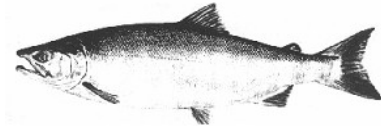


**ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME**  
**DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES**  
**NEWS RELEASE**



*Denby S. Lloyd, Commissioner*  
*John Hilsinger, Director*

**Contact:**

Jeff Fox, Area Management Biologist  
 Pat Shields, Assistant Area Management Biologist  
 Phone: (907) 262-9368  
 Fax: (907) 262-4709

Soldotna ADF&G  
 43961 Kalifornsky Beach Rd.  
 Suite B  
 Soldotna, AK 99669  
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**UPPER COOK INLET**  
**2008 OUTLOOK FOR COMMERCIAL**  
**SALMON FISHING**

**SOCKEYE SALMON**

A run of 5.6 million sockeye salmon is forecasted to return to UCI in 2008 with a harvest by all user groups of 3.9 million fish. The forecasted harvest in 2008 is about 0.2 million fish below the 20-year average harvest by all user groups. The sockeye salmon run forecast for the Kenai River of 3.1 million is 16% less than the 20-year average run of 3.7 million. Age-1.3 sockeye salmon typically comprise about 65% of the run to the Kenai River. The sibling model predicted a return of 2.6 million age-1.3 sockeye salmon to the Kenai River while the fry model predicted a return of 2.5 million age 1.3-sockeye salmon. Age-2.3 sockeye salmon typically comprise about 20% of the run to the Kenai River. A sibling model based upon the return of age-2.2 sockeye salmon in 2007 was used to forecast the return (286,000) of age-2.3 sockeye salmon to the Kenai River in 2008. The return of age-2.2 sockeye salmon in 2007 was 58% less than the 20-year average return for this age class. The predominant age classes in the 2008 run should be age-1.3 (85%) and age-2.3 (9%).

The sockeye salmon run forecast for the Kasilof River of 1.3 million is 33% greater than the 20-year average run of 968,000. Age-1.3 sockeye salmon typically comprise about 35% of the run to the Kasilof River. A sibling model based upon the return of age-1.2 sockeye salmon in 2007 was used to forecast the return (376,000) of age-1.3 sockeye salmon in 2008. The return of age 1.2-sockeye salmon last year was 57% greater than the 20-year average return for this age class. Age-1.2 sockeye salmon typically comprise about 30% of the run to the Kasilof River. A sibling model based upon an above average return of age-1.1 sockeye salmon in 2007 was used to forecast the return of age-1.2 sockeye salmon to Kasilof River. The sibling model predicted a return of 484,000 age-1.2 sockeye salmon. However, we are less confident in this forecast, because a smolt model predicted a return of only 252,000 age-1.2 sockeye salmon. Age-1.2 sockeye salmon migrated as smolts from the Kasilof River in 2006, when their estimated abundance was only 2.6 million, about

one-half of the 20-year average. The predominant age classes in the 2008 run should be age-1.2 (38%) and age 1.3 (29%).

The sockeye salmon run forecast for the Susitna River of 344,000 is 24% less than the 20-year average run of 453,000. The accuracy of the Susitna River forecast is uncertain due to the unknown amount of undercounting of the escapement which has recently been documented. The Board of Fish designated the Susitna River sockeye stocks as a stock of yield concern at the February 2008 meeting. The department has developed an “Action Plan” for management of those stocks. Proposed studies to determine the amount of undercounting with the Bendix Sonar are currently waiting funding in the legislature. The run forecast for Fish Creek of 53,000 fish is 67% less than the 20-year average run of 159,000. The sockeye salmon run forecast for Crescent River of 100,000 is 7% less than the 20-year average run of 108,000.

Forecast runs to individual freshwater systems are as follows:

System	Run	Goal
Crescent River	100,000	30,000–70,000
Fish Creek	53,000	20,000–70,000 <sup>a</sup>
Kasilof River	1,286,000	150,000–250,000 <sup>b</sup>
Kenai River	3,064,000	750,000–950,000 <sup>c</sup>
Susitna River	344,000	90,000–160,000
Minor Systems	727,000	N/A

<sup>a</sup> Escapement goal includes up to 5,000 fish for broodstock for the hatchery program in Big Lake.

