



YUKON RIVER DRAINAGE FISHERIES ASSOCIATION

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Greetings from the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association!

Here is a summary of the #13 2024 Yukon River Salmon In-Season Management Teleconference held Tuesday, August 27, 2024. Call lasted 95 minutes. 58 callers participated.

Background: Yukon River salmon management teleconferences are held annually every Tuesday in June, July, and August for managers and fishers throughout the Yukon River drainage to discuss fishing conditions and management strategies in real time as the salmon run is occurring. Funded by a grant from the US Fish and Wildlife.

Communities participating: 18

Management Reports:

Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Bonnie Borba, Fall Season Research Biologist, Fairbanks, Alaska

I'm going to provide the Fall Season assessment up to date. Based on in-season assessment, the Fall Chum salmon run size is projected to be below the range wide escapement goal of 300 to 600,000 Fall Chum salmon. The average Fall Chum salmon run size is over 900,000 fish. As of August 26, the cumulative CPUE (catch per unit of effort) for both the Lower Yukon Test Fish and Mountain Village Test Fisheries are below the historical medians for Fall Chum salmon. Both projects are passed to three quarter points of Fall Chum salmon passage, which is typically around August 18th. Coho salmon are tracking late and weak at these projects, with the three quarter points occurring around August 27th and 29th. The Lower Yukon Test Fish is about to transition to YDFDA operations that will go through September 10th and the Mountain Village Test Fishery will operate until September 12th. The Mainstem Yukon River Sonar project near Pilot Station transitioned to Fall Season counts on July 19. As of August 26th, the cumulative passage is 217,000. This is for all Chum salmon. This is well below the median cumulative passage of 594,000 Chum salmon for this date. The three quarter point for Chum salmon passage usually occurs on August 19th for median timing and August 23rd for late timing, which were passed both of those dates. The recent group of Chum salmon have been passing for several days. However, the daily counts are low, with the peak daily count being less than 13,000 fish. Genetic mix stock analysis on Chum salmon that passed the Mainstem Sonar from August 7th through the 19th indicated approximately 4% were Summer Chum and 96% were Fall Chum salmon. The Fall Chum salmon stocks consisted of 42% border US, which is the Teedriinjik, Sheenjek and Draanjik rivers, and 8% Canadian and 46% Tanana Falls. For Fall Chum salmon, this represented 92% US origin and 8% Canadian-origin stocks. The next portion of the run typically contains more than 96% of the Fall Chum stocks. Based on the genetics for the Canadian Mainstem component, passage will likely be an all-time low Chum salmon escapements this year. Assessment based on historical genetic proportions for this time of year suggests there are 170,000 Fall Chum salmon in the Yukon River. The median passage of this state or this date is typically 688,000 Fall Chum salmon. Therefore, the current projections to the end of the season total run size are at 188,000 to 233,000 Fall Chum salmon. The preliminary age composition of 520 Chum salmon sampled from the drift gillnet fishery and LYTF project through August 25th consisted of 65% age 4 and 36% age 5 fish. Which compares to the 2001 to 2023 historical averages of 69% age 4 and 29% age 5. The percentage of female Chum salmon was 42%, which is below the historical average of 58% and the average length of 572 millimeters is well below the historical average of 584mm. Monitoring of the escapement in the upper portions of the Yukon River drainage and the

Teedriinjik and the Sheenjek sonars both began on August 5. As of August 26, the Teedriinjik Sonar operated by US Fish and Wildlife Service has a cumulative passage of 4,700 Fall Chum salmon, which is below the median of 20,000 fish. The Teedriinjik escapement goal is 85,000 to 234,000 Fall Chum salmon. The Sheenjek Sonar project, operated by Alaska Department of Fish and Game as of August 26th, has a cumulative passage of 1,000 Fall Chum salmon, which is below the median of 4,600 fish for this date. Eagle Sonar will transition from Chinook to Fall Chum salmon in the near future as they have captured their first Fall Chum salmon on August 26. Coho salmon typically enter the Yukon River in mid-August, with the bulk of the run occurring between August 16th and the 27th at the Mainstem Sonar. As of August 26th, the cumulative passage is 34,000 coho salmon at the Mainstem sonar and this compares to the median cumulative passage of 98,000 Coho salmon by this date. Coho salmon run projections based on late run timing is currently at 61,000 to 67,000 fish. Stay tuned through the ADF&G Yukon River Daily Updates and Weekly Advisory Announcements for continued reporting throughout the salmon run to include the genetic composition from August 20th through the end of Pilot Station, which is going to operate through September 7th. I'm probably going to have two more strata. The next one will be sent to the lab this week. We'll be reporting the progress of all salmon assessment projects on the river through most of the projects ending which is late October.

