

YUKON FISHERIES NEWS

A Publication of the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association

FALL 2009



YUKON RIVER
DRAINAGE
FISHERIES ASSOCIATION

A United Voice for Yukon River Fishers

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT—AN ALASKAN FISHER'S VIEWS ON CANADIAN FISHERIES

by Debra Deacon, Grayling AK

The fireweed buds were barely showing their charming little faces when I set out for Canada as part of a cultural exchange trip arranged by Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA). The timing was inconvenient since it was the beginning of berry picking season, but I had wanted to find out what was going on with the salmon: Where were they and who or what was making them go away?

After a trip of over 5,000 miles I had part of an answer—the problem wasn't the Canadians and I knew it wasn't us river fishers.

I've fished with my family my whole life along the Yukon River. We are a mere generation away from a nomadic lifestyle following resources. An early memory is of the whole village making the trip through the slough from the Innoko to our fish camps along the Yukon. Amid high excitement, we packed up household items, hardware, children, dog teams, washing machines, or as they were called, scrub boards, and Fels Naptha. It took days and days: I don't remember sleeping.

Once at camp, the nets and fish wheels were set. Summer was never a time of leisure for us. My elders cut fish all day and into the night; cutting fish like our lives depended on it, because that was it, our lives did indeed depend on it. This cold hard fact was a lesson taught over the millennia that we survived here as a people. If we didn't fish and cache away food for winter we'd simply starve. The fish, when they came, tipped the chances of our survival to the good.

What a bitter pill it was then when we were

told to sit along the bank and let the fish swim by. "The Canadians need their escapement," we were told. So we waited and tried to fit our lives into a fishing schedule set down for us by the US Fish and Wildlife service, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and apparently the government of Canada.

It was in this frame of mind that I, and seven others, flew through the smoke to converge on Whitehorse to begin our 8-day journey to areas frequented by the king salmon.

First stop was the dam at Whitehorse, built in 1958 to supply the increasing demand for electricity; it sat as a barrier to the salmon's round-trip to the sea. Shortly after the dam was built a fish ladder was added

...the problem wasn't
the Canadians and
I knew it wasn't us
river fishers.

"FOOD FOR THOUGHT..." continued on page 8



Al von Finster of DFO and Mickey Stickman from Nulato talk fish while boating on Lake Lebarge.

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A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

by Jill Klein, Executive Director

The Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA) was formed 20 years ago because people on the river saw a need to become organized. There were poor salmon returns, low commercial prices and people were arguing. But there was recognition by people along the river that working together was better than going it alone, where each region was fighting to protect their fishing interests.

As a river wide collaboration, YRDFA became the first organization along the Yukon River to tackle the salmon fisheries, together. Working together can save time, pool resources, and weather the bumps. Over the years, working together to promote healthy wild salmon fisheries has been successful yet also really challenging. There are years when some regions do not get their concerns supported; there are other years when people do not get enough fish. Mere words cannot express the difficulties faced in such times, but the sustainability of the salmon and the people who rely on them is of utmost importance. YRDFA works together through the good times and bad times. Unfortunately, we have seen more bad years in recent times.

Let us all step up to the table, sit down and work together with respect.

Getting to an all time low during the 2009 season that led to a first time management decision to close fishing on the first pulse to ensure we delivered enough fish to the spawning grounds was severe. All along the river, people could not fish as they traditionally do and it hurt. In light of the hardship some people did manage to find a way to meet their needs and small bits of success can still be found along the river.

YRDFA wants to support the fishing families along the Yukon River. We want enough fish for all people. It would be devastating to

see the salmon stocks diminish any further after they have survived for so many years. The world is changing, the environment is changing and there are many factors influencing the health of wild salmon. We need to look at this issue holistically and we need to continue to work together to do so. It seems like it is the right time to take this work to the next level, and that is for all of us to work together; not just the individual fishermen at the table, but the State and Federal management agencies,

the Tribal Governments and the organizations that represent them. As a non-government organization, YRDFA promotes healthy wild salmon fisheries. We need the involvement and support of the people on the Yukon River to carry out this work. Let us all step up to the table, sit down and work together with respect. We all want the same goal which is healthy salmon and sustainable communities along the Yukon River. There is no time like the present to try to achieve this. ☘



Yukon River Fisheries Meetings Calendar

DATE	MEETING	LOCATION
Oct. 26-27, 2009	YRDFA Board/Committee Meeting	Anchorage
Oct. 29, 2009	NPFMC Salmon Bycatch Workgroup	Anchorage
Nov. 1-5, 2009	AK Chapter American Fisheries Society	Fairbanks
Nov. 16-19, 2009	Joint Technical Committee	Whitehorse
Nov. 20-22, 2009	Fish Expo	Seattle
Dec. 7-15, 2009	NPFMC	Anchorage
Dec. 7-12, 2009	Yukon River Panel	Whitehorse
Jan. 26-31, 2010	Board of Fish AYK Finfish	Fairbanks
Feb. 8-16, 2010	NPFMC	Portland
Feb. 15-18, 2010	YRDFA Annual Meeting	Nulato
Feb. 23-25, 2010	W. and E. Interior Regional Advisory Councils	Fairbanks
April 6-10, 2010	NPFMC	Anchorage
May 17-21, 2010	Council Coordinating Committee	Anchorage
June 7-15, 2010	NPFMC	Sitka

MARINE DEBRIS CLEAN UP ON THE YUKON RIVER

by Richard Bender, Program Assistant

It was officially the first day of my summer internship with YRDFA. First Alaskans Institute was the sponsor of the internship, and I was meeting with Jill Klein and Lauren Sill from YRDFA for the first time at a BBQ. Just 15 minutes before they arrived someone threw a piece of garbage on the ground and I said:



Hanson Point, near Alakanuk, before the clean up.

“Hey pick that up!” The person did not reply, so as I picked it up I told that person sarcastically: “I better be optimistic about it, I guess littering will provide someone with a job this summer.” I said that partly because it has little fact to it, and the First Alaskans Institute seemed to encourage a positive attitude. Fifteen minutes after this conversation, I met Jill

and Lauren. We introduced ourselves and had a discussion about YRDFA. Then we started talking about possible projects and tasks that I could do as an intern. So they told me I would be working on the teleconference summaries and a marine debris clean up in Kotlik and Alakanuk. The irony of the conversation I had with the “litter bug” and getting a job created because of litter did not dawn on me until half way through my 10 week internship.

When I started my internship, Lauren had

already applied for and received a grant for the marine debris clean up in Alakanuk and Kotlik, and it was by chance that I happened to be from the village of Kotlik.

After getting the proposal approved by the Marine Conservation Alliance Foundation(MCAF), Lauren gave me the responsibility of managing the project. I was new to this type of work, but I was confident that I could plan and follow through on the project.

I started by contacting Wes Jones since he had experience doing the same project with the Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation (NSEDC). He gave logistical information including scheduling, labor, and material purchasing information. Both NSEDC and the tribal organizations were helpful to



Hanson Point after the clean up.

the planning of the project as this was the first marine debris clean up YRDFA conducted.

After getting as much information as I could about the marine debris clean up and doing the initial planning, I started figuring out the direction of the clean up. I made job applications and fliers and sent them out to the tribal organizations to post at their offices. Lauren and I made orders for supplies we needed. After receiving job applications back we hired and constructed our crew. I ended up

We cleaned up

approximately 1.5 tons

of debris from [Kotlik]...

In Alakanuk there was

approximately 3.5 tons of

bagged trash...

being the supervisor for the clean up crews.

We allowed one week of clean up for both Kotlik and Alakanuk. The Kotlik clean up lasted from August 3-9, and Alakanuk clean up lasted from August 17-21. We cleaned up approximately 1.5 tons of debris from 25 miles of beach near Kotlik, cleaning the coastline nearly half the distance to Stebbins. In Alakanuk there was approximately 3.5 tons of bagged trash plus one Conex container of drums, snomobiles, and 4 wheelers, from 14 miles of beach on the Alakanuk River.

This clean up project was able to operate smoothly thanks to help from the employees, NSEDC, tribal organizations, and the city offices. All the workers worked hard and did a good job. NSEDC provided invaluable information to start this new project. Both Alakanuk and Bill Moore’s Slough tribal offices provided support through their advice and clerical assistance, free of charge. Both Kotlik and Alakanuk City offices helped out too. Kotlik allowed us to use their City Hall in-kind, and the City of Alakanuk hauled debris to the transfer area. Cyril Okitkun of Kotlik allowed us to rent his boat for the entire length of the project. YRDFA would like to thank all those who helped on the project. ☺

This project was completed by YRDFA with funding provided by the Marine Conservation Alliance Foundation under award number NA07NOS4630139 from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce. The statements, findings, conclusions, and recommendations are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce, or the Marine Conservation Alliance Foundation.