<sup>b</sup> The Kasilof River has an optimum escapement goal (OEG) of 150,000 to 300,000 to facilitate meeting the lower end of the Kenai River goal.

<sup>c</sup> The Kenai River is an abundance-based escapement goal; 750,000 to 950,000 is the appropriate inriver sonar goal for a 2 million to 4 million Kenai River sockeye salmon run.

<sup>d</sup> The escapement goal for the Yentna River is 90,000 to 160,000 sockeye salmon counted by sonar. In Kenai runs of over 4 million, there is a Yentna River OEG of 75,000 to 180,000 sockeye. The Yentna River is thought to account for approximately 50% of the total Susitna River run.

### **OTHER SPECIES' HARVEST PROJECTIONS**

Very little information is available on which to base outlooks for the commercial harvests of the other salmon species. Using recent harvest trends and factoring in the expected intensity of the sockeye-based fishery, the following numbers represent our best estimate of the 2008 harvest:

Pink Salmon	380,000
Chum Salmon	100,000
Coho Salmon	200,000
Chinook Salmon	20,000

### **2008 REGULATORY CHANGES**

There were many regulatory changes made by the Alaska Board of Fisheries during the February meeting that will be implemented during the 2008 season. The following summary is for informational purposes only and is not a comprehensive review. Regulation booklets are currently

being printed and will be available prior to the beginning of fisheries. Regulation language will be available from department offices prior to booklets being published.

One of the most important changes at the 2008 Alaska Board of Fisheries meeting was the clarification that managing to meet established escapement goals is the Department's primary objective.

### **Northern District Set Gillnet**

- The Northern District king salmon fishery will open on the first Monday on or after May 25 and remain open for 12-hour (7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.) fishing periods on Mondays through June 24, unless closed by emergency order. The area from an ADF&G regulatory marker located 1 mile south of the Theodore River to the Susitna River remains open for one period only, on the second regular Monday period, this year that period will be June 2.
- Susitna River sockeye salmon were found by the Board to be a stock of yield concern. An action plan was developed to conservatively manage the commercial fishery while research continues to better understand the productivity of this stock. This action plan allows the Northern District set gillnet fishery to fish with no more than one net per permit from July 20 through August 6, unless the Department determines that the Yentna River escapement goal will be achieved. If so, the gear restriction may be relaxed by emergency order.

### **Upper Subdistrict Set Gillnet Fishery**

- From the beginning of the fishing season through July 7, or until the Kenai and East Forelands Sections set gillnet fisheries open, there is to be a weekly no-fishing window of 36-hours in duration. The Board directed the department to make this a fixed window in time, and to begin it sometime between 7:00 p.m. on Thursdays and 7:00 a.m. on Fridays. The maximum number of emergency order hours that may be utilized during this time frame remains at 48-hours per week.
- Use of the Kasilof River Special Harvest Area (KRSHA) should now occur only on rare occasions. The Board directed the department to use its emergency order authority to fish in traditional areas with more time than allowed for in the management plans, if needed, to allow additional harvests if Kasilof River sockeye salmon escapements were likely to exceed the escapement goal. The KRSHA is to be used only in cases when fishing in traditional areas does not provide for meeting escapement objectives.

### **Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery**

- The Board outlawed the use of spotter planes 1-hour before a fishery opens and while the fishery is being prosecuted.
- The Board passed a regulation allowing permit "stacking". This allows two drift gillnet permit holders to fish on one boat and be allowed to fish a total of 200 fathoms of gear instead of the normal limit of 150 fathoms. Prior to fishing, the boat must be registered (see 5 AAC 21.333).
- After the opening of the set gillnet fishery in the Upper Subdistrict, fishing with drift gillnets may not occur within 1.5 miles of the mean high tide mark of the Kenai Peninsula shoreline in that area of the Kenai and Kasilof Sections of the Upper Subdistrict south of the Kenai River, nor within 1 mile of the mean high tide mark of the Kenai Peninsula shoreline in that area of

the Kenai and East Forelands Sections of the Upper Subdistrict north of the Kenai River, whenever the set gillnet fishery in that area is closed.

### **Single strand fishing gear**

- Beginning with the 2008 season, commercial fishermen in UCI may now fish their full allotment of gear using single strand (monofilament) mesh. No registration with the Department is required prior to using single strand mesh gear.

