



## **Advisory Announcement**

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### **2020 Yukon River Salmon Fall Fishery Announcement #15**

#### **Fall Update # 5, Yukon Area Salmon Fishery**

Districts Affected: Yukon Area

The 2020 fall chum salmon inseason projection is for a run size of less than 300,000 fish, which would be the second lowest run size since the year 2000. Mixed stock analysis was applied to the passage estimates to remove summer chum salmon and is currently estimating 104,000 fall chum salmon are in the river as of August 16. Based on median timing, the three-quarter-point of the fall chum salmon run at the mainstem sonar operated near Pilot Station occurs on August 19. The projected abundance is below the level needed to meet the drainagewide escapement goal of 300,000-600,000 fall chum salmon, tributary escapement goals, and Canadian treaty objectives (see management strategies below). Fall chum salmon are typically dominated by age-4 fish however, the 2016 parent year that produced that age class has shown extremely poor survival in chum salmon runs throughout the state.

Fall chum salmon typically take 39 days to migrate from the mouth of the Yukon River to the U.S./Canada border, with estimated travel rates of 35 miles per day, though travel times may be a bit slower with this year's sustained high water. The first chum salmon are expected at the U.S./Canada border any day, and the first identified sizeable fall chum salmon group that entered the Yukon Rivers during the summer to fall transition on July 19 would be approaching the U.S./Canada border around August 31.

Coho salmon have begun entering the river in low numbers to date. The primary parent year for coho salmon this year is from the escapements of 2016. An average run size of coho salmon is approximately 243,000 fish.

#### **Fall Assessment Projects**

##### Lower Yukon River Cooperative Fall Drift Test Fishing / ADF&G, YDFDA

The cumulative CPUE through August 16 was 801.66 for fall chum salmon, which is below the historical average of 1,092.86 for this date. The three quarter-point for fall chum salmon is typically on August 17 for this project. The cumulative CPUE for coho salmon was 39.09, which is well below the historical average of 169.60 for August 16. The mid-point for coho salmon is typically on August 18 at this project.

##### Mountain Village Drift Test Fishing / Asacarsarmiut Traditional Council

The cumulative CPUE through August 16 was 424.01 for fall chum salmon, which is well below the historical median of 1,536.24 for this date. The three quarter-point for fall chum salmon is typically on August 18 for this project. The cumulative CPUE for coho salmon was 33.15, which is well below the historical average of 285.13 for August 16. The mid-point for coho salmon is typically on August 22 at this project.

### Sonar Project near Pilot Station / ADF&G

The cumulative fall chum salmon passage estimate from July 19 through August 16 was 174,000 fish, which is below the median passage of approximately 435,000 fish for this date. The fall chum salmon component of this count is approximated as 104,000 fish using the application of genetic stock proportions. The three quarter-point for chum salmon is typically on August 19 for this project. The cumulative coho salmon passage estimate through August 16 was 15,000 fish, which is below the median passage of approximately 40,000 fish for this date. The mid-point for coho salmon is typically on August 22 at this project.

Teedriinjik (Chandalar) River sonar project operated by USFWS and the Upper Porcupine River sonar project operated by DFO in the Yukon Territory of Canada is not operating this season.

### Age Composition Fall Season / ADF&G

The preliminary chum salmon age composition from the LYTF 6-inch drift gillnets through July 31 consists of 38% age-4 and 59% age-5 (n=244) this compares to the average of 59% age-4 and 40% age-5. Females represent 51% of the fish sampled (n=455), which is below the average of 56%, as of August 16. The average length is 598 mm from a sample of 456 fall chum salmon, which is above the 10-year (2010–2019) average of 583 mm.

### Chum Salmon Stock Identification / USFWS, ADF&G

The fall chum salmon component, estimated using genetic mixed stock analysis (MSA) on chum salmon that passed the mainstem Yukon River sonar near Pilot Station from July 19 to August 2, contained 45% fall chum salmon. The sample of fall chum salmon represented 75% U.S.-origin and 25% Canadian-origin stocks. The samples from August 3-16 are headed to the lab; look for the results in the Yukon River daily update email later this week. To subscribe go to the following link: <http://list.state.ak.us/mailman/listinfo/yukonriverdailyupdate>.

### **Fall Season Management Strategy:**

Within the Yukon River Fall Chum Salmon Management Plan, a threshold of 300,000 fall chum salmon is needed to allow any fishing for fall chum salmon in the Yukon Area. The current inseason projection is below that threshold, therefore subsistence, commercial, sport, and personal use fishing for fall chum salmon are being closed in the Yukon Area until further notice. In addition, the projected abundance would not achieve the lower end of the drainagewide escapement goal of 300,000-600,000 fall chum salmon, and likely not achieve any of the tributary escapement goals, and/or Canadian treaty objectives.

Although subsistence fishing for salmon is being closed at this time, subsistence fishing for other important species such as whitefish and pike will remain open seven days per week, 24 hours per day with use of 4-inch or smaller mesh gillnets. Fishermen fishing in Districts 1, 2, and 3, and in Subdistrict 4-A downriver from the community of Nulato can use hook and line gear to target non-salmon species and salmon other than fall chum salmon. Fish wheels may not be used to fish for whitefish and other non-salmon species during closed subsistence salmon fishing periods.

The fall chum salmon run will continue to be monitored throughout the season to determine if any surplus becomes available for subsistence opportunities. Fishermen should watch for advisory announcements regarding changes to the subsistence salmon fishing schedule.

