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Advisory Announcement

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UPPER COOK INLET 2022 OUTLOOK FOR COMMERCIAL SALMON FISHING

Sockeye Salmon Forecast

In 2022, a run of approximately 4.97 million sockeye salmon is forecast to return to Upper Cook Inlet (UCI)¹ with an estimate of 2.97 million available for harvest (commercial, sport, personal use, and subsistence). The commercial fishery harvest is estimated to be approximately 1.4 million sockeye salmon, which is 1.3 million fish less than the 20-year average annual commercial sockeye salmon harvest of 2.7 million fish.

The sockeye salmon total run forecast for the Kenai River is approximately 2.90 million fish. The Kenai run forecast¹ is weak based on historical total run estimates from 1986 to present. The 2022 sockeye salmon forecast is 794,000 less (21%) than the 20-year average run of 3.70 million, and similar to the 5-year average of 2.92 million. In 2022, the predominant age classes are projected to be age-1.2 (12%) and age-1.3 (71%). The preseason forecast for Kenai River sockeye salmon has underestimated the total run by an average of 4% over the past 5 years with a range of -50% to 39%.

The Kasilof River sockeye salmon run forecast¹ is approximately 941,000 fish which is 51,000 less (5%) than the 20-year average but is 168,000 greater (22%) than the 5-year average. The Kasilof preseason forecast has overestimated the total run by an average of 10% over the past 5 years with a range of -31% to 10%. The predominant age classes in the 2022 run forecast are age-1.2 (33%), age-1.3 (43%), and age-2.2 (21%).

The Susitna River sockeye salmon run forecast¹ is 310,000 fish, which is 55,000 fish less (15%) than the 10-year average of 365,000 fish. This forecast was derived using mean return per spawner by age class and mark-recapture estimates of spawner abundance for brood years 2006–2018. The predominant age classes in the Susitna River sockeye salmon run forecast are age-1.2 (25%) and age-1.3 (50%).

The Fish Creek sockeye salmon run forecast¹ for 2022 is 89,000 fish. This forecast is approximately 3,000 fish greater (3%) than the 20-year average run of 86,000 fish and is approximately 5,000 fish

¹ 2022 UCI sockeye salmon forecast

<https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/applications/dcfnewsrelease/1355244301.pdf>

or 5% less than the recent 5 year average of 94,000 fish. The predominant age classes in the 2022 Fish Creek run forecast are estimated to be age-1.2 (57%) and age-1.3 (27%). The 10-year MAPE for the Fish Creek sockeye salmon run forecast is 76%.

2022 Sockeye Salmon Forecasts and Escapement Goals

System	Forecast	Goals ^a
Kenai River ^{b,c}	2,902,000	1,100,000–1,400,000
Kasilof River ^{b,d}	941,000	140,000–320,000
Susitna River	310,000	
Larson Lake	N/A	15,000–35,000
Chelatna Lake	N/A	20,000–45,000
Judd Lake	N/A	15,000–40,000
Fish Creek	89,000	15,000–45,000
Unmonitored Systems ^e	725,000	N/A
Total	4,967,000	

^a Goals listed here are as follows: Kenai River: Inriver; Kasilof River: Biological Escapement Goal (BEG); Susitna River: SEG (weir goals); and Fish Creek: Sustainable Escapement Goal (SEG).

^b Kenai River goal is DIDSON-based; Kasilof river is Aris-based.

^c Kenai River SEG is 750,000–1,300,000 sockeye salmon.

^d Kasilof River optimal escapement goal (OEG) is 140,000–370,000 sockeye salmon.

^e Unmonitored systems are estimated to be 15% of monitored systems.