Voices from the River

“What do you think about management decisions this year, and what would you like to have seen instead?”

In July and August 2009, Stefan Milkowski and Jesse Newman asked this question to fishers up and down the Yukon River. See “A Year with Less Fish” on page 6 for more about Stefan and Jesse.

PAUL ANDREWS, EMMONAK

“I’d say we have poor management down here. They won’t listen to us. We live here 365 days a year and they come around and tell us something we already know... They should start listening to local knowledge, elder knowledge, hearing our elders out. They’re the ones that observe [the fish runs] for years and years and years. We have stuff that’s been passed down from years ago, and we still use it today.”

GILBERT HUNTINGTON, GALENA

“As far as management is concerned, I don’t think they could do anything different—until they change their exploitation [methods to account for size and sex of fish taken]. Really it’s a lazy man’s management system.”

NICK ANDREW, JR., MARSHALL

“They could get that sonar situation straightened out. The fishery management, both on the state and federal side, need to get their program together, because we’re paying for their mistakes.”

SHIRLEY CLARK, GRAYLING

“We never liked [the closures], but we didn’t have a whole lot of choice.”

RICHARD BURNHAM, KALTAG

“Overall I think they used all the tools, just about, that we had put in the toolbox. We’re going to see 65,000 fish [reaching Canada], which is 15,000 more than we need. Probably the only downfall’s going to be in that. I think that’s going to cause a backlash. Fishermen are going to be really reluctant to follow through with anything as stringent next year because of that.”

A YEAR WITH LESS FISH

by Stefan Milkowski

The author is a reporter from Fairbanks. Through this article and another in The New York Times he relates what he observed and learned during his canoe trip on the Yukon this past summer.

This summer, my friend Jesse Newman and I paddled a canoe down the Tanana and Yukon rivers from Fairbanks to the Bering Sea. We wanted to get out and experience the river, but we also wanted to learn about fish and see how the poor runs of king salmon in recent years were affecting people.

I'd listened to the Tuesday teleconferences before we left and wondered a little at the time people spent talking about fish and the emotions they felt over things like fishing windows and mesh size. I usually hung up after 2 hours.

Out on the river, our education began. We visited fish camps, talked with fishermen, and watched nets get picked. You welcomed us into your homes, took time to explain how you fish and what it means to you, and shared fish in a year when fish were hard to get. (Thank you!)

In every village we passed through, from Nenana to Ruby to Saint Mary's and beyond, we were impressed by the role salmon still play in people's lives. Even in upriver villages with little commercial fishing, salmon help balance checkbooks. In downriver villages thick with commercial fishermen, salmon are a staple subsistence food. And in every village, fishing serves as a means of bringing family together and carrying on traditions.

It became clear to us just how much the weak runs of king salmon in recent years and resulting restrictions are affecting people economically, nutritionally, and culturally (and not just fishermen themselves, but also the extended families that depend on them).

The ban on commercial fishing for kings this year left fishermen with a fraction of the income they saw five or 15 years ago. Many fishermen told us fishing simply wasn't worth it this year—that after paying for crewmember licenses and gasoline, any income from selling chum salmon disappeared.

Unprecedented restrictions on subsistence fishing also took their toll. Most fishermen cut back on kings, and some didn't fish at all. Fishermen who did fish told us they got calls

every day from people wanting to buy salmon.

The narrow windows, limited opportunities for commercial fishing, and high cost of gas also seemed to accelerate a trend away from summers spent at fish camp.

Up and down the river, the stories we heard from residents about life at fish camp were hard to reconcile with the deserted cabins we passed by each day.

We heard many fishermen express frustration with managers. They said they are willing to conserve when runs are weak, but weren't convinced that was the case this year, even before the large numbers from

the Eagle sonar came out in August. Many fishermen complained that managers don't pay enough attention to local knowledge of where fish travel in the river and to traditional ways of predicting run strength, such as through spring weather patterns and wind direction.

We also developed an appreciation for just how hard it must be to manage salmon runs on the Yukon—to maximize the harvest while preserving the long-term strength of the run, and to let big kings get upriver without cutting into the already waning earnings of downriver fishermen. And to do it all over more than 1,000 miles without knowing the true strength

of the run or size of the harvest until weeks after it matters most.

Managers we talked with acknowledged the impact of the restrictions. In Tanana, Jesse and I rode with Fish and Game Commissioner Denby Lloyd and other department officials upriver to the Rapids, where several families still fish.

For a few hours, the officials toured Stan Zuray's fish-counting operation and talked to fishers with sharp criticisms about how the department was managing the run.

"Obviously there's a large degree of sacrifice," Lloyd told me. "What we're doing though, hopefully, is planning for the future."

As Jesse and I paddled, we often imagined the fish



William Aloysius, a fisher in Holy Cross, AK, removes a chum salmon from his net in the Yukon River.



Benedict Jones, a fisher in Koyukuk, surveys the water for fish during an evening of drift netting.



Vassily Sergie, Sr. surveys the salmon drying in his smokehouse in Marshall.

swimming invisibly beneath us, traveling as far upstream each day as we paddled down. Near the village of Holy Cross, we crossed the first big pulse of fall chums heading the other way and were treated to the site of fish finning just above the surface.

We found salmon in smokehouses and at the center of kitchen tables. We tasted the change in the fish as we neared the ocean and heard stories of fishing going back generations. By the time we reached Emmonak, we saw how salmon, maybe more than anything else, sustain the Yukon River. And we understood why people along the river fight so hard to sustain the fish and get their share of them. ☞

Join us in Nulato for the

YRDFA 20th Annual Meeting

February 15-18, 2010

YRDFA board members and staff, fishers, agency representatives, & other stakeholders will gather in Nulato the week of February 15, 2010 to discuss a number of important, current 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 Nulato!

Call us at 907.272.3141 ext. 105 or 877.999.8566 (toll free) for details.

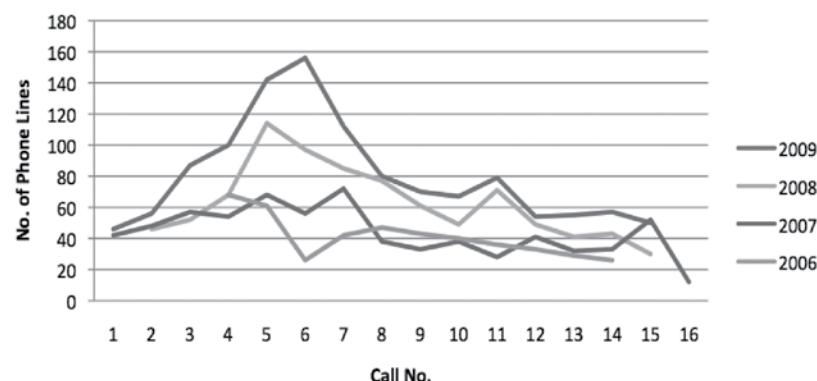
YRDFA HOSTS ANOTHER BUSY TELECONFERENCE SEASON

By Jason Hale, Communications Director

During the 2008 presidential election, many Americans were glued to news reports, anxious to hear the latest poll results or get the dirt on the candidates. The election had the nation tuned in because the outcome could affect their daily lives and as voters they had direct impact on the result. This summer a great many stakeholders in Yukon River fisheries applied the same dedication to the weekly in-season teleconferences. Every Tuesday at 1 p.m. Alaska time fishers, managers, tribal and intertribal representatives, processors, and others dialed in to hear about and discuss the 2009 summer and fall fishing season.

This year teleconference participation increased by 28 percent over last year (in terms of number of lines on the call). Since 2006, participation has nearly doubled.

Call Attendance by Week



Increased advertising is probably responsible for a portion of this spike in participation. However, the larger culprit is more likely the declining Chinook salmon runs. As fishing conditions worsen, fishers are hungrier for news and more impassioned to share their views with fisheries managers and others.

