

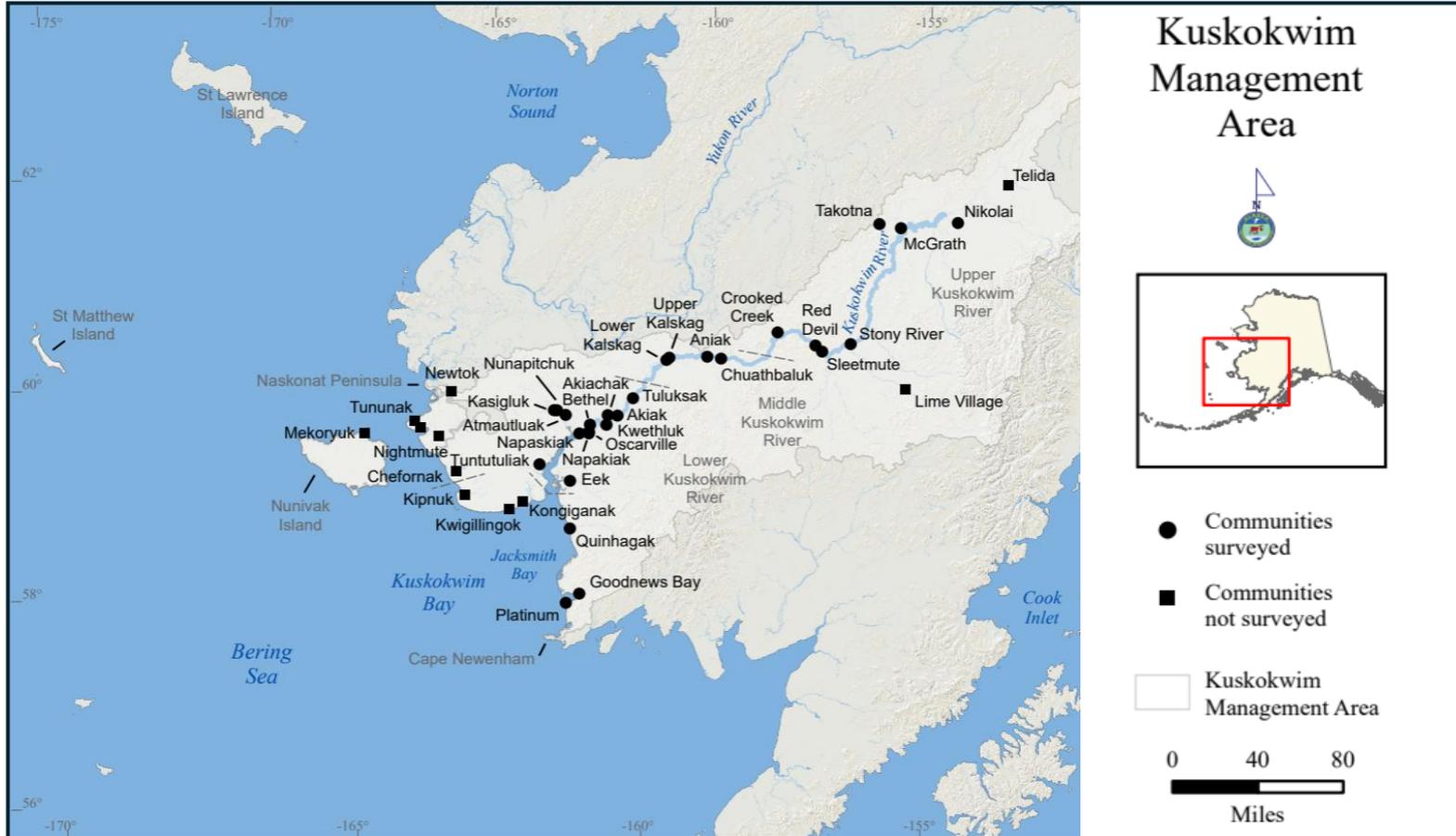
Subsistence Overview of the Kuskokwim River region



