



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Bureau of Land Management  
National Park Service  
Bureau of Indian Affairs

## Federal Subsistence Board

1011 East Tudor Road, MS 121  
Anchorage, AK 99503-6199



Forest Service

### Notice to Rescind Salmon Fishing Restrictions within Federal Waters of the Kuskokwim River Drainage

#### TEMPORARY SPECIAL ACTION

Under Authority of: 36 CFR 242.10 and .19  
50 CFR 100.10 and .19

---

**Temporary Special Action No: FSA-YD-23-02**

**Issued at: Bethel, AK August 11, 2023**

Effective Date: August 13, 2023, 11:59 PM

#### **EXPLANATION:**

The Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge (YDNWR) Manager determined that Federal management was necessary for the conservation and prioritized rural subsistence user of Chinook, Chum, and Coho Salmon within Federal public waters of the Kuskokwim River drainage. That action was based on the provisions of Title VIII of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) and delegation of authority letter from the Federal Subsistence Board. **This action, FSA-YD-23-02, rescinds all previous salmon fishing restrictions announced in FSA-YD-23-01 within Federal public waters of the Kuskokwim River.**

#### **JUSTIFICATION:**

The closure of Federal public waters to the harvest of salmon with gillnets began on June 1, 2023, based on conservation concerns throughout the Kuskokwim River drainage. The in-season management team of the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (KRITFC) and the YDNWR made ten separate announcements of openings to subsistence harvest when run strength would allow it.

The depressed run of Chinook and Chum salmon resulted in reduced harvest opportunities for those species. Estimates indicate that subsistence needs were not adequately met, especially for Chum Salmon. Although Chum Salmon numbers improved in 2023 compared to the recent three years' returns, restrictions were still necessary for conservation reasons. The management team worked to provide opportunity for targeting the plentiful Sockeye Salmon run while avoiding Chum Salmon harvests.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Bureau of Land Management  
National Park Service  
Bureau of Indian Affairs

## Federal Subsistence Board

1011 East Tudor Road, MS 121  
Anchorage, AK 99503-6199



Forest Service

The 2023 Coho Salmon run and the pre-season predictions by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) indicated a below average Coho Salmon run this year. The KRITFC and YDNWR team used the precautionary approach described in the joint [2023 Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Strategy to guide Coho Salmon management](#). The Coho Salmon run started coming in early at the Bethel Test Fishery and Bethel Sonar, yet precaution dictated that Federal conservation measures were still needed during the early run to ensure the species made it to upriver communities and to weir projects with management escapement goals (at the Kogrukluuk and Kwethluk rivers).

On August 9<sup>th</sup>, the KRITFC and YDNWR technical staff met to discuss the timing and strength of the Coho Salmon returns. After deliberating and polling the entire in-season management group, the decision was made to rescind FSA-YD-23-01. The Coho Salmon capture data from the Bethel Test Fish project is increasing steadily and indicates healthy returns. Traditional Knowledge bearers have indicated that pressure to harvest has declined, and the Coho Salmon run has passed its historical lower Kuskokwim midpoint after the second week of August. The management trigger points that the KRITFC and YDNWR team set in place at the start of the Coho Run have been exceeded. The Federal and Tribal management team will continue to collaboratively monitor the Coho Salmon run and will take conservation measures in the future, if warranted.

Federal Subsistence Board by delegation to:

Boyd Blihovde  
Kuskokwim River In-season Manager  
Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge

### **DISTRIBUTION:**

Anthony Christianson, Chair, Federal Subsistence Board  
Jack Reakoff, Chair, Western Interior Subsistence Regional Advisory Council  
Raymond Oney, Chair, Yukon-Kuskokwim Subsistence Regional Advisory Council  
Jonathan Samuelson, Chair, Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission  
Kevin Whitworth, Executive Director, Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission  
Sara Boario, Regional Director, Alaska Region, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Jill Klein, Interagency Staff Committee  
Sue Detwiler, Assistant Regional Director, Office of Subsistence Management  
Ben Mulligan, Deputy Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
Mark Burch, Special Projects Coordinator, Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
Nicholas Smith, Area Management Biologist, Alaska Department of Fish and Game