



Advisory Announcement

Released: August 17, 2021

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2021 Yukon River Salmon Fall Fishery Announcement # 14

Fall Update # 4, Yukon Area Salmon Fishery

Districts Affected: Yukon Area

The 2021 fall chum salmon run size is projected to be 100,000 fish, the lowest on record for the second consecutive year. As of August 15, the Yukon River mainstem sonar near Pilot Station estimated 85,000 chum salmon (summer and fall) have passed upriver. Genetic mixed stock analysis results indicate only 42,000 of those were fall chum salmon, which is well below last year's genetic estimate of 104,000 fall chum salmon for that date. The historical third quarter point of the run at the mainstem sonar occurs on August 19. According to the Fall Chum Salmon Management Plan, the inseason projection does not meet the threshold of 300,000 fish needed to allow subsistence or personal use fishing. A run of this size is unlikely to meet the drainagewide escapement goal of 300,000-600,000 fall chum salmon, tributary escapement goals and Canadian treaty objectives.

Fall chum salmon typically take 39 days to migrate from the mouth of the Yukon River to the U.S./Canada border, using an estimated travel rate of 35 miles per day. The first group of fall season chum salmon entered the river on July 16 and is expected to be approaching Circle August 16 and the U.S./Canada border August 24. The second group of fish are expected to approach Rampart August 17, Hughes August 20, Nenana August 21 and the U.S./Canada border September 3. A third small group of fish are expected to be approaching Nulato August 18, Tanana/Huslia August 23, Fort Yukon August 3, and the U.S./Canada border September 13. Monitored Yukon River and tributary water levels as well as water temperature are currently near average and should not adversely affect the migration of fall chum and coho salmon.

Coho salmon typically enter the Yukon River in mid-August with the bulk of the run occurring between August 13 and 25 in the Lower Yukon Test Fishery (LYTF). This year's coho run size is anticipated to be below average to average (average is 240,000 fish). The historical first quarter point of the coho salmon run at the mainstem sonar occurs on August 16. Coho salmon have been weak or late to enter the river so far this year. Currently, the run is tracking below last year's low run of 121,000 fish and is well below average at all assessment projects.

Fall Assessment Projects

All projects that handle fish (LYTF; Mt. Village Drift Test Fishery; Pilot Station and Eagle sonars) are making efforts to reduce salmon mortality and distribute test fish catches to community members. Any salmon healthy enough will be released alive from the test nets. Injured salmon and mortalities will be distributed to community members by Tribal councils or on a first come first-served basis from a public dock.

Lower Yukon Test Fishery / ADF&G, YDFDA

Fall season operations began on July 16 using 6-inch mesh drift gillnets to target fall chum and coho salmon. As of August 15, the fall chum salmon cumulative CPUE was 60.21 which is below the average of 997.97 for this date. The third quarter point for fall chum salmon run, on average, occurs on August 18 at this project. The coho

salmon cumulative CPUE was 1.55 which is below the average of 143.20 for this date. The midpoint of the coho salmon run, on average, occurs on August 19 at this project.

Mountain Village Drift Test Fishery / Asacarsarmiut Tribal Council

Fall season operations began on July 18, and as of August 15, the fall chum salmon cumulative CPUE was 189.29 which is below the average of 1,325.73 for that date. The third quarter point for fall chum salmon run, on average, occurs on August 18 at this project. No coho have been caught at the project yet, this season. On average, the first quarter point would occur on August 16 with an average CPUE of 276.09.

Sonar Project near Pilot Station / ADF&G

The sonar project operated near Pilot Station transitioned to fall season counts on July 19. As of August 15, the cumulative passage estimate is 84,999 chum salmon. This is well below the median cumulative passage of 410,259 chum salmon for this date. The estimated fall chum salmon component of this count is approximately 42,000 fish after the application of genetic stock proportions. The third quarter point for chum salmon is typically on August 19 at this project. The cumulative passage estimate of coho salmon is 5,742 fish as of August 15, which compares to the median cumulative passage of 31,198 coho salmon for this date. The first quarter point for coho salmon is typically on August 16 at this project.

Age, Sex, and Length Composition

The preliminary chum salmon age composition from the LYTF 6-inch drift gillnets through August 9 consists of 92% age-4 and 6% age-5 (n=50), compared to the 1983-2020 average of 62% age-4 and 36% age-5. Females represent 45% of the fish sampled (n=59), which is below the average of 56%, through August 15. The average length is 554 mm from a sample of 60 chum salmon, which is below the 1981–2020 average of 592 mm.