## **2008 FISHING STRATEGY**

Based on the sockeye salmon run forecast to Cook Inlet for 2008, restrictions during regular periods other than those directed by the management plans, are not anticipated. In the drift gillnet fishery, mandated restrictions require the fishing periods on July 10 and July 14 be restricted to the Kenai and Kasilof Sections and Drift Gillnet Area Number One (Figure 2). In addition, in runs of between 2 and 4 million sockeye salmon to the Kenai River; two regular fishing periods between July 16 and July 31 will be restricted to the Kenai and Kasilof Sections of the Upper Subdistrict and Drift Areas One & Two (Figure 2). The date these two restrictions will occur on is dependant on how accurate the forecast is and how the season develops.

The use of the Kasilof Terminal fishery is unlikely in 2008.

### **Northern District Set Gillnet**

- The Northern District king salmon fishery will be open for Monday periods between May 25 and June 24. In 2008 the fishery is scheduled to occur for five regular Monday periods, May 26, June 2, 9, 16 and 23. The area from an ADF&G regulatory marker located 1 mile south of the Theodore River to the Susitna River is open for one period only, on the second regular Monday period, this year that period will be on June 2. Fishing periods are from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.
- During the regular season the number of nets from July 20 to August 6 will be reduced to a single net per permit until the escapement goal is projected to be achieved.

### **Central District Fisheries**

#### **Big River Fishery**

The Big River Sockeye Salmon Management Plan was amended in 2005 to allow fishing in a portion of the Kalgin Island Subdistrict along the western shore from Light Point at 60° 29.00' N. lat., 151° 50.50' W. long. to the Kalgin Island Light on the southern end of the island at 60° 20.80' N. lat., 152° 05.09' W. long.

#### **Upper Subdistrict Set Gillnet Fishery**

##### **Kasilof Section Prior to July 8**

- The Kasilof Section opens on the first regular period on or after June 25, unless the department estimates that 50,000 sockeye salmon are in the Kasilof River prior to that date, at which time the commissioner may open the fishery, by Emergency Order (EO); however, the fishery may not open earlier than June 20.
- From the beginning of the fishery through July 7 the department may not allow more than 48 hours of additional fishing time per week (Sun through Sat) and will try to close the fishery

for 36 consecutive hours per week, which will begin between 7:00 p.m. on Thursdays and 7:00 a.m. on Fridays.

- Beginning July 8, or after the Kenai and East Forelands Sections open, the Kasilof Section will be managed in combination with the Kenai and East Forelands Sections.

### **Kenai, Kasilof and East Forelands Sections**

After July 8, or after the Kenai and East Forelands Sections fishing season opens, the following fishing scenarios are possible depending on run strength to the Kenai River:

- If the Kenai assessment shows the run to be **less than 2 million Kenai sockeye salmon**, there will be no more than 24 hours of additional fishing time per week in the Upper Subdistrict and there are no mandatory window closures. If the Kenai and East Forelands Sections are not fished during regular or additional openings, the department may limit regular and additional periods in the Kasilof Section to within ½ mile of shore. After July 15, if the Kasilof escapement is projected to exceed 300,000 sockeye salmon, an additional 24-hours of fishing time per week is available within ½ mile of shore in the Kasilof Section.
- If the Kenai assessment is **between 2 and 4 million Kenai River sockeye salmon**, the Department may allow up to 51 hours of additional fishing time per week and will close the Upper Subdistrict for a 36-hour closed period, which will begin between 7:00 p.m. on Thursdays and 7:00 a.m. on Fridays. In addition there will be a second 24-hour closed fishing period per week to be implemented at the Department's discretion. If the Kenai and East Forelands Sections are not fished, the department may limit regular and extra periods in the Kasilof Section to within ½ mile of shore.
- If the Kenai assessment changes to a run of **more than 4 million Kenai River sockeye salmon**, the department may allow up to 84 hours of additional fishing time per week and will close the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery for a 36 hour period, which will begin between 7:00 p.m. on Thursdays and 7:00 a.m. on Fridays. There are no other mandatory no-fishing windows at this run strength. If the Kenai and East Forelands Sections are not fished, the department may limit regular and extra periods in the Kasilof Section to within ½ mile of shore.
- The Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery will close no later than August 15 and all restrictions and additional time regulations from July carry over into August. From August 11-15 the fishery is open for regular periods only.

