



# United States Department of the Interior

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
1011 East Tudor Road  
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6199



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Report # B-7: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Report to the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council, April 2019.

The following information is a summary of the major updates from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) that the Service is involved in related to the affairs of the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council.

## **I. Migratory Bird Management**

### *Update on Seabird Mortality Events and Monitoring*

In 2018, the Service reported on seabird mortality events detected in the northern Bering and Chukchi seas. Starvation was determined to be the likely cause of death during this last mortality event, but we have not ruled out the potential contributing factor of exposure to toxins from harmful algal blooms. The Service has not received any additional accounts of seabird mortality events during the winter of 2018-2019 in Alaska. The Service's Division of Migratory Bird Management (MBM) will continue to work with partners, including State of Alaska and Federal management agencies, local community representatives, and the Coastal Observation and Seabird Survey Team program to monitor for seabird die offs in the coming months. In addition, MBM will conduct seabird surveys while onboard multidisciplinary research vessels this year in the Gulf of Alaska, Bering, Chukchi, and Beaufort seas, to collect data on seabird distribution and abundance, and will monitor offshore waters for signs of seabird mortality events.

The Service is also collaborating with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration - Fisheries to examine the overlap of Federal fisheries and seabird distribution in Alaska. Our goal is to complete a geospatial analysis to identify the seasonal timing of certain fisheries and regions of high seabird density. The project is currently in the preliminary stages and we anticipate producing preliminary interaction maps by late 2019.

Three Service staff are members of the Short-tailed Albatross Recovery Team, which met in conjunction with the Pacific Seabird Group annual meeting on February 26, 2019, in Kauai, Hawaii. The group discussed ongoing projects and the plan to revise the recovery goals for Short-tailed Albatross over the next 5-years.

For further information, please contact Migratory Bird Management Wildlife Biologist, Ms. Kathy Kuletz, at [kathy\\_kuletz@fws.gov](mailto:kathy_kuletz@fws.gov) or 907-786-3453.

## **II. Federal Subsistence Fisheries**

### *Anticipated Federal Subsistence Management Pre-Season Closures:*

Returns of Sockeye Salmon across Alaska were highly variable in 2018, with strong returns in some portions of the state and record low returns in others. This resulted in a number of restrictions and closures to Federally managed subsistence fisheries. Likewise, most stocks of Alaskan Chinook Salmon returns have been low or below average in abundance in recent years, including 2018. Federal subsistence fisheries that had restrictions or were closed during the 2018 season included: Yukon River Chinook Salmon; Kuskokwim River Chinook Salmon; Chignik River Chinook and Sockeye Salmon; Buskin River Sockeye Salmon; Afognak River Sockeye Salmon; Kenai River late-run Sockeye Salmon and early-run Chinook Salmon; Situk River Sockeye and Chinook Salmon; and, Stikine River Chinook Salmon. There are concerns that these trends will continue for both species in 2019, which will likely require additional restrictions or closures to Federal subsistence fisheries.

For 2019, there is only one federal subsistence fishery (Stikine River Chinook Salmon) that is currently set to be closed. The forecast for this run requires an automatic closure through the Pacific Salmon Treaty as there is no harvestable surplus.

### *Special Action Requests to the Federal Subsistence Board in 2019:*

The Office of Subsistence Management has received one special action request from a rural community within the Kuskokwim River drainage (the Akiak Native Community) requesting that the Federal Subsistence Board assume management of the Chinook Salmon fishery for the Kuskokwim River between June 1 and July 1, 2019. The special action requests that the Chinook Salmon fisheries be limited to Federally qualified subsistence users, and further restricted to the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act Section 804 Subsistence User Prioritization analysis that was implemented in 2017. The request also asks for a community allocation system with harvest reported to community harvest monitors, similar to what occurred in 2015. The Federal Subsistence Board is planning to take action on this request at their April 15-18, 2019, meeting.

For further information, contact Office of Subsistence Management State Subsistence Liaison Mr. George Pappas, at [george\\_pappas@fws.gov](mailto:george_pappas@fws.gov) or 907-786-3822.