Stock Identification

Genetic mixed stock analysis on chum salmon from July 19–August 5 that passed the mainstem sonar, contained approximately 64% summer chum and 36% fall chum salmon. The summer chum salmon stocks were primarily Lower River stocks at 37%, while the Middle River and Tanana stocks together represented 27%. The fall chum salmon stocks consisted of 22% Border/US (Teedriinjik/Sheenjek/Black), 9% Canadian, and 5% Tanana Fall stocks. For fall chum salmon this represented 76% U.S.-origin and 24% Canadian-origin stocks.

Fall Season Management Strategy

The 2021 fall chum salmon projection is critically low, and below the 300,000 fish threshold in the Fall Chum Salmon Management Plan to allow any subsistence, personal use, sport or commercial fishing in the Yukon Area. Fishermen should plan for continued fishing closures to conserve fall chum salmon. All districts have transitioned to fall season management. Subsistence salmon fishing is closed, except for the use of selective gear to target salmon other than Chinook and chum from the Lower Yukon Area through Subdistrict 4-A Lower. Similar to last year, the department will assess the coho salmon run and consider additional fishing opportunities for that species.

Subsistence fishing for other important species, such as whitefish and northern pike, will remain open 24 hours per day, seven days per week. Fishermen may use 4-inch or smaller mesh gillnets 60 feet or shorter in length and other non-salmon gears listed in the Current Management Actions section.

Summer Assessment Projects

All information is current through August 15.

Chena River Tower/Sonar (ADF&G)

Operations ended August 8. Cumulative passage is 1,421 Chinook salmon, which is below the average of 6,138 fish for this date; and 586 summer chum salmon, which is below the median cumulative passage of 8,462 fish for this date.

Salcha Tower/Sonar (ADF&G)

Operations ended August 10. Cumulative passage is 2,082 Chinook salmon, which is below the average of 8,413 fish for this date; and 2,193 summer chum salmon, which is below the median cumulative passage of 21,057 fish for this date.

Eagle Sonar (ADF&G)

Cumulative passage is 29,603 Chinook salmon, which is below the average of 54,976 fish for this date. Based on late timing, the 2021 run is more than 95% complete at the Eagle sonar. The Interim Management Escapement Goal for Canadian-origin Chinook salmon is 42,500–55,000 fish. The goal is assessed post-season using the Eagle sonar count minus the estimated U.S. and Canadian harvest of Chinook salmon above the sonar.

Age Composition Summer Season / ADF&G

The preliminary Chinook salmon age composition from the Eagle Sonar test fishery through July 26 consists of 2% age-4, 37% age-5, 58% age-6 and 3% age 7 (n=107). This compares to the 10–year (2011–2020) average of 7% age-4, 41% age-5, 49% age-6 and 3% age-7. Females represent 52% of the fish sampled (n=122), which is above the average of 45%. The average length is 792 mm from a sample of 122 Chinook salmon, which is above the 10–year (2011–2020) average of 779 mm.

Current Management Actions

Subsistence salmon fishing is closed to protect Chinook and chum salmon as they migrate to their spawning grounds. Districts and subdistricts that have selective gear opportunities for pink, sockeye and coho salmon are required to release Chinook and chum salmon alive immediately. Gillnets of 4-inch or smaller mesh may be used during subsistence salmon fishing closures to target non-salmon. However, due to the conservation concern for Chinook and chum salmon, 4-inch or smaller mesh gillnets are restricted to a maximum length of 60-feet. Fishermen are reminded to use this gear in areas where non-salmon species are abundant to avoid incidentally harvesting Chinook and chum salmon.

The following management actions and gear listed apply to the lakes, sloughs and tributaries within the districts and subdistricts of the Yukon River drainage.

Coastal District, Districts 1-3, Subdistrict 4-A Lower (Chevak, Hooper Bay, Scammon Bay, Emmonak, Nunam Iqua, Alakanuk, Kotlik, Mountain Village, Pitkas Point, St. Mary's, Pilot Station, Marshall, Russian Mission, Holy Cross, Shageluk, Anvik and Grayling):

Subsistence fishing is open with dip nets and hook and line gear to target salmon species other than Chinook and chum salmon (such as pink, sockeye and coho salmon). All Chinook and chum salmon caught using selective gear must be released alive immediately. Subsistence salmon fishing with other gear types remain closed.

Gillnets of 4-inch or smaller mesh may be used to target non-salmon but are restricted to 60 feet or shorter length. Additionally, other legal gear to take non-salmon species during subsistence salmon fishing closures in this area includes hand line, longline, fyke net, dip net, spear, and hook and line with a rod or pole.

