

MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH Fish & Wildlife Commission

350 E Dahlia Ave., Palmer, Alaska 99645

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Ex officio: Jim Sykes

Regular Meeting

October 9, 2025

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- 6 = B3 Litigation Report WFC NMFS
- 7 = PPTE Staff Tasking
- 9 = Borough Action Priorities

Physical Location of Meeting: Conference Room 203
DSJ Bldg, Palmer. Remote Participation: See agenda.

Planning and Land Use Department - Planning Division

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9.25.2025

DRAFT NPFMC THREE-MEETING OUTLOOK – 9/25/2025				
	September 29-October 9, 2025 VIRTUAL	Council staff contact	December 1-9, 2025 Egan Center, Anchorage, AK	Council staff contact February 2-11, 2026 Egan Center, Anchorage, AK
TOPICS EVENTS/ REPORTS*	Election of officers, new member oath ED report: Council response to EO 14276 NMFS report: Status of BSAI FMP Biological Opinion AFSC report	DW DE DW DW	ED report: CCC meeting, IRA update NMFS report: Final ADP, inseason reports NOAA Enforcement BSA pollock report on 2026 dynamic spatial closures IPHC halibut assessment presentation Executive Session	DE DE DE DE SM DE
GROUND FISH HARVEST SPECS	BSAI Groundfish: Proposed specs, PT reports GOA Groundfish: Proposed specs, PT reports Groundfish spatial apportionment: Proposal for Nov BSAI BSRE accountability measures: Discussion paper	DS SC SC DS	Ecosystem Status Reports: Review BSAI Groundfish: PT report, Final Specifications GOA Groundfish: PT report, Final Specifications	SC DS SC
OTHER SPECS: CRAB, SALMON, SCALLOP	BSAI Crab stocks: ABC/OFL specs, Crab PT report	AK	NSRKC: ABC/OFL specs, Crab PT report	AK
REPORTING/ MONITORING	2025 Observer ADP: Review, PC/FMAC reports Economic Data Reports Removal: Initial/Final Action	SC SM		
BSAI/GOA GFISH MGMT	MRA adjustments: Final Action BSAI Pot Cod LAPP: Discussion Paper (Council only)	TH AH		
BSAI CRAB MGMT	Crab C-shares: Initial Review	TH	Crab arbitration: Final Action Crab C-shares: Final Action (T)	SM TH
BYCATCH			GOA Tanner crab protection meas.: Preliminary Review	DS KH
HALIBUT: IFQ/CHARTER	IFQ/CQE transfer, beneficiary changes: Disc. paper	AH	2026 Charter halibut mgmt measures: Final action	SM
OTHER	EFH 5-year review workplan: Review Programmatic evaluation: Discuss next steps	AK KL		EFH 5-year review workplan: SSC review AK

ITEMS NOT YET SCHEDULED:

AI GKC start date : *Discussion paper (will fold into cost recovery)*
 Pot gear regulation consistency: *Discussion paper*
 Sablefish motion scales: *Discussion paper*
 Cost recovery adjustments: *Discussion paper (June 2026)*

Cook Inlet Salmon tribal fishery feasibility: *Discussion paper*
 Charter Halibut Mgmt Measures Timing: *Discussion Paper*
 Pelagic trawl and crab research: *Updates and next steps (June 2026)*

Council staff contacts: AH - Anna Henry, AK - Anita Koska, DE - Diana Evans, DS - Diana Stram, DW - Dave Witherell, KH - Kate Haapala, KL - Katie Latanich, MF - Mike Fey (AKFIN), SC - Sara Cleaver, SM - Sarah Marnin, TH - Taylor Holman
 *Reports in addition to the standard agency B reports (Executive Director, NMFS Management, NOAA General Counsel, ADFG, USCG, USFWS.) For acronyms and abbreviations, see online list: <https://www.npfmc.org/library/acronyms/>



United States Department of the Interior

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
1011 East Tudor Road
Anchorage, Alaska 99503



In Reply Refer to:
FWS/R7/FES

Report # B-8: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Report to the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council, October 2025.

Yukon River Federal Subsistence Fisheries - Preliminary Post Season Summary

The Chinook Salmon run was again among the lowest on record, and none of the established escapement goals for Chinook Salmon were met. The summer Chum Salmon run was the second smallest on record and failed to meet the drainage wide escapement goal and all tributary goals. No subsistence opportunities were provided for either species.

