

Yukon Fisheries News

Protecting and promoting all healthy wild fisheries and cultures along the Yukon River drainage

Fall 2026

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YRDFA Board Meeting

October 20, 2026

Virtual | Anchorage, AK

Alaska Federation of Natives Annual Convention

October 22-24, 2026

Dena'ina Convention Center | Anchorage, AK

Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (YKDRAC)

October 27-29, 2026

Bethel, AK

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News from the Executive Director, Serena Alstrom

The Yukon River salmon crisis is something that affects all of us. For those of us who grew up along the river, salmon are much more than a resource. They are part of who we are—our culture, our traditions, our families, and our way of life.

I grew up in St. Mary's and have subsistence-fished all my life. I have also had the privilege of working for my Tribe for more than 15 years, where I have heard firsthand the concerns and frustrations of our people regarding the Yukon River salmon. These conversations have reinforced for me how important it is that we continue to speak honestly about the challenges we are facing.

One issue I recently brought forward was **illegal fishing for salmon along the Yukon River**. This is a difficult subject to raise, and I knew it would generate strong reactions. It is not something I brought up to point fingers, accuse our communities, or place blame on one group of people. I raised it because I believe we cannot have meaningful conversations about salmon conservation if we are unwilling to talk about all of the factors that may be affecting our salmon.

There are multiple factors contributing to the decline of Yukon River salmon. Some are within our control, and some are not. We have to be willing to acknowledge both.

At the same time, we cannot overlook the tremendous amount of work being done by our community leaders, Tribes, organizations, fishermen, and advocates. Countless hours are spent attending meetings, reviewing information, communicating with agencies, and working to influence changes that are needed—not only to protect Yukon River salmon, but salmon throughout the state.

I understand the distrust that many people have toward management. That distrust comes from years of experiences, decisions, and policies that have affected our communities and our ability to provide for our families. Rebuilding trust will not happen overnight. It will require listening, transparency, respect, and a willingness from everyone involved to work together.

That means we need to be able to have **hard conversations**.

When I spoke about illegal fishing, I received a lot of feedback—not all of it positive. Some of the responses became personal. While that was difficult, it also reminded me why these conversations are necessary. If we only talk about the issues that are comfortable, we will never address the problems that are difficult.

We have to ask ourselves: **What can we control, and what can we change?**

We can advocate for better management. We can continue pushing for meaningful involvement of local communities and Tribal knowledge. We can hold agencies accountable. We can encourage responsible fishing practices. And we can talk honestly about activities that may be contributing to the problem, even when those conversations are uncomfortable.

We also need to recognize the sacrifices being made by people throughout the Yukon River who have chosen not to fish for salmon. An elder once reminded me that ***we need to keep thanking those who are making the sacrifice not to fish***. I believe that is something worth remembering.

Choosing not to fish when salmon are so deeply connected to our culture, our families, and our identity is not easy. Those sacrifices matter. Every person who makes that difficult decision is contributing to the effort to give our salmon a chance for future generations.

For me, conservation is not about blaming one person, one community, one agency, or one type of fishing. It is about recognizing that there are many pieces to this problem and asking what each of us can do.



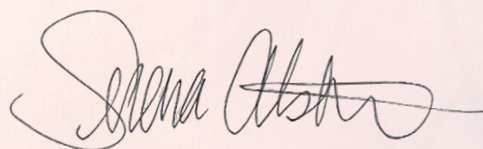
Our responsibility extends beyond ourselves. We have traditional knowledge to pass on to our children and, hopefully, our grandchildren. We want them to know what it means to prepare for fishing, harvest food, care for salmon, share with family, and provide for one another.

We cannot guarantee what the future holds for Yukon River salmon. But we can decide how we respond to the challenges in front of us.

That means continuing to listen to one another, respecting different perspectives, bringing traditional and local knowledge to the table, and being willing to address difficult issues rather than avoiding them.

Our salmon deserve our honesty, our respect, and our collective effort.

Quyana to everyone who continues to show up, speak up, sacrifice, listen, and work toward a future where our children and grandchildren can once again experience the salmon that have sustained our people for generations.



Serena Alstrom

YRDFA Executive Director





2026 Yukon River Season Summary

Authors: Deena Jallen, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) Summer Season Area Manager; Matt Olson, ADF&G Fisheries Biologist

The 2026 Yukon River salmon season was marked by improved abundance of both Chinook and chum salmon when compared to recent years. While still below average, the Chinook salmon run of around 100,000 fish was the largest since 2021. Summer chum salmon returned with more than 1 million fish, the largest run since 2019. The fall chum salmon run size is estimated to be over 900,000 fish drainagewide and the largest since 2018. The preliminary coho salmon run size estimated by Pilot Station sonar project was approximately 102,000 fish.

For more in-depth information, please keep an eye out for the 2026 season summaries which will be published soon.

Inseason management and assessment

Based on the low preseason forecast for both Chinook and summer chum salmon, subsistence fishing restrictions began in the lower river on June 1. Gillnets with a mesh size of 4-inches or less were initially allowed but were required to be used as set nets near shore. Starting on June 16 all gillnets had to be removed for two and half weeks to allow the bulk of the run to pass. These closures started in the lower river and moved upriver based on salmon travel time. Fishing for nonsalmon was still allowed with selective gear types, but all Chinook and chum salmon had to be released alive.

