

Greetings from the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association!

Here is a summary of the 3rd, 2019 Yukon River Salmon In-Season Management Teleconference held Tuesday, June 18, 2019. Call lasted 94 minutes. 54 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 the US Dept. of the Interior, Office of Subsistence Management.

Media participating: KZPA radio-Fort Yukon, **Radio in Whitehorse**

Political Representatives participating: none

Communities & organizations participating this week: 23

Hooper Bay

Alakanuk

Mountain Village

Saint Marys

Marshall

Russian Mission

Holy Cross

Anvik

Nulato

Koyukuk

Huslia

Allakaket

Galena

Rampart

Rapids

Beaver

Fort Yukon

Nenana

Fairbanks

Old Crow

Dawson

Whitehorse

Subsistence Reports:

Alaska

Hooper Bay: Lester Wilde - Fishing for about a week. Favorable weather and winds. The bay is warming up and getting shallower. Fish are not coming to where our nets are. Less than 1% complete on subsistence. My family hasn't gotten any fish and we've had our nets in the water for a week.

Wayne: Is the shallow water something that's happened over the last few years?

Lester: Yes, over the last few years we've had a lot of erosion, making the water shallower and warmer.

Alakanuk: Pamela - Why didn't we receive the news release for Alakanuk? Survey for the week I contacted 20 households. Interviewed 17. 8 fished. 3 reported less this week. 5 reported better than last week. 9% Chums and 10% Kings. 4 Sheefish caught. 5.5", 5 3/4", 5 7/8" and 6" set nets. Warm water. Some fisherman complained about closures. They would like to not be restricted until after commercial has started.

Mt. Village: Nita - Contacted 19 people, interviewed 8. Water levels are still high. Waiting on the chum run to cut their dry fish. Caught less fish last week.

St. Marys: Bill Alstrom - Not very much happening. Water is slowly going down. Still debris floating downriver. I don't know that everyone is done with their subsistence with kings yet, but I think they are. Chums are really slow. I heard that they are starting to pick up at the mouth, so hopefully we will be getting some.

Marshall: Norma Evan - I spoke with 12 families - 9 fished. Most reported better fishing. We had a hot week. Water is down about 7' and there is a lot less debris in the water because it is lower. We've also had a smoky week due to some fires.

Russian Mission: Basil - Water is dropping fast. There is less fish now. Most everyone is still being conservative with Kings. There were some camps that have 30-55 kings. Chums are slow. There is a fire north of Russian Mission. We were smoked out for a while, but it is clearing up now. Lots of air traffic. One woman reported 2 very infected kings, and they had to be disposed of.

Holy Cross: David Walker - The water is dropping and the debris has subsided. Little or no debris in the water. Some fisherman haven't started yet. This weekend

really nothing was caught. We are just waiting on the numbers coming in the mouth now.

Anvik: Ken Chase - Water has gone down and not much debris left. Shageluk no salmon yet. Water is still higher than normal there. I don't know what the overall catch is here yet, but it seems pretty slow. The few I've caught have been all smaller males. I had one that was infected too. It was all watery, red and infected, so I got rid of it. The people that I talked to in Grayling; some boats were getting 7-10 a night. Everyone seems satisfied with 7.5" net in this opening at this time.

Nulato: Mickey Stickman - People are just getting started. A few people with kings on their racks. Some guys got 7 last night. I haven't gone fishing yet. The water was high all the way to Tanana. It is dropping steadily. Still some drift on the river. Everyone is just getting ready to get started in the next couple of days.

Koyukuk: Benedict Jones - Average about 2 every 24 hours. Water is dropping about 4-6" per day. No more debris in the water.

Huslia: Zoe - People are only fishing for whitefish, sheefish and pike. The water is still too high to fish. This is the highest that the water has gotten that the elders can remember.

Allakaket: Pollock Simon - Water dropping 4-5" every day. No debris. Most of the snow in the mountains is gone. Light rain. The weather is nice. Fishing the slough for whitefish and pike.

Galena: Howard - Water dropped 4' since last week. The water temp is ?? its warm. People are saying the fish are cooking in the water.

