

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



Cora Campbell, Commissioner
Jeff Regnart, Director



Contact:
Eric Newland, Area Management Biologist
Phone: (907) 949-1320
Fax: (907) 949-1830

Lower Yukon Office
PO Box 127
Emmonak, Alaska 99581
Date Issued: 6/16/2014

2014 Yukon River Summer Salmon Fishery News Release # 16

Summer Update # 6, Yukon Area Salmon Fishery

Districts Affected: Yukon Area

Assessment

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

Catch rates from the Lower Yukon test fishery program indicated that an early group of Chinook salmon began entering the lower river on May 31. This group of fish should be located near Tanana. As expected based on historical upriver migration timing, Chinook salmon passage rates at the Rapids Test Fish Wheel are building.

The first pulse of Chinook salmon migrated past the sonar project near Pilot Station on June 8 through June 10. The timing of this first pulse is considerably earlier than the average for historical years, which is typically June 19. This timing is also earlier than the average for early years, which is June 14. So it appears that the first pulse of the 2014 Chinook salmon run is tracking at least 4 days earlier than the average for early years and at least a week earlier than the average for all years. The sonar project estimated the size of the first pulse was approximately 22,000 Chinook salmon. Based on historical upriver migration timing, the first pulse of Chinook salmon should be moving through District 4 this week.

Genetic mixed stock analysis (MSA) on the early group and first pulse of Chinook salmon past the sonar project near Pilot Station (June 1-11) estimated that 50% were of Canadian-origin. For more information about Yukon River inseason genetic MSA, please visit the ADF&G Gene Conservation Laboratory website at:
http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=fishinggeneconservationlab.yukonchinook_baseline

Based on recent catch rates from Lower Yukon test fishery program, it appears that the second pulse of Chinook salmon started moving through the lower river on June 12 and continued through June 15. The front end of that first pulse passed by the sonar project near Pilot Station on June 15, with an estimated passage of approximately 7,200 Chinook salmon in that first day. We expect to see this second pulse continue migrating past the sonar project over the next few days. The timing of the second pulse is similarly tracking considerably earlier than the average for historical and early years.

Total Chinook salmon passage at the sonar project through June 15 is estimated to be approximately 46,000 fish, which is consistent with a lower than average run size for this point in the run and is consistent with the preseason outlook range of 64,000 to 121,000.

The summer chum salmon run is building in the lower river, with relatively high catch rates in the Lower Yukon test fishery program. An initial group of summer chum salmon passed by the sonar project near Pilot Station on June 10 through June 11, but then daily passage estimates declined. Consistent with this assessment information and historical migration timing, good catches of summer chum salmon with dip nets were reported in Russian Mission on June 14. Additionally, subsistence reports and recent commercial harvest information indicate summer chum salmon are beginning to move through in good numbers. We should continue to see the summer chum salmon run building in the lower river over the next week, as the average first quarter point at the LYTF is June 19. Summer chum salmon passage by the sonar project through June 15 is estimated to be approximately 371,000 fish.

Summer Chum Salmon Radiotelemetry Project – Russian Mission

Tagging operations for the summer chum salmon radiotelemetry research project began June 12 upriver from the community of Russian Mission. As of June 15, 41 summer chum salmon have been tagged and released. In addition to the radio tag, summer chum salmon will also have a white spaghetti tag located at the base of the dorsal fin. If a tagged summer chum salmon is harvested, please note the date, time, and location and return the tag to the address listed on the outside of the radio tag or contact Stephanie Schmidt or Sean Larson with ADF&G (stephanie.schmidt@alaska.gov or sean.larson@alaska.gov). Tagging operations will continue through July 18.

Assessment Projects

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

8.5-Inch Set Gillnet: The cumulative CPUE as of June 15 is 10.50, which is above the historical average of 4.57 for this date for all years, but below the historical average of 13.37 for early years for this date. 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 taken in the LYTF, the number of set net sites has been reduced from four sites to one site. 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. It is unlikely the North Mouth site will be used during the 2014 season.

8.25-Inch Drift Gillnet: The cumulative CPUE as of June 15 is 374.65. 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 cumulative CPUE for summer chum salmon as of June 15 is 3,110.75, which is well above the historical median of 238.31 for this date.

Andreafsky River Weir/ USFWS

Project staff completed construction of the weir over the weekend and were fully operational starting June 16.

Sonar Project near Pilot Station/ ADF&G

The Chinook salmon passage at the sonar project is estimated at approximately 46,000 salmon as of June 15, which is below the historical cumulative average of approximately 68,300 for early years for this date.

