

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



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2016 Yukon River Fall Salmon Fishery News Release # 9

Fall Update # 1, Yukon Area Salmon Fishery

Districts Affected: Yukon Area

Fall Season Assessment

The 2016 fall chum salmon preseason run projection, based on the summer chum to fall chum salmon run size relationship, is for a run size between 800,000 and 900,000 fish. This level of abundance should be sufficient to provide for escapement, an above average subsistence harvest, and a surplus available for commercial and personal use purposes. The estimated fall chum salmon reconstructed run (based on the mainstem sonar near Pilot Station and the downstream harvest) through July 24 is estimated to be 350,000 fish, which is above the historical median of 96,000 fish for that date. The first pulse of fall chum salmon entered the Yukon River on July 18 and is expected to be near Kaltag on July 30, Galena around August 1, and Tanana/Huslia around August 6, Rampart around August 8 and the Canadian border around August 21. If the run is early, this large first pulse of fish could possibly represent the first quarter point.

The coho salmon outlook is for an average to above average return. The primary parent year for coho salmon this year is from the escapements of 2012. A few coho salmon have been entering the Yukon River based on the commercial fishery but the majority of the run begins building in early August.

Fall Assessment Projects

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

The cumulative CPUE for the project through July 25 was 308.78 fall chum salmon, which is above the historical median of 144.23 for this date.

Mountain Village Drift Test Fishing/Asacarsarmiut Traditional Council

The fall season project began July 18 at Mountain Village. The cumulative CPUE for the project through July 25 was 980.39 fall chum salmon, which is above the historical median of 304.13 for this date.

Sonar Project near Pilot Station/ADF&G

The sonar project near Pilot Station transitioned to fall season counts on July 19. The cumulative fall chum salmon passage estimate through July 24 was 294,000, which is above the median passage of approximately 78,000 fish for this date.

Age Composition Fall Season/ADF&G

The preliminary fall chum salmon age composition from the LYTF 6-inch drift gillnets indicates the fish are dominated by age-4 fish, which is typical. As expected based on last year's run composition, this year's age-4 component is above average. The 2016 preliminary proportion of age-4 and age-5 fish is 71% and 27% respectively compared to the average of 56% age-4 and 42% age-5 fish based on a samples size of 213. Females represent 49% of the fish sampled, which is near the average of 51% for this date.

Fall Season Management Strategies

The Coastal District, Districts 1, 2, and 3, and the Innoko River full regulatory schedules have been announced for the fall season. Subsistence fishermen may use gillnets with 7.5 inch mesh or smaller in these areas. In District 4, subsistence salmon fishing has been announced to go seven days a week in light of the preceding conservation efforts for Chinook salmon this season. The remaining upriver districts and subdistricts will transition to fall season management as the fall chum salmon migration enters those areas.

Summer Assessment

As of July 24, the cumulative Chinook salmon passage at the sonar project near Pilot Station is approximately 176,000 fish, which is near the upper end of the preseason outlook but below the historical early year average of about 217,000 fish for this date. Preliminary run timing dates suggest the 2016 Chinook salmon run was up to four days earlier than the historical average run timing.

As of July 24, approximately 54,000 Chinook salmon have been counted at the sonar project near Eagle, which is above the historical average of approximately 32,000 fish. The first three pulses of Chinook salmon have been counted at the sonar and the fourth pulse of Chinook salmon should reach the sonar by July 26. As a result of considerable conservation efforts, the 2016 Chinook salmon run is expected to surpass the upper end of the escapement goal into Canada with sufficient surplus for the Canadian TAC harvest share.

The Chinook salmon escapement goal at the East Fork Andreafsky River has been met and the cumulative Chinook salmon passage estimate at the Henshaw Creek weir is above average. The cumulative Chinook salmon passage estimate at the Gisasa River weir is slightly below average. Unfortunately, high water conditions have hindered operations at the escapement monitoring projects on the Salcha and Chena rivers. Sonar counts have continued on the Chena and Salcha

rivers during high water conditions but apportioned counts of Chinook and summer chum salmon will not be available until post-season data analysis is concluded.

