

**Yukon River Inseason Management Teleconference
Call #2 – June 2, 2009**

Facilitated by: Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA)

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

Communities involved in the call: Nunam Iqua, Kotlik, Mt. Village, St. Mary's, Marshall, Holy Cross, Shageluk, Kaltag, Nulato, Galena, Ruby, Tanana, Rampart, Minto, Nenana, Eagle, Whitehorse, Teslin, Old Crow

Other Organization/Entities: AVCP, Interior Alaska Fish Processors

Call #1 Summary – The first teleconference of the season was held on May 26. During the call, the preseason outlook and management strategies were outlined and discussed by ADF&G and USFWS. YRDFA then gave an update on Chinook salmon bycatch. A representative from the state of Alaska discussed the North Pacific Fishery Management Council process and bycatch from the state's perspective, then answered questions.

Subsistence Reports: No salmon have been reported in the river. Sheefish and whitefish fishing is occurring in the lower river up to Marshall. St. Mary's reports an abundance of sheefish and whitefish so far. Middle river villages are collecting smokewood and preparing for the king and summer chum runs. In the Tanana River there are reports of some Grayling begin caught and an early run of whitefish. On the Canadian side of the river, Teslin is reporting freshwater fishing activity.

The Yukon is free of ice. Teslin reports that the lake ice went out and they are expecting water levels to rise. They also report an overabundance of snow this past winter. The Porcupine River is experiencing high water, as is Eagle on the US side of the river. Eagle is also seeing some drift in the water. Nenana reports low water on the Tanana, but there is high water around Rampart, Ruby and Galena. Water levels are dropping from Nulato to Marshall, and holding around St. Mary's, with some debris. In Kotlik, water levels are low.

Management Updates:

ADF&G Assessment: Subsistence fishing efforts are light due to high and fast water and there have been no confirmed salmon catches to date. Ice breakup in the lower river was on May 26, which is later than usual, so the ice going out has also been later than usual. Partial test fishing in Pilot Station began on May 30 with the right bank sonar up and running as of May 31. High water has delayed the start of the left bank. On June 1, nets for the test fishery went in the water at Big Eddy. Middle Mouth set nets should be operational by June 4 or 5.

Run and Harvest Outlook: Management decisions will be made consistent with preseason projection, moving to inseason management of the runs once salmon abundance increases.

The 2009 run of Chinook salmon is expected to be below average to poor, with primary concern for the projected poor run of Canadian-origin kings. It is likely that subsistence conservation measures beyond those used in 2008 will be required in an effort to share the subsistence harvest and meet escapement goals. A directed king commercial fishery in the mainstem is unlikely. There is the possibility of a small king harvest on the Tanana River.

An average run of summer chum is projected for 2009 that will provide for escapement needs, subsistence use and a commercial harvest. The available surplus for a directed fishery could range from 500,000 to 900,000 summer chum, but the actual harvest will most likely be constrained due to the potentially poor Chinook salmon run.

Due to flooding, ice jams and shorefast ice, the reduced subsistence schedule will be delayed so there is time to target whitefish. Most likely the schedule will begin on June 8. There will be no fishing on the first pulse of Chinook salmon. This will be implemented by pulling one to two subsistence periods as the first pulse moves upriver. These restrictions will be announced by short notice news releases on VHF, radio and YR DFA teleconferences.

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

USFWS Input: A federal Special Action goes into effect June 3, limiting the subsistence harvest of kings in federal water in Y-1, -2 and -3 to federally qualified rural subsistence users only. Similar Special Actions will be implemented upriver as the run progresses. Qualification is based upon the user's permanent home (that would be listed on a permanent fund dividend, hunting, fishing, or driving license). If a person is not living in a Yukon River community, they are not eligible for harvest this year. People can still go to camps and help, just not fish.

Local Input & Closing Comments:

Clarification was requested on the Special Action. The Action only applies in federal waters. A news release was sent to the Y-1, Y-2 and Y-3 districts, which included a map of federal waters. USFWS also noted that there will be regional law enforcement for this Action. Consequences for violations may be fines or gear confiscation, but will probably be based on the specific instance. A couple of callers suggested that information be sent out to the Tribal Councils and cities to ensure everyone in the river is informed, and also to advertise in Anchorage and Fairbanks newspapers so people don't come out to the river and can't fish.

An update on customary trade was requested. USFWS explained that the Federal Subsistence Board rejected the request for a special action to disallow trade from rural users to others because it was not an emergency. The request can go through the regular FSB cycle in 2011. Customary trade this year will be like it has been, which means only fresh unprocessed fish can be sold.

A fisher asked about the possibility of reducing or closing the mouth of Andreafsky River as fish rest there on their way upriver. ADFG responded that the mouth is closed and markers will be put up soon. Fishers don't fish at the mouths of the Innoko and Koyukuk Rivers, so it is not as much of an issue there. Clarification was requested on Innoko River regulations, to which ADF&G explained there were no reductions in the schedule because they are trying to protect Canadian bound Chinook salmon, which aren't in the Innoko. A number of callers discussed the fact that people were planning on fishing outside of the regulations. It is troubling for the people who do follow the regulations to see others not doing so. ADF&G reiterated that they understand people need fish, but hope that others do follow the rules in recognition that the salmon need to be protected. ADF&G is trying to work with people so they understand the necessity, and they are working on enforcement along the river. If violations are seen, they can be reported anonymously by calling 1.800.478.3377. Finally, a question was asked that if the first pulse was closed, what would happen with the test net fishery. ADF&G will continue fishing with the test nets in order to get timing and abundance data. Any salmon caught will be given to local people.

**Yukon River Inseason Management Teleconference
Call #3 – June 9, 2009**

Facilitated by: Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA)

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

Communities involved in the call: Nunam Iqua, Emmonak, Kotlik, Mt. Village, St. Mary's, Pilot Station, Marshall, Holy Cross, Shageluk, Kaltag, Nulato, Koyukuk, Huslia, Allakaket, Galena, Ruby, Tanana, the Rapids, Rampart, Minto, Nenana, Beaver, Ft. Yukon, Venetie, Eagle, Whitehorse, Teslin, Old Crow

Other Organization/Entities: Interior Alaska Fish Processors, Tanana Chiefs Conference

Subsistence Reports: King salmon are being caught in Nunam Iqua, Emmonak, Mountain Village, and St. Mary's. Reports from St. Mary's are that the fish are silver bright and big. Summer chum salmon have been seen in Nunam Iqua and Emmonak. People are fishing for sheefish and whitefish in some locations from the mouth up to Fort Yukon. Many villages in the lower Yukon and GASH region are still cleaning up after the recent flooding, preparing fish camps and fishing gear.

