

Yukon Fisheries News

Protecting and promoting all healthy wild fisheries and cultures along the Yukon River drainage

Winter 2023-2024 Edition

See pictures from our Annual YRDFA Board meeting held here in Anchorage on October 3&4, 2023.

Winter 2024

Inside this issue

Keeping Yukon River Chinook in Hearts and Minds in Washington and Ottawa [Page 3](#)

YRDFA holds Its Annual meeting in Anchorage [Page 5](#)

Gravel to Gravel Project [Page 7](#)

Elders Warnings Project Shares Results at Events [Page 8](#)

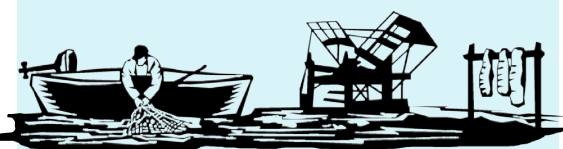
Environmental Stewardship and Technological Innovation [Page 9](#)

Wild Salmon Survival is a shared Responsibility [Page 10](#)

Proposed Ambler Road and the Yukon River [Page 13](#)

YRDFA founder Richard Burnham retires [Page 14](#)

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE
YUKON RIVER DRAINAGE
FISHERIES ASSOCIATION



News from the Director

Serena Fitka

YRDFA Executive Director

As the year ends it is a good time to reflect on what has been done, what can be improved and more importantly to let go of what weighs us down. Back in college I wrote my personal vision statement for a leadership class.

My vision is to become an influential Native leader. I will gain the Native people's trust by displaying my strength, community, and above all respect.

I revisit my vision statement often and this year I decided to add to it. My values of strength, community and respect, I feel I need to add trust. The strength of my ancestors have been passed down generation by generation. This strength has built a sense of community with one another and with that comes respect for one another. This is where I want to include trust. We cannot continue down the same path as a community without trust and respect. My values were instilled in me by my family and were passed down from their families. These values are what guides me and I use them as I continue to work for the people of the Yukon River.

YRDFA has had a big year with a lot of accomplishments and some setbacks. I look at those setbacks as stepping stones to become a more successful organization. I look forward to the year 2024 and what it will bring. I wish everyone a safe and prosperous new year.

Quyana and puiaraa.



Upcoming Meetings

YRDFA Board Resolution Committee Meeting

January 8, 2024 / Virtual

Co-Stewardship Symposium

January 16-19, 2024

Fairbanks, AK at Wedgewood

Yukon River Panel

January 22-25, 2024

Whitehorse, YT

Flooding and Environmental History in the Upper Tanana Region near Manh Choh

January 24, 2024

Virtual Presentation

Alaska Salmon Research Task Force

January 25, 2024 / Virtual

Alaska Marine Science Symposium

January 29 - February 2, 2024

Anchorage, AK at Captain Cook Hotel/Egan Center

Alaska Forum for the Environment

February 5-9, 2024

Anchorage, AK at Dena'ina Center/Virtual

Yukon River Symposium

February 14-15, 2024

Virtual, Hosted by YRDFA

Office of Subsistence Management ALL Regional Advisory Council Meeting

March 5-8, 2024

Anchorage, AK at Dena'ina Center

Tanana Chiefs Conference Annual Convention

March 11-14, 2024

Fairbanks, AK - Location TBD

American Fisheries Society - Alaska Chapter 50th Annual Meeting

March 24-29, 2024

Seward, AK

Subscribe to our Mailing List!

Be the first to receive YRDFA newsletters, news, important upcoming fisheries events and meetings!

Scan this link and subscribe to our mailing list:



Important Upcoming Dates

YRDFA Annual Board Meeting

April 30 – May 1, 2024

Anchorage, AK - Location TBD

YRDFA Pre-Season Meeting

May 2nd and 3rd, 2024

Anchorage, AK Location TBD

HOW DO I BECOME A YRDFA MEMBER?

- Go to yukonsalmon.org
- Go to YRDFA's Facebook page
- Fill out and mail in the form on page 15



Yukon Fisheries News is published by the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association
PO Box 2618 • Valdez, AK 99686
Phone: (907) 272-3141 • Fax: (907) 272-3142 • TOLL FREE 1-877-99-YUKON(98566)
www.yukonsalmon.org

Funding for this publication provided by the USFWS through the Restoration & Management Fund
All photos © YRDFA unless otherwise credited.



Keeping Yukon River Chinook in Hearts and Minds in Washington and Ottawa

Dennis Zimmermann – Yukon River Panel, Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee, and Pacific Salmon Treaty – Transboundary Rivers Representative

As a Canadian and longtime resident of Whitehorse, Yukon I would visit the Fish Ladder each year to peer in the window and marvel at these silvery-red Chinook salmon that have traveled against the current for up to 3,000 km (1,864 miles). With my kids we would look at each Chinook and guess what they faced with their roughed-up noses and tails, sometimes bite marks or net marks. These are the salmon we know in Canada.