The fall Chum Salmon run is expected to be below the established escapement goals, and the mainstem Canadian origin fall Chum Salmon escapement is likely to again be one of the lowest on record. Complete Chum Salmon closures were in place for fall season. The Coho Salmon run was early and below average, but the largest it has been since 2020. Subsistence fishing with selective gear was provided for Coho Salmon for most of the fall season.

Throughout the salmon seasons, there was opportunity to harvest non-salmon species using non-salmon gear. Non-salmon 4-inch set gillnets were restricted during the season to reduce the incidental harvest of the salmon as they migrated through the river, but the other selective gears remained open 24 hours per day, seven days per week. In addition, 2025 was the first year that 6-inch gillnets were allowed in select non-salmon areas during fall season to increase non-salmon harvest opportunity.

Subsistence salmon fishing was closed for Chinook and Chum Salmon throughout the seasons, marking the sixth consecutive year of Chum Salmon gillnet closures and the fifth consecutive year of full closures for Chinook Salmon. Subsistence harvest estimates will not be available until after household surveys are completed and analyzed by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), typically in December. However, Yukon households faced another year of very low harvest. This situation represents a loss of over 190,000 salmon for approximately 2,500 households in the region. We acknowledge the severe hardship these closures impose on subsistence households, affecting community food security, and cultural practices. Although Yukon residents valued the limited coho and non-salmon opportunities and the few hundred salmon donated to communities from the test fishery projects, these do not adequately address the subsistence, cultural, and spiritual needs of the Yukon River communities dependent on salmon.

For more information, please contact Yukon River Federal Subsistence Manager, Holly Carroll, via at holly_carroll@fws.gov or by phone at 907-351-3029.

Kuskokwim River Federal Subsistence Fisheries - Preliminary 2025 Post Season Summary

The 2025 season marks the 12th consecutive year of federal subsistence fisheries management of the Kuskokwim River Chinook Salmon run within federal public waters of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge, and the 11th consecutive year of cooperative management with the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (KRITFC). Chum and Coho Salmon were also under federal management this year due to the expectation of low returns and the need to conserve and provide a rural subsistence priority for subsistence users under the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) Title VIII. Federal management began on June 1 and ended August 7 to provide conservation and sustainable fishing opportunities for federally qualified subsistence users for Chinook, Chum and Coho Salmon within federal public waters.

During the 2025 season, the refuge management team worked closely with KRITFC and sought input and feedback from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) to manage Chinook, Chum, and Coho Salmon on the Kuskokwim River. The YDNWR and KRITFC developed their joint 2025 Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Strategy and Harvest Strategy as has been done since 2021. These strategies were developed according to the following guiding principles:

- Use a precautionary approach by utilizing in-season information, in addition to preseason forecasts, to avoid overharvest of Chinook, Chum, and Coho Salmon within the Kuskokwim River watershed.
- Integrate meaningful local and Traditional Knowledge into the fisheries management decision-making process.
- Strive for continued customary and traditional subsistence harvest opportunities while balancing the need for adequate escapement to rebuild declined Pacific salmon stocks.
- Uphold federal mandates and responsibilities regarding conservation and protection of Pacific salmon stock diversity.

The cooperative management approach taken by the refuge and KRITFC focused on balancing Chinook, Chum, and Coho Salmon conservation with the continuation of customary and traditional subsistence uses. During times of uncertainty about Pacific salmon abundance, the following in-season stock assessment tools were used to readily adapt management decisions:

- ADF&G's Kuskokwim River sonar project, which is a direct salmon passage enumeration project.
- KRITFC's community-based harvest monitoring project, in coordination with Orutsararmiut Traditional Native Council and Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge, which provides lower Kuskokwim in-season harvest estimates for each species of Pacific salmon following Federally announced subsistence fishing opportunities.

- Local and Traditional Knowledge that included run timing, abundance, and health of Pacific salmon.

These in-season monitoring tools provided information on run strength, salmon size, harvest effort and success. This information, combined with prior years of low productivity, and long-term subsistence needs, suggested that harvest restrictions were necessary to meet the drainage-wide Chinook Salmon escapement goal. While the June salmon harvest was relatively higher in 2025 than recent years, in season data indicated that harvest may be lower than needed to meet subsistence needs. Additional fishing hours took place later in the season to target abundant Sockeye Salmon and helped continue to offer subsistence fishing opportunities that helped fill subsistence needs.

For more information, please contact Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge Manager, Spencer Rearden, via email at spencer_rearden@fws.gov or by phone at 907-621-6129.