Water levels are generally high, and are either holding steady or slowly dropping. In Whitehorse and Teslin, the river is rising. There is little or no debris in the water from the mouth up to Canadian headwaters. Kotlik reports that the ice in the bay is now gone.

Management Updates:

ADF&G Assessment: The first reported king salmon was caught on June 7. Subsistence fishing efforts have been light, but have started to increase as salmon begin entering the river.

The lower Yukon test fishery project became fully operational on June 7. The cumulative catch per unit effort (CPUE) through June 8 is .50, which is below the ten year average of 1.50 for this date. Test fishing at Pilot Station began on May 30. The sonar became fully operational with right and left bank coverage on June 6. The first Chinook salmon was caught in the test nets at Pilot on June 9th and the first chums on June 8th. The Dall point assessment project has been delayed because of shore ice, but ADF&G staff should be in Hooper Bay by the end of the week.

Run and Harvest Outlook: Management decisions will be made consistent with preseason projection, moving to inseason management of the runs once salmon abundance increases. The 2009 run of Chinook salmon is expected to be below average to poor. A directed king commercial fishery in the mainstem is unlikely. There is the possibility of a small king harvest on the Tanana River. The reduced subsistence salmon fishing schedule, developed with input provided by fishers throughout the drainage, was put into effect in District 1 on June 8. It will be implemented in the remaining districts chronologically with the upriver salmon migration. The reduced subsistence fishing schedule will begin in Y-2 on June 10 and in Y-3 on June 14. There will be no fishing on the first pulse of Chinook salmon. This action will be implemented by pulling one to two subsistence periods as the first pulse moves upriver. These restrictions will be announced by short notice news releases on VHF, radio and YRDFA teleconferences.

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

USFWS Input: A federal Special Action went into effect June 3, limiting the subsistence harvest of kings in federal water in Y-1, -2 and -3 to federally qualified rural subsistence users only. Similar Special Actions will be implemented upriver as the run progresses.

The crews for the Andrefsky and Gisasa weirs arrived last week. More updates on the weirs will be forthcoming next week as these projects become operational.

Local Input & Closing Comments:

Clarification on the reduced fishing schedule in Y-2 was requested. Y-2 is open 24 hours a day until June 11 at 2pm, at which point it closes until Sunday at 8pm. It will open again from 8pm Sunday to 2pm Monday and there are no gear restrictions. ADF&G is not anticipating any gear restrictions anywhere at this time, except for the coastal district, which will be limited to 6 inch mesh. A caller from the Y-4 district wanted to know when the first date to drift would be. ADF&G responded that drifting would be allowed from June 10 to July 14, and that subsistence is currently open 7 days a week in Y-4 until the reduced schedule is implemented around June 17. Another caller asked if there will be time reductions for summer and fall chum fishing. ADF&G does not expect there will be time restrictions for fall chum, but they are a possibility for summer chum. ADF&G will wait and see how the chum and Chinook salmon runs develop before making those decisions. Finally there was a question about licenses and enforcement. It was clarified that while permits and licenses are needed for commercial fishing, none are needed for subsistence.

Many questions were asked about ADF&G assessment projects. During the call, we learned that the Marshall test fishery will not operate this year because it is used more for the commercial king fishery. Since there will not be a directed fishery this year, ADF&G decided not to run the project and save some fish. In the lower river test fishery, a question was asked about how the CPUE is calculated, and if the low CPUE this year was a concern. The CPUE is calculated with the test fish caught, not subsistence fish. While so far the CPUE is well below the ten year average for this date, it is above the CPUEs in 2007 and 2008. ADF&G will make an assessment of the data when more fish have come in. ADF&G responded to one questioner that there is a 3 day time lag for the fish to get to Pilot, and that they are not concerned with the lack of kings seen yet, as they should be arriving in the next 24 hours. Another caller wondered if ADF&G was concerned that big female kings were being caught. Again, ADF&G said they were not concerned, partly because of the small sample size and partly because they expected to see a lot of 6 year old salmon this year, which typically have a higher proportion of females.

One caller related that in past years when kings have come in before chums it's meant a heavy run of kings, which is what he is hoping to see this year. A few lower river callers have finished their subsistence Chinook fishing. Many have not even begun fishing yet. One caller expressed his desire to be able to take some of these early kings. ADF&G responded that that is what they hope will happen with the delayed implementation of the reduced fishing schedule. There were a couple of questions about the first pulse and how it is identified. Typically ADF&G sees these early fish, then 3-4 days of high salmon counts followed by reduced counts. Historically the first pulse is around June 8 to 15. Whether or not the first pulse will be sufficient to meet Canadian escapement needs is difficult to predict. Last year the first pulse was 10,000 fish, which wouldn't be near enough. ADF&G will wait and see how this run develops and what proportion of the first pulse is Canadian. Another caller reminded everyone that river-wide it was agreed to let the first pulse go through, and that it is important to do so. There needs to be informed enforcement along the entire length of the river during the first pulse.

**Yukon River Inseason Management Teleconference
Call #4 – June 16, 2009**

Facilitated by: Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA)

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

Communities involved in the call: Hooper Bay, Emmonak, Kotlik, Mt. Village, St. Mary's, Pilot Station, Marshall, Russian Mission, Holy Cross, Anvik, Grayling, Nulato, Koyukuk, Huslia, Allakaket, Wiseman, Galena, Ruby, Tanana, the Rapids, Rampart, Minto, Manley, Minto, Nenana, Circle, and Eagle.

Subsistence Reports: Fisherman on the lower river reported catching healthy bright kings with firm meat. Kings are reported to be early in Kotlik this year. A few fishermen on the lower Yukon have met their subsistence needs, but many have not started because of needed repairs to fish camps. Chums and kings are being caught in the lower river. Grayling reported 1 king caught and white fish are being caught in Marshall, Koyukuk, Tanana, and Minto. Water level in the lower Yukon is high with low debris. G.A.S.H water levels are normal. Levels in the Koyukuk river are moderate-high and dropping. Water from Galena to Rampart is high with no debris and water is also high on the Yukon flats with little debris.

Management Updates:

ADF&G Assessment: Subsistence salmon fishing effort increased over the past week as more Chinook and summer chum salmon began to enter the river. Test nets on the lower Yukon indicated on June 15 that the first pulse has arrived and is later than previous years. The strength of the pulse will be better known after it has passed Pilot Station.

The cumulative catch per unit effort (CPUE) through June 15 is 2.36, which is below the ten year average of 6.68 for this date. Pilot Station sonar reported approximately 5,200 king and 51,000 chums which are both below average. High waters have hampered the sonar, making it difficult to get accurate salmon numbers. Chinook tested on the LYTF through June 14 indicated that 88% of fish were age 6, which is 24% percent higher than average.