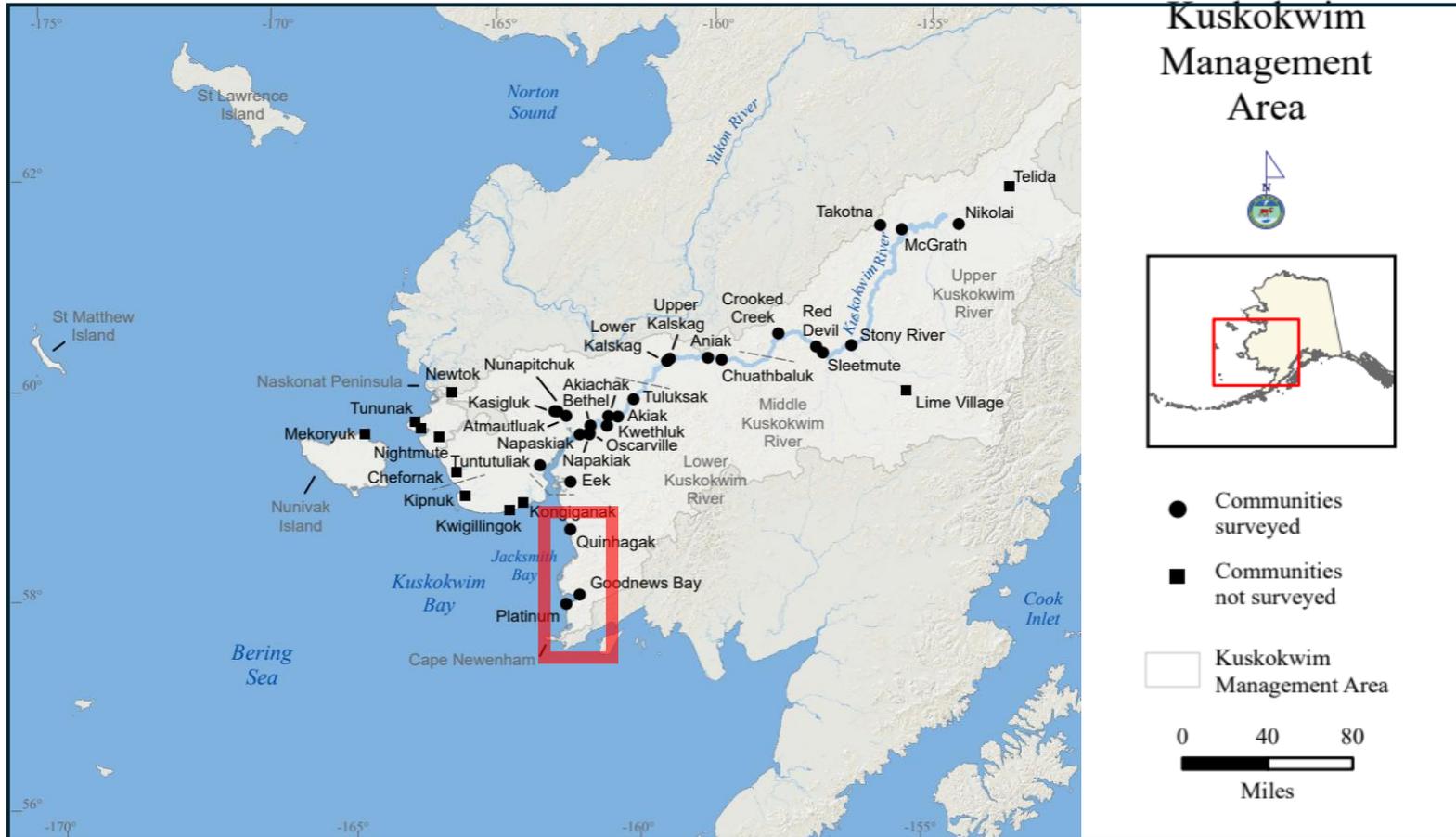
Oral report to the Board
November 2025

Tim Bembenic and Alida Trainor
Division of Subsistence

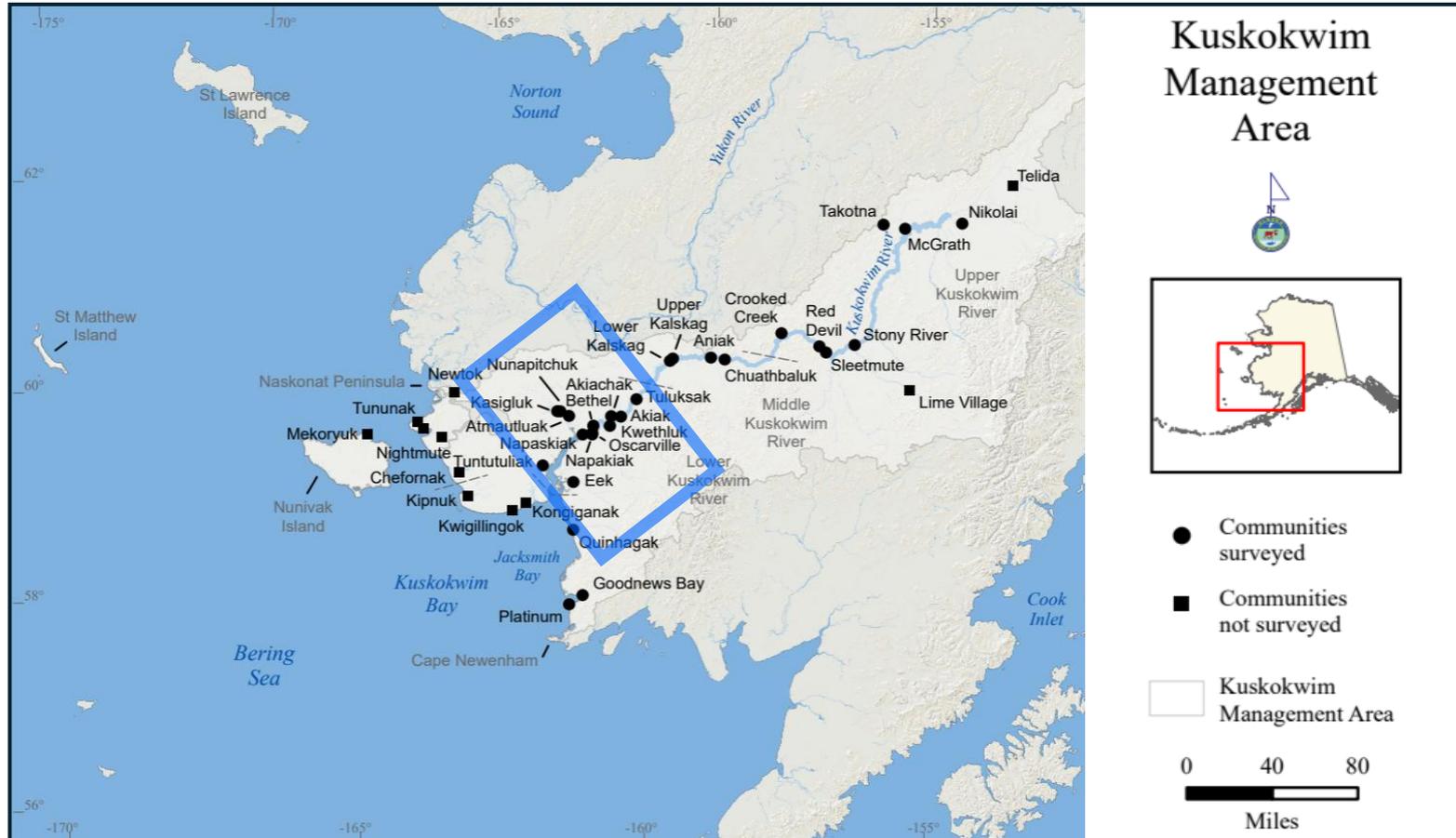
Subregions within the Kuskokwim River



South Kuskokwim bay subregion



Lower river subregion



Middle river subregion

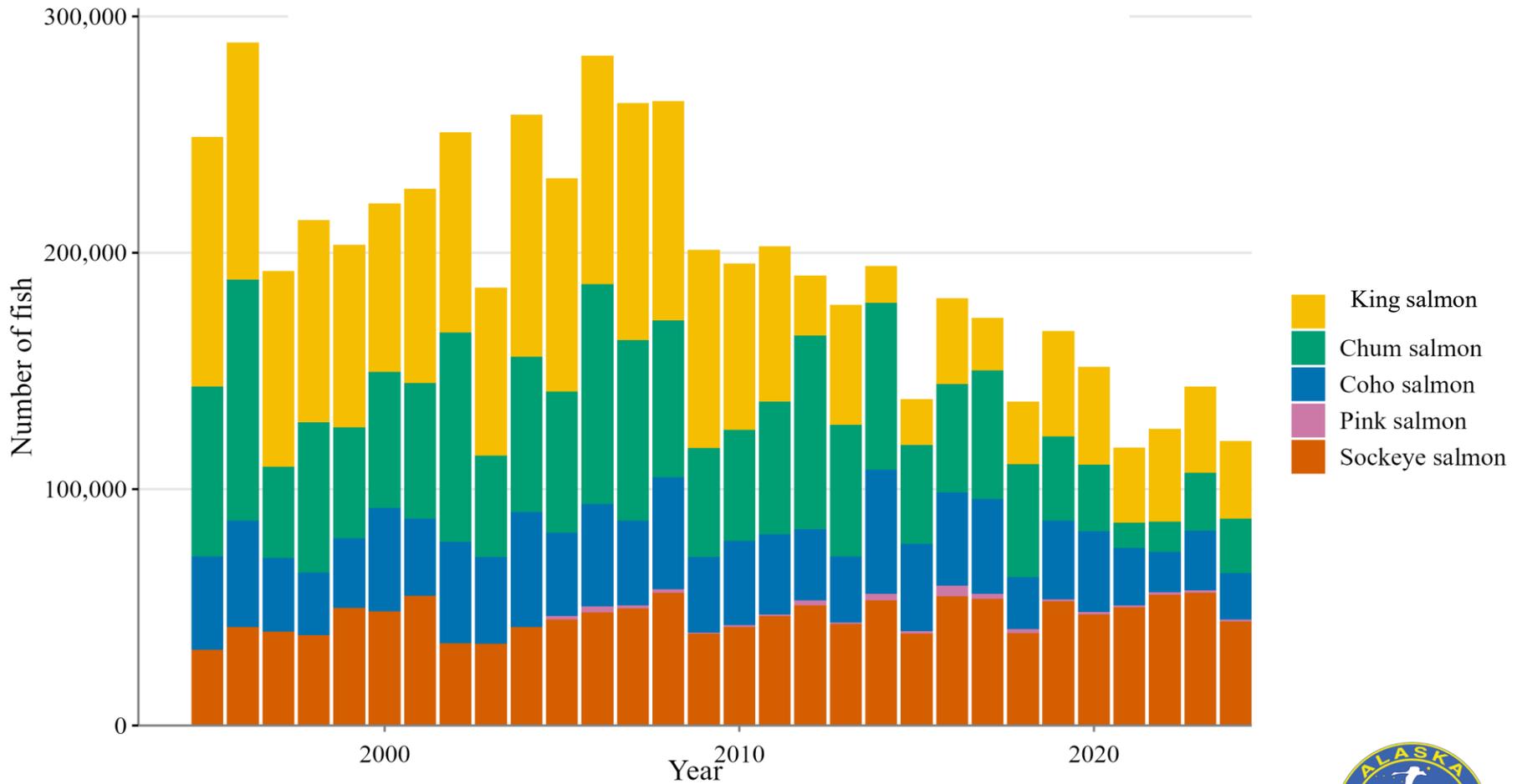


Upper river subregion



Total subsistence harvest by species

Kuskokwim Management Area, 1995–2024



Regional differences in the fishery

South Kuskokwim bay

- 7% of population in 3 communities (~1,000 people)
- Hub community is Quinhagak (~680 people)
- 166 fishing households, 8% of total Kuskokwim salmon harvest
- Coastal, not situated on Kuskokwim River mainstem
- Fishing in open ocean and local rivers
- Drift and set gillnets, rod and reel