Christy Gleason, Yukon Area Fall Season Manager, Fairbanks, Alaska

I'll follow up and provide a management update. As Bonnie mentioned, the Yukon River Fall Chum and the Coho Salmon runs are projected to be really low and we're unlikely to meet any of the Fall Chum salmon escapement goals this year, and we're tracking very similar to the run in 2020. For fisheries management, Chum salmon and Coho salmon fishing is all closed right now. Due to these critically poor runs per Fall Season for both of these species. We did reduce the fishing time of 4-inch gillnets. Those nets are only open on Friday, Saturday and Sundays for the remainder of the salmon season. From Monday to Thursday, all gillnets must be removed from the water. This is a measure to protect migrating salmon. It's really important to get those salmon to the spawning grounds when we're in this bad of a run. We do plan to relax fishing restrictions beginning October 1st when the salmon run is done in the Lower Yukon. We'll move that date up river following the migration timing of Fall Chum salmon similar to what we did last year. As Managers and Research Biologists on the Yukon River, we understand it's been really hard on fishermen the last five years for Fall Season of not being able to fish. We're just at a point where these salmon runs are critically low, and we really need to be focused on rebuilding the runs. In the off season here, you can always get a hold me in the Fairbanks office at (907) 459-7240. I'd love to hear from you and your feedback on management this season to see if we can improve anything for next year. If you have questions on the current fishing schedule or the gear for your area, you can call the hotline number and that is 1-866-479-7387. Thanks again for everyone's cooperation this year during these low salmon runs.

Deena Jallen, Summer Season Fishery Manager, Fairbanks, AK

We really don't have much to add for Summer Season, we'll just be waiting to see what the date is that they decide to have the transition from Chinook to Fall Chum in Eagle. That will give us the final number of Chinook salmon that have gone past that project. That's about all we've got for Summer Season. Everything's transitioned over to Fall Season for Management and that's the last project we've got on the Alaskan side for Summer Season Assessments.

Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada

Jaclyn Kendall, Fishery Manager

Stock Assessment at our Porcupine River camp, near the community of Old Crow, we have transitioned to chum season and as of August 25th there has been an estimated 891 chum salmon past the sonar. The Klondike River Sonar, operated by Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation has now ended their season as of August 23rd with a preliminary count of 221 Chinook. Sonars on the Pelly River, operated by Selkirk First Nation have been operational since July 4, and as of August 22 there has been an estimated cumulative passage of 3,276 Chinook salmon, compared to 1,829 on this date last year and the average of about 5,464. The video weir on Tatchun Creek which is run by Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation has counted a total

of 9 Chinook as of August 20th. The Big Salmon Sonar is operational with an estimated 1,784 Chinook as of August 20, compared to 1,706 on that date last year and the average of 4,647. The Takhini River sonar, run by Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, has been operational since early August. As of August 27, there has been an estimated cumulative passage of 582 Chinook salmon. The Nisutlin River sonar, located in the Teslin River watershed and managed by Teslin Tlingit Council, is now operational and reporting daily passage of Chinook salmon. As of August 6, there has been an estimated cumulative passage of 226 Chinook. Last year on this date, the cumulative passage was 427. The Whitehorse Rapids Fishway, run by Yukon Energy, has observed 173 passing Chinook as of August 22, compared to just 53 on this date last year and an average of 612. In support of the 2024 Chinook Radio Telemetry program, DFO crews have installed 12 towers throughout the Yukon. These towers aren't equipped with satellite uplinks, so we won't be able to review data until receivers are pulled post-season, however we have completed one aerial survey, with others following shortly.

Environmental Conditions, Air temperatures across much of the territory were mild for much of the past week, with rain and cooler temperatures spreading across the territory today. As such, water temperatures, which were already average to below average, will continue to be within thermal ranges of migrating salmon. There will be no changes to Canadian management to report for Chinook Salmon. In line with the newly signed 7 year agreement and the preliminary low Canadian origin Chinook salmon outlook for 2024, DFO has closed the recreational fishery for 2024 and will continue to close through 2030, and the current long-term closures in both the commercial and domestic (non-indigenous food fishery) fisheries will be extended through 2030. For Canadian origin chum salmon for 2024, with the low outlooks for the Yukon River and Fishing Branch River not anticipated to meet spawning objectives in Canada the public angling fishery has been closed for 2024 and the commercial and domestic fishery long term closures will continue. Thanks so much for hosting these meetings this year.

