



**YUKON RIVER DRAINAGE FISHERIES ASSOCIATION**

PO Box 2898 Palmer, AK 99645  
Tel: 907-272-3141 Toll free: 877-999-8566  
Fax: 907-272-3142 E-mail: [serena@yukonsalmon.org](mailto:serena@yukonsalmon.org)

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

Here is a summary of the 17th, 2020 Yukon River Salmon In-Season Management Teleconference held Tuesday, September 8th, 2020. Call lasted 64 minutes. 35 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: 8**

**Mt. Village**  
**St. Mary's**  
**Pilot Station**  
**Russion Mission**  
**Eagle**  
**Nenana**  
**Fairbanks**  
**Whitehorse**

**Community level reports:**

**District 2-Coastal/Lower Yukon**

**Mt. Village:**

**Nita Stevens** - Nothing going on here except tons of rain. The water is dropping, people are starting to moose hunt slowly and nothing else is going on.

**St. Mary's:**

**Bill Alstrom** - Not much here either. Same as Pilot.

**Pilot Station:**

**Martin** - River usually starts rising with the August rain. The rain came late. We've had 3 days of hard rain and monsoon type winds. No fishing with this current weather.

**District 3-Coastal/Lower Yukon****Russian Mission:**

**Basil Larsen** - Missed last week because I started working during the day. There has been no fishing on the main stem of the Yukon but there have been a couple of nets at popular spots for whitefish. They have been giving us their bycatch pikes for dogs. And there's a lot of them. We have had the first frost of the year and people have been waiting for that to ripen up the blackberries. There has been no fishing. I took a ride before this storm hit. We found a dead cow moose that looked like it died from natural causes. Its stomach was really bloated. It was right by the water. It was still warm. No marks or blood or anything. I tried to call Fish and Game in Bethel and left a message. Other than that there has been no fishing on the river. That's it.

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

**Ruby [reported by Catherine]** - There is not much to report on in Eagle. There are no nets in the river, and no-one is fishing. The river level has been steadily dropping despite many days of thunderstorms and heavy rain. The water is still high for this time of year, but at least there is a little beach now. The fishers in Eagle all support the closure on chum fishing even though it is very hard. We need to feed ourselves, our dog teams, and keep our traditional activities alive, but we also need to protect the future of salmon so our children and future generations will have this important resource.

**Districts 6a, b & c****Nenana:**

**Victor Lord** - The river has been going down a bit even though we have been getting quite a bit of rain. I don't know if anyone is fishing - there are probably a few people. Other than that, the river is good natured, and everyone is trying to get a moose right now.

**Fairbanks:**

**Virgil** - Not normally on the calls at this time because I am usually out hunting. The villages are locked down so I cannot go guiding this year. As Yukon up at the bridge on Sunday. Water is super high for this time of year. A lot of people, from the villages, Rampart, Tanana, etc. can't even go into the village to get gas, they have to go to the bridge to get gas. Corona virus has messed things up for lots of people. And people really need to get their moose because they didn't get their salmon.

**Canada****Whitehorse:**

**Elizabeth MacDonald** - It's pretty fall like. The trees are changing over. The river level is still pretty high, not flooding but higher than other years. Yukon Salmon Subcommittee is asking to be more conservative with their chum this fall.

**Dennis - Yukon River Panel and YSSC** - I'd like to echo what Elizabeth said, Fortunate to get to 3 projects this year. Video project, carcass tag and fish passage work. Really good work being done in Canada, just no fish.

**AI** - Steven Frost Sr. has passed, and the community [of Old Crow] is busy taking care of things. The community is devastated and that is why they are not giving reports.

**Dennis** - Also wanted to add that Jeff, Caroline, Stephanie, Dennis all visited Steven in Old Crow.

### **Management Reports Agenda:**

**Jeff Estensen - ADF&G Yukon Area Fall Season Manager** - I want to begin by saying how sad I am to hear about the passing of Steven Frost. I learned so much from him about fall chum salmon, and I was really looking forward to seeing him again in May when I was planning on visiting Old Crow. I got to have coffee with him every morning at his house. I called him a friend and really enjoyed the time I got to spend with him. I am very sad to hear of his passing.

