

Status of Arctic Yukon and Kuskokwim (AYK) Fisheries

House Fisheries Committee

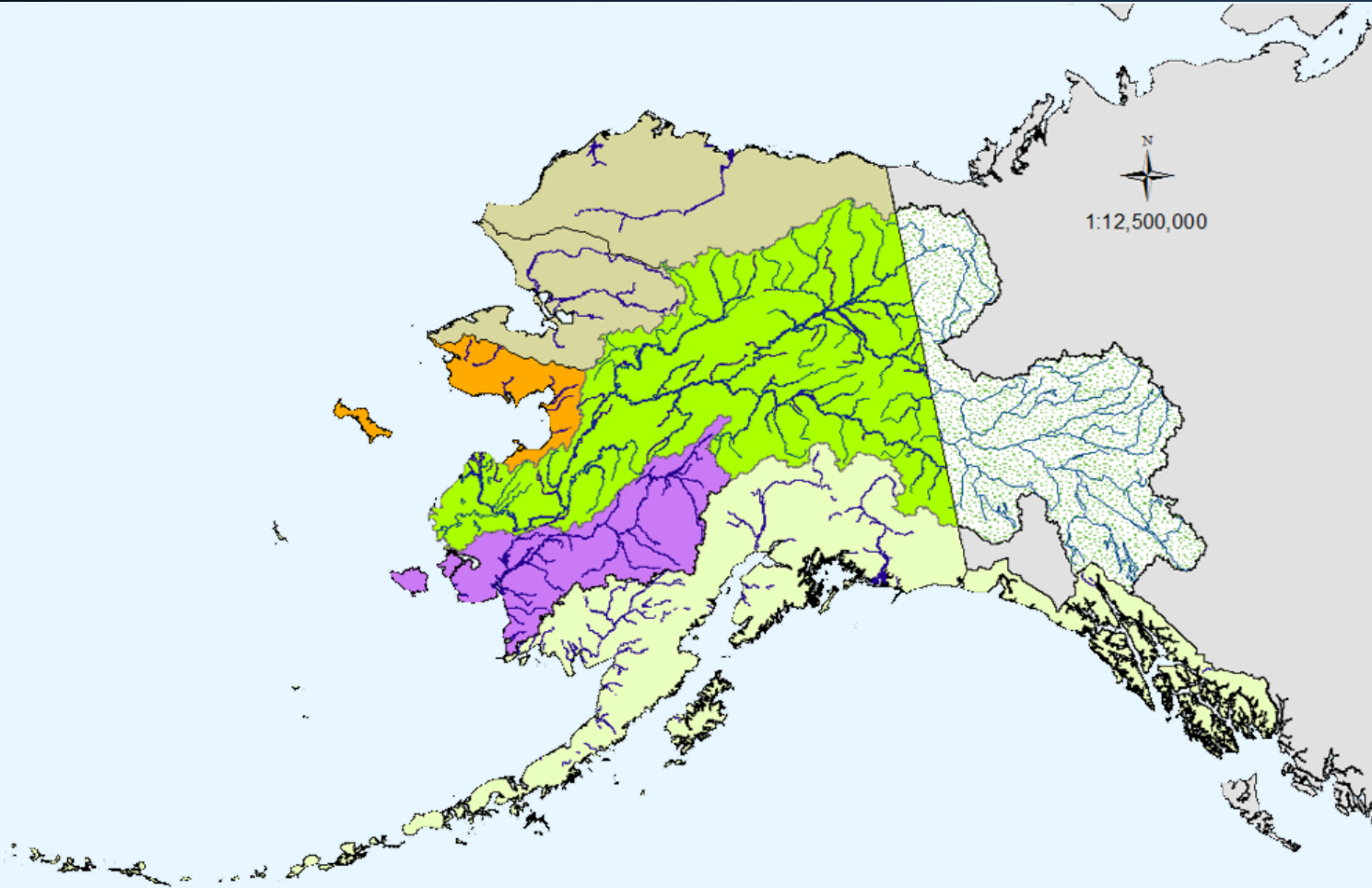
January 31, 2023

Doug Vincent-Lang, Commissioner





Alaska Department of Fish and Game



