

YUKON FISHERIES NEWS

A Publication of the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association



SPRING 2013

Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association

A United Voice for Yukon River Fishers

Salmon Bycatch is in the Spotlight: Key Developments at the Council and in the Legislature

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Chinook Salmon Bycatch: Back on the Agenda

Responding to heartfelt testimony from many Western Alaska representatives at their April meeting in Anchorage, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council asked for a report on Chinook salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock fishery to be delivered no later than their October meeting. The report will include updated information on the status of Western Alaska Chinook salmon stocks; updated genetic stock identification information from the bycatch; an updated analysis of the impacts of bycatch at the current cap levels and the actual bycatch in recent years; and a number of items to evaluate fishing and bycatch performance under the current management measures (Amendment 91).

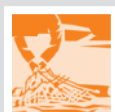
While the Council has merely requested a report and is not committed to taking any further action, this is a critical step for the Council to take a real look at the impacts of Chinook salmon bycatch on Western Alaska stocks in light of the currently declining runs. It also gives the Council the opportunity to review the current management measures and begin to assess whether the industry incentive plans are operating as promised under Amendment 91.

The Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Cora Campbell, introduced this important motion at the Council and it passed unanimously. The Council provided clear direction that this is a high priority item and will come back to the Council no later than October of this year.

Chinook salmon bycatch in the pollock fishery in 2013 is 8,103 fish as of April 11. In 2012, 11,352

Chinook salmon were caught as bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock fishery. This number is well below the 10-year average, and one of the lowest bycatch numbers in recent years. However, under Amendment 91 the fleet has the ability to catch up to 47,591 Chinook salmon as bycatch in any year and up to 60,000 fish in any 2 out of 7 years. New genetic stock identification information from 2011 indicates that 73% of the bycatch is from Western Alaska (including the lower Yukon, Kuskokwim, Norton Sound, Bristol Bay and middle and upper Yukon). 2010 genetic stock identification results also found 73% were from Western Alaska, although a higher proportion were from the upper Yukon in 2010 than 2011.

It's been a busy year for Chinook salmon bycatch. The Alaska Senate passed SR 5, introduced by Senator Micciche, which requests the North Pacific Fishery Management Council reduce Chinook salmon bycatch in both the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea trawl fisheries. YRDFA supported this resolution and I provided invited testimony to the House Fisheries Committee in support of their parallel resolution, HR 6. That resolution, sponsored by Representative Seaton, was withdrawn on the floor after an attempt was made to modify it beyond the intent of the resolution to apply to Upper Cook Inlet setnetters. YRDFA and our partner groups in Western Alaska, including Bering Sea Fishermen's Association, Association of Village Council Presidents and Tanana Chiefs Conference provided important testimony supporting both resolutions. The Alaska Board of Fisheries also agreed at their March statewide meeting to send a letter to the Council requesting that they reduce Chinook salmon bycatch in the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea as well.



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

"SALMON BYCATCH" ...CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

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Boreal Fisheries	Allakaket Traditional Council
Holy Cross Traditional Council	Algaaciq Tribal Government
Koyukuk Tribal Council	Beaver Village Council
Ruby Marine	Birch Creek Tribal Council (Dendu Gwich'in)
City of Nulato	Nulato Tribal Council
Pitka's Point Tribal Council	Ruby Tribal Council
Yupit of Andreafski	Evansville Tribal Council
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Kotlik Traditional Council	Louden Tribal Council

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A Message From the Director

By Jill Klein, Executive Director



Once again, we are preparing for another poor return of Chinook salmon to the Yukon River. The outlook is about the same as or worse than last year. While there

may be hope for future increased run returns, the projections are getting abysmally low. Just when you thought it could not get any worse, it keeps getting worse. The Chinook runs are decreasing, as is fishing time and yet the people of the Yukon River are more resilient than ever. Throughout this hardship they continue to persevere to try to keep their families and communities strong.

I recently met with members of five Yukon River communities who are doing just that! People from Pilot Station, Nulato, Galena, Tanana and Nenana came together in Fairbanks to discuss summer camps for youth that they are operating to give youth a chance to get out of town, to practice subsistence activities, and to have a new experience while being in a remote camp environment. While it may seem like a simple feat to “get out of town”, it is not that simple for everyone. While family fish camps still exist up and down the Yukon River, we also know that

there are many kids in town who do not get to experience life out at camp. Recreating a camp experience in a remote location takes many people and resources to implement. Thanks to the Administration for Native Americans, YRDFA has been able to get a glimpse into village life while partnering with entities such as tribal councils and a church that also have many partners helping to fund and implement their camps.

YRDFA staff have been working with Yukon River communities for many years now, but we have not delved too far into the mechanisms that make village life work. Charismatic leaders both inside and outside of the village can make a big difference in programmatic success at the village level and especially in the success of a kid’s life. We are fortunate to have learned about the efforts that villages are taking to implement and sustain fish camps for youth to attend. We met many involved, caring, and motivated individuals and we know that there exist many more like them in all of the other Yukon River villages. Youth camps can give children the opportunity to stay connected to their traditional activities such as fishing, hunting and berry picking. Time

at camp can also teach about new paths forward, provide new people to meet and it can provide an opportunity for kids to try something new, be in a new space and new place away from their daily lives. Sometimes it is just these simple opportunities that can positively impact a kid’s life.

