

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



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**2015 Yukon River Summer Salmon Fishery News Release # 26
Summer Update # 4, Yukon Area Salmon Fishery
Districts Affected: Yukon Area**

Assessment

The 2015 Chinook and summer chum salmon runs are continuing to build on the Yukon River. Although Chinook salmon and summer chum salmon entered the river early and the department was preparing for an early season, it now appears that both salmon runs are tracking closer to average run timing.

The first Chinook salmon should be near Fort Yukon on June 22. A small, early group of Chinook salmon passed the sonar project near Pilot Station starting June 7 and is currently in the Rapids area. The first pulse of approximately 15,500 Chinook salmon lasted 4 days and should be near Koyukuk by June 22. A second pulse of fish appears to have entered the lower river beginning on June 17, as indicated by assessment information at the Lower Yukon Test Fishery (LYTF) program, and is now passing the sonar, but it is too early to tell the magnitude of this second pulse. As of June 21, the cumulative Chinook salmon passage at the sonar project near Pilot Station was approximately 46,500 fish, which is below the historical cumulative average of 59,600 for this date.

Genetic mixed stock analysis (MSA) on the early group and first pulse of Chinook salmon past the sonar project near Pilot Station (May 30 to June 17) estimated that 50% were of Canadian-origin. 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

The first moderately sized group of summer chum salmon passed the sonar project near Pilot Station starting June 8 and should be near Kaltag on June 22. A second, larger pulse of summer chum salmon passed the sonar on June 16 and should be near Holy Cross by June 23. As of June

21, the cumulative summer chum salmon passage at the sonar project near Pilot Station was approximately 389,000 fish, which is above the historical cumulative median of 371,000 for this date.

The average quarter point for the Chinook and summer chum salmon runs past the sonar at Pilot Station are June 19 and June 22, respectively. It is still early in both runs and assessment is challenging this early in the season. Early assessment indicates that both the Chinook and summer chum salmon runs are tracking below preseason outlooks.

The department would like to extend gratitude to the Yukon River subsistence fishermen who have shared harvest information. These reports have been instrumental in directing management actions during the early part of the season. The department is reminding fishermen to track their harvest on their subsistence calendars and encourages them to continue calling the ADF&G office in Emmonak to provide harvest reports.

Assessment Projects

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

8.5-Inch Set Gillnet: The LYTF cumulative Catch per Unit Effort (CPUE) for both the Middle Mouth and Big Eddy sites combined as of June 21 is 16.08. Operations have been altered from previous years, so caution should be taken when comparing current catch rates to historical catch rates.

8.25-Inch Drift Gillnet: The Big Eddy Chinook salmon drift test fishery began operations on May 24. The cumulative CPUE as of June 21 is 262.83, which is slightly above the historical average of 222.77 for all years.

Given the need to conserve Chinook salmon, the department has adjusted the LYTF program operations in order to reduce the test fishery harvest of Chinook salmon. Any Chinook salmon healthy enough to be released from test nets have been released alive immediately. Any Chinook salmon caught in the test nets that are unable to be released are being distributed to village elders by the Tribal Councils. Currently, fewer set net sites are being fished than have been fished historically in an effort to further reduce Chinook salmon mortality in the LYTF program. These adjustments were recommended by fishermen at various pre-season planning meetings.

Summer Chum Drift Test Fishery/ ADF&G, YDFDA

5.5-Inch Drift Gillnet: The summer chum drift test fishery began operations on May 24 in the Big Eddy area of the South Mouth. The cumulative CPUE as of June 21 is 2,550.14, which is well above the historical median of 1,355.91 for this date.

Sonar Project near Pilot Station/ ADF&G

The sonar project near Pilot Station has been fully operational since May 31. The first Chinook and summer chum salmon were counted at the sonar site on May 31 and May 30, respectively. Chinook salmon passage as of June 21 is estimated to be 46,474 fish which is below the historical cumulative average of 59,588 Chinook salmon for this date for normal run timing years.

Summer chum salmon passage as of June 21 is estimated to be 389,216 fish which is above the historical cumulative median of 371,042 summer chum salmon for this date.

