



YUKON RIVER DRAINAGE FISHERIES ASSOCIATION

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Greetings from the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association!

Here is a summary of the #3 2024 Yukon River Salmon In-Season Management Teleconference held Tuesday, June 18, 2024. Call lasted 107 minutes. 90 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 a grant from the US Fish and Wildlife.

Media present:

Political Representatives participating:

Communities participating: 25

Management Reports:

Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Fred West - Summer Season Research Biologist, Bethel, AK

The runs appear to be late for both species, similar to the recent years and it's still too early to produce any kind of run size projections but the cumulative runs so far to date are slightly larger than in recent years for both species, so that's kind of encouraging. As far as assessments, we still have the lower River Test fishery for summer chum salmon. The catch has been pretty consistent. They've been getting a decent index, but the Below average for an overall run sizes, below average. As far as Pilot Station Sonar, that project started tallying on the 5th the first summer chum was caught on the 6th and the 1st Chinook Salmon was caught on the 12th of June. The current passage for Chinook, is estimated to be 6729. ± 2600 fish. And then with that below, the spherical cumulative average of 41,000. Summer chum passes is estimated to be 27,120. ± 5500 this which is below the historical cumulative median of 158,000 fish so and we're also in the second year of the radio telemetry project and the first fish was tagged on the 10th of June. Tagging today has been successful with and the tags that are being deployed are proportional to the Canadian origin run size based on historical run timing. So tagging is going successful so far and we've within the I guess the update, the weekly update we put out, there's more information about how to contact us if you happen to come across a tag fish. Another couple of projects that are coming online, the Andrafski Weir, the crew is on site and they're in the process of deploying the Weir, but high water is having some impact on installation. And Anvik Sonar is also in camp and they're in the works of deploying the thorough units, but also high water is impacting that project.

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

I'll just kind of briefly recap management so folks know we have a preseason plan, and we implement that based on timing as fish go up the river and then in season based on the runs as they come in. Up in the very furthest part of the river like 5D, it's still open for subsistence fishing because salmon haven't arrived there yet. We have announced closures for Chinook and summer chum salmon up through Sub District 5 ADC. So, on June 23rd fishing closes in that area. You can still use 4 inch or smaller mesh gill nets for non-salmon and then down in the lower river as the bulk of the Chinook salmon run is coming in, we're

announcing a 2-week closure of all gill nets. For two weeks all gill nets must be removed from the water and fishermen can continue to use hook and line and dip nets and site nets and other sorts of things for non-salmon species and those closures of all gillnets have been announced up through District 3. If you have any questions about fishing in your area. Please call the toll-free hotline number at 866-479-7387 You can also give our Emmonak office a call at 907-949-1320. We appreciate everyone's patience as these actions work their way upriver. The toll-free hotline is updated as soon as we put out all our news releases and announcements, so you can always call that and also get information about the test fish counts and the pilot station sonar counts, so that, yeah, I'll turn it over to Fish and Wildlife service if they've got additions.

US Fish and Wildlife Service

Shane Ransbury – Fishery Assessment Biologist

I don't really have anything much more to add. We did have our research project up at Rapids that they have our initial setup, but other than that, we've just been kind of following along with the state and announcing closures and that sort of thing.

Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada

Jaclyn Kendall, Fishery Manager

This is Jacqueline Kendall. I am currently the operations manager for the Yukon River with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. And I'm going to provide just a bit of a brief update on stock assessment with some environmental conditions and then a management recap. In terms of stock assessment, DFO technicians have now traveled to Oak Grove to start mobilization on the 2024 Porcupine River Sonar program. The Porcupine sonar, for those that don't know is located in the upper portion of the Yukon River watershed. It's about two kilometers downstream from the community of Old Crow, and it's jointly delivered by Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the Vantech Gwitchin and First Nation government. In support of the 2024 radio telemetry program, we'll have telemetry towers going up the week of June 24th on the Yukon River downstream of Dawson City and on the White River and Stewart River. Also the week of June 24th, CFO technicians plan to meet with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game staff in Eagle, Alaska to begin setup of the Eagle Sonar camp. In terms of environmental conditions, the Upper Yukon Teslin and White River systems are experiencing about average to above average temperatures right now. With thunderstorms throughout. This combined with high elevation snow melt has led to peak pressure in the South. Generally across the Yukon River, levels are expected to begin dropping. This could change with heavy rains if they come and river temperatures are close to yearly averages. In terms of Canadian management, I don't have too much new to report, so I'll just give a bit of an update or sorry, a brief recap of what I've reported before for those that might be new on the call, we are continuing right now to work to finalize our 2024 Canadian management strategy and really looking to have that completed by the end of this month. It will incorporate conservation as a key priority, as well as aspects of the newly signed seven-year agreement. In light of the very low preliminary Canadian origin Chinook forecast and the measure as agreed to in the new seven-year agreement, DFO will close the recreational fishery for the next seven years and the current long-term closures in the commercial and domestic fisheries will be extended.

