

Yukon River 2025 outlooks and management strategies

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ADF&G Summer Season Management Biologist

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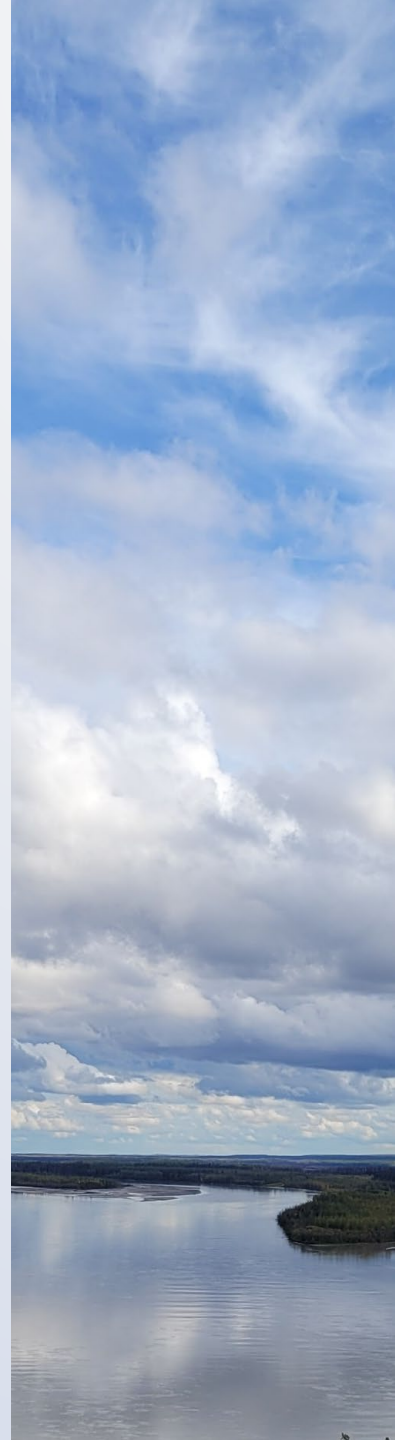
ADF&G Fall Season Management Biologist

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YRDFA Preseason Meeting – Fairbanks

Pikes Landing – April 24-25, 2025

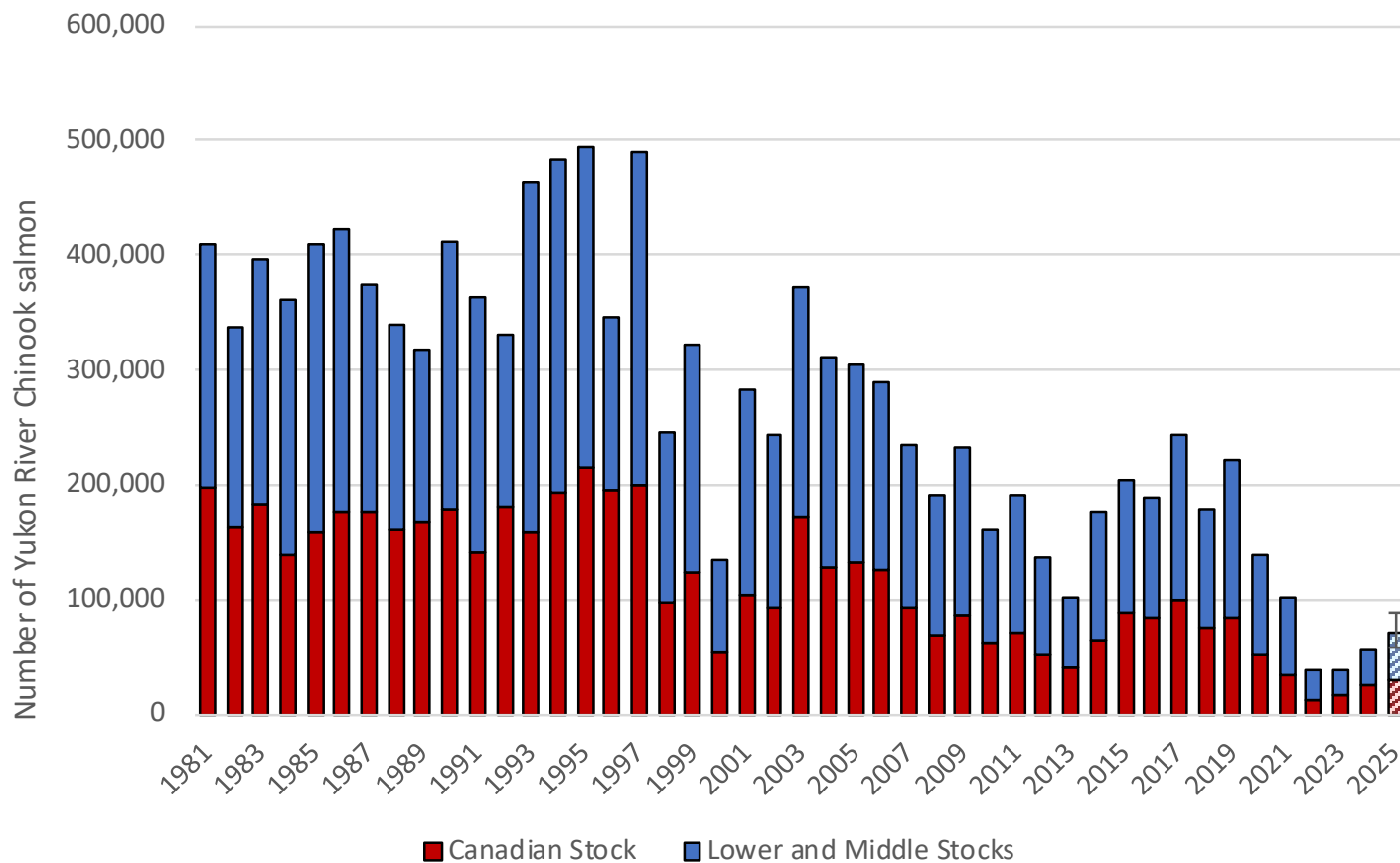


Preseason planning

- Preseason forecasts are developed over the winter by fishery research biologists and are based on previous years information and trends
- Forecasts tell us what run sizes to expect this year and give an idea of how to prepare for the season
- Transitioning from the forecast to inseason run size is based on information collected at assessment projects and observations from throughout the river.
- Information about the actual run size is refined as the run develops and is used to guide management inseason.
- Fishery managers in Alaska (ADF&G and USFWS) work together to plan management strategies for the upcoming year. Public input, like we will hear today at this meeting, is vital for planning upcoming management actions
- Presenting today
 - Summer season: Deena Jallen, ADF&G
 - Fall season: Matt Olson, ADF&G
 - Management considerations for upcoming season and federal update: Shane Ransbury, USFWS

2025 Chinook salmon outlook

- Canadian-origin: 30,000 fish, with a range of 24,000 to 37,000 fish (80% CI)
 - Border passage objective is 71,000 fish
- Drainagewide: 72,000 fish, with a range 58,000 to 88,000 fish (80% CI)



