



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**No. 18-103**

**Contact:** Austin Baird, Press Secretary – (907) 310-9761  
Berett Wilber, Deputy Press Secretary – (907) 419-3931

**Governor Walker declares economic disaster for Chignik fisheries**  
*Failed sockeye season poses significant harm to Chignik communities*

AUGUST 23, 2018 JUNEAU – Because of dramatic declines in salmon returns this year, Governor Walker declared an economic disaster for the Chignik fisheries region today. Current harvest rates are low enough to threaten the communities of Chignik, Chignik Lagoon, Chignik Lake, Perryville, and Ivanof Bay, which depend on the subsistence and commercial availability of salmon.

- With a preliminary harvest count of 128 sockeye salmon, the 2018 sockeye harvest was only .00922% of the prior ten-year average.
- Escapement counts for 2018 for all salmon in the Chignik Management Area (as of July 29, 2018) are 54 percent of what they were on the same date in 2017.

This economic disaster declaration allows the Legislature to appropriate money for assistance grants and allows the Governor to make budget recommendations to accelerate the region’s existing capital projects and provide funding for new ones. It also waives specific provisions of Alaska Statute and regulations relating to capital project requirements, employment, and contractor preference.

In addition to the disaster declaration, Governor Walker directed the Division of Economic Development to commit as many resources as possible to assist salmon permit holders who participate in the Commercial Fishing Revolving Loan program and may be unable to meet the terms of their loans because of Chignik’s low harvest

“Chignik is used to catching more than a million sockeye every year. This year, they caught 128 fish,” said Governor Walker. “Salmon is *the* economic and subsistence staple in these communities and the failure of this year’s fishery is a one-two punch. It is critical that we do what we can to support them as they work to recover: that’s what we’re here for.”

Additional support for Chignik area residents is available from the Division of Public Assistance, which provides food relief and financial assistance to Alaskans in need. The division offers programs such as the Heating Assistance Program, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, and the Alaska Temporary Assistance Program. For information about the Division of Public Assistance, visit [dhss.alaska.gov/dpa/Pages/default.aspx](http://dhss.alaska.gov/dpa/Pages/default.aspx). For more information about the Division of Economic Development, visit [commerce.alaska.gov/web/ded/](http://commerce.alaska.gov/web/ded/).