

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



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Date Issued: 06/30/2014

**2014 Yukon River Summer Salmon Fishery News Release # 28
Summer Update # 8, Yukon Area Salmon Fishery
Districts Affected: Yukon Area**

Assessment

The 2014 Chinook salmon run timing continues to track considerably earlier than historical averages as indicated by multiple run assessment projects. To account for this early run timing, the sonar project at Eagle began operations on June 27, which is earlier than normal. The early group of Chinook salmon that entered the lower river on May 31 is expected to be migrating past the sonar project near the Canadian border during the course of the next few days. This should give a sense of the magnitude of this early group, which passed through the lower river before the sonar project near Pilot Station was fully operational.

Based on historical upriver migration timing, the first pulse of Chinook salmon should be moving through Subdistrict 5-D this week. The longer, more sustained, second pulse of Chinook salmon is expected to reach Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C this week. While, the third pulse of Chinook salmon is anticipated to be migrating through District 4 this week. Meanwhile, in the Lower Yukon, test fishing indices and Chinook salmon sonar passages estimates have declined in the past several days.

Genetic mixed stock analysis (MSA) on the early group combined with the first pulse of Chinook salmon past the sonar project near Pilot Station (June 1-11) estimated that 50% were of Canadian-origin. Genetic MSA on the second pulse of Chinook salmon (June 12-20) estimated that 52% were of Canadian-origin. While the genetic analyses estimated that the third pulse of Chinook salmon (June 21-27) contained 24% Canadian-origin fish. 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

Total Chinook salmon passage at the sonar project through June 29 is estimated to be approximately 122,900 fish. Comparing the early and historical average timing, the Chinook salmon run through the lower river is estimated to be 90% complete as of June 29. The 2014 run size appears to be near the high end of the preseason outlook range of 64,000 to 121,000. As a result of considerable conservation efforts the Chinook salmon run appears to have the potential to meet escapement goals and objectives, despite being below average in run size. However, it is still too early to be certain that escapement goals will be met until Chinook salmon begin to arrive at escapement projects. The cumulative passage estimate for Chinook salmon at Eagle sonar through June 29 is 706 fish. Given the recent trend in Yukon River Chinook salmon run sizes, the department continues to critically evaluate the data uncertainty associated with the sonar passage estimates as well as genetic mixed stock analysis when assessing the run.

Summer chum salmon numbers in the lower river declined during the past week, with sonar passage estimates dropping to less than 50,000 per day. However, higher catch rates in the lower river test fishery indicate another group of summer chum salmon may be entering the river. These new fish should reach the sonar project near Pilot Station over the next few days. The average first quarter point at the sonar project for summer chum salmon is June 22 and the average median is June 27, but it appears the run could be tracking two or three days earlier than historical average run timing. Cumulative summer chum salmon passage at the sonar project through June 29 is estimated to be approximately 1,370,000 fish. Summer chum salmon are starting to show up in good numbers in District 4 this week.

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 29, nearly 800 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 29 is 33.54, which is above the historical average of 16.05 for this date for all years, and above the historical average of 23.73 for early years for this date. Please note that calculations for CPUE account for fewer nets being fished compared to previous years. Due to these changes in project operations, the absolute CPUE estimates are difficult to compare to historical data and are not used as an indicator of abundance. Rather, the trend in CPUE at this project from one day to another is being used to evaluate the relative run timing.

In an effort to reduce the number of Chinook salmon taken in the LYTF, the number of set net sites has been reduced from four sites to one site. The Big Eddy set nets in 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 29 is 616.73. 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 29 is 7,337.57, which is well above the historical median of 2,336.40 for this date.

Andreafsky River Weir/ USFWS

The cumulative Chinook salmon passage as of June 29 is 62 Chinook salmon which is below the historical average of 184 for this date. The summer chum salmon passage as of June 29 is 2,337 fish which is below the historical median of 4,310 for this date.

Anvik River Sonar/ADFG

The cumulative summer chum salmon passage as of June 28 is approximately 72,300 fish which is well above the historical median of 27,800 for this date.