The summer chum salmon run was considered complete at the sonar project near Pilot Station on July 18 and chum estimates after this date are assumed to be predominantly fall chum salmon. The cumulative summer chum salmon passage at the sonar was approximately 1.9 million fish, which is above the historical cumulative median of approximately 1.7 million fish. The escapement goal of at least 40,000 summer chum salmon at the East Fork Andreafsky River weir was achieved on July 10. Summer chum salmon passage estimates at the Gisasa River and Henshaw Creek weirs are well above average for this date; however, the cumulative summer chum passage at the Anvik River sonar project is below average for this date and may end just short of the escapement goal.

Summer Assessment Projects

Sonar Project near Pilot Station / ADF&G

The sonar project near Pilot Station has been fully operational since June 1, which is one of the earliest start dates since 1995. Chinook salmon passage as of July 24 is estimated to be 175,717 fish which is below the historical cumulative early year average of 216,957 fish. Summer chum salmon passage as of July 18 is estimated to be 1,919,507 fish which is well above the historical cumulative median of 1,667,013 summer chum salmon for this date.

East Fork Andreafsky River Weir / USFWS

The East Fork Andreafsky River weir began operations on June 20. Chinook salmon passage as of July 24 is estimated to be 2,676 fish, which is below the historical cumulative average of 3,969 Chinook salmon for this date. Summer chum salmon passage as of July 24 is estimated to be 50,362, which is above the historical cumulative median of 47,183 for this date. The Sustainable Escapement Goal (SEG) for the Andreafsky River is 2,100–4,900 for Chinook salmon and greater than 40,000 for summer chum salmon; both of these escapement goals have been met.

Anvik River Sonar / ADF&G

The Anvik River sonar began operations on June 16. Summer chum salmon passage as of July 24 is estimated to be 325,065 fish, which is below the historical cumulative median of 455,194 fish for this date. The Biological Escapement Goal (BEG) for summer chum salmon is 350,000–700,000 fish past the sonar project.

Gisasa River Weir / USFWS

The Gisasa River weir began operations on June 17, which is one of the earliest start dates since 1995. Chinook salmon passage as of July 24 is estimated to be 1,331 fish, which is below the historical cumulative average of 1,974 Chinook salmon for this date. Summer chum salmon passage as of July 24 is estimated to be 60,920 fish, which is well above the historical cumulative median of 35,311 summer chum salmon for this date.

Henshaw Creek Weir / TCC

The Henshaw Creek weir began operations on June 26. Chinook salmon passage as of July 24 is estimated to be 1,259 fish, which is above the historical cumulative average of 1,132 Chinook salmon

for this date. Summer chum salmon passage as of July 24 is estimated to be 252,008 fish, which is well above the historical median of 86,849 summer chum salmon for this date.

Chena River Tower / ADF&G

The Chena River tower began operations on June 26. Poor water conditions have been obscuring visibility at the tower since June 28; however, sonar is also in operation and will be used post-season to assess passage during days when visibility prohibited counts from the tower. Prior to June 28, three Chinook and zero summer chum salmon were counted at the tower. The BEG for Chinook salmon is 2,800–5,700 fish past the tower.

Salcha River Tower / ADF&G

The Salcha River tower began operations on June 26. Poor water conditions obscured visibility at the tower between July 4 and July 10 and have also been obscuring visibility since June 18. A cumulative of 1,534 Chinook and 621 summer chum salmon were counted at the tower during the dates it was operational. Sonar is also in operation and will be used post-season to assess passage during days when visibility prohibited counts from the tower. The BEG for Chinook salmon is 3,300–6,500 fish past the tower.

Eagle Sonar / ADF&G

The Eagle sonar project began operations on July 1, which is one of the earliest start dates since the project began in 2005 and the run timing appears to be early; similar to passage in the lower river. Approximately 54,034 Chinook salmon have been counted at the sonar project as of July 24, which is above the historical cumulative average of 31,610 for this date. The Interim Management Escapement Goal for Chinook salmon of 42,500–55,000 is anticipated to be met based on sonar passage.

Age Composition

The Chinook salmon age composition from drift gillnets in the Pilot Station test fishery from May 30 through July 6 was 14% age-4, 68% age-5, 16% age-6, and 1% age-7 fish. The sample size was 650 fish, of which 44% were female. As expected from the preseason forecast based on brood returns, the proportion of age-4 and age-5 fish was above average, while the proportion of age-6 fish was below average.

The Chinook salmon age composition from the 8.5-inch LYTF set nets from through June 30 was less than 1% age-3, 8% age-4, 55% age-5, 35% age-6, and 2% age-7 fish. The sample size was 902 fish, of which 47% were female. Similar to the Pilot Station test fishery, the proportion of age-4 and age-5 fish was above average, while the proportion of age-6 fish was below average.