Run and Harvest Outlook: Management decisions will be made consistent with preseason projection, moving to inseason management of the runs once salmon abundance increases. The 2009 run of Yukon River Chinook salmon is expected to be below average to poor. Data from the Frasier, Stikine, and Copper Rivers, as well as Cook Inlet indicated low 2009 Chinook returns throughout the state. In response to the predicted poor return, pre-season management strategies designed to conserve the greatest number of Canada bound Chinook salmon are being implemented. There will be no fishing during the first pulse of Chinook. An 18 hour subsistence period was closed in area Y-1 on June 15, and similar closures will be implemented as the pulse moves up the Yukon.

Summer chum numbers are difficult to estimate due to the limited amount of assessment information currently available. ADF&G anticipates numbers enough for escapement, a normal subsistence harvest, and a surplus to provide a commercial harvest. However, commercial chum harvest will likely be affected by the low numbers of kings because kings are incidentally harvested in chum salmon-directed fisheries.

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

USFWS Input: A federal Special Action went into effect June 16, limiting the subsistence harvest of kings in federal water in Y-4, to federally qualified subsistence users only. Similar actions have been implemented in Y-1, -2, and -3 and will be implemented upriver as the run progresses.

Local Input & Closing Comments: ADF&G reported that subsistence fishermen along the Yukon have been following subsistence fishing guidelines and regulations, and that enforcement will follow the progress all the way up the Canadian border.

Clarification was requested on what it means that subsistence fishing is open to federally-qualified users. USFWS responded that federally qualified users are rural residents that have their permanent address in a Yukon River village or Stebbins; this would exclude people that now live outside rural communities that normally migrate to rural Alaska to subsist. This rule applies only to fishing on federal waters. The concern was raised that it will be difficult to meet the needs of elders who rely on children living in urban areas to help with subsistence fishing. Stances on this topic varied, with some people arguing that there must be an exception made for elders, while others felt that was unnecessary as eligible fisherman within the village would and should take care of the elders needs.

Residents were concerned with the effect of incidental catch in the high seas pollock fishery on the subsistence salmon resource. USFWS responded by explaining the numbers which show that incidental catch is a contributor to the problem, and mentioned that there are other factors contributing to the low returns of Chinook salmon such as the changing freshwater environment and changes going on in the Bering Sea. It seems there is more of an ocean connection due to the broad poor returns of Chinook salmon throughout Alaska this year.

A number of people had questions about the current fishery regulations. One resident was curious why the length of subsistence periods were different in the upper and lower districts. ADF&G explained that the fish in the upper districts are more spread out, upper river districts are longer, and there are less drift net sites in the upper river so people there are given more time to fish than in the lower river.

Fishermen also asked for clarification on the schedule and when more information would be available about upcoming closures. ADF&G responded that they would try to make the news releases clearer and provide a timeline for when decisions would be made. ADF&G would make a decision by June 17 on whether they would close another period in Y-1. It was asked if ADF&G anticipated more restriction beyond what has already been implemented. The response was that it is still too early in the run to know. A couple people stated that they must follow the preseason management plan that they had agreed upon at the preseason meeting in Fairbanks.

Fishermen were curious as to the status of the first pulse, wanting to know whether or not the fish in the river are Canadian bound kings. ADF&G said that they have not received genetic test results from the first run of king salmon. There were also some questions about where the first pulse was and how the run timing was looking. ADF&G expected the first fish to be in Anvik soon. Run timing is currently looking similar to last year, which was also a little late. The quarter point of the run will probably be around June 18. ADF&G thought the first pulse was building in Emmonak.

**Yukon River Inseason Management Teleconference
Call #5– June 23, 2009**

Facilitated by: Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA)

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

Communities involved in the call: Hooper Bay, Emmonak, Kotlik, Mt. Village, St. Mary's, Pitka's Point, Pilot Station, Marshall, Russian Mission, Holy Cross, Anvik, Grayling, Kaltag, Nulato, Koyukuk, Huslia, Allakaket, Galena, Ruby, Tanana, the Rapids, Rampart, Fort Yukon, Circle, Eagle, Teslin, and Old Crow.

Subsistence Reports: In the Canadian portions of the river, there are few whitefish in the Porcupine River and the water level is low with little debris. Teslin has high water and there are whitefish. On the Alaskan side, water is dropping with little debris on the Yukon flats and whitefish are present. Kings are being caught as far up as Ruby, but most were small males. The kings have been in the Rapids for 4 days. Water on the Koyukuk is high in sediment, dropping, and there is a mix of whitefish, pike, and salmon, mostly chums. In the middle reaches of the river, the water is slightly above normal and is dropping. Some of the kings being caught in Kaltag were blushed. In the lower river, camps are still being repaired from the spring flooding. Sheefish are being caught along with the king and chums. Kotlik is catching mostly sheefish and the kings are ~35% are jacks, and a lot of the kings have holes and one was full of puss. Along the coast, in Hooper Bay ~50% of subsistence needs met, and they're seeing mostly chums now. This week has been raining throughout most of the Yukon, and subsistence fishermen are saying the weather is bad for drying.

Management Updates:

ADF&G Assessment: Subsistence salmon fishing effort increased over the past week in Districts 3 and 4a. Harvest reports ranged from fair to poor. The Dall Point Test Fishery, which is a new drift gillnet test fishery project, began operations on June 20. The Lower Yukon test fishery on June 20, using 8.5 inch gear, had a cumulative CPUE of 5.60 which is below the average of 12.01. Pilot Station Sonar recorded, through June 22, a total of 26,400 kings, which may be as high as 27,000, but is still below the 56,000 fish average. 148,000 chums were recorded which is below the expected number of 358,000 to this date. Numbers recorded at the Pilot Station Sonar are considered conservative due to high waters. A more accurate assessment is expected as water levels drop. The Anvik River sonar became operational on June 18 and the Rapids test fish wheel project came online on June 14. The first king salmon was recorded on June 21.

Run and Harvest Outlook: The 2009 king run appears to be similar or weaker than the 2008 run. Pulse strength usually increases in numbers for 3-4 days, but this year that has not happened. This unusual pattern appears to be symptomatic of a weak run. As the fish pass Pilot Station sonar, run strength will be more clearly understood. Due to limited amount of assessment information currently available it is still difficult to estimate run abundance and timing for summer chum salmon, however the run is anticipated to provide for escapement, subsistence, and commercial fishing. If run strength develops as anticipated the surplus could range from 500-900,000 chums. Commercial chum fishing will be affected by the poor king run.