YRDFA would like to thank all those who participated in the teleconferences this season for sharing their opinions, ideas, and expertise. If you have any thoughts on ways to make these calls more useful, please contact Jason Hale at 877-999-8566 ext. 105 (toll free). To view summaries of the teleconferences, visit yukonsalmon.org. ☞

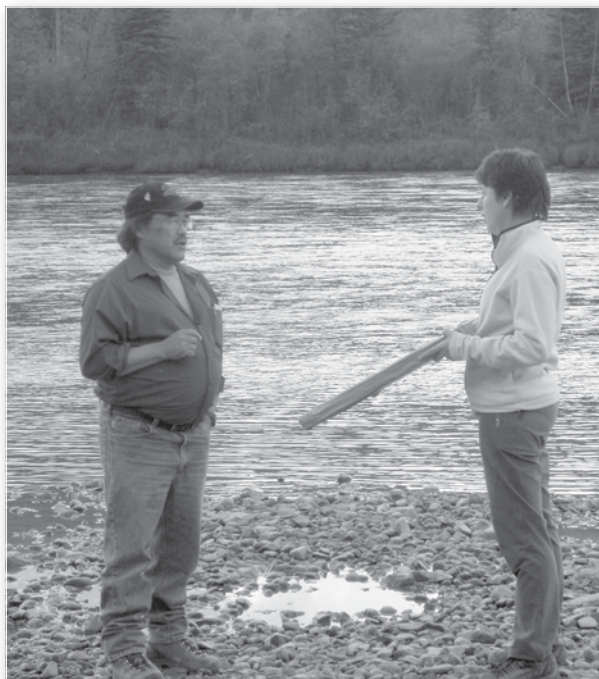
YRDFA's work on the In-season Management Teleconferences is funded under award number 701818J698 from U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Office of Subsistence Management (OSM); and contract number CC-01-09 from the Yukon River Panel, Communications Committee. The statements, findings, conclusions, and recommendations are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of OSM, the Yukon River Panel, or any related agencies.

and is operating pretty much as it did back then.

The wooden ladder consists of rectangular ponds each a step higher. It stretches hundreds of feet, climbing and doubling back until it reaches the height of the dam. One could see salmon milling around at the bottom by the entry way. Perhaps they were confused by the barely navigable spillway to the left or the narrow opening to the ladder or maybe they were just resting for a moment. It is a daunting climb, even for the salmon.

The sound of water jetting out of the turbines is deafening as the water resumes its otherwise inexorable journey. No fish can swim through the turbines and Lord only knows what happens to any fish taking this route when they head downstream. The dam is problematic, but the effects are offset by the ladder and the efforts from the fish hatchery.

At random intervals, several fish are taken from the fish ladder to the hatchery. A female has thousands of eggs which are hatched in vats. 300,000 of these little speckled fry are released into streams predetermined by the Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO). They follow a re-populate or enhancement plan. They are not in the salmon production business and they don't release fish where there weren't any before. As to why they don't release more fish to compensate for bad runs, they said adding more fish could place undue stress on the resources and that



Fred Huntington from Galena shares his views with a Canadian news reporter while touring the Teslin River.

the hatchery fish might outcompete the wild salmon. In order for DFO to monitor this, it is the job of our tour guide at the dam to snip off the adipose fin of all those little fish. That he would do such a thing made him kind of a tourist attraction in itself. Wow. 300,000 little fins! Of that 300K an estimated 6% survive to begin their quest for sea water.

Afterward, we drove through a plain that is so dry that the dead trees don't rot. When they fall, they lay there creating this odd surreal landscape. Here and there are small ponds with steep sides. They are created when the underlying permafrost melts and the weight of it punches through the ground. We were on our way to Kusawa Lake, a long time salmon spawning area.

The fish have been frequenting this lake for so long that even from a height of about fifteen stories atop sand bluffs we could see the salmon dunes down below in the water. These ridges are about three or four feet tall, built up over hundreds of years by hundreds of fish tails sweeping rocks out to make a nest for the eggs. This place has other historic stories to tell besides the salmon. We looked up at the surrounding peaks and back through time as our guide, retiring from the DFO, Al Von Finster, told us about a hunting camp close to ten thousand years old that was revealed as the melting snow caps receded.

The slopes are bare and speak of conditions so brutal that nothing grows there, but life begins here for the salmon and evidence of past hunting activity reveals a give-and-take relationship between humans and the environment that has existed for millennia.

The rest of the journey is a blur. I saw too many things to put into this short article. We traveled to several rivers and lakes that empty their translucent waters into the Yukon. On the way people shared their food with us and, occasionally, a place to sleep. We caught a boat ride across Lake Lebarge, home of Sam McGee, to visit an old home site. Reminiscent to some of our stories, the guide told us his mother's entire house had been dismantled and stolen. On down the road we stopped at a farm that

used to be a way station for horses and ate the sweetest carrots ever.

One day we rode up the Pelly River to the ghost town of Ft. Selkirk. I asked our boat captain, Robert, if he did any fishing. He said he did and had caught less than twenty then pulled his net.



Dale Bradley shares stories of the Canadian domestic fishery with Linch Curry from Pelly Crossing and Debra Deacon from Grayling while giving them a tour of Pelly Farm.

“Oh yeah,” I wanted to know, “Who told you to pull it?”

“Nobody,” says he, “I did it out of respect.”

Food for thought. The First Nation people have the right to fish whenever they want, but they do police themselves. At Teslin Lake we saw a sign reminding tribal members of a ten-fish per household limit to be caught on the weekend. I suspect the subsistence users here are not the ones decimating the fish stocks. The Yukon Territory has 21 commercial licenses with 8 people using them. Another report mentions that less than 500 fish were caught commercially. An elder lady who accompanied us on our boat ride told us she pulled her net after catching 18 fish. She seemed genuinely pleased with them. It's been three years since there have been enough fish crossing the border for them to fish on that scale.

We went on to see reclamation areas, old and new fish camps, farms and museums. We drove over areas on the river where paddle wheelers used to turn around, and in doing so tore up the river bottom. There is still patient work to be done here.

A comment stuck in my head regarding the salmon bycatch out in the Bering Sea. The pollock industry caught around 20,000 king salmon in 2008. Compared to the more than 120,000 in 2007, that's a deduction of about

100,000 fish. And they did this without much change to their fishing methods. If that's true then there must be something wrong with the fish. I hope I am not the only one who finds that alarming.

The trip changed my perception of our neighbors upriver down south. I like what I learned. And as is often the case when you learn something, you also learn something about yourself. This trip caused me to rethink my role and my obligations. I realized that if we don't learn to work together we will all be sitting by the bank grateful for our 18 fish.

To view a short video of the 2009 Yukon River Educational Exchange, visit www.yukonsalmon.org or www.youtube.com/watch?v=6R3b3uywveU. 🐟

The Yukon River Educational Exchange is funded through grant award number CC-02-09 from the Yukon River Panel. The statements, findings, conclusions, and recommendations are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Yukon River Panel.

