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### **Greetings from the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association!**

Here is a summary of the 5th 2022 Yukon River Salmon In-Season Management Teleconference held Tuesday, July 5, 2022. Call lasted 130 minutes. 68 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:** KZPA Fort Yukon

#### **Political Representatives participating:**

Samuel from Senator Sullivan's office.  
Jenny from Representative Rep. Foster's office.

#### **Communities participating:**

Emmonak  
Mountain Village  
St. Mary's  
Pilot Station  
Marshall  
Russian Mission  
Anvik  
Yukon River Bridge  
Beaver  
Fort Yukon  
Eagle  
Fairbanks  
Dawson  
Whitehorse  
Teslin

#### **Management Reports:**

*Fred West -ADF&G Summer Season Research Biologist*

- Assessment update: Just released an update today, at this time, 3/4s of the chum has arrived in the Lower Yukon. Well below historical averages, lowest cumulative counts in the state. Runs are so small that it is unlikely escapement goals will be met for Canada. Counts observed in 2021 were the lowest, this year is the second lowest. Below 500,000 escapement goal.
- Assessment project: All data through July 4th, LYTF summer chum seen on the second of July, morning drift. Haven't seen any big pushes of fish in the lower river. Well below average. No indication of big runs. Might see runs at Pilot Station, low compared to average. Water levels are higher than average at Pilot Station. Just around 35,000 fish. Lowest cumulative to date. Summer chum average is 234000 plus or minus 14000 fish. Anvik Sonar: 4170 passage, average is 18000 as of the 4th of July. Chena and Salcha tower started on July 2nd, haven't seen any yet. Eagle sonar started on the 1st and saw 51 Chinook salmon. Fish sampled from the river were 51% Canadian origin. Fish sizes are a tad smaller than average.

### **Deena Jallen, Emmonak, ADF&G Summer Season Manager of Yukon River**

- Looking at the numbers, we are in a poor year. Went into season knowing runs would be low and keeping fishing closed to the midpoint of run. Unfortunately, now past mid-point and it doesn't look good. Not even halfway to escapement goals. Hard to have fishing be closed, but that is what we have to do when we have runs this low. Updated assessment counts are available on the hotline. You can use a 4" mesh net 24/7. Must release kings and summer chum salmon from rod and reel and dipnets. Starting to get some good counts of pink salmon at the sonar. Tend to run close to the shore. Getting subsistence catches of pink salmon. Got a few sockeye salmon also. Thank everyone along the river for your continued conservation and stewardship.

### **Holly Carroll, Yukon Area Manager, USFWS**

- Not much to add - Fred has given a lot of numbers, when biologists talk about being past the midpoint, then more than half the run has already passed the sonar. You can multiply that by 2 and can see that we won't make escapement goals on the river. We need at least 500,000 and we don't have half of that. It's important that we let every salmon go by. If you are in a spot where you're catching a lot of chum, you need to move the net. We've had years like this before, especially 2000 and 2001 for chum salmon. Fisherman banding together in 2013, we should have that again and it paid off. It's hard now, but if we let the fish go by we'll be able to fish them again in 5 years, maybe even 2-3 years. These runs are resilient and chum can be there for the future.

## **Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada**

### **Oliver Barker**

- Stock assessment and management. 1st Chinook have entered Canada. At the border passage on the main stem. Porcupine drainage, Old Crow sonar, in the river since July 1. Daily counts by tomorrow. Other sonar and assessment operational soon. Environmental conditions - hot, dry, smokey. Water levels are high in southern and Central Yukon. Water level peaked and on its way down. Except headwaters around Whitehorse, still rising - Marsh Lake. Hoping for rain.

- Management - Poor numbers for Chinook and summer Chum, anticipate same for Fall Chum. Priority is conservation. All fisheries closed. No allocation anticipated for First Nations.

### **Community level reports:**

#### **District Y2:**

**Mt. Village:** Nita - No one has fished. Talked with 3 people. Still high water, no sign of it dropping. We had a conference and the river?. It is cold now and hopefully it will warm up in a day or two.

