



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

Greetings from the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association!

Here is a summary of the 7th 2023 Yukon River Salmon In-Season Management Teleconference held Tuesday, July 18th, 2023. Call lasted 83 minutes. 56 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:

KEAA - Eagle AK

KZBA - Fort Yukon

Political Representatives participating:

Communities participating:

Alakanuk

Kotlik

Mountain Village

Pitka's Point

St. Mary's

Marshall

Russian Mission

Huslia

Ruby

Tanana

Nenana

Fairbanks

Old Crow

Whitehorse

Management Reports:

Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Deena Jallen, Emmonak, ADFG Summer Season Manager of Yukon River- Back in Fairbanks office. Christy takes over the Emmonak Office. Fishing is open with selective gear type - live release type for summer chum, pink, sockeye, but chinook must be released. Up to 5C and 5D districts. Management will transition to Fall season on lower Yukon. Time to get late

summer chum - will be a 3rd pulse hitting Anvik, Kaltag going through lots of the river tributaries. Call the toll free hotline for more information.

Bonnie Borba, ADFG - Assessment Fall Season - Summer chum run size improved 800000, below average of 2 million. Predicts an improvement for fall season - 218K is expected. Average is over 900K.

July 16 fall season began. Mountain village 0 July 18 up and running. Pilot Station -switch to fall chum July 19. In River assessment projects will be used to determine if we will meet escapement Lower summer stocks are above average.

Fred West, ADFG Summer Season Research Biologist - Assessment update- lower River - Fall season now. Assessing summer run as they move up the river. 2023 Chinook run is coming in similar to 2022, poor run. Canadian origin well below historic averages. Do not expect to meet any escapement goals.

800,000 chum salmon have passed Pilot, within escapement goal and upper end of preseason forecast.

LYTF - Fall season now. Summer season saw summer chum and chinook below average compared to Historic averages.

Pilot Station Sonar- Water levels are dropping. Project running as expected. Estimate as of yesterday 58,098 Chinook - well below historic late timing for this date 140K

818,035 Summer chum - also below historic media of 1.2 million for late timing years.

East Fork Andreafsky - weir in July 8 but water level rose that weekend. Counting but count considered under estimate. Weir back in July 15. So far 86 chinook salmon, 1500 summer chum (both below average).

Anvik- high water issues also, sonar removed July 10. 47,216 below average of 253K (summer chum).

Giasa River- high water - out of water weekend of July 8 and 9. Weir is tight aging on the 16th. Underestimates. 172 chinook, below average; 5000 summer chum well below average

?? - have not deployed weir.

Chena River - 700 fish, 132 Summer chum below average.

Salcha - 709 chinook average (well below average) 132 Summer chum(below average).

Eagle Sonar - 20000 Chinook (below average but better than last year. Look to weekly report for more information.

Christy Gleason, Yukon River Fall Season Manager ADFG - Salmon entering test fishery area for fall season. Great to see local experienced residents teaching others. Starts tomorrow. Fall chum preseason projection is higher than the expected numbers for escapement. Ones entering river are still summer chum. Sunday July 16 management has switched lower river. Fall chum run ADF&G and USFWS will adjust fishing schedule as needed.

Mark Ross, Yukon River Operations Manager - Fishery management - Unchanged in Canada during low chinook abundance. No change in management strategy. Ensure chinook salmon reach spawning grounds for future returns. Subsistence, recreational and commercial fishing are closed. No first nation fishing. Chum salmon - fall chum dates are changing over. No harvest opportunities for chum are planned.

Holly Carroll, USFWS - Nothing to add. Some chum, some coho and sockeye for limited fishing. Special action for federal public waters are limited to federally qualified users. Only applies in federal waters. Stand by for questions.

Adam O'Dell, Biologist, Whitehorse - Senior Stock assessment biologist from Whitehorse. Technicians at Eagle Sonar. Staff in Old Crow on Porcupine River for 1 month. Sonar running since June 28. Since July 16 211 Chinook counted. 235 last year. Average 850 chinook. Water levels high on Porcupine over weekend. 2 meters. Temp has been reducing with high water. Was at 20 degree C now down to 18 C.

Klondike River sonar - 40 chinook salmon as of July 17. Less than last year which was 66. Water temps are at 12 C.

Pelly- running 2 weeks but no update in 10 days. July 8 - 1 fish counted. Inexperienced and green crew, checking quality.

Big Salmon Sonar- operational. No update yet.

General environmental conditions - precipitation. Large amounts causing water level increasing. Temps scattered. Main stem. 20 C in Dawson city.

