



YUKON RIVER DRAINAGE FISHERIES ASSOCIATION

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Greetings from the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association!

Here is a summary of the 11th 2023 Yukon River Salmon In-Season Management Teleconference held Tuesday, August 15th, 2023. Call lasted 77 minutes. 44 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:

Political Representatives participating:

Communities participating:

Dawson

Nenana

Fairbanks

Tanana

St. Mary's

Pilot Station

Management Reports:

Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Bonnie Borba, Research Biologist, ADF&G - The fall chum salmon projection based on inseason assessment projects indicates a run size of near 300,000 fish, compared to an average run size of near 900,000 fish. Mixed stock analysis (MSA) was applied to the passage estimates at the Yukon River mainstem sonar, operated near Pilot Station, to remove summer chum salmon and resulted in an estimate of 148,000 fall chum salmon in the river as of August 14, compared to the median of 407,000 fish, for this date. The cumulative CPUE for LYTF is below average and MVTF is above average. The three-quarter point for fall chum salmon typically occurs on August 19 at LYTF and August 18 at MVTF. The age composition of 226 chum salmon sampled from the drift gillnets in the LYTF project through August 8, were 75% age-4, a nice increase, and 24% age-5 fish, which compares to the historical averages of 63% age-4 and 36% age-5. The percentage of female chum salmon through August 14 was 54% which is near the historical average. The average length of 571 mm is well below the historical average of 592 mm, but larger than the last two years. Genetic sampling is being used to distinguish the fall component throughout the run. The prior stratum ending July 31, consisted of 73% summer chum salmon and 27% fall stocks. The next stratum of chum salmon samples collected from August 1-13 are

headed to the laboratory and results should be available next week. These fish encompass the first major fall chum looking pulse that entered the river, though there may still be a mix of summer chum salmon in this sample. Chum salmon entering the river the remainder of the season should be primarily fall chum salmon. 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. The sonar project on the Teedriinjik began operations on August 8 and has a cumulative passage of 1,160 fall chum salmon, which is below the median passage of 3,499 fish. The escapement goal on this system is 85,000 to 234,000 fall chum salmon. The sonar project on the Sheenjek River began operations on August 6 and has a cumulative passage of 199 fall chum salmon, which is below the median passage of 906 fish. The Eagle sonar, on the mainstem Yukon near the U.S./Canada border, will also transition to counting fall chum salmon sometime in 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 cumulative passage of coho salmon is approximately 5,479, which is below the median of 22,000 fish. The sonar, LYTF and MVTF are all showing late and weakness in coho salmon passage to date, but coho salmon should begin to hit later here in August. That is all I have on assessment, Christy will cover management strategies for the fall season.

Deena Jallen, Emmonak, ADFG Summer Season Manager of Yukon River - Wrapping summer season management. Looking towards fall - how people are harvesting salmon and nonsalmon. Important to understand how people are dealing with fishing.

Christy Gleason - Yukon River Fall Season Manager ADFG - Last week we saw a group of fall chum salmon come into the river. However, the salmon run is still very low and there's not enough fall chum salmon to harvest. We only have 146,000 fall chum salmon in the river and we're near the midpoint of the run. Management is not changing for a while. We need to let more fish come into the river. Lower and middle river districts remain closed to chum and chinook. District 6 of the Tanana River drainage has transitioned to fall management and that announcement came out this morning. They are the last district to fish summer chum salmon for the first 10 days of fall season with selective gear and all chinook salmon must be released alive.

Holly Carroll Yukon River Subsistence Fishery Manager, USFWS - Not a lot of Federal land where folks are fishing in Tanana drainage. Will standby for questions.

Luc Glover, Biologist, Whitehorse - 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 227 Chinook salmon by August 13th. This stands in comparison to the count of 237 on the same date last year and an average of 687 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

12th, an estimated count of 1,564 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 4,440. This stands in contrast to the average count of 6,503 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 12th, an approximate count of 1,478 Chinook salmon have been observed passing through. During the last active year, which was 2021, the cumulative count for the same period was 1,760. This count stands in comparison to the 10-year average of 4,214 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 13th, an estimated count of 434 Chinook salmon have been recorded making their way through the sonar site. By August 14th, a total of 27 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. This stands in comparison to the count of 24 on the same date last year and an average of 318 for the project's monitoring period from the past decade. Environmental Conditions: Over the last week, the Yukon region has encountered cooler air temperatures and gusty winds. The community of Old Crow underwent an evacuation last week but is now transitioning back to an evacuation alert status. At present, operations at Porcupine camp have been halted, with the intention of resuming activities by week's end. 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.

