

# **ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME**

## **DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES**

### **NEWS RELEASE**



*Sam Cotten, Commissioner*  
*Jeff Regnart, Director*



---

Contact:  
Stephanie Schmidt, Area Management Biologist  
Sabrina Garcia, Assistant Area Management Biologist  
Phone: (907) 267-2217  
Fax: (907) 267-2442

Anchorage Regional Office  
333 Raspberry Road  
Anchorage, Alaska 99518

Date Issued: 07/27/2015

#### **2015 Yukon River Summer Salmon Fishery News Release # 85**

#### **Summer Update # 9, Yukon Area Salmon Fishery**

Districts Affected: Yukon Area

#### **Summer 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 26 was approximately 115,700 fish. 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 the sonar project near Eagle indicate that the fourth pulse of Chinook salmon is currently migrating 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 27 is approximately 54,400 fish. Based on the Canadian-origin Chinook salmon run timing at the mainstem sonar project near Pilot Station and the historical upriver migration timing, the Chinook salmon run should be approximately 75% complete at Eagle sonar. As a result of considerable conservation efforts, the 2015 Chinook salmon run has met the spawning escapement goal of 42,500 – 55,000, despite being below average in run size.

Through July 26, the Chinook salmon escapement goals at East Fork Andreafsky, Chena, and Salcha rivers have been met and Henshaw Creek weir Chinook salmon counts are well above average for this date. An aerial survey was conducted over the weekend on the West Fork Andreafsky River and the aerial survey goal of 640–1,600 Chinook salmon was met. Additional aerial surveys are being flown on the Nulato, Gisasa, Kaltag, Rodo, and Anvik rivers.

As of July 18, the summer chum salmon run is complete at the mainstem Yukon River sonar project near Pilot Station, and chum estimates after this date are assumed to be predominantly fall chum salmon. 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 salmon. The escapement goal of at least 40,000 summer chum salmon at the East Fork Andreafsky River was achieved on July 9 and the project had an estimated passage of approximately 48,000 salmon through July 26. Summer chum salmon passage at Anvik River sonar is currently 372,000 fish and the lower end of the escapement goal (350,000 to 700,000) for this river has been achieved.

## **Fall Assessment**

The 2015 fall chum salmon preseason run projection, based on the summer chum to fall chum salmon relationship, is for a run size between 700,000 and 800,000 fish. This level of abundance should be sufficient to provide for escapement, an above average subsistence harvest, and a surplus is available for commercial and personal use purposes.

The first pulse of fall chum salmon entered the Yukon River on July 18 and was two days in duration (at the peak). The pulse finished passing the mainstem sonar near Pilot Station on July 22 and the estimated size was 101,500 fish. As of Tuesday, July 28, the front-end of the first pulse should be located between the communities of Grayling and Kaltag.

## **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 26 was 132.59, which is below the historical median of 190.16 for this date.

### Mountain Village Drift Test Fishing/Asacarsarmiut 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 26 was 384.55, which is above the historical median of 344.63 for this date.

### Sonar Project near Pilot Station/ ADF&G

The sonar began counting fall chum salmon on July 19. The cumulative fall chum salmon passage estimate through July 26 was 141,874, which is above the median passage of approximately 94,200 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 26 is 1,500 and 1,771 fish, respectively. At this time, Chinook and summer chum salmon passage at the Rapids video test project is 97% and 29% complete, respectively.

Andreafsky River Weir / USFWS

As of July 26, 5,301 Chinook salmon have been counted at the weir, which is above the historical cumulative average of 3,888 Chinook salmon for this date. As of July 26, 48,028 summer chum salmon were counted at the weir, which is above the historical cumulative median of 47,385 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 26, 1,210 Chinook salmon have been counted at the weir, which is below the historical cumulative average of 2,131 fish for this date. As of July 26, 41,146 summer chum salmon have been counted at the weir, which is above the historical cumulative median of 36,867 fish for this date.

Henshaw Creek Weir / TCC

As of July 26, 2,222 Chinook salmon have been counted at the weir, which is above the historical cumulative average of 960 fish for this date. As of July 26, 203,623 summer chum salmon have been counted at the weir, which is well above the historical cumulative median of 87,217 fish for this date.

