

YUKON FISHERIES NEWS

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A Publication of the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association

FALL 2005



**YUKON RIVER
DRAINAGE
FISHERIES ASSOCIATION**

*A United Voice
for Downriver and
Upriver Fishers*



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YRDFA reserves the right to include or omit any submissions to the Yukon Fisheries News. The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the author and may not necessarily reflect the views of YRDFA.

MIXING ZONES

BY BECCA ROBBINS, POLICY COORDINATOR, YRDFA

The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) recently proposed regulation changes which would allow “mixing zones” in salmon spawning areas in Alaska. A mixing zone is essentially an area in which a discharger of waste is allowed to release chemicals into the water in higher amounts than allowed under state and federal water quality standards. Under current Alaska law, while mixing zones are allowed in other places, they are not allowed in salmon spawning areas. This prohibition is in place precisely because increased levels of pollution in or near salmon spawning areas present a danger to fish and human health.

What is a Mixing Zone?

Water quality standards are set by the federal Clean Water Act at levels which will protect fish life and human health. Mixing zones are essentially a loophole in these standards, resting on the long abandoned notion that “dilution is the solution to pollution.” In fact, mixing zones allow a concentrated area around where the waste is discharged to have higher levels of pollution than the Clean Water Act would otherwise allow.

A Threat to Salmon

Mixing zones thus pose a threat to salmon, Yukon River fishers who depend on these salmon for income and subsistence, and Yukon River eaters of salmon. We all know that to survive salmon require clean, healthy rivers in which to spawn. Salmon stock populations are limited by the availability of suitable spawning habitat. Since salmon return to spawning beds only once in their lives to spawn, disturbances to spawning habitat can cause immediate and severe impacts on salmon populations.

Mixing zones, however, could allow changes to water quality and temperature that would severely and irreversibly impact salmon populations – water temperature is not even listed as a factor to consider when permitting a mixing zone under the current regulations.

A Threat to Salmon Markets

Mixing zones also threaten commercial salmon markets. Alaska salmon is valuable in the market precisely because of the clean, healthy waters in which our salmon swim. YRDFA and Yukon River fishers have invested significant amounts of time and money in marketing campaigns focused on the wild, healthy status of Alaska’s salmon waters. Allowing mixing zones will severely harm this image, counter these efforts and threaten the marketability of Alaska salmon products.

A Threat to Human Health

Finally, mixing zones threaten human health. Since salmon are ultimately consumed by people, any toxic chemicals present in the fish can accumulate in humans. While water quality standards are intended to take this into account, they are set for levels of consumption far below that of subsistence salmon consumers. Further, mixing zones can allow higher amounts of these toxic chemicals than otherwise allowed. While the mixing zone provisions require that chemicals will not impact human health in this way, the polluter is only required to prove that the chemical won’t cause harm based on the “available evidence.” This means that if no studies have been done that show a chemical does harm it could be allowed. Under these regulations DEC is not required to investigate the mat-

“MIXING ZONES...” CONTINUED ON BACK PAGE

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JILL KLEIN, Executive Director
Phone: 907-272-3141, ext. 102
Email: yrdfa@alaska.com

DARCY KING, Program Manager
Phone: 907-272-3141, ext. 103
Email: darcy-yrdfa@alaska.com

CASEY PEAVY, Administrative Assistant
Phone: 907-272-3141 ext. 101
Email: casey-yrdfa@ak.net

ALICIA DE LA CRUZ, Finance Manager
Phone: 907-272-3141 ext. 104
Email: alicia-yrdfa@ak.net

BECCA ROBBINS, Policy Coordinator
Phone: 907-272-3141 ext. 106
Email: becca-yrdfa@ak.net

CATHERINE MONCRIEFF, Anthropologist
Phone: 1-877-933-1340
Email: catherine-yrdfa@alaska.com

MIKE MCDOUGALL, Fishery Biologist
Phone: 907-479-3658
Email: yrdfa@mosquitonet.com

KRISTIN MULL, Fishery Biologist
Email: kristin-yrdfa@ak.net

RICH CAPITAN, Education Outreach Coordinator
Phone: 907-272-3141 ext. 105
Email: rich-yrdfa@ak.net

YUKON FISHERIES NEWS is published by
The Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association
725 Christensen Drive, Suite 3-B
Anchorage, AK 99501
Phone: (907) 272-3141 / Fax: (907) 272-3142
TOLL-FREE 1-877-99-YUKON (98566)
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**** sponsored by Pilot Station Inc.

2005 YUKON FALL CHUM RUN PHENOMENAL

BY FRED BUE, FALL SEASON AREA MANAGER, ADF&G

Even though harvests are still being added up and data is continuing to be carefully reviewed, most fishermen along the Yukon River agree that the 2005 fall chum salmon return was among the strongest in memory. The preliminary total run size is estimated to be approximately 2 million fish and represents the largest run since 1975.

As if the large run was not remarkable enough, the 2005 return was the product of the 2000 and 2001 parent years, which had some of the lowest fall chum salmon escapements during that same 30-year time period. Escapements of 200,000 to 300,000 salmon produced this year's run of 2 million. Typically, a normal production rate for a healthy fall chum stock is considered to be between 2 and 3 returns per spawner. In comparison, the 2005 return was the result of extraordinary production rates of roughly 8 returns per spawner, well beyond expectations.

Fishermen throughout the drainage enjoyed the benefits of the strong fall chum run. The 2005 preseason outlook was optimistic that the health of the stock would continue to improve. The increased subsistence fishing time provided during the summer season beyond the regulatory schedule was continued into the start of the fall season. At the time, commercial fishing opportunity was anticipated, however fall chum markets were expected to be weak.

