

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



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**2016 Yukon River Summer Salmon Fishery News Release # 51
Summer Update # 7, Yukon Area Salmon Fishery
Districts Affected: Yukon Area**

Assessment

Based on sonar and run timing estimates, the 2016 summer chum salmon run is projected to be near the upper end of the preseason outlook range of 1.3 to 1.8 million fish. The 2016 Chinook salmon run is projected to be near the upper end of the preseason outlook range of 130,000 to 175,000 fish. Preliminary run timing dates suggest the 2016 Chinook salmon run may be up to five days earlier than the historical average run timing. A Chinook salmon run size of this magnitude is lower than the historical early year average, but does have the potential to meet escapement goals and objectives and provide a limited subsistence harvest. However, given the recent trend of low Yukon River Chinook salmon run sizes, it is still too early to project whether escapement goals will be met until Chinook salmon passage increases at escapement projects. At this point, the department is hopeful that the conservative management actions and sacrifices made by fishermen to date will result in attaining spawning escapements needed to sustain this Chinook salmon run for future generations.

As of July 4, four Chinook and four summer chum salmon pulses have been identified at the sonar project near Pilot Station and their upriver travel has been tracked using average swimming speed. The first pulse of approximately 23,000 Chinook salmon lasted four days at the sonar project and should be passing Circle. A second, three-day, pulse of approximately 33,000 Chinook salmon closely followed the first pulse and should be between Stevens Village and Beaver. The third pulse of approximately 47,000 Chinook salmon lasted six days at the sonar project and should be near Tanana. The fourth pulse of approximately 23,000 Chinook salmon lasted five days at the sonar project and should be between Grayling and Kaltag. The first pulse of approximately 395,000 summer chum salmon lasted six days at the sonar project and should be between Ruby and Tanana. The second pulse of approximately 244,000 summer chum

salmon should be between Kaltag and Koyukuk. The third pulse of approximately 237,000 summer chum salmon should be between Grayling and Kaltag. The fourth large group of approximately 127,000 summer chum salmon should be near Holy Cross. The average historical third-quarter point for early run Chinook salmon is June 25 and the median historical third-quarter point for early run summer chum salmon at the sonar project is June 30.

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

Assessment Projects

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

The cumulative Chinook salmon CPUE for the 8.5-inch set gillnets at the Big Eddy and Middle Mouth sites combined as of July 3 is 33.94, which is above the historical average of 25.92. The cumulative Chinook salmon CPUE at the 8.25-inch drift gillnet at the Big Eddy site as of July 3 is 533.28, which is above the historical average of 379.15. The last day of operation for the Big Eddy 8.5 set gillnet was June 30. The combined cumulative summer chum salmon CPUE for the 5.5-inch drift gill net at the Big Eddy and Middle Mouth sites as of July 3 is 9,150.96, which is well above the historical median of 5,998.32 for this date.

Operations at the LYTF for both Chinook and summer chum salmon have been altered from previous years so caution should be taken when comparing current catch rates to historical catch rates. All healthy Chinook salmon are released alive from the test nets and injured salmon are 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 has been fully operational since June 1, which is one of the earliest start dates since 1995. The project is operating well and has not experienced any major issues from debris or equipment malfunction. Chinook salmon passage as of July 3 is estimated to be 155,742 fish which is below the historical cumulative average of 159,327 Chinook salmon for this date and below the average of 195,857 for years with early timing. Summer chum salmon passage as of July 3 is estimated to be 1,329,760 fish which is well above the historical cumulative median of 1,235,615 summer chum salmon for this date.

East Fork Andreafsky River Weir / USFWS

The East Fork Andreafsky River weir began operations on June 20. Chinook salmon passage as of July 3 is estimated to be 1,336 fish, which is above the historical cumulative average of 485 Chinook salmon for this date. Summer chum salmon passage as of July 1 is estimated to be 28,930, which is above the historical cumulative median of 13,665 for this date. The Sustainable Escapement Goal (SEG) for the Andreafsky River is 2,100–4,900 for Chinook salmon and greater than 40,000 for summer chum salmon.

Anvik River Sonar / ADF&G

The Anvik River sonar began operations on June 16. Summer chum salmon passage as of July 3 is estimated to be 153,465 fish, which is above the historical cumulative median of 97,302 summer chum salmon for this date. The Biological Escapement Goal (BEG) for summer chum salmon is 350,000–700,000 fish past the sonar project.

