

just getting colored. In St. Mary's first chum were caught on May 18 with 1/3 actively fishing, but 3 families are done fishing for chum having caught 60-100 chum. The water levels are still rising with a lot of debris. Still too early for king salmon to arrive, but lots of chum seemingly abundant on the northside of the river milling around mouth and not going up Andrafsky River. From Marshall up reports indicated lots of debris in the water with water rising quite a bit. In Marshall a few king and more chum salmon have been caught. In Holy Cross reports indicated no catch as of yet. In Nulato no debris now and people fishing mainly on side sloughs for sheefish and whitefish.

On the Koyukuk water is dropping slowly and no debris in the water. In Allakaket reports indicate water may rise again with mountain run-off. No nets out on the river, only in sloughs and lakes. In Wiseman lots of rain and 75% snow pack has led to moderate-high water conditions.

Throughout the Tanana, Yukon Flats and Upper Yukon regions water is still rising with lots of debris. No salmon fishing activities as of yet.

Date	No. of King Salmon
25-27 May	0
28-May	2
29-May	2
30-May	0
31-May	12
1-Jun	10
2-Jun	13

Run Assessment Highlights by ADFG:

Emmonak office opened on May 24 and the test fishery started on May

25th as nets were put in at Big Eddy and on May 31 at Middle Mouth. The Pilot Station test fishery went in a week earlier than last year, therefore counting a week earlier than normal. High debris load and high water are impacting test fishing and sonar. However, concurrent with the subsistence reports, ADFG has witnessed a small trickle of summer chum and a few king salmon. Summer chums are coming in earlier with an early push. Total estimates through June 2 are 1,200 king salmon and 12,000 chum salmon. Little assessment data at this point as ADFG needs more time to gather information for run assessment.

For fishery updates call the recorded information line in Emmonak at 907-949-1731, or the public line at 907-949-1320 or the toll free number at 1-866-479-7387 for fishing schedules and current information.

Management Strategy by ADFG/USFWS:

The schedule for sub-district 4-A incorrectly stated the times on the posters and flyers sent out by USFWS. The correct times should be two 48-hour periods/week starting June 14th on Monday 6 pm to Wednesday 6 pm / and Thursday 6 pm to Saturday 6 pm. ADFG will be in Rampart next week to issue subsistence fishing permits.

Local Input & Closing Comments:

Innoko Fishing Schedule: ADFG sought feedback from conference call participants regarding the request from Shageluk to be allowed to fish 7 days per week on the Innoko River, as they currently fish whitefish and sheefish and there are few salmon caught. With broad support and no opposition expressed from conference call participants, ADFG will issue an emergency order to allow it. It was also expressed that a close eye be kept on the progress of this fishery since this is something new.

Gas Prices: Within the G.A.S.H. region the price of gasoline has increased significantly compared to last summer (\$2.75/gallon in 2003, \$4.50/gallon in 2004). This could have a dramatic effect on

the length of subsistence fishing time and the number of times fisherman go out. Therefore, ADFG asked fisherman to please keep this in mind when considering post-season surveys and how it affected individual fishing activity.

Water-Quality: Water temperature will be measured at all ADFG project sites this summer. In Huslia water collected from the last rainfall had quite a bit of yellow stuff [possibly spruce pollen] in it, and more than ever seen before. Chris Stark requested a water sample be sent to him for testing.

Call # 2 - June 8, 2004

Communities involved in the call:

Hooper Bay	St. Mary's	Nulato	Minto
Alakanuk	Marshall	Koyukuk	Dawson City, YT
Emmonak	Holy Cross	Allakaket	Pelly Crossing, YT
Kotlik	Anvik	Galena	Whitehorse, YT
Mtn. Village	Grayling	Tanana	

State and Federal Agencies involved in the call:

ADFG - Commercial Fisheries in Anchorage, Emmonak, Pilot Station & Russian Mission
ADFG - Division of Subsistence in Fairbanks
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service offices in Emmonak
Office of Subsistence Management in Anchorage & Fairbanks
Dept. of Fisheries & Oceans, Canada in Whitehorse, YT
NMFS in Russian Mission

Other organizations and businesses

Interior Alaska Fish Processors, Inc.

Subsistence Reports:

Subsistence fishers reported that king salmon have been caught as far upriver as Tanana and, since June 4, summer chum as far as the Koyukuk River. Reports are that chum catches are gradually decreasing as kings are increasing. King salmon look good, bright in color, showing no signs of disease, with firmer meat than seen in previous years. Water levels are still high, but also gradually decreasing. Near St Mary's and Marshall water levels were reported as steady. Debris loads in the lower river are off and on, while loads in the upper river are still high but gradually decreasing. Near Nulato debris loads are high as much debris is coming off the Koyukuk River

Around Alakanuk and Middle Mouth the numbers of king salmon are increasing as chums decrease. Fewer kings and more chum were reported coming through the North Mouth due to northerly winds last week. In Emmonak most households are half-way done catching chum. In St Mary's a significant number of kings (10-40 on average) have been caught, so some fishers are done king fishing. In Holy Cross kings are just starting to come in and in Grayling the first fish was caught on June 1, but none since then. Galena fishers have caught a few kings, but a significant run has not come through yet. In Tanana, where the water is clear and high, one king was reported to have been caught so far. Subsistence fishers up-river (Canada) reported that

water levels are high, but are gradually decreasing and there is not much debris in the river. No salmon catches as of yet.

Management Update, by ADFG:

Even though break-up was early this year, run timing appears normal. (It's usually green before the salmon appear and it started to green up around Emmonak on June 1). More sheefish than kings have been seen at Middle mouth, but it is still early and a slow but steady run has appeared at South Mouth so far. As the Pilot Station Sonar program started a week early this year estimates are not comparable to previous years and it is difficult to assess the run at this time. However, to date, passage rates at Pilot Station seem to correlate with the Lower Yukon River test nets, with 5,258 kings and 15,046 chums having already passed through. No assessment of age composition is available at this time as few samples have been taken, and those that have been show conflicting results.

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Management Strategy by ADFG/USFWS:

Due to high gas prices, shortage of gas and significant debris loads in the water many people have not participated in the subsistence fishery yet. Therefore, the subsistence fishery will stay on the scheduled fishing windows to allow for fishing opportunity. Next week's run assessments will be important for determining management's strategy. If catches are up than a commercial fishing period may be possible, if not than the schedule will remain in place.

Local Input & Closing Comments:

Fishing Schedules: Fishers in Holy Cross (District 3) are not pleased with the new fishing schedule. Even though it allows fishing on weekends, it does not allow for two nights of fishing as did last year's schedule. Fishers in District 4-A also expressed concern regarding their schedule start date of June 14. Fishers are concerned their needs will not be met if the run does not come in on time, and would prefer a start date of June 25. At this time they will adhere to the schedule as ADFG is hopeful the run will come in by June 14. Additional fishing time may be considered if the need arises.

Gas Prices: Concern surrounding gas prices still exists and fishers worry that subsistence needs may not be met due to decreased fishing time and the number of boat trips out. In Galena one trip out on the river costs approximately \$80-\$100. In Emmonak gas prices are currently \$3.20/gallon and over \$4/gallon in Canada. YRDFA asked people to start thinking of ways, whether by pooling resources, requesting agency involvement or creating efficient boat trips, to alleviate the gas problem now, before the fishing season is over.

Test Fisheries Projects: The Border Sonar project in Eagle will begin around August 15th for 2-3 weeks, to capture the fall chum and the tail end of the king run. The objective of this project is to explore species composition of resident species versus salmon and to determine distribution. ADFG reviewed some of their test fisheries projects for this summer. It was also commented that the tower in Nulato is not going up this summer as there was no funding from BSFA.

Announcements: Student intern needed for ADFG, Fish Pathology Lab., *Ichthyophonus* Project, July 1 – August 21, 2004: For more information contact Eryn Kahler at 907-267-2174 or email eryn_kahler@fishgame.state.ak.us

Alaska Salmon Fisheries Response Project: To help find new opportunities for people in the salmon industry who are struggling to make ends meet. For more information contact your local tribal council/city office or the Dept. of Labor & Workforce Development at 907-334-2242 or visit www.jobs.state.ak.us

Call #3 - June 15, 2004

Communities involved in the call:

Hooper Bay	Pilot Station	Koyukuk	Galena	Beaver	Pelly
Crossing					
Alakanuk	Holy Cross	Huslia	Ruby	Circle	Old
Crow					
Emmonak	Grayling	Hughes	Tanana	Minto	
Whitehorse					
Mtn. Village	Kaltag	Allakaket	Rampart		Nenana
St. Mary's	Nulato	Wiseman	Stevens Village		Dawson

State and Federal Agencies involved in the call:

ADFG - Commercial Fisheries in Emmonak, Fairbanks, Pilot Station

ADFG - Division of Subsistence in Fairbanks

USFWS in Emmonak, Fairbanks & Galena

Dept. of Fisheries & Oceans, Canada in Whitehorse, YT

NMFS

NPS

RAC – Western Interior

Other Organizations & Businesses

AVCP Interior Alaska Fish Processors, Inc.

Subsistence Reports:

Subsistence fishers reported that king salmon have been caught as far upriver as Rampart. Coastal communities have been fishing the Black River due to bad wind direction and have caught several chum (25) and kings (3). Lower river communities up to St Marys report most fishing effort is ending as subsistence needs have been met. Lots of king and chum salmon have passed through to Pilot Station. In the G.A.S.H region up to Galena the kings are coming slowly, catching 2-6 kings a day. In Holy Cross 7 out of 12 fishers are fishing and have seen good quality fish, but some have had sores. In Grayling not 10% of subsistence harvest has been met and one king was caught with a radio tag. Most report the fish are of good quality and taste good. Nulato fishers are concerned over gas prices (\$4.50/gallon) as it takes nearly 10 gallons/trip. Set nets are just starting in this area as eddys appear. Six miles below Koyukuk, the king run seems to be 5 days earlier than the previous 2 years and the pulse has just started to pick up. From Ruby to Rampart few kings (1-2/day) have been caught. Three fish wheels are just starting in Ruby, and in Tanana the fish wheel averages one king/day. From Stevens Village up through Canada reports are that no salmon have been caught yet. Water levels are still high, which has prevented some fishing, but are slowly dropping. Debris loads in the lower and upper river are minimal.

On the lower Koyukuk River water levels are still high, but near Wiseman and Allakaket water is going down and reaching customary levels. However, water temperatures have been reported as unusually warm. No king salmon have been caught, even though nets are out, and a few chum have been caught in Huslia. No report from subsistence fishers on the Tanana River.

Management Update, by ADFG:

Run timing is earlier than normal, but not as early as last year. Test nets in the lower river show an above average CPU of 8.25 (6.44 is average), which is lower than the 2003 CPU of 13.25. Pilot Station counts of 17,000 king salmon are believed to be underestimated due to silty, high water. However, chum counts, which are less affected by silty water & debris because chum swim closer to shore, are more reasonable at 79,000. The 2004 projection for king salmon is well above the 2001-2002 runs, which were considerably below average, but is expected to be a little less than seen in 2003. The first pulse of kings, starting on June 9, dropped on June 11 and built up again on June 12 and has held steady since, even higher on June 15 than anticipated.

It is still too early to project for summer chum, but this year's run, mainly 5-yr olds (75%) coming from the 1999 brood year, are twice the amount seen in 2003 for this time of year. More information will be available next week.

The Anvik and Andreafsky escapement projects are in the process of being set up and will begin next week. As of June 13, 216 kings were tagged in Russian Mission. Archival tags also being used this year (pink spaghetti tag) to collect depth and water temperatures. DFO Canada reported that fish wheels will go in next week before salmon reach the border.

Age composition assessments show that the numbers of 5-yr old king salmon are down (13%), when normally they comprise 25% of the run. In the same respect, 6-yr old kings are up (80%) from the usual 60%. The number of 4-yr olds is also high this year. 7-yr old salmon comprise about 4% of the run, compared to the usual 9%.

