

Fishery Management Report No. 06-33

Yakutat Set Gillnet Fishery 2006 Management Plan

by

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May 2006

Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Divisions of Sport Fish and Commercial Fisheries



Symbols and Abbreviations

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Weights and measures (metric)		General		Measures (fisheries)	
centimeter	cm	Alaska Administrative Code	AAC	fork length	FL
deciliter	dL	all commonly accepted abbreviations	e.g., Mr., Mrs., AM, PM, etc.	mid-eye-to-fork	MEF
gram	g	all commonly accepted professional titles	e.g., Dr., Ph.D., R.N., etc.	mid-eye-to-tail-fork	METF
hectare	ha	at	@	standard length	SL
kilogram	kg	compass directions:		total length	TL
kilometer	km	east	E		
liter	L	north	N	Mathematics, statistics	
meter	m	south	S	<i>all standard mathematical signs, symbols and abbreviations</i>	
milliliter	mL	west	W	alternate hypothesis	H _A
millimeter	mm	copyright	©	base of natural logarithm	<i>e</i>
		corporate suffixes:		catch per unit effort	CPUE
Weights and measures (English)		Company	Co.	coefficient of variation	CV
cubic feet per second	ft ³ /s	Corporation	Corp.	common test statistics	(F, t, χ^2 , etc.)
foot	ft	Incorporated	Inc.	confidence interval	CI
gallon	gal	Limited	Ltd.	correlation coefficient (multiple)	R
inch	in	District of Columbia	D.C.	correlation coefficient (simple)	r
mile	mi	et alii (and others)	et al.	covariance	cov
nautical mile	nmi	et cetera (and so forth)	etc.	degree (angular)	°
ounce	oz	exempli gratia	e.g.	degrees of freedom	df
pound	lb	(for example)		expected value	<i>E</i>
quart	qt	Federal Information Code	FIC	greater than	>
yard	yd	id est (that is)	i.e.	greater than or equal to	≥
		latitude or longitude	lat. or long.	harvest per unit effort	HPUE
Time and temperature		monetary symbols (U.S.)	\$, ¢	less than	<
day	d	months (tables and figures): first three letters	Jan, ..., Dec	less than or equal to	≤
degrees Celsius	°C	registered trademark	®	logarithm (natural)	ln
degrees Fahrenheit	°F	trademark	™	logarithm (base 10)	log
degrees kelvin	K	United States (adjective)	U.S.	logarithm (specify base)	log ₂ , etc.
hour	h	United States of America (noun)	USA	minute (angular)	'
minute	min	U.S.C.	United States Code	not significant	NS
second	s	U.S. state	use two-letter abbreviations (e.g., AK, WA)	null hypothesis	H ₀
Physics and chemistry				percent	%
all atomic symbols				probability	P
alternating current	AC			probability of a type I error (rejection of the null hypothesis when true)	α
ampere	A			probability of a type II error (acceptance of the null hypothesis when false)	β
calorie	cal			second (angular)	"
direct current	DC			standard deviation	SD
hertz	Hz			standard error	SE
horsepower	hp			variance	
hydrogen ion activity (negative log of)	pH			population	Var
parts per million	ppm			sample	var
parts per thousand	ppt, ‰				
volts	V				
watts	W				

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by

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ABSTRACT

The 2006 Yakutat set gillnet fishing seasons and fishing periods will open by regulation on Sunday as specified in 5 AAC 30.310 and 5 AAC 30.320. The Alsek River will open on Sunday, June 4, Yakutat Bay will open on Sunday, June 11, the Situk-Ahrnklin Inlet and Manby Shore Outside Waters will open on Sunday, June 18. All Yakutat District fisheries will be open by Sunday, June 25. Set gillnet fisheries are managed by adjusting fishing times and areas in response to inseason assessments of run strength. Management strategies will concentrate on sockeye and Chinook salmon in June and July. Following the first Sunday in August, fall fishing periods will go into effect and the emphasis for management strategies will switch to coho salmon. The East Alsek River is the sole exception due to the late timing of the sockeye salmon run, and the river will be managed for sockeye salmon into September. No formal preseason forecast program exists for the Yakutat salmon runs. Returns are expected to be average for sockeye salmon, and average to above average for coho salmon.

