



Greetings from the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association!

Here is a summary of the 12th, 2020 Yukon River Salmon In-Season Management Teleconference held Tuesday, August 4th, 2020. Call lasted 70 minutes. 57 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: 10

St. Mary's

Marshall

Russian Mission

Anvik

Tanana

Beaver

Eagle

Nenana

Fairbanks

Whitehorse

Community level reports:

District 2-Coastal/Lower Yukon

St. Mary's:

Bill Alstrom - Just listening.

Marshall:

Norma Evan - Haven't heard of anyone fishing for fall chum. People are blueberry picking like there is no tomorrow. People were moose hunting. There has been no debris, and no fishing.

District 3-Coastal/Lower Yukon

Russian Mission:

Basil Larsen - Very little to no fishing activity. Everyone is in berry picking mode. One guy called and said there were humpies in his boat. Set a net on his way to the berry spot and pulled it out on the way home. Got a bunch of whitefish and 10 humpies. Wants the whitefish for his berries. Finally got some clouds. We've been in the fog every morning. Looks like it is turning to fall. There are so many humpies. They bump the boat. No word on silvers. Won't even try it because you will just fill up with humpies.

District 4a-Upper Yukon

Anvik:

Ken Chase - Water is the same, with little drift. No one is catching fish. The berries are scarce. One report, kind of a complaint, I can talk about it later.

Districts 5a, b, c & d

Tanana/Rapids:

Stan Zurey - Water levels are slightly rising. Above average level now. Some small drift at times. Everyone quit fishing before closure last week because of bad salmon quality. Fishers are glad that 4" nets will be allowed as of tonight because they are out of dog food and people food. COVID-19 protocols remain the same- wear masks at general store. Outsiders wanting gas are to call the store before they come in. Flights require permission from TC. Quarantine house has been set up in Tanana for those needing it.

Beaver:

Rhonda Pitka - Fishing has been really bad. We were shut down over a week ago. There was really high water. Now we are open to 4" nets for whitefish. From what I see from the numbers, not a lot of silvers are coming in. We are incredibly low.

Eagle:

Ruby - I do not have a survey report. There is no fishing due to closures. The water is still very high. People all over town are very concerned about the chum and anxiously awaiting news. Feels good though to know that kings are passing by. We are also focused on berries and awaiting caribou.

Districts 6a, b & c

Nenana:

Victor Lord - River was coming up a bit, drift coming on. Most people are fishing now. I saw one guy with a dip net and he said he caught 3 chums with it. I'm with Tim McManus and we have comments for later.

Fairbanks:

Stephanie Quinn-Davidson -YRITFC -Just listening in.

Canada

Whitehorse:

Elizabeth MacDonald - Slow on our side. There is a fair bit of activity with other things. Water levels are high. Lots of concern over low Chinook numbers. I know a friend who was fishing out in the Mayo area. He caught 3 Chinook and may be done for the year.

Management Reports Agenda:

Jeff Estensen - Yukon Area Fall Season Manager - Steadily getting into fall season. The Lower Yukon is in fall management, the upper river is still in summer. Last week actually, there were fall chum in the river.

Bonnie Borba- ADF&G Fall Season Research Biologist - We had our preliminary projection, and now with in season data, more information is available. The salmon are dominated by age 4 fish and poor survival is indicted. The lack of age 4 fish is expected to result in lower abundance. Aug 6 they were in Ruby, they will be in Stevens Aug 15 and at the US/Canada border Aug 31. The stocks going to Tanana are the first group. The majority of the chum are headed to the upper river. Lower Yukon Test Fish CPUE is below historic average. Average length is 599 mm which is above the 10 year average of 583mm. More results are not available for another week. The first coho was caught today at Big Eddy. At the main stem sonar pilot, the cumulative count for fall chum is 126K, which is below median of 214K. On Aug 3 we had 1800 coho salmon counted which is below the median for this date.

Jeff Estensen - Yukon Area Fall Season Manager - The first fall chum came in, wasn't very big, but we are keeping an eye on it and the weather. Aren't seeing the winds right now. It is common to have the lull between runs, which looks like what we are seeing right now. As migration reaches other areas, they will start seeing fall management. High water looks like it is delaying the migration. District 6 should be standing by for their transition to fall management. Projected run size isn't certain that we are going to meet our goals and escapement. Which is why we are going into restrictions on fishing. It is very important that we are able to give some opportunity to the folks on the river. I think it is important to note that there are people in the upper river that have not had much opportunity with kings or summer chum. It's been a poor year for the whole state. For commercial, run size is too low, it doesn't look like there will be any commercial fishing this year.

Gerald Maschmann - Acting Yukon River Federal In-season Manager- No report. That sums up the season so far.

Lisa - Sport fishing division- ADF&G - Announcing that the sport fishery in the Yukon for fall chum is closed (excludes the Tanana, although I think that is coming).