Organizational Reports:

Charlie Wright – Yukon River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission

I just want to say no, we're not fishing in the interior. I wanted to add a little bit more today. About the seven-year agreement in place and for all of us to think about that and. In my mind, every egg counts now, at this time. It used to be every fish but I think every egg counts now at this time. What we do this summer and next summer is really going to have an outcome at the end of the seven-year agreement. So we all got to do our best to conserve salmon on Yukon tributaries this year. That's about all I can say. It's really hard to say and think about struggles that are going on. Struggles with their salmon is real and worrying about future generations having the ability and the chance to catch and enjoy and process salmon like we all have

in our lives. That's all I'm thinking about today. I know that there's not much fishing going on, of course. But it's getting ready to do something else because of closure.

Charlie Wright - I am on the executive committee and I am the Vice-chair now. I wasn't told to say anything, but I just took the chance to do it, so if anybody else wants to add some more. Then please feel free.

Serena Fitka, Executive Director YR DFA

The 2024 Yukon River Educational Exchange trip from Alaska to Canada is approaching. We selected 4 individuals; Josie Edmond from Alakanuk, Carol Alstrom from St. Mary's, Howard Beasley from Galena, and Olivia Irwin from Nenana. They will join myself, Mike McIntyre, and another YR DFA staff member on July 21st to begin our educational journey to Whitehorse, Dawson City, and Old Crow.

The Education Exchange was developed by YR DFA and funded by the Yukon River Panel since 2002 and has had over 90 people participate in the program. We currently partner with the Yukon Salmon Sub Committee on the excellent program. The exchange trip is for people from Alaska and Canada that reside in Yukon River villages or who work with Yukon River salmon fisheries to learn from each other and fisheries management agencies about issues pertaining to Canadian origin Chinook and fall chum salmon fisheries. A group of 5-7 people travel across the border to the neighboring country in alternating years. ***The goal of the exchange is to foster cross border collaboration and acts as a bridge to greater understanding, dialogue and cooperation along the Yukon River.*** The program fosters community relationships focused on Yukon River salmon, especially salmon of Canadian origin, with the outcome of a more aware public that will maintain and protect the salmon stocks and habitat. If you would like more information about the educational exchange program please contact me directly. We are looking forward to our trip to Canada next month.

I would like to welcome our first Andrew Firmin Young Fisher Intern; Andre Simon from Hooper Bay. He will be starting work with us this week and he will be working throughout the summer and hopefully travel out to assessment site projects to learn more about what is being done on the Yukon River. The Andrew Firmin Young Fisher Internship Program was created after the passing of Andrew Firmin from Ft. Yukon who was a dedicated and passionate advocate for the Yukon River and a long standing YR DFA board member. We would like to thank the generosity of the community of Ft. Yukon, Andrew's parents, who have been involved in fundraising, City of Ft. Yukon, Gwichyaa Zhee Gwich'in Tribal Government, Gwichyaa Zhee Corporation and the Maxwell Foundation for making our internship possible. We hope to inspire young leaders to pursue a career in fields around resource stewardship and empower other young leaders in our communities

Karla Bush – ADF&G Extended Jurisdiction Program Manager

My name is Karla Bush. I work with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game at the headquarters in Juneau. I helped to coordinate the States involvement in the federal fishery disaster process. The federal fishery disasters are administered by Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission. The Commission has recently provided us with an update that they are procuring the application materials for the 2020 and 2021 Yukon River fish disaster. Those are part of what we're calling a statewide salmon disaster, because it also includes funds for the Norton Sound, Kuskokwim, Chignik and SE regions but within that statewide salmon disaster, as I mentioned earlier, are the funds for the 2020 and the 2021 Yukon River Disaster. They're anticipating starting the application period this Friday. So for those people who are eligible permit holders and those are the commercial salmon permit holders who made landings in either 2019 Permit holders that made Chinook or chum salmon landings on their permit cards in either 2019 or 2020. So for those commercial permit holders, they will likely be receiving an application in the mail and that will come to the same address that's listed in the commercial fishery entry Commission website so the same address where you receive your permit cards is where Pacific States will send those notices. For subsistence participants or crew members who worked with permit holders, they will need to self-identify and fill out an application for those fishery relief funds. We're currently planning to have Pacific States and some paper copies of those

applications to our fish and game offices both the seasonal office in Emmonak and to the ADF&G Office in Fairbanks. Those application forms will also be available online, so people can go online to the Pacific States Website and that can be found at www.psmfc.org so that stands for Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission pfmsc.org and we can provide those links to you as well to help distribute. So yeah, the forms should be available for sure by next week and we plan to recommend at least a 60 day application period, understanding that this is coming at not an ideal time right in the middle of salmon season and hope to send out emails and get the word out broadly so that people can go to that site and get the forms or stop by one of the fish and game offices to pick up a form and apply.