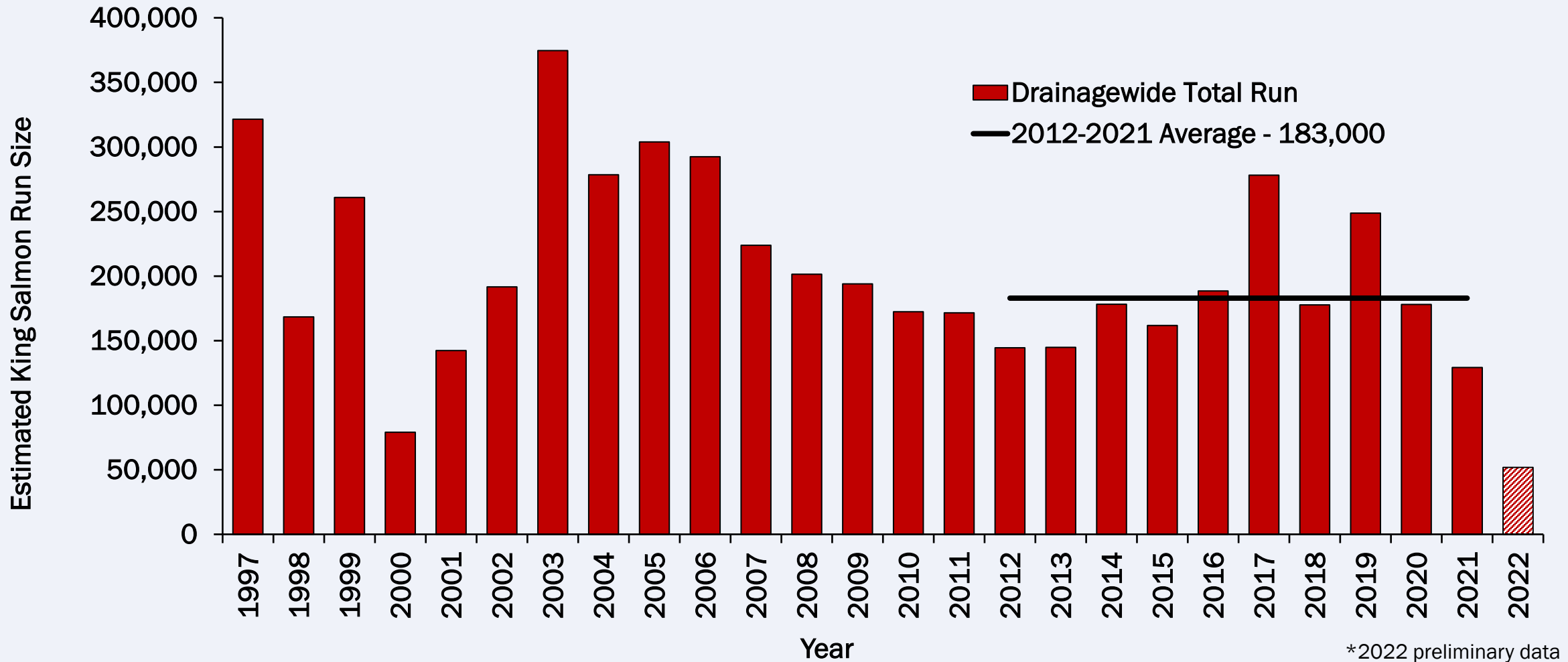
AYK Region Salmon Management Areas



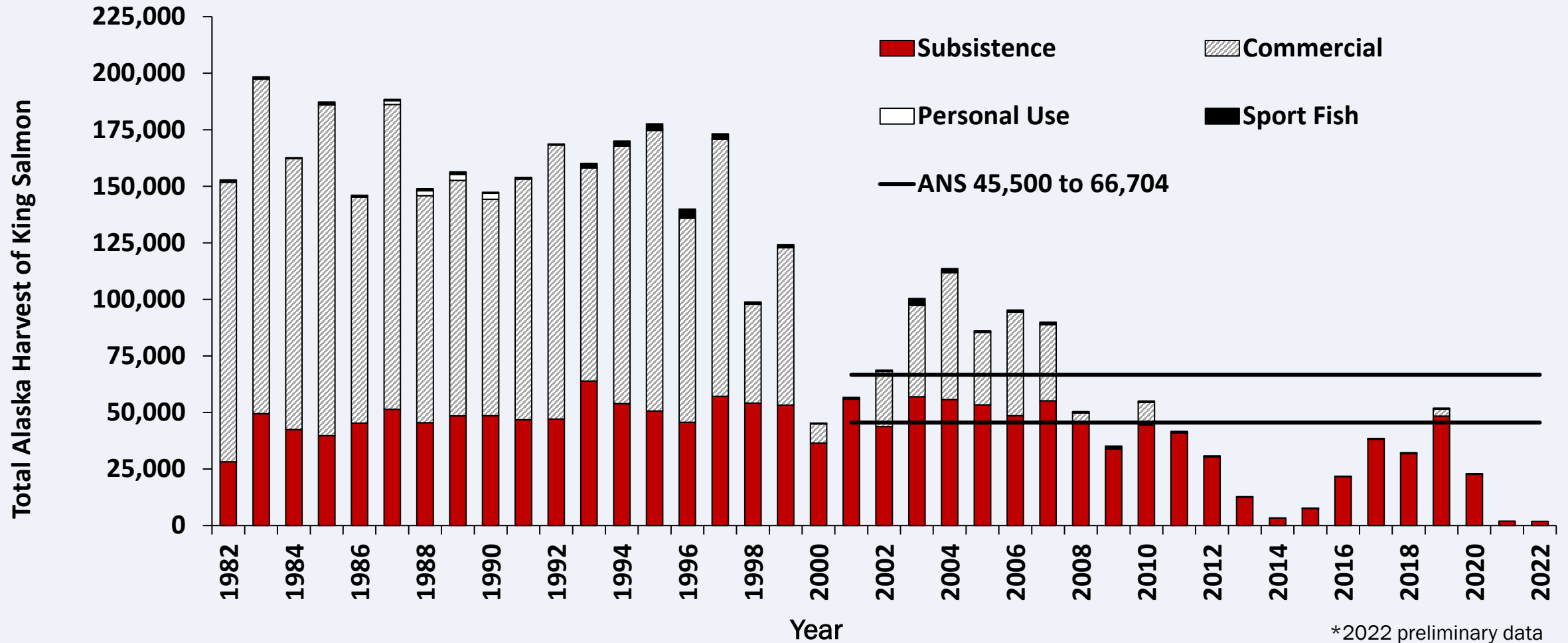
AYK Region Salmon Management Areas

-  Kotzebue Sound-Arctic Area
-  Norton Sound-Port Clarence Area
-  Yukon Area
-  Kuskokwim Area

