

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



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Date Issued: 07/21/2014

2014 Yukon River Summer Salmon Fishery News Release # 49

Summer Update # 11, Yukon Area Salmon Fishery

Districts Affected: Yukon Area

Assessment

Based on assessment information to date, the 2014 Chinook salmon run size is better than anticipated preseason but still well below average. 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 at Eagle indicate that the first and second pulses of Chinook salmon have migrated across the border and are on their way to the spawning grounds in Canada. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) in Canada reported today that the first Chinook salmon arrived at the Whitehorse Fish Ladder – the earliest date on record. Chinook salmon have also been counted at escapement projects on the Porcupine River and Big Salmon River in Canada.

The cumulative passage estimate for Chinook salmon at Eagle sonar through July 20 is approximately 37,600 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. Run timing at the Rapids Test Fish Wheel suggests the Eagle sonar project should see another couple of days of elevated passage estimates. If daily passage estimates similar to the last few days continue, the lower end of the border escapement objective (42,500 – 55,000) should be achieved this week. The preliminary projection for Canadian-origin Chinook salmon based on cumulative passage at the Eagle sonar project and historical run timing is approximately 52,000. As of July 20, the Chinook salmon run was approximately 95% complete at Rampart, which is located in Subdistrict 5-C.

Initial passage estimates through July 20 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. Cumulative passage at that project through July 20 was estimated at 5,600 Chinook salmon. 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. Aerial surveys are being planned on Henshaw Creek and Salcha River to estimate escapement on those systems. Project leaders began using sonar on the Chena River on July 10 to generate daily estimates of total salmon passage. An analysis will be conducted post season to estimate total passage by species and assess escapement for Chinook and summer chum salmon.

Summer chum salmon passage through July 18 at the sonar located near Pilot Station was estimated at approximately 1.9 million fish. The first quarter point of the summer chum salmon run at the sonar project was June 18, the median point was June 23, and the third quarter point was July 1. The Anvik River escapement goal of 350,000 – 700,000 was achieved on July 14, while the cumulative passage estimate of approximately 34,000 summer chum salmon at E.F. Andreafsky River continues to track 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).

Tagged summer chum salmon are continuing to migrate upriver, towers have indicated the fish are spreading through the study area as far upstream as Rapids and Lower Tanana River near Manley. The highest proportions have entered the tributaries of Anvik, Koyukuk, Bonasila, and Nulato Rivers, with lower proportions just moving into upper river systems such as Melozitna, Gisasa, and Hogotza Rivers. Aerial survey flights in the lower and middle Yukon River areas have been concentrating on smaller tributaries that are not covered by towers. Summer chum salmon have been located in numerous rivers and creeks mostly on the north side of the Yukon River mainstem.

Assessment Projects

Lower Yukon River Cooperative Fall Drift Test Fishing/ YDFDA, ADF&G

The project began July 16 at Emmonak. The cumulative CPUE for the project through July 20 was 329.43, which is above the historical average of 83.93 for this date.

Andreafsky River Weir/ USFWS

The cumulative Chinook salmon passage as of July 20 is approximately 5,700 Chinook salmon which is above the historical average of approximately 3,400 for this date. The summer chum

salmon passage as of July 20 is approximately 34,100 fish which is below the historical median of approximately 42,800 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.

Persistent high water has disrupted counts since July 13.

Anvik River Sonar/ADFG

The cumulative summer chum salmon passage as of July 20 is approximately 385,000 fish is above the minimum escapement goal level and below the historical median of approximately 434,500 for this date.

Sonar Project near Pilot Station/ ADF&G

The Chinook salmon passage at the sonar project is estimated at approximately 136,700 salmon as of July 20, which is below the historical cumulative average of approximately 193,700 for early years for this date.

Summer chum salmon passage is estimated at approximately 1.9 million fish as of July 18, which is in line with the historical median for this date.

The sonar began counting fall chum salmon on July 19. The cumulative fall chum salmon passage estimate through July 20 is 18,820, which is below the average passage of approximately 30,600 fish for this date. The first coho salmon was captured in the mainstem sonar test net fishery on July 20.

Rapids Video Test Fish Wheel/Zuray

As of July 20, the cumulative CPUE for Chinook salmon is estimated at 6,241.05 which is well above the historical average of 2,229.91 for this date. The cumulative CPUE for summer chum salmon is estimated at 1,098.16 which is above the historical median of 803.61 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 20 is approximately 37,600 Chinook salmon which is well above the historical average of 14,400 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 end of season 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 end of season was 26% age-4, 69% age-5, and 5% age-6 fish. The female percentage was 55%. The sample size was 1,579 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

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

Chum salmon genetic samples have been collected from the test fishery conducted at the mainstem sonar site operated near Pilot Station beginning June 1. Samples processed from July 7 through July 13 (strata 6) indicate that stocks represent approximately 78% lower summer, 12% upper Koyukuk and Yukon mainstem and 9% Tanana summer. The next strata will be from July 14 through the end of the summer season July 18 and should contain more of a mix summer and fall chum salmon based on the observations from the LYTF.

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

Summer Season Management Strategies

Summer season management is still in effect in the Upper Yukon as the Chinook salmon run comes to an end. The 2014 Chinook salmon run is estimated to be more than 95% complete through Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C. Therefore, the subsistence fishing closure in this area is being discontinued and conservative subsistence fishing opportunities are being providing 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.

The subsistence salmon fishing closure is still in effect in Subdistrict 5-D, as the remainder of Upper Yukon Chinook salmon stocks continue to migrate across the border.