I've had the privilege as a member of the Yukon River Panel, and with the support of organizations like the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association to travel through the middle and lower river in Alaska. I'll never forget visiting communities like Galena, Kaltag, Nulato, Mountain Village, St. Marys, and Pilot Station benefiting from the generosity of people sharing precious bright silvery salmon from their family fish camps. These are the salmon they know in the United States.

We've often said that Yukon River Chinook "know no borders" with approximately fifty per cent of the run being what we call "Canadian origin". What brings our two democratic countries formally together for dialogue, is the Yukon River Panel, created through the Yukon River Salmon Agreement (YRSA) in 2002. The YRSA is a treaty that forms Chapter 8 of the Pacific Salmon Treaty between Canada and the United States.

With this treaty in mind, a small political delegation of Canadians, including Member of Parliament Brendan Hanley, Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation Chief Nicole Tom, Canadian Senator Pat Duncan, and two members of the Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee, Cheyenne Bradley and myself, visited Washington DC to reinforce the importance of Yukon River Chinook and Fall Chum salmon.

Given the long list of pressing conservation concerns facing both the United States and Canada, our goal was to ensure that Yukon River Chinook salmon remained top of mind for our political leaders. Our delegation met with a number of United States Senators and Representatives, including Alaska's Senator Murkowski and Representative Peltola.



Senator Murkowski had just returned from a field hearing and listening session in Bethel, titled “Impact of the Historic Declines on the Health and Well-being of Alaska Native Communities Along Arctic, Yukon, and Kuskokwim Rivers”. Based on our lengthy conversation it became immediately clear that all living along the Yukon River in Canada and United States are now fully aware of the crisis and are saying the same thing. There are no fisheries and there is great fear of losing nutritional benefits, cultural connection, and important ecological benefits that salmon provide.



Representative Peltola further reinforced this through a deep connection with Chief Nicole Tom over indigenous salmon culture and the need to have salmon for Elders and youth. Tears were shed, relationships amongst salmon people reinforced, and salmon were shared.

The Canadian delegation met with additional committee representatives, both republicans and democrats, as well as Canadian Embassy staff that advocate both in Washington and in our Canadian capital, Ottawa. Overall, our delegation was pleased at the reception received, time given, our ability to articulate how we need to keep hope and continue working together to find solutions.

As salmon become fewer, politics intensify. This is why through the Yukon River Panel, as Canadians and Americans, if we continue to sit together, dialogue, share, and listen with empathy, we’ll see that we have more in common than we have differences.

Whether our connection to salmon is through a viewing window in Whitehorse, or a fish camp in St. Mary’s, continuing to advocate for Yukon River salmon together in our respective capitals, Washington and Ottawa, can only serve to ensure that we keep these magnificent fish in our hearts and minds forever.



YRDFA Holds Its Annual Meeting in Anchorage

October 2nd and 3rd, 2023

Gabe Canfield, YRDFA Policy Coordinator

The Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association held its 33rd Annual Meeting at the Egan Center in Anchorage, Alaska on October 2nd and 3rd, 2023. YRDFA's Board Members flew in from all areas of the Yukon River to discuss current events surrounding fisheries within our communities. At the meeting, YRDFA elected to maintain Bill Alstrom and Victor Lord as co-chairs and Stanley Sheppard to serve as secretary of the board. Four new members were elected, with alternate John Strongheart entering District Y1, Seat 2, alternate Robert Walker entering District Y4, Seat 2, alternate Darrell Vent entering Koyukuk River seat, and a new alternate Tommy Kriska joining Y4, Alt. 1 seat. Three board members, Pollock Simon Sr, Richard Burnham, and Stan Zuray, are stepping down from YRDFA's board and were honored at an event at 49th State Brewery during our annual meeting this year. We thank them for their years of dedicated service to YRDFA and Yukon River communities on fisheries.

YRDFA and board members spoke about many issues along the Yukon River over the past year, including the fisheries disaster declaration, chum and chinook bycatch, Area M fisheries, and future actions YRDFA would like to take within our resolutions. Public input and testimony was taken each day and we received insightful commentary from a number of community members within and outside the Yukon River. Representatives from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the University of Alaska Fairbanks, and a number of fisheries-related nonprofit joined in providing presentations that shared info on the past season of fisheries including closures. For next steps, on January 8, 2024 our board and newly formed resolution committee will meet to go over additional resolutions and finalize the ones shared at the October board meeting.



Welcoming Our New Board Members:

Y-1, Seat 1 - John Strongheart from Alakanuk

Y-4, Seat 2 - Robert Walker from Anvik

Y-5, Seat 2 - Brooke Woods from Rampart

Y-6, Seat 1 - Dorothy Shockley from Manley Hot Springs

Koyukuk Seat - Darrell Vent from Huslia

Alternates:

Coastal, Alternate 2 - Clifford Kaganak, Sr. from Scammon Bay

Y-4, Alternate 1 - Tommy Kriska from Galena

Vacancies:

Y-1, Alternate 2

Y-4, Alternate 2

Y-5, Alternate 1

YR DFA would like to wholeheartedly thank the past board members for their generous work towards protecting and promoting all wild fisheries and traditional cultures within the Yukon River Drainage.