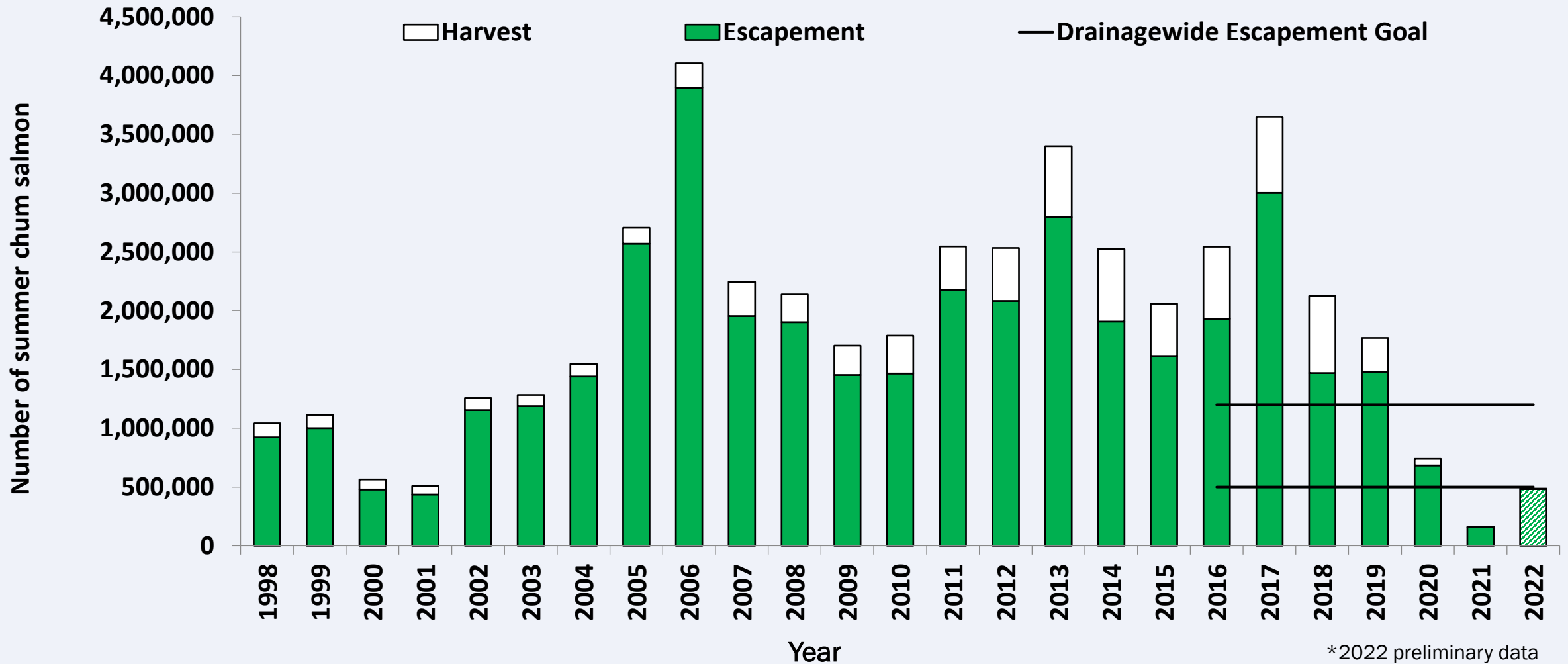
Yukon River King Salmon Drainagewide Total Run



