



Advisory Announcement

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2024 BRISTOL BAY SALMON SEASON SUMMARY

The following is an overview of the 2024 Bristol Bay commercial salmon season. All data are preliminary. The 2024 inshore Bristol Bay sockeye salmon run of 51.6 million fish (Table 1) was the 10th largest inshore run since 2004 and was 7% above the 48.2 million average run for the latest 20-year period (2004–2023; Elison et. al 2024). This is the 10th year in a row that the total inshore run was larger than 50 million fish.

The 2024 Bristol Bay sockeye salmon run was 36% above the preseason inshore forecast of 37.9 million fish (Table 2). Runs to every district were larger than their preseason forecasts. All sockeye salmon escapement goals were met or exceeded, with a total bay-wide escapement of 20.0 million fish (Table 3). The commercial harvest of 31.6 million sockeye salmon was 26% above the 25.0 million preseason forecast (Table 1). The preliminary harvest estimates for other species are 6,895 Chinook, 506,541 chum, 28,804 coho, and 76,199 pink salmon (Table 1).

EXVESSEL VALUE

Exvessel value of salmon caught in Bristol Bay in 2024 was estimated using the price information from final operations reports for each species, and numbers and average weights from preliminary fish ticket numbers. The 2024 Bristol Bay preliminary exvessel value of \$128.1 million for all salmon species (Table 4) was 34% below the 20-year average of \$193.4 million (Elison et. al 2024). Prices may not include incentives for icing, bleeding, floating, or production bonuses.

SPECIES PERFORMANCE

Sockeye Salmon

The 2024 harvest of 31.6 million sockeye salmon was 5% lower than the recent 20-year average of 33.2 million for all districts (Table 5; Elison et. al 2024). Nushagak and Wood River sockeye salmon escapements were above the optimum escapement goal (OEG) ranges adopted in 2023 by the Alaska Board of Fisheries for Chinook salmon conservation (Table 3). Sockeye salmon escapement goals were exceeded on the Ugashik, Igushik and Togiak rivers. The Kvichak, Naknek, Alagnak and Egegik rivers were within their escapement goal ranges (Table 3). Overall, run timing was two days late compared to the 20-year average.

In 2024 the sockeye salmon run was composed of a higher proportion of younger and smaller fish than forecasted. Eighty percent of the 2024 Bristol Bay sockeye salmon run was comprised of fish with two years of ocean growth. The 1.2 age class composed roughly 72% of the total run and came in well over its preseason forecast of 50%. The 2.2 age class contributed 8% which was well below the forecasted

13%. Age 1.3 fish contributed 16%, or approximately half of the forecasted 31%. The high proportion of younger fish resulted in the smallest average sockeye salmon weight on record at 4.53 pounds (Table 4; Figure 1).

Chinook Salmon

Bristol Bay Chinook salmon harvest and abundance continued to be low in 2024. Chinook salmon harvested in Bristol Bay are incidentally caught during directed sockeye salmon fishing periods. The 2024 Chinook salmon harvests were below the 20-year average in all districts (Table 6). The preliminary total Chinook salmon harvest of 6,895 was 82% below the most recent 20-year average of 38,743 fish, and the lowest in the last 20 years. Nushagak Chinook salmon is the main source of Chinook harvest in Bristol Bay and is a stock of concern. The Nushagak District was managed according to the Nushagak Chinook salmon action plan with sockeye salmon OEG triggers that delay fishing to allow for increased Chinook salmon escapement. The Nushagak District Chinook salmon harvest was 4,340 fish (Table 6), 85% below the 20-year average harvest of 30,606 fish (Elison et. al 2024). The Nushagak River Chinook salmon in-river run index at Portage Creek sonar was 41,893 fish, which is below the escapement goal range of 55,000–120,000 fish and the in-river goal of 95,000 fish.

Chum Salmon

The 2024 preliminary Bristol Bay chum salmon harvest was 506,541 fish (Table 1), 50% below the recent 20-year average of 1.0 million fish, but the largest harvest since 2019 (Elison et. al 2024). The Nushagak District is the largest producer of chum salmon and had a harvest of 313,091 fish (Table 1). The Nushagak River chum salmon in-river run index at Portage Creek sonar was 302,145 fish, well above the lower bound of the sustainable escapement goal of 200,000 fish.

Pink Salmon

Pink salmon in Bristol Bay are predominantly an even-year species. Pink salmon harvest was incidental to the sockeye salmon fishery and totaled 76,199 fish (Table 1). Pink salmon escapement is not monitored in Bristol Bay.

Coho Salmon

The preliminary coho salmon harvest in 2024 was 28,804 fish (Table 1), 70% below the recent 20-year average of 96,337 fish (Elison et. al 2024). The Nushagak District is typically the largest producer of coho salmon and accounted for 21,453 of the fish harvest in 2024. Harvests of coho salmon can be variable from year to year depending on processor availability, market conditions, and overall fishing effort. In 2024, fishing ended early due in part to bad weather and low market interest in purchasing coho salmon. Coho escapement is not monitored in Bristol Bay.

ALLOCATION

Bristol Bay fisheries are managed for allocation (secondary to escapement) between drift and set gillnet gear groups in four of five districts. The Togiak District is excluded from the allocation plan. Strategies used to achieve allocation between gear groups included varying the amount of fishing time and providing separate gear group openings. Table 7 lists the allocation goals and the actual harvest percentages for 2024. During years with large sockeye salmon returns, gear group allocations can be difficult to achieve when the primary objective is managing to meet escapement goals.