Wasillie Alexie, Russian Mission - Just got a question about the fishery disaster. Will that include the subsistence fisherman too, or just the commercial?

Karla Bush – ADF&G Extended Jurisdiction Program Manager

Yeah. Thank you for the question. It includes both the commercial permit holders, their crew and subsistence users as well. So the application for subsistence users will be very similar to the one that was used for the CARES Act funds. As I mentioned earlier, we hope to have paper copies of those forms are available at the Emmonak and Fairbanks Fish and Game Office, but you can also go online to get those forms to apply for the subsistence relief funds.

Community level reports:

District Y2:

St. Mary's:

Matty Beans –St. Mary's got a water temperature of 59.1 for the Andraefski. Took a little ride to check the Yukon earlier. So the temp out there today in the Yukon is warmer. It's 61.1 out there.

Sven Paukan - Just an update on the river. Water's still pretty high. Folks have been going out with their 4-inch nets, getting the whitefish, sheefish, pike, that type of stuff here. Not much wood floating down as of yet. I guess there wasn't much driftwood coming down. A lot of folks weren't able to get a lot of their winter wood for wood heat. Temperatures are pretty warm right now. It's about 60-70°.

Mountain Village:

Nita - The rivers still high, the weather is decent. Not really instructive, wheelchair. Except for, I don't know, 32 votes. Some reports on Facebook about two boats drifting and they don't know who they are, posted on Facebook.

District Y3:

Russian Mission:

Basil Larsen – Hey everybody, this is Basil from Russian Mission. Just checking in. I finally got my binder in today so I wasn't able to do any interviews or anything of that nature but there's been no salmon fishing going on in our area. We still remain conservative and we have been like for years but here's a little rundown we had. We didn't have a flood this year. Water came up pretty high to the upper bank, we call it and it's been slowly dropping for the last couple of weeks. Water streams are kind of cold. There's, like I said, there's there's been no Salmon fishing. There's some people out there with 4-inch nets trying to get table food and pass around for some whitefish. Like Wasillie said, there was some people wanted to set a 4-inch net inside creeks and these, these are these are non salmon species nets already and we're getting chopped off harder and harder and harder. This is getting kind of crazy man. Nobody wants these fish more than us natives and we abide by all these rules starting 20 years ago. Saying, do this and the salmon will be back. Well, they just keep getting less and less and less so the general feeling out here in my area is that strategy is not working. You gotta try figure out what's going on with these fish and see if you could protect them during their life cycle as compared to managing our lifestyle. And of course, there's the trust issue, not

everybody is just going to get interviewed because when I did, I could remember starting these interviews and then getting into the 4-inch net situation and people were already telling me. Well, I'm not gonna answer that because they're just gonna cut us off with the 4-inch nets next. So you know that it's just the Domino effect is getting worse and the trust issues bent past is should be. Other than that we have hardly any drift, there's all the logs that we had a flood last year. So all the big logs and trees and stuff, drift are inside the land and there's. We don't really have enough logs spoken by to go out and log like hell. But like I said, there are some 4-inch nets in the water for people to get some fresh feed because produce and everything out here in the store is pretty expensive and we're not targeting any salmon so that's pretty much it for Russian. Thanks.

Wasillie Alexie, Russian Mission - Anyway, I've just had a concern about, you know, bringing up on some posts on Facebook. Some people are raffling and selling salmon from last year. What they caught. Isn't that illegal to be doing that because for us, you know, we can't go out and get fish for table yet you see some people selling salmon and raffling them off. Is there something you're going to be looking into or what's the deal on that?

Holly Carroll, Yukon Area Manager, USFWS - Yeah. Thanks for bringing that up, Wasillie. So yeah, I mean, it is illegal for people to be selling processed salmon. It's illegal, both state and federal and the reason for that is it's kind of more due to the processing laws. You have to be a permitted kitchen to process foods like that and then sell them. Especially Jarred foods, because people can get sick from that. But you know, on the fairness issue as well, you know when people are selling Yukon salmon that maybe shouldn't have even been caught in the 1st place or maybe it was caught legally while no one can fish, it's just not a legal situation right now. And so we discourage anyone from doing that. We ask people not to do that. Sometimes people are selling fish they didn't catch on the Yukon and you know, we can't always prove what kind of fish it is. We have let enforcement know when we see these kinds of posts and then they can look into it. So if you do have major concerns about it, you can certainly send the screen grabs of the people doing it and we can forward the information on to enforcement and they can look into it further. But you're right at this time, we really need to be conserving salmon and not using salmon to make any money right now, that's certainly not the situation we're in.