YRDFA members came to Anchorage in the spring of 2023 to train with their federal partners on assessing, inventorying, and monitoring streams as a vital part of Gravel to Gravel. Photography by C. Ebbers, BLM.

Gravel to Gravel Project

Charles Ebbers, Public Affairs Specialist - Bureau of Land Management

December 2023 - Tribes, Native Corporations, and consortia in coordination with the Department of the Interior, are partnering on the Gravel to Gravel Keystone Initiative to address the loss of salmon in Alaska's Yukon, Kuskokwim and Norton Sound regions.

Gravel to Gravel's goal is to work together to restore salmon habitats, to build and strengthen relationships and co-stewardship between Tribes and federal agencies, to share knowledge, to coordinate restoration activities, and to design projects together as a strategy to address threats to food security and the existing salmon crisis. In October, representatives from over 15 Tribes, Tribal consortia, non-profits, and agencies including the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and U.S. Geological Survey met in Anchorage to discuss and build a common vision and path forward for the initiative. After two days of discussion and review by Tribal leaders, the vision for the initiative was decided, "together, with tribes centered, we unite to care for salmon from gravel to gravel."

Recently Kevin Whitworth, executive director of the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, told Alaska Public Media that Gravel to Gravel is one of the bright spots he's seeing for salmon in the region. The Kuskokwim River has seen declining returns of chinook, coho, and chum salmon in the last decade.

Gravel to Gravel intends to use both Indigenous Knowledge and western science to inform plans for collective action to support resilient ecosystems and communities in the region. Gravel to Gravel will also make immediate investments in the foundational science and projects needed to respond to the salmon crisis, while simultaneously investing in projects to heal the broader ecosystem.

Currently, the BLM has two grant opportunities open related to this effort.

- 1) <https://grants.gov/search-results-detail/351085> - \$5,000 - \$800,000. Closes 5/24/2024.

This Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) provides an opportunity for tribes or native corporations to submit proposals for projects that support on the ground stream restoration in the Norton Sound, Yukon, and Kuskokwim regions. Examples of activities that support stream habitat restoration include multiple phases such as data collection to inventory impacted streams and identify types of degradation requiring restoration, data collection at reference sites to develop stream restoration targets, and the development of stream restoration design plans; however, implementation of stream restoration on the ground must be included. Please reach out to the BLM Gravel to Gravel Project Coordinator if you have questions or would like assistance with proposal development: Rebecca Shaftel, rshaftel@blm.gov.

2) <https://www.grants.gov/search-results-detail/351382> - up to \$500,000. Closes 2/5/2024.

This NOFO provides opportunities to develop projects that help support BLM's management of functioning freshwater ecosystems that include streams, lakes, riparian and wetland areas. The BLM Alaska Aquatic Resources Program can work with partners to assist with activities such as restoring and connecting degraded aquatic habitats, advancing monitoring activities and tools, preventing the establishment and spread of invasive species, and increasing public knowledge of aquatic habitats on BLM lands especially in rural and indigenous communities. A complete list of the program goals and objectives that can be used to guide proposal development can be found in the NOFO. Please reach out to the BLM Aquatic Resources Program Lead for more information: Matt Varner, mvarner@blm.gov.

The USFWS has opportunities as well, including an open directed funding opportunity that would transfer 1.66 million dollars to the Village of Eagle. These co-stewardship funds would be used to help the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission and Tanana Chiefs Conference work on various Salmon conservation, restoration, and capacity building efforts.

More contacts and information can be found at the BLM and USFWS websites:

- <https://www.fws.gov/page/gravel-to-gravel-keystone-initiative>
- <https://www.blm.gov/programs/aquatic-resources/alaska/gravel-gravel-keystone-initiative>

To learn more about the work of the BLM in Alaska, including projects out for public comment, visit <https://www.blm.gov/alaska>.



Elders Warning Team: Katie Turner, Millena Jordan, Nataawnee Weihi and Catherine Moncrieff

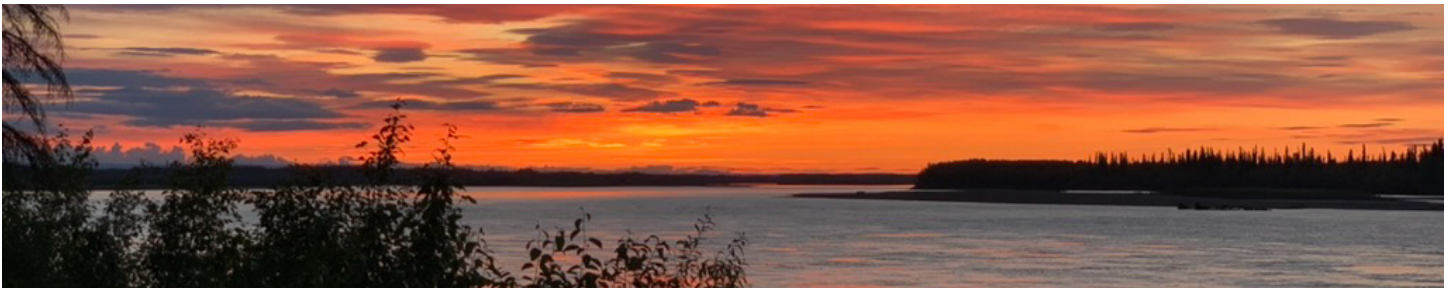
Elders Warnings Project Shares Results at Events