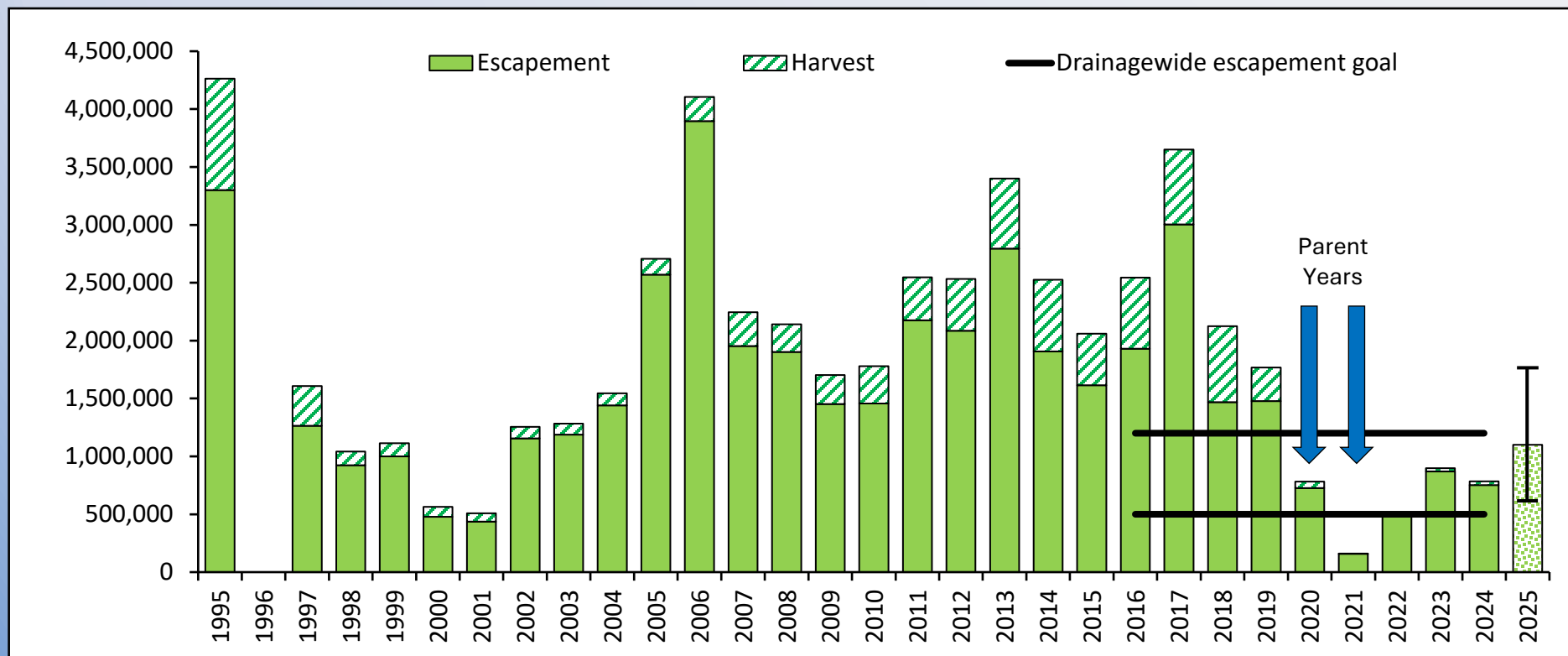
Management planning – Chinook salmon

- The Chinook salmon run is not expected to meet any escapement goals in Alaska or Canada, so there is no harvestable surplus for any fisheries. Subsistence, personal use, sport, and commercial will all be closed.
- Based on run timing of early Chinook salmon arrival in each district;
 - Salmon fishing will close and all gillnets larger than 4-inch must be removed from the water
 - Closures will likely start on June 1 in District 1 and the coast, similar to last year
 - Nonsalmon gillnets will be restricted to 4-inch or smaller mesh setnets up to 60-feet in length.
 - Gillnets should be operated close to shore as shore based setnets.
 - Fishermen should set their nonsalmon nets in locations where they will avoid Chinook salmon migrating to their spawning grounds.
 - Chinook salmon must be released alive from hook and line gear, and all other nonsalmon gears types including longline, jigging gear, hand line, beach seine, fyke net, spear, or lead.

2025 Summer chum salmon outlook

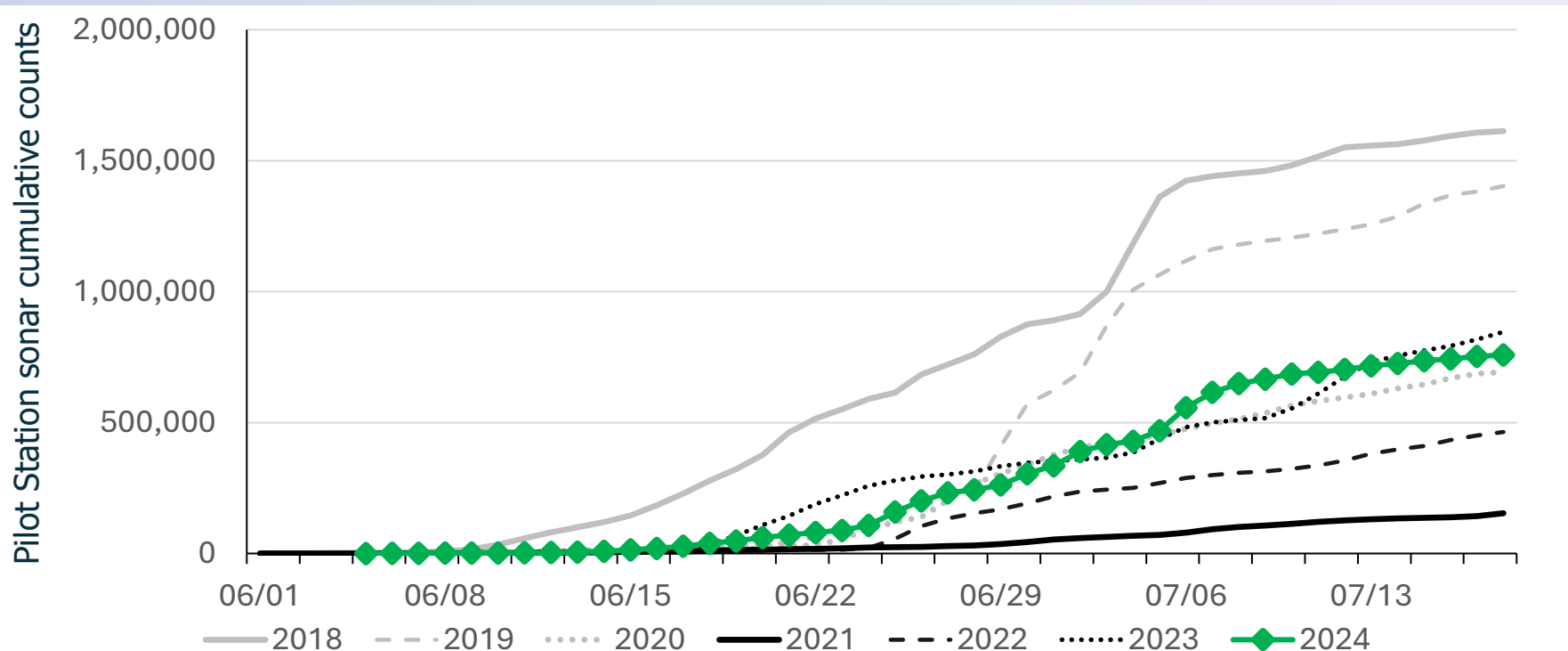
Forecast is for a run of 550,000–1,800,000 fish (80% CI), with a point estimate of 1,100,000 fish.

- Parent years are primarily from 2020 and 2021.
- 2024 escapement was ~750,000 fish and was within the drainagewide escapement goal.



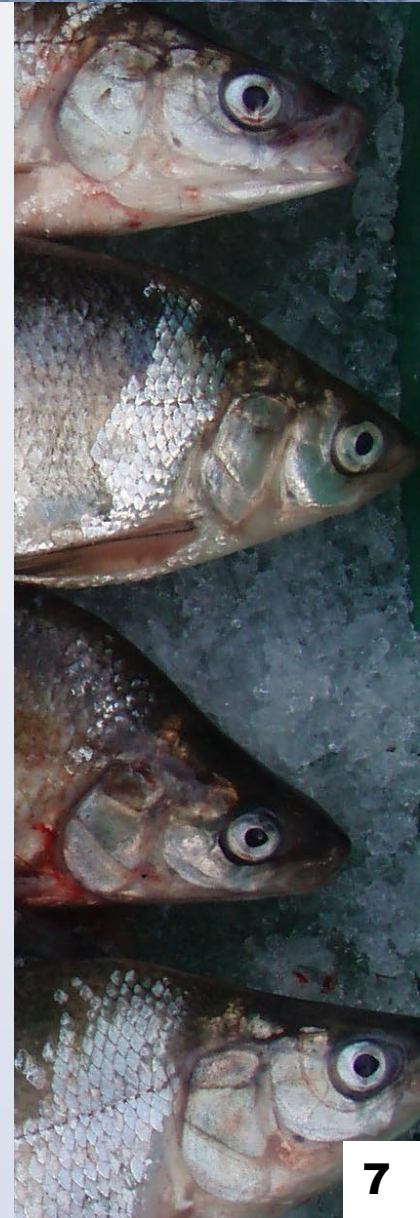
Management planning – Summer chum salmon

- Due to uncertainty about the summer chum salmon run, selective gear openings will not start until the run is projected to be within or above the drainagewide goal of 500,000 to 1,200,000 fish.
- Expect run will be large enough to open subsistence fishing
- In 2024, early projections around June 20 were strong enough that fishing with selective gear opened starting June 22



