

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



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2014 Yukon River Fall Salmon Fishery News Release # 21

Fall Update # 4, Yukon Area Salmon Fishery

Districts Affected: Yukon Area

Fall Assessment

The preseason fall chum salmon run projection, 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. Fish began moving in again at the mouth on August 18 with the switch in local winds and assessment of the pulse size is ongoing.

The 2014 coho salmon run size is expected to be 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 midpoint and three quarter point of the coho salmon run at the mainstem sonar near Pilot Station on average occurs on August 22 and August 26 respectively.

Summer Assessment

The Chinook salmon run is complete at the Eagle sonar project as of August 12. The total preliminary passage estimate for Chinook salmon at the border project is approximately 64,500 fish. Thanks to the considerable conservation efforts this season, the border escapement objective of 42,500 – 55,000 was achieved despite the 2014 Chinook salmon run being below average in run size.

Eagle Sonar Chinook Salmon Age Composition

The Chinook salmon age composition from drift gillnets in the test fishery conducted at the Eagle sonar project through August 5 was 7% age-4, 51% age-5, 40% age-6, and 2% age-7 fish. The percentage of females in the samples was 35%. The sample size was 706 fish. While the Chinook salmon run was approximately 97% complete as of August 5 at the Eagle sonar project, these data are considered preliminary.

The age-5 percentage was above the historical sonar project average (2005 – 2013) of 36% and was the second highest percentage of age-5 fish since 2005 (ranged from 28% to 57% across years). The age-6 percentage was below the historical average of 56% (ranged from 37% to 64% across years) and was the second lowest percentage of age-6 fish since 2005. The female percentage was below the historical average of 42% and was also the second lowest percentage of females since 2005 (ranged from 33% to 51% across years).

Fall Season Assessment Projects

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

The cumulative fall chum salmon CPUE for the project through August 17 was 1,447.82, which is above the historical average of 1,014.99 for this date. The cumulative coho salmon CPUE for the project through August 17 was 221.25, which is above the historical average of 175.74 for this date.

Mountain Village Drift Test Fishing/Asacarsarmiut Traditional Council and BSFA

The cumulative fall chum salmon CPUE for the project through August 18 was 1007.14, which is below the historical median of 1,495.19. The cumulative coho salmon CPUE for the project through August 18 was 167.76, which is below the historical average of 411.35 for this date.

Mainstem Sonar Project near Pilot Station/ ADF&G

The cumulative fall chum salmon passage estimate through August 17 is approximately 331,100 fish, which is below the median passage of approximately 386,300 fish for this date. The cumulative coho salmon passage estimate through August 17 is approximately 53,000 fish, which is above the median passage of approximately 43,400 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 17 is 10,141 chum salmon which is above the historical median of 4,819 fish for this date. The estimate adjusted for water levels is one and a half 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 17 is approximately 14,200 fish which is well above the median of 7,461 fish for that date.

Eagle Sonar/ADF&G

The Eagle sonar began counting fall chum on August 13. The cumulative estimated passage as of August 17 is approximately 687 fall chum salmon which is equal to the historical average of 631 for this date.

Manley Test Fish Wheel/ADG&G

The test fish wheel operated near Manley on the Tanana River as part of the sonar project began counting chum salmon August 9. The cumulative chum salmon CPUE for the project through August 17 was 809, which is above the historical average of 336.

Stock Identification

Chum salmon genetic samples for the time period August 7 through August 17 were just sent to the laboratory and analysis should be available before the end of the week. 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 17 was 46% age-4 and 51% 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 65% and 33% respectively for this date. Females represent 55% which is average for this date. The sample size was 654 fish for both ages and gender.

The proportion of females in the District 1 commercial catch samples through August 15 was 63% and the dominant age class was 64% 4-year olds. The sample size was 557 fish for ages and 560 for gender from the commercial catch.

Coho salmon age composition from the LYTF 6-inch drift gillnets through August 17 was 9% age-3, 80% age-4 and 11% age-5. The average proportion of age-3, age-4 and age-5 is 15%, 76%, and 5% respectively. Females represent 40% in the 150 fish sampled compared to the average of 43% for this date.

Summer Chum Salmon Radiotelemetry Project – Russian Mission

Tagging operations for the summer chum salmon radio telemetry 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. Movement of tagged fish has nearly ceased as fish have reached their spawning grounds. The few fish still moving are located in the upper reaches of the Koyukuk River. We have completed aerial surveys of the Yukon River drainage and expect that no further aerial surveys will be necessary. Data analysis will be ongoing through the winter and updates on the project will be provided at various fisheries meetings. If you have any

further questions about the project feel free to contact Stephanie Schmidt or Sean Larson with ADF&G (stephanie.schmidt@alaska.gov or sean.larson@alaska.gov).

Fall Subsistence Management Strategies

Subsistence: In Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, & 5-C, the current subsistence salmon fishing schedule is 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: Five commercial fishing periods have been announced in District 1, and four periods in District 2. Commercial fishermen in both districts are currently on standby for further commercial period announcements. 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 will be open for one period in District 2 on Monday, August 18 from 2:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m. This will be a 5-hour commercial fishing period with gillnets restricted to six-inch or smaller mesh.

Commercial fishing in Subdistricts 5-B and 5-C will open for one additional 5-day period from 6:00 p.m. Tuesday, August 19, until 6:00 p.m. Sunday, August 24. Gillnets will be restricted to 6-inch smaller or less. However, there are no buyers currently operating in either subdistrict. Commercial fishermen must confirm their market prior to commercial fishing. Processors, catcher sellers, or direct marketers should notify the department of their intent to operate by contacting the Fairbanks office at 459-7274.

Fall Season Commercial Salmon Fishing

Preliminary harvest information for District 1:

The total cumulative commercial harvest in District 1 is 27,533 fall chum salmon and 4,742 coho salmon.

Preliminary harvest information for District 2:

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

Preliminary harvest information for Subdistricts 5-A and 5-B:

Period #1: 5 days (6:00 p.m. Tuesday, August 19 until 6:00 p.m. Sunday, August 24), 1,284 fall chum/9,630 lbs.

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:

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 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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