Catherine Moncrieff, YRDFA Anthropologist

The Elders Warnings team was pleased to be selected to host a workshop at the 2023 Elders and Youth Conference in Anchorage in October. Millena Jordan, Katie Turner and Catherine Moncrieff developed a presentation describing the background of our project and the activities through the 2.5 years so far. Katie shared a powerpoint presentation and the videos created by Millena and Katie. We followed up with a discussion about our experiences and what we were learning through this project and from Yukon River Elders. The room was filled with interested people from all over Alaska, not just the Yukon River. Some folks said they came to the workshop out of interest but also to show solidarity with the Yukon River people.

The Elders Warnings project will be ending in March of 2024 and some of our final activities will be outreach based, sharing what we have learned. Our next stop is the Alaska Marine Science Symposium where we will share a poster summarizing our project. It will be up at the Egan Center from noon on Monday, January 29th until 9pm Tuesday, January 30. We will be available at our poster to answer questions about our project on Tuesday, Jan 30th from 7:30-9pm.

We thank the North Pacific Research Board for funding this project as well as the 43 participants in our TEK Interviews from all over the Yukon River.



Environmental Stewardship and Technological Innovation: Indigenous Sentinels Network and YRDFA Collaborating on Fisheries Monitoring

Authors: Hannah-Marie Garcia (Aleut Community of St. Paul Island Tribal Government) and **Emily DeGroot** (Open Landscape Network)

Hello Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association communities, we are thrilled to announce an exciting collaboration between the Indigenous Sentinels Network (ISN) and the Yukon River Drainage and Fisheries Association (YRDFA), marking a significant milestone in the realm of community-driven environmental monitoring. For over two decades, ISN has been equipping Alaskan communities with tools to track, record, and communicate essential environmental data. Now, with the integration of YRDFA's expertise in conducting annual fish surveys, this partnership promises to bring forth advancements in community-driven environmental monitoring and community engagement.

About the Indigenous Sentinels Network (ISN):

ISN, a network coordinated by the Tribal Government of St. Paul Island (TGSPI), has been a beacon of Indigenous-led environmental stewardship for over two decades. Their programs and tools have enabled Alaskan communities to enhance co-management partnerships and maintain comprehensive records of critical environmental data, from coastal erosion rates to wildlife population trends. With a commitment to flexible, standardized, and inclusive data collection, ISN integrates traditional and local knowledge seamlessly alongside scientific data, creating a holistic approach to environmental monitoring.

Introducing the YRDFA and ISN Collaboration:

In this latest collaboration, ISN and YRDFA are proud to introduce a state-of-the-art tool and technology that will revolutionize the way communities collect, own, and share their environmental fisheries data. One of the key features of this innovative tool is the Dynamic Form Builder module, offering users and YRDFA teams a tool to design environmental surveys and data collection forms without coding knowledge or experience. This allows for real-time collaboration, enabling community members and YRDFA administrators to create and refine fisheries survey forms with ease.

YRDFA's In-Season Salmon Survey Program and the Vision for the Future:

YRDFA's fisheries survey program, initiated in 2004, has evolved into a vital resource management tool, connecting with communities and fishermen throughout the Yukon River drainage. With the next annual fisheries survey program set to commence in the summer of 2024, the collaboration between ISN and YRDFA aims to leverage the existing methods (i.e., paper survey forms) with ISN's tools to enhance the program's efficiency and impact.

The new data collection and survey tool will be used in YRDFA's annual fisheries surveys and will offer a range of components and features, including audio, photo, and file upload, various input fields, and more. The new tool being developed aims to work seamlessly with YRDFA's previous data collection methods and allow for more flexibility in the future to incorporate more local and Traditional knowledge alongside conventional fisheries survey data.

As we progress through the summer and fishing season of 2024, the ISN data collection tools (i.e., smartphone apps and a community-owned database) and paper forms will be utilized by surveyors in the field, with training efforts occurring in March to familiarize YRDFA users with the technology. The fall/winter of 2024 will consist of follow-ups with surveyors, analysis of data gathered from the summer, and the initiation of phase two, marking continuous progress and refinement.

Looking Forward:

ISN is looking forward to supporting YRDFA in their 2024 fisheries survey program and continuing to provide communities with further updates and training opportunities. Together, ISN and YRDFA are set to redefine community-driven environmental monitoring, fostering a sustainable process for generations to come. This collaboration symbolizes the power of partnership, innovation, and community-driven solutions.

