



Advisory Announcement

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2021 Yukon River Salmon Fall Fishery Announcement # 6 **Fall Update # 1, Yukon Area Salmon Fishery** Districts Affected: Yukon Area

The 2021 fall chum salmon run size is anticipated to be critically low, similar to this season's summer chum salmon that was the lowest on record. The fall chum salmon preseason projection, based on the relationship between summer chum salmon and fall chum salmon run sizes, is for a run size less than 300,000 fish. According to the Fall Chum Salmon Management Plan, the preseason projection does not meet the threshold of 300,000 fish needed to allow subsistence fishing. In addition, the current run projection is unlikely to meet the drainagewide escapement goal of 300,000-600,000 fall chum salmon, tributary escapement goals and Canadian treaty objectives. Similar to last year, the Western Alaska chum salmon stocks in Kuskokwim and Norton Sound are also performing poorly.

Coho salmon typically enter the Yukon River in mid-August with the bulk of the run occurring between August 13 and 24 in the Lower Yukon Test Fishery (LYTF). The primary parent year for coho salmon this year is from the escapements of 2017. This year's coho run size is anticipated to be below average to average (average is 240,000 fish).

Fall Assessment Projects

All projects that handle fish (fall season LYTF; Mt. Village Drift Test Fishery; Pilot Station and Eagle sonars) are making efforts to reduce salmon mortality and distribute test fish catches to community members. Any salmon healthy enough will be released alive from the test nets. Injured salmon and mortalities will be distributed to community members by Tribal councils or on a first come first-served basis from a public dock.

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

Fall season operations began on July 16 using 6-inch mesh gear to target fall chum and coho salmon. As of July 25, the fall chum salmon cumulative CPUE was 22.42 which is below the average of 224.95 for this date.

Mountain Village Drift Test Fishing / Asacarsarmiut Tribal Council

Fall season operations began on July 18 and as of July 25, the fall chum salmon cumulative CPUE was 98.75 which is below the average of 322.28 for that date.

Sonar Project near Pilot Station / ADF&G

The sonar project operated near Pilot Station transitioned to fall season counts on July 19. As of July 25, the cumulative passage is 26,000 fall chum salmon. This compares to a median cumulative passage of 111,000 fall chum salmon for this date.

Fall Season Management Strategy:

The 2021 fall chum salmon projection is critically low, and below the 300,000 threshold in the Fall Chum Salmon Management Plan to allow any subsistence fishing at this time. Subsistence fishermen should plan for continued fishing closures to conserve fall chum salmon. The Lower Yukon Area districts and Subdistrict 4-A Lower have transitioned to fall season management. Subsistence salmon fishing is closed, except for the use of selective gear to target salmon other than Chinook and chum through Subdistrict 4-A Lower. Pink salmon are present in the Lower Yukon Area and Subdistrict 4-A Lower, which supports subsistence salmon fishing in these reaches while conserving Chinook and chum salmon. The remainder of District 4 will be transitioning to fall management this week. The remaining upriver districts and subdistricts will transition to fall season management as the fall chum salmon migration reaches those areas. Similar to last year, the department will assess the coho salmon run and consider fishing opportunities.

Summer Season Assessment

The Chinook and summer chum salmon runs are complete in the lower river and management has transitioned to fall season in the lower river districts. Assuming late run timing, the midpoint of the Chinook salmon run will reach Eagle sonar on July 28. The cumulative passage of Chinook salmon at Eagle sonar is below average and the third smallest since 2005. Current projections indicate we may not meet the lower end of the Canadian IMEG of 42,500. Additionally, the stock composition of samples from Pilot Station sonar indicate U.S. stocks may be lower in abundance drainage-wide. Passage of Chinook salmon at all U.S. assessment projects are below average and escapement goals are unlikely to be met.

The 2021 summer chum salmon run was the weakest and latest on record and failed to meet the drainage-wide escapement goal of 500,000 to 1.2 million summer chum salmon. The summer chum salmon escapements past the Anvik and Andreafsky assessment projects are very low and will not meet escapement goals. To protect the spawning escapements of Chinook and summer chum salmon, fishing will remain closed.

Summer Assessment Projects

All information is current through July 25.

East Fork Andreafsky River Weir / USFWS

Cumulative passage is 1,368 Chinook salmon, which is well below the average of 3,854 fish for this date; and 2,103 summer chum salmon, which is well below the median of 54,333 fish for this date.