A reduced schedule has been implemented in Y-1, Y-2, and Y-3 consisting of two 18 hours periods a week. Consistent with the with the preseason management plan, 2 fishing periods were closed in districts Y-1, Y-2, and Y-3 to protect the first pulse. After the two period closures, these districts will return to their reduced fishing schedule, with gear size restricted to 6 inch mesh. Subsistence fishing periods in Y-4a are currently being as the first pulse moves through the district. Similar actions will be implemented in upriver districts and sub districts chronologically with the run of the first pulse. Subsistence fishing is open 24/7 until a reduced schedule goes into effect. **Fisherman upriver should**

be on stand by for short notice news on the VHF and radio regarding implements on the subsistence schedule.

Current Subsistence Fishing Schedule and Assessment Projects – please visit the ADF&G website at <http://www.cf.adfg.state.ak.us/region3/yukhome.php> for this information, or contact Emmonak ADF&G at 1-866-479-7387 (available 24 hours).

USFWS Input: Federal restrictions of qualified subsistence users applies only to areas that are in Federal waters. Neither the federal inseason manager nor the Federal Subsistence Board can take special action to allow a proxy for fishers who normally receive fishing help from non-federally qualified users. In order for such an exception to be made, a proposal must be put before the Federal Subsistence Board during their meeting in December of 2010 or January of 2011.

Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO): DFO will not be operating the mark/recapture program this year due to flood damage at their camp. This was to be the last year of the mark/recapture program. DFO staff members are currently working at the Eagle sonar program which will be used to assess the Upper Yukon Chinook and fall chum salmon runs into Canada.

DFO discussed how the timing pattern of the 2009 Chinook run may influence total season return. It has been difficult to determine what timing pattern this year's Chinook salmon run is following. Within a few days the run may be 50% complete if the run is following average (1995-2008) run timing and approximately 30% complete if the timing is similar to 2008. When various timing information are applied to recent Pilot Station counts, the trend is for declining total season run projections. There have been some Chinook salmon run failures on the Pacific coast this year (i.e. Fraser and Stikine Rivers) and DFO is concerned that the Yukon run could be much lower than the preseason projections.

Local Input & Closing Comments: Many fishermen were not prepared for the 6 inch mesh gear restrictions, and there was some confusion about why it was being implemented. ADF&G stated that it was a part of the preseason management plan that could be used if the Chinook salmon run developed as poor as it has so far. The necessity of these restrictions will be reevaluated in the future. Gear restrictions allow fishers to still fish for summer chums, but as most people in the upper districts do not own 6 inch gear they requested more time restrictions instead. While the regulations may differ, the overall goal is to apply fair regulations in both the upper and lower river districts.

People were concerned and confused about enforcement regarding ADF&G patrols and the subsistence fishing schedule. ID cards are not necessary, but ADF&G stated that a main concern is for everyone to wear or have a PFD and troopers are citing people for not doing so. To keep current with the changing subsistence schedules, ADF&G faxes updates to all the villages and makes announcements on the VHF or radio, but people can also call the ADF&G office.

There were a number of questions about the daily numbers from the ADF&G test projects and comparisons of this year's run timing and strength to last year's. ADF&G clarified that the overall numbers are lower so far in 2009, even though there was less subsistence harvest this year. On the topic of bycatch in the pollock fishery, it was suggested that those kings be given to subsistence users on the river. USFWS replied that the fish taken as bycatch are young, small and of low quality.

A participant representing the Teslin Tlingit Council spoke about their voluntary community closure for the Chinook salmon season and wondered if anyone else on the river planned to do the same. A fisherman from the lower Yukon responded that even though there is no formal system to restrict subsistence catch, people on the Alaska side of the drainage have restrained or limited their subsistence harvest voluntarily.

**Yukon River Inseason Management Teleconference
Call #6 June 30, 2009**

Facilitated by: Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA)

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

Communities involved in the call: Emmonak, Kotlik, Mt. Village, St. Mary's, Marshall, Holy Cross, Anvik, Grayling, Kaltag, Nulato, Huslia, Allakaket, Wiseman, Galena, Ruby, Tanana, The Rapids, Rampart, Nenana, Steven's Village, Ft. Yukon, Circle, Eagle, Old Crow

Subsistence Reports: Many families on the Lower Yukon have met their subsistence king needs, although some are still well below where they want to be. Others have refrained from harvesting their usual amount of kings to protect the run. Many people in District 2 have reported doing well on subsistence, with many chums being reported. The kings are good and bright, but some fishermen noticed some blushed fish. Middle river communities have harvested few fish to date and all are anticipating the next subsistence opener. First kings were caught in Huslia, Nenana and Stevens Village. Upper river communities are getting ready to fish. White fish are being caught in Old Crow and the water is lower than last year. Water levels in the upper Yukon are dropping with small amount of debris while rising in the middle river and along the Koyukuk.

Management Updates:

ADF&G Assessment and Management Strategies: Catch rates at the LYTF are still well below average for this date. There was a large increase in king and summer chum passage at Pilot Station on June 26-28, but total passage estimates are below average. The summer chum run appears to be slightly later than average, with the midpoint of the run expected to be on June 29.

Age-6 kings continue to predominate in all large mesh harvests. 87% of fish harvested in the Lower Yukon Test Fisheries were age 6, which is 22% above average. 9% were age 5, and 56% of the fish were female, which is 5% above average.

The 2009 Yukon River king run appears to be similar to the 2008 run. A reduced subsistence schedule and some gear restrictions have been implemented, and subsistence fishing periods are being closed to protect early portions of the king run.

The current projection for the summer chum run is 1.2 – 1.4 million fish to pass Pilot Station. Commercial fishing periods were held in Y-1 and Y-2 on June 29, concurrent with the subsistence period to target summer chum salmon. Although the majority of kings have migrated upstream of these districts, there is still a conservation concern for the run. The Board of Fisheries met and approved an emergency petition that amends the Yukon River Summer Chum Salmon Management Plan to state that any incidental harvest of kings in the commercial fishery cannot be sold. Live kings may be released, or they may be retained for subsistence purposes.

Current Subsistence Fishing Schedule and Assessment Projects – please visit the ADF&G website at <http://www.cf.adfg.state.ak.us/region3/yukhome.php> for this information, or contact Emmonak ADF&G at 1-866-479-7387 (available 24 hours).

USFWS Input: 330 chums and 0 kings have passed East Andreafski Weir. Gisasa River Weir counted 260 summer chums and 0 kings. Based on the current projected king run size of 120,000 to 130,000 fish, conservation measures for kings are still needed. A large factor in providing for the summer chum salmon commercial opportunity was to ensure that kings were not sold commercially but were provided for subsistence needs. The Department's coordination with processors and catcher/sellers to not have king salmon sold during the first Y-1 and Y-2 openings was necessary and appreciated.

Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO): Based on genetic information, the Canadian component at Pilot Station as of June 29 is estimated to be approximately 37,500 fish. Canadian commercial, sport, and domestic fisheries will likely be closed for the season. Yukon First Nations have been advised that there is unlikely to be enough fish for an unrestricted First Nation fishery; 1/2-3/4 fishery is more appropriate given the preseason outlook.

Local Input & Closing Comments: Fishermen were worried about not being able to meet their subsistence needs this summer. ADF&G asked for input on management strategies for the Subdistrict Y-4A, which was unable to harvest much of the early fish before the first pulse closures. The second pulse of fish should be around Russian Mission and Holy Cross around June 29-July 1.

There are still concerns as to how accurate the assessment numbers are, given discrepancies between the sonar and the test fisheries. ADF&G acknowledged that there may be something going on and are looking into the test fisheries, but also cautioned that there is an aggregate of assessment data looked at when making management decisions, not just one project. While some fishers expressed frustration that they are not allowed to fish and that the assessment numbers may be wrong, ADF&G responded that all indicators are pointing to another poor run with a need for restrictions. There was a lot of confusion, and some disagreement, by Y-1 and Y-2 subsistence fishermen because the commercial periods were scheduled to overlap with the subsistence periods. ADF&G responded that they were trying to reduce the overall fishing time and mortality of kings, which is why they scheduled the periods together. There was confusion expressed over the new regulation that during the commercial chum salmon openers, kings were not allowed to be sold. Some fisherman from those districts reported an excess of bycatch and were concerned that they might be dumped overboard. ADF&G responded that during the preseason management meetings, most fishers expressed the belief that if subsistence harvests were to be restricted it would not be fair to allow incidentally caught kings to be sold. Two local fish processors offered to accept donations of king bycatch which could be processed and distributed to people that needed them.

People were curious what would happen to subsistence fishermen who fished against the regulations. ADF&G responded that it was an unfortunate event given that most fishermen have been complying with restrictions and some villages are voluntarily reducing their harvest. Enforcement is investigating the incident of illegal fishing and enforcement efforts on the river are ongoing.

**Yukon River Inseason Management Teleconference
Call #7 July 7, 2009**

Facilitated by: Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA)

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

Communities involved in the call: Hooper Bay, Emmonak, Kotlik, Mt. Village, St. Mary's, Marshall, Holy Cross, Anvik Grayling, Kaltag, Nulato, Koyukuk, Huslia, Allakaket, Wiseman, Galena, Tanana, The Rapids, Rampart, Circle, Eagle.

Subsistence Reports: Chums are still running and are getting smaller in size on the coastal villages, and the subsistence fishermen in Hooper Bay have met the majority of their needs. Most communities on the lower Yukon have met their subsistence needs for kings except for a couple communities, and many people are planning on harvesting fall chums. Commercial summer chum fishermen in the lower river released many kings during the last commercial opening. Subsistence harvests have been low to moderate in the G.A.S.H region where many fishermen expressed gratefulness for the extra 12 hours added to the subsistence opener. People on the Koyukuk just started harvesting kings starting on July 4 and most people have not met their needs for kings yet. In Galena a couple of families are $\frac{3}{4}$ done harvesting kings, but most have not even reached the $\frac{1}{4}$ mark, and some families are not going to harvest kings and will wait for the fall chums. Kings in the Yukon Flats region were reported as healthy. The first kings were caught in Circle on the 2nd of July. Water level in the Canadian portion of the Yukon is dropping, there is no salmon yet and no debris in the water.

Management Updates:

ADF&G Assessment and Management Strategies: The king run is tapering off in the lower river. Pilot Station passage estimates for Chinook for July 5 is approximately 108,000 and the current projection is for 115,000-125,000 fish to pass Pilot Station Sonar. There have been fishing closures in subdistricts 4-b-c-d and closures have been announced for District 5, consistent with the preseason management plan. The subsistence schedule is now back to a reduced schedule for Subdistricts 4-a and Districts 1, 2 and 3.

Pilot Station Sonar has recorded approximately 1,026,000 summer chums and current projection for the summer chum run is 1.2 – 1.4 million. Commercial summer chum fisheries began on June 29. Although the majority of kings have migrated upstream of these districts, there is still a conservation concern for the run. Live kings may be released, or they may be retained for subsistence purposes.

Age-6 kings predominate in all large mesh harvests. 86% of fish harvested in the Lower Yukon Test Fisheries were age 6, 9% were age 5, and 54% of the fish were female. The chum salmon age composition from the LYTF was 47% age-4 fish and 50% age-5. Females were 54%.

Current Subsistence Fishing Schedule and Assessment Projects – please visit the ADF&G website at <http://www.cf.adfg.state.ak.us/region3/yukhome.php> for this information, or contact Emmonak ADF&G at 1-866-479-7387 (available 24 hours).

USFWS Input: 1,193 summer chums and 4 kings have passed the East Andreafski Weir as of July 5, which is below average for both species. Gisasa River Weir counted 4,471 summer chums and 21 kings as of July 5 which is also below average for that date.

Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO): Based on genetic information, the Canadian component of king salmon that have passed Pilot Station as of July 5 is estimated to be approximately 51,000 fish. The escapement goal for Canadian-bound kings is 45,000. Based on these numbers, Canada will be in the Yellow Management Zone. Within this zone, the management response will likely involve the closure of the commercial, domestic and recreational fisheries and potential restrictions to First Nations fisheries. Yukon First Nations have been advised that there is unlikely to be enough fish for an unrestricted First Nation fishery; a 1/2-3/4 fishery is more appropriate given the preseason outlook.

The Eagle sonar program became operational on July 5 and will be used to assess the Upper Yukon king run into Canada. There were 193 kings counted during the first two days. The Klondike River sonar program is now operating but there has been no fish counted yet. This is a stock with early timing.

Local Input & Closing Comments: Fishermen were concerned about the Pilot Station sonar estimates because changes were made to some of the initial king salmon estimates. ADF&G explained that they had to adjust the estimate due to the commercial fishing openers which affect how the sonar and test fishing operates. Another question was about the possible range for the king count numbers at the Pilot Station sonar, which ADF&G has characterized as conservative. ADF&G answered that the number could be 16,000 more or 16,000 less fish than what is actually reported. This range is taken into consideration when ADF&G makes management decisions.

Subsistence fishermen in District 4 were grateful for the 12-hour extension on the subsistence opener. People in District 3 wanted to know if management could make adjustments to the fishing schedule to allow their district more harvest opportunity.