Subdistrict 4-A Upper and the Koyukuk River (Kaltag, Nulato, Koyukuk, Huslia, Hughes, Alatna, Allakaket, and Bettles):

Subsistence salmon fishing is currently closed. Gillnets of 4-inch or smaller mesh may be used to target non-salmon but are restricted to 60 feet or shorter length. However, in the subsistence permit area of South Fork and the Middle Fork of the Koyukuk River, gillnet gear may only be used from August 20 to June 30 and must be 3½ inches or smaller mesh size. Additionally, other legal gear to take non-salmon species during subsistence salmon fishing closures include hand line, longline, fyke net, dip net, spear, and hook and line with a rod or pole. However, hook and line with a rod or pole may only be used for subsistence fishing for non-salmon in Subdistrict 4-A Upper up to the Nulato River mouth and including the Nulato River drainage.

A subsistence fishing permit is required for all species in the Koyukuk River above Bettles.

Subdistricts 4-B and 4-C and District 5 (Galena, Ruby, Tanana, Rampart, Stevens Village, Beaver, Birch Creek, Arctic Village, Fort Yukon, Venetie, Chalkyitsik, Fort Yukon, Central, Circle and Eagle):

Subsistence salmon fishing is currently closed. Gillnets of 4-inch or smaller mesh may be used to target non-salmon but are restricted to 60 feet or shorter length. However, in Birch Creek and the subsistence area portion of Beaver Creek, gillnet mesh size may not exceed 3 inches. Additionally, other legal gear to take non-salmon species during subsistence salmon fishing closures in these subdistricts includes hand line, longline, fyke net, dip net and spear.

A subsistence fishing permit is required to fish for all species in the following locations: from the westernmost tip of Garnet Island upstream to the mouth of Dall River (includes Rampart and Dalton Highway Bridge Area; Subdistrict 5-C and a portion of Subdistrict 5-D) and the upstream mouth of 22 Mile Slough to the U.S./Canada border (includes Circle and Eagle; a portion of Subdistrict 5-D).

Subdistricts 6-A and 6-B, including the Kantishna River (Manley, Minto, Nenana, Healy, Cantwell, and Lake Minchumina) and the **Upper Tanana Area** (the Tanana River from the confluence with the mouth of Volkmar River on the north bank and the mouth of the Johnson River on the south bank upstream to the Tanana River headwaters, which includes Dot Lake, Tanacross, Tetlin, Tok, Northway, Nabesna):

Subsistence salmon fishing is currently closed. Gillnets of 4-inch or smaller mesh may be used to target non-salmon but are restricted to 60 feet or shorter length. Additionally, other legal gear to take non-salmon species during subsistence salmon fishing closures in these subdistricts includes hand line, longline, fyke net, dip net and spear.

In the Tanana River drainage up to the Wood River, a subsistence permit is required for salmon fishing. A subsistence permit is required for northern pike fishing in the Tolovana River drainage, including Minto Flats. A subsistence permit is required to fish for all species in the Upper Tanana Area.

Personal Use Salmon Fishing

Subdistrict 6-C (from the regulatory markers at the mouth of the Wood River upstream to the downstream mouth of the Salcha River, which includes the communities of Fairbanks, North Pole and Salcha):

Personal Use salmon fishing is currently closed.

Personal Use Whitefish and Sucker Fishing

Fairbanks Nonsubsistence Area (a portion of the Tanana River drainage from the Wood River upstream to the mouth of the Volkmar River on the north bank and the mouth of the Johnson River on the south bank, which includes Fairbanks, North Pole, Salcha and Delta Junction):

Personal Use whitefish and sucker fishing in Subdistrict 6-C with gillnets and fish wheels follows the Subdistrict 6-C salmon fishing schedule and is closed until further notice. Fishing with other gear for whitefish and suckers in the Fairbanks Nonsubsistence Area remains open 7 days per week, 24 hours per day, subject to permit stipulations.

A personal use whitefish and sucker permit is required for this area.

Subsistence harvest calendars are available from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game Fairbanks office (459-7274). Subsistence and Personal Use permits are available at www.adfg.alaska.gov/store.



This is an announcement by the ADF&G in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

To reach the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Yukon River Subsistence Fishery Manager,

Holly Carroll, please call 907-351-3029.



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COVID-19

Under Alaska's Health Advisories 1, 2, 3, and 4, subsistence and commercial fishing is considered essential and is part of Alaska's Essential Services and Critical Infrastructure. Commercial fishermen should ensure that all travel and other activities in support of commercial fishing operations follow protocols in Alaska COVID-19 Health Advisories. COVID-19 Health Advisories may be found here: <https://covid19.alaska.gov/health-advisories/>.