Wild Salmon Survival is a Shared Responsibility

Gale K. Vick

Alaska has long been considered the last “safe” home of one of the world’s most incredible resources - wild salmon. But we are quickly losing that distinction.

Salmon have sustained humanity since before recorded time. Salmon are anadromous species that must navigate complex passages of up to thousands of miles. They have an incredible gauntlet of climate change/fluctuating environmental conditions, harvest / intercept, bycatch, hatchery competition, predators, disease and inadequate to deliberately poor multi-jurisdictional management to navigate. The fact that they have survived modern man at all is a testimony to their strength and resilience.

But now that resiliency is running out. The world has threatened that resiliency so much that the billions of salmon that have fed ecosystems around the world for millennia are now a trickle; the threat of losing whole runs is the reality rather than incidental. Even more, we have lost or are losing the genetic stock that produced massive sizes of salmon. In less than one hundred years we have damaged our wild salmon stocks in such significant ways that we have likely permanently altered patterns and genetics.

Chinook salmon stocks in the AYK are at a sustained historic low with discrete stocks in severe peril of extinction. We are way past a “stock of concern” and in the realm of threatened species. Summer and fall chum salmon and coho are showing increased signs of following that downward trend. Sockeye stocks, while still abundant in some areas, have declined in average size. Only pink salmon are thriving, both an abundance of hatchery and wild. Evidence of too many pinks in the ocean, affecting other species and entire ecosystems, is mounting.

A new scientific paper published this fall shows that the pink salmon population is booming in the North Pacific Ocean — and global warming is helping it happen. The new evidence suggests that pinks are not just outcompeting other salmon species but they’re affecting the whole ecosystem — from the microscopic to large marine whales. “Pink salmon are one of the winners in terms of climate change,” said Greg Ruggione, a salmon researcher and lead author of the new 40-page paper published Sept. 21 in the scientific journal, Marine Ecology Progress Series. But for every winner, there is a loser — or in this case, several. The new research shows that the spike in pink salmon in recent decades is affecting the ocean’s fragile food chain. Pink salmon run on an every-other-year cycle. The population in the odd number years is 25% greater than even number years. And when pink numbers are up, other species are down. “From phytoplankton, zooplankton, forage fishes, all five species of Pacific salmon, and so forth and marine birds. It all points to pink salmon,” Ruggione said. ¹

This is really bad news for most Alaskans. And it is definitely bad news for many of our wild salmon stocks.

We Alaskans love our salmon to the degree that we are often at a loss for words. However, while we may share an intense attachment to salmon, we may not have benefit of being of the same mindset. Is our attachment based on dependency to salmon as a food security and cultural resource? A commodity to be exploited for monetary gain? A resource that can be replaced by aquaculture? A recreational experience?

To be sure, many of us have multiple different goals when it comes to salmon. But our joint use all comes down to a single common problem; sustainability. We know that our Alaska Constitution (Article 8 § 4. Sustained Yield) specifically mandates maintaining our wild resources on a sustained yield principle but following the principles in 5 AAC 39.222 Policy for the Management of Sustainable Salmon Fisheries is complicated and quite often ignored.

Like many Alaskans I have eaten, fished, and processed salmon most of my life, even before arriving in Alaska fifty-five years ago. I have subsistence, sports, personal use and commercially fished. Simultaneously, I have worked for almost 40 years on fisheries policy and advocacy, learning from countless elders – Athabascan, Tlingit, Haida, Inupiat, Yupik, Tsimshian, Alutiiq, Aleut – who understood from millennia of practice what salmon truly mean and how they should be treated.

Now, like thousands of others, I am enmeshed in wild salmon policy and practices within the vast Yukon and Kuskokwim river drainages, working with the best salmon scientists in Alaska, Canada and the Pacific North west, who are analyzing massive amounts of data and local and traditional knowledge in efforts to understand salmon size and volume loss in the North Pacific and the entire Pacific West Coast.

We never thought we would be in the predicament that our wild salmon might not be sustainable. We can no longer assume that the bounty of wild salmon that existed throughout millennia is going to survive into the future. The immense loss that is occurring in the AYK is a reflection of what has happened in other parts of the world and a harbinger of what will happen in the rest of Alaska. Our Yukon River Canadian counterparts have been standing down on most salmon harvest for over twenty years and clearly warning us – “your time is coming.”

They were right. That warning should be loud and clear all over the state of Alaska.

I remember teeming fish camps and fishwheels dominating my view on the Yukon River fifty years ago. It was glorious and we thought it would last forever. Fish camps were once everywhere on the rivers and coasts of Alaska as people followed the rhythm of seasonal migrations. Fish camps were the learning centers for the young, where elders taught skills, history, culture, resource management. The family worked together and reinforced inter-generational inter-dependency. They built nets or fishwheels in accordance with the geography and they took only what they needed for subsistence and trade. This scenario was repeated in whole coastal fishing communities as well, where families worked to fish multi-species, living a life that provided health, sustenance, education and work, as well as protection of the species. With the coming of bigger boats, commercialization and fishing quotas, family fish camps and fishing communities started disappearing until now they are a tiny fraction of what they once were. The loss of fish camps is one of the greatest tragedies to befall Alaska culture, education and resource protection.

