

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



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**2015 Yukon River Summer Salmon Fishery News Release # 78
Summer Update # 8, Yukon Area Salmon Fishery
Districts Affected: Yukon Area**

Assessment

Based on the assessment information to date, the 2015 Chinook salmon run size is on track to be above the lower end of the preseason outlook range of 118,000 to 140,000 fish. The cumulative passage of Chinook salmon at the sonar project near Pilot Station as of July 18 was approximately 115,500 fish. The first quarter point for the Chinook salmon run at the sonar was likely June 18, the midpoint was likely between June 24, and the third quarter point was approximately June 29. These preliminary run timing dates suggest the 2015 Chinook salmon run was a couple of days earlier than the historical average run timing.

Passage estimates at sonar project near Eagle indicate that the first and second pulse of Chinook salmon have migrated across the border and are on their way to spawning grounds in Canada. The cumulative passage estimate for Chinook salmon at Eagle sonar through July 19 is approximately 32,600 fish. Based on the Canadian-origin Chinook salmon run timing at the sonar project near Pilot Station and the historical upriver migration timing, the midpoint of the Chinook salmon run at Eagle sonar should be approximately June 19 – June 20. As a result of considerable conservation efforts, the 2015 Chinook salmon run is likely to meet border escapement goals and objectives, despite being below average in run size. 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 third pulse of Chinook salmon should have passed through the upper part of district 5-D and reach the Eagle sonar project by July 22, while the fourth pulse of Chinook salmon is expected reach Circle by July 21.

Passage estimates through July 19 at the escapement projects operated in the Alaskan portion of the drainage, are very encouraging. The escapement goals at East Fork Andreafsky River, Chena

River and the Salcha River have been met for Chinook salmon and Henshaw Creek weir counts are well above average for this date.

As of July 18, the summer chum run is complete at the Pilot Station sonar project, and chum estimates after this date are assumed to be predominantly fall chum. The cumulative summer chum salmon passage at the sonar project near Pilot Station was approximately 1.4 million fish, which is below the historical cumulative median of 1.7 million summer chum for this date. The escapement goal of at least 40,000 summer chum salmon at East Fork Andreafsky River was achieved on July 9 and the project had an estimated passage of approximately 46,000 salmon through July 19. Summer chum passage at Anvik River sonar is currently 355,000 and the lower end of escapement goal 350,000 to 700,000 for this river has been achieved.

Assessment Projects

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

The project began July 16 at Emmonak. The cumulative CPUE for the project through July 19 was 97.85, which is above the historical average of 75.56 for this date.

Mountain Village Drift Test Fishing/Asacarsarmut Traditional Council and BSFA

The project began operation on July 18 at Mountain Village. The cumulative fall chum salmon CPUE for the project through July 20 was 466.41, which is above the cumulative median of 186.20 for that date.

Sonar Project near Pilot Station/ ADF&G

Chinook salmon passage as of July 19 is estimated to be 115,497 fish which is below the historical cumulative average of 140,899 Chinook salmon for this date for normal run timing years. Summer chum salmon passage as of July 19 is estimated to be 1,384,218 fish which is below the historical cumulative median of 1,665,667 summer chum salmon for this date.

The sonar began counting fall chum salmon on July 19. The cumulative fall chum salmon passage estimate through July 19 is 8,869, which is below the median passage of approximately 10,700 fish for this date.

Rapids Video Test Fish / Zuray

The Rapids video test wheel was operational at noon on June 13. The Rapids video test wheel was discontinued from June 23–July 15 due to the Tozitna fire. Operations began again on July 16. The cumulative count of Chinook and summer chum salmon as of July 19 is 922 and 734 fish, respectively. Though it is late in the season for assessing these species at this project, the daily counts for each of the four days since the project restarted are more than twice as high as the average passage rate for these dates.

Andreafsky River Weir / USFWS

As of July 19, 5,133 Chinook salmon were counted at the weir, which is above the historical cumulative average of 3,467 Chinook salmon for this date. As of July 19, 46,144 summer chum salmon were counted at the weir, which is above the historical cumulative median of 44,052 fish for this date.

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. Both of these escapement goals were met on July 9.