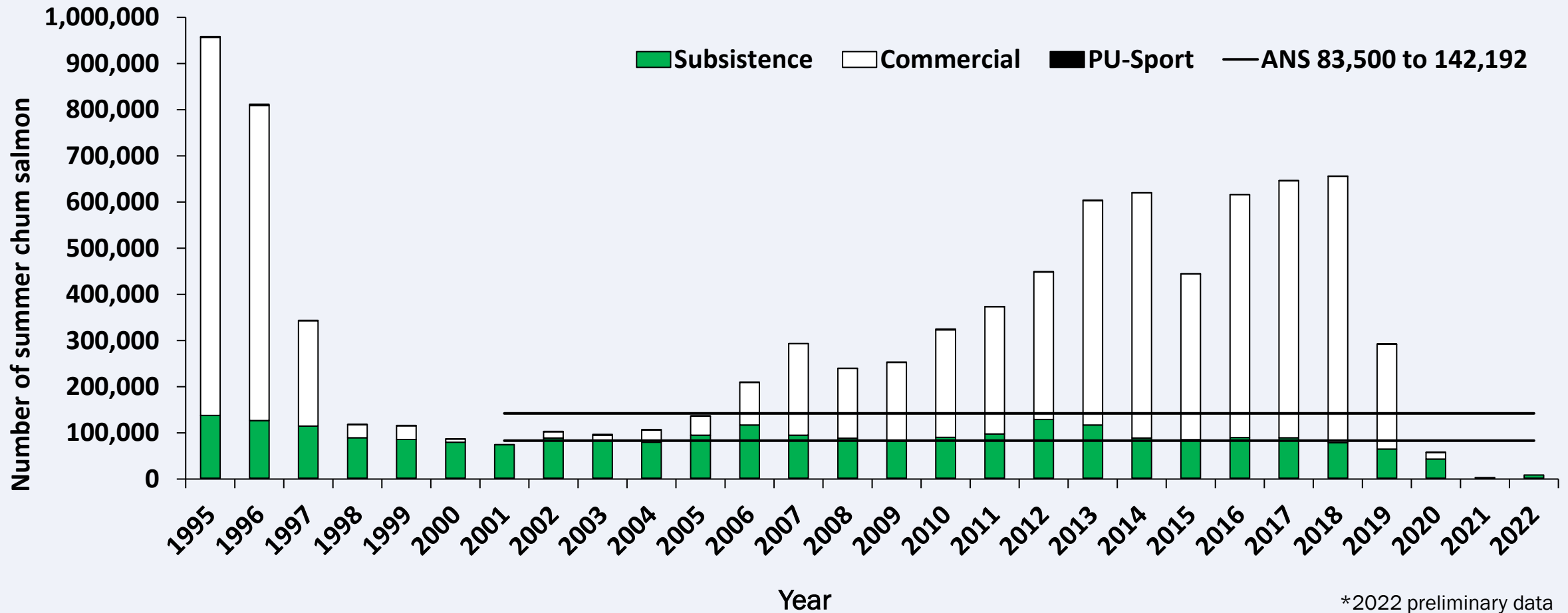
Yukon River King Salmon Harvest



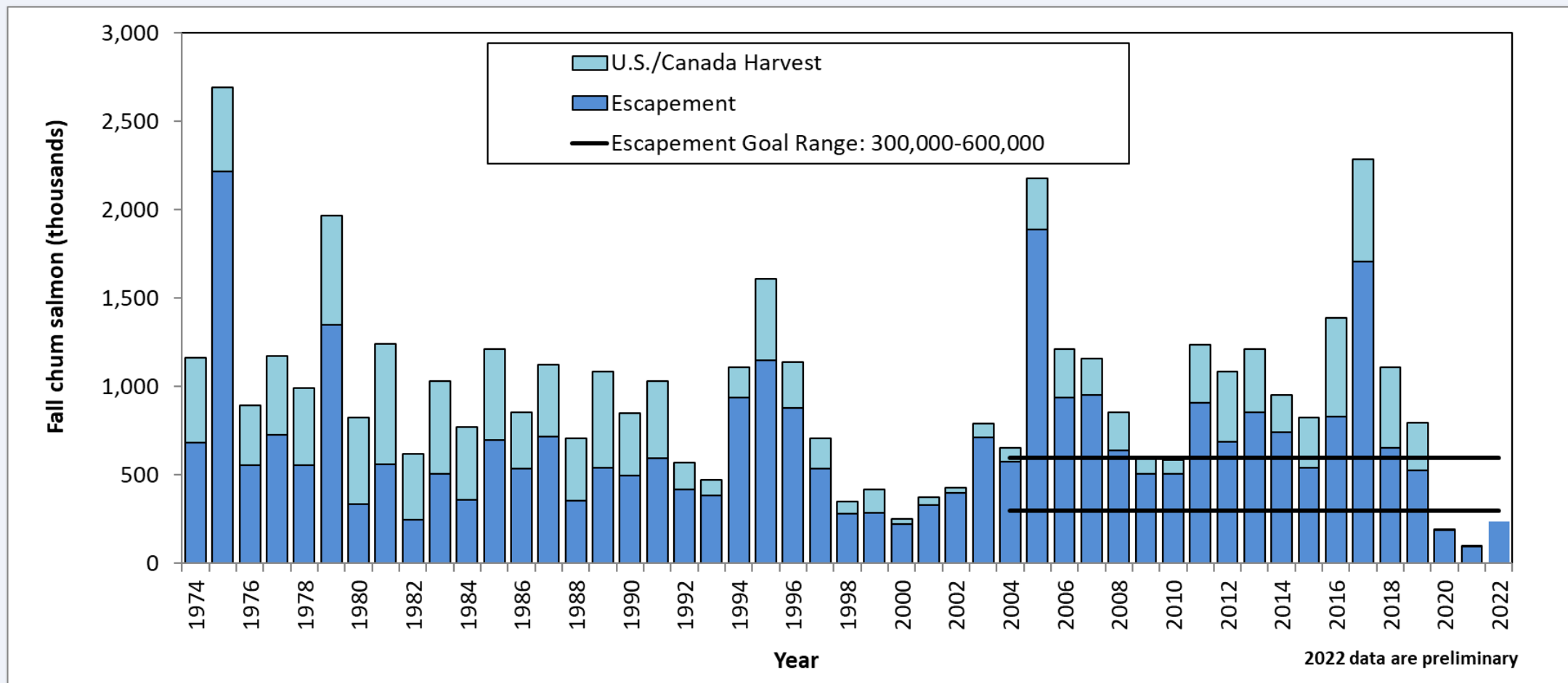