As the fall chum run developed beyond expectations, subsistence fishing was further liberalized and commercial salmon buyers scrambled to secure market outlets to deliver their product. Managers worked closely with salmon buyers to maximize their processing capacity while the salmon buyers worked closely with fishermen, emphasizing careful handling of the salmon to improve the quality of the fish delivered to the dock. The estimated total fall chum harvest taken for subsistence is incomplete at this time, but is expected to be below average because

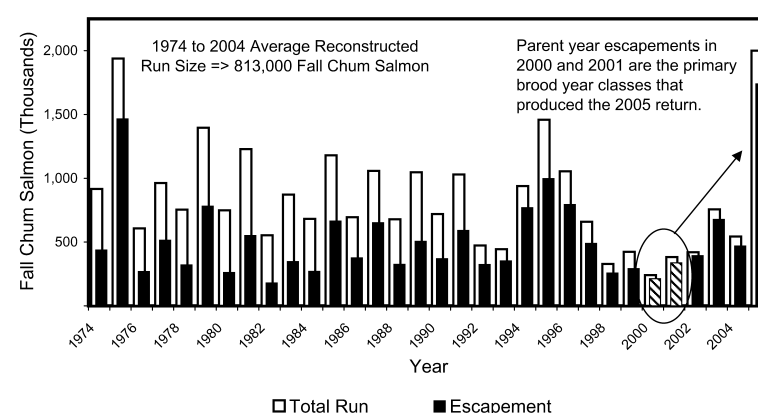
of the decline in effort in recent years as a result of several poor salmon runs changing fishing use patterns. The commercial harvest of approximately 180,000 fall chum is well below historical levels, but is the largest since 1996.

Overall, the 2005 fall chum run reinvigorated fishermen throughout the Yukon River drainage.

Production rates have been improving since 2003 with escapement goals on the spawning grounds being attained or exceeded.

This gives us confidence in strong runs to come in the future. Subsistence fishermen were well rewarded for their efforts with abundant catches and commercial fishermen

Yukon River Fall Chum Salmon



took advantage of the opportunity to positively reacquaint the marketplace with fall chum salmon by delivering a high quality product. Record runs do not come along every year, but when they do occur, they are very much appreciated. 🐟

YRDFA BOARD MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

RICHARD BURNHAM



Richard Burnham, president of the Kaltag Fishermen's Association, advisor to the Yukon River

Panel and YRDFA up-river co-chair, calls the community of Kaltag home. He has lived there for the past thirty one years with his wife, four children and two foster children. When asked why he has stayed in Kaltag for so long and what he enjoys about living there, he puts it simply, "People always ask that question, and whenever you take them 5 minutes out of town in a boat or on a snow machine – they see the answer and the gorgeous scenery." Change is constant on the River and with refer-

ence to change in Kaltag he said, "Thirty one years ago, it used to be that there was one phone and that was a radio telephone that everyone shared – now we have internet and four flights a day in and out!"

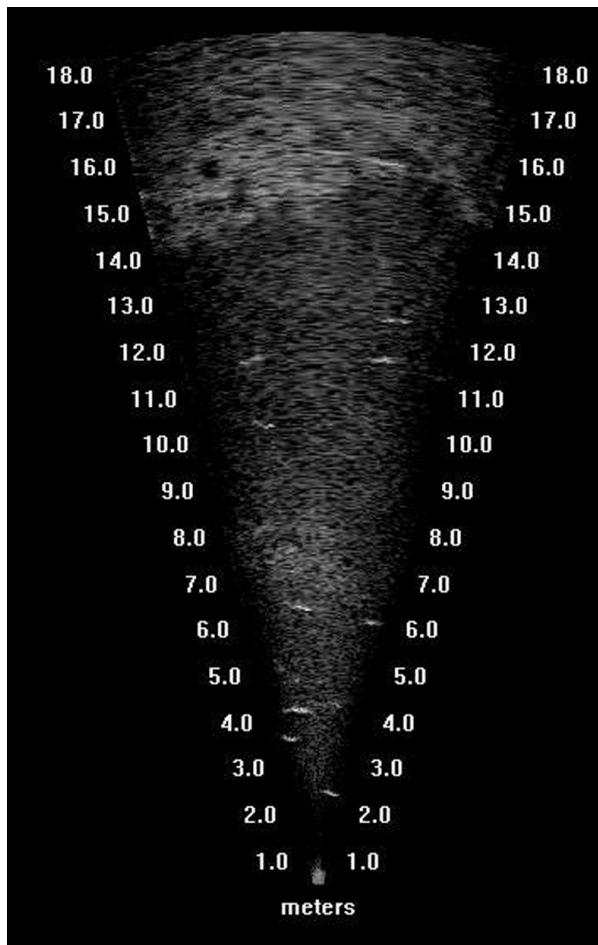
He has been with YRDFA since its inception and was in attendance for the historic 1990 gathering in Galena. Regarding the benefits of YRDFA, Richard said, "YRDFA represents people's wants and the needs of fishers and also solves problems between user groups." When considering YRDFA's future, he said, "Management ensures salmon runs so that they will be high enough so everyone's needs are fulfilled. If the fish aren't there, we've failed..." 🐟

LOWER YUKON RIVER ASSESSMENT PROJECTS IN 2005

BY STEVE HAYES, SUMMER SEASON AREA MANAGER, ADF&G

Emmonak test fishing indices, subsistence harvest reports, and Pilot Station sonar passage estimates provide information the Alaska Department of Fish & Game (the department) uses to assess the salmon runs inseason. As the runs progress upriver, other projects provided additional run assessment information. Because the 2005 king run was expected to be driven by the 5-year-olds from the poor run of 2000 and 6-year-olds from the poor run of 1999, the department developed a conservative preseason management strategy with a potential commercial harvest ranging from 20,000 - 60,000 king salmon.

