**Greetings from the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association!**

Here is a summary of the 9th, 2019 Yukon River Salmon In-Season Management Teleconference held Tuesday, July 30, 2019. Call lasted 79 minutes. 45 callers participated at 50 minutes into the call.

**Background:** Yukon River salmon management teleconferences are held annually every Tuesday in June, July, and August for managers and fishers throughout the Yukon River drainage to discuss fishing conditions and management strategies in real time as the salmon run is occurring. YRDFA Yukon River Teleconferences are funded by the US Dept. of the Interior, Office of Subsistence Management.

**Media participating:** KZPA radio-Hans @ Fort Yukon

**Political Representatives participating:** none

**Communities & organizations participating this week: 15**

Scammon Bay

Nunam Iqua

Alakanuk

St Marys

Marshall

Russian Mission

Nulato

Koyukuk

Huslia

Galena

Rapids

Fort Yukon

Eagle

Pelly

Whitehorse

**Community level reports from Alaska**:

**Scammon Bay: Mayor** - several people at Black River catching coho during subsistence opening.

**Nunam Iqua: Stanley Pete** - River conditions normal for this time of year, temp and ? back to normal without excessive heat. A few fish caught, fall chum and coho. Gear is sufficient for their needs. Subsistence season winding down, waiting for fall chum and coho to arrive. Chinook and summer chum past. Waiting for fall chum and coho to be more abundant in the river before they go out and put effort into it.

**Alakanuk: Pamela** - All fishermen are 100% done with their summer salmon. Not too much activity going on here of subsistence. People are all, last week, there was a lot of search and rescue for the drowning of a young man. Everyone is harvesting their berries and waiting for fall chum and coho. Warm water and low tide revealed body. People from region searching all the way up to Pilot Station. Same report as Stan.

**St. Mary’s: Bill Alstrom -** Nothing to report. just listening in.

**Marshall: Norma Evan** - This week I asked a bunch of ladies if they are cutting fish. They are picking berries. We have really large blueberries this year. Last week we had 2 deaths - my grandma and a young boy. Everyone is waiting for fall chum and coho. There is no drift.

**Russian Mission: Basi**l - Morning, same as guys below me. There has been very little fishing activity. Everyone is in berry picking mode. Water is real low and it is starting to cool off. I did not see any dead summer chum but I did see some dead pikes and sheefish in these little creeks. I could not take a picture because we were trying to avoid getting stuck in the shallow water. About 4 days ago it was real rough in town and we had to move our boat to the lake. When I got my boat I saw the dead pikes and humpies. When we were berry picking and coming out of a shallow channel, the ladies saw some dead sheefish. There were no bugs or seagulls going after the dead fish. Wayne- How many fish? Basil- 4 dead pikes in the lakes and a couple dead humpies and then down below we saw 2 dead sheefish.

**Andrew-** I got a camp that we are living in 5 miles above the river in a bend of the river. When I leave RM I take the boat straight line to the camp. It was unusual to see 1-4 chums floating down the river upside down. You don’t see these fish until you are right on top of them. The river is a mile wide so how many are we missing? There are seagulls that are probably eating them. This morning I floated down about 900 feet and I saw 5 dead salmon on the beach in that stretch. Later I took a straight line and I only saw 1 dead fish. This is unusual and not seen in past years. This would tell me that the fish, with the ADFG graphs, are entering the streams with the sonars, how many of these counted fish are spawning. All our effort to help the kings to get up there (to Canada), maybe it is time to worry about our Alaskan stock. Kings are pretty fat and downriver, people may not want to dry them, but here we want them. Time to worry about heat and whatever is killing the fish.

**Nulato: Arnold Demoski -** Nothing to report for Nulato, no one is fishing. Everyone is waiting for fall chum and coho. Wondering where it is. Everyone had a good summer season and no one was unsatisfied.

**Koyukuk: Benedict Jones** **-** Everybody was done fishing about the 10th of July. No one is fishing now, they are waiting for Fall chum. I put a net out Sunday and Monday and I got a mix of summer chum, fall chum and coho.

