

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



Sam Cotten, Commissioner
Scott Kelley, Director



Contact:
Holly Carroll, Area Management Biologist
Sabrina Garcia, Assistant Area Management Biologist
Phone: (907) 949-1320
Fax: (907) 949-1830

Lower Yukon Area Office
P.O. Box 127
Emmonak, Alaska 99581
Date Issued: 6/13/2016

2016 Yukon River Summer Salmon Fishery News Release # 16

Summer Update # 4, Yukon Area Salmon Fishery

Districts Affected: Yukon Area

Assessment

The 2016 salmon season is underway on the Yukon River. Catch per Unit Effort (CPUE) at the LYTF sites is matching up well with Chinook and summer chum salmon passage at the sonar near Pilot Station indicating that our test fisheries are operating well. Catch rates increased last week for both Chinook and summer chum salmon in the LYTF. As of June 13, the first summer chum salmon caught in the LYTF should be near Ruby and the first Chinook salmon should be between Rampart and Stevens Village. An early group of summer chum salmon should be between Holy Cross and Anvik on June 13. Daily Chinook salmon passage estimates at the sonar near Pilot Station have been relatively high (greater than 4,000 fish per day) since June 11 which likely indicates the start of a Chinook salmon pulse passing the sonar. Though it's too early to determine run timing, on average, the first quarter point for Chinook salmon at the sonar near Pilot Station is between June 14 (for an early run) and June 19 (for an average run). The average quarter point for summer chum salmon at the sonar near Pilot Station is June 22.

Fishermen are reminded that the Yukon River Inseason Salmon Management Teleconferences hosted by the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association will be held every Tuesday, beginning at 1:00 p.m. Alaska time. Dial (800) 315-6338, and enter participant code: YUKON #.

Assessment Projects

Lower Yukon Test Fishery (LYTF)/ ADF&G and YDFDA

The combined cumulative Chinook salmon CPUE for the 8.5-inch set gillnet at the Big Eddy and Middle Mouth sites as of June 12 is 10.55, which is above the historical average of 4.47. The cumulative Chinook salmon CPUE at the 8.25-inch drift gillnet at the Big Eddy site as of June 12 is 186.36, which is above the historical average of 82.37. The combined cumulative summer chum

salmon CPUE for the 5.5-inch drift gill net at the Big Eddy and Middle Mouth sites as of June 12 is 1,280.05, which is well above the historical median of 408.22 for this date.

Operations at the LYTF for both Chinook and summer chum salmon have been altered from previous years so caution should be taken when comparing current catch rates to historical catch rates. Any Chinook salmon healthy enough will be released alive from the test nets and injured salmon will be distributed to village elders by the Tribal Councils. Fewer set net sites are being fished than in the past to reduce Chinook salmon mortality.

Sonar Project near Pilot Station/ ADF&G

The sonar project near Pilot Station has been fully operational since June 1, which is one of the earliest start dates since 1995. The project is operating well and has not experienced any major issues from debris or equipment malfunction. Chinook salmon passage as of June 12 is estimated to be 23,865 fish which is above the historical cumulative average of 16,498 Chinook salmon for this date. Summer chum salmon passage as of June 12 is estimated to be 136,411 fish which is well above the historical cumulative median of 27,003 summer chum salmon for this date.

Management Strategies

A conservative management approach is being taken early in the summer season because of the below average return of Chinook salmon expected in 2016.

Closures for subsistence Chinook salmon fishing have been implemented from the Northern Portion of the Coastal District up through District 4. These closures will be implemented in upriver districts and subdistricts based on historical migratory timing prior to the arrival of Chinook salmon. The intent is to protect the early fish and first pulse of Chinook salmon as they make their way upriver.

Restrictions are expected to be in place for most of the Chinook salmon run. However, management strategies may change based on inseason run assessment information. It is still too early in the season to assess the strength of the 2016 Chinook salmon run. Therefore, current management actions are being based on the preseason Chinook salmon outlook.