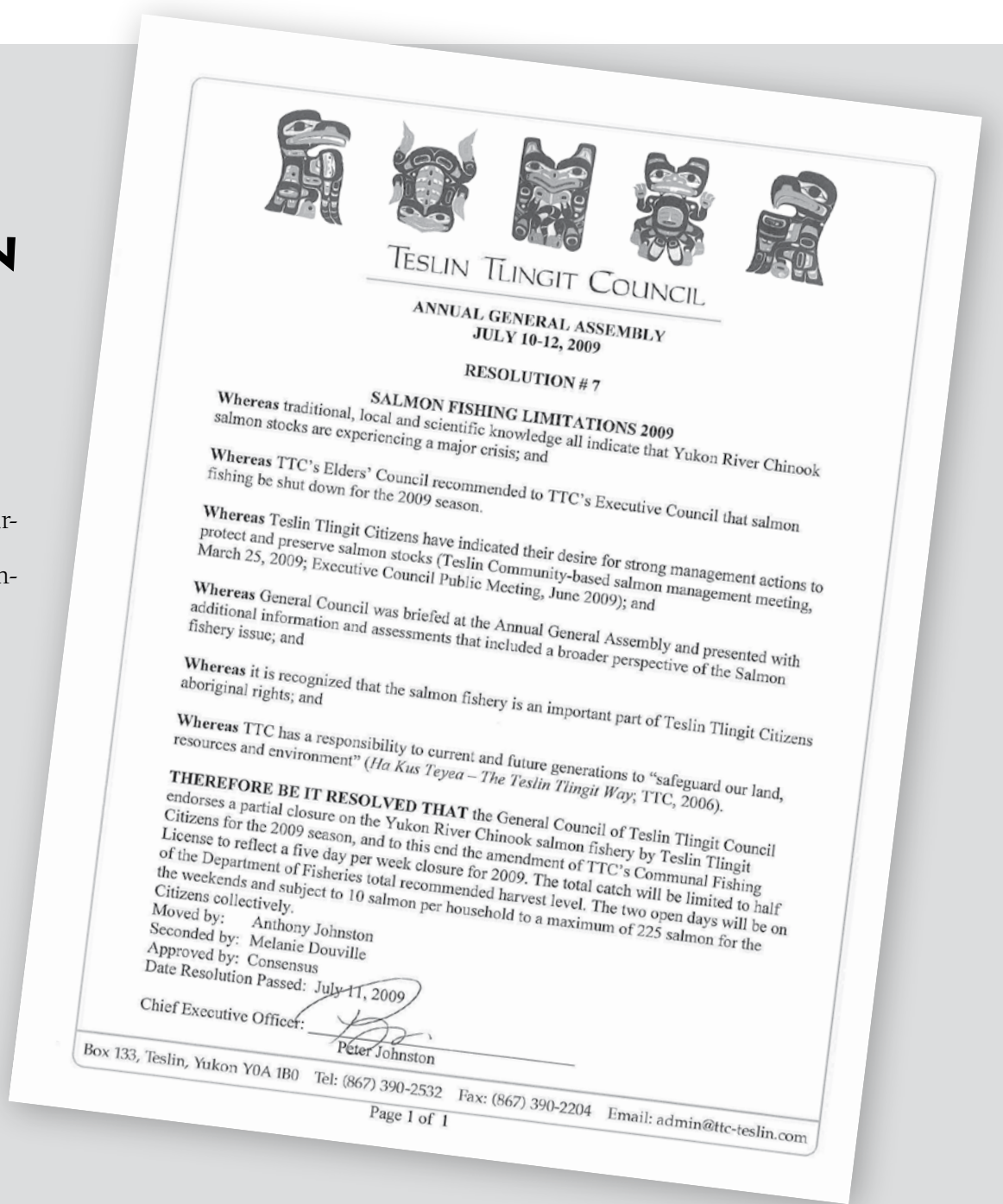


Exchange participants learn from tour guides at the Whitehorse Rapids Salmon Hatchery.

TESLIN IMPLEMENTS PARTIAL CLOSURE ON KING FISHING

by Kim Melton, Fish and Wildlife Officer,
Teslin Tlingit Council

The Teslin Tlingit Council implemented a partial closure on king fishing that resulted in roughly one quarter of the normal Chinook salmon harvest for the community for the 2009 season. We are proud to be a long-standing member of the salmon conservation movement that continues to grow all along the Yukon River and look forward to working with all users in the future to ensure that all of our grandchildren will be able to sustain themselves spiritually, culturally, and physically with Yukon River salmon. 🐟



It's Board of Fish Time Again!

ALASKA BOARD OF FISHERIES AYK MEETING

JANUARY 26-31, 2010

by Becca Robbins Gisclair, Policy Director

THE BOARD OF FISHERIES PROCESS

The Alaska Board of Fisheries will be meeting at the Princess Lodge in Fairbanks, January 26 – 31, 2010 to discuss and vote on Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim (AYK) proposals. The Board of Fisheries process includes staff reports, public testimony, committee meetings and board deliberations, in that order.

First, the Board hears staff reports from ADF&G, who explain each proposal, describe how the proposal would change current regulations, provide any other relevant information, and present ADF&G's position on each proposal.

Next, public testimony is taken. This only occurs once—at the beginning of the meeting, for all proposals. Sign-ups to give public testimony are closed at some point during the first or second day of the meeting, so make sure you are there before that time to sign-up if you wish to provide public comments. Each person is given a limited time to speak.

After public testimony, committees consider the various proposals. Committees are designated for specific areas or types of fish (for example, AYK resident fish or Yukon Area salmon). Sign-ups for committees take place at the beginning of the board meeting. A limited number of people, usually representing different areas and user groups, are selected for each committee, along with several members of the Board of Fisheries. Committee meetings are open to the public, but only committee members are allowed to speak. Committee members discuss their opinions on each of the proposals assigned to that committee. The input of the committee is then summarized and presented to the full Board of Fisheries.

Once all of the committees have met, the Board of Fisheries reconvenes to deliberate on proposals. They discuss and take action

on each proposal. Once the board begins deliberation there is no opportunity for the public to speak on the record.

The full Board of Fisheries meeting is open to the public. You can also listen to the meeting on-line. When the Board is in session a link will appear on their homepage—www.boards.adfg.state.ak.us/fishinfo/index.php—which you can click to hear live streaming audio of the meeting. The audio is listen only, so you will not be able to speak to the Board, but you can follow the meeting.

The Board also accepts written comments. Written comments should be received by January 12, 2010 to be included in the Board's materials. Written comments are also accepted at the meeting, but Board members will not have the advantage of reading them beforehand. Please see below for specific instructions about how to comment.

The agenda for the meeting will be posted on the Board's website at: www.boards.adfg.state.ak.us/fishinfo/meetinfo/fcal.php.

YRDFA'S INVOLVEMENT

The YRDFA Board will be considering each of the proposals before the Board of Fisheries. YRDFA operates on a consensus basis, so all board members must agree for YRDFA to take a position on these proposals. The YRDFA Board consists of 16 members from each of the fishing districts on the Yukon River—see page two for a complete list of YRDFA board members.

YRDFA staff and several board members will be at the Board of Fisheries meeting in January to participate in the Board of Fish process and provide YRDFA's comments.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE

Attend the Board of Fisheries Meeting,
January 26-31, 2010 in Fairbanks:

- Public testimony is usually taken start-

ing midway through the first day of the meeting and continuing into the second day. Make sure you are there for the first part of the meeting if you wish to provide testimony.

- If your travel budget or time is limited, it's most important to be there towards the beginning of the meeting if you wish to provide testimony or participate in the committees. You can listen to the board deliberations on-line if you're not able to stay for the full meeting.

Submit Written Comments

- Written comments should be received two weeks before the meeting to be included in the Board's materials—by January 12.
- If you are providing written comments, list the proposal number and state whether you SUPPORT or OPPOSE the proposal. If you support the proposal with a change, say you "SUPPORT AS AMENDED" and provide a short description of the change you support. Also briefly explain why you support or oppose the proposal—this will help the board in their deliberations. If you are submitting comments on more than one proposal list them in one letter. Do not use a separate sheet of paper for each proposal. Further instructions are provided at the beginning of the proposal book, which is available on the Board of Fish website.
- Send written comments to:
ATTN: BOF COMMENTS
Boards Support Section
Alaska Department of Fish and Game
P.O. Box 115526
Juneau, AK 99811-5526
FAX: (907) 465-6094 ☐

BOARD OF FISH PROPOSALS 2009/10

IMPACTING YUKON RIVER SALMON FISHERIES

#81 | *Proposed by ADF&G*

Clarify the subsistence fishing schedule in Subdistricts 4-B and 4-C. In Subdistrict 4-A, salmon may not be taken from 6:00pm Sunday until 6:00pm Tuesday. In Subdistricts 4-B and 4-C, salmon may not be taken from 6:00pm Friday until 6:00pm Sunday.

#82 | *Proposed by ADF&G*

Modify subsistence fishing schedule in Subdistrict 4-A to allow subsistence fishing in Subdistrict 4-A to be open for two 48-hour periods during the commercial fishing season.

#83 | *Proposed by Fairbanks Advisory Committee (AC)**

Require recording subsistence harvest on catch calendars in ink, before concealing the fish from plain view, transported from the fishing site or off loaded from a vessel.

#84 | *Proposed by Middle Yukon AC*

Extend Subdistricts 4-B and 4-C drift gillnet area for king salmon upriver into Subdistrict 4-B and 4-C to the mouth of the Yuki River.

#85 | *Proposed by Middle Yukon AC*

Extend Subdistricts 4-B and 4-C drift gillnet area for king and fall chum salmon upriver into Subdistrict 4-B and 4-C to the mouth of the Yuki River.

#86 | *Proposed by E. Interior Regional Advisory Council (RAC)†*

Allow setnets to be tied up during closures in Subdistrict 5-D (instead of requiring that setnets be pulled, as under current regulations).

#87 | *Proposed by ADF&G*

Review the following items in the king salmon management plan:

1. Potential triggers and management tools for managing subsistence, commercial, personal use, and sport fisheries.
2. Review commercial guideline harvest ranges.
3. Review subsistence fishing schedule.

#88 | *Proposed by Tanana Rampart Manley AC, Eastern Interior RAC, Fairbanks AC, Minto-Nenana AC, and Ruby AC*

Prohibit subsistence and commercial driftnet fishing in the entire Yukon River drainage, including all upriver and downriver driftnet areas.

#89 | *Proposed by Tanana Rampart Manley AC, Eastern Interior RAC, Fairbanks AC, Minto-Nenana AC, and Ruby AC*

Restrict depth of subsistence and commercial 6 inch mesh gill nets to a hung depth of no more than 15 feet or 35 meshes.

#90 | *Proposed by Tanana Rampart Manley AC, Eastern Interior RAC, Fairbanks AC, Minto-Nenana AC, and Ruby AC*

Prohibit subsistence and commercial gillnets over 6 inch mesh size in the entire Yukon River drainage.