Special Reports:

Randy Brown, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Fishery Biologist, Fairbanks, Alaska

I've been asked to come and talk a little bit about some of the Sheefish work that I've been doing. There was some interest in understanding what was happening in the spawning populations and other things. A brief background, I came to the Fish and Wildlife Service in 1996 with a Chum salmon Market Capture Project out of Rapids and quickly saw that there were large numbers of Sheefish in late August, coming through the fish wheels. There was some incentive to figure out where they were going because we didn't know at the time where they were going or where they were coming from. I ended up going to the University on a Master's program to try to figure that out. We used radio tags for three years on those Sheefish and found that they go up and spawn between Fort Yukon and Circle, in the Upper Yukon Flat. Another thing that we did was to look at the otolith chemistry. There was a kind of a new technique at the time to slice the otoliths. You see the growth increments and be able to use some electron microprobe techniques that are similar to electron microscopes. It's actually analyzing the chemistry within each growth increment and found that those Sheefish that are spawning up in the Upper Yukon Flats were highly anadromous. Virtually all of them go down and rear in the Delta and the estuary, so there are signs of them being in salt water. That started me going with sheefish and since that time we've applied the radio telemetry and the otolith chemistry to a few different watersheds in the Tanana River drainage, the Nowitna River drainage, the Innoko and tracked some of these fish for several years at a time. Some of the more recent radio tags were going to last for four to five years. We had the tower network up in the drainage that got started with the Chum salmon project back in the 90s. It then blossomed even more with the Chinook salmon tagging project, radio tagging project in the early 2000s, and that's been absolutely essential part of the Sheefish telemetry because we've been able to tap into those towers and monitor the Sheefish movements around the drainage, it's really spectacular. The spawning areas that we've been able to find were in the Tanana River drainage as well as the Yukon, between the mouth of the Chena and the mouth of the Salcha Rivers. It's a real graded system there, just like the Upper Yukon Flats. We were able to show, I worked with Andy Griska with Fish and Game on that project, and they there's all the different species except Bering Cisco of the whitefishes in that spawning area. In the Yukon Flats, there's Bering Cisco, Least Cisco, Humpback Whitefish, Broad Whitefish and Sheefish are all spawning in that area. The Chatanika River spawning area,

which is a tributary of the Tolovana that flows into the Tanana and that has Humpback, Whitefish and Least Cisco, Round Whitefish and Sheefish. There, the Sheefish component is really small, there's not very many of them and never has been as far as I can tell. The Salukna River, which is an upper tributary of the Nowitna River. That is a spawning area that Ken Alt, a longtime Fish and Game Biologist starting back in the 60s and he retired in the late 80s. He knew there was a population there, the radio telemetry part really gave us a strong tool to figure out where those spawning areas were within the river system. One of my colleagues, Jon Gerken and Dave Estie with BLM went and studied that population for quite a while. Dave Estie used that imaging sonar, DIDSON Sonar and tracked out migration of those fish after they spawned and was able to show that there was about 2,100 and 3,500 in two different years of his monitoring that out migration from the spawning area. We went down to the Innoko River more recently and put a lot of tags out there, 115 transmitters out on Sheefish, and tracked them for four years. About 2/3 of them went up into the Yukon Flats. Another 1/3 went up into the Alatna River. The Alatna River has been a known spawning area for a long time, way up to Koyukuk. The folks out of Allakaket and Alatna, they harvest a lot of Whitefish out of there, including Sheefish in that spawning area. That's a big river too, where they go to spawn up there. At this point in time, those six spawning areas appear to be all there are. Ken Alt used to collect them down near Hughes in the main Koyukuk. There may be some spawning areas in there, but we didn't have any of our radio tags go there over the years. Maybe some of them go there at times and spawn, but we didn't find any in the more recent radio telemetry work here. If there are any others, they're really tiny populations, but those appear to be all there is on the US side of the Yukon River. Sheefish do extend their range all the way up into the Porcupine, beyond the Fishing Branch, people have caught juveniles up there. There's spawning population up the Porcupine in Canada and also up the Yukon. They're present in Lake Labarge and Teslin Lake and most of the major tributaries up there. Those ones don't go to sea, they're living along the river course or in the lake. We don't know as much about those ones as the ones that I was just mentioning here.

Robert Walker, Anvik - With this Seven-year Moratorium that the Governor and the Fishing Manager have put on the Yukon. It really has changed a lot, looking for something to replace some of the fish here are one of the things that we talked about and I brought up. The Sheefish here on the Yukon, also on the Upper Tanana, further up the river and also the Innoko River, the Anvik River, the Melozi River and the Nowitna. I asked the lady that was with us in our meeting in the spring, if she could look at the Nowitna River and see what kind of outgoing we have for Sheefish because I think this is another one that's going to be targeted in the next couple of years and I was hopefully that we'd be ready to look at this as a substitute for the Chinook salmon. I did talk to the watershed program too, Teresa Clark. She works for the Watershed in Anchorage and I asked if she could go to the RAC meeting in Galena in October, the Western Interior and give us a report on the Donlin Creek mine. I think it was the Donlin Creek min across from Ruby. That when they do their holding tanks, how do they do it? With what kind of tarps? The settlement that has these tarps, what is the lifetime of them? Because those right there, if you look on the map, it drains into the Innoko River. So all of this transparency with the gold, how they clean it? They're looking at silver and also other minerals. It would affect the people from Shageluk all the way down the Yukon. It would affect us because we do trade for Whitefish from Shageluk, from the Holikachuk area, from Grayling and Anvik. We do have some of these resources, but it's not well known, but it's just between ourselves. The spawning grounds up Koyukuk River also that I brought up. Pollock Simon really brought to a point that I didn't really understand, but he stated the Allakakeet River is one of the heavier spawning grounds for the Sheefish there. When you look at some of these questions that were asked from me, from people from Nulato and Koyukuk that they don't even know this. It's like there's been no map showing where all these fish spawn. We have all the information about Chinook salmon, Chum salmon, Fall chum, etcetera. We don't have any kind of information talking about the Sheefish. It's pretty interesting, I'm really glad you brought this up. I did talk to Serena earlier about having this part of early discussions before we get into more and more. I think that every fall when you do put your calendars off the Fish and Game, they should have a 2025 subsistence Chinook and Sheefish. How many fish? I think they should be in bigger words than what they are, because a lot of people just skim over it and don't see it. I think this is going to be the next targeted fish. When you look at the Ambler River or the river up there outside from Nome, all the way up the Kobuk River. They

