

# YUKON FISHERIES NEWS

A Publication of the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association

Fall 2011



## Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association

A United Voice for Yukon River Fishers

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## King Salmon Management Plan Revision Underway

by Jason Hale, Communications Director

Initiated by a resolution from the river-wide YRDFA board of directors, YRDFA is launching a two-year project to revise the Alaskan Yukon River king salmon management plan to address the low king salmon runs. At the core of this process will be a working group of stakeholders, agencies, and other experts. With the groups' blessing, a proposal could be submitted this April 2012 and then this plan will be presented to the Alaska Board of Fisheries at its next Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim meeting, most likely in January 2013.

While YRDFA will be coordinating the meetings and providing staff support, we recognize that there are numerous organizations that must be involved in this process, not just as participants, but as full partners. We are inviting these groups to partner with us:

- Yukon Kuskokwim Regional Advisory Council
- Western Interior Regional Advisory Council
- Eastern Interior Regional Advisory Council
- Yukon River Panel (Alaska only)
- Yukon Delta Fisheries Development Association
- Association of Village Council Presidents
- Tanana Chiefs Conference
- Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments
- Alaska Department of Fish & Game
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
- YRDFA



YRDFA board of directors in action during its 21st Annual Meeting in Mountain Village, where it passed the resolution that resulted in the king salmon management plan revision project.

process. Further, at key stages in the development of the plan, it will be made available to Tribes, fishers, and the general public for comment. Our hope is to keep the core planning group small enough to be manageable, but give all stakeholders multiple opportunities to provide input.

The first step will be for the group to establish broad goals and agree upon a direction for the process. YRDFA will convene an initial stakeholder meeting to begin this work, along with a contract scientist who will handle much of the research and writing, as directed by the stakeholders. This meeting is slated to take place in early January 2012. Updates will be forthcoming throughout this project and will be posted on our website and in newsletter articles to the public.

For more information, contact Jill Klein, executive director, at 877-999-8566 ext. 102 or [jill@yukonsalmon.org](mailto:jill@yukonsalmon.org).

YRDFA's work on this project is funded through the State of Alaska Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development (DCCED). The statements, findings, conclusions, and recommendations are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of DCCED.

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

As part of this process YRDFA is forming an Elders group to serve an advisory role throughout this

## associate members

Interior Alaska Fish Processors Inc.	Kotlik Traditional Council
Boreal Fisheries	Asa'carsarmiut Tribal Council
Holy Cross Traditional Council	Allakaket Traditional Council
Koyukuk Tribal Council	Beaver Village Council
Ruby Marine	Birch Creek Tribal Council (Dendu Gwich'in)
City of Nulato	Nulato Tribal Council
Pitka's Point Tribal Council	Ruby Tribal Council
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Y-6, Seat 1	Philip 'Jeep' Titus
Y-6, Seat 2	Victor Lord
Koyukuk, Seat 1	William Derendoff
Yukon Flats, Seat 1	Jan Woodruff
Canadian (non-voting)	Ron Chambers

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\*sponsored by Alakanuk Native Corp. \*\*sponsored by Kotlik Yupik Corp. \*\*\*sponsored by Pilot Station Inc.

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# A Message From the Director

by Jill Klein, Executive Director



As YRDFA moves forward into its 23rd year we are looking forward to returning to Galena for our annual meeting. It was 23 years ago that the founding members of YRDFA got together in Galena for the first time to discuss the salmon fisheries with each other. With funds from the Alaska Humanities Forum, YRDFA was able to interview six people—Virgil Umphenour, Victor Lord, Richard Burnham, Lester Wilde, Harry Wilde, and John Lamont—who were either the initial founders of YRDFA or were there pretty early on in the process. We were looking to interview people who were in Galena at the time and who are still involved in fisheries issues and decision-making.

When watching some of the interviews on video, certain areas stood out as to why these individuals got involved. We wanted to know what it was at the time that led to their involvement and why were they successful in forming the first river-wide group along the Yukon River to work on salmon fisheries? It is important to look at this as we discuss how to get younger people involved. There is concern that younger people are the ones who are less likely to sit on a board and attend meetings, yet they are the ones that we need to enter processes like YRDFA to keep it going into the future and to bring new perspectives and voices to the table. Let us look back at our reasons for success and learn from these unique individuals that helped form YRDFA and use their messages in concert with the realities of today to move

forward. Some of the ways we learned that people got involved in that first meeting in Galena included:

- They were already involved in their local city or tribal governments,
- They met someone with whom they had something in common, such as dog mushing or going to school together,
- There was an influential motivator, teacher, and supporter who guided them in getting involved,
- They worked with people they knew to make it easier for them and increased their numbers,
- They formed a strategic alliance with the people they met, and
- They were employed in their villages, in places such as at the store, and were around to take advantage of opportunities.

These points were useful 20 years ago for the initial YRDFA leaders and are still relevant for how we can get new and younger people involved today. It is also a good lesson for young people who want to shape their future and are not sure how to do so. These are all simple ideas that can make a big difference. We can look for people who are working, who are serving as city and Tribal Council members, and who are now fishing on their own for their families. Our goal with the video interviews is to use these messages to guide and support younger people to get involved. The voices of today's leaders—your voices—are the ones that can teach the younger generations to get involved by practicing one of YRDFA's core values: do unto others as you would have others do unto you.

There are video clips that will be coming soon to our website at [www.yukonsalmon.org](http://www.yukonsalmon.org), so look for these. Full interviews will be submitted to the Alaska & Polar Regions Collections at the University of Alaska Fairbanks and Alaska Digital Archives for storage. If you are interested in seeing a full interview, please contact us at YRDFA. 🐟

## Yukon River Fisheries Meetings Calendar

DATE	MEETING	LOCATION
Dec. 5-8	Yukon River Panel	Whitehorse, YT
Dec. 5-13	North Pacific Fishery Management Council	Anchorage
Jan. 16-20	Alaska Marine Science Symposium	Anchorage
Jan. 17-18	Western Alaska Salmon Stock Identification Project (WASSIP)	Anchorage
Jan. 17-19	Federal Subsistence Board	Anchorage
Jan. 30-Feb. 7	North Pacific Fishery Management Council	Seattle
Feb. (dates TBD)	YRDFA Annual Meeting	Galena
Feb. 13-14	Alaska Young Fishermen's Summit	Juneau
Feb. 23-24	YK Delta RAC	Emmonak
Feb. 28-29	Western Interior RAC	McGrath
Mar. 2-3	Eastern Interior RAC	Central
Mar. 6-7	AVCP State of Our Salmon Convention	Bethel

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# Culvert Wrangling in the Yukon: Barrier Removal & Stream Ecology in Alaska's Interior

by Bob Massengale, Habitat Coordinator

Every fish counts for Yukon River populations of Chinook salmon. That's why it's critical to make sure that each fish has clear access to healthy stream systems wherever possible.

This summer and fall YRDFA was busily involved with fish access projects along roads in Interior Alaska. Many roads in Alaska travel through major and minor tributary watersheds of the Yukon River. Good design practices are critical where these roads cross streams to ensure they don't impede the flow of water and organisms. Roads that are causing poor fish passage need to be documented so that plans can be made to fix the problem.

Culverts are typically installed in small streams—under 20 feet wide—to allow for vehicle crossing.



Caribou Creek, before, during, and after culvert removal.

Oftentimes, especially on older roads, culvert designs do not meet natural flow requirements. This can result in handcuffing stream-systems' movement and reducing overall stream function.

## Why Is Stream Flow Important?

Reduction in stream flow is detrimental, as streams are natural pathways for movement for everything from nutrients and microorganisms to salmon. Streams lift and carry sediments from uplands into the flats, build gravel bars and channel riffles for fish egg sites and safe spots for aquatic organisms to use. Nutrient cycling is a fundamental process involving transfer of nutrients from one form into another. For example, the nutrients that come from salmon mortality enrich local soil, which in turn benefits plants like willow, providing browse for moose and shade for juvenile fish streams.

Tributaries are important to the larger health of rivers. Collectively, small streams actually make up the majority of water-miles in a watershed, and thus contain more riparian habitat and provide support to a diverse array of species. Barriers, like culverts, prevent these fundamental processes, and harm the river as a whole.

## What is YRDFA Doing about This?

To address these issues, YRDFA has already done away with one problematic culvert and has begun making an inventory of other potential barriers along the Yukon and its tributaries.

YRDFA removed an abandoned culvert on a tributary of the Chatanika River. The project site was on a small stream called Caribou Creek, tucked in the eastern hills of the White Mountains, 63 miles from Fairbanks.

Early visits in May revealed an undersized culvert restricting stream flow. Ice had built up behind the culvert, blocking the creek, which formed a wetland more than 100 feet across. In mid-summer the culvert was too narrow for the size of the stream, and caused erosion in the stream. Structural problems were also present. No road

maintenance would occur in the future, and a culvert collapse would block nearly 5 miles of upstream habitat to resident and migratory fish. The decision to remove the culvert came after determining that access to the valley would still be maintained for local use.

In June, YRDFA member George Yaska was present to watch heavy equipment operators from Great Northwest Construction Company lift more than 40 feet of rusting pipe out of the stream. The pipe was removed without incident and a channel was created, full of blocky red cobbles under clear gurgling water.

Two months later YRDFA staff and volunteers from Fort Wainwright's Wounded Warriors Project caught specimens of Arctic Grayling several miles upstream from the site; a positive sign that fish movement was uninhibited. We hope to find more fish and more species diversity in future visits.

Later in the summer and early fall, YRDFA formed partnerships with many river communities and collaborated with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's fish passage program to make an inventory of potential barriers along the Yukon and its tributaries. We enlisted the help of local residents Mathew and Ray Alexie in Mountain Village, Ed Sarten in Ruby, and Craig Semaken of Kaltag, who assisted in taking photographs and recording logging location information on barriers in fish streams.

Roads and some creeks in Mountain Village, Saint Mary's, Pitkas' Point, Pilot Station, Ruby, and Kaltag have been assessed. Plans are underway to investigate roads in Nulato and Galena next spring. We hope this inventory will be an important first step to new barrier-removal projects in our watershed.

YRDFA would like to express its sincere thanks to Trout Unlimited, NOAA, USFWS, Mathew and Ray Alexie, Ed Sarten, and Craig Semaken, and all the other people whose efforts made these projects a reality.

