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Greetings from the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association!

Here is a summary of the 1st 2023 Yukon River Salmon In-Season Management Teleconference held Tuesday, June 6, 2023. Call lasted 66 minutes. 43 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 present: Olivia, KZPA radio

Political Representatives participating: None

Communities participating:

Nunam Iqua

Alakanuk

Kotlik

Mt. Village

Pitka's Point

St. Mary's

Pilot Station

Marshall

Anvik

Tanana/Rapids

Circle

Minto

Nenana

Fairbanks

Whitehorse

Management Reports:

Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Deena Jallen, Emmonak, Summer Season Manager of Yukon River

Fred West -ADFG Summer Season Research Biologist

Early days - water is high and still is high from late breakup and snow and ice in rivers. We are just now getting online. Started doing drag nets clearing the test zone and officially test fishing yesterday, June 5. No catches yet. Drifting at middle and test site. Used to have a test fishery drift

net at other locations but not this year. Pilot station sonar: Crew is at camp and they are setting up. Plan is to start test fishing today, still in the process of deciding if sonar can be deployed due to high water. Collecting data.

Deena Jallen, Emmonak, ADFG Summer Season Manager of Yukon River-

District 1 and 2 are already closed based on Chinook travel time. Some fish are already in the river but fisheries will have trouble with high waters. Projection is 62000-104000 fish. The Canadian run is 26000-43000 fish. No escapement goals met last year. Summer chum runs have been very late the last 2 years. 560000 chum escapement prediction. 4 year olds from 2019 with hot waters. Hoping to have small openings for chum salmon. Summer chum has not hit till early July in recent years. As closures make way up stream, fishers can still fish for non salmon with 4" or less mesh size, and other types of gears. All chums and kings must be released, with the exception of already caught ones for no waste purposes. District 3 will close tomorrow at 8pm, Wednesday.

Yukon Area Manager from the US Fish and Wildlife please introduce yourself?

Holly Carroll- Agree with forecasts and assessment information. Asks for the Federal Manager to manage the river. Limit fishing to federally qualified users. Board delegated the decision to me. Made sense to continue managing fish and game - I agreed with all the closures. Doesn't make sense to have federal special action. It is unlikely to see summer chum opening opportunities, especially the first half of the summer. State regulations will apply to all waters. Nothing much to add - once federal projects hit the water

Staff from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada please introduce yourself?

Oliver BARKER-

Jaclyn Kendall - DOF Canada. Pre stock assessment update. DFO technicians are aiming to arrive at porcupine sonar in the last week of June. Upper portion of Yukon River watershed at Old Crow. Connection with Gwich'in First Nation and DFO officials. Collaborative with ADFG. Environmental conditions - spring has arrived. No major environmental conditions to report. Canadian management: finalized in late June at arrival of first salmon. Yukon river panel meeting objective: recommendations from YRSSC and key priority is for as many salmon to return to headwaters as possible, cautious and conservative, no harvests expected. Waiting for information from Pilot Station sonar to inform management.

Community level reports:

District Y1:

Alakanuk: Max Ayagar - Summer surveyor. Haven't started surveying. Recovering from breakup and flood. People are egging. Just starting to trickle in. No one is fishing yet.

District Y2:

Mt. Village: Nita Stevens - Water is still high, no one is fishing yet. Some drift in the river, not as much as last week. Mid winds. Start surveying this coming weekend.

Marshall: Diane Fitka - I haven't started surveying because people aren't fishing yet. Elders have concerns and questions about trawlers and Area M. They wanted to know what is being done down there.

District Y3:

Russian Mission: Basil Larsen - Nobody is fishing. There was a big flood recently. 5/22. During the day it was at the north side bank, at 4am it was right below my house. 30 feet in 4 hours. Runway went under. Came out a week later. Stayed shut down until June 4. We got mail again. Couple days of only mail planes. Freight can come in again. Water is really high. 8 houses had to be evacuated, including my brother. None floated away. Cut away from fuel for 4 days. Still have to drive through water for gas. The National Guard sent out a doctor with water, milk, baby milk, pampers, and ready meals. Water is high compared to years past. Over the north bank. Next to diesel cans. Every fish camp was wiped out. Cabin is flipped over, and unable walk to the camps. Only way to get to camps is with boats. Nobody is fishing. Fish camps are destroyed. Some on the hill are spared, but most smokehouses are destroyed. Earth and trees were floating along with the ice. Still underwater islands, trees are sticking out. People are able to get to Bethel for medical care now. No logs floating by. Want to rebuild camps. South side of the land is just water now. Boat ride - ice is freed up now. Across 7 mile, a cow (moose) gave birth to a calf on ice. Ice flipped and they swam to shore. Quite a few people egg harvesting and run into bears. Folks want to shoot the bears in close encounters. Unexpected flooding. Plugged in 3 miles south of the Russian Mission. Ice plugged, broke free, and plugged again 10 miles down. Connected to outside again. People are rebuilding camps and homes and not fishing again. We know restrictions are coming.