For fishery updates call the recorded information line in Emmonak at 907-949-1731, or the public line at 907-949-1320 or the toll free number at 1-866-479-7387 for fishing schedules and current information. Report radio tags toll-free at 1-888-881-2104 or 907-584-5300.

Management Strategy by ADFG/USFWS:

District Y-2 will open from 6:00pm to midnight on June 15 for commercial fishing. It is expected that later this week District Y-1 will also have a commercial fishing opportunity. Opening in District Y-1 would allow for commercial harvest just before the mid-point of the run. Since the first pulse is ending, allowing commercial fishing in District Y-1 would allow for harvest from the second pulse, thereby spreading out the harvest and allowing salmon to move up river.

Local Input & Closing Comments:

Commercial Fishing: Fishermen 25 miles below Hughes expressed concern over a commercial fishing period opening in District Y-2 as they feel they don't catch kings, or even good quality kings, the years there is a commercial opening. It was mentioned that high water last year played a role in this, affecting harvests. ADFG reminded teleconference participants that even though there have been bad years (1999-2002) for returns, last year was a good year and they need to be patient this year as the run is coming and should show up in the next few days (June 20-22). Radio tagging started the first week in June and those fish just starting to pass through the Ruby area. Tagging picked up the second week in June and those fish are now appearing in Holy Cross/Anvik traveling 33-38 miles/day. The ratio of males to females returning to the spawning grounds can be answered after the commercial fishing opening.

Fishing Schedule: Allowing for a commercial fishing period makes fishermen in Nulato feel that commercial has precedence over subsistence and asked that ADFG go off the fishing schedule to add more opportunity for them to fish. However, ADFG doesn't want to go off schedule, even though the first pulse looks good, because they want to protect the early part of the run. It was emphasized that the commercial fishing period in District Y-2 would allow for harvest from the second pulse of fish, and not the first. Nulato fishermen still feel, with the price of gas, that it would be more worthwhile for them to fish the second pulse (rather than the first pulse) as less effort would have to be made, with fewer trips and less money spent on gas. Up-river participants would like to see their subsistence needs met, therefore ADFG should be lenient and let more fish pass up river.

Age Composition: Age composition assessments are done using large mesh size. Smaller mesh is not used to get a more accurate picture of age composition because historical data from ADFG consistently used large mesh gear. Pilot Station data, collected in different size nets, could be used to determine age composition, but not until post-season. Larger mesh catches older king salmon (6-7 yrs old) and chum gear catches mainly 4-5 year olds.

Water Temperature: Water temperature will be recorded at all ADFG project sites this summer. Warm water temperatures promote the development of disease (such as *Ichthyophonus*). The disease is less likely to show up in waters where temperatures are cooler. Last year temperatures on the mainstem were around 17-18 degrees C, this year its holding at 13-14 degrees C which means the quality of fish could be better. Baseline studies are being done at in the Tanana, Salcha and Chena Rivers.

Gear Size Study: YRDFA will be conducting a gear study this year with Chris Stark as the principle investigator.

Call #4 - June 22, 2004

Communities involved in the call:

Hooper Bay	Pilot Station	Nulato	Tanana	
Dawson				
Alakanuk	Marshall	Huslia	Rampart	Pelly
Crossing				
Emmonak	Holy Cross	Wiseman	Beaver	Old
Crow				
Mtn. Village	Grayling	Galena	Ft Yukon	
Whitehorse				
St. Mary's	Kaltag	Fairbanks	Eagle	

State and Federal Agencies involved in the call:

ADFG - Commercial Fisheries in Anchorage, Emmonak, Fairbanks, Pilot Station
 USFWS in Emmonak & Galena
 Dept. of Fisheries & Oceans, Canada in Whitehorse, YT
 USFWS, OSM in Anchorage & Fairbanks
 NMFS

Other Organizations & Businesses

CATG	BSFA	Interior Alaska Fish Processors, Inc.	Daily News-
Miner			
YRCFA	Carl Morgan's Office	YRDFA Ed Exchange Participants	

Subsistence Reports:

Subsistence fishers reported that king salmon have been caught as far upriver as Dawson, however the bulk of the run seems to be between Kaltag and Nulato. Hooper Bay is suffering what looks to be a subsistence disaster due to wrong winds with only 5% of the harvest completed (150 chum, 12 king and a few pink). Lower river communities up to Marshall report most fishing effort is ending as subsistence needs have been met. In Alakanuk fishermen are predicting that kings will run through July like in 2003 and 1958. In Emmonak most subsistence effort is for chum and are now starting to see colored fish. Pilot Station fishermen reported that whitenose salmon are running earlier than the normal July start. In Holy Cross the kings are still silver and medium in size. In Grayling fishing effort has increased this past week and some fishermen are half done. One king catch was 50% jacks. Water levels seem to be dropping throughout the lower part of the river, but still higher at this point than in previous years. A significant number of fish hit Kaltag on June 19, therefore most fishing effort has started, averaging 5-20 kings in one drift. Nulato fishers have set nets out reporting poor catch with only 10% of the harvest completed.

Up the Koyukuk River in Huslia mostly chum and few kings, all of good quality, have been caught. In Wiseman water levels are down and they are still waiting for fish. Back on the mainstem in Galena one fisherman is using king gear and has not caught much yet, which is low compared to this point last year. In Tanana the first pulse arrived at hit both the north and south bank at the same time on June 18. Much debris is coming off the Tanana River and the Y-5A test wheel has now stopped due to mud. However, on June 19 the wheel caught 14 kings and 4 chum in 18 hours. Eighteen miles below the bridge between Rampart and Stevens Village fishermen caught 7 kings in 48 hours. In the Yukon Flats area catches have been slow, averaging 1-2 kings/day. And in Dawson fish wheels are turning and one king salmon has been caught to date.

Management Update, by ADFG & USFWS:

Estimates calculated from Pilot Station sonar indicate that 64,000 king and 264,000 chum have passed through as of June 20, which is below the 2001-2002 run. A pulse hit Pilot Station on June 21, with counts including 2000 kings and 8500 chum. It is predicted that 1 -1.4 million summer chum, mainly 5 year-olds from the 1999 brood year, will pass through this year. Other escapement projects are getting started. Anvik, already seeing chum, will be up and counting the evening of June 22, as well as the Chena counting tower. Federal escapement projects are mostly up and running. In Henshaw the project is in and counted 2 chum, Clear Creek project counted 43 chum and Tozitna counted 1 chum, all on June 21. The Andrafsky weir and Gisassa project are still being installed. The radio telemetry project in Russian Mission tagged 550 kings and 50 chum to date. The goal is to tag a total of 1100 kings and 200 chum. The first tagged fish have moved up river to the Rapids and up the Tanana River to Manley. Kings are moving at roughly 38 miles/day and chum at 23 miles/day and it is predicted that kings will arrive in Circle in another 11 days.

Age composition assessments show that 5-yr old kings comprise 17% of the run (normally 25%) and 6-yr olds are at 75% (normally 80%). The commercial harvest in Y-2 showed a more normal age composition with 19% 5-yr olds, 69% 6-yr olds and 6% 7-yr olds. Jacks are being caught, which bodes well for future runs.

Commercial fishing periods in Y-1 and Y-2 have yielded a total of 22,000-24,000 king salmon to date.

For fishery updates call the recorded information line in Emmonak at 907-949-1731, or the public line at 907-949-1320 or the toll free number at 1-866-479-7387 for fishing schedules and current information. Report radio tags toll-free at 1-888-881-2104 or 907-584-5300.

Management Strategy by ADFG & USFWS:

With 2/3 of the run already through the lower river, ADFG predicts that this year's run will be as strong as, or better than, the runs in 2001-2002. This year's passage has been steady with no peaks as seen last year, and should remain steady over the next 10-12 days as the run moves up the river. Therefore managing as anticipated, providing for commercial harvests at the front and back ends of a pulse and, if possible, will try to provide for commercial opportunity in all districts. Currently Y-1 and Y-2 are open for subsistence, Y-3 is off, in Y-4 ADFG is looking into starting earlier than this weekend, and in Y-5 just going on subsistence schedule with Y-5A on 2/48hrs like Y5B-C.

Local Input & Closing Comments:

Commercial Fishing: Concern was expressed as to the target number of kings that might be taken during the commercial fishery this year. ADFG assured teleconference participants that the harvest would not reach 100,000 as only 25,000 have been caught to date and we are already 2/3 way through the run.

Fishing Schedule: Nulato fishermen again asked ADFG to consider taking them off the normal fishing schedule to allow more fishing opportunity as community members are experiencing hardships due to gas prices, limited income, active fishermen leaving town to fight wild fires and regular work schedules. ADFG and USFWS both agreed to look into the regulations, work out the details and see what could be done. Lower river fishermen reminded teleconference participants that all fishermen experience hardships too and must adjust their work schedules to accommodate for fishing time.

Civil Disobedience: A fisherwoman in Marshall asked whether other fishermen along the Yukon River were considering opposing the subsistence fishing schedule through civil disobedience. Teleconference participants responded with a unanimous "NO". Lester Wilde, YRDFA Co-Chair reminded participants that the coastal districts have not met their subsistence needs and probably won't have a chance to, whereas fishermen up river need to be patient and wait for the fish to arrive. Nick Tucker of Emmonak also reminded participants of YRDFA's goal to keep up river and down river fishermen communicating, that there be no finger pointing, no arguing and that everyone will share the salmon resource.

Fish Health: Teleconference participants were reminded by a lower river fisherman (Emmonak) that there are many factors contributing to the health of the salmon, including oil spills and nuclear waste. He was reminded by fishermen visiting from Canada on YRDFA's Ed Exchange that the Yukon Queen could also contribute to fry mortality and should be looked into.

Call #5 - June 29, 2004

Communities involved in the call:

Hooper Bay	Pilot Station	Kaltag	Galena
Dawson			
Alakanuk	Marshall	Nulato	Fairbanks
Whitehorse			
Emmonak	Holy Cross	Huslia	Tanana
Mtn. Village	Anvik	Wiseman	Rampart

St. Mary's

Grayling

Koyukuk

Circle

State and Federal Agencies involved in the call:

ADFG - Commercial Fisheries in Emmonak, Fairbanks & Pilot Station

USFWS in Anchorage & Fairbanks

USFWS, OSM in Bethel, Anchorage & Fairbanks

Dept. of Fisheries & Oceans, Canada in Whitehorse, YT

NMFS

Other Organizations & Businesses

AVCP Interior Alaska Fish Processors, Inc.

Subsistence Reports:

Subsistence fishers reported that king salmon fishing has now started as far up as Circle. Hooper Bay is still enduring the same winds and the same problem with only 36 chum and 3 kings caught this past week – not including the Black River. Ocean water temperatures seem to be higher than normal with jellyfish inundating the waters. Subsistence efforts are decreasing in lower river communities up to Holy Cross with most fishermen drying and putting away now. Lots of chum and pink salmon have passed through lower river communities up to Pilot Station. In Alakanuk kings are bright and in Emmonak 1 out of 3 kings are blush in color. In Holy Cross subsistence efforts are 80% done and the fish look good, but a high percentage look to have Ichthyophonus and large flesh sores. Near Anvik the fish seem to have slacked off, decreasing from 40 to 3 kings caught while drifting. Effort is still strong in this area as 5 out of 8 families in Anvik have not met their needs and only 2 out of 46 have in Grayling. In Grayling a big run is going by and the fish look healthy, finding only 2 out of 25 kings to have Ichthyophonus. Whitenose are also being caught. In Nulato, Koyukuk and Galena the fish are coming steady as well and look good with only a few having sores. Water levels are dropping and debris loads are minimal throughout the lower part of the river.

