



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
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Federal Subsistence Board News Release



Forest Service

For Immediate Release
January 19, 2010

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FEDERAL SUBSISTENCE FISHERY FOR EULACHON CLOSED IN FEDERAL WATERS IN AREA 1D – BURROUGHS BAY AREA

KETCHIKAN - Ketchikan-Misty Fiords Acting District Ranger Bruce Prud'homme has announced that he is acting immediately to protect eulachon stocks in the Burroughs Bay/Unuk River area north of Ketchikan, Alaska. The District Ranger, as in-season manager, is closing the Federal subsistence eulachon fishery to all users in Federal public waters in the Burroughs Bay/Unuk River area (Area 1D) due to very low fish numbers in 2004 through 2009. The Federal Subsistence Board has delegated this in-season management authority to him. The closure will be effective 11:59 P.M., Sunday, February 21, 2010 and continue until 11:59 P.M., April 21, 2010. Any eulachon caught in this area must be immediately returned into the water unharmed.

Few eulachon have returned to the Burroughs Bay area since 2003. A similar closure was issued by the USDA Forest Service for the Burroughs Bay eulachon in 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2009. Unfortunately, once again very few eulachon were seen in the area during the 2009 monitoring efforts. Prud'homme stated "Eulachon are an important subsistence fish for many residents of Southeast Alaska, so I'm acting to protect these stocks so they have a chance to rebuild.

The strength of the eulachon return is determined by the amount of harvest by federally qualified subsistence fishermen and through observations made by Forest Service personnel. In 2004, only 1,500 pounds of eulachon were harvested and very low numbers of returning eulachon were seen by either fishermen or Forest Service personnel. In 2005 through 2009, no fish were harvested and only a few eulachon (42) were seen in the area. Monitoring efforts by the Forest Service, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), and

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fishermen since 2001, have provided baseline information, but still little is known about the eulachon after they leave the river system for saltwater. Since the projected escapement of eulachon in the Burroughs Bay area for 2010 is unknown at this time, the eulachon fishery will be closed to all users for 60 days to provide for spawning escapement needs for any fish that do return in 2010.

The USDA Forest Service manages subsistence fisheries in fresh waters of the Tongass National Forest. This special action has been coordinated with, and parallel actions are being taken by, the ADF&G as they apply to the eulachon fisheries in Burroughs Bay area.

“With this concurrent action by the ADF&G and the U.S. Forest Service, both Federal subsistence and State subsistence eulachon fishing in fresh and saltwater are closed in Area 1D for 60 days as of 11:59 P.M. Sunday, February 21, 2010,” Prud’homme said. Area 1D includes Burroughs Bay and extends north of Rudyard Bay in East Behm Canal to Chin Point in West Behm Canal. The Ketchikan-Misty Fiords Ranger District, in cooperation with ADF&G, will continue to monitor returns to this system and will provide a further update in the event that a change in the situation occurs.

For additional information, please contact Bruce Prud’homme (907) 228-4100 or Will Young at (907) 225-2137. Additional information on the Federal Subsistence Management Program can be found on the web at <http://alaska.fws.gov/asm/home.html>.

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