

YUKON FISHERIES NEWS

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A Publication of the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association



FALL 2007



YUKON RIVER
DRAINAGE
FISHERIES ASSOCIATION

A United Voice for
Downriver and Upriver
Fishermen.

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YRDLA 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 YRDLA.

ANOTHER RECORD YEAR: CHINOOK SALMON BYCATCH IN THE POLLOCK FISHERY

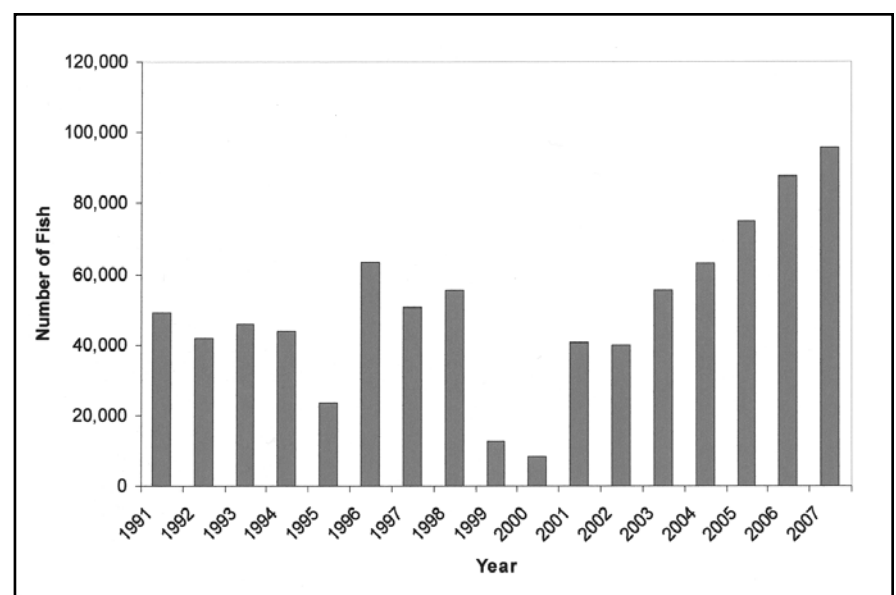
BY BECCA ROBBINS GISCLAIR, YRDLA POLICY COORDINATOR

Chinook salmon bycatch in the pollock fishery is climbing to unprecedented highs again this year. So far in 2007, over 88,000 Chinook salmon have been caught as bycatch by the pollock fleet. Salmon bycatch has increased dramatically in recent years (see graphs). The total for the entire Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands fleet is rapidly approaching 100,000, with over 97,000 Chinook salmon caught as bycatch so far. This bycatch is either thrown back into the water – dead after hours in the nets – or saved for donation to food banks.

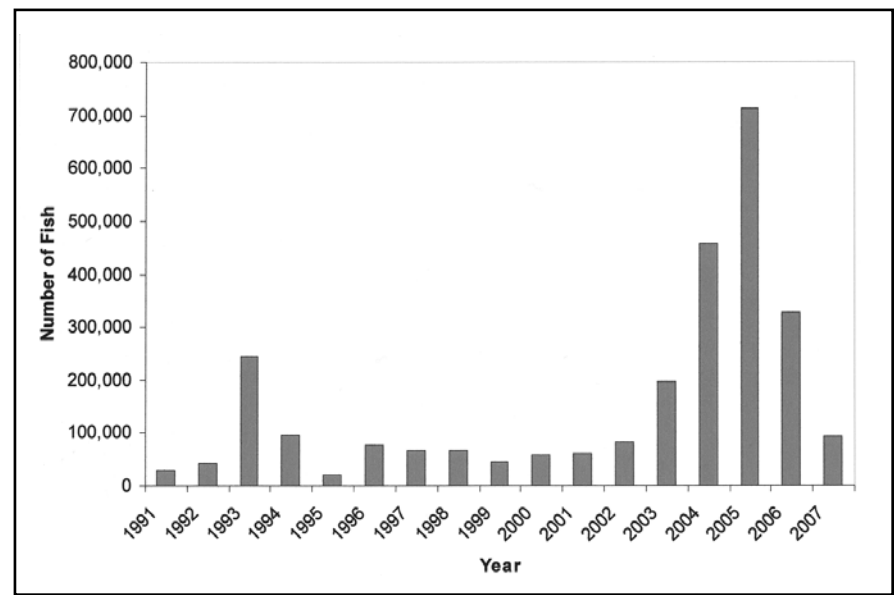
Many of these Chinook salmon are bound for Western Alaska. Studies of bycatch samples from the late 1990s show that over 56% of the Chinook salmon caught as bycatch in the pollock fishery are of Western Alaskan origin, and over 40% of those Western Alaskan Chinook are Yukon River stocks¹. Using the numbers so far from 2007, over 17,000 Chinook which would have returned to the Yukon River were caught by the pollock fishery. To put this in

¹"BYCATCH..." CONTINUED ON BACK PAGE

**BERING SEA/ALEUTIAN ISLANDS
SALMON BYCATCH – GROUND FISH FISHERY¹**
Chinook Salmon Bycatch 1991-2007



Chum Salmon Bycatch 1996-2007



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*YRDLA welcomes our incoming board members. We also thank all board members – incoming, current, and departing – for their guidance, dedication, and the valuable offering of their time.

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* sponsored by Alakanuk Native Corp. ** sponsored by Nerikilikmute Native Corp. *** sponsored by Kotlik Yupik Corp.
 **** sponsored by Pilot Station Inc.

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 and the management of Yukon River salmon.