The chum salmon age composition from the 5.5-inch LYTF drift nets through June 29 was less than 1% age-3, 58% age-4, 38% age-5, and 3% age-6 fish. The sample size was 647 fish, of which 59% were female.

The chum salmon age composition from the beach seine and dip net commercial fishery in District 1 (June 14–June 25) was 59% age-4, 38% age-5, and 4% age-6 fish. The sample size was 718 fish, of which 37% were female.

The chum salmon age composition from the restricted gillnet commercial period on June 28 in District 1 was 1% age-3, 53% age-4, 42% age-5, and 4% age-6 fish. The sample size was 80 fish, of which 47% were female.

Stock Identification

Genetic mixed stock analysis (MSA) on the early group and first pulse of Chinook salmon past the sonar project near Pilot Station (May 30 to June 14) estimated 52% of the fish were of Canadian-origin, which is slightly above expectations for even-year Chinook salmon runs. Genetic MSA indicated that roughly 34% of the second and third pulses of Chinook salmon past the sonar project (June 15 to June 25) were of Canadian-origin, which was slightly below expectations for even-year Chinook salmon runs. Finally, Genetic MSA indicated that about 54% of the Chinook salmon that were sampled at the sonar project between June 26 and July 6 were of Canadian-origin, which is above average for this component of the Chinook salmon run.

Four strata of chum salmon genetic samples have been processed in 2016. The strata from May 30–June 21 consisted of 99% summer chum salmon, of which about 9% were bound for the middle Yukon River and about 1% were bound for the Tanana River. The strata from June 22–June 28 also indicated that summer chum salmon made up approximately 99% of the sample but consisted of about 23% middle Yukon River stocks and about 2% Tanana River stocks. The strata from June 29–July 9 indicated that summer chum salmon made up approximately 97% of the sample and consisted of about 32% middle Yukon River stocks and about 9% Tanana River stocks. The strata from July 10–July 18 indicated that the lower summer chum salmon component represented approximately 55%, middle Yukon River stocks represented 40% and the Tanana component increased to 13%.

Summer Season Management Strategy

Summer season management is now only occurring in Districts 5 and 6 as nearly three-quarters of the Chinook salmon run is past the sonar project near Eagle. While the 2016 Canadian-origin Chinook salmon run is below average in size, the run is now anticipated to exceed the upper end of the Interim Management Escapement Goal range of 42,500 to 55,000 fish and provide some harvestable surplus in both Canada and the U.S, thanks to the considerable conservation efforts of fishermen this summer.

Consistent with preseason management strategies for a below average run, the first and second Chinook salmon pulses were protected from harvest but liberal fishing with selective gear (dip nets, beach seines, and live-release fish wheels) for summer chum salmon was allowed. Once the run was projected to be near the middle to upper end of the preseason outlook range, subsistence fishing was allowed with 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets on reduced regulatory schedules in most districts. Management attempted to provide increased subsistence harvest opportunity (compared to 2015) by allowing fishing earlier in the run, on a more predictable schedule (reduced regulatory) with better notice to communities, and by providing a limited 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnet opportunity for the harvest of Chinook salmon. Though harvest estimates will not be available until after the post-season subsistence harvest surveys are conducted, many fishermen have reported better Chinook salmon harvests than 2015 with some fishermen

reporting they were not as successful as last year. Currently, the subsistence salmon fishing schedule has been relaxed up through District 5 and gillnet restrictions are being lifted.

Based on sonar passage estimates and commercial harvest, the 2016 summer chum salmon run exceeded two million fish; therefore, liberal summer chum salmon subsistence fishing with 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets was provided from the Coastal District up through District 4. Commercial fishing for summer chum has concluded in the lower river but continues in District 6.

General Management Reminders:

- Fishermen are asked to please record their subsistence harvests, including any salmon kept from commercial fishing, on their harvest calendars for all species of fish.
- During subsistence salmon fishing closures in the Yukon Area, gillnets 4-inch or smaller mesh of 60 feet or shorter length may be used for non-salmon species. All salmon caught in 4-inch gillnets may be kept but fishermen may not target salmon as this gear is intended for non-salmon species. Fish wheels may not be operated during subsistence salmon closures.

