



YUKON RIVER DRAINAGE FISHERIES ASSOCIATION

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Greetings from the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association!

Here is a summary of the 8th, 2020 Yukon River Salmon In-Season Management Teleconference held Tuesday, July 7th, 2020. Call lasted 122 minutes. 99 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 participating: Eagle Station (KEAA-LP/ 97.9 FM)

Political Representatives participating: None

Communities participating this week: 23

Alakanuk
Mt. Village
St. Mary's
Pilot Station
Marshall
Russian Mission
Anvik
Nulato
Koyukuk
Huslia
Galena
Ruby
Tanana
Stevens Village
Fort Yukon
Circle
Eagle
Minto
Nenana
Fairbanks

Old Crow
Dawson
Teslin

Coastal District 1-Lower Yukon

Alakanuk:

Ted Hamilton - I talked with 4 fishers, 4 have fished. No kings have been caught, and humpies are in the net. The water level is higher, and there is debris. Most fishers did not get enough kings and wanted more time but understand conservation needs. 50% of our harvest has been met. I've been seeing ICK.

District 2-Coastal/Lower Yukon

Mt. Village:

Nita Stevens - I spoke with 8 fishermen, none have fished. Some were given fish by people who did not want to be interviewed. They had 18 chum, and 15 kings. The water came up more from last week. There is debris floating down river.

St. Mary's:

Bill Alstrom - Went out fishing with 7.5 gear, and 3-4 drifts. I managed to get a few kings. The water level is high for this time of year. A couple of kings had ICK. I'd like a little more detail from ADF&G about (...) it is unusually high for this time. They said they had commercial openings in Y1 with dip nets. They had a couple of them last week, and they had fish nets and mesh openers. From what I heard there were not very many chums. Heard the fishermen did not catch very many. Y2 is now officially closed. Recently they had ADF&G use 7.5 " gear. Successful fishermen made drifts and got a couple small fish. Fish that were caught were going up the Andreafsky or Anvik. Some of the kings had ICK and white spots. There are no chums. Things are slow for this time of the year. The Chums, some of them are water colored.

Pilot Station:

Martin Kelly- We rely on daily offload of catch from ADF&G. Families freshly widowed and others take advantage of daily drop off. The water level is extremely high for this time of year. There is lots of debris, the natural indicator of salmon changing color. The salmon caught that are blush are really soft meat. For the last 10 days we've had few breaks in the weather. Extremely poor weather to hang salmon.

Marshall:

Norma Evan- I spoke with 9 families, only 2 fished. I couldn't get in contact with the summer fish camp family. Most families have almost met their Chum needs. The water levels are pretty high, up about 4 ft. Seems higher than the spring break up and higher above sandbar sides. I caught a mixture of Jacks and 4 year olds yesterday with 7.5", they looked pretty healthy but one was missing an eye. 56 degrees water.

District 3-Coastal/Lower Yukon

Russian Mission:

Basil Larsen - Hope you had a happy 4th. Happy birthday to my son Kaden, happy anniversary to Serena and Chris. Everyone's fish camp is in full swing after these two openings, 6" and 7.5" camps got between 75 and 150 chum and (...) kings. These camps feed many families. Some kings had ICK. Figured they were headed for Anvik. Blue backs were infested with ICK. Water is high. Humpies showing up. Some canoers passed by. No whitenosed kings yet, just blue backs and silver ones.

District 4a-Upper Yukon

Anvik:

Alberta - People are starting to fish here in Anvik. Smokehouses have smoke coming out of them. Spoke to about 5 fishermen, 2 of them were fishing. One has been receiving fish from another fisherman. 30 chum were given. Another fisherman caught 30 and gave some away. There is high water, and lots of drift. Another fisherman got 25 king. The other one caught about 3. They were thinking of shutting down the town due to COVID-19. They have been meeting with the Tribe about that. Other than that, I have been busy cutting brush around town and doing the surveys.

Ken Chase- I haven't fished or talked to anyone, just got back from a trip. The water is high and there is drift. Haven't seen any chums at all, just a couple big kings. I think the bears are gonna have a hard time getting salmon.

Nulato:

Arnold Demoski - Nothing much to report. I know some people have been doing pretty good the last couple openings. Some people are waiting for this opening and looking forward to it. People have caught a couple snags. It's hard with the high water, people are looking for new spots to fish.