In the Tanana River water levels are high with debris still spilling out into the mainstem of the Yukon. The Y5-A Test Wheel operated for nearly 5 hours on June 28 and yielded an artificially high number of kings (69) and chum (10) due to the silt deposit and flow of water beneath the wheel which is acting as a funnel and channeling fish through that part of the river. At the Rapids Video Test Wheel 18% of king salmon checked for Ichthyophonus showed visible signs of the disease. To date the male/female ratio is 18% female and 82% male and 41% of the run is comprised of jacks. Quality of the fish is normal and some redder kings are showing up in the latest catches. In Rampart fishermen have started fishing, as well as in Circle where fishermen have already seen that 1/3 of the run are females.

Management Update, by ADFG & USFWS:

Estimates calculated from Pilot Station sonar indicate that 138,000 king (average is 120,000) and 748,000 chum (average is 858,000) have passed through to date. The king run is the second highest passage since 1995 and ADFG projects that 1.1-1.4 million summer chum will pass through. In the Anvik River 81,000 summer have passed through, with a projection of 490,000-700,000 chum which would surpass the goal of 350,000-700,000. In the Chena and Salcha Rivers kings have been seen at the escapement projects, but not enough data to assess at this point. Commercial fishing periods in Y-1 and Y-2 have yielded a total of 47,000 king salmon to date, not including the opening from the evening of June 28. For the radio telemetry project 757 kings have been tagged (goal is 1,100) as well as 112 summer chum (goal is 200). Subsistence reports are consistent with telemetry data and show kings passing through Circle and Nenana. DFO

reported that test wheels went in last week at Sheep Rock and White Rock. Catch has been low, averaging about 2/day, with only 6 kings caught to date.

Age composition assessments show that 6-yr olds are dominating the run at 70-75% and 5-yr olds are at 19%. Commercial harvest data and test wheels indicate that 55% to 60% of the run are females. 48% of the summer chum run looks to be comprised of 4-5 year olds.

Federal escapement projects are up and running. Cumulative counts to date include: E. Andreafsky, 800 king and 19,000 chum; Gisassa, 34 king and 4,500 chum; Clear Creek, 730 chum; Henshaw, no king and 375 chum; and Tozitna, 7 king and 20 chum.

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Management Strategy by ADFG & USFWS:

Currently Y-1 and Y-2 are open for subsistence, Y-3 and Y-4A are open until further notice, and Y-4B&C are open for subsistence 5 days/week and Y-5 went on the schedule as of June 22. Commercial fisheries in Y-2 are currently closed, a period for commercial may open in Y-4 but no announcement yet, and in Y-5B&C a period will likely open this week and anticipated for next week in Y-6. Summer chum runs appear stronger than anticipated, therefore all needs should be met and a commercial fishery may be possible if there's a market. Look for more announcements this week from ADFG.

Local Input & Closing Comments:

Commercial Fishing Opportunity Wanted: Fishermen in Grayling want better forecasts of when a commercial fishing period may open, as they currently have no buyers and no licenses and no market for kings. Even though there were roe markets in this area in the past, currently there is no market and it's frustrating because of the surplus of chum coming through this year. Many fishermen in this area feel they get the back burner when it comes to commercial fisheries and would appreciate the help to revive a commercial fishery in their area when the chance arises. Virgil Umphenour reminded these fishermen that as long as wild salmon compete with hatchery fish they will never have a roe fishery again. He suggested they get support from TCC and AVCP to address biological and market problems tied to hatcheries and subsidies from the State. Gilbert Huntington, YRDLA Co-Chair related that it is a long-term planning issue that needs to be addressed during the post-season planning process which also needs the support of lower river fishermen in districts Y-1 and Y-2. Gilbert Huntington also called for pre-planning research and background information to be collected in order to have something to work with for the next planning season. Frank Alstrom commented that he would go to the YDFDA Board and see what they could do to help.

Eels Evident in New Locations: Fishermen in Huslia and Hughes commented on the appearance of eels in the Koyukuk River, finding eel in the stomach of a pike. Fishermen on the Inooko also saw eels and think the fish are lost.

Water Temperature Data: Water temperature data collected from the federal test fisheries show that side streams are colder than the mainstem and at Pilot Station the temperature was steady at 18.5 to 19 degrees C as of June 28. However, it's almost up to 20 degrees C, shooting up within the last 48-72 hours. Archival tags (pink spaghetti tags) are recording temperature data, and next week NMFS will have more information available. Teleconference participants were reminded

of the importance of returning tags and that those who return tags are part of a lottery for a grand prize at the end of the season.

Ichthyophonus: Kings are primarily affected by *Ichthyophonus*, but chum get it too. ADFG is not sure of the mortality rate due to this disease but infection rates seem to hover around 30% from year to year. Speculation is that adult salmon are infected when out to sea and prone to falling symptom to it in freshwater as their stress levels increase upon returning to spawn. Warmer water temperatures may affect infection rates as well.

Call #6 – July 6, 2004

Communities involved in the call:

Hooper Bay	Grayling	Huslia	Fairbanks	Dawson
Emmonak	Nulato	Koyukuk	Beaver	Pelly Crossing
St Mary's	Galena	Tanana	Old Crow	Whitehorse

State and Federal Agencies involved in the call:

ADFG - Commercial Fisheries in Emmonak, Fairbanks & Pilot Station NMFS
USFWS in Emmonak, Anchorage & Fairbanks
USFWS, OSM in Anchorage & Fairbanks
Dept. of Fisheries & Oceans, Canada in Whitehorse, YT

Other Organizations & Businesses

BSFA Interior Alaska Fish Processors, Inc. Boreal Fisheries

Subsistence Reports:

Subsistence fishers reported that king salmon are as far up as Dawson, YT with a few caught in Pelly Crossing. As reported last week, 95% of families in Hooper Bay have not met their subsistence needs due to wrong winds. Those that have met their needs fished on the Black River. Most fishing effort in the lower river has ceased as families are now concentrating on drying & putting away and are waiting for fall chum and silvers. On the Andrafsky River some fishermen believe they have already caught a few fall chum. Water levels are stable at normal levels and no debris is reported. One out of three kings caught in Emmonak are blush color. In Nulato reports indicate that some kings are a little redder and have sores on the flesh with pale meat. A Huslia fisherman on the Koyukuk River reported catching kings of poor quality with gray, soft flesh; he went down to the Yukon to get better fish to give out to the elders.

In Galena fishermen report better king harvests this year (compared to 2003) with less effort. In Koyukuk larger kings were caught this year from the 3-4 year-old age class and several were caught with radio tags. In Tanana, fishermen report king quality as normal, with limited signs of *Ichthyophonus*, but showing advanced (normal) spawning characteristics. At the Rapids Video Test Wheel in Tanana, to date, 497 king salmon have been sampled, 13.5% are female and 86.5% are male, with 51.7% of the males as jacks. Subsistence efforts are winding down, but fishermen in Beaver report catching between 10-20 kings/day, all of good quality, bigger and better in color compared to this time last year.

In the Yukon Territory nets are just starting to go in, and in Dawson fishermen are catching an average of 2 kings a day - all of good quality. Water levels are higher than normal with some

debris from wild fires. In Old Crow not much is running yet, however a few kings have been caught. One net is in the water in Pelly, catching a few kings.

Management Update, by ADFG & USFWS:

All ADFG & USFWS assessment projects are up and operating and this year's king run looks to be stronger than in 2001-2002. Estimates calculated from Pilot Station sonar indicate that 166,583 king (average from 1995, 1997-2003 is 142,000) and 984,000 chum (average is 1,125,000) have passed through to date. Last year at this time only 823,239 chum had passed through, but cumulative passage numbers for king were at 253,130. Run abundance at this time is expected to provide for escapement, subsistence use and border passage, with a surplus for commercial harvests. The Andreafsky River weir indicates that king passage (3,200 salmon) has exceeded the sustainable goal of 1,500 salmon. The Gisasa River Weir shows less (170 chinook) than the 1995-2002 average, but the numbers still look okay. The chum escapement goal has been surpassed at Clear Creek, showing at passage of 5,000 chum. Henshaw Creek and Tozitna River both look good for meeting escapement needs for both chum and king. An estimate of 51,000 kings has been taken to date in lower river commercial fisheries. Information for commercial fisheries in Y-5B&C and the number of kings taken is unavailable at this time.

Two DFO fish wheels went in on June 24 and June 26, respectively, and caught the first king salmon on June 27, even though there were reports of kings caught prior to that date in Dawson. To date a total of 104 kings have been caught, which is three times the average, however it is still early in the run and water is high. One wheel is off the main bank and catching smaller males and averaging 17% females. The other is catching more (34%) and larger females (39-40 in), but overall catching fewer fish. Test fisheries will give initial population estimates through tag recovery. The R&E Fund project (weir) at Blind Creek will be going in shortly at Pelly.

Management Strategy by ADFG & USFWS:

Subsistence salmon fishing in District 1 is open and in District 2, 3 and Subdistrict 4-A, subsistence fishing is now open until further notice. In Subdistricts 4-B and 4-C, subsistence fishing is now 5 days per week. The commercial fishing period in District 1 on July 5 is likely to be the last commercial fishing period for the summer season. Two more 12 hour commercial salmon fishing periods have been announced for Subdistricts 5-B and 5-C. In addition, two 42 hr commercial salmon fishing periods have been announced for District 6. It is anticipated the commercial opportunity will occur in Subdistrict 5-D some time during the week of July 12.

Local Input & Closing Comments:

Water Temperature: A teleconference participant from Dawson questioned whether warm air temperatures would have an effect on water temperatures. DFO indicated they would have post-season temperature data available. As well, John Eiler with NMFS related how important archival tag retrieval was as temperature data is recorded and stored in those tags. Again, that information would be available post-season, but data retrieved from two tags shows that water temperatures this year in the lower and middle mainstem averaged around 16 to 17 degrees C. Temperatures normally increase after the Rapids-Rampart area with hottest temperatures around mid-July.

Effects of Wild Fires: A teleconference participant questioned whether wild fires occurring throughout the drainage would affect salmon. Both DFO and ADFG expressed that effects from wild fires would not be realized until years after its burn. Relatively small areas (compared to the size of the entire drainage) are experiencing fires so effects could be minimal. There are many factors that affect salmon so it would be hard to say that these wild fires might impact salmon

Up the Koyukuk River, in Huslia nine fishermen are out fishing with set net gear and reports range from very good to normal for catching summer chum. One fisherman caught a silver salmon, but most are waiting on fall chum as they rely heavily on this second species of chum.

Within the Rampart Region, including Tanana and Rampart, most are done fishing for king salmon as the numbers passing through the Y-5A test wheel begin to dwindle. Summer chum passage, however, is increasing. In Ft Yukon fishermen are still out catching king salmon and report that their subsistence needs are being met. In Canada no king salmon have reached Whitehorse yet, but a few have been caught near the mouth of McQuesten River, which is a tributary of the Stewart River. In Old Crow the king salmon run is fair as 1-2 kings salmon have been caught per day.

Management Update, by ADFG, USFWS & DFO:

Estimates calculated from Pilot Station sonar indicate that 182,000 king and 1.25 million chum (average is 1.33 million) have passed through to date. ADFG calculates that the low end of the escapement goal has been met. Age composition analysis shows that the number of 5-yr olds has increased to a normal percentage, but the percentage of females is still 10% than normal, even when compared to test fishery catches and commercial harvests. Summer chum passage showed younger salmon coming in later in the run and the older salmon returning in the beginning of the run. To date the commercial fishery in the lower river has taken 52,643 king salmon (average weight of 20.8lbs) and 19,842 summer chum (average weight of 6.9lbs). In Districts Y-5B and Y-5C four commercial openings have yielded approximately 1,500 king salmon.

The radio telemetry project in Russian Mission is nearly completed and tagging has begun at the Y-5A test wheel in Tanana to tag 110 king salmon to test for *Ichthyophonus*. Currently the radio telemetry shows that 60 king salmon have passed the border and are moving into the Stewart, Pelly, White and Porcupine River. More fish in the lower river shows out of 4 salmon, three are heading to Canada and one is bound for the Tanana River.