A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

BY JILL KLEIN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

With the changing of the seasons, it is also time to change our mindset as we get ready to sit together at the table during the many upcoming meetings this winter where



we will review the Yukon River salmon season from this past summer. The salmon did not show up in the numbers we were hoping for, or at the times we expected; due to this some regions of the river had a hard time meeting their subsistence needs. Commercial fisheries were limited in scope in Alaska and even closed in Canada for Chinook salmon due to lower than anticipated run strength and subsequent border passage. Overall questions remain as to how the Yukon River salmon stocks are rebuilding and what further efforts are needed to ensure that enough salmon return to meet the various needs of the Yukon River residents while allowing ample fish onto the spawning grounds to sustain healthy, wild salmon populations.

Other changes taking place include the funding conditions that groups in Western and Interior Alaska, including the State of Alaska and the Federal Government, have relied upon. Most organizations in Alaska rely heavily on government grants for their funds. This is especially true for Alaskan non-profits, which receive 57 percent of their funding through grants; the national average is 35 percent. While Alaska will most likely continue to receive federal funds due to our strength of public – private partnerships that we have built over the years, we need to learn how to generate revenue from other sources such as fee for service, or other philanthropic sources like individual, foundation and corporate giving.

The Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA) has built fruitful partnerships with funding agencies over the years, and it is imperative that we continue

to sustain those relationships in order to continue fostering successful communications along the Yukon River. It is also critical that we cultivate sustained funding to carry out the important work of all the entities working to sustain salmon populations during this time of transitions.

It is the end of one season and the beginning of another and it is always important to say thank you when we end something to begin anew. We have worked with many people and organizations this past summer and over the past years. Without all those who have helped YRDFA to do the work that it does, we would not be able to show the successes we have today and for tomorrow.

Thank you. 🐟

WINTER MEETING CALENDAR



December 3-7, 2007

Yukon River Panel
Anchorage

December 5-11, 2007

North Pacific Fishery Management Council
Anchorage

December 11-12, 2007

Alaska Young Fishermen's Summit II
Anchorage

December 11-13, 2007

Federal Subsistence Board
Anchorage

February 6-12, 2008

North Pacific Fishery Management Council
Seattle

February 25-28, 2008

YRDFA Annual Meeting
Grayling

Join us in Grayling at the

YRDFA 18th Annual Meeting

February 25-28, 2008

YRDFA board members and staff, fishers, agency representatives, and other friends will gather in Grayling, Alaska the week of February 25, 2008 to discuss important fisheries issues. This meeting is open to the public and all interested people are encouraged to contact our office. Some travel assistance may be available.

We hope to see you in February!

Call us at **907.272.3141 ext. 101** or **877.999.8566** (toll free) for details.

ANDREAFSKY RIVER WEIR SCIENCE CAMP

The Andreafsky River Weir science camp has been an annual partnership between the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) and YRDFA since 2002. During those years many kids have attended the camp to learn about fish and fisheries, along with a host of related topics.

The 2007 camp took place from May 28 to June 9, and the following students participated: Danielle Green, Pilot Station; Freida Sergie, Marshall; Shawna Pitka, Marshall; Blaise Long, Mountain Village; Vaughn Agwiak, Mountain Village; Randell Joe, Mountain Village; and Nate Makar, Marshall

Camp activities included juvenile and adult salmon biology, fish identification and adaptations, dissection, in-season management, enumeration techniques, telemetry, water chemistry, aquatic insects, fish printing, first aid, outdoor safety and survival, and kayaking. Community awareness of the camp and interest in it continues to expand each year.

Several partners come together to make the camp a reality each year. The Lower Yukon School District and Yupiit of Andreafsky each contributed staff time to advertise the camp, help evaluate applications and choose students. Alaska Village Council Presidents contributed fuel to support the camp. USFWS takes the lead roll in organizing the camp. YRDFA biologist Mike McDougall has contributed many hours to help evaluate applications and select students, and plan and implement camp activities. This highly successful community outreach and education effort couldn't continue without the work of these groups.

YRDFA's work with the Andreafsky River Weir science camp is funded by a grant from the Yukon River Panel. ☺



Camp participants measure the dissolved oxygen levels of the Andreafsky River.

BOARD OF FISHERIES WORKSESSION

The Alaska Board of Fisheries met on October 9-11, 2007 in Anchorage. At the work-session, the Board considered Agenda Change Requests (ACRs), which allow them to consider topics out of the normal cycle. Five ACRs were considered for the Yukon Region and all five were rejected by the Board, which means they will not be taken up during this year's meetings. The five ACRs considered were:

ACR 3. Fairbanks Advisory Committee - Reduce mesh size for gillnets to preserve the genetic diversity and historical size structure of the Yukon River king salmon.

ACR 4. Jesse Foster - Address Yukon River salmon conservation concerns in reference to U.S./Canada Treaty obligations.

ACR 8. Michael E. Smith - Change designation of Yukon River king salmon from a "yield concern" to a "management concern."

ACR 9. Michael E. Smith - Revise Yukon River king salmon escapement goals to address quality of escapement.

ACR 10. Michael E. Smith - Readdress use of "windows" for subsistence fishery management.

For more information see <http://www.boards.adfg.state.ak.us/fishinfo/index.php> or contact the Board of Fisheries at (907) 465-4110. ☺

FEDERAL SUBSISTENCE BOARD FISHERIES PROPOSALS

The Federal Subsistence Board will meet at the Egan Convention Center in Anchorage December 11-13 to make decisions on fisheries proposals for the 2008/2009 regulatory year (April 1, 2008 to March 31, 2009). The Board will decide upon the following proposals. The full proposals can be viewed in the proposal book at <http://alaska.fws.gov/asm/law.cfm?fp=1> or by contacting the Office of Subsistence Management at 800-478-1456 or 907-786-3888. There will be an opportunity for public comment during the meeting.