called the Sheefish, the white salmon. That is their main target. Thank you for your time and giving that info.

Randy Brown, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Fishery Biologist, Fairbanks, Alaska

I forgot to mention the tagging in the Innoko. We had never thought there was a spawning ground up there previously when Ken Alt was working there back in the 80s. He tagged a bunch of sheefish in the Innoko. Some of them got caught out on the Yukon. He thought that there wasn't a spawning population there, but there is and we did identify it up near Folger Creek. We actually went there by boat and got genetic samples from that population. That was a long boat trip from the Hall Road Bridge but it was worth while. Regarding the Nowitna River, the fish spawn in the Salukna, which is an upper tributary of the Nowitna. It's really unusual, but that population, there are a few individuals that migrate down to sea, but mostly they're not anadromous and our radio telemetry work showed that they mostly overwinter a couple of miles out of the Nowitna and then out in the Yukon between the mouth of the Nowitna and the mouth of the Koyukuk. They sit in the same place all winter long, and then the spring comes and they come back into the Nowitna to feed. One of the striking things about that was that they would go, almost all of them, back to the exact location where we had captured them and tagged them, and they sit there all summer feeding at the mouths of these old oxbows or stream mouths or things. They know where they are all the time in the river, even though it looks like it would be impossible. There are records of harvest of Sheefish that the Fish and Game Department collects. It's hard to tell exactly how many are being caught, but there's the under ice fishery that goes on down in the Delta during Winter. Then there's the harvest along with the salmon, when those runs were happening, when there was fishing for salmon. So it would amount to somewhere around 20,000 fish, maybe a little more. I suspect that's a little bit of a low estimate and without the salmon fishing the Sheefish are probably doing pretty well right now.

Robert Walker - Quite interesting, thank you for that. I appreciate it. Give me a better point of view on how to look at it now and then when I do report to the Western Interior RAC meeting in Galena, I'll have a little more information. Thank you for that. I really appreciate that.

Serena Fitka, YR DFA - Thank you, Robert and Randy. Randy did write an article for our newsletter that will be coming out in October. So please, if you're not signed up to get that, please sign up. Just contact myself or Mike McIntyre, who's our Communication Coordinator.

Andrew Padilla – ADF&G Research Biologist, Fairbanks, Alaska

We are in charge of the Subsistence Survey that we do annually in the Fall time. We do estimate Sheefish harvest on the Yukon. The most recent five year average has been about just under 10,000 fish for the whole drainage for the people who are surveyed. It's about total about 10 to 15,000 between in the last two most recent 5-year averages. So that kind of gives you an idea of how much it's currently being harvested throughout the drainage for sheefish.

Victor Lord, Nenana - Quick questions for him, he said Sheefish spawn up in the Chena to Salcha drainages there. Down in Nenana, we used to fish pretty steadily with the fishwheel and everything. Every time we catch the Sheefish, it would be put in your freezer or cut and smoked or given away to a grandmother or elders. Praise fish all the time. There's a few of them, some of the eggs were smaller and a lot of people like the fish eggs and the fish. Some of the eggs were more mature, bigger. We fished with kids upriver from here, there's another creek where we catch Sheefish. There's two of them where we catch them. There's Pike in there and there is Sheefish in there. There's some creeks on the other side, but it's too muddy to fish. Not knowing where they spawn, but I would think that those two would have Sheefish in there. One other question is where do those fish go after they're done spawning in the Tanana River?