**Bonnie Borba- ADF&G Fall Season Research Biologist** - Fall chum salmon are typically dominated by age-4 fish however, the 2016 parent year escapement has shown extremely poor survival in chum salmon runs throughout the state. This is only the fourth time in 43 years that age-5 fish have dominated the fall chum salmon run. Both the LYTF and MVTF fall assessment projects are tracking below the historical averages for fall chum and coho salmon. Seven small groups of chum salmon have entered the Yukon River since the transition to fall season, the sixth group represented 35,000 and the seventh group entered on August 27 and just passed the mainstem Yukon River sonar, the peak day of passage was 13K followed by another 8K today. Genetic mixed stock analysis on chum salmon from August 17-27 are in the lab currently and are expected to contain approximately 94% fall stocks; look for the results in the Yukon daily update email later this week. The mainstem Yukon River sonar operated near Pilot Station, as of August 31, has a cumulative count of ALL chum salmon after July 19 of 254,000 fish which is below the median of 740,000 fish. After applying genetics to the sonar passage estimates at Pilot to remove summer chum salmon the estimate of FALL chum salmon is 182,000 fish as of August 31 which is below the median of 819,000 for this date. Based on these inseason assessment projects, the fall chum salmon run size is projected to be near 200,000 fish based on median timing. The run is currently tracking as the lowest run size on record. Coho salmon primarily return as age-4 fish, this year they are returning from the 2016 escapement. As of August 31, the cumulative mainstem Yukon River sonar passage estimate is 76,000 fish and is below the median passage of approximately 133,000 fish for this date. The run of coho salmon in the Yukon River appears to be late and weak -similar to what is occurring in the Kuskokwim River.

**Sam Decker- ADF&G Fisheries Biologist-** Sam Decker- YR subsistence harvest survey project. This survey has been going on for 60 years. We started in Emmonak. We will send a poster about 1 week before we get to each community. The poster will have a QR code and you can send in your harvest information that way. The survey will take about 10 minutes. We ask about your harvest of the different salmon species, the whitefish species and about your household. This is important to learn about your harvest this year and the run over time. We look forward to speaking with you.

**Jeff Estensen - ADF&G Yukon Area Fall Season Manager-** Fall chum is over for management purposes. We just put out a news release, relaxing the subsistence fishing restrictions for districts 1-3. People can use up to 7.5" nets, dip nets and fish wheels for salmon or other species. We will move that up river as the run moves up. We hope to get people out fishing for white fish or coho or whatever is out there. This has been a very trying year for everyone worldwide. Things have been difficult for a lot of reasons, and then pile on the poor run this year. I want to extend my great thanks for the people that participate in this. I can't tell you how valuable this information is to us. This may be the last teleconference, but there will be meetings throughout the winter. We are available anytime. Please call with any questions or concerns. Ruby from Eagle had asked about the Spruce - I emailed an article from the ADN. Serena is going to try to get that on the website, so take a look at that.

**Serena Fitka- YRDFA** - I did post it on the facebook page. Please take a look at that if you are interested.

### **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

**Gerald Maschmann - Acting Yukon River Federal In-season Manager** - I don't have anything to add. The subsistence surveys that Sam talked about are important. A chance for you to tell us about your harvest, what you got, and it helps us to make better management decisions. We appreciate your participation.

### **Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada**

**Jesse Trerice - Fisheries Manager-** Work for Fisheries and oceans canada. Can't believe that this is the last call of the season. These have been exceptionally difficult both from Covid and salmon. Appreciate everyone who has shared on this call and opened their hearts. I feel that empathy and compassion goes a long way. I hope that 2021 provides for more opportunities and reasons to rejoice. Rather than feel salmon shells shocked every week. We have now moved, the chum run has started coming into Canada at EAgle. The Eagle sonar has started counting chum. There are still some chinook in the river but not as many as we expected based on what was observed at Pilot. There will be no harvest share. Sadly as with chinook there will be no domestic opportunities. Closure on Yukon River will be extended to the end of season. The First Nations are recommending [to not fish] The Yukon Operations support these recommendations. Oliver, Yukon River biologist has returned to work after some parental leave.

**Oliver- Yukon River Biologist** - The update on Fall chum in Canada is quite brief. The Sonar didn't happen this year. The crews have arrived at fishing camp. We expect to get counts tomorrow morning. Other than that this is the beginning of the fall chum arrival in Canada.

