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Greetings from the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association!

Here is a summary of the 10th 2023 Yukon River Salmon In-Season Management Teleconference held Tuesday, August 8th, 2023. Call lasted 87 minutes. 52 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:

KZPA Fort Yukon

Max Graham, Grist Magazine

Political Representatives participating:

Communities participating:

Nenana

Huslia

Russian Mission

Mountain Village

Pilot Station

Marshall

Kotlik

Management Reports:

Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Bonnie Borba, Research Biologist, ADF&G - The fall chum salmon run size projection based on the summer to fall relationship is 425,000 fish. The average run size for fall chum salmon is over 900,000 FC. We will be using inseason project assessments to determine if the run size will materialize. As of August 7, the cumulative CPUE for LYTF is below average and MVTF is above average. The midpoint of the fall chum salmon run usually occur on August 12 at LYTF and August 10 at MVTF. The mainstem Yukon River sonar project operated near Pilot Station, transitioned to fall season counts on July 19. As of August 7, the cumulative passage was 110,000 chum salmon. This compares to a median cumulative passage of 266,000

chum salmon for this date. The midpoint of the fall chum salmon run at the mainstem sonar is typically around August 10. The fourth stratum of chum salmon mixed stock analysis from genetic samples taken at the Pilot Station sonar test fishery (from July 19-31) consisted of 73% summer chum salmon, of which 76% were lower river stocks, 20% were bound for the middle Yukon River, and 4% were bound for the Tanana River. This stratum also contained an estimated 27% fall stocks which were composed of 71% upper Yukon U.S. stocks (Teedriinik, Sheenjek, and Draanjik), 22% Tanana River and 7% Canada. The mixed stock genetic analysis was applied to the mainstem sonar passage estimates to remove summer chum salmon and resulted in an estimate of 44,000 fall chum salmon in the river as of August 7. This level of passage is well below the median of 259,000 fall chum salmon for this date. Fish movement into the lower river has been slow up to this point with the first decent pulse coming in with the storm we had over this past weekend. It will be a few days to get this pulse through the mainstem sonar at Pilot Station. LYTF caught good numbers of fish when they were able to get out the morning of 8/7 and YRDFA_fallassessment_update_080823vY.docx 2 MVTF caught some fish the night before. This pulse of fish were very large sized and robust looking fall chum salmon. The scale samples will be on their way to the lab later this week and will be reported in next weeks update. Otherwise, samples to date were near average for both age-4 and age-5 chum salmon. The percentage of female chum salmon through August 7 was 54% which is near the historical average of 55%. The average length of 570 mm is well below the historical average of 592 mm. The fall chum salmon drainagewide escapement goal ranges from a minimum of 300,000 to 600,000 fish, and there are also several individual tributary goals. Monitoring of escapement in the upper Yukon portion of the drainage, within Alaska, is beginning with the deployment of sonars on both the Teedriinjik and Sheenjek rivers. Both crews are on site and Sheenjek provided counts this morning and we expect Teedriinjik to report possibly tomorrow. Look for the passage estimates for these projects on the Yukon River daily update and Facebook. Eagle sonar on the mainstem Yukon near the U.S./Canada border will transition to counting fall chum salmon sometime in mid-August after the passage of Chinook salmon. Coho salmon typically enter the Yukon River in mid-August with the bulk of the run occurring between August 16-27 at the mainstem sonar. The mainstem sonar has picked up a few early coho salmon, and LYTF and MVTF both caught coho salmon on August 7.

Deena Jallen, Emmonak, ADFG Summer Season Manager of Yukon River - Only few projects left. Chena and Eagle. Salcha ended last week. 1200 kings (below average). Summer chum below. 1033 kings, 653 summer chum below. 48550 - only better than the counts we saw last year. Few summer chum seen for carcass survey. Smoke in the Interior. Transitioning to fall if not already. 5abc transition on 8/14 to fall.

Christy Gleason - Yukon River Fall Season Manager ADFG - It was good to see a group of fall chum salmon come into the river the last few days. Those fish started passing the sonar in the Lower Yukon yesterday. We're still expecting a low chum salmon run this season. So far only about 44,000 fall chum salmon are in the river based on genetics. We have a long way to go before we make any management changes since we are well below lower end of the drainagewide goal of 300,000 fall chum salmon. Lower and Middle River districts are closed to chum and chinook salmon fishing. Fall season management has been announced through District 5ABC.

Holly Carroll Yukon River Subsistence Fishery Manager, USFWS - District 5b is in its own place - on summer schedule. Getting questions from fishermen hoping for fall chum. Wish better

news but we're seeing a small run size. Might have to let chum go by. Will be 4th year in a row. Acknowledge the hardship it's causing. The chum run did get a little better than last year. May mean next year chum run will be fishabel. Do our part and let them go by.

