



Advisory Announcement

Released: August 3, 2021

CONTACT:

Christy Gleason, Acting Area Management Biologist
Bonnie Borba, Fall Season Research Biologist
(907) 949-1320
Toll free fishing schedule and counts: (866) 479-7387
In Fairbanks fishing schedule hotline: 459-7387

2021 Yukon River Salmon Fall Fishery Announcement # 9

Fall Update # 2, Yukon Area Salmon Fishery

Districts Affected: Yukon Area

The 2021 fall chum salmon run size is anticipated to be critically low, similar to this season's summer chum salmon that was the lowest on record. The fall chum salmon preseason projection, based on the relationship between summer chum salmon and fall chum salmon run sizes, is for a run size less than 300,000 fish. According to the Fall Chum Salmon Management Plan, the preseason projection does not meet the threshold of 300,000 fish needed to allow subsistence fishing. In addition, the current run projection is unlikely to meet the drainagewide escapement goal of 300,000-600,000 fall chum salmon, tributary escapement goals and Canadian treaty objectives. Lower Yukon River assessment projects are tracking well below average for fall chum salmon. The fall chum salmon run is past the historical quarter point at the sonar project near Pilot Station.

Fall chum salmon typically take 39 days to migrate from the mouth of the Yukon River to the U.S./Canada border, using an estimated travel rate of 35 miles per day. The first group of fall season chum salmon to enter the river entered on July 16 and is expected to be approaching Tanana August 4, Stevens Village August 8, Fort Yukon August 14, and U.S./Canada border August 24. A second group of fish entered the Yukon River this past week and are expected to approach Anvik August 3, Galena August 9, Tanana August 14, and the U.S./Canada border September 3.

Coho salmon typically enter the Yukon River in mid-August with the bulk of the run occurring between August 13 and 25 in the Lower Yukon Test Fishery (LYTF). This year's coho run size is anticipated to be below average to average (average is 240,000 fish).

Fall Assessment Projects

All projects that handle fish (LYTF; Mt. Village Drift Test Fishery; Pilot Station and Eagle sonars) are making efforts to reduce salmon mortality and distribute test fish catches to community members. Any salmon healthy enough will be released alive from the test nets. Injured salmon and mortalities will be distributed to community members by Tribal councils or on a first come first-served basis from a public dock.

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

Fall season operations began on July 16 using 6-inch mesh gear to target fall chum and coho salmon. As of August 1, the fall chum salmon cumulative CPUE was 34.00 which is below the average of 437.63 for this date.

Mountain Village Drift Test Fishing / Asacarsarmiut Tribal Council

Fall season operations began on July 18, and as of August 1, the fall chum salmon cumulative CPUE was 107.86 which is below the average of 608.18 for that date.

Sonar Project near Pilot Station / ADF&G

The sonar project operated near Pilot Station transitioned to fall season counts on July 19. As of August 1, the cumulative passage is 53,000 fall chum salmon. This compares to a median cumulative passage of 197,000 fall chum salmon for this date.

Age, Sex, and Length Composition

From July 19 through July 30 a total of 45 chum salmon were sampled for age, sex and length from the drift gillnet in the LYTF project. The ages are not available at this time. The average length of chum salmon in the sample was 554 mm which is below the historical average. Female chum salmon represented 47% of the samples compared to the historical average (1983–2020) of 53%.

Fall Season Management Strategy

The 2021 fall chum salmon projection is critically low, and below the 300,000 threshold in the Fall Chum Salmon Management Plan to allow any subsistence fishing at this time. Subsistence fishermen should plan for continued fishing closures to conserve fall chum salmon. Yukon River Districts 1-4 have transitioned to fall season management. Subsistence salmon fishing is closed, except for the use of selective gear to target salmon other than Chinook and chum from the Lower Yukon Area through Subdistrict 4-A Lower. Pink salmon are present in the Lower Yukon Area and Subdistrict 4-A Lower, so the use of selective gear to target these salmon is warranted in these areas. Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B and 5-C will be transitioning to fall management this week. The remaining upriver districts and subdistricts will transition to fall season management as the fall chum salmon migration reaches those areas. Similar to last year, the department will assess the coho salmon run and consider fishing opportunities.