Current Management

Coastal District (from the Naskonat Peninsula north to Point Romanof and including all state marine waters):

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

District 1 (including the Black River):

Subsistence salmon fishing is currently open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets except for 12 hours before, during, and 12 hours after commercial fishing periods.

District 2:

Subsistence salmon fishing is currently open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets except for 12 hours before, during, and 12 hours after commercial fishing periods.

District 3:

Subsistence salmon fishing is open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets.

Innoko River:

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

Subdistrict 4-A (from $\frac{3}{4}$ mile downstream of Old Paradise Village upstream to Cone Point, which includes the mainstem Yukon River communities of Anvik, Grayling, Kaltag, Nulato, and Koyukuk):

Subsistence salmon fishing is currently on their 5-day per week schedule from 6:00 p.m. Tuesdays to 6:00 p.m. Sundays, with 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels.

Effective 6:00 p.m. Tuesday, July 26, subsistence salmon fishing will be open 24 hours per day, seven days per week, and fishermen may use fish wheels or gillnets with mesh size up to 7.5 inches. Drift gillnet fishing in the lower portion of Subdistrict 4-A downstream from the mouth of Stink Creek closes by regulation after August 2. Drift gillnet fishing will remain open, by regulation, **in the upper portion of Subdistrict 4-A upstream from the mouth of Stink Creek.**

Drift gillnets may not exceed 25 fathoms in length.

Subdistricts 4-B and 4-C (from Cone Point to Illinois Creek, which includes the mainstem Yukon River communities of Galena and Ruby):

Subsistence salmon fishing in Subdistricts 4-B and 4-C is currently on a 5-day per week fishing schedule, from 6:00 p.m. Sundays until 6:00 p.m. Fridays with 6-inch or smaller mesh size set gillnets and fish wheels.

Effective 6:00 p.m. Sunday, July 31, subsistence salmon fishing will be open 24 hours per day, seven days per week, and fishermen may use fish wheels or gillnets with a mesh size up to 7.5 inches.

Koyukuk River:

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

Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C (from the western edge of the mouth of Illinois Creek to the ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately two miles downstream of Waldron Creek, including the communities of Tanana and Rampart as well as the area near the Yukon River bridge):

Subsistence salmon fishing in Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C is currently open five days per week, from 6:00 p.m. Tuesdays to 6:00 p.m. Sundays, with 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels.

Effective 6:00 p.m. Tuesday, July 26, subsistence salmon fishermen in Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C may use 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels. Chinook salmon caught in gillnet gear and fish wheels may be retained for subsistence use. Subsistence salmon fishing remains open from 6:00 p.m. Tuesdays to 6:00 p.m. Sundays.

A subsistence fishing permit is required to fish for all species in the portion of Subdistrict 5-C from the western most tip of Garnet Island upstream to the mouth of Dall River.

Subdistrict 5-D (from the ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately two miles downstream of Waldron Creek upstream to the U.S./Canada border, including all adjacent tributaries and the communities of Stevens Village, Beaver, Venetie, Fort Yukon, Chalkyitsik, Circle, and Eagle):

Currently, subsistence salmon fishing in all of Subdistrict 5-D is open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with 6-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets and fish wheels.

Effective 6:00 p.m. Tuesday, July 26, subsistence salmon fishermen in Subdistrict 5-D may use 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels. Chinook salmon caught in gillnet gear and fish wheels may be retained for subsistence use. Subsistence salmon fishing remains open 24 hours a day, seven days per week.

A subsistence fishing permit is required to fish for all species in the following locations: between the western tip of Garnet Island and the Dall River (Dalton Highway bridge area) and from the upstream mouth of 22 Mile Slough to the U.S./Canada border.

Subdistricts 6-A and 6-B (from the mouth of the Tanana River upstream to the regulatory marker at the mouth of Wood River, which includes the communities of Manley, Minto, and Nenana):

Subsistence salmon fishing in Subdistricts 6-A and 6-B is open for two 42-hour periods each week, from 6:00 p.m. Mondays until 12:00 p.m. noon Wednesdays and from 6:00 p.m. Fridays until 12:00 noon Sundays, with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets and fish wheels.

The Kantishna River is open on its regulatory subsistence salmon fishing schedule of 24 hours a day, seven days per week with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets and fish wheels.

The Old Minto area is open on its regulatory schedule of five days per week from 6:00 p.m. Fridays until 6:00 p.m. Wednesdays with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets and fish wheels.

