



YUKON RIVER DRAINAGE FISHERIES ASSOCIATION

PO Box 2898 Palmer, AK 99645
Tel: 907-272-3141 Toll free: 877-999-8566
Fax: 907-272-3142 E-mail: serena@yukonsalmon.org

Greetings from the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association!

Here is a summary of the 2nd, 2020 Yukon River Salmon In-Season Management Teleconference held Tuesday, May 26, 2020. Call lasted 63 minutes. 50 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 900AM

Political Representatives participating: None

Communities participating this week: 14

Alakanuk
Mt. Village
Pitka's Point
St. Mary's
Marshall
Russian Mission
Anvik
Nulato
Huslia
Rapids
Fort Yukon
Chalkyitsik
Nenana
Teslin

COMMUNITY LEVEL REPORTS:

Coastal District 1-Lower Yukon

Alakanuk: Pamela Cook - River conditions are high water with a lot of debris. People are still waiting. Nothing yet. She spoke with Scammon Bay and Hooper Bay. Keeping up on a daily basis with them. A lot of community members in Alakanuk are logging, harvesting herring eggs, and bird eggs. They are fixing their motors. Due to Covid-19, some people have been going out [with their own households]. It is difficult because they can only go out with people they are quarantined with.

Gerald USFWS- question to Pam: Have you heard of any first caught chum or Chinook?

Pam- Only in Hooper Bay - a king. [Yes, they have caught fish in Hooper Bay]

District 2-Coastal/Lower Yukon

Mt. Village: Nita Stevens- Water is still high, We do not have much debris floating down the river. No one has caught any fish yet.

St. Marys: William Alstrom - There is not much going on here. Haven't been on the Yukon since last week. From what I heard, there is quite a bit of drift down the [Yukon] River. The Andreasfsky... is still holding. Has gone down a little bit. Haven't heard of anyone catching any fish. It has been good weather here.

Marshall: Norma Evan- no one is fishing yet, water is high. people are logging. Catch is mostly whitefish and pike.

District 3-Coastal/Lower Yukon

Russian Mission: Basil Larsen- There is pretty much no fish, except Sheefish. My fish camp neighbor is giving me the fish carcasses for my dog yard. He is the only one fishing on the Yukon. The water is holding. Everyone is logging. Logs come in spurts. A day good, then it slacks off. I went upriver and there were a lot of logs pushed into the creeks. The water is holding high. No salmon, just sheefish. Forgot to report on last [week's] teleconference that I saw a fish wheel floating by. It passed Russian, not sure where it went.

District 4a-Upper Yukon

Anvik: Alberta - No fish yet here. still waiting on salmon to arrive. Few people are catching sheefish. The Yukon River is still high, water is going down. It is raining here. I see a few people getting their gear ready. I haven't started interviewing yet.

Nulato: Arnold - Water is high but dropping slowly. No one is out fishing. Some drift going by, not as much as last week. We are going to start going back to work full time next week. We have been working half-time. We are waiting for MOUs to be signed so we can start traveling between villages.

Koyukuk River

Huslia: Zoe - People are starting to talk about fishing. One or two people have a whitefish net out now. River bank has been caving and water is dropping slowly. I believe it stopped caving now.

Districts 5a, b, c & d

Rapids: Stan: Water has gone down quite a bit from its high point and drift has subsided a lot. Not as much logging as there was. There are some nets across the river for whitefish and sheefish for people and dogs. Some people have gone to fish camps to check them out, but not a lot of activity at fish camp. Weather has been pretty nice.

Fort Yukon: Andrew: I was traveling on Yukon the other day. Water levels in Fort Yukon are still a little bit high, but upstream towards Circle water levels are normal for this time of year. People around Fort Yukon have set out their whitefish nets.

Chalkyitsik: Nicolas: Was out on the river this past week and water has come up. We discovered a drowned moose.

Districts 6a, b & c

Nenana: Victor: River has dropped down, it's pretty normal now. Last week there was a whitefish net out, maybe a few more now. No whitefish caught but people are catching suckers.

Canada

Teslin: Carl Sidney: Lake ice has just gone out a few days ago. The water is rising crazy fast, there should be lots of drift coming down the river. Still cold at night, last night below freezing.

Management Reports Agenda:

Holly Carroll - ADFG Summer Season Yukon Area Manager

Contact info: 907-267-2324

Not much of an update because we are just trying to get projects in the water.

Fred West- Summer Season Yukon Area Research Biologist- We did hear a report of one subsistence fish caught in Hooper Bay, a summer chum. Lower river test fish, our past test fishers that we have used for the drift will be working. Starting on Sunday they started doing their drifting with a snag net to get the snags out. Have not caught any fish in it. The set nets that we plan to put up at Big Eddy, are ready to go, once we decide to deploy them. We will probably start with a half net. The water is still swift and there is a lot of debris. We haven't heard of any other set nets in the river nearby. But it is ready to be deployed once the debris calms down.

Holly ADFG- I will remind people the Pilot Station sonar hopes to be operational by June 5. We normally post our daily counts on our Facebook page. This will start on June 2nd. Call the Toll Free hotline to get your fishing schedule: 1-866-479-7387, in Fairbanks 459-7387. We also post the daily counts on there, which will be after June 2nd or 3rd.

From management perspective, there is no update. All fishing is open 24/7, with 7.5" size nets. By the end of this week, the Coastal District and District 1 will have an announcement. This conference call is a little earlier than we usually have them.

Joseph Afcan - Wasilla- Has some questions.

Serena Fitka YRDFA- If we wait for questions after the management reports.

Carl Sydney- Asks to be second.