Summer Season Assessment

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. Assuming late run timing, the third quarter point of the Chinook salmon run will reach Eagle sonar on August 3. The cumulative passage of Chinook salmon at Eagle sonar is below average and the smallest since 2005. Current projections indicate we will not meet the lower end of the Canadian IMEG of 42,500 fish. Passage of Chinook salmon at all U.S. assessment projects are below average and escapement goals are unlikely to be met.

The 2021 summer chum salmon run was the weakest and latest on record and failed to meet the drainage-wide escapement goal of 500,000 to 1.2 million summer chum salmon. The summer chum salmon escapements past the Anvik and Andrefsky assessment projects were very low and did not meet escapement goals. To protect the spawning escapements of Chinook and summer chum salmon, fishing will remain closed for the remainder of the summer season.

Summer Assessment Projects

All information is current through August 1.

East Fork Andrefsky River Weir / USFWS

Operations ended on July 28. Cumulative passage was 1,418 Chinook salmon, which was well below the average cumulative total of 3,928 fish and below the goal range of 2,100–4,900 fish. Summer chum salmon total count was 2,531 fish, which was well below the median cumulative passage of 55,265 fish, and below the goal of 40,000 fish.

Anvik River Sonar Project / ADF&G

Operations ended on July 26. Cumulative passage was 18,812 summer chum salmon, which was well below the median cumulative passage of 457,457 fish, and well below the goal of 3500,000–700,000 fish.

Henshaw Creek Weir / TCC

Operations ended on July 29. Cumulative passage was 130 Chinook salmon, which was well below the average cumulative total of 1,057 fish; and 3,729 summer chum salmon, which was well below the median cumulative passage of 140,947 fish.

Chena River Tower/Sonar (ADF&G)

Cumulative passage is 1,372 Chinook salmon, which is below the average of 6,055 fish for this date; and 401 summer chum salmon, which is below the median cumulative passage of 5,644 fish for this date

Salcha Tower/Sonar (ADF&G)

Cumulative passage is 1,983 Chinook salmon, which is below the average of 8,141 fish for this date; and 1,289 summer chum salmon, which is below the median cumulative passage of 10,066 fish for this date. Water conditions are low with good visibility.

Eagle Sonar (ADF&G)

Cumulative passage is 20,279 Chinook salmon, which is below the average of 46,044 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.

Stock Identification

The summer chum salmon run was so small this year two full samples were not obtained for genetic mixed stock analysis from the Pilot Station sonar test fishery. The first stratum of chum salmon samples was 86% lower river stocks and 13% middle Yukon River stocks. The second stratum of chum salmon samples (from July 3 through July 18) consisted of nearly 100% summer chum salmon, of which, 75% were lower river stocks, 20% were bound for the middle Yukon River and 4% were bound for the Tanana River. The proportions of lower and middle stocks are slightly above average whereas the Tanana stocks were below average in the second stratum.

Current Subsistence Management Actions

Subsistence salmon fishing is closed to protect Chinook and chum salmon as they migrate to their spawning grounds. Districts and subdistricts that have selective gear opportunities for pink, sockeye and coho salmon are required to release Chinook and chum alive immediately. Gillnets of 4-inch or smaller mesh may be used during subsistence salmon fishing closures to target non-salmon. However, due to the conservation concern for Chinook and chum salmon, 4-inch or smaller mesh gillnets are restricted to a maximum length of 60-feet. Fishermen are reminded to use this gear in areas where non-salmon species are abundant to avoid incidentally harvesting Chinook and chum salmon.

Coastal District, Districts 1-3, Subdistrict 4-A Lower:

Subsistence fishing is open with dip nets and hook and line gear to target salmon species other than Chinook and chum salmon (such as pink, sockeye and coho salmon). All Chinook and chum salmon caught using selective gear must be released alive immediately. Subsistence salmon fishing with other gear types remain closed.

Gillnets of 4-inch or smaller mesh may be used to target non-salmon but are restricted to 60 feet or shorter length. Additionally, other legal gear to take non-salmon species during subsistence salmon fishing closures in this area includes hand line, longline, fyke net, dip net, spear, and hook and line with a rod or pole.