Subsistence salmon fishing remained closed throughout most of the summer season. Selective gear types were allowed after it was determined that the summer chum run was much better than expected. However, it was still required to release all Chinook salmon alive in order to protect the run to meet treaty obligations and escapement goals.

In 2026, both fall chum and coho salmon runs were also anticipated to be low, but the fall chum run came back much better than forecasted. Despite the strength of the overall fall chum salmon run, the Canada-bound portion of the run continued to be weak with uncertainty that the U.S./Canada Treaty objectives would be met. Subsistence fishing opportunities for salmon and nonsalmon were opened in almost all Alaskan tributaries but continued subsistence fishing closures were necessary in the mainstem of the Yukon River to protect those Canadian-origin fall chum salmon as they made their way upriver. Restrictions were able to be completely relaxed earlier than anticipated in every district, after the vast majority of Canada-bound fall chum had migrated through each area. Nonsalmon opportunity with selective gear types was open throughout the fall season, although the use of 4-inch or smaller mesh gillnets in the mainstem Yukon River was on a weekly schedule to protect migrating fall chum salmon.

Throughout the season, pink and sockeye salmon could be retained from selective gear (dip nets, beach seines, hook and line). Incidental salmon harvest was minimized through gear restrictions and times with full gillnet closures.

The Pilot Station Sonar project estimated approximately 104,000 Chinook salmon passing upriver, about 65% of the long-term average and the sixth lowest estimate on record. Summer chum salmon passage was estimated to be 1 million fish as of July 19, which far exceeded the forecasted return and approached the upper end of the drainagewide

goal of 500,000 to 1,200,000 fish. The preliminary postseason fall chum salmon run size was estimated to be 919,000 fish, which is well above the drainagewide escapement goal of 300,000 to 600,000 fish. Each of the Alaska-based upper Yukon River escapement assessment projects reflect this overall increase in abundance. The coho salmon run size at the Pilot Station sonar project was estimated to be approximately 102,400 fish.

The Eagle Sonar project on the mainstem Yukon River near the Alaska–Canada border estimated 35,000 Chinook salmon, which was well below the border passage objective of 71,000 fish. Fall chum salmon passage is ongoing as of this writing and a final passage number will be available at a later date. No escapement goals for Chinook salmon were met in 2026. All Alaska-based fall chum salmon escapement goals are anticipated to be met in 2026, although it is still too early to know if the run will meet the two U.S./Canada Treaty objectives. Several escapement projects were affected by high water or funding limitations, but aerial surveys, carcass counts, and local observations consistently documented lower than average numbers of returning salmon. Chinook salmon observed throughout the drainage were smaller and younger than average, with notably low proportions of large, older fish. Summer chum, fall chum, and coho salmon were all shorter in length than average in 2026.

Fish health monitoring continued, including sampling for Ichthyophonus and other conditions in Chinook salmon. Results will support ongoing research into inriver mortality and migration challenges faced by Yukon River salmon.