Migratory Bird Update

There were several seabird die-off events July through August 2025, including: Kachemak Bay (kittiwakes and some marine mammals), St. George Island (mixed species including dead fur seals and sea lions), St. Paul Island (murres and fulmars), and Kodiak Island (shearwaters). As of September 2025, there is a public health alert for Kachemak Bay due to elevated levels of Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning toxins detected in wild shellfish. Diagnostic updates and highly pathogenic avian influenza test results will be reported when they are available.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

THE DIRECTOR

June 30, 2025

Angel Drobnica, Chair
North Pacific Fishery Management Council
1007 West 3rd Ave., Suite 400
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

Dear Ms. Drobnica:

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has reviewed the North Pacific Fishery Management Council's June 10, 2025, motion concerning annual harvest specifications for the Cook Inlet salmon fishery. The motion reads as follows: "The Council does not intend to recommend harvest specifications for the 2026 Cook Inlet EEZ salmon fishery and requests that NMFS implement specifications under Secretarial authority."

Section 302(h) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) lists the mandatory functions of each Council, including the requirement that "Each Council shall, in accordance with the provisions of this Act... (6) develop annual catch limits for each of its managed fisheries that may not exceed the fishing level recommendations of its scientific and

statistical committee..." The Council does not have authority to ignore a statutory requirement, nor to assign a statutory obligation to NMFS. The Council must undertake this important and fundamental duty: reviewing the best available scientific information and recommending catch limits under a Council Fishery Management Plan to prevent overfishing.

I am aware of the Council's limited resources and scheduling challenges. If the Council cannot accommodate this item on its regular agenda, I suggest scheduling one or more virtual meetings as needed to fulfill this basic requirement of the MSA.

Sincerely,

Eugenio Piñero-Soler

THE ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR
FOR FISHERIES





UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Office of General Counsel
P.O. Box 21109
Juneau, Alaska 99802-1109

**Litigation Updates for the
October 2025 Meeting of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council**

Wild Fish Conservancy v. NMFS et al.

Parties:

Plaintiff: Wild Fish Conservancy.

Federal Defendants: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS); United States Department of Commerce; Secretary of Commerce, Howard W. Lutnick; NMFS Assistant Administrator, Eugenio Piñeiro Soler.

Case Activity:

On May 8, 2025, Wild Fish Conservancy (WFC) filed suit against NMFS, the Department of Commerce, Secretary Lutnick, and NMFS Assistant Administrator Piñeiro Soler in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. Plaintiff sued under the Endangered Species Act (ESA; 16 U.S.C. 1540(g)(1)(C), (g)(2)(C)) for NMFS's failure to meet the 12-month deadline on WFC's Petition to List Alaskan Chinook Salmon under the ESA. WFC submitted their Petition to NMFS on January 11, 2024. On May 24, 2024, NMFS announced its 90-day finding that listing may be warranted under the ESA (89 FR 45815). NMFS was then required to issue a 12-month finding within twelve months of receipt of the Petition, per 16 U.S.C. § 1533(b)(3)(B). At the 12-month finding stage, NMFS may either issue a negative 12-month finding that listing is not warranted or a positive 12-month finding that listing is warranted and a proposed rule to list the species. WFC's Complaint only challenges NMFS's delay in issuing a 12-month finding.

Status/Next Steps:

The parties are engaging in discussions to resolve Plaintiff's claim regarding NMFS's delay in issuing the required 12-month finding. Federal Defendant's Answer to the Complaint is currently due October 27, 2025 (Plaintiff's Complaint is provided as an attachment to the [NOAA General Counsel B3 Litigation Report - WFC v. NMFS](#) on the June 2025 Council agenda).

UPCOMING MEETINGS – REVISED 3-MEETING OUTLOOK

- **Dec 2025** – in-person at the Egan Center, Anchorage, AK
 - Final groundfish harvest specifications, and NSRKC
 - Final action on crab arbitration and Crab C-shares
 - Preliminary review of GOA tanner crab protection measures
- **Feb 2026** – in-person at the Egan Center, Anchorage, AK
 - Final action on chum salmon bycatch – analysis is [published and available](#)
 - Comments from NOAA comment period will be linked and included in a summary report
 - Will determine any other Feb agenda items after October discussions
- **NO APRIL MEETING**