The Gisasa River Weir shows 850 king salmon passing through, which is within average. Fires have caused the BLM Tozitna weir to be evacuated, but as of July 11 the king salmon count was 600 and summer chum was 1,900. Current counts at these escapement projects lead managers to believe that escapement needs will be met, as well as other uses.

Across the border 141 salmon have been caught at the upper DFO test wheel in Canada. Nets are being utilized near the test wheels for comparison purposes, and so far have been catching small males. These nets will be moved once these sites are exhausted. A commercial fishing period started Sunday (July 11) noon for three days and one fisherman caught above average for this time of year. Some fishermen are fishing in Dawson and Stewart, but DFO has no official counts at this time.

Management Strategy by ADFG & USFWS:

The fall chum management plan will take affect starting July 16 and the mind-point of the run will be considered through on August 6. The windowed fishing schedule will start this week in District Y-1. The Emmonak and Mt. Village test fisheries will be set up for drifting.

Local Input & Closing Comments:

Fall Season Begins: A teleconference participant asked ADFG how they determine the date at which the fall season begins. Using historical data, a change over is seen around July 16 and genetic studies show when runs overlap and when one run drops off and the other picks up.

Ichthyophonus: Of 272 king salmon sampled near the Rapids, a possible 17% show visible signs of *Ichthyophonus* infection.

Water Clarity: ADFG stated that high, turbid water early in the season could have affected sonar counts. While they don't have exact information at this point, they did say that these numbers were conservative to reflect difficulties associated with estimating fish passage.

Coastal District Concerns: Gabe Sam, a representative from Carl Morgan's Office, expressed his concern for families living within the Coastal District and their struggle to meet subsistence needs and asked how Carl Morgan's Office could help. Lester Wilde, YRDFA Co-Chair and Hooper Bay resident said that by next week he would have a report on the situation in the Chevak & Hooper Bay area.

Call #8 – July 20, 2004

Communities involved in the call:

Hooper Bay	Pilot Station	Nulato	Tanana	Eagle
	Whitehorse			
Emmonak	Grayling	Huslia	Rampart	Pelly Crossing
Mt. Village	Kaltag	Koyukuk	Fairbanks	Mayo

State and Federal Agencies involved in the call:

ADFG - Commercial Fisheries in Emmonak, Anchorage & Fairbanks	NMFS
USFWS in Fairbanks	
USFWS, OSM in Fairbanks	
Dept. of Fisheries & Oceans, Canada in Whitehorse, YT	

Other Organizations & Businesses

BSFA	Interior Alaska Fish Processors, Inc.	Carl Morgan's Office
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Subsistence Reports:

Subsistence fishers reported that king salmon are as far up as Pelly Crossing, YT. Lower river communities, up to Koyukuk, are done subsistence fishing for king salmon and are waiting for the arrival of fall chum. In Emmonak community members are concentrating on berry picking. In Pilot Station fishermen reported catching a few silver and fall chums, as well as seeing a steady pink salmon run. In Nulato one fisherman caught an average of 14 silver salmon and 3 summer chum salmon, using a silver salmon net, over a three day period (July 12-14). Throughout the Alaskan part of the drainage, water levels are down.

Up the Koyukuk River in Huslia one fisherman reported catching mostly male summer chum. Using only half a net to fish, catch is of low quality with fungus-like growths on the skin of summer chums. In the Rampart-Rapids region, as the run of king salmon are slowing down and their quality deteriorating (pale flesh and signs of *Ichthyophonus*), most fishermen report being done with their subsistence, king salmon fishing. Summer chum have been seen in large quantities along the north bank in Tanana as fishermen wait for the arrival of fall chum. As fire threats in Eagle subside, fishermen are getting back out on the river to fish kings in order to meet

subsistence needs. One fisherman in Eagle, using a fish wheel, reported catching 6 adult king salmon and 6 jacks.

Further up river into Canada fishing for kings is heavy in Dawson and will start soon in Carmacks. One fisherman in Mayo reported catching an average of 5-10 king salmon per day. In Pelly Crossing the first pulse of king salmon has come through, and fishing is reported as fair to good. Reported by one fisherwoman, *Ichthyophonus* was seen in 2 out of 6 kings caught in Pelly.

Management Update & Strategy, by ADFG, USFWS & DFO:

Summer Season: At this time ADF&G summer season staff are performing aerial surveys to assess escapement on the spawning grounds. This year's run assessment for king salmon is stronger than the below average runs in 2001-2002. Currently, most king salmon are in the upper Yukon. The summer chum projection is 1.5 million, which should be enough to meet subsistence and allow for commercial opportunity. In the lower river, commercial fisheries (to date) have taken 52,643 king salmon and 19,842 summer chum. Total commercial fisheries, including Y5B-C and Y-6, have taken 56,193 king salmon and 21,250 summer chum.

The telemetry project in Russian Mission finished tagging 1,000 king salmon on July 2. Aerial tracking will begin next week to locate tagged salmon in their spawning habitat. Based upon tags which have already been retrieved by fishermen, the first part of the king salmon run has made its way to the upper drainage, mid-run salmon have passed through the Rapids and are nearing the US/Canadian border, and the latter part of the run has hit near Manley and the Rapids. In Tanana an additional 100 were tagged for an *Ichthyophonus* study.

DFO reported catching an average of 50 kings/day in their test wheels and about 5-10/day in gillnets. As in Stan Zuray's test wheel in the Rapids, DFO is seeing mostly males and smaller males in their test fisheries, with only 20% being female. Two commercial periods have been opened to date, with another occurring now, catching 1,000 king salmon in three days. Once this commercial fishing period ends (Thursday, noon) DFO will have a population estimate, but currently it looks that the 28,000 king salmon escapement goal will be met. Water level in Whitehorse is the highest it's been in 20 years due forest fires, warm air temperatures and glacier melt in Atlin, B.C. Water levels at test wheels are higher and better than last year, but may have prematurely inflated the king count as early-season catch was twice the normal average. For every 40 fish through, one was tagged. As water levels drop, so too will the efficiency of the wheel. Currently catch is unusually high in the afternoon, compared to normal highs in the evening.

Fall Chum Season: Based on summer chum returns and parent year escapements, this year's fall chum projection is 500,000-600,000 salmon, which should be sufficient to meet escapement and subsistence needs. Management will return to the subsistence fishing schedule starting in lower river and moving up river as the run develops. The mid-point of the run (August 8th) is the potential time to change the fishing schedule. Assessment projects are starting to come on line, with the first fall chum caught in Emmonak on July 19. Starting July 19 sonar counts will apportion fish passage as fall chum. These counts have been steadily declining, with sharper pulses compared to the summer chum run.

Local Input & Closing Comments:

Water Levels & Temperature: A fisherman in Koyukuk asked whether low returns of fish in the Gissasa River could be attributed to the low water levels. While USFWS is keeping track of water levels this year, there have been no comparisons made to last year's data. Tributaries are

showing cooler water temperatures (12-15.5 degrees C) compared to the mainstem (19-20 degrees C).

Ichthyophonus: DFO stated that some, but not all, fishermen in Canada found the first pulse of fish to be of poor quality with rotting fins and pale flesh. The combination of high water levels and high temperatures could have a profound effect on salmon traveling long distances infected with *Ichthyophonus*. DFO requested for an update on *Ichthyophonus* projects as they would like to see evidence of pre-spawning mortality. ADF&G will report next week as all staff members are currently out in the field. John Eiler, working on the radio telemetry project, did mention that migration rates are comparable to last year's and Jill Klein, YRDFA, mentioned that at one time ADFG stated that overall infection rates were not high this year.

Summer Chum or Fall Chum: One fisherman in Nulato reported already seeing fall chum that had black fins, instead of white, and a different lateral line compared to summer chum. A debate ensued, as another fisherman from Koyukuk believed the Nulato fisherman probably saw bright-colored, summer chum bound for the Tanana River. The Koyukuk fisherman described fall chum as heavier and bigger with green-colored heads, and the fish he caught in his net along the south bank did not appear this way. One fisherman in Tanana reported catching small numbers of fall chum since July 5th and another reported seeing mostly summer chum on the Tanana River.

Silver & Sockeye Salmon: A fisherman in Huslia, having caught silver salmon 10 days ago and none since, asked if others were seeing silvers. ADFG reported that test nets have not caught any yet, but silvers may be early this year as they are already catching them in Norton Sound and the Kuskokwim. Of the 40 silver salmon the Huslia fisherman caught, only 2 were females. ADFG stated that this was normal as the early run is skewed towards males. ADFG also mentioned that they have seen a fair number of sockeye (red) salmon in their lower river test nets. A fisherman in Grayling mentioned catching a pink-colored fish with a green head (sockeye) on the Anvik River and a representative from Interior Alaska Fish Processors, Inc. said sockeye have been caught in Nenana.

Call #9 – July 27, 2004

Communities involved in the call:

Scammon Bay	Pilot Station	Nulato	Koyukuk	Eagle
	Whitehorse, YT			
Emmonak	Holy Cross	Huslia	Galena	Mayo, YT
St Mary's	Kaltag	Hughes	Tanana	Pelly Crossing, YT

State and Federal Agencies involved in the call:

ADFG - Commercial Fisheries in Emmonak, Pilot Station, Anchorage & Fairbanks

USFWS in Galena

USFWS, OSM in Fairbanks & Anchorage

Dept. of Fisheries & Oceans, Canada in Whitehorse, YT

NMFS

Others involved in the call:

YRDFA Ed Exchange Participants

Subsistence Reports:

Subsistence fishers reported that king salmon have made it to the upper reaches of the drainage within the Yukon Territory. Communities within the Alaskan portion of the drainage have finished subsistence fishing for king salmon and are waiting for fall chum. In Emmonak water levels are low, but normal. In Nulato, a Spirit Camp for youth has yielded 24 fish caught in a whitefish net. Last week in Galena the last of the subsistence king salmon fishermen met his needs using a fish wheel and gave fish to others in his community. In Koyukuk water levels are down and two fall chum were caught on July 26. Several communities reported that fishermen were out firefighting.

Up the Koyukuk River fall chum are starting to come in while summer chum are topping out. On the mainstem in Tanana, king salmon are still running in small numbers and are of better quality, but subsistence fishing for king salmon has stopped. Currently in Tanana bright fall chum are coming in on the north and south banks of the mainstem while water levels remain high on the Tanana River. In Eagle 80% of the people have met their subsistence needs and are starting to catch a few chum salmon.

In Mayo, 10 nets are out, but water levels are dropping to freeze-up levels; therefore, productive fishing eddies are being lost. King salmon caught show no signs of disease; therefore, none are being discarded. Men are out firefighting and around Mayo there are at least 20 locations where fire has come down to or crossed salmon spawning streams. On the Pelly River 6 people are actively fishing king salmon. Signs of *Ichthyophonus* have been found as white nodules on salmon hearts. Subsistence needs have been met and fishing activity is slowing down as quality decreases.

Management Update & Strategy, by ADFG, USFWS & DFO:

Summer Season: ADFG summer season staff have been performing aerial surveys to assess escapement on the spawning grounds and have determined that king salmon escapement in 2004 is well above average in most tributaries.

All aerial survey escapement indices were either within or exceeded their sustainable escapement goal (SEG). The aerial survey index for the W. Fork Andreafsky River was 1,317 (SEG:640-1,600), E.Fork Andreafsky River 2,879 (SEG:960-1,900), Anvik River 3,681 (SEG:1,100-1,700), Gisasa River 731 (SEG:420-1,100), Nulato River 1,321 (SEG:940-1,900).

The East Fork Andreafsky River had the 5th highest and the Anvik River had the 2nd highest counts since aerial surveys began in 1961. On the Chena River cumulative escapement through July 26 was 9,500 king salmon (BEG 2,800-5,700) and 15,000 king salmon on the Salcha River (BEG 3,300-6,500). These estimates are conservative because of periods of non-counting due to smoke and high turbid water conditions.