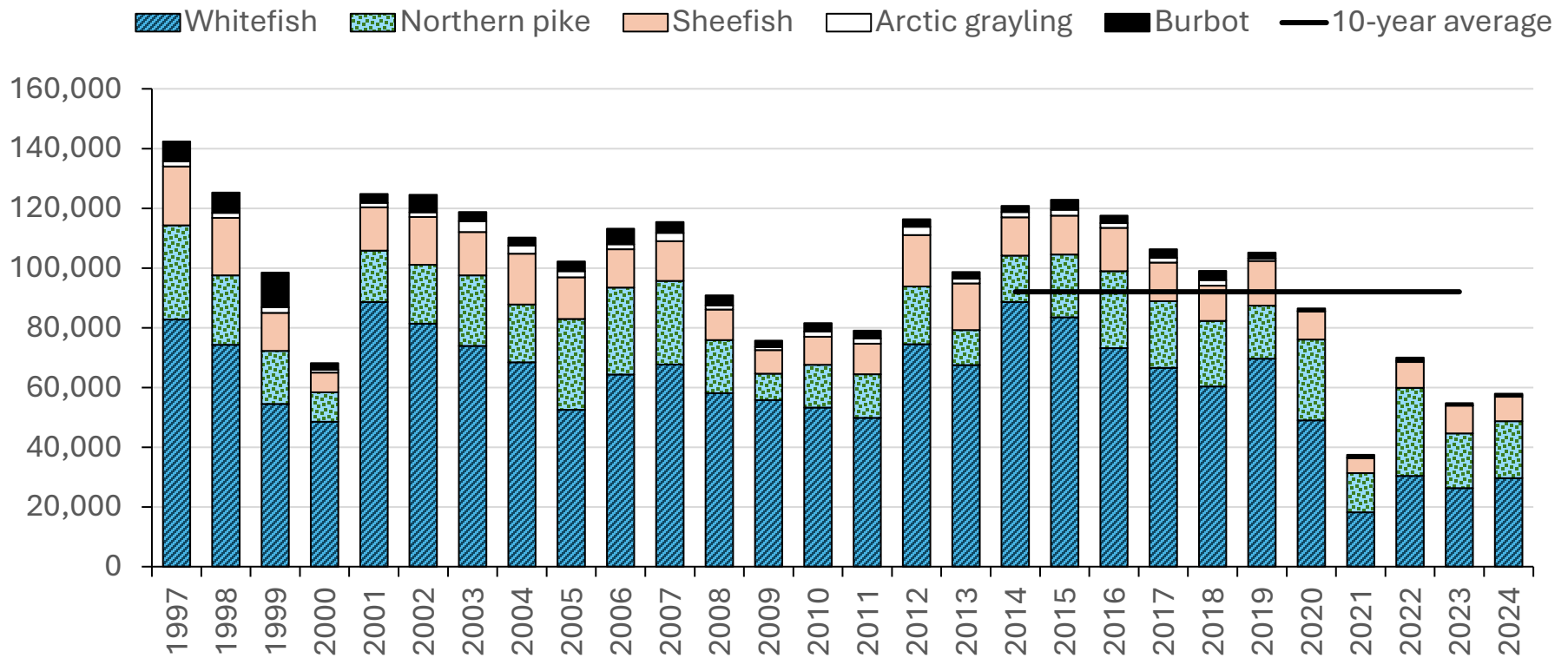
Management planning - nonsalmon

- In addition to 4-inch or smaller mesh setnets, other gear types including hook and line, longline, jigging gear, hand line, beach seine, fyke net, spear, or lead may be used.
- In 2024, during the Chinook salmon run, nonsalmon gillnets were removed from the water for two weeks.
- This year, additional closures for nonsalmon gillnets are being considered again to help reduce the incidental harvest of Chinook salmon.
- These options will be covered more in depth later in the presentation.

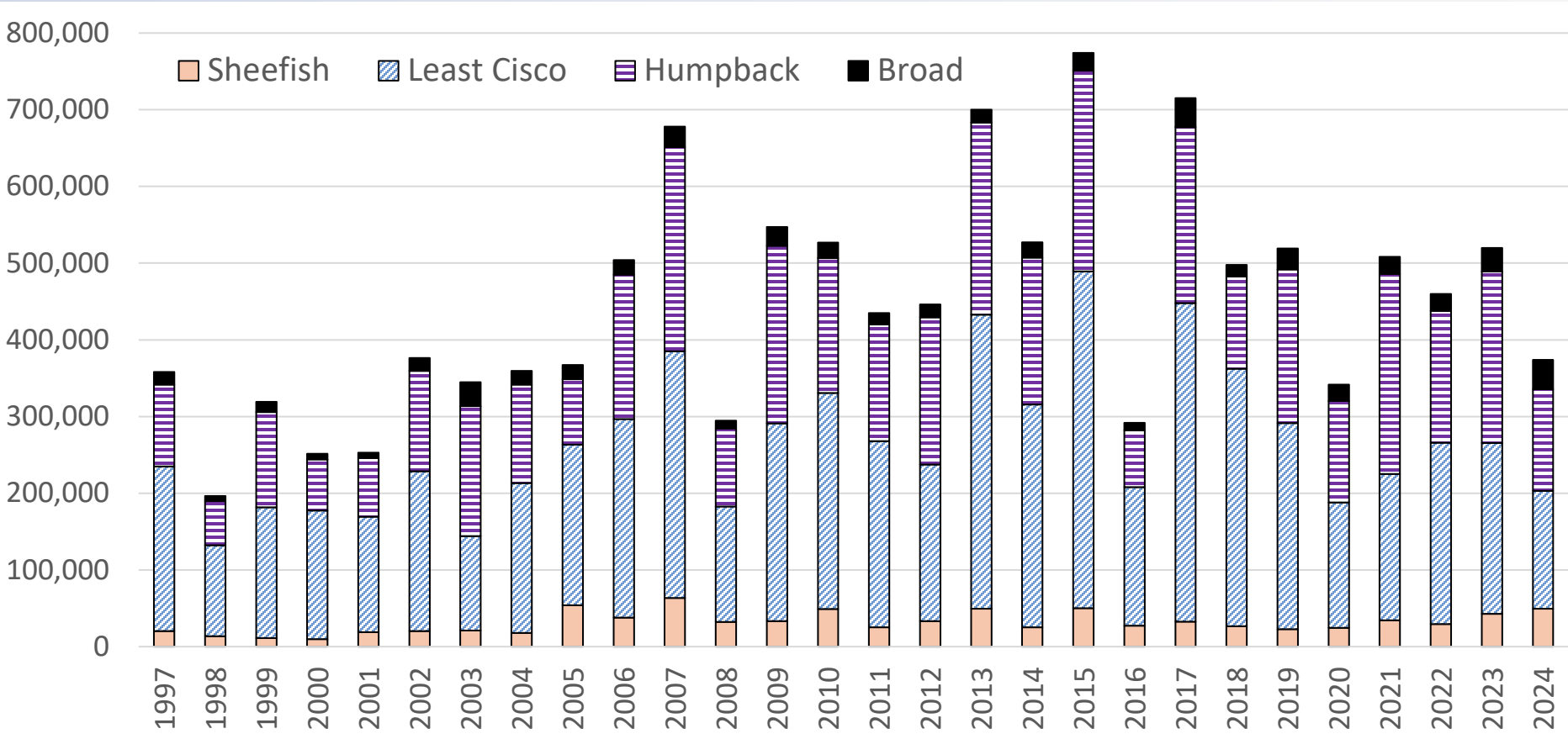


Nonsalmon harvest

- Nonsalmon species are important traditional subsistence resources.
- Salmon closures impact nonsalmon harvests as well.
- Harvest estimates are from post season subsistence harvest survey and subsistence permits.



Sheefish and whitefish counts at Pilot Station sonar



Average count	Sheefish	Least cisco	Humpback WF	Broad WF
All years (1997-2024)	31,336	234,091	160,793	19,680
Recent 10 (2015-2024)	34,059	260,582	180,663	24,794
Recent 5 (2020-2024)	36,157	193,342	184,306	26,832