People from the Yukon River have an amazing connection to the places they are from. Each village has it’s own unique places for fishing, hunting, and berry picking. For us to learn about this connection that people have to the Yukon River and the salmon, as their cultural food source is always a reminder of how strong a sense of place can be. It is this identity that will help people along the Yukon River during these times while the Chinook salmon are in trouble. As long as some resources continue to thrive, people will have the ability to continue to live off the land and stay connected to their traditions. Groups like YRDFA will also continue to offer support where we can to continue these traditions that support the youth and families that rely on them. 🐟

YRDFA Welcomes Newest Staff Member – Angelia Alstrom

Hello everyone,
My name is Angelia Alstrom, I am from Saint Mary’s, Alaska, and I am the new program assistant for Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA). My parents are David Beans and Gail Alstrom-Beans, and my grandparents are William Alstrom and Hilda Alstrom from Saint Mary’s. I grew up mainly in Saint Mary’s during elementary school, but spent a few years in Anchorage. I went to Mt. Edgecumbe high school my freshmen year, and the remaining at Andreafski high school. Then I went on and attended University of Alaska Fairbanks for three years. I will be attending the University of Alaska Anchorage this fall to finish my bachelor’s degree. Three years

ago I decided to take a break from college because I was not sure what I wanted to major in. I worked at several different jobs in Saint Mary’s, but once I got elected to be on the Saint Mary’s School Board I then realized how important it was to finish college. I got to work with five exceptional people that truly cared for the future of our students in Saint Mary’s. I got to understand how hard they have to work to get the money to offer the best education. I was told several times at the conferences I attended held by the Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB), that it is good to have younger people getting involved. That made me think of my Uppa William Alstrom, and how he had mentioned that

the younger people need to start getting involved with YRDFA. Now is the question, “How do we get the younger generation involved?” A lady at an AASB conference voiced that parents are doing too much for their children, and that’s why they don’t get involved. So, all you parents reading this article tell your children to attend

YRDFA’s meetings and start getting involved, so we can start getting closer to resolving the low fish count, and have fish in the future for our next generations to come. I have fished for over ten years and want to fish for many more, so I plan on working with YRDFA to sustain wild salmon fisheries. 🐟



The Council's requested report is an important response to all of these appeals. The information provided will help to chart the way forward in assessing the impacts of bycatch on our Chinook salmon stocks and ensuring that they are adequately protected.

Chum Salmon Bycatch: Complex & Moving Slow

Chum salmon bycatch was also low in 2012, with a total bycatch of 22,300 chum salmon. This number is well below the 10-year average and at the low end of the range of recent bycatch. Since chum salmon bycatch primarily occurs in the B season (summer and fall) fishery we don't know yet what the 2013 numbers look like. Information from 2011 genetic stock identification work indicates that approximately 17% of the bycatch was from Western Alaska (including the lower, middle and upper Yukon, Kuskokwim, Bristol Bay and Norton Sound).

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (the Council) is still in the process of developing new measures to reduce chum salmon bycatch. They last reviewed an analysis of potential actions at their meeting in Anchorage in October 2012. At this meeting it was apparent from the analysis before the Council that reducing chum salmon bycatch without negatively impacting Chinook salmon bycatch is challenging. The Council therefore chose to take another look at the alternatives under consideration. The current alternatives, including a range of hard caps which would close the fishery when reached, hard caps applied to June and July only when Western Alaska salmon are caught in higher proportions in the bycatch and a rolling hot spot program, are still under consideration. However, the Council also provided direction to industry to develop individual incentive plans which would operate in conjunction with the current Chinook salmon incentive plans. Industry will

provide reports at the October Council meeting about their proposals and the Council can decide at that time whether to pursue this approach further. While this action has been delayed several times now, it is with good cause: the Council is being very careful that actions taken on chum salmon bycatch do not unintentionally increase Chinook salmon bycatch.

The October Council meeting in Anchorage (September 30-October 8) will be an important one for both Chinook and chum salmon bycatch agenda items. We'll provide more information about how to participate in the fall. The full agenda will be posted at <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc/> when it's available. 🐟

This article was prepared by YRDFA under grants from the Oak Foundation, Alaska Conservation Foundation's Alaska Native Fund and Patagonia Environmental Grants program. The statements, findings, conclusions, and recommendations are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the funder.

Cultural Fish Camps for Youth: Reflections from a Workshop

By Catherine Moncrieff, Staff Anthropologist

Preparations for the second year of the Yukon River Cultural Fish Camps are under way! We held a two-day workshop in Fairbanks and brought fish camp leaders from each of the five communities (Nenana, Tanana, Nulato, Galena and Pilot Station) together to share experiences, stories, and reflect on year one. The goals of the workshop were to begin to develop sustainability plans so that the camps can continue into the future without the current grant funds from the Administration for Native Americans, to connect fish camp leaders with outside resources, and to review and improve the existing fish camp programs.

One of purposes of this workshop was to connect the fish camp leaders with outside resources and opportunities to enrich their camps. Guest speakers included representatives from the Division of Juvenile Justice, Koyukon Language expert Susan Paskvan, Elena Batista Sparrow of the GLOBE program, and Henshaw Science Camp representatives Allyssa

Gabriel of the Kanuti Wildlife Refuge and Alyssa Frothingham of Tanana Chiefs Conference. Each speaker shared information about their programs and answered questions from the fish camp leaders. Elena provided an opportunity for the camps to join the GLOBE observation program. Allyssa and Alyssa described their science camps and shared ideas. Susan did an interactive language activity as a sample of something the camp leaders could do at their camp.



A number of Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) staff attended the workshop because they are interested in learning more about the Cultural Fish Camps. They seek to find camps that they can refer 'at risk' youth to attend to help

ground them in their cultural traditions. The meeting had a big impact on the DJJ staff and the following are some comments they made after the workshop:

"It was inspirational to see the camp overviews with the youth utilizing traditional, cultural, as well as

spiritual knowledge. I was moved by the positive interaction with the Elders and community. The fish camps enhance social interaction, promote culture and traditions, and showcase subsistence salmon fishing through a variety of educational and traditional activities. The collaborative environment was wonderful, and I greatly enjoyed meeting the representatives and seeing the presentations from Pilot Station, Nulato, Galena, Tanana, and Nenana. DJJ is looking to increase communication and build strong relationships with tribal councils as well as utilize programs like the YRDFA Youth Fish Camps that showcase the unique resources of tribes and villages."