#91 | *Proposed by Eastern Interior RAC*

Limit incidental catch of Chinook salmon during commercial chum directed fisheries to 3,000 Chinook salmon. Once 3,000 Chinook salmon have been caught as bycatch in the commercial chum salmon fishery, the commercial chum salmon fishery will be closed for the remainder of the season.

#92 | *Proposed by Tanana Rampart Manley AC, Eastern Interior RAC, Fairbanks AC, Minto-Nenana AC, and Ruby AC*

Prohibit commercial sale of Chinook salmon caught in non-Chinook directed commercial fisheries in the entire Yukon River drainage. Chinook salmon caught as bycatch in non-Chinook fisheries can be kept for subsistence only.

#93 | *Proposed by Jude Henzler*

Prohibit retention of king salmon during chum salmon directed fisheries in the mainstem of the Yukon River (Districts 1-5 of the Yukon River management district).

#94 | *Proposed by Fairbanks AC*

Require windows schedule be implemented for subsistence fisheries even if commercial fisheries are allowed.

#95 | *Proposed by Eastern Interior RAC*

Reallocate the commercial king salmon harvest as follows (additions are in **bold and underlined**, deletions are in ~~strikethrough~~):

5 AAC 05.360(b)(2)the department shall manage the Yukon River commercial king salmon fishery for a guideline harvest range of **0-60,000** ~~67,350-129,150~~ king salmon, distributed as follows:

- (A) Districts 1 and 2: **0-26,700** ~~60,000-120,000~~ king salmon;
- (B) District 3: **0-8,000 set net only** ~~1,800-2,200~~ king salmon;
- (C) District 4: **0-8,000** ~~2,250-2,850~~ king salmon;
- (D) District 5:
 - (i) Subdistrict 5-B and 5-C: **0-8,000** ~~2,400-2,800~~ king salmon;
 - (ii) Subdistrict 5-D: **0-1,300** ~~300-500~~ king salmon; and
- (E) District 6: **0-8,000** ~~600-800~~ king salmon;

(3) when the projected king salmon harvest range for Districts 1 - 6 combined is below the low end harvest level from zero to **60,000** ~~67,350~~ fish, the department shall allocate the commercial harvest available by percentage for each district as follows:

- (A) Districts 1 and 2: **44.5** ~~89.1~~ percent;
- (B) District 3: **13.33** ~~2.7~~ percent **set net only**;
- (C) District 4: **13.33** ~~3.3~~ percent;
- (D) Subdistricts 5-B and 5-C: **13.33** ~~3.6~~ percent;
- (E) Subdistrict 5-D: **2.16** ~~0.4~~ percent; and
- (F) District 6: **13.33** ~~0.9~~ percent.

"BOARD OF FISH PROPOSALS..." continued on page 12

#96 | Proposed by Fairbanks AC

Reallocate commercial summer chum salmon harvest as follows:
5 AAC 05.362(f)

- (1) Districts 1 and 2: **180,000-540,000** 251,000 – 755,000 fish;
- (2) District 3: **24,000-72,000** 6,000 – 19,000 fish;
- (3) Subdistrict 4-A: **120,000-360,000** 113,000 – 338,000 fish;
- (4) Subdistricts 4-B and 4-C: **36,000-108,000** 16,000 – 47,000 fish;
- (5) Subdistricts 5-B, 5-C, and 5-D: **4,000-12,000** 1,000 – 3,000 fish;
- (6) District 6: **36,000-108,000** 13,000 – 38,000 fish.

(g) When the projected summer chum salmon harvest level for Districts 1 - 6 combined is 400,000 fish or less, the department shall allocate the commercial harvest available by percentage to each district or subdistrict as follows:

- (1) Districts 1 and 2: **45** 62.9 percent;
- (2) District 3: **6** 1.6 percent;
- (3) Subdistrict 4-A: **30** 28.2 percent;
- (4) Subdistrict 4-B and 4-C: **9** 3.9 percent;
- (5) District 5: **1** 0.3 percent;
- (6) District 6: **9** 3.2 percent.

#97 | Proposed by Fairbanks AC

Reallocate commercial fall chum salmon harvest as follows:
5AAC 05.365(a)

- (1) Districts 1, 2, and 3: **21,825-96,000** 60,000 to 220,000 chum salmon;

- (2) District 4: **14,550-64,000** 5,000 to 40,000 chum salmon;
- (3) Subdistricts 5-B and 5-C and 5-D: **14,550-64,000** 4,000 to 36,000 chum salmon;
- (4) Subdistrict 5-D: 1,000 to 4,000 chum salmon;
- (5) District 6: **21,825-96,000** 2,750 to 20,500 chum salmon.

#98 | Proposed by KwikPak Fisheries

Open commercial fishing between Black River and Chris Point – fishing would be permitted for both drift and setnet between Chris Point and Black River (between statistical areas 334-11 and 334-12).

#99 | Proposed by Fairbanks AC

Open Andreafsky River to commercial fishing.

#100 | Proposed by ADF&G

Close the Tok River drainage to sport fishing for salmon.

■ ■ ■

* Advisory Committee (AC) refers to an Alaska Department of Fish & Game Advisory Committee
† RAC refers to a Regional Advisory Council to the Federal Subsistence Board

You can request a copy of the AYK proposals by calling 907-465-4110 or visiting www.boards.adfg.state.ak.us/fishinfo/meet-info/fprop.php. ☞

This article was prepared by YRDFA under award number NA07NMF4720091 from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The statements, findings, conclusions, and recommendations are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

NATURAL INDICATORS PROJECT WRAPS UP

by Lauren Sill, Program Coordinator

YRDFA and ADF&G Subsistence Division staff have just completed a three-year project examining the role of local and traditional knowledge and natural indicators in contemporary fishing on the Yukon River. We define natural indicators as observations of natural events that correlate with specific ecological phenomena. For example, according to project participants in Kaltag the presence of cotton in the air signifies the impending arrival of Chinook salmon.

YRDFA and ADF&G staff traveled to five communities in the middle and lower Yukon River—Kaltag, Grayling, St. Mary’s, Emmonak, and Hooper Bay. Sixty-one people participated in the interviews, which covered the individual’s fishing history, their family’s fishing history, and, more generally, salmon and salmon fishing.

What we learned suggests that fishermen separate their observations of natural

phenomena into either causal or correlative indicators. Causal indicators are directly tied to how the salmon run develops. For example, wind direction and intensity at specific times of year affect when fish run and which mouth of the Yukon River they enter. Correlative indicators, on the other hand, are observations that occur along with the salmon run, but do not affect it. An example of a correlative indicator would be the appearance of migrating birds, butterflies, or certain plants. Lower river communities seem to rely more on causal indicators when assessing the salmon run, whereas correlative indicators are more predominant further upriver.

Most people we spoke with expressed concern about environmental changes making natural indicators less predictable or reliable. The changes include weather shifts, warmer winter air temperatures, an increase in sandbars, and reduced salmon abundance.

Most residents believe that these changes affect both how people fish and the fish themselves.

Results of this study are being presented as both a written report and a poster. If you would like to receive a copy of the report, please contact Lauren Sill at 877-999-8566 ext. 101 (toll free).

YRDFA would like to thank all the people who participated in this project and the communities that hosted the researchers. Thanks also to the two organizations that funded this project: the Arctic Yukon Kuskokwim-Sustainable Salmon Initiative and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. ☞

This article was prepared by YRDFA under contract number IHP-06-119 from the Arctic Yukon Kuskokwim-Sustainable Salmon Initiative (AYI-SSI) and award number NA07NMF4720091 from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) . The statements, findings, conclusions, and recommendations are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the AYK-SSI or NOAA.

BYCATCH ROUNDUP

How to Provide Input on Chinook & Chum Salmon Bycatch

by Becca Robbins Gisclair, Policy Director

CHINOOK SALMON

What Happened Earlier This Year

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (the Council) took action during its April 2009 meeting to address Chinook salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock fishery. The Council chose a two-part approach which provides for a 47,591 bycatch level in most years, with the potential for the fleet to reach 60,000 in two out of every seven years without consequence if they are participating in an industry incentive program (see Yukon Fisheries News Spring 2009 for more details).

What Comes Next

The Council's decision must still be reviewed and approved by the Secretary of Commerce. The National Marine Fisheries Service is currently preparing the proposed regulations. There will be an opportunity for public comment on the regulations from December 2009 to February 2010. Stay tuned for information about when and where to send letters.

How to Provide Input

Write a letter or pass a resolution directed to the Secretary of Commerce asking that he reject the Council's approved Chinook salmon management action and uses his emergency regulation authority to implement a hard cap of 32,500 effective immediately.