Summer chum salmon passage is estimated at approximately 371,000 fish as of June 15, which is well above the historical median of approximately 17,000 for this date.

Rapids Video Test Fish Wheel/Zuray

The Rapids video test fish wheel was fully operational on June 9. As of June 15, the cumulative CPUE for Chinook salmon is estimated at 139.16. There has been no summer chum salmon passage at this time.

Age Composition

The Chinook salmon age composition from drift gillnets in the Pilot Station test fishery through June 13 was 3% age-3, 6% age-4, 70% age-5, and 21% age-6 fish. Females comprised 32% of the 131 sampled. The age-5 percentage was above average, age-6 was below average, and the percent female was below average.

The Chinook salmon age composition from the 8.5-inch LYTF set nets through June 13 was 2% age-4, 56% age-5, 41% age-6, and 1% age-7 fish. Females comprised 32% of the 167 fish sampled. Similar to Pilot Station test fishery, the LYTF age-5 percentage was above average, age-6 was below average, and the percent female was below average.

The summer chum salmon age composition from the 5.5-inch LYTF drift nets through June 15 was 12% age-4, 80% age-5, and 8% age-6 fish. Females were 64%. The sample size was 460 fish. The age-4 percentage was below average, age-5 was above average, and females were above average.

The summer chum salmon age composition from the beach seine and dip net commercial fishery (period 3) was 21% age-4, 71% age-5, and 9% age-6 fish. Females were 52%. The sample size was 160 fish.

NOTE: Other assessment projects will be added as they become operational.

Management Strategies

The subsistence salmon fishing closure is now being applied to the last remaining management areas of the Yukon River as the first Chinook salmon begin migrating through the upper reaches of the Alaskan mainstem. Effective 8:00 p.m. Tuesday, June 17, subsistence salmon fishing will close to conserve Chinook salmon in the Upper portion of Subdistrict 5-D.

Consistent with the conservation measures taken on the mainstem Yukon River, a subsistence salmon fishing closure is being implemented in the Koyukuk and Innoko Rivers. These closures are expected to be in place to protect discrete pulses of Chinook salmon. However, further management actions such as gear restrictions are likely to be implemented following these closures to allow for summer chum salmon harvest while conserving Chinook salmon.

In District 6 including the Old Minto Area, fishermen should anticipate that subsistence and personal use fishing will be closed to protect the first pulse of Chinook salmon. The department will notify fishermen in the Tanana River regarding changes to the personal use and subsistence fishing schedule by Saturday, June 21.

In Districts 1 – 3, liberal summer chum salmon fishing opportunity continues to be provided with gear types that allow for Chinook salmon to be safely released. A schedule has been established and fishermen can expect that this schedule will continue until further notice.

Subsistence salmon fishing in District 4, including the Anvik River and other adjacent tributaries is currently closed. However, the department will continue to monitor the summer chum salmon run to determine when fishing opportunities will be provided with fish wheels and dip nets. Similar to the last several years, fish wheels used for subsistence purposes will be required to be equipped with a chute or a live box. Fishermen will be required to closely attend to fish wheels while in operation and all Chinook salmon caught in fish wheels must be returned to the water alive.

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 each day
- 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 from 12:00 noon until 10:00 p.m. each day
- 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 ensure 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 salmon 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.

Effective 8:00 p.m. Thursday, June 19, subsistence salmon fishing will close to conserve Chinook salmon stocks in the Innoko River.

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

Subsistence fishing for salmon is closed in Subdistrict 4-A Lower until further notice.

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 in Subdistrict 4-A Upper until further notice.

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 in Subdistricts 4-B and 4-C until further notice.

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.

Effective 8:00 p.m. Wednesday, June 18, subsistence salmon fishing will close to conserve Chinook salmon stocks in the Koyukuk River.

Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C: Subsistence fishing for salmon is closed in Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C until further notice.

Subdistrict 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 for salmon is closed in Subdistrict 5-D Lower until further notice.

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 for salmon is closed in Subdistrict 5-D Middle until further notice.

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: 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:

The Lower Yukon summer chum salmon dip net and beach seine commercial fishery began on Monday, June 9. The preliminary commercial harvest in District 1 and District 2 combined through June 15 is approximately 41,400 summer chum salmon with a reported 922 Chinook salmon released alive.

District 1 (including the Black River) Commercial Fishing Schedule:

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

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

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

District 2 Commercial Fishing Schedule:

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

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

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.

-end-