

YUKON FISHERIES NEWS

A Publication of the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association



FALL 2013

Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association

A United Voice for Yukon River Fishers

NPFMC Looks at Reducing Chinook and Chum Salmon Bycatch

by Nicole Kimball, Federal Fisheries Coordinator, Office of the Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish and Game

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This October the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) received a report on Chinook salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock fishery, now that the new bycatch management program has been in place for two full years. The report included information on the status of Alaskan Chinook salmon stocks, what impact Chinook salmon bycatch has on total runs, and information to help the Council evaluate individual vessels' fishing and bycatch performance under the program.

The report provided important information to the Council, especially about the impacts of Chinook salmon bycatch on Western Alaska stocks in light of low runs. The report used genetic information and age data to determine the number of Chinook salmon that would have returned to river systems had bycatch not occurred, and then compared that to run strengths. Under the first two years of the program, the impact of the actual bycatch on coastal Western Alaska river systems ranged from 1.6% to 2.0% of the total run. Put another way, the runs might have been 1.6% to 2.0% larger had bycatch been zero.

The Council spent a lot of time reviewing the impacts as well as determining whether the industry incentive plans are working as intended. The incentive plans are very important, even more so in times of low Chinook salmon abundance when bycatch levels are not anywhere near the cap levels.

Chinook salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock fishery in 2013 was about 12,500. In 2012, 11,352 Chinook salmon were caught in the Bering Sea pollock fishery. Both of these numbers are well below the 10-year average,

two of the lowest bycatch numbers in recent years, and well under the overall bycatch cap of 47,591 Chinook salmon in any one year and up to 60,000 fish in any 2 out of 7 years. At current abundance and bycatch levels, the caps are not as important as making sure the plans which set incentives for fishermen to avoid salmon are as strong as possible.

After two days of Council discussion, the Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Cora Campbell, made a motion to evaluate ways to improve Chinook salmon bycatch controls in the Bering Sea pollock fishery. The motion passed unanimously, and provided clear direction that despite evidence that the current bycatch management program is working to reduce bycatch, in a situation of historically low Chinook salmon abundance, the Council must continue to improve the program. The Commissioner spoke about the severe restrictions that are in place for subsistence users in Western Alaska, and that given the importance of Chinook salmon, the Council must consider the impacts of any level of removals to those users.

The Commissioner's motion focuses on changes to the program that will result in additional reductions in Chinook salmon bycatch, even beyond the levels of bycatch we see today. One possible improvement is to change fishing behavior and opportunity in September and October, when we know there are more Chinook salmon on the fishing grounds. While the timing of bycatch varies, the percentage and amount of bycatch taken in the fall can be high compared to other times of year. The motion provides for

"NPFMC..." continues on page 11

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A Message From the Director

By Jill Klein, Executive Director



Staying Positive

Since 1998 when the Chinook salmon stocks started to decline, the Yukon River Drainage

Fisheries Association (YRDFA) board of directors has decided to stay positive. I am continuously impressed every time I meet with YRDFA board members. Regardless if someone is from the lower river or the upper river, they have learned over all these years, that staying

...staying

positive is a

way to make

progress.

positive is a way to make progress. Others may think this is naïve, and not focused on the severity of the problem of the need to conserve Chinook salmon. We do recognize

the need to continue to educate the public about the problem, with the hope that they will become more motivated to change their behavior and conserve the Chinook salmon for the future.

In order to be successful in our efforts, we need to truly understand what motivates people living in rural Alaska, along the Yukon River to make changes and what barriers there are to making these changes. We want to start delivering messages to people along the Yukon River but need to make sure that we are delivering them in such a way that we compel people to conserve salmon and give them the tools to do so. We heard that many people again this past summer did not have 6-inch mesh gill net gear. While this gear is seen as a restriction, it is a tool that allows fishing families to continue to go out fishing for salmon that they can target such as summer chum salmon in the lower river, during times when the Chinook salmon run is doing so poorly. When seen as a benefit that will continue to enable fishing families to be out on the river fishing together so that they have some salmon to put away for the winter, then perhaps this is a positive measure opposed to just being a restriction from the

bigger nets that people used to use. While trying to stay positive about this, there is still a barrier however, because 6-inch nets cost money and people may need help to purchase one. We need to know how many people still need these 6-inch or smaller nets and how can we help people afford to purchase them. This is still a remaining barrier that we need to address to help people avoid the Chinook salmon while targeting other species.

There are still other barriers to overcome in the efforts to conserve Chinook salmon. People along the Yukon River only have so much control over their ability to fish these days. The state and federal governments regulate

the fishing times and fishing gear as they try to balance the need to move Chinook salmon to the spawning grounds while allowing for subsistence and even some commercial fisheries on the currently healthy and abundant species in the Yukon River.

