

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



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**2014 Yukon River Fall Salmon Fishery News Release # 17
Fall Update # 3, 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 Yukon River in erratic fluctuations with large pulses of fish occurring over several days often followed by several days of lower passage. Since August 4, fall chum salmon have been entering Yukon River in low numbers. This is likely because of hot and dry weather experienced at the mouth coupled with persistent east and northeast coastal winds. These lull periods of fall chum salmon entering the river have occurred in each of the last three years at approximately the same time period (early to mid-August). Typically, fall chum salmon enter the Yukon River with southwest and west coastal winds. The department anticipates that the next fall chum salmon pulse will occur with the next favorable winds at the mouth.

The 2014 coho salmon run size is expected to be average to below average. Coho salmon have been entering Yukon River in good numbers and their passage past the mainstem sonar near Pilot Station is well above the median. The first quarter and midpoint of the coho salmon run at the mainstem sonar near Pilot Station on average occurs on August 16 and August 21 respectively.

Summer Assessment

The Chinook salmon run is nearly over in the Upper Yukon River, as Eagle sonar daily passage counts have declined substantially in the last week. The cumulative passage estimate for Chinook salmon at Eagle sonar through August 10 is approximately 64,000 fish. As a result of considerable conservation efforts, the 2014 Chinook salmon run 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 64,000 – 65,000.

Persistent high water conditions this year impacted operations at the escapement monitoring projects on the Gisasa River, Henshaw Creek, Chena River, and Salcha River. Final review and analyses of aerial survey data for several of these systems and sonar data from Chena River are ongoing.

Assessment Projects

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

The cumulative fall chum salmon CPUE for the project through August 10 was 881.40, which is above the historical average of 694.78 for this date. The cumulative coho salmon CPUE for the project through August 10 was 58.03, which is below the historical average of 62.12 for this date.

Mountain Village Drift Test Fishing/Asacarsarmut Traditional Council and BSFA

The cumulative fall chum salmon CPUE for the project through August 10 was 821.60, which is below the historical median of 1,102.77. The cumulative coho salmon CPUE for the project through August 10 was 73.77, which is below the historical average of 129.78 for this date.

Mainstem Sonar Project near Pilot Station/ ADF&G

The cumulative fall chum salmon passage estimate through August 10 is approximately 215,300 fish, which is below the median passage of approximately 293,000 fish for this date. The cumulative coho salmon passage estimate through August 10 is approximately 23,350 fish, which is above the median passage of approximately 14,200 fish for this date.

Rapids Video Test Fish Wheel/Zuray

The Rapids Video Test Fish Wheel began counting fall chum salmon on August 3. The cumulative CPUE as of August 10 is 5,954 chum salmon which is above the historical median of 3,033 fish for this date. The estimate adjusted for water levels is two times greater than the median for this date.

Chandalar River Sonar/USFWS

The project began operations on August 6. The cumulative fall chum salmon passage through August 10 is approximately 1,414 fish which is slightly below the median of 1,576 fish for that 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 August 10 is approximately 64,000 Chinook salmon which is well above the historical average of 45,900 for this date.

Stock Identification

Chum salmon genetic samples processed from July 28 through August 6 indicated that summer chum salmon made up approximately 11% of the sample while fall chum salmon represented an estimated 89% of the passage at the mainstem Yukon River sonar for those dates. Overall, the fall chum salmon stocks in the sample consisted of 36% Border U.S. (Chandalar/Sheenjek), 40% Canadian and 12% Tanana fall. Each component in this stratum appears to be average in contribution through this portion of the run.

Age Composition Fall Season

The fall chum salmon age composition from the LYTF 6-inch drift gillnets through August 8 was 45% age-4 and 52% age-5 fish while proportions of age-3 and age-6 are less than 2%. The average proportion of age-4 and age-5 fish is 62% and 37% respectively for this date. Females represent 54% which is average for this date. The sample size was 531 fish for both ages and gender. No additional commercial sampling has occurred since the last update therefore the commercial report remains the same. 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.

Coho salmon age composition from the LYTF 6-inch drift gillnets through August 8 was 14% age-3, 82% age-4 and 4% age-5. The average proportion of age-3 and age-4 is 16%, 76%, and 5% respectively. Females represent 36% in the 63 fish sampled compared to the average of 40% for this date.

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. The majority of mainstem fish are located in the middle Yukon above Nulato, with fish in the lower river moving into final spawning locations. Aerial surveys have been conducted on the Nulato, Melozitna, Tanana mainstem, Chena, Salcha and lower and middle section of the Koyukuk River. Flights to cover tributaries along the upper Koyukuk River are currently under way.

Fall Subsistence Management Strategies

Subsistence: In Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, & 5-C, the current subsistence salmon fishing schedule is from 6:00 p.m. Tuesdays until 6:00 p.m. Sundays. Effective 6:00 p.m. Tuesday, August 12, Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C will be open 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. Subsistence fishermen may use fish wheels or gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or smaller.

Commercial Fisheries: Four commercial fishing periods have been announced in District 1, and three periods in District 2. No commercial periods have occurred in District 1 since July 28, and no commercial periods have occurred in District 2 since August 3. Commercial fishermen in both districts are currently on standby. 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.

Commercial fishing in Subdistricts 5-B and 5-C will open for one 5-day period from 6:00 p.m. Tuesday, August 12, until 6:00 p.m. Sunday, August 17. Gillnets will be restricted to 6-inch smaller or less.

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. Subsistence fishing in all portions of Subdistrict 5-D are 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 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

Preliminary harvest information for District 1:

No commercial periods have occurred since July 28.

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

Preliminary harvest information for District 2:

No commercial periods have occurred since August 3.

The total cumulative commercial harvest in District 2 is 26,189 fall chum salmon and 1,011 coho salmon.

Summer Season Commercial Fishing

The summer chum salmon commercial season has concluded. The preliminary commercial harvest for the Lower Yukon is approximately 427,300 summer chum salmon with a reported 5,440 Chinook salmon released alive and 440 Chinook salmon caught but not sold.

The preliminary commercial harvest for the Upper Yukon is approximately 103,300 summer chum salmon with 534 Chinook salmon caught and release and 11 Chinook salmon reported caught but not sold.

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.

District 4:

For the entire District 4, subsistence salmon fishing is open 7 days per week, 24 hours per day. Fishermen may use gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or less.

The use of subsistence **drift gillnet gear** is allowed in the portion of Subdistrict 4-A upstream from the mouth of Stink Creek.

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:

The current subsistence salmon fishing schedule in Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C is from 6:00 p.m. Tuesdays until 6:00 p.m. Sundays. Effective 6:00 p.m. Tuesday, August 12, Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C will be open 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. Subsistence fishermen may use fish wheels or gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or smaller.

Subdistrict 5-D:

Subsistence salmon fishing is currently open 7 days a week, 24 hours per day and fishermen may use 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. Subsistence fishermen outside of the permit area are encouraged to fill out their subsistence salmon catch calendars. Calendars are available from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game in Fairbanks.

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 salmon in all of District 6 and the Upper Tanana Area.

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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