Anvik River Sonar Project / ADF&G

Cumulative passage is 18,200 summer chum salmon, which is well below the median cumulative passage of 452,327 fish for this date.

Henshaw Creek Weir / TCC

Cumulative passage is 111 Chinook salmon, which is below the average of 990 fish for this date; and 2,451 summer chum salmon, which is well below the median cumulative passage of 123,012 fish for this date.

Chena River Tower/Sonar (ADF&G)

Cumulative passage is 1,227 Chinook salmon, which is below the average of 5,351 fish for this date; and 312 summer chum salmon, which is below the median cumulative passage of 2,577 fish for this date. Water conditions are low with good visibility.

Salcha Tower/Sonar (ADF&G)

Cumulative passage is 1,791 Chinook salmon, which is below the average of 6,837 fish for this date; and 693 summer chum salmon, which is below the median cumulative passage of 2,586 fish for this date. Water conditions are low with good visibility.

Eagle Sonar (ADF&G)

Cumulative passage is 12,810 Chinook salmon, which is below the average of 32,380 fish for this date. The Interim Management Escapement Goal for Canadian-origin Chinook salmon is 42,500-55,000 fish. The goal is assessed post-season using the Eagle sonar count minus the estimated U.S. and Canadian harvest of Chinook salmon above the sonar.

Stock Identification

Genetic mixed stock analysis (MSA) on the early group and first pulse of Chinook salmon (Stratum 1, sampled from the Pilot Station sonar test fishery May 31–June 22) indicated that $60\% \pm 7\%$ (90% Confidence Interval) of this group of fish were of Canadian-origin. The second pulse (Stratum 2, June 23–July 6) had $56\% \pm 6\%$ (90% Confidence Interval) Canadian-origin fish. These results indicate a weaker drainage-wide stock component, which coupled with a low total run, increases our conservation concern for Alaskan Chinook salmon stocks. All remaining samples will be analyzed postseason.

The summer chum salmon run was so small this year two full samples were not obtained for genetic mixed stock analysis from the Pilot Station sonar test fishery. The first stratum of chum salmon samples was 86% lower river stocks and 13% middle Yukon River stocks. The second stratum of chum salmon samples (from July 3 through July 18) consisted of nearly 100% summer chum salmon, of which, 75% were lower river stocks, 20% were bound for the middle Yukon River and 4% were bound for the Tanana River. The proportions of lower and middle stocks are slightly above average whereas the Tanana stocks were below average in the second stratum.

Age, Sex, and Length Composition

The age composition of 550 Chinook salmon sampled from the drift gillnets in the Pilot Station test fishery through July 6 was 2% age-4, 47% age-5, 46% age-6 and 4% age-7 fish. The percentage of age-6 and age-7 fish and the percentage of females (50%) were above average. Chinook salmon within each age class were smaller than average, with the exception of age-4 fish and the average length of 741 mm across all age classes is similar to the recent 10-year average length of 737 mm.

The age composition of 158 summer chum salmon sampled from the drift gillnets in the LYTF project through July 15 was 83% age-4 and 13% age-5 fish. This compares to an average of 47% age-4 and 50% age-5 summer chum salmon. The age-4 fish in the samples averaged 540 mm and age-5 are 566 mm which are both record small when compared to average (1981–2020). Female summer chum salmon component was also extremely low at 44% compared to a historical average (1983–2020) of 57%.

Current Subsistence Management Actions

Subsistence salmon fishing is closed to protect Chinook and chum salmon as they migrate to their spawning grounds. Districts and subdistricts that have selective gear opportunities for pink, sockeye and coho salmon are required to release Chinook and chum alive immediately. Gillnets of 4-inch or smaller mesh may be used during subsistence salmon fishing closures to target non-salmon. However, due to the conservation concern for Chinook and chum salmon, 4-inch or smaller mesh gillnets are restricted to a maximum length of 60-feet. Fishermen are reminded to use this gear in areas where non-salmon species are abundant to avoid incidentally harvesting Chinook and chum salmon.

Coastal District, Districts 1-3 and Subdistrict 4-A Lower:

Subsistence fishing is open with dip nets and hook and line gear to target salmon species other than Chinook and chum salmon (such as pink, sockeye and coho salmon). All Chinook and chum salmon caught using selective gear must be released alive immediately. Subsistence salmon fishing with other gear types remain closed.