2022 Fishing Strategies

Northern District Set Gillnet Salmon Fishery Overview and Management

- The 2022 Deshka River preseason Chinook salmon forecast of 11,435 fish² suggests harvest will need to be limited to achieve the sustainable escapement goal (SEG) of 9,000–18,000 fish. Based on this forecast and recent low Chinook salmon production throughout the Susitna Drainage, the department issued an Emergency Order (EO # 2-KS-2-05-22 and 2-KS-2-06-22) prohibiting retention of Chinook salmon in all units of the Susitna River drainage and the Little Susitna River.
- As regulated by the *Northern District King Salmon Management Plan* (NDKSMP), the 2022 directed Chinook salmon commercial fishery in the Northern District (ND) will be restricted to 6-hour fishing periods in all subdistricts in response to the EO limiting the start of the 2022 Deshka River sport fishery to no retention. For the 2022 season, the commercial fishing periods affected by this restriction will be May 30 and June 6, 13, and 20. Escapement of Chinook salmon into the Deshka River will be closely monitored. If the run is stronger than expected and retention of Chinook salmon is allowed in the Deshka River sport fishery, reestablishing 9 or 12 hour openings in the directed Chinook salmon commercial fishery may occur.

² https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/Static-sf/fishing_reports/PDFs/2022_deshka_outlook.pdf

- Beginning Monday, June 27, the ND set gillnet fishery will be managed per provisions found in the *Northern District Salmon Management Plan* (NDSMP). This plan provides for two 12-hour weekly fishing periods and follows standard regulatory gear stipulations.
- While Susitna River sockeye salmon were removed from stock of yield concern status at the 2020 Board of Fisheries meeting, restrictive actions to commercial fisheries that harvest this stock were retained in regulation. According to the NDSMP, the legal complement of gear in the ND set gillnet fishery may be reduced to either one or two nets per permit from July 20 through August 6 to conserve Susitna River sockeye salmon. However, in that portion of the General Subdistrict south of the Susitna River, options for gear reduction are limited to two nets per permit after July 30.
- The fishery will be closed for the season by EO when catch and effort cease ~ October 1.

Central District Set Gillnet Fisheries in Chinitna Bay, Western, Kustatan, and Kalgin Island Subdistricts of the Set Gillnet Salmon Fisheries Overview and Management

- Chinitna Bay, Western, Kalgin Island, and Kustatan subdistrict management will generally follow regulatory fishing periods and schedules, except for that portion of the Western Subdistrict south of Redoubt Point, where fishing is often allowed three days per week based on increasing harvest rates of Crescent River sockeye salmon.
- The Kalgin Island Subdistrict may also be given up to one extra fishing period per week if the Packers Lake sockeye salmon assessment shows that the escapement goal is projected to be achieved.
- The fisheries will be closed for the season by EO when catch and effort cease ~ October 1.

Upper Subdistrict set gillnet (ESSN) and Central District Drift Gillnet fisheries Overview

ESSN fishery

- The 2022 pre-season estimate for the total run of Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon is 2.9 million fish. If the Kenai River late-run Chinook salmon optimal escapement goal (OEG) is projected to be achieved, without sport fishery restrictions, in-season management of the ESSN fishery will fall under the *Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan* (KRLSSMP). For sockeye salmon runs 2.3–4.6 million fish, the KRLSSMP stipulates ADF&G shall meet the SEG range of 750,000–1,300,000 and achieve an in-river goal of 1.1 to 1.4 million fish. By regulation, Mon/Thurs regulatory fishing periods are allowed with an additional 51 hours of EO time available each week. A 36-hour Thurs-Fri closure window and a 24-hour Monday to Wednesday closure window will be applied.
- The 2022 Kenai River late-run Chinook salmon forecast projects a total run of 16,004 large (>75cm mid eye to tail fork) fish³. The OEG for Kenai River late-run Chinook salmon is 15,000–30,000 large fish. If the run returns as forecasted, this run will rank the 6th lowest since 1985,

