

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



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2015 Yukon River Fall Salmon Fishery News Release # 34

Fall Update # 4, 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 fall season is drawing to a close in the lower river as the fall chum salmon directed commercial fishery closes by regulation after August 31, and the last day of operation for the mainstem sonar near Pilot Station is August 31. In contrast, the fall chum salmon run is well under way in the upper portion of Yukon River as the mainstem sonar at Eagle began counting fall chum on August 13.

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 25, the front-end of the first pulse should be approaching the community of Eagle. 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 Rapids and Circle. On August 10, the largest pulse so far this year entered lasting four day and contained an estimated 127,000 fall chum and 17,000 coho salmon. This group of fish will be approaching Ruby. A fifth pulse entered on August 19-20 and is estimated to be 63,000 fall chum salmon and is approaching Holy Cross. Inseason assessment is currently in line with the estimated run size for fall chum salmon, and the coho salmon run appears to be above average at the mid-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 23 was 1,048.01 for fall chum salmon, which is slightly below the historical median of 1,201.55 for this date. The cumulative CPUE for coho salmon was 327.47, which is slightly above the historical median of 308.55 for this date.

Mountain Village Drift Test Fishing/Asacarsarmiut Traditional Council

The cumulative fall chum salmon CPUE for the project through August 23 was 1,390.02, which is below the historical median of 1,625.03 for this date. The cumulative coho salmon CPUE for the project through August 23 was 912.44, which is above the historical median of 590.18 for this date.

Sonar Project near Pilot Station/ADF&G

The cumulative fall chum salmon passage estimate through August 23 was 460,100, which is below the median passage of approximately 538,000 fish for this date. The cumulative coho salmon passage estimate through August 23 was 60,300, which is below the median passage of approximately 84,900 fish for this date.

Rapids Video Test Fish/Zuray

The cumulative CPUE from July 21 through August 23 is 7,008 chum salmon which is below the historical median of 9,409 fish for this date. The estimate adjusted for water levels is also 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 21 is approximately 12,200 fish which is below the median of 15,500 fish for this date. High water has prevented the project from operating over the past few days.

Mainstem Sonar at Eagle/ADF&G and DFO

The project transitioned to counting fall chum salmon as of August 13. Passage through August 23 is 2,068 fall chum salmon.

Upper Porcupine River Sonar/DFO

The sonar project began operations on August 10 the estimated chum salmon passage is 1,759 through August 21, this level of passage is similar to 2014, the only other year this project started this early (August 12).

Stock Identification/USFWS

The genetic strata from August 12-16, representing the fourth group of fish to enter the river contained approximately 40% Border/US (Chandalar/Sheenjek), 34% Canadian and the Tanana fall component increased to 23%.

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 proportion of age-4 and age-5 fish to date is 54% and 36% respectively compared to the average of 65% age-4 and 33% age-5 fish. Females represent 60% of the fish sampled, which is above the average of 57% for this date. The sample size is 678 fish for ages and 765 for sex. The proportion of females in the District 1 commercial catch samples through August 19 was 49% and included 6% 3-year olds, 52% 4-year olds, and 40% 5-year olds. The sample size was 573 fish for ages and 566 for sex from the commercial catch.

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.

Subsistence salmon fishing in the mainstem Porcupine River is closed for the remainder of the fall season. During this closure, fishermen may fish for **non-salmon species** using gear with a mesh size of 4 inches or less. Tributaries such as the Sheenjek, Black, Coleen, and Salmon Trout Rivers remain open.

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. For much of the season, both districts have been fishing 2-periods per week. However, schedule adjustments in both districts have been made in an attempt to get more fall chum salmon upriver for escapement and subsistence use.

Two commercial fishing periods occurred in Subdistricts 5-B and 5-C. Processors, catcher sellers, or direct marketers interested in operating in Subdistricts 5-B and 5-C should notify the department by contacting the Fairbanks office at 459-7274.

The fall commercial season is open in District 6. Two commercial periods were announced in District 6 August 21 through 26. Processors, catcher sellers, or direct marketers interested in operating in District 6 should notify the department by contacting the Fairbanks office at 459-7274.

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

Period #9: 4-hour period in the drift area and set net only area, August 19, with a harvest of 12,687 fall chum and 11,570 coho salmon.

Period #10: 6-hour period in the drift area and set net only area, August 23, with a harvest of 3,374 fall chum and 5,472 coho salmon.

The cumulative commercial harvest in District 1 through August 23 is 91,223 fall chum salmon and 49,232 coho salmon.

District 2 Commercial Fishing Schedule:

Period #8: 6-hour period, August 19, with a preliminary harvest of 1,024 fall chum salmon and 4,874 coho salmon.

Period #9: 6-hour period, August 23, with a preliminary harvest of 9,506 fall chum salmon and 11,086 coho salmon.

The preliminary cumulative commercial harvest in District 2 through August 23 is 53,962 fall chum salmon and 29,918 coho salmon.

District 6 Commercial Fishing Schedule:

Period #1: 42-hour period August 21-August 23, with a preliminary harvest of 462 fall chum salmon and 13 coho salmon.

Period #2: 42-hour period August 24-August 26. No harvest reported as of yet.

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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