Stan - I was down in camp this weekend. Heard on VHF that surrounding fish camps were getting more humpies (pinks) than sheefish. Our water dropped over the weekend. Today the water temp is 55 degrees. South wind at 9 miles an hour, gusting to 13 miles an hour. I heard an announcement on the Yukon on KNOM about subsistence in Y1 and Y2.

**St. Mary's:** Bill Alstrom - Nothing to report here - Water has dropped here but still pretty high.

**Pilot Station:** David - questions about research. Does it include Water Quality around the Yukon River? Do any of the communities reports of mining activities or waste water discharge? I am concerned about waste water discharge. In particular, phosphate which is very detrimental to fish. It would be interesting to see some water quality reports along the Yukon. My second question is I heard that the BSFA has banded together with some other entities, are you going to bring the concerns in front of the NPFMC. I was wondering if YRDFA is going to join that effort. We should not be standing alone. Tying it together. Everybody's efforts to try to get to the bottom of these fish counts.

Deena - Water temperatures are measured through our project - and YRITWC .

Serena - Yes, I will try to get Theresa Clark from YRITWC to be on the call. They work with 10 communities. They do not work with heavy metals. I can also reach out to ANTHC. They work closely with DEC. For mining activities, we would have to refer to Edda Mutter. She works closely with Canadian communities and what is going on there.

Then the BSFA, I think you are referring to the letter..... Is that what you are referring to?

David - yes, I heard it on the news.

Serena- You may be referring to a letter that was tribally based. YRDFA was not a part of that. We did participate in the meeting. And I have been in contact with Karen of BSFA and Fish commission. We are not standing alone.

**Marshall:** Diane - Water levels seemed to drop a bit. One of my friends who started fishing with a set net is doing better now - caught a king in his net that was dead so he kept it. No deformities in the fish. Things are good.

#### **District Y3:**

**Russian Mission:** Basil- Did anyone give a report for Russian Mission? Happy 4th. Hope you all had a safe and fun weekend. The water is dropping steadily. There are some local spawning chums compared to the last few years. My brother was going after whitefish with eggs and a J hook and he snagged a couple chums and one sockeye. We were happy to see the local spawners compared to the last few years when it was bare. The waters are pretty high. There are pulses of sticks coming off the beach. Humpies did show up in full force. My brother was able to get

enough humpies for a couple days' feed. He picked out the best looking ones and cut them up. I caught a couple suckers and coastal whitefish. My brother caught a few graylings too. And my brother and cousin caught a sturgeon. They didn't keep it. They thought it was poisonous with all the spikes. There was a bear sitting about a mile above town.

#### **District Y4a:**

**Anvik:** Ken - Missed the last couple of calls, missed the river reports. They want an update after the call on Chum and Chinook. Wants public info on comparison of the past three years to now. Request on comments made from Marshall. Pools seeping into the river in certain areas - water quality check in the villages. Make a report to YRDFA so that YRDFA can share it out widely, requests can be made out publicly. Thanks.

Alberta - No reports of anyone fishing. Water levels are dropping. Tried to talk to fishermen and no reports.

#### **District Y5abc&d:**

**Yukon River Bridge:** Jeffery - Very very smoky with the Dalton Complex fire. There are folks fishing here from 5D to the end of district 4. Very hot.

**Beaver:** Rhonda - we haven't been fishing, it's really hot. There are a lot of fires.

**Fort Yukon:** Kara'lisa Tremblay - Surveyor - nobody is fishing, still high water, really hot here. Whitefish only.

Rochelle Adams - Some concerns I've been hearing in the community from tribes - there are lots of concerns on water quality. Big concern with Doyon Hilcorp drilling in the Yukon flats.

Fisheries recovery and wildlife in that area. Sending appreciation to everyone on the call still calling in, even with low morale and low salmon. We should see followthrough on ideas. We want to see response on ideas from management to the people on the river. This is our home and we are the ones that suffer when things aren't managed properly. Next week: I'd like to know what is being done for water quality, other suggestions appreciated and action being seen. If people see that their questions are being answered and action is actually being taken, more people are likely to be involved.