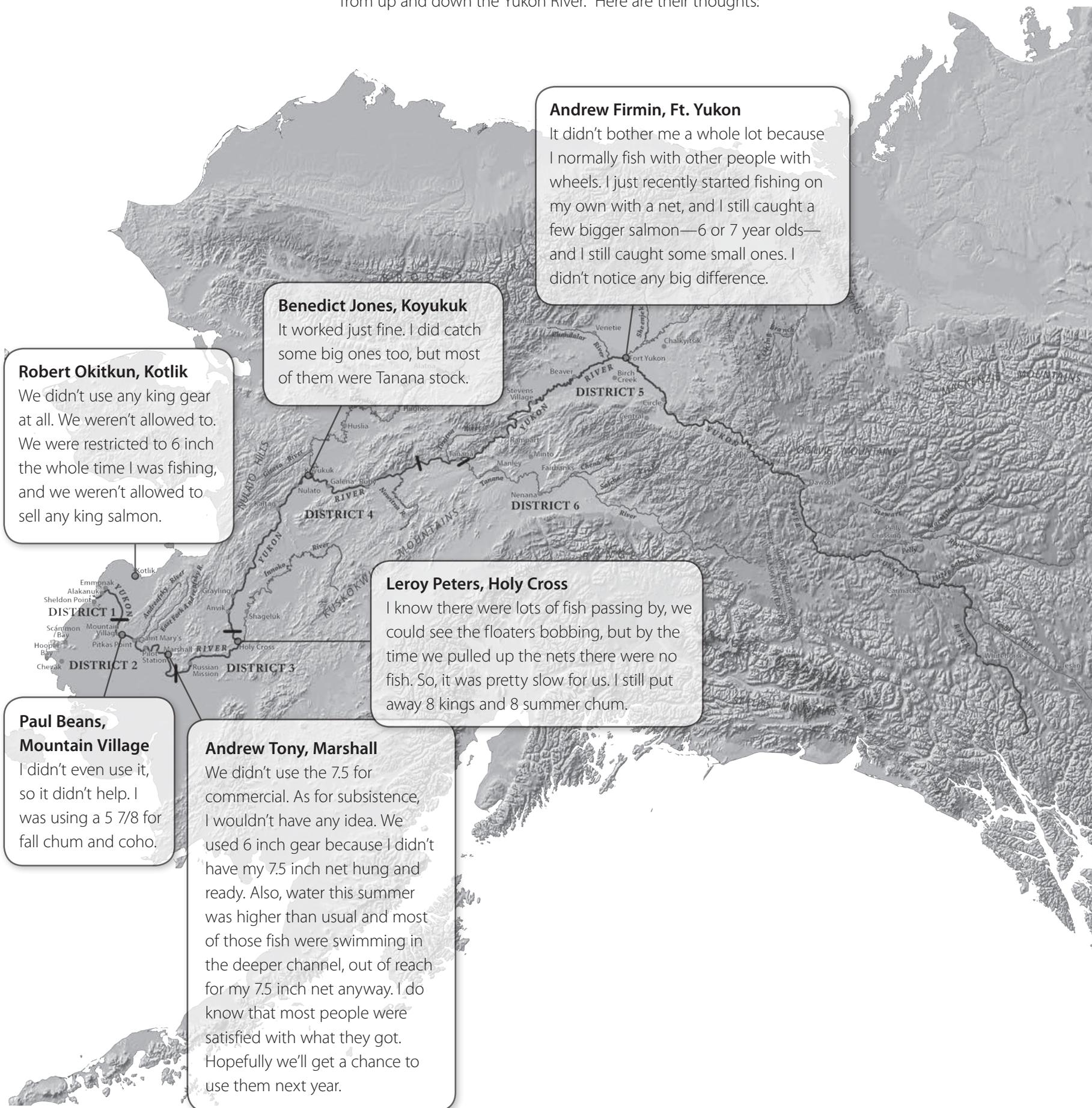
To find out how your community can become involved in fish passage inventories, or for more information on fish passage, please contact Bob Massengale, Habitat Coordinator at 907-272-3141 or [bmassengale@yukonsalmon.org](mailto:bmassengale@yukonsalmon.org).

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# Voices from the River

“How did the mesh size change affect fishing for you this summer?”

This fall, YRDLA communications director Jason Hale asked this question of fishers from up and down the Yukon River. Here are their thoughts:



**Robert Okitkun, Kotlik**

We didn't use any king gear at all. We weren't allowed to. We were restricted to 6 inch the whole time I was fishing, and we weren't allowed to sell any king salmon.

**Benedict Jones, Koyukuk**

It worked just fine. I did catch some big ones too, but most of them were Tanana stock.

**Andrew Firmin, Ft. Yukon**

It didn't bother me a whole lot because I normally fish with other people with wheels. I just recently started fishing on my own with a net, and I still caught a few bigger salmon—6 or 7 year olds—and I still caught some small ones. I didn't notice any big difference.

**Leroy Peters, Holy Cross**

I know there were lots of fish passing by, we could see the floaters bobbing, but by the time we pulled up the nets there were no fish. So, it was pretty slow for us. I still put away 8 kings and 8 summer chum.

**Paul Beans, Mountain Village**

I didn't even use it, so it didn't help. I was using a 5 7/8 for fall chum and coho.

**Andrew Tony, Marshall**

We didn't use the 7.5 for commercial. As for subsistence, I wouldn't have any idea. We used 6 inch gear because I didn't have my 7.5 inch net hung and ready. Also, water this summer was higher than usual and most of those fish were swimming in the deeper channel, out of reach for my 7.5 inch net anyway. I do know that most people were satisfied with what they got. Hopefully we'll get a chance to use them next year.

# YRDFA Forming Yukon River Elders Council

by Catherine Moncrieff, YRDFA Anthropologist

*“The Elders are our teachers,  
they are our scientists.”*

—QUOTE FROM PARTICIPANT IN YRDFA TEK PROJECT

Elders have insight and knowledge of the past. They are our tradition bearers, the traditional teachers, and the traditional scientists.

At its 2011 meeting in Mountain Village, the YRDFA Board of Directors supported the idea of forming a Yukon River Elders Council that could act in an advisory role to YRDFA and others on the river working on fisheries issues, including king salmon management planning. The Yukon River Elders Council will be made up of one Elder and one alternate Elder representing each fishing district. The first meeting will be held in Galena in February 2012, just before the YRDFA annual meeting.

The Yukon River Elders Council will discuss traditional values that are important to build into fisheries plans, research, management, and harvests. They will also discuss traditional ways of sharing and how to preserve the Yukon River fishing culture. Elders have the ability to unite the river, particularly during these times of low salmon numbers. Two representatives from the Elders Council will directly participate in the king salmon management planning process that YRDFA is coordinating over the next year.

There are other Elders Councils in our region, but none that is focused on Yukon River fisheries issues. YRDFA has consulted with other organizations in the region that have Elders Councils, including the Alaska Marine Conservation Council, the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council, Den’akkanaaga, and

Calista. YRDFA Board member and Elder Benedict Jones presented the idea of a Yukon River Elders Council at the 2011 Den’akkanaaga gathering in Nulato, and it was well received. From our research, we found that a representative group would be most productive and would have the best ability to meet as a group.

If you would like to nominate someone to the Yukon River Elders Council, please contact Catherine Moncrieff at 907-783-0210 or [Catherine@yukonsalmon.org](mailto:Catherine@yukonsalmon.org) .

*YRDFA’s work on this project is funded through the Lannan Foundation and the State of Alaska Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development (DCCED). The statements, findings, conclusions, and recommendations are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Lannan Foundation or DCCED.*

## YRDFA Board Gets Down to Business at Fall Meeting

by Jason Hale, Communications Director

In early November, nine members of the YRDFA’s executive board worked together to pound through a varied and ambitious agenda. The tone in the conference room in downtown Anchorage was friendly, which is not unexpected since the participants could be called old friends, but viewpoints did not always match up and some of the topics were challenging. Here are a few key highlights:

### Audit

“No financial issues at all.” –Brad Cage, auditor

Our most recent audit went smoothly, showing that our accounting is in good shape. This isn’t to say that we’re flush with money, just that we do a good job of managing what we’ve got. Thank you Richell Carmichael, YRDFA’s finance manager!

### Check-In

Before diving into more heady topics, we carved out some time for board and staff to catch up regarding life along the Yukon. The idea was to

help everyone better understand and appreciate how things are going in different villages and regions, and to encourage bonds amongst all present. We talked about fishing for eels, concerns over the protection of any one specific pulse of king salmon, and effects of the new 7.5 inch mesh restriction. We heard about some

larger-than-average king salmon that were caught in Kaltag, Tanana, and Nenana, including one 45-pounder and two that tipped the scales around 55 pounds.

“If I knew [7.5 inch mesh] would do such a good job of catching fish, I’d have switched years ago.”  
–Frank Alstrom, Alakanuk

Outside of fishing, we also shared and mourned recent losses across the drainage. To name a

few that struck close to home: Robert Walker’s wife and founding board member Ernie Chase in Anvik. Founding board member Carl Walker in Grayling. Close family losses of Stanley Ned of

Allakaket and Fran Thompson of St. Mary’s. Hearts were heavy and condolences went out to friends and families. It may not be apparent on any map, but the Yukon River is a small community.

### Organizational Effectiveness Training

The board members went back to school for the afternoon, as they participated in a top-notch training from The Foraker Group. They heard about current trends in funding and nonprofit structure, and discussed their roles in YRDFA’s continued success. Everything was on the table: consensus voting, fundraising, Robert’s Rules, board structure, working for the best interest of the entire river. We were also told that the economic downturn is likely going to continue to affect nonprofits, but were somewhat assured that we’ll make it through.

### Consensus

YRDFA has always operated under 100 percent consensus—if a single board member disagrees with something, it does not happen. This has served us well, as when we put our support behind something, it implies that it’s good for the whole river. However, on some issues it has prevented us from being able to weigh-in.

