

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



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2015 Yukon River Fall Salmon Fishery News Release # 22

Fall Update # 2, 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) and the pulse was estimated to be 100,000 fish. As of August 11, the front-end of the first pulse should be approaching the community of Stevens Village. The entry of fall chum salmon into Yukon River has been relatively steady, with a couple of smaller groups of approximately 40,000 and 31,000 fish passing the mainstem sonar respectively through August 6. These two groups of fish should be between Anvik and Kaltag. On August 10 another group of both fall chum and coho salmon began entering the river however it will be a few more days for it to pass the mainstem river sonar. Inseason assessment is currently in line with the estimated run size for fall chum salmon.

Fall Season Assessment Projects/Operators

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

The cumulative CPUE for the project through August 10 was 545.85 fall chum salmon, which is below the historical median of 705.40 for this date. The cumulative CPUE for coho salmon was 88.08, which is slightly above the historical median of 60.97 for this date.

Mountain Village Drift Test Fishing/Asacarsarmiut Traditional Council

The cumulative fall chum salmon CPUE for the project through August 9 was 724.40, which is slightly below the historical median of 854.51 for this date. The cumulative coho salmon CPUE for

the project through August 9 was 118.80, which is slightly above the historical median of 103.98 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 9 was 245,000, which is slightly below the median passage of approximately 276,000 fish for this date. The cumulative coho salmon passage estimate through August 9 was 6,900, which is slightly below the median passage of approximately 12,000 fish for this date.

Rapids Video Test Fish/Zuray

The project began counting fall chum salmon on August 2 based on flesh color. The cumulative CPUE from July 21 through August 9 is 2,482 chum salmon which is slightly below the historical median of 2,784 fish for this date. The estimate adjusted for water levels is average for this date.

Chandalar River Sonar/USFWS

The project began counting on August 8 and the cumulative fall chum salmon passage estimate through August 9 is approximately 554 fish which is below the median of 1,023 fish for the second day of operation.

Stock Identification

The genetic strata from July 23 through August 2, representing the second group of fish to enter the river, contained approximately 32% summer chum and 68% fall chum salmon. Overall, the fall chum salmon stocks in the sample consisted of 35% Border/US (Chandalar/Sheenjek), 26% Canadian and 7% Tanana Fall.

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 53% and 39% respectively for this date. Females represent 54% of the fish sampled, which is near the average of 55% for this date. The sample size was 228 fish for ages and 336 for sex. The proportion of females in the District 1 commercial catch samples through August 2 was 46% and included 7% 3-year olds (higher than average), 49% 4-year olds, and 42% 5-year olds. The sample size was 343 fish for ages and 328 for sex from the commercial catch.

Summer Assessment

The Chinook salmon run is nearly over in the Upper Yukon River. Eagle sonar daily passage counts have declined substantially in the last three days and chum catches in the test fishery at the project are beginning to increase. The cumulative passage estimate for Chinook salmon at Eagle sonar through August 9 is approximately 83,000 fish. As a result of considerable conservation efforts, the 2015 Chinook salmon run surpassed the upper end of the spawning escapement objective of 42,500 – 55,000, despite being below average in total run size. The current passage estimate is the highest seen at the project since it began in 2005.

Assessment Projects

Eagle Sonar/ADF&G

The Eagle sonar project began operations on June 30. As of August 9, 82,530 Chinook salmon have been counted. The average cumulative passage of Chinook salmon (2005–2014) for this date is 48,648. Please note that the sonar project started five days earlier in 2015 relative to previous years.

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 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>

Fall Season Management Strategies

The entire Yukon Area is now under fall season management. As a result of the severe Chinook salmon restrictions put in place in the Yukon Area this season, opportunity to harvest fall chum salmon for subsistence use has been increased to ease the hardships caused by these restrictions. Therefore, subsistence fishing has been liberalized to seven days a week in all of District 4 and Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C in light of the conservation efforts for Chinook salmon this season. In addition, effective 6:00 p.m. Monday, August 10, personal use fishermen can use gillnets with up to 7.5 inch mesh.

