

PROPOSAL 110 – 5 AAC 01.249. Yukon River Drainage Fall Chum Salmon Management Plan. Increase the commercial fishery threshold trigger in the Yukon River Drainage Fall Chum Salmon Management Plan, as follows:

5 AAC 01.249. Yukon River Drainage Fall Chum Salmon Management Plan (3)(C)(5) is amended to read:

(5) when the projected run size is more than 600,000 [500,000] chum salmon, the commissioner may, by emergency order, open and close, commercial fisheries drainage-wide and manage the fisheries to achieve escapements within the established drainage-wide escapement goal range of 300,000 - 600,000 chum salmon; the targeted harvest of the surplus will be distributed by district or subdistrict proportional to the guideline harvest range established in [5 AAC 05.365](#); the department shall distribute the harvest levels below the low end of the guideline harvest range by district or subdistrict proportional to the midpoint of the guideline harvest range;

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? When projected run estimates for Yukon River fall chum salmon are 600,000 or less, second pulse protection of fall chum would be put in place with no commercial fishing allowed in Districts Y1 through Y5 so that sufficient fall chum salmon will move upriver to meet subsistence needs and escapement goals.

Fall chum is the only salmon available to the upper Yukon River communities since Chinook salmon declines and closure of all directed Chinook harvest projected for the foreseeable future. Fall chum salmon is now needed to provide food for Yukon River communities more than ever before. Protections are needed to ensure commercial harvest of fall chum in the lower Yukon River does not prevent subsistence families from meeting their harvest needs in the upper river. This proposal is to increase the threshold at which the fall chum salmon commercial fishery can open from projected run size of 500,000 chum salmon to 600,000 chum salmon.

What would happen if nothing is changed? The current fall chum salmon commercial fishery threshold trigger of 500,000 is the lowest it has ever been in regulation. While currently the fall chum returns have been strong, this may not continue to be the case in the future and regulations take a long time to go into effect to be responsive and thus require proactive conservation management. If the regulation is not changed the uncertainty of projected run size could cause circumstances again in the future where a commercial fishery is prosecuted and runs do not return as expected, causing escapement goals to not be met and also place all the burden of limiting harvest on subsistence communities in the upper river (as well as commercial and sport fisheries in District 5) in order to meet escapement goals. Fall chum salmon is relied on more heavily now by subsistence communities in times of low Chinook returns and any restriction to subsistence fall chum salmon harvest caused by overharvest in the commercial fisheries causes great hardship to subsistence communities in the upper Yukon River that have no other salmon options.

This commercial fishery threshold increase will help build in protection for uncertain run size projections so that more fall chum can move upriver where they are necessary to meet increasing subsistence needs in the upper river prior to any accidental overharvest in the lower river by missed projections and still will allow for the commercial opportunity for the lower river. Increasing the projected run size commercial fishing threshold trigger will be a tool for managers to assure escapement goals are achieved and subsistence needs are met in the upper river Yukon River districts prior to removal of fall chum salmon from the system before fully knowing the run strength. The example is that if fall chum salmon don't actually return in the numbers that were projected, but a commercial fishery is already prosecuted in the lower Yukon districts then subsistence fishing in district Y5 has to be restricted in order to meet escapement goals.

PROPOSED BY: Eastern Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

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