



## Advisory Announcement

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## CONTACT:

**Christy Gleason, Area Management Biologist**  
**Bonnie Borba, Fall Season Research Biologist**  
**(907) 459-7274**

**Toll free fishing schedule and counts: (866) 479-7387**

**In Fairbanks fishing schedule hotline: 459-7387**

### **2021 Yukon River Salmon Fall Fishery Announcement # 28**

#### **Fall Update # 11, Yukon Area Salmon Fishery**

Districts Affected: Yukon Area

The Yukon River fall chum and coho salmon runs are the lowest on record. The fall chum salmon run is approximately 102,000 fish compared to a historical run size of 1 million fish. The coho salmon run is approximately 37,000 fish compared to a historical run size of 240,000 fish. The coho salmon run came in late and was extremely weak. According to the Fall Chum Salmon Management Plan, the run size did not meet the threshold of 300,000 fish needed to allow subsistence, personal use, sport or commercial fishing. The drainagewide escapement goal of 300,000-600,000 fall chum salmon, tributary escapement goals and Canadian treaty objectives are not expected to be achieved.

Fall chum salmon typically take 39 days to migrate from the mouth of the Yukon River to the U.S./Canada border, with estimated travel rates of 35 miles per day. Coho salmon are smaller than fall chum salmon, and typically travel 30 miles per day. Both salmon species tend to slow down their migration speed when nearing spawning areas, based on past radio telemetry studies, assessment projects and local fishermen's reports. Monitored water levels and water temperatures were near average and should not have adversely affect salmon migration.

#### **Fall Assessment Projects**

Lower Yukon assessment projects have completed for the season. Upper Yukon assessment projects that include weirs and sonars are now complete for the season, except for the Fishing Branch River video weir and sonar. Salmon spawning escapement surveys conducted by foot, boat and aircraft will continue in the Tanana River drainage into early December. Daily, cumulative and historical data for most of the assessment projects listed in this section can be accessed online at [www.adfg.alaska.gov/yukonfishcounts](http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/yukonfishcounts).

#### Lower Yukon Test Fishery / ADF&G, Yukon Delta Fisheries Development Association

This project concluded operations September 10, 2021. The fall chum salmon cumulative catch per unit effort (CPUE) was 125.72 which is well below the average of 1,588.86 for this date. The coho salmon cumulative CPUE was 14.09 which is well below the average of 414.56 for this date. This year's run timing for both fall chum and coho salmon are late compared to median timing at this project.

#### Mountain Village Drift Test Fishery / Asacarsarmiut Tribal Council

This project concluded operations September 12, 2021. The fall chum salmon cumulative CPUE was 450.29 which is well below the average of 2,038.58 for that date. The coho salmon cumulative CPUE was 117.00 which is well below the average of 1,084.58 for this date. This year's run timing for both fall chum and coho salmon are late compared to median timing at this project.

Sonar Project near Pilot Station / ADF&G

This project concluded operations September 7, 2021. The preliminary cumulative passage estimate of chum salmon from July 19 through September 7 was 146,172 fish, which is well below the median passage of 723,413 fish for this date. The estimated fall chum salmon component of this count was approximately 102,000 fish after the application of preliminary genetic stock proportions. The run timing for fall chum salmon was near median at this project. The preliminary cumulative passage estimate of coho salmon is 37,257 fish through September 7, which compares to the median cumulative passage of 147,456 coho salmon for this date. This year's run timing for coho salmon is 5 days late compared to median timing at this project.

Teedriinjik (formerly Chandalar River) sonar / United States Fish and Wildlife Service

This project concluded operations September 28, 2021. As of September 27, the cumulative passage estimate is 19,907 fish which is well below the historical median of 202,000 fish for that date. Note this year's count includes a pre-season expansion and a post season expansion will also be calculated to represent the fish still migrating into the system when the sonar operations ceased due to the onset of winter. The run timing for fall chum salmon was near median at this project. The sustainable escapement goal of 85,000 to 234,000 fall chum salmon for this river was not achieved.

Eagle Sonar / Alaska Department of Fish and Game and Department of Fisheries and Oceans

The project has concluded for the season. The cumulative fall chum salmon passage estimate is 23,170 fish, (including an expansion for after sonar operations ceased on October 6 through October 18), this estimate is well below the median passage of approximately 168,000 fish for this date. The fall chum salmon run was four days later than average at this project. The Interim Management Escapement Goal for Canadian-origin fall chum salmon is 70,000-104,000 fish and was not achieved in 2021. Except for last year, the escapement goal was met, and most of the time exceeded, in the previous 18 years.

Porcupine River Sonar / Yukon Territory Canada / Department of Fisheries and Oceans

This project concluded operations September 29, 2021. This project transitioned to counting fall chum salmon on August 15. The cumulative passage of fall chum salmon provided through September 20 was 2,895 fish, which is well below the average passage of 22,000 fish for this date. Post season the final counts and possible expansion to represent the end of the run will be provided.

