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## Fish News

June 7, 2012

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### **Area M Seiners Association Stand Down During First Commercial Salmon Fishery Opening**

For the third year in a row, the Area M Seiners Association has decided to voluntarily sit out the first opening of the June sockeye salmon fishery, which began today. The Area M fishery is located around Alaska's Eastern Aleutian Islands and Western Peninsula on the North Pacific Ocean and Bering Sea. The Association has 35 members from Sand Point, King Cove and False Pass.



Members of the Area M Seiners Association are standing down during the first commercial salmon fishery opening of 2012. Photo by Raynelle Gardner.

“The Area M Seiners Association realizes that chum salmon catches during the June fishery are politically dangerous,” said Association president Glen Gardner, Jr. “For many years, our fishermen have been plagued by accusations that we are affecting commercial and subsistence chum salmon runs in the

A-Y-K (Arctic Yukon Kuskokwim). We believe that scientific studies currently underway will demonstrate that the Area M sockeye salmon fishery has very little impact on the chum salmon stock.”

“Until then, and until the public and the Alaska Board of Fisheries has time to review the studies, the chum issue continues to be a political hot potato for our fishermen,” said Sand Point seiner David Osterback.

“We’re trying to be proactive about this controversial issue,” Gardner added.

The Association met earlier this week (June 5<sup>th</sup>) and last Friday (June 1<sup>st</sup>) to discuss their



Glen Gardner, Jr., President of the Area M Seiners Association, says the organization is trying to be proactive about this controversial issue. Photo by Raynelle Gardner.

options. Gardner said subsistence fishermen have noticed that the chum-to-sockeye ratios are still high. So the group decided to stand down during this opening, which began today at 6 a.m. (Thursday, June 7<sup>th</sup>) and ends at 10 p.m. on Sunday, June 10<sup>th</sup>. Giving up fishing time after a long winter is a tough decision, but one the Association believes is necessary.

“During the month of June, we concentrate on fishing sockeye, the money fish,” said Osterback. “We don’t make any money fishing chums. But we don’t want this chum issue to be a threat that’s held over our heads.”

“As long as A-Y-K residents believe our fishermen are catching high numbers of chums, we face great political scrutiny,” Gardner said. “We certainly recognize their concerns. We view our stand down as a positive gesture of solidarity.”

In 2001, the Alaska Board of Fisheries implemented severe restrictions which nearly bankrupted the entire Area M fishing fleet. In 2004, the Board of Fisheries lifted the restrictions to pre-2001 levels after finding no evidence that previous chum salmon fishing restrictions made any improvement in chum runs in the A-Y-K.

“We don’t want to have our gear restricted again,” Osterback said. “We need to be out there fishing when the fish are running. We have a very short opportunity to do that. The sockeye salmon fishery keeps our communities alive. We have a longstanding fishery here, and we deserve the right to fish this historical fishery. But at the same time, we don’t want to be shut down because there are too many chums going by.”

The fishermen hope that by taking voluntary measures like this Area M Seiners Association stand down, they can maximize their sockeye harvest without generating controversy that follows large chum catches.

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## **AEB Supports Continuation of Voluntary Chum Pool During June Salmon Season**

The Aleutians East Borough supports the continuation of the voluntary chum pool for the 2012 June salmon season, developed years ago by fishermen and processors. The Area M chum pool began at a time when Area M fishermen were restricted by a chum cap, that when reached, would close down the June fishery, including subsistence fishing.

Area M salmon fishermen and local processors decided that all chums caught in June would be pooled and each vessel would receive an equal share of the price paid. This pool will be in place for June 2012.



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Recently AEB fishermen received a presentation about the WASSIP study (Western Alaska Salmon Stock Identification Project) that will be released later this year. Fishermen are confident the study will inform future decisions regarding state salmon fisheries.

Alaska Board of Fisheries will meet in early 2013 to discuss finfish proposals for the South Alaska Peninsula. Proposal books will be released to the public in early August.

# South Unimak & Shumagin Islands June Fisheries Opens to Commercial Salmon Fishing This Week

According to the Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G), the South Unimak and Shumagin Islands June fisheries will open to commercial salmon fishing during the following times and dates:

From 6:00 a.m. today (Thursday, June 7) until 10:00 p.m. Sunday, June 10

From 6:00 a.m. Tuesday, June 12 until 10:00 p.m. Friday, June 15

From 6:00 a.m. Sunday, June 17 until 10:00 p.m. Wednesday, June 20

From 6:00 a.m. Friday, June 22 until 10:00 p.m. Monday, June 25

From 6:00 a.m. Wednesday, June 27 until 10:00 p.m. Friday, June 29

The June fishery occurs in the following districts and sections:

Unimak District

Bechevin Bay Section of the Northwestern District

Southwestern District

West and East Pavlof Bay sections of the South Central District

Shumagin Islands Section of the Southeastern District

All closed waters in the above locations will be as described in the regulation book or as adjusted by emergency order.

Subsistence permits for the Alaska Peninsula are available in the Alaska Department of Fish and Game offices in Sand Point, Cold Bay, and Port Moller. Subsistence fishermen must obtain a permit and have it in their possession while harvesting salmon under subsistence guidelines.



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## CHIGNIK COMMERCIAL SALMON FISHERY UPDATE

As of last night at 6:15 p.m. (June 6<sup>th</sup>), an estimated cumulative total of 25,968 sockeye salmon have passed the Chignik River weir. ADF&G said estimated escapement during the next 24 hours is expected to meet or exceed the escapement objectives (29,500-

33,700) for June 10.

The **Chignik Bay, Central, and Eastern districts** and the **Inner Castle Cape Subsection of the Western District** (273-93) of the Chignik Management Area will open to commercial salmon fishing for **53 hours beginning 7:00 a.m. Friday, June 8 until NOON Sunday, June 10**. The Chignik Lagoon markers will be located at Humes Point.

Commercial salmon fishing license holder may not subsistence fish for salmon during the 12 hours before a commercial salmon fishing period or during the 12 hours following the closure of a commercial salmon fishing period.

Statistical charts, harvest strategies and subsistence fishing permits are available at the Chignik weir and the Kodiak regional ADF&G offices. Commercial fishing regulations, salmon harvest, escapement, and news releases can be found on the ADF&G website at <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareachignik.salmon>.

Fishermen are encouraged to standby on VHF Channel 6 at 9:15 a.m. and 6:15 p.m. daily for fishery updates

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