Gisasa River Weir / USFWS

The Gisasa River weir began operations on June 17, which is one of the earliest start dates since 1995. Chinook salmon passage as of July 3 is estimated to be 192 fish, which is above the historical cumulative average of 103 Chinook salmon for this date. Summer chum salmon passage as of July 3 is estimated to be 22,221 fish, which is well above the historical median of 3,375 summer chum salmon for this date.

Chena River Tower / ADF&G

The Chena River tower began operations on June 26. Water conditions are currently obscuring visibility, but fortunately sonar is also in operation which will be used post-season to assess passage during days when visibility prohibited counts from the tower. Chinook salmon passage as of July 1 is estimated to be 3 fish, which is below the historical cumulative average of 103 Chinook salmon for this date. No summer chum salmon have been observed at the tower. The BEG for Chinook salmon is 2,800–5,700 past the tower.

Salcha River Tower / ADF&G

The Salcha River tower began operations on June 26. Chinook salmon passage as of July 3 is estimated to be 444 fish, which is above the historical cumulative average of 161 Chinook salmon for this date. No summer chum salmon have been observed at the tower. The BEG for Chinook salmon is 3,300–6,500 past the tower.

Eagle Sonar / ADF&G

The Eagle sonar project began operations on July 1, which is one of the earliest start dates since the project began in 2005. As of July 3, 1,158 Chinook salmon have been counted, which is below the historical cumulative average of 2,051 for this date.

Age Composition

The Chinook salmon age composition from drift gillnets in the Pilot Station test fishery between May 30 and June 17 was 14% age-4, 68% age-5, 17% age-6, and 2% age-7 fish. The sample size was 282 fish, of which 42% were female. The Chinook salmon age composition from drift gillnets in the Pilot Station test fishery between June 18 and June 25 was 20% age-4, 67% age-5, 12% age-6, and less than 1% age-7 fish. The sample size was 210 fish, of which 49% were female. For both sampling periods, the age-5 percentage was above average, the age-6 percentage was below average, and the proportion of females was above average.

Stock Identification

Genetic mixed stock analysis (MSA) on the early group and first pulse of Chinook salmon past the sonar project near Pilot Station (May 30 to June 14) estimated 52% of the fish were of Canadian-origin, which is slightly above expectations for even-year Chinook salmon runs. Genetic MSA indicated that roughly 34% of the second and third pulses of Chinook salmon past

the sonar project (June 15 to June 25) were of Canadian-origin, which was slightly below expectations for even-year Chinook salmon runs.

Two strata of chum salmon genetic samples were recently processed. The strata from May 30–June 21 consisted of 99% summer chum salmon, of which about 9% were bound for the middle Yukon River. The strata from June 22–28 also indicated that summer chum salmon made up approximately 99% of the sample but consisted of about 23% middle Yukon River stocks. The Tanana River summer chum salmon contribution was negligible for both strata.

Management Strategies

In order to protect the early fish and first pulse of Chinook salmon as they made their way upriver, subsistence Chinook salmon fishing closures were implemented from the Northern Portion of the Coastal District up through District 5 based on average swimming speed.

Consistent with the management strategies discussed at the pre-season planning meeting, in an effort to provide more regular fishing opportunity rather than short-notice “surgical” openings, the reduced regulatory schedule is being used to provide fishing opportunity in Districts 1 through 5 C with gillnet mesh restricted to 6-inches or smaller. The intent of these gillnet openings is to provide fishermen opportunity to more efficiently meet their subsistence needs for summer chum salmon while providing some limited harvest of Chinook salmon. Chinook salmon caught in 6-inch gillnet gear are likely to be smaller, younger fish with a higher proportion of males. Effort has been made to put each district on this reduced schedule in such a way that the harvest is spread equitably across the Chinook run, while still protecting the first pulse.

Given the cumulative passage of Chinook salmon past the sonar project near Pilot Station, and Chinook salmon run projections that indicate escapement goals are likely to be met, subsistence fishermen in Districts 2 through Subdistrict 5-C have been provided one short 7.5-inch mesh gillnet subsistence period spaced between their reduced regulatory periods.

