

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



Cora Campbell, Commissioner
Jeff Regnart, Director



Contact:
Jeff Estensen, Area Management Biologist
Phone: (907) 949-1320
Fax: (907) 949-1830

Lower Yukon Area Office
P.O. Box 127
Emmonak, Alaska 99581
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2014 Yukon River Fall Salmon Fishery News Release # 13

Fall Update # 2, Yukon Area Salmon Fishery

Districts Affected: Yukon Area

Fall Assessment

The preseason fall chum salmon run projections, based on a historical relationship between summer chum and fall chum salmon runs, is greater than 850,000 fish. This level of abundance should be adequate to meet escapement and provide for an above average subsistence harvest, personal use, and commercial harvests. Fall chum salmon typically enter the Yukon River in erratic fluctuations with large pulses of fish occurring over several days often followed by several days of lower passage. As a result, inseason abundance projections for fall chum salmon are highly variable until approximately the first quarter to midpoint of the run based on the mainstem Yukon River sonar located near Pilot Station, which, on average, occurs July 31 and August 8 respectively.

A first group of chum salmon entered the Yukon River on the transition date from summer to fall season (July 16). A second group of fall chum salmon entered the Yukon River from July 20-23 and was estimated to contain 75,000 fish. A third pulse of fish entered the Yukon River on July 1-2 and will begin passing the mainstem sonar today.

The coho salmon run is expected to be average to below average in run size. A few coho salmon have been caught in each of the three Lower Yukon Area assessment projects as well as in the commercial fishery. The first quarter and midpoint of the coho salmon run at the mainstem Yukon River sonar project on average occurs on August 16 and August 21 respectively.

Summer Assessment

The Chinook salmon run is nearly over in the Upper Yukon River. Eagle sonar daily passage counts continue to decline and based on historical upriver migration, the Chinook salmon run should be more than 95% complete at the border project as of July 31. The cumulative passage estimate for Chinook salmon at Eagle sonar through August 3 is approximately 62,000 fish. As a result of considerable conservation efforts, the 2014 Chinook salmon run has surpassed the upper end of the border escapement objective of 42,500 – 55,000, despite being below average in total

run size. The preliminary projection for Canadian-origin Chinook salmon based on cumulative passage at the Eagle sonar project and historical run timing is approximately 63,000 – 64,000.

Persistent high water conditions this year impacted operations at the escapement monitoring projects on the Gisasa River, Henshaw Creek, Chena River, and Salcha River. Sonar operations at the Chena River have ended. An analysis will be conducted post season to estimate total passage by species and assess escapement for Chinook and summer chum salmon.

An aerial survey of the W. Fork Andreafsky River was conducted recently and the preliminary count is very encouraging as it is likely the aerial survey goal for Chinook salmon was met in this system. Aerial surveys are expected to be conducted on the Nulato and Anvik Rivers over the course of the next few days. Additional surveys are being planned for tributaries in the Tanana River drainage, including the Salcha, Goodpaster, and Chena Rivers.

Assessment Projects

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

The project began July 16 at Emmonak. The cumulative fall chum salmon CPUE for the project through August 3 was 872.55, which is above the historical average of 490.42 for this date. The cumulative coho salmon CPUE for the project through August 3 was 38.21, which is above the historical average of 17.34 for this date.

Mountain Village Drift Test Fishing/Asacarsarmiut Traditional Council and BSFA

The cumulative fall chum salmon CPUE for the project through August 3 was 703.67, which is slightly above the historical median of 678.32. The cumulative coho salmon CPUE for the project through August 3 was 41.91, which is above the historical average of 16.77 for this date.

Andreafsky River Weir/ USFWS

The Andreafsky River Weir concluded operations on July 31. The cumulative Chinook salmon passage for the season was approximately 5,950 Chinook salmon which is well above the historical average of approximately 3,700. The summer chum salmon passage was approximately 37,800 fish which is below the historical median of approximately 46,000 and below the minimum escapement goal of 40,000 fish.