Gisasa River Weir / USFWS

As of July 19, 771 Chinook salmon have been counted at the weir, which is below the historical cumulative average of 1,668 fish for this date. As of July 19, 35,044 summer chum salmon have been counted at the weir, which is above the historical cumulative median of 31,944 fish for this date.

Henshaw Creek Weir / TCC

As of July 19, 1,476 Chinook salmon have been counted at the weir, which is above the historical cumulative average of 693 fish for this date. As of July 19, 108,736 summer chum salmon have been counted at the weir, which is well above the historical cumulative median of 49,213 fish for this date.

Anvik River Sonar / ADF&G

As of July 19, 354,628 summer chum salmon have been counted at the sonar, which is below the historical cumulative median of 426,823 fish for this date. The Biological Escapement Goal (BEG) for summer chum salmon of 350,000–700,000 fish past the sonar project was met on July 19.

Chena River Tower/ADF&G

The Chena River tower began operations on June 30. Tower operations were suspended for five days from July 3–July 7 due to high debris in the river. Tower counts for Chinook and summer chum salmon resumed on July 8. As of July 19, 3,693 Chinook salmon were counted at the tower, which is above the historical cumulative average of 3,526 fish for this date. As of July 19, 1,726 summer chum salmon were counted at the tower, which is above the historical cumulative median of 394 fish for this date. The BEG for Chinook salmon on the Chena River of 2,800–5,700 fish was met on July 16.

Salcha River Tower/Bering Sea Fishermen's Association

The Salcha River tower began operations on July 12. As of July 19, 3,406 Chinook salmon were counted at the tower, which is below the historical cumulative average of 5,657 fish for this date. As of July 19, 753 summer chum salmon were counted at the tower, which is above the historical cumulative median of 534 fish for this date. Cumulative counts are not directly comparable to the historical average and median due to the late startup of the project in 2015. The BEG for Chinook salmon on the Salcha River of 3,300–6,500 fish was met on July 19.

Eagle Sonar/ADF&G

The Eagle sonar project began operations on June 30. As of July 19, 32,611 Chinook salmon have been counted. The average cumulative passage of Chinook salmon from 2005–2014 is 14,763. Please note that the sonar project started five days earlier in 2015 relative to previous years.

Age Composition

The Chinook salmon age composition from drift gillnets in the Pilot Station test fishery through July 5 was 21% age-4, 34% age-5, and 44% age-6 fish. The sample size was 376 fish, of which 35% were female. The proportion of age-5 was below average, while the proportions of age-6 and age-4 were above average, and the proportion of females was below average.

The Chinook salmon age composition from the 8.5-inch LYTF set nets through July 5 was 9% age-4, 18% age-5, 72% age-6, and 1% age-7 fish. The sample size was 580 fish, of which 53% were female. Similar to Pilot Station test fishery, the LYTF proportion of age-5 fish was below average and the proportions of age-6 and age-4 were above average. The proportion of females was near average.

The chum salmon age composition from the 5.5-inch LYTF drift nets through July 8 was less than 1% age-3, 37% age-4, 60% age-5, and 2% age-6 fish. The sample size was 741 fish, of which 53% were female. The proportion of age-4 was below average, the proportion of age-5 was above average, and the proportion of females was below average.

The chum salmon age composition from the beach seine and dip net commercial fishery through was 1% age-3, 35% age-4, 62% age-5, and 2% age-6 fish. The sample size was 710 fish, of which 47% were female.

The chum salmon age composition from the restricted gillnet commercial fishery in District 1 through period 23 (July 7) was 1% age-3, 54% age-4, 43% age-5, and 2% age-6 fish. The sample size was 240 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 and will conclude July 21. A total of 1,180 summer chum salmon have been tagged with radio transmitters 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. Tagged fish have been in the Bonasila, Anvik, Innoko, Melozitna, Nulato, and Tanana rivers. Tagged fish continue to pass Gisasa, Hogotza, and the Upper Koyukuk on the Koyukuk River. Flights to track tagged summer chum will continue through August. 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). This project is funded in large part by the Alaska Sustainable Salmon Fund. For more information visit: <http://www.akssf.org/Default.aspx?id=3368>

Summer Season Management Strategies

The Chinook salmon run is complete in Lower Yukon River and subsistence salmon fishing restrictions are beginning to be relaxed in the upper river districts. The subsistence salmon fishing schedule was relaxed in District 3 and is being liberalized in District 4. Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C have been put on their regulatory subsistence fishing schedules. Gear is restricted

to 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets to target summer chum salmon, while minimizing the incidental harvest of Chinook salmon.