FP08-13. Eastern Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council. *Species:* Salmon.
In the Yukon River drainage, all gillnets greater than 6" stretch mesh may not be more than 35 meshes deep.

FP08-14. Eastern Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council. *Species:* Salmon.
Maximum gillnet size for the Yukon River drainage is 7.5 inch stretch mesh for subsistence and commercial salmon fishing in Federal public waters with a three year phase-in period for subsistence fishers and a one-year phase-in period for commercial fishers.

FP08-15. Louden Tribal Council. *Species:* Chinook Salmon.
Allow drift gillnets no more than 150 feet long and no more than 35 meshes deep during entire regulatory opening(s) in Subdistricts 4-B and 4-C.

FP08-16. Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game. *Species:* Chinook Salmon.
Eliminate use of drift gillnets in Subdistricts 4-B and 4-C.

FP08-17. Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association. *Species:* Salmon.
Exempt persons who are age 60 or older and are participating in the fishing activity themselves from the windows fishing schedule. One individual less than age 60 may assist one or more persons, age 60 or older, with their fishing activity. ☺

2007 YRDFA EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGE TRIP

BY LOUISE FREEMAN, TRIP PARTICIPANT

This summer the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association sent four representatives from the lower and middle Yukon River on a 10-day trip to the Yukon Territory to participate in an Educational Exchange Program. In 2006, Canadian representatives traveled to villages on the lower Yukon. This year it was our turn to visit communities in the upper Yukon and Porcupine River drainages to share our knowledge and experience of salmon fisheries and to explore the regional and cultural differences of salmon fisheries in Canada. Trip participants included Joseph Strongheart of Nunam Iqua, Dora Moore from Emmonek, Louise Freeman of Eagle, and Eric Volk from the Department of Fish and Game. YRDFA Educational Outreach Coordinator Jason Hale was our trip leader, with YRDFA Executive Director Jill Klein joining us for the last segment of the trip.

The first thing on our packed itinerary was a visit to a reclaimed tailing site in Dawson to learn about the ways that mining impacts on fish can be mitigated. After over-nighting in Dawson, we flew to Old Crow, a traditional First Nation village north of the Arctic Circle. There we learned about the importance of salmon to the Vuntut Gwitchin culture and spent two days at a fish camp on the Porcupine River. In Whitehorse, we toured the fishway and hatchery and the Icy Waters aquaculture facility. The next day we visited enhancement and restoration projects with Department of Fisheries and Oceans personnel and sat in on the weekly management teleconference. From Whitehorse we flew back to Dawson for the start of a two-day boat trip down the river to Eagle, Alaska. Along the way, the group stopped at the DFO fish-wheel to observe how the fish are caught and counted to calculate escapement figures on the Canadian side. After camping overnight at the Forty-Mile River, the trip ended with a visit to the sonar station downriver from Eagle. Following a salmon barbecue with the seasonal crew, we watched a demonstration of the sonar equipment and learned how they arrive at their escapement figures, which are compared with the Canadian numbers.

From a kaleidoscope of images and information gained on this trip, two things stand out. When we fished alongside our Vuntut Gwitchin hosts on the Porcupine River, we were especially struck by the appearance of the salmon we pulled from the net--so lean that they seemed to have disproportionately large heads, having lost most of their body fat since starting their trip upriver. In contrast, at the cookout YRDFA hosted for the people of Old Crow, a jar of king salmon that Dora had brought all the way from Emmonek drew exclamations from elders at the rich amount of oil in the jar. More than anything else, seeing this contrast brought home to us what truly remarkable creatures salmon are, to be able to complete such a long and arduous journey. They deserve our best efforts to protect their habitat and allow enough escapement to ensure they will continue to return to Canadian waters and spawn, providing food, economic benefit, and cultural significance to the people of both Alaska and the Yukon.

YRDFA's educational exchange is funded by a grant from the Yukon River Panel. The views expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect the views of the Yukon River Panel or any of its subagencies. ♻️



Exchange participant Dora Moore demonstrates how to make Eskimo ice cream at an educational camp outside of Old Crow, YT, while youth look on.



Guide Dennis Frost checks a set net on the Porcupine River near Old Crow, YT, while participants Louise Freeman and Joseph Strongheart show off a king salmon.



(from left to right) Participants Joseph Strongheart, Dora Moore, and Louise Freeman learn about R&E projects from DFO rep Sandy Johnston in Whitehorse, YT.

2007 Preliminary Yukon River Summer Season Summary: *Fast Facts from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game*

This article provides a preliminary summer season summary report for the 2007 Yukon Area Chinook and summer chum salmon fishing season from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG). All harvest and escapement figures for 2007 are preliminary. The Chinook and summer chum salmon season is also referred to as the summer season.

2007 Run and Fishery Summary

Chinook Salmon

The Pilot Station sonar project preliminary cumulative passage estimate from May 31 to August 8 was 125,300 Chinook salmon. The first quarter point, midpoint, and third quarter point were on June 19, June 24, and July 1 respectively.

The total commercial harvest was 33,629 Chinook salmon for the Alaskan portion of the Yukon River drainage. This range of commercial catch for Chinook salmon is 30% below the 10-year (1997–2006) average of 48,254 Chinook salmon.

It appears the 2007 Yukon River Chinook salmon run was approximately 60,000 to 70,000 fish less than projected preseason. It is noteworthy that the Chinook salmon runs in the Kuskokwim and Nushagak rivers were approximately 100,000 fish less than projected preseason in 2007 in each system. In all three of these large river systems, preliminary information indicates that more than one age class was less than expected preseason. The cause of this discrepancy is unknown.

Summer Chum Salmon

The Pilot Station sonar project summer chum cumulative passage estimate through July 18 was 1,726,885 fish. The first quarter point, midpoint, and third quarter point were on June 21, June 27, and July 2 respectively.