Early in the run it appeared that the king run was weaker than expected based on set gillnet test fishing catch per unit effort (CPUE) and preliminary Pilot Station sonar estimates. However, significant high water lowered the efficiency of the test nets and erosion of the left bank at the Pilot Station sonar site caused the sonar to miss fish. Sonar staff identified the problem on the left bank and used a new DIDSON sonar to estimate fish passage near the left bank. The results of these efforts were managers determining that there was enough king salmon for escapement, subsistence and a surplus for commercial harvest and good estimates of fish passage the rest of the summer.



Fish passing through DIDSON sonar on left bank at Pilot Station, June 22, 2005.

In order to better assess king salmon abundance in the lower river, the department is planning on addressing these problems at both projects in 2006.

Lower River Test Gillnets

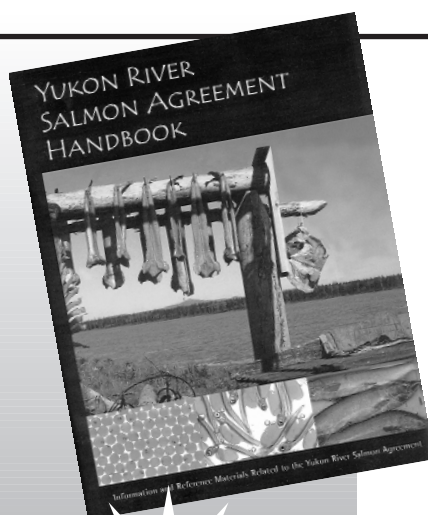
For 2006, the department is planning to continue the existing test net sites. In addition, we will be deploying additional test nets in new sites to better assess that the nets are fishing properly. All of this will be done in cooperation with local fishers.

Pilot Station Sonar

For 2006, the department is planning on addressing king salmon passage estimates in two ways: first we are going to go into the season planning on using the DIDSON sonar for the nearshore on the left bank as was done in 2005; second we are going to look for a more favorable site about 300 feet down river of the current site.

We are continuing to explore other methods of examining the king salmon estimates produced by the Pilot Station sonar project. We are considering the possibility of operating a mark and recapture project to provide an independent population estimate for comparison. It may also be possible to examine the accuracy of the Pilot Station king estimates by comparison with the passage estimates from the Border sonar project located near Eagle. In addition, we are considering using acoustic or radio tags to examine where king salmon migrate in the channel in the lower river. This will help us to determine whether our assumption of our coverage of the river is sufficient. One of the difficulties we have is overlapping king and chum salmon runs. This makes it difficult to separate counts by species. We are examining our test fishing program and whether our effort with the large mesh nets is appropriate for estimating relative species abundance.

The department would like to thank fishermen for reporting subsistence harvest information and Yukon Delta Fisheries Development Association for funding support of the test fishing project and earlier startup for Pilot Station sonar. ☺



**It's
Here!**

The Yukon River Salmon Agreement Handbook

is complete and now ready for release!

The Handbook has information and reference materials related to the Yukon Salmon Agreement.

To request a copy, please contact YRDFA at:
1-877-99YUKON (9-8566) or 907-272-3141
or visit our website at
www.yukonsalmon.org

FISHERIES TECHNICIANS GRADUATE

BY DARCY KING, PROGRAM MANAGER, YRDFA

The Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA) conducted its third Fisheries Technician Training Program (FTTP) in the upper portion of the Yukon River drainage this past summer. Nine students, selected from a pool of river-wide applicants, participated in a three week-long camp designed to qualify each student as an employable, fisheries technician. Students were flown, driven and boated from their home communities to the remote camp site located 12 miles downriver from the community of Eagle, Alaska.

Fisheries science, camp living and safety were key aspects covered during the training. Approximately 50% of the training was hands-on and 50% classroom instruction. One lead training director, one support staff and 8 guest instructors were scheduled to carry out the training sessions. Sessions included water quality sampling, seining & identifying juvenile fish, calculating stream discharge, operating a GPS, taking scale samples, recognizing fish parasites, trapping aquatic macroinvertebrates, analyzing data, and using science versus experience! While wild fires and smokey conditions kept some guest instructors from making it to the FTTP, all sessions were conducted and each student was trained with the appropriate skill sets. Students also became certified in CPR/First Aid, Boater Safety, Bear Safety and Shotgun Safety. Instructors were also able to take advantage of the camp's close proximity to ADFG's sonar test fishery to introduce students to sonar technology (DIDSON and split-beam). While visiting, students were able to meet a past FTTP graduate currently working on the sonar test fishery.

Mimicking the set-up of a real in-season test fishery camp, the FTTP required students to sleep in tents, assemble a weatherport, construct an outhouse and participate in daily chores. From different regions of the drainage and of different ages, students learned from each other as much as they did from the instructors. The overall objective of the FTTP was to build capacity by providing a pool of Yukon River drainage resi-



dents who are capable of performing technician duties for state, federal, tribal or non-profit organizations conducting fish research or surveys. It will, hopefully, also motivate some students to pursue further education in the fisheries field. Ideally, as these individuals better understand fish and fish issues all along the river, they will be inspired to participate in all aspects of local fish research and management. ☞

Training sessions included identifying juvenile fish, to studying fish habitat; from catching adult fish in a weir to learning how sonar works; from operating radio telemetry gear to using a dissecting microscope; from chainsaw safety to bear safety; from incorporating traditional knowledge to writing a resume.