*Everything was on  
the table: consensus  
voting, fundraising,  
Robert’s Rules, board  
structure, working for  
the best interest of  
the entire river*

“Fall Meeting...” *continued on page 17*

# Tri-RAC Subcommittee Continues Work on Customary Trade

by David Jenkins, Ph.D., Anthropologist, Office of Subsistence Management

A protected subsistence use under Title VIII of ANILCA, customary trade is also a longstanding cultural practice. Although undefined in ANILCA, the term “customary trade” was later defined in federal regulations as the “exchange for cash of fish and wildlife resources.” One important limiting factor was that the exchange for cash could not reach the level of a “significant commercial enterprise.” Fish and wildlife resources exchanged under customary trade must also be harvested from federal land and waters by federally qualified users.

The Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Subsistence Regional Advisory Council, the Western Interior Subsistence Regional Advisory Council, and the Eastern Interior Subsistence Regional Advisory Council formed a subcommittee to address a river-wide solution to the issue of customary trade of Yukon River king salmon. The Tri-RAC subcommittee, composed of three members from each RAC, met on May 18-19 in Anchorage and again on August 23-24 in Fairbanks. At both meetings, subcommittee members agreed that low runs of king salmon require conservation efforts to extend to customary trade practices. If king salmon runs return to prior levels, limits to customary trade may no longer be needed.

At its May meeting, the subcommittee discussed three potential customary trade regulatory changes, which would only apply to Yukon River king salmon. These included precluding all customary trade of Yukon River king salmon between rural residents and others; allowing customary trade only between rural residents within the Yukon River drainage, with a \$750 limit per household; and requiring a permit and recordkeeping form. The subcommittee’s ideas for proposed regulatory changes were sent out for public review and comment.

At its August meeting, the subcommittee discussed the public response to the proposed regulatory changes. Based on those discussions, the subcommittee developed two new recommendations, which were later presented to the Regional Advisory Councils for review. The subcommittee strongly preferred the first recommendation, but developed the second to address the issue of a “significant commercial enterprise.”

- 1) Customary trade of Yukon River king salmon may only occur between federally qualified rural residents with a current customary and traditional use determination.
- 2) Preclude customary trade of Yukon River king salmon between rural residents and others.
  - a. Establish a \$750 limit per calendar year per qualified household;
  - b. Require customary trade recordkeeping and receipt form.

The subcommittee believes that in times of low abundance, Yukon River king salmon should remain within the Yukon River drainage for subsistence uses. It also believes it is important to curtail large customary trades involving king salmon that are reported to occur in urban areas of Alaska and may rise to the level of a significant commercial enterprise, contrary to federal regulations. By allowing customary trade only between federally qualified rural residents with a customary and traditional use determination for Yukon River king salmon, the subcommittee hopes that the cultural practice of customary trade will continue, but at a lower level, recognizing the need for conservation. This was the intent of the subcommittee’s preferred recommendation.

The Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Regional Advisory Council met on September 29-30 in Bethel. Council members supported the first recommendation, but some members felt that if a dollar limit was imposed, the \$750 limit was appropriate. Council members were generally pleased with the subcommittee’s recommendations and supportive of its efforts. The YKRAC did not vote on which recommendation to support.

The Western Interior Regional Advisory Council met on October 4-6 in Aniak. The WIRAC voted unanimously to support the first recommendation and not the second. Council members pointed out that sharing and barter, also protected subsistence uses under ANILCA, have no limits and may substitute for some cash exchanges under customary trade. Council members emphasized that the Federal Subsistence Board should explicitly recognize traditional processing practices, such as the preparation of strips, as part of customary trade. As one council

member noted, there are “hardly any traditional or customary trade practices dealing with unprocessed fish on the Yukon.”

The Eastern Interior Regional Advisory Council met on October 11-13 in Fairbanks. The EIRAC received public comment on customary trade and on the subcommittee’s recommendations. Much of the public commentary pointed out the cultural differences of customary trade practices along the Yukon River, and emphasized that more research was needed to understand those practices. Without more information, it may be difficult to craft meaningful regulations which accurately reflect local cultural practices. As one person testified about the sale of strips versus the sale of unprocessed fish under customary trade, “The sale of whole fish is not customary in our area.” The EIRAC voted in favor of the subcommittee’s first recommendation, on a split vote. It voted against the second recommendation, also on a split vote.

The Tri-RAC subcommittee on customary trade remains open to all public comments on its recommendations, and encourages broad public participation. Comments can be sent to:

Office of Subsistence Management  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
1011 E. Tudor Road, Mail Stop 121  
Anchorage, Alaska 99503  
FAX: (907) 786-3898  
Email: Subsistence@fws.gov

## Next Steps

- Regional Advisory Council and public comments will be compiled and taken back to the subcommittee.
- In preparing for the 2012 winter RAC meeting cycle, the subcommittee will meet and develop recommendations that will be presented to the three RACs for their consideration and potential development of proposed regulatory changes.
- The proposal will go through the federal regulatory process beginning with the publication of the proposed rule to change regulations.
- Regional Advisory Councils will provide recommendations on the proposal during the 2012 fall meetings.
- The Federal Subsistence Board takes action on the proposed rule in January 2013. 🐟

## Yukon King Salmon Bycatch: Things Are Not Always What You Hear They Are

by Stan Zuray, Tanana Area Fisher

*The views expressed in this opinion piece do not necessarily reflect those of YRDFA. The comments are solely the opinion of the author.*

Do you believe the high seas pollock fishing bycatch of Yukon River king salmon has been a highly likely cause of the decline in average size and overall strength of our Yukon king salmon runs?

Well, if you do you have something in common with the majority of fishers and just plain common people who live in the villages or in cities like Fairbanks and Anchorage and have ties to the Yukon River. A decade of talking about it, blaming the pollock industry, and spending immense time and effort on the subject at our meetings has seen to it that most of us think this **is** the problem. Everywhere I go I hear it, over and over.

Now before I go on, I need to say I believe we must keep a vigilant eye on the bycatch of our king and fight for bycatch caps to make sure it never gets any higher. This is more important now than ever, as we face trying to rebuild a king run reduced dramatically in size and spawning quality. All user groups need to tighten belts. King subsistence was shut down for most of this past season. Groups like YRDFA need to continue their work ensuring bycatch everywhere has limits and operates in the best manner to avoid Yukon king salmon.

However, on the issue of that being the cause of the demise of our king salmon I would like to say, "There is no way in heck that the facts in this case point to that conclusion." Our best science speaks to it so clearly it's amazing the idea has gotten any traction at all, until one realizes the idea has been perpetuated by many who have wanted to deflect the attention from more likely, yet politically distasteful, causes for the demise of the king salmon.

**So what are the facts and are they just one person's facts or are they what everyone agrees are the facts?**

- First off, there is the genetic information

that comes from standard scientific procedures and is the only reason we even know how many or what percent of the king salmon are Yukon bound fish. This is established science and to my knowledge it is not in question by any reputable researchers on any side of this debate.

- Second is the bycatch numbers that have existed since 1992—19 years of amounts of all ages of king salmon taken by the pollock fleet. Again, this data is not in question by any reputable researchers that I know. ADF&G, USFWS, and YRDFA all have said they consider them accurate numbers. They are also the same numbers that are used by those who have perpetuated this idea of the pollock fleet destroying the Yukon king run.

Two qualifying notes before we go on:

1. Most persons involved in this bycatch research have expressed concern about the need for a more rigorous scientific sampling program, and this is now in place as of the last couple of years. Prior years use the best science available to say anything on the issue.
2. There is some difficulty identifying genetically some lower Yukon king stocks from other western Alaskan ones. However, middle and upper Yukon stocks are very distinct each year, and their known ratio to the lower ones allows for a percent of Yukon-bound king salmon to be arrived at. This is an area of larger than desirable confidence intervals.

**So now comes the simple math:**

Looking at all years prior to 2005, which are the ones capable of having produced the present problem, we come up with an average king bycatch of 41,614 each year.

Now we take the genetic information, gotten right from the king caught by the pollock boats, which says that about 25% of the king they are catching is Yukon River bound fish, and we multiply that by the average bycatch number and we get about 10,000 fish. The bycatch kings are not mature and are all ages. Not all of those

caught would have made it to the Yukon due to some dying naturally. It's called "adult equivalent" by Yukon researchers, and when it's figured in it drops the average amount of king each year taken in the pollock fleet to **under 10,000 a year.**

Now, my question is: "How can less than 10,000 kings a year out of a run of 250,000 to 350,000 fish possibly have any significant effect on the health of a salmon run?" At the very least, any biologist, manager, or researcher would have to agree it is a completely manageable number, in that to make up for it all management would have to do is allow 10,000 more king to pass up river to the spawning grounds. Back in the days when the king decline problem was becoming apparent to some, 10,000 fish out of our normal in-river commercial take of 80,000 to 120,000 would have seemed like a tiny price to pay to keep the run healthy, given the price we are paying now with no commercial at all and the majority of the season closed to subsistence king fishing.

But the truth is those 10,000 king did not—and could not—have caused the king decline. It has upset me over and over again at our meetings to have knowledgeable persons, who clearly know this information (and say so in private conversations), throw out the idea that the pollock fleet could be to blame and then sit back and let fishers talk on and on about the bycatch without any meaningful intervention considering what they started.

Finally, what started all this was my wanting to write an article about how **customary trade** (like the pollock bycatch issue) has become the new whipping boy on the river by those who still don't want to face the possibility that this king decline is something in-river fisheries management could have done something about. But that maybe will have to wait until another newspaper.

Thank you for your time,  
Stan Zuray  
907-366-7114, stanzuray@gmail.com 🐟

# Salmon Bycatch in the Pollock Fishery 2011—A Year in Review

by Becca Robbins Gisclair, Policy Director

This was the first year in which the Bering Sea pollock fishery operated under the Chinook salmon cap (Amendment 91). Anticipating upcoming action from the North Pacific Fishery Management Council on chum bycatch, the fleet also imposed some additional restrictions on themselves to reduce chum salmon bycatch this year.

So what was the end result?

Well, to start with the numbers, 24,760 Chinook salmon and 191,440 chum salmon had been caught as bycatch as of October 29. Last year's numbers were much lower—at this same time in 2010 Chinook salmon bycatch was at 9,692 fish and chum salmon bycatch was at 13,217 fish. This compares to a 10-year average for Chinook of about 48,000 fish and about 195,000 for chum salmon. Note that pollock fishing is still happening, so these numbers may climb a bit, but most of the fleet is done fishing.

Looking at Chinook salmon first, we note that the bycatch number is well below the overall cap of 60,000 and the performance standard of 47,591.