Rampart: Charlie - Catching 2-5 Kings per day for about 10 days. Water is going down steadily. Low debris in the water. Sheefish are starting to come in.

Rapids: Stan **Zuray** - Charlie covered it mostly. Whitefish fishing has been going for about 3 weeks. Most fisherman have not been fishing yet. 1 king per net per day seems accurate, but as of the last day or so, seems to be changing. No wheels running yet.

Beaver: Paul Williams – No one is fishing here yet. It's a little early. Another week-10 days people will start. River has gone down. No debris.

Fort Yukon: Andrew - Not much to report. Only a couple of people fishing with nets. I will start my surveys this weekend so I will have a better report next week. Fish Commission is here, so I need to go see them.

Eagle: Catherine, Ruby & Dawn - Not much happening in Eagle yet. No nets in yet. Weather is beautiful. River levels are good and dropping. We are just excited and waiting for the fish.

Nenana: Victor Lord - Not much going on. River is kind of low. I saw a fish net going by on the bank on a 4 wheeler last night, but other than that I haven't seen anyone fishing.

Fairbanks: Virgil - The water is real low. It is supposed to be 80 tomorrow. The water in Huslia is higher this spring than it was in 1994 that was called a "100 year flood event" that took away Hughes.

Canada

Old Crow: Stan - Water level is average low for this time of year. We are fishing for whitefish and we are chomping at the bit to fish for Kings. A lot of erosion happening and that is affecting the turbidity of the water.

Dawson: Al von Finster- No fishing going on. Upper Yukon Drainage Basin is pretty dry this year. It is drier than I've ever seen it. The groundwater is real low this year. A lot of the water ran off on top of the ice this year and didn't go into the ground.

Whitehorse: Steve Gotch. A little rain over the last 2 weeks, but not a lot of increase in water flows. The rain isn't doing much for water levels. No fish. Harvey Jesse - Next week is the Yukon Quest and the big concern is the water levels. Many people are saying they've never seen the water levels this low.

Management Reports:

ADFG:

Fred - Seeing a strong early trickle of chinook. Most likely counting the first pulse at this point. Chum has just picked up the last day or 2. Average run is 9% for a normal run and 2% for a late run. Similar chinook passage to 2018 so far.

Holly - I've been reaching out to fishermen to get some local knowledge since we've seen some weird stuff. At Pilot Station, using a 6" net, some of his Kings there were puss pockets and the fish were soft. They did notice some differences when they were being checked at night - the flesh seemed better. We've heard from subsistence that the catches were small fish. We are seeing real big fish coming in now. We won't know the ages until we send the scales in, that will be about a week out. Got another great report from Scammon Bay, he was saying that he was seeing beluga today, which means there is probably a chum pulse coming in soon.

What we are seeing is the early trickle of fish was really strong. We probably had more fish coming in before we started counting them. We are having a hard time deciding what is a pulse. Things are looking good for Kings. Commercial fishing is going to be delayed due to the late chum return. Management strategy right now is just like we came into the season - reduced schedule for all districts. We don't plan on changing now. We are just waiting to see on the chums.

USFWS:

Fred - Kings are similar to last year both in timing and magnitude. We had restrictions, but we met our goals. The chum are late, but to add to that it isn't just the Yukon. The chum aren't coming in strong anywhere yet - but it is still early. Also, you've heard up river has really low water conditions, but in the lower river the main stem is pretty normal. In some places it is still too high. Anvik river sonar went in 2 days ago and they saw a couple of chum. There are some moving up.

Dept. of Fisheries and Oceans:

Jesse -

- The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Canada has received the Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee's Management and Allocation Recommendations for 2019.
- The various recommendations provided will be carefully considered to ensure that resulting public, commercial and domestic fishery management measures are administered in a way which supports rebuilding and sustainable management of Yukon River Salmon stocks into the future.
- We anticipate the Minister will provide his decision by July 1, which will result in the finalization of the 2019 Canadian fishery management strategy and coincide with the arrival of the first Chinook salmon at the international border.

