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Greetings from the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association!

Here is a summary of the 4th 2023 Yukon River Salmon In-Season Management Teleconference held Tuesday, June 27, 2023. Call lasted 112 minutes. 65 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: Mike McIntyre, YRDFA

Political Representatives participating: Mike Wood, Board of Fish

Communities participating:

Alakanuk

Kotlik

Pilot Station

Marshall

Russian Mission

Anvik

Huslia

Allakaket

Galena

Ruby

Nenna

Fairbanks

Whitehorse

BBAYK

Management Reports:

Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Fred West -ADFG Summer Season Research Biologist - in Bethel, AK

Run below average, won't meet escapement goals. Summer chum is entering and is stronger than recent years. Run will be above the lower end of escapement goals. Assessment projects - lower river test fishery. Indices show that there is high water at drift sites - canceled due to poor fishing conditions. Some fish are still passing, heading past sonar. Well below average for both species. Pilot station: water levels high, dropping, low debris, mid run Chinook salmon passed through yesterday (26,000) fish which is well below normal run timing and late timing average. summer

chum: 293,506, also below normal and late timing average passes over the long term. Andreafsky - still too high to install sonar. Anvik - 900 summer chum. weir - high water and waiting to deploy. Telemetry project started on the 19th, high water delayed the start. Catches are low. Fish have been tagged with external spaghetti tag and internal telemetry tag. Update this morning- contact folks who are in charge of the project to get more information.

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

Chinook run coming in poor to protect - announcements made for closures. 5. Close July 4th. Closures working their way up river. Starting to open in the lower river for summer chum with regulations and scheduled openings. Summer chum travel slow. It takes king salmon 14 days from Pilot Station to Tanana. It takes summer chum 23 days from Pilot Station to Tanana. Continue operating with regulations and scheduled openings using selective gear. If you have questions with management actions, please call the hotline at 1-866-479-7387. The hotline is open 24/7, please call anytime for your district information.

Holly Carroll, US Fish and Wildlife Service Yukon River Area Manager

USFWS & ADFG are working together and made decisions last week as a group. Both are in agreement with the assessment. Limit salmon fishing. Federal special action to combine with 15 & 16, adding a layer to limit fishing opportunities. The communities on the Yukon are considered federal public waters - not for nonresidents. Nonresidents may help but not run gear in the boat.

Rachael Baker with Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game

2020 & 2021 with the Yukon River Fisheries Disaster - ADF&G finalized a final spend plan or plan to distribute funds for those 2 years. The plan was finished in April and submitted to the commission. Same organization that distributed the funds for the Cares funds will distribute the funds for this. It can take 6 + months but hoping to get approval to get an application open for a distribution spend plan. Can talk to Serena. Applications are not open yet. Quick run down for 2020-2021 disasters - subsistence fishermen are eligible for distribution funds 12.6 mil allocated for subsistence fishermen. Commercial fishermen are eligible 2.5 mil for those Included communities, research funds available for distribution.

Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada

Adam O'Dell, Biologist for Whitehorse, Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada

There isn't a whole lot of change from last week. All programs in phase. Projects should be operating. Staff will arrive in Old Crow. Setting up Porcupine camp and operating today or tomorrow. Ironing out. Planning on towers on Porcupine River and on the main river in Dawson and upstream. Not a whole lot changed. Bit of rain. Lower than past years. Back to normal conditions right now.

Jaclyn Kendall, Fishery Manager, Yukon River

Stock Assessment: Many of the programs within Canada are in the pre-season phase currently, as we await the arrival of Chinook salmon. Sonar installation has begun on the Klondike River at Dawson City, Yukon by Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in fisheries staff. Following record high water discharge in the spring, the Klondike River has subsided recently but water volume remains a challenge to navigate the full installation of the sonar. DFO technicians arrived in Eagle, Alaska over the weekend and are working with ADF&G staff to prepare camp and set up the sonars for July 1 operation. Our staff have been in Old Crow for over a week and as of yesterday both

sonars are operational. Technical issues delayed setup 1-2 days, but counting has begun and daily updates should commence imminently. Our team is awaiting tower material via cargo airplane to install at our sonar site and detect passage of radio tagged Chinook which return to the Canadian Porcupine River. Environmental Conditions: Water conditions in the Yukon River and tributaries are generally near average for this time of year. Rain has occurred sporadically across the territory and conditions are relatively dry and warm. We will watch water temperatures as levels are near normal for this time of year, but a continuation of mild air temperatures and low precipitation can lead to increased stream temperatures as the season progresses.

