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

Here is a summary of the 2nd 2023 Yukon River Salmon In-Season Management Teleconference held Tuesday, June 13, 2023. Call lasted 77 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 present:** None

**Political Representatives participating:** None

### **Communities participating:**

**Alakanuk**

**Anvik**

**Mountain Village**

**St. Mary's**

**Russian Mission**

**Marshall**

**Ruby**

**Whitehorse**

**Area M**

**BBAYK**

**\*Western Alaska was experiencing phone & internet outages**

### **Alaska Department of Fish and Game**

#### **Management Reports:**

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

- Early days, water high
- Fishing closures starting June 2nd. More announcements to come.
- June 5 test fishing. No fish yet. Drifting for chinook and chum,
- PilotStation - test fishing today but high water.

This year's forecast is low, so we put out announcements. Still high water. Off shore winds pushing salmon out. Only a few caught - Pilot Station's run is one week later than normal. Average is 0.74. Expected low but not late. For summer chum have been late - July 3rd. closures

- fish with 4" gear or smaller - 60 feet or less to allow for salmon to go by. Open 7 days a week for other species.

**Holly Carroll - US Fish and Wildlife Service Yukon River Area Manager**

Nothing to add. High water may be delayed but the crew is on ground getting ready.

**Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada**

**Jackie Kendall, Fishery Manager, Yukon River -**

Levels are the same - experiencing a late melt. Average snowpack is high. Canadian management remains focused on salmon returning. Harvest opportunities are not expected. Closures are expected for the 2023 season.

**Stock Assessment:** A crew of DFO technicians will be ready to start setting up the sonars and camp at the Porcupine Sonar by June 19th. The Porcupine sonar is a jointly delivered project by Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Government and is located in the upper portion of the Yukon River watershed in Canada at the community of Old Crow.

Another crew of DFO technicians are also planning to arrive at the Eagle sonar on June 25th to help set up that camp. The Eagle sonar is located about 29 kilometers downstream from Alaska's border with Canada; it is a collaboratively delivered project with ADFG.

**Environmental Conditions:** Environmental conditions remain similar to last week with river-level snow having melted in most of the Yukon territory. There has been a bit of an accelerated melt of late that has caused some higher water levels. There was an approximately avg snowpack this past winter that was lower than the past couple of years which experienced very high snowpacks.

**Canadian Management:**

- The key priority for management in Canada will remain focused on ensuring as many Canadian-origin salmon reach their spawning grounds as possible in order to sustain future returns.
- With the preliminary Canadian origin Chinook outlook of 26,000 to 43,000, and in consideration of previous years performance, Canada's management strategy will be very cautious and conservative.
- Harvest opportunities in the First Nation Subsistence Fishery are not expected and DFO will maintain closures in the Chinook public angling (recreational) commercial, and domestic (non-indigenous food fishery) fisheries throughout the 2023 season.
- Over the coming weeks, Fisheries and Oceans Canada will rely on information collected by assessment programs at Lower Yukon Test Fishery and Pilot Station Sonar to inform management moving forward.

**Community level reports:**

**District Y1:**

**Alakanuk:** Gabriel Buster - raining on and off. Water high rn. People fishing before the closure didn't catch anything. Lots of moss and driftwood in the water.

**District Y2:**

**Mt. Village:** Nita Stevens - no one is fishing. Contacted (5) homes. Water is high and there is driftwood in the river. The weather has been cloudy.

**St. Mary's:** Eric: High water, weather is colder than normal spring. Some fishermen are catching whitefish and sheefish here and there with nets. People are concerned about no fish counts or enforcement.

George: Calling to listen in.

**Marshall:** Diane Fitka - no one is fishing. Same weather. High water and cold.

### **District Y3:**

**Russian Mission:** Basil Larsen - same high water that is holding and still flooding to the south side of the river. No fishing. No drift. Not many fish camps are being repaired. This week 60% of the people lost 4" nets from fish camps. Residents are recovering from flood damage. (2) families are planning to relocate to subsistence fish in Iliamna and Bethel. Basil might follow suit. There are a couple nets out. No kings. Fishermen are catching medium sheefish and big whitefish. People are concerned about sonar and accuracy of the data collected. He's having trouble conducting weekly surveys. People are mad and sad about the fishing or the lack of. People are upset about Fish & Game managing the last of the salmon: "Not protecting during the whole lifecycle of salmon". People are seeing a lot of dead adult moose & bears. Land is under water making it hard to harvest eggs.

**Anvik:** Ken Chase: Anvik River sonar is getting set up. Water is still quite high; lots. They set up the counting station on the river. Water still high. No one is fishing. Lots of rain.

### **District Y4a:**

**Ruby:** Rachael Kangas - called a few people. The water is dropping daily. Minimal drift in the river. Not as large as last week. Low numbers of fish going up the Yukon. Fishing is open in the area but the concern is gas prices. One elder says it is not worth going out there doing any types of fishing with the cost of getting boats ready and hitting the river.