ADF&G requested input on relaxing the subsistence schedule, starting in the lower river. There were mixed opinions on this issue. Those who supported relaxing the schedule pointed out that most of the kings have passed through the lower river already, it would increase fishing efficiency, and some portions of the lower river still have not met their needs. Those against relaxing the restrictions argued that all stocks need to be protected, there are still many Canadian –origin fish in the river, people in the middle and upper river have not met their needs and relaxing the restrictions will take from those people, and restrictions are helping to increase size and numbers of kings. Further, a DFO representative reminded people that escapement goals must be met, it has been 3 years since the Canadian domestic fisheries has been open, and last year less than 3,000 kings were taken in Canada.

**Yukon River Inseason Management Teleconference
Call #8 July 14, 2009**

Facilitated by: Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA)

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

Communities involved in the call: Emmonak, St. Mary's, Marshal, Holy Cross, Kaltag, Nulato, Huslia, Allakaket, Galena, Ruby, Tanana, Rampart, Ft. Yukon, Circle, Eagle, Whitehorse, Teslin, and Old Crow

Subsistence Reports: Subsistence harvests for kings on the lower Yukon are slowing down because the number of kings is declining in that region. Quality is poor and most families have met their king needs and are waiting for fall chum since the summer chum run slowed down. Most subsistence fishermen of the GASH (Grayling, Anvik, Shageluk, and Holy Cross) region have not met 50% their subsistence king needs, kings are of mixed quality, and they are waiting for fall chum to make up for the poor king harvests. Water on the Koyukuk River is high in silt, the summer chum run is strong, fish quality is good, king needs were not met but harvests were higher than last year, and subsistence fishermen are at 25% of their chum harvest. The second pulse of kings has just passed the Rapids and is observed to be at a faster pace than the first pulse. Fishermen on the middle Yukon to the Yukon Flats have reached roughly 50% of their harvest needs and some of the fish they caught were blushed, red, or scarred. Fish in Eagle were reported to be smaller males with good quality. Whitehorse and Teslin have not seen any fish yet but are waiting to fish.

Management Updates: *ADF&G Assessment and Management Strategies:* The Pilot Station sonar count through July 13 is 120,690 king salmon which is below the average of 138,570 for that date; this year's projection is for 125,000 kings. 1,253,805 summer chums have passed Pilot Station as of July 13 and the number is near the expected number for this date and the current projection for the summer chum run is 1.2 – 1.4 million fish. 600 kings and 54 summer chums passed the Chena River Counting Tower which are both below average of 2,156 kings and 110 chums for July 12. Rapids Test Wheel counted 2,244 kings which is above the July 12 average of 1,525. Eagle Sonar counted approximately 4,900 kings as of July 13 and the number is above the projected average of 2,521 fish for that date. 20,397 summer chum have passed the Henshaw Creek weir which is above the average of 10,492 fish.

The 2009 Yukon River king run appears to be similar to the 2008 run. A reduced subsistence schedule and some gear restrictions have been implemented, and subsistence fishing periods are being closed to protect early portions of the king run. The passage levels for summer chums are enough to meet escapement goals, subsistence needs and to allow for a directed summer chum commercial fisheries. Six commercial summer chum openers in Y-1 and Y-2 were scheduled through July 14, and the department scheduled the periods when the king numbers were low. One-36 hour and three-24 hour commercial fishing periods will be open in Subdistrict Y-4a. All commercial set gill net gear is restricted to 6 inch or smaller. In Districts Y-1 and Y-2 133,000 summer chums and 2,500 kings were caught in the summer chum commercial fisheries.

Age 6 kings predominated the large mesh Lower Yukon Test Fisheries. 86% of fish harvested were age 6, which is 20 percentage points above average. 9% were age 5, and 60% were female, which is 7 percentage points above average (sample size of 981). The LYTF using 5.5 inch gear

recorded a sample of 960 summer chums which were 48% age 4 and 49% age 5, and 48% of the chums were female. Age 4 chums are 4 percentage points above average.

The lower river is transitioning to fall season management this week. Management estimated a fall chum run of 650,000 which is enough for subsistence harvests and for commercial harvests of 100,000 fish. Subsistence fishing will begin returning to the pre-2001 schedule in the lower river. The commercial fall chum management strategy will spread the harvest throughout the run, holding back 50% until after the average midpoint when Coho salmon will add to the mix. Commercial fishermen are now able to sell their kings during the fall chum openers and gear is restricted to 6 inch or smaller.

Current Subsistence Fishing Schedule and Assessment Projects – please visit the ADF&G website at <http://www.cf.adfg.state.ak.us/region3/yukhome.php> for this information, or contact Emmonak ADF&G at 1-866-479-7387 (available 24 hours).

USFWS Input: 4,325 summer chum and 312 kings have passed East Fork Andreafski Weir as of July 12 which is below the average of 2,770 kings and 53,400 summer chums for that date. Gisasa River Weir counted 13,669 summer chums and 439 kings. Based on the current projected king run size of 125,000, conservation measures for kings are still needed through the remainder of the king run in the upper portion of the river.

Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO): Based on preliminary genetic analyses, about 54,000 of the kings which have passed Pilot Station are believed to be Canadian-origin. As of July 13, 4,938 kings have passed the Eagle sonar, which is above the 2005-08 average of 2,521 fish. The 2009 spawning escapement goal for the Upper Yukon River is >45,000 Chinook salmon. The numbers of fish expected to reach Canada fall into the Yellow Management Zone which involves the closure of the commercial and domestic fisheries, and non-retention of Chinook salmon in the recreational fishery. Yukon First Nations have been advised that it is expected there will likely not be enough fish for an unrestricted First Nation fishery this year; a half fishery to three quarter fishery is more appropriate given the preseason outlook and in-season information to date. This will be updated as more information is available from the Eagle sonar program. At this point in time the Eagle sonar count is higher than was expected.

Local Input & Closing Comments: A person asked if the test fisheries in Marshall could be used as a check on the Pilot Station Sonar. Management responded that they did not use the Marshall test fisheries this year because there was not a directed commercial fishery, and stated that they will consider setting it up next year if they have funding for it. A subsistence fisherman had concerns of windows being different in different districts and that it was unfair because some districts met their subsistence needs while other did not. Management responded that they did their best to accommodate each district and reminded them about the pre-season management goals related to escapement. Another caller pointed out that subsistence fishers will likely target more fall chum than normal because of the lower than normal king harvests. This caller asked managers whether they had considered this when planning for commercial fall chum harvests. Management replied that they had taken this into consideration. A fisherman of District Y-3 asked management about their district quota for commercial king fishing. Management responded that the quota is still available, but there is no market for the kings in district Y-3 because there are no fish buyers in that district.