Canadian Management:

- In light of the low 2023 Chinook outlook, and current passage estimates from Pilot Station Sonar, at this time there is no change to the current Canadian Management strategy.
- The priority will remain focused on ensuring as many Canadian-origin Chinook salmon reach their spawning grounds as possible in order to sustain future returns and DFO will proceed cautiously and conservatively.
- 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.
- We will continue to monitor information collected by assessment programs at the Lower Yukon Test Fishery and Pilot Station Sonar to assist in providing updates at upcoming in-season Domestic meetings with Yukon First Nations and Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee members.

Shannon Erhart, YRITC- High water in upper Koyukuk to install weir. No total update yet but know the weather has been bad.

Serena Fitka, Executive Director YRDEFA

YRDEFA is coordinating the Yukon River Educational Exchange Program. This year, YRDEFA will be hosting our (7) Canadian guests and bringing them to Grayling, Anvik, Holy Cross and Russian Mission. The Educational Exchange Program provides an opportunity for a diverse group of people involved in salmon fisheries along the Yukon River to come together. Yukoners visit Alaskans and Alaskans visit the Yukon Territory to experience and understand regional and cultural similarities and differences regarding fishery issues. The exchange has been going on since 2002 with over 90 participants from both sides of the border. We will depart on July 12 and be spending 2 nights in each community. We look forward to getting on the river and meeting with your communities. (This is a project of the Yukon River Panel).

Next week's teleconference call does land on the 4th of July. We will continue with the call next week.

Community level reports:

District Y1:

Alakanuk: Max Agayar - There are a handful of people catching sheefish, broad whitefish, pike, bering cisco using 4" gear. A couple fishermen still have their boats up. Fishers wishing to use 5.5" gear but happy to have the opportunity to fish with dip net and beach seines. Humpys are starting to show up down here.

Kotlik: Marvin Okitkun - Some people are catching fish. Some guys fished (4) days to get (50) chum and (5) kings as far as he knows. Went out last night for the dip net opener; it was very slow. (4) other boats went out and didn't catch anything. He caught (4) chum in a total of (5)

hours; fishing was very slow last night. Other reports - there was fish in the river last week. Hopefully today there will be more fish. Other reports - Last week set out sonar to track beluga whales in rivers. Set a couple on the south side, Seagull Point and in the middle of the river to get an idea how many belugas chase after salmon. We'll know when we see- they're chasing salmon in the river. 58.5 degree water temp. Have big tidal surges here but normal. Water level normal. Middle mouth river is a couple feet higher than normal. River changing a lot. Would like to talk to ADF&G about that.

District Y2:

St. Mary's: Bill Alstrom - Nothing much to report. Water still high. Don't know about drift coming down.

Matty Beans - 57.4 temp by the forks of Andreafski.

Pilot Station: Martin Kelly Pilot Station Tribal Office - River conditions are still high. 2 years ago they experienced high water. Heard a report of the opportunity to dry salmon. Temp 50-55 degrees. Have mosquitoes again. 58 degree water temp. This is my first teleconference since June. Projections conflicting between summer chum and king salmon. Studied reports from previous yrs. Used 4-7 year return. Can understand experiencing average below projection. Want the report to begin. Tomorrow there is an opener using selective gear. It had been almost 4 years without. Want to thank ADF&G for the daily catch of fish being dropped at the community dock.

Marshall: Diane Fitka- Not much; water level is high. Dropped a couple feet since last call in. People are not fishing, they are busy helping with the search. Some people are getting fish to hang or for their freezer. Everyone she talks to says they share what they catch with others in need. Remaining conservative. Everyone is happy about the opening. Looking to USFWS for dipnetting.

District Y3:

Russian Mission: Basil Larsen - Water is dropping slowly but surely. North beach water level 6 in. below. All fish camps that were destroyed are exposed now. It's not our mud. It's sticky, thick, not runny. "Maqallaq" is what locals are calling it. It sticks on shoes and everything. Not our dirt. Brought from somewhere else. Everywhere water dropped is "sticky icky". Mainly having east wind this summer. Few fishers with 4" net steadily. (3) guys near the mouth of the creek about (3) days got (7) chums. Pulled net so he wouldn't feel guilty. All local fish going there. Not as shiny. About 7 miles up another fisherman reported the only salmon were sockeye not chum. All female sockeye. They both feel unusual. Selective gear opening. Tribe handing out 30 gal gas to help with subsistence efforts. Mud in fishcamps has to dry up a bit more before they are usable. Fishing to feed family and for the table. One family is cutting 2-3 chum a day. Good to see a little orange. Everyone is thankful. Went to Marshall this past Sunday to pay respects to the family. All fishcamps are finally getting exposed. Not much subsistence fishing going on - just enough to eat. A question was brought up by my uncle about wanton waste - if we shoot moose and don't take all edible meat - why is it not the same for guys out on the high seas - why are they not regulated? They should crack down on them. All chum healthy. No infected fish. All reds, chums, sheefish, white fish are all healthy. Water cool, kids starting to swim. Elder mentioned eels showing up again and feeling hopeful.

District Y4a&c:

Anvik: Robert - Was listening to a conversation down river from Anvik - put net out and caught 6 pike. That's all. Talked to the crew down at the weir - and as of today they said 750 chum went up the Anvik River. Normally the river is significantly higher. Used to see little spools of fish going down river. Did Not observe any small fish they feed on. Fish caught had hardly any smolt in their bellies. Going to look higher up the Yukon - where are they going to go fish? They try and never catch. Have to look at it. Anvik had the biggest spawn of fish - looking at disaster - to have no fish again, be hungry again, be suffering... borrowing from others' caches and going where they shouldn't. No one is paying attention to that. All people dumping fish in the river and ADF&G doesn't do anything about it. ADF&G usually fines for wanton waste. Here again, having to declare a disaster. Talked to Serena and Holly. Going by boat - only see 3 nets up to Galena. Water temp 68.5 degrees. Same temp all the way to the mouth of the Yukon. No shoreline for the bears to walk. Not sure what more to say - advocate for council. I don't want to say unnecessary things.

Ken Chase - Lower end of chum at Pilot Station sounds good. See what Anvik river does. Was up last week. Have questions on Anvik river. 1) Sonar count 900. Anvik has high water. Did they say anything on sonar having an affect on the count with high water?

Fred West, ADFG Summer Season Research Biologist - Reports they have operations going as normal. Set up the tower to identify species. Sometimes see pinks but haven't seen salmon from towers but are counting fish.

Ken Chase - Anvik has their quota - what is the possibility at opening? If ADF&G regulates, can people catch fish? The fish turn real quick. Is it possible or legal to get good quality fish before spawning?

Deena Jallen, Emmonak, ADFG Summer Season Manager of Yukon River - Will offer selective gear up river but no date/time yet.

Ken Chase - Fish change quick - will we have the possibility of good fish?

Deena Jallen, Emmonak, ADFG Summer Season Manager of Yukon River- You can release bad fish.

Holly Carroll, US Fish and Wildlife Service Yukon River Area Manager- Ken is asking good questions. Anvik is in District 4. It is still early for summer chum. No where near mid point. If more openers are announced you'll have fresh fish move in there.

Ruby: Rachel Kangas - Water level dropping steadily. No drift. No fishing. Not open. 1 person fished when there was an opening. Caught sheefish - that's about it. Not fishing due to closure. Waiting for an opener.

Huslia: Darrel Vent - I'm not currently in Huslia but know the water is high water. Lots of caving (of the banks). Some people fish for white fish. No reporting. Talked to Catherine about it. Hoping to find a surveyor there to report.

Allakaket: Pollock Simon Sr. - 4" fishing in slough. White fish and pike fish. Water dropping. Low temps, haven't reached 80 degrees yet. Cold spring. Little rain. No one is fishing.

District Y5abc&d:

Galena: Howard - Water drop good. No drift. Dropping 3 inches a day. Hearing stories about illegal drifting. Wants enforcement.

District Y6ab&c:

Nenana: Victor Lord- River is high and has been high. Family went camping with a net. Good to see people make an effort to feed their families. Doing a good job. Will go look around. Need fish but they're not here.

Fairbanks: Virgil Umphenhour - Cotton flying from trees. Only 1 person from Huslia caught sheefish below Huslia about 50 miles (runs into Koyukuk River).

