

Sam Cotten
Commissioner
P.O. Box 115526
Juneau, AK 99811-5526
www.adfg.alaska.gov



PRESS RELEASE

Office of the Commissioner

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – June 8, 2017

CONTACT: Morgan Foss, Special Assistant to the Commissioner, (907) 465-6137, morgan.foss@alaska.gov

ADF&G Impacts of Potential Government Shutdown

[Juneau, AK] – The Alaska Department of Fish and Game is working with the Office of Management and Budget and the Department of Law to analyze the impacts of a potential shutdown of government services. Individual programs are currently being reviewed, including an assessment of the impact of a shutdown on the commercial, subsistence, personal use fisheries, and sport fisheries; as well as hunting seasons.

Alaska's multi-billion dollar salmon industry is primarily based on fisheries that occur between the months of June and September. These fisheries provide the sole means of subsistence and livelihood for many Alaskans. A government shutdown would coincide with the peak of the Bristol Bay sockeye season, which regularly occurs around July 4th. Not only would current season fisheries be potentially impacted, the department's ability to forecast future escapement goal analyses and data collection could also be significantly compromised. Insufficient sampling could hinder assessment of the state's performance for Pacific Salmon Treaty obligations, the department's ability to manage allocations set by the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council, and impact the International Pacific Halibut Commission's stock assessment program.

The issuance of subsistence and drawing permits could be delayed, interrupted or even not issued, creating food insecurity, cultural and economic impacts, as well as loss of hunting opportunities. Additionally, hunts with in-season management, permitting, or reporting could potentially be delayed or cancelled. This includes hunts managed by quota such as Nelchina caribou, most western Alaska moose hunts, and all goat hunts. Hunts for sheep could also potentially close or be delayed due to sealing requirements.

Alaska's two state-owned hatcheries annually produce over 4.5 million salmon, rainbow trout, and Arctic Char. Although the department will take all actions within its authority to avoid adverse consequences for the hatcheries, a shutdown could threaten the 2.5 million fish currently housed at the hatchery, and prevent the collection of Chinook and Coho broodstock. These potential losses could be long-term, surpassing the three to four years required to rebuild the basic broodstock.

Additional Fish and Game services potentially at risk of being shut down, delayed or interrupted if a fully funded budget is not passed before July 1 include:

- Prevention of, and response to, encounters with wildlife such as moose, bears or musk ox.
- Issuing or amending Title 16 permits from the Division of Habitat, which could delay or halt many projects

- Responding to emergency resource conservation situations
- Timely release of the 2017-2018 proposal books
- Timely meetings to inform the public to engage and participate in the regulatory process
- Operation of state shooting ranges
- Operation of McNeil River and Round Island wildlife viewing areas

The executive-branch still believes that the legislature will pass a budget before July 1, 2017. Therefore, the programs and services at Fish and Game will continue on their normal course through the month of June. Only if a shutdown occurs on July 1 will the department begin to pull their staff back from the field and begin working on any closures that need to occur.

This year's preparations for a government shutdown are different than in 2015, when the legislature had passed a partially funded budget. This year, money has not been appropriated for any government services. As a government shutdown in Alaska is unprecedented, Department of Law is examining what money could be spent to continue vital state services if the legislature has not fulfilled its constitutional obligation to pass a budget.

###