Yukon River Summer Chum Salmon Total Run



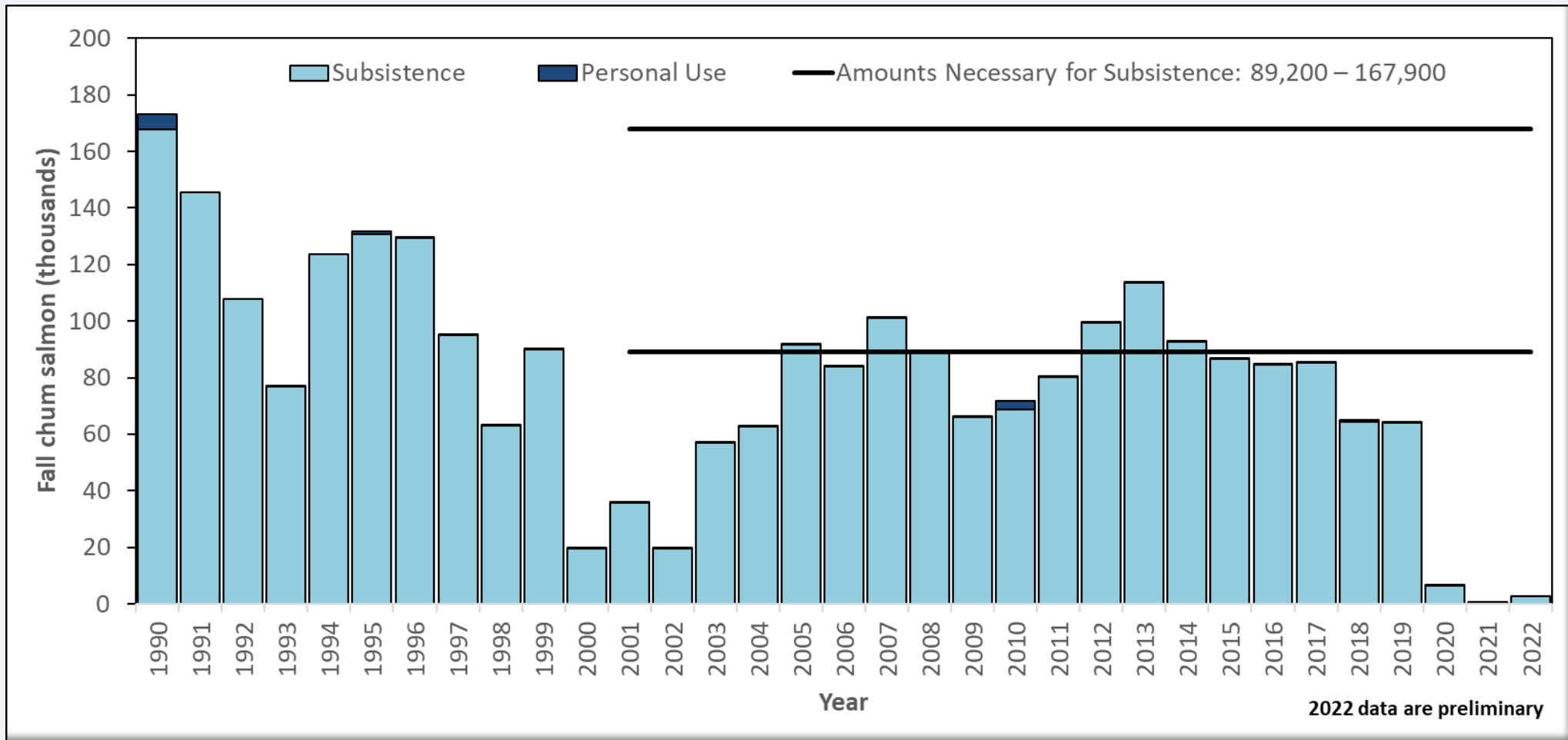
Yukon River Summer Chum Salmon Harvest by Type



