

**Yukon River Inseason Management Teleconference
Call #9 – July 27, 2010**

Facilitated by: Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA)

Funded by: USFWS – Office of Subsistence Management and the Yukon River Panel

Communities involved in the call: Emmonak, Kotlik, St. Mary's, Pilot Station, Marshall, Holy Cross, Nulato, Koyukuk, Huslia, Allakaket, Galena, Tanana, The Rapids, Rampart, Minto, Fairbanks, Fort Yukon, Circle, Eagle, Old Crow

Subsistence Reports: Fishing effort was reported as low this week. In the upper river and flats area, high water and drift has made fishing difficult. Families in this region are anywhere from 20% to 100% satisfied in their subsistence harvests. In the middle river there is some fishing, mostly for chums and whitefish. More families will fish again when the fall chum come in. In the GASH region and lower river communities, there is a little fishing going on as people wait for the fall chum. From the Koyukuk River, Huslia reports a few families fishing for chums. Old Crow is also reporting high water and drift; there are no nets in the water currently.

Water levels are high or rising in most of the communities on the call. Koyukuk reported water levels dropping a little bit. Debris load in the river was variable, ranging from extensive in Circle, Huslia, Nenana and Kotlik to none in Rampart or the Rapids.

Management Updates:

ADF&G Assessment: The lower river switched to fall season management on July 16. The LYTF and Chinook salmon drift test fishery have ceased operations as of July 15. Final cumulative Chinook salmon CPUEs were 18.67 and 482.26, respectively, both of which are below average. The summer chum drift test fishery final cumulative CPUE is 4271.9, which is above average. Through July 19, 114,000 Chinook and 1,327,000 summer chum salmon have passed Pilot Station sonar. These are below average numbers for both species. Chum passage after July 19 will be considered fall chum salmon. Test fisheries at the Rapids and Nenana are reporting below average catches of Chinook salmon for this date. Summer chum numbers at the Rapids are above average, but below average at Nenana. Eagle sonar has counted 4,460 Chinook salmon as of July 19, well below the average of 17,500 fish.

Run and Harvest Outlook: The 2010 Chinook salmon run is below average to poor. The Alaskan portion of the run is probably weaker than average, but it is anticipated that most Alaskan escapement goals will be met. There is continuing concern for meeting escapement goals to Canada and fulfilling the harvest-sharing goals of treaty obligations. Managers are asking for voluntary conservation measures of Chinook salmon. Due to high water and high fuel costs, fishing has been difficult this year; therefore fishing restrictions were not implemented.

Total summer chum passage at Pilot Station is 1.33 million fish. Total summer chum harvest in the directed fisheries in Y-1, Y-2 and Y-4a and Y-6 is 226,000 fish. 9,946 incidental Chinook salmon were harvested in Districts 1 and 2. Commercial periods are open in Y-4a and Y-6.

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: As of July 25, the Andrefsky and Gisasa weirs have counted 69,990 and 45,160 summer chum respectively. Both counts are above average. Chinook salmon counts are below average at both weirs. The Henshaw River weir has counted approximately 669 Chinook and 82,053 summer chum salmon.

DFO Input: At the quarter point of the run at Eagle sonar, DFO projected 37,500 Chinook salmon into Canada. Based on the numbers seen at Eagle sonar since then however, this is probably an optimistic projection. Canadian management is in the Yellow Zone, meaning that sport, commercial and domestic fisheries are closed. Currently the First Nations are unrestricted.

ADF&G Fall Chum Management: Pilot Station has been counting fall chum since July 19. As of July 26, 90,391 fall chum have passed, slightly below average for this date. Fall chum salmon typically enter the river in erratic fluctuations of fish. Therefore, the inseason projection is highly variable until the midpoint of the run, normally occurring around August 8 at Pilot Station. The current fall chum run projection is for 600,000 fish which should be adequate to meet escapement and subsistence needs, as well as provide for a limited commercial harvest. Subsistence fishing is currently open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in Y-1, 2, and 3. Y-4 is on a 5-day per week schedule, and Y-5A, B, and C are expected to transition to a similar schedule next week. Drifting is closed in Y-4 until August 2, when it will open in Y-4A upstream of Stink Creek.

Local Input & Closing Comments:

Many of the comments this week dealt with the management of the fall chum salmon run. Many people voiced their concerns about ensuring enough fall chum make it upriver to supplement the poor harvest of Chinook salmon in the middle and upper river. Most who spoke were of the opinion that commercial periods should not be allowed in the lower river, or that they should at least be delayed as long as possible. In addition, because fishing conditions were so difficult this year and so few people met their subsistence needs with the Chinook salmon, the request was made to have more fishing time when the fall chum are in the river as well as extended drift time in Y-4A. ADF&G responded that no decisions will be made about commercial fishing for fall chum until the midpoint of the run, at the earliest. They will be cautious and conservative in their approach, but there is also a management plan that guides ADF&G in their management of the fall run. The run this year is expected to be a bit bigger than last year and ADF&G believes there will be enough fish to satisfy all the needs on the river. ADF&G will consider opening up fishing time in Y-4 and Y-5 as requested as well as look at extending the drifting period in Y-4A. The final comment on fall chum commercial fishing was that if the numbers are strong enough to support a commercial harvest, there should be opportunity in all the districts.

Other questions during this period concerned the sonars at Pilot Station and Eagle. A question was asked about DFO's projections of Chinook salmon run size into Canada. DFO responded that at the end of last week, they, in conjunction with ADF&G, were projecting about 37,500 Chinook salmon into Canada. After looking at the sonar numbers at Eagle over the weekend, they are now thinking it will be a little smaller, but cautioned that given the difficulty with understanding run timing and water conditions it is difficult to project. For the Pilot Station sonar, clarification was requested on how species are apportioned. ADF&G explained that from the sonar, only numbers of fish can be estimated. Along with the sonar, ADF&G fishes with a variety of net sizes, and from the results of that fishing determines the approximate percentages of fish species going by the sonar.