Mickey Stickman - Me and my cousin went out on the last opening. There was a lot of drift and the water was super high. I saw one net hung up on a snag. It took 9 hours, and we got 27 kings, no chums. There's lot of smaller ones, and a few big ones. Everyone was really worried because the water was so high. There was a lot of drift. The water is dropping. It depends on which way the wind is blowing. There are a lot of green logs floating just under the surface of the water. A grizzly bear came back to Nulato and has been around a couple of smokehouses. Everyone has been having a hard time. Hope that the next opening we do better.

Koyukuk:

Benedict Jones - The last two openings, we had about 40 kings, all jacks. I'd like to know about the test fishery in Emmonak if they are catching 7 and 8 year olds.

Percy - *has questions....

Koyukuk River

Huslia:

Zoe - One household got one fish. One said it was better for chum and kings this week.

Districts 4b & c-Upper Yukon

Galena:

Howard - Water temp came up to 56 Degrees, water level dropping and drift lessening. Several people fished with 6" nets. Several nets caught in debris. A few fish caught in each drift.

Ruby:

Rachael Kangas - Water dropped on the last opening. The drift was minimal, then picked up. Dodging big stumps. The fishermen are still not meeting their needs. people were getting 1-7, some were getting 7-20 with individual fishing 12 hours. I was able to get 13 good size kings and released a few small jacks. No summer chum or any other fish were caught in our nets. It's been raining. Fish were running in the middle of the river.

Districts 5a, b, c & d

Tanana:

Stan Zurey - Water is fast, receding from the willows, but still high. The fish spots are okay. It's up to 25% ICK visible in hearts, similar to mid to late 2000's, it's present all season in every catch. The camps filled back up for the last two openings, some are calling it quits with recently announced closure. Most agree if the run is bad, we have to conserve. There are COVID-19 protocols in place, people have to wear masks in the general store. Any flights into Tanana require Tribal Council permission. People are traveling by river everywhere with full spectrum of carefulness.

Stevens Village:

Ben Stevens - Question about Bycatch? *Serena explained directing questions to NPFMC* Over the 4th of July weekend, I went fishing but lost a net, so I used a 6" net. I didn't catch anything. Successfully pulled in 5 small jacks yesterday. There's a lot of debris. The water is high but going down fast.

Fort Yukon:

Andrew Firmin - I have contacted 12+ households, and interviewed 10. 8 reported fishing, 2 did not due to gear, and low numbers of fish. All fishers who caught got single digits of fish. Everyone is eating fish. The water level is very high. Yukon slowed down, but is still dropping. Starting to see gravel bars and willows where there should be. There is some small debris. The porcupine is very high with lots of small debris. Very poor fishing conditions. People who were fishing were catching one in the AM and one at night. No one's needs are being met. It is pretty dire here in the Yukon flats. The people are asking for another opener.

Paul Herbert - Hello to Dr. Quinn. Fishing is poor. Water is high.

Circle:

Larry Nathaniel - The water is high. It has been poor fishing with (...) mesh net. We are not getting many fish. Seems like when they close, that's when all the fish go by. If fish cross 22 mile slough, then you close the opening here, it is so many miles away. That seems to be a problem. Is there some way we can do an opening with a 7.5 " net? Then we might catch the fish we

need. So far, not enough fish except small fish. I told this to Fish and Game last Monday and this Monday.

Eagle:

Ruby - We are just getting into the beginning stages here. We had an opener. There is only one family fishing. We did hear of one king caught at Eagle village. The water level is very high but it is dropping. Banks are covered with sticky mud. I was asked to relay comments - we are purposefully not going to fish this pulse to help the Canadian fish. This is a large portion of the winter food supply and significant portion of our diet. This family believes pulse protection is critical for protection of the kings. We hope the managers will close fishing in Eagle during the first pulse to let it go by.

Districts 6a, b & c

Minto:

Jeep (Phillip Titus) - There were some people fishing here over the weekend, they caught a lot of drift.

Nenana:

Victor Lord - The last opening we had, the guys did pretty good. 5 or 3 wheels that I know of, a couple of king salmon were given to me, they were both in good shape. I had a king salmon steak for breakfast. The nets are doing good too. 3 or 4 or 5. Water was a little high last week, it is coming down now. The fish are here. I have questions for later.

