

Yukon River Inseason Management Teleconference
Call #4 – June 22, 2010

Facilitated by: Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA)

Funded by: US Fish and Wildlife Service – Office of Subsistence Management and the Yukon River Panel

Communities involved in the call: Hooper Bay, Scammon Bay, Alakanuk, Emmonak, Kotlik, Mountain Village, Pilot Station, Marshall, Russian Mission, Holy Cross, Anvik, Grayling, Nulato, Koyukuk, Huslia, Hughes, Allakaket, Galena, Ruby, The Rapids, Rampart, Manley, Stevens Village, Venetie, Circle, Eagle, Dawson, Whitehorse, Old Crow

Subsistence Reports: Chinook salmon are being caught as far upriver as Koyukuk. The fish look good, but on the smaller side. Hooper Bay has reported a good run of Chinook salmon this year, and Scammon Bay is reporting a lot of fish in the rivers near them for the first time in 20 or 30 years. Summer chums are being reported as far upriver as Anvik. The few people who reported on their quality said they looked good. No communities are close to being done with their subsistence needs. With the exception of Hooper Bay, where it has been raining the past week and a half, the weather throughout the drainage has been good. Water levels are still generally lower than average, except along the Tanana River which is running high. Debris levels are reported as low.

Management Updates:

ADF&G Assessment: The 2010 Chinook salmon run is later than average. Beginning on June 14, test nets in the lower Yukon detected an increase in Chinook salmon counts, which have remained steady, indicating that the run is late and compressed. When this group of fish pass Pilot Station sonar the strength of the early portion of the run will be better understood.

The cumulative catch per unit effort (CPUE) at the LYTF set net project is 6.72 as of June 21, which is below the ten-year average, but similar to 2008. The CPUE through June 21 at the Chinook salmon drift net project is 150.85, also below the ten year average of 277.50. The Mountain Village test fishery appears to be tracking well with the other assessment projects. Pilot Station sonar reported 25,300 Chinook which is well below average as of June 21. Age composition analysis at the LYTF showed 63.53% age-5 and 27.84% age-6 fish. Females constituted 31.8% of the sample.

Summer chum salmon have begun entering the river. The cumulative CPUE at the drift test fishery is 1878, which is well above average. Approximately 245,300 chum salmon have passed Pilot Station as of June 21, below the ten-year average of 375,000 chum salmon.

Run and Harvest Outlook: The 2010 Chinook salmon run appears similar to 2008 in abundance and timing. However, there is some uncertainty with the Pilot Station sonar, which is being taken into consideration in management actions. ADF&G is monitoring the run and there may be short-notice restrictions in the lower river, though more information is needed before that will happen. A directed Chinook salmon commercial fishery in the mainstem is unlikely.

The summer chum run is difficult to assess currently due to a lack of assessment information. However, an average run is projected that will provide for escapement needs, subsistence use

and a commercial harvest. The actual commercial harvest will likely be constrained due to the potentially poor Chinook salmon run.

Current Subsistence Fishing Schedule and Assessment Projects – please visit the ADF&G website at <http://www.cf.adfg.state.ak.us/region3/yukhome.php> for this information.

USFWS Input: The Andreafsky and Gisasa weirs are both operational. No salmon have been reported as of June 21 at Gisasa, and only a pink salmon was observed at Andreafsky.

DFO Input: DFO crew are heading to Eagle to get the sonar up and running. Inseason management actions will be based on counts at Eagle sonar.

Local Input & Closing Comments:

Questions this week were about fishing regulations, salmon run outlooks and ADF&G assessment projects. As the run is at or near the quarter point, a caller wanted to know when decisions might be made about implementing possible further restrictions. ADF&G answered that they weren't sure the run was at the quarter point yet, but they would continue to assess the run for the next couple of days. Because of the late run and because so few people have met their subsistence needs, it was requested that ADF&G allow fishing to be open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in Y-2, or to change the opening of the windows to start at 8 a.m. rather than 8 p.m. ADF&G responded that the windows schedule was implemented a bit later than normal and people should be able to meet their needs on the windowed schedule. It is difficult to significantly change the schedule inseason, but ADF&G and USFWS will discuss possibly changing the opening time to 8 a.m. Fishers in Y-4a wanted to know if the period when drifting is allowed will be extended beyond its end date of July 14 because the fish are late this year. ADF&G responded that they will see how the subsistence fishermen are doing in terms of meeting their needs as the end date of the drift period approaches and make any decisions then.

There were some questions about the possibility of a summer chum commercial fishery. ADF&G replied that the summer chum run looks pretty good, though they still are waiting for more assessment information. There might be a commercial opener next week, but the commercial catch will be constrained by the Chinook salmon run. ADF&G needs to be able to project that subsistence and escapement needs will be met before they open a commercial period. Another caller wanted to know where the fish were. The pulse of Chinook salmon that was seen around June 14th in the lower river should be around Anvik now. The increase in summer chum salmon seen at Pilot Station on June 17th is around Russian Mission or Holy Cross.

Because the Mountain Village test fishery is fishing with 7.5 inch mesh, a caller wanted to know if ADF&G was seeing any dropoff of Chinook salmon. ADF&G didn't have an answer but would contact the staff at Mountain Village to see if they've noticed any. Another caller wanted to understand how the sonar at Pilot Station works and why it doesn't operate 24 hours a day. ADF&G responded that the sonar is on about 9 hours a day in 3 shifts spread throughout the day. These numbers are then extrapolated to give an estimate of the total number of fish that pass in each 24-hour period. The sonar does not operate while test fishing is occurring, which occurs for another 7 hours each day. ADF&G has run the sonar for 24 hours a day before and the results have been very similar to this method. The sonar gives estimates of abundance and is complemented by test fishing, which provides information on species apportionment.