Randy Brown, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Fishery Biologist, Fairbanks, Alaska

Victor, the Sheefish that's spawn in the Tanana River. Up there between the Chena and Salcha River mouths. There's some of those that go all the way down to the Delta, to the ocean, but more of them are overwintering in the Lower Tanana or out in the Yukon, downstream from the mouth of the Tanana. Than going all the way down. So they behave quite a bit like the ones in the Nowitna. As compared with the

Yukon Flats, virtually all of the Yukon Flats ones head down to the Delta or the lower part of the Yukon. As do those on the Alutna, they leave the Koyukuk River. We had towers down in the Lower Koyukuk recording their movement. All of the radio tags would always leave and go down into the Lower Yukon. There's real different behaviors within these populations, but the Tanana and the Salukna, populations tend to not go as far downriver.

Andy Bassich, Eagle - I was just wondering if you could talk a little about if you did much studies on what Sheefish are predated mostly on. I know you did quite a bit of work with juvenile salmon and with Dave. I'm wondering if you were looking at what they were foraging on as far as our salmon fry out migration.

Randy Brown, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Fishery Biologist, Fairbanks, Alaska

I have not really done much work with Sheefish, except on the spawning grounds or close to it, and they aren't eating in those situations. So I have read through a lot of the literature and so I know some of the species that they eat but not that much about specifically how much or what fraction is this species versus that.

Andy Bassich – Robert, that might be something interesting for you guys to start studying as subsistence users. If you could get some information and maybe open up stomachs. Some of the fish will be recognizable that they eat. I do that here, sometimes you can tell. A lot of times when they're digested for fairly long periods of time, it's pretty hard to tell what they're eating. Later in the season I see primarily I'm seeing Bourbot. They lay in the deeper areas and that's what I'm seeing in their stomachs when it's the larger Sheefish that migrate through here, but anyway, Robert, that might be something interesting for people in the Lower River, if you're catching those really large Sheefish to see what they're predated on.

Robert Walker - We do look when we do catch Sheefish here and we opened their stomach. They have a lot of fingerling Pike, a lot of Chum salmon, Pink salmon and they have small Whitefish also. In the Fall time when the land fish come up, that's where they really fill up on smaller lamprey. So they are a very predacious animal.

Organizational Reports:

Karen Gillis – Bering Sea Fisherman's Association, Executive Director

I am here today to talk about a few things that are going on in the Arctic, Yukon and Kuskokwim Regions that BSFA is Engaged in. The first thing I want to talk about today though, is the Alaska Salmon Research Task Force report that came out a month or two ago. For those that aren't familiar with the Task Force, the Alaska Salmon Research Task Force Act was enacted by Congress to identify the gaps in knowledge that are needed to understand the variability and declining trends in salmon. It was primarily focused on Yukon and Kuskokwim salmon, it's really what instigated the act. The purposes of the act, are to ensure that Pacific salmon productivity and abundance trends in Alaska are characterized and that research needs are identified. To prioritize scientific research needs for Pacific salmon in Alaska. To address the increased variability or decline in Pacific salmon returns in Alaska by creating a coordinated salmon research strategy, and finally to support collaboration and coordination for Pacific salmon conservation efforts in Alaska. Arctic Yukon Kuskokwim working group was tasked with identifying the top priority research themes for the region. They were given a survey about what the priority research themes should be and what came out of that survey was. A list in Appendix 10 in the research report, or the Task Force report. It has 2 pages worth of research hypotheses and research questions, but essentially the working group members were surveyed about the priorities for future research. The top two priority research themes identified by the working group were #1 to better understand impacts of marine harvest on AYK salmon and #2 changes in the quantity and quality of marine food for AYK salmon. There are a couple of good figures within the working group report that highlights what the working group priorities are. When you totaled the assigned scores of the top individual research questions considered by the working group, the highest ranking priority was competition with hatchery Pinks and Chum, along with Bristol Bay Sockeye. The second one was food quality for smolts including climate change and food webs. The third is marine fisheries impacts, including state, federal and foreign. The 4th is bycatch in federal marine fisheries. The 5th is interceptions in state marine fisheries. Then climate change, spawner health, spawner quality, and genetic markers for identifying fish in marine

fisheries. The report came out with a really clear direction for any future funding that we expect will come down from federal sources to address these results or the research priorities here. One of the things that Bering Sea Fisherman's Association, along with other groups in the Yukon and Kuskokwim have identified is that we believe any funds that are offered to satisfy the research priorities of the task force that they be awarded to entities who are engaged in collaborative research efforts that are led by non-governmental agencies. We think that utilizing a really strong independent science process to peel back the layers of what's impacting your resources is really the key to success here. A letter is being drafted and will be sent to Senator Sullivan, Senator Murkowski and Congresswoman Peltola that identifies that we need to be working together for the most bang for our buck. I know that there are lots of funding mechanisms around the state. If folks have experience with one or another. It would be really a great conversation to hear your thoughts on where you all think funds should be directed.