There is still a part for people to take action on. While the hardship is real, and the hurt is real, the decline in the salmon numbers is real too. By staying positive about alternative fisheries and subsistence activities and embracing ways to save Chinook salmon, we will hopefully have Chinook salmon in the future – a benefit we all want. ☺

•• SAVE THE DATE! ••

Yukon River International Salmon Summit

April 8 – 9, 2013

Funded by the Yukon River Panel and Hosted by the
Council of Yukon First Nations

*working together because salmon know no
borders*

•• AND ••

Alaska Pre-season Planning Meeting

April 10, 2013

Funded by the Yukon River Panel and Hosted by the
Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association

**BOTH MEETINGS WILL BE HELD IN
FAIRBANKS, ALASKA**

Bycatch and Seafood Donation Program: An Update from SeaShare

by Jim Harmon, Executive Director, SeaShare

Editor's Note: Over the years we've receive many questions at YRDFA about the SeaShare program which donates bycatch and other seafood to provide food for those in need. Particularly in these recent years of low Chinook salmon returns we've heard from numerous communities asking about the availability of seafood donations. Some communities feel strongly that they do not want to receive seafood donations, while others are interested in receiving seafood donations to help provide food when salmon returns are low. This decision is ultimately up to the tribe, community or individual. YRDFA remains committed to our long-term goal of reducing salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock fishery. In response to the requests for more information, YRDFA asked Jim Harmon, Executive Director of SeaShare to provide an update on SeaShare's seafood donation program.

.. . .

Wild Alaska seafood is feeding more hungry people in Alaska this year, thanks to the generosity and teamwork of fishermen, processors, NOAA, and others. SeaShare exists to maximize their efforts.

SeaShare began 20 years ago, working with fishermen and processors to establish the Prohibited Species Donation Program. SeaShare remains the only organization authorized by NMFS to retain and distribute

"bycatch" for hunger-relief. No one is advocating for bycatch. Fishermen work hard to avoid incidental catch. And all participants are encouraged to throw back any fish that might survive (after they've been counted and/or sampled by observers and in compliance with all applicable laws). But we also recognize the value that these fish have for hungry Americans. Over the last 20 years we have received, processed and donated 3 million pounds of fish that would otherwise have been thrown overboard. That's over 12 million servings.

Every person, company, and association that SeaShare works with has committed to helping us feed hungry Americans. Despite the additional work it would entail, Industry leaders asked SeaShare two years ago to expand our donation efforts within Alaska. Some of the obstacles we needed to overcome included storage limitations, intrastate freight, varying quality and a lack of qualified food banks and feeding centers. But we also recognize the dietary and cultural significance that seafood has for Alaskans, so we went to work. NMFS amended our permit, adding more boats and processors, and allowing SeaShare to qualify additional food banks in remote communities. The current list of participants is substantial: 122 Fishing boats, 18 At-Sea processors, 15 Shore Plants, six receiving agencies in Alaska, 9 financial

donors (corporations and foundations), and 20+ other companies (cold storage, freight, packaging, etc.). I'm proud to report that we've made huge strides. As a result, last year every pound of usable bycatch caught in Alaska was distributed in Alaska. That's over 100,000 pounds (400,000 servings). SeaShare is now looking for more partners, so that we can expand distribution to more communities in Alaska. The Food Bank of Alaska and Fairbanks Food Bank are key partners, and we appreciate the dedication and expertise that they provide all year to feed families.



Coastal Villages Region Fund (CVRV) inspecting salmon from their boat.

Reclaiming fish that were being thrown overboard was our original goal, and it remains an important program - one that highlights the respect that fishermen and other stakeholders have for the resource. But Alaskans benefit from other donations as well: Canned salmon, frozen Salmon fillets, and frozen breaded Pollock portions. One example is the 1200 pounds of sockeye fillets donated to the Glory Hole in Juneau last May. These weren't from bycatch. They were first run product, donated by an Alaska seafood company. Other fishermen and processors donate food regularly in communities like Dillingham, Kodiak, and Dutch Harbor.

Thanks to their generosity, along with financial support from Alaska Airlines, the Rasmuson foundation, Western Alaska Community Development Association (WACDA, the trade association for the 6 Western Alaska CDQ groups), Alaska Marine Lines, Wells Fargo, and others, SeaShare was able to donate over 220,000 pounds of frozen and canned seafood in Alaska last year --- all at 0 cost to the receiving agencies. That equates to more than



Jim visited Sam Kirstein and the Fairbanks Community Food Bank after they received a container of frozen salmon steaks in October.

one meal for every Alaskan.

Outside the great state of Alaska, SeaShare has tailored other programs that generate truckloads of seafood that are distributed across the country. 1.5 million pounds were donated to 48 food banks in 25 states last year. The seafood industry, through SeaShare, remains one of the largest sources of protein to the food bank network.

Fishermen have always been generous. Our goal at SeaShare is to find others who can help pull on the same oar, so that the load is shared and the results are maximized. With a growing list of processors, freight companies, food banks, and financial donors, more seafood is being served on more tables in Alaska, and across the country.

