

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



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**2017 Yukon River Summer Salmon Fishery News Release # 26
Summer Update # 4, Yukon Area Salmon Fishery
Districts Affected: Yukon Area**

Based on passage at the Pilot Station sonar and run timing estimates, the 2017 Chinook salmon drainage-wide run is on track to be near or above the preseason outlook range of 140,000 to 195,000 fish. The 2017 summer chum salmon run is on track to be above the upper end of the preseason outlook range of 2.2 to 2.5 million fish.

Preliminary run timing dates suggest the 2017 Chinook salmon run is tracking similar to historical early run timing. If the run size materializes as current run projections indicate, this year's run would be the largest since 2006 and 15% to 20% larger than 2016. A Chinook run size of this magnitude has the potential to meet escapement goals, provide increased subsistence harvest over 2016, and meet the harvest sharing objectives in the Yukon River Salmon Agreement.

As of June 27, four Chinook pulses and three 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 21,000 Chinook salmon lasted 5 days at the sonar project and should be passing Stevens Village. A second pulse, lasting seven days, of approximately 80,000 Chinook salmon, should be between Ruby and Tanana. A third pulse, lasting five days, of approximately 70,000 Chinook salmon, should be between Grayling and Kaltag. The fourth pulse of Chinook salmon is still being assessed at Pilot Station sonar and the start of this group should be near Marshall.

The first pulse of approximately 820,000 summer chum salmon lasted seven days at the sonar project near Pilot Station and should be approaching Kaltag. A second pulse, lasting seven days, of approximately 950,000 summer chum salmon, should be passing Holy Cross. The third pulse of summer chum salmon is still being assessed at Pilot Station sonar and the start of this group should be approaching Marshall. Based on recent LYTF catches, daily passage estimates at the Pilot Station sonar are expected to increase in the next several days for both Chinook and summer chum salmon. Run timing is based on average timing at the Pilot Station sonar project.

The average midpoint for early Chinook salmon runs is June 19 and typically 75% of the Chinook run in early years is through Pilot Station by June 26. The midpoint for early summer chum salmon runs is June 25.

Genetic mixed stock analysis (MSA) on the early group and first pulse of Chinook salmon sampled at the sonar project near Pilot Station (May 31 to June 13) estimated 43% of the sampled fish were of Canadian-origin, which is below expectations for odd-year Chinook salmon runs. Genetic MSA on the second pulse of Chinook salmon (June 14-18) estimated 56% of the sampled fish were of Canadian-origin. The age composition of 203 Chinook salmon sampled from the drift gillnets in the Pilot Station test fishery through June 18 was 8% age-4, 61% age-5, 29% age-6, and 2% age-7 fish. Age-5 fish were above average for this date and all others were near average. Females were above average. Age composition estimates are similar to what was forecasted with age-5 and age-6 fish dominating the run. Genetic MSA and analysis of age-sex-length data for Chinook salmon passing by the sonar project during the next sampling strata are being performed at this time.

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/ ADF&G and YDFDA

The combined cumulative Chinook salmon CPUE for the 8.5-inch set gillnets at the Big Eddy and Middle Mouth sites, as of June 26, is 20.86, which is above the historical average of 16.35. The cumulative Chinook salmon CPUE at the 8.25-inch drift gillnet at the Big Eddy site, as of June 25 is 434.98, which is above the historical average of 319.83. As of June 26, the combined cumulative summer chum salmon CPUE for the 5.5-inch drift gill net at the Big Eddy and Middle Mouth sites is 23,323.53, which is well above the historical median of 5,369.93 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. Efforts have been made to reduce Chinook salmon mortality in the test fishery. Any Chinook salmon healthy enough will be released alive from the test nets and any dead or injured salmon are distributed to village elders by the Tribal Councils.

Sonar Project near Pilot Station/ ADF&G

The sonar project near Pilot Station has been fully operational since June 1. The project is operating well and has not experienced any major issues from debris or equipment malfunction. As of June 26, the estimated cumulative Chinook salmon passage is 188,440 fish, which is above the average of 169,662 fish for years with early run timing. As of June 26, the estimated cumulative summer chum salmon passage is 2,021,887 fish, which is well above the historical median of 763,060 fish for this date.