"I think the camps themselves seem pretty great, and I really like the concept of getting kids to take part in traditional activities. In the instance of the village I'm assigned to, I like that the Galena camp runs for most of the summer, which increases the opportunity for us to visit the community and take part in some phase of the camp."

"I thought that the YRDFA meeting was very informative. It was interesting to hear about all the

"FISH CAMPS"... CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Voices from the River

Catherine Moncrieff, YRDLA anthropologist, asked this question of fishermen from the Yukon River at the Tanana Chiefs Conference Fish Summit held in Fairbanks on February 19 and 20, 2013:

“What is something you have recently learned about the Yukon River fisheries that you didn’t know before?”

Craig Semakin, Kaltag

“When I first started, I didn’t know about deep sea trawlers and that some of them are foreign [fleets]. Because we are a small village [the low salmon numbers] didn’t affect us, but this year I finally ran out of fish.”

Rocky James, Fort Yukon

“I have been reviewing the treaty between the USA and Canada (salmon agreement). I learned that the treaty didn’t consider future generations and how they would manage in a decline in salmon numbers. We all need to work together, no matter what.”

Rondell Jimmie, Nenana

“I recently learned about how information is shared at meetings. I think we need a Native board to represent us because there are too many people from strong villages with strong, different opinions. It is hard to come up with consensus.”

PJ Simon, Allakaket

“I recently learned that there is a whitefish commercial fishery at the mouth of the Yukon River. I am concerned about this because we have run out of King salmon. We don’t sell our (subsistence) food. (Will we run out of whitefish next?)”

Robert Alstrom, Alakanuk

“Over the last few months, I’ve come to a few meetings. I’ve met a lot of people who are all trying to better our salmon. I think I’m starting to understand folks from more parts of the river.”

“FISH CAMPS” ... CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

different fish camps and the various ways in which they are run. I believe that these fish camps would be an excellent opportunity for some of DJJ’s rural kids, to participate in a cultural activity that is constructive, fun, and educational.”

“I thought that the meetings were very valuable for networking. It was also very helpful to hear about what each particular camp offered for activities. I was surprised to hear that the fish camps were not 100% about fishing, that they offered many different cultural activities and learning experiences that would greatly benefit the youth we work with.”

Richell Carmichael, YRDLA finance manager led the discussion on the sustainability planning. Modeled after a business plan, each camp went through an exercise to identify potential funding sources and long term goals for their camps.

These plans are a work in progress with a goal of completion by September of 2013.

The Yukon River Cultural Fish Camps are gearing up for this summer. The following bullets summarize the camp dates and changes for 2013.

- The Galena camp will run the whole summer, beginning May 20th when the youth get out of school and finish in October. They plan to spend a week or two at the Bishop Mountain Fish Camp and to build a smokehouse and fish wheel in Galena.
- The Nenana Fish Camp will continue to take place at their site on the riverbank in Nenana from July 8 to August 1st. This is a day camp running Monday to Thursday.
- The Pilot Station camp will continue their

long standing camp, while expanding their fishing activities from July 25 to 29.

- The Tanana Fish camp has changed their time frame to August 8-12 to enable them to focus on the chum salmon run this summer.
- The Nulato Fish Camp will take place August 12-16, also targeting chum salmon.

For more information about the fish camps, contact Catherine Moncrieff at YRDLA 907-382-8990. 🐟

YRDLA’s work on this project is funded by the Administration for Native Americans as well as many partners that include state, federal, tribal and private entities. The statements, findings, conclusions, and recommendations are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the funders and partners.

2013 Tanana Chiefs Conference Fish Summit

Preliminary Report by Orville Huntington

Here at Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) we are thankful for the TCC Tribes that used their own Wildlife & Parks Funds to make this Summit a success, and we support efforts by all the Tribes in this regard. In attendance at their Summit, there were 43 Tribal members from 18 tribes from 5 Sub-Regions along the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers. Also in attendance were key State and Federal Fisheries Managers from the Yukon River, and several of our partners in fisheries.

During the first day in the discussions with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) and the Federal Subsistence Fisheries Managers, TCC was able to answer a lot of questions on the failed 2012 fishing season, and the 2013 preseason outlook for salmon in the interior drainages. The tribes from the TCC region saw a great benefit for all by working together in 2013. As many discussed on several occasions there is yet another potential Chinook salmon disaster on the Yukon River in 2013, and can certainly agree something needs to be done. One of the key points is that the ADF&G and federal government wants a reduction in the subsistence harvest. The amount is to be set later but could be as high as 7,000 Chinook salmon reduced from interior Alaska harvests. This also includes the non-tribal members along the Yukon River. It is well known that the Chinook salmon run timing and returns are well below the historical averages in the Yukon River. Data from Pilot Station Sonar cumulative passage and Eagle Sonar at the Canadian Border show very low returns of Chinook salmon in 2012.

The tribes wanted the Department to support their effort of conservation of Chinook salmon, and they wanted them to know last year it resulted in hardship along the Yukon River with all of our TCC tribes. Some of the conservation again this year is to be directed to fewer hours to fish, and not fishing during open fishing periods to protect the first pulse of Chinook salmon moving through the Yukon River. Tribes said the cost of gas to fish and the lack of 6 inch mesh nets available to fisherman in the TCC region, may lead fishermen to forgo their opportunity to fish because of lack of legal gear. They also do not want so many restrictions to subsistence if there is open commercial fishing.