Sonar Project near Pilot Station/ ADF&G

The Chinook salmon passage at the sonar project is estimated at approximately 122,900 salmon as of June 29, which is below the historical cumulative average of approximately 162,900 for early years for this date.

Summer chum salmon passage is estimated at approximately 1.37 million fish as of June 29, which is above the historical median of approximately 1.1 million fish for this date.

Rapids Video Test Fish Wheel/Zuray

As of June 29, the cumulative CPUE for Chinook salmon is estimated at 2,325.02 which is well above the historical average of 306.93 for this date. The cumulative CPUE for summer chum salmon is estimated at 94.16 which is above the historical median of 0.00 for this date.

Eagle Sonar/ADF&G

The Eagle sonar began operations on June 27. The project was fully operational as of June 28. The cumulative estimated passage as of June 29 is 706 Chinook salmon.

Age Composition

The Chinook salmon age composition from drift gillnets in the Pilot Station test fishery through June 27 was 4% age-3, 10% age-4, 67% age-5, 19% age-6, and 1% age-7 fish. The female percentage was 31%. The sample size was 376 fish. The age-5 and age-3 percentages were above average, age-6 was below average, and females were below average.

The Chinook salmon age composition from the 8.5-inch LYTF set nets through June 27 was 1% age-4, 53% age-5, 43% age-6, and 3% age-7 fish. The female percentage was 42%. The sample size was 498 fish. Similar to Pilot Station test fishery, the LYTF age-5 percentage was above average, age-6 was below average, and females were below average.

The summer chum salmon age composition from the 5.5-inch LYTF drift nets through June 29 was 21% age-4, 73% age-5, and 6% age-6 fish. The female percentage was 56%. The sample size was 1,141 fish. The age-4 percentage was below average, age-5 was above average, and females were average.

The summer chum salmon age composition from the beach seine and dip net commercial fishery was 32% age-4, 62% age-5, and 5% age-6 fish. The female percentage was 52%. The sample size was 640 fish.

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

Management Strategies

The subsistence salmon fishing closure is in full effect in the upper Yukon, as the vast majority of the Upper Yukon stocks are expected to be migrating through the area over the course of the next two weeks. Fishermen should not expect changes to the schedule in District 5 during the course of this week.

As the Chinook salmon run winds down in the lower river, gear restrictions will be cautiously relaxed to allow for more efficient harvest of summer chum salmon after most Chinook move out of the area. A short subsistence fishing period with 6-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets was allowed on June 28 in Districts 1 and 2 and similar opportunity will be provided in District 3 on July 3. Subsistence salmon fishing in the Innoko River has been reopened with 6-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets and the Koyukuk River will follow suit on July 2. The gear restrictions that have been in place in the southern portion of the Coastal District, near the communities of Scammon and Hooper Bay, are also likely to be lifted by the end of the week.

Additional opportunities with 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets will be considered for the Lower Yukon districts. Strategies are currently being developed on how to transition from daily fishing periods with selective fishing gear such as dip nets and beach seines to a schedule that allows for both subsistence and commercial opportunity with restricted gillnet gear to target summer chum salmon.

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.

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

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

District 3:

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

Subsistence salmon fishing will be open in District 3 for one 3-hour period from 6:00 p.m. until 9:00 p.m. Thursday, July 3, with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size only to target summer chum salmon. Chinook salmon incidentally caught in the 6-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets may be kept for subsistence purposes.

Fishermen may choose to use dip net gear during this period, however all Chinook salmon caught in dip nets must be immediately released back to the water alive.

Fishermen using dip nets or beach seine gear are required to immediately release all Chinook salmon back to the water alive. This requirement will be strictly enforced. 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 salmon fishing is open 7 days a week, 24 hours per day with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size to target summer chum salmon. This gear restriction is anticipated to be in place for the remainder of the Chinook salmon run in the Innoko River.

Subdistrict 4-A Lower (from ¾ miles downstream of Old Paradise Village upstream to Stink Creek, including all adjacent tributary rivers and mainstem Yukon River communities of Anvik and Grayling):

Subsistence fishing for summer chum salmon in the *Anvik River Special Management Area* (which includes the lower 12 miles of the Anvik River) is open 7 days a week, 24 hours per day with dip nets and beach seine gear only.

