



## YUKON RIVER DRAINAGE FISHERIES ASSOCIATION

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

Here is a summary of the 16th, 2020 Yukon River Salmon In-Season Management Teleconference held Tuesday, September 1, 2020. Call lasted 64 minutes. 41 callers participated.

**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. Funded by the Office of Subsistence Management and the Yukon River Panel.

**Media participating: KZPA Fort Yukon**  
**Political Representatives participating: None**

**Communities participating this week: 11**

**Mt. Village**  
**St. Mary's**  
**Pilot Station**  
**Marshall**  
**Russion Mission**  
**Tanana/Rapids**  
**Eagle**  
**Nenana**  
**Fairbanks**  
**Dawson**  
**Whitehorse**

**Community level reports:**

**District 2-Coastal/Lower Yukon**

**Mt. Village:**

**Nita-** Not a lot of activity going on. People are berry picking.

**St. Mary's:**

**Bill** - Not much to report from here either, it is windy.

**Pilot Station:**

**Martin** - Nothing to report. Nothing going on here in Pilot Station.

**Marshall:**

**Norma** - No one is subsistence fishing, that I know of. Possibly one set net out. Most families are focusing on other subsistence activities, moose and geese hunting, and berry picking. The water went down a little this past week and there has been no debris.

**District 3-Coastal/Lower Yukon**

**Russian Mission:**

**Basil** - No one is fishing on the main stem of the Yukon River.

**Districts 5a, b, c & d**

**Tanana/Rapids:**

**Stan Zuray** - Water mostly steady and slightly high level. No drift. About 4 camps are still open in the Rapids area but starting to disassemble things with two of three fish wheels having been pulled out of water. People just keep their dogs fed day to day with whitefish nets and may do so for a while as no one has any food put up for winter.

The few fall chum that are caught incidental in the 4" nets are in unusually poor condition in that they are in more advanced spawning shape and white flesh for this time of the run compared to any year I've seen. It has been this way since the first ones were caught in the 1 short opening we had. All fishermen here and all talked to in Tanana say the same thing. Unusual numbers have runny eggs and ready to spawn.

Covid Protocols remain in place at the general store where masks are worn and outsiders wanting gas or supplies are asked to call the store first. Flights into Tanana require Tribal Council permission. A second gas station, Tanana Gas, conducts business outdoors.

**Eagle:**

**Ruby**- Not a whole lot to report. The river is still extremely high, the highest it's been all summer. It's up all the way to the willow. Somewhat thankful that we aren't fishing due to the fast water. My kids are sad to not be fishing; the fall feels strange without fishing. The orange subsistence is still very prevalent here on the yukon.

**Districts 6a, b & c**

**Nenana:**

**Victor** - The river is pretty good for this time of year. A lot of people are hunting. A guy was looking for a whitefish net, I couldn't help him. We are kind of busy here, my uncle disappeared over 2 weeks ago on the highway and we are all looking for him.

**Fairbanks:**

**Virgil** - I am just listening in.

## **Canada**

### **Dawson:**

**Sebastian Jones-** Good afternoon. Don't have anything really to report. Looking towards not having any chum fishing this season, I have to explain that to the community. Not much happening with fishing but the weather has been considerably better.

### **Whitehorse:**

**Elizabeth-** Not much to report in Whitehorse. Generally we have been rainy this last week, although we did have some sun for the first time in a while. It is feeling and looking like fall. The water is still high in the river. Very few Chinook have reached the Fish Ladder and the run appears to be wrapping up. Fishers are very concerned by the low chum numbers. Fall chum are very important to a few communities on our side. Chum don't reach all communities, so not everyone is able to harvest them. For those people who do, some reduced their Chinook harvest expecting to be able to catch a chum. A friend in Pelly told me that he took around 10-15 Chinook. These Chinook feed his large family of kids (who are adults now) and his grandkids. But it doesn't last long. His Chinook only lasts about 1 month and then it is all gone. He was hoping to catch some chum so his family could eat more salmon this year. Other foods, like moose, are harder to eat for the little kids.