³ <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/fishing/pdfs/sport/byarea/southcentral/2022KenaiLateRunOutlook.pdf>

though larger than the 2021 preliminary estimated total run of 12,665 large fish. Based on the forecasted run size average harvest rates in both sport and commercial fisheries, the Kenai River late-run Chinook salmon large fish OEG may not be met without a reduction in sport and commercial harvest of this stock. On January 26, 2022, the department issued EO No. 2-KS-1-09-22 restricting the Chinook salmon sport fishery to catch-and-release only in the Kenai River beginning July 1, 2022. If the Kenai River sport fishery is restricted to either no bait or no retention, then management of the ESSN fishery from June 20 through August 15 falls under provisions found in the *Kenai River Late-Run Chinook Salmon Management Plan* (KRLKSMP). The paired restrictions include fishing hour reductions, and mandatory gear restrictions. Additionally, all fishing periods under the KRLKSMP may now be restricted to within 600 feet of shore, but hours fished do not count toward weekly hourly restrictions. When the sport fishery is restricted to no bait and no retention, all commercial set gillnet fishing time provided the ESSN fishery will occur only via EO. ESSN commercial fishing periods are open for no more than 24 hours per week, with a 36-hour continuous closure per week beginning between 7:00 p.m. Thursday and 7:00 a.m. Friday. In addition to all fishing time coming via EO only in the ESSN fishery, the Alaska Board of Fisheries has also mandated gear restrictions during all ESSN fishing periods when the Kenai River Chinook salmon sport fishery is restricted. These mandatory gear restrictions are in effect from the beginning of the season through July 31 in the entire Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery.

Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery

- The Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) within UCI will be closed to all commercial salmon fishing in 2022. A chart displaying the EEZ boundary is available from NOAA⁴.
- The department manages the UCI drift gillnet fleet primarily under the guidance of the *Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan* (CDDGFMP; 5 AAC 21.353). The purpose of this management plan is to ensure adequate escapement of salmon into Northern Cook Inlet drainages and to provide the department with management guidelines.
- The drift gillnet fishery opens the third Monday in June or June 19, whichever is later.
- Drift gillnet openings generally follow regulatory Monday/Thursday fishing periods; 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.
- Drift gillnet fishery openings are stipulated in the CDDGFMP by date and sockeye salmon abundance.
- Additional fishing time may be added based on sockeye salmon abundance.

⁴ <https://www.charts.noaa.gov/OnLineViewer/16661.shtml>

Inseason Management of the ESSN and Central District Drift Gillnet Fisheries

ESSN Fishery

Kasilof Section Prior to July 8

- The fishing season in the Kasilof Section (Figure 1; statistical areas 244-21, 244-22, and 244-31) opens on the first regulatory period on or after June 25, except that, if 30,000 fish are estimated to be in the Kasilof River any day on or after June 20, the fishery shall open on that day. With restrictions announced for the Kenai River sport Chinook salmon fishery, the *Kasilof River Salmon Management Plan* (KRSMP) is no longer in effect. Management of the Upper Subdistrict, including the Kasilof Section, will begin with paired restrictions found in the KRLKSMP. Commercial fishing periods are open for no more than 24 hours per week, and all commercial set gillnet fishing time provided to this subdistrict will occur only via EO.
- If the Kenai River OEG for late run large king salmon is projected to not be achieved, and the Kenai River sport fishery for king salmon is closed, the ESSN fishery will close as per the KRLKSMP.

North Kalifornsky Beach (NKB) Statistical Area July 1 to July 8th

- The NKB statistical area (Figure 1; statistical area 244-32) may be open within 600 feet of mean high tide any time after July 1 if the Kasilof Section is open and the Kenai and East Foreland sections are closed.
- From July 1 to July 8, all NKB openings shall be restricted to within 600 feet of shore and limited to nets with a mesh size restriction of no more than 4.75 inches and no more than 29 meshes deep.

