

**ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES
NEWS RELEASE**



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**2016 Yukon River Summer Salmon Fishery News Release # 7
Summer Update # 2, Yukon Area Salmon Fishery
Districts Affected: Yukon Area**

Assessment

The 2016 salmon season is underway on the Yukon River. Based on above average temperatures and an early ice out, the Chinook salmon run was predicted to be early this year. The first summer chum and Chinook salmon were caught in the Lower Yukon Test Fishery (LYTF) on May 17 and May 23, respectively. While catch rates have been relatively low for both Chinook and summer chum salmon in the LYTF since the first catches, salmon have started moving into the river over the weekend. Based on historical migration timing, the first summer chum salmon should be between Grayling and Kaltag and the first Chinook salmon should be near the District 3 and Subdistrict 4-A boundary on May 31.

The department would like to extend gratitude to the lower Yukon River subsistence fishermen who have shared harvest information. These reports are instrumental in directing management actions during the early part of the season. The department is reminding fishermen to track their harvest on their subsistence calendars and encourages them to continue calling the ADF&G office to provide harvest reports.

Fishermen are also reminded that the Yukon River Inseason Salmon Management Teleconferences hosted by Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association will be held every Tuesday, starting June 7, 2016 at 1:00 p.m. Dial (800) 315-6338, and enter participant code: YUKON #.

Assessment Projects

Lower Yukon Test Fishery (LYTF)/ ADF&G and YDFDA

In anticipation of an early salmon run, LYTF operations began early starting with the drift gillnet program. Due to debris and heavy winds, shorter nets had to be used and some fishing periods were missed. Salmon catches were low which matched reports from subsistence fishermen.

The 8.5-inch set gillnet was fully operational the evening of May 23 in the Big Eddy area of South Mouth. Chinook salmon catches in the set net continue to be low and sporadic. The set net site in Middle Mouth is expected to be in place by June 3.

The 5.5-inch summer chum drift and the 8.25-inch Chinook salmon drift test fishing projects have been fully operational at Big Eddy since May 19 and May 21, respectively. Catches for both summer chum and Chinook salmon continue to be low and sporadic.

Any Chinook salmon healthy enough will be released alive from the test nets and injured salmon will be distributed to village elders by the Tribal Councils. Fewer set net sites are being fished than in the past to reduce Chinook salmon mortality.

Sonar Project near Pilot Station/ ADF&G

The sonar project near Pilot Station should be fully operational by June 1. Test fishery catches at the project since May 30 include very few Chinook and some whitefish.

Management Strategies

A conservative management approach is being taken early in the summer season because of the below average return of Chinook salmon expected in 2016.

Closures for subsistence salmon gillnet fishing have been implemented from the Northern Portion of the Coastal District up through District 2. These closures will be implemented in upriver districts and subdistricts based on historical migratory timing prior to the arrival of Chinook salmon. The intent is to protect the early fish and first pulse of Chinook salmon as they make their way upriver.

Restrictions are expected to be in place for most of the Chinook salmon run. However, management strategies may change based on inseason run assessment information. It is still too early in the season to assess the strength of the 2016 Chinook salmon run. Therefore, current management actions are being based on the preseason Chinook salmon outlook.

Fortunately, the 2016 summer chum salmon run is expected to be average to above average. Fishing opportunities to harvest summer chum salmon with selective gear such as dip nets, beach seines, and live-release fish wheels will be provided. Yukon Area fishermen should be prepared for liberal subsistence and commercial opportunity using selective fishing gear to harvest summer chum salmon while releasing Chinook salmon safely to the water. These gear types may not be efficient until strong pulses of summer chum enter the river so fishermen are encouraged to call the toll-free fishing hotline (**1-866-479-7387**) for up to date information.

The 2016 season is expected to be another challenging year for Yukon River fishermen. ADF&G and USFWS would like to extend thanks and appreciation to the fishermen of the Yukon River for their continuing efforts to conserve Chinook salmon.

Current Management

In the **Southern Portion of the Coastal District** (from the Naskonat Peninsula north to 62 degrees North latitude):

Subsistence salmon fishing is open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with 6-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets until further notice.

In the **Northern Portion of the Coastal District** (from 62 degrees North latitude to Point Romanof and including all state marine waters):

Subsistence salmon fishing is closed until further notice.

