

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



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2016 Yukon River Summer Salmon Fishery News Release # 4

Summer Update # 1, Yukon Area Salmon Fishery

Districts Affected: Yukon Area

Assessment

The 2016 salmon season is underway on the Yukon River. Based on above average temperatures and an early ice out, the Chinook salmon run was predicted to be early this year. The first subsistence-caught summer chum salmon was reported on May 16. The first subsistence-caught Chinook salmon was reported on May 23, four days earlier than 2015. These reports indicate that the 2016 Chinook and chum salmon runs are just beginning to enter the Yukon River.

Weather in Emmonak has been very windy, and the river is experiencing high, murky water with some debris. Consequently, few subsistence fishermen are reporting fishing activity. The Lower Yukon cooperative 5.5-inch summer chum drift test fishery has been operational at the Big Eddy site since May 19. Catch rates have been very low for summer chum salmon. The 8.25-inch drift test fishery program has been in operation at the Big Eddy location since May 21. A single 8.5-inch set net has been fishing in South Mouth since May 23 and an additional set net site is likely to be in place in Middle Mouth on June 3. Four Chinook salmon were caught in the set net on May 23rd but none were caught in the drift nets. Any Chinook salmon healthy enough to be released from test nets will be counted and released alive immediately. Any Chinook salmon caught in the test nets that are unable to be released are being distributed to village elders by the Tribal Councils.

Department staff are currently setting up the sonar site near Pilot Station; the sonar and test fishery is anticipated to be fully operational by June 1.

The department would like to extend gratitude to the lower Yukon River subsistence fishermen who have shared harvest information. These reports are instrumental in directing management actions during the early part of the season. The department is reminding fishermen to track their harvest on

their subsistence calendars and encourages them to continue calling the ADF&G office to provide harvest reports.

Management Strategies

A precautionary management approach will be taken this season given the below average return of Chinook salmon expected in 2016.

Once subsistence reports and test fishery catches indicate that Chinook salmon are entering the river in substantial numbers, fishermen should expect management actions that will close the lower river to subsistence salmon fishing with gillnets. These closures will be similarly implemented in upriver fishing districts and subdistricts based on historical migratory timing.

Fortunately, the 2016 summer chum salmon run is expected to be average to above average. Fishing opportunities to harvest summer chum salmon with selective gear such as dip nets, beach seines, and live-release fish wheels will be provided. Lower Yukon Area fishermen should be prepared for liberal subsistence and commercial opportunity using selective fishing gear to harvest summer chum salmon, however, these gear types may not be efficient until strong pulses of summer chum enter the river.

The 2016 season will undoubtedly be another challenging year for Yukon River fishermen. ADF&G and USFWS would like to extend thanks and appreciation to the fishermen of the Yukon River for their continuing efforts to conserve Chinook salmon.

Current Management

Coastal District: As in recent years, the Coastal District is being further subdivided into two management areas to allow for more management precision and flexibility. Fishermen are reminded that all marine waters between 1 and 3 miles offshore of District 1 are included in the Coastal District.

In the **Northern Portion of the Coastal District** (from 62 degrees North latitude to Point Romanof) and the **Southern Portion of the Coastal District** (from the Naskonat Peninsula north to 62 degrees North latitude): Subsistence salmon fishing is open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets.

District 1 (including the Black River) and District 2: Subsistence fishing is currently open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets.

District 3 and the Innoko River: Subsistence fishing is currently open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets.

District 4 (from $\frac{3}{4}$ mile downstream of Old Paradise Village upstream to Illinois Creek): Subsistence fishing is currently open 24 hours a day, seven days per week and fishermen may use fish wheels or gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or less.

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

District 5: Subsistence fishing is currently open 24 hours a day, seven days per week and fishermen may use fish wheels or gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or less.

District 6: By regulation, the subsistence salmon fishing schedule consists of two 42-hour fishing periods per week from 6:00 p.m. Mondays until 12:00 noon Wednesdays and from 6:00 p.m. Fridays until 12:00 noon Sundays and fishermen may use fish wheels or gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or less. Fishermen should anticipate fishing restrictions when Chinook salmon start moving into the Tanana River.

Old Minto Area: Subsistence salmon fishing is open five days per week from 6:00 p.m. Fridays until 6:00 p.m. Wednesdays and fishermen may use fish wheels or gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or less. Fishermen should anticipate fishing restrictions when Chinook salmon start moving into the Old Minto area.

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

The subsistence fishing schedule and recorded fishery announcements will be available 24 hours a day at **1-866-479-7387** (toll free outside of Fairbanks); in Fairbanks, call **(907) 459-7387**. The Emmonak ADF&G office will open June 1. If you have any questions regarding this report, please call the ADF&G office in Anchorage at 267-2324.

Fishermen are also reminded that Yukon River Inseason Salmon Management Teleconferences hosted by YRDLFA will be held every Tuesday, starting June 7 through August 30, 2016 at 1:00 p.m. Dial 1(800) 315-6338, participant code: YUKON #.

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