Mainstem Sonar Project near Pilot Station/ ADF&G

The cumulative fall chum salmon passage estimate through August 3 is 136,800 fish, which is below the median passage of approximately 192,000 fish for this date. The cumulative coho salmon passage estimate through August 3 is 4,100 fish, which is above the median passage of approximately 2,400 fish for this date.

Rapids Video Test Fish Wheel/Zuray

As of August 3, the cumulative CPUE for Chinook salmon is estimated at 6,318.21 which is well above the historical average of 2,488.21 for this date. The cumulative CPUE for summer chum salmon is estimated at 2,830.70 which is above the historical median of 2,266.99 for this date. The Rapids Video Test Fish Wheel began counting fall chum on August 3. The cumulative CPUE as of August 3 is 205.

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 27 is approximately 62,000 Chinook salmon which is well above the historical average of 41,200 for this date.

Stock Identification

Chum salmon genetic samples processed from July 19 through July 27 indicated that summer chum salmon made up approximately 25% of the sample while fall chum salmon represented an estimated 75% of the passage at the mainstem Yukon River sonar for those dates. Overall, the fall chum salmon stocks in the sample consisted of 48% Border U.S. (Chandalar/Sheenjek) and 23% Canadian. The Tanana fall group remains at low levels at this time.

Age Composition Fall Season

The fall chum salmon age composition from the LYTF 6" drift gillnets through August 1 was 41% age-4 and 56% age-5 fish while proportions of age-3 and age-6 are less than 3%. The average proportion of age-4 and age-5 fish is 59% and 39% respectively for this date. Females represent 55% which is average for this date. The sample size was 441 fish for ages and 443 for gender. The proportion of females in the District 1 commercial catch samples through July 28 was 65% and the dominant age class was 65% 4-year olds. The sample size was 398 fish for ages and 400 for gender from the commercial catch.

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 that the fish are spreading through the study area as far upstream as Rapids, Upper Koyukuk (near Indian River), and the Chena and Salcha rivers. Increasing numbers of fish are moving up the Tanana with a small number having reached Nenana. The majority of the fish are still located in the mid to lower Yukon, past Anvik but before the Melozitna. Aerial surveys have been conducted on the lower and middle section of the study area including Kako Creek, Bonasila, Anvik, Thompson Creek, Bear Creek, Stink Creek, Rodo River, Kaltag River, Nulato River and the Lower Koyukuk Rivers. Future flights will be directed to cover tributaries upriver from Galena as well as tributaries along the mid and upper Koyukuk.

Fall Subsistence Management Strategies

Districts 1, 2, 3, 4, 6 and Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, 5-C and most of 5-D have been placed on their full regulatory subsistence schedules for the fall season. Fishermen may use gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or less.

The remaining upriver Subdistricts will transition to fall season management as the fall chum salmon migration enters those areas. Subsistence fishermen should stand by for any announcements regarding subsistence fishing.

Summer Management Strategies

Conservative management of the summer season salmon runs are coming to an end in the Upper Yukon as the Chinook salmon run is nearly complete. Therefore, the subsistence fishing restrictions are being discontinued in Subdistrict 5-D Upper. Effective 6:00 p.m. Tuesday, August 5, the requirement to release Chinook salmon alive from fish wheels and the 6-inch or smaller mesh size restriction are being discontinued in Subdistrict 5-D Upper. Therefore subsistence fishing in all portions of Subdistrict 5-D will be open 7 days a week, 24 hours per day and fishermen may use fish wheels or gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or smaller.

The 2014 season will be marked as the most conservatively managed Chinook salmon season in recent history. Maintaining a management course that was focused on meeting escapement objectives would not have been possible without the full cooperation and understanding of the fishermen of the Yukon River. Over the course of the last several years, Yukon River fishermen have exhibited incredible flexibility, complying with schedule changes and gear restrictions. The department acknowledges the continued commitment made by Yukon River fishermen to conserve the valuable Chinook salmon resource for future generations.