The total commercial harvest was 198,201 summer chum salmon for the Yukon River drainage. The summer chum salmon harvest was the tenth lowest since 1967, but 274% above the 1997–2006 average harvest of 53,014 fish.

2007 Subsistence Fishery

Subsistence and personal use harvests for 2007 are not available at this time. However, Subsistence harvest information was reported in-season through a variety of sources including the YRDLFA teleconferences. In the lower river, fishermen reported good catches of Chinook and summer chum salmon, and were meeting their needs, but subsistence fishermen in the middle river reported difficulties in catching Chinook salmon. Because of the difficulty, ADFG allowed 7 days per week, 24 hours per day of subsistence fishing and extended the drift gillnet season to allow an additional seven days of fishing.

.....
IT APPEARS THE 2007 YUKON RIVER CHINOOK SALMON RUN WAS APPROXIMATELY 60,000 TO 70,000 FISH LESS THAN PROJECTED PRESEASON
.....

2007 Commercial Fishing Effort and Exvessel Value

A total of 591 permit holders participated in the Chinook and summer chum salmon fisheries, which was 4% below the 1997–2006 average of 614 permit holders. The Lower Yukon Area (Districts 1-3) and Upper Yukon Area (Districts 4-6) are separate Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission permit areas. A total of 564 permit holders fished in the Lower Yukon Area in 2007, which was 4% below the 1997–2006 average of 585. In the Upper Yukon Area, 27 permit holders fished, which was 16% below the 1997–2006 average of 32.

Yukon River fishermen in Alaska received an estimated \$2.2 million for their Chinook and summer chum salmon harvests in 2007, approximately 28% below the 1997–2006 average of \$3.1 million.

2007 Escapement

Chinook Salmon

All spawning escapement goals were met in Alaska. The Eagle sonar cumulative estimated passage was 41,182 Chinook salmon.

Summer Chum Salmon

Preliminary postseason analysis indicates summer chum escapements were generally good in the East Fork Andreafsky and Anvik rivers, and in the Koyukuk River drainage. The Anvik River sonar-based escapement count of 459,500 summer chum salmon was within the BEG range of 350,000 to 700,000. In 2007, the Anvik River accounted for greater than 27% of the Pilot Station summer chum passage estimate. The estimated escapement of 69,642 summer chum salmon for the East Fork Andreafsky River was within the BEG range of 65,000–135,000. Five tributaries without goals were monitored as well.

Canadian Fisheries

In 2007, based on the projected total U.S. catch of Canadian-origin Chinook salmon in 2007 and the harvest sharing arrangements in the Canada/U.S. Yukon River Salmon Agreement, it was expected that the total border escapement would be at least 45,500 Chinook salmon as measured by the mark–recapture program and the Canadian allowable Chinook harvest would be approximately 12,500 fish. However, there was a shortfall in the run into Canada. The final mark–recapture estimate is 23,000 Chinook salmon. Because of the low run strength, the Canadian commercial and domestic fisheries were not allowed in 2007 for Chinook salmon. The daily catch limit in the recreational fishery was reduced and subsequently closed. No restrictions were placed on the First Nations' fishery, and an estimated 5,000–5,500 Chinook salmon were harvested.

For more detailed information about the 2007 Yukon River Summer Season Summary, contact ADFG for their News Release #61. 🐟

2007 Preliminary Yukon River Fall Season Summary: *Fast Facts from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game*

This article provides a preliminary fall season summary report for the 2007 Yukon Area fall chum salmon fishing season from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG). All harvest and escapement figures for 2007 are preliminary.

Fall Season Overview

The 2007 Yukon River fall chum salmon run was exceptionally late which contributed to a commercial harvest of both fall chum and coho salmon well below the preseason outlook for both species. Post season assessment information collected well after the fishery suggests the overall fall chum salmon run abundance may have been near 1 million fish resulting in surplus escapements.

Commercial Summary

An average of 118 permit holders (113 for the Lower Yukon Area, 5 for the Upper Yukon Area) fished the fall chum and coho salmon fishery during the previous ten fall seasons as compared to 313 fishers who participated in 2007 (303 for the Lower Yukon Area, 10 for the Upper Yukon Area).

The 2007 total commercial harvest for the Yukon River fall season included 90,677 fall chum and 44,575 coho salmon for the Alaskan portion of the drainage. A total of 74,678 fall chum and 43,207 coho salmon were harvested in the Lower Yukon Area and 15,999 fall chum and 1,368 coho salmon were harvested in the Upper Yukon Area. All salmon were sold in the round with no salmon roe sold separately. However, District 6 of the Upper Yukon Area, selectively purchased whole female salmon that were processed for roe extraction during the fall season. The 2007 Yukon Area fall chum salmon commercial harvest was approximately double (102% above) the previous 10-year average (1997-2006) of 44,800 fish and 117% above the 10-year average of 20,600 coho salmon.

The preliminary 2007 commercial fall chum and coho salmon season value for the Yukon Area was \$290,400. The previous 10-year average value for the Yukon Area was \$102,400.

Subsistence Summary

Subsistence and personal use harvests for the 2007 fall season are not available at this time. However, subsistence harvest information was reported in-season through a variety of sources including the YRDFA teleconferences. Initially many fishermen expressed concern for the consequences of a run failure as they anxiously awaited the late fall chum salmon run. Throughout most of river, fishermen reported adequate catches of fall chum and coho salmon with some subsistence fishermen in the middle river and Koyukuk River reporting difficulties in catching their desired amount of fall salmon.