FTTP 2005 Graduates

Michael Heckman, *Pilot Station*

Mitchell Makaily, *Pilot Station*

Clara Demientieff, *McGrath*

Mike Peters, *Marshall*

Howard Esmailka, *Nulato*

Sabrina Nix, *Eagle*

Ricky Nix, Jr., *Eagle*

Starla Helmer, *Eagle*

Scott Cruikshank, *Eagle*

Update: Of the previous 20 FTTP graduates, six have been hired as seasonal fisheries technicians.

A special thanks to Andy Bassich for letting YRDFA set up camp on his property and for all his additional support.

The Fisheries Technician Training Program for 2005 was funded by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), pursuant to grant number NA04NMF4720276.

THE 16th ANNUAL YRDFA BOARD MEETING

is being held in

RUBY, ALASKA

FEBRUARY 13 – 16, 2006

Please watch the website **www.yukonsalmon.org**
for updates and more information!

If you have questions, please contact YRDFA at:
1-877-99YUKON (9-8566) or 907-272-3141.

YRDFA PUBLISHES NEW REPORT: *Phenotypic Characterization of Chinook Salmon in the Yukon River Subsistence Harvest*

BY CATHERINE MONCRIEFF,
TRADITIONAL ECOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE PROGRAM MANAGER/ANTHROPOLOGIST, YRDFA

YRDFA just released a new report on the phenotypic characterization of Chinook salmon in the Yukon River subsistence harvest. The report is the culmination of research begun in April 2003 when YRDFA hired Alex Coffee to take genetic samples from Chinook salmon caught at Pilot Station through the Alaska Department of Fish & Game test site. The report incorporates information from interviews with fishers in Emmonak, Alakanuk, Holy Cross and Nulato to describe the characteristics of locally described Chinook salmon. The final report was completed this past month and mailed out in wide distribution. All the tribal councils for villages in the Yukon River drainage as well as many fisheries management agencies will be receiving a

copy of the report. Please contact the YRDFA office or visit our website for a copy of this report. Below is the abstract and citation from the report.

Abstract: Subsistence fishers from the villages of the lower and middle Yukon River harvest Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*) that they describe as *whitenose*, *blueback*, and *blackhead* salmon. Moncrieff and Klein (2003) speculated that these fish may represent distinct runs that may include Canadian origin fish. The run and harvest timing of these types of fish are reportedly predictable, which implies they may be different stocks. If these fish can be identified as separate stocks, direct phenotypic identification of fish stocks could prove to be a useful fishery management tool, with implications for studies in fish biology, stock status and trends, and harvest monitoring. This project combined traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) to classify Chinook salmon sampled from a test fishery in the lower Yukon River, with the scientific method of genetic analysis to determine stock of origin. The phenotypes of sampled fish were identified by a technician from



Alex Coffee, project technician.

the village of Marshall on the Yukon River. Using allozyme baseline data, *blackhead* and *whitenose* Chinook salmon phenotypes did not appear to subdivide into large regional groups of US versus Canadian origin stocks. This may be because phenotypic identification of the salmon was not verified by multiple observers or because phenotypes are not strongly correlated with large-scale stock groups. Therefore, the use of these phenotypes does not appear to have an immediate management application for large-scale aggregates. A goal of this project was to learn how Yukon fishers characterize phenotypes of Chinook salmon and to learn through TEK specific information regarding each phenotype including run quality, run timing, spawning, meat quality and local uses. Additional Yukon River Chinook salmon phenotypes identified in this study include: *whitenose*, *blueback*, *blackhead*, *blacknose*, *red king* and *grayback*.

Citation: Moncrieff, C. M., D. W. Wiswar, and P. A. Crane. 2005. Phenotypic Characterization of Chinook Salmon in the Subsistence Harvest. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Subsistence Management, Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program, 2005 Final Report (Study No. 03-015). Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association, Anchorage, Alaska. 🐟



White-nose and blue-back salmon identified by YRDFA staff.

NOTICE - Meeting Dates Extended

The Yukon-Kuskowkim Delta Subsistence Regional Advisory Council meeting originally scheduled to be held on February 23rd and 24th, 2006 in Emmonak **has been extended**.

The Yukon Kuskokwim Delta Subsistence Regional Advisory Council will hold its winter 2006 meeting on February 22-24, 2006 in Emmonak.

For more information, please contact Alex Nick at 907-543-1037.

TARGETED FISHERIES ASSISTANCE PROGRAM: **ALASKA SALMON VESSEL QUALITY UPGRADE PROGRAM (SAVQUP)**

The Department of Commerce, Community & Economic Development (Commerce) finds that many segments of the Alaska salmon harvesting and tender fleet continue to suffer from poor quality infrastructure and capacity on their vessels. Poor quality of salmon, on even a small portion of a region's fleet, has the ability to diminish the quality of product overall and puts the industry in a poor position in the marketplace. This inconsistent quality adds to the overall distressed state of Alaska's salmon economy and must be addressed. Assistance by the Department of Commerce, through the Alaska Salmon Vessel Quality Upgrade Program (SAVQUP) will expedite crucial investments in operations that require quality upgrades.

All Yukon River commercial permit holders may apply.

Improvements funded by this program should directly contribute to increased quality of commercially caught salmon aboard harvesting or tendering vessels.

Projects must occur on the actual vessel.

Potential projects include the following, although project proposals based on other solutions will be accepted for review:

- Projects that upgrade the chilling capability of a harvesting or transporting vessel
- Projects that increase on-board freezing capacity
- Bleeding/handling equipment and improvements

Specific projects may include:

- Freezers, Coolers, Ice machines, chutes, and accessories, Hold insulation and related repairs, Refrigerated sea water systems, Slush bags, Generators or generator upgrades related only for powering quality improvement equipment, Quality handling equipment and/or the fabrication of quality handling equipment such as bleed, chlorine dip, or glaze tanks, Insulated totes for use on the vessel

Projects are intended to take place prior to the 2006 salmon season and must be complete by **June 30, 2006**.