Gillnets of 4-inch or smaller mesh may be used to target non-salmon but are restricted to 60 feet or shorter length. Additionally, other legal gear to take non-salmon species during subsistence salmon fishing closures in this area includes hand line, longline, fyke net, dip net, jigging gear, spear, and hook and line with a rod or pole.

Subdistrict 4-A Upper and the Koyukuk River (Kaltag, Nulato, Koyukuk, Huslia, Hughes, Alatna, Allakaket, and Bettles):

This area will transition to fall season management at 12:01 a.m. on Wednesday, July 28, and remain closed to subsistence salmon fishing.

Gillnets of 4-inch or smaller mesh may be used to target non-salmon but are restricted to 60 feet or shorter length. Additionally, other legal gear to take non-salmon species during subsistence salmon fishing closures in this area includes hand line, longline, fyke net, dip net, jigging gear, spear, and hook and line with a rod or pole. However, hook and line with a rod or pole may only be used for subsistence fishing for non-salmon in this subdistrict up to the Nulato River mouth and including the Nulato River drainage.

A subsistence fishing permit is required for all species in the Koyukuk River above Bettles.

Subdistrict 4-B and 4-C (Galena and Ruby):

Subsistence salmon fishing is currently closed. Gillnets of 4-inch or smaller mesh may be used to target non-salmon but are restricted to 60 feet or shorter length. Additionally, other legal gear to take non-salmon species during subsistence salmon fishing closures in these subdistricts includes hand line, longline, fyke net, dip net, jigging gear and spear.

District 5 (upstream to the U.S./Canada border including the Porcupine River and all other adjacent tributaries; including Tanana, Rampart, Stevens Village Beaver, Venetie, Chalkyitsik, Fort Yukon, Circle, and Eagle):

Subsistence salmon fishing is currently closed. Gillnets of 4-inch or smaller mesh may be used to target non-salmon but are restricted to 60 feet or shorter length. Additionally, other legal gear to take non-salmon species during subsistence salmon fishing closures in this district includes hand line, longline, fyke net, dip net, jigging gear and spear.

A subsistence permit is required to fish for all species in portions of Subdistrict 5-C from the western most tip of Garnet Island upstream to the mouth of Dall River (Dalton Highway bridge area), and in Subdistrict 5-D from the upstream mouth of 22 Mile Slough to the U.S./Canada border.

Subdistricts 6-A and 6-B, including the Kantishna River (Manley, Minto, Nenana and Lake Minchumina):

Subsistence salmon fishing is currently closed. Gillnets of 4-inch or smaller mesh may be used to target non-salmon but are restricted to 60 feet or shorter length. Additionally, other legal gear to take non-salmon species during subsistence salmon fishing closures in these subdistricts includes hand line, longline, fyke net, dip net, jigging gear and spear.

A subsistence salmon fishing permit is required for this area. A subsistence fishing permit for northern pike is required in the Tolovana River drainage, including Minto Flats.

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 salmon fishing is currently closed. Gillnets of 4-inch or smaller mesh may be used to target non-salmon but are restricted to 60 feet or shorter length. Additionally, other legal gear to take non-salmon species during subsistence salmon fishing closures in this area includes hand line, longline, fyke net, dip net, jigging gear and spear.

A subsistence fishing permit is required for all species in this area.

Subdistrict 6-C Salmon (Personal use fishery 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 closed.

A personal use salmon fishing permit is required for this area.

Subdistrict 6-C Whitefish and Sucker Personal Use Fishing

Fishing for whitefish and suckers in this area remains open 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, subject to permit stipulations.

A personal use permit is required to fish for other species from the mouth of the Wood River upstream to the mouth of the Salcha River (Subdistrict 6-C).

Subsistence harvest calendars and subsistence fishing permits are available from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game Fairbanks office (459-7274) or online at www.adfg.alaska.gov/store/.



This is an announcement by the ADF&G in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

To reach the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Yukon River Subsistence Fishery Manager, Holly Carroll, please call 351-3029.



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COVID-19

Under Alaska's Health Advisories 1, 2, 3, and 4, subsistence and commercial fishing is considered essential and is part of Alaska's Essential Services and Critical Infrastructure. Commercial fishermen should ensure that all travel and other activities in support of commercial fishing operations follow protocols in Alaska COVID-19 Health Advisories. COVID-19 Health Advisories may be found here: <https://covid19.alaska.gov/health-advisories/>.