Jim Harmon is Executive Director of SeaShare, a 501(c)3 non-profit Organization based on Bainbridge Island, WA. Find out more at www.seashare.org



H&G salmon are then steamed, glazed, & re-packed for food banks

Salmon Bycatch in the Bering Sea Pollock Fishery: YRDFA's Perspective

by Becca Robbins Gisclair, Sr. Fisheries Policy Advisor

YRDFA has been working on reducing salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock fishery for over 20 years. In that time, both bycatch and bycatch reduction efforts have ebbed and flowed. The current system of caps and industry incentive plans is a step forward from earlier management systems which had no cap or limit on the amount of bycatch which was allowed. However, especially under the current state of the Chinook salmon runs on the Yukon River and neighboring runs in Western Alaska, we are concerned that the current management system does not do enough. In the current Chinook salmon crisis, as in-river users are asked to continually reduce their subsistence harvest, it's critical that bycatch is being continuously reduced as well.

In recent years bycatch has been relatively low compared to historical levels. While we're grateful for the low levels, it's important that everything possible is

being done to reduce bycatch even further in these times. It's also important that bycatch stays low – a spike in bycatch at the current levels of abundance would be devastating to Western Alaska's Chinook salmon.

YRDFA is fully engaged in the North Pacific Fishery Management Council process and I participated as YRDFA's representative on the Advisory Panel at the October 2013 Council meeting. We were very pleased to see Cora Campbell, the Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, put forth a motion which indicates that the Council too wants to see more being done to reduce salmon bycatch. It is noteworthy that the Council motion outlines an approach which includes not only changes to the industry incentive plan agreements, but also additional regulatory approaches to further reduce bycatch. The provision to change the accounting year for salmon bycatch, which would place the high value winter fishery at the end of the accounting

year, poses a significant change. Because vessels will want to ensure they are not in danger of hitting the cap and closing the highest value part of the year for the fishery, this means the fleet is likely to stay well under the cap. While we are pleased with the direction the Council is moving, we, along with many other Western Alaska groups, remain concerned about the overall level of bycatch permissible under the current program. It is critical that the Council and/or industry addresses the overall cap amount to ensure that Chinook salmon recovery is not set back because of a bycatch spike.

The motion put forward by the Commissioner and supported unanimously by the Council starts a lengthy process for the Council to consider changes to the management program. YRDFA will be continuing to play a key role in this work. Look for additional updates in future newsletters! 🐟

Magnuson-Stevens Reauthorization Offers Opportunity to Strengthen our Fisheries

by U.S. Senator Mark Begich — for the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association

The Magnuson-Stevens Act is our nation's premier law that manages our marine fisheries. Written by Senators Ted Stevens and Warren Magnuson of Washington and first passed in 1976, the legislation kicked foreign fishing fleets out of our waters and set up a series of regional councils to manage marine fisheries from 3 to 200 miles off our coast. Inside water fisheries are managed by the states.

By far the nation's most productive and successful region, Alaska is regulated by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council. Our state accounts for over 5 billion pounds of seafood every year, over half our nation's seafood production. There are problems with some runs – notably Yukon Chinook salmon – but Alaska fish stocks are generally considered well managed and healthy.

Despite our successful management, there are always issues that need to be addressed, such as conflicts between user groups and weaknesses in some fish stocks. That's why the law comes up for periodic reauthorization. It's a chance to fix problems and make adjustments to ensure the sustainability of the fishery resource and ensure users are treated fairly.

The last reauthorization of the Act in 2006 made sweeping changes to the law which largely reflected how we were managing our fisheries in Alaska. Now, the Magnuson-Stevens Act is up for reauthorization again. The Commerce subcommittee on Oceans and Fisheries, which I chair, has begun the process of listening to Americans about what changes are needed in the law.

This is a big task since the Magnuson-Stevens Act covers more than just Alaska. It also deals with New England cod, red snapper in the Gulf of Mexico, tuna off Hawaii and many, many more. The first hearing my subcommittee held focused on fisheries off New England and the Mid-Atlantic states. The next will look at the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico. After that my subcommittee will turn to the Pacific region and include a hearing just on Alaska fisheries.

That's a lengthy process so I have also held a series of roundtables and listening sessions to

hear from Alaskans on these issues. I met with commercial fishermen in Kodiak, recreational fishermen in Kenai, and two sessions in Fairbanks focused on subsistence fisheries, the most recent in conjunction with the annual convention of the Alaska Federation of Natives.

What I've heard at these roundtables includes the need to recognize subsistence and recreational fisheries in the law. Originally written to manage commercial fisheries, other users involved with subsistence and sport fisheries are also affected. They want a stronger voice in the process when shared issues such as bycatch and allocations are being discussed. I have heard loud and clear the need to improve the working relationship between federal agencies and tribes.