2025 Yukon River Fall Chum and Coho Salmon Outlook

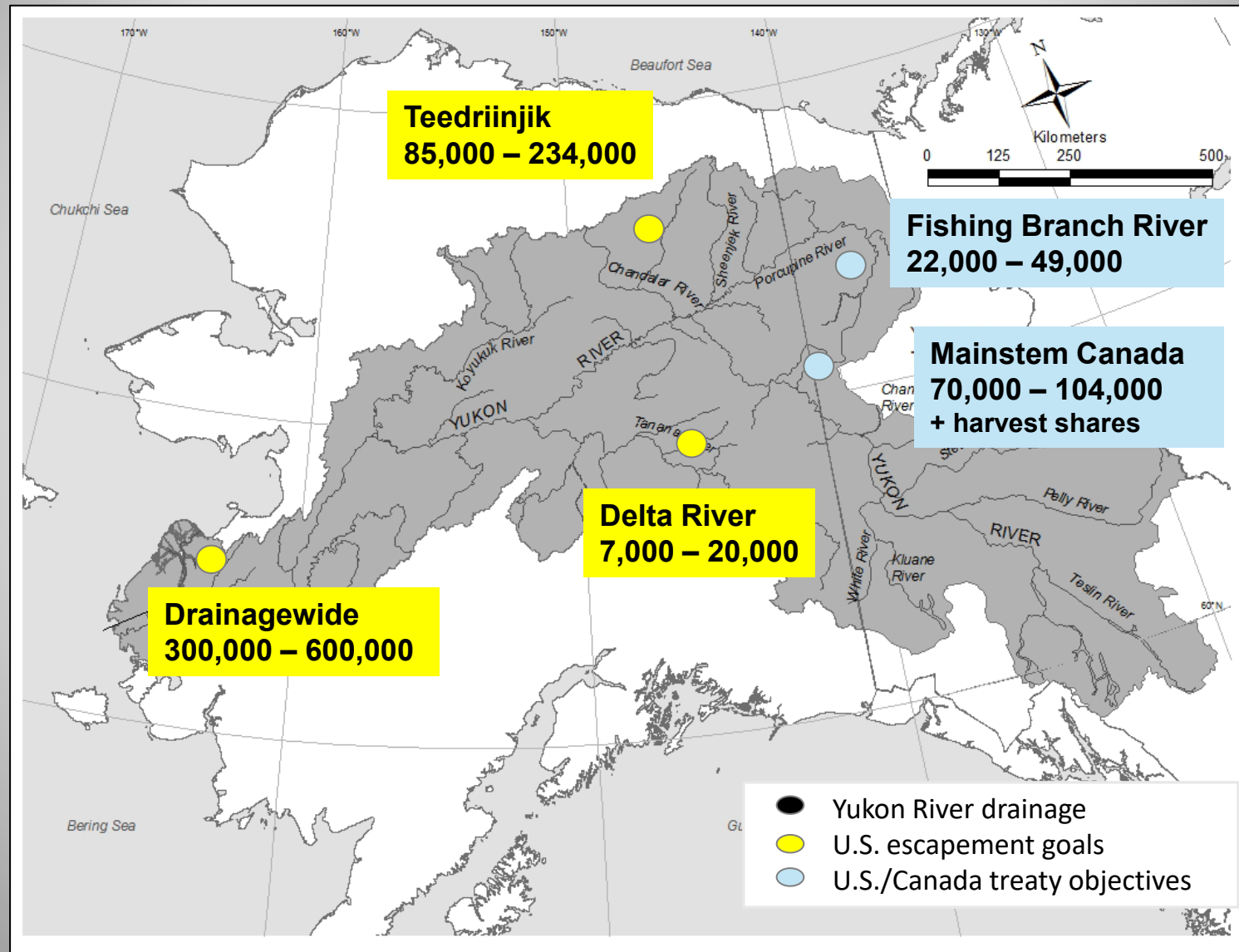


YRDFA Preseason Meeting
April 24, 2025
Fairbanks

Presentation by Matt Olson



Fall Chum Salmon Management Objectives



Fall Chum Salmon Forecast Summary

Component	Forecast (range)	Goal / IMEG
Yukon River Drainagewide	218,000 (114,000 – 322,000)	300,000 – 600,000
CA-Mainstem Yukon River	22,000 (8,000 – 48,000)	70,000 – 104,000
Fishing Branch River	9,000 (5,000 – 13,000)	22,000 – 49,000

Primary parent years for 2025 run: 2020 (Age 5) and 2021 (Age 4)