Fall Season Commercial Salmon Fishing

Four commercial fishing periods have been announced in District 1, and three periods in District 2. The department has made substantial adjustments to the commercial fishing schedule in an effort to pass fall chum salmon upriver for subsistence needs. If necessary, the department may continue to adjust the timing of commercial periods, or reduce commercial opportunity, if the number of fall chum salmon passing upriver falls below the amount necessary for escapement and subsistence needs.

Preliminary harvest information for District 1:

Period #4: District Y-1 (including Set Net Only Area), 6 hours (4:00 p.m. until 10:00 p.m. July 28), 1,694 fall chum/12,382 lbs. (\$0.75/lb.), 608 coho/3,750 lbs.

The total cumulative commercial harvest in District 1 through August 4 is 26,484 fall chum salmon and 872 coho salmon.

Preliminary harvest information for District 2:

Period #3: District Y-2, 5 hours (2:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m. August 3), 7,938 fall chum/61,067 lbs. (\$0.75/lb.), 880 coho/5,081 lbs.

The total cumulative commercial harvest in District 2 through August 4 is 26,113 fall chum salmon and 1,019 coho salmon.

Summer Season Commercial Fishing

The preliminary commercial harvest in the summer chum directed commercial fishery in District 1 and District 2 combined through July 16 is approximately 427,300 summer chum salmon with a reported 5,440 Chinook salmon released alive and 440 Chinook salmon caught but not sold.

Subdistrict 4-A Commercial Fishing Schedule

The summer commercial fishing season in Subdistrict 4-A has closed. The preliminary total commercial harvest in Subdistrict 4-A is 96,400 summer chum salmon with a reported 344 Chinook salmon released alive.

Subdistricts 6-A and 6-B

The cumulative harvest through August 3 is approximately 6,900 summer chum salmon with a reported 190 Chinook salmon released alive and 11 Chinook salmon caught but not sold.

Commercial fishermen may use either set gillnets or fish wheels to target summer chum salmon. Gillnets are restricted to a mesh size of 6 inches or less. Commercial fishing is open for one additional 42-hour fishing period, beginning at 6:00 p.m. Monday, August 4.

Period #8: 6:00 p.m. Monday, August 4, until 12:00 noon Wednesday, August 6.

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 is currently open 5 days per week from 6:00 p.m. Tuesdays through 6:00 p.m. Sundays. Fishermen may use gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or less.

The use of subsistence drift gillnet gear is allowed during subsistence salmon fishing periods in the portion of Subdistrict 4-A upstream from the mouth of Stink Creek. Fishermen may use gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or less.

Subdistricts 4-B and 4-C (from Cone Point to Illinois Creek, which includes the mainstem Yukon River communities of Galena and Ruby):

Subsistence salmon fishing is currently open 5 days per week from 6:00 p.m. Sundays through 6:00 p.m. Fridays. Fishermen may use gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or less.

Koyukuk 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.

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

Subsistence fishing is open 5-days per week from 6:00 p.m. Tuesdays until 6:00 p.m. Sundays. Subsistence fishermen may use fish wheels or gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or less.

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

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

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 salmon fishing is currently open 7 days a week, 24 hours per day 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. Tuesday, August 5, the requirement to release Chinook salmon alive from fish wheels and the 6-inch or smaller mesh size restriction are being discontinued in Subdistrict 5-D Upper.

Therefore subsistence fishing in all portions of Subdistrict 5-D will be open 7 days a week, 24 hours per day and fishermen may use fish wheels or gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or less.

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.

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 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 open on the normal schedule which 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.

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.

Subsistence fishermen are reminded that a fishing permit is required to fish for all species in the portion of Subdistricts 5-C and 5-D from the western most tip of Garnet Island upstream to the Dall River and from the upstream mouth of 22-Mile Slough to the US/Canada Border as well as all of District 6 and the Upper Tanana Area. Subsistence fishermen outside of permit areas are encouraged to fill out their subsistence salmon catch calendars. Both permits and calendars are available from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game in Fairbanks.

As a reminder non-salmon species may be harvested using 4-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets not exceeding 60 feet in length during subsistence salmon fishing closures.

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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