Fairbanks:

Virgil - Nothing to really report minus that the water has gone down.

Canada

Old Crow:

Stan Julie - Hi to my counterparts in AK. Few jacks caught in 6" nets. Water is still pretty high. There are no good Eddies. A lot of traveling and waiting for the water to drop. Water is still average high and dropping slowly. Waiting for water to drop and fish to come up.

Dawson:

Natasha - No fishing in Trondek Gwitch. We have a sonar counting.

Teslin:

Emmy - We don't have anything to report here. There is lots of rain. We're not fishing yet.

Whitehorse:

Elizabeth MacDonald - YSSC - Fairly rainy and the water is pretty high. The sonar is counting their first Chinook. No salmon here yet.

Management Reports Agenda:

*Holly Carroll, ADFG YR Summer Season Manager; call 907/267-2324

(Jeff Estensen with ADFG will give a fall report as the fall season will begin on July 15 /16 in the Y-1 lower river district)

Fred West- ADF&G Fisheries Biologist- The majority of the Chinook have entered the lower river. There are 150,000 Chinook at Pilot. The summer chum is tracking late. Midpoint for summer chum run was July 3rd, about 1.7 to 2.1 million run size for them. We've seen an increase in catches for them, which is good. The early trickle is currently being counted, and indicates we didn't miss the first trickle of the run. There may be delays due to the high water. As of July 7th the first pulse of chinook should be near Tanana, the second near Ruby, and third near Kaltag. The first pulse of summer chum should be near Kaltag, the second near Anvik, and the third near Sonar. The catches have increased the last couple days which is good. We're seeing a decent number of chums at the lower river. As far as the Sonar at Pilot, the water remains high and there is debris in the river but it isn't affecting the counts. Catches are below historic counts. For the China river, that project was out of the water for a little, they went back in but got 0. Stock ID first group of fish indicated 62% Canadian origin. 2nd group of samples June 23-28, included 1st and 2nd pulses we're 50% Canadian origin. Together these results indicate that we have a strong Canadian component. Expect to be near a pre-season outlook. The first stratum of chum genetics June 7-Jun 28. 99% summer chum. 94% lower river. 5% middle river. For age and sex, we caught 377 chinook salmon sampled at test fishery at Pilot station. 10% age 4, 50% age 5, 38% age 6, age 6 % is higher than average and so if female at 51%. Chinook salmon in each age class were smaller than the recent 10 year average. Small overall, from samples is corroborating what fishermen are saying about their catch. June 2-30 is composed of age 5 fish. It's unusual to have a run mostly composed of age 5. The survival of age 4 in the 2016 parent year. The average size is slightly bigger, probably a result of higher than average 5 year olds. 70% female which is above the long term average.

Holly Carroll- Yukon River Summer Season Manager - Two main points for people to know. I could actually hear Bill really well. One thing he was saying was that the Kings that he caught in the last opening looked like they were heading for the Adrefski. This is what we have been hearing and expecting. The Alaska bound Kings come later in the run, which is why we can relax fishing in the lower river. We are trying not to overfish the early run that is bound for Canada. The comments from Eagle are great, they are understanding that they are protecting the fish going into Canada. We will look at closing fishing when the run size gets larger coming into Eagle, to protect the fish that are bound for Canada. We have a run size in the drainage that is borderline not large enough to meet the goals. We have a harvest goal about half of what we did last year. Thank you to the fisherman for understanding this and taking conservation approaches yourselves. We want to provide as much chum harvest as possible, but it is looking weak. We are about a million fish behind on the chum run. That is why Commercial fishing was closed on the lower river.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Gerald Maschmann - Acting Yukon River Federal In-season Manager - I just want to remind fishermen in 5D who are wondering where the fish are... we have had a very late run, so they aren't there yet, but they are coming. Be patient. Traditional knowledge tells us that when the water is high the fish swim slower.