Summer Season Management Strategies

Management of the summer season salmon runs are coming to an end in the Upper Yukon as the Chinook salmon run is nearly complete. Subsistence fishing in all portions of Subdistrict 5-D has been open 7 days a week, 24 hours per day and fishermen may use fish wheels or gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or smaller.

Assessment data early in the season indicated a weak Chinook salmon run and conservative management actions were taken for most of the season to protect Chinook salmon to meet escapement objectives. Subsistence fishing opportunities were provided to target abundant summer chum salmon and minimize incidental harvest of Chinook salmon. Once assessment data at escapement projects and at the Eagle sonar started to indicate a stronger Chinook salmon run and projections showed that escapement objectives would be met, fishing restrictions were relaxed.

Low water, warm water, and wildfires undoubtedly impacted the ability to accurately assess the 2015 Chinook salmon run inseason. Maintaining a conservative management course focused on ensuring that escapement objectives would be met was necessary given the inseason assessment data uncertainty and the recent trend in low run sizes. ADF&G and USFWS would like to thank Yukon River fishermen for their cooperation and understanding during another difficult season.

The 2014 and 2015 seasons indicate that Yukon River Chinook salmon are showing signs of improving production. Over the course of the last several years, Yukon River fishermen have exhibited incredible flexibility, complying with schedule changes and gear restrictions. The department acknowledges the continued commitment made by Yukon River fishermen to conserve the valuable Chinook salmon resource for future generations.

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 or smaller mesh size gillnets and fish wheels.

Koyukuk River:

Subsistence salmon fishing is open 24 hours a day, seven days per week and fishermen may use gillnets with a 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 area):

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

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 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 currently open for 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.

Effective 6:00 p.m. Monday, August 10, fishermen may use fish wheels or gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or less. Chinook salmon caught in gillnets and fish wheels may continue to be retained. Personal use salmon fishing will remain on its regulatory schedule.

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 season has concluded. The preliminary commercial harvest for the Lower Yukon is approximately 354,000 summer chum salmon with a reported 9,500 Chinook salmon released alive and 3,240 Chinook salmon caught but not sold.

The preliminary commercial harvest for District 6 is approximately 4,800 summer chum salmon with 347 Chinook salmon caught and released and 81 Chinook salmon reported caught but not sold.

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

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

Period #8: 6:00 p.m. Friday, August 7, until 12:00 p.m. noon Sunday, August 9. Verbal reports indicate a preliminary harvest of 359 summer chum salmon.

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. Commercial fishing in Subdistricts 5-B and 5-C will open for one 5-day period from 6:00 p.m. Tuesday, August 11, until 6:00 p.m. Sunday, August 16. Gillnets will be restricted to six-inch or smaller mesh size.

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

Period #6: Nine-hour period from 2:00 p.m. Thursday, August 6 until 11:00 p.m. Thursday, August 6. Verbal reports indicate a preliminary harvest of 4,779 fall chum salmon and 3,188 coho salmon.

Period #7: Six-hour period from 10:00 a.m. Monday, August 10 until 4:00 p.m. Monday, August 10. No harvest to report at this time.

The cumulative commercial harvest in District 1 through August 6 is 42,226 fall chum salmon and 7,989 coho salmon.

District 2 Commercial Fishing Schedule:

Period #4: Four-hour period from 2:00 p.m. Tuesday, August 4 until 6:00 p.m. Tuesday, August 4. Verbal reports indicate a preliminary harvest of 7,181 fall chum salmon and 855 coho salmon.

Period #5: Six-hour period from 2:00 p.m. Sunday, August 9 until 8:00 p.m. Sunday, August 9. Verbal reports indicate a preliminary harvest of 1,812 fall chum salmon and 1,449 coho salmon.

The cumulative commercial harvest in District 2 through August 9 is 26,288 fall chum salmon and 2,681 coho salmon.

The subsistence fishing schedule and recorded fishery announcements are 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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