The second and third day had discussions with Yukon River Drainage Fisherman Association (YRDFA) and Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP), in regard to the new Tribal Fish Commission and International Fish Summit we are trying to set up. There was an AVCP PowerPoint and a lot of sharing of information about our collaborative efforts so far. Final products of the discussion were a Tanana Tribal Proclamation to 'Save our Salmon', and support of a resolution from YRDFA on behalf of Loudon Tribe and one from Chalkyitsik for Black River Preservation. These will be forwarded to the TCC Convention by respective tribes that hold an interest in them for considerations by the Full Board of Delegates. There was also a request to have the TCC Convention ratify the E-Board action on the Tribal Fish Commission. 🐟

Yukon River Subsistence Salmon Survey and Calendar Program

Deena Jallen, ADFG • deena.jallen@alaska.gov • 907-459-7294

How many salmon return to the Yukon River? Are salmon fisheries being managed sustainably? Efforts are made at the end of each summer to answer these and many related questions. Subsistence harvest estimates, along with information from fishing permits, test fishery projects, sonar passage, and genetics are used to estimate how many salmon of each species return to the Yukon River. Annual documentation is important for pre-season forecasts, treaty negotiations with Canada regarding

harvest allocation and in ensuring that enough salmon are protected for spawning and subsistence harvest needs.

Management decisions are made each year that affect your fisheries. Those decisions are only as good as the information on which they are based. The subsistence harvest estimate relies on your participation in the annual household harvest survey and calendar programs. The accuracy of these programs is critically dependent on your involvement!

The survey and calendar programs have been conducted for many decades (email author for links to past reports). Data from individuals about households is confidential therefore results are summarized

by community or fishing district. Surveys take place in the fall (September and October) in 33 communities in the Yukon Area and use information from selected households to estimate the harvest of the entire community. Harvest calendars supplement information collected from the surveys. Calendars are sent out in the spring to 1) give households a place to record their daily catch of salmon and other species, and 2) to provide more detailed information about daily harvest for determining harvest and run timing. The use of calendars reduces the need for recalling from memory your harvest numbers, and therefore improves subsistence estimates.

In 2012, 1,610 calendars were mailed to households, and 289 (nearly 18%) were returned. **This year, efforts are being made to boost the calendar return rate**

by providing 32 cash prizes for returning completed calendars.

Cash prizes range from \$100 to \$500. Details will be printed on the inside cover of calendars that will be mailed later this spring.

To qualify for the cash prize drawings, households must return their original calendar by December 31, 2013 with the questions on the inside cover filled out. In January 2014, prize winners will be drawn at random and winners will be notified. Calendars can be returned by mail or you can give the completed calendar to an ADF&G surveyor during the fall survey.

Help protect your salmon and subsistence harvests by providing the reliable information needed for good management decisions. Thank you for your participation and be safe this fishing season! 🐟



YRDFA 2013 Resolutions

23rd Annual Meeting — St. Mary's, Alaska
February 11-14, 2013

01 – Thanking the Community of St. Mary's

Be it resolved that the YRDFA Board Members, delegates and staff of YRDFA gratefully thank the various organizations and the people of St. Mary's, including the City of St. Mary's, St. Mary's School District, Yupiit of Andreafsky Tribal Council, Algaaciq Tribal Council, bed and breakfasts, businesses, fishers, drivers, dancers, cooks, and families for their generosity and hospitality.

02 – Salmon Bycatch

Be it resolved that YRDFA requests that the North Pacific Fishery Management Council take action immediately to reduce the overall bycatch cap to 30,000 and change the pollock fishing season closing date to Sept. 30 to avoid the consistently high bycatch in October.

Be it further resolved that YRDFA requests that the North Pacific Fishery Management Council also take action to adopt chum salmon bycatch management measures which will adequately protect Western Alaska chum salmon runs.

03 – Hatcheries

Be it resolved that YRDFA supports setting specific limits on hatchery production within Alaska and internationally.

04 – Mining in the Yukon River Region

Be it resolved that YRDFA expresses its concern that these mines operate with no impacts to the environment and, particularly, no impacts to aquatic life and habitat productivity.

05 – International Cooperation

Be it resolved that YRDFA will continue its efforts to work with Canadian First Nations, the Council of Yukon First Nations, the Yukon Salmon Sub Committee, state and federal fisheries management agencies and Alaska's tribes for international cooperation and understanding between the United States and Canada for the good of the Chinook salmon and fishers of the Yukon River and its tributaries.

06 – Reducing Fishing Time in Area M June Salmon Fisheries

Be it resolved that YRDFA requests that the Alaska Board of Fisheries significantly reduce the amount of fishing time for the South Alaska Peninsula June fisheries, with accompanying meaningful closure windows to help protect migratory Western Alaska stocks that are transiting the fishery.

07 – Thanking the Elders

Be it resolved that the YRDFA delegation and staff gratefully thank the Elders for attending and participating in the YRDFA annual meeting.

08 – Unified Yukon River Conservation Plan

Be it resolved that YRDFA continue to work and plan strategies with all fisheries stakeholders on the Yukon River on conservation of Yukon River Chinook salmon to allow the stock to recover and rebuild.

09 – Harvesting Summer Chum Salmon

Be it resolved that YRDFA supports allowing the harvest of Yukon River summer chum salmon during the Yukon River Chinook salmon run, regardless of Chinook salmon run strength, if the means and methods of harvesting summer chum do not add additional pressure on the Chinook salmon stocks. 🐟

Highlights of the 23rd YRDFA Annual Meeting

(funded by the Restoration and Management Fund)



Community dinner, raffle and music in the elementary school gym.



YRDFA Lower river co-chair Bill Alstrom addresses the crowd on the importance of conserving king salmon.



Stan Zuray of Tanana and Phillip Titus of Minto, both long-standing YRDFA board members.



Orville Huntington, Board of Fisheries member and Huslia community member, addresses the YRDFA delegation.



YRDFA delegation members from the entire length of the Yukon River sit together at one table to work on fisheries issues.