Summer chum salmon escapement levels continue to be below average, but have continued to show improvement. The Anvik River sonar-based escapement count of 364,000 summer chum salmon (through 7-25) is above the low end of the BEG range of 350,000 to 700,000. The estimated escapement of 62,000 (through 7-25) summer chum salmon for the E. F. Andreafsky River is above the low end of the BEG of 65,000-135,000.

Commercial fisheries are over, except in District 6 where a few more periods will open, but will be over by next week.

DFO reported that king salmon caught in their test fisheries seem larger in size and more females are appearing. Currently the border escapement projection is around 45,500 if the run is early. However, if the run turns out to be average then the border escapement is projected to be 60,000

king salmon. It is too early to tell at this point. At the moment 62% of the run has passed through the border and by August 1 run passage through the border should be up to 80%. The Whitehorse Rapids Fishway saw its first fish through the fish ladder on July 23 and 7 have gone through to date. Water levels are low, and even though the DFO test wheels are not catching as much it seems that a pulse is going through. To date the aboriginal fishery has taken about 1,200 king salmon, commercial fishery nearly 2,300 salmon and the test fishery has caught 167 king salmon. It is projected that the aboriginal fishery will take a total of 7,000-8,000 by season's end. A five-day commercial fishery will end on July 30.

Ichthyophonous Update: In season work is ongoing for this project. Field data collection has concluded in Emmonak and Tanana. From the test wheel in Tanana 110 radio telemetry tags were deployed. Tissue punch samples have been collected in the lower Chena and Salcha Rivers and carcass surveys are just beginning on both systems. It is too early to report any lab results at this time.

Fall Chum Season: Fall chum have been moving in at a normal slow pace over the past two weeks creating a low passage rate. Fall chum normally enter in pulses, yet there have been no significant pulses even though there was a spike in Emmonak on July 19, which moved through Mt. Village and Pilot Station on July 21 and 22, respectively. Fall abundance projection is highly variable until the midpoint of the run (8/7 at the Pilot Station sonar project). It is still too early in the fall season to make run projections based on in-season assessment. Therefore, the current fall chum run outlook ranges between 500,000 and 600,000 salmon. A run of this size should be sufficient to provide for most escapement and subsistence needs. Management has returned to the windowed fishing schedule for Districts Y-1,2 & 3. Sub-district Y-4A will go to 2/48 hrs period this week and sub-districts Y-4B & C will begin 2/48 hrs on Wednesday (7/28).

Side note: The first coho salmon was caught in the Emmonak Gillnet Drift Test on July 26.

Local Input & Closing Comments:

Area M: In June nearly 430,000 chum salmon had been intercepted in the Area M fishery.

Hatchery vs Wild Salmon: One lower river fisherman asked what component of this year's king salmon returns were hatchery fish (*hatchery fish have clipped adipose fins*). While it is believed more hatchery fish have been seen in the commercial fishery and in the District 5 fishery this year, compared to last year, there are no hard numbers from ADFG. DFO stated that in one day they caught 5 (out of 40) hatchery fish in their test wheels and that those hatchery fish seemed larger - perhaps meaning a stronger return.

Call #10 – August 3, 2004

Communities involved in the call:

Emmonak	Huslia	Tanana	Mayo, YT
Kaltag	Koyukuk	Beaver	Ross River, YT
Nulato	Galena	Eagle	Whitehorse, YT

State and Federal Agencies involved in the call:

ADFG - Commercial Fisheries in Emmonak, Pilot Station & Fairbanks
USFWS in Galena, Fairbanks & Emmonak
USFWS, OSM in Fairbanks
Dept. of Fisheries & Oceans, Canada in Whitehorse, YT

Other Organizations & Businesses

BSFA Carl Morgan's Office

Subsistence Reports:

Subsistence fishers reported that king salmon have made it to the upper reaches of the drainage within the Yukon Territory and, according to ADFG, the first small pulse of fall chum should reach Ruby by August 3. Overall fishing activity is at a minimum in the lower river as most are waiting for a strong fall chum run before going out to fish again. In Emmonak water levels are low with big tides, which is normal for this time of year. In Kaltag, as the fall chum come in, fishermen are seeing larger sized fish compared to last week and catching an average of 10 fall chum per drift. In Nulato no one is fishing as they are waiting for a strong run of silvers to come in before going out. Even though a few fall chum have arrived in Koyukuk none have been caught yet, however one fisherman did catch a sockeye salmon.

Up the Koyukuk River in Huslia, 2 families are 50% done and 3 families are 75% done with their subsistence efforts for fall chum. One fisherman reported catching a purple-pink colored salmon with a green head (probably a sockeye salmon). While catches are good and of good quality compared to last year, catch effort remained the same. On the mainstem in Tanana fishermen have been targeting bright fall chum for a couple of weeks, but not on a grand scale. People are cutting fall chum for people food now and the next couple of groups of fall chum will most likely be used for dog food. The first pulse of fall chum yielded the highest catch of 260 fall chum/day, which was considered rather weak. Currently fishermen are catching about 100 fall chum/day. No unusual amount of *Ichthyophonus* has been observed in fall chum tested to date at Stan Zuray's Conservation/ Student Camp. In Beaver, while water levels have come up a bit, one fisherman above Stevens Village is actively fishing chum. In Eagle, where water levels are low, fishermen are done with king salmon as chums are beginning to come through (i.e. a few people were even dip netting for chum).

In Mayo, fishing for king salmon has improved as a strong run has come in. Water levels are high due to recent rains. In Ross River king salmon are now coming through in large numbers. Water levels are low as there have been many fires burning around the area. To date, a fish weir 50 km downriver (Blind Creek) has counted about 500 king salmon.

Management Update & Strategy, by ADFG, USFWS & DFO:

Fall Chum Season: Fall chum have been moving into the mouth of the Yukon River at a slow rate. On July 30, strong westerly winds increased the number of fall chum entering the Emmonak test fishery from 1-2/day up to 100/day. On August 2 this number dropped by about half. The first pulse of fall chum (July 19) should reach Ruby today (8/3) and pick up at the Pilot Station sonar by August 4. As stated during last week's teleconference, ADFG will hold off making an in-season projection until the midpoint of the run on August 7. However, indicators are currently consistent with the pre-season outlook and predicting that the run will come in over 500,000 fall chum. Assessment projects in Emmonak, Mt. Village and Pilot Station are running below average, with Kaltag running above average. Last year at this time in Pilot Station, 174,000 fall chum passed through, compared to 91,000 this year.

Management strategy is unchanged from last week. At this rate, Districts Y-5&6 will return to the subsistence fishing schedule next week. ADFG will wait for midpoint of run to reach Pilot Station before considering changes to the fishing schedule. USFWS escapement assessment projects for the summer season are breaking down, while the fall season projects are starting up.

DFO: The border escapement projection for the entire season ranges from 47,500 to 53,100 king salmon. Test wheels at the border are currently catching 20 king salmon per day, are in good condition and increasing in size. To date, the commercial fishery has taken nearly 3,000 king salmon and First Nation fishery 2,400 salmon. The test wheels have caught 42 chum salmon and last week's commercial fishery caught 5 chum salmon. The chum average this year compares to the 10 year average. If run timing is normal, then it would lead to question whether these are summer chum or fall chum crossing the border, as these chum would have to have entered the mouth of the river in mid-June. The Fishing Branch Weir is to be set up on the Porcupine River by August 18 and there will be a voluntary aboriginal fall chum closure on August 10 due to conservation concerns.

Local Input & Closing Comments:

Ichthyophonus: When asked to clarify what is an 'usual' amount of *Ichthyophonus* seen in Tanana (regarding the subsistence report stating that "No unusual amount of *Ichthyophonus* has been observed in fall chum tested to date at Stan Zuray's Conservation/ Student Camp"), one Tanana fisherman explained that last year they found 13% of the fish they caught to have visual signs of *Ichthyophonus*, and these fish had a certain coloration – mainly with green backs. Joe Sullivan, YRDFA, stated that an infection rate of 5-10% for chum, as it has been in the past, is common. He also reminded teleconference participants that other things can cause white spots on the heart, not just *Ichthyophonus*. Jill Klein also mentioned that during the Ed Exchange trip to Canada, on the Pelly River, one fisherwoman reported catching nearly 20 king salmon with visual signs of *Ichthyophonus* (white spots on the heart) and another fisherman reported finding 2 – one with white spots throughout the flesh and one with spots on the heart.

ADFG mentioned that of the 110 salmon tagged in Tanana, as part of the *Ichthyophonus* study, 30 were picked up in the fishery and several have been tracked to the Kantishna, Chena and Salcha Rivers. ADFG will perform an aerial survey over Goodpaster River soon and sampling of recently post-spawned salmon is going well.

Koyukuk River Spawning Areas: One Koyukuk River fisherman asked where spawning grounds for the middle drainage, on the Koyukuk River, were located. ADFG staff present during the teleconference did not have that information handy.

Sockeye Evident: Representative Gabe Sam, from Carl Morgan's Office, asked whether it was unusual or not for sockeye salmon to be going up the Yukon River. One fisherman worries they are seeing more sockeye as he believes it means more hatchery fish are entering the YR system. ADFG acknowledged that fairly strong runs in western Alaska, particularly in Norton Sound, could affect the Yukon River salmon runs. Sockeye salmon may have always been present on the Yukon River, but stronger numbers this year, as seen in other area fisheries, may be the reason more sockeye are being caught on the YR. Therefore, the sockeye may not be hatchery fish. Chris Stark, BSFA stated that if a tissue sample were to be taken from one of these sockeye it could be processed to determine where it originated. Jill Klein, YRDFA also commented that sockeye runs could potentially be tracked next season.

Call #11 – August 10, 2004

Communities involved in the call:

Emmonak	Pilot Station	Huslia	Beaver	Ross River, YT
Mt Village	Russian Mission	Koyukuk	Mayo, YT	Carmacks, YT

St Mary's

Kaltag

Tanana

Pelly Crossing, YT

State and Federal Agencies involved in the call:

ADFG - Commercial Fisheries in Anchorage, Pilot Station & Fairbanks

USFWS in Galena & Emmonak

USFWS, OSM in Fairbanks

Dept. of Fisheries & Oceans, Canada in Whitehorse, YT

Other Organizations & Businesses

Interior Alaska Fish Processors, Inc.

Subsistence Reports:

Subsistence fishers reported that king salmon have made it to the upper reaches of the drainage within the Yukon Territory and fall chum as far as Tanana. Overall fishing activity is low, for both king and fall chum salmon. In Emmonak 3 (out of 5) fishermen are 50% done subsistence fishing for f. chum and one is 25% done. The first pulse of f. chum, passing through Pilot Station around August 1, were running heavy and coho (a.k.a. silver salmon), running simultaneously, were healthy and of good color. In Russian Mission one drift on August 9 yielded 50 coho salmon that were of very good quality. In Kaltag the f. chum seemed elusive with one fisherman catching only 5 salmon after drifting all day. In Koyukuk, as in Kaltag, f. chum are few. However, fishermen are catching lots of whitefish on the Yukon River as low water levels seem to be keeping them from entering spawning streams.

Up the Koyukuk River in Huslia, 3 fishermen are actively fishing, catching only a few f. chum, but those caught are of good quality. On the mainstem in Tanana the first pulse of f. chum is moving along the north (leading up the mainstem YR) and more slowly along the south bank (leading up the Tanana River). Even though the big run of chum has not hit yet, quality of those caught to date is good and many are putting up chum salmon for human food- as well as dog food. Stan Zuray reported that he is seeing less than 1% of chum with visible signs of possible *Ichthyophonus*. However, three sheefish that he caught and examined had visible *Ichthyophonus* spots on the hearts. Fishermen are still catching fairly good quality king salmon and don't remember a king run lasting this long. Water levels are relatively stable, but decreasing slowly. In the Yukon Flats community of Beaver no one is fishing.

In Mayo, fishing for king salmon is slow, with no peak in the run. This year unsatisfied fishermen are fishing a week to 10 days later than they did last year and there is still a 20-25% reduction in the number of salmon caught. However, the kings caught are of good quality and only a few have been discarded due to discoloration of the flesh. Pelly Crossing fishermen are done and are in the process of drying. Near Ross River, at the Blind Creek Weir approximately 700 king salmon have been counted, compared to 1,200 last year. Therefore fishing has been reported as slow and most fishermen are getting ready to take out their nets.