Anvik River Sonar / ADF&G

As of July 26, 371,633 summer chum salmon have been counted at the sonar, which is below the historical cumulative median of 469,662 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 from July 3–July 7 and from July 21–July 24 due to murky water and high debris in the river. Tower counts for Chinook and summer chum salmon resumed on July 25. As of July 26, 3,932 Chinook salmon were counted at the tower, which is below the historical cumulative average of 5,425 fish for this date. As of July 26, 2,176 summer chum salmon were counted at the tower, which is above the historical cumulative median of 1,761 fish for this date. The BEG of 2,800–5,700 Chinook salmon on the Chena River was met on July 16.

Salcha River Tower/Bering Sea Fishermen's Association

The Salcha River tower began operations on July 12. Tower operations were suspended from July 21 through July 22 due to high water and/or low visibility. As of July 26, 4,207 Chinook salmon were counted at the tower, which is below the historical cumulative average of 9,229 fish for this date. As of July 26, 3,792 summer chum salmon were counted at the tower, which is above the historical cumulative median of 3,713 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 of 3,300–6,500 Chinook salmon on the Salcha River was met on July 19.

### Eagle Sonar/ADF&G

The Eagle sonar project began operations on June 30. As of July 26, 54,442 Chinook salmon have been counted. The average cumulative passage of Chinook salmon from 2005–2014 is 31,905. Please note that the sonar project started five days earlier in 2015 relative to previous years.

### Age Composition Summer Season

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 summer 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 summer 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 summer 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.

### Stock Identification

Two strata of chum salmon genetic samples were recently processed. The strata from July 5–18 indicated that summer chum salmon made up approximately 99% of the sample. The strata from July 19–22 contained approximately 64% summer chum salmon while fall chum salmon represented 36% of the passage at the mainstem Yukon River sonar for those dates. Overall, the fall chum salmon stocks in the sample consisted of 23% Border/US (Chandalar/Sheenjek) and 10% Canadian. The Tanana fall group was negligible at this time.

### Age Composition Fall Season

The preliminary fall chum salmon age composition from the LYTF 6-inch drift gillnets indicates the fish are dominated by age-4 fish, which is typical. The average proportion of age-4 and age-5 fish is 56% and 42% respectively for this date. Females represent 50% of the fish sampled, which is average for this date. The sample size was 130 fish for ages and 138 for sex. The proportion of females in the District 1 commercial catch samples through July 23 was 37% and

the dominant age class was 57% 4-year olds. The sample size was 114 fish for ages and 120 for sex from the commercial catch.

### **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 concluded 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](mailto:holly.carroll@alaska.gov) or [sean.larson@alaska.gov](mailto: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**

Summer season management is still in effect in the Upper Yukon as the Chinook salmon run comes to an end. While the 2015 Canadian-origin Chinook salmon run is below average in size, the run is now anticipated to be strong enough to exceed the upper end of the spawning escapement objective of 42,500 to 55,000, thanks to the considerable conservation efforts this summer. We are now confident that the spawning escapement and harvest sharing objectives will be met.

The subsistence salmon fishing schedule has been relaxed in District 5. Gillnets are still being restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size to reduce the harvest of large, female Chinook salmon headed to spawning areas in Canada. Subsistence fishermen in District 5 are reporting relatively low effort and low catches of Chinook salmon, with catches being dominated by males.

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. Subdistrict 4-A, including the Koyukuk River, will transition to fall season management on July 28. Subsistence fishermen in Subdistricts 4-B and 4-C 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, which includes the mainstem Yukon River villages of Anvik, Grayling, Kaltag, Nulato, and Koyukuk):

Subsistence salmon fishing in Subdistrict 4-A is currently open five days per week from 6:00 p.m. Tuesdays through 6:00 p.m. Sundays. Gillnets are restricted to a mesh size of 6 inches or less and drift gillnet fishing is allowed in the upper portion of Subdistrict 4-A, from the mouth of Stink Creek upstream to Cone Point.

Effective 6:00 p.m. Tuesday, July 28, subsistence fishermen may use gillnets with mesh size up to 7.5 inches. Subsistence fishermen fishing in the upper portion of Subdistrict 4-A can continue using drift gillnet gear during fall season subsistence salmon fishing periods.

**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):

Subsistence salmon fishing in Subdistricts 4-B and 4-C is currently open five 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 currently open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with 6-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets.