Dawson also has a small commercial fishery on chum. For many Yukoners, this is their only access to Yukon salmon. With no harvest allocation, these fishers won't be able to fish for their community. Also, many of these fishers use and sell chum as dog food which supports their winter activities like trapping. Our one fly in the community, Old Crow, usually harvests more chum than Chinook. But their chum have been struggling to meet spawning escapement goals for some time now. This low run is expected to produce only half of the spawning escapement goal to Fishing Branch. This could be devastating for this very important chum population.

### **Management Reports Agenda:**

**Bonnie Borba- ADF&G Fall Season Research Biologist-** Fall chum are typically dominated by age 4 fish. The age 5 fish are dominating. Tracking below the historical average for both summer and fall chum. This is the 4th time in 43 years that age 5 fish have dominated.

Peak passage of fall chum was 13,000 followed by 8,000 today. As of August 31, 254,000 chum salmon after July 19. After genetic sampling to remove the summer chum, the estimate of fall chum is 182,000 fish. Well below expected numbers and well below the median of 819,000.

Run is currently tracking as the lowest on record. The run of Coho salmon also appears to be late and weak.

**Sam Decker- ADF&G Fisheries Biologist-** Sam Decker- YR subsistence harvest survey project. Working with Andy and Bonnie. Changes this year. Usually we spend 2 months visiting all 33 communities. This year, we will be using phone, online surveys - accessible through smart phones or community computers at TCs. and short mail surveys. 3 ways (online survey, mail survey and telephone survey) This week starting in Emmonak. Working upriver. Following end of salmon run as it moves north (upriver) Announcements on community posters. Every household will be mailed a letter with a short paper survey and QR code. WE will also be calling a bunch of households in each community. Stay tuned on Facebook over the next 2

months. Same survey that has been going on for 60 years. Only way that we understand what subsistence needs are for each community. Confidential. Quick and easy.

**Jeff Estensen - Yukon Area Fall Season Manager** - Nearing the end of the fall chum run. Not much has changed throughout the whole season. It has been the lowest run on record. projection of about 200,00 fish, which is well below the 300,000 needed for fishing. We did allow selective gear where coho, pink, and sockeye are present. They could use dip nets for non-salmon species and could use fishwheels as long as they are manned. As we draw near the end of the run, we are looking at getting people back out with up to 7.5" mesh nets to target white fish. Usually it's about the 10th of September, but we will have to see how things go for the next 10 days to make sure there aren't additional pulses or groups coming through. If we don't see anything prior to the test fisheries closing for the season, we can loosen things up.

### U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**Gerald Maschmann - Acting Yukon River Federal In-season Manager** - Don't have anything more to report on that. Announcement - for those interested in FEderal RAC the YK RAC will be meeting Oct. 6th & 7th via teleconference. WIRAC and EIRAC will meet Oct. 14th and 15th via teleconference. Anyone interested in Federal meetings, those are coming up.

### Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada

**Jesse Trerice - Fisheries Manager**- Good afternoon, with DFO Canada. Wet whitehorse, Yukon. Recent headlines touting news that Yukon has experienced 125% of average precipitation for the month of August. 76K canadian component. Numbers at eagle do not align with what was expected. As of Aug 31, 33,642 Chinooks were counted. Assessment program switching to chum anyday. In light of poor Chinook return, DFO has maintained closures. First Nations govt have received recommendations to cease fishing. They are in support. Current fall chum projection will not provide Canada with a harvest share. There will be no commercial chum opportunities this year. No recreational opportunities either. First nations govt will be appraised and manage their fisheries accordingly. A few projects on the go now. Klondike river sonoar completed 2 weeks ago 406 almon. Pelly River finished Aug 22, ??? Big salmon counted 1,560 as of Aug 24 - ¼ of average. Whitehoser fish ladder 210 Chinook- less than 20% of average. Female composition at Eagle is 55% compared to long term average of 42%. Glimmer of silver lining in returns. Females have the eggs. The more females the better.

### Questions and discussion:

**Ruby - Eagle** - Question about the orange, spruce rust on the river? Any reason why it is only seen on the main stem of the river. Not visible on the tributaries. And doesn't appear to be airborne, like pollen dust. Why? Has anyone taken any samples for testing?