Looking Ahead

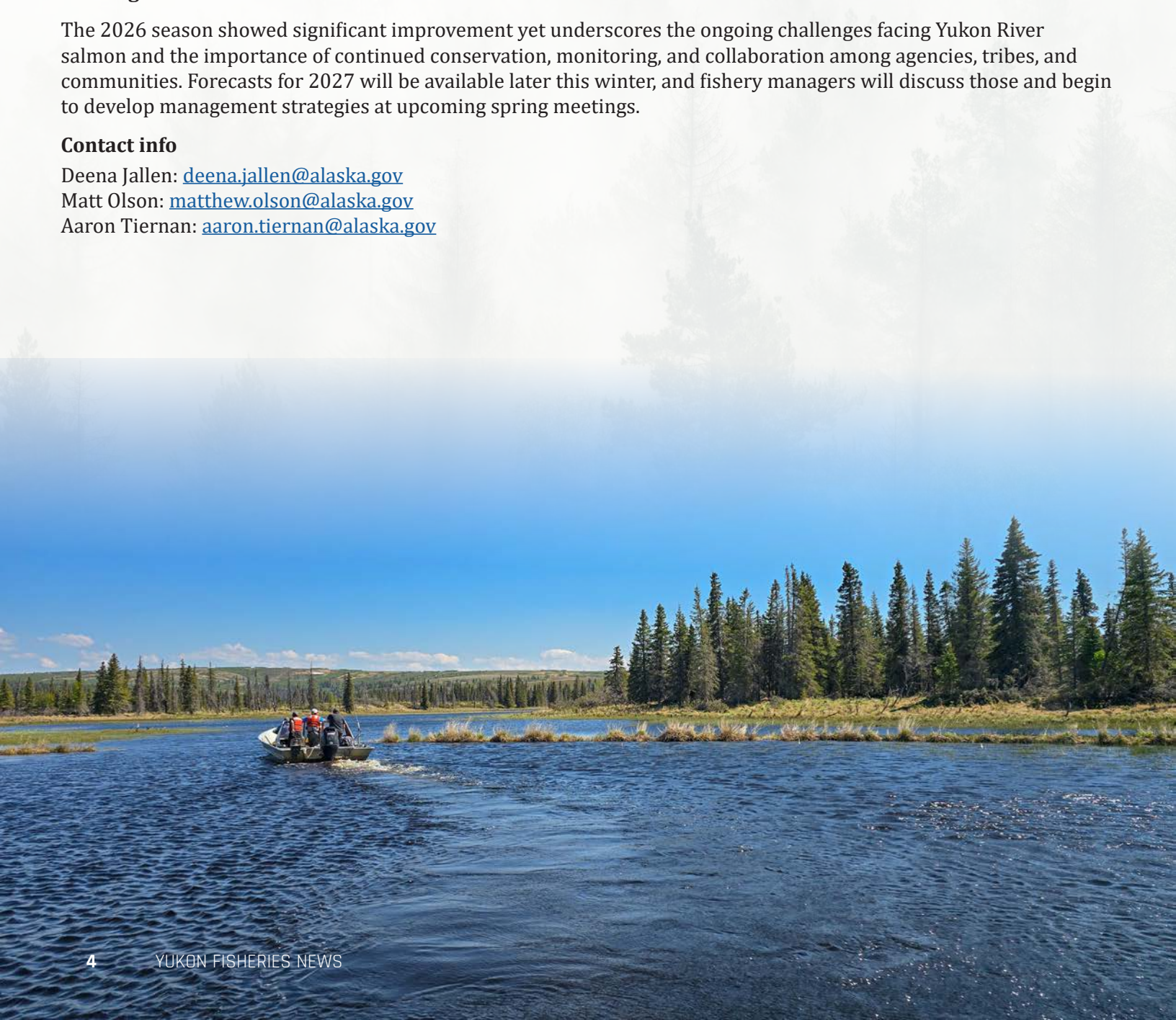
The 2026 season showed significant improvement yet underscores the ongoing challenges facing Yukon River salmon and the importance of continued conservation, monitoring, and collaboration among agencies, tribes, and communities. Forecasts for 2027 will be available later this winter, and fishery managers will discuss those and begin to develop management strategies at upcoming spring meetings.

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2026 Bio-Technician Training Recap

Author: Rachael Kangas, Training/Education Program Manager

The Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA) is proud to announce the successful completion of our 2026 Biological Technician Training program. Held between June 10-18, 2026, in the communities of St. Mary's and Emmonak, Alaska, this initiative served as a vital bridge between traditional knowledge and modern fisheries science. By recruiting local residents and providing hands-on vocational training, YRDFA continues its mission to empower Yukon River communities to lead in the research and management of their essential fishery resources.

This intensive training camp aimed to equip local participants with the technical skills and certifications needed for careers in fisheries. This year's cohort brought together representatives from Emmonak, Ruby, Kotlik, and Anchorage. Through a collaborative effort involving tribal, state, and federal partners, participants received an in-depth look at current management practices, gear operations, and safety protocols, ensuring they are prepared to serve as stewards of the Yukon River drainage.





YRDFA developed the curriculum, and a multitude of partners came together to make this training educational and an opportunity to learn hands-on in the field.

Yukon River Fishery & Management Overview: Biological and ecological insights led by YRDFA and UAF biologists, with management perspectives from Holly Carroll (USFWS).

Technical Demonstrations: Hands-on training in electrofishing (Erik Shoen, UAF), sonar technology (USFWS), and eDNA sampling (Kristen Reece, UAF).



Agency Site Visits: Practical species identification and management training at the Emmonak Fish & Game office with Deena Jallen and Mike Parker (ADF&G).

Field Methods: Practical experience with beach seining, minnow traps, and fyke nets.

Professional Development: Boat Safety Training and Certification (Anne Grenier, DNR) and a comprehensive resume-building workshop.

Due to high water conditions at the Andreafsky River, fieldwork was successfully relocated to Alstrom Creek near St. Mary's. This change provided a safe and productive environment for participants to deploy various sampling tools. The team captured 44 fish, all of which were identified, measured, and released alive.



Sampling Highlights:

Minnow Traps: 28 juvenile coho salmon, 10 slimy sculpin, and 2 ninespine stickleback.

Electrofishing & Seining: Captured juvenile coho salmon and Arctic grayling.

Educational Samples: Successful collection of eDNA water samples and multiple beach seine sets for gear proficiency.

Celebrating Our Graduates

YRDFA is incredibly proud of the hard work and dedication shown by our four graduates. Please join us in congratulating:

Cody Smith • Emmersyn Wiehl • Adaline Pete • Reuben Redfox

These individuals are now better prepared to work in the fisheries field and serve as vital communicators within their communities. Their commitment ensures that local voices remain at the heart of Yukon River fisheries management.





Blending Tradition and Science: 2026 Ruby Culture Camp Empowers Yukon River Youth

Author: Rachael Kangas, Training/Education Program Manager

RUBY, ALASKA — From July 13 through July 18, 2026, the Native Village of Ruby, in partnership and coordination with the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA), hosted its annual Ruby Culture Camp. Designed as a "Blended Science and Culture Camp," the weeklong event brought together youth, elders, instructors, and community partners along the Yukon River and as far as Sitka, Alaska, to foster hands-on STEM learning, preserve Athabascan heritage, and support youth mental, physical, and social wellness.