CANADA**Elizabeth McDonald, Council of Yukon First Nations -**

There is a lot going on this week in Canada. The Council of Yukon First Nations is hosting their General Assembly at Klukshu Village. The Northern Tutchone are hosting their May Gathering at Pelly. At the May Gathering, the 3 First Nations have dedicated an entire day to fish with Chinook salmon being the focus. Chinook will likely start entering Canada around Canada Day (July 1st). Last week we (Yukon First Nation Salmon Stewardship Alliance staff) visited the Nordenskiöld River, Tatchun Creek, the Yukon River near Carmacks and the Pelly River for a water temperature project and juvenile Chinook habitat project. Water levels appeared normal. On the Pelly and Nordenskiöld Rivers, the banks had areas of erosion from the high water in the spring. While out we saw grayling, lots of wild flowers and yellow butterflies. I spent the weekend at Twin Lakes (headwaters of the Nordenskiöld) and the lake level was normal. I saw white fish, loons and ducks in the lake. Weather has generally been warm, over 20/25C (68/77F) each day. There was a lot of wind on the weekend.

Dennis Zimmermen, Yukon First Nations Sub-Committee Member - Glad Elizabeth mentioned the active fishers meeting this week to discuss salmon - not to fish salmon. The Educational Exchange Program - he's involved with the sub-committee. Aware of folks coming up. They are young commercial fishers, early professors, etc. Thank you for welcoming them to Alaska. Caught lake trout, grayling, and white fish all from the same area.

OTHER UPDATE:

Next week's teleconference call does land on the 4th of July and we will continue with the call next week.

BBAYK:

Gale Vick, Chair of the Fairbanks Advisory Committee Fisheries Sub-committee - reporting for BBAYK coalition -

Few major: had in the last week or two a discussion of getting the Board of Fish members to fish camps. Not many are open. This would be a good opportunity to discuss important topics with the Board Members. Getting a Board Member out to camp and asking if anyone is interested in offering the opportunity to visit their fish camp that they please reach out to Serena. NOAA Salmon Task Force - no representative for the Yukon River. Talked to a NOAA representative in Juneau and they had a meeting Monday but no results yet. Sub-committee for AYK - 2 weeks

ago a citation in Area M was given. Several more citations will be coming down. This was a huge discussion at the Area M Board meeting. Request for out of cycle request form.

Open Discussion / Questions:

Martin Kelly - Looking at hunting guidelines. State water at 6 or 8 miles. Want clarification on federal and state regulations and clarification on waters.

Holly Carroll, US Fish and Wildlife Service Yukon River Area Manager: From the coast all the way up to just after Russian Mission water through the Refuge is all Federal. District 1 & 2. Federal waters are anywhere around Pilot Station. District 3, anyone on the Yukon can fish the waters. You can't be from the Kuskokwim and fish the Yukon. Any communities on the Yukon can fish. Ask Holly if you have doubts if you can fish in Federal public waters. State waters begin at Holy Cross.

Unknown Caller: Old history - the run would have come in 2015 with 84k chinook passed sonar there in Canadian waters. Never saw that number change. Was the number ever validated by spawners or?

Jaclyn Kendall, Fishery Manager, Yukon River Will look into the answer for that question. Will look into information and get it to Serena.

Holly Carroll, US Fish and Wildlife Service Yukon River Area Manager - I was managing that year. The run did pass over 80k. That number is never questioned. Sonar at the border operated perfectly that year and matched the lower river. Eagle sonar does not overestimate anything, only + a thousand fish. No other species passes to confuse the type of fish to be counted. You would be seeing returns from that run in 2020; that would be the first year you would see return. I do not have good answers. Not that we believe escapements.

Unknown Caller - Did fish make it to spawning grounds? What was the harvest for the Canadians during last year?

Holly Carroll, US Fish and Wildlife Service Yukon River Area Manager - If we have warm water - no idea if on route - not sure if fish are reaching spawning grounds. Looking at effects of diseases and if they reach spawning grounds as a success.

Victor Lord - More can be done by ADF&G/USFWS. Extra money for spawning grounds - Anvik river - are they hurting - measuring water and checking actual spawning grounds. Imagine workers are thin.

Deena Jallen, Emmonak, ADFG Summer Season Manager of Yukon River - Rachel mentioned money will go toward research. Unsure how, when and where. Knowing who is doing what is a pretty big deal to summarize.

Martin Kelly - Max reported pinks; odd /even year is different. Is it normal for pinks to be running the lower river this time of year?

Holly Carroll, US Fish and Wildlife Service Yukon River Area Manager - It is a weak year for pinks. Should see very few.

Deena Jallen, Emmonak, ADFG Summer Season Manager of Yukon River - Haven't seen pinks in LYTF yet. Not at Pilot Station.

Martin Kelly - Is the next teleconference on the 4th?