District Y4a:

Anvik: Ken Chase - High water breakup, no jams. Water crested 2 days ago, went down 2 inches. Upriver it is coming down. Not too much drift this year. Fishing with nets for whitefish. Local fishing is good, whitefish and sheefish.

District Y5abc&d:

Rampart: Charlie Wright - All of Yukon has had trouble. Rampart was bad too. Camps got hit pretty hard. Lowlands flooded quite a ways. Affected the whole river. Set a whitefish net a week ago. No catch of small round whitefish. Tanana river. 2 small sheefish and that's it. Pretty good with whitefish in the lower river. I'd like to hear about interior whitefish troubles. Interior water levels - high, and heatwave now. It's been cold recently so water might go higher with more melt from the heatwave.

District Y6abc:

Minto: Phillip 'Jeep' Titus - Not much to report, water is high, winds cotton blowing, no pike or whitefish nets out.

Nenana: Victor Lord - River is looking nice, haven't been out yet. People aren't putting out nets yet. Thinking about setting nets for round whitefish. Question for fish and game - 4" whitefish net - do you report every fish caught incidentally?

Deena Jallen- We appreciate recording any kings caught on the permit. Relating to any other species caught. Subsistence surveys in September and October: All info is helpful, and looks at catch and impacts.

Fairbanks: Virgil - High water, 79 degrees today. Snow is melting faster. Water will rise.

CANADA

Old Crow: Stan- Downtown old crow. Elizabeth McDoland from YRP and YRSCC - Water is pretty high on the porcupine for a while. Dropping a bit recently. 10 days ago there were concerns about flooding (in Fort Yukon?). Wasn't super high at that point. Didn't come up all the way, there was high water, volume came from the Alaska side. Black River, other tributaries contributed a lot of water to this region. Lowlands were flooding, like Fort Yukon. Tribal Hall flooded in Fort Yukon. Warming up here in Old Crow. Most of the snow has melted in the mountains. 75 fahrenheit. Smoky today. Fires in North pole, Fairbanks. See the smoke here. Whitefish caught this spring. All 5 species caught here. Porcupine river - they come into the river and go back in the lakes when water levels lower. We just had a meeting.

Dawson: Tim - Brief summary of community meeting last night in Old Crow - spoke to Gwich'in citizens - we want every chinook and fall chum salmon to reach spawning grounds, enforce a closure on salmon fishing. Government and officials will enforce and those who loosely followed rules will now have to follow the policy. Sentiment here is we need the salmon to get home this year. Dawson wasn't affected by flooding as much as downriver communities, like Eagle. Trondek Gwich'in tribe are giving out messages. We are interested in seeing what happens in the lower river.

Whitehorse: Unknown Speaker- Whitehouse lucky, not much flooding. Hopefully water table levels are low but they look high, there might be more flooding later. No salmon in the area. No nets in the water. In Old Crow with Pauline, she said she doesn't want to see nets in the water. Stronger restrictions are wanted with fears of salmon going extinct in these years. Might not be able to recover.

Dennis Zimmermen - number of Yukon first nations completing salmon plans for this next meeting great to see what they are doing when they can't fish. Thanks.

Open Discussion / Questions:

Victor - Apologize to Canadians, we know the treaty has been broken in Area M. Oregon and Washington fishers.

Charlie Wright - Wanted to state that in order to get fish for camps, we went to Dillingham for culture camps, ways to keep culture alive without salmon. Trying and hoping for a better day in the Interior.

Virgil - US and Canadian sides - setnetters in Area M start fishing today, and Normandy invasion today.

Dennis Zimmerman - Interesting to see if it could happen from Northern British Columbia - keep track of how much non Yukon salmon is being brought into the drainage for consumption.

Hardships on people. One Yukon First Nation is purchasing 1200 pounds of salmon.

Eva Burk - Nenana - Purchasing extra fish, I run Nenana Fish camp. Work with fisherman who donate fish for fish camps. Abundance of fish in storage, prices will be low for fishermen. USDA bought fish. For communities who are lacking, industry is the cause of decline, having to buy our salmon we used to catch, it is not fair especially if salmon is in storage. Is it our responsibility to ask?

Nita Stevens - Happy birthday Basil.

Confirmation for Victor.
jtbakernna@gmail.com Need agenda.

Call ended [time]pm

2:06pm