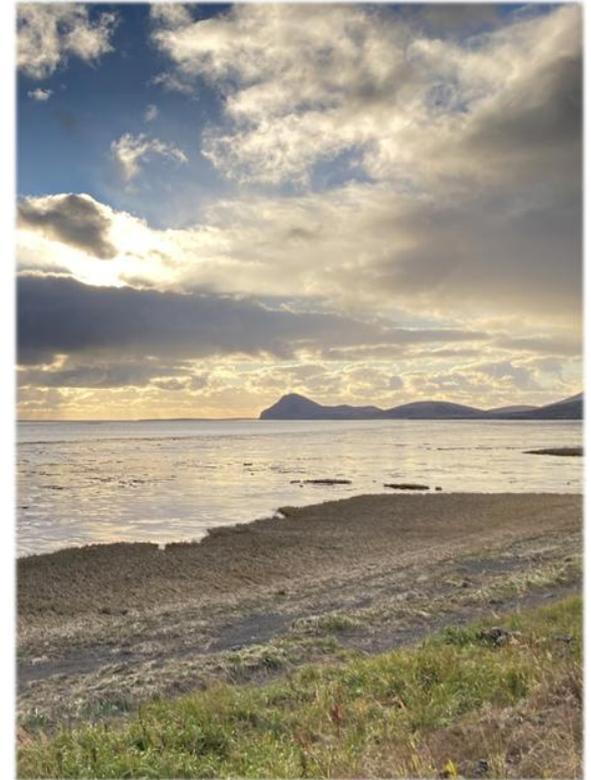


Photo credit: Heather Dorsey, ADF&G Division of Subsistence



Regional differences in the fishery

Lower river

- 82% of population is in 13 communities (~11,600 people)
- Hub community is Bethel (~5,800 people)
- 1,500 fishing households, 83% of total Kuskokwim salmon harvest
- Large, low gradient, tidal river
- Drift and set gillnets
- First opportunity on all species within mainstem river

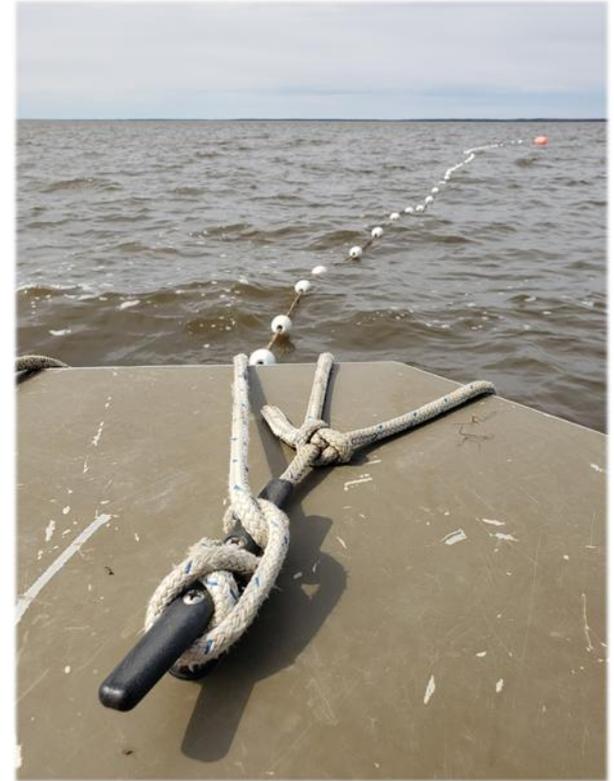


Photo credit: Tim Bembenic, ADF&G Division of Subsistence



Regional differences in the fishery

Middle river

- 7% of population in 4 communities (~900 people)
- Hub community is Aniak (~500 people)
- 167 fishing households, 6% of total Kuskokwim salmon harvest
- Narrower river with fewer channels
- Gillnets, fish wheels, rod and reel
- Lower abundance of salmon

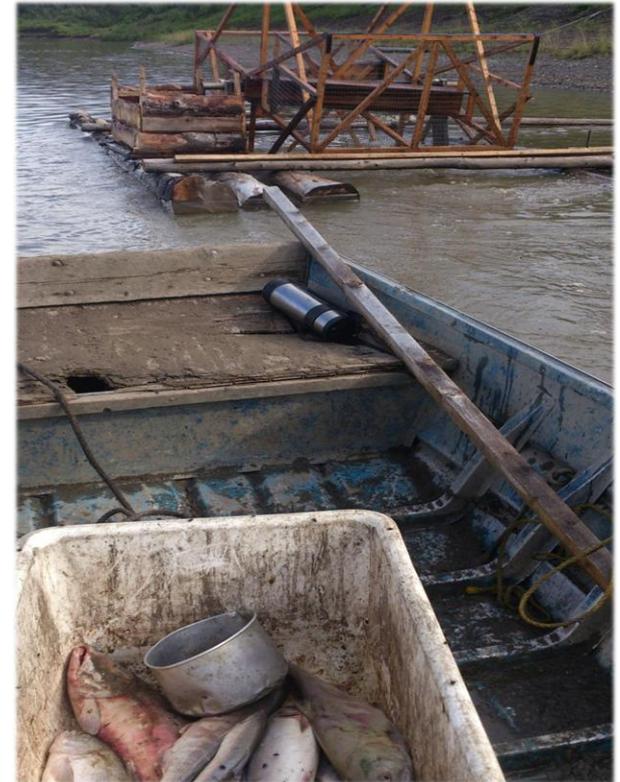


Photo credit: ADF&G Division of Subsistence

Regional differences in the fishery

Upper river

- 5% of population in 8 communities (~600 people)
- Hub community is McGrath (~300 people)
- 115 fishing households, 2% of total Kuskokwim salmon harvest
- Set gillnets, fish wheels, rod and reel
- Late season king harvests
- Low, but increasing presence of sockeye upstream of Stony River