### **District Y5abc&d:**

#### **Eagle:**

Andy Bassich - river levels are average or below average and are clearer than normal. Not seeing glacial melt coming down the river. Not seeing lots of debris. Not expecting to see much debris this year. Running a small 4" net catching a few whitefish and sheefish and occasional small pike (to help feed the dogs).

Discussion for monitoring up in the region. Monitoring low runs of chum.

Ruby Becker - people have hope. Trying to get answers. River still high and talking about putting in a line for burbot.

### **CANADA**

**Elizabeth McDonald, Council of Yukon First Nations:** Today we are out in the field deploying temperature loggers. Whitehorse has had mixed weather, cool and warm this last week and windy. Otherwise water levels are starting to come up (normally, no flood risks). People are really worried about what the salmon runs will look like this year. We really need more salmon back just to make sure there are salmon on the spawning grounds. From the First Nations I have talked to, it sounds like they will be all not fishing this year. I have also heard that some First Nations are asking for no nets in the river during the salmon run. In the Whitehorse area, First Nations haven't fished here for about 20 years because of low Chinook numbers (no chum here). Hopefully this will be a better year for salmon.

## **OTHER UPDATE:**

### **AREA M:**

Matt Keys - biologist for Area M. Same fleet conducted a test fishery on June 8-10. Low harvest levels for sockeye and chum. Picked up near Shumagin Island. Concluded 1 seine opening at 2am today. Set and gill netter's 1st opening closes at 10pm tonight. Some changes to seine schedule in June (1st and 2nd period) reduction to 66 hours. 76 hr closure between openers.

Added cap, next trigger June 23rd. Seine gear closed.

Harvested 100k reds, 14k chum, 9k pink, 172 king

Harvest levels low - below average

Unseasonably cool. Ongoing trend within the Gulf of Alaska. Seeing a delay in these species in this area.

### **BBAYK:**

**Gale Vick** - reporting for BBAYK coalition. BBAYK has been meeting since before the BOF meeting. Learned a lot and branched out into other areas. BBAYK meets every week via zoom for 1 hour. The meeting is very informative for everyone for different subject areas from legal to ground to openers. BBAYK is similar to YRDFA. SB128 and HB180 are areas of focus for Area M. Will be reconsidered in January. Experiencing BOF issues, (new board members). BBAYK suggested the Yukon should invite them to our area. Legislation for SB128 and HB180 have been striking up lots of conversation. Need as much information and facts regarding the intercept area and AYK. Have limited numbers, need numbers in abundance and harvest for this season.

### **Open Discussion / Questions:**

**Basil (Russian Mission)** - People are wondering if Fish & Game are coming out to do some tagging? The cabin is unsafe. Started renting a camp - supposed to come back.

**Fish & Game responded:** "Doing work out of Emmonak. Next YRDFA call they will give an update.)

**Andy** asking keys about current chum catch in Area M.

**Matt keys replied:** "King Cove, Chignik, and other areas are sampling genetics on each gear type and species. They are trying to get several hundred each day. Lisa Fox is the Lead Supervisor. Birch Foster is her Supervisor.

**Andy** - Time frame for genetic samples? Can we be updated weekly?

**Matt Keys** - not sure on the turnaround time on the samples, not sure if we can do weekly.

**Holly Carroll** - thank everyone for reports about the river. Want to provide non-salmon harvest opportunities due to extra hardship. She is very aware of the hardship. Discuss with YRDFA - appreciate inviting people from those areas (Area M). They don't have the ability to affect any kind of change - but learn trust and hope that sort of relationship is created with Area M. What would work better etc. Grateful for creating space. Great appreciation for this resource. Goal is to reduce bycatch.

**Shannon** - back from June Management council meeting in Sitka. One of the topics was to support a new program using old data - hearing complaints about using old data- pushing forward.

**Gale Vick** - Operating for under a year - putting recommendations together

**Eric** - where is enforcement on the lower river?

**Deena ADF&G** says District 1 & 2 folks can call her or contact troopers if they need to request enforcement. Emmonak is (907)949-1320 8-5 M-F 1-5 on Saturday or she can be reached by cell as well.

**Basil Larsen**- stated residents are relying on moose and bear in place of salmon. Sustainability is causing concern due to the flood. Everything on the South Side of the river didn't make it. Seeing big, dead, adult moose with heads and necks out of the water. A new born baby moose fell off the ice last week. Concerns about the sustainability of moose. (Pass these comments on to the Board of Game).

**Shannon** - brought up concern about big game animals. Big game are struggling and it is hard on their people.

**Victor** - was on flats behind Nenana. found ancient fish bone.

**Serena** - village travel to Grayling, Anvik, Holy cross

*Call ended [time]pm*

**2:06pm**