June 2026 – currently planned in-person in Vancouver, WA



DRAFT NPFCM THREE-MEETING OUTLOOK – 10/7/2025

	December 1-9, 2025 Egan Center, Anchorage, AK	Council staff contact	February 2-11, 2026 Egan Center, Anchorage, AK	Council staff contact	June 1-9, 2026 Hilton Hotel, Vancouver, WA	Council staff contact
Topics						
EVENTS/ REPORTS*	ED report: CCC meeting, IRA update NMFS report: Final ADP, Chief Scientist report AFSC, NOAA Enforcement reports BS pollock report on 2026 dynamic spatial closures IPHC halibut assessment presentation Finance Committee, Executive Session Contextual Ecosystem Status, Economic Reports: Review Inseason mgmt year-end reports: Review (Council only) BSAI Groundfish: PT report, Final Specifications GOA Groundfish: PT report, Final Specifications BSAI Crab: NSRKC ABC/OFL specs, Crab PT report	DE DE DE DE SM DE AH AH DS SC AK	NMFS report: Annual cost recovery, EFH consultations AFSC report NPRB report IPHC report (T) Chum Salmon bycatch: Final action	DE DE DE DE KH	ED report: CCC update NOAA Enforcement report Finance/Executive Committee (T) Cooperative reports GOA Tanner crab protection meas.: Initial Review	DE DE DE AH DS
GROUND FISH HARVEST SPECS						
OTHER SPECS: CRAB, SALMON, SCALLOP						
REPORTING/ MONITORING						
BSAI/GOA GFISH MGMT						
BSAI CRAB MGMT	Crab arbitration: Final Action Crab C-shares: Final Action	SM TH				
BYCATCH	GOA Tanner crab protection meas.: Preliminary Review	DS				DS
HALIBUT: IFQ/CHARTER	2026 Charter halibut mgmt measures: Final action	SM				
OTHER	EFH 5-year review workplan: Review SSPT update: Action as necessary	AK SM	EFH 5-year review workplan: SSC review	AK	Climate workplan: Update	DS

ITEMS NOT YET SCHEDULED:

Inseason authority to prevent ACL overages: *Initial Review*
Pot gear regulation consistency: *Discussion paper*
Sablefish motion scales: *Discussion paper*

Cook Inlet Salmon tribal fishery feasibility: *Discussion paper*
Charter Halibut Mgmt Measures Timing: *Discussion Paper*

BOROUGH ACTION PRIORITIES

A. FISHERY MANAGEMENT

- Support collaboration between the State and Federal fisheries management to reduce bycatch.
- Maintain[increase] funding and support for fish weirs while exploring sonar capabilities to maintain monitoring during high water events in the Borough, coho genetic sampling to improve salmon management, and invasive species suppression programs.
- Fully match Federal funds from license fees to maximize Federal dollars for fish and game.
- Maintain the conservation corridor for Northern-bound salmon to adequately meet Northern Cook Inlet salmon escapement goals, while providing harvest opportunities throughout the season.
- Ensure adequate ADF&G staffing to efficiently and effectively execute fishery-related programs.
- Support ADF&G designation of Susitna king salmon, Deshka coho salmon, and Little Susitna coho salmon at the appropriate stock of concern levels [as stocks of yield concern] and help develop corresponding management action plans during 2026.

BOROUGH FUNDING PRIORITIES:

7. FISHERY PROTECTION - \$2,500,000 (HD 25-30) - In 2015, a strategic Research, Monitoring, and Evaluation Plan for Upper Cook Inlet was conducted, resulting in improved resource management through genetic stock analysis, economic impact studies, and stabilized [improved] funding of Northern District weirs / sonar. In 2026[5], the plan will be a decade old, six [five] years beyond its stated relevant time horizon. Since the last plan, there have been significant declines in salmon populations in the Borough. An update to this plan would provide a list of prioritized goals and strategies that support healthy salmon populations and habitat, and an opportunity for public and agency engagement in guiding strategies for the future.

Additionally, this funding would be utilized to support ongoing work on the Borough's fish passage program, secure more consistent provide stabilized funding and operations of Northern District weirs / testing of sonar augmentation and genetic studies, execute pike suppression efforts, [resume operation of the Upper Cook Inlet commercial test net fishery] operate a Susitna River Sockeye Salmon mark/recapture abundance estimate, provide an update to the 'Economic Contributions of Sportfishing on the Cook Inlet Region in 2017' study, and ensure additional cataloging of local streams, rivers, and habitat essential for healthy fish and wildlife populations.

Quality fisheries management for Upper Cook Inlet should not only [prioritize the procurement of] maintain adequate funding for projects but should also ensure adequate staffing — recurring seasonal staff hirings should be exempt from hiring-freeze delays— to operate and execute the programs efficiently. In a region with such extensive and essential anadromous fish habitat surrounding a rapidly growing population center, and with declining salmon stocks, it is necessary for our region to continue monitoring and investing in tools, data, and information that support healthy local salmon populations and productive Northern Cook Inlet and Mat-Su fisheries.