Keywords: fishing seasons, fishing periods, Chinook, sockeye, coho, pink, chum salmon.

INTRODUCTION

The Yakutat area encompasses the waters of Alaska between Cape Suckling and Cape Fairweather. The area is divided into two fishing districts: the Yakataga District between Cape Suckling and Icy Cape, and the Yakutat District between Icy Cape and Cape Fairweather. All five salmon species are harvested in the Yakutat area, with coho, sockeye, Chinook, and pink salmon comprising the majority of the catch in order of commercial value.

Set gillnet gear is the only net gear permitted in the Yakutat area. About 170 commercial setnet entry permits are renewed annually. Setnet permit holders in the Yakutat area do not have registered sites and may fish in any open fishing area. They may also move between fishing areas during the season as long as not more than one area is fished concurrently.

There are 25 unique setnet fisheries in the Yakutat area. Most of these fisheries target sockeye salmon from mid-June through July and coho salmon in August and September. The only targeted pink salmon fishery occurs in the southeast portion of Yakutat Bay on fish returning to Humpback Creek. Set gillnet fisheries in the Yakataga District primarily harvest coho salmon.

In January, 2006 the Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF) adopted two regulations that permanently changed the weekly fishing periods and fishing seasons for the Yakutat Area from Monday to Sunday of each week. In 2006 the Alsek River will open on the first Sunday in June (June 5), Yakutat Bay will open on the second Sunday in June (June 11), and the Situk-Ahrnklin Inlet will open on the third Sunday in June (June 18). By the fourth Sunday in June (June 25) all fisheries in the Yakutat District may be open if expected returns are surplus to escapement needs.

From 2003 through 2005 the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) conducted stock assessment projects in many of the waters of the Yakutat Area. The Southeast Sustainable Salmon Fisheries Fund is funding another project in 2006. This project will consist of both traditional external marking and radio tagging, recovery, and tracking of coho in the Lost, Ahrnklin, and Situk River systems. The goal of this project is to increase understanding of total run size and escapements of coho in these systems. Coded Wire Tag (CWT) recovery efforts will continue in 2006 for coho salmon tagged in the Lost, Ahrnklin, and Situk Rivers in 2004 and 2005.

ANTICIPATED SALMON RETURN

No formal preseason forecast program exists for the Yakutat salmon runs. Preseason expectations are based on parent-year spawning escapements, commercial catch trends, local observations of rearing conditions, and information on year-class strength. The 2006 Yakutat area salmon runs are expected to be average for sockeye salmon and average to above average for coho salmon. Detailed projections by specific drainage area are presented on page 9.

FISHERY MANAGEMENT

Set gillnet fisheries in the Yakutat area are managed by adjusting fishing times and areas in response to inseason assessments of run strength. These actions are taken to provide adequate spawning escapements and to allow harvests of salmon that are surplus to escapement goals. Inseason assessment methods include both fishery performance and spawning escapement information. In the glacial systems, fishery performance data is utilized for management because poor visibility prevents the accurate observation of spawning escapements.

During 2006, the major fishing areas can be expected to open on the following dates:

Yakutat District		
Area		Opening Date
Alsek River		4 June
Dangerous River		11 June
Yakutat Bay (south of 59°40' N lat.)		11 June
Manby Shore Ocean		18 June
Situk-Ahrnklin Inlet		18 June
Lost River		by Emergency Order
East River		by Emergency Order
Akwe River		25 June
Manby Shore Inland		25 June
Remainder of the Yakutat District		25 June
Italio River		by Emergency Order
Yakataga District		
Season	Area	Opening Date
Sockeye Season		by Emergency Order
Coho Season		
	Kaliakh River	August 6
	Tsiu River	by Emergency Order (around August 22)

2006 SUMMER MANAGEMENT PLAN

This management plan concentrates on the major fisheries in the Yakutat area. Information on areas that are fished only occasionally is available from the Yakutat area management biologist listed at the end of the plan. Most Yakutat gillnet openings for sockeye salmon will generally run from 6:00 a.m. Sunday through 6:00 p.m. Tuesday.

