



# United States Department of the Interior

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge

PO Box 346

Bethel, AK 99559



Emergency Special Action No.: 3-KS-03-21

Issued at: Bethel, Alaska July 1, 2021

Effective Date: July 2, 2021 6:00 a.m.

## **Federal Public Waters of the Kuskokwim River: Subsistence Fishing Announcement**

Pursuant to authority delegated by the Federal Subsistence Board, the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge Manager, as In-Season Manager, hereby announces several additional gillnet fishing opportunities for Federally qualified subsistence users. These additional openings reflect revisions to Emergency Special Action (ESA) 3-KS-01-21, issued June 01, 2021, which closed certain waters within and adjacent to the exterior boundaries of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge (Yukon Delta NWR) to the harvest of salmon and certain fishing methods in order to ensure the continued viability of, and subsistence use of Chinook Salmon. ESA 3-KSA-01-21 further provided several Chinook harvest opportunities for Federally qualified subsistence users, the latest of which occurred on June 15, 2021. Since that time, the In-Season manager has continued to review data and information reported by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) and other parties, and has engaged in numerous discussions with stakeholders concerning the prospect of providing additional harvest opportunities.

The data indicates that this season's Chinook Salmon run is late or weak, that a conservation concern continues to exist, and that the run is not strong enough to support a complete rescission of the existing closure. However, the data also indicates, and ADF&G and the Kuskokwim Inter-Tribal Fish Commission agree, that limited re-openings can be provided without jeopardizing the viability of future Chinook salmon runs. Based on historical information, the drift gillnet opportunities announced below are expected to generate a Chinook harvest of less than 4,000 fish on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, and less than 1,000 fish on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>. Pursuant to Section 804 of ANILCA, these limited re-openings will be afforded only to Federally qualified subsistence users.

The subsections below describe these additional openings and also reiterate certain key closures and restrictions instituted by 3-KS-01-21 that remain in effect.

### **Federally Qualified Subsistence Fishing Opportunities:**

**(1) Gillnet (set or drift) opportunities for Federally qualified subsistence users will be open in Federal public waters in the main stem of the Kuskokwim River (downstream of Kalskag Bluffs) during the following dates and times:**

- July 2, 2021 from 06:00 AM to 3:00PM
- July 9, 2021 from 06:00 AM to 6:00PM
- July 16, 2021 from 06:00 AM to 6:00PM



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During this opportunity, subsistence users will be allowed to use gillnets with 6-inch or less mesh which may not exceed 45 meshes in depth. Gillnets utilized in areas above the Johnson River may not exceed 25 fathoms (150 feet) in length, and gillnets utilized in areas below the Johnson River may not exceed 50 fathoms (300 feet) in length. Set gillnets need to be spaced 150 feet apart from another set gillnet. The salmon bearing tributaries listed in ESA 3-KS-01-21 will remain closed to the use of all gillnets for all salmon and all methods and means for Chinook salmon to all users during this period.

## (2) Set Gillnet Opportunity:

- **July 10, 2021 starting at 12:01AM through July 11, 2021 11:59PM**
- **July 17, 2021 starting at 12:01AM through July 18, 2021 11:59PM**

Set gillnets are restricted to 6-inch or less mesh, may not exceed 100 feet in length and 45 meshes in depth. Set gillnets may not be operated more than 100 feet from the ordinary high-water mark, must be attached to the bank, and substantially fished perpendicular to shore.

**Alternative Methods-** Nothing in ESA 3-KS-01-21 or the present action prohibits the use of alternative methods of fishing that enable the live release of Chinook Salmon (including use of hook and line, dip net, beach seine, and fish wheels with a live release wells).

**Tributary Details-** The following Federal public waters within and adjacent to the exterior boundaries of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge remain closed to the harvest of Chinook Salmon and the use of all gillnets by all users:

- **The Eek River;**
- **The Kwethluk River drainage beginning at its confluence with Kuskokuak Slough**
- **The Kasigluk and Kisaralik river drainages including Old Kuskokuak Slough to ADF&G regulatory markers at the confluence of Old Kuskokuak Slough and Kuskokuak Slough;**
- **The Tuluksak River drainage including its confluence with the Kuskokwim River and downstream approximately 1-mile to ADF&G regulatory markers;**
- **The Aniak River drainage to ADF&G regulatory markers at its confluence with the Kuskokwim River; and**
- **The Aniak box defined as: The waters of the Kuskokwim River main stem from the Yukon Delta NWR boundary at Aniak downstream to a line formed from the northwest corner of the runway (latitude 61° 35' 16" N, longitude 159° 33' 28" W), due north to a point on the southeast corner of the sandbar (latitude 61° 35' 37" N, longitude 159° 33' 16" W).**

Fishing from tributaries not listed above is restricted to fishing 100 yards upriver from the mouth of the river (confluence with the main stem Kuskokwim River).



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Access up-to-date information on fishing opportunities by calling 907-543-3151 or visit the Refuge [Facebook](#) page or [www.fws.gov/refuge/yukon\\_delta/](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/yukon_delta/).

By delegation from the Federal Subsistence Board:

Boyd Blihovde, Refuge Manager  
Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge

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