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Greetings from the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association!

Here is a summary of the 3rd 2022 Yukon River Salmon In-Season Management Teleconference held Tuesday, June 21, 2022. Call lasted 124 minutes. 73 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: KUAC Dan Gross Fairbanks

Political Representatives participating: Cordelia Kelly - Senator Murkowski's Office

Communities participating:

Alakanuk
Mt. Village
St. Mary's
Pilot Station
Russian Mission
Holy Cross
Anvik
Huslia
Allakaket
Tanana/Rapids
Rampart
Yukon River Bridge
Fairbanks

Serena Fitka, Executive Director of YR DFA:

Before we get started and move on, I would like to say a few words. The teleconference calls have been going on for many years and are funded through a grant from the Office of Subsistence Management to track the inseason Yukon River runs. Unfortunately, we had to shift these calls due to the low runs we have been seeing. As the executive director I manage these programs, but as someone who grew up on the Yukon River I would like to provide my knowledge and understanding. I understand as an Indigenous person that we need to carry on our

traditional practices of fishing, processing our catch to pass that along to our children, and we cannot do that if we do not have fish in our river.

Growing up I was taught not to waste. I was also taught to not take all of what we hunt or gather because they need for them to replenish. At this point, I want every salmon to spawn because it is my responsibility to make sure our children and their children have salmon. I was recently at home in St. Mary's and someone asked me if I was here to go fishing. I told them no because there are no salmon. They responded by saying, there are other fish to cut. That statement in itself constitutes that we are resilient people and to acknowledge our Elders teachings of the protections of our resources we depend on; to replenish themselves for our children.

Times have changed, both with the weather, water, and the ways we communicate. We know more outside information today than our ancestors ever did. It is what we do with the information we have. Do we use it as a tool or as a weapon? Our people in the communities are the stewards of our land and resources and we must incorporate western sciences into our traditional knowledge and use them as a tool. There are many reasons the salmon are not returning and we cannot ignore the fact that the number of salmon returning to the Yukon River is so critically low that every salmon matters. So I will use both western science and the traditional knowledge that I learned to let the salmon pass - to replenish for our children.

I know we, the Yukon River people have been sacrificing for years and our sacrifices are not going unnoticed. What actions we do know will benefit us in the long run. By working together to influence change; not in anger, but as a collective front, on issues and challenges we are faced will not go unnoticed. As long as I am here and willing I will not waiver to do the right thing for the protection of our resources.

So let us begin our conversation with one another about the status of the Yukon River using both western science and traditional knowledge in hopes to replenish what little we have. Thank you all for listening to what I have to say and let us begin our teleconference call.

Management Reports:

Deena Jallen - ADF&G Summer Season Yukon Area Manager

Thanks to Serena for the reminder at the beginning of the call. Your words are powerful. I have also grown up with salmon all my life. Hope to help through my education and by talking with Elders and fishers over the years.

Proceeding with preseason management strategy. Salmon fishing closes tonight at 8pm. During salmon fishing closures, you can use 4" gill nets or smaller. Dip Nets can be used for non salmon, with pinks or sockeyes as an exception. Subsistence for salmon with hook and line not allowed.

Thanks to the crew who are dealing with lots of circumstances including debris and wildfires, to understand what is impacting fish.

Fred West - ADF&G Yukon Area Summer Season Research Biologist

Assessment update - News release today

Chinook and summer Chum are well below summer averages, for Pilot Station historically. The numbers are so low that there were no reliable numbers met for any surveying. For Chinook the cumulative run is 7,600 as compared to 66,000 for a normal year and 25,000 for a late year. For chum 9,400 cumulative as compared to a median of 338,000 or 190,00 for a late year. Well below cumulative average for both Chinook and Chum. Sonar - dealing with a lot of high water

and debris, causes issues with drift and set nets. Anvik sonar started counting on 15th of June, and has counted 843 fish so far.

The East Fork crew plan to return this week.

Holly Carroll - USFWS Yukon Area Federal Manager- Also echo what Deena said and Serena's opening remarks. We don't always hear enough from the Elders and those stewarding these runs. We share data but it means a lot to hear from folks about what life is like on the river. Data, going back to the 80s, we haven't had runs this poor. We had a crash but this is different. If we make the hard decision now to go without fishing, 4-5 years from now we will be fishing on Chinook and Chums. And maybe with way better runs. I want to thank the fishers who are trying to feed their families with non-salmon or foregoing fishing.

Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Jaclyn Kendall - Acting Fishery Manager DFO -

- 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.
- DFO will maintain closures in the Chinook and Chum public angling (recreational) commercial, and domestic (non-indigenous food fishery) fisheries throughout 2022.
- Unless in-season information changes and strongly indicates otherwise, there will not be an allocation to the First Nation subsistence fishery.
- 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.

Oliver Barker - DFO - Stock assessment with F & O in Whitehorse. Still awaiting the first Chinook to cross the border. Watching Pilot Station numbers closely. Both for Chinook and summer chum as an indicator of fall chum. These numbers are exceptionally low. Regular contact with ADFG, scientists and managers, will continue to coordinate with them. Environmental conditions in Yukon, period of rain has ended. Weather fair and within seasonal averages. High water still, higher than in many years, in some cases, highest ever recorded. With the amount of snow remaining, we expect to continue to have high water.

Community level reports:

District Y1:

Alakanuk: Max - Waters are high and lots of debris, fishers are using 4" gear and not catching any salmon.

Ray Oney - About a week ago I received an email from Rep Foster's office. Letter written to commissioner Vince, requesting that Area M fishermen be placed on hold for the month of June. I am wondering if there are any updates?

Serena - Yes, we have Forrest Bowers and Karen Gillis on the line today. We are focusing on community reports and in season management and we will provide an update on Area M at the end.

District Y2:

Mt. Village: Nita - I spoke with 10 people over the weekend, out of the 10, 3 did the survey. They did not fish yet. The water is still high, no debris. Today we have a south wind. One person said they do not have a boat or motor so they will not be participating this year. A couple other people said they will not participate in the survey because there will be no fish this year.

St. Mary's: Sven - nothing to report I just wanted clarification. Is the East Fork Weir operational now with the fire being out.

Gerald - Weir is not operational, crew is going out Friday and then head to camp on Saturday. It's safe now to head up, but there are high water levels and we need to wait for water levels to decrease to put the weir in the water for fish counts.

Eric - St Marys -High Water and debris, minimal fishing efforts and smoke is cleared.

Bill Alstrom - I'm out of town right now, I'm not in St. Mary's. Just listening in. Good to hear Sven give a report from St. Mary's. I don't know what the conditions are there but listening in and hopefully I'll be able to give a report next Tuesday. Being the lower River Co-chair for YRDFA, I'm somewhat disappointed by the lack of reports from the coastal and lower Yukon areas. ADF&G and USFWS depend on these reports to access the salmon runs. I would encourage any reports from the lower river. This is important because it involves all of us from up and down the river.

Serena- We send posters out to all the communities on the Yukon River. There is ongoing effort to get communities that aren't participating on the call to call.

Pilot Station: Martin - Happy Solstice everyone. As far as subsistence fishing, I have nothing to report for Pilot Station. The water level now is high. There has been quite a bit of drift or debris in the river. Probably indicating some rain or something upriver. We are still in extreme dry conditions. Current temp is 49 degrees. Last handful of emergency state and federal personnel left Pilot yesterday. We were appreciative of their support. Our area has plenty of hardwood. A flare up would have been a disaster. Thanks again to the firefighters. We still have drought conditions. The water is shut off to preserve the well. We have certain days and times to turn the water on and we are still receiving bottled water.

I have one comment, with the extreme high water, it can affect the sonar. The water temperature seems favorable for more salmon. Natural indicators, I know some of you are new to management. I appreciate the 'old dogs'. The sonar is not extremely accurate but enough to manage our salmon resources.

District Y3:

Russian Mission: Basil - Not survey guy this year, unfortunately. I'm working for Tribe. Got laid off for a few days. Water is at a high level, at the south bank rim. Up until a couple days ago and then it started dropping. There is a lot of drift going down. One of my co-workers, last year the tribe passed out 4" mesh. He had to cut it because it was full of stumps and sticks. He was trying to order a new one. All the fish camps, all the grasses are growing in and hardly anyone is even trying. My brother has a dog team so he has to fish. He has been getting

enough pike to feed the dogs. My mom will take the whitefish and sheefish to cut and dry. Hot and dry. Russian Mission is in the heart of timber county and if there was a fire, it would be very scary.