Fortunately, the 2016 summer chum salmon run is expected to be average to above average. Fishing opportunities to harvest summer chum salmon with selective gear such as dip nets, beach seines, and live-release fish wheels have been provided. Yukon Area fishermen should be prepared for liberal subsistence and commercial opportunity using selective fishing gear to harvest summer chum salmon while releasing Chinook salmon safely to the water. These gear types may not be efficient until strong pulses of summer chum enter your fishing area.

The 2016 season is expected to be another challenging year for Yukon River fishermen. ADF&G and USFWS would like to extend thanks and appreciation to the fishermen of the Yukon River for their continuing efforts to conserve Chinook salmon.

General Management Reminders:

- When subsistence fishing for Chinook salmon is closed, fishermen are required to immediately release Chinook salmon alive from dip nets, beach seines, and fish wheels. Fish wheel users must closely attend their wheels and immediately release Chinook salmon alive from the livebox. The requirement to release Chinook salmon alive from all selective gears will be strictly enforced. Great care must be taken to assure Chinook salmon are released quickly and unharmed so that they can swim the long distance upriver and spawn successfully. Fishermen are also strongly encouraged to avoid fishing where Chinook salmon may be encountered.
- Beach seine gear may not exceed 150 fathoms in length, 100 meshes in depth, and 4-inches stretched measure. Beach seines may not be constructed of monofilament webbing. All Chinook salmon must be released alive from beach seine gear.
- During subsistence salmon fishing closures in the Yukon Area, gillnets 4-inch or smaller mesh of 60 feet or shorter length may be used for non-salmon species. All salmon caught in 4-inch gillnets may be retained, but fishermen are reminded not to target salmon as this gear is intended for non-salmon species. If it is determined that fishermen are using gillnets larger than 4-inch mesh size during Chinook salmon closures, enforcement may seize these illegal gear sizes and the opportunity to use 4-inch gillnets to target non-salmon may be removed.

Current Management

Southern Portion of the Coastal District (from the Naskonat Peninsula north to 62 degrees North latitude):

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

Northern Portion of the Coastal District (from 62 degrees North latitude to Point Romanof and including all state marine waters):

Subsistence salmon fishing is closed until further notice.

District 1 (including the Black River):

Subsistence fishing is currently closed one hour before, during, and one hour after commercial periods. Subsistence salmon fishing will be open with dip nets and beach seines on the following schedule:

- Tuesday, June 14, from 4:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m.
- Wednesday, June 15, from 4:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m.
- Thursday, June 16, from 4:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m.

- Friday, June 17, from 4:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m.
- Saturday, June 18 from 4:00 a.m. until further notice.

All Chinook salmon caught in dip net and beach seine gear must be released alive immediately.

District 2: Subsistence salmon fishing with gillnets is closed. Subsistence fishing with dip nets and beach seine gear is open for 24 hours a day to target summer chum salmon.

Effective 11:00 a.m. Tuesday, June 14, subsistence salmon fishing will close. Following this closure, subsistence fishing will be closed one hour before, during, and one hour after commercial periods. Subsistence salmon fishing will be on the following schedule:

- 1:00 a.m. Wednesday, June 15, until 11:00 a.m. Thursday, June 16
- Starting at 1:00 a.m., Friday, June 17, open 24 hours a day, seven days per week until further notice.

District 3: Subsistence salmon fishing with gillnets is closed. Subsistence fishing with dip nets and beach seine gear is open for 24 hours a day, seven days per week to target summer chum salmon. Fishermen are reminded that Chinook salmon caught in dip nets and beach seines must be released alive.

Innoko River: Subsistence fishing is currently open 24 hours a day, seven days per week and fishermen may use 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets. Fishermen should be prepared for management actions that restrict subsistence salmon fishing when the first pulse of Chinook salmon is expected to migrate into the Innoko River.

District 4:

Subsistence Chinook salmon fishing is currently closed. This includes drift gillnets in waters adjacent to the Federal Management Units within Subdistricts 4-B and 4-C. Fishing with dip nets, beach seines, and live-release fish wheels is open 24 hours a day, seven days per week to target summer chum salmon.