Bridging Traditional Knowledge and Modern Science

At a time when standard subsistence opportunities remain limited, the 2026 Blended Science & Culture Camp provided a vital connection for youth to learn traditional harvesting and preservation methods. With a Cultural Education Permit from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, participants had ample opportunity to drift-net fish on the Yukon River near the camp. Instructors Ryan Madros and Rachael Kangas Madros led demonstrations on fishing techniques, and later in the day participants learned traditional fish-cutting techniques for smokehouse preservation; the youth also took an Indian Ice Cream class taught by Debbie Captain. Fish cutting took place in the Culture camp on Straight Island, 9 miles above the village of Ruby, Alaska. Fish cutting was a highlight of the camp, and afterward, Cody Smith with the ANSEP Program documented it alongside the youth. They recorded each fish's age, sex, and length. The youth participated in stomach dissections and fish anatomy lessons alongside their instructors, Cody Smith with ANSEP and Holly Carroll with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Holly Carroll with USFWS and Aaron Prussian with Trout Unlimited reviewed the salmon life cycle, current threats to survival, and interactive games on survival and spawning.



The teamwork during presentations and activities ensured education, culture, and camp wellness were completed daily. Evening activities and storytime around the campfire ran late, and the laughter and sharing were much needed, including the digital detox time.

Alongside traditional practices, youth explored hands-on STEM and fisheries science projects, while Cody Smith and Jake Colburg from the Alaska Native Science & Engineering Program (ANSEP) presented team projects and drone technology. One camp highlight the youth shared was the opportunity to fish for non-salmon species up the Melozitna River. Youth, alongside instructors Aaron Prussian, Cody Smith, Ryan Madros, and Jake Colburg, harvested Sheefish and provided the camp and community with a fish fry evening meal, and not a piece was left. Conservation was a topic around the campfires, including the importance of harvesting non-salmon species as we go through a period when we cannot harvest salmon from the Yukon River. Youth had many questions about why this is happening and what we can do for the future. We discussed education and Traditional Knowledge and how both are intertwined.

Holistic Wellness and Community Partnerships

Safety instruction was integrated throughout the schedule, featuring boating safety and life jacket fittings, as well as a “Kids Don’t Float” session presented by Kosette Seibert of the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

Cultural preservation remained a daily highlight. Youth participated in foraging for medicinal plants, salve making, and lip balm workshops led by Margaret David. Evenings were filled with Athabascan storytelling with one of our Elders, Ella Sam from Hughes; we appreciated all of her time and Traditional Knowledge she shared with our camp. Dancing and singing with Native language instructor Dewey Hoffman was a highlight, as were campfire reflection sessions and art activities such as driftwood fish mobile creation hosted by Allyson McCarty of Dineega Corporation.

While drift netting was a slow process, the camp also had Salmon from Sitka, Alaska, funded by donations. Working alongside Aaron Prussian of Trout Unlimited, we flew in fresh King Salmon from Sitka. This would not have been possible without the Seafood Producers Cooperative. The youth were amazed by the silvery giant kings and noted the difference in color and size, and one eager youth pointed out, “Hey, those fish have teeth.” This fish provided fresh salmon nightly and was



also turned into half-dry, and the community gathered nightly to enjoy meals which enriched their hearts and souls. Not one piece of fish went to waste; heads and eggs were delicacies amongst youth and elders. The youth seasoned and wrapped the bakebones in tinfoil. Making their own packets of greatness, they sat around the campfire, tended them, told stories, and laughed.

