

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



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Date Issued: 07/14/2014

**2014 Yukon River Summer Salmon Fishery News Release # 43
Summer Update # 10, Yukon Area Salmon Fishery
Districts Affected: Yukon Area**

Assessment

Based on the assessment information to date, the 2014 Chinook salmon run size is better than anticipated preseason but is still well below average. The Chinook salmon run is nearly over in the Lower Yukon and the cumulative passage at the sonar project near Pilot Station is approximately 136,000 salmon. The first quarter point for the Chinook salmon run at the sonar was likely between June 12 and June 13, the median point was likely between June 18 and June 19, and the third quarter point was approximately June 23. The preliminary run timing dates for the 2014 Chinook salmon run are approximately one week earlier than the historical average run timing.

Sonar passage estimates indicate that the first pulse of Chinook salmon have migrated across the border and are on their way to the spawning grounds in Canada. The cumulative passage estimate for Chinook salmon at Eagle sonar through July 13 is approximately 20,100 fish. 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 preliminary projection for Canadian-origin Chinook salmon based on genetic and sonar passage estimates at the sonar project located near Pilot Station ranges from 47,200 – 63,100. However, due to the recent poor escapement performance, a cautious management approach which accounts for the data uncertainty associated with this projection will be taken to ensure the escapement objective (42,500-55,000) is achieved.

The longer, more sustained second pulse of Chinook salmon should be migrating past the Eagle sonar project over the next several days, while the third pulse of Chinook salmon will be migrating through Subdistrict 5-D this week. 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.

The magnitude of the second pulse of Chinook salmon as it migrates past the sonar project over the next several days should provide a better indication regarding the likelihood that the border escapement objective will be met with this run size.

Meanwhile, initial passage estimates through July 13 at the weir projects operated in the Alaskan portion of the drainage, including the East Fork Andreafsky River and Gisasa River weirs are very encouraging. The escapement goal for Chinook salmon on the E.F. Andreafsky River (2,100 – 4,900) was achieved on July 8, with a daily passage estimate of over 2,000 Chinook salmon at the weir project – a record daily passage for that project. Daily passage estimates at the project have since dropped off and are averaging approximately 160 Chinook salmon per day. Unfortunately, high water conditions continue to impact operations at the escapement monitoring projects at the Gisasa River, Henshaw Creek, Chena River, and Salcha River. Additional data are necessary before it can be determined with more certainty that other escapement goals in the Yukon River drainage will be met.

Summer chum salmon passage through July 13 at the sonar located near Pilot Station is estimated at approximately 1.8 million fish, which is in line with historical median of 1.8 million for this date. Using historical run timing, the summer chum salmon run in the lower river is estimated to be 97% complete as of July 13. Based on assessment data to date, the Anvik River appears to be on track to meet the summer chum salmon escapement goal at that project, while the cumulative passage estimate of approximately 31,000 summer chum salmon at E.F. Andreafsky River is tracking slightly behind what is necessary to meet the escapement goal of greater than 40,000 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 and concluded on July 13. Approximately 1,200 summer chum salmon were tagged and released. In addition to the radio tag, summer chum salmon 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).

Assessment Projects

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

8.5-Inch Set Gillnet: The last day of operations for the season was July 7. The cumulative CPUE for the season was 36.25, which is above the historical average of 19.18 for all years, and above the historical average of 26.08 for early years.

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 13 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 13 is 8,902.66, which is well above the historical median of 3,130.69 for this date.

Andreafsky River Weir/ USFWS

The cumulative Chinook salmon passage as of July 13 is approximately 5,200 Chinook salmon which is above the historical average of approximately 2,500 for this date. The summer chum salmon passage as of July 13 is approximately 31,000 fish which is slightly below the historical median of approximately 36,300 for this date.

Gisasa River Weir/ USFWS

The cumulative Chinook salmon passage as of July 13 is 1,570 Chinook salmon which is above the historical average of 1,011 for this date. The summer chum salmon passage as of July 13 is approximately 32,100 fish which is above the historical median of approximately 24,200 for this date.

High water has impacted operations as of July 13.

Anvik River Sonar/ADFG

The cumulative summer chum salmon passage as of July 13 is approximately 342,500 fish which is slightly above the historical median of approximately 342,400 for this date.

Sonar Project near Pilot Station/ ADF&G

The Chinook salmon passage at the sonar project is estimated at approximately 136,000 salmon as of July 13, which is below the historical cumulative average of approximately 191,400 for early years for this date.

Summer chum salmon passage is estimated at approximately 1.8 million fish as of July 13, which is in line with the historical median for this date.

Rapids Video Test Fish Wheel/Zuray

As of July 13, the cumulative CPUE for Chinook salmon is estimated at 5,882.74 which is well above the historical average of 1,702.52 for this date. The cumulative CPUE for summer chum salmon is estimated at 552.00 which is above the historical median of 321.81 for this date.

Eagle Sonar/ADF&G

The Eagle sonar began operations on June 27. The project was fully operational as of June 28, approximately three days early. The cumulative estimated passage as of July 13 is approximately 20,100 Chinook salmon which is well above the historical average of 2,127 for this date.