Thank You to Our 2013 Annual Meeting Raffle Donors

By Teddy Willoya

We want to thank you on behalf of the fishing families of the Yukon River for your generous donation to the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association's annual meeting raffle. The meeting brought together fishers and fishery managers from the entire length of the Yukon River. Nearly all of the attendees, along with many residents from the host community of St. Mary's, participated in the raffle. Your donation helped make 2013's Raffle one of our best ever.

Proceeds from the raffle will be dedicated to better representing Yukon River fishery users and communities that depend on the valuable salmon resource. By supporting communication among upriver and downriver fishery users and promoting contact between user groups and management entities, local people have the opportunity to be involved in the fisheries management process.

Thank you for your time and generous support and I look forward to working with you again next year!



2013 Yukon River Salmon Fisheries Outlook



This information sheet describes the anticipated management strategies for the 2013 season.

Run and Harvest Outlook

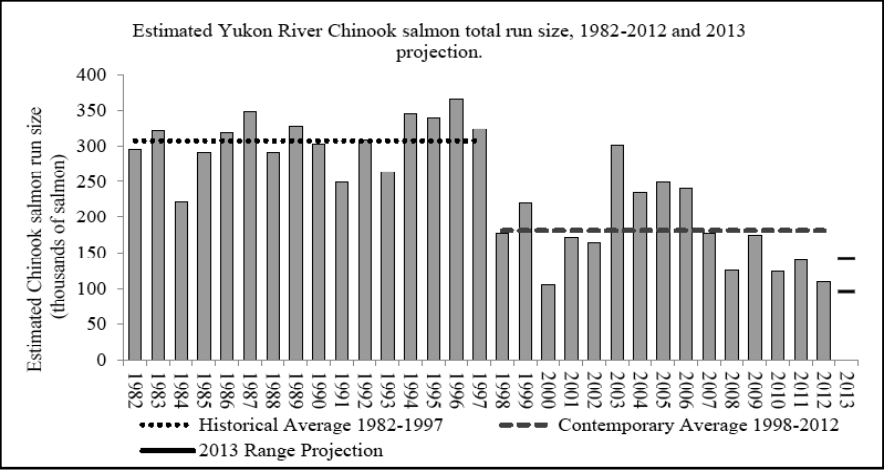
	CHINOOK	SUMMER CHUM	FALL CHUM	COHO
Projection:	Poor to below average	Average to above average	Average to above average	Average to below average
Escapement:	Expect difficulties meeting all goals	Expect to meet goals	Expect to meet goals	Expect to meet goals
Subsistence:	Expect harvest reductions will be necessary	Expect to provide for normal harvest	Expect to provide for normal harvest	Expect to provide for normal harvest
Commercial:	No fishery anticipated	300,000 to 500,000 potentially available for harvest	350,000 to 600,000 potentially available for harvest	10,000 to 70,000 potentially available for harvest

Management Strategies

- The subsistence salmon fishing schedule will begin May 30 in District 1 and will be implemented chronologically with the upriver migration (see schedule table on the opposite side).
- When the schedule is initiated, gillnets will be restricted to 6-inch maximum mesh size in each district including the Coastal District and the Innoko and Koyukuk Rivers.
- Subsistence fishing on the first pulse of Chinook salmon will be closed. Based on the poor preseason projection, it is likely the closure will be extended to protect the second pulse (meaning an approximately 10 day closure). The closure will be initiated in District 1 and similarly implemented in upriver fishing districts and subdistricts based on migratory timing. After the closure, fishing time may be reduced to further conserve Chinook salmon.
- The Tanana River will be managed to meet Chinook salmon escapement goals for the Chena and Salcha rivers. To improve escapement into the Chena River, a subsistence fishing period will be closed (approximately 5 days) and implemented based on inseason assessment and run timing information. Gillnets will likely be restricted to 6-inch maximum mesh size at the midpoint of the run to conserve female Chinook salmon. Personal Use fishery will be restricted to 6-inch maximum mesh size on July 1.
- Fishermen are strongly encouraged to voluntarily reduce their Chinook salmon harvest to not exceed 25% of their average annual harvest to help ensure adequate escapement. For example, a family that normally harvests 40 Chinook salmon should consider taking only 10 this year. Fishermen should consider shifting harvest to other salmon species, where possible, to supplement a reduced Chinook salmon harvest.
- The sport fishery for Chinook salmon will be closed in the mainstem Yukon River. In the Yukon River tributaries (excluding the Tanana River drainage), retention of Chinook salmon will not be permitted in June.
- The Tanana River drainage sport fisheries will be closed to Chinook salmon retention (restricted to catch-and-release). Sport fishing opportunities may be further restricted or liberalized based on inseason run assessments from the Chena and Salcha rivers.
- New commercial gear options available in the Lower Yukon including dip nets, beach seines, and 5.5-inch mesh size gillnets (30 meshes deep) will be employed early in the summer chum salmon directed commercial season to reduce the incidental harvest of Chinook salmon. Later in the season, gillnets with 6-inch maximum mesh size will be utilized when the rate of incidental harvest is expected to be low.

For 2013, the US/Canada Yukon River Panel agreed to continue Interim Management Escapement Goals (IMEG) of 42,500-55,000 Chinook salmon and 70,000-104,000 fall chum salmon based upon the Eagle sonar program. In addition, approximately 5,000 Chinook and a minimum of 10,000 fall chum salmon will need to cross the border to fulfill harvest sharing commitments specified in the US/Canada Yukon River Agreement. The Fishing Branch River IMEG of 22,000-49,000 fall chum salmon is based upon the historical weir data.

The 2013 Chinook salmon projection is for a run size range of 96,000 to 142,000. The lower end of this range is slightly below the run size observed in 2012. The following chart shows the historical estimated Yukon River Chinook salmon total run size, illustrating the drastic decline in production beginning in 1998.