ALSEK RIVER

The Alsek River, located 45 miles southeast of Yakutat, is a major transboundary river that drains a large area east of the coastal mountain range. The Alsek extends approximately 130 miles from its mouth upriver into the Yukon Territory of Canada. The U.S./Canada border is approximately 40 miles upstream from the river mouth. The river supports large populations of Chinook, sockeye, and coho salmon, and small populations of pink and chum salmon. Alaskan set gillnet fisheries target sockeye and coho salmon. Canadian subsistence and sport fisheries target sockeye and Chinook salmon.

Commercial salmon landings from the Alaskan portion of the Alsek River averaged approximately 19,300 sockeye, 3,200 coho, and 700 Chinook salmon annually from 2001 through 2005. The Canadian subsistence and sport harvest has averaged approximately 230 Chinook, 1,800 sockeye, and 150 coho salmon during the same period. Subsistence and sport fisheries in the Alaskan portion of the river are relatively minor, harvesting about 200 salmon annually.

Historically, the set gillnet fishery targeted Chinook salmon during May in the Alaskan portion of the river. However, due to what was thought to be depressed runs, the directed Chinook salmon fishery has been closed since 1962 and Chinook salmon have been harvested only incidentally during the sockeye salmon fishery in early June. The Northern Panel of the Pacific Salmon Commission has reached bilateral agreement to reopen the Stikine and Taku Inlet gillnet fisheries, and they also established a test fishery for the Alsek to begin in late May of 2005. The test fishery will again be conducted in 2006 within the common property gillnet fishing area on the Alsek, and harvest shall not exceed 500 Chinook salmon. It is anticipated that the Northern Panel will at some point reach bilateral agreement to reopen the Alsek River to commercial fishing for Chinook salmon in May. In January, 2006 the BOF adopted regulatory language to allow for this fishery should agreement be reached. The 2006 run of Chinook salmon is expected to produce fish surplus to the current Klukshu River escapement goal of 1,100 to 2,300 fish.

The 2006 overall Alsek drainage sockeye salmon run is expected to be approximately 66,700 fish; this is below the recent 10-year average of 77,200 fish. The principle contributing brood years will be 2001 (Klukshu escapement of 9,300 sockeye salmon) and 2002 (Klukshu escapement of 23,600 sockeye salmon). Both the early and late run segments of the Alsek sockeye run are expected to be average in 2006. The escapement goal for 2006 is a total of 7,500 to 15,000 sockeye past the Klukshu weir. The Village Creek electronic counter recorded 2,200 sockeye salmon in 2001. This count was below the recent average of 2,600 sockeye salmon. Escapement counts in U. S. tributaries were also below average in 2001.

The Alsek will open downstream from a marker located three miles below the southern end of Alsek Basin on the first Sunday in June (June 4). Weekly openings will initially be set at 24 hours. The duration of weekly fishing periods will be based on fishery performance and Klukshu weir data. Gillnets will be restricted to a maximum mesh size of 6 inches through July 1 to

minimize Chinook salmon harvest. Fishing time will be based on a comparison of current to historical fishery performance data.

The Alsek River surf fishing area is expected to be open during the same periods as the in-river fishery. The surf fishing area includes the shoreline, 0.75 of a mile in each direction, from the river mouth to the outermost bar where the surf breaks.

DANGEROUS RIVER

The Dangerous River will be opened downstream from the Dangerous River Bridge on June 11. Catch and effort from this system has been sporadic. The 2001 parent year harvest of 5,750 sockeye salmon was well above average. The Dangerous is seldom fished for coho salmon.

YAKUTAT BAY

Three separate set gillnet fisheries occur in Yakutat Bay. The Yakutat Bay fishery occurs in the ocean waters of Yakutat Bay south of 59°40' N. latitude and will open on the second Sunday of June (June 11). The Manby Shore Ocean fishery encompasses the ocean waters of Yakutat Bay north of 59°40' N. latitude and will open the third Sunday of June (June 18). The Manby Shore Inside Waters fishery will open on the fourth Sunday of June (June 25) in streams along the northern shore of Yakutat Bay.

