



## **Advisory Announcement**

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### **2021 Yukon River Salmon Fall Fishery Announcement # 10**

#### **Fall Update # 3, 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 projection based on inseason assessment projects indicates a run size of less than 300,000 fish. According to the Fall Chum Salmon Management Plan, the 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. Lower Yukon River assessment projects are tracking well below average for fall chum salmon. The fall chum salmon run is at the historical midpoint at the sonar project near Pilot Station.

Fall chum salmon typically take 39 days to migrate from the mouth of the Yukon River to the U.S./Canada border, using an estimated travel rate of 35 miles per day. The first group of fall season chum salmon to enter the river entered on July 16 and is expected to be approaching Beaver August 11, Fort Yukon August 14 and the U.S./Canada border August 24. A second group of fish are expected to approach Galena August 9, Tanana August 14, Hughes August 20 and the U.S./Canada border September 3.

Coho salmon typically enter the Yukon River in mid-August with the bulk of the run occurring between August 13 and 25 in the Lower Yukon Test Fishery (LYTF). 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 (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 Test Fishery / ADF&G, YDFDA

Fall season operations began on July 16 using 6-inch mesh drift gillnets to target fall chum and coho salmon. As of August 8, the fall chum salmon cumulative CPUE was 51.21 which is below the average of 670.07 for this date.

#### Mountain Village Drift Test Fishery / Asacarsarmiut Tribal Council

Fall season operations began on July 18, and as of August 8, the fall chum salmon cumulative CPUE was 142.29 which is below the average of 826.54 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 August 8, the cumulative passage is 64,371 fall chum salmon. This is well below the median cumulative passage of 289,771 fall chum salmon for this date. The sonar test fish crew began catching a few coho salmon on August 2. The cumulative passage of coho salmon is 836 fish as of August 8, which compares to the median cumulative passage of 8,468 coho salmon for this date.

### **Age, Sex, and Length Composition**

From July 19 through August 7 a total of 50 chum salmon were sampled for age, sex and length from the drift gillnet in the LYTF project. The average length of chum salmon in the sample was 555 mm which is smaller than the historical average. Female chum salmon represented 48% of the samples compared to the historical average (1983–2020) of 55%. Ages from the first 24 samples taken since mid-July indicated the chum salmon were 96% age-4, which is well above the historical average (1983–2020) of 58%.

### **Stock Identification**

The first batch of the fall season chum salmon genetics has been sent to the lab and results should be available later this week. The results will be posted in next week's advisory announcement Fall Update # 4 and in the Yukon River daily update, to subscribe visit <http://list.state.ak.us/mailman/listinfo/yukonriverdailyupdate>.

### **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. Yukon River Districts 1-4 and Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B and 5-C 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 from the Lower Yukon Area through Subdistrict 4-A Lower. Pink salmon are present in the Lower Yukon Area and Subdistrict 4-A Lower, so the use of selective gear to target these salmon is warranted in these areas. Subdistricts 5-D and District 6 will be transitioning to fall management in the middle of August. Similar to last year, the department will assess the coho salmon run and consider fishing opportunities for that species.

### **Summer Season Assessment**

Subdistrict 5-D and District 6, on the Yukon and Tanana rivers continue to be managed for Chinook and summer chum salmon and is closed to salmon fishing. Assuming late run timing, the Chinook salmon run at Eagle is estimated to be 90% complete. The cumulative passage of Chinook salmon entering Canada is below average and the lowest since 2000. Current projections indicate that the lower end of the Canadian IMEG of 42,500 fish will not be met. Passage of Chinook salmon at all U.S. assessment projects are also below average and escapement goals are unlikely to be met. Unfortunately, poor weather prevented aerial surveys on tributaries with established escapement goals.

Low numbers of Chinook and summer chum salmon are continuing to pass the projects on the Chena and Salcha rivers, but counts are well below average. 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. To protect the spawning escapements of Chinook and summer chum salmon, fishing will be closed for the remainder of the summer season.

### **Summer Assessment Projects**

All information is current through August 8.

Chena River Tower/Sonar (ADF&G)

Cumulative passage is 1,421 Chinook salmon, which is below the average of 6,138 fish for this date; and 586 summer chum salmon, which is below the median cumulative passage of 8,462 fish for this date

Salcha Tower/Sonar (ADF&G)

Cumulative passage is 2,073 Chinook salmon, which is below the average of 8,391 fish for this date; and 2,052 summer chum salmon, which is below the median cumulative passage of 20,202 fish for this date.

Eagle Sonar (ADF&G)

Cumulative passage is 26,972 Chinook salmon, which is below the average of 52,901 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.

**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 salmon 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, 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, 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):

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, 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.

**Subdistricts 4-B and 4-C and District 5** (Galena to 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 these subdistricts includes hand line, longline, fyke net, dip net and spear.

Fishermen in Subdistrict 5-D will be transitioning to fall season management later this week. Standby for an announcement.

A subsistence fishing permit is required to fish for all species in the following locations: from the westernmost tip of Garnet Island upstream to the mouth of Dall River (includes Rampart and Dalton Highway Bridge Area; Subdistrict 5-C and a portion of Subdistrict 5-D) and the upstream mouth of 22 Mile Slough to the U.S./Canada border (includes Circle and Eagle; a portion of Subdistrict 5-D).

**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 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 and spear.

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

**Subdistrict 6-C Personal Use Salmon Fishing** (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.

**Personal Use Whitefish and Sucker Fishing**

**Fairbanks Nonsubsistence Area** (a portion of the Tanana River drainage from the Wood River upstream to the mouth of the Volkmar River on the north bank and the mouth of the Johnson River on the south bank, which includes Fairbanks, North Pole, Salcha and Delta Junction):

Personal Use whitefish and sucker fishing in Subdistrict 6-C with gillnets and fish wheels follows the Subdistrict 6-C salmon fishing schedule and is closed until further notice. Fishing with other gear for whitefish and suckers in the Fairbanks Nonsubsistence Area remains open 7 days per week, 24 hours per day, subject to permit stipulations.

A personal use whitefish and sucker permit is required for this area.

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/](http://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.



Announcements will be shared on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/YukonRiverFishingADFG](https://www.facebook.com/YukonRiverFishingADFG)

**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/>.