The cause of this drop in production remains largely unknown. Though parent year escapement objectives were generally achieved throughout the drainage, Chinook salmon returns since 2007 have been much lower than expected. As in recent years, initial management will be based on the preseason projections and will shift to inseason assessment as the runs develop. The schedule below is subject to change as subsistence fishing periods can be expected to be closed or reduced in duration to protect Chinook salmon pulses.

Subsistence Fishing Schedule

AREA	REGULATORY SUBSISTENCE FISHING PERIODS	DATE SCHEDULE TO BEGIN	OPEN FISHING TIMES
Coastal District	7 days/week	All Season	M/T/W/TH/F/SA/SU – 24 hours/day
District 1	Two 36-hour periods/week	May 30	Mon. 8 pm to Wed. 8 am /Thu. 8 pm to Sat. 8 am
District 2	Two 36-hour periods/week	June 2	Wed. 8 pm to Fri. 8 am /Sun. 8 pm to Tue. 8 am
District 3	Two 36-hour periods/week	June 5	Wed. 8 pm to Fri. 8 am /Sun. 8 pm to Tue. 8 am
Subdistrict 4A	Two 48-hour periods/week	June 9	Sun. 6 pm to Tue. 6 pm /Wed. 6 pm to Fri. 6 pm
Subdistricts 4B, C	Two 48-hour periods/week	June 16	Sun. 6 pm to Tue. 6 pm /Wed. 6 pm to Fri. 6 pm
Koyukuk & Innoko Rivers	7 days/week	All Season	M/T/W/TH/F/SA/SU – 24 hours/day
Subdistricts 5A, B, C	Two 48-hour periods/week	June 21	Tue. 6 pm to Thu. 6 pm /Fri. 6 pm to Sun. 6 pm
Subdistrict 5D	7 days/week	All Season	M/T/W/TH/F/SA/SU – 24 hours/day
District 6	Two 42-hour periods/week	All Season	Mon. 6 pm to Wed. Noon /Fri. 6 pm to Sun. Noon
Old Minto Area	5 days/week	All Season	Friday 6 pm to Wednesday 6 pm

For additional information:

- Subsistence fishing schedule: 1-866-479-7387 (toll free outside of Fairbanks); in Fairbanks, call 907-459-7387.
- ADF&G Eric Newland, Anchorage 907-267-2217; Jeff Estensen, Fairbanks 907-459-7217; or contact the Emmonak office 907-949-1320.
- USFWS: Fred Bue, Fairbanks 907-455-1849 or 1-800-267-3997; or contact the Emmonak office 907-949-1798.

Your Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) Guide to 2013 Summer Season Management

By Eric Newland and Dr. Stephanie Schmidt, ADF&G

It's that time of year again: the summer fishing season is just around the corner! Unfortunately, the preliminary outlook for Chinook salmon is looking similar to last year, where we had a difficult and disappointing run. We had to take some very conservative management measures and many fishermen voluntarily reduced their harvest to conserve Chinook salmon to make sure enough fish were getting to the spawning grounds, but we still fell short of some escapement goals. The run size was just too small. So we're looking at another summer in 2013 where we will be conservative with our management.

We have been talking with a number of Yukon River fishermen in the last couple of months at several meetings, either in person at the YRDFA annual meeting in Saint Mary's and the TCC meeting in Fairbanks or over the phone for various AC and RAC meetings. We have been trying to get the message out to fishermen about what to expect for the 2013 Chinook and summer chum salmon fisheries. We want to address some of the frequently asked questions we've been getting at these meetings. This isn't meant to be an exhaustive list of concerns and questions – just a few of the more common ones. See the official outlook, also in this newsletter for further details on the upcoming summer season.

When can I subsistence fish?

The amount of subsistence fishing opportunity will be dependent on the run timing and strength, but we can offer some perspective on what to expect this summer:

- 1) The windows subsistence fishing schedule will continue to be implemented early in the season, using a similar timeline as 2012.
- 2) Due to a new regulation adopted by the Board of Fisheries in January, the first pulse of Chinook salmon will be closed to fishing starting in District 1 and implemented chronologically upriver with migration of Chinook salmon.

News releases will be distributed to notify the public when subsistence fishing will be closed. Additional closures may be necessary if inseason assessment information indicates the Chinook salmon run is as poor as expected.

What type of gillnet gear can I use for subsistence fishing?

Gillnets will likely be restricted to 6-inch maximum mesh size in each district when the regulatory subsistence schedule is implemented. The intent of this action is to minimize the overall harvest of the Chinook salmon especially the larger, older females while allowing for some harvest opportunity of summer chum salmon and smaller Chinook.

But I thought gillnet gear was restricted in 2011 to a maximum of 7.5-inch gear to get larger and older females to the spawning grounds? Why is it being restricted further this season to 6-inch or less?

That is true: the 7.5-inch mesh was implemented to get larger and older females to the spawning grounds. Unfortunately, the 7.5-inch mesh size gillnets was intended to target Chinook salmon. So while it may get larger and older females through to the spawning grounds, it still catches a lot of Chinook salmon overall. If the run size is as poor as 2012 when several escapement goals were not met, then there is a need for getting more Chinook salmon to the spawning grounds. These low run sizes in the last couple of years are not large enough to direct the harvest on Chinook salmon. Using 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnet gear focuses the harvest on summer chum salmon (which are projected to have a good run again this year), while allowing some harvest opportunity on Chinook salmon.

What if I don't have that gear?

We understand that some fishermen do not have 6-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets, and buying new gear is expensive. However, we hope that people can find ways to work collaboratively within their community to share gear and harvest. If you don't have the gear, do you know someone else in your community who does and you could work with them to share it?

When can I commercial fish for summer chum salmon?

If a harvestable surplus of summer chum salmon is identified (that means escapement goals and subsistence needs will be met), then commercial fishing opportunity would occur only at times or in a manner that results in minimal impact to the Chinook salmon run. This could mean restricting commercial fishing to just portions of districts or times when summer chum salmon are abundant and we believe Chinook salmon incidental catch will be low. The idea is to get fishing on a large group of summer chum salmon when there are not many Chinook salmon present; unfortunately, this situation does not occur in all areas of the districts because of the river characteristics or because of how the salmon run together in the river.