**Huslia: Zoe** - Did my final interviews. 1/2 of fishermen said they met their needs. One fisherman said he was only catching about 1 tub of fish a day which he said was unusual. As of yesterday, people are still reporting dead fish floating on the river.

**Galena: Howard -** water temp dropped to 60 degrees. Ph is going up. Water is not silty brown, now it is silty white. Only one wheel running in town catching 10-12 fish a day. Waiting for the fish to come up. I've been hearing the 3 day bird so they must be getting here soon.

**Fred Huntington**- whale citing around Nulato about 3 days ago. Beluga. Water is low for this time of year. Record low. Went to Kaltag Friday, back Monday, lowest I’ve seen it in years, like late fall.

**Rapids: Stan Zuray** - YRDFA Teleconference report 7/28/2019 Stan Zuray

 - Water coming up slightly from its lowest all season. No drift

 - Many report King caught are now about 50% poor quality for cutting in some way. White flesh, injuries, etc.

 - Fishing times are short so gear mostly not fished during openings much and usually only for things like canning or freezing a few and immediate food. Many consider King fishing basically over.

 - Chum are in large numbers. Here that means another reason to stop King fishing as they are mostly unwanted fish with white spawning flesh and require a manned wheel or net or someone to give chum to.

 - Fish quality is normal for this end part of King run and very little Ichthyophonus seen as has been the case in recent years.

- Some fishers are basically done and some camps closing that only fish the King run. Others are waiting on the fall chum for making people dry fish and eventually in September dry dog food and crib fish.

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**Fort Yukon: Andrew:** 3 households still fishing. Quality declining. Rain storm came through and hailed. Warm temps gone. Really hot ,dry smokey summer. Lot of firefighting activity. Most people done King fishing and waiting on silvers. Most people pretty satisfied with getting their needs met. If they didn’t get their needs met its because they were busy doing something else.

**Eagle: Ruby:** Closures, little rising in water which created a lot of drift. Fishing has been very difficult and everyone had pulled their nets and are picking berries. Most people are about 80-90% done and they may put their nets back in next week.

**Community fishery reports-Canada**

**Pelly: Eugene Alfred** - Have Pelly River sonar in. As of July 28, we have 3,015 that have come in, lower than last year at this point. River is very low, fishing is very slow, a lot slower than last year. We are anticipating a lot more of the run to come through. People are able to get their camps going. We have 24 active family camps. We have our salmon management plan that we give a recommendation to each camp. Recommending 30 fish per camp. 50’ nets, 5-6” mesh, releasing all live females. Encourage more family activity but so far it has been very slow.

**Whitehorse: Jesse** - Salmon have been observed at the fish ladder but so far no reports of fish making it through. Water temps are average. Whitehorse dam just observed their first fish to go up the fish ladder.

**Al** - There has been some major rains in the upper part of the drainage but not in Pelly river and above. Snow on mountains. White River has eroded away. A week ago, affected Dawson and may be all the way down. If salmon get into Salmon and Pelly river basin they will find some attractive conditions.

**Stephanie - YRITFC, housed under TCC.** This past weekend on Friday and Saturday, went to Koyukuk with Holly Carroll and Peter Westly, boated from Hughes to Huslia 170 miles of river. We went through a slough 150 miles. Second day we boated down about 20 miles below Huslia and went to an eddy that people have reported dead fish. We saw dead chum salmon on the shores. We did not see them in many places but we saw single or double dead salmon consistently throughout the stretch of river we boated down. Only in a few places did we see large numbers of dead chum salmon. When we could we cut open dead chum salmon that had not decayed and they had NOT spawned. Looked like healthy salmon. No tumors, no signs of radiation poisoning. Typically you would see tumors and lesions on the fish and we did not see any of this. There is a mining operation that drains into the river. It is a placer mine so it does not use any chemicals and it does not discharge into the river. It is not a mining operation that is discharging anything into the river. I feel comfortable saying it is not the reason. We had warm temps around July 7, 90 degrees in Huslia and continued for 4 days. Unprecedented air temperature. Really low water river, really warm air temperatures so the river probably got warm. Deeper areas that would be cooler were less available. Wondering if this is just isolated to the Koyukuk because of the low water. Looking into someone to survey the Anvik because they have low water. Again, high temps, right after that locals reported dead salmon. We measured the water temp. They were in low 60s which is within normal range, but temps have cooled down. We may be out of that warm temp time periods. Had good chats with people in Hughes and Huslia. And thanking boat driver and community of Huslia. We couldn’t have done this trip without the locals. critical to have that local information to know where to drive to, etc.

