

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



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2014 Yukon River Summer Salmon Fishery News Release # 4

Summer Update # 1, Districts 1-6

Districts Affected: Yukon Area

2014 Chinook and Summer Chum Outlooks

The 2014 Chinook salmon outlook is for a run size range of 64,000 to 121,000. The lower end of this range is slightly below the run size observed in 2013 and would not provide any available surplus for subsistence harvest. As in recent years, initial management will be based on the expectation that the 2014 Chinook salmon run size will likely be near the lower end of this range. Drastic conservation measures are necessary in an attempt to meet escapement objectives this season and subsistence fishermen should not expect opportunities to directly harvest Chinook salmon. However, management strategies may change based on inseason run assessment information.

The preseason outlook for the 2014 summer chum salmon run is estimated to be 1.5 to 1.8 million fish and is anticipated to provide for escapement, an above average subsistence harvest, and a commercially harvestable surplus range of 500,000 to 800,000 fish. When summer chum salmon become abundant, subsistence and commercial fishing opportunities will be provided with selective gear such as dip nets, beach seines, and manned fish wheels. Fishermen must carefully and immediately release Chinook salmon alive when encountered in these gear types.

Management Strategies

The Yukon River and surrounding coastline is expected to be ice free earlier than normal. The Yukon River is mostly open from Eagle to Alakanuk. Water levels are reported as low for this time of year. In response to an early break up, preparations are being made now for a potentially early Chinook salmon run which is anticipated to be extremely weak. Conservative management actions are being implemented in accordance with the preseason management plan outlined in the 2014 Yukon River Salmon Fisheries Outlook.

A precautionary management approach is being taken early in the season with gillnets being restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size. The intent is to have a gear restriction already in place when Chinook salmon begin their spawning migration while still providing an opportunity to fish for non-salmon species such as sheefish, traditionally harvested in the Lower Yukon immediately following break-up. Fishermen are strongly encouraged to avoid fishing where Chinook salmon may be encountered. The department is reminding subsistence fishermen to track their harvest on the subsistence calendars and encourages them to call the ADFG office in Anchorage at 267-2217 to provide harvest reports. Subsistence harvest and effort reports will be important information for managers when considering early season management actions.

The 2014 season will undoubtedly be another challenging year for Yukon River fishermen. ADFG and USFWS would like to extend thanks and appreciation to the fishermen of the Yukon River for their continuing efforts to conserve Chinook salmon when these stocks are so weak.

Current Management

The subsistence fishing schedule and recorded fishery announcements will be available 24 hours a day at **1-866-479-7387** (toll free outside of Fairbanks); in Fairbanks, call **(907) 459-7387**.

The current subsistence fishing schedules are as follows:

Coastal District: Subsistence fishing is open 7 days a week, 24 hours per day and fishermen may use gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or less

Effective 8:00 p.m. Friday, May 16, subsistence fishing will be open 7 days a week, 24 hours per day with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size to conserve Chinook salmon.

Districts 1 and 2: Subsistence fishing is open 7 days a week, 24 hours per day and fishermen may use gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or less.

Effective 8:00 p.m. Friday, May 16, subsistence fishing will be open 7 days a week, 24 hours per day with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size to conserve Chinook salmon.

District 3: Subsistence fishing is currently open 7 days a week, 24 hours per day and fishermen may use gillnets with mesh size of 7.5 inches or less. Fishermen should anticipate fishing restrictions when Chinook salmon start moving into District 3.

District 4: Subsistence fishing is currently open 7 days a week, 24 hours per day and fishermen may use gillnets with mesh size of 7.5 inches or less. Fishermen should anticipate fishing restrictions when Chinook salmon start moving into District 4.

Subdistricts 5-A,B,C, and D: Subsistence fishing is currently open 7 days a week, 24 hours per day and fishermen may use gillnets with mesh size of 7.5 inches or less. Fishermen should anticipate fishing restrictions when Chinook salmon start moving into Subdistricts 5-A,B,C, and D.

District 6: By regulation, the subsistence salmon fishing schedule consists of two 42-hour fishing periods per week from 6:00 p.m. Mondays until 12:00 noon Wednesdays and from 6:00 p.m. Fridays until 12:00 noon Sundays and fishermen may use gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or less. Fishermen should anticipate fishing restrictions when Chinook salmon start moving into the Tanana River.

Old Minto Area: Subsistence salmon fishing is open 5 days per week from 6:00 p.m. Fridays until 6:00 p.m. Wednesdays and fishermen may use gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or less. Fishermen should anticipate fishing restrictions when Chinook salmon start moving into the Minto area.

Innoko River: Subsistence fishing is currently open 7 days a week, 24 hours per day and fishermen may use gillnets with mesh size of 7.5 inches or less. Fishermen should anticipate fishing restrictions when Chinook salmon start moving into the Innoko River.

Koyukuk River: Subsistence fishing is currently open 7 days a week, 24 hours per day and fishermen may use gillnets with mesh size of 7.5 inches or less. Fishermen should anticipate fishing restrictions when Chinook salmon start moving into Koyukuk River.

During subsistence salmon fishing closures, fish wheels may not be operated and gillnets with a mesh size larger than four inches and a length longer than 60 feet must be removed from the water.

If you have any questions regarding this report, please call the ADFG office in Anchorage at 267-2217.