

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



Sam Cotten, Commissioner
Scott Kelley, Director



Contact:
Jeff Estensen, Area Management Biologist
Christy Gleason, Asst. Area Management Biologist
Phone: (907) 949-1320
Fax: (907) 949-1830

Lower Yukon Area Field Office
P.O. Box 127
Emmonak, Alaska 99581
Date Issued: 8/1/2016

2016 Yukon River Fall Salmon Fishery News Release # 16 **Fall Update # 2, Yukon Area Salmon Fishery** Districts Affected: Yukon Area

Fall Season Assessment

The 2016 fall chum salmon preseason run projection, based on the summer chum to fall chum salmon run size relationship, is for a run size between 800,000 and 900,000 fish. This level of abundance should be sufficient to provide for escapement, an above average subsistence harvest, and a surplus available for commercial and personal use purposes. The estimated fall chum salmon reconstructed run (based on the mainstem sonar near Pilot Station and the downstream harvest) through July 31 is estimated to be 445,000 fish, which is above the historical median of 174,000 fish for that date. If the run is early, August 5 would represent the average midpoint at the mainstem sonar. The first pulse of fall chum salmon entered the Yukon River on July 18 and is expected to be near Galena on August 2, Tanana and Huslia around August 7, Rampart around August 9 and the Canadian border around August 22. High water may slow the passage of fish and delay timing slightly from these dates. It appears that another group of fall chum salmon is entering the river based on the Lower Yukon Test Fishery.

The coho salmon outlook is for an average to above average return. The primary parent year for coho salmon this year is from the escapements of 2012. A few coho salmon have been entering the Yukon River based on the commercial fishery but the majority of the run begins building in early August.

Fall Assessment Projects

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

The cumulative CPUE for the project through August 1 was 477.36 fall chum salmon, which is above the historical median of 324.04 for this date.

Mountain Village Drift Test Fishing/Asacarsarmiut Traditional Council

The cumulative CPUE for the project through July 31 was 1,108.07 fall chum salmon, which is above the historical median of 564.52 for this date.

Sonar Project near Pilot Station/ADF&G

The cumulative fall chum salmon passage estimate through July 31 was 367,000, which is above the median passage of approximately 164,000 fish for this date.

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. As expected based on last year's run composition, this year's age-4 component is above average. The 2016 preliminary proportion of age-4 and age-5 fish is 72% and 26% respectively compared to the average of 57% age-4 and 42% age-5 fish based on a samples size of 242. Females represent 49% of the 306 fish sampled and the average is 54% for this date.

Stock Identification

Genetic mixed stock analysis (MSA) on the strata from July 19–25, which included the first large pulse, contained approximately 48% summer chum and 52% fall chum salmon. The summer chum salmon components were dominated by the Tanana summer at 24%, followed by lower summer at 14% with the middle Yukon stocks at 10%. The fall chum salmon stocks in the sample consisted of 24% Border/US (Chandalar/Sheenjek), 25% Canadian and 4% Tanana.

Fall Season Management Strategy

The Coastal District, Districts 1, 2, 3, and the Innoko and Koyukuk Rivers have been placed on their full regulatory subsistence salmon fishing schedules for the fall season. As a result of the Chinook salmon restrictions put in place in the Yukon Area this season, the department is increasing the opportunity to harvest fall chum salmon for subsistence use. Subsistence salmon fishing has been liberalized to seven days per week, 24 hours per day in District 4. The subsistence salmon fishing schedule in Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C will be liberalized to seven days per week, 24 hours per day beginning August 2nd. Subsistence fishermen may use gillnets with 7.5 inch mesh or smaller during the fall season.

Summer Assessment ProjectsSonar 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. Chinook salmon passage as of July 31 is estimated to be 175,717 fish, which is below the historical cumulative early year average of 218,237 fish. A season total of 1,919,507 summer chum salmon were counted at the sonar which is well above the historical cumulative median of 1,667,013 summer chum salmon.

East Fork Andreafsky River Weir / USFWS

The East Fork Andreafsky River weir operated between June 20 and July 24. A season total of 2,676 Chinook salmon were counted at the weir, which is below the historical cumulative average of 3,969 fish. A season total of 50,362 summer chum salmon were counted at the weir, which is above the historical cumulative median of 47,183 fish. 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 this season.

Anvik River Sonar / ADF&G

The Anvik River sonar operated between June 16 and July 26. A season total of 330,709 summer chum salmon were counted at the sonar, which is below the historical cumulative median of 461,899 fish. The Biological Escapement Goal (BEG) of 350,000–700,000 fish past the sonar project was not met this season.