**Al**-Koyukuk seems different. Are local communities interested in tracking water temps using data loggers?

Sthephanie? community monitoring projects. Fish commission, university, ADFG will put in grants. Wants to know how major tributaries and spawning area. Salcha river boating by TCC and they did not see any dead salmon up there.

Holly - Good trip report, thanks for the invite. Our research biologist-Andy Padia, counts kings and summer chum, gave us a preliminary report, flown east fork and West Fork Andreafsky, flew Nulato river, looks good, similar to last year, maybe even better. confirmed that fish were spawning in roughly the same locations that they used last year. Because of low water he did have very good counting conditions which can make your count higher. We are trying to document die off, how is it affecting our escapement count, en route mortality, hard to account for that. We do check fish that float back down to see if they spawned. Pre-spawn mortality. may be normal amount and they will make note to check that. Post season we will do a write up. Summer chum were 5 days late at Pilot and may be 8 days late at the spawning grounds.

**Management Reports:**

**ADFG - Assessment by B. Borba, Fall Season Research Biologist**

The summer chum to fall chum salmon relationship suggests a run size of 625,000 with a range of 500,000 to 750,000 fall chum salmon, this is a below average run size (1.0 mil). LYTF fall chum salmon CPUE of 275 is below the average of 356 as of July 30. The sex ratio of chum salmon is 36% female (n=295) which is well below the average of 53% through July 29. Age samples are not available at this time. The first coho salmon was caught on July 18. MVTF fall chum salmon CPUE of 565 is above the average of 541as of July 30. The first and only coho salmon was caught on July 19 at this project.

The mainstem Yukon River sonar near Pilot Station has a passage estimate of 242,000 fall chum salmon which is above the median of 156,000 as of July 29. The first coho salmon was caught on July 26 at this project.

We are assuming there is a large proportion of summer chum salmon that entered during the first portion of the fall season. Summer chum salmon typically migrate 30 miles per day while fall chum salmon typically travel 35 miles per day. Based on these travel times we expect the chum salmon that entered on July 18 to be near Nulato August 2, Ruby around August 5, and Tanana/Huslia around August 9. The fall component headed into the upper portion of the drainage would be near Rampart around August 8, Fort Yukon around August 16 and the Canadian border around August 26.

The genetics from the strata prior to the fall season July 8-18, consisted of 99% summer chum salmon of which 88% were lower stocks, 8% were bound for the middle Yukon River, and all other stocks were negligible. The Tanana River summer component was extremely weak in this stratum. The fourth strata from July 19–26, representing the transition to fall season, are currently at the laboratory and results will be available in the Yukon River daily update on Thursday.

During the transition last year, the strata from July 19-25 contained 82% summer and 17.8% fall stocks. Typically the first group of fall chum salmon is composed of a higher proportion of BorderUS stocks than the Canadian component (14%). Coho salmon run size is anticipated to be average. The coho salmon run usually starts picking up in August and peaks mid to late August.

Jeff will address management strategies.

**ADFG Fall Season Management report, fall season manager Jeff Estensen**

One of the lower preseason projections for fall chum salmon we have seen in a while, lower than the forecast. Wide range and uncertainty that warrants caution in our approach to management, particularly management of the commercial fisheries. 500,000 to 750,000 fish, across that range of fish abundances, it is expected to provide enough fish to meet escapement, mainstem Yukon River treaty objective, and subsistence use needs

Subsistence Fisheries

o Districts 1-4 are on regulatory schedules

o Districts 5 and 6 should stand by for announcements regarding their switch to fall

management

o Porcupine is the exception; closed to subsistence salmon fishing to begin season

Commercial Fishing

o Have been taking very cautious approach considering the outlook range

o We had several commercial periods during the transitional period between the summer and fall seasons (2 in Y1 and 1 in Y2), to allow additional commercial

Flat Island and Hooper Bay catching Coho.