Community level reports:

District Y1:

Alakanuk: Max Agayar - Quite a bit of salmon caught last week and most everyone is done with their summer fish. A few catching cohos.

Kotlik: Marvin Okitkun - We have water temps at 59.2 degrees. 3 days of sunshine. Finally. Mean water level in town is average for this time of year. Riding up to Middle Mouth above split, north side, a foot above mean average for now. Lower river near Seal point (?), has dropped tremendously but still a little high. Several people have gone north from here to set nets, reports of good sized chums. Maybe start of (Yup'ik) "almost fall chums" Pretty much is done with their harvest of summer chums. Just waiting on fall chum and cohos. That will be about a week or so before they reach here.

District Y2:

Mt. Village: Nita Stevens - Contacted some households, interviewed 6, 5 fished, 2 households did not. Fishing was the same. Caught 50 chums, no kings, whitefish, shee, dipnet. People are thankful for subsistence, some say they need to catch more fish. Water level dropped somewhat. See across the river, by next week people will hopefully pick salmonberries.

Pitka's Point: Gabriel - Less than half our population is fishing. Looks like everyone is doing alright. 1/2 smokehouse filled or a little more. #s are fair, i guess. Our family has been averaging 20-30 a week. I don't know how other households are doing. There are 120 people here and less

than ½ of locals are fishing. Not a lot of fish here. Haven't seen any cohos yet but expect to see them soon since Andreafsky is right around the bend, we usually get a lot after the summer chums.

St. Mary's: Sven Paukan - Water levels are the same or maybe higher than normal. Some sun the past couple days. Cool summer so far. Some people are done with summer chum. Waiting for berries and fall chum.

Pilot Station:

Marshall: Diane Fitka - People here are finally starting to harvest fish, they were having motor and other problems. Some people finally got some, including my mom. She got 12 chum. We are happy for the openings. Lot of fish still. The water has been dropping a lot. When we head and gut our fish, it is harder because we are not on the rocks. We are happy to put some fish away, happy for the openings. I saw 2 fish with bites that were infected. I put them aside. We have been catching but we don't take too much. They pass out fish to Elders and widows. My mom has been receiving fish from people.

District Y3:

Russian Mission: Basil Larsen - Everybody is pretty much done for fishing - 20-50 chums for fish camps. Only 4 fish camps that are putting up fish. Pretty much happy, a few want a couple more before opening. Some finally started after motor problems, getting help from other fishers. Fish run slowed down. 3-4 days where people got good numbers from dipnets. Waiting and feeling hopeful for fall chum. Some humpys are showing up. Nephew went from Russian to mountain v, called to let me know there are a lot of dead moose on the shoreline. Little bit older carcasses, bears are showing up on the shoreline, otherwise hardly any bears. Good drying weather, it's been a rainy and cold summer, especially this past week. I had to keep the fire going to keep fish from spoiling. Usual concern for bycatch, caught my attention - rules should be the same for commercial and subsistence fishing. Jellyfish, halibut caught alongside salmon that are bound for AYK. Want and waste. Effect that has on the ecosystem there. Everyone is done with fishing mostly. Couple are hoping for fall fishing. YRDFA staff and 7 folks from Canada are heading down to Russian Mission. Waiting for them at fish camp. Water is dropping, kind of stinks, mud on land. Feeling hopeful.

District Y4a,b,c:

Ruby: Rachael Kangas - Not much people fishing in Ruby - primarily we are the only family trying different techniques, not super successful. People are planning on waiting on if they open fall fishing they will fish then. Water conditions - dropping, no drift or debris. People have been going to Melosi for sheefish. Usually we get quite a bit at this time but we didn't get any. High gas prices so people won't go when they don't know what to do.

Huslia: Charlene Vent - This past week there hasn't been much fishing and the families that are fishing are out at camp. We are also doing culture camp and a lot of people have pulled their nets because they are out of town.

District Y5abc&d:

Rapids: Stan Zuray - Wish I could be on the teleconference but the internet is very poor

for phone calls this summer. Water levels continue to drop each day. No drift at all. Very little fishing and very few camps open. Most fishing coincides with feeding the few dogs people have left with the average number of days fished around 4 per fisher. Some larger sheefish being caught lately and these get put up into people food. Many people are aware that if the Fall chum numbers follow the summer chum we could have a fall chum season and they have expressed the desire to open camps and fish for people food. Unlike the summer chum which are almost all in spawning mode in this section of river the first fall chum are excellent eating quality. They are the only hope people have for significant fish for winter food in this area.