Management Update & Strategy, by ADFG, USFWS & DFO:

Fall Chum Season: Three slow, but distinct pulses of f. chum have entered the Yukon River; the first pulse (7/19) passing by the Yukon River bridge, the second pulse (8/1) near Grayling and the third pulse(8/8) should reach the Mt Village test fishery today (8/10) and be at Pilot Station later in the evening. These pulses, predominantly f. chum with coho mixed in, are moving around 35 miles/day. ADFG noted that most from the first pulse of f. chum are moving up the mainstem YR and not veering off to the Tanana River. Assessment projects in Emmonak, Mt Village and Pilot Station show a below average run, while the project in Kaltag shows the run as above

average. Age composition shows that the 4 yr-old component, compared to last year, is below average while the 5 yr-old component is above average. As low numbers of coho salmon move upriver, ADFG noted that it is still very early in the run (average first ¼ point of run is 8/17 at Pilot Station sonar).

Total passage of f. chum, as of August 8, through Pilot Station was estimated to be 234,000 salmon. Therefore, total run size is projected to be 400,000-500,000 salmon, which should be sufficient to meet most escapement goals and provide for subsistence needs. To date, the number of f. chum (234,000) is below the average of 258,000 salmon.

Subsistence fishing throughout the Alaskan portion of the drainage has returned to the windowed fishing schedule, with the most recent change, beginning on August 10, in Sub-districts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C returning to two 48-hour periods each week. ADFG will be watching to see how the f. chum and coho runs overlap, which may influence management strategy. However, the current schedule will stay the same unless a reason to change is needed based on future information.

Assessment Project Updates: The Chandalar River sonar project, having just started, has a cumulative count of 1,800 f. chum. The Rampart Rapids tagging project, begun about two weeks ago, has no population estimate for this week, but perhaps for next week. The Tanana River f. chum mark-recapture tagging project is scheduled to start on August 16. As part of this project the Nenana test wheel will also begin operating (8/16) to provide CPUE data for chum and coho salmon as well as operate for the mark-recapture resulting in f. chum salmon population estimates. Similarly the Kantishna project operates one tagging fish wheel at the mouth with recovery fish wheels located in both the upper Kantishna River drainage and the Toklat River drainage effectively providing three more sites for CPUE data for f. chum and coho salmon. The Eagle Sonar project is slated to start on August 16, if equipment is able to be delivered on time (Smokey conditions may delay).

DFO: DFO test wheels at the border are currently catching low numbers of king salmon, some in good and some in bad condition. Surveys, to be performed next week, on the Little Salmon and major index areas should help to determine total escapement for king salmon for this year's summer season. While still projecting between 47,000 and 53,000 king salmon, DFO hopes to have a new border escapement estimate next week. A commercial fishing period, ending at noon on August 11, showed little effort from fishermen as the market has been saturated.

The test wheels are also catching an average of between 2 and 11 chum/day. DFO will be collecting DNA samples from these early chum salmon to determine if they are summer or fall chum. DFO is also uncertain if these early chum are staying on the mainstem (heading up to Ft Selkirk and Carmacks) or if they are heading to Teslin/Kluane. It is hoped that DNA sampling will answer this question. The Fishing Branch Weir, near Old Crow, will go in next week and DFO suspects there are low numbers of chum in that area.

Local Input & Closing Comments:

Personal Use Permits: In Fairbanks there is currently not much activity relating to personal use permits. However, during the king and summer chum runs there is some interest. When asked for report from the summer season regarding these personal-use users, ADFG said they would try to have a report for next week's teleconference.

King Salmon Counts: Even though the border escapement estimates look good, many fishermen in the Yukon Territory have commented that fishing this year has been slow and unsatisfactory. With many possible factors attributing to the difference between DFO test wheel catches and

fishermen's catches, DFO could give only plausible reasons for the discrepancy (i.e. bad water conditions, some areas of the river easier to track than others, run strength and timing of fishing, etc.)

Changing Migration Pattern: One Koyukuk fishermen believes that fishermen caught fewer f. chum in their area because of low water levels. His thought: Low water causes the salmon to swim further out in the middle of the river where water is deeper and where nets are not capable of reaching.

Call #12 – August 17, 2004

Communities involved in the call:

Hooper Bay (report)	St Mary's	Anvik	Huslia	Ft Yukon	Old Crow, YT
Emmonak	Pilot Station	Kaltag	Koyukuk	Eagle	
Mt. Village	Holy Cross	Nualto	Tanana	Mayo, YT	

State and Federal Agencies involved in the call:

ADFG - Commercial Fisheries in Anchorage, Pilot Station & Fairbanks
USFWS in Fairbanks & Emmonak
Dept. of Fisheries & Oceans, Canada in Whitehorse, YT

Other Organizations & Businesses

CATG BSFA Yukon River Panel

Subsistence Reports:

Subsistence fishers reported that fishing effort throughout the entire drainage is low. In the upper river a few king salmon are still being randomly caught. After the third pulse, fishing effort for f. chum in the lower and middle river is still low. In Hooper Bay the situation remains the same as it has been all summer; no fishing due to winds. In Emmonak no one is fishing due to bad weather and only 2 (out of 5) households are 50-75% done subsistence fishing for f. chum. On August 10-11 a good run of f. chum, along with coho, was witnessed in Mt Village. Water levels there have been increasing, with temperatures between 58-60 degrees C. While activity remains low in St Mary's, fishermen saw an increase in coho salmon and a decrease in f. chum, as a southerly wind brought in fish. In Pilot Station and Holy Cross there was no fishing activity to report. One Anvik fisherman, catching nearly 15 chum a day, is not fishing hard (due to holes in net) even though a steady pulse is going by. In Kaltag over 30 good quality chum, mostly large males have been caught in the test fishery, along with one coho. Nulato fishermen are starting to fish again as bad weather last week kept them off the water.

Up the Koyukuk River in Huslia, only 4 people are out fishing. Water level and debris load is high, thereby keeping fishing effort low - even though a good pulse of f.chum has gone by. Those fishing have caught good quality f. chum and seen fewer summer chum. Back on the mainstem in Koyukuk, water level is dropping and weather is good. A local fisherman's personal observations showed, that even while experiencing a fairly good pulse of f. chum, to date the run is 60% below 2003, 8% of this year's run are 5 yr-olds and 30% are females. In Tanana activity has been low for f. chum, compared to the king salmon season, but fishermen are getting geared up to go out this week as the first effects of the large pulse (through Pilot Station on 7/22) should be felt. Fishermen using f. chum for dog food, will wait to crib and split in September during cooler weather. On August 15 chum salmon hit around the Ft. Yukon area and local fishermen are catching between 40-50 healthy chum per day. One fish wheel in Eagle has caught 6 chum and 6

king salmon per day, and one net is catching nearly 10 chum/day. As in Mt. Village, water temperatures have been around 60 degrees C.

Up the Porcupine River in Old Crow the odd king and chum salmon are being caught, but not much effort is being put forth as the voluntary closure will soon be in affect for f. chum. Fishermen near Mayo finished with king salmon fishing on August 11. This year's harvest appears to be 10-15% lower than the 2003 harvest; more effort for fewer fish. On the Stewart River, below McQuesten River, 2 chum salmon have been caught, which is noteworthy because chums have not been found there in a while. King salmon are also still being caught in Lake Laberge.

Management Update & Strategy, by ADFG, USFWS & DFO:

Fall Chum Season: Fall chum and coho moving into the mouth of the river have been slow over the first half of the season. Three distinct pulses have moved past the Pilot Station sonar, the last on August 10. As of August 17, the first pulse, estimated at 54,000 f. chum should be near Circle, the second pulse of 120,000 f. chum should be near Ruby and the last pulse of 110,000 should be near Grayling. Swimming at a normal speed of 35 miles per day, ADFG is confident that monitoring projects are effectively detecting changes in daily fish passage. As of August 15, the cumulative salmon passage by Pilot Station was estimated to be 356,000 f.chum and 59,000 coho salmon. The current f. chum total run size is projected between 450,000-550,000 salmon. This projection reflects improved production, as this year's run should be roughly twice the parent year escapements. Coho salmon are entering the river in increasing numbers, but it is still early as the average first quarter point occurs on August 17. This year's total coho run is expected to be above average.

Subsistence fishing effort has been low, but interest and activity has increased slightly in the lower river even though harvest reports are low. Subsistence fishing returned to the windowed fishing schedule throughout the drainage starting in the lower river districts and was applied sequentially to upper river districts. ADFG is considering relaxing the schedule in the next couple of weeks as a good portion of the run (¾) has moved up the mainstem and the lower districts have been on the schedule for a month. ADFG requested feedback from teleconference participants regarding the potential relaxation of the schedule.

Assessment Project Updates: Sonar operations began counting on the Sheenjek River on August 8, counting approximately 1,900 f. chum, which is below average. The Rampart/Rapids tagging project counted 24,000 f. chum between August 8-13, which is consistent with managers' expectation. The Rapids wheel is tracking below average while the Rampart wheel is above average. The Y-5A test wheel, at the mouth of the Tanana River, monitoring f. chum passage currently has a low CPUE, which is typical for this time of year. The E. Fork Andreafsky project flooded on August 13, but counted 420 coho as of August 12 – which is favorable with the ¼ point on August 27.

DFO: DFO test wheels have caught between 4-14 king salmon/day over the last 5 days – some have been good and some, especially the females, have been soft. One aerial survey was performed on Little Salmon River, counting 1,492 king salmon; the average of the past 10 years is 785 salmon. On August 18 surveys will be performed on the Big Salmon, Nisutlin and Wolf Rivers. At the Whitehorse Rapids Fishway 1,492 king salmon have been counted to date, expecting nearly 2,000 by the end of the season. The portion of females returning past the Fishway is 17% for both hatchery and wild salmon, which is lower than observed at the DFO wheels (tracking between 20-22%).

DFO is catching between 3-15 chum/day at their test wheels, which is average at this point. DNA samples are being collected to compare to database and perform stock analysis. On August 18 counting will begin for chum on the Fishing Branch. DFO hopes to set up a test fishery project for f. chum, through the R&E Fund, for this year.

Local Input & Closing Comments:

Fishing Schedule Relaxation: With support and no opposition from teleconference participants, ADFG will relax the fishing schedule for f. chum over the next few weeks. With narrow fishing windows and passage of pulses in narrow time frames, opening to 7 days/week will allow for more efficient fishing effort. Additional note: It is still early to tell if there will be a coho commercial fishery. ADFG wants to make sure f. chum needs are met before even considering an opening.

Boat Traffic on Anvik River: One local fisherman is concerned that increased boat traffic is impacting salmon runs and spawning sites on the Anvik River. ADFG does not know of any studies that have been conducted regarding boat traffic, but mentioned that tributaries on the Tanana (Chena and Salcha Rivers) experience heavy boat traffic as well.

Hooper Bay Situation: Concern exists for Hooper Bay and their lack of fish due to wind direction. As winds are a natural occurrence, ADFG believes it unnecessary to conduct a study on changing migration patterns of salmon for that area. ADFG will, however, monitor subsistence use, fishing effort and harvest success. In the meantime, community members are looking for other means to supply them with fish. ADFG mentioned having a contingency plan in the future to help alleviate the problem (i.e. work with CDQ to get summer chum from the lower river).