For full management report check out ADF&G's link below:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/applications/dcfnewsrelease/1203007209.pdf>

Fred West, Fishery Biologist Contact info for ADFG YR Summer Season Manager; call 907/267-2324

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Holly Carroll - Summer Season Manager for ADF&G- I don't have much to report. We are starting to reinstate the 4" gill nets. It is important to mushers. We are trying to allow that gear back in the water once the Kings have moved through that area. Just wanted to assure fisherman that while you are closed in D5, we don't think you are missing anything right now. The escapement assessment at Eagle is well below average (below 25k) usually about 50k. The run should be about ¾ complete. When they are late it occurs on August 3rd. We should only see ¼ remaining through the sonar. We won't know until postseason, once we know what the harvest from Canada and US is. It does paint a very sad picture. I understand that it has been a very hard year and that people have not met their needs. When we fail to provide a harvest share for Canadians, then every fish they harvest reduces our return. Post season we need to know what our harvest and other details are to figure out why our numbers are so low. One thing that is a positive, is that we are seeing above average quality and females.

Gerald Maschmann - Acting Yukon River Federal In-season Manager - Sums it up.

Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada

Jesse Trelice - Fisheries Manager - Based in Whitehorse. Quick water update. Klondike water levels high but dropping. Management strategy is to respect harvest and sharing arrangements established within the salmon agreement. We anticipated a conservative approach for 2020. Chinook harvestable only available for First Nations fisheries managed by the First Nations govt. recreational, commercial and domestic fisheries remained closed. DFO has maintained closures in recreational fishery, commercial and domestic. And will likely delay the chum fishery to protect Chinook. With current counts at Eagle, we expect that we will not meet spawning objectives. Friday YSSC sent a letter of recommendations to conserve Chinook. Fall chum have not hit the border yet. The most recent run projection is significantly lower than projection.

Vesta - DFO salmon biologist located in Whitehorse. Eagle sonar, total count 24,000. approaching ½ of average cumulative average for the same date. Low compared to last year's passage on the same date 40,000. The Klondike River, and tributary near Dawson. Counted 340 as of Aug 2nd and a historical comparison = 2009-2011 by this date there had been 2,000 = low count at Klondike sonar for this year. For the Pelly sonar - 3,000 fish, last year they were at 5,000 at this time. Big Salmon - operated by private contractor - Aug 1- 400 fish/last year 1500 fish high water and drift. Whitehorse - fish ladder has 1 fish. Early compared to historical accounts. Glad to see ASL data showing high #s of females.

Questions and discussion:

Victor Lord- Nenana - Did anyone mention how far the fall chum are up the river?

Bonnie Borba- ADF&G Fall Season Research Biologist - We reported on the first group as of August 4th are in Galena. The pulse that is mostly fall chum won't be up until the middle of August.

Stan Zurey - Tanana - There has been no fishing here. It's hard to say this, but from running the project at Rapids for so many years. So few summer chums, as opposed to what comes into the mouth, like what they get compared.... August 10. Up here we do not see any summer chum,

hardly. If there are any fall chum in the river, that's what we see here. Anyone who has been on these teleconferences for a lot of the past years, every year I would get on and say, all the way up river.... the fall chum... we've been cutting Fall chum into strips for the last two weeks. They are not big numbers but it doesn't take big numbers, except for the dog food in the fall. But it's very significant for us to catch those first ones because later 50% have bad flesh. But at the beginning it's important to catch the first ones.

Bonnie Borba- ADF&G Fall Season Research Biologist- What Stan is talking about. When there is a transition between summer and fall. Up through the transition date of July 18. There are at least 6,000 that came in before the actual pulses. Compared to last year of 13,000 at this time at the transition date. Run size is low.

Jeff Estensen - Yukon Area Fall Season Manager- High water could be slowing things down too. I understand how important these fall chum are to people and the need to get some good quality fish. We will be thinking about this as we transition to the fall season.

Ruby- Eagle - I just have 2 questions I was asked to ask.

1. Holly already kind of answered, When will 5d be able to use 4" nets?
2. 1-3 was having a couple of openings with 7.5" net and if we are unsure of the strength of the run, maybe it would be a cautious move to roll them back to 6". They felt like there was a discrepancy between net sizes, and that we likely wouldn't be allowed to use 7.5 when they get here.

Jeff Estensen - Yukon Area Fall Season Manager- As it stands right now, we are in fall season management. Most people use 6" or less to target fall chum. Some people use a 7.5" net for fall chum. Since kings are out of the way, reducing net size wouldn't restrict what they are getting down there. In the upper river I don't expect that we would see any restriction on net sizes since it doesn't change what they are able to catch.

Basil Larsen- Russian Mission - I want to reassure the person asking, just because 7.5 is allowed, doesn't mean it is being used. That size net is pretty scarce down here.

Call ended 2:09