The 2016 summer chum salmon run is expected to be near the upper end of the preseason forecast so liberal summer chum salmon subsistence fishing with 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets has been provided from the South Coastal district through 5-C and commercial gillnet fishing periods for summer chum salmon are being provided in Districts 1 and 2.

General Management Reminders:

- Fishermen are asked to please record their subsistence harvests, including any salmon kept from commercial fishing, on their harvest calendars for all species of fish.
- 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 kept but fishermen may not target salmon as this gear is intended for non-salmon species.
- Chinook salmon caught in gillnets may be kept for subsistence use.

Current Management

Southern Portion of the Coastal District (from the Naskonat Peninsula north to 62 degrees North latitude): Subsistence salmon fishing is currently open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets.

Northern Portion of the Coastal District (from 62 degrees North latitude to Point Romanof and including all state marine waters): Subsistence salmon fishing is currently open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets.

District 1 (including the Black River):

Subsistence salmon fishing is currently open 24 hours per day, seven days per week with 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets except for six hours before, during, and six hours after commercial fishing periods.

District 2:

Subsistence salmon fishing is currently open 24 hours per day, seven days per week with 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets except for six hours before, during, and six hours after commercial fishing periods.

District 3: Currently, subsistence summer chum salmon fishing is open for two 18-hour periods per week on the following schedule with 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets:

- 8:00 p.m. Sundays to 2:00 p.m. Mondays
- 8:00 p.m. Wednesdays to 2:00 p.m. Thursdays

Between the fishing periods subsistence salmon fishing is closed.

Innoko River:

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

Subdistrict 4-A Lower (from $\frac{3}{4}$ mile downstream of Old Paradise Village upstream to Stink Creek, which includes the mainstem Yukon River communities of Anvik and Grayling including all tributaries):

Subsistence salmon fishing is currently open for two 24-hour periods per week with 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels on the following schedule:

- 6:00 p.m. Sundays until 6:00 p.m. Mondays
- 6:00 p.m. Wednesdays until 6:00 p.m. Thursdays

Subdistrict 4-A Upper: (from Stink Creek upstream to Cone Point, which includes the mainstem Yukon River communities of Kaltag, Nulato, and Koyukuk):

Subsistence salmon fishing is currently open for two 24-hour periods per week with 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels on the following schedule:

- 6:00 p.m. Mondays until 6:00 p.m. Tuesdays
- 6:00 p.m. Thursdays until 6:00 p.m. Fridays

Effective 6:00 p.m. Wednesday, July 6, subsistence salmon fishing will open for one additional 6-hour period with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets from 6:00 p.m. until 12:00 a.m. midnight Wednesday, July 6. Following this opening, subsistence fishing will return to the two 24-hour periods per week schedule.

Subdistrict 4-B and 4-C (from Cone Point to Illinois Creek, which includes the mainstem Yukon River communities of Galena and Ruby):

Currently, subsistence salmon fishing is open for two 24-hour periods per week with 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels on the following schedule:

- 6:00 p.m. Sundays until 6:00 p.m. Mondays
- 6:00 p.m. Wednesdays until 6:00 p.m. Thursdays

Effective Friday, July 8, from 6:00 p.m. to 12:00 a.m. midnight subsistence fishing is open for one additional 6-hour period with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels.

Federal regulations allow the use of drift gillnets for the subsistence harvest of Chinook salmon in Federal public waters in Yukon River Subdistricts 4-B and 4-C from June 10 through July 14 during scheduled gillnet openings. Fishermen who want to fish with drift gillnets in Federal public waters of Subdistricts 4-B and 4-C may do so on the above schedule with 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnet gear until July 14. No permit is required. Anyone outside of these areas are limited to set gillnets only. All salmon caught in gillnets and fish wheels may be kept for subsistence use.

Koyukuk River:

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

Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C (from the western edge of the mouth of Illinois Creek upstream to the ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately two miles downstream of Waldron Creek, including the communities of Tanana and Rampart as well as the area near the Yukon River bridge):

Subsistence summer chum salmon fishing is currently open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with selective gear including dip nets, beach seines, and live-release fish wheels only. Any Chinook salmon caught in these gear types must be immediately released to the water alive.

Effective 6:00 p.m. Tuesday, July 5, subsistence salmon fishing will be open for two 24-hour periods per week with 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets (set net only) and fish wheels on the following schedule:

- 6:00 p.m. Tuesdays until 6:00 p.m. Wednesdays
- 6:00 p.m. Fridays until 6:00 p.m. Saturdays

Effective Sunday, July 10, from 6:00 p.m. to 12:00 a.m. midnight subsistence fishing is open for one additional 6-hour period with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels.