YAKUTAT BAY AND MANBY SHORE OCEAN FISHERIES

Both the Yakutat Bay and Manby Shore Ocean fisheries harvest mixed stocks of sockeye salmon. Tag recovery data collected in 1987 indicated that a major portion of the Yakutat Bay sockeye harvest was of Situk origin. Because of the high Situk River sockeye contribution to the Yakutat Bay and Manby Shore ocean fisheries, both fisheries will be managed to conserve or harvest Situk River sockeye from the third week in June through the third week of July. The Yakutat Bay fishery will open on Sunday, June 11 for 2.5 days. The weekly fishing period will be limited to a maximum of 4.5 days due to the mixed stock nature of the ocean fisheries and the potentially adverse impact on weaker Yakutat area stocks.

The Manby Shore fishery will open on Sunday, June 18. Weekly fishing periods will depend on Situk River sockeye salmon run strength.

SITUK-AHRNKLIN AND LOST RIVER

The Situk-Ahrnklin Inlet is the site of the oldest and, historically, most productive fishery in the Yakutat area. Located about nine miles by road from Yakutat, the Situk-Ahrnklin fishery normally supports the largest concentration of fishing effort in Yakutat (up to 100 permits). Fishing occurs primarily in the inlet, although some fishing occurs at the river mouth and in the adjoining surf-fishing area. Sockeye salmon make up the major portion of the harvest during the summer and coho salmon dominate the catch during the fall. Situk-Ahrnklin catches have averaged about 55,000 sockeye, 130,000 coho, 30,000 pink, and 1,100 Chinook salmon (2001-2005).

The 2001 brood year Situk River sockeye salmon escapement was approximately 55,000 fish. Return per spawner data indicates that the 2006 Situk River sockeye salmon run could exceed 160,000 fish. The sockeye salmon Biological Escapement Goal (BEG) range for the Situk River drainage is 30,000 to 70,000 fish through the weir. A mid-range escapement of 50,000 could leave somewhere in the vicinity of 110,000 fish available for harvest. Sockeye salmon returns in

recent years have not lived up to preseason expectations, and the actual surplus available for harvest may not approach 110,000 sockeye salmon.

The Situk-Ahrnklin Inlet will open initially on Sunday, June 18. Fishing periods will be based on fishery performance and escapements through the Situk River weir. A run-timing model will be used to estimate the total Situk River sockeye salmon run after several weeks of harvest and escapement data are available. A similar model will be used to project Situk Chinook salmon abundance.

Chinook salmon are taken incidentally in the set gillnet fishery, and the Situk commercial catch of Chinook salmon is largely dependent on fishing time allowed for sockeye salmon. If the Chinook salmon return is weak, conservation measures may be necessary to reduce the incidental harvest of Chinook salmon. Conservation and allocation objectives associated with the harvest of Situk River Chinook salmon are described in the Situk-Ahrnklin Inlet and Lost River Chinook Management Plan (5 AAC 30.365).

Management options for maximizing harvest of Situk River pink salmon are limited due to the overlap in run timing with sockeye and coho salmon. Escapement goals for pink salmon in the Situk River are 42,000 to 105,000 in even years and 54,000 to 200,000 in odd years. The parent year (2004) escapement past the Situk weir was 144,000 pink salmon.

Steelhead trout in post-spawning condition occasionally accumulate in the Situk River prior to the time they emigrate to the ocean. When the emigration is late, there is a potential for the Situk setnet fishery to harvest a larger than normal number of adults. The rate of emigration of spawned-out steelhead often increases following periods of heavy rainfall. If a major emigration is expected to occur during a scheduled gillnet fishing period, the opening may be delayed for a few days to reduce the incidental harvest of steelhead.