### **Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery**

- The drift fishery opens the third Monday in June or June 19, whichever is later.
- From July 9 through July 15,
  - ♦ Drift gillnet fishing is restricted for two regular fishing periods to the Kenai and Kasilof Sections and Drift Area One described below.
- From July 16 through July 31,
  - ♦ In runs of less than 2 million sockeye salmon to the Kenai River there will be two regular 12-hour fishing periods restricted to the Kenai and Kasilof Sections of the Upper Subdistrict and Drift Area One;

- ◆ In runs of between 2 and 4 million sockeye salmon to the Kenai River; there will be two regular 12-hour fishing periods restricted to the Kenai and Kasilof Sections of the Upper Subdistrict and in Drift Areas One & Two;
- ◆ In runs of over 4 million sockeye salmon to the Kenai River, there are no mandatory restrictions.
- From August 16 until closed by emergency order,
  - ◆ Drift Areas Three & Four are open for regular periods (Figure 3);
  - ◆ Chinitna Bay may be opened by emergency order.

### **Drift Fishing Areas**

- (1) Drift Area One: includes those waters of the Central District south of Kalgin Island at 60° 20.43' N. lat. (Figure 2);
- (2) Drift Area Two: includes those waters of the Central District enclosed by a line from 60° 20.43' N. lat., 151° 54.83' W. long. to a point at 60° 41.08' N. lat., 151° 39.00' W. long. to a point at 60° 41.08' N. lat., 151° 24.00' W. long. to a point at 60° 27.10' N. lat., 151° 25.70' W. long. to a point at 60° 20.43' N. lat., 151° 28.55' W. long. (Figure 2);
- (3) Drift Area Three; includes those waters of the Central District within one mile of mean lower low water (zero tide) south of a point on the West Foreland at 60° 42.70' N. lat., 151° 42.30' W. long. (Figure 3);
- (4) Drift Area Four; includes those waters of the Central District enclosed by a line from 60° 04.70' N. lat., 152° 34.74' W. long. to the Kalgin Buoy at 60° 04.70' N. lat., 152° 09.90' W. long. to a point at 59° 46.15' N. lat., 152° 18.62' W. long. to a point on the western shore at 59° 46.15' N. lat., 153° 00.20' W. long., not including the waters of the Chinitna Bay Subdistrict (Figure 3).

### **SET NET REGISTRATION AND BUOY STICKERS**

*All Cook Inlet setnet fishermen* are still required to register prior to fishing for one of three areas of Cook Inlet: 1) the Upper Subdistrict of the Central District; 2) the Northern District; or, 3) all remaining areas of Cook Inlet (Greater Cook Inlet). Once registered for one of these three areas, fishermen may fish only in the area for which they are registered for the remainder of the year. No transfers will be permitted. Set gillnet permit holders fishing in the Northern District or the Greater Cook Inlet area can register at Department offices in Soldotna, Homer, or Anchorage or by mail. Forms are available at area offices or on the department's homepage at <http://www.cf.adfg.state.ak.us/region2/ucihome.php>. Fishermen wishing to register in the Upper Subdistrict must register in the **Soldotna ADF&G office only**, and must purchase buoy stickers at the time of registering.

### **SEASON OPENING DATES**

Season opening dates for the various fisheries around the inlet are as follows:

- *Big River Fishery*: June 2 and continuing through June 23 unless the 1,000 Chinook salmon harvest limit is reached prior to that date. Weekly fishing periods are Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

- *Northern District King Salmon Fishery:* May 26. There will be up to five fishing periods, the remaining periods are scheduled on June 2, 9, 16 and June 23. In that area from one mile south of the Theodore River to the Susitna River, there is only one open period during this fishery, which will occur on June 2 in 2008.
- *Western Subdistrict Set Net Fishery:* June 16.
- *All remaining set gillnet fisheries except the Upper Subdistrict:* June 26.
- *Upper Subdistrict Set Net Fishery:* June 26 for the Kasilof Section (that portion south of the Blanchard Line) unless opened earlier by EO (if 50,000 sockeye are in the river before the June 26 opener), but will not open before June 20. The Kenai and East Forelands Sections (that portion north of the Blanchard Line) will open July 10. All sections of the Upper Subdistrict will close for the season on or before August 15.
- *Drift Gillnet Fishery:* June 19.