Victor Lord, Nenana - I think I remember from reading the information before I went to testify. It was the last bit of information they were going to take for the season. I'm not sure, but anyway I was glad to see it even though it was a year old already, it was kind of new to me and wanted to spend more time to meet with the people but I was upriver chairman of YRDFA, I had to get back to my meeting. The other thing is, I think it's important to follow the whole salmon from birth through the end. Like you know Area M, which is close to state waters. We believe our fish go through there. It didn't sound like a super sound greeting from the biologists out there. The biologists on the river here seemed like there were distant. That's it, thank you.

Karen Gillis – Bering Sea Fisherman's Association, Executive Director

Thank you, I'm glad you had the opportunity to at least kind of get a sense for where they were at in the spring. You're right, they were almost done with their process by that point. They had a very short timeline to achieve this report, despite the fact that they had a pretty large and diverse group of individuals from the Yukon, Kuskokwim and Norton Sound or Bering Straits region involved. I don't know that they had a really thorough public face to the process but there were lots of opportunities to engage if you were aware of it and following along. I'll just go over the next couple of items here. To draw your attention to two efforts that Bering Sea Fisherman's Association is currently supporting. One is a weekly teleconference where residents from Bristol Bay, the Arctic, Yukon and Kuskokwim Regions come together to identify regional concerns and, when possible, develop strategies to address those concerns. We initially came together to prepare for the last Board of Fisheries meeting, but also talk about North Pacific Fisheries Management Council issues. As well as tracking legislative movements that have the potential to affect your fisheries. We meet every Thursday morning by Zoom and participation is limited to people who live in the Bristol Bay, Arctic, Yukon and Kuskokwim Regions and want to stay up to date on engagement opportunities for fisheries management, subsistence issues or other policy priorities. We don't invite State or Federal agency folks, but if anyone is interested in participating or at least receiving the weekly agenda and teleconference or zoom information. You can e-mail me at karen@bsfaak.org or you can call my cell directly at (907) 887-1148. I send out the agenda every Wednesday afternoon. It's a really long document because it provides updates and information on everything from the US Department of Agriculture, Farm Bill information, opportunities for public comment, public engagement in Council meetings or RAC meetings. So there's a lot of information in the agenda, but we'd really encourage anyone from your communities to attend when possible. We call that the BBAYK Coalition and it's very loosely formed. It's been a really powerful set of conversations that are just targeted toward empowering your communities and finding the most responsible stewardship of your resources. That's one of the efforts I wanted to drive your attention to. The other one is, The Arctic Yukon Kuskokwim Tribal Consortium, which grew out of the Arctic Yukon Kuskokwim Sustainable Salmon Initiative, which has been a really long standing example of co-management of research funding addressing salmon in the AYK. The Tribal Consortium is a member organization of tribal entities, which include AVCP, TCC and both of the Inter-tribal fish commissions, the Yukon and the Kuskokwim Fish Commissions. They have basically an overarching goal, which is to restore, maintain and conserve the health and biodiversity of Bering Sea ecosystems as a river to seize approach. But there are a couple of different things that you or your communities might be interested in. One is the Tribal Consortium can assist tribes and tribal organizations in drafting letters or talking points, visualizing data or preparing for public engagement opportunities. We have a team of people who support tribes and tribal organizations in that

policy and data support area. We also have grant writing support through a contracted grant specialist. That individual can offer assistance to tribes and tribal organizations who are looking to apply for grants that support co-management ecosystem conservation, salmon science, or really any area of interest that your tribe or tribal organizations are looking for capacity support on. The last thing that the Tribal Consortium offers is travel assistance to help tribal members, residents of the AYK and members of tribal organizations, funding to participate in policy making processes like the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council and Board of Fisheries meetings. If your community or tribe is looking for additional support, please feel free to reach out to me and we can work together to see how the Tribal Consortium could support your efforts. I think that's all I have today. Thank you so much. I'm really honored to be here this is a really important meeting throughout the summer. We really value the input from communities from the State, Federal and academic individuals as well through the year for teleconference. So just a quick moment of gratefulness for everyone that comes together for these calls.

Community level reports:

CANADA

Whitehorse:

Elizabeth McDonald - I want to give a quick update. It's seemed pretty overcast and feeling like Fall here. Kids are back in school as of today. Chinook are wrapping up up north. There's not very many left and then down South, entering the end of their migration and mostly in spawning season now. First Nations projects are still counting as DFO reported earlier. Otherwise, we've got our telemetry projects, water monitoring still going on and lots of other activities but hopefully everyone's having a good start to Fall. Thank you.

ALASKA

District Y6abc:

Nenana:

Victor Lord - Just like to thank all the people that presented themselves that you invited. Especially like to thank you, Mr. Wood, the Board of Fish for listening to us. Such an important position. A lot of work that they do, I know and take time out. I really appreciate it. We've got a lot of work to do too. I'll go down and get ready for it. Thank you.