Kasilof, Kenai, and East Forelands Sections After July 8

- Commercial fishery openings on weekends will not occur to facilitate movement of fish into the rivers for the personal use fishery.
- The Kenai and East Forelands sections fishing season opens on or after July 8.
- Management of the ESSN fishery will be based on the projected escapement of Kenai River late-run large Chinook salmon, and Kenai and Kasilof river sockeye salmon passage levels. From July 8 to August 15, if the Kenai River late-run Chinook salmon sport fishery remains restricted, then management of the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery will follow provisions in the KRLKSMP with Mon/Thurs regulatory fishing periods no longer in effect. Commercial fishing periods are open for no more than 24 hours per week with a mandatory 36 hour Thurs-Fri closure, and all commercial fishing time will occur only by EO.
- All fishing periods restricted by the KRLKSMP shall include gear restrictions as per 5 AAC 21.359 (e)(3)(G), and fisheries restricted to within 600 feet of shore may be allowed in all statistical areas, without time restriction.
- If the Kenai River OEG for late run large king salmon is projected to not be achieved, and the Kenai River sport fishery for king salmon is closed, the ESSN fishery will close as per the KRLKSMP.
- The department will formally reassess the UCI sockeye salmon run after July 20.

- From August 1 to August 15, management of the ESSN fishery is based upon meeting Kenai and Kasilof river sockeye salmon escapement objectives and the Chinook salmon OEG in the Kenai River. If the Chinook salmon sport fishery is restricted on July 31, the ESSN fishery will be restricted to a maximum of 36 hours of fishing time per week, by EO only, with no mandatory Friday no-fishing window. Subsequently, if at any time before August 15 the Chinook salmon OEG is achieved in the Kenai River, the restrictive provisions of the KRLKSMP will be lifted and the management of the ESSN fishery will follow the KRLSSMP. This would entail regulatory Mon/Thurs fishing periods and up to 51 hours of optional EO fishing time at run sizes > 2.3 million Kenai River sockeye salmon (except after August 11 when only Mon/Thurs regulatory fishing periods are allowed).
- The ESSN fishery closes no later than August 15. However, the season may close any time after July 31 if during two consecutive fishing periods the sockeye salmon harvest is less than one percent of the season total. The “one-percent rule” applies separately to the Kasilof Section and the Kenai/East Foreland sections and all fishing periods after July 31 will be used for the one-percent calculation.

Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery

- The 2022 run size for Kenai River late run sockeye salmon is projected to be 2.9 million fish, which leads to the following management provisions in the drift gillnet fishery:
- The Exclusive Economic zone within UCI will be closed to all commercial salmon fishing in 2022. A chart displaying the EEZ boundary is available from NOAA. These closed waters will be in effect for all drift gillnet openings in UCI in 2022.
- **Prior to July 8,**
 - Regulations specify 12-hour District Wide regulatory Mon/Thurs fishing periods.
 - Extra time may be allowed District Wide
- **From July 9 through July 15,**
 - Commercial fishery openings on weekends will not occur to facilitate movement of fish into the rivers for the personal use fishery.
 - Drift gillnet fishing is restricted for both regulatory fishing periods to the Expanded Kenai and Expanded Kasilof sections (Figure 2), and Drift Gillnet Area 1 (Figure 3). For Kenai River sockeye salmon runs > 2.3 million, one additional fishing period may be opened in the Expanded Sections and Area 1.
 - All additional fishing time is allowed only in the Expanded Kenai and Expanded Kasilof sections.
- **From July 16 through July 31,**
 - For runs 2.3–4.6 million Kenai River sockeye salmon, fishing during one regulatory period per week will be opened in one or more of the following areas: the Expanded Kenai, Expanded Kasilof, the Anchor Point Sections, and Drift Gillnet Area 1. The remaining regulatory period will be restricted to one or more of the following: Expanded Ken/Kas sections and Anchor Point section of the Upper Subdistrict.

Any additional time shall be restricted to the Expanded Kenai Section, the Expanded Kasilof Section, and the Anchor Point Section.

