



## MEMORANDUM

TO: Members  
Alaska Board of Fisheries

DATE: September 30, 2025

FROM: Israel Payton, Director  
Division of Sport Fish *IP*

and

SUBJECT: Bristol Bay  
Management Area  
Stock of Concern  
Recommendations

Forrest R. Bowers, Acting Director *FRB*  
Division of Commercial Fisheries

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The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (department) conducted a stock of concern evaluation for salmon stocks in the Bristol Bay Management Area as part of the 2025–2026 Board of Fisheries regulatory cycle. Based on this review, the department recommends:

- Nushagak River king salmon remain designated as a stock of management concern, and
- No additional salmon stocks in the Bristol Bay Management Area be designated as a stock of concern at this time.

An update on the status of stocks of concern and a review of the department’s recommendations will be provided at the Bristol Bay Board of Fisheries meeting in January 2026.

Following the 2025 salmon season, all 13 Bristol Bay salmon stocks with formal escapement goals (Table 1) were reviewed for potential stock of concern status by the escapement goal review committee. This evaluation included input from staff at the headquarters, regional, and area levels across both fishery divisions. The department’s recommendations and a summary of the status of the one existing stock of concern are provided below.

The department’s stock of concern evaluations are guided by the Policy for the Management of Sustainable Salmon Fisheries (SSFP; 5 AAC 39.222). Under this policy, the department is required to report to the board on the status of salmon stocks and identify any that raise concerns related to yield, management, or conservation. These evaluations occur during regular board meetings as defined in regulation.

A stock of management concern is defined (5 AAC 39.222) as a concern arising from a chronic inability, despite specific management measures, to maintain escapements within the bounds of specified management objectives. A “chronic inability” is defined as the continued or expected failure to meet escapement thresholds over a four- to five-year period—approximately the generation time of most salmon species.

## **Nushagak River king salmon –Stock of Management Concern**

In 2022, the board designated Nushagak River king salmon as a stock of management concern due to a chronic inability to meet the inriver goal of 95,000 king salmon in five of the previous six years (ADF&G 2023). This inriver goal represents the regulatory "specified management objective" for the stock. At the time of designation, the stock had not consistently failed to meet the Sustainable Escapement Goal (SEG), but concerns about the accuracy of sonar assessments—particularly in 2019 and 2021—added uncertainty to SEG-based evaluations.

Despite this uncertainty, the consistent failure to meet the inriver goal, even with targeted management actions, led to consensus among staff that the designation as a stock of management concern was warranted. Stock assessment information and management measures were summarized in an action plan developed at the 2022 board meeting (ADF&G 2023). Prior to stock of concern listing in 2023, the department had been implementing king salmon conservation measures since runs began to decline in 2017. These management actions focused on 1) closing the directed commercial fishery, 2) reducing incidental catch of king salmon in the commercial sockeye salmon fishery by reducing time and area early in the sockeye salmon run when king salmon are historically more abundant, and 3) using emergency order authority to reduce sport harvest of Nushagak River king salmon.

Between 2017 and 2022, no openings were provided for the directed commercial king salmon fishery. In addition, the commercial sockeye salmon fishing season was delayed with respect to the Wood River sockeye salmon escapement trigger of 100,000 fish in all but one year. The Nushagak River king salmon sport fishery was restricted using emergency order authority to reduce harvest, with restrictive actions taken in five of the six years during this period. These actions focused on bag, possession, and annual limit reductions, as well as prohibition of bait.

Following the board's adoption of the *Nushagak District King Salmon Stock of Concern Management Plan* (5AAC 06.391) in 2023, the management actions outlined in the plan for the commercial and sport fisheries were implemented in 2023, 2024, and 2025.

## **REFERENCES CITED**

ADF&G (Alaska Department of Fish and Game). 2023. Nushagak River King Salmon–Stock Status and Action Plan / Report to the Alaska Board of Fisheries, November 29, 2022. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Divisions of Sport Fish and Commercial Fisheries, Regional Information Report No. 2A23-01, Anchorage.