Gisasa River Weir / USFWS

The Gisasa River weir began operations on June 17, which is one of the earliest start dates since 1995, and ended operations on July 28. A season total of 1,395 Chinook salmon were counted at the weir, which is below the historical cumulative average of 2,145 fish. A season total of 66,670 summer chum were counted at the weir, which is well above the historical cumulative median of 37,373 summer chum salmon.

Henshaw Creek Weir / TCC

The Henshaw Creek weir began operations on June 26. Chinook salmon passage as of July 31 is estimated to be 1,335 fish, which is above the historical cumulative average of 1,167 Chinook salmon for this date. Summer chum salmon passage as of July 31 is estimated to be 282,698 fish, which is well above the historical median of 111,842 summer chum salmon for this date.

Chena River Tower / ADF&G

The Chena River tower began operations on June 26. Poor water conditions have been obscuring visibility at the tower since June 28; however, sonar is also in operation and will be used post-season to assess passage during days when visibility prohibited counts from the tower. Prior to June 28, three Chinook and zero summer chum salmon were counted at the tower. The BEG for Chinook salmon is 2,800–5,700 fish past the tower.

Salcha River Tower / ADF&G

The Salcha River tower began operations on June 26. Poor water conditions obscured visibility at the tower between July 4 and July 10 and have also been obscuring visibility since June 18. A cumulative of 1,534 Chinook and 621 summer chum salmon were counted at the tower during the dates it was operational. Sonar is also in operation and will be used post-season to assess passage during days when visibility prohibited counts from the tower. The BEG for Chinook salmon is 3,300–6,500 fish past the tower.

Eagle Sonar / ADF&G

The Eagle sonar project began operations on July 1, which is one of the earliest start dates since the project began in 2005. Approximately 65,761 Chinook salmon have been counted at the sonar project as of July 31, which is above the historical cumulative average of 46,573 for this date. Chinook salmon passage has exceeded the Interim Management Escapement Goal into Canada (42,500 – 55,000 fish) and provides a sufficient surplus for the Canadian Total Allowable Catch harvest share.

Current Subsistence Fishing Schedules

Coastal District (from the Naskonat Peninsula north to Point Romanof and including all state marine waters):

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

District 1 (including the Black River):

Subsistence salmon fishing is currently open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets except for 12 hours before, during, and 12 hours after commercial fishing periods.

District 2:

Subsistence salmon fishing is currently open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets except for 12 hours before, during, and 12 hours after commercial fishing periods.

District 3:

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

Innoko River:

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

Subdistrict 4-A (from $\frac{3}{4}$ mile downstream of Old Paradise Village upstream to Cone Point, which includes the mainstem Yukon River communities of Anvik, Grayling, Kaltag, Nulato, and Koyukuk):

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

Drift gillnet fishing in the lower portion of Subdistrict 4-A downstream from the mouth of Stink Creek closes by regulation after August 2. Drift gillnet fishing will remain open, by regulation, **only in the upper portion of Subdistrict 4-A upstream from the mouth of Stink Creek.**

Drift gillnets may not exceed 25 fathoms in length.

Subdistricts 4-B and 4-C (from Cone Point to Illinois Creek, which includes the mainstem Yukon River communities of Galena and Ruby):

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

Koyukuk River:

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

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):

Subsistence salmon fishing in Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C is currently open five days per week, from 6:00 p.m. Tuesdays to 6:00 p.m. Sundays, with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels.

Effective 6:00 p.m. Tuesday, August 2, subsistence salmon fishermen in Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C will be open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels.

A subsistence fishing permit is required to fish for all species in the portion of Subdistrict 5-C from the western most tip of Garnet Island upstream to the mouth of Dall River.

Subdistrict 5-D (from the ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately two miles downstream of Waldron Creek upstream to the U.S./Canada border, including all adjacent tributaries and the communities of Stevens Village, Beaver, Venetie, Fort Yukon, Chalkyitsik, Circle, and Eagle):

Currently, subsistence salmon fishing in all of Subdistrict 5-D is open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets and fish wheels.

A subsistence fishing permit is required to fish for all species in the following locations: between the western tip of Garnet Island and the Dall River (Dalton Highway bridge area) and from the upstream mouth of 22 Mile Slough to the U.S./Canada border.

Subdistricts 6-A and 6-B (from the mouth of the Tanana River upstream to the regulatory marker at the mouth of Wood River, which includes the communities of Manley, Minto, and Nenana):

Subsistence salmon fishing in Subdistricts 6-A and 6-B is open for two 42-hour periods each week, from 6:00 p.m. Mondays until 12:00 p.m. noon Wednesdays and from 6:00 p.m. Fridays until 12:00 noon Sundays, with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets and fish wheels.