### **GENERAL INFORMATION**

The UCI commercial fisheries information line will again be available by calling 262-9611. The most recent emergency order announcement is always available on the recorded message line and catch, escapement and test fishing information is included whenever possible. All emergency order announcements are also faxed to processors as quickly as possible and posted to the Upper Cook Inlet web page at <http://www.cf.adfg.state.ak.us/region2/ucihome.php>. For very general information, we invite you to visit the Commercial Fisheries web page on the Internet at <http://www.cf.adfg.state.ak.us/>. If you would like to receive emails of all UCI commercial fisheries emergency orders, please log onto the following site (<http://csfish.adfg.state.ak.us/newsrelease/select.php?dist=SOL>) and click on "Subscribe" and you will be automatically signed up to receive the emergency orders as soon as they are posted to the website.

If, during the summer, fishermen have information or questions concerning the commercial fishery, the Soldotna Commercial Fisheries Division staff can be reached by phone at 262-9368, by fax at 262-4709 or by mail at 43961 Kalifornsky Beach Road, Suite B, Soldotna, 99669.

Latitude and Longitude are based on the North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83) which is equivalent to the World Geodetic System 1984 (WGS 84).

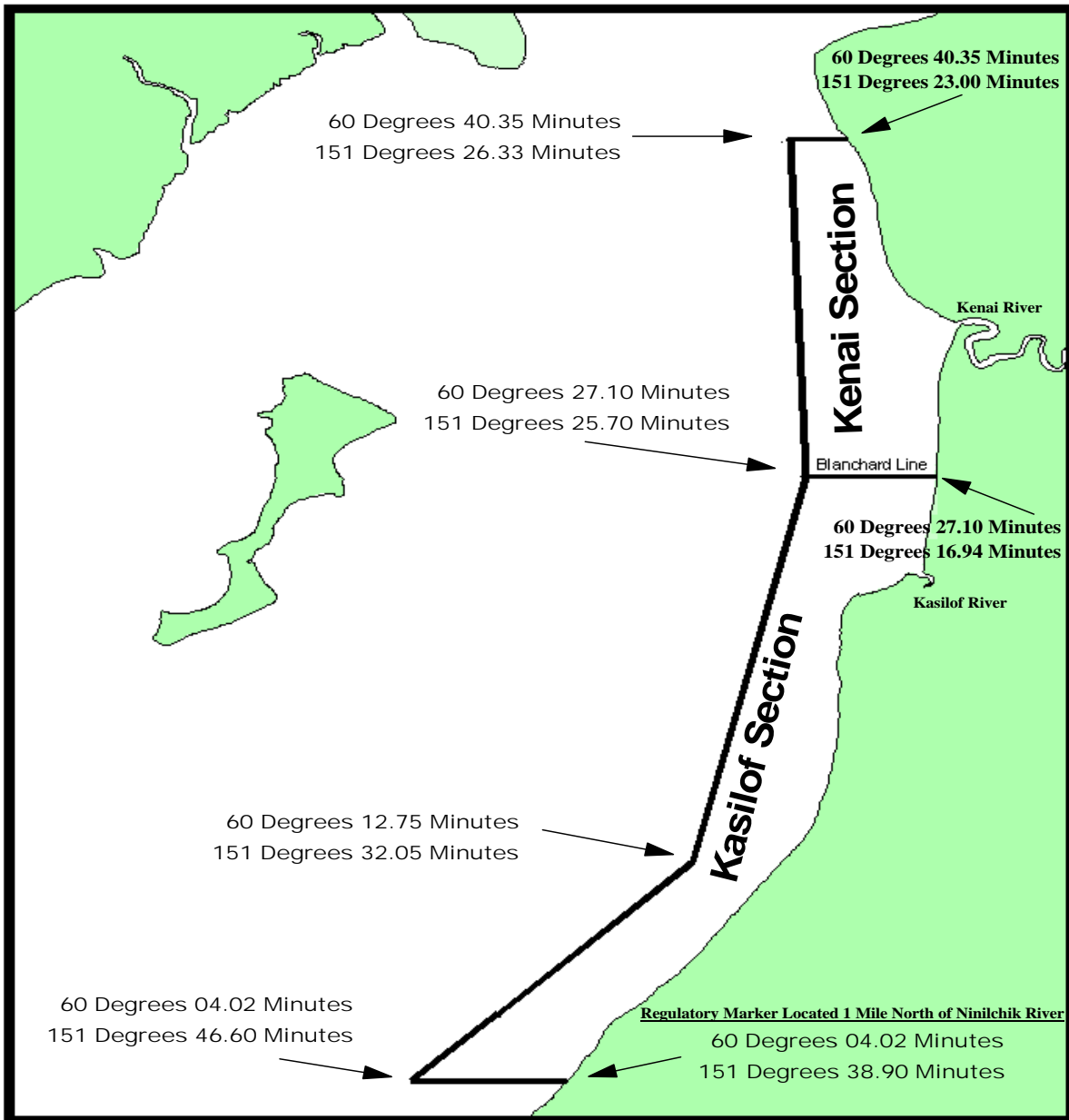


Figure 1. Map of the Kenai and Kasilof Sections with waypoint descriptions.

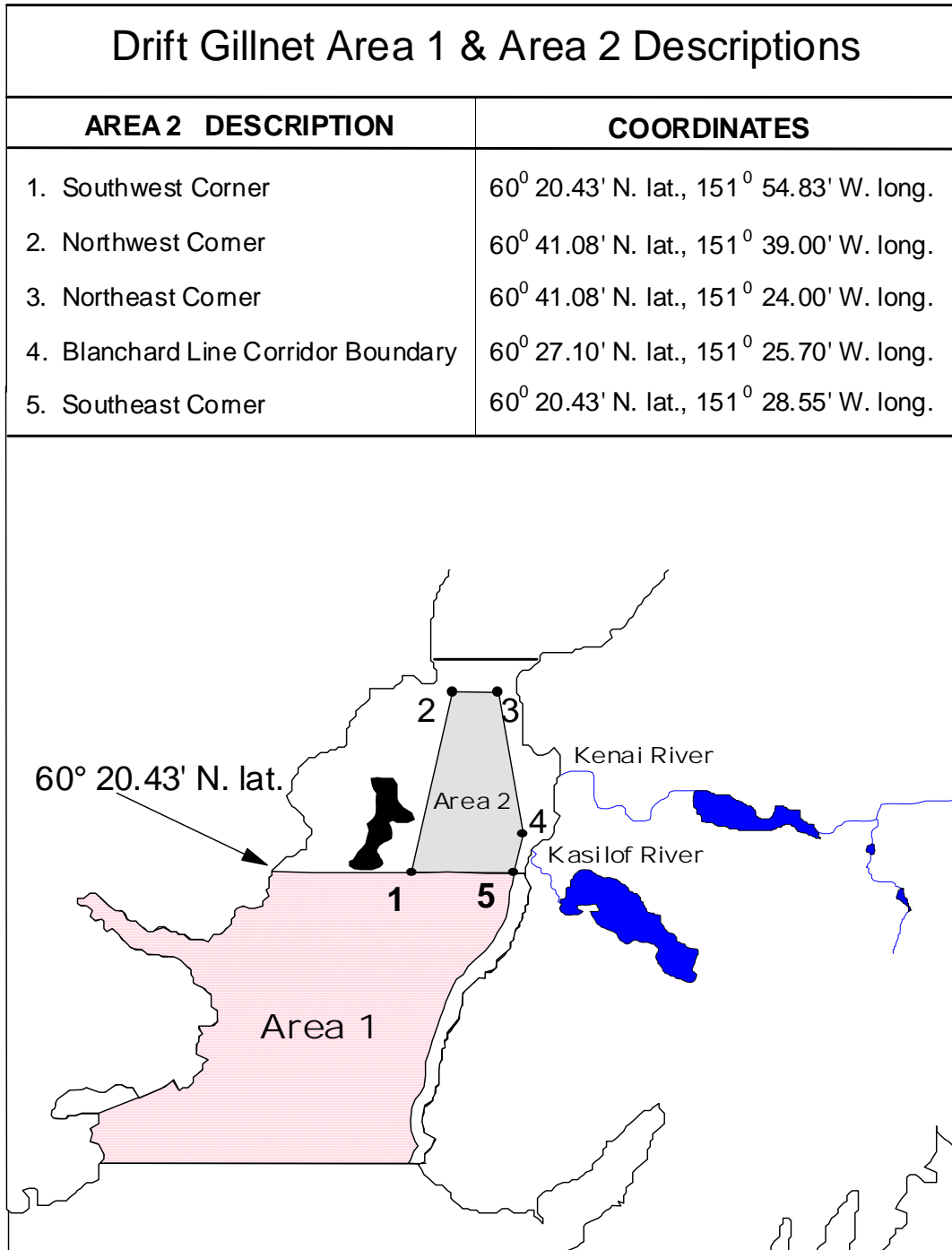


Figure 2. Map of drift gillnet fishing areas one and two.