Commerce may provide up to 50 percent of the project's entire cost not to exceed a maximum award of \$25,000. Applicant's must provide at least 50 percent of the funding (match) and are encouraged to provide more. Each vessel is limited to one application.

"SAVQUP..." CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

YUKON RIVER WILD

*The longest wild salmon migration in the world;
uniting cultures and people along the Yukon River*

In April 2005, a majority of the salmon processors on the Yukon River met to form the Yukon River Fisheries Marketing Association ("YRFMA" or "Association"). The purpose of the Association is to assist the river-wide processors in marketing wild Yukon River salmon. Initial funding to spearhead this project was received by Yukon Delta Fishermen's Development Association through a grant from the State of Alaska Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development. Since then, the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA), through the Pacific Salmon Recovery Fund, was able to contribute funds to continue the effort of a regional marketing campaign. Additionally, Bering Sea Fishermen's Association is contributing staff time to the project. YRDFA is responsible for program delivery and administration of the grant, based upon conceptual direction provided by the Marketing Association.

Since the spring of 2005, the following initiatives have been started:

- Agreement on the importance of regional branding efforts – "Yukon River Wild" – and a tag line – "The longest wild salmon migration in the world; uniting cultures and people along the Yukon River;"
- Developing marketing materials, including posters, packaging stickers, and a brochure;
- Developing a website: www.yukonriverwild.org;
- Issuing press releases; and
- Initiating a quality control program for the river's fisheries.

At its recent meeting in October 2005, Association members agreed to continue with these initiatives and provided conceptual direction for a marketing and communications plan for the 2006 season, which is to be developed by YRDFA and its contractors. New initiatives for 2006 include a marketing campaign for Yukon River salmon at the Boston Seafood Show in March to be operated by YRDFA staff and Marketing Association members.

Stay tuned for the new logo of Yukon River Wild to hit the press. For more information, visit www.yukonsalmon.org. 🐟



Ad from Alaska Airlines In-Flight magazine Nov. 2005



ALICIA DE LA CRUZ

Finance Manager

Alicia has been with YRDFA since October 2005. Her accounting experience includes working as the Accounting Manager for Maniilaq Association in Kotzebue, Alaska; Staff Accountant for REM Colorado; and Accounting Technician II for Pueblo Community College in Colorado. Originally from California, Alicia has a B.S. in Accounting from the University of Colorado.

The third of ten children, Alicia was raised in California, and has lived in several different parts of the United States, including Guam, Arkansas, Colorado and Utah. Alicia has a ten year old daughter, Leia, who has been extremely active in the Arts from a young age (ballet, tap, jazz, modern, hip-hop, painting, and clarinet) and is also an avid soccer player. They have been learning to play tennis and golf together. Alicia has been enjoying the outdoors in Northwest Arctic Alaska, trying her hand at boating, camping, ice-fishing, snow-machining, cross-country skiing, and 4-wheeler riding.



CASEY PEAVY

Administrative Assistant

Casey started working for YRDFA in 2005. She has worked for tribal and environmental organizations for over five years. Casey's experience in water quality issues includes her work on the Native American Fish & Wildlife Society's Water Quality and Aquatic Environment Monitoring Project. The position fueled Casey's interest in helping Alaska's people with natural resource management. And once she got a taste of the non-profit world, she was hooked. Casey intends to go back to college soon to finish up her degree in Anthropology, with a minor in Alaska Native Studies.

Born and raised primarily in Anchorage, Casey is of Inupiaq descent, and her roots are in the Native Village of Wainwright. The oldest of five children, she truly enjoyed growing up in Alaska, and is proud to call it her home. Casey has one daughter, Emme, and they both love to read - especially together.