Subsistence fishermen are reminded that a subsistence fishing permit is required to fish for salmon in the Tanana River drainage. Permits are available from the ADF&G office in Fairbanks. Subsistence fishermen fishing in the upper portion of Subdistrict 6-B, from three miles upstream of the mouth of Totchaket Slough to Wood River, are required to report their harvest catches to the department by **4:30 PM Thursday** each week by contacting the department at **(907) 459-7388**. When you call, please provide your name, permit number, fishing location, and daily catch by species for that week.

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.

A subsistence fishing permit is required to fish in the Upper Tanana River Drainage.

Subdistricts 6-C (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 open for two 42-hour periods each week, from 6:00 p.m. Friday until 12:00 p.m. noon Sunday and from 6:00 p.m. Monday until 12:00 p.m. noon Wednesday. Fishermen may use 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels. Chinook salmon may be retained from gillnets and fish wheels.

A reminder to fishermen that a personal use salmon fishing permit and a sport fish license are required to fish in Subdistrict 6-C of the Tanana River. Fishermen are required to report their harvest catches to the department by **4:30 PM Thursday** each week by contacting the department at **(907) 459-7388**. When you call, please provide your name, permit number, fishing location, and daily catch by species for that week.

Commercial Fishing:

Fall Season Commercial Salmon Fishing

The fall chum salmon commercial fishing season is open in Districts 1 and 2. It is expected that both districts will continue on a fishing schedule of two periods per week with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh. The scheduling of periods in either district may be adjusted when pulses of fall chum salmon are moving through each district.

District 1, including the Set Net Only Area:

Period #3: **SET NET ONLY AREA:** 12-hour period from 12:00 noon until 12:00 midnight Monday, July 25. **Remainder of District 1:** 9-hour period from 3:00 p.m. until 12:00 midnight Monday, July 25.

The preliminary cumulative commercial harvest of fall chum harvest through July 21 in District 1 is 32,628 fish.

District 2:

The preliminary cumulative commercial harvest of fall chum harvest through July 24 in District 2 is 38,766 fish.

Summer Season Commercial Salmon Fishing

The Lower Yukon summer chum salmon directed commercial fishery began on June 7 in District 1 and June 14 in District 2 with beach seine and dip net gear only. From June 26 to July 5 fishermen in District 1 used 5.5-inch gillnets limited to 30 meshes deep to harvest summer chum salmon while minimizing the incidental harvest of Chinook salmon. Starting July 6 in District 1, and June 27 in District 2, fishermen have used 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets to target summer

chum salmon. The preliminary commercial harvest in District 1 through July 16 is approximately 293,576 summer chum salmon with a reported 4,169 Chinook salmon released alive from dip nets and beach seines and 2,780 Chinook salmon kept for subsistence use. The preliminary commercial harvest in District 2 through July 17 is approximately 228,267 summer chum salmon with a reported 4,086 Chinook salmon released alive from dip nets and beach seines and 2,570 Chinook salmon kept for subsistence use. The preliminary commercial harvest in District 6 through July 24 is approximately 1,910 summer chum salmon with a reported 137 Chinook salmon kept for subsistence use.

District 6 Commercial Schedule:

Commercial fishing in District 6 is open for two 42-hour fishing periods per week on the following schedule with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels:

- 6:00 p.m. Mondays, until 12:00 p.m. noon Wednesdays
- 6:00 p.m. Fridays, until 12:00 p.m. noon Sundays

Commercial fishermen should coordinate with the buyer on a daily basis regarding scheduling deliveries. All salmon harvested during commercial fishing operations must be recorded on a fish ticket at the time of sale. All Chinook salmon kept for personal use from gillnets and fish wheels must also be recorded on the fish ticket. Other fish species caught but not sold must also be recorded on the fish ticket. Processors, catcher-sellers, or direct marketers should notify the department of their intent to operate by contacting the Fairbanks office at 459-7274.

All Chinook salmon caught in gillnets may be kept for subsistence use and must be recorded on a fish ticket as “caught but not sold”.

The subsistence fishing schedule and recorded fishery announcements will be available 24 hours a day at **(866) 479-7387** (toll free outside of Fairbanks); in Fairbanks, call **459-7387**.

If you have any questions regarding this report, please call the ADF&G office in Emmonak at (907) 949-1320, the ADF&G office in Fairbanks at (907) 459-7274 or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Fairbanks at (907) 455-1849.

This is an announcement by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

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