Luke Webber, Biologist, Whitehorse - Porcupine river August 6th 620 king. Klondike July 30th 161 kings compared to 166 last year. Pelly River - August 6 1292 kings, last year 3794. Big Salmon - August 5th 1254 last year 364 kings counted. Whitehorse - 8 kings counted.

Mark Ross Manager, Treaties, Fisheries and Salmon Enhancement (Yukon River) - Stock Assessment: DFO technicians are still present at the Eagle sonar locations in Alaska, where collaborative efforts with ADF&G are underway for sonar operations and test fishing. Chinook salmon of Canadian origin are consistently migrating through the area, while the upcoming weeks are expected to see the movement of fall chum salmon. Since June 28th, our camp situated on the Porcupine River, near the community of Old Crow has been in operation. As of August 7th, the count reveals that 642 Chinook salmon have been approximated to have journeyed past the sonar stations. In comparison, last year on the same date, the count stood at 349, while the project's average from 2014 to 2022 has been 2,684. The Klondike River sonar, managed by Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in in Dawson City has identified and estimated 167 Chinook salmon by July 31st. This stands in comparison to the count of 175 on the same date last year and an average of 584 between 2010 to 2011 and 2020 to 2022. The Pelly River sonar, managed by Selkirk First Nation, has been in operation since July 6th. As of August 7th, an estimated count of 1,355 Chinook salmon have made their way passed the sonar station. In the previous operational year, which was 2021, the cumulative count for the same period was 3,951. This stands in contrast to the average count of 5,789 for the project spanning the years 2016 to 2021. The operation of the Big Salmon River sonar commenced on July 14th, and up to August 5th, an approximate count of 1,156 Chinook salmon have been observed passing through. During the last active year, which was 2021, the cumulative count for the same period was 1,254. This count stands in comparison to the 10-year average of 3,155 for the project's monitoring period from the past decade. Beginning this year, the Teslin Tlingit Council has initiated a sonar operation along the Nisutlin River. Located in proximity to the Teslin community in Yukon, this river is integral to the Teslin River watershed. The initiative has been active since July 16th, and up until August 6th, an estimated count of 364 Chinook salmon have been recorded making their way through the sonar site. By August 4th, a total of 8 Chinook salmon have been documented traversing the ladder at the Whitehorse Rapids Fishway. In the previous year, the initial sighting of a Chinook was noted on August 2nd, with the overall count for the season amounting to a historical low figure of 165 Chinook, marking a 50-year nadir. Environmental Conditions: Elevated air temperatures persist across a significant portion of the Yukon, contributing to a heightened frequency of lightning-induced wildfires across the region. The outbreak of fires in proximity to Old Crow has prompted the local community to be places on evacuation alert, as a precautionary measure in anticipation of the possibility that the fires could advance close to the town. As a result of a continuing wildfire that endangers the Mayo community, the Yukon government has officially declared a state of emergency, leading to the evacuation of the affected area. The water temperature in the Porcupine River remains elevated, maintaining around 20°C during this week. Among the tributaries of the Yukon River, water temperatures vary, ranging from 12°C in the Klondike River to 19°C in the Pelly River. The Nisutlin and Big Salmon rivers have temperatures within the range of 15-18°C. Water levels are near normal in most systems for this time of year with Kluane Lake, Pelly River and Teslin Lake all below average.

Canadian Management:

- For Chinook the current passage estimates from Eagle Sonar continue to be low for Canadian-origin Chinook salmon, in light of this there is no change to the current Canadian Management strategy.
- The priority will remain focused on maximizing the number of Canadian-origin Chinook salmon reach their spawning grounds in order to sustain future returns.
- There are no harvest opportunities for Chinook and DFO will maintain closures in the Chinook public angling (recreational), commercial, and domestic (non-indigenous food fishery) fisheries.
- Moving into fall chum, although current projections have increased the number of Canadian-origin fall chum expected based on the summer to fall relationship, results from genetics will provide a more accurate in-season forecast of Canadian-origin fish and will help guide management going forward.
- We will be watching the run as it progresses very closely for any changes to management should the run come in higher than was originally anticipated.
- The Public Angling (recreational), Commercial and Domestic fisheries for fall chum are closed.

Janessa, Yukon River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission - Brian Lepping, biologist is with Charlie Wright on the river looking for sonar spots.

Community level reports:

District Y1:

Kotlik: Marvin Okitkin - Fishing activities going on here in Kotlik, people setting 3.5" whitefish net before picking. Normal tide level water dropped up rigger. Sand bars all over. Beluga 10 miles in river. Everyone is berry picking here. ADF&G test fishing - if they cancel test fishing - when in Middle mouth they always went out. ADF&G in emo about all the fishing testing and all that stuff - not doing for the betterment. The # of fish we know are in the river. We're not commercial fishing out there.