District Y4a&c:

Anvik:

Robert Walker - Just listening to what we've been talking about here through the 800 number to do this do that. It just reminds me of when moose season was closed. How the state would really go after people who would. They say poach a moose and we say hunt a moose to feed their family and this is really getting way over to the left here with our state. We have the biggest river, the longest river and can't fish. We look at the news and you see Kenai and you see all these people lined-up fishing with rod and reel. Somehow, somewhere. How do we get to feed our people? We don't have rod and reel here. The Anvik River is kind of like dog salmon and really. which, you know, we could adjust too, but just to watch the people down in Kenai fishing all these silvers and other salmon species here. Then you watch in Anchorage. Your current end of the month they'll be fishing right into creeks, right into Anchorage there and they're pulling out salmon while all the people watch them do. It's really, really sad how we have to adjust to what the Fish Commissioner with his Seven-year moratorium. I know there is some illegal fishing going on, but what can you say? I mean you could call the 800 number and do this, do that. Some people have been fishing for years, even though it's closed and we try to abide by the laws. This year if it comes up. And there is illegal fishing Y-3 or Y5 or Y4. I'm just going to tell the crew here if you guys want to get some fish go for it because the state's not doing nothing about it. People who are poaching fish. These people here will not sell a JAR of fish because it's too well prized. It's for your family and for your dinner. What I'm getting at is that, you know, we're doing everything we can to make sure that our families, you know, don't go and get any kind of fish so we could say every fish saved is does the fish stock could bring back more fish and that's kind of like a motto I see on some people's coats, which is OK. I mean that's fine. And you know, I went to Galena over the weekend, and I traveled from Anvik all the way to Galena by boat. I didn't see one fish

bouy all the way up to 250 miles, but one mile below Galena. There was a red bouy in the eddie there and just out of curiosity, I asked some of my friends and they said yeah, when the guys caught a salmon in a four inch mesh, it was dead and they passed it around to the elders. So I mean, that's a long that's a long way to run and this and this was a Chinook salmon about a 12 pounder they said that they caught in the net. So anyway. I know we're going to go over this time and time again and we're going to have to see what kind of openings we're going to have and this is really late here today is the 18th of June. I looked at my calendar. 15 years, 18 years, 16 years ago we caught 25 Kings today on the 18th. Me and my late wife. Talking to the crew from Anvik River weir that were down buying gas at the gas station. They said only 150 plus chums went by, but they're not really set up to count yet. We're getting pretty desperate and this is one of the things that talking with some of the elders up the river that would be conditioned kind of like Pavlov's dog. Once we pass, the next generation is not going to want to fish because they haven't been trained by people you know in a family unit to go to Fish Camp. And these new generations, they're probably going to let all this fish go and that'll be the end of our traditional way of doing things here on the Yukon. So like I said, we have the biggest river, we have the longest river here. And it's almost a question of where it's going to be extinct if we keep at the high seas fish. Be taken and thrown overboard on False Pass. Where it's going to come to, it's a good question and thank you for your time sharing and all your biologists. Holly, thank you very much.

Ken Chase - I've been listening here. I don't have much to say, but. As the season goes on. I'll be trying to keep contact with Shageluk to look and see how they're doing over there. So if I'm on every week, I'll try to give a little report on this area. I work with the Fish and Wildlife Service off of ANILCA Refuge and subsistence information . So I'll probably be on whenever I can and try to keep updated and the one thing I think that people want to know is. Robert mentioned the Anvik River. You know, that's our lifeline. And the fish, that's why we're here. But the thing that I think that concerns us mostly right now is when and if we get any kind of a surplus or a count coming in that looks good down river that we would sure like to be aware of right away. So we can catch a few, if we can possibly do that. I appreciate all your guy's time too, and thank you and see you next week.

Deena Jallen, ADFG Summer Season Manager of Yukon River

We do put the Pilot Station Sonar counts on the toll free hotline. If you're interested in those counts. We haven't seen a whole lot of summer chum come in yet. It looks like they're late, probably like they have been the last few years, but we should be getting a pretty good run of summer chums this year, at least better than last year.

Ruby:

Rachael Kangas - There's nobody fishing. There's no nets in the water. The water level is slowly going down. I do see people out trying to sports fish, but currently nobody has any in the river and there has been no reports of anybody catching any fish, including sheefish and that is my report.

Allakaket:

Pollock Simon Sr. - No fishing report. Nobody is fishing. It's been a cold spring and it has sadly warmed up some 80° the last few days and water cross bound never been high. Because it's warm, the water is coming up a little bit because of run off from the mountains. There's no excitement about fishing here. There's hardly any salmon come up the river so everybody knows that. Smoke racks fell into the river. No fishing, but we're still waiting and thinking someday the fish would come back and it's just that we all work together to try to bring this back. We all have to work hard to bring the fish back, so just hope. I'm glad that I can make a report today. Thank you, that's all.

District Y5abc&d:

Galena:

Howard Beasley - We caught one king on the 10th and one king on the 15th and six sheefish on the 10th. That's the only fish caught here. Water temperature is 52°, has gone down 4° and we're 12°C for you scientifically. There's minor drift in the rear right that's coming out of the slough. The water is still dropping fast, but overall we're just getting ready for a thunderstorm in a couple minutes. That's all I got.