The fleet was operating under their incentive plan agreements this year, so each boat had an individual bycatch limit. The fleet was also operating under hot spot systems where they move away from "hot spots" or areas of high bycatch.

Bycatch remained relatively low throughout the season—13,300 Chinook salmon had been taken as bycatch as of October 4. However, because fishing was limited early in the "B" season because of chum salmon avoidance measures, more fishing occurred later in the season when Chinook salmon bycatch is higher, and the numbers have close to doubled since October 4.

For chum salmon bycatch, the only management measure currently in place is the rolling hot spot system. This year, with new information from genetic stock identification

work that Western Alaska chum salmon stocks are more prevalent in the bycatch in June and July, the pollock fishery took proactive steps to increase the amount of area that could be closed under the hot spot program.

Under the current hot spot program there is a limit on the amount of area that can be closed as hot spots. For chum salmon bycatch, the limit was 3,000 square miles. This year, the pollock fishers through their inter-cooperative agreement added 1,000 square miles, bringing



YRDLA Policy Director Becca Robbins Gisclair tries following the path of a salmon escaping from a salmon excluder. The excluders allow salmon to escape from pollock nets while keeping the pollock in, and many pollock boats use these as part of their gear. Dutch Harbor, AK.

the total to 4,000 square miles. This is not a fixed area closure, but means that if there are more hot spots they can close more area, potentially providing more protections to Western Alaska salmon. This provision for extra area closures was in effect through August 15, 2011. In addition, they agreed that any boat fishing in an area that had been closed, or was currently closed to other boats, would conduct a test tow (a small tow to see what the bycatch looks like) before fishing in that area.

Despite these actions, chum salmon bycatch has been relatively high this year, although not nearly as high as the over 700,000 chum salmon taken as bycatch in 2005. At the same time, chum salmon runs were relatively strong throughout much of Western Alaska this year, so this may be contributing to the high numbers of bycatch. While the hot spot

program undoubtedly reduced chum bycatch to some unknown extent this year, it was ultimately unable to keep chum bycatch under control in a high encounter year.

This is important information as the Council sets out to adopt new management measures to reduce chum salmon bycatch. YRDLA, along with other Western Alaska groups, has supported continuing to work with the hot spot program in combination with other management measures, and this experience may indicate the need for something more than the hot spot program.

On the Chinook salmon side of things, the increase in Chinook salmon taken as bycatch later in the season is very apparent. Balancing this with reducing chum salmon bycatch of Western Alaska stocks early in the season is critical, and will be a key point in designing the next set of chum salmon bycatch measures at the Council.

As you may remember, the Council is still in the process of putting new management measures in place to reduce chum salmon bycatch. They are scheduled to review the options at

their April 2012 meeting in Anchorage, with final action tentatively scheduled for October 2012. We'll provide updates about the Council's action and about opportunities to comment to the Council as we approach these dates.

For current and historical chum salmon bycatch numbers, visit: [http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/sustainablefisheries/inseason/chum\\_salmon\\_mortality.pdf](http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/sustainablefisheries/inseason/chum_salmon_mortality.pdf)

For current and historical Chinook salmon bycatch numbers, visit: [http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/sustainablefisheries/inseason/chinook\\_salmon\\_mortality.pdf](http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/sustainablefisheries/inseason/chinook_salmon_mortality.pdf)

*This article was prepared by YRDLA under a grant from the Oak Foundation. The statements, findings, conclusions, and recommendations are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Oak Foundation.*

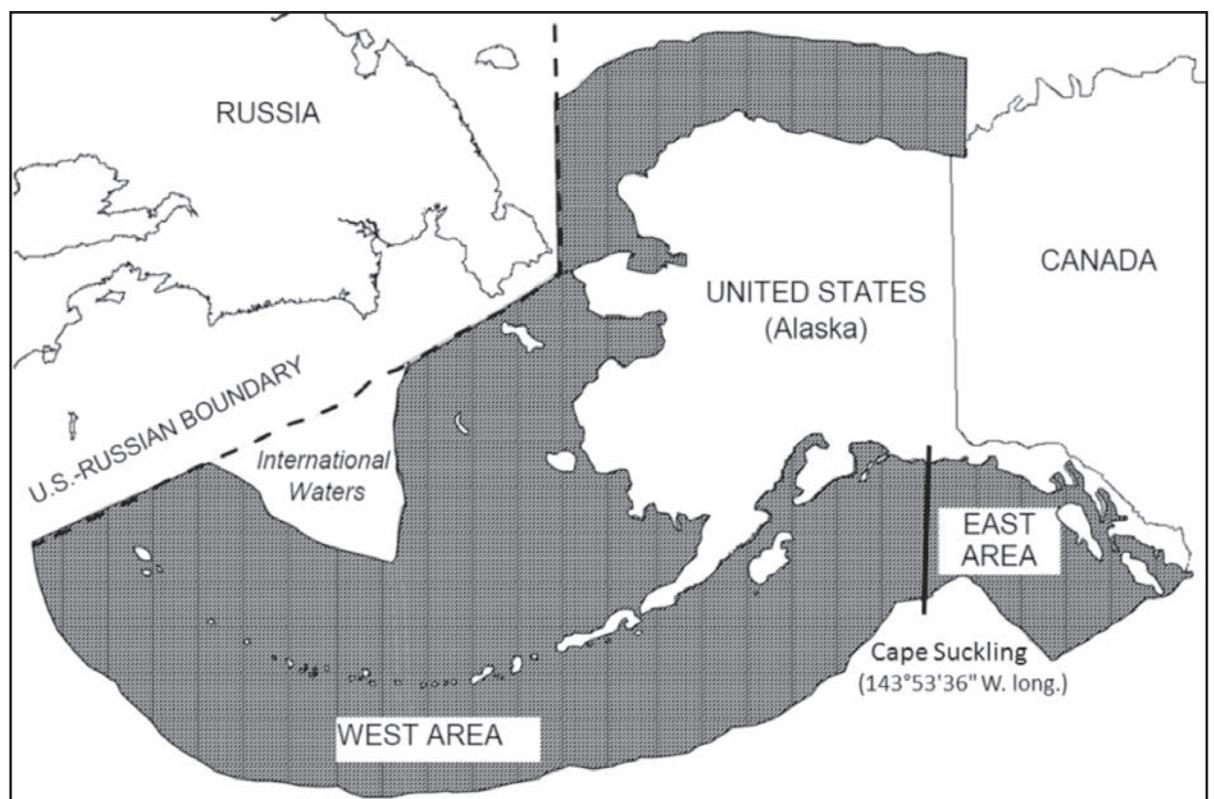
# Revisions to the Council's Salmon Fishery Management Plan: Final Action in December

by Becca Robbins Gisclair, Policy Director

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (the Council) is in the process of revising its Salmon Fishery Management Plan (FMP). The Council is required to have an FMP for every fishery it manages, and under the latest revisions to the Magnuson-Stevens Act it must establish annual catch limits for these fisheries.

The Salmon FMP is a bit different than many of the other FMPs, because in the case of salmon the State of Alaska manages the fisheries, not the Council and National Marine Fisheries Service. The Council does actively manage bycatch of salmon in the groundfish fisheries, but this is within the framework of the groundfish FMPs for those target fisheries, not through the Salmon FMP.

The Salmon FMP is divided into two areas: the East Area which includes Southeast Alaska, and the West Area which includes everything West of Cape Suckling. The Salmon FMP only applies to the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) from 3 to 200 nautical miles. The West Area is the portion of primary concern to Western Alaskans. Under current management, only three salmon fisheries operate in the EEZ in the West Area: the Prince William Sound, Upper Cook Inlet, and Area M fisheries. These fisheries operate in federal waters, but are managed by the State.



All other areas in the West EEZ are closed to salmon fishing.

In addition to the need to comply with Magnuson Act requirements, the Council is reviewing the Salmon FMP because no significant changes have been made since 1990, while many state, federal, and international laws have changed during the time period.

Further, the current FMP does not clearly set out management authority for the three fishing areas in the West Area, so the Council is seeking to clarify this.

At its June meeting, the Council selected a Preliminary Preferred Alternative (PPA), which it reconfirmed as the PPA at its October meeting. This PPA, known as Alternative 3, maintains federal management authority over salmon fisheries in the EEZ in the East Area and West Area, but excludes the three historical fishing areas described above. Management of the Southeast Alaska salmon fisheries in the East Area would be deferred to the State, and the State would also manage the three historical net areas. Most importantly for Western and Interior Alaskans, this alternative would continue to prohibit commercial salmon fishing in the rest of the West Area. This means that commercial salmon fishing can't occur in the EEZ, and if illegal fishing does occur the closure can be enforced.

The Council is scheduled to take final action on this agenda item at its December meeting in Anchorage. For more information see the Council website at: <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc/> or contact Becca Robbins Gisclair at 907-272-3141 ext. 106 or [becca@yukonsalmon.org](mailto:becca@yukonsalmon.org).

Coming to a regional meeting near you...

## Fish Science Workshops for Fishers

This is a new initiative to bring salmon science into Yukon River communities and will be presented as a supplementary activity during regional meetings this winter. The first installment of workshops will discuss current salmon issues and provide information about basic salmon life history, both in freshwater and in the ocean. Through an interactive, hands-on approach we hope to shed some light on confusing or controversial topics regarding salmon science, while having fun doing it!

BROUGHT TO YOU BY:



### COME EXPLORE THESE TOPICS WITH US:

- Learn about the freshwater salmon life cycle
- Find out where salmon travel in the ocean
- Discover what young fry and smolt eat in the rivers and oceans, and what eats them!
- Learn about the BASIS research survey that studies juvenile salmon
- Dissect a salmon using our salmon anatomy puzzle!
- Understand effects of the marine environment on salmon
- Hear about competition for food in the marine environment
- Can you tell the difference between salmon species when they are fry? You can learn!
- Learn how to read scales and estimate how old the fish on your fish rack are!
- Play games and earn fabulous prizes!