- **From August 1 through August 15,**
 - Regulatory Mon/Thurs fishing periods will be restricted to one or more of the following: Expanded Kenai Section, Expanded Kasilof Section, Anchor Point Section, or Drift Gillnet Area 1. Any additional fishing time outside regulatory fishing periods will be dependent upon meeting sockeye and coho salmon escapement objectives but is limited to the Expanded Kenai or Kasilof and Anchor Point sections.
 - Two one-percent rules apply to drift gillnet fishing in August. If the entire ESSN fishery is closed per its own one-percent rule, or if the department determines that less than one-percent of the season total drift gillnet sockeye salmon harvest has been taken per fishing period, for two consecutive fishing periods by drift gillnets, then regulatory fishing periods will be restricted to Drift Gillnet Areas 3 and 4.
 - The department is using all open periods regardless of the area(s) open to fishing to calculate the drift gillnet one-percent rule.
- **From August 16 until closed by EO,**
 - Drift Areas 3 and 4 are open for regulatory periods.
 - Chinitna Bay may be opened by EO only, based upon chum salmon escapement objectives being met or when the chum salmon run is complete.
- Drift fisheries close for the season by EO, when effort ceases, which is generally mid- to late-September.

Season Opening Dates

Season opening dates in 2022 for the various fisheries around the inlet are as follows:

- *Northern District king salmon fishery:* May 30. The area from the wood chip dock to the Susitna River remains closed for the directed Chinook salmon fishery in 2022.
- *Big River fishery:* June 1 and continuing through June 24, unless the 1,000 Chinook salmon harvest limit is reached prior to that date. Weekly fishing periods are Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.
- *Western Subdistrict set gillnet fishery:* June 16.
- *Drift gillnet fishery:* June 20.
- *All remaining set gillnet fisheries, except the ESSN fishery:* June 27.
- *ESSN fishery:*
 - June 25 for the Kasilof Section (that portion south of the Blanchard Line). However, the fishery shall open any day on or after June 20 if 30,000 sockeye salmon are estimated to be in the Kasilof River.

- The NKB stat area 244-32 may open from July 1 when the Kasilof section is open to commercial fishing, and is restricted to within 600 feet of shore with nets 29 meshes or less in depth and with mesh less than 4 ¾ inches
- The Kenai and East Forelands sections (that portion of the Upper Subdistrict north of the Blanchard Line) will open on Friday, July 8. By regulation, the ESSN fishery closes on Monday, August 15, 2022.

Set Gillnet Registration and Buoy Stickers

All Cook Inlet setnet fishermen are required to register prior to fishing for one of three areas of Cook Inlet: 1) the Upper Subdistrict of the Central District; 2) the Northern District; or, 3) all remaining areas of Cook Inlet (Greater Cook Inlet). Once registered for one of these three areas, fishermen may fish only in the area for which they are registered for the remainder of the year. No transfers will be permitted. Dual set gillnet permit holders are required to register both permits in the same registration area. Set gillnet permit holders fishing in the Northern District or the Greater Cook Inlet area can register at ADF&G offices in Soldotna, Homer, or Anchorage or by mail. Forms are available at area offices or on the department's Upper Cook Inlet commercial fishing homepage at: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareauci.salmon#/management>.

Fishermen wishing to register in person for the Upper Subdistrict must register in the **Soldotna ADF&G office** and must purchase buoy stickers at the time of registering. Electronic registration and buoy sticker purchasing may be completed online. Permit holders will need to create an ADF&G profile to access the new registration/sticker application.

General information and Contact Numbers

The UCI commercial fisheries information line will again be available by calling 262-9611. The most recent EO announcement is always available on the recorded message line and catch, escapement and test fishing information is included whenever possible. The same recording may be accessed at <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareauci.main> and clicking on the UCI Commercial Fisheries Information Recording player.

All EO announcements are also faxed or emailed to processors as quickly as possible and posted at <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareauci.salmon>. If you would like all EOs and News Releases emailed to you as soon as they are released, you can subscribe at this website for that service. For very general information, the Commercial Fisheries web page is found at <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=fishingCommercial.main>.

If, during the summer, fishermen have information or questions concerning the commercial fishery, the Soldotna Division of Commercial Fisheries staff can be reached by phone at 262-9368, by fax at 262-4709, or by mail at 43961 Kalifornsky Beach Road, Suite B, Soldotna, 99669.

