

# ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

## DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

### NEWS RELEASE



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#### **2015 Yukon River Fall Salmon Fishery News Release # 16**

#### **Fall Update # 1, Yukon Area Salmon Fishery**

Districts Affected: Yukon Area

#### **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, August 4, the front-end of the first pulse should be approaching the community of Tanana. Over the last week fall chum salmon entry into Yukon River has been steady and interspersed with small groups.

#### **Fall Season 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 August 2 was 407.67, which is only slightly below the historical median of 435.86 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 August 2 was 494.83, which is below the historical median of 621.99 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 August 2 was 195,725, which is above the median passage of approximately 173,219 fish for this date.

### Stock Identification

The strata from July 23 through August 2 are on the way to the lab and results should be available for the next update.

### 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 58% and 41% respectively for this date. Females represent 52% of the fish sampled, which is near the average of 54% for this date. The sample size was 228 fish for ages and 235 for sex. The proportion of females in the District 1 commercial catch samples through July 30 was 43% and included 7% 3-year olds (higher than average), 50% 4-year olds, and 41% 5-year olds. The sample size was 286 fish for ages and 268 for sex from the commercial catch.

### **Summer Assessment**

The Chinook salmon run is coming to an end in the Upper Yukon River. After approximately three weeks of daily passage estimates that were above 2,000 Chinook salmon, Eagle sonar has an estimated passage of 75,000 Chinook salmon to date. As a result of considerable conservation efforts, the 2015 Chinook salmon run has achieved the upper end of the border escapement objective of 42,500 – 55,000, despite being below average in run size. As of August 3, the Chinook salmon run is estimated to be approximately 95% complete at the Eagle sonar project.

In addition to the border escapement objective, all Chinook salmon systems with escapement goals in the Alaskan portion of the Yukon River drainage have been met or exceeded. These systems include: East Fork Andreafsky River, Chena River, Salcha River, West Fork Andreafsky River, Nulato River, and Anvik River.

As of July 18, the summer chum run was complete at the Pilot Station sonar project, and chum salmon 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 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 49,000 salmon through the final date of operations on July 30. Summer chum salmon passage at Anvik River sonar was 372,000 fish by the last day of operations on July 26 and the lower end of the escapement goal (350,000 to 700,000) for this river has been achieved.

### **Summer Assessment Projects**

#### 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 August 3 is 1,552 and 1,969 fish, respectively.

Andreafsky River Weir/USFWS

As of the last day of counting on July 31, 5,474 Chinook salmon have been counted at the weir, which is above the historical cumulative average of 4,029 Chinook salmon for this date and above the established escapement goal. Counts for summer chum salmon were 48,809 fish at the weir, which is slightly above the historical cumulative median of 48,178 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 the last day of counting on July 31, 1,319 Chinook salmon have been counted at the weir, which is below the historical cumulative average of 2,262 fish for this date. A season total of 42,747 summer chum salmon have been counted at the weir, which is above the historical cumulative median of 38,352 fish for this date.

Henshaw Creek Weir/TCC

As of August 2, 2,353 Chinook salmon have been counted at the weir, which is above the historical cumulative average of 1,039 fish for this date. To date, 233,955 summer chum salmon have been counted at the weir, which is well above the historical cumulative median of 101,196 fish for this date.

Anvik River Sonar/ADF&G

As of the final day of operations on 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, and from July 28–August 2 due to murky water and high debris in the river. As of July 27, 4,067 Chinook salmon were counted at the tower, which is below the historical cumulative average of 5,846 fish for this date. As of July 27, 2,506 summer chum salmon were counted at the tower, which is above the historical cumulative median of 2,109 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 and July 28 through July 30 due to high water and/or low visibility. As of August 2, 4,426 Chinook salmon were counted at the tower, which is below the historical cumulative average of 10,550 fish for this date. As of August 2, 5,952 summer chum salmon were counted at the tower, which is well below the historical cumulative median of 14,417 fish for this date. 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 August 2, 75,253 Chinook salmon have been counted. The average cumulative passage of Chinook salmon from 2005–2014 is 44,574 for this date.