Send letters to:

Secretary Gary Locke
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20230
E-mail: TheSec@doc.gov

CHUM SALMON

How This Process Will Begin

Now that the Council has taken action on Chinook salmon bycatch, they will begin the process of adopting chum salmon management measures. The Council's Salmon Bycatch Workgroup will meet October 29, 2009 in Anchorage to refine the options they are considering to reduce chum salmon bycatch. In December 2009 the Council will look at the Workgroup's recommendations and further refine the list of options. **They will not take final action until late 2010 or 2011.** As we get closer to final action it will be important to attend Council meetings to testify in person and to send letters, so start including travel plans in your budgets

and calendars. Council meeting agendas are posted on the Council's website at: <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc/>. For more information see the YRDLFA website at www.yukonsalmon.org or contact Becca at YRDLFA: becca@yukonsalmon.org or 907-272-3141 ext. 106.

How to Provide Input

At the December Council meeting:

- **Testify** at the meeting, December 9-15, 2009 at the Hilton Hotel, Anchorage. The agenda will be posted on the Council's website: <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc/>
- **Write a letter** to the Council. Send letters by mail or fax by December 2 to:
North Pacific Fishery Management Council
605 W. 4th Ave Suite 306
Anchorage, AK 99501
Fax: (907) 271-2817

TIMELINE

October 29, 2009	Salmon bycatch workgroup meets in Anchorage to refine chum salmon bycatch alternatives
December 9-15, 2009	Council meets in Anchorage to refine chum salmon bycatch alternatives
December 2009-February 2010	60-day public comment period on the proposed rule to implement the Council's Chinook salmon bycatch measures.
August 31, 2010	Final Chinook salmon bycatch rule published.
Fall 2010 or early 2011	Final action on chum salmon bycatch measures.
January 1, 2011	Final Chinook salmon regulations take effect.

Note: these dates are estimates and subject to change

Future Council Meetings will take place in February, April, June, October, and December 2010. Check the Council website for future meeting agendas. ☞

This article was prepared by YRDLFA under award number NA07NMF4720091 from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The statements, findings, conclusions, and recommendations are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

SUMMER SEASON SUMMARY

Fast Facts from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game

This article provides a preliminary summary report for the 2009 Yukon Area Chinook and summer chum salmon fishing season from the Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G). All harvest and escapement data for 2009 are preliminary.

SUMMER SEASON OVERVIEW

Chinook Salmon

The Pilot Station sonar preliminary cumulative passage estimate from June 1 to August 9 was 122,474 Chinook salmon. The first quarter point, midpoint, and third quarter point were on June 24, June 27, and July 1 respectively.

The estimates provided by Pilot Station sonar are considered to be conservative through June 23 due to high water conditions, which made assessment of the early portion of the run challenging. See the related article on page 16 for more details.

Summer Chum Salmon

The Pilot Station sonar project summer chum cumulative passage estimate through July 18 was 1,283,206 fish. The first quarter point, midpoint, and third quarter point were on June 26, June 28, and July 4 respectively.

Inseason Subsistence Fishery Management Actions

Subsistence closures were initiated in District Y-1 beginning June 15 to protect the first pulse of Chinook salmon. Two subsistence fishing periods were pulled and similar actions were implemented in upriver fishing districts and subdistricts based on migratory timing.

Following the pulse closures each fishing district was returned to the reduced subsistence salmon fishing schedule and remained on the reduced schedule until approximately 80% of the Chinook salmon had passed through a District. However, based on the poor abundance observed at the time, and in an effort to further conserve Chinook salmon while allowing for the

opportunity to target summer chum salmon, gillnets were restricted to a maximum of 6-inch mesh size when Districts Y-1, Y-2, and Y-3 returned to the reduced fishing schedule. The gear restriction was in place for two reduced periods in Districts Y-1 and Y-2 and only one period in Y-3.

Federal Special Actions limiting the harvest of Chinook salmon to federally qualified rural users for Districts Y-1, Y-2, and Y-3 were issued on June 1, for District Y-4 on June 17, and District Y-5 on June 22.

[Note from YRDFA: due to poor returns and unprecedented restrictions, many fishers did not meet their subsistence harvest goals in 2009.]

COMMERCIAL FISHERY SUMMARY

Chinook Salmon

The total commercial harvest was 316 Chinook salmon for the Alaskan portion of the Yukon River drainage, which includes 185 fish harvested during the fall season. This range of commercial catch for Chinook salmon is 99% below the recent 10-year (1999–2008) average of 35,027 fish.

Effective July 1, due to the conservation concern for Chinook salmon and to provide opportunity for a directed summer chum commercial fishery in Districts Y-1 and Y-2, the Alaska Board of Fisheries adopted an emergency regulation specifying that during the commercial summer chum season in Districts Y-1 through Y-5 Chinook salmon taken may be retained but not sold. Therefore, fishers could release live Chinook salmon or use them for subsistence purposes. This emergency regulation was discontinued, effective July 16, since the majority of the Chinook salmon run had passed the lower river districts. A total of 944 Chinook salmon were caught but not sold in District Y-1, 2,596 in Y-2, 200 in Subdistrict Y-4A and 12 in District Y-6.

Summer Chum Salmon

The total commercial harvest was 170,272 summer chum salmon for the Yukon River

drainage. The summer chum salmon harvest was 140% above the 1999–2008 average harvest of 63,341 fish.

Fishing Effort and Exvessel Value

Yukon River fishers in Alaska received an estimated \$556,000 for their Chinook and summer chum salmon harvest in 2009, approximately 76% below the 1999–2008 average of \$2.3 million. A total of 387 permit holders participated in the summer chum salmon fishery, which was approximately 33% below the 1999–2008 average of 575 permit holders. The average income for Lower Yukon Area fishers in 2009 was \$1,425; the average income for Upper Yukon Area fishers that participated in the 2009 fishery was \$1,857.

In addition to meeting the [Interim Management Escapement Goal] to Canadian spawning grounds, this passage has also fulfilled the harvest sharing agreement with Canadian fisheries.

ESCAPEMENT

Chinook Salmon

For the 2009 season, the Yukon River Panel agreed to continue 2008's one-year Canadian Interim Management Escapement Goal (IMEG) of >45,000 Chinook salmon based on the Eagle sonar program. The preliminary estimated passage into Canada is

approximately 69,957 fish. In addition to meeting the IMEG to Canadian spawning grounds, this passage has also fulfilled the harvest sharing agreement with Canadian fisheries. The Chena River counts are near the upper end of its Biological Escapement Goal (BEG), while Salcha River counts are double the upper end of its BEG.

Summer Chum Salmon

Summer chum salmon escapement was variable among projects despite an adequate run size in 2009. Summer chum escapements in the Gisasa and Tozitna Rivers were below expected escapement levels. East Fork Andreafsky and Anvik River escapements experienced historic lows and failed to meet the respective BEGs. Henshaw Creek escapement, however, was double the expected and attained the second highest escapement recorded for this assessment project. On the Tanana River, summer chum escapements exceeded the expected counts for Chena and Salcha Rivers.

CANADIAN FISHERIES

The preseason outlook was for approximately 60,700-71,600 Canadian-origin Chinook salmon applicable to Eagle sonar-based total run estimates. Canadian fishery managers conducted Chinook salmon fisheries according to available abundance and international harvest sharing provisions.

Commercial fishing periods targeting Chinook salmon resulted in a harvest of approximately 364 fish by eight fishers. The sport fishery bag limit was one per day. The First Nation's harvest is approximately 2,832 Chinook salmon to date.

The Canadian harvest shares are 9,000 to 11,000 Chinook salmon and their harvest is expected to be well below that allowable catch. Therefore, both Canada and Alaska contributed to increasing the number of Chinook salmon returning to the spawning grounds in 2009. 🐟

2009 PRELIMINARY YUKON RIVER **FALL SEASON SUMMARY** *Fast Facts from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game*

This article provides a preliminary summary report for the 2009 Yukon Area fall chum and coho salmon fishing season from ADF&G. All harvest and escapement data for 2009 are preliminary.

FALL SEASON OVERVIEW

The fall chum run was comprised of three primary pulses—two small and one moderate sized—with a timing of two days late when compared to the average midpoint. The preliminary 2009 post season run size is estimated to be approximately 450,000 fall chum salmon. This is below the 1974-2008 average of all years (876,000) and odd-numbered years (687,000).

Coho salmon run timing was near normal and the Pilot Station sonar passage estimate of 207,000 was well above the average of 143,000 for the project. However, several conditions such as extremely low water levels and difficulties test fishing for species apportionment resulted in a conservative estimate of fall chum salmon at Pilot Station and a possible overestimate of coho salmon.

SUBSISTENCE SUMMARY

Subsistence fishing time was reduced by approximately one third and personal use fisheries were closed for a portion of the run to assure escapement goals in the majority of the areas would be achieved. The subsistence harvest estimates are expected to be less than 75,000 fall chum salmon and some level below average for coho salmon as fish did not materialize upriver to the degree indicated by downriver projects.