District Y5abc&d:

Eagle:

Andy Bassich - Not a lot to report here. The river is very low, kind of at mid-September levels here. I'm still fishing in the dead end back sloughs for Whitefish, Sheefish and Pike. Not catching a lot, but a little bit, so not really a lot of activity. I just wanted to say some thank yous here since this is our last meeting. I really appreciate the work that YRDFA puts into this call and you, Serena, with all the work, you're doing. Really important work and excellent work being done. I also wanted to shout out to Board Member Woods. We really appreciate them taking the time to listen in on these teleconferences. I think it's really important for them to hear directly from people on the river. Lastly, I just wanted to say thank you to all of the managers. I know they've had a really tough season this year. I think they've done a good job of trying to balance out subsistence harvests with conservation this year. I know it's a really difficult job. It's always hard for a lot of people to give up fishing or to be cut back on fishing, but it's what we need to do and I think the managers have done a pretty good job of striking the balance there. So shout out to them. Thank you for all the work that they're doing. I guess that's about all I have to say and I'm just hoping that as many Fall Chum can get up and spawn as possible. It's pretty disappointing to hear that the numbers are so low on Fall Chum because we really feel like that needs to be rebuilt in the Upper River here. But anyway, I also appreciate all the people on the river who have taken metrics for conservation and been very careful to try not to target non-targeted fish. Thank you.

District Y4a:

Anvik:

Robert Walker - Randy, If you're still on, I went to the back on my map. Sorry, but that was Illinois Creek that I was talking about across from Kaltag. I hope you can go to our meeting there in Galena with the Western Interior RACs. You could bring this because this is would be very interesting to see what we're going to do. Also Serena, we do a lot of fishing in the Fall time. We put nets under the ice here in Anvik and Grayling they do the same thing. Nobody ever really talks about it. The amount of fish that they catch again, nobody doesn't really talk about it because we pass it out to everybody.

District Y3a:

Russian Mission:

Basil Larson - The waters up and holding, it's higher than it is normally is this time of the year. There's been some drift showing up, coming out of the eddies and the islands. Everybody's basically been picking berries. We've been having so much rain and wind, when there is actually decent days, everybody goes out picking. We went out a couple of times this week and we didn't see any close bears, but we saw some. We do set when we do go, we bring along our 4-inch nets and set them in the creeks on our way to the berry spots and grab them on the way. I don't think anybody knew about the closure, but nobody sets net down the river. There's been no fishing. This summer was pretty expected low numbers and everybody took a conservative approach in their efforts to get summer fish when it was available. We do subsist with the season, with the lack of salmon again, food security comes into everybody's mind. Usually, we've been making up for by harvesting a little more of everything of every other season that we come upon. That's starting to get pretty tricky, costing a lot of money to go do other stuff, to make up for the no salmon here. With the 4-inch restrictions getting kind of out of hand, I think a lot of people here coming at me saying, we're not the problem. Why are you guys even trying to restrict our freshwater fishing? When the nets not even set sometimes the whole day, just a few hours. Whitefish does go along with berries, and there's a favorite traditional dish in the whole our area. We do utilize a lot of Whitefish this time of year and we'd like the freedom to do so because there's been no salmon fishing and no salmon for years. If you guys are gonna restrict us this badly. We might as well start looking at other factors that affect the low salmon numbers and start putting them on the hot seat too. It's getting out of hand. Food security is coming in to everybody's mind. Everybody's getting ready for moose hunting. Some people caught moose and passed it around. It was good to taste that. It was another tough season just like everywhere else. We didn't subsist much salmon, and we're pretty sad to see the low Fall Season returns. Basically, we've been having this crappy weather for so long that everybody's cooped up inside. When there's good weather, the popular berry spots like over the weekend, there's probably 6 boats down there, holy cow. There's a lot of berries, but you got to look. Around here we got to climb, we can't use a Honda, no Honda trails up to the flats or anywhere. What's the word on the cyanide spill? A lot of people have been asking me if it's still going on, what about this and about that. We just feel caught up in the middle and with our backs against the wall a little too long. So got to start pushing back. Thanks.

Serena Fitka, YR DFA - We did have a special report a couple weeks ago from Canada. If you want, we can provide that recording to you through your tribe.

District Y2:

St. Mary's:

Bill Alstrom - Nothing much to report here. Same old, same old. Been seeing a lot of rain. Rain in the vicinity, hopefully it'll stop soon. It stopped this morning, but we might have some more coming in. Rain and weather has been really, like Basil said, everybody inside looked, cooped up. It gets really disheartening. Just want to thank Serena and the management for putting on these teleconferences every week. They've been very informative. I wish we'd get more involvement from the downriver people. We don't really know what's going on down there. That's where the fish come into the mouth of the river. Sure

like to hear more from them. Thank you all and the management for all their reports. Everybody else that's online that in their weekly reports. I just wanted to say thank you to everybody.