Figure 1. – Bristol Bay drainages with salmon escapement goals.

Table 1.– Bristol Bay Management Area king, sockeye, coho, pink, and chum salmon escapement goals and escapements, 2016 to 2025. Escapements in shaded cells were below the escapement goal in place that year for that stock.

System	2025 Goal range		Type	Initial year	Escapement									
	Lower	Upper			2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022 <sup>a</sup>	2023	2024	2025 <sup>a</sup>
<b>KING SALMON</b>														
Nushagak River	55,000	120,000	SEG	2013	118,077	52,297	91,354	41,258	40,313	52,199	40,334	28,826	38,440	31,112
	95,000		Inriver <sup>b</sup>	2013	125,368	56,961	97,239	46,763	43,032	55,222	44,434	31,499	41,893	34,322
<b>CHUM SALMON</b>														
Nushagak River <sup>c</sup>	200,000		LB SEG	2013	419,810	415,488	735,628	514,339	110,592	124,419	99,654	98,259	261,399	366,432
<b>COHO SALMON</b>														
Nushagak River	60,000	120,000	SEG	2013	NS	NS	111,455	51,852	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
	70,000	130,000	Inriver <sup>b</sup>		NS	NS	111,455	51,852	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
<b>PINK SALMON</b>														
Nushagak River (even years)	165,000		LB SEG	2013	NS	NA	628,069	NA	NS	NA	NS	NA	NS	NA
<b>SOCKEYE SALMON</b>														
Kvichak River	2,000,000	10,000,000	SEG	2010	4,462,728	3,163,404	4,398,708	2,371,242	4,030,968	4,703,520	4,224,882	3,751,686	6,644,490	2,968,128
Alagnak River <sup>d</sup>	210,000		LB SEG	2019	1,677,769	2,041,824	1,581,426	820,458	2,386,518	3,236,904	1,668,222	1,099,050	2,356,560	2,157,828
Naknek River <sup>c</sup>	800,000	2,000,000	SEG	2015	1,691,910	1,899,972	2,221,152	2,911,470	4,112,160	2,796,534	1,921,296	1,156,206	926,112	1,042,152
Egegik River	800,000	2,000,000	SEG	2015	1,837,260	2,600,982	1,608,354	2,340,210	2,389,728	1,832,196	1,786,152	1,562,700	1,114,008	1,382,106
Ugashik River	500,000	1,400,000	SEG	2015	1,635,270	1,186,446	1,167,792	1,547,748	1,745,940	2,859,930	1,436,784	1,128,896	1,759,776	1,041,048
Wood River	700,000	1,800,000	SEG	2015	1,309,707	4,274,224	7,507,254	2,073,276	2,243,886	4,410,156	3,747,612	2,648,616	4,404,654	2,211,888
Igushik River	150,000	400,000	SEG	2015	469,230	578,700	770,772	256,074	323,814	878,952	378,768	542,496	692,616	668,268
Nushagak River	260,000	760,000	OEG	2013	680,512	2,852,308	1,247,460	709,431	1,228,059	4,697,299	3,455,272	1,772,676	1,723,374	3,260,590
	370,000	900,000	SEG	2015										
Togiak River	120,000	270,000	SEG	2010	200,046	195,098	511,770	351,846	261,126	280,836	242,412	268,218	361,578	314,064

Note: SEG = sustainable escapement goal; LB SEG = lower-bound SEG; OEG = optimal escapement goal; NA = not applicable; NS = no survey

<sup>a</sup> All 2025 data are preliminary.

<sup>b</sup> Inriver goals for Nushagak king and coho salmon are assessed by the Nushagak River sonar project at Portage Creek.

<sup>c</sup> Escapement goal for Nushagak River chum salmon is based on sonar count through July 20. Fish counts past July 20 are not included in this table.

<sup>d</sup> 2016 Alagnak River sockeye salmon escapement estimate was expanded from aerial survey estimate.

<sup>e</sup> Naknek River has an OEG of 800,000–2,000,000 sockeye salmon when the Naknek River Special Harvest Area is open to fishing.