Jeff Estensen - Yukon Area Fall Season Manager - Fall season for Yukon is fastly approaching. Fall season management - managing for fall chum begins on July 16. In district 2, July 19, district 3- July 21. We have had issues with Kings and restrictions. We will confirm with summer season management to make sure there are no concerns before we transfer to fall season. Fall management is based on the relationship between summer and fall chum salmon. We are able to make a prediction. Over the years it has worked well to give us basis to predict, manage on. 1.6 million passed sonar. There are low numbers for summer chum. This could be an indication that we will have a low run of fall chum. We could see some improved summer chum numbers in the next week and this would improve the fall chum projections. We are slowly approaching the fall season. Right now, fall season for subsistence fishing and full regulation schedules may be reduced. We will not be having full 24/7 fishing as we have had in the past. May be no commercial harvest in 2020. Will report more next Tuesday. 8 days to go until we switch. That is a long time in terms of a salmon run coming in. Things may change. I will update during next Tuesday's teleconference.

Gerald Maschmann - Acting Yukon River Federal In-season Manager - Nothing to add.

Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada

Jesse Trerice - Fisheries Manager - Water levels here are pretty high, rain is still falling. The chinook have just started arriving with 200 estimated to have passed the sonar yesterday. We've counted 5 chinook so far. We are looking forward to seeing them in the river. The overall objective of the 2020 plan is conservation. We truly hear and appreciate the low abundance of fishing opportunities and how that has created hardship for fishermen. As hard as it is, we have to balance that with the commitment to continue to have fish return.

Questions and discussion:

Victor Lord - I was born and raised in Fish camp from late May to October. This is where I got part of my knowledge. I have been on the Fishery Advisory Boards since 1978. YR DFA since 1990 and Yukon Panel as an Advisor. I've been working with Fish and Game. Ben asks me, I say, we will work it out. Once they hit the Tanana River, it's a terminal fishery. We've been managing. I don't like to mention names, Hank Ketchler Sr., says, once the fish get up here we are pretty limited. But they only last good for the first 10-14 days. The king salmon are done by the 4th of July. How can you manage? You manage the Tanana river. We've never had a sonar. Most of the time the river is hot. Counting towers on the Salcha, I don't know about that. How do you focus with the ripples? Your credibility on the Tanana river is.... I don't know. I think we caught about 20 fish, they were king salmon. One year... my wheel ran over a king salmon, pretty close to 300 fish. Serena, I'd like to bring this up in one of our regular meetings.

Basil Larsen - You mentioned something about the Whitenose and Bluebacks? A friend of mine went down to Holy Cross and they were trying to teach him about the whitenose and bluebacks. What's the difference? Disaster - you are talking about no commercial (in Y2) I have a commercial license for my area. I've been down to Hooper Bay, and other places.... And now you are talking about COVID-19. We might be moving back to shutting down again.

Jesse Trerice - Fisheries Manager - I'm glad that your departments are connected. That you work together. I think we have NOAA but I am not sure how much sharing is going on.

Basil Larsen - I don't quite know about the Bluebacks - big giant silver kings with a blue back. Whitenoses are usually the last, darker color with redder skin. We figured the bluebacks were going to Anvik. We didn't see any Whitenoses.

Norma - Marshall - I've been fishing weekly and I haven't seen the Whitenoses. Before coloring they have a darker back, almost blackish. Bluebacks are (...) you can really tell the coloring on them, they are pretty much blue backs. I haven't seen them yet. For the Anvik River, in Marshall, in a 20 mile radius, I think we have like 10- spawning areas. The water is really clear and you can see the spawning fish.

David Beans - St. Marys - Thanks for all of the information. It seems like everything is late this year. Water is high, we are drifting in places that we don't normally drift. I was thinking about it and I thought that we've had early break ups, early spring and low waters. This year it seems like it is back to normal with a cold winter, lots of snow, and that could be contributing to what is going on. I was disappointed with the participation of the lower river.

Holly Carroll - Yukon River Summer Season Manager - I wanted to address Victor's questions. You didn't have to give a resume to me. You are well respected. Our assessment on the Tanana is frustrating. We can't always count the fish, so we rely on the reports from fishermen like you. We do have a pretty expensive ocean program with Katie Howard and Sabrina. That's how we know that this King run is going to continue to decline in the coming years. We don't report on a lot of what is going on in the Ocean because we are limited on these calls, but hopefully we can give a more rounded report during the Pre(post) season meeting coming up.

Victor Lord - Yes, Katie Howard and Sabrina, they do put out a lot of information and we appreciate the work that they do. Thank you.

