

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



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2015 Yukon River Fall Salmon Fishery News Release # 27

Fall Update # 3, Yukon Area Salmon Fishery

Districts Affected: Yukon Area

Fall Assessment

The 2015 fall chum salmon inseason run projection 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 three days in duration and the pulse was estimated to be 118,000 fish. As of August 17, the front-end of the first pulse should be approaching the community of Circle. The entry of fall chum salmon into Yukon River continued with a couple of smaller groups of approximately 44,000 and 31,000 fish passing the mainstem sonar respectively through August 6. These two groups of fish should be between Ruby and Rampart. On August 10, the largest pulse so far this year entered and contained both fall chum and coho salmon. An estimated 127,000 fall chum and 17,000 coho salmon passed the sonar in four days and will be approaching Holy Cross at this time. Inseason assessment is currently in line with the estimated run size for fall chum salmon, and the coho salmon run appears to be average at the quarter point of the run.

Fall Season Assessment Projects/Operators

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

The cumulative CPUE for the project through August 16 was 765.51 fall chum salmon, which is below the historical median of 1,033.98 for this date. The cumulative CPUE for coho salmon was 170.17, which is slightly above the historical median of 161.73 for this date.

Mountain Village Drift Test Fishing/Asacarsarmiut Traditional Council

The cumulative fall chum salmon CPUE for the project through August 16 was 1,075.29, which is slightly below the historical median of 1,271.63 for this date. The cumulative coho salmon CPUE

for the project through August 16 was 473.66, which is above the historical median of 303.22 for this date.

Sonar Project near Pilot Station/ADF&G

The cumulative fall chum salmon passage estimate through August 16 was 396,800, which is slightly above the median passage of approximately 360,700 fish for this date. The cumulative coho salmon passage estimate through August 16 was 27,500, which is below the median passage of approximately 40,300 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 16 is 4,242 chum salmon which is near the historical median of 4,466 fish for this date. The estimate adjusted for water levels is slightly below 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 16 is approximately 4,300 fish which is below the median of 7,000 fish for this date.

Mainstem Sonar at Eagle/ADF&G and DFO

The project transitioned to counting fall chum salmon as of August 13. Passage through August 16 is 753 fall chum salmon. The Eagle sonar project counted Chinook salmon from June 30 through August 12, the total estimated passage is approximately 83,400 fish which is well above the historical average of 52,900 fish.

Stock Identification/USFWS

The genetic strata from August 3-11, representing the third group of fish to enter the river contained approximately 11% summer chum and 89% fall chum salmon. Overall, the fall chum salmon stocks in the sample consisted of 40% Border/US (Chandalar/Sheenjek), 32% Canadian and 17% Tanana Fall. Samples from August 12-16, representing the fourth and largest pulse to enter the river are yet to be analyzed.

Age Composition Fall Season/ADF&G

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, however the age-4 component is weaker than expected. The average proportion of age-4 and age-5 fish is 53% and 36% respectively compared to the average of 63% age-4 and 35% age-5 fish. Females represent 59% of the fish sampled, which is above the average of 56% for this date. The sample size was 568 fish for ages and 643 for sex. The proportion of females in the District 1 commercial catch samples through August 13 was 48% and included 5% 3-year olds, 52% 4-year olds, and 41% 5-year olds. The sample size was 516 fish for ages and 506 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 salmon 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.

Fall Season Management Strategies

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.

Subsistence Fishing Schedules:

Coastal District:

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

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 7.5-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets or fish wheels. Chinook salmon caught in gillnets 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.

Fall Season Commercial Salmon Fishing

The fall chum salmon commercial fishing season is open in Districts 1 and 2. Both districts have been fishing 2-periods per week 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 18, until 6:00 p.m. Sunday, August 23. Gillnets will be restricted to six-inch or smaller mesh size.

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

Period #8: 6-hour period in the drift area, and 9-hours in the set net only area, August 13, with a harvest of 12,906 fall chum and 12,243 coho salmon.

The cumulative commercial harvest in District 1 through August 13 is 75,138 fall chum salmon and 32,472 coho salmon.

District 2 Commercial Fishing Schedule:

Period #6: 4-hour period, August 12, with a harvest of 11,041 fall chum salmon and 4,298 coho salmon.

Period #7: 4-hour period, August 16 with a preliminary harvest of 5,870 fall chum salmon and 7,048 coho salmon.

The preliminary cumulative commercial harvest in District 2 through August 16 is 43,224 fall chum salmon and 14,026 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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