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Advisory Announcement

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2026 BRISTOL BAY SALMON SEASON SUMMARY

The following is an overview of the 2026 Bristol Bay commercial salmon season. All data are preliminary. The 2026 inshore Bristol Bay sockeye salmon run of 45.7 million fish (Table 1) was 8% below the 49.6 million average run for the latest 20-year period (2006–2025; Vega et al. 2026). This is the first year since 2014 that the total inshore run was less than 50 million fish.

The 2026 Bristol Bay sockeye salmon run was 4% above the preseason inshore forecast of 44.1 million fish (Table 2). All sockeye salmon escapement goals were met or exceeded, except for the Togiak River, which did not meet the lower bound of the escapement goal. Baywide escapement totaled 15.6 million fish (Table 3). The commercial harvest of 30.1 million sockeye salmon was 7% below the 32.3 million preseason forecast (Table 1; Weaver and Terry-Shindelman 2025). The preliminary harvest estimates for other species are 10,700 Chinook, 457,100 chum, 55,100 coho, and 666,700 pink salmon (Table 1).

EXVESSEL VALUE

Exvessel value of all salmon species caught in Bristol Bay in 2026 was estimated using price information from processor final operations reports, and numbers and average weights from preliminary fish ticket numbers. The 2026 Bristol Bay preliminary exvessel value of $264.0 million for all salmon species (Table 4) was 21% above the 20-year average of $207.8 million (Vega et al. 2026). Prices may not include incentives for icing, bleeding, floating, or production bonuses.

SPECIES PERFORMANCE

Sockeye Salmon

The 2026 harvest of 30.1 million sockeye salmon was 3% lower than the recent 20-year average of 31.1 million (Table 5; Vega et al. 2026). Sockeye salmon escapement goals were exceeded on the Nushagak, Igushik and Ugashik Rivers. The Togiak River escapement was below the lower bound escapement goal range. The Kvichak, Naknek, Alagnak, Egegik, and Wood rivers were within their escapement goal ranges (Table 3). Baywide run timing was two days early compared to the 20-year average.

In 2026, the age composition of sockeye salmon in Bristol Bay was roughly on forecast, with 45% 2-ocean fish (forecast of 47%) and 53% 3-ocean fish (forecast of 52%) returning. The 1.2 age class contributed 32%, and age 1.3 fish contributed 40%. The average weight of sockeye salmon this season

was 5.0 pounds, which is the same as the recent 5-year average (Table 4; Figure 1). However, weight at age was at or below the recent 10-year average for all major age classes.

Chinook Salmon

Bristol Bay Chinook salmon harvest and abundance remained below the historical average in 2026. Chinook salmon harvested in Bristol Bay are incidentally caught during fishing periods targeting surplus sockeye salmon. The preliminary total Chinook salmon harvest of 10,700 fish is the highest since 2019. Chinook salmon in the Nushagak District is the main source of Chinook harvest in Bristol Bay; Nushagak Chinook salmon are currently a stock of management concern. The Nushagak District commercial fishery was managed according to the *Nushagak District King Salmon Stock of Concern Management Plan* (plan), with sockeye salmon escapement triggers that delay the start of fishing and OEGs that allow for increased Chinook salmon escapement (Table 3). In 2026 the department managed the Nushagak district fishery more conservatively than required by the plan to conserve Chinook salmon. The Nushagak District Chinook salmon harvest was 5,100 fish. (Table 6; Vega et al. 2026). Beginning in 2026, the Alaska Board of Fisheries prohibited releasing Chinook salmon caught in the Nushagak District commercial fishery. In response to chronic underreporting of Chinook salmon harvest on fish tickets, the department began using both fish tickets and production reports from major salmon processors to account for Chinook salmon removals in 2026. As such, comparing this year's harvest to historical averages is not appropriate and the increase in documented commercial harvest in 2026 can likely, and at least partially, be attributed to new methodology for generating harvest estimates and the prohibition on releasing Chinook salmon. The Nushagak River Chinook salmon in-river run index at Portage Creek sonar was 36,339 fish, which is below both the escapement goal range of 55,000–120,000 fish and the in-river goal of 95,000 fish.

Chum Salmon

The 2026 preliminary Bristol Bay chum salmon harvest was 457,100 fish (Table 1), 53% below the recent 20-year average of 980,300 fish, but the third largest harvest since 2019 (Vega et al. 2026). The Nushagak District is the largest producer of chum salmon and had a harvest of 237,000 fish (Table 1). The Nushagak River chum salmon in-river run index at Portage Creek sonar was 199,809 fish, just below 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. A directed pink salmon fishery in the Nushagak District in 2026 contributed to most of the Baywide harvest of 667,000 fish (Table 1).