Rampart:

Charlie Wright – I report that the river has been going down pretty rapidly in Rampart. A little to no fishing at all going on. I just want to add a little bit more today and tell people. Culture camps and maybe tribal council should try to build a fish wheel. We have opportunity for summer chum in some of the lower villages. So if those numbers come in well then there'll be an opportunity to catch fish. So we're hoping that the fall chums are good enough to have an opportunity this fall further up the river. So, we'll try to get a fish wheel, at least one fish wheel ready. I just wanted to tell people that there could be an opportunity to be ready. Thank you.

Stevens Village:

Randy Mayo - I am an enrolled member of Stevens Village and the Fish Commission representative for Stevens Village. My fish camp is between Rampart and Stevens Village, I listened in last week and I was just listening in today. All the different comments and a lot of thoughts and feelings. Last few days thinking back within less than a lifetime that this at this time of the year. Around this time when there was salmon and in our area. You know, people would start catching fish up in our area. Just trying to maintain you know, I know there's some board of fish members and media. That's just trying to contain my outrage. What a travesty. I have a whole lot to say about the whole thing. For years and years there has to be a different management scheme. But I know that the fish and game is managed by the political system. You know, I read a piece that you know should be, you know, the scheme has been managing numbers for years and years. Watching the numbers go down, down, down. You know that this piece I read that there should be management for the health of the fish. I mean, we've been reduced to, this is getting ridiculous. This is what we've been reduced to as fishermen along the river who not very long ago were self-sufficient. I had a discussion in the Fairbanks office with Deena and Christy. The message is always if, may, When? I think we need to start talking realism here. The fish are in such poor shape. Are we past the tipping point? I think the managers need to just start talking straight to us. Are we past the tipping point? How scientifically, biologically in all reality, where are the fish going to come from to rebuild what was once there? We know it's never going to be the same. After the end of seven years, if things don't improve, I think it's pretty clear that the salmon are pretty much done on the Yukon River. I talked about what we've been reduced to dancing around the real issue, being polite. You know, and managers, everybody knows what everybody else is doing on the river. You know, but. And then we're the ones that have obviously been bearing the brunt of the results. Where's all the big money and the research? All you hear is we don't know what's going on. This will probably be the last teleconference I'll listen in on. I'm just echoing what I know some of the other callers are feeling right now. This turns this discussion into a real one. Realistically, are we past the tipping point scientifically, biologically, all the way around? The management scheme, like I said, I know it's controlled by the big political machine, the economics. It's just a travesty and it's a farce and it's sort of like just distracting us not to get to the real points of the issue here. So you know that. So I have a whole lot more to say, but I'll just leave it at that. Thank you.

Deena Jallen, ADFG Summer Season Manager of Yukon River

You know I feel like we have tried to be pretty clear about the messaging for kings that we expect this run to be low and so there does not be any harvest opportunity for King salmon and that's why we're doing measurements like the two week closure of four inch mesh to try to prevent any incidental harvest of kings. For summer chum salmon, there is a lot of uncertainty. You know the forecast is for a run between 550,000 to 2,000,000. So it's a pretty wide range and we're waiting for more chum to come in river before we can

really see kind of where that's at, but, definitely appreciate all your comments and it's always good to visit with you when you stop by in Fairbanks and we like to certainly enjoy seeing you again later this fall.

Holly Carroll, Yukon Area Manager, USFWS - Yeah, Randy, I appreciate your perspective and I think probably a lot of other people on the line are feeling the same. It's real tough because when you say let's have a real conversation. Is it is this it, is it over? Are we past the point, you know? We don't know, but what we do know is if we fish the runs now, it could be 15,000 fish. If we get that many on the spawning grounds again like we did last year. Are we going to come back from that in four or five years? We still don't know, but we know that if we don't even try to get the 15 and 16 as many as we can get, we definitely won't. There is a point where we just fish them all, they won't come back. But I think you have to be careful with messaging because I have heard even just on this one phone call, so many people who taught me about salmon. Elders, knowledge holders, that I respect. I have heard them say well, hey, if they're going to fish, maybe I'll fish. Hey, if we're not going to do nothing about trawlers then, maybe I'll fish. When we lose hope and we say it's over, there's no point. Then people won't do the right thing, they won't do it what their heart is telling them to do, which is to continue to sacrifice and do the right thing. We have a lot of people who can't afford food and they just want to feed their family. And so it is a hard line for us managers to walk. We're trying to focus on the positivity of the summer chum turning around, but we also realize people in your part of the river won't even get summer chum. So, I don't think anything is lost. I would like people to retain hope, but I would also like people to keep trying to save these salmon and so to do that, we have to realize that we can make a difference. We can let them go by and they can spawn. We cannot take any extras right now and we can hope for the best. These salmon have been around for millennia, and like I've said before, I don't think they will go extinct, but there may be periods of their productivity where they're just not going to provide enough food for us humans and that's already happening. And we do need to adapt to that. So what we've seen from the chums is that even after crashes, we can see really big returns. We will have to do the right thing on Chinook and we will have to continue doing that and we will have to find other ways to practice culture and to find food and there's a lot of people out there doing that and that's not what we focus on on these calls. People haven't been focusing on the positive stuff that's going on because we are quite upset. So I just want to throw that out there, for whatever it's worth.