During the winter of 1998/1999 the Lost River changed course and flowed into the Situk/Ahrnklin Estuary instead of the Gulf of Alaska. The Lost River continues to flow into the Situk/Ahrnklin Estuary. Prior to the 1999 fishing season ADF&G developed a management plan for the Lost River and Situk/Ahrnklin Estuary with the intent of meeting escapement requirements for the Lost River. This plan closed the Lost River and the North bank of the Situk/Ahrnklin Estuary between an ADF&G regulatory marker approximately 100 yards above the confluence of the Lost River and the Situk/Ahrnklin Estuary and a marker located near the mouth of the Situk/Ahrnklin Estuary. The plan went into effect at the beginning of the season and the Lost River (Tawah Creek) was surveyed weekly throughout the season to monitor escapement. The lower marker was moved closer to the Lost River as escapement objectives in the Lost River were met. Sockeye and coho salmon escapement goals for both the Lost River and the Situk/Ahrnklin system have been consistently met using this management scenario, and similar measures will be taken in 2006.

The weekly escapement surveys on the Lost River over the years have indicated that sockeye salmon run timing is different for Lost River and Situk/Ahrnklin stocks. No fish have been observed in Tawah Creek prior to July 10. The north bank of the Situk/Ahrnklin Estuary from a marker at the mouth of the estuary (500 yards) to a marker 100 yards above the confluence of the Lost River will be closed to commercial set gillnet fishing beginning July 10. Prior to this date the closed area will be confined to 100 yards on each side of the mouth of the Lost River. It is anticipated that the Lost River will remain closed for the entire sockeye season. The intent of these closures is to achieve the escapement goal (peak float count) of between 1,000 and 2,300

sockeye salmon that has been established for the Lost River and to maximize fishing opportunity in the Situk/Ahrnklin estuary. Regulatory marker placement may change during the course of the season as escapement or river channel movement warrants.

EAST RIVER

The East River is a short, clear river originating from the upwellings and local drainage of the eastern portion of Dry Bay. The area open to inriver commercial fishing extends from the mouth to two miles upstream; the adjacent ocean waters within two miles of the mouth in each direction out to 500 yards from the shore at low tide are also open to commercial fishing. The surf and ocean areas are open during the same periods as the inriver fishery.

Prior to 1994 the East River had been one of the most productive sockeye salmon fisheries in the Yakutat area, however salmon catches have dramatically declined. From 1994–1998 average catch was about 37,000 sockeye, 1,500 chum, and 7,400 coho salmon. The river was closed to commercial fishing for sockeye during the 1999, 2000, 2001, and 2002 seasons. The East was opened during coho season in 2002, and for both sockeye and coho in 2003, 2004, and 2005. During these recent-year openings only minor catches were recorded.

The East River will be managed to achieve the BEG of 13,000 to 26,000 sockeye salmon. Escapement will be closely monitored, and the East will probably not open until the lower end of the escapement goal is attained. In 2005 the East opened during the second week of July. If the fishery does open in 2006, the duration of the weekly fishing periods will be based on escapement observations. Returns to the East River are predominantly age 4 (0.4). The 2002 parent-year escapement was estimated at 14,200 sockeye salmon, within the BEG range. Sockeye salmon returns have been less than parent-year returns since 1998.

AKWE RIVER

The Akwe River is a glacial river system located about 35 miles south of Yakutat. The lower seven miles of the river are wide and shallow and flow parallel to the beach before entering the ocean. The commercial fishery occurs in this lower portion of the river. The 2001–2005 average Akwe River harvest was approximately 9,300 sockeye and 200 Chinook salmon. Historically, the Akwe coho salmon harvest has averaged approximately 4,000 fish, but the river has not been fished for coho salmon in four of the recent five years due to market conditions.

The sockeye salmon return to the Akwe River is expected to be above average in 2006 based on parent-year fishery performance and effort. The 2001 parent year harvest of 17,200 sockeye salmon was the sixth highest on record, although parent-year escapement counts were minimal. The sockeye fishery is scheduled to open on Sunday, June 25 and the season will extend through early August. Inseason management will be based on fishery performance and index escapement counts, and reductions in the normal 2.5-day weekly fishing period may be necessary to insure adequate escapement. An escapement goal (peak aerial count) of 600 to 1,500 sockeye salmon has been established for the Akwe River.

