



2020 Yukon River Salmon Fisheries Outlook



The 2020 drainage-wide Chinook salmon outlook is for a run size of 144,000 to 220,000 fish. This would be a slightly smaller run size than 2019. A cautionary approach will be taken early in the season, and management strategies will be adjusted based on run assessment information as fish enter the river. The Pilot Station sonar project is an essential assessment tool because we can estimate the number of fish daily, the expected run size for each species, and the size of the Canadian-origin Chinook run. Sonar estimates directly inform our daily management decisions, allowing us to restrict fishing if the runs come in weaker than expected, and to relax fishing to provide more harvest opportunity when runs are stronger. Using the sonar helps us to better understand what surpluses are available for harvest, and to meet escapement goals and border objectives with Canada. Due to COVID-19, we have been working to create a mitigation plan for the safe operation of this project and have shared these plans with the communities of St. Mary’s and Pilot Station. At this time, it is likely that the project can proceed safely, which would allow for a typical management strategy. If there is not community support for operating the sonar, due to a health and safety concern from the communities involved, a conservative management strategy based on the lower end of the outlook for Chinook salmon would be in place for the summer season. Assessment project and management updates will be given on the **YRDFA weekly teleconferences**. Join us **Tuesday, May 12, at 1:00 pm. Call in number: 1-800-315-6338, Passcode: 98566#.**

2020 Run and Harvest Outlook for Yukon River Salmon

| | Chinook | Summer Chum | Fall Chum** | Coho |
|---------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Outlook: | Below Average | Average | Average | Average |
| Escapement: | Potential to meet goals | Expect to meet goals | Expect to meet goals | Expect to meet goals |
| Subsistence: | Some restrictions | Expect to provide for normal harvest | Expect to provide for normal harvest | Expect to provide for normal harvest |
| Commercial: | No directed fishery | Up to 1.1 million available | 277,000 to 499,000 available | 30,000 to 100,000 available |

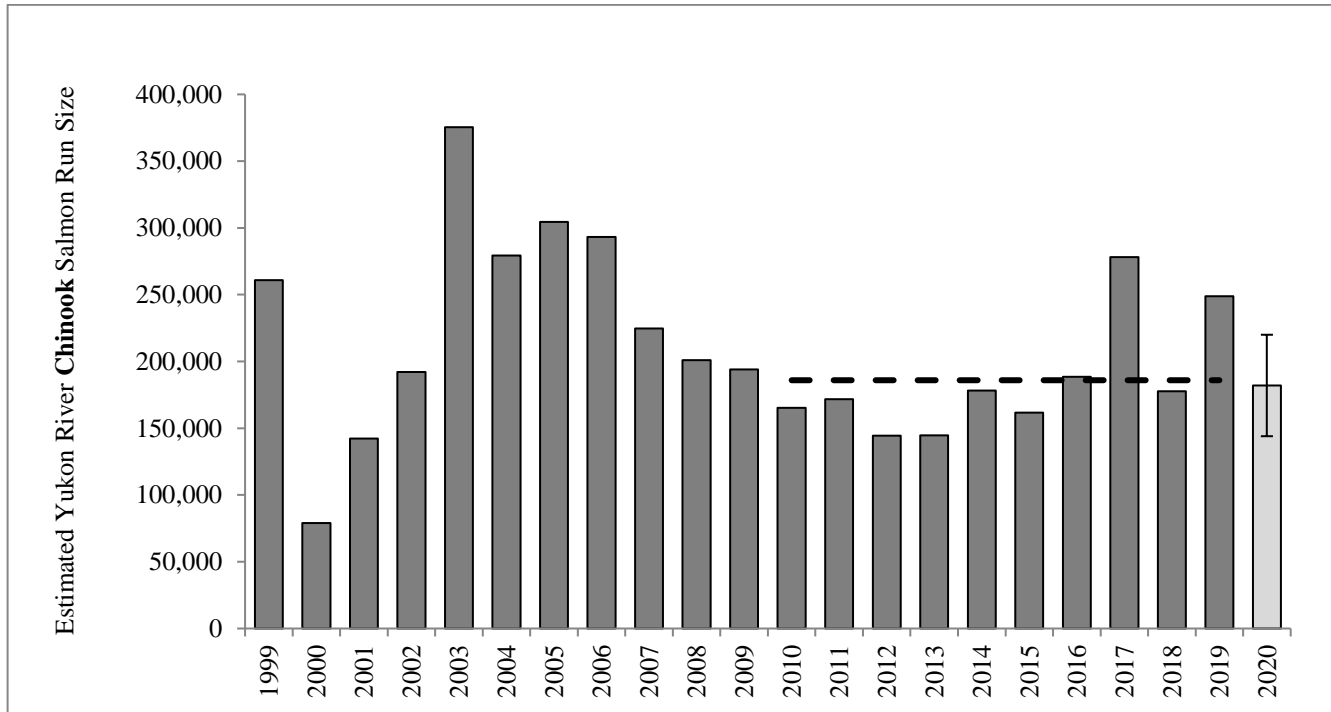
* * *Fall Chum salmon projection and the amount available for commercial harvest will be revised in early July based on summer chum salmon run size.*

Management Strategies based on the full operation of the Pilot Station sonar project:

- The sport fishery for Chinook salmon will begin the season closed (effective May 11) throughout the U.S. portion of the Yukon River drainage, excluding the Tanana River drainage. Chinook salmon may not be retained or possessed. Management actions for the Tanana River drainage will be announced in early June.
- As Chinook salmon enter each district, subsistence salmon fishing will be on a **reduced regulatory schedule and restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets**.
- If inseason assessment indicates a poorer than anticipated run, subsistence fishing periods may be cancelled (similar to last year). If confidence is high that the Chinook salmon run is near the upper end of the outlook and escapement goals are likely to be met, the use of 7.5-inch gillnets will be considered.
- **Fishermen in District 5 should expect to have gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh throughout the summer season.** This is an effort to provide harvest opportunity while protecting Chinook salmon bound for Canada.

- As a reminder, subsistence fishermen may use dipnets during open subsistence periods in all districts. This gear allows fishermen to harvest Chinook and chum salmon and may be an effective means for targeting higher quality chum and releasing unwanted fish.
- Dependent on the ability of the processor to operate safely, commercial fishing for summer chum salmon may begin with selective gear (dip nets and beach seine with required live-release of all Chinook). Openings in District 1 and 2 will be dependent on processor capacity.

The following chart shows the historical estimated Chinook salmon total run size in the Yukon River:



Note: Total run size uses the post-season Pilot Station sonar estimate and includes estimated escapement and harvest below the sonar. The 2020 bar represents the approximate midpoint of the outlook range of 144,000 to 220,000 Chinook salmon. The dashed line is the recent 10-year average run size of ~ 182,000 Chinook salmon.

Due to COVID-19-related travel restrictions, the Emmonak field offices will not open during the summer season. Essential services will be provided to fishermen online and over the phone. The department will continue to monitor the situation and consider the possibility of opening the Emmonak field office for fall season.

Please call the toll-free Fishing schedule and fish counts hotline: (866) 479-7387; in Fairbanks: (907) 459-7387.

ADF&G Anchorage office: (907) 267-2385, Fairbanks office: (907) 459-7274.

USFWS Fairbanks office: Gerald Maschmann, Fairbanks: (907) 456-0406 or (800) 267-3997.

Announcements and daily test fishery counts will also be posted on Facebook:

www.facebook.com/YukonRiverFishingADFG/

For commercial fishery permit questions please see the Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission website here: www.cfec.state.ak.us/