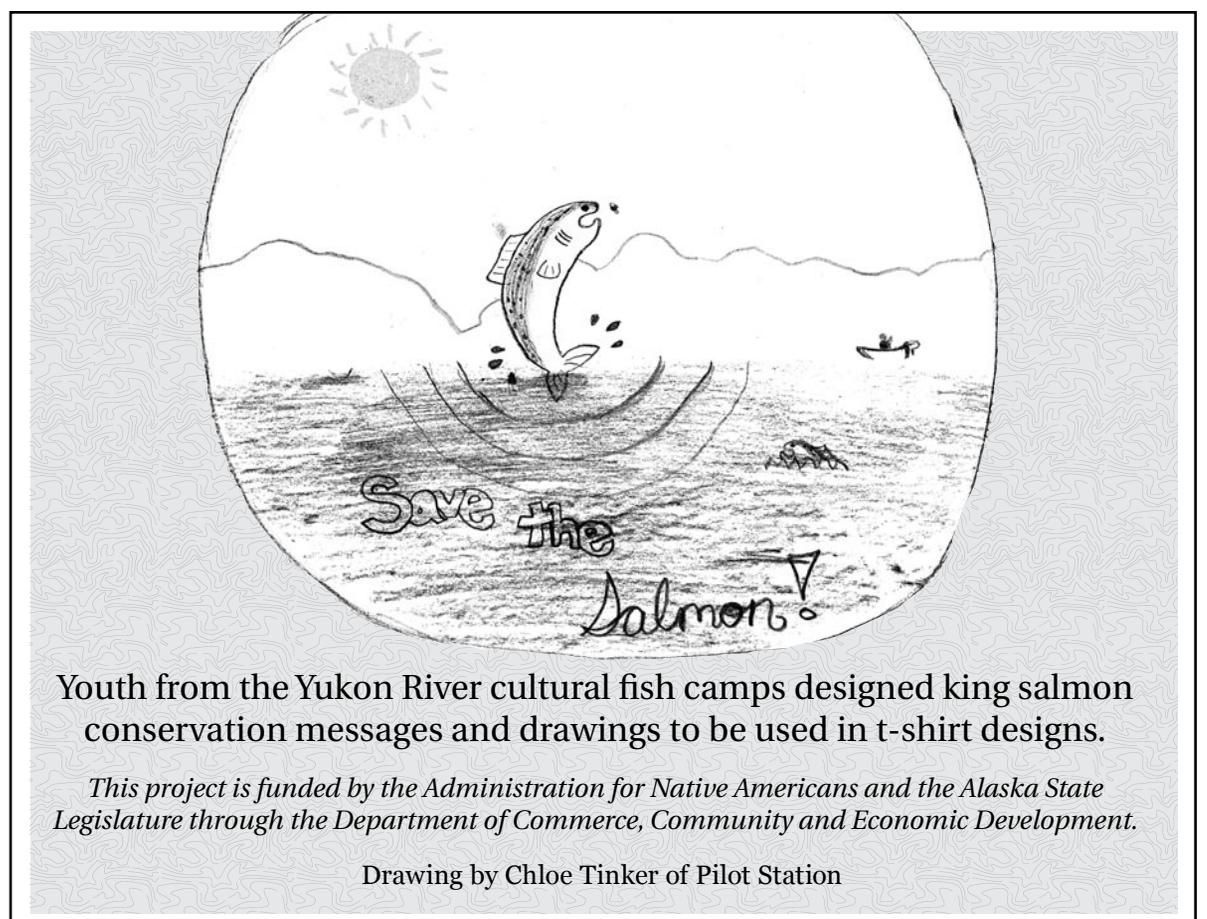
Nationally, there are concerns about managing "data poor" stocks for which there isn't enough scientific information, and timelines for rebuilding fisheries. Many fishermen are worried about climate change affecting our fisheries and how that affects our management strategies. Concerns have been raised about the certification of our fisheries as

sustainable so consumers know they're buying a healthy, well managed product. These are all significant issues.

Given the national scope of the law and the complexity of issues involved, it may take years to finalize a new law. In the meantime, the lack of reauthorization doesn't mean the Magnuson-Stevens Act goes away. The law remains on the books and the councils still do their work. The last reauthorization of the Act took five years to complete and this might take as long.

But the reauthorization process is now underway and I welcome the thoughts of all Alaskans including members of the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association on how we can improve this landmark legislation. Future hearings on Alaska fisheries will be scheduled in the months ahead. You are always welcome to contact my offices in Anchorage, Fairbanks and Washington, DC or send me an email to msacomment@begich.senate.gov.

I look forward to hearing from you on ways we can strengthen the management of Alaska's fisheries. ☾



First Salmon Return to Fox Creek

by Jacqueline Ronson — [Reprinted with permission from the Yukon News]



On August 29 at around 11 a.m., Coralee Johns spotted two spawning chinook salmon in Fox Creek. It was the moment she had been waiting for, a culmination of seven years of work.

"It was pretty amazing," said Johns. "Super, super exciting."

The Ta'an Kwach'an Council has been raising salmon and releasing them into the creek since 2007. Johns has managed the project since 2009.

Elders say that they used to fish salmon in Fox Creek all the way up to the bridge at the Klondike Highway, 14 kilometres from the mouth, said Johns.

But in the 1950s, the salmon stopped coming back. No one knows exactly what happened, but an explosion in the beaver population could have been part of the problem, she said.

And so, with money from the Yukon River Panel's restoration and enhancement fund, the First Nation has been working to restore the salmon run to Fox Creek, a tributary of Lake Laberge.