Mattie Beans - I'm just doing your last water report down here. We got a water temp about 47.6 today. Andreafski is really high water for this time of the year, so are the forks upriver. Yukon is looking pretty high out there right now. Been lot of rain, torrential rain. I can understand what Basil is saying because this year is the time to pick berries and it's very frustrating when you go out and set your little 4-inch net and catch little Whitefish that are meant to feed cats and dogs, and not a human being. Getting ready for moose hunting. There's got to be some kind of rule that we could not get in trouble if we go set a 5-inch net inside a slough to just target Whitefish. That's all we're trying to do and you know you feel like the criminal going out there and setting the net. Thanks for the all the updates along the Yukon up there and it's been an interesting year and hopefully we continue to all work together. Thank you very much.

District Y1:

Kotlik:

Marvin Okitkun - Lots of rain, like everyone's been saying out here. The good days, we tend to go out. Last week, I went out with my family before my daughter left back to Mount Edgecombe, the mean water level here in Kotlik is about I'd say about 8 inches higher than normal when we walk down. In Middle Mouth a couple of days ago. Mean water level over there at low tide is about a foot higher than last year in this time. There's a lot of water coming down the Yukon, lots of debris showing up. I haven't heard of anyone going out catching any fish, but there is Whitefish out there starting to show. Catching Sheefish and the guys been setting net inside Kotlik Slough for Whitefish. That's about it, but there is a lot of salmon coming in. I know one of the guys hit a coho, it got stuck between the prop and the plate. Incidentally caught salmon. New Hamilton, after coming home from picking blueberries, when they were on their way home. They're about 25 miles on the river, they spotted salmon jumping up and down. We see fish like that. I always question what the Fish and Game Test Fisheries do and their sonar counts because when we seem like that we know there's lots of fish. That's about it. Thank you for all your weekly teleconferences and keeping us updated.

Alakanuk:

Max Agayar - The water been, seemed like the tide hasn't gone down for over a week since the storms hit. They're starting to get arvinag out there. They're picking blueberries and looking for black bears right now, but they're having a hard time finding those. There's some salmon in the river. Haven't heard anyone harvesting any, but that they're starting to get arvinag over here.

Open Discussion / Questions:

Taylor Bradley, YSSC - Hi, it's Taylor from the Yukon Salmon subcommittee. I just wanted to thank you for hosting these calls. They've been really informative and a great way to connect with everyone along the Yukon River. Thank you for all your hard work this year.

Robert Walker, Anvik - One more thing, there was a beluga up at Kaltag yesterday, it was on Facebook. I don't know if anybody seen that. Also, thank you Serena and your crew for giving this report here. I know I missed a lot of it because I had other things I had to do, but it's always nice to know that, wherever we are and everything is what's going on. But one of the questions I asked that wasn't answered was what happens down in False pass. How many people have been cited for fishing and so forth? The lady I asked didn't answer the question. Next year, hopefully that we can have a little more transparency when we ask questions about what goes on outside of our AYK region.

Serena Fitka, YRDFA - Thanks, Robert. I'll get that information and forward it to you. I really appreciate your comments as well. This season I did see that information about the beluga. I think someone outside Ruby also stated that they seen a beluga up that way.

Victor Lord, Nenana - I'd like to say again, the fight is not over, we're getting dangerously low on our salmon, real dangerous, makes you think about endangered species again, once in a while. The numbers like the Chena rivers down to 300 and something king salmon. That's pretty low and the numbers up to Yukon, up in Canada. I don't know what the cut off numbers, they drop down, it gets so low, it's probably real critical. We've got such a big area, I'm still interested in out there on the ocean. Like you said in our newsletter, everybody's responsible. We're responsible for our fish according to the creator. We cannot give up. The lady from the task force, you said that they have some kind of monies. We had fish camp, Cultural Fish Camp here. A lot of kids in Nenana attended. Some kids came home for the Summer and visit, they've gone up the Fish Camp too. It was good to tell them, education is important. You can learn to be biologists and bookkeeper, nything that that we need, like in the YR DFA organization, Fish and Game. Kids can go to work and it could be a little more level ground, I think. It was a good place I got to preach to them as far as I could as far as the elder in me. Thank you.

Serena Fitka, YR DFA - I'd like to thank YR DFA staff for a great teleconference season and all their hard work this summer. YR DFA would like to thank everyone joining the call today and throughout the season. We hope the information shared was useful for Yukon River Communities, Yukon First Nations and Fishery Managers. We encourage all users to engage in meetings this Winter to ensure your voices are being heard when it comes to the management of our Yukon River salmon. Maintaining a sustainable fisheries can only be achieved by everyone working together. We must eliminate the division between communities, areas and management. We may disagree on many aspects when it comes to the sustainability of our salmon resources, but it is how we overcome those challenges and take up actionable steps to produce a more successful salmon run for the Yukon River. Quyana cakneq to everyone, I hope and look forward to seeing you this Winter during meeting season, again quyana for your time, until next year.

Call ended 2:35 PM