Holy Cross: Alferd - Water is finally going down, lots of drift, no fishing, gas is 9\$ a gallon. Hoping there are fish later on, people are hanging in there.

District Y4a:

Anvik: Ken - No on fishing. Lots of cotton blowing. Creeks are full. Anvik is low but Shageluk is high. Lots of hot weather and mosquitos.

Alberta Walker - Surveyor for Anvik - No fishing going on, contacted 6 households, none have been fishing or have orange mesh, some comments say they wish there fishing, can there be donated bycatch to villages? Will they stop trawler bycatch? Water levels are high and lots of debris.

Huslia: Lisa Bifelt - People aren't fishing, some people are ill. Others are fishing and catching sheefish and whitefish. Water is low and there is hot weather.

Allakaket: Pollock - low water here. It's a bit cold. Close to the mountains so it's cold up here and we don't have high water yet. No fishing except pike for people who have dog teams. No one is excited. Down river there used to be 6 fish camps. Now there is only one. Not too excited about fishing because we don't expect much. There is not much smoke.

District Y5abc&d:

Tanana/Rapids: Stan - Spoke to a number of people around the village, very few fishing if at all. Few people who have put out nets a few weeks back, off and on fishing, Dog teams in village are the reason why fishing would occur. Any catching is a fraction of that. This will limit the number of people fishing and only cisco will be caught most likely. Not much fish camp activity, however. Small amount of drift in the river right now.

Rampart: Janessa - Not much going on here. The river is still pretty high. There is still good chunks of snow in the hills and mountains around us. Decent amount of drift. Not any fishing that I am aware of.

Brooke - Back in Fairbanks from being in Rampart. The water is very high like Janessa said. Also a ton of drift so fishing opportunities did not exist. These conservation measures and restrictions do not work unless we are all sharing the conservation burden. So much effort has been put into the commercial fishing effort in the Bering Sea. Council members have been saying they feed the impoverished but they are not considering the Alaska Native people and the tribes who depend on these salmon for culture and food. I feel the feds and the state remain silent on the issues. If you are restricting the tribes more need to be said. The costs are high. Gas prices are \$6. I had to buy meat to bring home. It's not okay. We are in a crisis. Restricting tribes is not enough. The problem is not in-river.

Yukon River Bridge: Jeffery - The water here is very very high with quite a bit of drift. Haven't seen many people fishing but there have been a few. No one caught anything yet. Hearing a lot of conversations from people traveling the road, communicating concerns about

food security from lack of fish and ADF&G is hoping or planning to do this fall to help supplement the lack of fish harvest for subsistence fishermen and hunters who live in the area.

Deena - There was a press release from the Governor's office that came out last week about fish donations. There have been a lot of fish donated this summer but not sure how it gets into people's hands.

District Y6 abc:

Fairbanks: Virgil - Not much to report, lots of mosquitoes and it's warm, rained a bit recently. 66,000 pounds of salmon distributed to villages. Hopefully that's done soon.

Additional Discussion & Questions

David Fitka - Marshall - Don't know. Seems like there is a lack of confidence here. Not too many participants. I joined YRDFA when they first started as a lifetime member in the 1990s. I was under the impression that we would be representing pretty well in decision making. Wondering with YRDFA is going to be more involved in ADFG decisions to intercept like Area M and the trawling industry are the main concerns. Just wanted to, I don't feel very represented when it comes to the decisions making. Seems like we should be approaching the governor directly. All our requests for lower caps are basically being ignored. Wonder if we can get more reports on activities as YRDFA so we can see what exactly we are trying to accomplish here. That is my request.

Serena - Since I've been hired by YRDFA, I've been doing a lot of outreach. Everything is posted on our website. We also send out newsletters. This year we are doing 4 newsletters. WE also email the tribes on a regular basis. If you are not hearing from your tribe, I recommend you look at our website. A lot of info that we do is posted to our website at www.yukonsalmon.org. Last year we received some funding for an advocacy series. I personally feel that I cannot force anyone to participate along with me and I am only one person. I was in attendance at the last council meeting and provided testimony. Unfortunately there were only 2 of us from the Yukon river who provided testimony. After the comments we will be hearing from Forrest Bowers and also Karen Gillis on Area M. We sent a joint letter to the commissioners office and Karen will be providing an update. I appreciate your feedback.

Jaelyn Kendall - DFO - National Indigenous Peoples Day in Canada and many people have the day off.