Serena Fitka, Executive Director, YRDFA - Yes, the next teleconference will be Tuesday, July 4th at 1pm.

Martin Kelly- Wants a report on average weight on king and chum. As of today, when they do testing of salmon do they check weight and scaling?

ADF&G - No, the technicians do not get weights but do get lengths and the information is shared in the weekly update announcements that get sent out.

Ken Chase - Shageluk - during season because of USFWS Refuge up there with kings, do they have any counts on the river around Innoko? No assessment project, they only rely on local knowledge. No dead count. No carcass testing. The reason I'm asking is because we had high numbers of kings go up with high water. They went up Innoko and Shageluk residents caught lots of kings that year.

Basil Larsen - If rules and regulations stay the same I have a question about wanton waste - what is considered wanton waste on high seas? Bycatch gets thrown out. Are there rules for them?

Deena Jallen, Emmonak, ADFG Summer Season Manager of Yukon River - I'm not familiar with the regulations that govern that area. I imagine they do have rules but don't know them. It is not my fishery, I am not familiar with the rules.

Serena Fitka, Executive Director, YRDFA - I will be scheduling a bycatch report soon and will post on the YRDFA website & FaceBook page.

Marvin Kelly - For ADF&G in Emmonak - Why was test fishing canceled? There were several cancellations these past weeks. The weather was calm. Light breeze. Do sometimes cancel due to weather or crew- will go out soon.

Marvin Kelly - Discuss where they are test fishing; usually discuss with ADF&G directly. Made changes w/Dan B. Sites are still used today.

Deena Jallen, Emmonak, ADFG Summer Season Manager of Yukon River - Other fishing efforts going on. Looking at others. Chinook tagging. Might fish different locations and times. Local technicians will scope out decent depth, bottom shape, free of snags spots. The goal isn't to catch lots of fish, it's to try to get a relative index of fish so we know where fish come into the river.

Marvin Kelly -With the change of river, channel, depths, you don't always have correct information from year to year. ADF&G says 1-10 in the test but if you go to a fishing spot for commercial fishing you can catch 100; it's not a good spot to catch.

Deena Jallen, Emmonak, ADFG Summer Season Manager of Yukon River - Spots do line up well. LYTF counts groups that show up at Pilot Station sonar.

Basil Larsen - Wondering if test sites at Pilot Station or yonder - can they share the catch with elders in Russian Mission?

Deena Jallen, Emmonak, ADFG Summer Season Manager of Yukon River - Will pass the question onto the Pilot Station sonar crew.

Bill Alstrom - On disaster declaration - asking about application period

Serena Fitka, Executive Director, YRDLA - Will share information and will get the word out.

Bill Alstrom - Asking past couple years

Serena Fitka, Executive Director, YRDLA - Money is not available yet. Once out - they'll ensure everyone is aware.

Bill Alstrom - Someone said they will receive checks for the disaster years. Wasn't sure they were receiving checks from.

Serena Fitka, Executive Director, YRDLA - There are several different funds. One was Covid relief for subsistence users and they also fund for commercial fishermen. Will get word out and shared on social media.

Brooke Woods - Put concerns about chum chucking in Area M. This was not isolated to one citation. If increased enforcement gets sent here, it should be the same for Area M. Area M association feels that chum is not valuable and refer to it as just gas fish worth a couple cents and not valuable. We haven't had chum fishing in a long time - to hear about chum chucking is concerning. Chignik got a run - Shumigan is fishing for the full 88 hours now. Good to see summer chum strong; it needs to continue. Each chum is important to get to their spawning grounds. Wondering how many chums were able to pass through with Area M closures and what was the expectation as far as timing? When are those fish expected to be in the AYK region? Is opening Area M the best thing for AYK at this time?

Serena Fitka, Executive Director, YRDLA - I will be traveling with the Educational Exchange to Anvik, Russian Mission, Holy Cross and Grayling. You can check out social media or call Serena for more information.

Don Stevens - Stevens Village - Report on fishing around the Yukon, is there follow up on that?

Holly Carroll, US Fish and Wildlife Service Yukon River Area Manager - Any follow up about illegal fishing near Galena? If they hear reports of concerns, there are state and federal patrolling areas of the river. I will pass on the report from today's meeting. Please call to report where, when and type of fishing. I Have been in touch with them (just today) and there's not much fishing due to high water. Seeing 4" gear. Haven't seen a lot of fishing. Will definitely follow up with enforcement.

Call ended pm 2:52pm