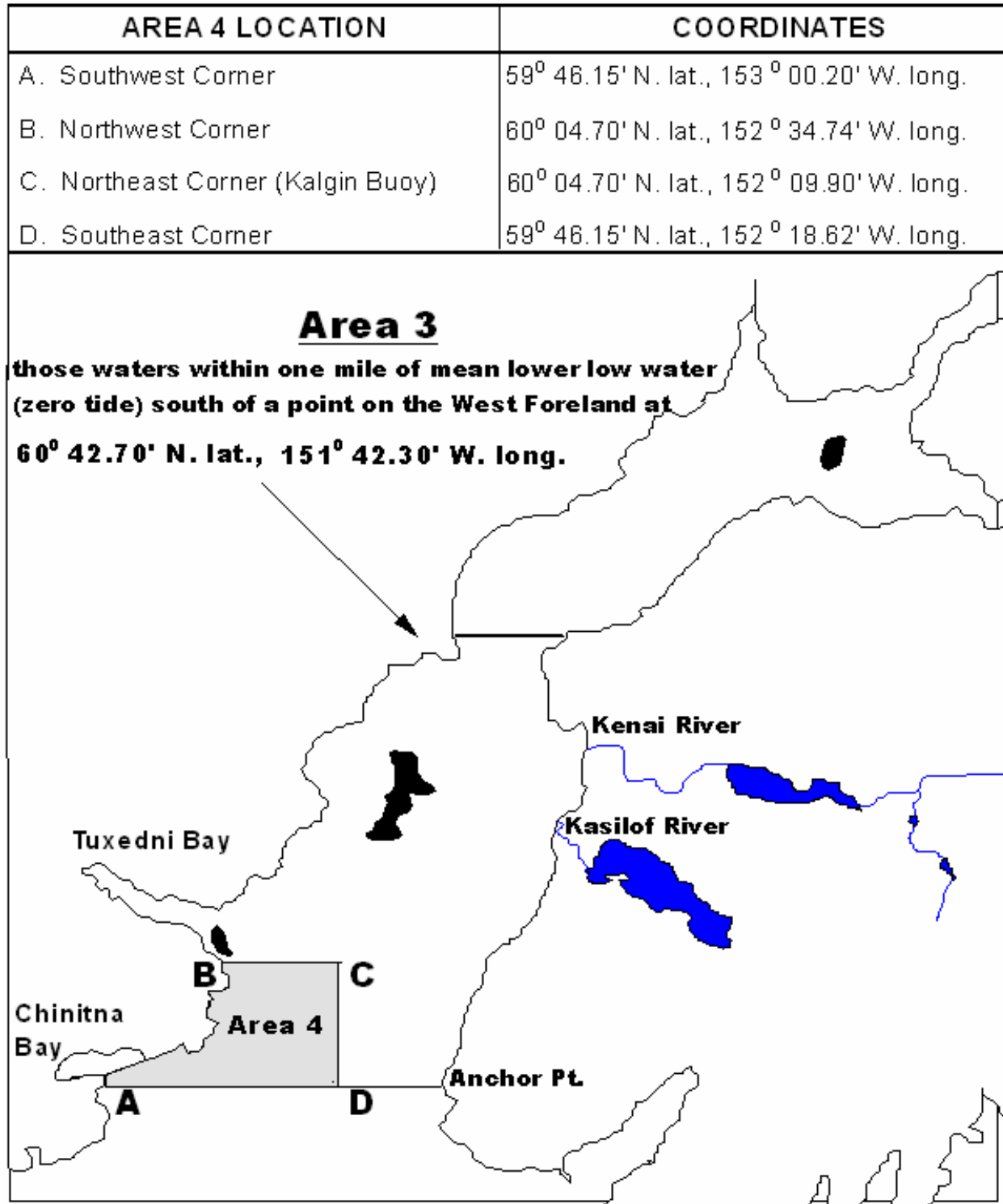


Figure 3. Map of the drift gillnet areas open beginning August 16.