Yukon River Inseason Management Teleconference
Call #9 – July 21, 2009

Facilitated by: Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA)

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

Communities involved in the call: Hooper Bay, St. Mary's, Marshall, Holy Cross, Koyukuk, Galena, Ruby, Tanana, Rampart, Fort Yukon, Circle, Eagle, Dawson, Teslin, and Old Crow.

Subsistence Reports: Fishermen on the upper portion of the river in Canada have not harvested many kings, although 200 kings were harvested in Dawson. Teslin had a change in policy and decided to fish limited openers this summer. Residents on the Porcupine River started catching kings last week and are having good fishing. Water levels on the Yukon Flats are low and the fish are strong and healthy. Many fishermen of the upper portion of the Yukon Flats are satisfied with this year's fishing season so far, but some of the fishermen of the lower portion have not done as well and believe that most of the fish have passed by them. Most subsistence fishermen from Rampart on down the Yukon have reported to be done king fishing. Most are done because they are satisfied with what they have, but a few have not finished because there were not enough fish. Most fishermen of the coast and Lower Yukon have completed their king and summer chum salmon harvest and are waiting for the fall run of chum and silvers.

Management Updates: *ADF&G Assessment:* Pilot Station Sonar counted 122,275 kings on July 19, which is below the average for this date. Total passage projection is for a return of 125,000 kings. The first pulse of kings has reached Eagle sonar, and 28,400 fish have passed as of July 20. Run timing at Eagle sonar appears to be earlier than expected, but the counts to date are encouraging. As of July 19, 1,283,206 summer chums had passed the sonar which is below the average of 1,606,455 fish. These numbers are considered to be conservative. The Lower Yukon Test Fisheries ended on July 15 with a CPUE of 11.51 which is below the average of 29.79. Summer chum drift test fisheries ended on July 15 and concluded a cumulative summer chum CPUE of 4,877.21.

Beginning on July 16, management has switched from the summer season into the fall season. Test fisheries operations for the fall season started in Mt. Village on July 17 and on July 16 in Emmonak. As of July 21, 5,300 fall chum have entered the mouth of the Yukon. The lower Yukon Cooperative Test Fisheries CPUE as of July 19 was 13.43. Mt. Village Drift Test Fisheries CPUE as of July 19 was 48.17. Pilot Station sonar began estimating the fish that pass the sonar as fall chum as of July 19, and approximately 2,362 fish have passed.

Low passage numbers are expected during the transition from the summer chum run to the fall chum run. Past seasons have demonstrated that there is a good relationship between the summer and fall chum runs within the same year. With the summer run nearly complete, this relationship was used to project a fall chum run of 650,000 fish. Summer chum will continue to be monitored as they arrive at their spawning grounds.

Fall season harvests during the commercial fisheries in Districts Y-1 and Y-2 have totaled 7,621 fall chum, 55 Coho, and 132 kings. Summer season harvests for these districts were 156,000 summer chum and 2,600 kings caught incidentally and not sold. A commercial fisheries period was opened in subdistrict 4-A for summer chum roe and the buyer has now ceased operations.

Run and Harvest Outlook: The fall season will be managed initially as though the fall chum run size will be near 650,000 fish. Inseason management is anticipated to start near the historical

mid-point of the run of August 8 at the Pilot Station sonar. Fall season subsistence fishing will be open 24 hour a day 7 days a week for Districts Y-1, Y-2, and Y-3, except for 12 hours before and after a commercial opener. Subsistence fishermen further up the river will continue on the current schedule until the fall chums reach those sections of the river. Fall chum numbers allow for a 50,000 commercial harvest from the first half of the run, and more assessments can be made as information becomes available and when Coho becomes a more significant part of the harvest.

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

USFWS Input: Management commented that due to the inconsistencies with the LY test fisheries, Pilot Station Sonar, and assessment project information they are supportive of the additional aerial surveys ADF&G is planning this year. Post-season review will try to understand the reasons why various estimates or counts were higher or lower than the overall assessment of the return for both Chinook and summer chum salmon.

The E. Fork Andreafsky River Weir has counted 950 kings and cumulative count of 6,933 summer chums. These numbers are below the average of 3,670 kings and 53,394 summer chums. The Gisasa River Weir counted 1,470 kings and a cumulative count of 21,570 summer chums as of July 19 which is below the average of 1,859 kings and 70,074 summer chums for that date.

Department of Fisheries and Oceans: DFO discussed how the timing pattern of the 2009 king run may influence total season return. The Eagle sonar program will be used to assess the Upper Yukon Chinook run into Canada. At this point in time, the Eagle sonar count is higher than expected, but they are still in the Yellow Management Zone. If the daily counts at the Eagle sonar program hold up, the Canadian-origin run into the Upper Yukon River drainage might exceed 54,000 which would move their management to the Green Management Zone. In the Green Management Zone, First Nation Fisheries will be unrestricted and there will be opportunities for the commercial, domestic and sport fisheries. Management will be approaching this cautiously as more information becomes available from the Eagle sonar program.

Local Input & Closing Comments: There were questions about management's switch to fall chum and how management distinguishes between summer and fall chum when making their counts at the Pilot Station sonar. Management stated that through past genetic testing and conversations with fishers, July 19 seems to be a consistent date where the transition takes place. The number of fish in the river during this time is low. The fall chum that pass the sonar before the switch date are pretty well balanced by the summer chum that pass after the switch.

Many residents on the Yukon were concerned with the accuracy of the Pilot Station sonar and the competence of the Lower Yukon test nets. The opinion was voiced that the Marshall Drift project should be reinstated as it acted as a good check on Pilot Station. Management replied that the high water and other environmental conditions did cause the sonar to underestimate fish passage for the first three weeks of June and made it difficult to make assessments from the test net fisheries. That is why the assessment numbers are considered to be conservative.

There were also concerns about potential contamination of fish because of flooding this year, as well as natural predation on the salmon and its affect on the run. Some discussion ensued on these points.

**Yukon River Inseason Management Teleconference
Call #10 – July 28, 2009**

Facilitated by: Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA)

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

Communities involved in the call: Kotlik, Mt. Village, St. Mary's, Marshall, Holy Cross, Anvik, Nulato, Huslia, Alakaket, Galena, Ruby, The Rapids, Rampart, Fairbanks, Ft. Yukon, Circle, Eagle, Whitehorse, and Old Crow.

