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

Here is a summary of the 2nd 2022 Yukon River Salmon In-Season Management Teleconference held Tuesday, June 14, 2022. Call lasted 103 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:** Ann in Eagle  
KUAC in Fairbanks  
KZPA Fort Yukon

**Political Representatives participating:** None

### **Communities participating:**

Hooper Bay  
Scammon Bay  
Alakanuk  
Emmonak  
Mt. Village  
Pilot Station  
Huslia  
Tanana/Rapids  
Eagle  
Fairbanks  
Yukon River Bridge  
Whitehorse

### **Management Reports:**

**Fred West- ADF&G Yukon River Area Research Biologist** - Assessment so far. Test fishing since late may/early june. Chum and chinook, both cumulative indexes so far are below average. We have not seen a push of fish as of yet. We caught 9 summer chums this morning. Catches have been pretty consistent for Chinook.

Pilot station has been counting since the first of June. First chum was caught on the 12th. Current count is 2460. Below cumulative average of 22000. Summer chum is 307 fish, well below the median counts of 39,000. Still waiting for fish to arrive.

Andrefski is still waiting due to fires.

Anvik sonar crew is onsite setting up camp. Hope to be operational by the 16th of June.

**Deena Jallen - ADF&G Yukon River Summer Season Manager** - Closures started in District 1 on June 1, and is working its way up. Just trying to protect salmon as they move up river. We've had a shift in the winds, so hopefully we will see a push of fish coming up river.

**Holly Carroll - US Fish & Wildlife Service Yukon River Area Manager** - Federal manager for Yukon - Crew deploying to install new weir on Koyukuk. Well below average counts on chum and chinook leading to closures. Should see better fish runs in the future.

## **Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada**

**Oliver Barker - Biologist** - Really very early season. We are just preparing. Porcupine sonar is due to start in July. DFO technicians will be heading to Eagle. Still in prep mode here.

Environmental conditions: winter snowpack and water content was double; snow was more widespread. We are getting rain. Flood watches this week. Rain will end today and we will see some more seasonal temperatures. A lot of water will be coming down the river from up here.

Mark Ross - Fisheries and Oceans. Covering for Jaclyn Kendall. Recap of last week's update: not a lot has changed as fish have not come into Canadian waters yet. The key priority will be ensuring sufficient numbers of salmon meet spawning grounds. DFO is maintaining all closures of chinook for 2022. Over the coming weeks F&O will rely on information collected down river to further inform our decisions.

## **Mark Ross - A/Fisheries Manager - Yukon River**

### **Stock Assessment:**

DFO technicians will arrive at the Porcupine Sonar by June 24. The Porcupine sonar is located in the upper portion of the Yukon River watershed in Canada at the community of Old Crow. It is a jointly delivered project by Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Government.

DFO technicians will arrive at the Eagle sonar on June 24. 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:**

Spring has arrived. The river-level snow has melted in most of the Yukon territory, however there is still substantial snow volumes at elevation. Canadian portions of Yukon and Porcupine drainages saw substantially higher-than-average snowfall this winter. The projection is for high water levels that will be similar (or higher) than the high water observed last year. With high water, the expectation is to see cooler water temperatures (which are good for migrating adult salmon). The intensity of flooding is yet to be determined as the high-water crest and timing will depend on environmental conditions (i.e., heat, rain-on-snow events at elevation).

### **Canadian Management:**

- The 2022 Canadian management strategy will be finalized in late June, in advance of the arrival of the first Chinook salmon at the international border. It will be informed by the Yukon River Panel's (YRP) 2022 management recommendations, the objectives

established in the Pacific Salmon Treaty's Yukon River Salmon Agreement, recommendations from the YSSC and the results of consultations with Yukon First Nation Governments and community members.