Age Composition

The Chinook salmon age composition from drift gillnets in the Pilot Station test fishery through July 9 was 4% age-3, 10% age-4, 66% age-5, 19% age-6, and 1% age-7 fish. The female percentage was 30%. The sample size was 431 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 7 was 1% age-4, 51% age-5, 46% age-6, and 3% age-7 fish. The female percentage was 46%. The sample size was 613 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 13 was 26% age-4, 69% age-5, and 5% age-6 fish. The female percentage was 55%. The sample size was 1,563 fish. The age-4 percentage was below average, age-5 was above average, and females near average.

The summer chum salmon age composition from the commercial fishery was 33% age-4, 63% age-5, and 4% age-6 fish. The female percentage was 52%. The sample size was 1,120 fish from 6 periods.

Chinook Salmon Stock Composition: Genetic Mixed Stock Analysis (MSA)

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. These genetic analyses suggest a below average Canadian run component. 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

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

Management Strategies

Subsistence salmon fishing restrictions and closures are being relaxed in District 4 chronologically with the upriver migration as the Chinook salmon run comes to an end in the middle river

However, the subsistence salmon fishing closure remains in place in the upper river, as the majority of the Upper Yukon Chinook salmon stocks continue to migrate through District 5. Due to the uncertainty associated with the run size projection, management actions in the District 5 will continue to follow the conservative approach already taken in the downstream districts.

As the midpoint of the run is approached at Eagle sonar, if confidence is gained that the escapement objective will be met, fishing opportunities will be considered first in Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C. This could occur as early as this coming weekend in Subdistrict 5-A, 5-B, 5-C. However, fishermen in Subdistrict 5-D should not anticipate changes to the subsistence fishing closure during the course of this week.

Current Management

Subsistence Fishing Schedule:

Coastal District: Subsistence fishing will be open 7 days a week, 24 hours per day with gillnets restricted to a mesh size of 7.5 inches or less.

District 1 (including the Black River) and 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 with dip nets is discontinued and subsistence fishing will 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.

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 salmon fishing in Subdistrict 4-A Lower is open for two 48-hour periods per week from 6:00 p.m. Sundays until 6:00 p.m. Tuesdays and from 6:00 p.m. Wednesdays until 6:00 p.m. Fridays with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size and live release fish wheels.

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

Effective 6:00 p.m. Monday, July 14, subsistence fishing for summer chum salmon with dip nets will be discontinued and the use of 6-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets will be allowed.

Subsistence fishing will be open from 6:00 p.m. Monday, July 14, until 6:00 p.m. Tuesday, July 15, with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size and fish wheels must be equipped with a chute or a live box. Fishermen are reminded the use of drift gillnets in Subdistrict 4-A closes

by regulation at 12:00 midnight Monday, July 14. Fish wheels must be closely attended while in operation and all Chinook salmon caught in fish wheels must be returned to the water alive.

Beginning Wednesday, July 16, subsistence fishing in Subdistrict 4-A Upper will return to the regular subsistence fishing schedule which consists of two 48-hour periods per week from 6:00 p.m. Wednesdays until 6:00 p.m. Fridays and from 6:00 p.m. Sundays until 6:00 p.m. Tuesdays with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size and live release fish wheels.

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 currently 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.

Effective 6:00 p.m. Wednesday, July 16, subsistence fishing for summer chum salmon with dip nets will be discontinued and the use of 6-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets will be allowed.

Subsistence fishing will return to the regular fishing schedule in Subdistricts 4-B and 4-C from 6:00 p.m. Wednesdays until 6:00 p.m. Fridays and from 6:00 p.m. Sundays until 6:00 p.m. Tuesdays with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size and fish wheels must be equipped with a chute or a live box. Fish wheels must be 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.

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.

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.

Old Minto Area:

Subsistence salmon fishing in The Old Minto Area will be open 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.

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.

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.

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, 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.

Commercial Fishing:

The preliminary commercial harvest in District 1 and District 2 combined through July 13 is approximately 377,100 summer chum salmon with a reported 5,440 Chinook salmon released alive and 389 Chinook salmon caught but not sold.

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

The last summer season commercial fishing period in District 1 will be open from 12:00 noon until 12:00 midnight Tuesday, July 15 with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size to target summer chum salmon. This will be a 12-hour commercial only fishing period.

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:

Commercial fishing in all of District 2 will be open from 2:00 p.m. until 11:00 p.m. Monday, July 14 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.

District 2 will be open for two 9-hour commercial fishing periods with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size to target summer chum salmon. These will be the last two commercial fishing periods of the summer season in District 2. The commercial fishing schedule in District 2 is as follows:

- 2:00 p.m. until 11:00 p.m. Wednesday, July 16
- 2:00 p.m. until 11:00 p.m. Friday, July 18

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 13 is approximately 74,200 summer chum salmon with a reported 234 Chinook salmon released alive.

Commercial fishing will be open for seven additional 24-hour fishing periods, beginning at 12:01 a.m. Monday, July 14.

Period #22: Monday, July 14
Period #23: Tuesday, July 15
Period #24: Wednesday, July 16
Period #25: Thursday, July 17
Period #26: Friday, July 18
Period #27: Saturday, July 19
Period #28: Sunday, July 20

Fishermen will be notified by Saturday, July 19, regarding additional commercial fishing opportunity.

Subdistricts 6-A and 6-B:

Summer chum salmon directed commercial fishing opportunity is being provided in Subdistricts 6-A and 6-B 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 13 is 666 summer chum salmon with a reported 83 Chinook salmon released alive.

Commercial fishing will be open for one 42-hour fishing period:

Period #2: 6:00 p.m. Monday, July 14, until 12:00 noon Wednesday, July 16

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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