All salmon caught in set gillnets and fish wheels may be kept for subsistence use. A fishing permit is required to fish for all species in the portion of Subdistrict 5-C from the western most tip of Garnet Island upstream to the mouth of Dall River.

Subdistrict 5-D Lower (from an ADF&G regulatory marker two miles downstream of Waldron Creek upstream to the Hadweenzic River and including all adjacent tributaries, which includes the communities of Stevens Village and Beaver):

Subsistence salmon fishing in Subdistrict 5-D Lower is currently closed.

Subdistrict 5-D Middle (from the Hadweenzic River upstream to 22 Mile Slough and including the Porcupine River and all other adjacent tributaries, which includes the communities of Venetie, Chalkyitsik and Fort Yukon):

Subsistence salmon fishing in Subdistrict 5-D Middle is currently closed.

Subdistrict 5-D Upper (from 22 Mile Slough to the U.S./Canada border and including all adjacent tributaries, which includes the communities of Circle City and Eagle):

Subsistence fishing for salmon in Subdistrict 5-D Upper is closed.

A fishing permit is required to fish for all species in the following locations: between the western tip of Garnet Island and 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: Subsistence salmon fishing in Subdistricts 6-A and 6-B currently consists of two 42-hour periods each week, from 6:00 p.m. Mondays until 12:00 p.m. noon Wednesdays and from 6:00 p.m. Fridays until 12:00 noon Sundays, and fisherman may use fish wheels or gillnets restricted 6-inch or smaller mesh.

Subsistence fishing for salmon in the Kantishna River is currently open for fish wheels and gillnets that are restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh 24 hours a day, seven days per week.

Old Minto Area: Subsistence salmon fishing is currently 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 6 inches or less.

Subsistence fishermen are reminded that a subsistence fishing permit is required to fish for salmon in the Tanana River drainage. Permits are available from the ADF&G office in Fairbanks. Subsistence fishermen fishing in the upper portion of Subdistrict 6-B, from three miles upstream of the mouth of Totchaket Slough to Wood River, are required to report their harvest catches to the department by **4:30 PM Thursday** each week by contacting the department at **(907) 459-7388**. When you call, please provide your name, permit number, fishing location, and daily catch by species for that week.

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.

Subdistricts 6-C (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 currently consists of two 42-hour periods each week, from 6:00 p.m. Friday until 12:00 p.m. noon Sunday and from 6:00 p.m. Monday until 12:00 p.m. noon Wednesday. Fishermen may use 6-inch or smaller mesh set-gillnets, dip nets, and live-release fish wheels. Fish wheel and dip net fishermen must release Chinook salmon alive.

Commercial Fishing:

District 1 Commercial Gillnet schedule:

Commercial fishing will be open in District 1 for one 6-hour period with 5.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets not exceeding 30 meshes deep to target summer chum salmon:

- Monday, July 4, from 8:00 p.m. until 2:00 a.m. Tuesday, July 5

Commercial fishing will be open in District 1 for two 6-hour periods with 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets to target summer chum salmon:

- Tuesday, July 5, from 8:00 p.m. until 2:00 a.m. Wednesday, July 6
- Wednesday, July 6, from 8:00 p.m. until 2:00 a.m. Thursday, July 7

District 2 Commercial Gillnet schedule:

Commercial fishing in District 2 will be open for two 4-hour periods with 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets to target summer chum salmon:

- Tuesday, July 5, from 6:00 p.m. until 10:00 p.m.
- Thursday, July 7, from 6:00 p.m. until 10:00 p.m.

All Chinook salmon caught in gillnets may be kept for subsistence use and must be recorded on a fish ticket as “kept but not sold”.

All Chinook salmon kept for subsistence use during the commercial gillnet opening must be marked by removing both tips of the tail fin. The tips must be removed before concealing the Chinook salmon from plain view or before transferring the salmon from the fishing site.

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**.

If you have any questions regarding this report, please call the ADF&G office in Emmonak at (907) 949-1320, the ADF&G office in Fairbanks at (907) 459-7274 or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Emmonak at (907) 455-1849.

This is an announcement by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

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