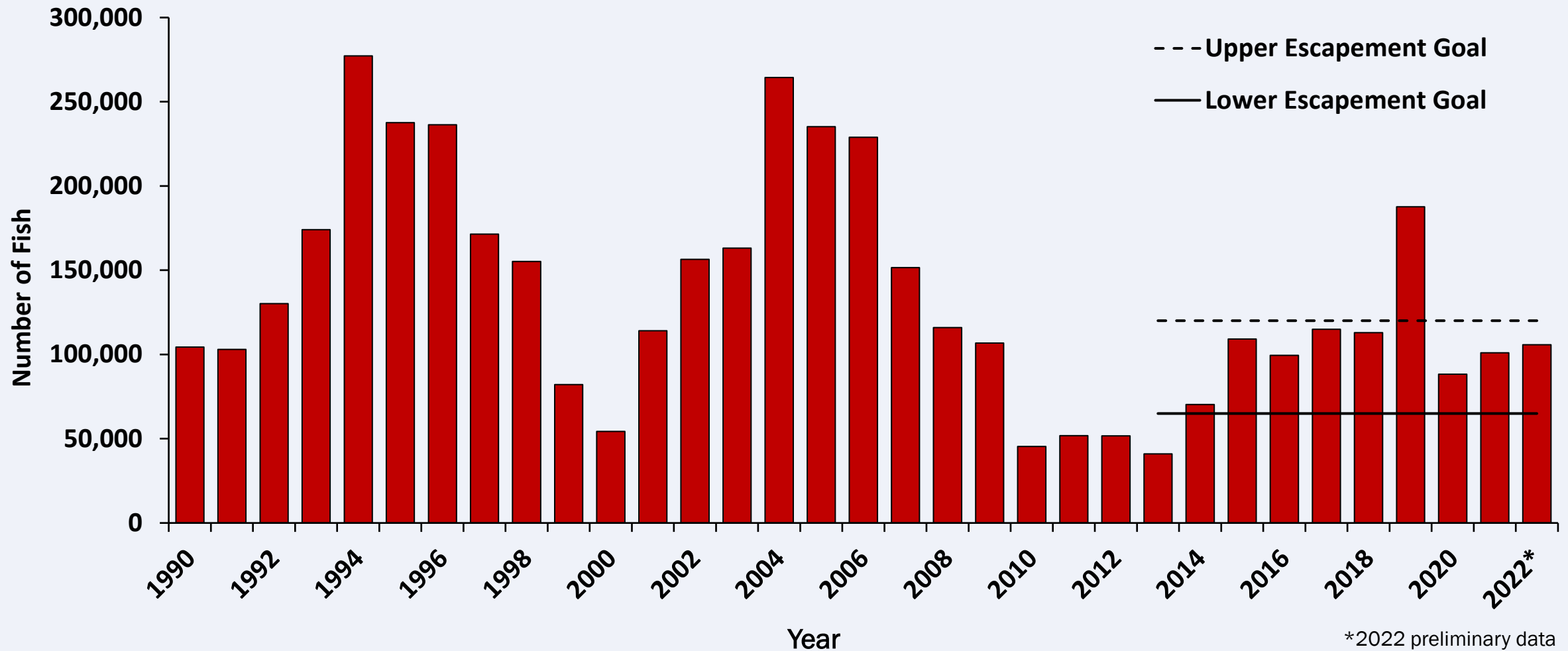
Yukon River Fall Chum Salmon Run Size



Yukon River Fall Chum Salmon Subsistence & Personal Use Harvests

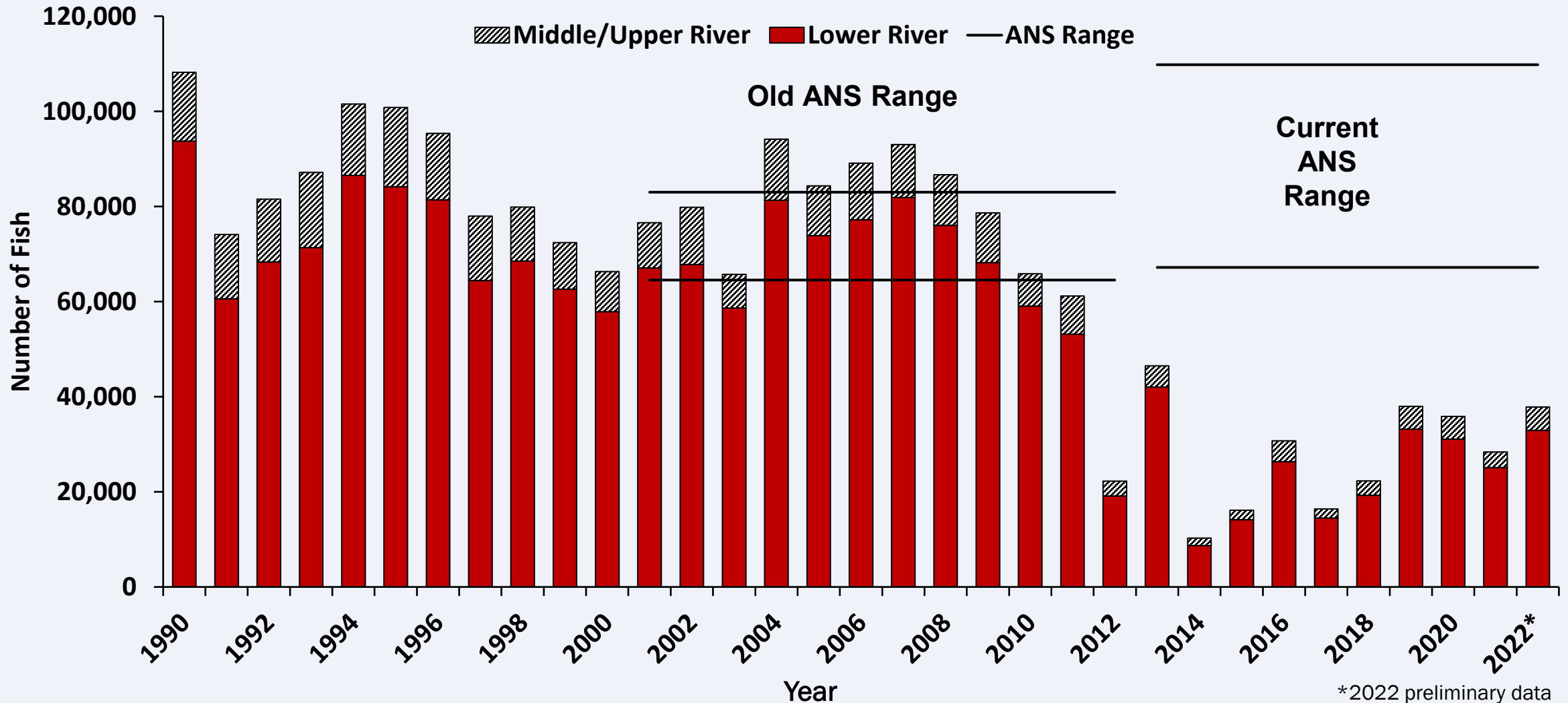


Kuskokwim River King Salmon Escapement, 1990-2022



*2022 preliminary data

Kuskokwim River King Salmon Subsistence Harvest, 1990–2022

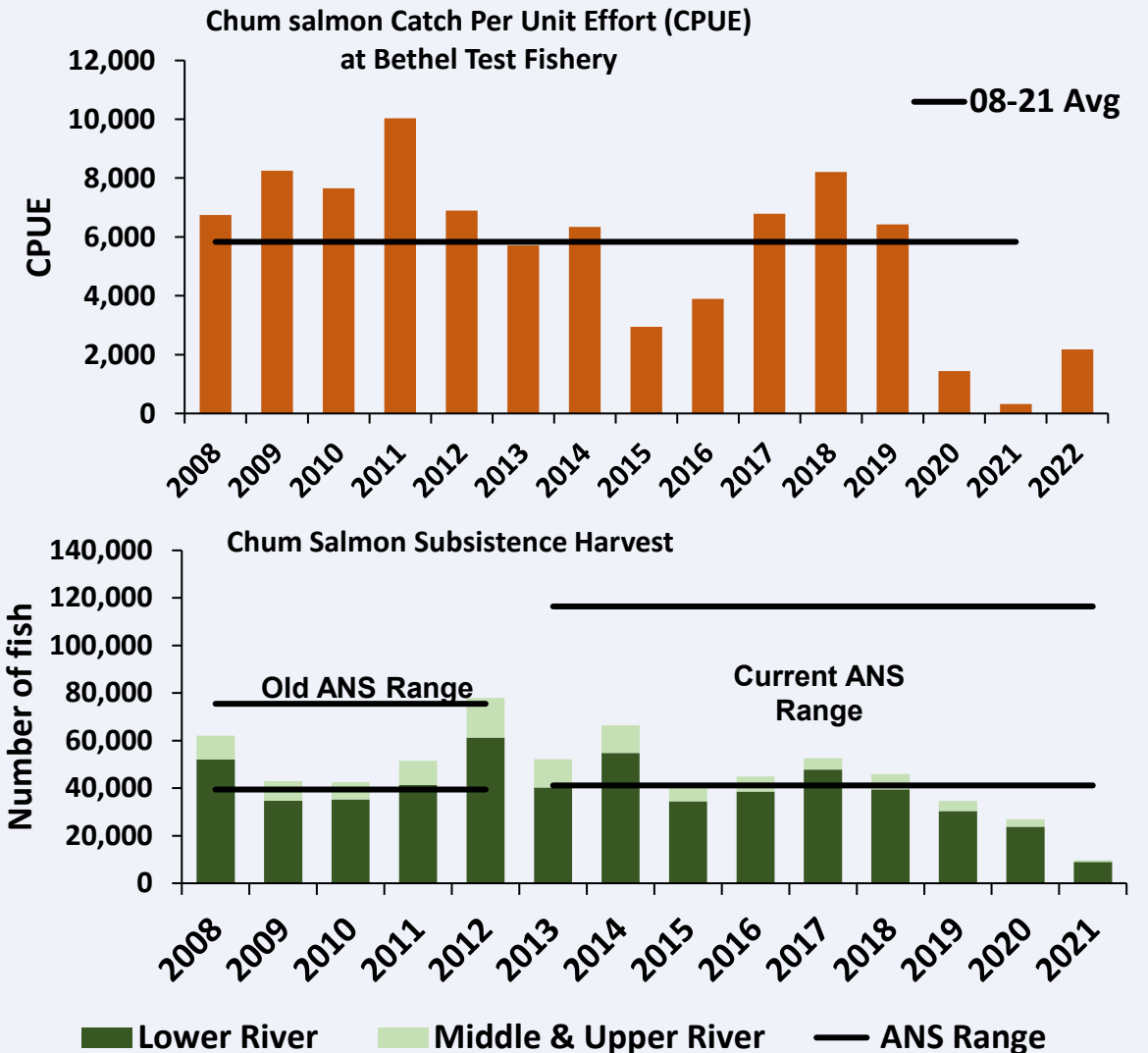


*2022 preliminary data

Kuskokwim River Chum Salmon