Acknowledgements

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Reference cited

Elison, T., A. Tiernan, T. Sands, S. Vega, and P. Stacey. 2024. 2023 Bristol Bay annual management report. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Fishery Management Report No. 24-11, Anchorage.

Table 1.–Preliminary Bristol Bay salmon harvest and escapement by district and species, 2024.

District	Sockeye	Chinook	Chum	Pink	Coho	TOTAL
Naknek-Kvichak catch	9,257,793	811	69,907	4,235	557	9,333,303
Escapement-Kvichak tower	6,644,490	a	a	a	a	6,644,490
Naknek tower	926,112	a	a	a	a	926,112
Alagnak tower	2,356,560	a	a	a	a	2,356,560
N-K subtotal	19,184,955	811	69,907	4,235	557	19,260,465
Egegik catch	5,286,279	403	32,991	776	5,671	5,326,120
Escapement-Egegik tower	1,114,008	a	a	a	a	1,114,008
Egegik subtotal	6,400,287	403	32,991	776	5,671	6,440,128
Ugashik catch	4,244,043	427	42,787	20	424	4,287,701
Escapement-Ugashik tower	1,759,776	a	a	a	a	1,759,776
Ugashik subtotal	6,003,819	427	42,787	20	424	6,047,477
Nushagak catch	12,241,090	4,340	313,091	40,004	21,453	12,619,978
Escapement- Wood tower	4,404,654	a	a	a	a	4,404,654
Igushik tower	692,616	a	a	a	a	692,616
Nushagak sonar	1,708,693	41,893	302,145	a	a	2,052,731
Nushagak subtotal	19,047,053	46,233	615,236	40,004	21,453	19,769,979
Togiak catch	565,314	914	47,765	31,164	699	645,856
Escapement - Togiak tower	361,578	a	a	a	a	361,578
Togiak subtotal	926,892	914	47,765	31,164	699	1,007,434
Bristol Bay catch	31,594,519	6,895	506,541	76,199	28,804	32,212,958
Bristol Bay escapement	19,968,487	a	a	a	a	a
Bristol Bay total run	51,563,006	b	b	b	b	b

^a Escapement not assessed or incomplete

^b Total run size cannot be determined in the absence of complete escapement data.

Table 2.—Difference between Bristol Bay sockeye salmon actual inshore run and preseason forecast, 2024.

District	Inshore forecast	Inshore run	% Above/below forecast
Naknek-Kvichak	14,970,000	19,184,955	28% Above
Egegik	5,540,000	6,400,287	16% Above
Ugashik	4,640,000	6,003,819	29% Above
Nushagak	12,070,000	19,047,053	58% Above
Togiak	680,000	926,892	36% Above
Totals	37,900,000	51,563,006	36% Above

Table 3.—Bristol Bay sockeye salmon escapement goals and actual escapements, 2024.

River system	Escapement goal range	Escapement
Kvichak River	2,000,000–10,000,000	6,644,490
Naknek River	800,000–2,000,000	926,112
Alagnak River	320,000 minimum	2,356,560
Egegik River	800,000–2,000,000	1,114,008
Ugashik River	500,000–1,400,000	1,759,776
Nushagak River OEG	370,000–1,425,000	1,708,693
Nushagak River SEG	370,000-900,000	
Wood River OEG	700,000–3,000,000	4,404,654
Wood River SEG	700,000–1,800,000	
Igushik River	150,000–400,000	692,616
Togiak River	120,000–270,000	361,578
Total		19,968,487

Table 4.—Average price, weight, harvest, and value of salmon harvest in Bristol Bay, 2024.

Species	Price/lb.	Avg. weight (lb.)	Number of fish	Total weight	Value
Sockeye	\$0.89	4.53	31,594,519	143,123,171	\$127,379,622
Chinook	\$0.71	8.69	6,895	59,918	\$42,541
Chum	\$0.21	5.1	506,541	2,583,359	\$542,505
Pink	\$0.08	3.65	76,199	278,126	\$22,250
Coho	\$0.42	5.37	28,804	154,677	\$64,965
Totals			32,212,958	146,199,252	\$128,051,884

Table 5.–2024 preliminary Bristol Bay commercial sockeye salmon harvests and 20-year averages by district.

District	2004–2023 average sockeye harvest	2024 sockeye salmon harvest
Naknek-Kvichak	10,253,887	9,257,793
Egegik	8,904,856	5,286,279
Ugashik	3,425,036	4,244,043
Nushagak	9,977,055	12,241,090
Togiak	603,658	565,314
Totals	33,164,492	31,594,519

Table 6.–2024 preliminary Bristol Bay commercial Chinook salmon harvests and 20-year averages by district.

District	2004–2023 average Chinook salmon harvest	2024 Chinook salmon harvest
Naknek-Kvichak	1,743	811
Egegik	765	403
Ugashik	945	427
Nushagak	30,606	4,340
Togiak	4,685	914
Totals	38,743	6,895

Table 7.–Allocation of Bristol Bay drift and set gillnet harvest, 2024.

District	Drift gillnet percent of harvest allocated /caught	District set gillnet percent of harvest allocated /caught	Section set gillnet percent of harvest allocated /caught
Naknek-Kvichak	84% / 80%	16% /20%	Naknek: 8% / 7% Kvichak: 8% / 13%
Egegik	86% / 77%	14% / 23%	–
Ugashik	90% /88%	10% / 12%	–
Nushagak ^a	74% /75 %	26% / 25%	Nushagak: 20% / 16% Igushik: 6% / 4% Wood River NA / 5%

^a Wood River Special Harvest Area harvest is included in Nushagak drift and set gillnet calculations.

Figure 1.—Average weight of Bristol Bay sockeye salmon, 1980–2024.

