Strong Sockeye Escapement Opens Up More Waters for Subsistence, Commercial Fishing

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Jay Barrett/KMXT

The sockeye salmon run so far this summer has been reasonably strong in most districts around Kodiak Island – and strong enough around Afognak that the Feder5al Subsistence Board is opening up much of Afognak Bay to subsistence fishing.

All federal waters of Afognak Bay up to the ADF-and-G markers located at the Old Bridge near the stream terminus of the Afognak River will open for subsistence salmon fishing at noon Friday until 9 p.m. Saturday. It’s an area normally off limits.

In a statement Bo Sloan, the in-season manager with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Kodiak, he says the opening is being made to prevent over-escapement into the Afognak River. Through Tuesday, he says 10,748 sockeye have been counted past the Afognak River weir.

Fish and Game has also reduced closed waters in Afognak Bay for commercial fishing beginning at noon Friday. The department announced yesterday several other openings for Friday and Saturday.

The Afognak weir isn’t the only one seeing higher than average sockeye return this year. The Karluk weir has seen 58,000 sockeye go by – 46,000 of them on Tuesday alone. That’s by far the most by that date since 90,000 went by in 2005. Chinook escapement is also better than recent years, with 305 passing the weir through Tuesday.

The Ayakulik saw 1,600 sockeye pass on Tuesday, and the season total through that date is about half of the last two years, but above most other years since 2006.

Litnik sockeye is well above last year, and a little ahead of 2010 and 2011 to date. The Buskin River is also getting a bit more sockeye return than in recent years.