US Fish and Wildlife Service

Gerald Maschmann - Fish Biologist- No updates from me. Thanks lower Yukon Fishers for keeping an eye out for the first king and chum. And thanks to Pamela for calling Scammon Bay.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada

Jesse Trece- Fisheries Manager - I don't have a lot of additional info to say. We are working within Federal and Territorial guidelines regarding Covid. All pre-season management meetings have been moved to online platforms or teleconference. 2020 management plan will be ready on time [July 1st?] Canadian management strategy is the same as last week.

Projects Canadian origin 59,000-90,000. 42,500-55,000 escapement goals. Canadian harvest shares 900-1,100. This amount only will provide opportunity for first nations. There is concern around food security issues. First nations are reporting that they expect to harvest more this year due to food security issues. For many years they chose not to harvest due to conservation, but this year there are also greater food security issues. Please only take what you need or even a little bit less for the kings to reach the spawning grounds and for the people who need to lean on them more. There are still no Covid-19 cases in the Yukon Territory.

Questions and discussion:

Joe Afcan - He saw a post on Facebook about a citation issued to a subsistence harvester. He did not realize that a permit was required for the people out in the rural areas. The way I understood it was, as long as you had your Native I.D., you would be able to harvest any kind of salmon or fishing or hunting for subsistence purposes.

Holly - Permits are not required for most parts of the Yukon River.

Joe - Citation issued to a couple of fishermen, fishing for smelt on the Yukon River. They were approached by Fish and Game. I read it on Facebook.

Holly- That doesn't sound like anything that would have occurred because ADF&G staff are not monitoring the lower Yukon River, it would be the Troopers. Second, it is legal to have nets in the water to be catching smelt. That kind of enforcement doesn't happen on the Yukon River. We are not citing people for catching smelt.

Joe - Second question. When do the salmon enter the river? Every year it is a different date. My theory is when the salmon enter the river system, could it be the salinity of the water, does it have anything to do with the entrance of the salmon?

Holly- There are a lot of factors that cause the timing of the salmon. For instance the Chinook and the chum often overlap. Remember last year, the chum were late. Different factors affect different fish. We know that the outfall affects [their migration], local knowledge says we need winds in a certain direction to push the water of the Bering Sea. That is why we listen to the local people. For instance, we rely on the fishermen in Hooper Bay, Scammon Bay when we hear they are catching fish. We don't know much about the timing of the runs but we listen to the fishermen, NOAA has a model in the Bering Sea.

Joe- I would think that ADFG would start putting in their counting systems as soon as the river ice allows it.

Holly- Good point, in most years we do try to get our projects in the water before the fish come in. But as you've heard, the debris can delay us. But once we start counting, we can see if we missed part of the run.

Carl- Due to the COVID issues, will managers go to the communities to manage? How will enforcement happen?

Holly- Management will not go to Emmonak this summer. We will operate our management office as normal in Anchorage. In that sense it won't change. We meet every day and get a lot

of calls and walk in. We are hoping we won't miss too much since we have local fisherman on the ground that can report on how fishing is going.

As far as enforcement: we as staff don't have time to enforce. We rely on Troopers and sometimes USFWS to educate on enforcement laws. There should be some enforcement, but that won't be done by Fish and game staff.

Carl- My concern is in my community, people are scared, and food security is top of mind and people are hunting and fishing more than normal.

Holly- I ask that fisherman to let us know about those food security issues on these calls. We aren't hearing a lot of that experience yet from communities. We are hoping that if people don't get what they need/want in the summer, that they will fish a little more in the fall, because that will be less restrictive.

Victor- I just wanted to say, I remember back in the day when we had salmon shortages and noticed that they were getting smaller, it was like COVID back then. We need to hang on to what we have, and help out on these calls. Keep asking questions and giving information to the management.

Scott in Pitkas Pt.- Speaking of COVID 19, I got an email a couple of weeks ago about how Captains need to carry something about COVID.

Holly- I think you are talking about larging commercial fishing vessels. I need to find out about the Mandate and get back to you. I think they are for large fishing vessels, not river boats, but I will find out and let you know next week on the call. Commercial fishermen can also check in with Kwipak, I will also post on our facebook page.

Bill- I missed out on the last concern.

Arnold- Is the department and YRDFA prepared for another heat stress event?

Holly- We should be doing research when it comes to the river. One unfortunate event is that 2 weirs aren't operating this year, so we won't have that data. And we don't monitor the mainstem. We need to partner with organizations to create a better citizen monitoring program. I don't think there are any new programs for this this season. Our plan: we need to manage conservatively.

Arnold- I was at a meeting last winter, and there was a lady from the Watershed council and she said it was possible for them to provide temperatures throughout the watershed.

Serena- I've talked to them, and they are going to write an article for our next newsletter. We are also looking into projects to fill in the gaps for the water temperature monitoring.

Stephanie- We had hoped to launch a project this season that got squashed due to COVID 19. We will keep an eye on air temperature, and then we will be in touch with the communities to get us some local water temperatures.

Holly- If you see dead salmon, snap a photo and send it to the department and tell us where these are at. Call the department directly. If you have the water temp at that time that would be great also.

Victor- That was a great question, and great answer girls.

Gerald USFWS- Are there any snowpack reports from Carl?

Carl- I don't have the exact number, but there is more than in the past. The water is expected to get quite high.

Jesse DFO- I don't have exact numbers, but we did get quite a bit of precipitation at the end of the season. I can get you more information.

Elizabeth MacDonald - Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee- This year things were a little different. The ground warmed up and as snow melted it went back into the ground, refilling the aquifers.

Arnold - Heard about a whitefish net.....Seen some pictures on Facebook that people were catching whitefish with dip nets.

(Jeff Estensen with ADFG will give a fall report as the fall season will begin on July 15 /16 in the Y-1 lower river district)

Contact info for ADFG YR Summer Season Manager; call 907/267-2324