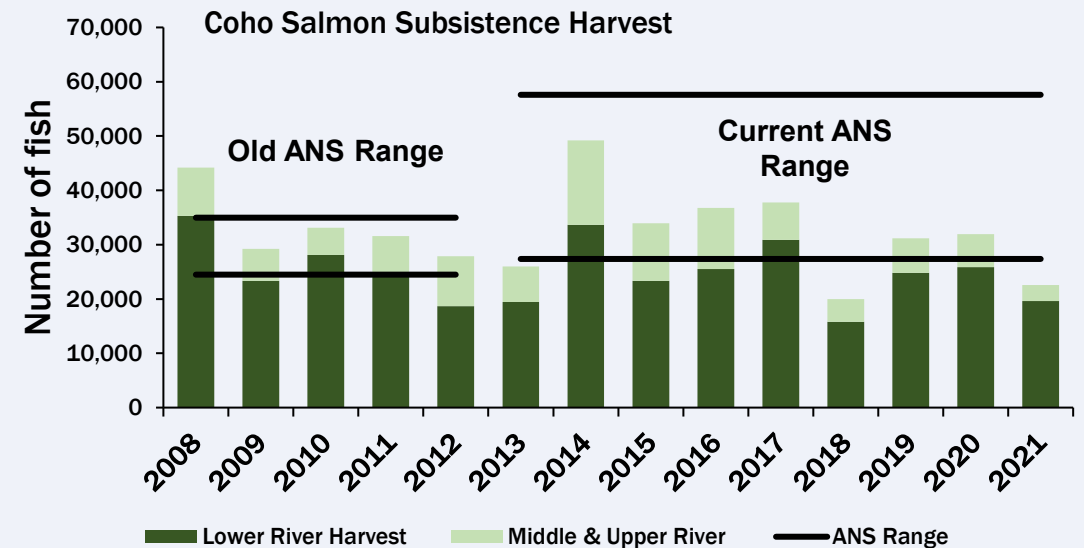
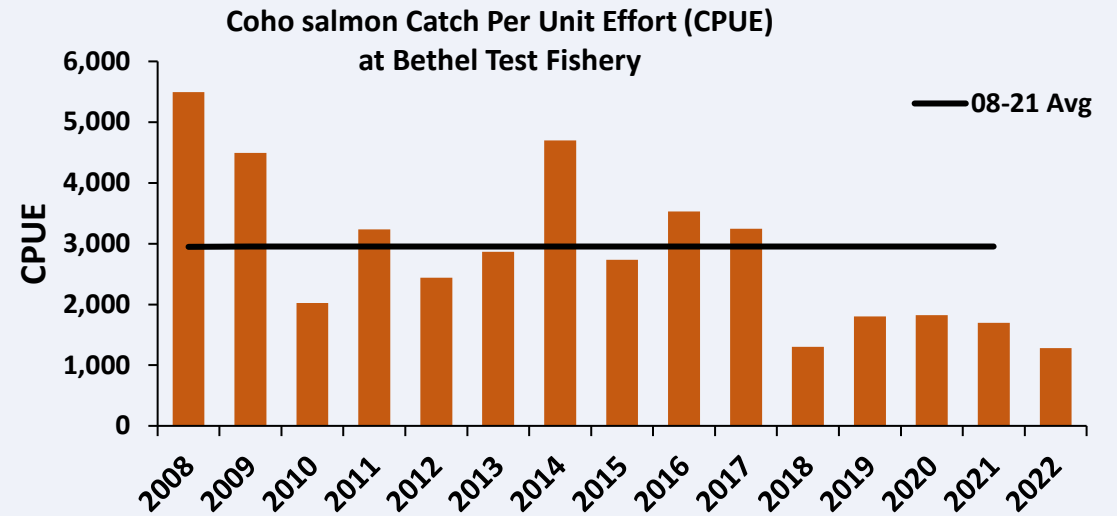
- Dramatic decline in run size beginning 2020
 - 2021 was lowest on record
- The single escapement goal not met 2021 or 2022
- July subsistence fishing restrictions
 - Mainstem and tributary gillnet closures
 - Gillnet restrictions
 - Limited time and area openings
- ANS has not been achieved since 2018
- No commercial processor since 2015
 - Catcher/Seller