District Y6abc:

Nenana: Victor Lord - Some people fishing and catching fish, I'm not fishing but other people are. Not sure what they're catching. 5 days of summer chum salmon opening in 5A. Email got that notice, in 6a and above, closes. 6a - where they were talking about. Confusing notice. Passing it on and people were asking questions.

Fairbanks: Virgil Umphenhour - Not much going on. Can't fish, not expected to be 80 degrees. The water has come down.

CANADA

Elizabeth McDonald, Council of Yukon First Nations - We are much cooler this week compared to last week. Not a tinderbox anymore. Some rain but still warm. Fires less of a problem. Still hearing of high temps in water. Voluntary closures. Not fishing because they haven't seen an opening in so long. No nets allowed in the water. People saw chinook in Dawson breaching. A First Nation is breaking up a log jam.

Dennis Zimmermen, Yukon First Nations Sub-Committee Member - Great to hear Stan's update. Wanted to talk about First Nations in Whitehorse organizing salmon purchase from Tal river. No fishing here in Canada. A lot of first nations purchase fish from Taku river in British Columbia- commercial fish estimates that 8000 lbs of sockeye headed and gutted to offset losses of chinook. 9\$/lb. That's a lot of investment. Concern on putting too much pressure on Taku stocks. Becoming a conversation, thankful for those fish. Smoke some, bake some, share with others. Taken for granted and now we are taking from other drainages.

Old Crow: Stan - Went to get my boat, back in old crow now. People along the river are great and hospitable. Thank people in Emmonak and St. Mary's. Situation I see is the same all along the river. Stopped in villages asked questions about fishing. One guy with 14-15 grandchildren, says he needs to feed his family. Fish and get what you can while you can. Really great trip. Stopped at Stan Zuray's camp, Basil in Russian Mission. Hope he fixed his camp that was filled with muck. Understanding the situation along the river and what people deal with. Other thing -people getting back here, considering opening up the Porcupine chinook. Consideration of chinook, there is no fishing right now. If there is ever an opener for chinook on porcupine, we will probably not see it due to bycatch. YSSC recommended that you can set net for fish. Still opportunity for whitefish. 200. Water was warm a few days ago, warm enough for swimming. Murky. Water has risen over a meter. Tributaries and headwaters all raised. Cooled down. Looks like fall chum are coming. When do we put in a net for freshwater fish? Thanks.

Additional Speaker:

Kate Haapala, North Pacific Fishery Management Council Rural Fishing Community and Tribal Liaison/ Fishery Analyst - Asked by Serena to share a little about an upcoming action, related to chum salmon bycatch. Here to provide information. NPFMC is one of 8 regional councils established by Magnuson-Stevens Act. 200 miles from shore. Council makes recommendations to NMFS and Congress. NMFS writes, approves and enforces fishery regulations. Feasibility of new management measures to avoid chum bycatch in North Pacific in federal waters. Since April, staff has been working on this analysis. Oct 2-11 in Anchorage-Hilton. Participate online or in person. Comments are allowed by general public. NMFS - environmental impact statement required for this action. Full disclosure statement. To ensure that Council understands this issue/decision. July 11 NMFS announced its notice of intent to prepare this statement. Identified underlying need and corresponding objectives - to minimize bycatch on chum salmon in Bering Sea. Public can make comments - will help Council meet their objectives.

Bridget Mansfield, NMFS in Juneau, NEPA Coordinator - All federal agencies undertaking major federal action. I provide guidance. All federal agencies are directed to use an early and open process to determine the scope of an EIS. Process of determining what will go into the study is called Scoping. NMFS is required to conduct scoping. Solicit input from public and interested parties. Consideration of alternatives (including no action). Public comments www.regulations.gov Federal requirement of scoping is one process. It is separate from requirements from Magnuson - Stevens act. Our agency and Council have integrated these processes due to overlap. Council meetings allow for additional comments. Formal scoping period does not overlap the Council meeting. NMFS will still consider public comment provided at this Council meeting and future meetings.
www.regulations.gov

Open Discussion / Questions:

Victor - Thanking Virgil, Stan and Basil for their reports. Glad to have a chance to put some fish away.

Gabriel - What is the date of that meeting?

Kate - The council is October 2-11.

Gabriel - What is the name?

Kate - North Pacific Fisheries Management Council

Michelle Cohen, TCC - website for more info?

Victor - Is there any cod or pollock fish in False Pass during that migration period - if so are there a time and period?

Kate - Not sure of timing of chum salmon migration from gulf to bering sea - they fish during their B season June 10 - Nov 2

Victor - Special scrutiny on this.

THANK YOU!

Call ended 2:23 pm