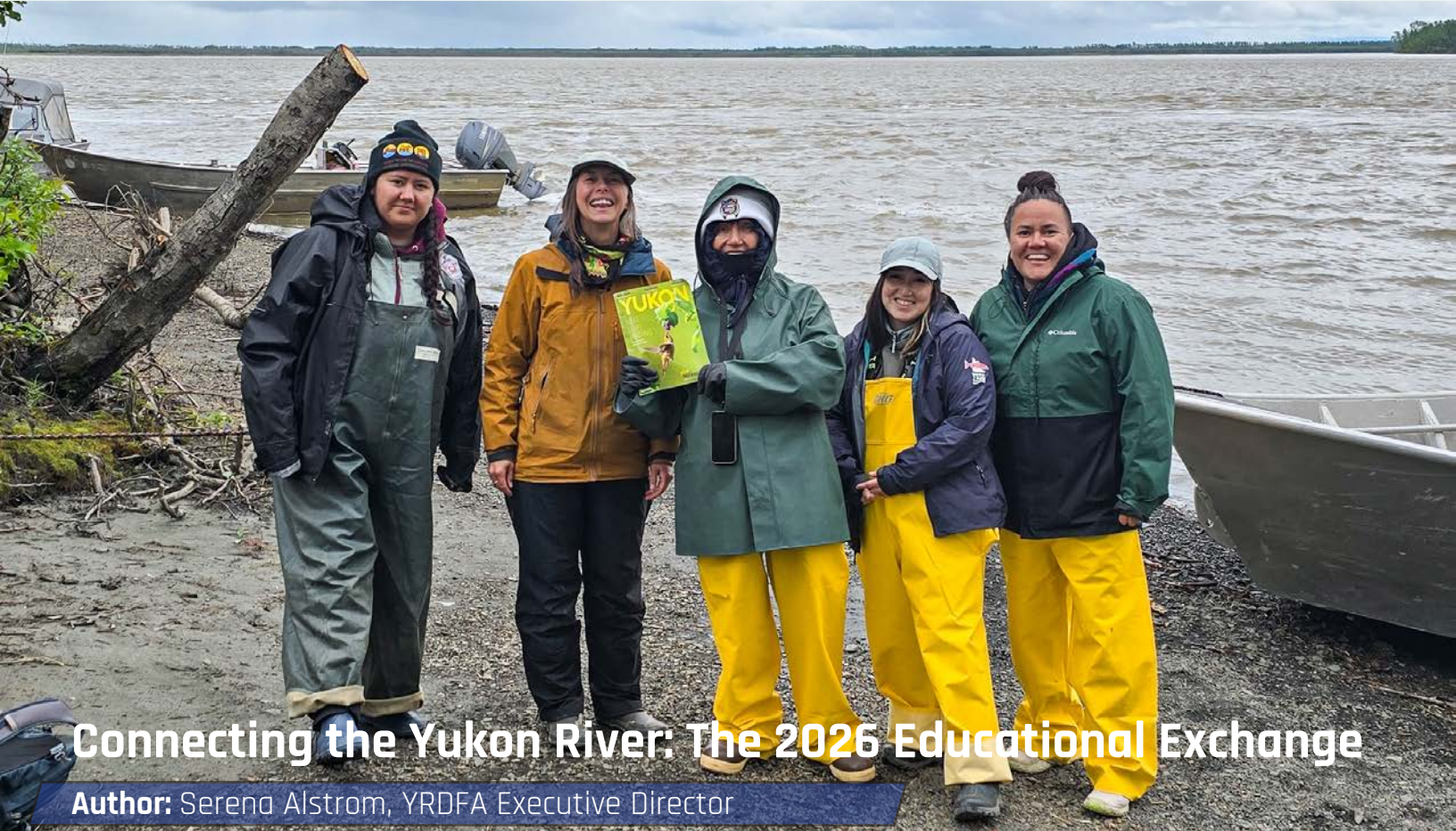


Inspiring Future Leaders

The week concluded with presentations from emerging youth leaders Christian Moses (Koyukuk) and Emmersyn Wiehl (Ruby). The emerging leaders were supportive, assisted with youth activities, and participated in Native singing and dancing. They spoke about their program, in which they currently hold roles, supported by the Tanana Chiefs Conference, followed by a final community dinner, native dancing, and recognition of camp participants and instructors. We recognize all of the volunteers who made this possible. We want to thank everyone who helped with activities, chaperoning in the evenings and food preparation, ensuring there was firewood, and setting up camp. Without teamwork and dedication, this would not have been possible. Lastly, I would like to recognize Ryan Madros's dedication to setting up camp each year and the endless hours spent providing transportation and serving as the drift netting instructor and boat captain.

This camp was successful and organized through partnerships and funders, which include the Native Village of Ruby, Rural Cap Foundation, Doyon Corporation, Tanana Chiefs Conference, the University of Alaska Fairbanks, Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Trout Unlimited, Wrights Air Service, Tanana Valley Watershed Association, Recover Alaska, and local donors including Dineega Corporation and Dineega Fuel Company. The 2026 Ruby Culture Camp demonstrated the resilience of Yukon River communities and the strength of passing traditional knowledge to the next generation.





Connecting the Yukon River: The 2026 Educational Exchange

Author: Serena Alstrom, YRDFA Executive Director

The Yukon River is more than a river—it is a connection between people, communities, cultures, and generations.

Flowing approximately 1,980 miles from its headwaters in Northern British Columbia, Canada, through Yukon and Alaska before reaching the Bering Sea, the Yukon River connects more than 50 communities that rely on salmon for food, culture, and economic stability. For thousands of years, people throughout the watershed have depended upon salmon, and they remain central to subsistence, Indigenous, and commercial fisheries today.

That connection was at the heart of the 2026 Yukon River Educational Exchange, held June 23–30. Over the course of the week, participants traveled from Anchorage to Emmonak, downriver to St. Mary's, and to the Pilot Station sonar site. Along the way, they learned about fisheries management, visited communities and Elders, experienced life along the Lower Yukon River, and shared their own knowledge and experiences with the people they met.

Building Connections Across the Watershed

The Educational Exchange has been bringing people together from different parts of the Yukon River since 2002. More than 100 people have participated over the years, spending time in communities outside their own, learning how salmon are managed, and listening to different perspectives from Elders, fishers, community members, and fisheries staff. The goal is to build trust, understanding, and respect while fostering hope for the future of Yukon River salmon.

The need for those relationships is particularly important because Yukon River salmon know no international boundary.

Salmon migrate thousands of miles through both Alaska and Canada. Their management therefore requires cooperation between the United States and Canada. Beginning in the mid-1980s, the two countries entered negotiations concerning the conservation and sharing of Canadian-origin Chinook and fall chum salmon. Those efforts eventually led to the Yukon River Salmon Agreement, finalized in 2001, which established shared conservation goals, harvest sharing, and escapement targets.