Genetic analyses and sonar counts near Pilot Station indicated a weaker than anticipated Canadian-origin Chinook salmon run. Passage estimates at the Eagle sonar project through July 19 are encouraging and if daily passage estimates similar to the last few days continue, the lower end of the Canadian stock escapement objective (42,500 – 55,000) should be achieved this week. As a result in improved confidence that the escapement objective will be achieved, subsistence fishing opportunities with 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels were offered in Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, 5-C and the lower and middle portions of Subdistrict 5-D. Gillnets were being restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size to reduce the harvest of large, female Chinook salmon headed to spawning areas in Canada. Fishermen in the upper portion of Subdistrict 5-D should expect a similar short subsistence opportunity that has been provided downstream in lower and middle portions of Subdistrict 5-D.

With Chinook salmon escapement goals being met at all projects in the Alaskan portion of the drainage so far and the encouraging passage estimates at the Eagle sonar project, ADF&G and USFWS would like to extend thanks and appreciation to the fishermen of the Yukon River for their efforts to conserve Chinook salmon this season.

Fall Season Management Strategies

The Coastal District, Districts 1, 2, and 3, and the Innoko River are on their full regulatory schedules for the fall season. Subsistence fishermen may use gillnets with 7.5 inch mesh or smaller in these areas. Fishermen in Subdistrict 4-A should stand by for an announcement regarding changes to subsistence fishing in their area. The remaining upriver districts and subdistricts will transition to fall season management as the fall chum salmon migration enters those areas.

Current Management

Subsistence Fishing Schedule:

Coastal District:

Subsistence salmon fishing is open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with the use of gillnets up to 7.5 inch mesh in size.

District 1 (including the Black River):

Subsistence salmon fishing is currently open with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets 24 hours a day, seven days per week except for 12 hours before, during, and 12 hours after a commercial fishing period.

District 2:

Subsistence salmon fishing is currently open with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets 24 hours a day, seven days per week except for 12 hours before, during, and 12 hours after a commercial fishing period.

District 3:

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

Innoko River:

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

Subdistrict 4-A (from $\frac{3}{4}$ mile downstream of Old Paradise Village upstream to the tip of Cone Point):

Currently, subsistence salmon fishing in Subdistrict 4-A 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 with 6-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets and fish wheels. Chinook salmon caught in gillnet gear and fish wheels may be retained for subsistence use.

Effective Tuesday, July 21, at 6:00 p.m. subsistence salmon fishing in Subdistrict 4-A will open for 5 days a week, from 6:00 p.m. Tuesdays until 6:00 p.m. Sundays with 6-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets and fish wheels. Chinook salmon caught in gillnet gear and fish wheels may be retained for subsistence use.

A new regulation passed at the Board of Fisheries meeting in March 2015 allows the use of drift gillnets to harvest summer chum salmon for subsistence purposes from June 10 through August 2 in the upper portion of Subdistrict 4-A. The upper portion of Subdistrict 4-A is defined as the area from Stink Creek upstream to Cone Point and includes the mainstem communities of Kaltag, Nulato, and Koyukuk.

Subdistricts 4-B and 4-C (from Cone Point upstream along the north bank of the river to the westernmost edge of Illinois Creek, which includes the mainstem Yukon River communities of Galena and Ruby):

Currently, subsistence salmon fishing in Subdistricts 4-B and 4-C 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 with 6-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets and fish wheels. Chinook salmon caught in gillnet gear and fish wheels may be retained for subsistence use.

Effective Sunday, July 26, at 6:00 p.m. subsistence salmon fishing in Subdistricts 4-B and 4-C will open for 5 days a week, from 6:00 p.m. Sundays until 6:00 p.m. Fridays with 6-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets and fish wheels. Chinook salmon caught in gillnet gear and fish wheels may be retained for subsistence use.

Koyukuk River:

Subsistence salmon fishing is open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with 6-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets.

Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C (from the western edge of the mouth of Illinois Creek to the

ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately two miles downstream of Waldron Creek):

Currently, subsistence salmon fishing is closed to conserve Chinook salmon.