The Kantishna River is open on its regulatory subsistence salmon fishing schedule of 24 hours a day, seven days per week with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets and fish wheels.

The Old Minto area is open on its regulatory schedule of 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 and fish wheels.

Subsistence fishermen are reminded that a subsistence fishing permit is required to fish for salmon in the Tanana River drainage. Permits are available from the ADF&G office in Fairbanks. Subsistence fishermen fishing in the upper portion of Subdistrict 6-B, from three miles upstream of the mouth of Totchaket Slough to Wood River, are required to report their harvest catches to the department by **4:30 PM Thursday** each week by contacting the department at **(907) 459-7388**. When you call, please provide your name, permit number, fishing location, and daily catch by species for that week.

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 and gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or less.

A subsistence fishing permit is required to fish in the Upper Tanana River Drainage.

Subdistricts 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 for two 42-hour periods each week, from 6:00 p.m. Friday until 12:00 p.m. noon Sunday and from 6:00 p.m. Monday until 12:00 p.m. noon Wednesday. Fishermen may use 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels. Chinook salmon may be retained from gillnets and fish wheels.

A reminder to fishermen that a personal use salmon fishing permit and a sport fish license are required to fish in Subdistrict 6-C of the Tanana River. Fishermen are required to report their harvest catches to the department by **4:30 PM Thursday** each week by contacting the department at **(907) 459-7388**. When you call, please provide your name, permit number, fishing location, and daily catch by species for that week.

Commercial Fishing:

Fall Season Commercial Salmon Fishing

The fall chum salmon commercial fishing season is open in Districts 1 and 2. It is expected that both districts will fish a two-period schedule. However, commercial fishermen should be on standby as the scheduling of periods in either district may be adjusted when pulses of fall chum salmon are moving through each district.

It is anticipated that commercial openings will be announced for Subdistricts 5-B and 5-C, and for District 6 in the coming weeks.

District 1, including the Set Net Only Area:

Period #6: **SET NET ONLY AREA:** 9-hour period from 1:00 p.m. until 10:00 p.m. Monday, August 1. **Remainder of District 1:** 6-hour period from 4:00 p.m. until 10:00 p.m. Monday, August 1.

The preliminary cumulative commercial harvest in District 1 through July 31 is 59,462 fall chum and 1,031 coho salmon.

District 2:

The preliminary cumulative commercial harvest in District 2 through July 31 is 53,124 fall chum and 181 coho salmon.

Summer Season Commercial Salmon Fishing

The Lower Yukon summer chum salmon directed commercial fishery began on June 7 in District 1 and June 14 in District 2 with beach seine and dip net gear only. From June 26 to July 5 fishermen in District 1 used 5.5-inch gillnets limited to 30 meshes deep to harvest summer chum salmon while minimizing the incidental harvest of Chinook salmon. Starting July 6 in District 1, and June 27 in District 2, fishermen have used 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets to target summer chum salmon. The preliminary commercial harvest in District 1 through July 16 is approximately 293,576 summer chum salmon with a reported 4,169 Chinook salmon released alive from dip nets and beach seines and 2,780 Chinook salmon kept for subsistence use. The preliminary commercial harvest in District 2 through July 17 is approximately 228,267 summer chum salmon with a reported 4,086 Chinook salmon released alive from dip nets and beach seines and 2,570 Chinook salmon kept for subsistence use. The preliminary commercial harvest in District 6 through July 24 is approximately 1,910 summer chum salmon with a reported 137 Chinook salmon kept for subsistence use.

District 6 Commercial Schedule:

Commercial fishing in District 6 is open for two 42-hour fishing periods per week on the following schedule with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels:

- 6:00 p.m. Mondays, until 12:00 p.m. noon Wednesdays
- 6:00 p.m. Fridays, until 12:00 p.m. noon Sundays

Commercial fishermen should coordinate with the buyer on a daily basis regarding scheduling deliveries. All salmon harvested during commercial fishing operations must be recorded on a fish ticket at the time of sale. All Chinook salmon kept for personal use from gillnets and fish wheels must also be recorded on the fish ticket. Other fish species caught but not sold must also be recorded on the fish ticket. Processors, catcher-sellers, or direct marketers should notify the department of their intent to operate by contacting the Fairbanks office at 459-7274.

All Chinook salmon caught in gillnets may be kept for subsistence use and must be recorded on a fish ticket as “caught but not sold”.

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 **459-7387**.

If you have any questions regarding this report, please call the ADF&G office in Emmonak at (907) 949-1320, the ADF&G office in Fairbanks at (907) 459-7274 or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Fairbanks at (907) 455-1849.

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

-end-