- The key priority for management in Canada will remain focused on ensuring sufficient numbers of Canadian-origin salmon reach their spawning grounds in order to sustain future returns.
- The preliminary Canadian origin Chinook forecast is 41,000 to 62,000. In consideration that it is unlikely that the run will come in at the upper end of the pre-season forecast and that the lower end of the Interim Management Escapement Goal (42,500 to 55,000) has not been achieved for the past several years, Canada's management strategy will be cautious and conservative.
- Unless in-season information strongly indicates otherwise, it's not anticipated that the season will commence with an allocation to the First Nation subsistence fishery.
- Allocations made to the First Nation subsistence Chinook fishery will align with the Canadian management plan. DFO will maintain closures in the Chinook public angling (recreational) commercial, and domestic (non-indigenous food fishery) fisheries throughout 2022.
- The preliminary Canadian origin Fall Chum forecast for Yukon River mainstem stocks is 20,000 to 37,000 and 3,000 to 6,000 for Fishing Branch River stocks. Both forecasts are well below the escapement goal ranges for those stocks (70,000 to 104,000; and 22,000 to 49,000 respectively) The chum forecast and management decisions will be revised mid-July (following the summer chum run).
- 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 decisions in Canada.

### **Community level reports:**

#### **District Y1:**

**Hooper Bay:** Lester Wilde - Some families are catching some salmon in Hooper Bay

**Scammon Bay:** George Smith - Not known for chinook, mostly pinks and ciscos, we need bigger nets to catch Broad whitefish. We would like leeway to harvest. 5 ½"

Deena - George, thank you for the comments and information. We have received your emails, and we have been discussing it. I will also remind folks that fishing is open for non salmon with dip nets, 4" mesh and hook and line.

**Alakanuk:** Max-I interviewed 10 households. 2 are fishing with 4" gear. The rest didn't have it, or weren't sure where to set it. They all said it was worse than last year. One fisher caught some chum and a king. Water is really high. Debris still flowing down.

**Emmonak:** John Lamont - I have a question for the department. They seem to be giving us the numbers instead of the average. Can they compare it to 2020 and 2021 compared to what it is looking like this year and send it out to us?

Fred - Yes, we can do that.

Deena - The weekly update should have recently published. We've been having a lot of connectivity issues. We apologize for the delay.

**District Y2:**

**Mt. Village:** Stan Sheppard- Not too much activity, under a handful of people 1-3, drift coming down the river, docks are submerged, some people set their 4" downriver for sheefish and whitefish impacted by drift so they will wait. Skinny fish with little fat content. For the 3 main rivers below Mt. Village toward the end of June, broadhead whitefish and sheefish netting and targets when they still have oil content. In July and August no oil content

Nita Stevens - I haven't started a survey yet. We have high water.

**Pilot Station:** Cynthia - Martin called and asked me to give a report. Our water level is high, lots of debris on the river. Weather is southwest winds. Hopefully the fire will move away from Pilot. We have a lot of crew members here from out of state. I haven't heard of anyone catching salmon yet. Just pike and sheefish.

**Koyukuk River:**

**Huslia:** Hugh Bifelt - Water levels are down, haven't been fishing. Recent meeting in Anchorage talking about snowmelt in Brooks Range, water levels below normal for Koyukuk

**District Y5 abc&d:**

**Tanana:** Stan - A few people fishing, not many. Few people fishing for dogs. Little bit of drift. Water isn't bad, but supposed to get higher. Don't think we will see anyone going to fish camp this summer. It's too expensive to go and not fish.

**Eagle:** Andy - Super high water that is dropping now - highest since 1974, 64 and 61. Considerable amount of debris and water coming down the river. Canadians report rain upriver that maintains high levels of water into June and July. No one is on the river as of now.

**District Y6 abc:**

**Fairbanks: Virgil** - Nothing has happened here. Water is down a little bit. It is smokey here.

**Community Reports, Questions or Discussion**

**Jeffrey - Yukon River Bridge** - water levels are super high, not a lot of action on the river other than transport between Stevens Village and Rampart. Conversations about food security later this fall are happening, and Inquiry on limiting out of state hunting to make up for the lack of fish. High water and lots of debris

**Deena** - I don't have any information about hunting. Call fish and game in Fairbanks. Or talk to your advisory council members. Fish - this is going to be another extremely hard year if we don't see the numbers come back.

**Hugh** - The way I see it, on the Koyukuk, the guides pass the meat out to the villages when they don't take the meat. The transporters drop hunters off and pick them up 10 days later and the meat is no good by then. That is the problem I have with them.