In Districts 1 and 2, summer chum commercial fishing opportunity with restricted gillnets will likely be delayed until the majority of the Chinook salmon have passed through those districts. In the last several years the first commercial fishing period has typically occurred in late June.

The Subdistrict 4-A Kaltag summer chum salmon fish wheel only fishery will likely commence by July

and possibly extend into August. Commercial fishing in District 6 may occur with fish wheel only as early as the third week of July.

What gear can I use for commercial fishing?

The board has authorized new gear options for the commercial harvest of summer chum salmon in the lower river districts. Dip nets, beach seines, and 5.5-inch mesh size gillnets that are 30 meshes deep can be utilized. However, it is uncertain to what extent we will be using these new gear options. We are planning on meeting with fishermen early in June to discuss how much interest there is in utilizing each gear type.

Incidentally-caught Chinook salmon, by regulation, must be released alive when using dip nets and beach seines. Safely returning a Chinook salmon caught in a dip net back to the water alive is relatively simple. However, the department plans to coordinate with fishermen to ensure safe handling practices are being exercised when releasing Chinook salmon caught in beach seines. Fishermen can start thinking about what fishing locations would best fit these gear types.

The 5.5-inch mesh option will likely be considered when we typically have commercial fishing with gillnets in late June. As in recent years, commercial fishing periods would be timed when the rate of incidental harvest of Chinook salmon would be low and summer chum are still available in volume. Later we would transition to the more traditional, 6-inch or smaller mesh size restriction to target summer chum. We would anticipate that we would get more participation in these periods.

In Sub-district 4-A and in District 6, commercial fish wheel construction specifications were adopted by the board to reduce the potential for injury of Chinook salmon that may incur while being captured and released. Commercial fish wheels must be made in the following manner: basket sides and bottoms consisting of soft mesh material similar to or made of seine web, and an adjustable or fixed slide or chute that consists of a smooth bottom and closed-cell foam lined sides that returns Chinook salmon immediately to the water. As a reminder, commercial fish wheels must be closely attended at all times.

We appreciate your working with department on the management of the fisheries and we will have more updated information as we get closer to the start of the fishing season, and of course as the runs begin to come into the river. Feel free to call Eric Newland in Anchorage at 907- 267-2217 or in Emmonak at 907-949-1320. 🐟

Yukon River Panel Meets In Whitehorse



The management of Yukon River salmon stocks originating in Canada is the joint responsibility of American and Canadian governments with active participation from stakeholders and is overseen by the Yukon River Panel (yukon-riverpanel.com). The Yukon River Panel held its annual meeting in Whitehorse recently to review pre-season outlooks, management strategies and anticipated conservation measures for Canadian origin Yukon River salmon. The Panel agreed upon interim Canadian escapement goals for Chinook salmon, upper Yukon fall chum salmon, and for the Fishing Branch River fall chum salmon and discussed the expected low return of Canadian-origin Chinook salmon in 2013. Additionally, the Panel approved the final list of Restoration and Enhancement projects proposed for 2013 season.

The Yukon River Panel, established by the US/Canada Yukon River Salmon Agreement, met in Whitehorse, YT from March 25 through 28 to discuss 2013 salmon run outlooks and review interim escapement goals for Canadian origin Chinook and fall chum salmon. The Panel agreed to a three year extension of the interim Canadian escapement goal range adopted in 2010 of 42,500 to 55,000 Chinook salmon as evaluated by Eagle sonar. The Panel also agreed to continue for three additional years an interim mainstem Yukon River Canadian escapement goal range of 70,000 to 104,000 upper Yukon fall chum salmon. For the Fishing Branch River, a tributary of the Porcupine River, the Panel agreed to continue for three additional years an interim escapement goal range adopted in 2011 of 22,000-49,000 fall chum salmon. In addition to these escapement goals, there is a commitment to pass enough Chinook and fall chum salmon across the border to meet harvest share agreements.

Based on data compiled by the Panel's Joint Technical Committee, the 2013 Canadian-origin Chinook salmon run is anticipated to be below average to poor. Recognizing this situation, the Panel determined that the implementation of conservative management measures is warranted to facilitate that the total number of Chinook salmon returning to Canada falls within the escapement goal range. In addition to existing

U.S. and Canadian management strategies and regulations, the Panel discussed new regulations directed at Chinook salmon conservation that were recently adopted by the Alaska Board of Fisheries. These changes include providing mandatory protection of the first pulse of Chinook salmon migrating up the Yukon River as well as an increased number of management tools available to better conserve incidental harvest of Canadian-origin Chinook salmon during chum salmon fisheries in Alaska.

Beyond discussing biological and management issues, the Panel approved over \$US 1 million of funding for 31 project proposals for salmon and habitat Restoration and Enhancement Fund projects in both Alaska and the Yukon. The Panel has allocated over \$US 10 million since 2002 to community-based projects, including stewardship projects, directly supporting the management and recovery of Yukon River salmon stocks originating in Canada. For 2013, these projects include population monitoring projects, stewardship and education projects, and subsistence harvest surveys. Projects that were approved for funding will occur along the Yukon River Mainstem and its tributaries, such as the Porcupine River. Communities include Mountain Village, Rampart Rapids, Dawson, Mayo, Old Crow, Teslin and Whitehorse during the 2013 season.

As the current administrator of the Yukon River Restoration and Enhancement fund, representatives from the Pacific Salmon Commission secretariat provided the Panel with an update on 2012 projects that were approved to receive funding by the Yukon River Panel. Additionally, the secretariat presented an overview of its current structure, responsibilities and activities carried out in support of both the Yukon River Panel as well as other Panels established pursuant to the Pacific Salmon Treaty.