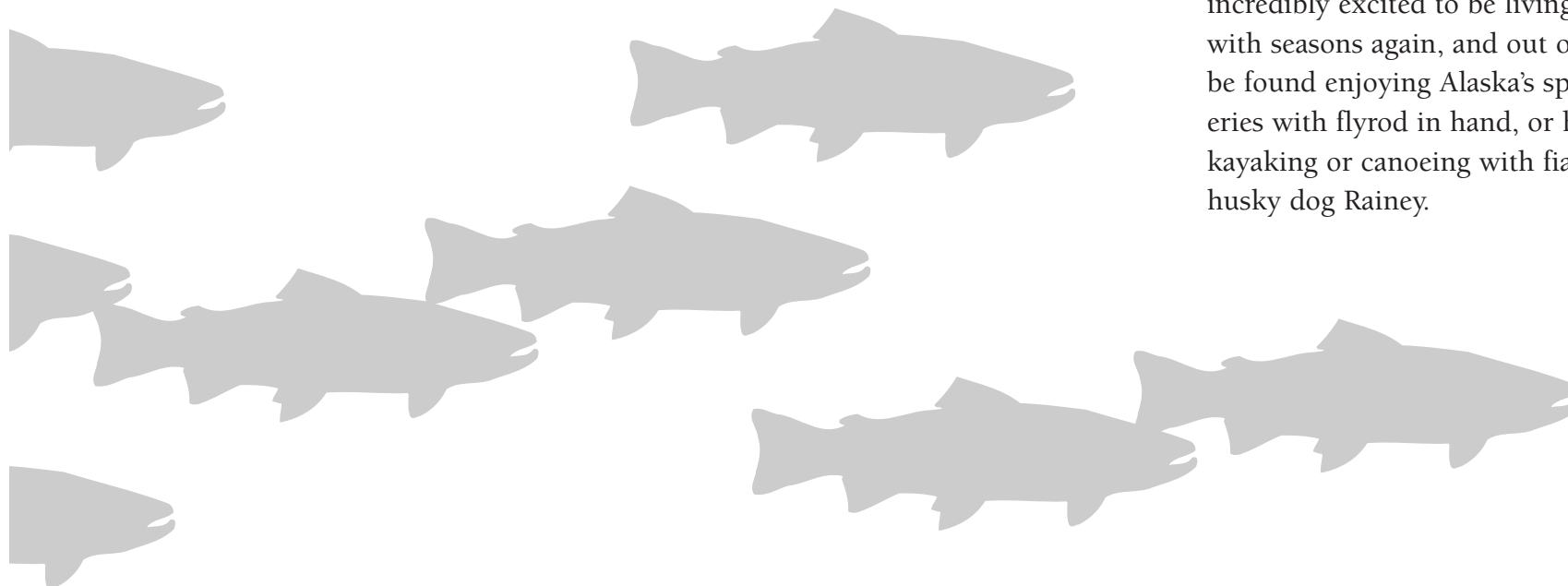
BECCA ROBBINS

Policy Coordinator

Becca joined the YRDFA staff as Policy Coordinator in November, 2005. Prior to joining YRDFA, she worked on Alaska ocean policy and fisheries management issues for Oceana and the Ocean Conservancy. Becca worked with fishing and indigenous communities in Mexico in preparation for the 2002 World Trade Organization Ministerial as part of her work at the International Forum on Globalization (IFG), a San Francisco-based think tank. Becca's articles on fisheries management and community-based fisheries have appeared in the West-Northwest Journal of Environmental Law and the Environmental News Network. She has also written extensively on the impacts of trade and globalization on the environment and indigenous, fishing and farming communities for the IFG.

Becca holds a B.A. in history from Stanford University and a J.D. from the University of California, Hastings College of the Law where she was Executive Editor of the *Hastings International and Comparative Law Review*.

Raised in rural Connecticut, Becca is incredibly excited to be living in a place with seasons again, and out of the office can be found enjoying Alaska's spectacular fisheries with flyrod in hand, or hiking, skiing, kayaking or canoeing with fiancé Kurtis and husky dog Rainey.





KRISTIN MULL
Fishery Biologist

Kristin Mull joined YRDFA as a Fisheries Biologist in 2005. Before joining YRDFA, Kristin researched adult salmon spawning behavior and juvenile salmonid survival and growth as a Graduate Research Assistant at Humboldt State University. Kristin also has expertise in statistical modeling and GIS based analyses. She received a Fulbright Fellowship to teach English in Germany for one year and also served as a Peace Corps volunteer for two years in Zambia, teaching tilapia aquaculture and integration of farming systems to subsistence farmers. Kristin has a B.S. degree in Biological Sciences and German from the University of Notre Dame and an M.S. degree in Fisheries Biology from Humboldt State University.

Kristin was raised in Snohomish, Washington, a small town named for the river that flows through it. Growing up she enjoyed getting out to the river and surrounding mountains, experiences that inspired her interest in fisheries and natural resource work. She moved to Fairbanks with her husband in 2005, and they enjoy learning about the land and the people of Alaska, backpacking, cross-country skiing, and looking out for “the lights”.



RICH CAPITAN
Educational Outreach Coordinator

Rich came to Alaska from Michigan as a Student Conservation Association volunteer to work on a salmon weir in 1993. Having been bitten by the “Alaska bug”, he returned every summer to assist with moose browse surveys, lynx tagging/recapture, songbird monitoring and banding, wolf/caribou radio tracking, arctic steppe vegetation surveys, seabird population /productivity, walrus tagging efforts, waterfowl/shorebird surveys, and was a naturalist guide on St. Paul Island. Rich also spent an austral summer assisting with Chinstrap and Gentoo penguin research near the Antarctic Peninsula. He made Alaska home in 1999.

Rich joined YRDFA as Educational Outreach Coordinator in November of 2005. Rich brings extensive education experience to YRDFA: he worked for the Alaska SeaLife Center for 5 years where he created the traveling Outreach Education program, delivering presentations and school programs statewide and piloting curriculum, such as the Marine Explorer’s summer camp and video distance education programs. Originally from Michigan, Rich holds a B.A. in Biology from Olivet College, MI and attended the University of Alaska Southeast in Juneau, Alaska, to pursue a M.A.T degree in Elementary Education.

He is a member of Scared Scriptless; Alaska’s longest running comedy Improv troupe and is married to Dr. Alison Capitan, a veterinarian in Eagle River, Alaska. They enjoy their many animals and Alaskan adventures.

YRITWC PLANS CLASSROOM PROGRAMS

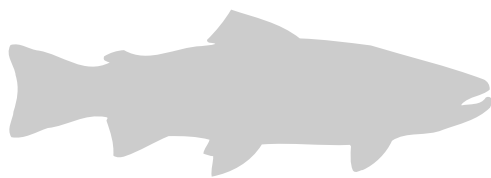
BY DARCIE WARDEN,
FAIRBANKS OPERATIONS
MANAGER/EDUCATION
COORDINATOR, YUKON
RIVER INTER-TRIBAL
WATERSHED COUNCIL

The Yukon River watershed is approximately 300,000 square miles beginning in British Columbia, Canada, at Atlin Lake and flows through the state of Alaska to the Bering Sea. This diverse geographic landscape consists of ecosystems such as tundra, boreal forest, and wetlands. Consequently, diverse geography cultivates diverse people. There are approximately 70 villages in the watershed representing Yup’ik, Athabascan, and Tlingit native people.

The Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council (YRITWC) works with 62 communities signed onto an Inter-Tribal Accord agreeing to clean and protect the Yukon River and the tributaries. One of the ways this goal will be achieved is through a strong education program. The YRITWC is working with tribes to develop a water quality monitoring program and solid waste education program. Additionally, the YRITWC is working to get youth involved from remote villages and the road communities to build environmental knowledge and leadership.

The YRITWC would like to bring these programs into the classrooms. Jon Waterhouse, Solid Waste Coordinator; Darcie Warden, Education Coordinator; and La’ona DeWilde, Mapping and Science Research Coordinator are developing materials, trainings, and a schedule to implement education for the upcoming year. They will be able to offer watershed based curriculum that matches up to state teaching standards, provide resources for topics related teaching and present materials with hands on teaching opportunities for water quality monitoring.

If you want to see these programs in your school contact Darcie Warden at 451-2530. Visit the YRITWC website at www.yritwc.com. 🐟



“SAVQUP...”

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Applications will be accepted from January 1, 2006 until May 1, 2006. Project funding is on a first come, first serve basis until funding is no longer available.

This Request for Applications is being issued by:

State of Alaska
Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development (Commerce)
Office of Economic Development
P.O. Box 110804
Juneau, Alaska 99811 (Mailing Address)
333 Willoughby Avenue, 9th Floor
Juneau, Alaska 99801 (Delivery Address)
Attention: Debbie McBride
Phone Number: (907) 465-2023
Fax Number: (907) 465-5085
E-mail:
debbie_mcbride@commerce.state.ak.us



HATCHERIES UPDATE



YUKON RIVER DRAINAGE FISHERIES ASSOCIATION

725 Christensen Drive, Suite 3-B, Anchorage, Alaska 99501
Tel: 907-272-3141 Fax: 907-272-3142

November 18, 2005

Commissioner McKie Campbell
Alaska Department of Fish & Game
PO Box 25526
Juneau, Alaska 99802-5526

Dear Commisioner Campbell:

We are writing on behalf of the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA) in response to the Commissioner's action this past July permitting roe stripping in Valdez. YRDFA represents fishers, processors and subsistence users on the Yukon River, Alaska's longest river.

As you know, Alaska law forbids the "wanton" waste of salmon. AS § 16.05.831. While we understand that the Commissioner has the legal ability to issue exemptions to this law, we feel that your actions in doing so were not warranted in this case. The practice of roe stripping, which is normally forbidden in the state of Alaska, is incredibly wasteful of our valuable salmon resources. Allowing roe stripping sets an undesirable precedent here in Alaska, and sends the wrong message and image to Alaskans and salmon consumers worldwide.

Beyond the image concerns this practice raises, when roe stripping is allowed the roe market may become flooded. The increased supply of roe could cause roe prices to drop. Because a hatchery in Valdez has miscalculated and too many salmon returned, fishers and processors on the Yukon can suddenly find that their roe is worth much less than it should be. In effect, the hatcheries who are allowed to roe strip – many of which were started with substantial funding from the state – could drive the roe prices down for all of Alaska's fishers. State funded hatcheries would thus cause hard-working Alaskan fishers to lose money. This seems contrary to the intentions of the salmon enhancement program, and to common sense.

We understand that hatchery science is imprecise and the number of salmon returning in a given year varies incredibly. However, allowing roe stripping rewards exactly the wrong kind of behavior. If hatcheries are allowed to roe strip in years of excess there is little incentive to keep returning salmon numbers down, rather quite the opposite incentive is created. We propose that rather than issuing exemptions for hatcheries, ADF&G should take a stronger role in regulating hatchery outputs, putting meaningful limits on the number of fish a hatchery can release in a given year and preventing this problem from occurring in the first place. This is not the first time the Commissioner has granted this sort of exemption and at worse there should be a plan in place to utilize these excess fish. They could, for example, be used to produce fertilizer if no distribution channels can be accessed quickly enough to make them available for human consumption.

A beach full of rotting salmon may be unsightly, but the harms to Alaskan fishers and the salmon industry pose a far greater threat than these rotting salmon. We ask that you as Commissioner put preventative measures in place to ensure that the wanton waste of salmon is truly not allowed in these situations.

Sincerely,

Bill Alstrom
Lower River Co-chair

Richard Burnham
Upper River Co-chair

YRDFA sent this letter to the Commissioner of ADF&G in response to the roe stripping that was allowed this past summer.

IN YOUR OWN WORDS...

Mark Twain said it about the weather, and it was a funny way to put a common fact: "Everybody talks about it, but nobody does anything about it." The statement applies equally to the loss of the Yukon River's former chum salmon roe fishery to Southeast fisherman-- except in this case it's not so funny.

Anybody who has fished for more than 10 years will remember the days when the middle Yukon had a valuable roe fishery. Although we fishermen in the Tanana area never had such a lucrative market come to us regularly with arms outstretched, we still had our chance to make some money selling buckets of eggs to processors in the interior while retaining the carcasses for use to feed sled dogs-- all legal, and in my opinion, a conscientious use of the entire fish.

That all changed in what now seems like the blink of an eye, as the State-financed chum hatcheries in Southeast Alaska began to kick in and really produce.

Why, after all, should a processor come all the way out to Kaltag, say, when he could just park a tender near the bay into which the chums come streaming in near the southeast hatcheries and get eggs the easy way. And, Southeast's gain was our loss.

If it were just market forces at work, it would be easier to just be philosophical about it all-- you could say it was just free enterprise. But it wasn't. The hatcheries got and continue to get all manner of financial assistance and breaks from the State. The State spends money to benefit one area at the expense of another.