Basil - Russian Mission - Question about legal size of non salmon fishing gear? Since we have been encouraged to go after the freshwater fish species to subsidize our salmon. 4" gives us a chance to go out and fish but there is a size restriction and we won't get anything too big. Anyway we can up the legal limit for non salmon legal gear from 4" to 5" so we can get a couple fish a little heavier and go into winter. Gas is \$6.25/gallon. Right now it is \$4.50 but when that gas runs out it will go up to \$6.25 a gallon. And I'd like to echo what Brooke said earlier for river management and us not being the problem. The other part of the equation is being ignored by the managers.

Deena Jallen - We hear that a lot, that in river fishermen are not the problem but these runs are so low, we could be a problem. If we took the few fish returning, there would not be enough

salmon to reach the spawning grounds. In terms of gear for non salmon species, 4" open 24/7. It does still get some salmon. That can be a concern for other fishermen. For other fishing methods, gillnets, dipnets, hook and line, spear. There has been discussion for larger gillnets but priority is to protect all salmon for spawning. Not ideal but is where we are at right now.

Nita - One of the guys I spoke to last weekend, asked about how sonar is read at Pilot. They said they saw some salmon on the south side at the bottom of the river. They were wondering if the sonar at Pilot would read them?

Fred West - So far, dealing with high water and debris, the encounters the sonar has with fish are within the first 15 meters. Most should be counted.

Martin - I'd like to reiterate trying to get salmon bycatch, instead of dumping it overboard, has there been any effort to try to get bycatch donated to the communities? Enumerators under NPFMC to make sure these numbers are under the cap... it would be helpful and important, to get that salmon conveyed out to the communities that need that salmon. Our food security has been highlighted because we get our food from the land. I implore, ADF&G, Holly Carroll, and YRDFA, I want people to try to utilize roadkill. They do it with homeless shelters in Anchorage. Why can't they do it for us? Put your minds and resources together to try to get that wild salmon that are thrown off the big trawlers out to the villages where we would utilize what we need.

Virgil - I want to read an email I got from Jim Harmon who runs Seashare. "We are progressing with plans to send fish from Naknet and (illegible) . They are freezing fish and none of it is bycatch. I am thinking of sending them to Emmonak and Kodiak. The Coast Guard won't fly their C130s to the gravel airstrip in Emmonak. Sent a request to send 25,000 lbs from Kodiak to Fairbanks. Please confirm that TCC is willing to accept and donate the fish this summer. Here is another one from Jim, "we are prepared and plans are still developing. We will know more after July 1. Quantities 5,000-6,000 from the plant in Kodiak, last year. YRDFA and Kwik'pak will coordinate distribution in lower yukon and TCC for upper yukon. Sea share is available to coordinate this project. From Kodiak and Naknek. Seashare also has grant funds to cover associated costs. Hunger has not decreased in Alaska and the lower 48." Sea Share is run by Jim Harmon and his wife. They formed it 10+ years ago. The Coast Guard has been flying donated fish. They also distributed the bycatch from the Trawl fishery. The fish going to the Yukon are not bycatch but donated fish from Bristol Bay where they target sockeye but catch kings and chums as well. I did get 6,600 pounds. I don't know if it came from the governor or commissioners office. I hope that helps explain what various people (governor, YRDFA etc) are trying to do to help people out.

Karen Gillis - Bering Sea Fishermen's Association Executive Director - Letter signed by 13 organizations sent to Area M Seiner's Association to ask them to stand down fishing for the month of June to let chum salmon return. Responded by saying that there were efforts underway to minimize catches, but did not share what efforts were made by the fleet over the past several months. Argued that they were not a significant part of the problem. After that letter was sent out to the Seiners Association. YRDFA & BSFA sent a similar letter to the Commissioner of Fish and Game about Area M. He did not respond to our letter. Large percentage of AYK salmon-bound, and Area M has priority over these regions to harvest before they return to spawning grounds. As an update to the recent NPFMC meeting, Folks were asking the Council to put a chum cap in place, and figure out ways to reduce bycatch, the council asked the industry

to implement chum bycatch measures, but did not move forward with a chum bycatch motion cap. Analysis needs to be updated, and hasn't been done since 2012. Bycatch task force recommendations incoming. Western Alaskan users will form a group with the task force that will review the discussion on chum salmon and the findings of the task force. Work to incorporate TEK and subsistence knowledge. The council prioritizes research and supports ways to research chum and chinook bycatch. That is Council and AREA M update. As of Sunday, June 19, the number of chum caught in Area M is 205,618 large percent of those chum are western Alaska bound.