**Forrest Bowers - Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division Operations Manager** - I could give you an update from South Alaska Peninsula Fishery.

The fleet in the south western fishery started a test fishery. They tested on June 8-10. Based on the results and forecast run size the fleet chose not to fish on June 10, which is the first day that

they would have been open. They fished until 1pm on the 11th and 12th and 8pm on the 13th. Reduction of 81 hours. The fishery is closed today by regulation and will open tomorrow. Fishing time will be reduced from 88 to 40 hours to conserve early run sockeye salmon, which is now a management concern. At this point the chum salmon harvest is about 50,000 fish. Last year there were 108,000 fish. We are significantly below the 2021 harvest and the 10 year average. The sockeye salmon to date is about 730,000 fish.

**Lisa Stube - Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Sport Fish Biologist** -No sport fishing on salmon currently.

## **CANADA**

**Whitehorse:** Elizabeth MacDonald (written submission)- Environmental conditions: Currently we are getting a lot of rain. There are a lot of flood warnings and evacuation alerts throughout the Yukon Territory. The Pelly River, Teslin Lake, Carmacks area are sandbagging. Another concern with very high water levels is that our main highway is at risk as the lake level is now almost level with the highway. This is a big concern as a washout would prevent supplies from reaching our communities. There is no rail or boat, everything comes by truck. In the past, grocery stores can fly in perishables but then shelves are empty for the most part, even in Whitehorse. On the salmon front, we have a ways to go before there are any salmon crossing the border. But everyone is planning for a poor season.

## **Additional Comments and Questions**

John Lamont - Will there be sport fishing or dip netting, or what kind of fishing off of the Richardson on the Sulcha this summer?

Lisa - ADF&G Sportfish- The Yukon River Dept of Sport Fish excludes the Tanana. The way the run is going, the fishery for king and chum, we are waiting to see what happens, but they won't arrive for a couple of weeks. I am highly confident that those fisheries will be closed. They have not closed yet, but it is inevitable that it will close. No advisory announcements for district 6 (Tanana).

John - Since we were closed on 2nd, are all districts closed for any type of gillnetting?

Fred - We have announcements through 4BC they will close on the 16th at 8pm, and that is current.

In the next 2 weeks the first kings should make their way up the Salchik?

John - One last question. Is the Yukon river bridge still open for Salmon?

Sam Decker - Yes the bridge is still open right now. We are rolling our salmon closures up river with the arrival of the King Salmon. 4 B and C is open until 8pm on June 17?

John - The reason I am asking is that under the new subsistence rules, I am not allowed to get a net wet in Y1, but am I allowed to get it wet at the Yukon River Bridge for sheefish?

Holly - I think I get what you are asking... yes, its open. Its open because there are no salmon there. Pretty soon the upper river will close, as soon as there are salmon in that area.

John - So the 18th?

Holly - We don't have dates for Y5 yet. The latest closure is 4BC.

Stan - The Juneau department talked about the False Pass, Area M, that took some restrictions on their fishing down there?

Forrest - Yes, that was for False Pass, Area M - South West Peninsula.

Stan - It showed that for the last 2 years that False Pass, and Area M really impacted the salmon. After harvesting countless hours of fishing down there and not being able to have in mind that all these fish are going up somewhere and we get cut down with subsistence. With my understanding is that when there is no subsistence, all salmon fisheries should come to a halt?

Forrest - The South Alaska fishery is managed by the BOF management plans. We know that some of the chum salmon caught in that area are bound for rivers in Western Alaska. That includes the Yukon (and others). We don't know in-season where the fish are bound. The information that we have is based on an analysis that occurred from 2007-2009. We know it is a mixed stalk fishery. We also know that the largest contributor is likely mortality in the early marine life. We are aware of the concerns and we are taking great steps to meet the escapement goals on the rivers in Western Alaska. We may take additional restrictions, more than what has been voluntarily taken. No, there is no requirement for restriction in this area because of restriction in other areas.

Stanislaus - As you recall in the late 80s, there was a large crash. There was a restriction river wide, but that wasn't the problem. It was Area M and False Pass. As soon as they took restrictions in Area M, within three years there was a bounce back in our fishery. I am sure the numbers are available, you need to look at those numbers and see what they did then. Why don't they take that information and do it again? The answer I got before was that there has to be another study. Why does there have to be another study if we already have the information? Can he get that information from back then and what we did?