**Jesse Trelice - Fisheries Manager**- Thanks Oliver. I wanted to also reflect on my reflections and lead ups about Steven Frost. I've sat on his couch a number of times too. I always came away feeling so calm. His experience, knowledge and warm heart. The opportunities of getting to meet up with him in Old Crow will be fondly cherished.

### **Questions and discussion:**

**Victor Lord- Nenana** - Late fall run. I remember back in the 60s there would be a weak fall, back then everyone had dogs and we had to make it through. The fishermen realized the run was weak. No one fished too hard, hunting and berry picking and we got enough to get by. And then the return was good after. The fish, I don't know what happened to the fish... in the ocean or the spawning grounds or False Pass? I don't know but fishermen are always the ones to get penalized. If there is any information, I would appreciate it.

**Jeff Estensen - ADF&G Yukon Area Fall Season Manager** - As of 1:00 today subsistence fishing has been relaxed. Salmon fishing is open 24/7 up to 7.5" nets plus other gear. Just a heads up in case you didn't know that already.

**Victor Lord- Nenana** - how far up the river is that mandate?

**Jeff Estensen - ADF&G Yukon Area Fall Season Manager**- Right now Victor, that is in districts 1-3, basically as the fall chum run migrates upriver, you can expect that we will relax as things move up river. Plan is to get everyone off restrictions and start fishing again.

**Victor Lord- Nenana** - Right now.

**Martin- Pilot Station** - I was thinking about I know one of our teleconferences, Tedd from Emmonak was on and it brought me back to years ago when unit 2 had the strict moose moratorium, and Tedd and Chuck Hunt started the turn. The Federal moose hunt here is open all the time. Each person is allowed at least 1 antlered, but allowed 2 moose. From my perspective this conservation method doesn't work with salmon management. Co-management is how I was brought up. If we asked for openings targeting fall and summer chum, it has never happened. I've always said that our ecological knowledge is from the people's mouths. Managers need to listen when we ask for openings. I don't blame management for what is in my freezer. But I am pretty mad about it. They pretty much control what I eat. I appreciate this teleconference. We track the salmon village by village, but a lot of villages don't chime in. We are hoping that next year will be better. We hope that these other organizations come up with a way to help support people that are not commercial fisherman. I hope someone is listening. We've run out of time. This is the last teleconference. I hope someone takes my baggage. It is really heavy. Take care.

**Victor Lord- Nenana** - Thank Dennis of the Yukon Panel for participating with us. The Panel is a great organization and participating with us is a great thing. Thank you Dennis.

**Virgil- Fairbanks** - I'd like Stephanie to give me a call if she's on. Sounds like the upper village are the only ones who are on. A lot of fishers in the upper Yukon didn't even get one fish. You

are lucky you are down at the mouth because you get to catch fish before they figure out how many fish there are. A lot of people in the upper river don't have any fish and are really hurting.

**Brook Woods** - Any state managers able to answer the question on expectations for the runs next year? What is the update for the CARES act funding? And what are the state's thoughts on the run for this year, as it did not come in as expected?

**Bonnie Borba- ADF&G Fall Season Research Biologist** - We have not, we won't be looking at what we expect for next year until after we get the harvest information. That is what we do over the winter and the spring. As far as what happened, we will be getting together with other biologists and see what happened in their areas. That is what we do over the winter. We talk to folks at NOAA and try to figure out what is the most probable reason that this occurred. I don't know about the CARES act, you'd have to look at the website to see what they posted and contact them.

**Brook Woods** - Thank you. I know that prior to the season starting people were concerned about the next FEW years. Thank you for the answers.

**Bonnie Borba- ADF&G Fall Season Research Biologist** - When this happened before, it turned out okay because the salmon have so many age classes. We will have to see what the ocean is going to do and they will eventually bounce back.

**Elizabeth MacDonald- Whitehorse** - I wanted to say thank you for getting an extension and hosting these calls. They are very informative.

*Thank you all for joining in on the last Yukon River In-Season Salmon Management call today. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for making my first in-season teleconference calls a successful one despite the hardship we are all facing due to the low returns of salmon.*

*Before we say our goodbyes I would like to make these few announcements.*

*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. 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. Again, Quyana caknek for calling in and hope to meet everyone once we are all able to travel.*

**Call ended 2:04**

**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**