Fall Season Escapement

Fall chum salmon BEG ranges have been established drainage-wide for the Yukon River as well as several major tributary stocks. Three of the five assessed escapement goals were

attained or exceeded in 2007 and the drainage-wide escapement goal was surpassed. The Chandalar River, the upper Yukon Canadian mainstem portion, and the Tanana River all exceeded the upper end of their respective escapement goal ranges. The Sheenjek River escapement was below the established goal range when limiting the passage estimate to only the one side of the river which was the basis for developing the BEG. However, both banks of the river were counted in 2007 with a combined estimate that is within the Sheenjek River escapement goal range. Also, the Fishing Branch weir on the upper Porcupine River reported an end of season total slightly below the interim escapement goal objective for 2007.

For more detailed information about the 2007 Yukon River Fall Season, please contact ADFG. ☘

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YUKON RIVER PANEL MEETING December 3 – 6, 2007 • Anchorage Marriot Hotel

The Panel Co-Chairs invite Panel members, alternates, advisors and the interested public to join the upcoming semi-annual meeting of the Panel in Anchorage. The meetings will be from in the Marriot Anchorage Hotel.

The Panel will consider and deal with a range of work items, including:

- Report on progress since the Panel's meeting last April in Fairbanks. For example, the Panel's participation with the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council to deal with offshore interception of Yukon River salmon stocks; and, update of the Panel's Restoration and Enhancement Program priorities.
- Review the 2007 chum and chinook stock returns, and fisheries throughout the length of the Yukon River in Alaska and Yukon.
- Joint Technical Committee reports on a range of tasks assigned by the Panel to manage and restore Yukon River salmon stocks, such as stock identification and counting techniques and projects.
- Review and make decisions on the 2008 Restoration and Enhancement conceptual proposals in both Alaska and Yukon.
- And other matters that Panel members decide to advance.

The Panel meeting agenda and related details are available from the Panel's Secretariat.

Panel meetings are open to the public. There are scheduled opportunities for public comment. For more information visit www.yukonriverpanel.com.

YRDFA FISHERY TECHNICIANS ARE INSTRUMENTAL IN ADFG FISHERIES PROJECTS

This is a letter sent from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to YRDFA's Executive Director, Jill Klein, regarding the fishery technicians program.

Dear Ms. Klein:

On behalf of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG), I wish to thank the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA) and its technicians for their efforts during the 2007 season. For several years technicians have worked cooperatively with ADFG in an array of fishery projects on the Yukon River. In 2007, these projects included the Lower River Test Fishery; *Ichthyophonus* Sampling; Chinook Salmon Weight and Girth Determination; Chinook Salmon Genetic Stock Identification; and age sex and length (ASL) sampling of subsistence and commercially caught salmon.

Specifically, the technicians assisted in drift and set gillnet test fishing for Chinook and chum salmon; collecting biological data from subsistence, commercial and test fishery catches; collecting genetic tissue samples; collecting heart samples for *Ichthyophonus* testing and assisting with the comparative mesh size study. The information provided by the various assessment and monitoring projects is essential to the management of the Yukon River salmon fisheries.

YRDFA's role in capacity building in Yukon River Drainage communities is commendable. Employing people from these communities facilitates local involvement in fisheries research and management projects and offers an excellent opportunity for local people to gain techni-

cal skills and professional expertise to pursue future employment. This collaboration provides an understanding of ADFG's management efforts in the communities and presents a valuable link of subsistence and commercial fishers, research and management. Along with the ADFG Yukon staff, I thank the following technicians for their hard work during the 2007 field season:

- Richie Nick (Pilot Station): *Ichthyophonus* sampling, Chinook salmon weight and girth determination, comparative mesh size study, Lower Yukon test fishery, and ASL sampling of commercial and subsistence salmon in Districts 1 and 2.
- Noreen Mountain (Nulato), Evelyn Aloysius (Ruby) and Dennis Argall (Nenana): Genetic Stock Identification and ASL sampling of subsistence Chinook salmon in District 4.
- Riba deWilde (Eagle): Eagle Sonar test fishery in District 5d.

We greatly appreciate their contributions. I also wish to thank YRDFA for the continued support of these projects and their dedication in continued capacity building.

Sincerely

John Hilsinger

Director, Division of Commercial Fisheries 🐟

BLM Thanks YRDFA Fish Tech for Work at the Tozitna River Fish Passage Project

Since initiating the Tozitna River Fish Passage Project in 2001, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has sought to provide an opportunity for local students and rural residents to gain experience and skills in the field of fisheries management by assisting with the daily operation of the project. YRDFA has supported that effort since 2005 by providing BLM with a seasonal research assistant.

For the past three years YRDFA has employed Tom Fogg to fill that role. Tom is at home on the Tozitna River, having lived and worked in the vicinity for more than 30

years. Tom is highly dependable, works well with others, and his ability to solve problems and fix equipment has proven very useful. Additionally, Tom shows a real interest in the project, as displayed by his immense dedication.

The Fairbanks District Office fisheries staff is grateful to Tom for his valued efforts on this project, and they would like to extend their most sincere thanks. Staff would also like to thank YRDFA for their continued support of the Tozitna project, which has increased the project's efficiency.

The Tozitna River Fish Passage Project was designed to help address the lack of escapement data available to fisheries managers in the middle Yukon River. The objectives of the project include estimating escapement, run timing, and age-sex-length composition of adult Chinook and summer chum salmon.

YRDFA's fishery technician program is funded by grants from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Office of Subsistence Management, and Yukon River Panel Restoration and Enhancement Fund. 🐟

TALKING WITH THE TECHS...

YRDFA catches up with Yukon River Fishery Technicians, Dennis Argall and Richie Nick



Caption: Fishery technician Richie Nick wrestles a large king salmon onto a tote during evening sampling in Emmonak.