- 2020 Escapement - 183,000
- 2021 Escapement - 93,000

Yukon River Drainage Fall Chum Salmon Management Plan

**2025
Forecast**



0 – 300,000



Closed to meet
escapement goals

300,000+



Subsistence*

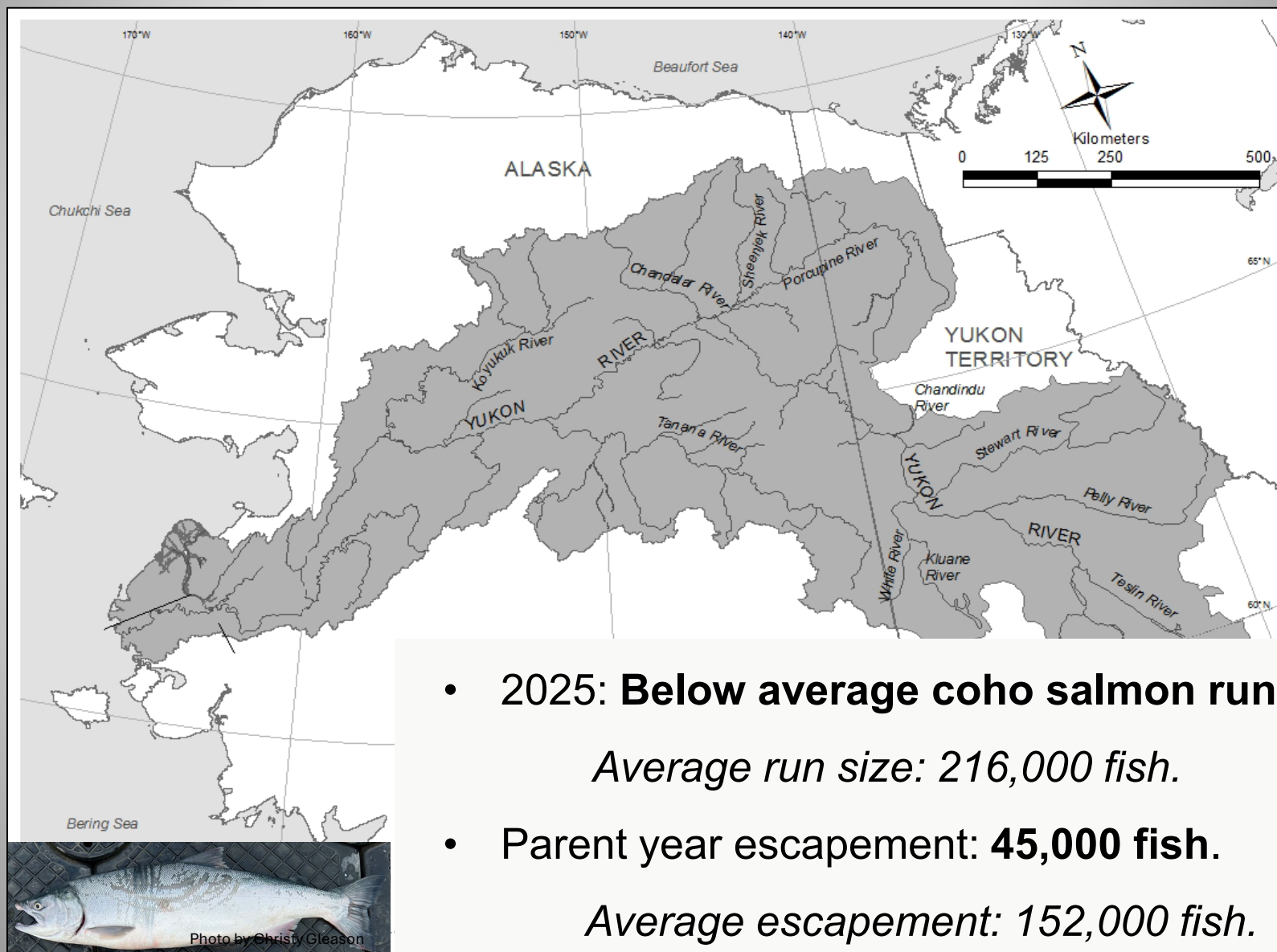
550,000+



**Subsistence*
Personal Use*
Sport*
Commercial***

* Possible restrictions to meet
escapement goals

2025 Coho Salmon Outlook



2025 Management Approach

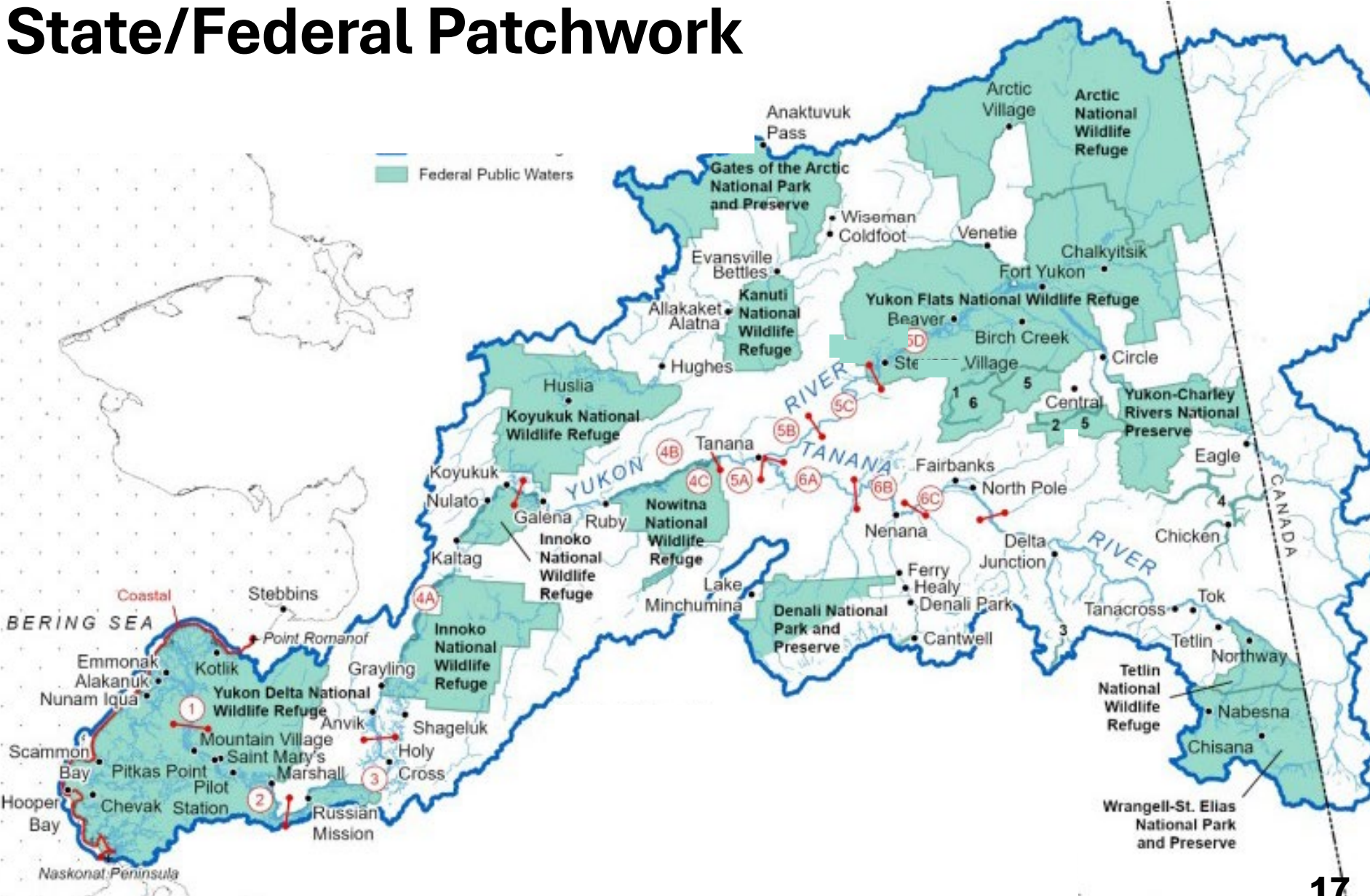
- **Early season decisions will be based on:**
 - Preseason projection for fall chum salmon (summer/fall chum).
 - Local observations and recommendations.
 - Summer chum and Chinook salmon run strength.
 - Escapement Assessment.
 - Closures, restrictions, and surplus for subsistence harvest opportunities.
- **Mid to late season decisions will be based on:**
 - Assessment project information.
 - Fish counts, genetics, age class, and male/female ratios.
 - Local observations and recommendations.
 - Inseason projections for fall chum and coho salmon.

2025 Subsistence Fishing Opportunities

- Fall chum and coho salmon fishing closures.
- Prior to fall chum salmon run starting in lower river (not seeing large numbers of probable fall chum salmon in LYTF/Pilot Station genetics) possibility of additional summer chum salmon opportunity with selective gear.
 - Would be based on inseason run abundance information for both summer and fall chum salmon runs.
- Selective gear for nonsalmon.
 - Dip nets, hook and line, beach seines, and manned fish wheels.
 - Required release of any specified salmon species.
- 4-inch or smaller mesh set gillnets for nonsalmon only, limited to 60 feet in length, with additional time and area closure approaches to limit the potential for incidental harvest of salmon.



State/Federal Patchwork



State and Federal managers meet at least weekly, sometimes daily

- We talk, argue, and come to agreements

Ultimately, **there are shared values throughout the drainage:**

- Desire for healthy fish stocks
- Desire for subsistence fishing opportunities
- Desire for maintaining cultural values

Leading to:

- Shared escapement goals
- Agreements on management decisions

2025 Federal Special Action

- Submitted by YRITFC
- Requests subsistence openings in Federal waters to be for federally-qualified users only (similar to last several years)
- Requests justification in writing for all closures of subsistence fishing in federal waters clarifying how the action fits ANILCA
- Federal Subsistence Board deferred this request to the Federal in-season manager
- Hearing on proposed management strategy on May 7 at 4pm
 - 833-436-1163
 - ID: 797043615#



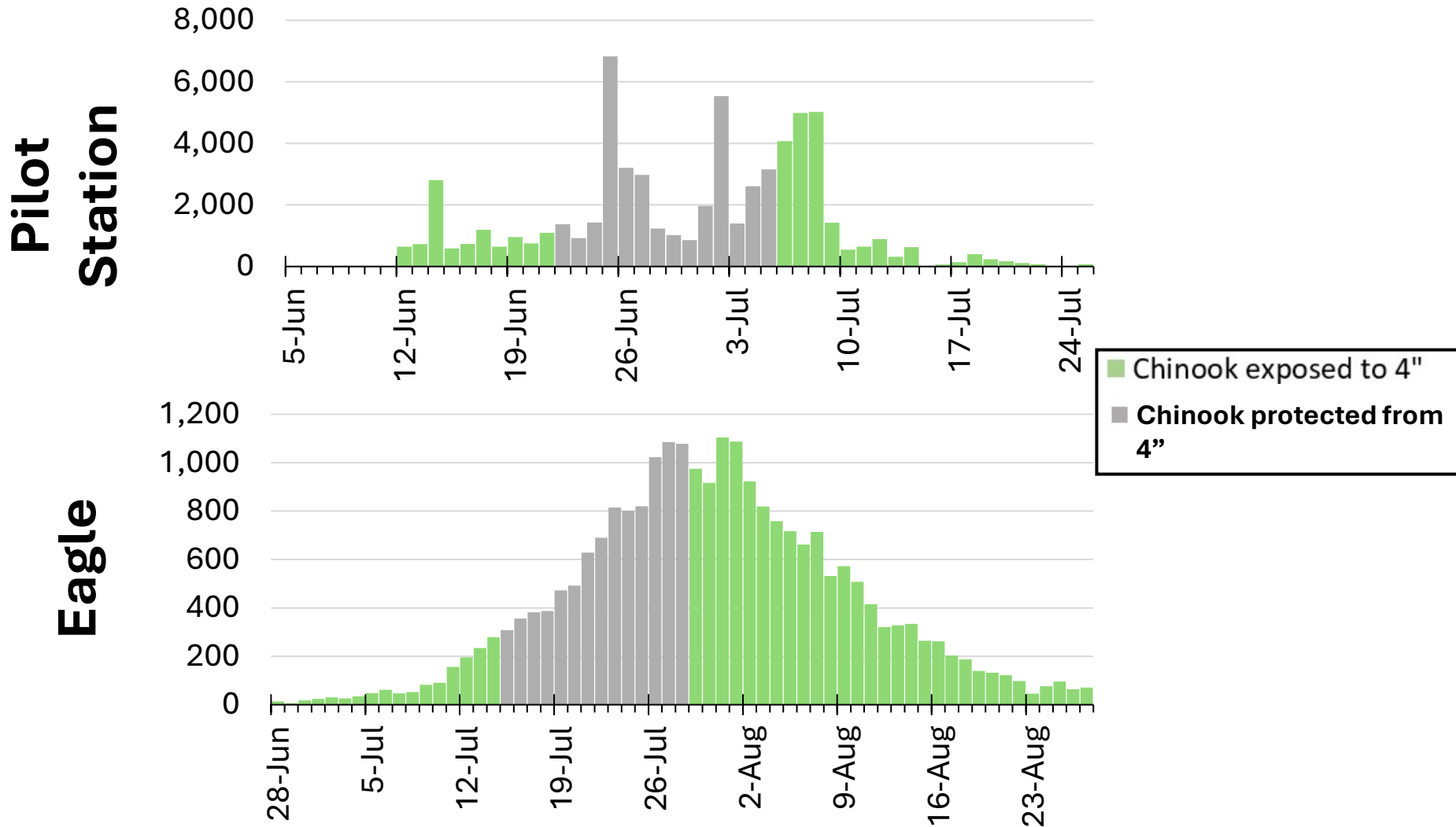
Photo by Shane Ransbury

- Public requests for better protection for Chinook, Fall chum, and coho (from incidental harvest)
- Continued requests for meaningful large-mesh fishing for whitefish in lakes and nonsalmon streams
- Feedback is spurring these new management options for public consideration