Subsistence fishing for summer chum salmon in the remainder of Subdistrict 4-A Lower will be open 7 days a week, 24 hours per day with dip net gear and live-release fish wheels only.

Subsistence dip net and beach seine fishermen are required to immediately release Chinook salmon alive from these gear types. Fish wheels must be equipped with a chute or a live box and closely attended while in operation and all Chinook salmon caught in fish wheels must also be returned to the water alive.

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 summer chum salmon in Subdistrict 4-A Upper is open 7 days a week, 24 hours per day with dip net gear and live-release fish wheels only.

Subsistence dip net fishermen are required to immediately release Chinook salmon alive from this gear type. Fish wheels must be equipped with a chute or a live box and closely attended while in operation and all Chinook salmon caught in fish wheels must be returned to the water alive.

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 summer chum salmon in Subdistricts 4-B and 4-C is open 7 days a week, 24 hours per day with dip net gear and live-release fish wheels only.

Subsistence dip net fishermen are required to immediately release Chinook salmon alive from this gear type. Fish wheels must be equipped with a chute or a live box and closely attended while in operation and all Chinook salmon caught in fish wheels must be returned to the water alive.

Koyukuk River:

Subsistence fishing is currently closed to conserve Chinook salmon stocks in the Koyukuk River.

Effective 8:00 p.m. Wednesday, July 2, subsistence salmon fishing will be open 7 days a week, 24 hours per day with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size to target summer chum salmon. This gear restriction is anticipated to be in place for the remainder of the Chinook salmon run 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.

Effective 8:00 p.m. Monday, June 30, use of 4-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets in Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C will be closed until further notice. This non-salmon fishing opportunity will be reinstated after the majority of the run of Chinook salmon have passed or when assessment is highly confident escapement goals will be met.

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

Subdistricts 6-A and 6-B (from the mouth of the Tanana River upstream to the regulatory marker at the mouth of Wood River, which includes the communities of Manley, Minto, and Nenana):

Subsistence fishing is currently closed and will remain closed during the next two subsistence salmon fishing periods which were scheduled to begin at 6:00 p.m. Monday, June 30, and Friday, July 4, respectively.

Subdistricts 6-C (from the regulatory marker at the mouth of the Wood River upstream to the downstream mouth of the Salcha River, which includes the communities of Fairbanks, North Pole, and Salcha):

Personal use salmon fishing in Subdistrict 6-C is currently closed and will remain closed until further notice to conserve Chinook salmon.

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.

Please note: Fishermen planning to personal use fish for whitefish and sucker in the Fairbanks Nonsubsistence Area, are required to contact the Fairbanks Fish and Game office to obtain a Personal Use Whitefish and Sucker permit.

Old Minto Area:

Subsistence fishing for salmon is closed in the Old Minto Area Upper further notice.

The department will notify fishermen by July 5 concerning run status and future subsistence fishing opportunities for Subdistricts 6-A, 6-B, and 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 preliminary commercial harvest in District 1 and District 2 combined through June 29 is approximately 229,400 summer chum salmon with a reported 5,095 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 with beach seine and dip net gear only:

- 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 with beach seine and dip net gear only:

- 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.

Subdistrict 4-A Commercial Fishing Schedule:

Summer chum salmon directed commercial fishing opportunity is being provided in Subdistrict 4-A with fish wheels only. Fish wheels must be manned at all times during operations and all Chinook salmon caught in the fish wheels must immediately be released to the water alive.

The cumulative harvest through June 29 is approximately 18,600 summer chum salmon with a reported 30 Chinook salmon released alive.

Commercial fishing will be open for an additional seven 24-hour fishing periods, beginning at 12:01 a.m. Monday, June 30.

Period #8: Monday, June 30

Period #9: Tuesday, July 1

Period #10: Wednesday, July 2

Period #11: Thursday, July 3

Period #12: Friday, July 4

Period #13: Saturday, July 5

Period #14: Sunday, July 6

Subdistrict 4-A commercial fishermen will be notified by Saturday, July 5, regarding additional commercial fishing opportunity.

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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