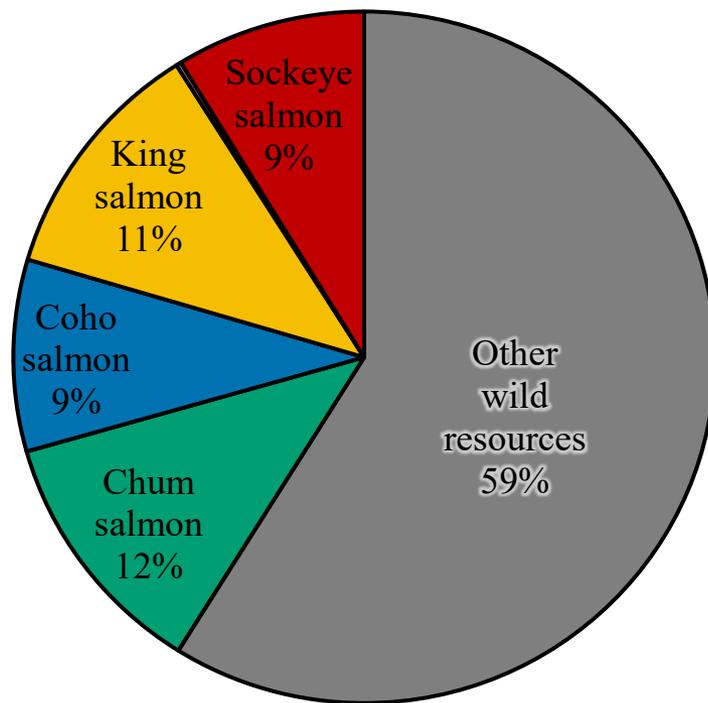
Photo credit: Isabelle Tiller, ADF&G Division of Subsistence



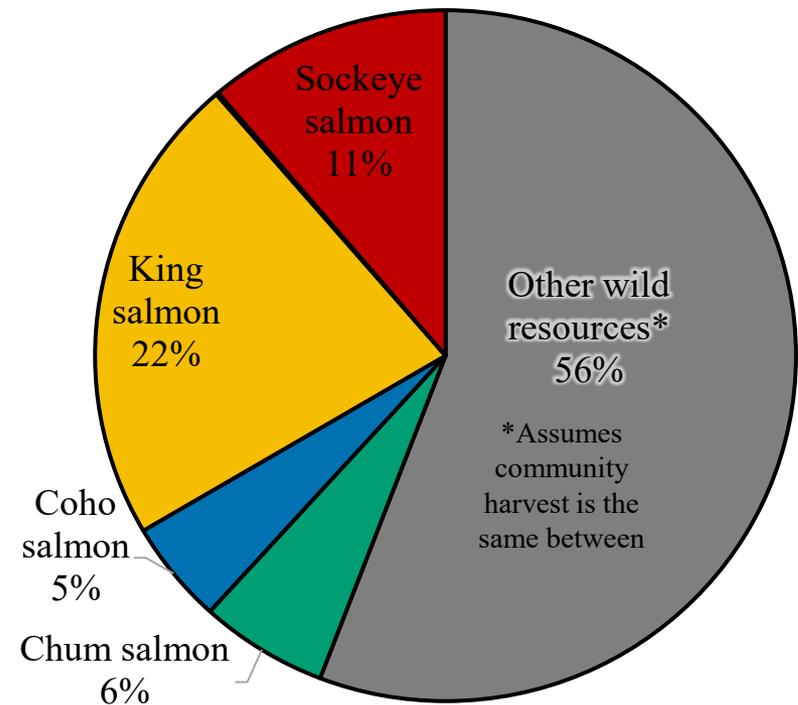
Composition of wild food harvests

Lower river communities

Average community harvest of all wild resources, 2011–2023: **304,582 lb**



Average community harvest of salmon, 2024: **134,546 lb**



*Assumes community harvest is the same between

Note: Resources totaling <1% are unlabeled
Source: ADF&G Division of Subsistence CSIS database

