



**Tuesday, May 30, 2023 @ 10:00am**  
**Weekly River-Wide Teleconference**

**Join by computer:** <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81230332731>

**Join toll-free by phone:** 888-788-0099

**Meeting ID:** 812 3033 2731

No passcode.

---

Every week of the salmon season, the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (KRITFC) hosts a river-wide teleconference for fishermen along the Kuskokwim River to call in and discuss fishing regulations, closures and openers, fish camp updates, Traditional Knowledge, and management action. This call is held tollfree on Zoom and open to the public. In 2023, it will be held Tuesdays at 10am starting May 30 until the end of the salmon season.

---

Identified Participants (15 total):

- *KRITFC Staff:* Kevin Whitworth, Justin Leon, Nikki Pollock, Terese Schomogyi, LaMont Albertson
  - *KRITFC In-Season Managers:* Paul Cleveland
  - *Yukon Delta NWR Staff:* Boyd Blihovde, Christian Alexie Jr., Emmitt Nicori, Christopher Tulik, Aaron Moses
  - *Public:* Adolph Lupie (Tuntutuliak)
- 

- In McGrath, the river has been coming down, 8-10 inches over the weekend. Still a lot of snow in McGrath.
- In Quinhagak, the first king was caught in Kuskokwim Bay on 5/29. Fish are swimming in deep water. Smelts put away. Drizzling today, river is swollen, cutting off road/runway access.
- In Napakiak, the first 2 kings were caught on 5/28. Smelts harvested on 5/29.
- In Bethel, snowing today. Last year, Bethel area was smelting on 5/24, but they just came on 5/29 this year; running a little bit later this year. The salmon follow the smelt. Looking forward to fishing as much as we can this year. A drifter caught 3 sheefish last week.
- In Kwethluk, smelting over the weekend.
- In Tuntutuliak, a king salmon was caught over the weekend. Ice-free, clear water since last week on the Kuskokwim and Tuntutuliak rivers. High and low tides come and go with the high waters. During northwest winds, the fish were swimming during peak tides. Cold and cloudy at the mouth of the river; good weather for salmon to swim. Smelts are already past. Salmon caught while drifting on 5/29, in the morning incoming tide.
- Starting June 1, 2023, at 12:01 am, the federal temporary special action will close gillnets to all users, and close fishing to non-federally qualified subsistence users to protect Chinook, chum, and coho salmon. This special action closure will go until August 31, 2023. Early season, pre-announced opportunities only for federally qualified subsistence users (i.e., permanent rural resident of the Kuskokwim) are:

- Set gillnet: June 3, 6, and 9 @ 6am-10pm. Nets must be 60-foot, 6-inch mesh, 45 meshes deep nets; and attached to the bank, oriented to the bank, and 150 feet from the next net.
- Drift and/or set gillnet: June 12 and 17 @7am-7pm. Nets must be 6-inch mesh, 300 feet below Johnson and 150 feet above Johnson River (for both set + drift net lengths combined), 45 meshes deep.
- Non-spawning tributaries (i.e., Gweek, Johnson, Pailleq Slough, Kailik) are open to gillnets. People are happy these are open for drifting.
- Happy that the KRITFC and Yukon Delta NWR and ADFG are working together to manage fish from the mouth of the river to upriver.
- The front-end closure is June 1-11. It was first implemented by ADFG to protect headwaters king salmon, which are headed up to tributaries above McGrath. Three set net opportunities have been announced during the front-end closure. An extra day was added by the KRITFC and YDNWR managers between the first drift opportunities to give upriver fish more time to pass through the lower Kuskokwim; this is one way to enact more conservation for headwaters stocks, especially around Nikolai.
- The announced set and drift opportunities are only for federally qualified subsistence users to limit the pool of users who can fish the Kuskokwim during conservation times. Federally qualified subsistence users are people who live full-time in a village on the Kuskokwim watershed (roughly Nelson Island area to the mouth of the Kuskokwim, including the tundra villages, up to the headwaters). Family members from Fairbanks, Anchorage, or elsewhere cannot fish (i.e., no pulling net, no driving boat), but they can help with processing fish, carrying gear, and other fish camp work. They can also be given fish or take fish home.
- Keep updated with fishing information at [www.facebook.com/KuskoSalmon](https://www.facebook.com/KuskoSalmon), [www.facebook.com/YukonDeltaRefuge](https://www.facebook.com/YukonDeltaRefuge), [www.kuskosalmon.org/2023-fishing-info](http://www.kuskosalmon.org/2023-fishing-info), calling the Yukon Delta NWR Fish Info line at 907-543-1008, calling KRITFC staff (Kevin Whitworth at 907-574-0388), tuning into KYUK Fish Talk on Thursdays from 1:00-2:30pm.
- KRITFC's Community-Based Harvest Monitoring program has hired about 10 people in Eek, Tuntutuliak, Napakiak, Napaskiak, Kwethluk, and Tuluksak to collect anonymous harvest data during and after announced openers. These harvest numbers are combined with ONC's Bethel area harvest information and YDNWR's boat and net counts to produce lower river harvest estimates, which help the KRITFC and YDNWR management team make better informed decisions and hopefully provide more openers.
- Please let harvest monitors know if you do not fish during openers, if asked, and feel free to share why. Helpful for managers to know.
- During high water, the fish will swim faster going up. The fish may go up faster this season.
- Lots of debris coming down the river still, and water is high.
- Hoping for better weather for drying once the openers start.
- Salmon bearing tributaries are closed: Eek, Kwethluk, Kisaralik, Kasigluk, Old Kuskokuak Slough, Tuluksak, Aniak, Aniak box. Generally, these are tributaries on the right-hand side of the Kuskokwim.
- Non-salmon bearing tributaries are open to gillnet fishing 100 yards above their confluence with the Kuskokwim: Gweek, Johnson, Kailik, Pailleq Slough (mouth of Eenayarak), Kinak/Tuntutuliak River, Tagayarak. Generally, these are tributaries on the left-hand side of the Kuskokwim. Working with federal law enforcement to get yellow 100-yard markers in place and to not penalize folks fishing for whitefish in these tributaries.
- Above Aniak, ADFG has issued two emergency orders for Aniak to the headwaters (sections 4-5). Starting June 7, this section of the river is closed to drifting, but set gillnets (6-inch mesh, 60-foot long, 45-mesh deep) are allowed 24/7. Alternative gear types (rod and reel, fish wheels) are allowed 24/7, but king and chum salmon must be released alive when caught with non-gillnets.

- The Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group will meet weekly on Wednesdays at 10:00am starting June 7. This is a great way to hear about management in state waters and talk with ADFG managers. You can call Nick Smith, ADFG Area Manager, at 907-543-2709.
- KRITFC's five In-Season Managers rely on Indigenous Yup'ik and Athabaskan Knowledge and fishing experience, as well as the best available Western science: Betty Magnuson (McGrath), Megan Leary (Napaimute), Mike Williams Sr. (Akiak), Henry Hunter Sr. (Bethel/ONC), Paul Cleveland (Quinhagak), James Nicori (Kwethluk), Robert Lekander (Bethel/ONC). This team represents fishers from the headwaters to Kuskokwim Bay.
- The ADFG king salmon escapement goal is 65,000–120,000. The KRITFC/YDNWR escapement goal is for 100,000–120,000, aiming for 110,000, trying to aim for the upper end of the escapement goal range to rebuild king salmon stocks.
- In Kuskokwim Bay, subsistence and commercial fishing is closed on Sundays and limited to 1 net per boat (6-inch, 300 feet max, 45 meshes deep), per ADFG regulations.
- Higher water around Bethel than normal, even over a week after breakup.
- Dipnetting for red salmon later this season is a completely legal, good way to fish.
- It snowed in Tuntutuliak this morning, which means it blanketed the bird eggs and they're ready to hatch. No more bird hunting.
- People on the coast are seeing trawlers just offshore of their communities.