- Given the Canadian-origin Chinook salmon rebuilding process is still underway we anticipate that a conservative approach to managing salmon fisheries will again be required in 2019.
- A key Canadian priority will continue to be to ensure that large, Canadian-origin salmon reach their spawning grounds in order to sustain future returns.
- Over the coming weeks, Fisheries and Oceans Canada will rely on information collected by assessment programs at Pilot Station and Harvest in Alaska to inform in-season management decisions in Canada.
- The total number of Chinook past Pilot station at the mid-point of the run will be particularly important in informing initial fishery opportunities upstream of the international border in Canada during the first half of July.
- Information received through these weekly calls is also particularly helpful in informing fishery management strategies in Canada.

Questions and discussion:

Victor - Holly said it was a big trickle, and then Fred said the first pulse was just now going past Pilot Station.

Holly - We've had really consistent fish counts at Pilot. We know we were expecting a large increase today or tomorrow. We think we are currently counting the first pulse, but we can't really tell until it's passed Pilot. The early fish were steady and strong is what we were saying.

Mickey - What is the schedule for fishing in Nulato?

Holly - currently in Nulato its open 24 hours but tomorrow it will close and you will go to your reduced schedule. I just wanted to remind fisherman that if you need to know your schedule, call the hotline; 866/479-7387.

Pamela - What is the fishing schedule for Y1. The concern is that they prefer to hear from me.

Holly - If they don't want to call the hotline, or if they have questions, they can call us in Emmonak.

Pamela - There was also concern about why fishing isn't open for people trying to gather subsistence. There aren't many boats around here and some people are

harvesting for 5 family members. Can you keep it open unrestricted until commercial opens?

Holly - I understand the concern; a lot of fishermen are fishing for multiple families. But we don't have run sizes that support 100% subsistence. Unfortunately, that is the point. Everyone may not meet their needs entirely.

Stan - I just wanted to add some perspective about the infected fish. Puss pockets are not something that you see in Ich infected fish anymore than you see in regular fish.

Charlie - I just wanted you to know that I haven't seen anything like that. Everything has been healthy and beautiful.

Marshall - Wasily - I don't know if it was brought up already, but a question has come to my attention about the quota for the buyers.

Holly - A commercial quota for chums? There is no quota for individuals.
Wasily - I am just talking about the buyers. Anyone can fish, but I am talking about the buyers so everyone can have a share.

Ben Jones - All 4 year olds that we are catching. Some of the first run is not as rich as the Pacific runs. Usually the sheefish hit 10 days before the Kings run, but right now it is hitting after the Kings.

Holly - that is unusual. I wonder if that does mean that there was such a strong trickle of kings before we started counting. There is a lot of weird stuff going on right now.

Norma - I have been fishing every summer since I was 10 years old. When the sand bars are 100% underwater, you get a lot faster swim time of the salmon. We've had such high water, that I think that the fish were a lot faster.

Holly - I think we are seeing that as well. We are hearing reports that fish are swimming deeper too. I think you are spot on.

Norma - Most of my Kings have been caught close to the bank. My cousin was fishing in the middle of the river. He got 5 and I got 30.

Wayne - I wonder if the fish are seeking the coldest water they can find.

Bill - With high temps and extremely low water, hopefully the spawning grounds aren't affected.

Fred Bue - There are a lot of theories on that. It will still be a month before they get there, so it is early to tell. There are a lot of different variables that will play into this and it is a long season.

Al - I maintain a system of water temperature monitoring. What I suspect is going to happen this year, unless we get a lot of rain, some of the better producing spawning grounds will be stressed. With high temps and lower levels, risks of beaver dams moving in, create another problem for salmon getting through. This may be the year to watch, to see what we are going to run into in the worst of climate change.

Call ended at 2:34

Contact info for ADFG YR Summer Season Manager; call 907/267-2324

For further information, please contact the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association at 907-272-3131 or look for us on the web at www.yukonsalmon.org.

For Alaskan management information, please visit:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=fishingCommercialByArea.interior>

or call toll-free 1-866-479-7387 for recorded fishing schedules and assessment information

For Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Canada updates, please visit:

<http://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/yukon/fmcountingfac.htm>

Please join us on the next teleconference, Tuesday at 1 p.m. Alaska time (2 p.m. Yukon time). As a reminder, the toll free number is 1-800-315-6338 and the code is YUKON# (98566#).