Fishermen are required to immediately release Chinook salmon alive from dip nets, beach seines, and fish wheels. Fishermen are also reminded they must closely attend the fish wheel and Chinook salmon must be immediately released alive from the livebox.

Koyukuk River: Subsistence fishing is currently open 24 hours a day, seven days per week and fishermen may use gillnets with mesh size of 7.5 inches or less. Fishermen should be prepared for management actions that will restrict subsistence salmon fishing when the first pulse of Chinook salmon is expected to be migrating into the Koyukuk River.

Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C (from the western edge of the mouth of Illinois Creek upstream 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):

Subsistence salmon fishing is currently open 24 hours a day, seven days per week and fishermen may use fish wheels and 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets.

Effective 6:00 p.m. Thursday, June 16, subsistence salmon fishing for Chinook is closed.

Effective 6:00 p.m. Friday, June 17, subsistence fishing will reopen with dip nets, beach seines, and live-release fish wheels 24 hours a day, seven days per week to target summer chum salmon.

Fishermen are required to immediately release Chinook salmon alive from dip nets, beach seines, and fish wheels. Fishermen are also reminded they must closely attend the fish wheel and Chinook salmon must be immediately released alive from the livebox.

District 6: By regulation, the subsistence salmon fishing schedule consists of two 42-hour fishing periods per week from 6:00 p.m. Mondays until 12:00 noon Wednesdays and from 6:00 p.m. Fridays until 12:00 noon Sundays and fishermen may use fish wheels or gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or less. Fishermen should anticipate fishing restrictions when Chinook salmon start moving into the Tanana River.

Old Minto Area: Subsistence salmon fishing is open five days per week from 6:00 p.m. Fridays until 6:00 p.m. Wednesdays and fishermen may use fish wheels or gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or less. Fishermen should anticipate fishing restrictions when Chinook salmon start moving into the Old Minto area.

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, including the communities of Healy Lake, Dot Lake, Tanacross, Northway, and the Tok area): 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.

Commercial Fishing:

Fishermen requested at pre-season management meetings that the department provide an alternating schedule rather than concurrent subsistence and commercial periods for lower river districts in order to reduce competition among fishing sites. The department is endeavoring to accommodate these requests along with any limitations the processor may have when scheduling commercial periods.

Early commercial openings in District 1 indicated that fishermen were catching good numbers of summer chum while incidentally catching and releasing relatively few Chinook salmon. Subsistence fishing in both District 1 and District 2 will be closed one hour before, during, and one hour after commercial periods this week.

District 1 (including the Black River):

Effective Monday, June 13, commercial fishing for summer chum salmon in District 1 is open for the following periods:

- Monday, June 13, from 3:00 p.m. until Tuesday, June 14, at 3:00 a.m.
- Tuesday, June 14, from 3:00 p.m. until Wednesday, June 15, at 3:00 a.m.
- Wednesday, June 15, from 3:00 p.m. until Thursday, June 16, at 3:00 a.m.
- Thursday, June 16, from 3:00 p.m. until Friday, June 17, at 3:00 a.m.
- Friday, June 17, from 3:00 p.m. until Saturday, June 18, at 3:00 a.m.

District 2 Commercial:

Effective Tuesday, June 14, commercial fishing for summer chum salmon in District 2 will be open for the following periods:

- Tuesday, June 14, from 12:00 p.m. noon until 12:00 a.m. midnight
- Thursday, June 16, from 12:00 p.m. noon until 12:00 a.m. midnight

All Chinook salmon are required to be released alive from dip net and beach seine gear and must be recorded on a fish ticket. This requirement will be strictly enforced. Fishermen are reminded that great care must be taken to ensure Chinook salmon are released unharmed so that they can swim the long distance upriver and spawn successfully.

Summer chum salmon catches and incidental catches and releases of Chinook salmon from these commercial periods will be evaluated to determine additional commercial openings.

The subsistence fishing schedule and recorded fishery announcements will be available 24 hours a day at **(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 Emmonak at (907) 949-1320 or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Emmonak at (907) 949-1798.

This is an announcement by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

-end-