**USFWS Fred Bue** - Everyone did a good job in summarizing what we had. Andreafsky weir and Gisasa weir count salmon and today is last day.

*(Jeff Estensen with ADFG will give a fall report as the fall season will begin on July 15 /16 in the Y-1 lower river district)*

**Fisheries and Oceans Canada: Canadian ManagementUpdate; Jesse Trerice**

• Canadian In-season fishery management decisions are informed by:

o The obligations set out in the Yukon River Salmon Agreement; o The International Yukon River Panel’s 2019 recommendations; o The Canadian Yukon River Salmon Integrated Fishery Management Plan; and, o In consultation with the Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee and Yukon First Nation Governments.

• Importantly, Yukon River salmon fishery management decisions in Canada are guided by the obligation to support rebuilding Canadian-origin Chinook salmon stocks. This is a multi-year effort that requires long-term commitment and cooperation.

• A key Canadian fishery management priority continues to be to ensure that large, Chinook salmon successfully reach their spawning grounds in order to support future returns.

• We are currently considering data collected at both the Pilot Station and Eagle enumeration programs, information available on Alaskan fisheries, and Pacific Salmon Treaty harvest share allocations to determine if adjustment to fishery management measures currently in place is required.

• We’re at a point in time in the King/Chinook run where a change in abundance of 1000 fish on a given day or the change in run timing whether back or forward can significantly influence the number of fish we expect to see across the border.

• We are seeing fewer Chinook than we expected, but we currently anticipate that we will make escapement and provide for a First Nation Fishery.

• It is important to recognize that initial opportunities for harvest in the majority of Canadian fisheries are just starting, coinciding with the arrival of migrating Chinook salmon into the upper Yukon River Watershed.

• To illustrate, salmon that entered the mouth of the Yukon River in early part of June are just now arriving in the middle to upper reaches of the Canadian-portion of the Yukon River watershed.

• **Information on assessment programs in Canada:**

• The Porcupine River Sonar located near the community of Old Crow has counted 2,731 Chinook salmon as of July 28.

• The Pelly River Sonar located near the community of Pelly has counted 3,015 Chinook salmon as of July 28.

• The Big Salmon Sonar located approximately 2/3 of the way between the international border and the headwaters of the Yukon River has counted 623 Chinook salmon as of July 28.

• The first Chinook was counted in the Whitehorse Fish Ladder during this phone call!

• Chinook counts will be continued to be shared in these calls as they come available. As will Additional Information from Canadian assessment projects as it becomes available.

**Fishery Management Measures Currently in Place in Canada (as of July 30):**

• To date, harvest of Chinook salmon in Canadian sport, domestic or commercial fisheries has been prohibited.

• Harvest of Chinook salmon in Canadian First Nation subsistence fisheries is being administered in accordance with local management plans, and informed by Pacific Salmon Treaty harvest allocations and international border passage estimates.

• First Nation harvest reports are indicating slow and low harvest compared to average and some reports of excellent quality.

• Looking ahead to the Chum fishery, licensed conditions are being finalized for commercial licences, which will be available soon. Of note are two conditions of licence which are new to 2019 which are:

o The maximum allowable mesh size in the Chum fishery is 6-inch, and; o All Chinook salmon caught in the Chum Commercial fishery must be

released.

***Questions and discussion:***

Ben Jones Koyukuk- Aerial survey, have they spotted any black bears? In the last 5 years we haven’t seen any black bears in our area. One black bear seen between here and Huslia this summer.

Howard - Galena - water plant operators could easily test river water in most villages.

John from Scammon Bay. We are 60 miles from the mouth of Yukon, 1.5 hrs to our fishing grounds. Emergency openings are a disadvantage for us.

Jeff and John discuss commercial openings and ample notice for their region.

Call ended at: 2:19pm

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| **Contact info for ADFG YR Fall Season Manager; call 907/949-1320****Contact info for ADFG YR Summer Season Manager; call 907/267-2324** |

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