**Eagle:** Ruby - no one has been fishing. It is very very quiet at the public boat landing in town, eerily quiet. The Yukon is still high and it is very hot. 80 degrees now. Expect 90 degrees today. Have not had any rain for a month. Subsistence gardens are going nicely. Very important to many people in Eagle. Even though we are on the road system, it is about 400 miles to Fairbanks. We rely on our gardens to supply food. We had our 4th of July celebration with Eagle and Eagle Village. Very wonderful event. Live band included. We have no fish but we have hope and we are staying strong together. We need to protect our fish.

#### **District Y6abc:**

**Fairbanks:** Virgil - Hot and smoky here. Up in the 80s for several days, super smoky. Smoke in Fairbanks is 20x worse than the minimum levels.

#### **CANADA**

**Dawson:** Sebastian - Nothing happening here related to fishing. Question around proposed legal sampling for ICH at the sonar. Is that still planning to go on considering the catastrophically low Chinook run?

Deena - yes, that sampling is planning to go forward. Critical to understand. There is also sampling happening at Pilot Station.

Fred - We have talked about it a bit because of the low run sizes. This year is really important to collect that data because it may be one of the reasons we are not seeing the fish at the border. The disease is cyclical but when the disease is bad, we need to understand what is happening.

**Whitehorse:** Dennis Zimmerman - Yukon panel member - Lots of smoke in the air, water is high and fast. Follow up question - What is the sample size?

Fred - Lower river at Pilot, the sample size is 180-200 fish per location. Sample size needs to be that high because we won't get a definitive result otherwise.

Deena- The samples at Pilot, there are usually mortalities at Pilot in their sampling. Test fish distributions are donated to the local communities.

**Teslin:** Carl Sidney- 180 salmon to 200 per location. How many locations?

Fred - Pilot station sonar for lower river info. We are sampling at Rapids and at Eagle.

Carl - 600 salmon. What are you going to do with the healthy salmon? I don't imagine you are giving away the ICK salmon.

Fred - in the lower river, fish are distributed through Pilot Station sonar. Fish from Rampart Rapids area - Holly can address that - how and where they are being distributed. The fish from Eagle - ½ are getting distributed to First Nations in Canada and ½ are being distributed to Eagle and Eagle Village.

Carl - Lots and lots of water here at the headwaters. Weather is very very hot. Lots of forest fires. Probably all over the whole Yukon, even right here is whitehorse.. The only other concern regarding the testing to ICK, you have to be aware that there is a huge concern here in Canada, I understand the importance of doing the study. I want you to be aware that there are people who are asking the Salmon committee people. I think the distributed fish will mostly go to Dawson and the First nations around Whitehorse and probably won't make it to Teslin.

Deena - We've thought about this a lot this past winter, we know that its critical to keep test fish numbers low, but this is also a really important research in our field. Because there's so few salmon in the water, the number of time that nets are set can be reduced and less casualties can occur.

Carl: Monica is also on this call, Executive director for Yukon Salmon Subcommittee

Ruby: Talking to Carl - I work for the tribe here in Eagle, many of the tribal members here are dual citizens with Canada, we feel strongly that these samples should be distributed to people who want them in Canada. These can be distributed from Teslin. We'll help you out. At the Eagle AC meeting in February, we saw lethal sampling for Ick but what else are you studying? What are you using to study and how? Take this chance to gather much more information.

Fred West - Ruby makes a good point, these locations are getting multiple tissue staples, getting used for multiple purposes. Eggs are gathered as well. How fish sizes are changing and egg masses are changing. Kidney samples to learn about parasites causing mortality issues. Muscle biopsies to look at heat stress or other stressors. ASL and genetics from these fish. Also otitis? Isotope work. Taking livers from fish lower in the system, stomach contents and fat meters from lower river test fisheries. Fish are getting sampled well, to get as much information possible from these fish.