District Y2:

Mt. Village: Nita Stevens - Out on medical right now. Talked to one guy was at fishcamp. Said it's slow down where he camps. Still trying to subsist. People out picking berries. Raining lots. Water high but almost to where it should be in summer time. People relying on daily catch with setnet.

Pilot Station: Martin Kelly - Not much to report. Had a cold summer like everyone is reporting. Delivery at dock - day catch from ADF&G here. Water level is at its normal level. Pretty cold 57-58 degrees today.

Marshall: Diane Fitka - Not much to report. People aren't really fishing. Few took out their nets. People into berry picking now. Most people are almost done w/salmonberries and moving onto blues.

District Y3:

Russian Mission: Basil Larsen - Water is dropping steady. Leaving ugly sticky mud. Not much fishing going on. Everyone is picking berries. Everyone knows you need whitefish for traditional dessert. Using set 4" net for whitefish. Set net, go berry picking, check net when back. No chum, Nothing. Everyone is into berry season. Up in the creek there is whitefish and trout and some chum. Something we hadn't seen in a couple years. Was an unexpected pulse of chum this year. Looking pretty grim right now. Historical past time was silvers in creeks. They're putting 6" on our runway. Got rock from Marshall. Doing sanitary restoration projects on houses. Mentioned before it's starting to get harder and harder to get folks to participate in these surveys. All we

ever hear is we'll get the fish back. Getting old, getting stale. Getting a stale feeling when I go to interview people. It was mentioned that we shouldn't do fishing - was expected. There were comments to me if ADF&G is going to manage our lifestyle - a couple elders want them to go to their managers. We know bycatch numbers. All we ever get is more restrictions. We were able to get a few chums this year. All local stock. When I go around and talk to people - that's the bad feeling. Our lifestyle is gone or slowly dying. We feel it and realize it more especially with the Canadians coming down here. Moose season. Brother went out to the South side of the river. Walked into the meadow but the water level was too high. Our traditional hunting grounds were lost to the flood. See way less tracks now. That flood also slowed down our season change. It's been cold and rainy all summer long. Lots of blueberries are still green. We're worried about our food supply after this flood. We've been heavily relying on moose, bears, and whitefish. Moose took a hit this year. We have to be careful of our moose now.

District Y4a,b,c:

Huslia: Charlene Vent - I had the same results as the week before. No one is fishing. Lots of people are traveling for potlatches. Wasn't able to get data or anything.

District Y6abc:

Nenana: Victor Lord - Couldn't get through last week. Must have been the weather. Not much going on fishing right now. Culture camp started yesterday. Had Watershed Summit last week. Was good. Will get out to fishcamp soon. Waiting on chum salmon.

CANADA

Elizabeth MacDonald, Council of Yukon First Nations - Plans to go to Dawson canceled due to fire. Last week at Pelly water was really warm. 19-20 celcius. 68-70 f. Getting close to too warm period. Supposed to be at a salmon gathering but there are several fires. Lots of smoke and lots of fire. Hoping rain will cool off rivers for salmon. People aren't out fishing. Finding ways to stay connected to salmon.

Area M Report:

Matthew Keyes, Area M biologist - We concluded out final fishing schedule. July 31st. Closed for most of August. Opened this morning at 8am for pink and chum. Things starting to pick up. Things late this season with low temps and lots of cloud coverage. All harvest for all species are all below average. chum 581000 harvest for the entire season. 10 year average 890000. Pink harvest and sockeye below average. Pinks showing up in the area. Things will wind down pretty quickly here.

BBAYK:

Karen Gillis, BSFA Executive Director - Will be meeting this week thru 9 am. Bristol Bay, Arctic anyone interested in attending call 907-887-1148 and she will add to the distribution list. Working through a number of issues. One will be about the non king bycatch. Talk about national standards 4,8,9.

Open Discussion / Questions:

Victor Lord - Hearing from Basil. Frustration is getting bigger. Phone calls are good. Maybe gear our heads to find out where our troubles are. We've done our part on the river, check out spawning grounds up here. Heard Area M biologist - would appreciate his report too. I didn't get his name or anything. Was that a biologist from Area M?

Serena Fitka, Executive Director, YRDFA - Matt Keyes.

Victor Lord - Okay.

Karen Gillis, BSFA Executive Director - Is Matthew on line?

Matthew Keyes, Area M biologist - Yes.

Karen Gillis, BSFA Executive Director - The number you provided.

Matthew Keyes, Area M biologist - That's all gear types.

Karen Gillis, BSFA Executive Director - Seems different than the report we see.

Matthew Keyes, Area M biologist - I'm looking at the report that was sent out this morning. Different areas. I just report on South Alaska Peninsula.

Karen Gillis, BSFA Executive Director - Ok, I see the difference, thank you.