The Educational Exchange adds a human dimension to that international relationship. It creates opportunities for people connected to different portions of the river to meet face-to-face, experience one another's communities, and understand how decisions and changes in salmon abundance affect people throughout the watershed.



Beginning the Journey

The 2026 exchange began June 23 in Anchorage, where Canadian delegates arrived for introductions and an overview of the Educational Exchange. Participants were also introduced to the work of the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association and reviewed what they would experience during the coming week.

The following morning, participants began learning more about Alaska's fisheries management system. The agenda included an Alaska fisheries management overview, a visit with the Alaska Department of Fish &

Game, and discussion about the other management bodies that interact with the Yukon River.

That afternoon, the group left Anchorage and flew to Emmonak, beginning the community-based portion of the exchange. After visiting the ADF&G office in Emmonak, participants toured the community and joined residents for a community potluck.

Experiencing the Lower Yukon

In Emmonak, participants had an opportunity to move beyond meeting rooms and see fisheries work and community life firsthand.

The group visited a test fishery, spent time visiting with Elders, learned about a juvenile salmon project, and traveled by boat to Flat Island.

These types of experiences are an important part of the Educational Exchange. Participants do not simply hear presentations about the Yukon River—they spend time on the river and in the communities whose lives are directly affected by changing salmon runs.

That opportunity was particularly meaningful for participants such as Emma Hoogland, a member of the First Nation of Nacho Nyak Dun and the Southern Tutchone people of Yukon. Emma works as a Fish & Wildlife Coordinator with Kwanlin Dün First Nation on Indigenous-led fish and wildlife stewardship initiatives, including salmon monitoring, freshwater fish projects, and community-based environmental programs.

Emma joined the exchange wanting to build relationships with people throughout the Yukon River watershed and learn more about life on the Lower Yukon River. She recognized that salmon connect communities throughout the watershed and wanted to hear different perspectives, learn about local traditions and ways of life, and better understand the challenges and opportunities communities face.

Those connections became increasingly important as the group continued its journey

Traveling the River to St. Mary's

On June 26, participants continued from Emmonak toward St. Mary's. Rather than simply flying from one destination to another, the exchange included boat travel along the Yukon River and a stop at a local fish camp before the group settled into St. Mary's.

In St. Mary's, participants toured the community, visited with local families, took part in a Yukon River panel discussion, and gathered for another community potluck. The following day continued with community visits and cultural and fisheries discussions.



These community interactions help demonstrate why the Educational Exchange is about more than fisheries management. Salmon management may involve agreements, regulations, escapement goals, harvest levels, and scientific monitoring, but salmon are also inseparable from the people and cultures of the Yukon River.

Participant Patricia “Pat” Joe described that relationship through her own story. Born on a family trapline at the headwaters of the Yukon River, Pat identifies herself as Tagish Dene and a citizen of Kwanlin Dün First Nation. In describing her relationship with salmon and the river, she writes simply and powerfully: “We are Salmon People.”

Pat described a relationship between First Nations, salmon, and the Yukon River that reaches back thousands of years. She came to the exchange wanting to understand her relations downstream—to see, hear, and feel the connections that bring people together and to learn about the stories and experiences of communities closer to saltwater.

Salmon People Meeting Salmon People

That desire to connect with people elsewhere along the river was shared by other participants.

Lianne Charlie, Wolf Clan and Tagé Cho Hudän—Big River People—is Northern Tutchone and lives in Whitehorse. An artist and faculty member with Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning, she came to the exchange looking forward to meeting other salmon people along the Yukon River and learning more about salmon experiences in the ocean off Alaska’s coast.

Alexandra “Allie” Winton brought another perspective from Dawson City. Her formative years included time at a family cabin on Ch’edähdëk—the Fortymile River—and at fish camps, where she listened to fishing stories and ate fresh and smoked salmon. As Yukon salmon runs declined, she became involved with small test fisheries and witnessed friends and family become involved in efforts surrounding salmon.



Since 2006, Allie has worked within the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in Däno Nts’ä Tr’ädäl, or Heritage Department, primarily in oral history and stewardship of the Dënezhu knowledge collection. Through that work, she has learned stories about the sacred relationship between Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in and salmon. Her own family also spent time together at fish camp, bringing their children even when they were infants and toddlers because fishing was a way of life.

Although each participant came to the exchange with a different background,

their stories shared a common thread: salmon connect people.

Seeing Salmon Management in Action

On June 28, the exchange brought participants to another important part of Yukon River salmon management.

Traveling by boat from St. Mary’s, the group visited the Pilot Station sonar site. There, participants received a presentation on sonar technology and learned about sonar data collection and interpretation before returning by boat to St. Mary’s.



The visit provided an opportunity to see one of the ways salmon moving upriver are monitored and to connect the scientific and management discussions from earlier in the exchange with work occurring directly on the Yukon River.

Throughout the week, participants were exposed to multiple parts of the salmon story—from fisheries management agencies and monitoring projects to fish camps, Elders, local families, cultural discussions, and community gatherings.