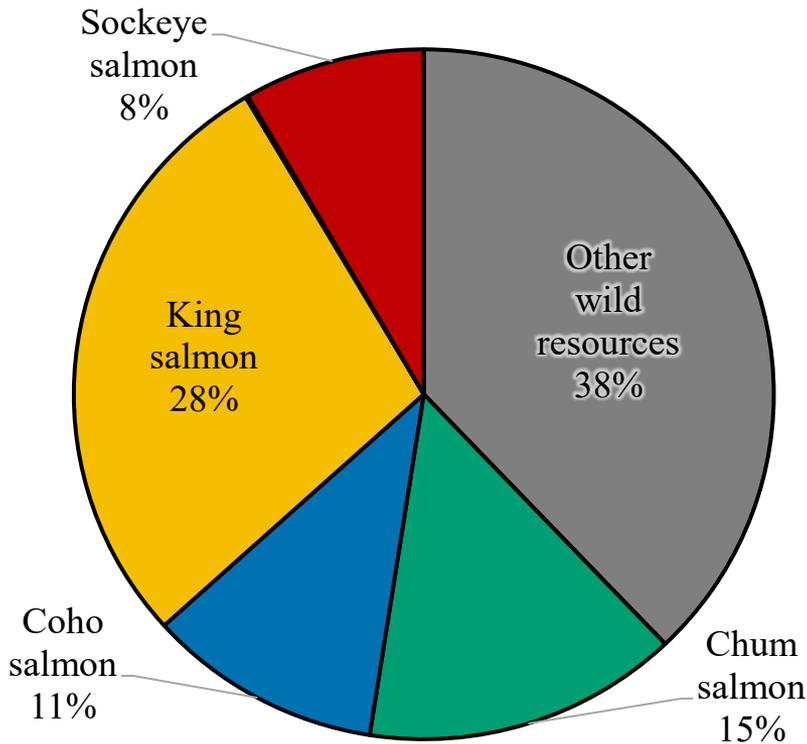
Source: ADF&G Division of Subsistence Post-season Subsistence Salmon Survey



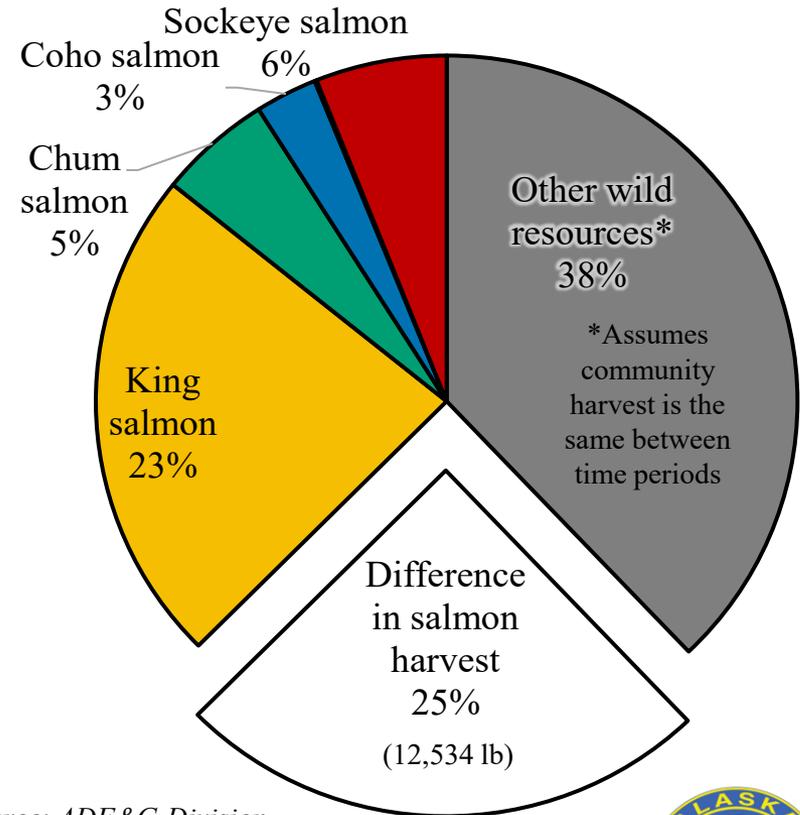
Composition of wild food harvests

Middle river communities

Average community harvest of all wild resources, 1995–2010: **50,893 lb**



Average community harvest of salmon, 2024: **19,080 lb**



Note: Resources totaling <1% are unlabeled
Source: ADF&G Division of Subsistence CSIS database

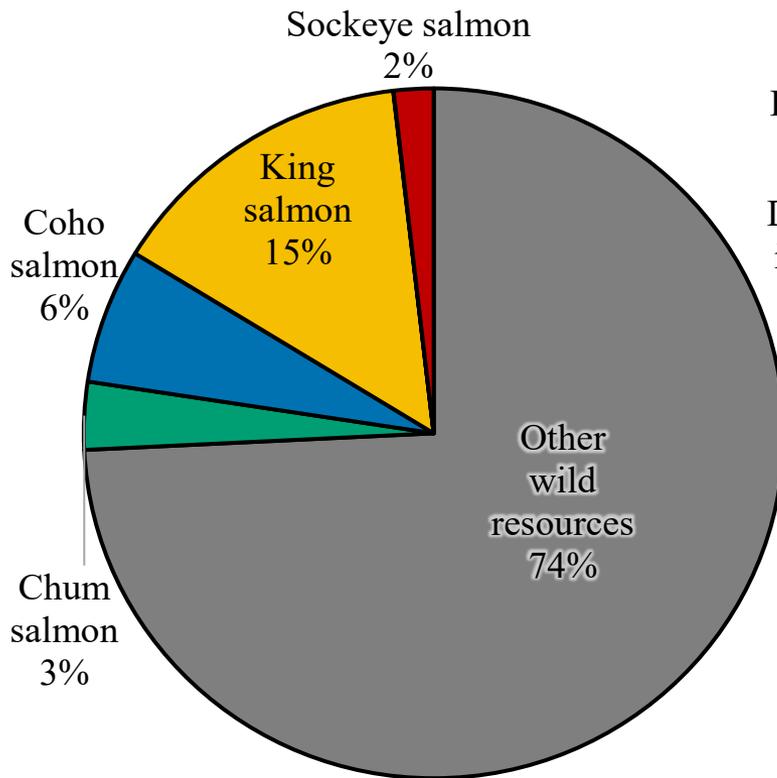
Source: ADF&G Division of Subsistence Post-season Subsistence Salmon Survey