# Yukon River Salmon Fisheries Preliminary 2011 Season Summary



## ALASKA

### Chinook Salmon

Consistent with preseason management strategies, a conservative management plan was initiated in District 1 and the northern portion of the Coastal District on June 13. Based on historical run timing information and the current in-season information, a subsistence salmon fishing period was cancelled to protect the first pulse of Chinook in each fishing district and subdistrict based on migratory timing. Based on further in-season assessment, it became evident that the Chinook salmon run size would likely be at or below the lower end of preseason projections. Consequently, it was necessary to protect the second pulse of Chinook salmon and an additional two subsistence periods were reduced in District 1 and an additional subsistence period in Districts 2-5 was cancelled to ensure that escapement goals were met.

Additionally, beginning June 27 in District 1 and June 29 in District 2, the mesh size during subsistence fishing periods was restricted to six inch or smaller throughout the remainder of the summer season to provide further protection on the third pulse of Chinook salmon as it passed through the districts.

Due to uncertainty concerning the Chinook salmon run strength, the need to fulfill the Canadian border passage obligation, meet Alaska escapement needs, and provide for subsistence uses, no commercial periods targeting Chinook salmon were allowed in 2011. Though Chinook salmon were incidentally caught in summer chum salmon-directed commercial fishing, the sale of incidentally caught Chinook salmon was not allowed. A total of 4,470 Chinook salmon were incidentally harvested in Districts 1, 2, and 6 combined. A total of 109 Chinook salmon were sold during the fall season in Districts 1 and 2.

Despite a weak run, conservative management actions allowed for most escapement goals to be met. Chinook salmon escapement goals for the East and West Fork Andreafsky Rivers were exceeded. Season cumulative counts on the

Gisasa and Henshaw Rivers were above average. High water conditions on the Chena, Salcha, and Goodpaster Rivers precluded counting for much of the season. An aerial survey of the Salcha River was conducted July 21. Approximately 3,600 Chinook salmon were counted during this survey, which meets the lower end of the escapement goal for this system. Preliminary Chinook salmon passage at Eagle sonar is 51,271 fish, yielding a preliminary border passage of approximately 50,888 fish (subsistence harvest between sonar project and border subtracted from sonar count). These numbers, however, are subject to change.

### Summer Chum Salmon

Management actions regarding summer chum salmon were delayed until near the midpoint in the Chinook salmon run. At that point, a total run size of approximately 2 million summer chum salmon was projected based on Pilot Station sonar. When it became evident that the third pulse of Chinook salmon was not developing as expected, the department took unprecedented measures to structure commercial summer chum salmon harvest opportunity while still protecting Chinook salmon. The total commercial harvest for Districts 1, 2, and 6 combined was 275,161 summer chum salmon, which is 163% above the 2001-2010 average harvest of 104,579 fish.

Most summer chum salmon producing tributaries experienced above average escapement.

### Fall Chum & Coho Salmon

A limited commercial harvest was allowed in Districts 1 and 2 during the transition time between the summer and fall seasons. By the last week of July, in-season assessment indicated that the 2011 run was below average, and no commercial fishing occurred during that time. The first and largest pulse of fall chum salmon entered Yukon River in early August and in-season

projections from that point on indicated the 2011 run had a surplus for commercial harvest. Commercial fishing continued in Districts 1 and 2 throughout the season. Attempts were made to align commercial openings with pulses as they entered the river. In between pulses, commercial openings occurred on a set schedule. The commercial harvest of 237,269 in 2011 is the highest since the 252,000 fish harvested in 1995. No restrictions to subsistence fishing schedules were implemented during the fall season.

Coho salmon are incidentally harvested in the fall chum salmon directed fishery. The commercial harvest of 75,885 fish is the highest since the 103,000 fish harvested in 1991.



Fisheries and Oceans  
Canada

## CANADA

### Chinook Salmon

The First Nation harvest of Chinook salmon was roughly 4,000 fish. A small recreational harvest of 22 Chinook salmon (preliminary) occurred in the later part of the season but the commercial and domestic king salmon fisheries remained closed

throughout the season. Escapements were within the Yukon River Panel escapement goal of 42,500 to 55,000 fish.

### Fall Chum Salmon

The fall chum salmon run was in the green management zone, which included First Nations, recreational, domestic, and commercial fisheries. It is estimated that First Nations harvested 1,500 chum salmon, while

5,069 were taken in the commercial fishery. Escapement goals were met on the mainstem Yukon River, while the Fishing Branch River escapement of 13,300 fell well short of the lower end of the escapement goal of 20,000. ☾

*Despite a weak  
run, conservative  
management actions  
allowed for most  
escapement goals to  
be met*

# USFWS Thanks Fishers for Salmon Stewardship in 2011

Geoffrey Haskett, Regional Director of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service in Alaska, sent the following letter to community leaders in villages across the Alaskan portion of the Yukon River drainage.



IN REPLY REFER TO:  
FWS/RD

United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
1011 E. Tudor Road  
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6199



OCT 21 2011

I have just returned from attending the Eastern Interior Regional Advisory Council meeting, and was very pleased by the many positive comments I heard at the meeting regarding how the Yukon River Chinook salmon fishery was managed this year. I wanted to extend my appreciation for your cooperation in observing the conservation measures enacted to protect the Yukon River Chinook salmon fishery this past season. We recognize sacrifices were made to invest in a brighter future for this vital resource. Your support sets an excellent example of responsible stewardship.

The good news is that together we have achieved a critical step. The added protection afforded the early pulses resulted in meeting our Chinook salmon escapement and border passage goals. Our best science points out the significance of returning healthy numbers of brood stock to natal waters in the Canadian Yukon. It is my belief you, and all of the other communities that supported the conservation measures, made that possible.

Our work is not over. We readily admit there are complex questions remaining to be answered. Our best and brightest scientists are researching the factors affecting diminishing returns and striving diligently to come up with workable solutions. I can tell you without any doubt, our resource managers are doing everything they can to get it right. Our ears are open to the wisdom found in traditional knowledge, believing that long-term answers will be found by assessing all sources of insight. I encourage you to remain connected and engaged as we work together to sustain this critical fishery.

We remain dedicated to preserving the health of the Yukon River Chinook salmon fishery so that you, and your families, may enjoy its bounty and continue a long heritage of subsistence use. By your actions, you have made it known you place the same level of commitment toward that end. I am convinced that working together we can achieve that common goal. For your efforts, I express my heartfelt appreciation.

Sincerely,

Geoffrey L. Haskett  
Regional Director

TAKE PRIDE  
IN AMERICA

# Lower River King Salmon Harvest Composition Project Off to Encouraging Start

by Doug Molyneaux and Casie Stockdale, AVCP

Biologists with the Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP) worked with 16 lower Yukon River subsistence fishers in Alakanuk, Emmonak, and St. Mary's to collect samples from their king salmon catches in 2011. The goal was to characterize the age, sex, length (ASL), and stock composition of the lower Yukon River subsistence king salmon harvest (Districts Y1 and Y2).

Fishers were trained how to collect samples following standardized protocols and outfit with the supplies needed for them to sample their own catch. From each king salmon fishers measured length, identified sex, collected 3 fish scales for use in age determination, and collected a fin clip for use in genetic stock identification. They also recorded the date and general location where the fish was caught, plus the gear type and gillnet mesh size used. For their effort, fishers were compensated for each fish sampled.

The final collection included 329 fish, short of the 600 hoped for, but 2011 was a pilot year and results are an encouraging start. Analysis of the information is in progress; some preliminary results are shown in Table 1. The table shows age composition and percentage of females caught in the subsistence fishery, which was restricted to using 7.5 inch or smaller mesh gillnets. For comparison, also included are results from the king salmon incidental catch in the lower Yukon River commercial fishery that was restricted to 6 inch or smaller mesh sizes, and the king salmon caught in the lower Yukon River test fishery that uses 8.5 inch mesh.

The subsistence and commercial catch both had more younger fish and fewer females than were caught with the 8.5 inch mesh. This suggests the new regulation reducing maximum mesh size to 7.5 inches is effective in reducing the catch of the older kings and of females compared to past practices when 8.5 inch mesh gillnets were more commonly used in the fisheries. Hopefully this will translate into more older-aged fish and more females on the spawning grounds. The genetic stock identification analysis is ongoing, and results will be included in the final project report this spring.

The primary value of this project is not so much in the utility of this one set of subsistence harvest

information, but in its contribution to the collective set of information needed to understand the overall Yukon River king salmon run and harvest dynamics. From throughout the Yukon River,

ASL and genetic samples are collected from commercial catches and subsistence catches, from test fish projects, and from spawning grounds. Information is also collected about king salmon abundance using sonar, weirs, counting towers, aerial surveys, and from the harvests. These are each like pieces to a puzzle, which when put together can be used to reveal some of the mysteries about Yukon River king salmon population that are of great utility in improving fishery management. The value of the lower Yukon subsistence information and similar data sets increase with each additional year information is collected, provided standardized protocols are followed that allow for comparison between projects and between years.

The 2011 project was funded by Arctic Yukon Kuskokwim Sustainable Salmon Initiative and was closely coordinated with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and a similar project conducted in the middle Yukon River by Tanana Chiefs Conference. AVCP is pursuing continuation of this project in 2012. If funded, more fishers will need to be recruited.

For the project to reach its full potential, samples need to be collected from 600 to 900 fish. These samples also need to be distributed from within a large enough group of participating fishers that the result truly represent the diversity of harvest methods and harvest timing needed to characterize the overall lower Yukon River king salmon subsistence harvest composition.

Quyana to all who contributed to and supported the 2011 project operations this summer! 🐟

*Fishery biologist Doug Molyneaux is contracted by AVCP as the Principle Investigator. Casie Stockdale is a staff biologist with the AVCP Natural Resources Department and Co-Investigator.*

Table 1. Preliminary age and sex composition of lower Yukon River Chinook salmon harvest

Sample Source	Number of Samples Collected	Age Composition				Females
		4	5	6	7	
<b>Commercial Retained for Subsistence Use</b> <i>(gillnet restricted to ≤ 6.0 inch mesh; collected 6/24-7/14/ 2011)</i>	508	38%	41%	20%	<1%	17%
<b>Subsistence Harvest</b> <i>(gillnet restricted to ≤ 7.5 inch mesh; collected 6/05-6/29/ 2011)</i>	329	8%	65%	26%	1%	20%
<b>ADF&amp;G Lower Yukon Test Fishery</b> <i>(gillnet are 8.5 inch mesh; collected 6/03-7/17/ 2011)</i>	1,050	1%	32%	63%	4%	53%



*Inspecting the quality of a scale sample, Alexandra Waska was one of two community coordinators hired to implement the project.*



*Participating fishers were required to confirm the sex of each fish by looking internally for eggs. This extra measure of diligence adds value and confidence to the utility of the data being collected.*



*Accurately recording the data collected is vital; for each fish the recorded age, sex, length, tissue sample, harvest method, and harvest date must match up correctly.*

# Aerial Fish Surveys: Getting the Overview

by Mike Parker, Fisheries Biologist, ADF&G

Each year aerial surveys are conducted as a means to enumerate salmon escapement and help quantify the overall run strength in systems that are too remote and costly to operate projects on the ground. Typically aerial surveys are not directly used for in-season management actions, but they do provide valuable data that can show trends in escapement and help evaluate the effectiveness of management strategies.