### **Summer Assessment Projects**

#### Eagle Sonar / ADF&G

The Eagle sonar began operations on July 1. Chinook salmon passage, through August 16, is estimated to be 31,782 which is below the historical cumulative average of 56,647 fish for this date. Based on average timing, the 2020 run is more than 95% complete at the Eagle sonar. The right bank sonar unit needed replacement and was removed on August 8. A Didson sonar unit was used to supplement counts starting August 10 and passage

estimates will be interpolated post season to account for the period of time missed before the right bank sonar was replaced. The Interim Management Escapement Goal for Canadian-origin Chinook salmon is 42,500-55,000 fish. The goal is assessed post-season using the Eagle sonar count minus the estimated U.S. and Canadian harvest of Chinook salmon above the sonar. Based on current passage and run timing, it is unlikely that the lower end of the escapement goal will be met.

#### ADF&G, USFWS, and TCC projects that did not operate in 2020

Due to COVID-19 travel restrictions or funding concerns, these projects did not operate: East Fork Andreafsky Weir, Anvik River Sonar, Gisasa River Weir, Henshaw Creek Weir, and Salcha River tower/sonar.

#### **Current Subsistence Management Actions**

**Coastal District** (Naskonat Peninsula to 1 nautical mile south of the Black River, which includes Hooper Bay and Scammon Bay):

Subsistence salmon fishing is closed until further notice. Fishermen may use 4 inch or less gillnet gear to target non-salmon species.

**Districts 1-3** (Black River, and communities of Emmonak, Nunam Iqua, Alakanuk, Kotlik, Mountain Village, Pitkas Point, St. Mary's, Pilot Station, Marshall, Russian Mission and Holy Cross):

Subsistence salmon fishing is closed until further notice. Fishermen may use 4 inch or less gillnet gear to target non-salmon species. Subsistence fishermen may use hook and line gear to target non-salmon species and salmon other than fall chum salmon.

#### **Innoko River:**

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

**District 4** (Grayling, Anvik, Kaltag, Nulato, Koyukuk, Galena, and Ruby):

Subsistence salmon fishing is closed until further notice. Fishermen may use 4 inch or less gillnet gear to target non-salmon species. Fishermen in Subdistrict 4-A downriver from the community of Nulato may use hook and line gear to target non-salmon species and salmon other than fall chum salmon.

**Koyukuk River** (Huslia, Hughes, Alatna, Allakaket, and Bettles):

Subsistence salmon fishing in is closed until further notice. Fishermen may use 4 inch or less gillnet gear to target non-salmon species.

**Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C** (Tanana and Rampart):

Subsistence salmon fishing in is closed until further notice. Fishermen may use 4 inch or less gillnet gear to target non-salmon species.

**Subdistrict 5-D Lower and Middle** (from a fish and game regulatory marker two miles downstream of Waldron Creek upstream to 22 Mile Slough, including the Porcupine River and all other adjacent tributaries, and the communities of Stevens Village, Beaver, Venetie, Chalkyitsik, and Fort Yukon):

Subsistence salmon fishing in is closed until further notice. Fishermen may use 4 inch or less gillnet gear to target non-salmon species.

**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 and Eagle):

Subsistence salmon fishing is closed. Subdistrict 5-D Upper will transition to fall season management effective 12:01 a.m. Wednesday, August 19. Subsistence salmon fishing will remain closed. However, fishermen may use 4 inch or less gillnet gear to target non-salmon species.

A subsistence permit is required to fish for all species in portions of Subdistricts 5-C and 5-D from the western most tip of Garnet Island upstream to the mouth of 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** (from the mouth of the Tanana River upstream to the Wood River, including Manley, Minto, and Nenana):

Subsistence salmon fishing in is closed until further notice. Fishermen may use 4 inch or less gillnet gear to target non-salmon species.

**Kantishna River:**

Subsistence salmon fishing in is closed until further notice. Fishermen may use 4 inch or less gillnet gear to target non-salmon species.

**Old Minto Area:**

Subsistence salmon fishing in is closed until further notice. Fishermen may use 4 inch or less gillnet gear to target non-salmon species.

**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):

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

**Subdistrict 6-C Salmon** (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, Salcha and surrounding area communities):

Personal use salmon fishing in is closed until further notice.

**Subdistrict 6-C Whitefish and Sucker Personal Use Fishing**

**Personal Use whitefish and sucker fishing with gillnets and fish wheels follows the Subdistrict 6-C salmon fishing schedule and is closed until further notice.** Fishing with other gear for whitefish and suckers in this area remains open 7 days per week, 24 hours per day.

In the Tanana River up to the Wood River (Kantishna River and Subdistricts 6-A and 6-B) a subsistence permit is required for salmon fishing. A personal use permit is required to fish for salmon from the mouth of the Wood River upstream to the mouth of the Salcha River (Subdistrict 6-C).

A subsistence permit is also required for all species in the “Upper Tanana River” area 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. A personal use permit is required to fish for whitefish and suckers in the Fairbanks Non-Subsistence area (from the Wood River upstream to the mouth of the Volkmar River on the north bank and the mouth of the Johnson River on the south bank). A subsistence permit is required for northern pike in the Tolovana River drainage, including Minto Flats.

Subsistence harvest calendars and subsistence fishing permits are available from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game Fairbanks office (459-7274) or online at [www.adfg.alaska.gov/store/](http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/store/).



This is an announcement by the ADF&G in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

To reach the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Fairbanks call 456-0406.

Announcements will be shared on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/YukonRiverFishingADFG](https://www.facebook.com/YukonRiverFishingADFG)



### **COVID-19**

Under Alaska's Health Mandates 10, 17, and 18, Subsistence fishing is Essential and is part of Alaska's Essential Services and Critical Infrastructure. Subsistence fishermen should ensure that all travel and other activities follow protocols in Alaska COVID-19 Health Mandates. COVID-19 Health Mandates may be found here: <https://gov.alaska.gov/home/covid19-healthmandates/>.