### **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. 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>

### **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. Subsistence fishing has been liberalized to seven days a week in all of District 4 in light of the conservation efforts for Chinook salmon this season. The Subsistence schedule in Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C will go to 7 days a week on Tuesday, August 4.

### **Summer Season Management Strategies**

Summer season management is still in effect in the Upper Yukon River as the Chinook salmon run comes to an end. Lower river assessment data early in the season suggested a weak Canadian-origin Chinook salmon run and, given the trend of low run sizes the past several years, conservative management actions were taken for most of the season to protect Chinook salmon in order to meet escapement objectives. However, the 2015 Canadian-origin Chinook salmon run is turning out to be stronger than originally anticipated and counts at the Eagle sonar project are well above the upper end of the spawning escapement objective of 42,500 to 55,000. Therefore, the subsistence salmon fishing schedule and gillnet gear restrictions were relaxed in District 5 last week to provide subsistence opportunity on Chinook salmon still moving through the district. Gear restrictions were also relaxed in the subsistence fishery in District 6 late last week, since escapement objectives were met on both the Chena and Salcha rivers.

ADF&G and USFWS would like to extend thanks and appreciation to the fishermen of the Yukon River for their efforts this season in helping achieve all Chinook salmon escapement goals in the Alaskan portion of the drainage and the escapement objective at the Eagle sonar project.

### **Subsistence Fishing Schedules:**

#### **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 fishing in Subdistrict 4-A is open seven days per week, 24 hours per day and fishermen may use gillnets with mesh size up to 7.5 inches. Subsistence fishermen fishing in the upper portion of Subdistrict 4-A (upstream from the mouth of Stink Creek) 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 fishing is open seven days per week, 24 hours per day, with 7.5-inch gillnets or less and fish wheels.

**Koyukuk River:**

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

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

**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 open five days per week from 6:00 p.m. Tuesdays to 6:00 p.m. Sundays with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets and fish wheels. Effective 6:00 p.m. Tuesday, August 4, Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C will be open seven days per week for the remainder of the summer season.

**Subdistrict 5-D** (from an ADF&G regulatory marker two miles downstream of Waldron Creek upstream to the U.S./Canada border and including all adjacent tributaries, which includes the

communities of Stevens Village, Beaver, Venetie, Fort Yukon, Chalkyitsik, Circle and Eagle):

Subsistence salmon fishing in Subdistrict 5-D Lower and Middle is open 24 hours a day, seven days per week and fishermen may use gillnets with mesh size up to 7.5 inches.

**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 7.5 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 7.5-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 personal 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**

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 August 2 is 3,860 summer chum salmon with 371 Chinook salmon caught and released and 68 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 #7: 6:00 p.m. Monday, August 3, until 12:00 p.m. noon Wednesday, August 5

Period #8: 6:00 p.m. Friday, August 7, until 12:00 p.m. noon Sunday, August 9

**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.

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

Period #4: Seven-hour period from 1:00 p.m. Thursday, July 30 until 8:00 p.m. Thursday, July 30. Verbal reports indicate a preliminary harvest of 5,859 fall chum and 292 coho salmon

Period #5: Nine-hour period from 10:00 a.m. Sunday, August 2 until 7:00 p.m. Sunday, August 2. Verbal reports indicate a preliminary harvest of 15,640 fall chum salmon and 3,840 coho salmon.

The cumulative commercial harvest in District 1 through August 2 is 37,440 fall chum and 4,822 coho salmon.

**District 2 Commercial Fishing Schedule:**

Period #3: Six-hour period from 2:00 p.m. Saturday, August 1 until 8:00 p.m. Saturday, August 1. Verbal reports indicate a preliminary harvest of 6,916 fall chum salmon and 316 coho salmon.

The cumulative commercial harvest in District 2 through August 2 is 17,295 fall chum and 385 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.

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