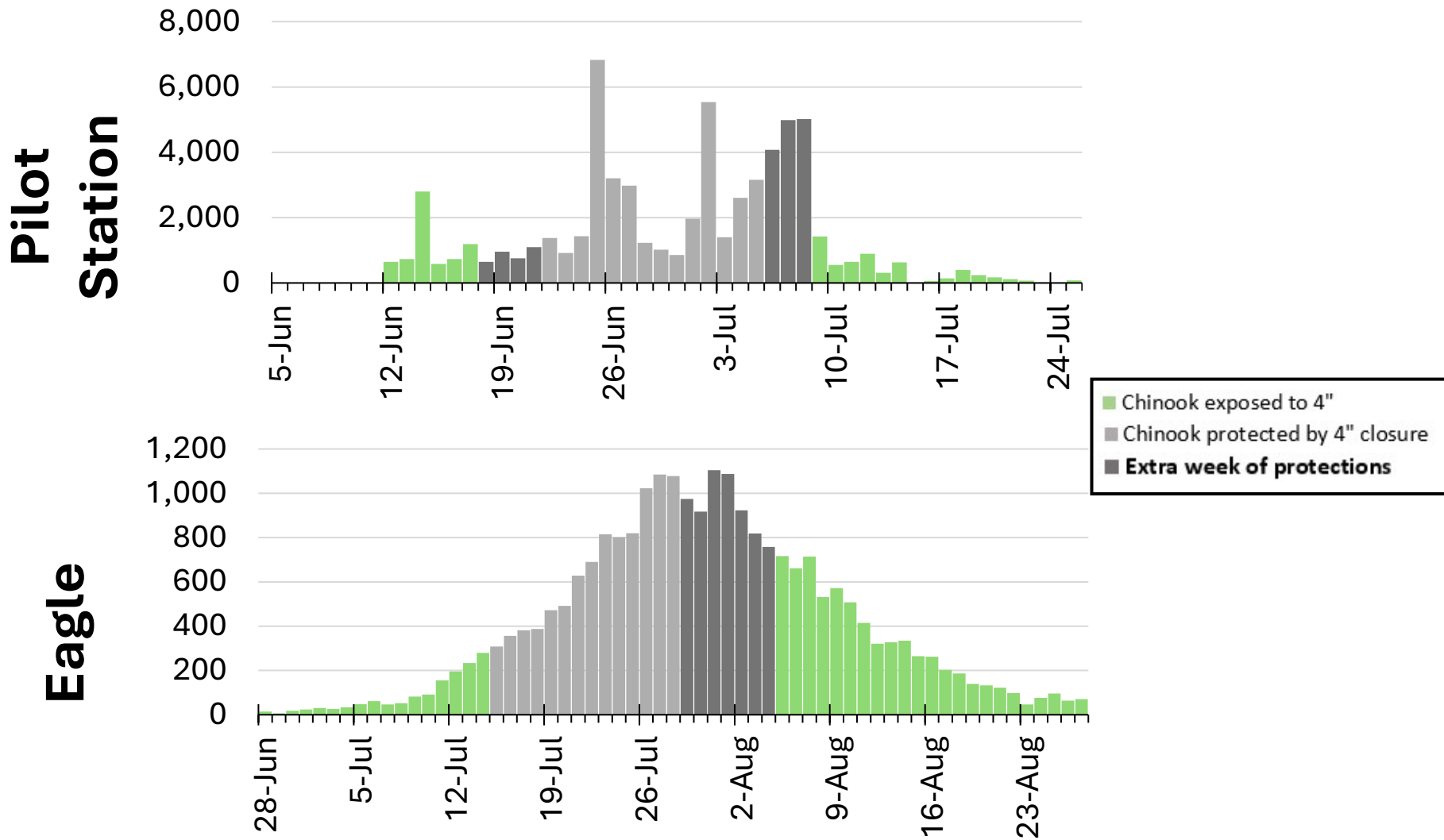


Photo by Shane Ransbury

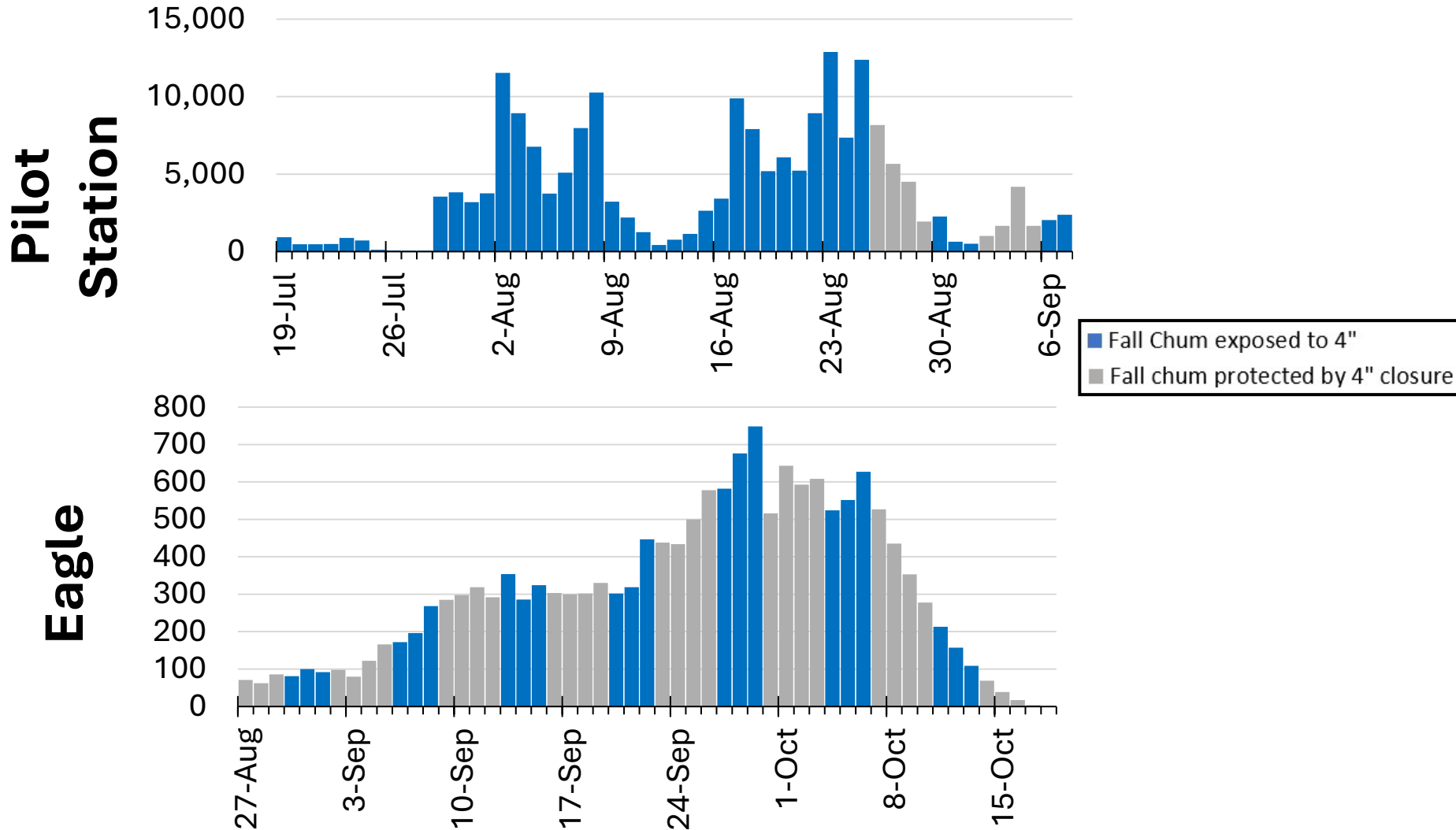
How well did 4" closures protect Chinook in 2024?