However, it is expected that the lower end of the escapement objective range of 42,500-55,000 will be reached during the course of this week and subsistence fishing opportunities will be considered in Subdistrict 5-D, beginning in lower portion of the subdistrict which includes the communities of Stevens Village and Beaver. Fishermen in Subdistrict 5-D Lower can expect that when initial subsistence fishing opportunity is provided following the closure it will be restricted in a manner similar to those fishing opportunities provided downstream in Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C.

Fall Season Management Strategies

Districts 1, 2, and 3, and Subdistrict 4-A are on their full regulatory schedules for the fall season. Subsistence fishermen may use gillnets with 7.5 inch mesh or smaller. In Subdistrict 4-A the requirement to release Chinook salmon alive from fish wheels has been discontinued.

The remaining upriver subdistricts will transition to fall season management as the fall chum salmon migration enters those areas.

Current Management

Subsistence Fishing Schedule:

Coastal District: Subsistence fishing is open 7 days a week, 24 hours per day and fishermen may use gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or less.

District 1 (including the Black River) and District 2:

Subsistence salmon fishing is open 7 days a week, 24 hours per day except for 12 hours before, during, and 12 hours after each commercial salmon fishing period and fishermen may use gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or less.

District 3:

Subsistence salmon fishing is open 7 days a week, 24 hours per day and fishermen may use gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or less.

Innoko River:

Subsistence salmon fishing is open 7 days a week, 24 hours per day and fishermen may use gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or less.

Subdistrict 4-A (from $\frac{3}{4}$ miles downstream of Old Paradise Village upstream to Cone Point, including all adjacent tributary rivers and mainstem Yukon River communities of Anvik, Grayling, Kaltag, Nulato, and Koyukuk):

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 and fishermen may use gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or less or fish wheels. The requirement to release Chinook salmon alive from fish wheels is discontinued.

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 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.

Effective 6:00 p.m. Wednesday, July 23, the requirement to release Chinook salmon alive from fish wheels and the 6-inch or smaller mesh size restriction are being discontinued in Subdistricts 4-B and 4-C.

Therefore subsistence fishing in Subdistricts 4-B and 4-C will be open 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 fish wheels or fishermen may use gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or smaller.

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 protect Koyukuk River Chinook salmon stocks on their way to the spawning areas.

Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C:

Subsistence salmon fishing in Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C is currently closed.

Effective 6:00 p.m. Tuesday, July 22, the subsistence salmon fishing closure will end. Subsistence fishing in Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C will return to the regular subsistence fishing schedule which consists of two 48-hour periods per week from 6:00 p.m. Tuesdays until 6:00 p.m. Thursdays and from 6:00 p.m. Fridays until 6:00 p.m. Sundays 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.

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 Hadweenzie 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 is 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.

Summer Season Commercial Salmon Fishing:

The preliminary commercial harvest in the summer chum directed commercial fishery in District 1 and District 2 combined through July 16 is approximately 426,600 summer chum salmon with a reported 5,440 Chinook salmon released alive and 441 Chinook salmon caught but not sold. This is the highest commercial harvest of summer chum salmon in the Lower Yukon since 1989.

Subdistrict 4-A Commercial Fishing Schedule:

The preliminary cumulative harvest through July 18 is approximately 87,400 summer chum salmon with a reported 241 Chinook salmon released alive.

The requirement that commercial 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 is discontinued. Commercial fishing is open for seven additional 24-hour fishing periods, beginning at 12:01 a.m. Monday, July 21.

Period #29: Monday, July 21
Period #30: Tuesday, July 22
Period #31: Wednesday, July 23
Period #32: Thursday, July 24
Period #33: Friday, July 25
Period #34: Saturday, July 26
Period #35: Sunday, July 27

Commercial gillnets are restricted to a mesh size of 6 inches or less. All Chinook salmon caught but not sold must be recorded on the fish ticket. Other fish species caught but not sold must also be recorded on the fish ticket.

Fishermen will be notified by Saturday, July 26, 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 20 is approximately 2,630 summer chum salmon with a

reported 169 Chinook salmon released alive.

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

Period #4: 6:00 p.m. Monday, July 21, until 12:00 noon Wednesday, July 23

Fall Commercial Salmon Fishing

Two commercial fishing periods have been announced in District 1, and one period in District 2. District 1 commercial fishermen can expect to fish a Monday and Thursday schedule, while District 2 fishermen can expect to fish a Wednesday and Sunday schedule. These schedules are intended to allow for commercial harvest while passing fall chum salmon upriver for escapement and subsistence needs. If the amount of fall chum salmon passing upriver falls below necessary amounts needed to meet escapement and subsistence needs, the department may adjust the schedule to pass more fish upriver.

Preliminary harvest information for District 1:

Period #1: District Y-1 (including Set Net Only Area), 6 hours (4:00 p.m. until 10:00 p.m. July 17), 12,526 fall chum/94,794 lbs. (\$0.60/lb.), 52 coho/349 lbs. (\$0.60/lb.)

Period #2: District Y-1 (including Set Net Only Area), 6 hours (6:00 p.m. until 12:00 midnight July 21). Currently there is no harvest to report.

Preliminary harvest information for District 2:

Period #1: District Y-2, 6 hours (2:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. July 20), 12,878 fall chum/97,611 lbs. (\$0.60/lb.), 5 coho/29 lbs. (\$0.60/lb.)

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 Fairbanks at 459-7274 or in Emmonak at 949-1320.

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