In District 1 (including the Black River):

Subsistence salmon fishing with gillnets is closed. Subsistence fishing with dip nets and beach seine gear is open for 24 hours a day, seven days per week to target summer chum salmon. Fishermen are reminded that Chinook salmon caught in dip nets and beach seines must be released alive.

In District 2:

Effective 6:00 p.m. Tuesday, May 31, subsistence salmon fishing with gillnets is closed to protect Chinook salmon.

Effective 6:00 p.m. Wednesday, June 1, subsistence fishing will reopen with dip nets and beach seine gear 24 hours a day, seven days per week to target summer chum salmon. Fishermen are reminded that Chinook salmon caught in dip nets and beach seines must be released alive.

District 3: Subsistence salmon fishing is currently open 24 hours a day, seven days per week and fishermen may use 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets.

Effective 6:00 p.m. Friday, June 3, subsistence salmon fishing with gillnets is closed to protect Chinook salmon.

Effective 6:00 p.m. Saturday, June 4, subsistence fishing will reopen with dip nets and beach seine gear for 24 hours a day, seven days per week to target summer chum salmon.

Fishermen are required to immediately release Chinook salmon alive from dip nets and beach seines. The requirement to release Chinook salmon alive will be strictly enforced. Great care must be taken to assure Chinook salmon are released quickly and unharmed so that they can swim the long distance upriver and spawn successfully. Fishermen are also strongly encouraged to avoid fishing where Chinook salmon may be encountered.

Innoko River: Subsistence fishing is currently open 24 hours a day, seven days per week and fishermen may use 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets. Fishermen should be prepared for management actions that restrict subsistence salmon fishing when the first pulse of Chinook salmon is expected to migrate into the Innoko River.

District 4 (from $\frac{3}{4}$ mile downstream of Old Paradise Village upstream to Illinois Creek): Subsistence fishing is currently open 24 hours a day, seven days per week and fishermen may use fish wheels or gillnets (set net only) with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or less.

Koyukuk River: Subsistence fishing is currently open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets.

District 5: Subsistence fishing is currently open 24 hours a day, seven days per week and fishermen may use fish wheels or gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or less.

District 6: By regulation, the subsistence salmon fishing schedule consists of two 42-hour fishing periods per week from 6:00 p.m. Mondays until 12:00 noon Wednesdays and from 6:00 p.m. Fridays until 12:00 noon Sundays and fishermen may use fish wheels or gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or less. Fishermen should anticipate fishing restrictions when Chinook salmon start moving into the Tanana River.

Old Minto Area: Subsistence salmon fishing is open five days per week from 6:00 p.m. Fridays until 6:00 p.m. Wednesdays and fishermen may use fish wheels or gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or less. Fishermen should anticipate fishing restrictions when Chinook salmon start moving into the Old Minto area.

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, including the communities of Healy Lake, Dot Lake, Tanacross, Northway, and the Tok area): Subsistence fishing is open 24 hours a day, seven days per week. Fishermen may use fish wheels or gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or less.

During subsistence salmon fishing closures in the Yukon Area, gillnets 4-inch or smaller mesh of 60 feet or shorter length may be used for non-salmon species. All salmon caught in 4-inch gillnets may be retained, but fishermen are reminded not to target salmon as this gear is intended for non-salmon species.

Subsistence fishermen are reminded that a fishing permit is required in District 6, the Upper Tanana and Koyukuk Rivers, as well as the portion of Subdistricts 5-C and 5-D from the western most tip of Garnet Island upstream to the Dall River and from the upstream mouth of 22-Mile Slough to the US/Canada Border.

As a reminder, fisherman may encounter Chinook salmon that have been tagged with coded wire tags embedded in the salmon's nose. Because this type of tag is not visible, the salmon will have the adipose fin clipped off signifying the fish is tagged. The adipose fin is the small fleshy fin on the fish's back located immediately in front of the tail fin. If you notice the adipose fin is missing

on a salmon, please remove the head, note the date and location of capture, then freeze the head. Call the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Emmonak at(907) 949-1798 or in Fairbanks at (800) 267-3997 and arrangements will be made to ship the head.

The subsistence fishing schedule and recorded fishery announcements will be available 24 hours a day at **(866) 479-7387** (toll free outside of Fairbanks); in Fairbanks, call **(907) 459-7387**.

The Emmonak ADF&G office will open June 1. If you have any questions regarding this report, please call (907) 949-1320.

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