Effective 6:00 p.m. Tuesday, July 28, subsistence salmon fishing in the Koyukuk River will be open 24 hours a day, seven days per week and fishermen may use gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or smaller.

**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, including the communities of Tanana and Rampart as well as the area near the Yukon River bridge):

Currently, subsistence salmon fishing in Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C is on the regulatory schedule of 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 to 6:00 p.m. Sundays with 6-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets and fish wheels.

Effective 6:00 p.m. Tuesday, July 28, subsistence salmon fishing in Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C will be open five days per week from 6:00 p.m. Tuesdays to 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.

**Subdistrict 5-D Lower and Middle** (from an ADF&G regulatory marker two miles downstream of Waldron Creek upstream to 22 Mile Slough including the Porcupine River and all adjacent tributaries, which includes the communities of Stevens Village, Beaver, Venetie, Fort Yukon, and Chalkyitsik):

Subsistence salmon fishing in Subdistrict 5-D Lower and Middle is open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with 6-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets and fish wheels. Chinook salmon caught in the 6-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets and fish wheels may be kept for subsistence purposes.

**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 closed in Subdistrict 5-D Upper.

Effective 12:01 a.m. Tuesday, July 28, subsistence salmon fishing will open for 24 hours a day, seven days per week with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size and fish wheels. Chinook salmon caught in the 6-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets and fish wheels may be kept for subsistence purposes.

**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. Fishermen may use 6-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets or fish wheels. Chinook salmon caught in gillnet gear or fish wheels may be retained for subsistence use.

**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**

At this time, the summer chum salmon commercial fishery is complete in the lower river. The preliminary commercial harvest in District 1 through July 15 is approximately 172,639 summer chum salmon with a reported 4,578 Chinook salmon released alive from dip nets and beach seines and 1,810 Chinook salmon kept from restricted gillnets for subsistence use. The preliminary commercial harvest in District 2 through July 18 is approximately 181,447 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. As of July 24, commercial fishermen are not required to man fish wheels and can use 6-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets. All Chinook salmon caught in gillnet gear and fish wheels may be retained for subsistence use but must be recorded on a fish ticket. The preliminary commercial harvest in District 6 through July 26 is 2,724 summer chum salmon



with 347 Chinook salmon caught and released and 22 Chinook salmon retained for subsistence use.

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

Commercial fishing is open for two 42-hour fishing periods with fish wheels and gillnets restricted to 6-inch or less mesh size:

Period #5: 6:00 p.m. Monday, July 27, until 12:00 noon Wednesday, July 29

Period #6: 6:00 p.m. Friday, July 31, until 12:00 noon Sunday, August 2

**Fall Season Commercial Salmon Fishing**

The fall chum salmon commercial fishing season is open in Districts 1 and 2. Both districts are currently fishing a 2-period per week schedule with gillnets restricted to 6-inch mesh or less. The sale of incidentally caught Chinook salmon is prohibited.

**District 1 including the Set Net Only Area Commercial Fishing Schedule:**

Period #1: Six-hour period from 4:00 p.m. Monday, July 20 until 10:00 p.m. Monday, July 20: Preliminary reports indicate a harvest of 3,698 fall chum and 47 coho salmon.

Period #2: Six-hour period from 6:00 p.m. Thursday, July 23 until 11:59 p.m. Thursday, July 23. Preliminary reports indicate a harvest of 4,078 fall chum and 184 coho salmon.

Period #3: Six-hour period from 7:00 p.m. Monday, July 27 until 1:00 a.m. Tuesday, July 28.

The cumulative commercial harvest in District 1 through July 27 is 7,776 fall chum and 231 coho salmon.

**District 2 Commercial Fishing Schedule:**

Period #1: Four-hour period from 9:00 a.m. Wednesday, July 22 until 1:00 p.m. Wednesday, July 22: Preliminary reports indicate a harvest of 8,134 fall chum and 19 coho salmon.

Period #2: Four-hour period from 6:00 p.m. Sunday, July 26 until 10:00 p.m. Sunday, July 26. Preliminary reports indicate a harvest of 2,206 fall chum and 49 coho salmon.

The cumulative commercial harvest in District 2 through July 27 is 10,340 fall chum and 68 coho salmon.

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 Anchorage for summer season questions at 267-2217 or in Emmonak for fall season questions at 949-1320.

-end-