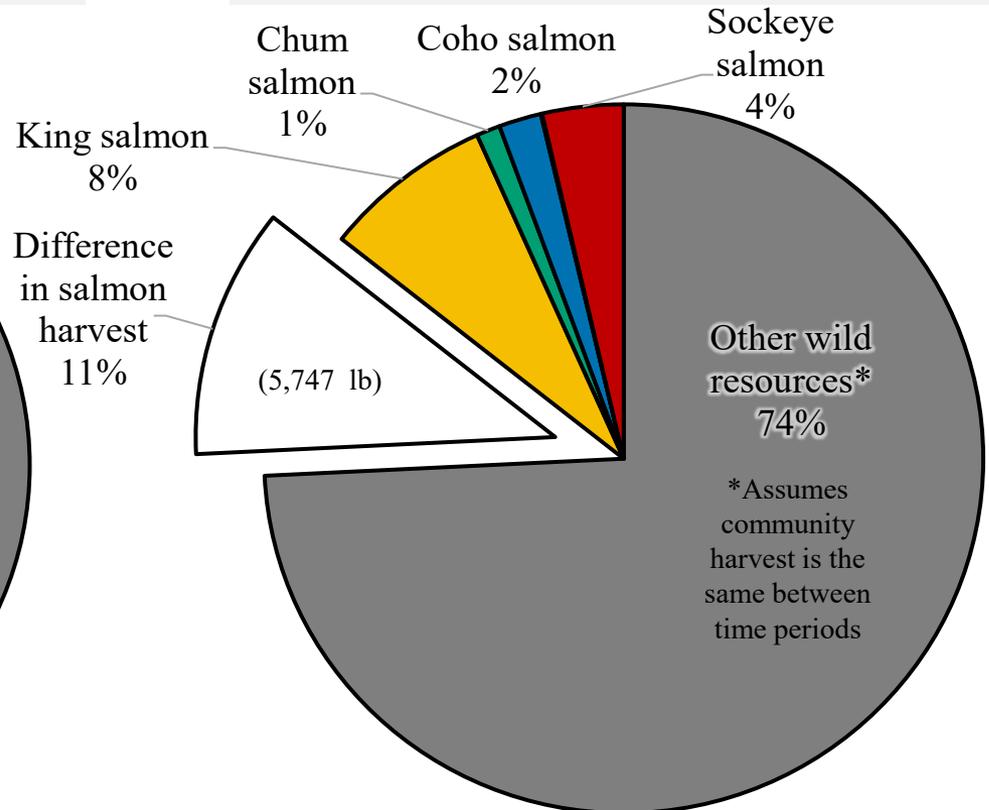
Composition of wild food harvests

Upper river communities

Average community harvest (lb) of all wild resources, 2011–2023: **50,351 lb**



Average community harvest of salmon, 2024: **7,228 lb**



Note: Resources totaling <1% are unlabeled
Source: ADF&G Division of Subsistence CSIS database

Source: ADF&G Division of Subsistence Post-season Subsistence Salmon Survey



Changing fishing patterns on the lower river

- Changes to traditional fishing practices including timing, location, preservation methods
- Loss of opportunity for generational transmission of knowledge
- Crowded fishing conditions
- Less fish camp use