Perhaps if the State capitol was located in Galena we might have seen a different outcome, but with everybody of Fish and Game and State and economical development consequence located right there in Juneau, (and with the middle Yukon way way out in left field) its easy to see how this kind of cozy cronyism could evolve the way it did.

A way could be found to swing it financially, using the State's (our!) money. A way could be found to get around that troublesome bit about wanton waste if chum salmon carcasses were there--sometimes in huge quantity-- to be stripped.

The other bad thing about this hatchery idea is the gigantic impact on the natural system-- an impact nobody bothered to really ask about until chums began to get scarce on the Yukon, when some fisheries scientists began to question whether there might be a link.

We've gotten as far as a bit of whining but not much further. When there were few chums to be had during the years of scarcity, it hardly seemed like good citizenship to be lobbying for our Yukon River egg fishery back, but now that we've seen that the chum run might be coming back in force (if 2005 was any indicator) we should try and stoke some of that righteous indignation and right this inequity in State spending. YRDFA is our point organization and we should be lobbying forcefully for our egg fishery. It's long overdue. Board people, get it together!

Charlie Cambell, Tanana

“MIXING ZONES...”

continued from page 1

ter themselves, rather DEC is allowed to rely entirely on the polluters data. The regulations also allow polluters to bypass many of the requirements for a mixing zone if a mitigation plan is filed with the Department of Natural Resources. Mitigation plans are supposed to “repair, rehabilitate or restore” the impacted environment. Under the mitigation plan provision, however, a polluter could simply provide a replacement resource, which could even be hatchery fish. Even worse, the regulations merely require that the mitigation plan be filed, not that it be implemented!

Why does the state of Alaska want mixing zones?

Given all these problems, one might wonder why the state of Alaska would even consider allowing mixing zones in salmon spawning areas. DEC proposed similar changes a year ago. The 2004 proposed regulations were met with overwhelming opposition from the public, including YRDFA. DEC insists that they decided the changes were necessary as part of their triennial review process, and cites the City of Valdez as one of only two examples they point to where the mixing zone provisions are necessary. Polluting industries, particularly the mining industry, have lobbied for these changes for years however, and many believe that the mixing zone provisions are an element of the Murkowski administrations pro-mining push. Certainly it seems more than coincidental that these regulations are being proposed just as the Pebble Mine in Iliamna – which needs these sorts of special exemptions to operate in the productive salmon grounds of the headwaters of Bristol Bay – is being developed.

YRDFA opposes mixing zones

YRDFA submitted written comments opposing the mixing zone provisions and gave oral testimony at the public hearing on the subject. YRDFA was joined by salmon fishers from around the state, tribal councils and fishermen’s associations in opposing the proposed regulations. Interestingly enough, at the public hearing – which had statewide participation through a call-in line - not one person testified in support of the regulation!

YRDFA IN THE NEWS

This Letter to the Editor appeared in the Anchorage Daily News in response to a column which pointed out the mining interests behind the mixing zones proposal.

Alan Boraas’s comment “Murkowski Risks Salmon for Gold Mine,” correctly assesses the twisted priorities of the new mixing zone proposal. It’s no news that salmon are a natural resource of incredible economic and cultural import to Alaska. Our communities depend on salmon for sustenance and our commercial fisheries depend on Alaska’s healthy salmon runs for income. On the Yukon River, the commercial salmon harvest provides the only means of income for many of those who live in this remote area, and salmon provides a primary source of food for human and canine residents alike.

The Murkowski administration’s mixing zone proposal would allow pollution in our pristine salmon streams where no discharges are currently allowed. Salmon require clean, healthy rivers in which to spawn. Alaska fishers and processors on the Yukon and throughout the state have invested significant amounts of time and money in marketing campaigns focused on the wild, healthy status of Alaska’s salmon and the waters in which they swim. The mixing zone proposal threatens our salmon populations and the salmon markets Alaskan fishers have so carefully cultivated. The proposal prioritizes out-of-state mining interests over our own state’s salmon resources and our communities livelihoods.

Becca Robbins, Policy Coordinator, Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association

HELP US, SO WE CAN SUPPORT YOU!
BECOME A MEMBER NOW!

Your membership helps support our core purpose, which is to provide a collective voice for the people of the Yukon River to ensure the long-term sustainability of the river and its cultural and economic benefits.

IN 2005 ALONE, YRDFA HAS:

- Conducted 7 research projects dealing with stock monitoring, habitat investigations, local & traditional knowledge and marine by-catch
- Trained 9 fisheries technicians
- Employed 10 local residents as seasonal technicians
- Held 14 in-season teleconference calls to connect local fishermen with management
- Hired over 40 local residents as project assistants
- Brought together 60-80 people river-wide for a fisheries forum to discuss current fisheries issues

ANNUAL DUES:

- ☐ Subsistence Only User (1 year)\$5
- ☐ Subsistence Only User (2 year)\$10
(You receive a YRDFA baseball cap)
- ☐ Commercial Permit Holder or Crew Member (1 year)\$10
(You receive a stainless steel travel mug)
- ☐ Sport User/General Public\$10
- ☐ Commercial Permit Holder or Crew Member (2 year)\$20
(You receive a Barlow pocketknife)
- ☐ Associate/Business/Corporation\$100
(You receive recognition & thanks in the YRDFA newsletter)
- ☐ Lifetime Member\$100
(You receive a mug, a knife, and recognition & thanks in the YRDFA newsletter)

Payable by cash, check or money order to:
Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association

NAME _____ AMOUNT PAID _____

ADDRESS _____ VILLAGE _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____ FISHING DISTRICT _____