Subdistrict 4-A Upper and the Koyukuk River (Kaltag, Nulato, Koyukuk, Huslia, Hughes, Alatna, Allakaket, and Bettles):

Subsistence salmon fishing is currently closed. Gillnets of 4-inch or smaller mesh may be used to target non-salmon but are restricted to 60 feet or shorter length. Additionally, other legal gear to take non-salmon species during subsistence salmon fishing closures in this area includes hand line, longline, fyke net, dip net, spear, and hook and line with a rod or pole. However, hook and line with a rod or pole may only be used for subsistence fishing for non-salmon in this subdistrict up to the Nulato River mouth and including the Nulato River drainage.

A subsistence fishing permit is required for all species in the Koyukuk River above Bettles.

Subdistrict 4-B and 4-C (Galena and Ruby):

Subsistence salmon fishing is currently closed. Gillnets of 4-inch or smaller mesh may be used to target non-salmon but are restricted to 60 feet or shorter length. Additionally, other legal gear to take non-salmon species during subsistence salmon fishing closures in these subdistricts includes hand line, longline, fyke net, dip net and spear.

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

This area will transition to fall season management at 12:01 a.m. on Thursday, August 5, and remain closed to subsistence salmon fishing.

Subsistence salmon fishing is currently closed. Gillnets of 4-inch or smaller mesh may be used to target non-salmon but are restricted to 60 feet or shorter length. Additionally, other legal gear to take non-salmon species during subsistence salmon fishing closures in these subdistricts includes hand line, longline, fyke net, dip net and spear.

A subsistence permit is required to fish for all species in Subdistrict 5-C from the westernmost tip of Garnet Island upstream to ADF&G regulatory markers located two miles downstream of Waldron Creek (Dalton Highway bridge area).

Subdistrict 5-D (Stevens Village, Beaver, Fort Yukon, Venetie, Chalkyitsik, Fort Yukon, Circle and Eagle):

Subsistence salmon fishing is currently closed. Gillnets of 4-inch or smaller mesh may be used to target non-salmon but are restricted to 60 feet or shorter length. Additionally, other legal gear to take non-salmon species during subsistence salmon fishing closures in this subdistrict includes hand line, longline, fyke net, dip net and spear.

A subsistence permit is required to fish for all species in portions of Subdistrict 5-D from ADF&G regulatory markers located two miles below Waldron Creek to the mouth of the Dall River (Dalton Highway bridge area), and from the upstream mouth of 22 Mile Slough to the U.S./Canada border.

Subdistricts 6-A and 6-B, including the Kantishna River (Manley, Minto, Nenana and Lake Minchumina):

Subsistence salmon fishing is currently closed. Gillnets of 4-inch or smaller mesh may be used to target non-salmon but are restricted to 60 feet or shorter length. Additionally, other legal gear to take non-salmon species during subsistence salmon fishing closures in these subdistricts includes hand line, longline, fyke net, dip net and spear.

A subsistence salmon fishing permit is required for this area. A subsistence fishing permit for northern pike is required in the Tolovana River drainage, including Minto Flats.

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):

Subsistence salmon fishing is currently closed. Gillnets of 4-inch or smaller mesh may be used to target non-salmon but are restricted to 60 feet or shorter length. Additionally, other legal gear to take non-salmon species during subsistence salmon fishing closures in this area includes hand line, longline, fyke net, dip net and spear.

A subsistence fishing permit is required for all species in this area.

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 salmon fishing is currently closed.

A personal use salmon fishing permit is required for this area.

Subdistrict 6-C Whitefish and Sucker Personal Use Fishing

Fishing for whitefish and suckers in this area remains open 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, subject to permit stipulations.

A personal use permit is required to fish for other species from the mouth of the Wood River upstream to the mouth of the Salcha River (Subdistrict 6-C).

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 Yukon River Subsistence Fishery Manager, Holly Carroll, please call 351-3029.



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

COVID-19

Under Alaska’s Health Advisories 1, 2, 3, and 4, subsistence and commercial fishing is considered essential and is part of Alaska’s Essential Services and Critical Infrastructure. Commercial fishermen should ensure that all travel and other activities in support of commercial fishing operations follow protocols in Alaska COVID-19 Health Advisories. COVID-19 Health Advisories may be found here: <https://covid19.alaska.gov/health-advisories/>.