



Advisory Announcement

CONTACT:

Jeff Estensen, Area Management Biologist
(907) 459-7274

Released: July 27, 2020

Toll free fishing schedule and counts: (866) 479-7387

In Fairbanks fishing schedule hotline: 459-7387

2020 Yukon River Salmon Fall Fishery Announcement #3

Fall Update # 2, Yukon Area Salmon Fishery

Districts Affected: Yukon Area

The 2020 fall chum salmon preseason projection, based on the relationship between summer chum and fall chum salmon runs, is for a run size of less than 450,000 fish. Adjustments to the projection may occur, particularly if the summer chum salmon run extends into the fall season as was observed in 2019. Additionally, the age composition from the Lower Yukon Test Fishery (LYTF) will be important to determine if the age proportions are different than expected given that the summer chum salmon return of age-4 fish was extremely weak.

Coho salmon typically enter the Yukon River in mid-August with the bulk of the run occurring between August 13 and 24 in the LYTF. The primary parent year for coho salmon this year is from the escapements of 2016. An average run size of coho salmon is approximately 243,000 fish.

Fall Assessment Projects

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

The cumulative CPUE through July 26 was 213.18 for fall chum salmon, which is below the historical average of 243.49 for this date. No coho salmon have been caught at these sites at is time.

Mountain Village Drift Test Fishing / Asacarsarmiut Traditional Council

The cumulative CPUE through July 26 was 115.01 for fall chum salmon, which is below the historical median of 402.11 for this date. No coho salmon have been caught at these sites at this time.

Sonar Project near Pilot Station / ADF&G

The cumulative fall chum salmon passage estimate through July 26 was 64,300 fish, which is below the median passage of approximately 121,000 fish for this date.

Teedriinjik (Chandalar) River sonar project operated by USFWS will not be operating this season.

Age Composition Fall Season/ADF&G

The preliminary chum salmon age composition from the LYTF 6-inch drift gillnets consists of 32% age-4 and 67% age-5 (n=97) this compares to the average of 57% age-4 and 42% age-5. Females currently represent 44% of the fish sampled (n=171), which is below the average of 52%, as of July 26. The increase of chum salmon length after July 15 in the samples indicates that age-5 fall chum salmon are present.

Fall Season Management Strategy:

Yukon River Districts 1-4 have transitioned to fall season management and are on their regulatory fishing schedules. The remaining upriver districts and subdistricts will transition to fall season management as the fall

chum salmon migration reaches those areas. The preseason fall chum salmon projection does not meet the threshold of 550,000 fish needed to allow commercial fishing and the department does not anticipate any commercial openings to begin the fall season. Also, the projected run size is not likely to meet escapement goals and treaty objectives. As a result, fishermen should expect subsistence fishing time to be reduced to allow more fall chum salmon to reach the spawning areas. Subsistence fishermen should stand by for announcements regarding changes to the subsistence salmon fishing schedule.

As a reminder to subsistence fishermen, dip nets are a legal gear type for subsistence salmon fishing. Subsistence salmon fishermen may continue using gillnets, dip nets, and fish wheels. Personal use fishing in Subdistrict 6-C of the Tanana River may only use set gillnets and fish wheels. During times of conservation, dip nets may be used in 6-C, however all Chinook salmon must be released alive.

Summer Season Management Overview

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. Despite restrictive actions taken throughout the Yukon River and reported low subsistence harvests of Chinook salmon, poorer than expected fish passage at the Eagle sonar warrants a closure for fishing in District 5. Typically, the midpoint of the run at the Eagle sonar for late runs is around July 28, and current cumulative counts are less than half the average seen for this time of year. Current projections indicate the lower end of the spawning escapement objective in Canada (42,500-55,000) may not be met. Therefore, it is imperative that all Chinook salmon moving through District 5 escape to the spawning grounds.

Summer Assessment Projects

Eagle Sonar / ADF&G

The Eagle sonar began operations on July 1. Chinook salmon passage, through July 26, is estimated to be 13,779 fish, which is below the historical cumulative average of 28,824 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.

Chena River Tower and Sonar / ADF&G

The Chena River project effectively began counting salmon on July 6. However, visual identification of salmon with the tower was not possible due to high water. As of Friday, July 24, the project has not been operational as the sonars had to be pulled out of the water due to high water conditions. Estimates of Chinook and summer chum passage will be provided post season.

ADF&G, USFWS, and TCC projects that did not operate in 2020

Due to COVID-19 travel restrictions or funding concerns, these projects did not operate: East Fork Andreafsky Weir, Anvik River Sonar, Gisasa River Weir, Henshaw Creek Weir, and Salcha River tower/sonar.

Stock Identification

Genetic mixed stock analysis (MSA) on the early group of Chinook salmon (stratum 1, sampled at the Pilot Station sonar project June 7 to June 22) indicated that 62% of this group of fish were of Canadian-origin. The first and second pulses (stratum 2, June 23–June 28) had 50% Canadian-origin fish. The third and a portion of the fourth pulse (stratum 3, June 29–July 5) had 43% Canadian-origin fish.

The third stratum of chum salmon genetic samples from the Pilot Station sonar test fishery (from July 10 through July 18) consisted of nearly 98% summer chum salmon, of which, 80% were lower river stocks, 14% were bound for the middle Yukon River and 4% were bound for the Tanana River. The lower than average proportions of Tanana River stocks and, to a lesser degree, middle river stocks resulted in above average proportions of the lower stock group for this time period.

Age, Sex, and Length Composition

The age composition of 497 Chinook salmon sampled from the drift gillnets in the Pilot Station test fishery through July 5 was <1% age-3, 10% age-4, 47% age-5, 39% age-6, and 3% age-7 fish. The percentage of age-6 fish and the percentage of females (52%) were above average. Chinook salmon within each age class were smaller than average, and the average length of 725 mm across all age classes is smaller than the recent 10-year average length of 740 mm, corroborating what fishermen have been observing.

