

**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
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**2014 Yukon River Summer Salmon Fishery News Release # 38
Summer Update # 9, 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. Based on historical upriver migration timing, passages estimates are expected to climb over the next few days as the first pulse of Chinook salmon is anticipated to migrate past the Eagle sonar. The longer, more sustained, second pulse of Chinook salmon is expected to migrate through Subdistrict 5-D over the next week, while the third pulse of Chinook salmon will be passing by the Rapids Test Fish Wheel Project. In the Lower Yukon, Chinook salmon sonar passages estimates continue to decline, indicating the Chinook salmon run is nearly over.

Total Chinook salmon passage at the sonar project near Pilot Station through July 6 is estimated to be approximately 132,000 fish. Given the early run timing, the Chinook salmon run through the lower river is approximately 97% complete as of July 6. The 2014 run size appears to be below average but better than anticipated preseason.

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

As a result of considerable conservation efforts, the 2014 Chinook salmon run has the potential to meet escapement goals and objectives, despite being below average in run size. The

cumulative passage estimate for Chinook salmon at Eagle sonar through July 6 is approximately 6,900 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. Initial passage estimates through July 6 at the Eagle sonar project and at the weir projects operated on the East Fork Andreafsky River and Gisasa River are encouraging. However, additional data are necessary before it can be determined with more certainty that escapement goals will be met. Unfortunately, high water conditions have delayed operations at the escapement monitoring projects at Henshaw Creek, Chena River, and Salcha River.

Cumulative summer chum salmon passage at the sonar project through July 6 is estimated to be approximately 1,730,000 fish. Using historical run timing, the summer chum salmon run in the lower river is estimated to be 85% complete as of July 6. Based on assessment data to date, the Anvik River and East Fork Andreafsky River appear to be on track to meet summer chum salmon escapement goals at those projects.

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 July 7, over 1,000 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 July 6 is 36.21, which is above the historical average of 18.88 for this date for all years, and above the historical average of 25.95 for early years for this date. The last day of operations for the season will be July 7.

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.

8.25-Inch Drift Gillnet: The cumulative CPUE as of July 6 is 629.04. 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 July 6 is 8,372.75, which is well above the historical median of 2,928.99 for this date.

Andreafsky River Weir/ USFWS

The cumulative Chinook salmon passage as of July 6 is 1,763 Chinook salmon which is above the historical average of 970 for this date. The summer chum salmon passage as of July 6 is approximately 21,000 fish which is slightly below the historical median of approximately 22,800 for this date.

Gisasa River Weir/ USFWS

The Gisasa River Weir began operations on July 2. The cumulative Chinook salmon passage as of July 6 is 442 Chinook salmon which is above the historical average of 222 for this date. The summer chum salmon passage as of July 6 is approximately 15,100 fish which is above the historical median of approximately 10,800 for this date.

Anvik River Sonar/ADFG

The cumulative summer chum salmon passage as of July 6 is approximately 241,000 fish which is well above the historical median of approximately 179,900 for this date.

Sonar Project near Pilot Station/ ADF&G

The Chinook salmon passage at the sonar project is estimated at approximately 132,000 salmon as of July 6, which is below the historical cumulative average of approximately 183,700 for early years for this date.

Summer chum salmon passage is estimated at approximately 1.73 million fish as of July 6, which is above the historical median of approximately 1.6 million fish for this date.

Rapids Video Test Fish Wheel/Zuray

As of July 6, the cumulative CPUE for Chinook salmon is estimated at 4,376.29 which is well above the historical average of 881.96 for this date. The cumulative CPUE for summer chum salmon is estimated at 308.31 which is above the historical median of 37.29 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 July 6 is 6,907 Chinook salmon which is well above the historical average of 78 for this date.

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 July 4 was 1% age-4, 51% age-5, 45% age-6, and 3% age-7 fish. The female percentage was 46%. The sample size was 609 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 July 7 was 25% age-4, 70% age-5, and 5% age-6 fish. The female percentage was 56%. The sample size was 1,418 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 commercial fishery was 33% age-4, 62% age-5, and 4% age-6 fish. The female percentage was 51%. The sample size was 960 fish from 5 periods.

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

Management Strategies

The subsistence salmon fishing closure continues to be in full effect in the upper Yukon, as the bulk of the Upper Yukon Chinook salmon stocks are still expected to be migrating through District 5 during the course of the next two weeks. While initial passage estimates at the Eagle sonar site are promising, the first pulse is just now reaching the border. Assessing the first pulse at the Eagle sonar site will be our first measure for verification of the lower river assessment. Typically, the data uncertainty around projection estimates decreases as we near the midpoint of the run. After the second pulse of Chinook salmon starts migrating past the sonar project, we should gain more confidence in projection estimates that will guide management actions in the upper river. Therefore, fishermen should expect the closure to remain in place during the course of this week. However, if and when confidence is gained that the escapement objective will be met, fishing opportunities may be considered in District 5.