A number of primary spawning streams with Sustainable Escapement Goals or Biological Escapement Goals are surveyed each year as a means to monitor the health of each specific drainage. Some of these systems have projects such as sonar, weir, or counting towers present on site, which typically produce a more accurate escapement estimate. However, environmental conditions during the season can occasionally affect the ability of these projects to obtain passage estimates.

Aerial surveys provide the following useful information:

- Indication of escapement when inclement weather effects the efficiency of onsite projects
- Base line data for historical comparisons of escapement and productivity
- Trends in escapement for a particular system over time
- Documentation of predation levels
- Nominating new streams to the Andromous Waters Catalog (AWC)
- Extending the ranges of salmon spawning or presence in the AWC
- Monitoring the effects of natural habitat disturbances and mining activity
- Evaluating the current escapement goals for each system

Limitations of aerial surveys include:

- Effectiveness is subject to weather conditions
- Requires experienced pilots and surveyors
- Species differentiation in high concentrations (primarily pinks and chums)
- Provide only a snap shot view of escapement
- Rely on variable run timing to capture peak spawning conditions for each species

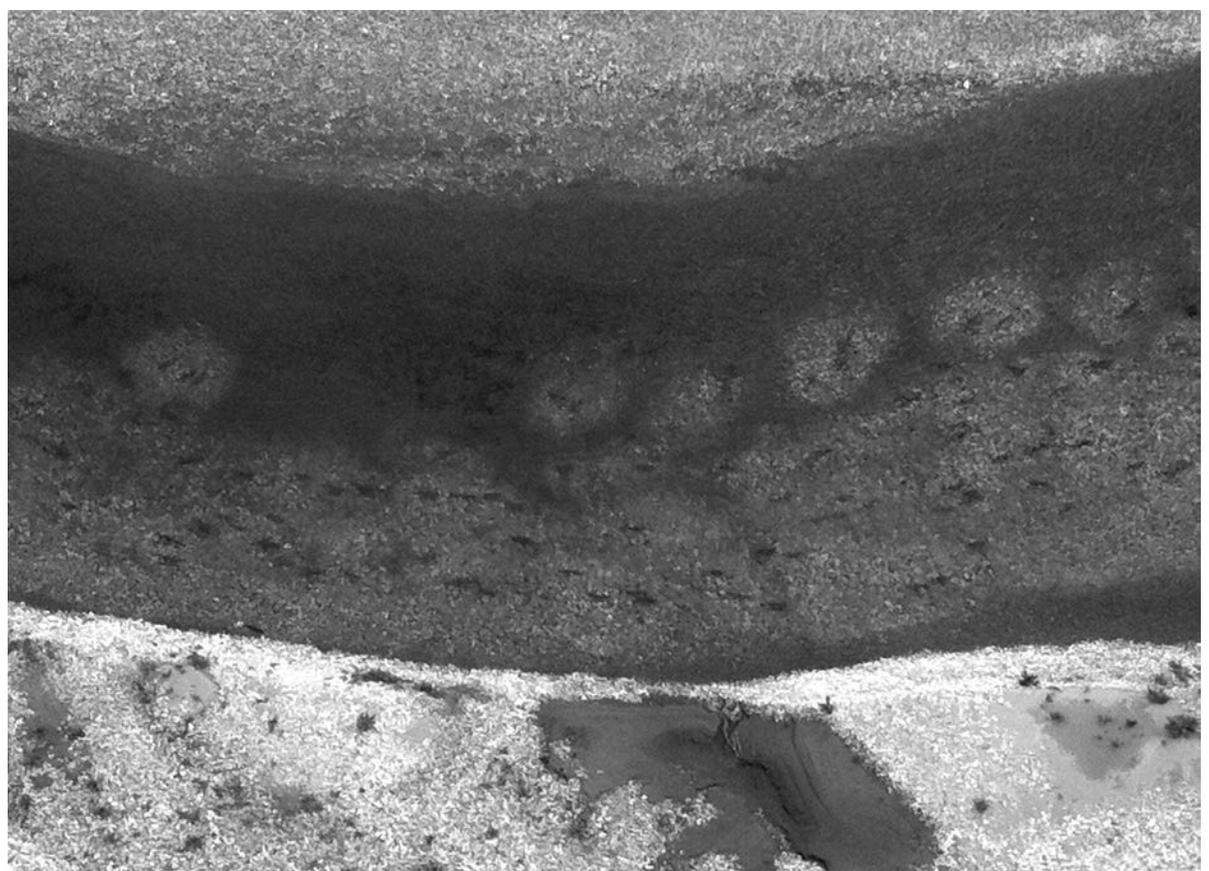
The AWC documents the presence, spawning, and rearing of fish species that migrate between fresh water and salt water during their life cycle. Recording the location of salmon observed in all of their life stages can help protect critical habitat and give biologists another critical piece of the information necessary to diagnose the overall health of particular river drainages. Observations of changes in stream habitat from the public are always welcome and can help complete the

puzzle when trying to determine the potential causes of major production shifts.

You can view the AWC at <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/cfanc/sfpublic/SARR/AWC/>. If you encounter salmon in new areas that are not documented, please let ADF&G know. The contact is:  
ADF&G Sport Fish Division Regional Office  
ATTN: J. Johnson  
333 Raspberry Road  
Anchorage, Alaska 99518 📍



*Surveying the mouth of the Nulato River.*



*Aerial view of chum salmon spawning on the Iniakuk River*

# In the Cockpit: The Inside Scoop on Aerial Surveying

YRDFA communications director Jason Hale caught up with Mike Parker, aerial surveyor and fisheries biologist with ADF&G, to find out what really goes into surveying from the skies. Here's a recap of what Mike told him:



"Each season about the middle of July I find myself in Unalakleet where I wait for weather suitable for flying an aerial survey to count salmon. The ideal conditions are rarely encountered and often other factors, such as recent rainfall and relative water levels, play an important role in determining when and where to

go. The majority of the lower river surveys are performed in a Cessna 180 piloted by Jim Tweto of Era Aviation. He has extensive experience and possesses the skills necessary to position the surveyor for the best view of the stream below. He's also an incredibly nice guy and good company during long flights.

A typical survey can last anywhere from six to eight hours, and that doesn't necessarily include the time it takes to travel to each individual stream. Although I've spent numerous hours doing surveys, the very first one of the season always seems to be the most difficult. The novelty of conducting aerial surveys to count salmon quickly wears off during the first half hour of flying low altitude steep banking turns one after another. Once your body adjusts to having your stomach in your throat things tend to go much smoother. I'm fortunate enough to say that I've never actually gotten sick during a survey. This unfortunately has led to me being picked as the primary surveyor for the Alaskan portion of the Yukon River drainage. The pilots also appreciate having somebody with an 'iron stomach' as it means a more enjoyable time for them as well.

Surveys of the upper Yukon River drainages are based out of Fairbanks, where we are fortunate enough to have Dennis Miller and his vast knowledge of the area. Dennis owns Caribou Air Services and flies a Piper Super Cub, which is capable of flying at slower speeds and making much tighter turns. This is a bit of a mixed blessing because although he is capable of staying on most river bends it makes for a more nauseating ride for the passenger in the back seat. The saving grace when flying with Dennis is that he too is a nice guy and won't torture you too much when you're feeling ill. He is also incredibly safety conscious and knows how far to push the limitations of the aircraft without creating unnecessary risk.

There has been an increased interest in what appears to be a shift in production between chum salmon spawning areas. This has resulted in the department looking at new areas and revisiting some previously known spawning areas. We cover a lot of beautiful country but I often find myself staring down at the water and missing a lot of the wildlife and scenery. Every once in a while I get the opportunity to look around and somehow convince myself that it's all worth it." 🐟

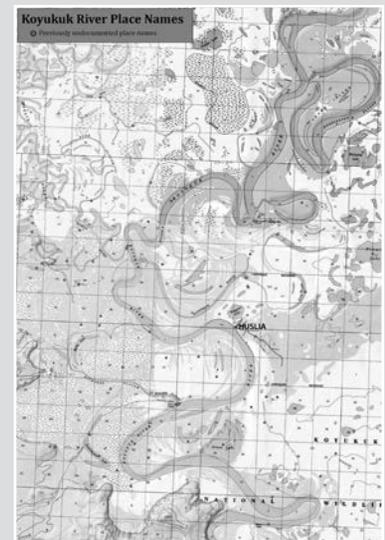
*Once your body  
adjusts to having  
your stomach in your  
throat things tend to  
go much smoother*

## Koyukuk River Traditional Place Names Documented: Koyukuk to Hughes Region

by Catherine Moncrieff, Anthropologist

Amazing stories were told and traditional names were mapped in the Huslia Tribal Office this September, where Elders met for two and a half days to ensure their traditional places were documented on USGS maps. YRDFA anthropologist Catherine Moncrieff traveled with Elder Eliza Jones, Susan Paskvan of the Yukon-Koyukuk School District, Sarah McCloskey of the U.S. Geological Survey, and Karin Bodony of the Koyukuk National Wildlife Refuge, with a mission of mapping 640 place names previously documented by Elders, past scholars, and linguists.

In Alaska, Koyukon Athabascan is one of the strongest indigenous languages. But in the Lower Koyukuk River communities of Huslia and Koyukuk, many of the youth are not learning their language, and the traditional place names are sometimes known only by their Elders. This trip was part of a new project to map traditional place names in the lower Koyukuk River region. The project is a partnership between the communities of Huslia and Koyukuk, YRDFA, the U.S. Geological Survey, the Koyukuk National Wildlife Refuge, and the Yukon-Koyukuk School District. We worked with nine Elders in Huslia and three Elders in Koyukuk to place 423 names on the USGS maps. In addition, we recorded their stories and pronunciations.