The loss of fish camps and culture has direct links to the greater world of fisheries management. Salmon stewardship has been continuously compromised by fractionalized management schematics. We too often treat wild salmon as a commodity instead of a resource that demands our “gravel to gravel” coordination between multiple agencies and user groups.

“The gravel is home, where life begins and ends. Set in motion at birth, the fate of Pacific salmon fulfills like clockwork: each year a new generation returns from sea to spawn where their ancestors’ lives began. Females grind their tails into the gravel, hoping their nests, and the eggs within, will withstand the scour of ice and spring floods. Many do — this gravel is home, where life begins and ends. As baby salmon grow up and move, migrating out to sea, the sediment too is kicked and swept up, traveling with them. But the river’s constant movement across the floodplain is a renewing force. Over the ages, the riverbed replenishes with gravel, offering the salmon who return a healthy place to continue their cyclical lifeways.”² In the spring of 2023, The Department of the Interior announced the Gravel to Gravel Initiative³ — coordinated through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Bureau of Land Management — to partner with Tribes, Indigenous leaders, other agencies, and communities to enhance the resilience of the region’s ecosystems and communities through transformational federal, philanthropic, and other investments. The initiative is in response to the climate crisis and will develop projects to future-proof salmon habitat and surrounding ecosystems.⁴

Our individual assumptions about wild salmon is what directs each of us. The realization that we need to treat salmon dramatically different than we have in the past puts us at a “tipping point” for wild salmon stocks. Do we want to save our wild salmon or just pretend it is all climate change and we can’t do anything about it?

We have to make some very hard decisions, collectively. None of the following is new to us but a reminder of some of the tools we can use to help mitigate factors that are human-caused.

- Get the feds and the state talking to each other rather than fighting over jurisdiction
- Increase local co-management and community based monitoring.
- Strengthen our coalitions
- Demand increased dialogues and public hearings on the state of our salmon in relation to our laws and policies

- Create a wholistic examination and assessment of our fisheries management – both state and federal –such as reductions in fleet (intercept), reductions in bycatch and reductions in hatchery production.
- Increase our knowledge base through research and the use of local and traditional knowledge
- Increase our monitoring and reporting systems
- Increase our education and communications
- Strengthen our commitment to wild salmon sustainability

Alaska’s salmon world has a cast of hundreds of thousands, from harvesting sectors (subsistence, personal use, sports and commercial), to research, regulations and management. The salmon management world may often be rife with controversy and disagreement because of resource sharing, compromise with development, but there are also coalitions and practices that work. There are a lot of knowledgeable, hard-working people out there. The challenge is in what we individually and collectively believe and how we act with the knowledge we have.

The more we challenge each other and build capacity of knowledge, the greater chance we have in protecting our vital salmon resources, and, indeed, whole ecosystems. We are, after all, all inter-connected and we must share in the responsibility of protecting one of our most valuable resources – wild salmon.

Gale K. Vick is a fisheries policy advisor and researcher in Fairbanks, Alaska. She is currently the Chair of the Fairbanks Fish and Game Fisheries Sub-committee and has served on multiple fisheries advisory and research boards and committees since 1991.

References

- 1 *“Pink salmon are thriving in warmer waters, affecting other species, scientists say”* By **Angela Denning**, **CoastAlaska** November 3, 2023
- 2 <https://www.fws.gov/page/gravel-to-gravel-keystone-initiative>
- 3 <https://www.fws.gov/page/gravel-to-gravel-keystone-initiative>
- 4 “The Struggle to Save Pacific Salmon After decades of work to counter the negative impacts of human-activities on salmon, climate change presents new challenges” Updates from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Aug 3, 2023 <https://medium.com/usfws/the-struggle-to-save-pacific-salmon-15053fb2bbc8>

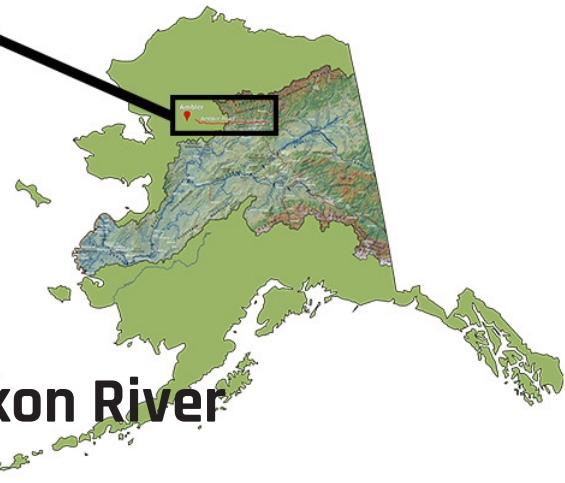
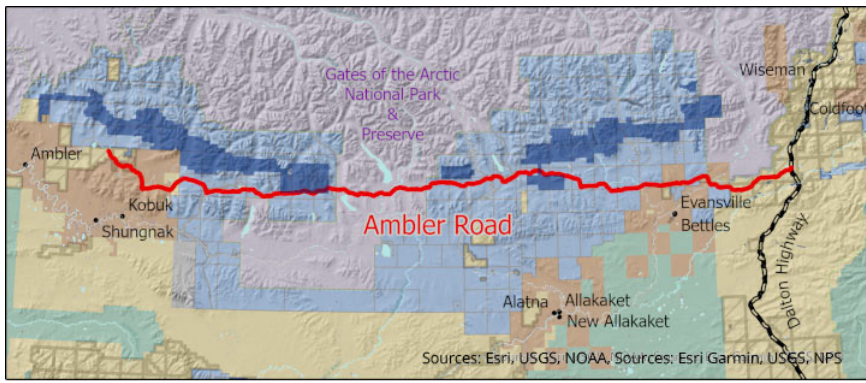
SAVE THE DATE