Coho Salmon

The preliminary coho salmon harvest in 2026 is 55,100 fish (Table 1), 40% below the recent 20-year average of 91,900 fish but was the largest harvest since 2020 (Vega et al. 2026). The Nushagak District is typically the largest producer of coho salmon and had a harvest of 46,200 fish (Table 1). Harvests of coho salmon can be variable from year to year depending on processor availability, market conditions, and overall fishing effort. The increase in coho salmon harvest in 2026 was likely due to late season processor availability and fishing effort.

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 does not have an allocation plan. Strategies used to achieve allocation between gear groups included varying the amount of fishing time and providing separate gear-group openings. Allocation goals and actual harvest percentages for 2026 are listed in Table

7. In the current regime of large sockeye salmon returns, a more mobile fleet, and dual permits, 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

Vega, S., T. Elison, T. Sands, C. Weaver, and J. Terry-Shindelman. 2026. 2025 Bristol Bay annual management report. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Fishery Management Report No. 26-08, Anchorage.

Weaver, C. and J. Terry-Shindelman. 2025. 2026 Bristol Bay sockeye salmon forecast. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Commercial Fisheries Division. Advisory Announcement, Juneau, AK. https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/applications/dcfnewsrelease/1745780946.pdf (issued November 13, 2025, cited September 18, 2026).

Table 1.–Preliminary Bristol Bay salmon harvest and escapement by district and species, 2026.

District	Sockeye	Chinook	Chum	Pink	Coho	TOTAL
Naknek-Kvichak catch	6,091,929	1,733	65,701	9,571	544	6,169,478
Escapement-Kvichak tower	3,080,286	[a]	[a]	[a]	[a]	3,080,286
Naknek tower	892,326	[a]	[a]	[a]	[a]	892,326
Alagnak tower	1,432,782	[a]	[a]	[a]	[a]	1,432,782
N-K subtotal	11,497,323	1,733	65,701	9,571	544	11,574,872
Egegik catch	9,225,123	1,834	41,266	1,262	7,020	9,276,505
Escapement-Egegik tower	1,982,724	[a]	[a]	[a]	[a]	1,982,724
Egegik subtotal	11,207,847	1,834	41,266	1,262	7,020	11,259,229
Ugashik catch	5,440,429	1,375	39,341	155	155	5,481,455
Escapement-Ugashik tower	1,703,598	[a]	[a]	[a]	[a]	1,703,598
Ugashik subtotal	7,144,027	1,375	39,341	155	155	7,185,053
Nushagak catch	9,138,720	5,065	236,964	630,437	46,232	10,057,418
Escapement- Wood tower	2,586,432	[a]	[a]	[a]	[a]	2,586,432
Igushik tower	551,850	[a]	[a]	[a]	[a]	551,850
Nushagak sonar	3,259,237	36,339	199,809	[a]	[a]	3,495,385
Nushagak subtotal	15,536,239	41,404	436,773	630,437	46,232	16,691,085
Togiak catch	180,574	727	73,814	25,240	1,147	281,502
Escapement - Togiak tower	119,298	[a]	[a]	[a]	[a]	119,298
Togiak subtotal	299,872	727	73,814	25,240	1,147	400,800
Bristol Bay catch	30,076,775	10,734	457,086	666,665	55,098	31,266,358
Bristol Bay escapement	15,608,533	[a]	[a]	[a]	[a]	[a]
Bristol Bay total run	45,685,308	[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, 2026.

District	Inshore forecast	Inshore run	% Above/below forecast
Naknek-Kvichak	10,980,000	11,497,323	5% Above
Egegik	8,930,000	11,207,847	26% Above
Ugashik	5,210,000	7,144,027	37% Above
Nushagak	18,390,000	15,536,237	16% Below
Togiak	530,000	299,872	43% Below
Totals	44,040,000	45,685,306	4% Above

Table 3.–Bristol Bay sockeye salmon escapement goals and actual escapements, 2026.

River system	Escapement goal range	Escapement
Kvichak River	2,000,000–10,000,000	3,080,286
Naknek River	800,000–2,000,000	892,236
Alagnak River	210,000 minimum	1,432,782
Egegik River	800,000–2,000,000	1,982,724
Ugashik River	500,000–1,400,000	1,703,598
Nushagak River OEG	370,000–2,600,000	3,259,237
Nushagak River SEG	370,000–900,000	
Wood River OEG	700,000–2,800,000	2,586,432
Wood River SEG	700,000–1,800,000	
Igushik River	150,000–400,000	551,850
Togiak River	120,000–270,000	119,298
Total		15,608,533

Table 4.–Average price, weight, harvest, and value of salmon harvest in Bristol Bay, 2026.