The salmon start their journey in the late summer as roe and milt collected from spawning salmon at Yukon Energy's Whitehorse Fishway.

From there, they are moved to the incubation facility at McIntyre Creek.

The tiny fry, measuring only about six centimetres, are clipped, tagged and released the following summer.

The juveniles spend a year or so in the creek, getting ready for the long journey, 3,000 km

down the Yukon River to the Bering Sea.

Tens of thousands of these little salmon have been released into the creek every year for the past six years, in the hopes that some of them would make it back. And in the hopes that once they start coming back, they won't stop. Last year, Johns was expecting that some four-year-old males would come home to Fox Creek, the first to return.

But she didn't find any evidence that they came.

This year, she was looking for five-year-old males and females.

Johns and a fisheries technician spent the last two weeks of August and the first week of September trekking along the 14-kilometre stretch of Fox Creek between Lake Laberge and the highway, looking for salmon.

It wasn't easy work, she said. "We had quite a bit of deadfall."

But all the effort was worth it on that late August morning when she spotted a male and a female chinook hanging out about eight kilometres up the creek.

She flagged the area and took the GPS coordinates, and continued her survey.

Another three kilometres up, she found a five-year-old male washed up on a grassy overhang.

It was already dead, spent from the epic journey from the ocean.

"I think he was exhausted from the stretch that he did do, because above where we found the two, there was probably a seven-metre-high cascade of log jams," said Johns.

His body was almost entirely intact, save for a gill taken by a bird, she said.

The next day, when she returned to where she had seen the pair, they too had passed on.

But they had left behind an amazing gift: The eggs of the first salmon to spawn in Fox Creek

in half a century.

Johns took samples from their carcasses. The female had released all but three of her eggs into the creek. The male had released his milt. Next May, when Johns returns to the creek to sample for minnows, she will know if some of those eggs were successfully fertilized and able to survive the harsh winter.

It's easy to tell which salmon were born in the wild, since all those raised in a hatchery have their tiny adipose fin clipped before they are released.

Johns hopes that next year even more spawning adults will return.

The First Nation developed a management plan for the creek in 2005. Over the next year, Johns will go back to that plan and see what can be improved, she said.

Johns had some funding a couple of winters ago to train youth to trap beavers in the area.

But an elder who trapped along Fox Creek passed away, and her land could not be touched for a full year out of respect.

Ta'an Kwach'an Council returned the money for that project.

Beaver management remains a significant obstacle to restoring the salmon population on the creek, said Johns.

"There are a lot more beaver dams in the last six years, so that's getting hard."

The First Nation will continue to work with the family to either help them to trap in the area or train youth to do it, she said.

If the beaver population can be brought down, it could make the journey of the returning salmon just a little bit easier.

With a little help and a little luck, there may again be a day when salmon can be caught right from the highway. 🐟

Contact Jacqueline Ronson at jronson@yukon-news.com

Fresh Coffee and Solutions with our Alaskan Friends

*A Perspective from the Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee
Executive Director, Dennis Zimmerman*

After an intensive few days in Dawson City and Mayo, Yukon, the 2013 Yukon River Educational Exchange changed pace with a breakfast meeting in Whitehorse. Alaskan participants John Lamont, Stanley Ned, and Fred Huntington, sat down with approximately 30 Canadian fishers, salmon managers, Government employees and individual stakeholders to share perspectives on salmon management.

All too often there is not enough time, resources or an appropriate venue for people on both sides of the border to share their thoughts, hopes, strategies and challenges about our Chinook salmon crisis. The Yukon River Educational Exchange, funded by the Yukon River Restoration and Enhancement Fund (R&E) of

the Yukon River Panel brought together a wide range of these passionate salmon managers and fishermen. Facilitated by the Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee and the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association, the meeting set out to focus on collaborative solutions rather than a re-hashing of all the problems.

The meeting started with a round-table sharing of perspectives and realities along the entire Yukon River drainage. Efforts of having the entire drainage represented were well served with a spectrum of participants there from the mouth at Emmonak to the headwaters in Teslin. The latter part of the meeting focused on a list of solutions that might serve to benefit both sides of the border.

The Alaskan participants spoke about salmon needs in their respective communities, what they are noticing on the river and the general reductions in fishing for Chinook salmon in Alaska. Canadians spoke to their challenges with not getting enough fish across the border and the resulting loss of salmon culture and overall lack of fishing.

The tone was one of mutual respect and cooperation. The remainder of the meeting was spent talking about ways for each side of the border to better understand what can be done to make change. Some items that were discussed included: by-catch, research projects, R&E fund, different fishing techniques, focus on alternate species and maintaining a fishing culture.

There were numerous comments around co-management and the need for working together at a grass-roots level. Many participants felt this two-hour meeting was very productive and thanked the Alaskans for being open-minded and sitting at the table with Canadians. It was hoped that all participants would bring back these shared perspectives to their communities and the next round of joint salmon talks at the Yukon River Panel.