Elizabeth MacDonald - I wanted to ask both Holly and Jesse, one of the recommendations was to consider extreme weather into their management plans, and this year it isn't hot, but there is a lot of water. How are you incorporating that into your management plan?

Holly Carroll - Yukon River Summer Season Manager - We are taking into consideration the high water and how it is really affecting people's ability to harvest. We are accounting for that, I don't think high water is going to have a detrimental effect on the fish like hot water in terms of mortality, but we are looking at slower travel times of the fish.

Jesse Trerice - Fisheries Manager - Yes, the temperatures are not as high and sustained as they were last year. There is a high Canadian origin component - we are also looking at run times and the delay. We plan based on Pilot and then look to Eagle to back that up. As far as environmental factors this year, high water is the biggest thing on my radar.

Martin Kelly - Pilot - Alaska PFD in July, some families were finally able to buy gas, motor parts, etc. for subsistence camp. Y2 commercial fishery looks bleak since processors decided not to

buy. We pay \$6.80 a gallon for gas. a quart of milk is \$15. A quart of clorox concentrate runs about \$15. The two and four stroke oil is \$13 in the village. The cost of living triggers basic reasoning to rely more on subsistence to supplement a healthy diet. We missed our window of that 2 weeks of nice sunny breezy weather. using this Tuesday teleconference trying to help out the Y2 commercial fisherman, that economic drive here in our village. There are people ready to raise basic hell. trying to make a point. that our subsistence fishing should not be regulated when we need it the most. That short 2 weeks of drying weather only comes, 1 out of 3 years we get a good dry summer. This year it has been extremely wet. Let us do what we need to. Our lower river commercial and subs fishing is pretty heavily regulated. A lot of people in our community take that PFD and apply it towards getting salmon and putting it in the freezer but our good weather has mostly passed.

Duane - Fort Yukon - Stevens to Circle, there are so many channels. ADF&G allows us to fish for 3 days. It's very hard to get your fish. Can they allow us more time to fish so we can get our fish? We have so many channels.

Holly Carroll - Yukon River Summer Season Manager - I've been up there, I've seen where people are fishing up there. There are a gazillion channels and they redistribute. It is going to give people a hard time in the upper river. Restricting fishing so people will get ½ of what they got last year. Even the restrictions will provide some opportunities. Keep district 5D on their half days.. I know it isn't much but some people will do well and some will do good. If we harvest as much as we did in the last 3 years, that is too much. The reason you haven't done well so far is because there is nothing up there. It is not a dense run. That trickle is long and protracted. We are trying to allow some harvest. we know you need it and haven't been getting it.

Duane - Even 2 days would make a big difference.

Victor Lord - Holly, I heard Stan mention a closure coming in Tanana/Rapids. Will there be another closure?

Holly Carroll - Yukon River Summer Season Manager - Someone mis-stated. They have a 24 hour period that is being pulled 7/10 and then they go back to their regular schedule. Their schedule usually allows for a 24 hour period Wednesday and Friday. We are pulling their next Friday period.

Sebastian Jones - Dawson - I was startled to hear that an entire age class has seemed to have vanished. Does anyone know what has happened? Has this happened before? What about the fall run?

Holly Carroll - Yukon River Summer Season Manager - Great question. The age 4 fish have not vanished. 4 and 5 year olds should be about 50/50. It looks like our sample is missing about 20% of the front end of the run of the 4 year olds. Doesn't mean they are missing, it is too early to tell. Let's get a few more samples before we talk about why or what happened.

Jeff Estensen - Yukon Area Fall Season Manager - We don't know if that will be the same case with the fall chum run or not. I agree with what Holly said. Other areas of Alaska are also not

having good chum runs. Too early to tell what is the cause. We will tease it out at the end of the season.

Bonnie Borba - If overall the numbers of summer chum are down, it will mean something. There's a spill over into the fall season. A lot of the time the fall chum are dominated by Age 4. Very few years are dominated by age 5. Everyday we get more data and that's how we determine our management.

Virgil - Are the fish in southeast and prince william sound coming in real late as well?

Holly Carroll - Yukon River Summer Season Manager - I don't know. We can get that information on the next call for you.

Call ended at 3:02pm