COMMERCIAL SUMMARY

A commercial fishery was conducted in Districts 1 and 2 at the beginning of the run based on the preseason projection and at the end of the run in Districts 1 and 6 based on availability of coho salmon. The total harvest was approximately 25,000 fall chum and 8,000 coho salmon. The fall chum salmon commercial harvest was below the recent 5-year average of 114,000 and the coho salmon commercial harvest was below the recent 5-year average of 45,000 fish.

ESCAPEMENT

Drainage-wide, the preliminary escapement is estimated to be near 350,000 fall chum salmon and is within the escapement goal range of 300,000 to 600,000 fall chum salmon. It is assumed that the Chandalar and Tanana river goals were met based on a combination of genetic mixed stock analysis and the passage of adequate numbers to the upper Yukon mainstem stocks and the Fishing Branch River. The minimum spawning escapement goals of 80,000 fall chum salmon for Canadian mainstem Yukon River and the interim escapement goal of 22,000 fall chum salmon for the Fishing Branch River were met. The Sheenjek River was once again one of the weakest stocks and did not meet the low end of the Biological Escapement Goal. The coho salmon run was determined to be adequate to meet escapement needs. 🐟

WHAT IS GOING ON WITH THE PILOT STATION SONAR?

After the 2009 summer and fall fishing season, many fishers expressed concern over inaccuracies at the Pilot Station sonar. YRDFA caught up with John Linderman, AYK Regional Supervisor with ADF&G, and asked for more details on what went wrong and how it will be addressed.

BEFORE WE GET INTO SPECIFICS, DO YOU HAVE ANY OPENING THOUGHTS ON THE SONAR FOR OUR READERS?

In a river as large and ever changing as the Yukon, employing methods to assess annual salmon runs has always been challenging and it will likely always be this way. Whether using more basic methods such as test fisheries or more high tech methods such as sonar, some level of uncertainty will always be present when determining run size.

The fish counts produced by sonar are not the total number of fish counted as they pass by the project site. The sonar counts fish for a number of hours each day, and expands those counts over a 24-hour period to estimate the total number of fish. Additionally, sonar cannot tell what species a fish is when it is counted. The project uses species composition from gillnet test fishery catches and applies it to sonar counts to estimate the number of each salmon species. Many factors can affect the accuracy of this methodology.

WHAT HAPPENED WITH THE SONAR PROJECT IN 2009?

The 2009 summer season was challenging

on a number of fronts. An unusual breakup saw many villages and fish camps damaged due to flooding and the Yukon River was persistently high throughout most of June. In addition to the physical damage, flood waters also complicated fish assessment. Floating trees and sticks make gillnetting difficult and high water leads to increased silt in the water that can limit the ability of sonar to detect fish.

High quantities of silt during the first several weeks of June limited the distance sonar could detect fish. Although this problem was recognized early, there was little that could be done to correct it. The effect of increased silt on sonar was similar to driving a car in a blizzard, the driver can turn on the high beams but it often doesn't allow them to see out any further. This is the situation the sonar was in through the third week in June.

All equipment was operating properly and fish were being actively counted during this time, but there was no way to evaluate how many fish may have gone undetected, especially farther offshore. After the third week of June, the water started dropping and the distance at which fish could be detected increased. This has happened in the past, but usually the water level drops to reasonable levels before salmon show up in high numbers.

HAVE YOU DONE ANYTHING TO IMPROVE THE ACCURACY OF THE SONAR SINCE THE PROJECT BEGAN?

The Department of Fish and Game

continues to make improvements to the project in an effort to increase the accuracy of estimates it produces. Recent improvements include switching from dual-beam to split-beam sonar in 2001 which determines the direction fish are traveling, adding DIDSON sonar in 2005 to more effectively count fish passing close to shore, and this past season the project transitioned to identifying fish targets electronically.

Additionally, half of the technicians working on the project are experienced commercial or subsistence fishermen from the local village. They are an integral part of our crew and their local knowledge and experience is invaluable.

WHAT CHANGES ARE YOU LOOKING AT FOR THE COMING YEAR?

Although there are no changes that can be made to equipment or how it's operated that will completely compensate for the silt levels encountered this year, options are being explored to minimize the effect. This includes operating side-scan sonar further offshore to increase the distance fish can be detected and conducting site surveys to determine whether there is a better location to run the sonar. The test fishing program will also be examined to better estimate species composition of the sonar counts. This will include evaluation of longer nets and different fishing locations on the left bank in an effort to decrease the uncertainty of species composition estimates.

There is no guarantee this work will lead to substantially improved estimates. Side-scan sonar has many of the same limitations of split-beam and DIDSON sonar, but it is easier to deploy offshore from a boat or other floating platform. It is also unclear whether alternate project sites wouldn't have the same silt related issues or whether they would present new or unforeseen problems.

IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE REGARDING THE SONAR THAT YOU'D LIKE TO SHARE?

The Department of Fish and Game works very hard to produce the best estimates of salmon passage possible and every year we continue to make improvements to the sonar project and other projects used to assess Yukon River salmon fisheries. Although the methods and technologies used to assess salmon runs have come a long way over the years, there is always room for improvement. The department will continue to make every effort to improve upon existing project and incorporate new projects or ideas to provide the best possible assessment of Yukon River salmon runs. 🐟



High water and debris on the Yukon River at the Pilot Station sonar site, June 2009.

LOCAL HIRES SHINE IN SUMMER PROJECTS

by Lauren Sill, Program Coordinator



Janis Carroll from Ft. Yukon records information on the local subsistence catch on a sunny summer day.

SUBSISTENCE ASSISTANTS PROGRAM

Each fall YRDFA hires assistants in villages throughout the Yukon River drainage to work with ADF&G surveyors conducting post-season subsistence salmon surveys. Each year, our local assistants never fail to be outstanding. Both YRDFA and the ADF&G survey crew (Deena Jallen, crew leader and Michelle Gillette and Seth Wilson, surveyors) would like to thank all the people who did such a terrific job this year! Special appreciation goes out to those assistants who work so hard year after year (we've put an asterisk beside their names).

Our gratitude goes out to: *Marvin Aguchak (Scammon Bay), Augusta Askoak (Marshall), *Craig Edwards (Beaver), *Blanche Edwin (Tanana), *Agnes George (St. Mary's), Stanley George (Mountain Village), Michelle Hamilton (Emmonak), Norma Hess (Mountain Village), *Simeon Housler (Russian Mission), Jordan Jones (Fort Yukon), Michael Jimmy (Emmonak), Percy Lornitz (Koyukuk), Eric Luke (Fort Yukon), *Marissa McCarty (Ruby),

*George Moses (Hooper Bay), Willie Nicholi (Anvik), *Julia Nick (Pilot Station), *Wayne Nickoli (Kaltag), *Linora Night (Hooper Bay), Cyril P. Okitkun (Kotlik), Danielle Oney (Marshall), *Rita Paul (Holy Cross), David Peter (Grayling), *Mary Ann Sam (Huslia), *Sandra Scotton (Galena), *Denis Shelden (Alakanuk), *Pollock Simon, Sr. (Allakaket), *Carol Thomas (Chalkyitsik), Bobby Tritt (Venetie), Wendy Waska (Nunam Iqua), *Augusta Westdahl (St. Mary's), and Lance Whitewell, II (Venetie).

FISHERY TECHNICIANS PROGRAM

This year saw the end of a multi-year project for YRDFA and BLM. Fishery technician Tom Fogg provided invaluable assistance to the Tozitna River Fish Passage Project and we greatly appreciate his efforts. Thanks Tom!

INSEASON HARVEST INTERVIEWERS

YRDFA and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service would like to express their sincere appreciation for the dedicated efforts of this year's Inseason Harvest Interviewers. The work of these individuals is a critical component to the management of salmon fisheries on the Yukon River.

Our gratitude goes out to: Albert Carroll Jr. (Circle), Janis Carroll (Fort Yukon), Gladys Derendoff (Huslia), Norma Evan (Marshall), Robyn George (Nulato), Ted Hamilton (Emmonak), Dana Helmer (Eagle), Catherine Henzie (Allakaket), Michael Jimmy (Emmonak), Rita Paul (Holy Cross), and Sandy Scotton (Galena). 🐟

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YRDFA THANKS BOARD MEMBERS

YRDFA's work is directed by a group of dedicated fishers representing fishing districts throughout the Yukon River drainage. These individuals, who are voted in by a group of their peers, are responsible for all of our past successes and continued efforts. They are the backbone of the organization, providing guidance, wisdom, and direction, and we would like to bid warm wishes of farewell to this year's outgoing members, hearty welcomes to the incoming members, and a heartfelt thank you to all of our board members, past and present.