Serena Fitka, YR DFA - Great. Thank you, Deena and Holly for your comments and feedback in response to Randy's comments. Randy, I do hope you continue to join the teleconferences. It's always great to hear feedback from people on the river. It's also encouraging for others to try to step up in other platforms where like North Pacific Fisheries Management Council or Board of Fisheries, where you can actively participate in advocacy for the Yukon River Fisheries. So please continue to call in. I always enjoy your comments as well.

Fort Yukon:

Kara'lisa Trembley - We've been having nice weather. The water on the Yukon is coming up. I went for a boat ride yesterday and noticed the porcupine was going. Water was going low, dropping. I spoke to a few fishermen that are fishing just for white fish. And we've been catching Pike too. That's all I have to report. Prayers for my community, we had a swimming accident on the 15th, that is all I have to say today.

Eagle:

Don Woodruff - We've had some extremely hot weather in the 90s and the river seems to be pulsing up and down. We've got a little rise in the water level of three days ago, and now it's dropped a little bit, but I think it will be coming up again. There's no fishing going on. I'd like to respond to Randy's comment about the politics of the fisheries. I understand that the state has to abide by the Board of Fish and the governor. But the federal subsistence people are totally apolitical. And I think that Holly and the crew that she works with is doing a very non-political job and I think they're doing a good job and it's up to all of us that understand the fisheries to step aside with our thinking about harvest and think more about the future of our children and grandchildren. Thank you.

Andy Bassich - I have a number of things I wanted to bring up. First, as Don reported, the river is fluctuating a little bit, but it's actually extremely low for this time of year, for a 10 year average. So I'm not sure if that's because of the glaciers in Canada or the Snow pack, but that's a reality up in this area. I have been fishing with a four inch mesh net since the ice went out every day except for about 5, when we had some debris coming down the river, I had to pull the nets. Simple small 4 inch by 30 foot net and I'm averaging about two sheefish a day with it. The sheefish up in our area with a four inch mesh. You catch between 18 and 20 inches mid eye to fork. So they're small and we use this for supplementing our dog food. For those of us that are dog mushers. Those nets will get pulled out of the main stem as the fish salmon get up to circle. In the past I fished in the back sloughs where there are no salmon with that gear and have never caught a salmon in the back sloughs if that helps managers at all. The other thing I wanted to talk about is, Holly made some comments about staying positive and I think one of the things that I've learned in being part of this process for over 25 years is that fishermen are extremely adaptable and they're very good at being very creative and inventive, and one of the things that I've learned because we have been in this situation for five or six years. I know the middle and lower Yukon is just now beginning to experience no fishing for salmon. But those of us in the Upper River have been in this scenario for quite a long time, and what we have learned to do, or what I'm learning to do, is to try different methods of fishing. And one of them that is becoming pretty successful is fishing in the back sloughs for non-salmon and the other thing that is becoming very effective as I practice it more and more is using a fyke net. Fyke nets are great because they don't kill any fish. You can select what you want and you can throw out what you don't want and you're not killing any fish. They're really good at catching sheefish. They're good at catching Pike. If there's Grayling in the area, they'll pick up Grayling or whitefish. So I would strongly encourage people to start developing that skill, it's something that could be home built. When you look online, they're expensive to buy, but all you need is a couple of round hoops and some seining net, and you can construct one pretty easily. Putting wings on it makes a big difference. I do have a question for managers and that is fyke nets are legal and I'm wondering if the type of fish trap that you used in the winter time under the ice. These usually made of chicken wire or other type wire. Would be legal to use in back sloughs where you could set up. You know where you don't have the current. You could set up a lead into it so a little bit of clarification for regulatory purposes might help people. But I wanted to pass that on because of what's happening in the Middle and Lower Yukon we've been at for a long time and I think the importance of this teleconference is sharing not only some of the difficulties that we have, but also the successes that we have. And I think one of the things I've heard for many years is we're losing the fishing culture. And if we can't fish for salmon, we're going to have a difficult time maintaining that culture. You don't have to lose the fishing culture. All you have to do is adapt and teach your kids how to fish differently for different species. I realized that a lot of non-salmon are not even close to what people are used to having or what they want to have. But the non-salmon species in the river, especially the farther you go down river are much more abundant and much larger than they are in our region, so it is a food source. And that's the kind of thinking that you need to have to move forward for the next generation, because rebuilding King salmon is going to take a long time. The other thing I'd like to just say is I think the most important thing that we can be doing collectively on the river right now is not targeting or incidentally catching any Chinook salmon because a fish caught in the river is way more detrimental than fish caught out in the ocean. They're both dead fish, but fish returning to the river are fish that are coming back to spawn, so they have a much higher value to rebuilding. The other thing that I wanted to say is that I think the future of our fisheries is making sure that we do everything possible to rebuild the summer chum and the fall chum runs so that there are some salmon in the river in the future for us to fish and if that means curtailing a little bit of harvest for the next year or two. Both of those species are showing some signs of recovery, especially the summer chum. So summer chum in the lower river, fall chum for the Upper River is going to be, in my view, the future of our fisheries for the next decade and we need to do everything we can to make sure that those come back and that they're managed in a sustainable manner so that those of us that rely on these resources to live out here have the ability to do so. So I know that's kind of long winded but it's you know, I'm hearing a lot of comments. I agree with a lot of the comments, everybody is struggling, but I think the big message is be creative, learn how to do new things. It takes a little bit of practice. It takes a little bit of failure and a little bit of success, but you do get