The Yukon River Panel fund YRDFA's work on this project. The statements, findings, conclusions, and recommendations are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the funders and partners. ☾



Fishers Report Very Low Progress Towards Chinook Salmon Harvest Goals and Increased Conservation Efforts in 2013

by Catherine Moncrieff

Fishers along the Yukon River were not able to meet their usual subsistence harvest goals for Chinook salmon this season according to the results from the In-season Subsistence Salmon Interviews. This was a challenging year for Chinook salmon fishers with low salmon numbers and conservative management. In fact, many fishers reported decreasing their harvest goals to conserve Chinook salmon and turning to other species such as chum salmon to meet their needs.

Since 2002, the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA) has been partnering with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to gather subsistence information from fishing households in a project called Yukon River In-Season Subsistence Salmon Interviews. During the Chinook fishing season, YRDFA hires a local person in 10 villages along the Yukon River to conduct interviews about subsistence salmon fishing conditions. The interviewer visits fishermen and women in their village every week between Thursday and Sunday. In 2013, this project took place in Alakanuk, Marshall, Russian Mission, Holy Cross, Huslia, Kaltag, Galena, Nenana, Fort Yukon, and Eagle. The interviewers collected information measuring fishermen's progress towards meeting their subsistence harvest goals for Chinook salmon. Through the interviews we also learned about fishing conditions and the quality of the subsistence catch.

Harvest goals:

Many villages reported very low progress towards reaching their harvest goals, even as low as 0 - 2%. While there was a range of some villages that harvested more fish than others, all of the participating fishers surveyed ended the season below 50% of their usual harvest goals by village (Table 1). The following table shows the participating villages, the number of households interviewed, and the fishers' progress as a village towards meeting their harvest goals for the last 3 years.

TABLE 1. Results showing number of households interviewed and final harvest completion for the Yukon River In-season Salmon Interviews 2011–2013.

| Village | # of households interviewed | | | % of harvest goals | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|------|------|--------------------|------|------|
| | 2013 | 2012 | 2011 | 2013 | 2012 | 2011 |
| Alakanuk | 18 | 11 | --- | 34% | 68% | --- |
| Marshall | 14 | 15 | 14 | 1% | 33% | 69% |
| Russian Mission | 8 | 10 | 12 | 2% | 55% | 92% |
| Holy Cross | 24 | 18 | 18 | 2% | 0% | 3% |
| Kaltag | 5 | 6 | 9 | 45% | 25% | 88% |
| Galena | 16 | 22 | 22 | 16% | 43% | 89% |
| Huslia | 0 | 7 | 17 | --- | 4% | 41% |
| Nenana | 10 | 6 | 11 | 6% | 4% | 59% |
| Fort Yukon | 26 | 30 | 32 | 38% | 33% | 46% |
| Eagle | 5 | 10 | 8 | 0% | 23% | 76% |

Chinook salmon conservation:

This year a new question on the survey asked fishers if they planned to reduce their Chinook harvest and if so, what species would they use to replace Chinook salmon. Fishers responded in about half of the communities and reported conservation efforts of Chinook salmon in Alakanuk, Galena, Nenana, Fort Yukon and Eagle. In Marshall, Kaltag, Galena, Fort Yukon, and Eagle, summer or fall chum salmon was the species selected most often as replacement for their subsistence harvest (Table 2).

TABLE 2. 2013 Chinook salmon conservation and replacement species as reported by fishers in the Yukon River In-Season Salmon Interviews.

| Village | Chinook Conservation | Replacement Species |
|-----------------|--|----------------------|
| Alakanuk | Reporting fishers reduced Chinook harvest by 75% | --- |
| Marshall | --- | summer and fall chum |
| Russian Mission | --- | --- |
| Holy Cross | --- | --- |
| Kaltag | --- | summer and fall chum |
| Galena | Reduced harvest by 100%, 50%, 40%, 35% | sheefish, fall chum |
| Huslia | --- | --- |
| Nenana | 3 of 6 of fishers interviewed reduced by 95% | --- |
| Fort Yukon | 4 of 10 fishers reduced by 25% or 50%; one will double efforts | chum salmon |
| Eagle | Many fishers not fishing at all - 100% reduction | chum, male burbot |

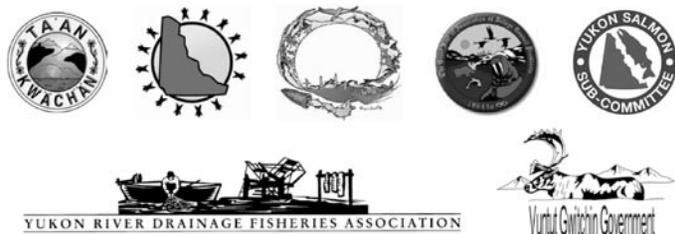
This year 7 of the 10 local hires were returning interviewers. The experience they brought to the program was an important contribution. One experienced local interviewer even traveled to another village to assist with the training of a new interviewer. We would like to thank our 2013 team of interviewers for their hard work and contributions to the program; Martin Harry, Alakanuk; Norma Evan, Marshall; Jeremy Wigley, Russian Mission; Rita Paul, Holy Cross; Craig Semaken, Kaltag; Sandy Scotton, Galena; Robin Campbell, Nenana; Andrew Firmin, Fort Yukon; Nathan Helmer, Eagle.