Forrest - Sure, one thing that is different now than in the past is that we have a pretty sophisticated program looking at the ocean ecology and when we take that information into consideration it is telling us that the decline is due to early ocean mortality of the salmon, not from fishery removal. So that is the information we have and the information we are going with.

Virgil - In 2004, Area M fishery management was totally changed from 2001-2003, Increased area and amount of fish that could be fished from previous years in "terminal areas". My question is, is there an emergency order? Or is it voluntary?

Forrest - The reduction of fishing time that has happened at this point has been done voluntarily by the fleet. The fishery is closed tomorrow and that is done by EO.

Virgil - What about the other 88-hour openings this month?

Forrest - Correct, that will depend on escapement. The chum harvest is low at 50k fish. If we were seeing chum harvest that was approaching the 10-year average, we would probably be

taking additional EO action based on that. It is less than ½ of the 10-year average. We are keeping an eye on it.

Virgil - Has the department come up with a management plan under that regulation?

Forrest - Yes, the process normally happens during in-cycle. This concern came up out of cycle. Because of that there was no action plan to consider. In lieu of an action plan, there was an agreement reached at the meeting and that is what we are following. There will be a draft action plan presented to the board at the meeting next year.

Virgil - When we have our teleconferences with YRDFA, will you give us an update of the numbers on the Chignik river?

Forrest - Yes, right now they are 306 sockeye and 271k cumulative?

Virgil - What is the minimum escapement goal for the early run of Chignik sockeye?

Forrest - 350-450,000

George - Agree with Stan, concern with Chignik intercept fishery and agree with Forrest that the biggest impact is mortality rate of young stage fish - our return rate is low, so every fish that gets intercepted is a huge impact. Makes an impact on how many fish are coming down. Restriction on fishing hours on Chignik fishery is an important decision, it's time to do genetic testing. Tests are much faster than they were 15 years ago.

Forrest: We are conducting new genetic stock identification project this year. Looking at the stock origin of Chum. Similar to previous study.

Virgil: I know they aren't doing genetic studies on Chinook, but our communities would like to see that happen and get involved in it. High ICK in late 1980s and last year. Herring also gets ICK. They might get infected south of the Alaska peninsula. This fishery has a high harvest of Chinook. 45K in June fishery. The genetic studies of chinook at Area M have never happened and it needs to.

Stan - Holly, is the federal government going to control subsistence this summer? Depending on if we get a storm, maybe fish will come into the Yukon. What numbers of fish do we need to see at Pilot sonar to be able to give us a little opener.

Holly - The department and the federal government are working very closely with each other. Current counts are well below. It's too early to guess what numbers will let us go fishing. We are going to have to wait until the midpoint, and that is June 24th, typically. We are hoping that the runs come in better than forecasted.

Stan - I have seen, have experience, especially when water is this high, the equipment at Pilot tends to adjust. One year they recorded low return because the angle of the sonar was pointed down to the bottom of the river. Make sure the sonar is pointed in the right direction.

Holly - We have good technology at Pilot and we can tell when we are pointed down. It is like a video camera.

Carl Fister- ADFG- Water is really high right now. Does limit our detection range. We can see about 150 feet right now. The fish are really close to shore. The fish are usually close to shore. 90% within 50 meters of the shore. Don't think we are missing a lot. Not much in the nets. Keeping an eye on it. Feel good about it.

Stan - I know in the past, in Mountain Village in the fall when we do our test fisheries, we have to follow a GPS on the drift. Is that the same thing that is happening in Emmonak? At this time the GPS would put you way out in the middle, and that is not where the fish are.

Carl - I can't speak for Emmonak, but at Pilot Station we do adjust our GPS to the water level because you are right, some drift locations wouldn't be appropriate.

Deena - Our crew does have depth finders, they are familiar with the rivers and channels. We have been fishing close to shore. They got a lot of snags at the beginning, but those have been pulled out of the water now. Our crew is a lot of local folks that know the river.

Stan - A majority of our young men are out on the fire crew. Thanks!

**Call ended: 2:43**