Yukon River Symposium

February 14-15, 2024

Virtual, for more information please keep updated on our website and YRDFA Facebook page

Hosted by Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association



Proposed Ambler Road and the Yukon River

Gabe Canfield, YRDFA Policy Coordinator

The proposed Ambler Road construction project, a 211-mile proposed road that would lead to the proposed Ambler Mine in northwest Alaska, is a project that crosses tributaries of the Yukon River. This proposed project is in a regulatory phase of public comment called a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) that will lead into a final decision of Right-Of-Way, allowing for the construction and length of use of the road. As similar roads have been constructed throughout the Yukon River Drainage and tributaries, such as the Dalton highway (of which Ambler Road will extend from), predicted impacts written in the Environmental Impact Statement reflect similar results to this related case. Many of these environmental impacts relate to the Yukon River and the results it will have in being constructed over and nearby the drainage.

The Ambler road construction will impact fish habitat in both direct and indirect ways. Some direct impacts include stream culverts, bridge construction, and water sedimentation altering. Stream culverts could ideally be safe for fish, especially juvenile fish such as migrating salmon, but over the lifetime of the road could be susceptible to sediment piling up and blocking off fish rearing habitat. Bridge construction will occur over larger sections of tributaries such as the Koyukuk and Kobuk River main stems. Water sedimentation alteration is likely as local minerals and gravel will be used and may wash off during periods of weather including freeze and thaw events and places of stream culverts.

Indirect impacts include heavy metal contamination, risk of spills, and acid mine drainage, among other indirect impacts. All of these indirect impacts can have minor to fatal impacts on fish and wildlife within the Yukon River Drainage depending on the severity of the case. Heavy metals coming from ore on trucks and equipment can leach into the environment up to 5 kilometers on either side of the road, which then can contaminate fish and the entire food chain. Risk of spills and acid mine drainage can cause impacts to chum and chinook salmon, especially juveniles, and cause mass mortality events in cases of extreme spills.

The proposed Ambler Road will look like a long-term heavily invested project that will need continued upkeep. In action, the road will entail 200+ miles of gravel road closed to the public, 168 truck trips per day, with a 50 year lifespan. It will bisect the Gates of the Arctic National Preserve, cross 11 major rivers including the Alatna, Koyukuk, and Kobuk among others, and have 3,000+ culverts and stream crossings. These are some potential impacts and changes that may be brought to the Yukon River Drainage in the lifespan of the project, from construction to closing of the road. Although these impacts may vary widely from community to community and be different in different sections of the Yukon River Drainage, it is important to note all the possibilities for future decision-making and taking the project into future consideration.





YRDF Founders Richard Burnham retires

Violet Burnham

When YRDF was organized long ago, they were tasked with uniting the people of the Yukon River and working together to share and protect the resources that we all relied on. The salmon. If you can imagine how difficult it is to unite just one community, imagine having to unite all the communities along the river all the way into Canada. Across jurisdictional, cultural, various economic and international boundaries... It was a daunting task, but YRDF did it! Through education and putting aside personal gains, local governmental politics and coming together to find a common goal. After years of negotiating, compromise, intense collaboration across international, State/Federal lines that eventually lead to the Canadian and Yukon River Panel's passage of the historic US/Canadian Salmon Treaty. What an accomplishment!!

Richard attributes his interest in fisheries to his sister-in-law Maylene, who had been serving on the Middle Yukon Fishery Advisory Committee and asked him to fill in for one meeting. When he voiced his lack of experience, She told him to talk from what he knew, about what it takes to live here in Kaltag, why it's important to protect our resources, and what he must do to provide for his family. From that time forward, Richard did what he could to protect our valuable resources not just for the day but for the future as well.

Richard made a great representative for YRDF because he was able to look at issues from an impartial perspective and made decisions based on scientific data at that time, what he experienced personally, and what kind of impact would it have on our way of life. He put great thought into his responses and brought back information to our community and helped to have us all to begin to think of conservation to continue our way of life. In 1997 we experienced our first glimpse of what was to come with the collapse of the summer chum and never imagined that our most prized chinook would even be impacted.