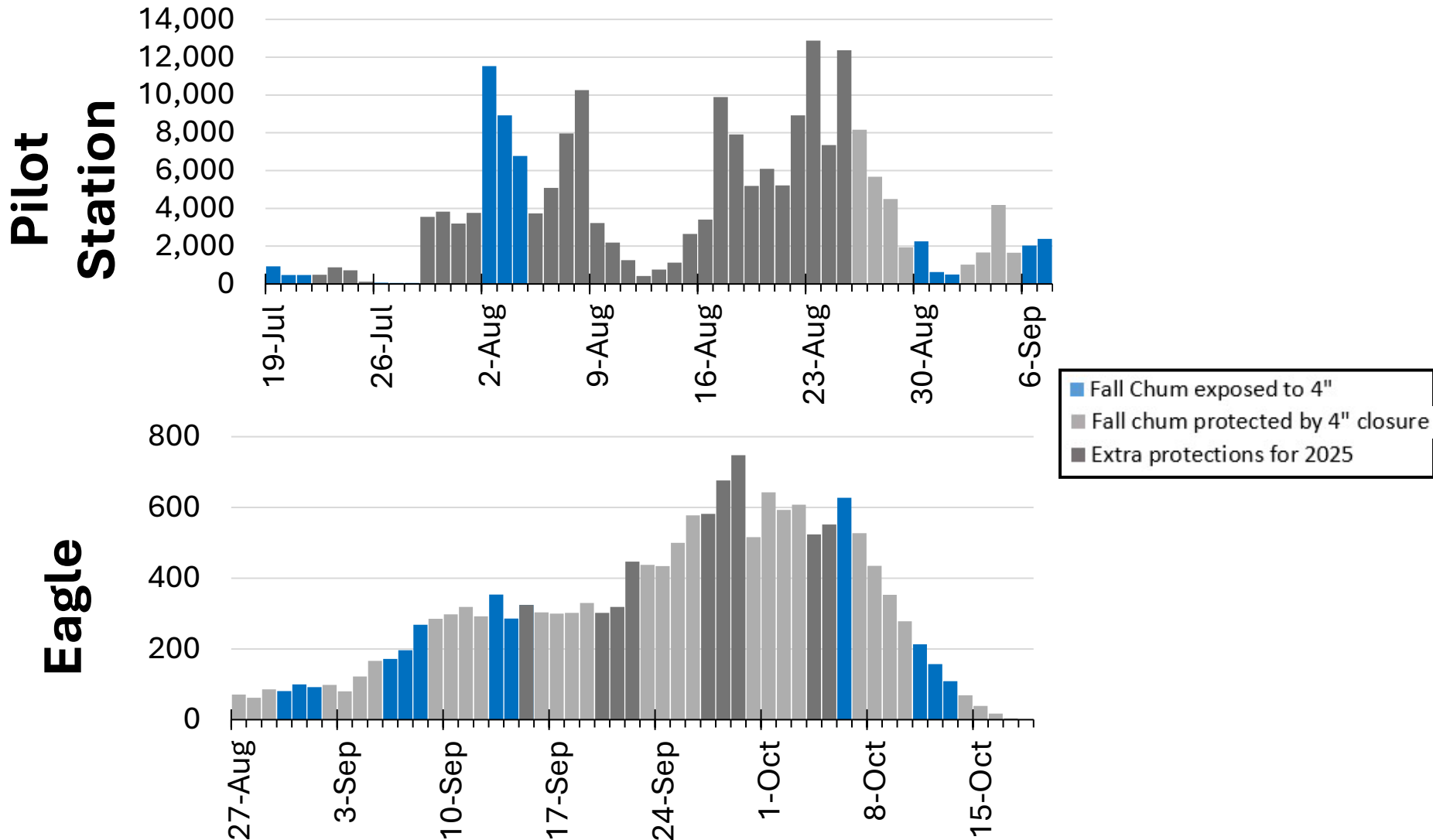
What would a 3-week closure have done in 2024?



How well did 4" closures protect fall chum in 2024?



What would a 3-week closure + weekday 4" closure have done in 2024?



Non-salmon fishing vs. Incidental salmon harvest protections

Number of days in the salmon season 4" closed

	2024 Summer = 2-wk closure Fall = late weekday closure	2025 Summer = 3-wk closure Fall = 3-wk + weekday closure
Chinook	14	21
Fall chum/coho	24	84

Number of days 4" allowed for nonsalmon

2024	2025 (as proposed)
328	260
90% of the year	71% of the year

- We also propose allowing 6" gear to target nonsalmon during fall in lakes

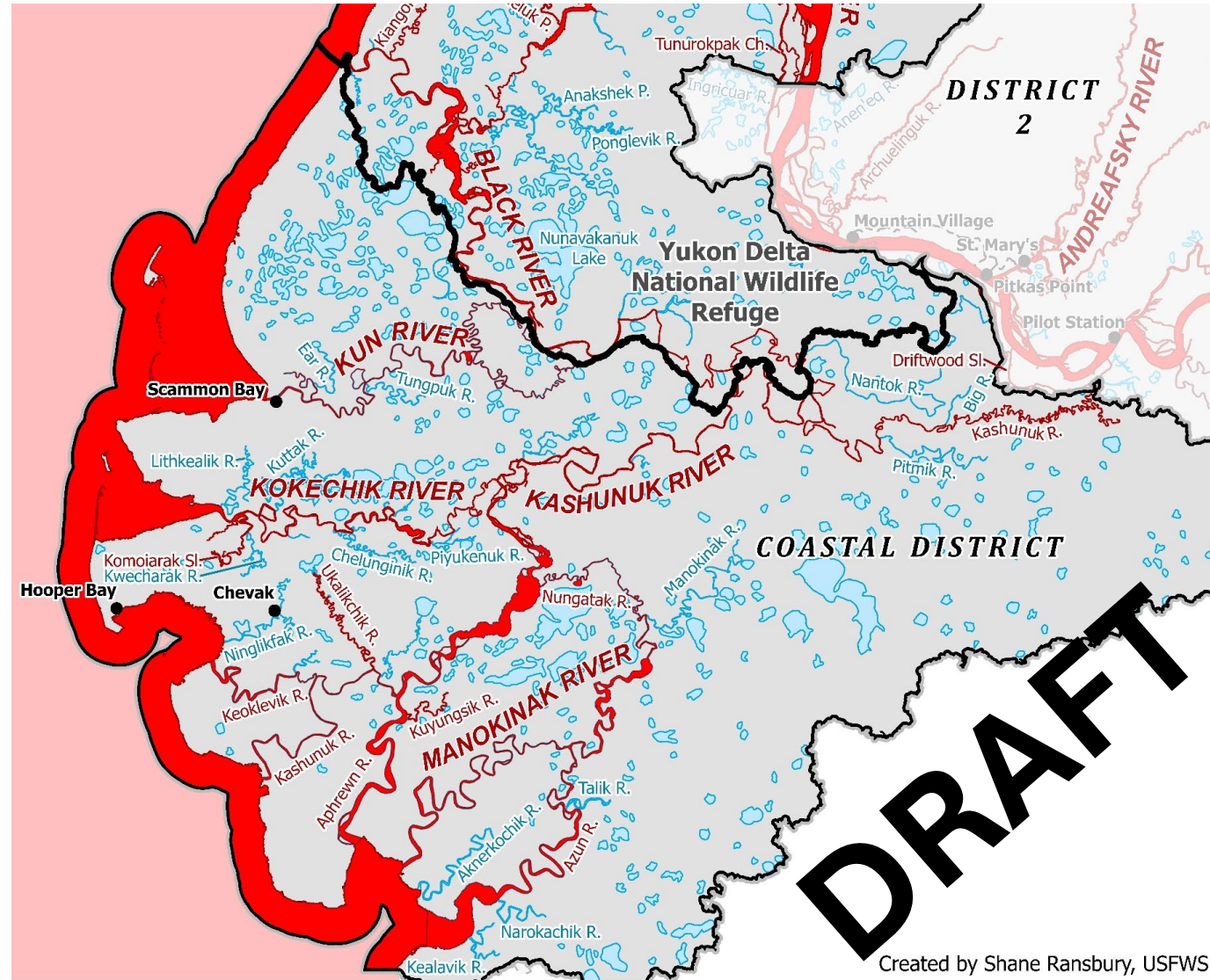
Large mesh opportunity to fish for NONSALMON (fall only)

Open select rivers and lakes for 6” or smaller gillnets
based on:

- Traditional knowledge of no salmon present or migrating
- Scientific records checked for Chinook, chum, and coho spawning and migration routes
 - Anadromous Waters Catalog
 - Study results (e.g., spawning review papers, radio telemetry reports)
- Unfortunately, because of river morphology, opportunity would not be equal by district
- **We will refine based on your feedback for each district**