For more information, contact Catherine Moncrieff at Catherine@yukonsalmon.org.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Fisheries Resources Monitoring Program fund YRDFA's work on this project. The statements, findings, conclusions, and recommendations are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the funders and partners.

Yukon River International Salmon Summit

*Funded by the Yukon River Panel and
Hosted by the Council of Yukon First Nations*



“working together because salmon know no borders”

In an effort to enhance cross border knowledge and understanding about Yukon River fisheries, the people that rely on them, the management programs and recent declines in Chinook salmon, an international salmon summit in conjunction with an Alaskan pre-season planning meeting is being planned to take place April 8, 9, and 10, 2013 in Fairbanks, Alaska. All stakeholder groups will be invited to participate in the summit and include those that depend on the Yukon River Chinook salmon such as Alaskan Tribes and First Nations people in Yukon, as well as inter-Tribal groups and non-profit groups working on behalf of the salmon fisheries and the state and federal management agencies on both sides of the border. This includes the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

The goal of the summit is to increase the ability of people living along the Yukon River to maintain and protect salmon stocks and their habitat. Through creating a greater understanding of key issues and of salmon management, the summit will also develop solutions that could address threats to a sustainable harvest of Chinook salmon in Yukon, particularly by those who have a Treaty or Aboriginal right to fish these stocks. Recent declines in Yukon River Chinook salmon stocks have highlighted the need for an unprecedented meeting of this magnitude.

Funded by the Yukon River Panel and hosted by the Council of Yukon First Nations, this summit will invite participants to learn about fisheries management structures in both Alaska and Yukon as well as set up small group discussions for participants to share their first hand knowledge of how the fisheries work in practice and to develop fisher-driven in-river solutions for addressing the need to conserve Yukon River Chinook salmon.

A steering committee has been created that includes representation from both Canadian First Nation and Alaskan entities to assist in carrying out this summit. Members include:

Emmie Fairclough from the Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee/Ta'an Kwäch'än Council
Pauline Frost-Hanberg from the Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee/Vuntut Gwitchin Government
Gillian Rourke from the Teslin Tlingit Council
Orville Huntington from the Tanana Chiefs Conference
Tim Andrew from the Association of Village Council Presidents
Dennis Zimmermann from the Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee.
Jill Klein of the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association
James MacDonald from the Council of Yukon First Nations

To learn more about the international summit please visit the following website: www.yssc.ca/conference. For more information about recent declines in Yukon River Chinook salmon, please visit the websites of the steering committee organizations as well as the state and federal management agencies.

For additional details about the meeting, to include information on travel and other logistics, please contact the Council of Yukon First Nations for Yukoners or the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association for Alaskans.

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Wayne Jenkins Joins YRDFA as New Deputy Director



YRDFA Board and staff welcome Wayne Jenkins as our new Deputy Director. Wayne has extensive non-profit management, fundraising, conservation policy and social organizing experience along with a deep love for Alaska's incredible environment and respect for the people who live and depend upon its resources.

When asked why he would want the deputy director position he replied, "It may sound idealistic, but my desire is to live an authentic life, that is a life of meaningful service. From my youth I have sought a life of purpose. Life is short and I wanted more than "a job". I wanted a way to contribute to the challenges we face. I also wanted to live closer to the earth, its natural cycles and rhythms. To produce much of what I needed and to live life simply."

This attitude led Wayne from his home-state of Virginia to 30 years of organic farming and gardening in the mountains of northern Georgia. He and his wife Lori have been married 33 years and raised two children, Jana Marie and Obadiah and have one grand-daughter, Kaya Hope. He has also worked as a carpenter, mill worker, organic farming consultant/inspector and for the last decade served as board member and executive director of the national forest conservation group Georgia ForestWatch. Following this he worked with the watershed protection group Cook Inletkeeper, here in Alaska. The position at Inletkeeper allowed he and his wife Lori to make the big leap; a long held dream born of summer trips to visit, fish, kayak and hike with their son. "It was the salmon that really hooked me." Wayne says, "Obie was seining and set netting for salmon and shipping some fish back to Georgia for the winter-freezer and along with our fresh garden vegetables and Lori's great cooking, well it was just wonderful. After several visits Lori and I longed to live in a place with such beauty, intact ecosystems and healthy wildlife populations."

Wayne is presently learning YRDFA's organizational processes and gaining orientation and training in the specific program areas he will concentrate on such as YRDFA representation at state, federal, tribal and other fisheries meetings, a US Fish & Wildlife fish passage project and assisting Director Jill Klein with building stewardship and conservation of Yukon River salmon fisheries. He is also focusing on learning YRDFA's history, the yearly in-season salmon teleconferences, membership growth and looks forward to working closely with the YRDFA Board Directors.