Richard was overcome with emotion when he received the wood laser plaque from YRDF. It represents the amount of work that went into serving the people not just from Kaltag but many others along the great Yukon River and its tributaries up into Canada, the people that he met, made friends with and worked with. Most importantly the work that went into helping to protect the valuable resources provided by the River, the salmon.

TEAM DIRECTORY

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: **Serena Alstrom Fitka**
Cell: 907-799-4336 | Email: serena@yukonsalmon.org

ANTHROPOLOGIST: **Catherine Moncrieff**
Cell: 907-382-8990 | Email: catherine@yukonsalmon.org

FINANCE MANAGER: **Richell Carmichael**
Cell: 907-982-7120 | Email: richell@yukonsalmon.org

POLICY COORDINATOR: **Gabe Canfield**
Cell: 907-617-7280 | Email: gabe@yukonsalmon.org

PROJECT MANAGER: **Rachael Kangas-Madros**
Email: rachael@yukonsalmon.org

COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR: **Mike McIntyre**
Email: mike@yukonsalmon.org

ENVIRONMENT SPECIALIST: **James Van Lanen**
Email: james@yukonsalmon.org

PROGRAM MANAGER: **Vacant**
Email:

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

DISTRICT	NAME	COMMUNITY
Coastal, Seat 1	Lester Wilde	Hooper Bay
Y-1, Seat 1	Stanley Pete	Nunam Iqua
Y-1, Seat 2	John Strongheart	Alakanuk
Y-1, Seat 3	Paul Andrews	Emmonak
Y-2, Seat 1	Bill Alstrom	St. Marys
Y-2, Seat 2	Mike Peters	Marshall
Y-2, Seat 3	Stanislaus Sheppard	Mtn. Village
Y-3, Seat. 1	Alfred Demientieff Jr.	Holy Cross
Y-4, Seat 1	Fred Huntington, Sr.	Galena
Y-4, Seat 2	Robert Walker	Anvik
Y-5, Seat 1	Charlie Wright	Tanana
Y-5, Seat 2	Brooke Woods	Rampart
Y-6, Seat 1	Dorothy Shockley	Manley Hot Springs
Y-6, Seat 2	Victor Lord	Nenana
Koyukuk River	Darrell Vent	Huslia
Flats, Seat 1	Jan Woodruff	Eagle
Canadian, Seat 1	James MacDonald	Whitehorse, YT

YOUNG FISHERS REPS

DISTRICT	NAME	COMMUNITY
Lower River	Kerri Kelly	Pilot Station
Upper River	Katlyn Zuray	Fairbanks (Tanana)

ALTERNATES

DISTR./SEAT #	REPRESENTATIVE	COMMUNITY
Coastal, Alt. 1	Richard Tuluk	Chevak
Coastal, Alt. 2	Clifford Kaganak Sr.	-
Y-1, Alt 1	Marvin Okitkun	Kotlik
Y-1, Alt. 2	VACANT	-
Y-2, Alt. 1	Rex Nick	Pilot Station
Y-2, Alt. 2	William Riley Jr.	Pitka's Point
Y-3, Alt. 1	Basil Larson	Russian Mission
Y-4, Alt. 1	Tommy Krista	Nulato
Y-4, Alt. 2	VACANT	-
Y5, Alt. 1	VACANT	-
Y-6, Alt. 1	Phillip Titus	Minto
Y-6, Alt. 2	Kathleen Demientieff	Nenana
Koyukuk Alt.1	Darrel Vent Sr.	Huslia
Flats, Alt. 1	Rochelle Adams	Fort Yukon/Beaver
Canadian, Alt 1	Carl Sidney	Teslin, YT

Yes!

I want to be a part of the United Voice on the Yukon River and support YRDFA!

Individual Membership:

- \$50 newsletter subscription
 \$75 newsletter subscription with beanie
 \$100 newsletter subscription with hoodie
 Other amount \$ _____

Agency/Business Donor:

- \$5000 Chinook \$1000 Chum \$500 Coho \$200 Pink
 Includes advertising on website, Facebook, and during public gatherings.

Payment Method:

(Online donations can be submitted at <https://yukonsalmon.org/support/>)

- Check # _____ enclosed (payable to **YRDFA**)
 Card (Circle one): VISA Mastercard Discover AMEX

Card #: _____

Exp. Date: _____ CVV: _____

Name on Card: _____

Signature: _____

Name: _____

Company/Organization/Fishing District: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Mail completed slip & donation to:

YRDFA
PO Box 2618
Valdez, AK 99686

Phone:

1-877-999-8566

Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA) is a 501(c)3 organization. Donations are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Cut & mail ✂



Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association
PO Box 2618 • Valdez, AK 99686

PRSR STD
U.S. Postage
PAID
Anchorage, AK
Permit #643

Protecting and promoting all healthy wild fisheries and cultures along the Yukon River drainage

Yukon River Drainage



Fisheries Association