Rapids Video Test Fish / Zuray

The Rapids video test wheel was operational at noon on June 13. The CPUE for June 21 was 18.46 Chinook salmon per 24 hours. The cumulative expanded counts as of June 21 are 84 Chinook salmon and two summer chum salmon.

Andreafsky River Weir / USFWS

The Andreafsky River weir began operations on June 17. As of June 21, two Chinook salmon and 12 summer chum salmon were counted at the weir. The Sustainable Escapement Goal (SEG) for the Andreafsky River is 2,100–4,900 for Chinook salmon and greater than 40,000 for summer chum salmon.

Gisasa River Weir / USFWS

The Gisasa River weir began operations on June 17. As of June 21, zero Chinook salmon and 36 summer chum salmon have been counted at the weir.

Anvik River Sonar / ADF&G

The Anvik River sonar began operations on June 17. As of June 21, 5,749 summer chum salmon have been counted at the weir. The biological escapement goal for summer chum salmon is 350,000–700,000 fish past the sonar project.

Age Composition

The Chinook salmon age composition from drift gillnets in the Pilot Station test fishery through June 17 was 12% age-4, 46% age-5, and 41% age-6 fish. The sample size was 136 fish, of which 30% were female. The proportion of age-5 was below average, while the proportion of age-6 was above average, and the proportion of females was below average.

The Chinook salmon age composition from the 8.5-inch LYTF set nets through June 17 was 2% age-4, 20% age-5, 75% age-6, and 3% age-7 fish. The sample size was 247 fish, of which 49% were female. Similar to Pilot Station test fishery, the LYTF proportion of age-5 fish was below average and the proportion of age-6 was above average. The proportion of females was slightly above average.

The chum salmon age composition from the 5.5-inch LYTF drift nets through June 20 was 24% age-4, 74% age-5, and 2% age-6 fish. The sample size was 312 fish, of which 55% were female. The proportion of age-4 was below average, the proportion of age-5 was above average, and the proportion of females was average.

The chum salmon age composition from the beach seine and dip net commercial fishery through period 7 was 30% age-4, 68% age-5, and 2% age-6 fish. The sample size was 354 fish, of which 43% were female.

Yukon River Summer Chum Salmon Radio Telemetry Project/ADF&G

Tagging operations for the summer chum salmon radio telemetry research project began June 12 upriver from the community of Russian Mission. As of June 22, 216 summer chum salmon have been tagged and released. In addition to the radio tag, summer chum salmon will also have a white spaghetti tag located at the base of the dorsal fin. Tagged fish have been identified in the Bonasila and Anvik Rivers. Tagged summer chum salmon are currently spread up the mainstem Yukon River and are beginning to enter the Lower Koyukuk River. 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 Holly Carroll or Sean Larson with ADF&G (holly.carroll@alaska.gov or sean.larson@alaska.gov). Tagging operations will continue through the third week of July.

Management Strategies

A conservative management approach has been taken early in the summer fishing season given the weak return of Chinook salmon expected in 2015. Gear restrictions have been implemented in the Coastal District up through Subdistrict 5-D prior to the arrival of Chinook salmon passing through each area. The gear restrictions were followed with subsistence salmon fishing closures, when Chinook salmon were entering or were expected to enter each area, based on historical migratory timing.

The Chinook salmon run is currently tracking below the preseason outlook of 120,000 – 140,000 total fish. However, current run size projection estimates based on sonar passage and historical run timing suggest the 2015 Chinook salmon run appears strong enough to meet escapement objectives. Some very limited incidental harvest could be possible with gillnets restricted to six-inch or smaller mesh size. Any opportunities for subsistence fishing with restricted gillnets would be short openings and would be timed with an abundance of summer chum salmon in the area. The intent of these opportunities would be so that fishermen can more efficiently meet their subsistence needs for summer chum salmon, while minimizing the impact to the Chinook salmon run. However, given the uncertainty in run assessment at this point in the run and in order to ensure that Chinook salmon escapement objectives are highly likely to be met, a conservative management approach is still warranted.