Dennis - How many years is the proposal or sampling?

Fred - The plan is to do it for the Rampart and Eagle location for two more seasons in order to get an idea of the baseline and how it may change. We have been planning it for 3 years. Then the Pilot location, if the tool we want to get out of it, then we could potentially, just sample at Pilot.

## **Additional Discussion & Questions**

**Stan** - Question - How far along are we with the False Pass and Area M issue? What kind of information is gathered so far?

**Additional Speaker:**

**Forrest Bowers, ADF&G - Area M-** The fishery has concluded and currently we are in that brief period of time before the July fishery begins. Test fishery with the objective of immature salmon. Relative low numbers of immature salmon were seen so the fishery will open on Wed until Thursday July 7 in Shumagin island section. Based on the results of the test fishery that finished today, the Shumagin Is fishery will open at 6am tomorrow. Uminak will open for 33 hours to set gillnet and seine gear July 6 and July 7. Then the set gillnet will open in another section. After the June fishery concludes there is a week long of closures, then test fishery to detect immature salmon, numbers were low enough that fishery will open on normal scheduled time which is tomorrow. We continue to sample chum salmon for genetics and that is proceeding on. The last harvest, June fishery with sockeye salmon harvest in south pen 4 mill fish, and 531,000 chum salmon which is about 10 average.

**Stan** - please give numbers for total catches for king and chum up to today.  
Forrest 3691~4,000 chum salmon.

**Brian** - Concerning bycatch. Out of Pilot, I've seen through the internet, test fisheries, for Yukon River returning salmon. I imagine there are hundreds of thousands of fish caught as bycatch. Do they test them all or just grab a few? I imagine that being a commercial fishery, they are focused on fishing.

**Forest** - not involved in the sampling, cannot speak to it.

**Serena** - For clarification, Area M is a commercial, non-local, intercept fishery. For bycatch, that is with the pollock fishery and that is federally managed.

**Brian** - that Area M is near False Pass.

**Forest** - Area M refers to the salmon registration area for the Alaska Peninsula. Area M is a small area within the fishing area.

**Rochelle** - This is a valuable question thank you, we should put a pin in it.

**Serena** - I'm trying to get Diana of the NPFMC to get on the call to get a report on bycatch. Also go to our website to look at our posts. Refer to our Facebook for information to keep up to date on things.

**Basil**- My auntie called in but one couldn't get unmuted.

**Olga** - I called in and I was trying to get unmuted but I got disconnected. Wassille was also on line and has a question. He couldn't get unmuted. What we will probably do is email the questions to Serena or Catherine.

One of the Elderly ladies got really upset about not being able to fish and they are taking it out on the Tribal Council staff. I told her it's not us that is saying they cannot fish, it's just a regulation from way up high. She was practically crying. Well tell those people to not go shop for 4 weeks. They have it easy. We are having hard time, #1 no fish, #2 the price of food is so high. One pound of bacon costs \$39 here. I had to put that back to get something else that would feed our family.

**Wassily** - I'd like to expand on that. I am also from Russian Mission but I'm college educated. I hold a masters degree. Victoria Walsey came down the river to do research on management on the Yukon River. Alongside with my masters degree - the survival of indigenous people along the Yukon River. From a personal perspective, indigenizing our diets, from a Native perspective. Being culturally displaced. Subsistence, surviving off the land in the summer for fisheries. It has always been a form of nourishment. To take care of our diet throughout the year. Impacts -