Marvin Okitkun - Regarding question to management that they lift gear type restriction. Very little fish in the river. Few families who only have 5.25-6" mesh gear. Thinking about putting fish in the freezer. Change from dip net to get fish put away.

Christy Gleason, Fall Season Manager, ADF&G - Right now all districts are closed to chum. You can use dip for coho or nonsalmon. Approaching midpoint of run. Have to be at least 300000. We're a long ways from there. Hopefully sonar can bring up projection.

Victor Lord - UPI said 44000 Christy. Is that Canadian or whole? Do they travel together?

Christy Gleason, Fall Season Manager, ADF&G: 110000 chum past ps sonar. 44000 fall chum - headed everywhere in the drainage. Little bit Canadian fish. Early in season but not looking good right now.

Marvin Okitkun - For Christy, ADF&G. Always says same thing fall fish, summer season fish. Nothing follows the date exactly. They consider Y1 then Y2 - you guys have to change your ways, change your seasons not by the date. The animals come and go when they are ready. We have no control over nature. Like seasons, breakups, the fall. You can understand that. You have to adjust your ways to get current numbers. Locals are getting screwed over either way you look at it.

Christy Gleason, Fall Season Manager, ADF&G - I now what you're saying. We have regulations that allow certain things. We did what you're asking us to do. We tried to provide opportunities; we offered selective gear opportunities knowing they make up the bulk of chum. The fall chum are really low. They need to make it up river. We already got enough to make summer chum that's why we had fishing. That is why it's closed right now.

Martin Kelly - What if the fall run was running late? We had a pretty cold summer. It gets really hot up in the Interior. We just had a big storm that started Saturday/Sunday. Weather been favorable for salmon, a lot cooler. Just being hopeful.

Christy Gleason, Fall Season Manager, ADF&G - That was a good comment. In years like this we look at average run and average late. Everything does look late. We are taking into consideration. I am hoping our fall chum run will improve. We need to wait before we open up any opportunities.

Basil Larsen -Not trying to put anyone in the hot seat. Managers are managers. They have a job title. These numbers are so low. They are so low that you think that scientists and managers would try to find out why, it's not us. See if there's any way for these Yukon genetically bound salmon to make their way back. Getting kinda stale. Next year even lower and lower numbers.

Deena Jallen, Emmonak, ADFG Summer Season Manager of Yukon River - There is research trying to understand. Unfortunately Christy and I are seasonal.

Basil Larsen - Can you repeat info again?

Karen Gillis, BSFA Executive Director - Are you talking about BBAYK?

Basil Larsen - Yes, the information she mentioned.

Karen Gillis, BSFA Executive Director - Yes, Bering Sea Fishing Association. Reach me at 907-887-1148.

Virgil Umpenhour - Is Area M manager for South Peninsula on?

Matthew Keyes, Area M biologist - Yes.

Virgil Umpenhour - You sent a letter stating the current situation and Russia's pink fishing to 0.20/lb. What's happening in Area M besides price?

Matthew Keyes, Area M biologist - As far as I know, they didn't put out any formal letters like Trident has. We only have three: Silver Bay Seafoods, Peter Pan, Trident. Pricewise follow suit. One processor didn't have a hard date of closing their facility. They keep to themselves.

Virgil Umpenhour - When Murkowski. was the governor they made regulation that gave the commissioner authority (unable to hear) I don't know if anyone on site that knows. AYK should be concerned - they don't make public. Stan on BOF. I know hatcheries do one of two either freeze, processed in china, then shipped back to the states. You can barely read that it's a hatchery fish. They are not wild fish. Seattle used bio-hatchery fish - put labels on. Lots of scientists are saying the biggest problem is too many mouths to feed in the ocean. It's stupidity to keep dumping everywhere. Primarily kings and chum which we need. We need to cause the department to limit how many permits and how many of those are getting ground up for dog food. Two were on NPMC committee. One of those guys never gave that (unable to hear) that's (unable to hear) ADF&G. We need to get to Lisa Murkowski and say.

Bill Alstrom St. Mary's - Nothing to report. Still got the same old weather. The water is level on river, steady. Didn't see setnets. The same old thing, concern the fish. I agree with Virgil about hatchery fish. So many millions get dumped into SE and Prince William Sound. Humpys and pinks just devour our food in the ocean for native species. Climate change is real, it's happening out here. Look at my window. See a trend, vegetation moving northward. Can't put a finger on what's causing. My biggest concern is climate change happening before our eyes, not at the snap of a finger. Every summer we see a change. It's happening. Might be a factor. Hard to put my finger on, not sure what to say. People are different, different solutions. ADF&G doing all they could. It's gotta be climate change. I think it happened in the past on the river. Not explainable. Someone got a better idea how to remedy this problem. ADF&G doing good with test sites and sonar but someone needs to have a better idea about this problem with the fish.

THANK YOU!

Call ended 2:27 pm