Our new deputy director admits, "I have much to learn from the Yukon River people, the agency managers and the leadership and staff of YRDFA. There is much passion and complexity, emotion and mystery around the challenge of returning strong Chinook salmon runs to the river and maintaining those runs that are still strong for future generations. I see YRDFA's work as critical in creating that open forum for all voices to be heard while bringing the best problem solving energy and information to the table."

We welcome Wayne to the team! 🐟

“NPFMC...” *continued from front page*

several possible ways to address this, either through the incentive plans or through changes to regulations.

Some proposed improvements could apply to every vessel, such as shortening the pollock season to end in September or requiring the use of salmon excluders. Other measures would target those vessels that have higher bycatch rates by imposing stronger penalties or closing the fishery early for those vessels. In addition, the Council will be considering changing how the bycatch caps are applied, which would provide a very strong incentive to avoid bycatch in the fall, because only good performance in the fall would allow a vessel be able to fish the following year, during the most valuable winter pollock season.

In addition, the Council asked that regular reports on impacts and effectiveness be provided to the Council and the public so that we can all understand how the program is truly working, as salmon stock status changes and genetic identification becomes more refined.

The Council also spent a lot of time discussing a better approach to balancing chum and Chinook salmon bycatch. The Commissioner’s motion asked for a paper on the changes needed to combine chum salmon bycatch avoidance measures with the Chinook salmon bycatch

reduction program. This will allow for a more targeted system of salmon management overall and will allow measures to avoid chum salmon to be put in place without weakening protection measures for Chinook. The most recent genetic data tells us that about 25% of the chum bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock fishery is from coastal Western Alaska or the Upper/Middle Yukon River, with most of the Alaskan chum caught in the summer months. The motion clearly stated the Council’s goals: to prioritize Chinook salmon bycatch avoidance, while preventing high chum salmon bycatch and focusing on avoidance of Alaska chum salmon stocks, and allowing flexibility to harvest pollock in times and places that best support those goals.

Although the information presented to the Council clearly indicated that the current Chinook bycatch management program is reducing bycatch and the impacts of current bycatch levels on Alaskan stocks are not significant, the Council and the State of Alaska consider this to be an important issue due to the current state of Chinook salmon runs and the hardships imposed on subsistence users. The requested analysis will come back to the Council no later than April 2014, when the Council meets in Anchorage. The analysis should be available well before the April meeting, so that everyone has time to provide meaningful testimony to the Council on possible improvements. ☞

Salmon Teleconferences Keep Fishers and Managers Informed in 2013

This year YRDFA held 14 in-season management teleconferences, every Tuesday in June, July, and August of the salmon fishing 2013 season, for Yukon River fishers to meet with managers during the fishing season. The important issues addressed this season during the teleconferences included the low Yukon River Chinook salmon runs and the conservative management strategies used in-season, salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea Pollock fishery and the Magnuson Stevens Act reauthorization.

Low Chinook salmon numbers:

In river Chinook salmon fisheries were managed conservatively and this was a major discussion point each week; how the run was coming in and when pulse closures would take place and what gear restrictions were in place. Fishers were concerned about the restriction to 6-inch gear as many fishers did not have it and did not have time or money to purchase it. People wanted to harvest king salmon because it is so important to them and there were a lot of discussions around this. Fishers in different districts requested additional fishing time so they could get king salmon for food and fish wheel fishermen also asked about relief for dog food because they usually catch incidental fish for their dogs while the wheels are turning. This year the wheels did not turn much due to the closures.

Others were concerned about how information is shared from the teleconferences. YRDFA assured the public that the concerns raised on the calls would be shared with the funding and management agencies supporting the calls and with the Yukon River Panel during the communications committee report.

Magnuson Stevens Act:

We learned about the Magnuson Stevens Act reauthorization process – this act governs the North Pacific Fishery Management Council and management of the offshore fisheries. Senator Begich holds an important committee seat with responsibility for reauthorizing the act. Priorities which the Alaska Native community are working on for this round of reauthorization include increasing representation on the Council, providing authority for bycatch fines, and requiring bycatch reduction. To provide input on the MSA, we encourage you to be in touch with Senator Begich’s staff. (Contact information is: msacomment@begich.senate.gov. People can always call their office at 907-271-5915 (ANC) or 877-501-6275 (DC).

Salmon Bycatch

The purpose of the in-season salmon management calls is to talk about in-river fisheries management. But over the years, we people have asked a lot of questions and made a lot of comments on the issue of salmon

bycatch in the Bering Sea. In order to address the need to discuss this important issue, two calls dedicated half of the teleconference to talking about salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock fishery, one at the beginning (the first call) and one towards the end of the season in August. Guest speakers during the calls included Diana Stram, staff for the North Pacific Fishery Management and Nicole Kimball, staff in the Alaska Department of Fish and Game’s commissioner’s office who serves as the commissioner’s alternate on the Council to discuss this important issue impacting Western and interior Alaska salmon stocks.

The calls followed an agenda each week: opening with subsistence fishing reports; hearing from state and federal fisheries managers on their fishery assessments and management strategies; hearing from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans in Canada and Yukon fishers in the Canadian headwaters. These teleconferences are funded through the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program and the Yukon River Panel. ☞

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