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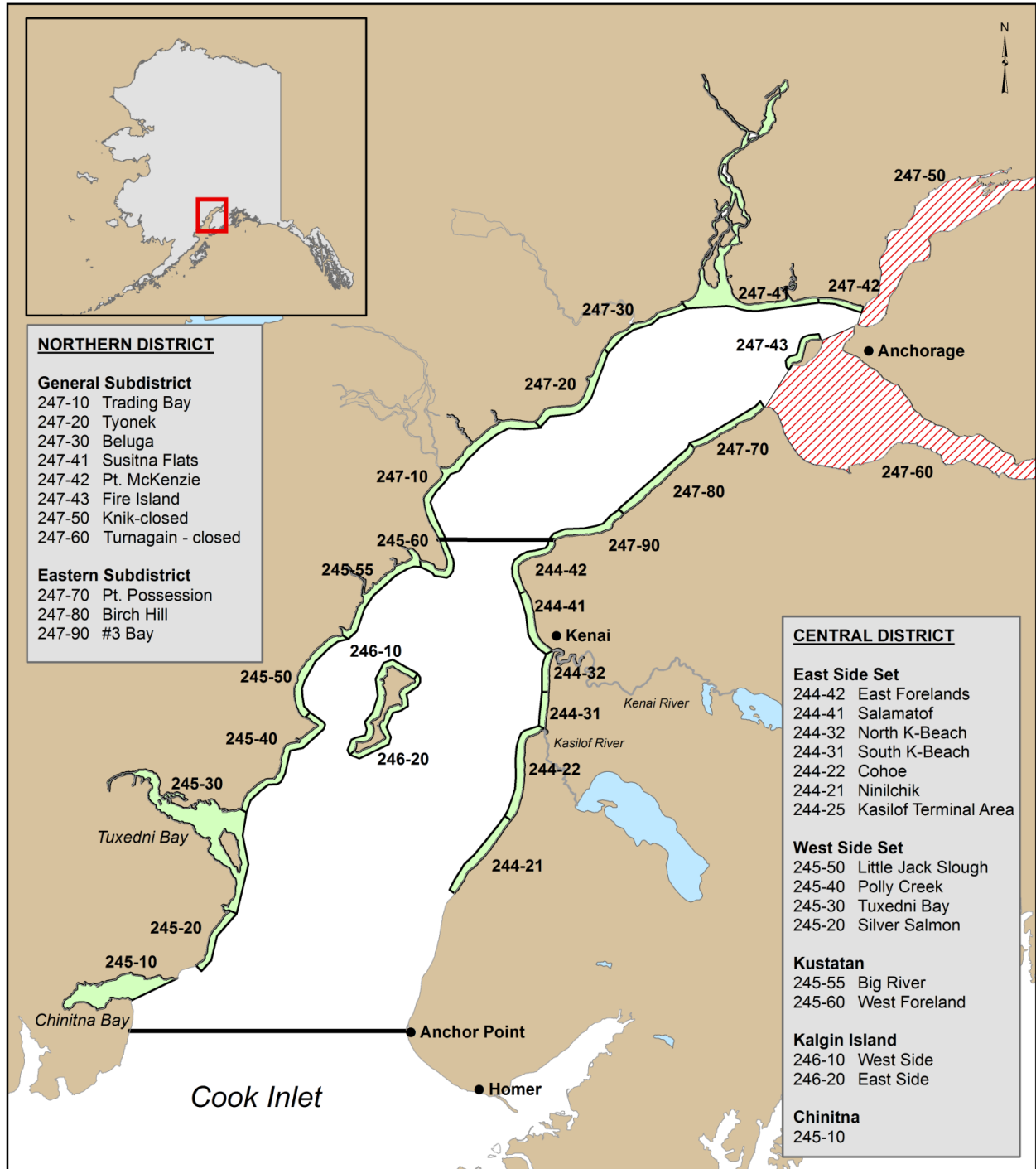


Figure 1. – Upper Cook Inlet commercial set gillnet statistical areas. The North Kalifornsky Beach (NKB) statistical area is 244-32.