Jacklyn Kendall, Fishery Manager, Yukon River - 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 slightly 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 and DFO will maintain current closures in the Public Angling (recreational), Commercial and Domestic fisheries for fall chum.

Community level reports:

District Y1:

District Y2:

St. Mary's: Matty Beans - 57.1 temp. Was good wind the other day. Mt. Village zero this morning. Lots of blueberries this year.

Bill Alstrom - Matty gave a good report. Problem is few people mentioned climate change. We haven't seen this kind of weather for a long time. Some sort of a cycle.

Pilot Station: Martin Kelly - River conditions overnight river has dropped quite a bit. At normal level. Temp cool. 59 degrees. Intermittent rain. Had some sunshine today. Expecting rain for next week or so. Families are focused on picking black and blueberries. Started putting paper together this afternoon. Read an article on KYUK trooper citation for salmon discard. Something we've been talking about. Especially hearing Basil Larsen talk about it. Area M resulted in nine citations for allegedly dumping salmon overboard. Have been collecting articles since we started teleconferences over summer. Violation considered Class A misdemeanor. I've been adding excerpts to my report. A study blames pollock trawlers. Cod crashed by trawl. Alaskan politicians campaign they don't accurately report salmon Bycatch to date. I think YRDFA can be invested in political action for us before all our fishery is totally destroyed and depleted. I heard what Basil had been advocating to try to charge Bycatch trawlers for wanton waste. I think it would be our obligation to have YRDFA if we can use it as a tool to try help us to stop trawlers. Can't do anything about climate and weather change. Have read articles of when Serena is involved. Maybe we can look at joining other fish committees. I think we can put a stop to it. Not only dealing in pounds but metric tons of waste. Small commercial being charged for wanton waste. Especially chum because they're targeting sockeye. Only nine commercial boats compared to trawling boats.

District Y3:

District Y4a,b,c:

District Y5abc&d:

Tanana: Rapids Camp Stan Zuray - Water levels are steady or down and there is no drift at present. No nets in water at Rapids and only one household still operating an open camp. All others have left or have cleared beaches of fish racks and cutting tables and actively moving to town. With the closure in effect and low numbers at Pilot Sonar people say they can't afford to run a fishcamp any longer into the fall. Boxes of Salmon were shipped to Tanana and people appreciated that much. Some even brought it to their fish camps to cut.

District Y6abc:

Nenana: Victor Lord - Just got done with culture camp. Kids put on a good potluck for us. There was a whitefish and they caught some summer chum. The donated fish is appreciated but it was good to eat home caught fish.

Fairbanks: Gale - Fairbanks Fish and Game advisory committee submitted an on-time submission to make an out-of-season ADFG meeting.

CANADA

Elizabeth MacDonald, Council of Yukon First Nations - Closure on Porcupine for chinook. Have been evacuated. Believe some are headed back in the next couple of days. Same with Mayo. Had to cancel the event due to fire. Felt more like fall. Got more rain. Salmon runs to the north are coming to an end and starting in the south. Kids saw small salmon, very great. Fish counts just started, hopefully more coming.

Dawson: Sebastian Jones Yukon Salmon Subcommittee - At camp 15 youth in Dawson area. Learned how to care for fish. Brought 40 salmon down for the youth to learn how to cut fish and preserve. Cut and smoked salmon. Learned about keeping the salmon culture alive. Didn't fish but demonstrated how to fish. Yukon river dropping in height and temperature.

BBAYK:

Karen Gillis, BSFA Executive Director - We have a lot on the agenda. We are going to have scientists. This week about ACRs and their strategy. Once submitted we work on our strategy. That's what we're focusing on this week.

Open Discussion / Questions:

Serena Fitka, Executive Director, YRDFA - We do have a couple groups. One is BBAYK - if interested I can forward your email on to Karen Gillis. Another group works on action on Bycatch. I can invite you to our group.

Gayle Vick, BBAYK - Was going to tell Marvin about BBAYK group. Research on this is great. Fairbanks advisory just put in to the chum chucking. When doing research there had been no citations for trooper log for last several years. Very under-policed. Hard area to police. We are asking for consideration of an investigation into this. As Serena suggested, there are many groups. It's not just environmental conditions. We have low numbers and can't keep intercepting these.

Fred West, Summer Season Research Biologist: Chena 1069 chinook ended August 11th and Salcha 1242 chinook below average.

Victor Lord - Good report Martin made. Two more meetings until September.

Serena Fitka, Executive Director, YRDFA - Yes two more until we're finished.

Victor Lord - People to report to the last meeting.

Serena Fitka, Executive Director, YRDFA - Yes, we'll reach out to tribes to let them know that there are two more calls left.