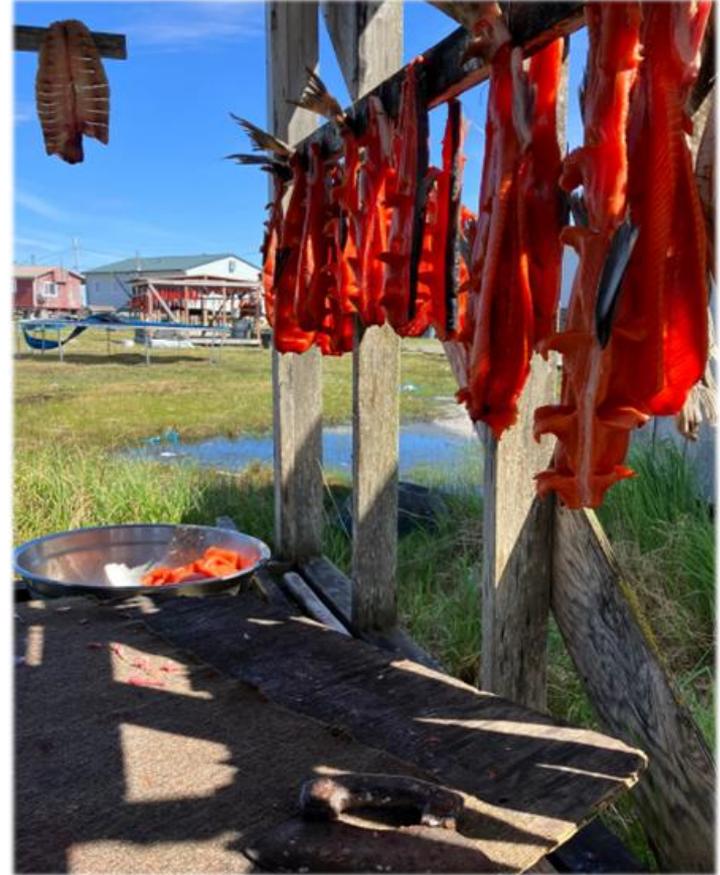


Photo credit: Tim Bembenic, ADF&G Division of Subsistence

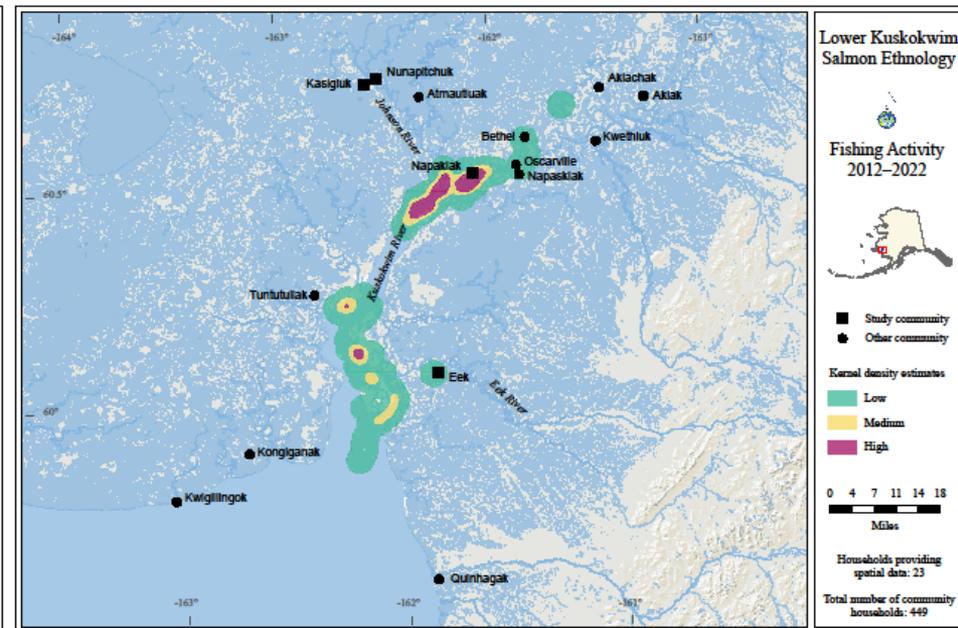
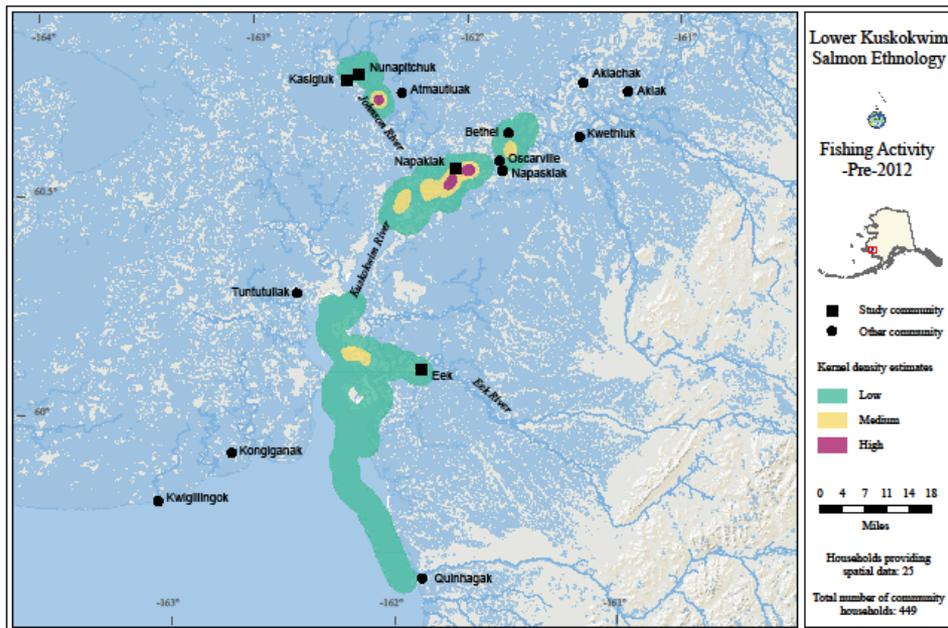


Source: Local and Traditional Knowledge of Salmon Declines and Effects of Increasing Salmon Fishery Management on the Lower Kuskokwim River (Trainor et al. 2025)

Fishing density on the lower Kuskokwim River

Pre - 2012

2012 - 2022



Source: *Local and Traditional Knowledge of Salmon Declines and Effects of Increasing Salmon Fishery Management on the Lower Kuskokwim River* (Trainor et al. 2025)



Conclusions

- Four distinct subregions that have unique fishing profiles
- Total drainagewide subsistence harvests of king, chum, and coho salmon are declining
- Composition of wild foods, including salmon, varies by subregion
- Changes to salmon fishing practices in the lower Kuskokwim River



Photo credit: Isabelle Tiller, ADF&G
Division of Subsistence

Questions