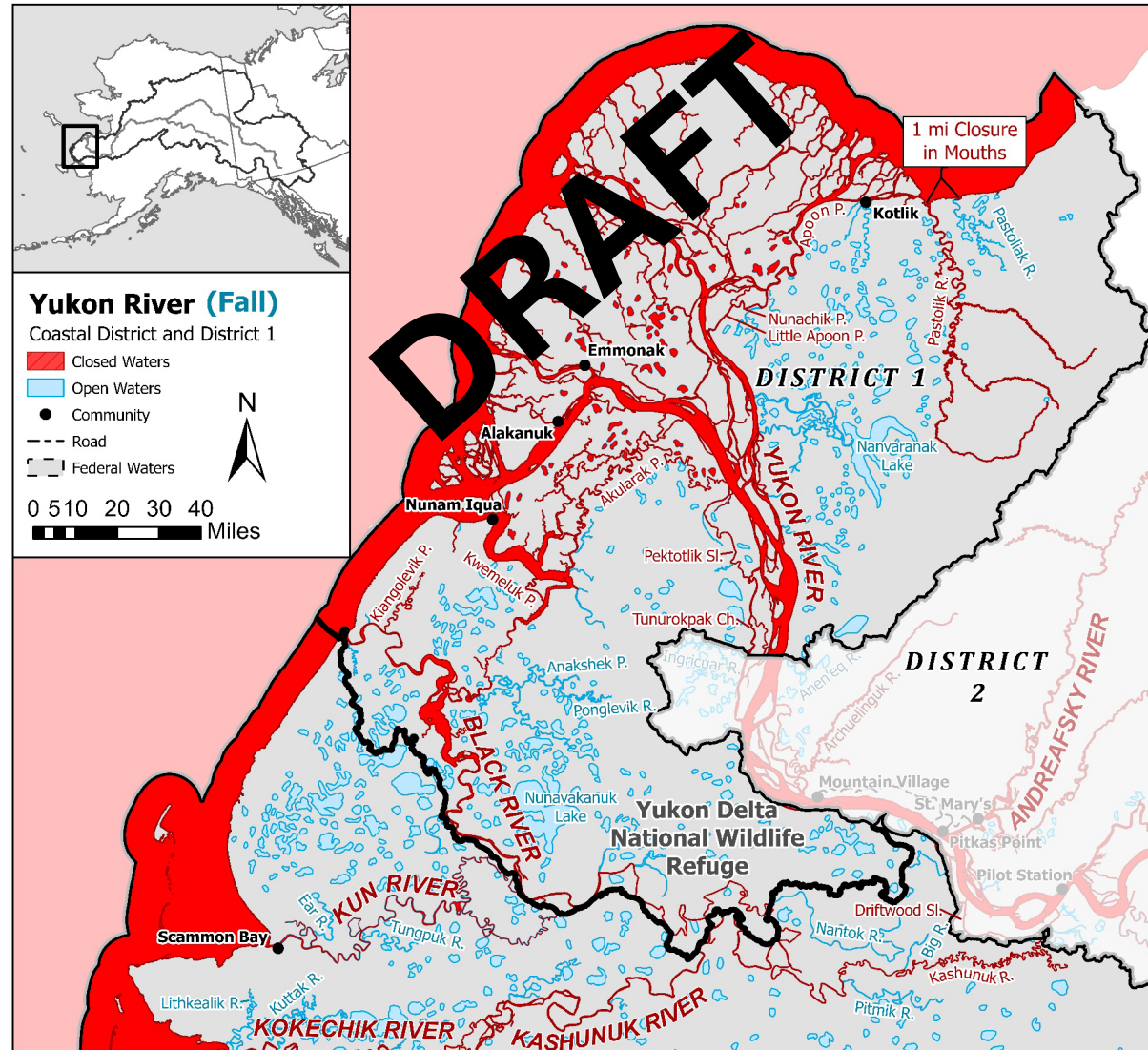
Coastal Nonsalmon 6"

- Ear River
- Tungpuk River
- Lithkealik River
- Kuttak River
- Kwecharak River
- Chelunginik River
- Piyukenuk River
- Ninglikfak River
- Aknerkochik River
- Talik River
- Narokachik River
- Kealavik River
- Pitmik River
- Big River
- Upper Manokinak and Nantok rivers
- Lakes except those with a closed river as the inflow and outflow



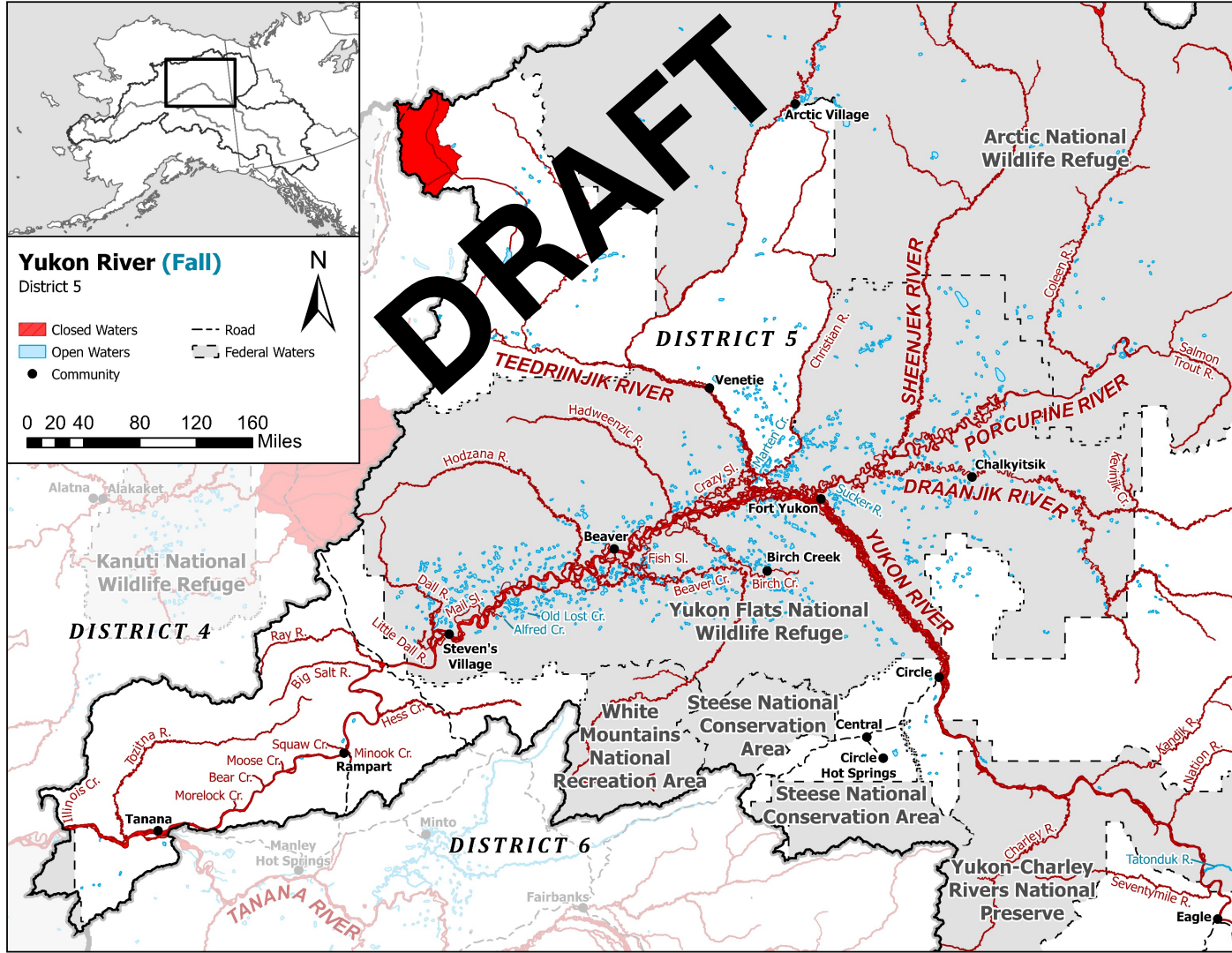
District 1 Nonsalmon 6"

- Pastoliak River
- Nanvaranak Lake and outlet slough
- Anakshek Pass
- Ponglevik River
- Nunavakanuk Lake
- Most small lakes SE of Apoon Pass and Akularak Pass






District 5 Nonsalmon 6''

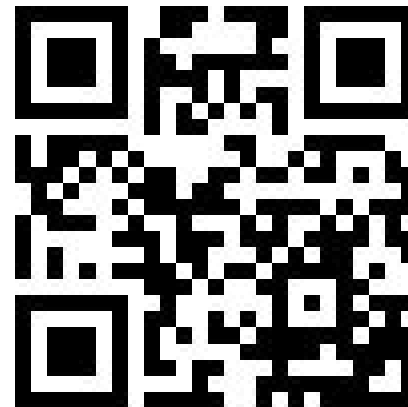
- Tatonduk River
- Sucker River
- Marten Creek
- Potentially multiple creeks between Steven's and Beaver
- Lakes except those with a closed river as the inflow and outflow



Summary for Discussion (SUMMER)

Restrictions to 4" to reduce incidental catch of Chinook




- 1) Close all gillnets for 2-weeks during bulk of Chinook run 
- 2) Close all gillnets for 3-weeks during bulk of Chinook run  
- 3) Close all gillnets during weekdays all season
- 4) Combination of the above




Summary for Discussion (FALL)




Restrictions to 4" to reduce incidental catch of fall chum and coho

- 1) Close all gillnets for 2-weeks during bulk of fall chum run
- 2) Close all gillnets for 3-weeks during bulk of fall chum run
- 3) Close all gillnets during weekdays all season to protect fall chum + coho 
- 4) Combination of the above  

Large mesh opportunity for nonsalmon

Allow 6" gillnets in lakes and rivers with no known migrating/spawning activity for Chinook, chum, or coho during fall 



Contact information - Acknowledgements

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