Fishing Branch River Weir/Sonar / Yukon Territory Canada / Department of Fisheries and Oceans

The project became operational on September 7 and the cumulative fall chum salmon passage estimate through October 10 is 2,155 fish, which is below the median passage of 27,870 for this date. The Interim Management Escapement Goal of 22,000 to 49,000 fall chum salmon will not be achieved in 2021.

Tanana River Escapement Assessment (ADF&G)

The first boat survey on the Delta Clearwater River occurred September 27 and low numbers of coho salmon were present. Escapement foot surveys began the first week of October in the Delta River and typically occur weekly through the end of November. The fall chum salmon had not arrived in the Delta River as of the first survey conducted October 5. The Delta River is an index of fall chum salmon escapement in the Tanana River and has a sustainable escapement goal of 7,000 to 20,000 fish. Last year (2020), the Delta River was the only fall chum salmon escapement goal achieved in the drainage. Aerial surveys will also be conducted in various other area in the Tanana River drainage for both fall chum and coho salmon in late October or early November during typical peak spawning times.

### **Age, Sex, and Length Composition**

The preliminary chum salmon age composition of the fish sampled (n=123) from the LYTF 6-inch drift gillnets through August 24 is 86% age-4 and 10% age-5, compared to the 1983–2020 average of 66% age-4 and 31% age-5. Females represent 52% of the fish sampled (n=133), which is below the average of 58%, through September 10. The average length is 563 mm from a sample of 133 chum salmon, which is well below the 1981–2020 average of 592 mm.

Coho salmon length is based on the catches in all drift gillnet mesh sizes operated in the test fishery at the mainstem Yukon River sonar project at Pilot Station. The average length, from a sample of 411 coho salmon, was 519 mm which was well below the 1995–2020 average of 558 mm.

### **Stock Identification**

Genetic mixed stock analysis on chum salmon has concluded for the season. The estimates from the entire fall season, from July 19 through September 7, that passed the mainstem Yukon River sonar, contained approximately 31% summer chum and 69% fall chum salmon. The fall component entering after July 19, were comprised of 40% Border/US (Teedriinjik/Sheenjek/Draanjik), 18% Canadian, and 42% Tanana Fall stocks.

### **Fall Season Management Strategy**

The 2021 fall chum and coho salmon runs were critically low, and well below the 300,000 fall chum salmon threshold needed to allow any subsistence, personal use, sport or commercial fishing in the Yukon Area. Preliminary data from assessment projects indicated that fall chum and coho salmon had the smallest fish lengths observed in their respective datasets. Subsistence fishing restrictions were relaxed starting in the Lower Yukon Area on October 1 and moving upriver once the tail end of the salmon run has passed a subdistrict. Some tributary drainages remain closed to subsistence salmon fishing to protect salmon spawning areas through December. These closed areas will be relaxed to 24 hours per day, seven days per week for 4-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and selective gear to provide additional nonsalmon opportunity.

### **Current Management Actions**

#### **Nonsalmon gear: open 24 hours per day, 7 days per week:**

##### **See areas with continued restrictions on 4-inch gillnets, fish wheels and dip nets in district**

**announcements below.** Legal gear to take nonsalmon species while subsistence fishing includes hand line, longline, jigging gear (ice fishing), hook and line attached to a rod or pole (see season restrictions), fyke net, dip net, spear, gillnets, beach seine and fish wheel. A hook and line with a rod or pole may be used year-round in the Coastal District up to the Nulato River mouth, including the Nulato River drainage (in Subdistrict 4-A Upper). Only while ice fishing may a hook and line attached to a rod or pole be used in the Yukon River drainage upstream of the Nulato River. In District 4, from September 21 to May 15, jigging gear may be used from shore ice.

**Coastal District, Districts 1-3, and 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, Shageluk, Holy Cross, Anvik, Grayling and including the Innoko and Anvik river drainages:

Subsistence fishing is open 24 hours per day, seven days per week with 7.5 inch or smaller mesh gillnets and all other legal salmon gear. All fish caught may be retained.

#### **Subdistricts 4-A Upper** (Kaltag, Nulato and Koyukuk):

Subsistence fishing for nonsalmon is open with 4-inch or smaller mesh gillnets (60 feet in length or shorter) from **Sundays 8 p.m. to Tuesdays 8 p.m. and from Wednesdays 8 p.m. to Fridays 8 p.m.** Dip nets may be

used 24 hours per day, seven days per week. Manned fish wheels may be used from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m., seven days per week. While using dip nets and manned fish wheels, all fall chum are required to be released alive and coho are recommended to be released.

Effective **8:00 a.m. Thursday, October 14**, subsistence fishing is open 24 hours per day, seven days per week with 7.5 inch or smaller mesh gillnets and all other legal salmon gear. All fish caught may be retained.

**Koyukuk River drainage** (Huslia, Hughes, Alatna, Allakaket, Bettles, Wiseman and Coldfoot):

Subsistence salmon fishing will remain closed through December. While using dip nets and manned fish wheels, all fall chum are required to be released alive and coho are recommended to be released.