East Fork Andreafsky River Weir / USFWS

The East Fork Andreafsky River weir began operations on June 14. As of June 26, the estimated cumulative Chinook salmon passage is 111 fish, which is above the historical cumulative average of 39 Chinook salmon for this date. As of June 26, the estimated cumulative summer chum salmon passage is 10,020 fish, which is above the historical median of 1,545 fish for this

date. The sustainable escapement goals (SEG) are 2,100-4,900 Chinook salmon and greater than 40,000 summer chum past the weir project.

Anvik River Sonar / ADF&G

The Anvik River sonar began operations on June 15. As of June 26, the estimated cumulative summer chum salmon passage is 66,462 fish, which is above the historical cumulative median of 15,102 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 18. Chinook salmon passage as of June 26 is estimated to be 7 fish, which is below the historical cumulative average of 14 Chinook salmon for this date. Summer chum salmon passage, as of June 26 is estimated to be 3,904 fish, which is above the historical median of 130 summer chum salmon for this date.

Henshaw River Weir / USFWS

The Henshaw River weir began operations on June 26. Summer chum salmon passage as of June 26 is estimated to be 244 fish and one Chinook salmon has been observed at the weir.

Chena River Tower / ADF&G

The Chena River tower began operations on June 26 and no Chinook or 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 and no Chinook or summer chum salmon have been observed at the tower. The BEG for Chinook salmon is 3,300–6,500 past the tower.

Management Strategy

A precautionary management approach was taken at the start of this season given the trend of below-average returns of Chinook salmon and the need to assess the early portion of the run. Inseason assessment of the 2017 Chinook salmon run is indicating the Canadian-origin run size is likely to be above the upper end of the preseason forecast and likely to achieve escapement goals and harvest sharing goals in both U.S. and Canada. Therefore it is warranted to relax subsistence closures and gillnet restrictions in District 5. Fishing will be open on the regulatory schedule in Districts 3-6 with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets.

Current Management

South Coastal District (from the Naskonat Peninsula north to 62 degrees North latitude including the communities of Hooper Bay and Scammon Bay):

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

District 1 (including the Black River and North Coastal District and the communities of Nunam Iqua, Alakanuk, Emmonak, and Kotlik):

Subsistence fishing with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets is open 24-hours a day, seven days a week. **Subsistence fishing will close 2 hours before, during, and 2 hours after commercial periods.**

District 2 (including the communities of Mountain Village, Pitkas Point, Saint Marys, Pilot Station, and Marshall):

Subsistence fishing with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets is open 24-hours a day, seven days a week. **Subsistence fishing will close 2 hours before, during, and 2 hours after commercial periods.**

District 3 (including the communities of Russian Mission and Holy Cross):

Subsistence fishing is open on the regulatory schedule of two 36-hour periods per week with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels:

- **8 p.m. Wednesdays to 8 a.m. Fridays**
- **8 p.m. Sundays to 8 a.m. Tuesdays**

Innoko River:

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

Subdistrict 4-A (from $\frac{3}{4}$ mile downstream of Old Paradise Village upstream to Cone Point, including the Anvik River, which includes the communities of Anvik, Grayling, Kaltag, Nulato, and Koyukuk):

Subsistence fishing is open on the regulatory fishing schedule of two 48-hour periods per week with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels:

- **6 p.m. Wednesdays until 6 p.m. Fridays**
- **6 p.m. Sundays until 6 p.m. Tuesdays**

Koyukuk River:

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

Subdistrict 4-B and 4-C (from Cone Point upstream along the north bank of the river to the westernmost edge of Illinois Creek, which includes the communities of Galena and Ruby):

Subsistence fishing is open on the regulatory fishing schedule of two 48-hour periods per week with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels:

- **6 p.m. Wednesdays until 6 p.m. Fridays**
- **6 p.m. Sundays until 6 p.m. Tuesdays**

Federally qualified subsistence fishermen may fish with drift gillnets in Federal public waters of Subdistrict 4-B and 4-C with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh during open fishing periods.

Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B and 5-C (from Illinois Creek upstream to regulatory markers two miles downstream of Waldron Creek which includes the communities of Tanana and Rampart):

Subsistence fishing is currently open with selective gear. Effective 6 p.m. Tuesday, June 27, fishing with selective gear will close and immediately reopen with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets on the regulatory schedule:

- **6 p.m. Tuesdays to 6 p.m. Thursdays**
- **6 p.m. Fridays to 6 p.m. Sundays**

Subdistrict 5-D (from an ADF&G regulatory marker two miles downstream of Waldron Creek

upstream to the U.S./Canada border and including all adjacent tributaries, which includes the communities of Stevens Village, Beaver, Venetie, Chalkyitsik, Fort Yukon, Circle, and Eagle):

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

Subdistricts 6-A and 6-B (from the mouth of the Tanana River upstream to the regulatory marker at the mouth of the Wood River, which includes the communities of Manley, Minto, and Nenana):

Subsistence fishing is open on the regulatory subsistence schedule of two 42-hour periods per week from 6 p.m. Fridays until noon Sundays, and from 6 p.m. Mondays until noon Wednesdays with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels.

Kantishna River:

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

Old Minto Area:

Subsistence fishing is on the regulatory subsistence fishing schedule of 5 days per week from 6 p.m. Fridays until 6 p.m. Wednesdays with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels.

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 with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels.

Subdistricts 6-C (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 consists of two 42-hour periods each week from 6:00 p.m. Fridays until noon Sundays, and from 6:00 p.m. Mondays until noon Wednesdays. Fishermen may use fish wheels and 7.5-inch or smaller mesh set gillnets.

Commercial Fishing

The Lower Yukon summer chum salmon directed commercial fishery began on June 10 in District 1 and June 21 in District 2 with beach seine and dip net gear only. Beginning June 23 fishermen in District 1 have had 2 periods with 5.5-inch mesh gillnets limited to 30 meshes deep to harvest summer chum salmon while minimizing the incidental harvest of Chinook salmon. District 2 fishermen remain on selective gear to target summer chum salmon largely due to capacity concerns in the district. The preliminary commercial harvest in District 1 through June 26 is approximately 139,265 summer chum salmon with a reported 3,746 Chinook caught and released alive from dip nets and beach seines and 1,173 Chinook salmon kept for subsistence use from gillnets. The preliminary commercial harvest in District 2 through June 24 is approximately 12,287 summer chum salmon with a reported 211 Chinook salmon released alive from dip nets and beach seines.

Commercial openings will be announced based on buyer capacity. All commercial fishermen must make sure they have a buyer before fishing each opening.

District 1 (including Black River) Commercial:

Commercial fishing with 5.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets not exceeding 30 meshes in depth will open for two 6-hour periods:

- **4 p.m. until 10 p.m. Tuesday, June 27**
- **5 p.m. until 11 p.m. Thursday, June 29**

Any Chinook salmon caught in gillnets during the commercial gillnet openings may be kept for subsistence use and must be recorded on a fish ticket as “kept but not sold”. Chinook salmon kept for subsistence use during the commercial gillnet openings must be marked by removing both tips of the tail fin before concealing the Chinook salmon from plain view or before transferring the salmon from the fishing site.

District 2 Commercial:

Commercial fishing with dip nets and beach seines only will open for two 8-hour periods to target summer chum salmon:

- **From 4 p.m. to midnight Wednesday, June 28**
- **From 4 p.m. to midnight Friday, June 30**

All Chinook salmon must be released alive from commercial dip nets and beach seines and recorded on a fish ticket. **These District 2 fishing times have changed since first announced due to tender operations.**

Subdistrict 4-A Commercial (from $\frac{3}{4}$ miles downstream of Old Paradise Village upstream to Cone Point):

Fishermen must use commercial fish wheels that are manned at all times of operation. All Chinook salmon caught in commercial fish wheels must be immediately returned to the water alive.

Commercial fishing will be open for 24-hours each day:

- **Period #2 thru #7: Monday, June 26 thru Saturday, July 1**

Fishermen should stand by for the announcement of additional periods.

All salmon harvested during commercial fishing operations must be recorded on a fish ticket at the time of sale. Chinook salmon caught and released must be recorded on a fish ticket. Other salmon harvested and not sold should be recorded on the fish ticket as “kept but not sold”. These commercial fishing periods in District 4 do not affect current subsistence fishing schedules.

Fishing schedules, test fish catches and sonar counts are 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, please call ADF&G in Emmonak at 949-1320, or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Emmonak at 949-1798.

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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