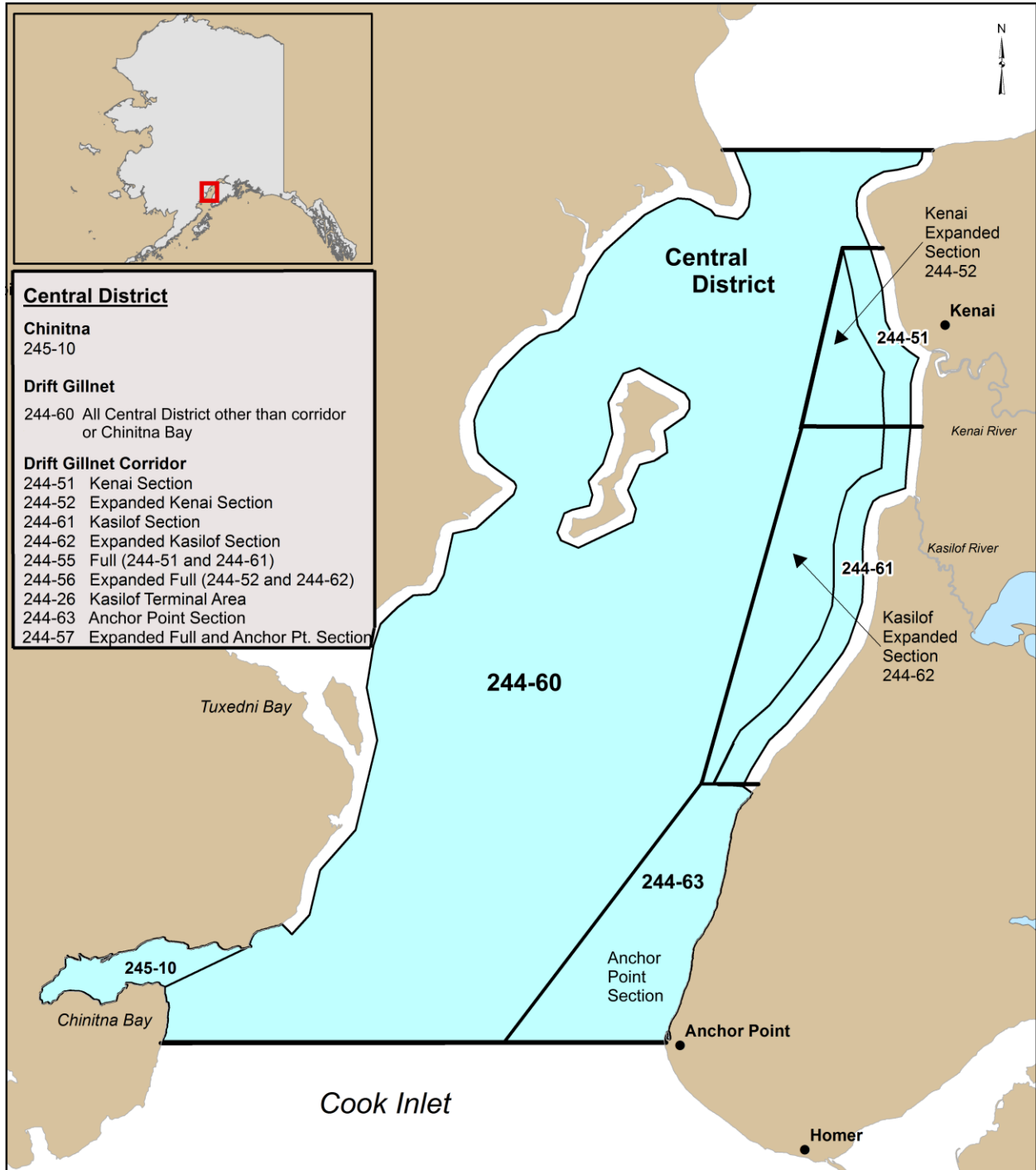


Figure 2. – Map of drift gillnet statistical areas.

