

**ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES
NEWS RELEASE**



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**2014 Yukon River Summer Salmon Fishery News Release # 14
Summer Update # 5, Yukon Area Salmon Fishery
Districts Affected: Yukon Area**

The 2014 Chinook salmon run timing is tracking earlier than historical averages as indicated by test fishery indices. Based on this assessment information and reports from subsistence fishermen along the river, this could be one of the earliest Chinook salmon runs on record.

The first Chinook salmon was caught in the subsistence fishery in the lower river on May 19. Based on migration timing, the first Chinook salmon should be near Rampart as of June 7. The department received a report that a Chinook salmon was harvested in the subsistence fishery above Tanana prior to the closure effective June 7.

Catch rates from Lower Yukon test fishery program indicate that an early group of Chinook salmon began entering the lower river on May 31. This group would have likely passed Pilot Station around June 2. Unfortunately, during this timeframe the sonar project was not fully operational. While initial test fishing had begun at that time, estimates of daily passage were not generated until June 5. The department is using a new model to estimate the number of Chinook salmon that could have passed by the sonar for the dates prior to June 5. This analysis is ongoing.

A larger group of Chinook salmon entered the lower river on June 6 and peaked on June 7, based on the Lower Yukon test fishery program. This is likely the first pulse of Chinook salmon. In the next day or two, daily passage estimates at the sonar project near Pilot Station should continue to build and reflect this group of fish moving through the river. As of June 8, the cumulative Chinook salmon passage at the sonar project was approximately 9,700 which is above the historical cumulative average of 4,000 salmon for this date and slightly above the historical cumulative average for early years of 9,500 for this date.

The summer chum salmon run also continues to build in the lower river as indicated by the relatively high catch rates observed on June 7 and June 8 in the Lower Yukon test fishery program.

Assessment Projects

Lower Yukon Test Fishery (LYTF)/ ADF&G, YDFDA

8.5-Inch Set Gillnet: The LYTF began operations on May 26 in the Big Eddy area of South Mouth. The cumulative CPUE as of June 8 is 4.79, which is above the historical average of 1.41 for all years, but below the historical average of 5.27 for early years. Please note that calculations for CPUE account for fewer nets being fished compared to previous years.

In an effort to reduce the number of Chinook salmon killed in the LYTF, the set net sites located in the Big Eddy area of the South Mouth were discontinued after June 6. The set net site in Middle Mouth was fully operational on June 7.

8.25-Inch Drift Gillnet: The Big Eddy Chinook salmon drift test fishery began operations on May 22. The cumulative CPUE as of June 8 is 210.23, which is above the historical average of 22.05 for all years. Since the drift test fishery has not operated as long or as continuously as the set net program, we lack sufficient data to compare early years for the drift net program.

Summer Chum Drift Test Fishery/ ADF&G, YDFDA

5.5-Inch Drift Gillnet: The summer chum drift test fishery began operations on May 21 in the Big Eddy area of the South Mouth. The cumulative CPUE as of June 8 is 1,512.11, which is well above the historical median of 18.68 for this date.

Andreafsky River Weir/ USFWS

Staff will be traveling to the site later this week and are expected to start installation of the weir over the weekend.

Sonar Project near Pilot Station/ ADF&G

The sonar project was fully operational and generating passage estimates on June 5. The Chinook salmon passage at the sonar project is estimated at approximately 9,700 salmon as of June 8, which is above the historical cumulative average of approximately 4,000 for this date, and slightly above the historical cumulative average for early years of approximately 9,500 at this date.

Summer chum salmon passage is estimated at approximately 38,400 salmon as of June 8, which is well above the historical median of 420 salmon for this date.

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. The subsistence salmon fishing closure is now being applied to the Upper Yukon as the first Chinook salmon begin migrating through Subdistrict 5-D.

In Districts 1 – 3 liberal summer chum salmon fishing opportunity is being provided with gear types that allow Chinook salmon to be safely released. The opportunity to harvest summer chum salmon in District 4 will be provided with fish wheels equipped with either a chute or a live box later as chum salmon abundance increases in that area. Early in the run, the opportunity to use dip net gear to harvest summer chum salmon will also likely be provided.

Non-salmon species may be harvested using 4-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets not exceeding 60-feet in length. However, this opportunity to fish for non-salmon species 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.

Current Management

Subsistence Fishing Schedule:

Coastal District: As in recent years, the Coastal District has been subdivided into two management areas to allow for more management precision and flexibility.

