



2016 Yukon River Salmon Fisheries Outlook

The 2016 Chinook salmon run is expected to be below average. Although the run may be stronger than recent years, continued conservation measures will be necessary to meet Chinook salmon escapement objectives.

2016 Run and Harvest Outlook for Yukon River Salmon

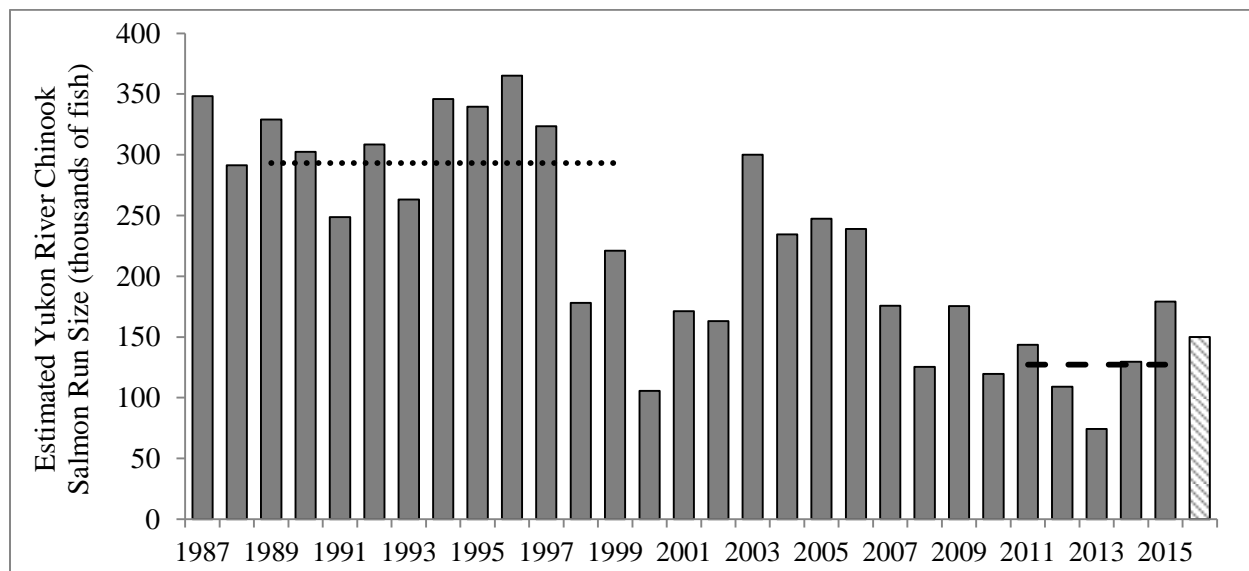
	Chinook	Summer Chum	Fall Chum	Coho
Projection:	Below Average	Average to above average	Below average	Average to above average
Escapement:	Potential to meet most goals	Expect to meet goals	Expect to meet goals	Expect to meet goal
Subsistence:	Restrictions necessary	Expect to provide for normal harvest	Expect to provide for normal harvest	Expect to provide for normal harvest
Commercial:	No fishery	450,000 to 950,000 potentially available	20,000 to 230,000 potentially available	30,000 to 100,000 potentially available

Management Strategies

- Before Chinook salmon enter the river, subsistence fishing opportunity for non-salmon species will be provided with 6-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets.
- As the Chinook salmon run begins to build, subsistence salmon fishing will close chronologically in each district based on the migration timing of Chinook salmon to protect the first pulse of Chinook salmon as mandated by regulation. Additional closures may be necessary if run assessment indicates a weaker than expected run.
- Similar to 2015, Subdistrict 5-D will be open to fish on the early trickle of Chinook salmon with 6-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets prior to the first pulse closure.
- During subsistence salmon fishing closures, non-salmon species may be harvested using 4-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets not exceeding 60-feet in length.
- When summer chum salmon become abundant, subsistence and commercial fishing opportunities will initially be provided with selective gear such as dip nets, beach seines, and manned fish wheels that require the immediate and careful release of all Chinook salmon alive.
- When confidence is high that the Chinook salmon run is adequate and escapement goals are likely to be met, the use of 6-inch gillnets, and possibly 7.5-inch gillnets, on a reduced regulatory schedule may be considered.
- Fishermen are reminded that whenever gillnets are allowed, they may choose to use *smaller* mesh gillnets than specified.
- The sport fishery for Chinook salmon is closed throughout the U.S. portion of the Yukon River drainage, excluding the Tanana River drainage. Chinook salmon may not be retained or possessed. Restrictions for the Tanana River drainage will be announced in early June.
- The fall chum salmon run is anticipated to be of sufficient size to provide for full subsistence harvest opportunity with a potential surplus for commercial harvest.

The 2016 drainage-wide Chinook salmon outlook is for a run size of 130,000 to 175,000 fish. The upper end of this range is similar in size to the run observed in 2015 and will require subsistence harvest restrictions in order to assure minimum escapement objectives are met. As in recent years, initial management will be based on the expectation that the 2016 Chinook salmon run size will likely be near the lower end of this range. However, management strategies may change based on inseason run assessment information.

The following chart shows the historical estimated Chinook salmon total run size in the Yukon River, illustrating the decline in production beginning in 1998. The cause of this drop in production remains largely unknown.



Note: The 2016 dashed bar represents the approximate midpoint of the projected outlook range of 130,000 to 175,000 Chinook salmon. The dotted line represents the historical average run size and the dashed line is the recent 5-year average run size.

For 2016, the U.S./Canada Yukon River Panel agreed to continue Interim Management Escapement Goals (IMEG) in Canada of 42,500–55,000 Chinook salmon and 70,000–104,000 fall chum salmon based upon the mainstem sonar program operated near Eagle. The Fishing Branch River IMEG of 22,000–49,000 fall chum salmon is based upon the historical weir data. However, Porcupine River chum salmon production has been consistently underperforming compared to other Yukon River fall chum salmon stocks, so fishery managers will work with fishermen along the Porcupine River on exploring opportunities to conserve chum salmon in the local area.

For additional information:

Subsistence fishing schedule: 1 (866) 479-7387 (toll free); in Fairbanks, call: (907) 459-7387.

ADF&G: Holly Carroll (Chinook and summer chum), Anchorage office: (907) 267-2324;

Jeff Estensen (fall chum and coho), Fairbanks office: (907) 459-7217;

The Emmonak ADF&G office will open June 1: (907) 949-1320.

USFWS: Fred Bue, Fairbanks: (907) 455-1849 or 1-800-267-3997; or contact the Emmonak USFWS office: (907) 949-1798.