better and better at it and it is a solution to a lot of these problems. It's not the same as fishing for salmon like we traditionally have, but it's still a way to be able to live out in these remote areas and live with the resources that are available to you. And so just a quick reminder if managers could maybe give a little clarification on fish traps, as opposed to fyke nets that might be very helpful to people. And the only other question I had for managers is how many Chinook have been tagged so far in the telemetry project, studying the ichthyophonous and King salmon movement. Thank you. Appreciate it.

Deena Jallen, ADFG Summer Season Manager of Yukon River

Yeah, thanks for all that information. That's super useful for fishermen to hear. Just in regulation. There's not a lot of details specified for fyke net. It's just a fyke net is a fixed funneling device used to entrap fish and that is an allowable legal gear for subsistence. It's open all the time, even during these fishing closures, and then even during this two week closure of all gill nets, nets are still allowable legal gear, and you can construct them out of materials that you have on hand. It just has to be a fixed funneling device, so fish swim in and they get contained in the trap and then you can go in and take the ones you want, release the ones you don't want. Fish traps are not legal gear in the Yukon, but a fyke net you can kind of construct however way you want. And yeah, there's not a lot of regulations. So yeah, thanks for that question. For the tagging, I'll just say that they have been fishing out of Emmonak and they're doing a lot better than they did last year and it's really encouraging to see all those boats out fishing hard and we have a lot of young and very enthusiastic crew down here and they're doing an excellent job taking care of the fish that are tagged and getting those tags in the fish and back in the water as soon as possible. And Josh, on the phone, anything about towers, processors or anything about the project I'll turn that over to you.

Josh Clark, Assistant Research Biologist for Summer Season

Yeah, they've been doing a great job tagging. We have the vast majority of the towers set up from Pilot Station all the way up to Circle. We're going to be putting one more tower in in the coming weeks up at the Eagle Sonar project. And then we also have towers on the main tributaries, but once again we are focusing primarily on Canadian origin fish. So we're not doing extensive monitoring in US tributaries. We're utilizing individual assignment genetics to kind of see what happens with the Canadian Origin fish, since those are the ones that appear to be dropping out en route. But I'm happy to answer more questions on that if any come up?

Andy Bassich - Yeah. Thank you for that. I'm just wondering, do you have a number of how many fish have been tagged so far? And if I remembered correctly, you were seeking maybe 200 fish for the study, can you clarify that? Thank you.

Josh Clark, Assistant Research Biologist for Summer Season

Yes, we're over 50 right now. I have to get with the crew to get the exact number, but we have multiple crews.

Open Discussion / Questions:

Diane Fitka, Marshall - I don't know if anybody reported from Marshall, but nobody's been setting any fishnets or anything on the main Yukon River. Everybody pulled out their 4-inch mesh nets. Who can we contact to request salmon that is caught in the test fishery from the pilot station ADF& G for distribution in our community?

Deena Jallen, ADFG Summer Season Manager of Yukon River

If you could call the Emmonak office. I'll see if I can help get some contact information exchange with you. You just give us a call at 907-949-1220 and we'll see if we can help to exchange some information.

Diane Fitka - So are we able to like our family members on the Kuskokwim River? Are they able to send us some salmon for us to cut and process?

Deena Jallen, ADFG Summer Season Manager of Yukon River

Yeah, absolutely. Yep, family members and I mean anyone can share fish that they harvested with their relatives. So yeah, that's definitely that'd be great. Would be super nice if they could send you some fish and they should be getting a lot of sockeye, especially down on the Kusko, they're doing pretty good this year.

Fred Beans, Mountain Village - I see two boats drifting on the river, is there test fisheries going on right now here in Mountain Village? I guess it's directed to Fish and Game.

Deena Jallen, ADFG Summer Season Manager of Yukon River

We don't have any testing going on up in Mountain Village and there shouldn't be any drift fishing going on. If folks are fishing with their 4-inch or smaller mesh nets, those have to be 60 feet or less in length and operated as a set net. And you can use those in District 2 until 8:00 PM Friday, June 21st.

