An Ethnographic Overview of the Yukon River Salmon Subsistence Fisheries

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Division of Subsistence

Overview

▪ Regional differences within the Yukon salmon fishery

▪ Contemporary use and harvest of salmon by Yukon River residents
  ▪ Relevant changes to the fishery
  ▪ Adaptations by fishermen
  ▪ Implications for harvest
Introduction to the Yukon River

- 6 major fishing districts divided into 3 sections

Introduction to the Yukon River, continued

- Historic reliance on salmon as a primary food source
Introduction to the Yukon River, continued

• Over 40 communities throughout the drainage

Fishing Gear and Methods: lower river

Legend
- lower river communities
- all other Yukon River communities
Fishing Gear and Methods: middle river

Legend
- middle river communities
- all other Yukon River communities

Fishing Gear and Methods: upper river

Legend
- upper river communities
- all other Yukon River communities
Percent of Species Harvested by District (1998-2007 average)

**Y-1 (lower river)**
- Fall chum: 10%
- Coho: 4%
- Chinook: 18%
- Summer chum: 68%

**Y-2 (lower river)**
- Fall chum: 8%
- Coho: 5%
- Chinook: 25%
- Summer chum: 62%

**Y-3 (middle river)**
- Fall chum: 7%
- Coho: 3%
- Chinook: 51%
- Summer chum: 39%

**Y-4 (middle river)**
- Fall chum: 21%
- Coho: 9%
- Chinook: 44%
- Summer chum: 26%

**Y-5 (upper river)**
- Fall chum: 59%
- Coho: 6%
- Chinook: 26%
- Summer chum: 8%

**Y-6 (Tanana River)**
- Fall chum: 48%
- Coho: 38%
- Chinook: 6%
- Summer chum: 32%

Comparison of Total Subsistence Harvests

**Emmonak, 2008 (lower river)**
- Salmon: 40%
- Large Land Mammals: 26%
- Non-Salmon Fish: 17%
- Marine Mammals: 11%
- Non-Salmon Fish: 3%
- Birds and Eggs: 2%
- Vegetation: 1%

**Grayling, 1990 (middle river)**
- Salmon: 42%
- Large Land Mammals: 33%
- Non-Salmon Fish: 17%
- Marine Mammals: 4%
- Non-Salmon Fish: 3%
- Birds and Eggs: 1%
- Vegetation: 1%

**Fort Yukon, 1987 (upper river)**
- Salmon: 61%
- Large Land Mammals: 20%
- Non-Salmon Fish: 3%
- Marine Mammals: 3%
- Non-Salmon Fish: 3%
- Birds and Eggs: 1%
- Vegetation: 1%
Socioeconomic Effects of King Salmon Declines

**Results**

1. **Decline of fish camps**
   Important site of cultural, economic, nutritional, and educational values

2. **Wage labor and subsistence**
   Challenge of balancing schedules of wage employment with need for cash to support subsistence activities

3. **Cost of fuel**
   Compounds problems caused by declining salmon: need to use more gas to get fewer fish
Results, continued

4. Regulations
   Restrictions, while important for conservation, decrease fishing efficiency and opportunity

5. Species replacement and alternative resources
   Not always available or accessible because of regulations that have shifted traditional harvest timing

Final Thoughts

- Salmon remains a vital resource for socio-cultural, economic, and food security reasons on the Yukon River

- Declines in king salmon have encouraged people from different regions of the river to work together for conservation

- Declining king salmon has negatively impacted residents of the river

- While harvests have slightly improved in recent years the needs of the people along the river are still not fully being met
Questions?