We appreciate the hospitality offered by the Huslia Tribal Council, where we set up our mapping station and conducted most of the interviews. Thanks also to the communities of Huslia and Koyukuk for allowing us to do this work and welcoming us into your villages. The Elders interviewed so far were wonderful and we really enjoyed listening to their stories. A big thank you to them: Catherine and Steven Attla, Rose Ambrose, Cue Bifelt, William Derendoff, Sidney Henry, Lorna Vent, Sophie Sam, George Yaska, Franklin and Annie Dayton, and Benedict Jones, Sr.

Future goals of this project are to transcribe the interviews, return to the communities with draft maps, interview folks we missed on the first trip, and possibly produce an atlas similar to the Middle Koyukuk River atlas and USGS maps with Koyukon Athabascan place names. We appreciate the support of the USGS Alaska Science Center and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) for funding Phase I of this project and to the Koyukuk National Wildlife Refuge and the Yukon-Koyukuk School District for allowing Karin Bodony and Susan Paskvan to work with us on this project. 🐟

YRDFA's work on this project is funded through the USGS Alaska Science Center and NOAA. The statements, findings, conclusions, and recommendations are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the USGS Alaska Science Center or NOAA.

The Ta'an Kwäch'an Council  
Lands Resources and  
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Hoodies  
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Bring the  
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Our purpose is to help raise awareness that the Yukon River salmon are important to the Yukon First Nations, our history and our culture.

The proceeds will support Yukon First Nation delegation participation at the Yukon River Panel meetings.

For information contact:  
Coralee Johns, Fish and Wildlife  
Program Coordinator  
(867) 668-3444 ext. 231 • [cjohns@taan.ca](mailto:cjohns@taan.ca)



## First Nations Salmon Summit Delivers Recommendations

by Brian Bell, Council of Yukon First Nations,  
and Jason Hale, YRDFA

Summer is always full of outdoor activities, like harvesting fish, boating, hiking, swimming, and enjoying the brief spell of warmer weather. Yet for three long days at the end of June, fifty people gathered inside the Ta'an Kwäch'an Council's Deep Creek Center beside the shores of Lake Laberge. Why? Because the salmon runs are declining and they wanted to sort out a united plan for restoring the runs.

Over the past few years there has been increased concern by Yukon First Nations and other salmon users regarding the decline of sustainably harvestable salmon that reach the Yukon, and the continued conservation of Yukon River salmon stocks. At the Council of Yukon First Nations (CYFN) General Assembly in 2010 there was a resolution passed to seek funding for CYFN to host a Yukon River Salmon Summit for Yukon First Nations. There is a great and urgent desire by Yukon First Nations within the Yukon River drainage to meet, discuss, and create a strategic plan with the focus on conservation, education, and increased information sharing between First Nations, salmon users, and salmon management bodies.

The primary goal of this event was the creation of a strategic plan with specific action items that can be initiated by various First Nations in their home communities. So it was that representatives from 12 First Nations from the Yukon Territory and 5 fisheries groups talked, brainstormed, voted, debated, and ultimately agreed on five recommended actions:

1. Establish an international meeting of all fishers up and down the Yukon River to discuss actions that can be developed for the restoration and enhancement of salmon.
2. Launch a media campaign to raise awareness of the declining runs.
3. Lobby politicians on both sides of the border to honor the Yukon River Salmon Agreement, protect pulses of king salmon, and preserve salmon and their habitat.
4. Open the salmon treaty to make amendments, including penalties for not following the treaty.
5. Find out why the salmon are declining.

This was the first Salmon Summit of its kind in the Yukon Territory, but organizers and attendees hope it will not be the last. Funding requests have been made for future meetings, and participants are already working on some of these action items. Attendees are keen to continue working together for the good of the salmon.

For more details, visit <http://www.yukonsalmon.org/news/SalmonSummit2011.pdf>.



# Why We Didn't Fish: Teslin's Voluntary Fishing Ban

by Mike Dunn, Teslin Tlingit Council Fish and Wildlife Officer

The 2011 Yukon River Chinook salmon border escapement, which allows migratory salmon into Canadian waters to spawn, was met this year. Roughly 51,000 salmon were counted passing by the sonar station at Eagle, which allows for sport fishing (rod and reel) in Canada. Yet, the Teslin Tlingit people did not harvest salmon during the week (from Sunday at 8pm to Friday at 8pm), as outlined in their Teslin Tlingit Council (TTC) Resolution #7. The people of Teslin even purchased salmon caught by another Tlingit tribe, located by the Taku River, to reduce their impact on the Yukon River Chinook salmon. This has confused many people along the Yukon River, especially those people across the border.

In August, a group of Alaskans on the Yukon River Panel's educational exchange was brought to the Yukon Territory by Jason Hale of YRDFA. This group was composed of fishers and management professionals from along the Yukon River. They all asked the same question to the people of Teslin: "Why are you not fishing?" The answer given by the Teslin Tlingit Council: "We want salmon for our children." The people of Teslin have made a firm position to conserve the salmon today so that future generations may have a chance to see the salmon. When asked what if the salmon still don't recover, a TTC citizen responded "at least we could say that we tried." Here in Teslin, we are grateful for the efforts of our American friends in conserving the Chinook

*When asked what if the salmon still don't recover, a TTC citizen responded, "at least we could say that we tried."*

(king) salmon on their long journey home to their spawning grounds. Teslin is proud to be home to one of the longest migrations of any salmon in the world and the people respect the salmon's amazing journey through perilous waters. Every year the Teslin Tlingit welcomes the 'salmon people' home with an offering and ceremony celebrating the cultural link between the Tlingit people and salmon. The TTC is continuing its past 9 years of conservation efforts, this year implementing a voluntary fishing ban during the week, to protect the salmon for future generations.

As the Fish and Wildlife Officer for the TTC, I have seen firsthand the sacrifices of the Teslin Tlingit people. I listened to the debate of the General Council, when it adopted Resolution #7, where parents worried about the loss of fish camps for their children and elders spoke of salmon eggs and heads that they have not tasted for years. The people here are facing hardship, as are all people connected to the salmon on the Yukon River, which will only be solved when the salmon population recovers. The people in Teslin are doing the most effective form of conservation, not looking at numbers and establishing quotas, but simply

choosing not to fish a species in crisis.

I have listened to officials from scientific organizations, who stress the idea that the salmon will be wasted if the spawning ground is overpopulated with fish. Based on accounts

from local fishers, we are nowhere near those thresholds. I have heard stories, not dating back to historic times but instead to the early 1980's, where salmon would color the water red with their bodies and would line the shore with their bodies.

Today, you would be

lucky to even spot a salmon swimming through the water. It doesn't take high level statistics to understand that the people of Teslin are not wasting salmon by allowing more to reach the spawning grounds.

The TTC would like to thank the educational exchange participants and the conscientious people along the Yukon River for their continued efforts to preserve the salmon. We can only succeed together and would like to encourage everyone to put in the extra efforts needed to ensure that we all can share the salmon with all of our children.

Thank you from Teslin,  
Mike Dunn 🐟



Salmon from the Taku River being offloaded and sorted for distribution in Teslin by TTC staff.

## "Fall Meeting..." *continued from page 6*

So, the board members present discussed other options, and unanimously elected to take a couple specific ideas to the full board at the upcoming annual meeting, this February in Galena. Should anything change, you'll read it here first!

### Hatcheries

There are two proposals—114 and 115—before the Alaska Board of Fisheries this December that aim to reduce hatchery production of chum salmon in Prince William Sound. YRDFA passed a motion to support both of these proposals.

### Customary Trade

As the tri-RAC subcommittee on customary trade moves forward in developing a proposal for the Federal Subsistence Board on the limitation of customary trade (see related article in this newsletter), the YRDFA board weighed in on the issue through the passage of two motions:

YRDFA recommends to the Federal Subsistence Board that any customary trade restrictions put into place apply only in times of shortage—when there is no commercial fishery on Chinook salmon and there are restrictions on subsistence fishing.

YRDFA supports reductions in fishing time or subsistence fishing period closures in times of shortage, instead of addressing customary trade specifically.

### Meeting Adjourned

Phew! That's a lot to cover in just two days, and these were just select highlights! 🐟

*YRDFA's work on this project was funded through the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS). The statements, findings, conclusions, and recommendations are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the USFWS.*

# Arresting Views: Words of Wisdom from an Enforcement Officer

by Jim Neely, Zone Officer-Northern Alaska, USFWS Division of Refuge Law Enforcement

The people and resources of Alaska never cease to amaze me. There truly is a connection between our land and our people that transcends culture and time. If I were to condense that connection to just a few words it would be responsible stewardship. Back in the 1960s, my grandfather used to tell me, "The times, they are a changin'." I'm a little older now, and I find myself realizing he was very correct in that assessment. Even in remote rural Alaska, we see rapid progress in technology, transportation, education, and lifestyle. What I believe hasn't changed though is our realization that our roots are in the land and waters and our responsibility lies in being good stewards of all of this that means home to us.

Being good stewards in a changing world means realizing that what we may have taken for granted just a few years ago may not be the same today, let alone, tomorrow. I can think of no better example of that than our changing Yukon River Chinook salmon fishery. From my travels up and down the river, to the meetings I attend throughout the state, I hear people from every walk express their concern about diminishing Chinook salmon stocks. A number of years ago, I heard the words of blame, distrust, and misinformation. That sentiment was an all-too-common thread woven within governments and extending to our river communities. I believe those unproductive reactions were natural enough to anticipate as change is not easy for any of us to accept. I can tell you though, that language has significantly improved. Now I frequently hear the words of ownership. Rather than looking elsewhere to place blame, I hear concerned fishers speaking of looking inward to become part of the answer. I hear government managers and leaders talk of cooperation, improving education and outreach, and most importantly building relationships grounded in trust. How do I know this?