Together, those experiences helped demonstrate that understanding Yukon River salmon requires listening to many voices.

Carrying the Exchange Home

The final day in St. Mary's focused on how

participants can become involved in Yukon River fisheries management. The group then came together for a closing circle and participant evaluations before departing St. Mary's for Anchorage, where they gathered once more for a debrief dinner. Canadian delegates returned home on June 30.

But the Educational Exchange does not truly end when participants return home.

One of the stated goals of the program is the importance of sharing beyond the exchange. Participants are encouraged to take what they have learned back to their families, communities, organizations, and governments.

The challenges facing Yukon River salmon are significant. Declining salmon populations affect communities differently, but the river ultimately connects everyone—from the headwaters in Canada to the mouth of the Yukon River and the Bering Sea.

The 2026 Educational Exchange provided an opportunity to strengthen those connections by bringing people together on the river itself.

Participants traveled through communities, sat with Elders and local families, visited fishery projects and monitoring sites, shared meals, discussed culture and management, and listened to the experiences of people living in different parts of the watershed.

Those conversations and relationships are important because protecting the future of Yukon River salmon will require more than one organization, community, government, or country. It will require people throughout the watershed continuing to listen to one another, share knowledge, and recognize their connection to the same river.

By learning directly from the river and from the people who call it home, participants return to their own communities better prepared to continue those conversations and work together for the future.

The Yukon River Educational Exchange continues to bridge voices and build stewards throughout the watershed—one relationship, one community, and one shared experience at a time.





YRDFA's Yukon Chinook Integrated Watershed Framework Project: Fall 2026 Update

Author: James Van Lanen, WEAP Project Manager

YCIWF is the acronym YRDFA uses for referring to its Yukon Chinook Integrated Watershed Framework project. The main objective of the YCIWF is to build a coordinated framework for Chinook salmon conservation and restoration in the Yukon River watershed. The YCIWF is funded by a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and includes partnership with Trout Unlimited, Tanana Valley Watershed Association, and Indigenous Sentinels Network (ISN). U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) staff provide additional advisory and technical support for our YCIWF work.

To accomplish YCIWF objectives, YRDFA is working with partners to continue its ongoing fish passage barrier assessment and water quality testing work, and to continue its support and training for local stream monitoring, Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) data collection, and integration of all data collected into YRDFA's GIS-based Watershed Ecosystem Action Plan (WEAP) decision making tool. The YCIWF intends to further develop the WEAP tool for use in streamlining identification of specific monitoring sites and future salmon habitat restoration projects in the Yukon River watershed.

YCIWF partners are aligning these efforts inter-organizationally to ensure that a diversity of data will contribute to directly informing habitat restoration planning. The information obtained from YRDFA's own field efforts, community monitoring, and citizen science applications, such as ISN, will be integrated into the WEAP GIS tool and into the USFWS Yukon River GIS database, with the intention of identifying priority Chinook habitats and possible future restoration sites. The intention is to significantly expand a shared organizational capacity for GIS-based Chinook habitat assessment and monitoring, and also to submit nominations to the Alaska Adronomous Waters Catalog (AWC) that guide strategic conservation.

Prior to the 2026 field season, YRDFA and ISN worked together to develop a customized fish passage barrier data collection app (modelled after the previously used Fish Barrier Hunter provided by USFWS). YRDFA and ISN also worked together to develop a water quality monitoring field app. With these collaboratively developed data collection tools in hand, during the 2026 field season YRDFA staff obtained 48 fish passage barrier surveys and 32 separate water quality samples from across select data collection sites in the middle Yukon River watershed. YRDFA also deployed three separate water temperature loggers in the study areas.



For the 2026 field season the priority communities and regions were

- Shageluk
- Anvik
- Grayling
- Tanana
- Dry Creek
- Delta
- Salcha
- North Pole

YRDFA and ISN will transfer the collected 2026 data into the WEAP interactive mapping tool and the USFWS GIS database. As the YCIWF project proceeds, TEK data, community-based monitoring data, and further fish passage barrier and water quality data will be transferred to these applications and also shared with the Alaska Freshwater Fish Inventory (AFFI) and the AWC.

These 2026 data collection activities served to expand YRDFA's 2024 and 2025 documentation of fish passage barrier and water quality concerns at

- St. Mary's
- Mountain Village
- Wiseman
- Coldfoot
- Fort Yukon
- Nulato
- Ruby
- Rampart
- Manely
- Minto

By extending collaboration between projects to fill data gaps, the YCIWF intends to provide an outstanding contribution towards protecting Yukon River Chinook salmon, informing habitat restoration activities, and developing future projects. Ultimately, the YCIWF intends to inform, and inspire among all stakeholders, the development of a collaborative regional habitat restoration decision-making tool which prioritizes actionable restoration projects that target the most critical habitat areas and which are centered on local knowledge. The eventual project outcome for the YCIWF will be to the development of a comprehensive watershed protection plan. Core to this protection plan will be positioning tribal stewardship as primary – prioritizing community-driven knowledge over externally imposed solutions.

YRDFA's efforts, and collaboration with our TVWA and ISN partners, on the YCIWF will continue during the 2026-2027 winter. Field data collection efforts will resume during Spring and Summer 2027.