Effective 6:00 p.m. Tuesday, July 21, subsistence salmon fishing in Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C will be open for two 48-hour periods per week from 6:00 p.m. Tuesdays to 6:00 p.m. Thursdays and from 6:00 p.m. Fridays until 6:00 p.m. Sundays with 6-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets and fish wheels for the remainder of the summer season. Chinook salmon caught in gillnet gear and fish wheels may be retained for subsistence use.

Fishermen may use 4-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets not exceeding 60 feet in length to target non-salmon species during subsistence closures.

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):

Currently, subsistence salmon fishing is closed to conserve Chinook salmon.

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. If a salmon is caught in this gear type, it is legal to retain it.

Subdistricts 6-A and 6-B (from the mouth of the Tanana River upstream to the regulatory marker at the mouth of the Wood River, which includes the communities of Manley, Minto, and Nenana):

Subsistence salmon fishing is open for two 42-hour fishing periods per week from 6:00 p.m. Mondays until 12:00 p.m. noon Wednesdays and from 6:00 p.m. Fridays until 12:00 p.m. noon Sundays. The Kantishna River is currently open 24 hours a day, seven days per week for subsistence salmon fishing.

Fishermen in Subdistricts 6-A, including the Kantishna River, and 6-B may use fish wheels or gillnets with mesh size of 6 inches or less.

Old Minto Area:

Subsistence salmon fishing is open five days per week from 6:00 p.m. Fridays until 6:00 p.m. Wednesdays with 6-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets or fish wheels.

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 open on its regulatory schedule consisting of two 42-hour periods each week, from 6:00 p.m. Fridays until 12:00 p.m. noon Sundays and from 6:00 p.m. Mondays until 12:00 p.m. noon Wednesdays. Personal fishing is currently restricted to fish wheels only, gillnets are not allowed at this time.

Fishermen using fish wheels are reminded that a fish wheel must be equipped with a live box that must be checked at least once every six hours and all Chinook salmon must be returned to the water unharmed. A fish wheel may be operated without a live box if the fish wheel has a chute that returns all fish captured back to the water unharmed, the person closely attends the fish wheel while it is in operation, and all Chinook salmon caught are returned to the water alive.

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.

Summer Season Commercial Salmon Fishing Schedule:

The Lower Yukon summer chum salmon directed commercial fishery began on June 11 in District 1 and June 15 in District 2 with beach seine and dip net gear only. From July 2–July 5 fishermen in District 1 used 5.5-inch gillnets limited to 30 meshes deep to harvest summer chum salmon while minimizing the incidental harvest of Chinook salmon. Since July 6, fishermen in Districts 1 and 2 have used 6-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets to harvest summer chum salmon. At this time, the summer chum salmon fishery is over in the lower river. The preliminary commercial harvest in District 1 through July 15 is approximately 172,568 summer chum salmon with a reported 4,578 Chinook salmon released alive from dip nets and beach seines and 1,713 Chinook salmon kept from restricted gillnets for subsistence use. The preliminary commercial harvest in District 2 through July 18 is approximately 181,847 summer chum salmon with a reported 4,935 Chinook salmon released alive from dip nets and beach seines and 1,430 Chinook salmon kept from restricted gillnets for subsistence use.

The summer chum salmon commercial fishery began in District 6 on July 13 with live-release, fish friendly fish wheels. All Chinook salmon caught in fish wheels must be released to the water alive and recorded on a fish ticket. The preliminary commercial harvest in District 6 through July 19 is 503 summer chum salmon with 163 Chinook salmon caught and released.

Subdistricts 6-A, 6-B, and 6-C Commercial Fishing Schedule:

Effective 6:00 p.m. Monday, July 20, commercial fishing will open for two 42-hour fishing periods with live-release, fish friendly fish wheels:

Period #3: 6:00 p.m. Monday, July 20, until 12:00 p.m. noon Wednesday, July 22

Period #4: 6:00 p.m. Friday, July 24, until 12:00 p.m. noon Sunday, July 26

Fall Season Commercial Salmon Fishing

The fall chum salmon commercial fishing season is open in Districts 1 and 2. Both districts will be on a 2-period per week schedule.

District 1 including the Set Net Only Area

Period #1: 4:00 p.m. Monday, July 20, until 10:00 p.m. Monday, July 20

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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