The Akwe River will be open upstream of the markers located about 0.5 miles from the terminus of the Akwe River lagoon at mean low tide to the upper markers located 2.5 miles downstream from the westernmost end of the Sand Dunes, a fishing area of about four miles.

MANBY SHORE INLAND FISHERY

Management of the Manby Shore inland fisheries (waters upstream of the mean high-tide line) will be based on the abundance of local stocks. During the summer, these fisheries harvest salmon primarily from Manby and Sudden Streams. A 2.5-day weekly fishing period can be expected during the initial opening period scheduled for June 25. Additional open periods will depend on fishery performance.

HUMPBAC KREEK FISHERY

The Humpy Creek fishery located in the southeastern portion of Yakutat Bay targets pink salmon. A below average run is expected at Humpy Creek for the 2006 season. Humpy Creek was not surveyed during the 2004 parent year. Inseason management of this fishery will be based on observed pink salmon escapement to Humpy Creek and the availability of pink salmon in the Yakutat Bay fishery. Escapement goals (peak aerial count) of 3,300 to 8,000 pink salmon in even years and 7,000 to 18,000 pink salmon in odd years have been established for Humpy Creek. There has not been a directed fishery on Humpy Creek for many years.

ITALIO RIVER

The Italo River is located adjacent to the Akwe River. The Italo supports small runs of sockeye and coho salmon. The course of the Italo River changed and flowed into the lower Akwe River during the winter of 1986/1987 and both rivers now share a common mouth. Both Italo and Akwe salmon stocks are present in this area and for some distance upstream in each river. Determination of Akwe or Italo run strengths based on fishing success in the junction area is not possible. Therefore, the junction and a portion of each river above the junction is closed to set gillnet fishing.

The Italo River sockeye salmon fishery has not been open since 1987. When the Italo River changed channel and entered the Akwe River lagoon, the homing ability of Italo River sockeye salmon may have been negatively affected. As a result, it may take several years for the productivity of the Italo River sockeye stock to return to historic levels. The Italo River fishery may open by emergency order if good escapements are observed. The 2001 parent-year escapement for this year's sockeye return was below the lower range of the escapement goal in place at that time of 2,500 to 7,000. Based on an analysis completed in the winter of 2002–2003 the escapement goal for the Italo was rescinded and no formal goal is in place due to changes in productivity of the system.

YAKATAGA DISTRICT

The Yakataga District is not expected to be open during the sockeye season in 2006. It will open by emergency order sometime in August based on coho escapement.

2006 FALL MANAGEMENT PLAN

Fall fishing is directed primarily at harvesting coho salmon, although fall chum salmon can contribute to the catches on the East River. The fall fishing season generally will start on the first Sunday of August. At that time, the regulatory weekly fishing period changes in most areas to a 12:01 p.m. opening, and 12:00 noon, closing time. During the fall, set gillnet fishing occurs in both the Yakutat and Yakataga Districts. In the Yakutat District, the fall coho salmon fishery occurs primarily in the same areas as the summer sockeye salmon fishery. In the Yakataga District, there are areas where only coho salmon fishing takes place.

Overall catches and escapements of coho salmon in the Yakutat area were above average in the parent year (2002). The Situk River escapement counts in 2002 were the highest on record and were well above the top end of the escapement goal range. Counts for the Tsiu River were also over the top end of the BEG range. The recent 15-year history of coho returns to Yakutat has been excellent, and the 2005 coho salmon run is expected to be average to above average area-wide.

A potential concern regarding Yakutat area coho salmon is based on both climatic and geological effects. Yakutat has been through a five-year period of drought. The land is rising away from the water table due to some of the highest rates of isostatic rebound found in the world. These factors dramatically affect fresh water rearing habitat for coho salmon. Forest Highway 10 crosses many streams, tributaries of the Situk and Ahrnklin Rivers and of Seal Creek. At least five of these streams, although listed in the Anadromous Stream Catalog as important for both spawning and rearing of coho salmon, no longer exist. These streams have not had any water in them at all for almost five years. At some future time it is possible that these events will negatively impact coho salmon production in the Yakutat area.