George Atka, Fairbanks - I attended a workshop in Fairbanks in March and great participation from folks on the Yukon and Federal and university researchers. We asked one of the meteorologists about conditions on the Tanana River, we have low water on the Tanana River now for some years and he said that it just doesn't rain like it did in the past, #1. #2 Those glaciers or heavy snow loads up in the mountains aren't there anymore. So we have predominantly low water in the Tanana River. It's unlike the Yukon. So I wanted to report that out there. I had the question about why is it so low all the time in the Tanana River? That explains a part of that and then my other question was we had high water exiting the Yukon at the mouth last year when the fish came in, so didn't seem to have any problems with the fish coming in last year, and I wondered if we had high water again at the mouth this year. Trying to get it into my head here. Do we just have now predominantly late entry into the Yukon? Or was it related to Yukon River water depth?

Deena Jallen, ADFG Summer Season Manager of Yukon River

I'll certainly defer to other folks from Lower Yukon with more knowledge about conditions than I. But right now the water levels are not super high. There's a little island right across from our office and we can certainly see a lot more of it this year than we could at some of the points last year when water was really high. And the timing this year, we've certainly seen summer chum salmon coming in late the last few years and so this may be another late run for summer chum and you know at this time it does look like the King run as late as well. So the fish are coming in a bit late this year, but we don't have notably high water in the lower Yukon.

George Atka - OK, thank you. And further, do we have in our reports or does anybody know anecdotally or otherwise this fish are being caught further up on the coast Stebbins, you know locally and so on?

Lillian Johnson, St. Mary's - Just to report that from my sister up in Unalakleet, she said there's they have had no fish, no fish caught, no Kings. So they haven't seen any fish there yet.

Brooke Woods, Rampart - I just had a few comments and I wanted to share that I have the same frustration as Randy Mayo from Stevens Village on the current management decisions and structure. I just feel like at this point, the state should be removed from managing and that we should have federal oversight as well as co-management of the Yukon River. When people say traditional fishing, you know that Alaskan native fishing that spans 12,000 years and I just want that to be acknowledged in this space. And the other comment I heard is that you know it really matters that we don't fish in river and you're just not seeing that in the past four years. We're seeing very little improvement in the run. The other comment I have is you know it's the 18th today and the summer chum run is looking very poor as well as the chinook run, and in two different spaces that I've been in, the Commissioner of Fish and Game has encouraged commercial fishing of summer chum as an option for this summer and look at what the summer chum is right now, like, how is that possible that he would want that? It's just disgusting to me that, you know, we haven't had any subsistence fishing opportunity yet. He's trying to push commercial fishing. The other thing is those on the

line, you know, your vote really matters and we need a new Commissioner, hopefully, an Alaskan Native Commissioner. Just really discouraged by the runs and the mismanagement of our fish and it's just, you know, heartbreaking like you had a leader say, people come up to him and ask questions, and that's the same for me. You know, I went home. Last two weeks ago and on the way, you know, I had people asking, what does fishing look like this year? Totally unaware that we have a seven-year closed door negotiation for the Chinook fishery. And just putting a lot of blame and responsibility on tribal citizens that are not responsible for this decline. It's just hard to kind of hear the comments and you know, stay positive, do this and that. But really, it really depends on where you are on the Yukon to have any other subsistence fishing opportunity. I have not fished for four years. I adhere to the laws that the state forces on us. But I'm not seeing an improvement because of that personal decision that I make. I haven't heard any new updates on Area M. That still remains a concern. Again, you know, tribal citizens asked for a 60% reduction of time in Area M. What we received was 12 at board of Fish, so that process doesn't work for tribal citizens, hundreds and hundreds of people testified to North Pacific Fisheries Management Council. You see very little tribal requests being made there. And if any of the requests that we have made are respected through the decision making process. You know that's slow to come. That's going to be years when we're in a crisis right now. So I believe that things need to happen in the Bering Sea around management in order for the run to improve in river and that we as stewards of this place, should have the right to fish right now and into the future. But because there's no decisions being made in the Bering Sea, we're not able to fish. And that's just an inequity. I want to even just say that's just racism in policy. You know, I'm just speaking as kindly as I can, but just being like very heartbroken and frustrated and I've given up on you know the state doing the right thing for tribal citizens. Thank you.

Serena Fitka - Next week's call will be having the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council update and I'll be inviting someone from Area M. I'll be reaching out to one of the Fishery Area Managers to also provide an update next week on Area M, so expect those to be on the call next week. Aren't there any other comments or questions? Hearing none, thank you guys. This is our longest call this season. Almost two hours. Hopefully next week we'll provide more updates and information to you. Have a wonderful week and we'll talk with you next week on Tuesday at 1:00, two PM Pacific Daylight Time, Canada.

Call ended 2:47 pm