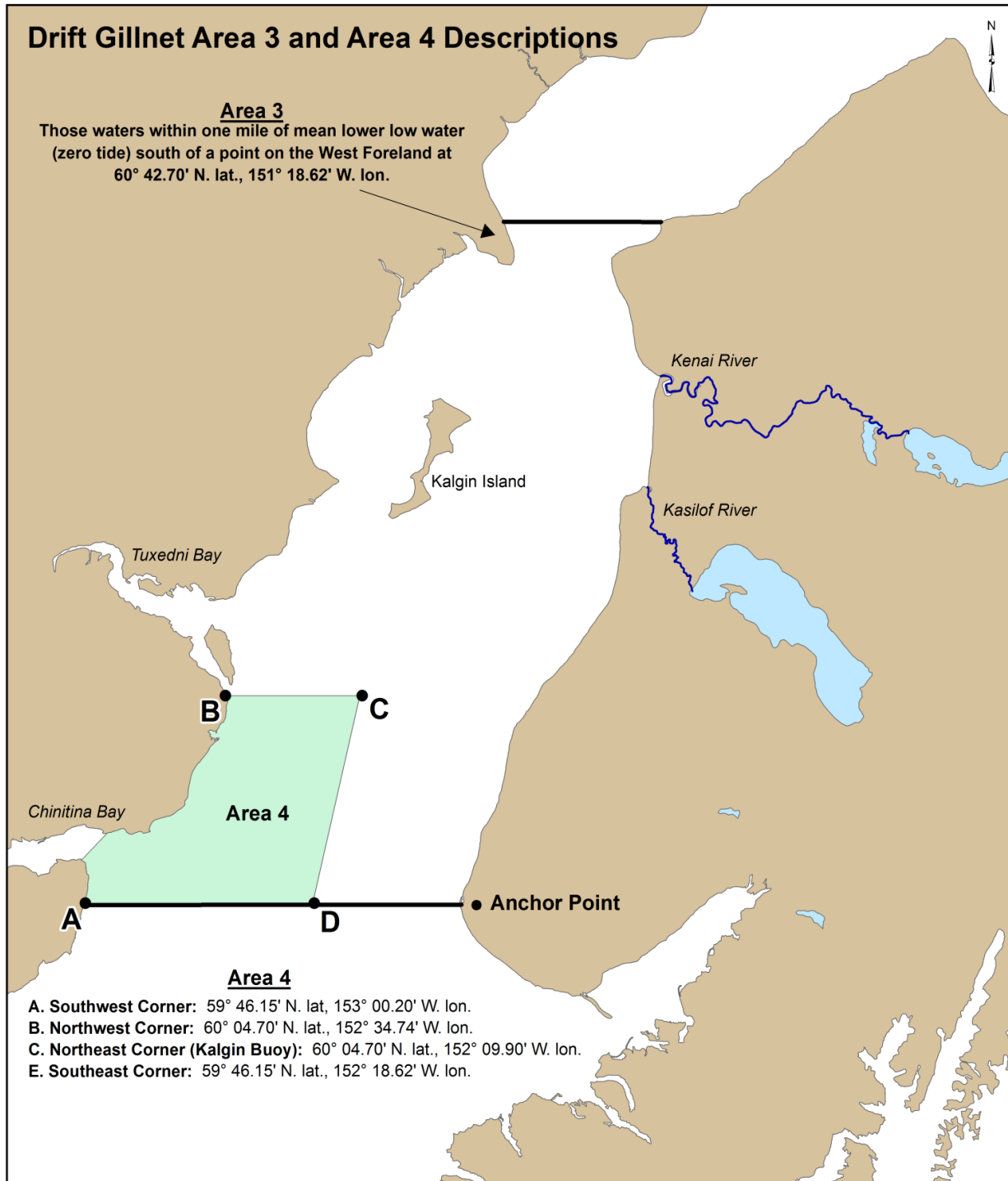


Figure 4.– Map of the drift gillnet areas 3 and 4; open after August 15.

Latitude and Longitude are based on the North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83), equivalent to the World Geodetic System 1984 (WGS 84).