Outgoing:

Harry Wilde, Sr., Mountain Village
Albert Beans, Jr., Pilot Station
Jeffrey Demientieff, Holy Cross
Benny Attla, Huslia
John Ayunerak, Alakanuk
Willie Fitka, Marshall
Mickey Stickman, Nulato
Edgar Monroe, Nenana

Incoming:

Frank Alstrom, Alakanuk
Alexie Walters, Sr., Mountain Village
William Derendoff, Huslia
Ole Hunter, Scammon Bay
John Tinker, Jr., Pilot Station
Billy Newman, Holy Cross
Shirley Clark, Grayling
Tim McManus, Nenana

Please visit page 2 for a full list of our current board members and alternates. 🐟

YRDFA WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

YRDFA extends a warm welcome and a heartfelt thanks to our new and returning members: Patrick Amukon (Scammon Bay), Denis Argall (Nenana), John & Betty Borg (Eagle), Charlie Campbell (Tanana), Cynthia and Steven Gowins (Eagle), Jude Henzler (Fairbanks), Tom Hyslop (Tanana), Paul & Mary Kleinschmidt (Nenana), Bonnie & Stanley Lyman (Eagle), Jerry & Linda Nelson (Eagle), Billy Newman (Holy Cross), Eddie O'Leary (Central), Jennie Peter (Ruby), Elsie Pitka (Beaver), Joseph Redington (Manley Hot Springs), Mike Sager (Eagle), Ronald Sam (Alatna), Sharon Santiso (Pennsylvania), Martin Scharf (Tanana), Jack Schulteis (Anchorage), Chalia Selman (Eagle), Jeff Simon (Allakaket), Pollock & Julia Simon (Allakaket), Paul & Mary Starr (Tanana), Walter Stickman (Nulato), Frank Talerico (Nenana), and Jan & Don Woodruff (Eagle).

If there's someone you think would like to be a member, let us know! 🐟

Spotlight on Eagle

by Dana Helmer, Eagle AK

In each issue of Yukon Fisheries News YRDLA highlights a different village. We hope these descriptions will give readers a glimpse into life and history in different areas of the Yukon River drainage.

Eagle, Alaska is a historically rich town situated on the Yukon River, six miles from the Canadian border, and 3,080 miles from the nearest Walmart.

Eagle was established in 1897 by gold prospectors. The population is around 150-200 people, varying season to season.

The scenery around Eagle is beautiful during all seasons. Set in a valley, Eagle is surrounded by rolling mountains and craggy river bluffs. The community is close; everyone knows each other. One funny thing about living in a small town is that even when you don't know what you're doing, somebody else does, and chances are they know how to do it better. The people are friendly, quirky, and kind. Eagle has character and charm. "It feels like home," is a comment many people visiting Eagle say. And it does.

The Taylor Highway, the only road connecting Eagle to the world, is snowed in

from October to May. Many Eagle residents are outdoors-minded, and they snowmachine, trap, hunt, camp, dog mush, boat, and of course, fish. Living in Eagle gives people a chance to be self-sufficient. You cut your own

This summer in Eagle was insanely busy. Roads had to be rebuilt, power poles restrung, and workers organized. Because of the efficient work crews, most of the homes are nearly complete. No one that lived through the flood of '09 is going to forget it—neither the bad nor the good that happened.

Not very many people fished in Eagle this summer—some because they lost a boat or fishwheel in the flood, and others because they did not have time. During the king season, the volunteers built a community fishwheel. They generously shared the fish they caught with others. It's early as yet to say whether or not the flooding negatively affected the salmon run. I do think that not having the resources to fish this summer made people appreciate the fish they have been able to get in previous years.



A cabin outside of Eagle gets swept downstream during the 2009 break-up.

firewood, clean your own fish, and process your own moose.

This spring the Yukon River flooded during the ice break-up, damaging about 17 homes and several major businesses. The ice-clogged water rose to record heights and scraped the banks of the Yukon clean. Many people lost everything. If their house didn't float apart and away, then it was crushed by massive chunks of ice that settled after the water went down.

I think it says something for the community of Eagle that it did not fall apart under the pressure. People came together to help each other, making room in their homes for the homeless, cooking meals for the community shelter, and donating clothes. Not long after the flood first hit, crews of volunteer workers started pouring into Eagle, rebuilding homes and encouraging families. It was overwhelming how many people and businesses donated their time, money, and belongings to help with the effort.



Several houses line the frozen river in Eagle.

Despite all the sad things the flood brought to Eagle this past year, I think the community is tighter because of it. Hopefully next year fishing can get back to normal! 🐟



A fish wheel waits out the winter near the shore.

Did you know...

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YRDFA WELCOMES NEW STAFF

Kevin Wiley

FINANCE MANAGER



Born and raised in Alaska, Kevin is an outdoor enthusiast always looking for new ways to explore this beautiful state. He and his two children spend much of their time hiking, biking and skiing around the Kenai Peninsula. Prior to joining YRDFA in June 2009, he worked as a financial advisor for a global securities firm, as executive director of a statewide not-for-profit and as treasurer/controller for a successful political campaign.

Kevin holds a Bachelor's degree in Liberal Studies and a Masters in Business Administration from Alaska Pacific University.

Kim Meeds

OFFICE MANAGER

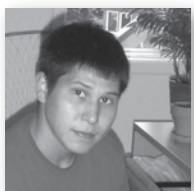


Kim joined YRDFA in February 2009. She works as a part time office manager and strives to support the staff in achieving their objectives. Kim lived in the Midwest all of her life until moving to Alaska in the summer of 2008. She has a business degree from the University of Kansas and a master's degree in business administration from the University of Notre Dame.

Kim, her husband, and their three daughters (and their dog) have been enjoying all that Alaska has to offer. She also spends lots of time volunteering with her kids' school activities and girl scouts.

Richard Bender

PROGRAM ASSISTANT



Richard is from the village of Kotlik where he resided for 20 years. He started off as a First Alaskan Intern at Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association in the summer of 2009. He is now employed part time with YRDFA and provides knowledge and assistance to many projects. He is a junior at the University of Alaska Anchorage and has just completed his university requirements.

Richard likes to attend school and is devoted to providing support for his Native community. Other than school and work he likes to go out on walks and hikes with his friends.

Evan Blankenship

COMMUNICATIONS ASSISTANT



Evan began an Americorps term with YRDFA in the fall of 2009.

A recent graduate from Lewis & Clark College, he received a B.A. in Environmental Studies. His senior thesis was on the sociological implications of images of fisheries in the Russian Far East through interviews and a 6 month situated research trip. "Davai pogovorim!"

A Pacific Northwest through and through, Evan grew up in Washington State. You can find him in the mountains, volunteering at Off the Chain bike co-op, and enjoying Anchorage's local art and music. 🐻

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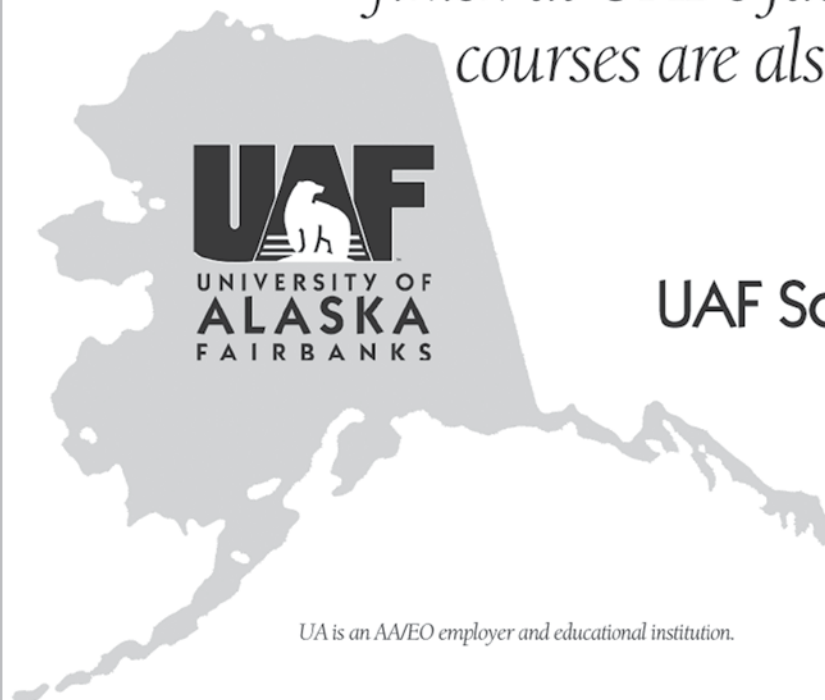
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