Call #13 – August 24, 2004

Communities involved in the call:

Emmonak	Grayling (report)	Galena
St. Mary's	Nulato	Tanana
Pilot Station	Huslia	

State and Federal Agencies involved in the call:

ADFG - Commercial Fisheries in Emmonak, Anchorage, Pilot Station & Fairbanks

USFWS in Galena, Fairbanks & Emmonak

Dept. of Fisheries & Oceans, Canada in Whitehorse, YT

Subsistence Reports:

Subsistence fishers reported that fishing effort throughout the entire drainage is low. In Emmonak two (out of 5) households are done fishing for f. chum, one is 50% completed and the rest are waiting for a larger run to appear. Some will fish just for supper and not to put away for the winter. Only one set net is out in St. Mary's to catch f. chum for dogs, but has only caught coho salmon. In Pilot Station one elder is expecting a big f. chum/coho run to come in, thus waiting to fish. A report from Grayling suggests the run is currently strong in that area as 4-5 families are out fishing. One fisher caught 100+ fish in one drift. Water levels are very low, making potential moose hunting difficult as sloughs dry up. People in Nulato are not cutting fish for dog food, but are however drying coho now as the weather is good for such practices. Only

100 coho salmon are needed for the winter, so fishers are neither fishing every day nor targeting the f. chum run.

Up the Koyukuk River in Huslia, fishing is slow, but there is a good f. chum/coho run, with lots of sheefish, whitefish and a few summer chum salmon. One fisherman fishing near Koyukuk over the weekend (August 21-22), after a slack in the run, reported catching 50 fish in 4 drifts. Back on the mainstem, in Tanana, f. chum are still being cut for people food and some is being taken for dogs. However, fishers using f. chum for dog food will wait to crib and split during cooler weather. Fall chum taken on the north bank are large, of fairly high quality and good flesh color.

Management Update & Strategy, by ADFG, USFWS & DFO:

Fall Chum Season: While subsistence effort has remained low, fishers are catching fish with good meat, but most are waiting for cool weather to take f. chum for dogs. There have been 5 distinct pulses to date; with the 1st pulse (54,000 salmon) near the border, the 2nd pulse (120,000) near Stevens Village, the 3rd pulse (110,000) near Ruby, the 4th pulse (31,000) entering on August 14 should be near Grayling and the 5th pulse (63,000) passing through Pilot Station started on August 20. The 5th pulse is predominantly f. chum (ratio 4:1, f.chum: coho). Fall chum from the 1st and 2nd pulses are presumed (and expected) to be moving up the mainstem and not veering off to the Tanana River. As of August 23, the cumulative f. chum estimate by Pilot Station sonar is 453,000 salmon and 113,000 coho salmon. On average, 90% of the f. chum and 50% of the coho are assumed to already be in the YR. Therefore, the current f. chum projection is near 500,000 salmon. At its mid-point, the coho run is above average, but below the passage for this date in 2003.

Assessment Project Updates: Sonar operations began counting on the Sheenjok River on August 8, counting approximately 3,300 to date, which is below average. At the Rampart/Rapids tagging project, the Rapids wheel is tracking below average while the Rampart wheel is above average. Test fisheries in Emmonak (ending on August 27) and Mt. Village (ending on Sept 9) are consistently below average, while the Kaltag test fishery tracks above average. The Pilot Station sonar project will stop running on August 31. The Tanana River f. chum tagging project consists of 5 test fish wheels that will estimate f. chum passage to the upper Tanana River and the Kantishna River. Only a week into operations, the Kantishna River is near average with Tanana River below average at this time. The Y5-A test wheel has tracked low passage rates over the past 3 weeks and has slowly increased over the last few days - which is normal for this time of year. The E. Fork Andreafsky project has not counted for 4 days due to high water, but as of August 23 the cumulative count was 1,560 coho, with the ¼ point of the run occurring on August 26. The Chandalar sonar project will reach its ¼ point on August 28.

Strategy: The projection of 500,000 f. chum should be adequate to meet subsistence and most escapement needs, but is not enough to have a directed f. chum commercial fishery. Neither will a coho commercial fishery likely occur, especially in the lower river. However, all districts will most likely have a liberalized subsistence fishing schedule with districts Y5A, B & C moving to a 5 days/week schedule on August 31. Due to YR DFA-prompted changes in the f. chum management plan for 2004, ADFG asked that YR DFA consider the coho management plan this year (having experienced a year with strong runs) to possibly modify the f. chum management plan for 2005 so as to allow for commercial harvesting of coho salmon.

DFO: DFO has performed aerial surveys on all spawning systems. Two surveys on the Little Salmon River showed approximately 1,100 king salmon, which is above average, while all other systems are around or below average. Surveys appear to have been conducted late, even though

they were performed a week earlier than last year, as peak timing was not captured. Currently the king salmon population estimate at the border is 48,000. DFO test wheels are still catching some king salmon and the Fishway in Whitehorse has seen approximately 1,900 salmon pass through.

Daily catch at the DFO test wheels is 15-20 chum, which is not high based on cumulative counts, but it is still early in the run. A 4-day test fishery, consisting of 2 wheels (funded through the R&E Fund) will recover tags used for population estimate and start on August 27. The Fishing Branch Weir is operational now, as well as the Porcupine test fishery below Old Crow that will tag fish to be recovered at the Fishing Branch Weir. A voluntary closure in Old Crow by the Vuntut Gwitchin F.N. closed late (after August 10) due to reluctant local fishers. However, no one is fishing at this time. Chum salmon are being fished at this time in the Dawson area by First Nation peoples.

Local Input & Closing Comments:

Radio & Archival Tag Reminder: ADFG asked that all radio and spaghetti tags be reported. If found please call toll-free 1-888-881-2104.

Ichthyophonus Study in Tanana: Work on *Ichthyophonus* continues on a limited scale at Stan Zuray's camp. Possible *Ichthyophonus* infections in chum have been up slightly at 3%, compared to those looked at last week. Out of 1,209 chum salmon, only 2% showed possible signs of *Ichthyophonus* infection. Other white spots continue to show up on hearts of humpback whitefish – nearly 90% of those looked at have spots.

One teleconference participant mistakenly heard the report of spots on whitefish hearts as being possible *Ichthyophonus* infections. While it is not known at this time if the infections are caused by *Ichthyophonus*, they are most likely not. Smoke from wildfires has stopped plane travel out of Tanana, thereby not allowing samples to be sent out for identification. More awareness and education is needed regarding *Ichthyophonus*. Teleconference participants were asked not to assume that all infections are related to *Ichthyophonus*, as most are not. One participant mentioned eating salmon, he knew was infected with *Ichthyophonus*, with no repercussions. If you are concerned that fish may be infected with *Ichthyophonus* please contact Tammy Burton at ADFG for possible sampling and identification. (907) 267-2394 or 267-2163.

Fall Chum Abundance: When asked if the f. chum run size was large enough to allow sport, recreational or commercial fishing on tributaries, ADFG acknowledged that the possibility may still exist as the total run size nears 500,000 salmon.

Call #14 – August 31, 2004

Communities involved in the call:

Mt. Village	Kaltag	Galena
St. Mary's	Huslia	Eagle
G.A.S.H. Region	Tanana	

State and Federal Agencies involved in the call:

ADFG - Commercial Fisheries in Fairbanks
USFWS in Fairbanks
Office of Subsistence Management in Anchorage
Dept. of Fisheries & Oceans, Canada in Whitehorse, YT
NMFS

Other Organizations & Businesses

BSFA Interior Fish Processors, Inc.

Subsistence Reports:

Subsistence fishers reported that fishing effort throughout the entire drainage is low. On the Andreafsky River, Near St. Mary's water levels are abnormally low and fishers are only out catching the occasional fish for supper. In Mt. Village residents are getting ready for moose hunting while still fishing for sheefish and whitefish. Reports from the G.A.S.H. region (Grayling, Anvik, Shageluk and Holy Cross) no one is fishing, but some are preparing to set whitefish nets. Water levels there are very low, as well. Water levels are up a bit in Kaltag as good quality fish are being caught as the quantity of fish coming through fluctuates. Up the Koyukuk River, in Huslia, 3 fishers are out catching good f. chum, as well as coho, sheefish and whitefish. Fishers are doing so well there that they are running out of places to put fish.

In Tanana some fishers are continuing to report high catches, while others, affected by low water and slow current, are reporting good catches. Quality of f. chum has decreased enough that people are slowing down their take for people food and concentrating on dried & split food for dogs. In Eagle there is not much fishing activity due to a substitution fishery. Water temperature in the Eagle area was reported at 51° F (10.5° C).

Management Update & Strategy, by ADFG, USFWS & DFO:

Fall Chum Season: One more significant, unexpected pulse entered the YR on August 26, making 6 distinct pulses to date; with the 1st pulse (54,000 salmon) currently across the border, the 2nd pulse (120,000) near Circle, the 3rd pulse (110,000) near Stevens Village, the 4th pulse (31,000) near Tanana, the 5th pulse (63,000) near Kaltag and the 6th pulse (unexpectedly large at 120,000) mostly through Pilot Station. The pulses are predominantly f. chum mixed with coho salmon. While the f. chum run has come in pulses, the coho runs remains constant with no peaks. At its $\frac{3}{4}$ point, the coho run is above average. As of August 30, the cumulative f. chum estimate by Pilot Station sonar is 607,000 salmon and 191,000 coho salmon. On average, more than 90% of the f. chum and 75% of the coho are assumed to be in the YR system. Based on the before mentioned and run timing, the current f. chum projection is near 640,000 salmon.

Assessment Project Updates: Test fisheries in Emmonak (ending on August 27) and Mt. Village (ending on Sept 9) are consistently below average, while the Kaltag test fishery tracks above average. At the Rampart/Rapids tagging project, the Rapids wheel is tracking below average while the Rampart wheel is above average. The Pilot Station sonar project stopped running today (8/31). Sonar projects on the Sheenjek and Chandalar River are seeing the first pulse of f. chum, and as of August 29 the Sheenjek has counted approximately 4,900 f. chum and the Chandalar project has counted 25,000. After two weeks of operations, the Kantishna River is well above average and the Tanana River is below average, estimating fish passage on the Tanana River f. chum tagging project. The Y5-A test wheel is tracking below average passage rates. The E. Fork Andreafsky project cumulative count, as of August 30, is 2,684 coho, and the Chandalar cumulative count for f. chum is 28,400, with the mid-point of the run to occur on Sept. 6.

Strategy: The projection of 640,000 f. chum should be sufficient to provide for most escapement and subsistence needs and support a small commercial harvest. Two 24-hour commercial fishing periods (August 31-Sept.1 & Sept. 2-3) have been announced for District Y-1. Subsistence fishing is closed 6 hours before, during, and 6 hours following a commercial period. Subsistence schedules have been relaxed for districts Y-4B & C, Y-5A, B & C, and Y-6A, B & C. All other districts are currently off the subsistence fishing schedule and can fish 7 days/week.

DFO: Daily catch at the DFO test wheels is 10-15 f. chum, believed to be between the 1st and 2nd pulse, the first pulse did not prove to be much of a peak. Total catch for chum at the test wheel has yielded a count of 430, which is 10% below average for this date. There are no reports on First Nation fisheries at this time. To date, there has been no commercial fishery directed at chum salmon. DFO is waiting for results from the mark/recapture test fishery before making a decision to open a commercial fishing period, or not.

The Fishing Branch Weir became operational on August 22, and has counted a total of 234 chum, which is twice the average, but the weir did go in earlier than normal this year. A substitution fishery is in effect in Old Crow due to their voluntary closure starting the second week in August.

Local Input & Closing Comments:

Ichthyophonus Study in Tanana: Work on *Ichthyophonus* continues on a limited scale at Stan Zuray's camp. Possible *Ichthyophonus* infections in chum have been down in the 426 samples taken last week. Of 1,637 chum salmon, only 1.3% showed possible signs of *Ichthyophonus* infection. High rates, as high as 25%, of possible *Ichthyophonus* infection seen last year by this project are not being seen this year.

Commercial Opening: Markets for f. chum are limited and ADFG asks that fishers remain in contact with buyers. If fishers believe they have a market for salmon, contact ADFG for potential commercial openings in your district. One fisherman from St Mary's commented that the current decision to open District 1 for commercial fishing will benefit only a few tightly knit fishers as the buyers from that area are not sending out tender boats. Due to the price of gas, the distance for fishers from District 2 to fish in District 1 was too great to justify expending effort on a commercial opening. ADFG took advantage of the opportunity to open a commercial period even though it would only benefit a few fishers. It is the nature of the market for chum to be limited and ADFG understands that transportation is a major limiting factor for fishers.