Subsistence salmon fishing is closed until further notice in all marine waters in the **Northern Portion of the Coastal District** from 62° degrees North latitude to Point Romanof. Management actions taken in the **Northern Portion of the Coastal District** are intended 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.

Daily subsistence harvest reports are being closely monitored by the department to determine if further conservation actions are warranted in this area to protect Chinook salmon.

District 1 (including the Black River):

Subsistence fishing for summer chum salmon in District 1 is on the following schedule with dip net and beach seine gear only until further notice:

- Sunday-Friday from 12:00 noon until 12:00 midnight
- Saturday from 6:00 a.m. until 12:00 midnight

District 2:

Subsistence fishing for summer chum salmon in District 2 is on the following schedule with dip net and beach seine gear only until further notice:

- Sunday-Friday 12:00 noon until 10:00 p.m.
- Saturday from 6:00 a.m. until 12:00 midnight

District 3: Subsistence fishing for summer chum salmon in District 3 is open 7 days a week, 24 hours per day with dip net gear only.

Fishermen using dip nets or beach seine gear are required to immediately release Chinook salmon back to the water alive. This requirement will be strictly enforced. Subsistence fishermen unfamiliar with these gear types are encouraged to communicate with fishermen who used them during the 2013 season. Great care must be taken to assure Chinook salmon are released unharmed so that they can swim the long distance upriver and spawn successfully. Fishermen are also strongly encouraged to avoid fishing where Chinook may be encountered.

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.

Subdistrict 4-A Lower (from $\frac{3}{4}$ miles downstream of Old Paradise Village upstream to Stink Creek, which includes the mainstem Yukon River communities of Anvik and Grayling):

Subsistence fishing for salmon is closed until further notice. During subsistence salmon fishing closures, fish wheels may not be operated and gillnets with a mesh size greater than four inches and a length greater than 60 feet must be removed from the water.

Subdistrict 4-A Upper (from Stink Creek upstream to Cone Point, which includes the mainstem Yukon River communities of Kaltag, Nulato, and Koyukuk):

Subsistence fishing for salmon is closed until further notice. During subsistence salmon fishing closures, fish wheels may not be operated and gillnets with a mesh size greater than four inches and a length greater than 60 feet must be removed from the water.

Subdistricts 4-B and 4-C (from Cone Point to Illinois Creek, which includes the mainstem Yukon River communities of Galena and Ruby):

Subsistence fishing for salmon is closed until further notice. During subsistence salmon fishing closures, fish wheels may not be operated and gillnets with a mesh size greater than four inches and a length greater than 60 feet must be removed from the water.

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, 5-B, and 5-C: Subsistence fishing for salmon is closed until further notice. During subsistence salmon fishing closures, fish wheels may not be operated and gillnets with a mesh size greater than four inches and a length greater than 60 feet must be removed from the water.

Subdistricts 5-D Lower (from an ADF&G regulatory marker 2 miles downstream of Waldron Creek upstream to the Hadweenzic River and including all adjacent tributaries, which includes the communities of Stevens Village and Beaver):

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.

Effective 8:00 p.m. Wednesday, June 11, subsistence salmon fishing will close to conserve Chinook salmon.

Subdistrict 5-D Middle (from the Hadweenzic River upstream to 22 Mile Slough and including the Porcupine River and all other adjacent tributaries, which includes the communities of Venetie, Fort Yukon, and Chalkyitsik):

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.

Effective 8:00 p.m. Sunday, June 15, subsistence salmon fishing will close to conserve Chinook salmon.

Subdistrict 5-D Upper (from 22 Mile Slough to the U.S./Canada border and including all adjacent tributaries, which includes the communities of Circle and Eagle):

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.

Effective 8:00 p.m. Tuesday, June 17, subsistence salmon fishing will close to conserve Chinook salmon.

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.

Commercial Fishing Schedule:

A commercial fishing schedule has been established in District 1 and District 2 with dip net and beach seine gear only. Fishermen are required to immediately release Chinook salmon back to the water alive from these gear types.

District 1 (including the Black River) Commercial:

Commercial summer chum salmon fishing in District 1 is on the following schedule:

- Sunday-Friday from 12:00 noon until 12:00 midnight

These will be 12-hour commercial fishing periods that are open concurrent with subsistence fishing times.

District 2 Commercial:

Commercial summer chum salmon fishing in District 2 is on the following schedule:

- Sunday-Friday from 12:00 noon until 10:00 p.m.

These will be 10-hour commercial fishing periods that are open concurrent with subsistence fishing times.

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**.

If you have any questions regarding this report, please call the ADFG office in Emmonak at 949-1320.

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