1989 Exxon oil spill. 2008 and 2009 shortage of salmon on the Yukon River, some villagers took upon themselves to protest fish. And now we have this one. The fishery is far worse than it has been in the past. In our census area, our employment rate is 39%. We are one of the poorest places to live in the US. Our fishery is part of the economy. It impacts both Native and non native. Those of use that are separated from the road system, everything has to be flown in. The cost of protein to feed their family is so high. A lot of people are having to replace that protein with junk food because it is cheaper. But that leads to higher cholesterol and less health. Dog mushers rely on summer fish to supplement the fish for their dog yards. And the predators. There are a lot more grizzly bears and they are in competition for the fish. They are having to find another form of food so you see them at the dumpsite. If there is research that shows the impact of salmon, well there has been an indigenous perspective that has already been done. American Indian religious freedom. Well, that's our sacred sites. The fish are sacred. Recently the Covid 19 pandemic has expanded unemployment. Thankful to have 4" gear. Hard hit small communities. Scholarships and educational grants in the tribe lead to secondary education. Grants and scholarships are needed for more studies up and down this Yukon River.

**Stan** - Forgot to mention earlier that our gas price increased to over 10\$ a gallon in the village.

**Basil** - Wondering if there was any progress in Seashare about the kings being caught and distributed. How many fish had Ick? Is there any conclusion on if Ick and infected fish still spawn? This year and last year, not being able to fish, keeping track of how many infected fish are being reported to me. Just the last couple fish, since there's no fish there's no info on that.

**Fred** - Summer season research bio - collecting data now so we won't know the full result until we do the post season analysis. Can't really report on what has been reported to date. There have been a few hearts that look like ICK. Can't really tell until we do the lab results. Those results will be available mid winter. JTC report. As far as last year, we ended up with 50% of fish at Pilot infected with ICK. This study is to try to get a handle on, of those fish, how many may make it up to the border. Past studies have indicated that the survivors are still able to spawn. What we are trying to get at is, the fish that are stressed in the river, how much impact are the additional factors affecting them (high water, hot water, low energy). Generally, fish that make it to the spawning grounds are able to spawn. We are trying to understand how many fish are getting ICK and NOT making it to the spawning grounds.

(Unknown) - Are they born infected with ICK when spawned from an infected fish?

**Fred** - Ick is a marine borne pathogen, once the fish dies, the parasite dies. It doesn't get transferred to juveniles. It gets caught by fish that get it from what they eat in the ocean.

**Basil** -Dispersement of accidentally caught fish to our neighbors on the river.

**Serena** - Virgil gave a pretty good description of Sea Share and how they distributed fish. For fish donations, do I have David Loomis on the line?

**Dave Loomis** - ADFG - We coordinate the ? into two locations. Upper and lower Yukon River. One goes to Emmonak and the other to Fairbanks. We leave it up to the folks contracted (Kwikpak and TCC) to distribute the fish. A lot of it is operation convenience. Already going to other locations and taking fish along. Started partnering with other independent folks. Alaska Longline folks out of the Bristol Bay area to ship to the Yukon River. Others north of Russian Mission to Holy Cross, that did not receive any salmon last year but were on the list. Grayling, Anvik and Holy Cross need fish. Going to let Kwikpak keep doing what they are doing. Had an issue with some of the fish going out being of poor quality. Halted our shipments but now we

have more fish and plan to send more out today. We are later getting fish out but quality is important. Within the next couple of weeks most communities should have received salmon. State did not get involved in the selection process of which communities receive. We let tribal leaders and organizations make selections.

**Bill** - Salmon that are caught in the test fish nets - have any salmon been delivered to St. Marys?

**Deena**- Bill you may be thinking of a different fish donation - LYTF donations. David Loomis is talking about fish distribution from the Governor's office.

**Bill** - No I am talking about LYTF distributions.

**Sam in Emmonak** - We work with local tribal councils to distribute fish. In the Emmonak we distribute test fish through them. A donation has been made to Nunam Iqua, and Mountain Village, but not St. Marys yet. We need to get a call from you to organize a boat, with the small numbers of fish and the cost of gas it may take some time.

**Bill** - We have two tribes in St Marys.

**Sam** - I'm sure that St Marys was busy with the fires. I would suggest you contact your TC and have them contact the Pilot station sonar and see if you can get a boat up to Pilot.

**Bill** - people complaining about fish. Like I said in the past, we all have masters degrees on this river, subsistence wise.

*Call ended 3:10 pm*