Brooke Woods - Deena brought up a good point about Tribes not able to fish because we could possibly become a problem. That is the problem in the fed fisheries in the Bering Sea and Area M. Every single fish they count matters and every fish we don't catch matters. There are people out desperately trying to catch one fish before they close but the river is not suitable currently for fishing. let's address the issues in our state.

Forrest Bowers, ADF&G Division - Area M

Just an update on the South Alaska Peninsula fisheries. Out of headquarters office in Juneau. In an effort to avoid chum harvest, purse seine test fishery on June 8, 9 and 10. Based on results on those test fisheries, we did not fish on first openings. And they fished for a limited time on June 11, 12 and 13. Reduced fishing time on first period. Second two periods in Southwest Peninsula fishery June 15 and June 20, both were reduced by emergency orders issued by the department. Reduced from 88 hours to 40 hours to reduce Chignik sockeye salmon. Fishery is currently open Monday at 6 AM. It will close tonight at 10 PM for purse seine gear. Set gill net will continue to June 23. Unimak district etc. Shumagin Island fishery will close tonight at 10pm. Harvest is 240,000 chum salmon. 18% below the 10 year average. 40% of 2021 harvest of 590,000 for this date. Appears to be effective at reducing harvest. We don't have stock composition of these fish but we have initiated a multi-year project on stock composition. That will be new information available in the future on stock composition.

Regarding the letter sent to the Commissioner. I believe there was a letter from Fairbanks AC and another one. I believe the commissioner is drafting a response and it will be available soon.

Virgil - When on BOF, it took me 4-5 years to get a print out of fish tickets of Area M and I got a 10 year print out by discrete fishermen but... (inaudible). They were numbered, showing what they caught by day. One fisherman caught 7,000 sockeye and 0 chums. Another one caught more chums than sockeye. Question - is anyone going through the fish tickets to see if anything outrageous is being reported.

Forest - No

Virgil - BOF Feb 2001 - Graham - troopers at BOF meetings, setting up an OP(?) with modern video equipment with telephoto lenses. They did it and they caught a number of people (seiners) throwing fish overboard. They all got convicted. AT least 3 vessels did this. Are there any operations going on to make sure nothing like that is happening?

Forrest- Not familiar with enforcement activities but there is no belief that the numbers are inaccurate.

Virgil - I am a hunting guide as well as a fisherman. I was a part of the treaty negotiations. We also have international agreements on our caribou. About 5 years ago, they were not able to take pictures. Then they did it and there were 20,000 extra caribou and they were showing signs of stress and malnutrition. All salmon sampled by the Department were the smallest fish ever measured. Bristol Bay, Copper River. Showing stress just like caribou were. What did the

Department do? This is negotiated every year by an international group. Now we are in the same situation with salmon except the hatcheries are increasing their production. Lots of scientists are saying our habitat is not as productive as it once was. We do not need a bunch of hatchery salmon competing with wild salmon. We need to take a stronger look at the hatcheries and do something about it.

Eric Wiengarth - Yukon River Panel Member - Want to remind other fisheries in the state of AK. The Yukon has been managed, and managed and managed. Now we don't have a commercial fishery, now we don't have a subsistence fishery. This agreement concerns all of Alaska. We don't have time to spend another 4-5 years studying stuff. Looking at this season, this is pretty scary what is happening to the Yukon River. What is happening in the river, in the Bering Sea, if we can't abide by the treaty..... People have been sacrificing too much. Someone needs to do something about it on the federal and state side.

George - Lower Yukon - Desire to curtail intercept of fisheries in the Bering sea - On these calls, can we get someone who is a local AREA M fishery biologist or NOAA biologist to find out what is going on out in the Bering sea? To find out what is going on as far as the river goes

Forrest - I am serving as the liaison between regions. Our Alaska peninsula staff is pretty busy this time of year so I am jumping in to convey that information to this group.

Serena - I am working on getting Diana Stram from the NPFMC to provide an update. They just finished their meeting and we are working on getting her on this teleconference soon.

Call ended: 3:04PM AKST