Species	Price/lb.	Avg. weight (lb.)	Number of fish	Total weight	Value
Sockeye	$1.72	5.03	30,076,775	151,300,458	$260,236,788
Chinook	$0.86	8.87	10,734	87,800	$75,508
Chum	$0.80	5.82	457,086	2,662,739	$2,130,191
Pink	$0.56	3.42	666,665	2,280,443	$1,277,048
Coho	$0.99	5.01	55,098	277,497	$274,722
Totals			31,266,358	156,608,937	$263,994,257

Table 5.–2026 preliminary Bristol Bay commercial sockeye salmon harvests and 20-year averages by district.

District	2006–2025 average sockeye harvest	2026 sockeye salmon harvest
Naknek-Kvichak	10,717,542	6,091,929
Egegik	8,639,283	9,225,123
Ugashik	318,528	5,440,429
Nushagak	10,763,299	9,138,720
Togiak	613,466	180,574
Totals	31,052,118	30,076,775

Table 6.–2026 preliminary Bristol Bay commercial Chinook salmon harvests and 20-year averages by district.

District	2006–2025 average Chinook salmon harvest	2026 Chinook salmon harvest [a]
Naknek-Kvichak	1,667	1,733
Egegik	689	1,834
Ugashik	841	1,375
Nushagak	22,898	5,065
Togiak	3,760	727
Totals	29,855	10,734

[a] Includes fish counted in production.

Table 7.–Allocation of Bristol Bay drift and set gillnet harvest, 2026.

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% / 70%	16% / 30%	Naknek: 8% / 15% Kvichak: 8% / 15%
Egegik	86% / 83%	14% / 17%	–
Ugashik	90% / 88%	10% / 12%	–
Nushagak [a]	74% /74%	26% / 26%	Nushagak: 20% / 23% Igushik: 6% / 3% Wood River: NA / NA

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

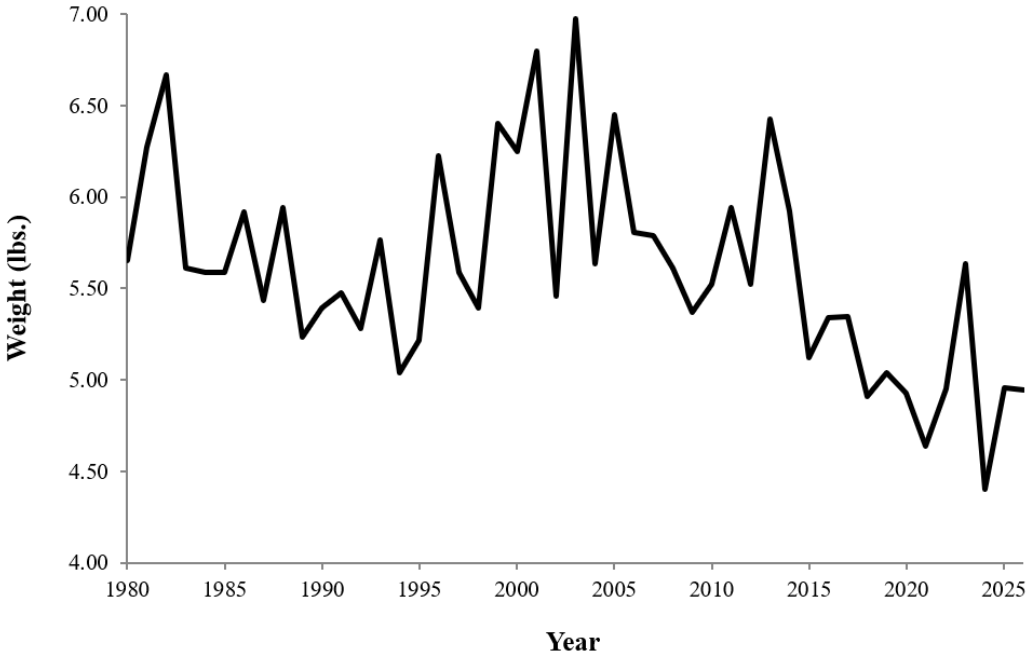

Figure 1.–Average weight of Bristol Bay sockeye salmon, 1980–2026.