For many years now, YRDFA has hired seasonal fishery technicians (techs) to work with management agencies on summer salmon monitoring projects along the Yukon River. The techs have been a valuable addition to the monitoring projects, often bringing with them a lifetime of fishing experience and dedication to a job well-done.

YRDFA program assistant Casey Peavy, who began managing the tech project in spring 2006, had a chance recently to talk with two of those technicians. Both Dennis Argall of Nenana and Richie Nick of Pilot Station have worked for YRDFA for multiple years as techs. Dennis came to Nenana as a child around 1955 or so and has lived there ever since. Richie was born in Bethel and has lived in Pilot Station most of his life. Many thanks to these two gentlemen for their commitment to their jobs these past years, and for taking the time to check in with us!

YRDFA: How old were you when you started fishing?

Dennis: We tried in 1973 but actually fished in 74, so I was around 25.

Richie: I was about 7 or 8.

YRDFA: What other hobbies do you enjoy?

Dennis: I have to fix things all the time; I don't think it's a hobby, part of the job.

Richie: Basketball, hunting, fishing.

YRDFA: What was it that interested you in becoming a YRDFA tech?

Richie: I was looking for a job and I applied.

YRDFA: How many years now have you been a tech?

Dennis: This was the second year. Before that I was a Fish & Wildlife tech with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

Richie: 3 years now.

YRDFA: Which sites have you worked at?

Dennis: Just the Galena one.

Richie: Pilot Station Sonar and the Emmonak Test Fishery.

YRDFA: Have you met a lot of new people through your tech job?

Dennis: Actually, the same old ones; I just keep seeing them (laughs). I've been on the Galena job since 97.

YRDFA: What's your favorite memory from your summers as a YRDFA tech?

Dennis: Just seeing the fish, the fishermen handling their fish.

Richie: I like working with the sonar here in Pilot Station.

YRDFA: What do you think your biggest challenge has been in your work as a tech?

Dennis: The challenge is I keep getting new bosses every year. I have to get them trained. Those fishery managers keep changing. Steve Hayes is a good guy to work with – been there over 20 years. He's the boss now. No real challenges, it's something you just get out and do.

MANY THANKS TO OUR 2007 SUBSISTENCE ASSISTANTS

Every September and October since 2004, YRDFA has hired subsistence assistants to help the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) with post-season salmon subsistence surveys.

According to Bill Busher, Yukon area fall season assistant management biologist with ADFG, "The assistant program has made great strides in four seasons with 2007 season proceeding rather smoothly. The assistant program is extremely valuable to the ADFG survey program and is highly endorsed by the survey staff to be continued in future years."

Both YRDFA and the 2007 ADFG subsistence survey staff (crewleader Lauren Tuori, and surveyors Diane Okonek and Phyllis Shirron) would like to extend a huge thank you to all the subsistence assistants who worked so hard this year! Special appreciation goes to the assistants who come back to do a fantastic job year after year (we've put an asterisk beside their names)! Thanks go out to:

Marvin Aguchak, Scammon Bay • *Cami Beans, Mt. Village • Dion Benjamin, Shageluk • Janis Carroll, Fort Yukon • Craig Edwards, Beaver • *Blanche Edwin, Tanana • Arlene Farmer, Huslia • *Agnes George, St. Mary's • Diane George, Stevens Village • *Jack George, Marshall • Nicole Gregory, Galena • Melanie Herbert, Fort Yukon • Simeon Housler, Russian Mission • Lawrence James, Birch Creek • Eric Kameroff, Kotlik • Wyoma Knight, Bettles • George T. Moses, Jr., Hooper Bay • *Julia Nick, Pilot Station • *Wayne Nickoli, Kaltag • Linora Night, Hooper Bay • Martha Owlletuck, Nunam Iqua • *Rita Paul, Holy Cross • David Peter, Grayling • Leslie Pitka, Nulato • Eileen (George) Prince, St. Mary's • *Denis Shelden, Alakanuk • *Pollock Simon, Sr., Allakaket • *Carol Thomas, Chalkyitsik • Augusta Westdahl, St. Mary's • Norma Williams, Ruby • Tim Williams, Hughes

YRDFA's subsistence assistant program is funded by a grant from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. ☺

"TALKING WITH THE TECHS..." CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

VOICES FROM THE RIVER

The following is an excerpt from a letter written by Martin B. Moore, Sr., City Manager of Emmonak, to U.S. Senator Daniel Inouye and U.S. Congressman Don Young on August 15, 2007. Like many village officials on the Yukon River, Mr. Moore has been working to find fiscal support for his village during years with limited or nonexistent economic opportunities; in the case of the Emmonak, it is the commercial fishing industry he is trying to support. In the excerpt below, he describes some of the hardships faced by the residents of the Yukon drainage due to loss of commercial fishing income.

The economic losses because of the fishing disaster will mount in future years. Uncertainties in the recovery of fish runs must be considered. Realistically, our community cannot expect to replenish or to replace the lost income from commercial fishing because our

region lacks a substitute emerging economy.

Our community and other Wade Hampton census and commercial fishermen have already experienced heavy losses from HAD BEEN \$104 million commercial fishery income from 1997-1999. The 1998, 1999, 2000, and 2001 devastation brought in the alarming statistic for this only economic base we had for years.

The chum and coho commercial income of \$55 million is completely saturated no longer viable.

The flash freezing fish processors had brought in \$275 million dollars in the past. This economy is now bleak and difficult.

The information from Alaska Department of Labor Statistics 1990-2000 reflects a \$590,000 seasonal unemployment benefits, now is completely deteriorated.

The ripple effect on the municipalities, retail establishments, transportation services, will continue to equate suffering as a result of all these

consequences as severity of the Declaration of Western Alaska Fishery continues.