I see it demonstrated on the river by subsistence fishers voluntarily reducing their harvests, following the fishing schedules and regulations, accurately reporting their harvest, shifting their harvest needs to other more abundant stocks,

and encouraging their neighbors to do all of the same. I hear it at the public meetings when people speak about supporting reduced harvests, reducing net mesh sizes to protect brood stock, and asking for law enforcement presence to deter the few from taking advantage of the many. I hear it from Elders who have built trust in their communities based upon understanding the relationship between traditional knowledge and biological science. I read it in formal proposals that have come from Yukon River fishers calling for harvest moratoriums, protection of age classes, and enforcement of illegal commercial trade. In all of this I hear the words; "We can be part of the solution. We are responsible stewards."

Within government, I see it in managers that invest in educational outreach, work toward establishing productive dialog, and foster opportunities for understanding. I see it in officers who recognize their efforts in promoting conservation must be first grounded in education and productive community relations before expecting compliance. And finally, I have witnessed it in leadership that understands tough issues require difficult decisions, and

therefore concentrate their efforts on building informed consensus rather than achieving political acceptance.

Finally, I saw it in the faces of those who were arguing in a village meeting this spring about what the highest management priority was for Yukon River Chinook salmon, when I suggested they consider sustainability as the highest priority.

As someone who is charged with enforcing the rules on the river, I want to tell you that kind of responsible stewardship is exactly what I hope for. This year Alaska Wildlife Troopers, USFWS Refuge Officers, and NPS Rangers worked the length of the river, literally from the ocean to the border, during the Chinook subsistence season. With very few exceptions, we observed fishers



Jim Neely answers questions from fishers at regional pre-season meeting in Ft. Yukon.

demonstrating the kind of behavior that best exemplifies good stewardship. I can tell you that is so gratifying and so very much appreciated.

So what was the result of your collective efforts? Our Canadian counterparts tell us that the quantity and quality of fish reaching the spawning grounds was very encouraging. Assessments of the data collected at the Eagle Sonar site indicate we achieved our escapement objectives and border passage goals. In essence, your cooperation, your contribution to conservation, allowed us to achieve the desired management goals. Let us hope the river and the ocean do their part in bringing us abundant returns in future years.

I have been blessed to meet so many good people who care about the same things I care about. People who have shared not only their concerns, but also their history, their heritage, and in many cases their hospitality. I was encouraged this summer by the grandfather that saw our floatplane along the river bank and stopped to be sure my partner and I were okay and not having airplane problems. This was near a village that, in the not too distant past, I would not have anticipated that sort of welcome. We talked about life on the river and I met this gentleman's two beautiful granddaughters who were out spending the day fishing with grandpa. That interaction gives me hope. A hope that all the good people of Alaska will pull together to restore this fishery, to protect a people's heritage, to recognize we are all charged with being responsible stewards of God's creation, and to commit to a bright and productive future for all of our grandchildren. We have a ways to go, but I'm convinced we are making progress. To each of you on that path I offer my many thanks and heartfelt encouragement to stay the course. 🍷

# Resources & Tips for Your Higher Education

by Teddy Willoya, Program Coordinator

For those of you who are thinking about furthering your education, you should check out the funding opportunities listed in this article. When you apply for the scholarships, be sure to meet all deadlines and include all of the required documents and materials. If you have never applied for funding before, don't get discouraged by the amount of information required or the length of an application. It does take some effort but the rewards are well worth it.

Items that are generally needed for most college scholarship applications

- Letter of intent or written statement
- College acceptance letter
- Class schedule or enrollment form
- Official high school or college transcripts
- Student aid report (SAR from FAFSA)
- 1-3 letters of recommendation
- Budget forecast from school
- Certificate of Indian blood or BIA card
- Application packet

The written statement sets the tone for your application. It should include your plans for college and what you plan to do after college. You should explain your long and short term goals and what is keeping you from being able to attend school now (such as funding barriers). You will need to be clear about which college/training center that you want to attend and why it interests you. Include the type of degree you are seeking, potential graduation date, and where you see yourself working after graduation.

Educational funding sources worth a look:

- Federal Student Aid or FAFSA  
www.fafsa.ed.gov  
1-800-433-3243
- College Scholarships.org  
www.collegescholarships.org
- AVCP  
www.avcp.org  
Contact: Steven Aluska / 907-543-7484  
Deadlines: June 30 college/1 month before start date of vocational training
- AVEC, Inc.  
Contact: Katie Millen / kmillen@avec.org  
1-800-478-1818 / 907-561-1818  
Deadlines: April 15 for spring semester, August 15 for fall semester

- Calista Scholarship Fund  
www.calistacorp.org / 1-800-277-5516  
Deadline: June 30
- CIRI Foundation  
tcf@the.cirifoundation.org  
Education Resources Handbook:  
http://www.thecirifoundation.org/other\_resources.htm  
1-800-764-3382 or 907-793-3575  
Deadlines: June 1 for fall semester, December 1 for spring semester
- Cook Inlet Tribal Council  
1-877-985-5900 / 907-793-3578  
Deadlines: June 1 for fall/Dec 1 for spring
- Doyon Foundation  
www.doyonfoundation.com/static/scholarships.aspx  
Contact: Tonya Garnett  
garnett@doyon.com  
1-888-478-4755 / 907-459-2049
- United Utilities, Inc.  
www.unicom-alaska.com  
1-800-478-2020 ext. 5214  
Deadline: April 9
- YK Health Corporation  
www.ykhc.org  
PA Health Care Pro Scholarship  
1-800-478-3321 ext.6981 / 907-543-6061
- Educational Assistance Grants  
Contact your local Tribal Office
- TCC - Contact your local Tribal Office if you are in TCC's region
- UAA Native Student Services  
1-866-786-4804 / 907-786-4000
- UAA Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program  
907-786-1860
- UAF Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program  
Contact: Dr. Thomas Clausen, Director  
907-474-5512 / tpclausen@alaska.edu
- UAF Rural Student Services  
1-888-478-1452 / 907-474-7871  
fyrss@uaf.edu
- Scholarships 101  
www.scholarships101.com
- American Indian Graduate Center  
www.aigcs.org  
for graduate students

For additional details or assistance, contact Teddy Willoya at 907-272-3141 ext. 101 or twilloya@yukonsalmon.org. 🐟

*YRDFA's work on this project is funded through the Administration for Native Americans (ANA) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The statements, findings, conclusions, and recommendations are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of ANA or NOAA.*

## Teacher Toolkits on Natural Indicators of Salmon Available to Order

Earlier this year YRDFA released a vibrant children's book detailing natural indicators of salmon arrival timing and abundance. We also developed a toolkit to accompany the book in the classroom, and distributed the toolkit to schools across the Yukon River drainage. This toolkit is now available for you to order.

This kit offers suggested activities to teach youth about traditional ecological knowledge of salmon, to engage students in place-based education, to provide an opportunity for teachers to invite Elders into their classrooms, and to provide another means for teachers to meet the Alaska Performance Standards.

Visit our website, [www.yukonsalmon.org](http://www.yukonsalmon.org), to view a sample activity and list of activities. To receive more information or place an order, contact Catherine Moncrieff at 907-272-3141 ext. 107 or [catherine@yukonsalmon.org](mailto:catherine@yukonsalmon.org). 🐟

*YRDFA's work developing this toolkit was funded through the Rasmuson Foundation. The statements, findings, conclusions, and recommendations are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Rasmuson Foundation.*

## Meet YRDFA's Newest Staffer

My name is Christian Osentoski and I was born and raised in the small community of Bethel, Alaska. I am one-half Yup'ik Eskimo and Polish-American. After graduating from high school in 2009, I went on to pursue a degree in Mechanical Engineering at the University of Alaska Anchorage. I am currently in my junior year of school and plan to obtain my degree in the fall of 2014.

Upon completion of my degree, I would like to remain in Alaska and give back to the community. I believe Alaska is at the forefront in the development of infrastructure, and with a degree in engineering, I hope to have strong influential voice in the future projects of Alaska.



Aside from school and work, my interests include outdoor activities such as camping, hiking, fishing, bicycling, and playing basketball.

I will be working as a program assistant for YRDFA, helping out with everything from teleconferences to teacher toolkits. You can reach me at 907-272-3141 ext. 101 or [christian@yukonsalmon.org](mailto:christian@yukonsalmon.org). 🐟



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

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## YRDFA to Help Coordinate Fish Camps for Youth

by Jason Hale, Communications Director

Once a traditional family activity, the number of active fish camps on the Yukon River has been on the decline, as has participation in those camps. As a result, people are experiencing a loss of culture, tradition, and their subsistence lifestyle. Youth are losing some of their connection to traditional knowledge, diet, and activities. With the aid of a grant from the Administration for Native Americans (ANA), YRDFA is embarking on an effort to help turn back the tide.

Over the next two years, YRDFA will work with the communities and Tribal Councils in Pilot Station, Nulato, Galena, Tanana, and Nenana to

create and implement youth-focused fish camps. Integral to these camps will be the teachings of local Elders, and mentoring regarding education and employment in fisheries and other areas of interest.

*board members offered*

*their personal family*

*camps or village camps*

Earlier this year, at YRDFA's annual meeting, our board of directors voted unanimously to engage Yukon River youth in YRDFA and in the stewardship of salmon along the river. This directive was followed by enthusiastic conversation about including youth at family fish camps, reinvigorating previously funded fish camps, and adding fishery components to existing culture camps. Hands went up around the room as board members offered their personal family camps or village camps that would be strong candidates for this undertaking.

In each of the five communities, YRDFA will work in partnership with the Tribal Councils, locally hired project assistants, local schools, and Elders and youth through community meetings, individual meetings, and through workgroups that will be created. While we will develop templates to follow and review successful models, we will tailor each camp to meet the community's unique needs and interests. The

Tribal Councils in each community have provided letters of support, and local YRDFA members and board members have expressed a keen interest in seeing this project through.

The Elders are the tradition bearers, the traditional teachers, and the indigenous scientists. We will turn to them for advice on how to improve the well-being of the future generations of Alaska Native youth. The activities of this project will focus on continuing the long tradition of knowledge sharing between Elders and youth and ensure that the cultural traditions of fish camp and the learning that happens there continue. The ultimate outcome should be stronger and healthier youth who are more informed, grounded, and prepared for the future.

For more information, contact Jill Klein, executive director, at 907-272-3141 ext. 102 or [jill@yukonsalmon.org](mailto:jill@yukonsalmon.org).

*YRDFA's work on this project is funded through the Administration for Native Americans (ANA). The statements, findings, conclusions, and recommendations are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of ANA.*