

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



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2014 Yukon River Summer Salmon Fishery News Release # 7

Summer Update # 3, Yukon Area Salmon Fishery

Districts Affected: Yukon Area

Assessment

The first Chinook salmon harvested on the Yukon River was reported to have been caught on May 19. This is the earliest reported Chinook salmon subsistence harvest in a decade. More recently, subsistence fishermen have reported that a few additional Chinook salmon have been caught over the weekend, thus indicating that the 2014 Chinook salmon run is just beginning to migrate upriver.

The department would like to extend gratitude to the Lower Yukon subsistence fishermen who have shared harvest information. These reports have been instrumental in directing management actions during this early part of the season. The department is reminding fishermen to track their harvest on the subsistence calendars.

The Lower Yukon cooperative drift test fishery program has been in operation at the Big Eddy location since May 21. Catch rates have been low for both summer chum and Chinook salmon. A single set net site is in place at the Big Eddy location, and an additional set net site is likely to be in place by May 27. In response to the need to conserve Chinook salmon, the department plans to adjust the Lower Yukon monitoring program operations in order to reduce the test fishery harvest.

Sonar staff is expected to be in Pilot Station early this week, setting up project equipment. It is anticipated that counting will begin around June 1.

Management Strategies

A very conservative management approach has been initiated early this season to protect the entire Chinook salmon run, which is anticipated to be the worst on record. Further conservative management actions are being implemented as the first Chinook salmon begin migrating through the lower river districts.

Effective 8:00 p.m. Monday, May 26, subsistence fishing for salmon will close in the Lower Yukon. All gillnets greater than 4-inch mesh size must be removed from the water in the Northern Portion of the Coastal District, and Districts 1-3.

This closure will be similarly implemented in upriver fishing districts and subdistricts based on migratory timing. This closure is expected to be in place for most of the Chinook salmon run. However, management strategies may change based on inseason run assessment information.

Fortunately, the 2014 summer chum salmon run is expected to be above average. Fishing opportunities to harvest summer chum salmon with dip nets will be provided in Districts 1-3 later, when chum salmon abundance increases. Assessment project information is being monitored to determine when this fishing opportunity will begin. However, Lower Yukon fishermen should be prepared for liberal subsistence and commercial opportunity using very selective fishing gear to harvest summer chum salmon.

Current Management

Coastal District: Subsistence fishing is currently open 7 days a week, 24 hours per day with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size to conserve Chinook salmon. Fishermen are reminded that state waters beyond 1 mile offshore of District 1 are included in the Coastal District.

As in recent years, the Coastal District will be further subdivided into two management areas to allow for more management precision and flexibility.

Effective 8:00 p.m. Monday, May 26, in the **Northern Portion of the Coastal District** from 62 degrees North latitude to Point Romanof and 3 miles offshore, subsistence salmon fishing will be closed until further notice. Management actions taken in the **Northern Portion of the Coastal District** will be coordinated with actions taken in District 1 to provide protection to Chinook salmon prior to entering the river.

In the **Southern Portion of the Coastal District**, from the Naskonat Peninsula north to 62° North latitude, the current subsistence salmon fishing schedule remains unaltered and is open 7 days per week, 24 hours a day with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size.

However, subsistence fishermen in the **Southern Portion of the Coastal District** should be prepared for management actions that will close subsistence salmon fishing when the first pulse of Chinook salmon is expected to be passing through the coastal area.

District 1 and District 2 (including the Black River): 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.

Effective 8:00 p.m. Monday, May 26, subsistence fishing for salmon will close. All gillnets greater than 4-inch mesh size must be removed from the water.

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.

Effective 8:00 p.m. Monday, May 26, subsistence fishing for salmon will close. All gillnets greater than 4-inch mesh size must be removed from the water.

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 be prepared for management actions that will close subsistence salmon fishing when the first pulse of Chinook salmon is expected to be migrating 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 salmon fishing closures to be implemented soon based on migratory timing.

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 be prepared for management actions that will close subsistence salmon fishing when the first pulse of Chinook salmon is expected to be migrating into the 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. Non-salmon species may be harvested using 4-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets not exceeding 60-feet in length. However, this opportunity to harvest non-salmon will be discontinued if this gear is used to target Chinook salmon. Fishermen are strongly encouraged to avoid fishing where Chinook salmon may be encountered and are urged to track their non-salmon subsistence harvest.

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.