Our current situation clearly shows that our economy already is cash starved and it is becoming smaller, while our population is growing. This means that communities in the area will suffer severe cash shortages in future years.

Public funds are needed to sustain the livelihood of our residents currently. In addition, training and education funds are needed to place our residents in all local jobs to open opportunity. Long term economic planning is necessary to design the road to recovery.

Our community promotes integrity and pride in its citizens. It strives for economic independence and preserves sensitivity of its traditions. The community recognizes that transfer funds are needed to abate value with development of other work producing industries. 🐟

YRDFA WELCOMES NEW STAFF



Bob DuBey

Bob joined the YRDFA team in the fall of 2007. He is a longtime Alaskan who recently returned after receiving a Ph. D. in Biology from New Mexico State University. In the past, he worked as a fisheries specialist and adjunct assistant professor with the New Mexico Fishery and Wildlife Cooperative Research Unit, researching coldwater native fish communities and fish health issues. He also served as a visiting assistant professor at New Mexico Highlands University and a natural resource specialist with the National Park Service. Bob has also been a guide and a commercial fisherman in the salmon, cod and halibut fisheries in Alaska. His work is currently focused on developing YRDFA's science direction and implementing fisheries research projects.

Bob and his wife Linda live in the valley and enjoy being close to family there. Bob is an avid sports fisherman during the summer and looks forward to cross-country skiing and winter sports. 🐟



Lauren Sill

Lauren joined YRDFA in September of 2007. She will be assisting with administrative tasks as well as developing and maintaining strategies to increase membership. Lauren grew up in Massachusetts, and she has lived in Alaska for seven years, with the past four being in Fairbanks. After receiving her master's degree in Northern Studies from the University of Alaska Fairbanks, she moved to Anchorage. Her background is with coastal communities and marine fisheries issues, but she is excited to learn all about the people and communities of the Yukon River! When she's not working, Lauren enjoys exploring remote parts of the state, camping and hiking with her husband and dogs. 🐟

YRDFA Mourns Passing of William Solomon, Jr.

William Solomon, Jr. of Kaltag passed away on August 25, 2007. He was a good and reliable friend to many and devoted himself to helping the fishing community. William sat at YRDFA's board table with the delegation in Pilot Station and was highly competent as an in-season harvest interviewer for subsistence fisheries. When YRDFA brought a group of Canadian fishermen to Kaltag, William welcomed them with warmth and cross-border camaraderie. The YRDFA staff depended on him to communicate about fisheries issues in his community. His friendship and work are dearly missed. ☹

“TALKING WITH THE TECHS...” continued from page 9

Richie: Maybe when I first started working and learning how to work with the sonar system and with the other techs with Fish & Game.

YRDFA: What skills have you gained?

Dennis: I used the skills I already had.

Richie: Doing the sonar, and the measuring, weighing and sampling [of salmon]. And setting up the sonar system, taking it apart.

YRDFA: What one piece of advice can you offer someone who might be considering getting a job as a fishery technician?

Dennis: You have to coordinate with people ... Don't be afraid to ask questions ... Think about it, if you've got a big family, it's like that. Most people are friendly, they talk to people.

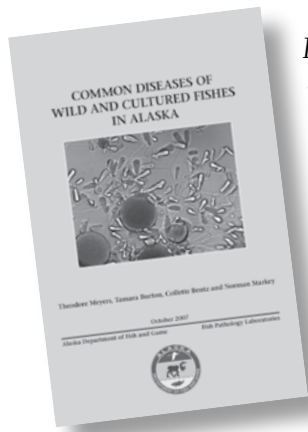
YRDFA: Do you see yourself continuing on as a YRDFA tech? Or in another job in fisheries?

Richie: Yes, I'd like to work again with YRDFA, hopefully in Pilot Station.

Dennis: Well, I'll probably do the tech job again next summer in Galena, after that I don't know. Other than that, I'm getting old... might just go back to fishing.

YRDFA's fishery technician program is funded by grants from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Office of Subsistence Management, and Yukon River Panel Restoration and Enhancement Fund. The views expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect the views of these funding organizations or any of their subagencies. ☹

YRDFA PUBLISHES FISH DISEASE GUIDE



A few years ago, as *Ichthyophonus* became a prevalent topic of discussion, YRDFA staff came up with the idea of creating an informational brochure about the disease to distribute to fishers on the Yukon River.

We envisioned a brochure that would provide facts about identification and implications of the disease for the fish and human health. As the project developed, we recognized that there are a number of other common diseases in Alaskan fish that fishers would be interested in, and in partnership with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) we set to the task of documenting the most common of these – 47 in all.

Now, after well over a year of planning, writing, editing, and designing, YRDFA is proud to release *Common Diseases of Wild and Cultured Fishes in Alaska*. This full color booklet will soon be distributed to villages throughout the Yukon River drainage, both in the U.S. and Canada. ADFG will also issue the booklet to many of its field staff.

This booklet is intended to serve as a brief illustrated guide that lists many of the common parasitic, infectious, and noninfectious diseases of wild and cultured fish encountered in Alaska. The content is directed towards lay users, as well as fish culturists at aquaculture facilities and field biologists. It is not a comprehensive work nor should it be considered a scientific document. Interested users of this guide are directed to the listed fish disease references for additional information.

Information contained within this booklet is published from the laboratory records of the ADFG, Fish Pathology Section that has regulatory oversight of finfish health in the State of Alaska. YRDFA would like to express its most sincere gratitude to Theodore Meyers, Tamara Burton, Collette Bentz, and Norman Starkey with ADFG for writing this document and working with us in all phases of its production.