YAKUTAT DISTRICT

Fall fishing will begin on Sunday, August 6 in the Yakutat District, except in the East River where management will continue to be based on sockeye salmon run strength through most of August. The initial fishing periods can be expected to extend from 12:01 p.m. Sunday through 12:00 noon Wednesday. Inseason management of all Yakutat District fall fisheries will be based on fishery performance data and inseason coho escapement surveys.

The following BEGs have been established for coho salmon in the Yakutat District: East River 2,500 to 8,500; Akwe River 1,800 to 5,000; Italo River 1,400 to 3,600; Situk River 3,300 to 9,800; and Lost River 2,200 to 6,500.

Fishing time and area adjustments will be made for each river as needed for conservation. A closed area can be expected in the Yahtse River to protect schools of milling coho salmon at tributary mouths. The actual closed water area will be based on inseason observations of coho schooling behavior, which is related to river flow conditions. Several small coho streams are located along the forelands west of the Yahtse River to Cape Yakataga. Most of these streams have very small numbers of spawning coho and cannot support in-river set gillnet fisheries. The area from the Yahtse River to Cape Yakataga will remain closed until harvestable surpluses are evident.

YAKATAGA DISTRICT

The major fisheries in the Yakataga District occur for coho salmon on the Kaliakh and Tsiu Rivers, located about 125 miles northwest of Yakutat. The Tsiu River is the more productive of the two rivers; in recent years, catches have averaged about 56,000 coho salmon. The Kaliakh, which had not been fished since 1999, had minor recorded effort in 2004 and no effort in 2005. The Tsiu recorded minor effort in 2004 and supported a more normal fishery in 2005 when 25,000 coho salmon were harvested; prior to that it had not been fished since 2001 due to market conditions. Parent-year (2002) escapement count of 30,000 coho salmon was just above the BEG range of 10,000 to 29,000 fish. The Kaliakh was not surveyed in 2002. The 2006 coho salmon return is expected to be average to above average in both the Tsiu and Kaliakh Rivers. The BEG range for the Kaliakh is 4,000 to 14,000 coho salmon.

The Tsiu River opening date and fishing periods will be determined from observed escapements above and below the regulatory markers. The Kaliakh River weekly fall fishing periods will normally open from 9:00 a.m., Sunday through 9:00 a.m., Wednesday, beginning on August 6. Market conditions will determine whether or not the Yakataga District is fished in 2006. The area is remote and fish must be flown to markets. It is possible that it will be economically unfeasible to fish the district.

2006 SALMON RUN EXPECTATIONS

SOCKEYE SALMON

Alsek River

The parent-year sockeye salmon escapement was approximately 9,300 through the Klukshu Weir. A total catch of around 10,000–15,000 sockeye is expected.

East River

The parent year escapement was approximately 14,300 sockeye salmon. A normal return this year could lead to a catch of approximately 8,000–12,000 fish. If the East River opens, effort will probably be limited to a few Alsek River fishermen.

Akwe River

No parent-year escapement counts are available. Based on catch, the runs in both parent years, 2001 and 2002, were strong, and the Akwe has shown above average sockeye salmon production in recent years. A catch of 7,000 to 12,000 sockeye is expected for 2006 based on parent-year fishery performance and effort.

Italio River

Parent-year escapements were low and it is unlikely there will be a directed sockeye salmon fishery in the Italio River in 2006.

Situk River

The parent-year escapement was slightly approximately above 55,000 sockeye salmon. A catch of around 40,000 to 60,000 sockeye, with an escapement of about 50,000 sockeye, is expected.

COHO SALMON

Tsiu/Kaliakh River

If there is any effort, a catch of over 40,000 coho may be possible in the Tsiu River in 2006. In the Kaliakh River, a harvest of 1,000 to 3,000 coho is possible.

Area-wide

Parent-year escapements were above average in most areas. Based on recent trends in the fishery, the run is expected to be average to above average. The area wide set gillnet catch is expected to be about 180,000 to 200,000 coho, but effort, and how it is distributed throughout the area, will largely determine how many coho are harvested.

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