Kuskokwim River Coho Salmon



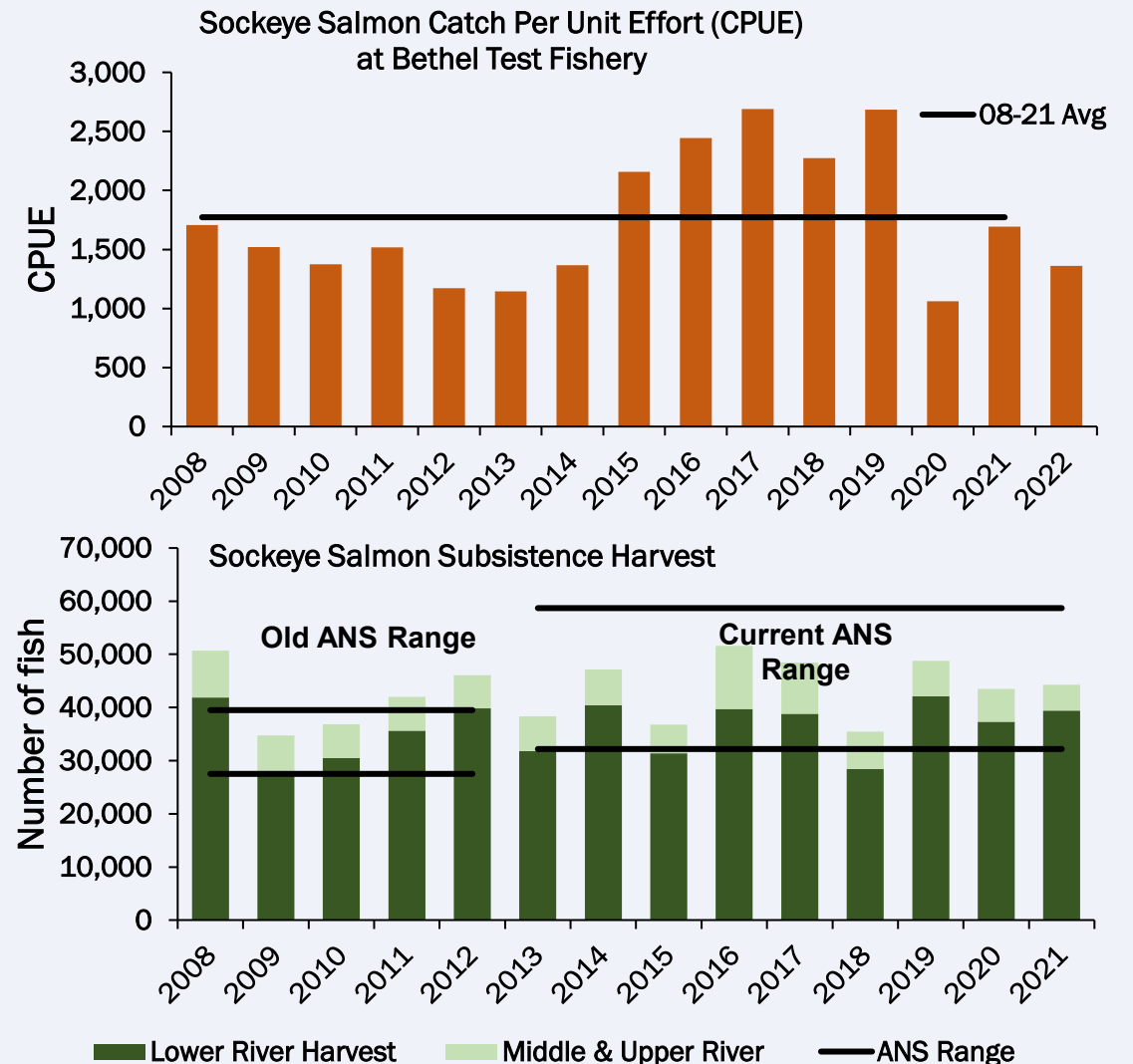
- Below average runs since 2018
- Subsistence fishing restrictions in 2022
 - Kuskokwim River subsistence fishery closed August 17 - September 15
- Escapement goals achieved annually since 2013, except 2018 and 2022
- 2013-2021: ANS achieved 6 of 9 years
 - Unlikely to be achieved in 2022



Kuskokwim River Sockeye Salmon



- Continued consistent run sizes
 - Lake type have been the dominate component since 2020
- The single escapement goal has been met or exceeded annually
- ANS has been achieved since 2013



Summary



Reduced Productivity

- King salmon over the past decade
- Chum and coho salmon over the past three years

Results of Reduction

- Closed commercial, sport and personal use fisheries
- Severely restricted or closed subsistence fisheries
- Impact on local communities, rural culture and practices, and economies

Increased Productivity

- Sockeye salmon
- limited commercial opportunities due to incidental catch of chinook, coho or chum salmon



What are we doing about this?

Food Security

- Distributed food to communities impacted by closures
- Funds now exhausted
- Working with non-governmental organizations to fill need if it arises again

ADF&G Marine Science Program

- Researching what is happening in the ocean
- Most evidence is pointing to low marine survival and productivity

International Year of the Salmon Marine Survey Program

- Department participated and provided funding
- Data analysis ongoing

Continued...



Bycatch Task Force

- Review bycatch issue and make recommendations
- Report handed to Governor in December 2022
- Being used by the Board of Fisheries (BOF) and North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC)

Other Actions

- Worked with industry to address chum salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea trawl fisheries
- Formed a committee to develop a problem statement and list of alternatives for analyses
- Worked with fishermen to reduce harvest of chum salmon in South Peninsula mixed stock fisheries
- Collected new genetic information to inform BOF deliberations on South Peninsula fisheries this February

Continued...



Fisheries Disasters

- Developing spend plans for identified fisheries disasters
- Included research as an element of each spend plan
- Worked with Congress to ensure communities have access to disaster funds

Working with Partners to Address Science Issues Inriver

- Studying Ichthyophonous as factor affecting inriver returns of chinook salmon
- Beginning inriver radio telemetry study to inform placement of a mid-river sonar in the Yukon River
- Beginning study of fall chum near the border to determine inriver factors affecting survival

Continued...



Other Efforts

- Working with BOF and Canada on options to provide a limited number of salmon for culture camps
- Exploring use of educational permit system to provide a limited number of summer chum for culture camps to help maintain culture while the runs rebuild
- Working with Canada on ideas for rehabilitation via hatcheries in the Yukon
- Open to permitting inriver incubation boxes in the Kuskokwim and Norton Sound areas

Federal

- Working with Federal Partners to leverage Infrastructure and Build Back Better dollars
- Cooperation in the Kuskokwim River hindered by US government's lawsuit against Alaska