The 2015 summer chum salmon run is currently tracking below the preseason outlook, but is still average in size. Liberal summer chum salmon subsistence fishing time with selective gear types was provided in Districts 1 through 3 with dip nets only and in Subdistrict 4-A with dip nets and live-release fish wheels. Summer chum salmon commercial fishing periods were also provided with dip net and beach seine gear in Districts 1 and 2. Based on historical migration timing of summer chum salmon, subsistence salmon fishing will open in Subdistricts 4-B and 4-C later this week with dip nets and live-release fish wheels. All Chinook salmon are required to be released alive immediately while using these gear types.

The 2015 season is undoubtedly another challenging year for Yukon River fishermen. ADF&G and USFWS would like to extend thanks and appreciation to the fishermen of the Yukon River for their continuing efforts to conserve Chinook salmon.

Current Management

Subsistence Fishing Schedule:

Coastal District:

As in recent years, the Coastal District is being further subdivided into two management areas to allow for more management precision and flexibility. Fishermen are reminded that all marine waters between 1 and 3 miles offshore of District 1 are included in the Coastal District.

In the **Southern Portion of the Coastal District**, from the Naskonat Peninsula north to 62 degrees North latitude, subsistence salmon fishing is open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size.

In the **Northern Portion of the Coastal District**, from 62 degrees North latitude to Point Romanof, including all marine waters, subsistence salmon fishing is currently closed until further notice.

District 1 (including the Black River):

Subsistence salmon fishing for summer chum salmon is currently open on the following schedule with dip net and beach seine gear:

- Monday, June 22, from 6:00 a.m. until 10:00 a.m. and from 12:00 p.m. noon until 12:00 a.m. midnight
- Tuesday, June 23, from 6:00 a.m. until 10:00 a.m. and from 12:00 p.m. noon until 12:00 a.m. midnight

All Chinook salmon caught in dip net and beach seine gear must be released alive immediately.

District 2:

Subsistence salmon fishing for summer chum salmon is currently open on the following schedule with dip net and beach seine gear:

- Monday, June 22, from 6:00 a.m. until 10:00 a.m. and from 12:00 p.m. noon until 10:00 p.m.
- Tuesday, June 23, from 6:00 a.m. until 10:00 a.m. and from 12:00 p.m. noon until 10:00 p.m.

All Chinook salmon caught in dip net and beach seine gear must be released alive immediately.

District 3:

Subsistence fishing for summer chum salmon in District 3 is currently open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with dip net gear only. Subsistence dip net fishermen are required to immediately release Chinook salmon alive from this gear type. This requirement to release Chinook salmon will be strictly enforced.

Innoko River:

Subsistence fishing is currently open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets.

Effective 8:00 p.m. Friday, June 26, subsistence salmon fishing will close until further notice to conserve Chinook salmon stocks in the Innoko River.

During subsistence salmon fishing closures, gillnets greater than 4-inch mesh size must be removed from the water. Gillnets 4-inch or smaller mesh size not exceeding 60-feet in length may be used during the closure to harvest non-salmon species.

Subdistrict 4-A Lower (from $\frac{3}{4}$ miles downstream of Old Paradise Village upstream to Stink Creek, which includes the mainstem Yukon River communities of Anvik and Grayling):

Subsistence salmon fishing is currently open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with dip nets and live-release fish wheels.

Subsistence salmon fishing for summer chum salmon in the *Anvik Special Management Area* (which includes the lower 12 miles of the Anvik River) is open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with dip nets and beach seine gear only.

Subsistence dip net and beach seine fishermen are required to immediately release Chinook salmon alive from these gear types. Fish wheels must be manned at all times of operation, or be equipped with a live box that must be checked at least once every six hours. All Chinook salmon must be released alive from fish wheels. The requirement to release Chinook salmon alive from these gear types will be strictly enforced.

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

Subsistence salmon fishing is open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with dip nets and live-release fish wheels.

Subsistence dip net fishermen are required to immediately release Chinook salmon alive from these gear types. Fish wheels must be manned at all times of operation, or be equipped with a live box that must be checked at least once every six hours. All Chinook salmon must be released alive from fish wheels. The requirement to release Chinook salmon alive from these gear types will be strictly enforced.