Mixing Zone Regulations: The deadline for written comments regarding the 'Mixing Zones in Salmon Streams' issue in Alaska is September 10. For more information contact Joe Sullivan, YR DFA (email: joe-yrdfa@alaska.com; phone (907) 272-3141, Ext 105) or Doug Sweat (email: dougsweat@acsalaska.net).

Call #15 – September 7, 2004

Communities involved in the call:

Emmonak	Huslia	Ft Yukon (report)
St. Mary's	Minto (report)	Eagle
Kaltag	Tanana	

State and Federal Agencies involved in the call:

ADFG - Commercial Fisheries in Fairbanks
USFWS in Fairbanks
Office of Subsistence Management in Fairbanks
Dept. of Fisheries & Oceans, Canada in Whitehorse, YT
NMFS

Other Organizations & Businesses

BSFA AVCP

Subsistence Reports:

Subsistence fishers reported little to no fishing effort throughout the entire drainage. In the lower river most people are concentrating efforts on moose hunting and/or berry picking. On the Andreafsky River, near St. Mary's water levels are extremely low and only one dog musher is out catching enough (coho) for his dog pot. Up the Koyukuk River in Huslia 3 out of 4 households are 50-75% done subsistence fishing, with one household 25% done. They are catching f. chum and coho – all in good condition. On the Tanana River in Minto, most are out moose hunting and not concentrating on fishing.

In Tanana, on the mainstem, fishermen are reporting lower catches, poorer quality catches of f. chum, but are still waiting for the next pulse. People will start taking fish for cribbing this week until the ice flows. A report from Ft. Yukon indicated that last week there were 5 fish wheels on the mainstem catching close to 100 fish per day. No one is fishing on the Porcupine River near Ft. Yukon and water levels are extremely low. In Eagle, the first sign of winter has appeared with snow on the summit. The substitute fishery in Eagle is still being planned, there are a few logistics left to get fish from Valdez. If for some reason the substitute fishery does not come through, fishers may need to put some nets in the water later in the season.

Management Update & Strategy, by ADFG, USFWS & DFO:

Fall Chum Season: There have been 6 distinct pulses of f. chum salmon, with the most recent pulse estimated at approximately 122,000 near Grayling. The majority of f. chum salmon are now in the middle and upper portions of the YR with the 1st and 2nd pulse approaching the spawning grounds. The 3rd pulse (110,000) should be near Circle, the 4th pulse (31,000) near Stevens Village and the 5th pulse (63,000) between Ruby and Tanana. The first half of the run appeared to be dominated by upriver stocks and the Tanana River stocks comprised an increasing proportion of the later fish. The cumulative f. chum salmon passage estimate at Pilot Station sonar was 609,000 fall chum salmon on its last day of operation (8/31). Based on the cumulative passage estimate and historical average run timing data, the end of season total run size is projected to be around 630,000.

The Chandalar River sonar passage estimates began slow, but have had daily increases for over a week and are nearing the cumulative average for this date. The Sheenjok River passage counts are beginning to increase, but appears that total run size will be below the escapement goal range. The Y5-A test fish wheel at the mouth of the Tanana is not providing much information due to changes in the river bottom profile at the project site. However, projects further up river indicate the run is doing well in both the Kantishna River and Upper Tanana.

Assessment Project Updates: The E. Fork Andreafsky project cumulative count, as of September 6, is 7,091 coho, which is slightly above the 1995-2003 average. At the Rampart/Rapids tagging project, which provides an estimate of f. chum passing through the mainstem above the Tanana River, the Rapids wheel is still tracking below average while the Rampart wheel is above average. The passage estimate of fall chum salmon through Sept.3 is 518,000, seeing approximately 101,000 from August 28 – September 3. Assessment projects will continue to run to cover the last, large part of the run (6th pulse).

Commercial Update: District Y-1 is finishing up their 4th commercial fishing period today (9/7), based on verbal reports catch has been approximately 542 f. chum and 1,442 coho salmon. Between 11 and 15 fishermen have participated in the openings.

Strategy: Subsistence fishing schedule has been relaxed. The amount of time required to have closed subsistence fishing prior to the start of the season was reduced from 24 hours down to 12

hours because of the short notice and the intent to begin commercial fishing as soon as possible when the last large pulse was detected. The requirement to close subsistence fishing 12 hours before, during and after each commercial period was reduced to 6 hours before, during, and after each period. This works to lessen closure time to subsistence fishing since commercial and subsistence do not fish concurrently in the lower river.

Four additional commercial periods were scheduled for District Y-1 due to adequate surplus of both f. chum and coho salmon and because of continued market interest. At this time, there are no other commercial markets interested in either fall chum or coho salmon. One buyer has expressed interest in a directed coho salmon roe fishery in the Tanana River late in the season. ADFG suggest re-evaluating the fall chum management plan for next year as it was a management scheme set up for a higher impact commercial fishery. Since impact has been considerably low this year it is something to think about for next year.

DFO: Daily catch at the DFO test wheels is between 114 and 141 chum/day. To date the run is tracking 15% below the 10-yr. average. The weir on the Fishing Branch has counted 1,592 f. chum to date, which is tracking 50% the 10-yr average (3,362 f. chum -not including 2003). The Porcupine test fishery (gillnet) has had a small recovery effort with 500 fish caught. The total run passage through Old Crow is estimated at approximately 15,000 f. chum salmon.

No commercial fishery as of yet; management is waiting for information/data from the second test fishery on the Upper Yukon to consider before opening.

Local Input & Closing Comments:

Ichthyophonus Study in Tanana: Chum and sheefish continue to be examined for possible *Ichthyophonus* as part of the Rapids Student Data Project. This will be the last week for the project and a large amount should be sampled as fishermen in the area will be cribbing.

Mixing Zone Regulations: The deadline for written comments regarding the 'Mixing Zones in Salmon Streams' issue has been extended to **November 1, 2004**. For more information contact Joe Sullivan, YRDFA (email: joe-yrdfa@alaska.com; phone (907) 272-3141, Ext 105). Or visit <http://www.state.ak.us/dec/water/wqsar/trireview/mixingzones.htm> for more information.

Market Demand: Teleconference participant, Jim Freedman, expressed interest in buying roe from the Tanana River, as ADFG said there may be enough to open for commercial fishery, and buying frozen chum from lower river processors. ADFG recommended calling Kwikpak in Emmonak regarding chums for sale.

Call #16 – September 14, 2004

Communities involved in the call:

St. Mary's	Ruby (report)
Grayling	Tanana
Huslia	Eagle (report)

State and Federal Agencies involved in the call:

ADFG - Commercial Fisheries in Fairbanks
ADFG - Subsistence Division in Fairbanks
USFWS in Fairbanks and Galena
Office of Subsistence Management in Fairbanks
Dept. of Fisheries & Oceans, Canada in Whitehorse, YT

Subsistence Reports:

Subsistence fishers on the lower river reported no fishing activity and extremely low water levels. In the middle and upper river fishing activity is low. Fishermen from Ruby are still catching good quality f. chum 100 miles up river from Galena with three fish wheels. Although most subsistence needs have been met, these fishermen are waiting for another pulse of chum to come through. Up the Koyukuk River in Huslia 3 out of 4 households are 75% done subsistence fishing, with one household 50% done. Three of those fishermen reported good quality catches. On the Tanana River in Minto, most are out moose hunting and not concentrating on fishing.

In Tanana, on the mainstem, fishermen are cribbing and putting up a large portion for dog food. Fishing activity has decreased for some who have gone hunting, but will return to crib until the ice flows. A report from Eagle indicated that one fisherman, hearing no news on the substitution fishery, put his net in for three days and caught 200 good quality f. chum for freezing and for dog food. No report this week from fishermen in Canada.

Management Update & Strategy, by ADFG, USFWS & DFO:

Fall Chum Season: The majority of fall chum salmon are now in the middle and upper portions of the Yukon River with some of the earliest fish currently on or approaching the spawning grounds. There have been 6 pulses of f. chum with the most recent pulse near Tanana. The cumulative f. chum salmon passage estimate at Pilot Station sonar was 609,000 salmon. Based on the cumulative passage estimate and historical average run timing data, the end of season total run size is projected to be around 630,000 f. chum salmon. The coho salmon run in the lower river is also nearing the end. Cumulative total estimate was 200,000 coho salmon, which is about 50% above average for the project. It is still very early to judge the strength of the coho salmon run to various tributaries, but most coho assessment projects are seeing above average numbers for this date.

Assessment Project Updates: The E. Fork Andreafsky project cumulative count, as of September 13, is 9,881 coho, which is above the 1995-2003 average. At the Rampart/Rapids tagging project, which provides an estimate of f. chum passing through the mainstem above the Tanana River, the Rapids wheel is still tracking below average while the Rampart wheel is above average. Projects further up the Tanana River are indicating the run is doing well with normal passage for this time of year in both the Kantishna River tributary and the Upper Tanana River drainage. In the upper Yukon River, the Chandalar River sonar passage estimates began slow, but have seen daily increases for over a week and are nearing the cumulative average for this date. As of 9/11, approximately 93,000 f. chum have passed through, exceeding the lower end of the biological escapement goal of 74,000. The Sheenjok River passage counts recently doubled their daily counts (as of 9/12, approximately 18,000 f. chum), however they still remain far behind the curve and are on track for a run below the established escapement goal. Fall chum are passing through the Canadian DFO weir on the Fishing Branch, but it is still too early to provide an indication of run strength.

CLARIFICATION: Summaries for the past three teleconferences (calls #13-15) have included ADFG's reports on the Rapids video monitoring project which provides CPUE index information. The ADF&G summary made comparisons with the average historical CPUE and stated the 2004 CPUE has been consistently below average in reference to the standard operations of the project (1996-2003). The project operator, Stan Zuray, has provided additional information during the teleconferences regarding the development of a correction factor that had been left out of the recent teleconference summaries. Stan has reported that he is working on a water level discharge correlation with the CPUE data for his test fish wheel in an effort to standardize catch rates that can be compared during varying water conditions. Stan said that when applying the correction

factor to this year's data, the adjusted 2004 CPUE is tracking above average for the Rapids test fish wheel. Again, this is additional information that had not been included in the last three teleconferences summaries (calls #13-15) only.

Commercial Update: District Y-1 has had 6 commercial fishing periods to date during the fall season. Based on verbal reports, catches have yielded 660 f. chum and 1,583 coho salmon by a maximum of 15 fishermen. Early next week will be the soonest possibility for a roe harvest on the Tanana River. However, nothing has been set yet. ADFG reminded teleconference participants if they wanted to take part in a roe fishery there are DEC regulations to follow for extraction. Contact Fred Bue, (907-459-7217) at ADFG if you have further questions.

DFO: To date, 2,406 f. chum have been counted passing through the test wheels at the border. And run timing is late this year. The weir on the Fishing Branch has counted 4,399 f. chum as of 9/13; total projection is 11,600 f. chum salmon. Border escapement estimate for f. chum is 68,800 salmon. The Porcupine test fishery (gillnet) has had a small recovery effort with 500 fish caught. The total run passage through Old Crow is estimated at approximately 15,000 f. chum salmon. A few chinook salmon are still straggling through. A total of 4,114 chinook were taken in the First Nation fishery, however data is still coming in so that number could range between 7,000 and 9,000 chinook salmon. A two-day commercial fishery for f. chum ends today (9/14), so information is not available yet.

Local Input & Closing Comments:

Substitution Fishery in Eagle: The Valdez fishery does not have enough fish to full supply residents in Eagle; therefore, people may not meet their needs. There are currently no closures on subsistence fishing in this area.

Commercial Interest: As this is the last teleconference call, people are encouraged to call ADFG, Commercial Division directly, to discuss their commercial interest.