**Jeff- ADFG**- Would need to look up info to provide at the next teleconference. Can't say how common or uncommon?

**Victor** - I just wanted to say to Sam, the other day I was thinking about the terrible subsistence year we've been having. It's hard to measure subsistence when they say no cash is involved. It was livelihood, not subsistence. We had to have rice, gas, butter, kerosene, and that comes to a

big chunk of money. That is how it should be measured, livelihood. We need to get straightened out on the words. And how to compensate people for their losses. We will never be able to replace the fish. It is hurting our culture. Even if we don't cut fish for a year, they get to doing something else, and then forget or get in trouble.

Also, I want to talk about the orange substance and I think we should call someone in the State and get someone to react to it instead of should-have could-have would-have. We need a scientist out there.

**Sabastiation** - Most years there has been \_\_\_ counted at the eagle sonar by now. Why hasn't that happened yet?

**Bonnie-ADFG**- They did catch another chum yesterday in their nets otherwise it's been mostly zero catching a king once in a while. They are matching up with the timing table to get to the border because of high water. Canadian stocks, there weren't a lot in the beginning of the run. They are going to transition over slowly. It's just timing. they are not there yet.

Sebastian - very weird, weird not to have any at all. Stark illustration of this year.

**Jeff-ADFG** - To give you an idea of timing, the first pulse which doesn't have a large Canadian component in it. Will be reaching the border in about 5 days from now.

Sebastian - Let's hope that this pulse doesn't do what so many others have done this year.

**Sam-ADFG** - I wanted to follow up on Victor's comment. He is aware of the CARES act and how that may apply for fishers and tribes. Please follow along with that - there are things being posted online on the changing guidelines. If Victor has any questions, please feel free to call and we will help with that. 907-459-7274

**Norma** - I know people were wanting to set whitefish nets but some people only have 4.5" nets. Restriction was up to 4" right?

Jeff- 4" or less to target non-salmon species.

**Bill**-In the past, 17 years ago, the chum crashed. wondering when they go out to the ocean, where do they go and how long are they out there? 4-5 yrs? Bering sea. Wondering if the pink salmon in PWS, mostly down in SE, don't know how far Chum salmon go in the ocean.

**Jeff-ADFG** - I believe the question is the migration of the chum salmon coming from the Yukon, would there be any interaction with the pink salmon going to prince william sound?

My guess is that there would not be too much integration in the ocean.

Bonnie- Correct Fall chum salmon

PWS is on an odd year high cycle. They don't typically mix - our chum with their pinks.

Bill- how about out in the ocean, are they harvested by japanese, tawianese.

Bonnie- I assume any hatcheries that put out pink or chums that they would try and fish for them.

**Norma** - In 2016 I reported that our region that the stream below us had no water at all - recently I went to the same bridge and visually I did not see any fish, usually I can see them. I will check again this week. Hopefully they are just late.

**Serena Fitka - YRDFA - Announcements**

*Thank you all for joining in on the call today. Just a reminder our last teleconference call will be next week on September 8th. We understand that September is hunting season for many; however, we felt during this low run year we may need to stay connected. We will also be hosting monthly Off-season teleconference calls on Oct. 20th, Nov. 17th, Jan. 19th, Feb. 16th. During these teleconferences they will be topic driven. I encourage you to keep informed by checking our website at [www.yukonsalmon.org](http://www.yukonsalmon.org) or by liking our Facebook page Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association. Again, Quyana caknek for calling in and we hope to hear from you next week.*

*The Annual YRDFA Board meeting will be held December 15th and 16th via Teleconference. YRDFA will be hosting a Post-season meeting on December 17th via teleconference. So please mark your calendars. YRDFA Board has a vacant seat in District Y1, Seat 1, this is a 3-year term. The Alternate Seats that are currently vacant are Coastal Alt 1, Y1, Alt 1, Y2, Alt.1, and Y5 Alt. 1. The YRDFA Board has created 2 Young Fisher seats on the Board. If you are interested in any of these opportunities please contact me at 907/272-3141.*

Call ended at 2:38pm

**Toll free fishing schedule hotline: 866/479-7387**

**Fishing Schedule hotline in Fairbanks: 907/459-7387**

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

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