Since the Yukon River Salmon Agreement was signed in 2002, the Panel has set an example for cooperation in the sharing and management of international salmon stocks. The Panel, which operates under the umbrella of the Pacific Salmon Treaty, consists of 6 Alaskan and 6 Yukon representatives from throughout the Yukon River system, and is supported by regional advisors, scientists, and managers from both Canadian and United States agencies.

At its winter meeting (scheduled for December 2 to 6, 2013 in Whitehorse) the Panel will review the outcome of the 2013 salmon runs as well as the management actions employed in both Alaska and Yukon. The Panel will also consider Restoration and Enhancement Fund project submissions proposed for 2014. 🐟

Thank You to Our 2012 In Season Harvest Interviewers

By Teddy Willoya

Since 2002, the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA) has been partnering with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to gather subsistence information from fishing households in a project called Yukon River In-Season Subsistence Salmon Interviews. This project is funded by the Office of Subsistence Management. YRDFA would like to send a sincere thank you to our 2012 in season harvest interviewers from: Alakanuk – Mikey Augline and Denis Shelden, Marshall – Norma Evan, Russian Mission – Jeremy Wigley, Holy Cross- Rita Paul, Kaltag – Craig Semaken, Huslia – Sheena Roberts, Galena – Sandy Scotten, Nenana – Rondell Jimmie, Ft. Yukon – Andrew Firmin, and Eagle – Nathan Helmer!

Thank you for participating in this project as a contractor for us. Thanks for taking the time out of your busy summer to complete this job. Your teleconference participation helped inform others that don't live in your area about what is going in your part of the river (weather wise, fish wise, and river conditions). Your efforts were very helpful in gathering the data during the 2012 salmon season. The data you helped collect will be used in the future decision making processes of managing the salmon runs. We understand that it's not always easy to complete this task due to other obligations of preparing for the winter, enjoying the warm weather, and other summer obligations. We thank you for your help and we hope to work with you again this summer!

Lower Yukon River King Salmon Subsistence Harvest Composition – Year 3

(Funding provided by the Yukon River Panel's Restoration and Enhancement Fund)

By Casie Stockdale, AVCP Biologist

AVCP Natural Resources staff is busy preparing for a third season of a king salmon subsistence sampling program in Districts 1 and 2 of the lower Yukon River. With an expected poor Chinook return and additional measures expected to be taken to protect the run, it will be challenging this season to meet sampling goals for this project. We will need everyone's help to work together to get enough samples. We encourage participation in the subsistence sampling program as a way for any local fisherman to help make a difference for the future of Yukon River Chinook salmon.

The purpose of this sampling program is to estimate the age, sex, length (ASL), and stock composition of the lower Yukon River subsistence harvest. A similar project is conducted in the middle Yukon River by Spearfish Research. We aim to collect samples from at least 900 kings collected across 50 different fishing households. ASL and genetic samples are collected from commercial and subsistence catches, from test fish projects, and from escapement projects at weirs. When the information from all of the projects that sample the harvest and escapement components of the run are used together, it can create a picture of the total Yukon Chinook run and provides valuable information about Chinook salmon population trends that are essential to effective management and conservation. The value of the lower Yukon subsistence information and similar data sets increases with each additional year information is collected, provided standardized protocols are followed that allow for comparison between projects and between years.



Sven Paulkan and his family sampling their Chinook catch in St. Mary's.

In addition to collecting data that is essential information for managing the Yukon Chinook run, this project has great value to the communities involved. A key component of this project is that it directly involves public participation, typically family units, and provides participants with background information about salmon research and management issues. The program began in 2011 with 16 local residents participating and was expanded in 2012. In 2012, seven communities were involved. Seven local community coordinators were hired and five boat drivers were hired to assist with the project. 43 samplers were trained and ultimately, 35 local participants successfully sampled 767 Chinook salmon.

Participants are paid for each fish sampled. A "sample" includes from each fish three scales that are used for determining the age of the fish, length, sex, and a small fin clip that is used to determine the general area where the salmon was born (i.e., lower, middle, and upper Yukon River). Also recorded is information about the harvest date, general location, and gear type used. Participants are asked to sample every king they catch for subsistence for the season. For one person sampling, it takes about 3-4 minutes to sample one fish. But that time can be reduced to 1-2 minutes if two people work together, with one person recording while the other samples.

AVCP staff Biologist, Casie Stockdale has been involved with the project since it began in 2011. This year we hope to employ a second AVCP Biologist to assist with the sampling project. As in 2012, AVCP will hire local Community Coordinators in Alakanuk, Emmonak, Mountain Village, St. Mary's, and Marshall as local points of contact.

AVCP Biologists will begin travelling in late May to District 1 and District 2 communities to train participants and to provide them with sampling kits. Trainings take about an hour, and attending is required to participate in the project. It is very important that a standardized sampling procedure be followed so that the results can be compared with other information collected from throughout the Yukon River, both past and present. Depending on river breakup, we



St. Mary's sampler training 2012 with AVCP Biologist Casie Stockdale.



2012 Sampler training in Marshall.

tentatively plan to arrange pre-season group trainings in Alakanuk, Emmonak, and Kotlik between May 25-31, and in Mountain Village, St. Mary's, and Marshall between June 1 and 8.

Quyana to the participating Tribal Councils and local fisherman and other residents for their continued support of this project. Your efforts are helping to collect information that is vital to future king salmon management in the Yukon River!

If you are interested in participating as a sampler this year, please Casie Stockdale (cstockdale@avcp.org, 1-800-478-3521 ext. 7341 or 907-545-4872) for details. ☾



Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association
725 Christensen Drive, Suite 3B
Anchorage, AK 99501

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**EVERY
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1:00 pm Alaska Time | 2:00 pm Yukon Time

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Management, USFWS, and the Yukon River
Panel*