Victor Lord- Will give a report on Parks next week.

Sebastian Jones - Questions on daily packet. 1). When I look at "Yukon area project updates for fall chum" there is a column for fall chum genetics. I don't understand that column. I can be specific. I don't understand cumulative salmon passage to date can be higher than the cumulative passage or how it relates to cumulative passage.

Bonnie Borba, Research Biologist Fall Season Biologist ADF&G - Genetics number of 148k today out of 226k. First are straight up Pilot Station. Second column is genetic estimate.

Sebastian Jones - Fall chum. How can the median of fall chum be 406000? That's higher.

Bonnie Borba, Research Biologist Fall Season Biologist ADF&G - Genetics only goes back to 2004. In the past we used to have summer chum that didn't bleed over. We're getting summer later. Crossover was typically on the 19th. Pilot Station might have more it has seen.

Sebastian Jones - Based on genetics there's a higher number chum then?

Bonnie Borba, Research Biologist Fall Season Biologist ADF&G - The number of fall chum that were in component for fall chum tends to be higher, yes.

Sebastian Jones - Question: Eagle sonar - look at median temp Eagle tends to be 16 degrees in July we've had temps 18 degrees or above when chinook have a difficult time. 22 degrees is the temp where salmon start to die. The river reached a high temp.

Bonnie Borba, Research Biologist Fall Season Biologist ADF&G - Temp at Eagle. Not many data years - other data in range includes hobo. Right now reporting the hand temps they are recording are high. I believe Fred West can comment as well will follow with radio telemetry whatever fish do cross the border.

Fred West, Summer Season Research Biologist - Water temps we're seeing around Eagle. Number of fish passing the border is not as many. Definitely a concern. It will be interesting to see how many tagged fish make it. Maybe Luc can answer specifics of where towers are. Hoping to get more information postseason how many fish made it up to Canada.

Bonnie Borba, Research Biologist Fall Season Biologist ADF&G - In water packet - temps are coming down. Eagle is coming down. Tanana was having hot temps a couple weeks ago. Canadian water temps we put in everyday.

Sebastian Jones - Make sure this is flagged.

Martin Kelley - I don't know what our Canadian salmon treaty is - for me it's a different country. Based on what I reported on the trawling industry. Maybe brought up to Aide program. If Canada could bring attention to the depletion.

Sebastian Jones - Devastating. Chinook like to eat baby pollock. We need to get a grip as to what is going on in the ocean.

Victor Lord - Spirit of people in each village. I can detect it on the teleconference. The spirit of fishing all the time is gone. Our fish clan, our people. It's a terrible thing. You lose your identity.

David Walker Holy Cross - No fishing. People trying to get jobs to make money for winter. What is the average depth they're taking temps in the water? When they used to drift for kings in the day. The kings we'd have 45 mesh deep and all kings would be on the lead line. That's 20 ft or below. They're way down near the bottom during the day. A lot cooler down than the surface. Chum swim higher to the surface. What's the average depth they're taking the temps? Until we have solid data about that we can't say that's affecting fish.

Bonnie Borba, Research Biologist Fall Season Biologist ADF&G - Where Stan has hobos near bottom and the top of the river. Yukon main river is very well mixed. Temps are relatively the same. Different water sources have different regimes. We will still take the temps relevant to where our sites are and compare data.

Fred West, Summer Season Research Biologist - As far as water temps impacting kings, several years ago there was a team with USGS that did study on heat stress and how it impacts kings. More information I need to look up. They noticed stress in heat they released protein?

2017 or 2015 they found several fish were under stress. There is evidence of heat impacting kings. They get lethargic. Other diseases manifest themselves. Water temps play a role in fatality in different ways.

Bonnie Borba, Research Biologist Fall Season Biologist ADF&G - In response to Fred West 2019 was last year we had really big heat stress year besides this year.

George - Haven't heard about the study about Ichthyophonus.

Holly Carroll, USFWS Yukon River Subsistence Fishery Manager - Been great discussion about the reasons fish are experiencing mortality. This year we sampled at three locations to contribute to our three year study. Trying to find a point in the river and where they might drop off before they make it to spawning grounds. Sampling low hopefully enough data to quantify what's happening.

George- No results yet Holly? Data not analyzed until next year.

Holly Carroll, USFWS Yukon River Subsistence Fishery Manager - Yes, another year before we have solid data to share. Will present when we have data analyzed and figured out.

George - I think Bill is right, climate change factor hitting us the hardest, interception, trawlers we can affect directly. Remember when talking to members of Congress. It's really impacting lives. The action they take has a big impact. They need to work as hard as they can.