The age composition of 483 summer chum salmon sampled from the LYTF project (June 2–July 15) indicates the run is composed of 80% age-5 fish, which is higher than the recent 10-year average of 45%. The average length is 570 mm from a sample of 493 summer chum salmon, which is above the 10-year average of 563 mm. The samples were 70% female, which is above the long-term average. These size and percent female trends are likely being driven by the smaller percentage of 4-year old fish in the samples.

Current Subsistence Management Actions

Coastal District (Naskonat Peninsula to 1 nautical mile south of the Black River, which includes Hooper Bay and Scammon Bay):

Fishing is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets.

District 1 (Black River, and communities of Emmonak, Nunam Iqua, Alakanuk, and Kotlik):

Fishing is open with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets on a schedule of two 36-hour periods per week from:

8 p.m. Mondays to 8 a.m. Wednesdays

8 p.m. Thursdays to 8 a.m. Saturdays

District 2 and 3 (Mountain Village, Pitkas Point, St. Mary's, Pilot Station, Marshall, Russian Mission and Holy Cross):

Fishing is open with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets on a schedule of two 36-hour periods per week from:

8 p.m. Sundays to 8 a.m. Tuesdays

8 p.m. Wednesdays to 8 a.m. Fridays

Innoko River:

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

District 4 (Grayling, Anvik, Kaltag, Nulato, Koyukuk, Galena, and Ruby):

District 4 transitioned to fall season management on Monday, July 27th. Fishing is open with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels on a schedule of two 48-hour periods per week from:

6 p.m. Sundays to 6 p.m. Tuesdays

6 p.m. Wednesdays to 6 p.m. Fridays

Koyukuk River (Huslia, Hughes, Alatna, Allakaket, and Bettles):

The Koyukuk River transitioned to fall season management on Monday, July 27th. Fishing is currently open 24-hours per day, 7 days per week with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels.

Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C (Tanana and Rampart):

Subsistence salmon fishing is currently closed and will remain closed until further notice. **Effective 6 p.m. Tuesday, July 28, all 4-inch or smaller mesh gillnets must be removed from the water.**

Subdistrict 5-D Lower and Middle (from an ADF&G regulatory marker two miles downstream of Waldron Creek upstream to 22 Mile Slough, including the Porcupine River and all other adjacent tributaries, and the communities of Stevens Village, Beaver, Venetie, Chalkyitsik, and Fort Yukon):

Fishing is open with fish wheels and gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh from: 10 a.m. Friday, July 24 until 10 p.m. Monday, July 27. **Effective 10 p.m. Monday, July 27 fishing is closed until further notice.**

Effective 6 p.m. Tuesday, July 28, all 4-inch or smaller mesh gillnets must be removed from the water.

Subdistrict 5-D Upper (from 22 Mile Slough to the U.S./Canada border and including all adjacent tributaries, which includes the communities of Circle and Eagle):

Fishing is currently closed and will remain closed until further notice.

Effective 6 p.m. Tuesday, July 28, all 4-inch or smaller mesh gillnets must be removed from the water.

A subsistence permit is required to fish for all species in portions of Subdistricts 5-C and 5-D from the western most tip of Garnet Island upstream to the mouth of 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 Wood River, including Manley, Minto, and Nenana):

Fishing is open with dip nets, beach seines, and live release fish wheels on the regulatory schedule of two 42-hour periods per week from:

6 p.m. Mondays to 12 p.m. noon Wednesdays

6 p.m. Fridays to 12 p.m. noon Sundays

All Chinook salmon must be released alive immediately.

Kantishna River:

Fishing is open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels.

Old Minto Area:

Fishing is open with dip nets, beach seines, and live release fish wheels on the regulatory schedule of one 5-day period per week from:

6 p.m. Fridays to 6 p.m. Wednesdays

All Chinook salmon must be released alive immediately.

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):

Fishing is open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels.

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 fishing is open with dip nets and live release fish wheels only on the regulatory schedule of two 42-hour periods per week from:

6 p.m. Mondays to 12 p.m. noon Wednesdays

6 p.m. Fridays to 12 p.m. noon Sundays

All Chinook salmon must be released alive immediately. Beach seines are not legal gear in the personal use fishery.

Subdistrict 6-C Whitefish and Sucker Personal Use Fishing

Personal use whitefish and sucker fishing with gillnets and fish wheels is closed until further notice in Subdistrict 6-C of the Tanana River. Fishing with other gear for whitefish and suckers in this area remains open 7 days per week, 24 hours per day.

In the Tanana River up to the Wood River (Kantishna River and Subdistricts 6-A and 6-B) a subsistence permit is required for salmon fishing. A personal use permit is required to fish for salmon from the mouth of the Wood River upstream to the mouth of the Salcha River (Subdistrict 6-C).

A subsistence permit is also required for all species in the “Upper Tanana River” area 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. A personal use permit is required to fish for whitefish and suckers in the Fairbanks Non-Subsistence area (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). A subsistence permit is required for northern pike in the Tolovana River drainage, including Minto Flats.

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 in Fairbanks call 456-0406.

Announcements will be shared on Facebook at www.facebook.com/YukonRiverFishingADFG



COVID-19

Under Alaska’s Health Mandates 10, 17, and 18, Subsistence fishing is Essential and is part of Alaska’s Essential Services and Critical Infrastructure. Subsistence fishermen should ensure that all travel and other activities follow protocols in Alaska COVID-19 Health Mandates. COVID-19 Health Mandates may be found here: <https://gov.alaska.gov/home/covid19-healthmandates/>.