As the Chinook salmon run comes to an end in the lower river, fishing closures and gear restrictions are being relaxed. The closure that has been in place in the northern portion of the Coastal District will end on Tuesday, July 8. In Districts 1-3 fishing schedules have been established that allow for the harvest of summer chum salmon with 6-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets. In District 4, subsistence fishing will likely be established later in the week starting first in Lower 4-A.

The subsistence salmon fishing closure has ended in the Tanana River, including Subdistricts 6-A, 6-B, and the Old Minto Area. However, due to the high water that continues to delay operations at the escapement projects in the Chena and Salcha Rivers, the effect of this closure is difficult to measure at this time.

The Koyukuk and Innoko Rivers are open 7 days per week, 24 hours a day with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size.

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 currently closed in all marine waters in the **Northern Portion of the Coastal District** from 62° degrees North latitude to Point Romanof.

Effective 8:00 a.m. Tuesday, July 8, subsistence fishing will be open 7 days a week, 24 hours per day in the **Northern Portion of the Coastal District** from 62° degrees North latitude to Point Romanof and fishermen may use gillnets with mesh size of 7.5 inches or less.

In the **Southern Portion of the Coastal District**, from the Naskonat Peninsula north to 62° North latitude, subsistence salmon fishing is open 7 days per week, 24 hours a day with gillnets restricted to 7.5-inch or smaller mesh size.

District 1 (including the Black River):

Subsistence salmon fishing will be open 7 days a week, 24 hours per day except for 6 hours before, during, and 6 hours after each commercial salmon fishing period with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size to target summer chum salmon. Chinook salmon incidentally caught in the 6-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets may be kept for subsistence purposes.

District 2:

Subsistence salmon fishing will be open 7 days a week, 24 hours per day except for 6 hours before, during, and 6 hours after each commercial salmon fishing period with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size to target summer chum salmon. Chinook salmon incidentally caught in the 6-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets may be kept for subsistence purposes.

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.

Effective 8:00 p.m. Wednesday, July 9, subsistence salmon fishing with dip nets will be discontinued and subsistence fishing will then be open for two 36-hour periods per week from 8:00 p.m. Wednesdays until 8:00 a.m. Fridays and from 8:00 p.m. Sundays until 8:00 a.m. Tuesdays with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size 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 using dip nets 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 $\frac{3}{4}$ 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 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 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.

Fishermen in Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B and 5-C may harvest non-salmon species using 4-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets not exceeding 60-feet in length. Fishermen are strongly encouraged to avoid fishing where Chinook salmon may be encountered and are urged to track their non-salmon subsistence harvest.

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 salmon fishing in Subdistricts 6-A and 6-B consists of two 42-hour periods each 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.

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:

Effective 6:00 p.m. Monday, July 7, subsistence fishing in the Old Minto Area will reopen for the remainder of the regular scheduled period. The Old Minto Area will resume the normal schedule, with open fishing occurring 5 days a week, from 6:00 p.m. Fridays until 6:00 p.m. Wednesdays, and fishermen may use gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or smaller.

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 July 6 is approximately 303,000 summer chum salmon with a reported 5,450 Chinook salmon released alive and 125 Chinook salmon caught but not sold.

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

Commercial fishing in all of District 1 will be open from 3:00 p.m. until 12:00 midnight Monday July 7, with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size to target summer chum salmon. This will be a 9-hour commercial only fishing period.

All of District 1 will be open for two additional 9-hour commercial fishing periods with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size to target summer chum salmon. The District 1 commercial fishing schedule is as follows:

- 3:00 p.m. until 12:00 midnight Wednesday, July 9
- 3:00 p.m. until 12:00 midnight Friday, July 11

Commercial gillnet fishermen can release live Chinook salmon or retain them for subsistence purposes. The sale of Chinook salmon is prohibited and Chinook salmon caught but not sold must be reported on fish tickets.

District 2 Commercial Gillnet Fishing Periods:

District 2 will be open for two additional 6-hour commercial fishing periods with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size to target summer chum salmon. The District 2 commercial fishing schedule is as follows:

- 4:00 p.m. until 10:00 p.m. Tuesday, July 8
- 4:00 p.m. until 10:00 p.m. Thursday, July 10

Commercial gillnet fishermen can release live Chinook salmon or retain them for subsistence purposes. The sale of Chinook salmon is prohibited and Chinook salmon caught but not sold must be reported on fish tickets.

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 July 5 is approximately 44,000 summer chum salmon with a reported 104 Chinook salmon released alive.

Commercial fishing will be open for seven additional 24-hour fishing periods, beginning at 12:01 a.m. Monday, July 7.

Period #15: Monday, July 7
Period #16: Tuesday, July 8
Period #17: Wednesday, July 9
Period #18: Thursday, July 10
Period #19: Friday, July 11
Period #20: Saturday, July 12
Period #21: Sunday, July 13

Commercial fishermen in Subdistrict 4-A will be notified by Saturday, July 12, 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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