Subsistence fishing for nonsalmon is open with 4-inch or smaller mesh gillnets (60 feet in length or shorter) from **Sundays 8 p.m. to Tuesdays 8 p.m. and from Wednesdays 8 p.m. to Fridays 8 p.m.** Dip nets may be used 24 hours per day, seven days per week. Manned fish wheels may be used from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m., seven days per week.

Effective **8:00 a.m. Saturday, October 30**, subsistence fishing for nonsalmon will be relaxed to 24 hours per day, seven days per week. Fishermen may use 4-inch gillnets 60 feet or shorter in length, other legal nonsalmon gear and selective gear such as manned fish wheels and dip nets.

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.

**4-B and 4-C** (Galena and Ruby):

Subsistence fishing for nonsalmon is open with 4-inch or smaller mesh gillnets (60 feet in length or shorter) from **Sundays 8 p.m. to Tuesdays 8 p.m. and from Wednesdays 8 p.m. to Fridays 8 p.m.** Dip nets may be used 24 hours per day, seven days per week. Manned fish wheels may be used from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m., seven days per week. While using dip nets and manned fish wheels, all fall chum are required to be released alive and coho are recommended to be released.

Effective **8:00 a.m. Saturday, October 16**, subsistence fishing is open 24 hours per day, seven days per week with 7.5 inch or smaller mesh gillnets and all other legal salmon gear. All fish caught may be retained.

**District 5:**

Subsistence fishing for nonsalmon is open with 4-inch or smaller mesh gillnets (60 feet in length or shorter) from **Sundays 8 p.m. to Tuesdays 8 p.m. and from Wednesdays 8 p.m. to Fridays 8 p.m.** Dip nets may be used 24 hours per day, seven days per week. Manned fish wheels may be used from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m., seven days per week. While using dip nets and manned fish wheels, all fall chum are required to be released alive and coho are recommended to be released. In Birch Creek and the subsistence area portion of Beaver Creek, gillnet mesh size may not exceed 3 inches.

Effective at the times, dates and communities listed below, subsistence salmon fishing will be open 24 hours per day, seven days per week with 7.5 inch or smaller mesh gillnets and all other legal salmon gear. All fish caught may be retained. In Birch Creek and the subsistence area portion of Beaver Creek, gillnet mesh size may not exceed 3 inches.

Effective **8:00 a.m. Wednesday, October 20** in Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B and 5-C (Tanana and Rampart).

Effective **8:00 a.m. Tuesday, October 26** in Subdistrict 5-D Lower (Stevens Village and Beaver).

Effective **8:00 a.m. Saturday, October 30** in Subdistrict 5-D Middle and Upper (Birch Creek, Fort Yukon, Central, Circle and Eagle).

**Porcupine and Teedriinjik River drainages** (Fort Yukon, Arctic Village, Venetie and Chalkyitsik):

Subsistence salmon fishing will remain closed through December. While using dip nets and manned fish wheels, all fall chum are required to be released alive and coho are recommended to be released.

Subsistence fishing for nonsalmon is open with 4-inch or smaller mesh gillnets (60 feet in length or shorter) from **Sundays 8 p.m. to Tuesdays 8 p.m. and from Wednesdays 8 p.m. to Fridays 8 p.m.** Dip nets may be used 24 hours per day, seven days per week. Manned fish wheels may be used from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m., seven days per week.

Effective **8:00 a.m. Saturday, October 30, subsistence fishing for nonsalmon** will be relaxed to 24 hours per day, seven days per week. Fishermen may use 4-inch gillnets 60 feet or shorter in length, other legal nonsalmon gear and selective gear such as manned fish wheels and dip nets.

**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 and Nabesna):

Subsistence fishing for nonsalmon is open with 4-inch or smaller mesh gillnets (60 feet in length or shorter) from **Mondays 6 p.m. to Wednesdays 12 p.m. and from Fridays 6 p.m. to Sundays 12 p.m.** Dip nets may be used 24 hours per day, seven days per week. Manned fish wheels may be used from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m., seven days per week. While using dip nets and manned fish wheels, all fall chum are required to be released alive and coho are recommended to be released.

Effective **8:00 a.m. Saturday, October 30, subsistence salmon fishing in the mainstem Tanana River** will be open 24 hours per day, seven days per week with 7.5 inch or smaller mesh gillnets and all other legal salmon gear. All fish caught may be retained.

**For District 6 tributary drainages, such as the Kantishna River drainage:**

Subsistence salmon fishing will remain closed through December.

Effective **8:00 a.m. Saturday, October 30, subsistence fishing for nonsalmon** will be relaxed to 24 hours per day, seven days per week. Fishermen may use 4-inch gillnets 60 feet or shorter in length, other legal nonsalmon gear and selective gear such as manned fish wheels and dip nets. While using selective gear, fall chum salmon must be released alive immediately and coho salmon are strongly recommended to be released.

**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 will remain closed for 2021.

**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. 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.

Effective **8:00 a.m. Saturday, October 30**, personal use whitefish and sucker fishing in Subdistrict 6-C will open with 4-inch or smaller mesh gillnets limited to 60 feet or shorter.

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](http://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.



Announcements will be shared on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/YukonRiverFishingADFG](https://www.facebook.com/YukonRiverFishingADFG)

### **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/>.