Welcoming new YRDFA Employee



Adaline Pete

Traditional Ecological Knowledge Technician

Adaline Pete was an office assistant with experience in data entry and customer service. She's known for improving office efficiency and is passionate about community work.

Born into the rhythms of the Norton Sound, Adaline's life was woven with the Yukon's seasonal pulse. Subsistence fishing and traditional harvests shaped her family's traditions and sustenance. She now lives in Kotlik, the most northern village on the mouth of the Yukon with her husband and their blended family.



Farewell to Olivia Irwin & Grace Kirkey

As we say goodbye to two valued members of the YRDFA team, we want to take a moment to recognize **Olivia and Grace** and the tremendous contributions they have made to our organization.

During their time with YRDFA, Olivia and Grace became much more than staff members. They became an important part of the work we do and the relationships we have built throughout the Yukon River region. Their dedication, energy, and willingness to step into the many challenges that come with this work made a lasting difference.

Working in salmon conservation and with Yukon River communities requires patience, flexibility, commitment, and, most importantly, a willingness to listen. Olivia and Grace brought those qualities to their work every day. They understood that the work of YRDFA is about more than meetings, projects, and programs. It is about people, communities, culture, relationships, and the future of Yukon River salmon.

Both Olivia and Grace contributed their own unique strengths to YRDFA. They helped move projects forward, supported our partners and communities, and contributed countless hours behind the scenes to keep things running. Their work often involved challenges that were not always visible, but their efforts were an important part of YRDFA's continued work across the Yukon River.

What made Olivia and Grace such an asset to YRDFA was not only what they accomplished, but **how they approached the work**. They cared about the people we serve, they cared about the river, and they understood the importance of bringing people together—even when the conversations were difficult.

As they move on to their next chapters, we want them to know how much their work has been appreciated. The relationships they built, the knowledge they shared, and the contributions they made will continue to be part of YRDFA.

Thank you, Olivia and Grace, for your dedication, your hard work, and for being such an important part of the YRDFA family. We are grateful for the time you spent with us and for everything you brought to the organization.

While we are sad to see you leave, we are also excited to see where your paths take you next. We wish you both continued success and hope you know that you will always have friends and colleagues at YRDFA.

Quyana, Olivia and Grace!

TEAM DIRECTORY

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

District	Name	Community
Coastal, Seat 1	Clifford Kaganak Sr.	Scammon Bay
Y-1, Seat 1	Stanley Pete	Nunam Iqua
Y-1, Seat 2	John Strongheart	Alakanuk
Y-1, Seat 3	Paul Andrews	Emmonak
Y-2, Seat 1	Bill Alstrom	St. Mary's
Y-2, Seat 2	Mike Peters	Marshall
Y-2, Seat 3	Stanislaus Sheppard	Mountain Village
Y-3, Seat 1	Alfred Demientieff Jr.	Holy Cross
Y-4, Seat 1	Fred Huntington Sr.	Galena
Y-4, Seat 2	Robert Walker	Anvik
Y-5, Seat 1	Charlie Wright	Tanana
Y-5, Seat 2	Brooke Woods	Rampart
Y-6, Seat 1	Dorothy Shockley	Manley Hot Springs
Y-6, Seat 2	Victor Lord	Nenana
Koyukuk River	Darrell Vent	Huslia
Flats, Seat 1	Jan Woodruff	Eagle
Canadian, Seat 1	VACANT	-

ALTERNATES

District	Name	Community
Coastal, Alt. 1	Richard Tuluk	Chevak
Coastal, Alt. 2	VACANT	-
Y-1, Alt. 1	Marvin Okitkun	Kotlik
Y-1, Alt. 2	Brandon Kameroff	Emmonak
Y-2, Alt. 1	Rex Nick	Pilot Station
Y-2, Alt. 2	VACANT	-
Y-3, Alt. 1	Basil Larson	Russian Mission
Y-4, Alt. 1	Tommy Kriska	Nulato
Y-4, Alt. 2	VACANT	-
Y-5, Alt. 1	Janessa Newman	Rampart
Y-6, Alt. 1	Phillip Titus	Minto
Y-6, Alt. 2	Kathleen Demientieff	Nenana
Koyukuk River	VACANT	-
Flats, Alt. 1	Rochelle Adams	Fort Yukon/Beaver
Canadian, Alt. 1	VACANT	-

YOUNG FISHERS REPS

District	Name	Community
Lower River	Kerri Kelly	Pilot Station
Upper River	Katlyn Zuray	Fairbanks (Tanana)

Yes!

I want to be a part of the United Voice on the Yukon River and support YRDFA!

Individual Membership:

- ☐ \$50 Newsletter subscription
☐ \$75 Newsletter subscription with beanie
☐ \$100 Newsletter subscription with hoodie
☐ Other amount \$ _____

Agency/Business Donor:

- ☐ \$5000 Chinook ☐ \$1000 Chum ☐ \$500 Coho ☐ \$200 Pink

Includes advertising on website, Facebook, and during public gatherings.

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721 Depot Dr Suite 14
Anchorage, AK 99501

Phone:

**1-907-272-3141 or
1-877-999-8566**

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