To receive a copy of *Common Diseases of Wild and Cultured Fishes in Alaska*, contact Jason Hale at jason@yukonsalmon.org, 907-272-3141, or 877-999-8566 (toll free).

YRDFA's work on this fish disease guide is funded by a grant from the Yukon River Panel Restoration and Enhancement Fund. ☹

Yes! I want to support healthy salmon runs for generations to come!

Enclosed is my tax-deductible annual gift of:

- \$5 Subsistence only user
 \$5 Student
 \$10 Commercial permit holder or crew member
 \$25 General public or agency
 \$100 Business
 \$100 Individual Sustainer
 Other: Amount _____

*payable by cash, or check or money order made out to "YRDFA"

Please indicate the ONE fishing district you live and/or fish in:

- Coastal Y-1 Y-2 Y-3 Y-4 Y-5 Y-6 Koyukuk Flats/Y-5d

YRDFA works to:

- Solve problems in fisheries management
- Sustain wild salmon populations
- Keep people informed on current fisheries issues
- Restore salmon habitat and depressed runs

Member name: _____

Address: _____

Village/City: _____

State: _____ Zip code: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail/fax: _____

Today's date: _____

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“BYCATCH...” *continued from front page*

perspective with in-river uses, this number represents 50% of the 2007 Yukon River commercial catch; 34% of the average subsistence catch, and 51% of the lower range of the Canadian escapement goal.

YRDFA has reported on the Voluntary Rolling Hot Spot (VRHS) system, a new system designed by the pollock fleet to reduce salmon bycatch, in past editions of Yukon Fisheries News. While the VRHS system held great promise in theory, in practice the system has not reduced salmon bycatch numbers. In fact, Chinook salmon bycatch has been at record high levels since the system went into place.

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council is currently analyzing back-up and substitute measures for reducing salmon bycatch if the VRHS system is not effective. Through the “Amendment 84B” analysis, the Council is looking at caps that place a numerical limit on salmon bycatch and at new closure areas and triggers. The Council appointed a Salmon Bycatch Workgroup, which consists of Western Alaska and pollock fishery representatives, and the Council is currently revising the options under consideration. The options for hard caps currently include a range of numbers from about 20,000 to 87,500. The Council is also looking at closures of fixed and triggered areas, which would close a set area to pollock fishing to reduce bycatch at certain times of the year or when trigger numbers are met. It is important that the Council analyze these options quickly and implement a measure that will reduce the number of Western and Interior Alaska salmon caught as bycatch.

The Council is scheduled to take initial action on this in June 2008 and final action in December 2008. You can let the Council know how important it is to reduce the number of Western and Interior Alaska salmon caught as bycatch by testifying at a Council meeting or sending written comments to:

North Pacific Fishery Management Council
605 West 4th Avenue, Suite 306
Anchorage, AK 99501-2252

To stay informed about YRDFA's efforts on this issue, contact Becca Robbins Gisclair at the YRDFA office at 877-999-8566 ext.106 or becca@yukonsalmon.org.

YRDFA's work on Bycatch is funded by a grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The views expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect the views of NOAA or any of its subagencies. 🐟

¹Non-CDQ numbers from NMFS AKRO Catch Accounting System (Oct. 9, 2007). CDQ numbers at <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/cdq/daily/cdqctd07.pdf> (Oct. 9, 2007).

²Kate Myers, et. al, *Estimates of the Bycatch of Yukon River Chinook Salmon in*

YRDFA PUBLISHES YUKON RIVER CUSTOMARY TRADE REPORT

“Customary trade of salmon supports a subsistence fishing lifestyle on the Yukon River by providing much-needed cash,” according to the YRDFA report on customary trade. It is part of a social system that distributes resources over time and space.

The Traditional Ecological Knowledge of Customary Trade of Subsistence Harvested Salmon on the Yukon River study took place in Alakanuk, Holy Cross, and Tanana. Active fishers and knowledgeable elders participated in 28 interviews discussing traditional and contemporary customary trade of fish practices.

Customary trade is defined as the exchange of subsistence items for cash. This practice is sometimes referred to as “selling” or “for sale.” It is different from barter, the exchange of subsistence items for goods other than cash, and it is also different from sharing, giving items away with no obligation expected in return.

All three study communities reported conducting customary trade of salmon today. But regional variations exist; the amount of customary trade reported was more common in the upriver villages. In Alakanuk, customary trade was described as opportunistic, only conducted on high harvest years with the exception of a few households who supply those who are unable to fish. In Holy Cross, customary trade was not unusual with 7 out of 8 participants engaging in customary trade. In Tanana, 6 of the 13 participants were active in customary trade, whereas the remaining 7 either did not participate in customary trade or participated at a minimal level.

“Customary trade was not conducted for profit nor is it conducted in isolation from other subsistence activities.”

Throughout the study communities, customary trade of fish was described as a way to earn cash when few other opportunities were available. One participant described it as “pocket change in the winter.” Customary trade was not conducted for profit nor is it conducted in isolation from other subsistence activities. The money earned was used to support a subsistence lifestyle, buying equipment and supplies used in pursuing subsistence activities.

YRDFA would like to thank the 28 participants and the tribal councils and communities of Alakanuk, Holy Cross, and Tanana. Without their support and participation, this study could not have been completed. YRDFA would also like to thank the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Office of Subsistence Management Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program for their guidance and financial support for this study.

This report, published in July 2007, was distributed to participants, tribal councils and agencies. To receive a copy of *Traditional Ecological Knowledge of Customary Trade of Subsistence Harvested Salmon on the Yukon River*, contact the YRDFA office at 907-272-3141 or 877-999-8566 (toll free).

YRDFA's work on Customary Trade is funded by a grant from the Office of Subsistence Management (OSM). The views expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect the views of OSM or any of its subagencies. 🐟