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 closed to conserve Chinook salmon.

Effective 6:00 p.m. Wednesday, June 24, subsistence salmon fishing will be open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with dip nets and live-release fish wheels.

Subsistence dip net fishermen are required to immediately release Chinook salmon alive. Fish wheels must be manned at all times of operation, or be equipped with a live box that must be checked at least once every six hours. All Chinook salmon must be released alive from fish wheels. The requirement to release Chinook salmon alive from these gear types will be strictly enforced.

Koyukuk River:

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

Effective 8:00 p.m. Thursday, June 25, subsistence salmon fishing will close until further notice to conserve Chinook salmon stocks in the Koyukuk River.

During subsistence salmon fishing closures, gillnets greater than 4-inch mesh size must be removed from the water. Gillnets 4-inch or smaller mesh size not exceeding 60-feet in length may be used during the closure to harvest non-salmon species.

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

Subsistence salmon fishing in Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C is currently closed until further notice. During subsistence salmon fishing closures, fish wheels may not be operated and gillnets greater than 4-inch mesh size must be removed from the water. Gillnets 4-inch or smaller mesh size not exceeding 60-feet in length may be used during the closure to harvest non-salmon species.

Subdistrict 5-D (from an ADF&G regulatory marker two miles downstream of Waldron Creek upstream to the U.S.-Canada border including all adjacent tributaries):

Subsistence fishing for salmon in Subdistrict 5-D is open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size to conserve Chinook salmon. Fishermen may use fish wheels, however, fish wheels must be manned at all times of operation, or be equipped with a live box that is checked at least once every six hours. All Chinook salmon caught in a fish wheel must be released to the water alive. Fishermen should anticipate fishing closures prior to the first pulse of Chinook salmon moving into this subdistrict.

Subdistricts 6-A and 6-B:

By regulation, the subsistence and personal use salmon fishing schedule consists of two 42-hour fishing periods per week. Fishing periods are open from 6:00 p.m. Mondays until 12:00 noon Wednesdays and from 6:00 p.m. Fridays until 12:00 noon Sundays. Fishermen may use fish wheels or gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or less, but should anticipate fishing restrictions when Chinook salmon start moving into the Tanana River.

Old Minto Area:

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

Fishermen should anticipate fishing restrictions when Chinook salmon start moving into the Old Minto area.

Subdistrict 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 is closed and will remain closed until further notice to conserve Chinook salmon.

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): Subsistence fishing is open 24 hours a day, seven days per week. Fishermen may use fish wheels or gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or less.

Commercial Fishing Schedule:

Commercial Fishing:

The Lower Yukon summer chum salmon dip net and beach seine commercial fishery began on Thursday, June 11, in District 1 and on Monday, June 15, in District 2. The preliminary commercial harvest in District 1 through June 21 is approximately 37,120 summer chum salmon with a reported 1,913 Chinook salmon released alive. The preliminary commercial harvest in District 2 through June 21 is approximately 24,780 summer chum salmon with a reported 1,321 Chinook salmon released alive.

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

Commercial summer chum salmon fishing in District 1 is on the following schedule:

- Monday, June 22, from 12:00 p.m. noon until 12:00 a.m. midnight
- Tuesday, June 23, from 12:00 p.m. noon until 12:00 a.m. midnight

These will be 12-hour commercial fishing periods that are open concurrent with subsistence fishing times. All Chinook salmon caught in dip net and beach seine gear must be released alive immediately. Chinook salmon released alive from dip net and beach seine gear must be recorded on a fish ticket

District 2 Commercial Fishing Schedule:

Commercial summer chum salmon fishing in District 2 is on the following schedule:

- Monday, June 22, from 12:00 p.m. noon until 10:00 p.m.
- Tuesday, June 23, from 12:00 p.m. noon until 10:00 p.m.

These will be 10-hour commercial fishing periods that are open concurrent with subsistence fishing times. All Chinook salmon caught in dip net and beach seine gear must be released alive immediately. Chinook salmon released alive from dip net and beach seine gear must be recorded on a fish ticket.

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 ADF&G office in Emmonak at 949-1320.

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