

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



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Date Issued: 5/20/2014

2014 Yukon River Summer Salmon Fishery News Release # 5

Summer Update # 2, Yukon Area Salmon Fishery

Districts Affected: Yukon Area

Assessment

The 2014 subsistence fishing season is underway on the Yukon River. The first chum salmon of the year was reported to have been caught on May 15 in District 2 near the Mt. Village/Pitka's Pt. area. This is the earliest reported summer chum salmon subsistence harvest in more than 20 years. Additionally, fishermen have reported good catches of sheefish during the course of the last week. There have been no reports of Chinook salmon being caught in the Lower Yukon subsistence fishery at this time. However, the Bering Sea ice extent is greatly diminished for this time of year and the Yukon River ice went out early, so it is anticipated that Chinook salmon will begin their in river migration soon.

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 until the Lower Yukon office is open for the 2014 season. Subsistence harvest reports are the primary source of assessment information during this early part of the season, and the department appreciates receiving local observations on fishing conditions as well as reports on where fish are being caught.

Test fishery crews in Emmonak are busy making preparations to begin operations. Drift and set net test fishing is expected to begin at the Big Eddy location later this week. However, in response to the need to conserve Chinook salmon, the department plans to limit the Lower Yukon program operations to reduce the test fishery harvest.

Sonar operations near the village of Pilot Station are expected to begin around June 1.

Management Strategies

A precautionary management approach has been taken early this season that restricted gillnets to 6-inch or smaller mesh size in the Coastal District and Districts 1 and 2. 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. However, once the Chinook salmon run begins subsistence fishermen should be aware that further conservation actions will be implemented to protect the anticipated low run of Chinook salmon and to help ensure enough Chinook salmon reach their spawning grounds.

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 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 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.

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.

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

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.

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

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): This area includes the communities of Healy Lake, Dot Lake, Tanacross, Northway, and the Tok area. Subsistence fishing is open 7 days a week, 24 hours per day. Fishermen may use fish wheels or gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or less.

During subsistence salmon fishing closures intended to protect Chinook salmon, fishermen should expect that fish wheels may not be operated and gillnets with a mesh size larger than four inches and a length longer than 60 feet will need to be removed from the water.

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 Emmonak ADF&G office is expected to be open by May 30. If you have any questions regarding this report, please call the ADFG office in Anchorage at 267-2217.