Subsistence Reports: Subsistence fishing efforts on the lower Yukon have lessened. Summer chum are mostly done, and fall chum are slow to enter the river. There were plenty of whitefish in Marshall. In the G.A.S.H region, only 25-50% of chum and king needs were met, water levels are low, and summer chum and kings were low in quantity and poor in quality. Fishermen in the lower part of the middle Yukon did very poor during the last two openings and the fish that were caught were of poor quality. Many people are waiting for the fall chum. Water levels on the Koyukuk are low and there are a lot of summer chums. It's thought that the majority of kings went by when the water was high and muddy, so many people have not met their subsistence king needs. Middle Yukon fishermen are done harvesting kings; quality and quantity are both declining, the temperature is too hot to hang fish, and water levels are low. Some are harvesting chums for dog food because of their poor quality. There are few fish in the lower Yukon Flats area and water levels are going down. The Upper Yukon Flats have just come off their closed period and are beginning to fish again. Most people are between 25 and 50% done. Fishing is good on the Upper Yukon in Canada. Fishermen on the Porcupine River are happy that the restrictions were lifted and they are about 50% done with their catch so far.

Management Updates:

ADF&G Assessment and Management Strategies: The king salmon run is basically over in the lower Yukon and the first pulse of kings is tapering off at the Eagle sonar. The Eagle sonar preliminary passage estimate for kings as of July 26 is 50,953. The interim management escapement goal of 45,000 kings to Canadian spawning grounds has been met, and it is expected that the harvest sharing agreement for Canadian aboriginal fisheries will also be met this season. The high numbers in Eagle sonar and other fisheries projects has indicated that the management strategies to protect the early portions of the run have been effective. King salmon numbers reaching their spawning grounds throughout the drainage looks healthy in most rivers except for the Andreafsky and Gisasa Rivers, which are below their average to date.

The summer chum run allowed for a full subsistence harvest and a directed commercial fishery. Most spawning rivers had healthy returns, except for the E. Fork Andreafsky, Gissa and Anvik Rivers, which are all below the expected escapements for this date. The Chena and Salcha Rivers, as well as Henshaw Creek have exceeded their expected counts. Exploratory aerial surveys are currently being used to assess primary locations of summer chum salmon escapement in the lower river.

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

USFWS Input: The cumulative passage of the E. Fork Andreafsky River Weir through July 26 is 1,806 kings and 8,303 summer chums, both below average. The cumulative passage of fish at the Gisasa River Weir as of July 26 is 1,900 kings and 25,206 summer chums, also below average.

DFO Input: The Klondike River sonar program has been in operation since July 6, and the count as of July 26 is 3,863 kings. The Big Salmon Sonar program was operational July 18th and the count to July 26th is 795 fish; the average count to this date is 276. At the Blind Creek weir, 2 fish have been counted to July 27th; the average count to this date is 108. It has been difficult to determine the timing pattern that this year's Chinook salmon run is following, Most subsistence fishing occurred after 2 fishing periods were closed to protect early Canadian-origin Chinook salmon. While daily counts at the Eagle sonar

program are still strong, they are expected to begin dropping off. A total of 54,000 fish into Canada is the number required to place Canada in the Green Management Zone, which is expected to occur. Yukon First Nations were advised last Wednesday that they may proceed with a normal fishery. While currently closed, there may be opportunities for the commercial, domestic and sport fisheries.

ADF&G Fall Chum Management: No pulses of fall chum have entered the river yet. A persistent offshore wind may be delaying their migration. As of July 26 approximately 16,000 fall chums have passed Pilot Station sonar, which is well below the average. However, it is not uncommon to experience a lull between summer and fall chum runs, and the fall chum run is characterized by erratic fluctuation of fish entering the river. The projected number of fall salmon is highly variable until the midpoint of the run (usually around August 8). Past seasons show a relationship between fall and summer chum in the same year, a fall chum run size of about 650,000 salmon is projected based on the summer chum run. This should be sufficient to provide for escapement and subsistence needs, with a small surplus available for commercial harvests. The current strategy is to spread out the harvest during the first half of the fall run. One commercial opening per week is expected in Districts 1 and 2 with a portion of the harvest saved for upriver allocations. A small number of early coho salmon were observed in the fall chum commercial fishery, but the run is not anticipated to start building until around August 8.

Local Input & Closing Comments:

While all callers were happy to hear that the border passage goals would likely be met this year, some fishermen expressed concerns that Canadian fishermen may be allowed to harvest kings commercially while many Alaskan subsistence fishermen did not meet their needs. Other callers also expressed their concern that the goals were met at great hardship to Alaskan fishermen. DFO responded that they will be following the harvest sharing provisions of the Yukon Salmon Agreement which allows a Canadian harvest of 20-26% of the Chinook salmon Total Allowable Catch (TAC). The TAC is based on an estimate of the total Canadian-origin run size minus the escapement goal which is 45,000 for the 2009 season. Canada will manage its catch to be consistent with the Treaty provisions and any extra fish will be passed to the spawning grounds. In response to another caller's comments DFO noted that there was no Canadian commercial fishery in 2007 and 2008, and prior to those years the Canadian commercial fishery was often limited because of low run strength. Another caller also reminded everyone of the importance of getting fish to the spawning grounds and stated "we are not giving fish to Canada, we are giving fish to ourselves." ADF&G also brought up that the goal this year was to get enough fish into Canada to meet escapement needs and treaty obligations. A number of people voiced their feelings of being singled out, whether by region or sector of the fishery. Everyone was encouraged to remember a river-wide perspective, and to use the teleconferences as a place to communicate. While everyone has made concessions during these low return years, it's important that everyone continues to work together.

A reoccurring concern brought up was the accuracy of the Pilot Station sonar. Suggestions were made of other locations to place the sonar that would perhaps give a better count. ADF&G said that they were currently investigating other potential sites near Pitka's Point and St. Mary's. Also, ADF&G will also look at bringing the Marshall test fishery back, which many callers felt was a very useful project in the past.

A couple of callers were interested in the low numbers of fall chum currently returning to the river. ADF&G responded that while the fish are definitely late, perhaps because the weather is holding fish offshore, they do not believe fish have been missed yet. They'll be watching the run and looking for the first pulse, but if the run doesn't develop, ADF&G will be looking at what to do.

**Yukon River Inseason Management Teleconference
Call #11 – August 4, 2009**

Facilitated by: Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA)

Funded by: US Fish and Wildlife Service – OSM and the Yukon River Panel

Communities involved in the call: Emmonak, Kotlik, Mt. Village, St. Mary's, Marshall, Russian Mission, Holy Cross, Grayling, Nulato, Koyukuk, Huslia, Galena, The Rapids, Rampart, Fairbanks, Ft. Yukon, Circle, Eagle, Teslin, and Old Crow.

Subsistence Reports: Subsistence salmon fishing efforts on the lower Yukon are low. There is some whitefish fishing, but mostly people are waiting for the fall chums and coho to pick up. A few sockeye have been seen in Kotlik. Many communities reported that people are berry picking. Further upriver - from the G.A.S.H. region to Rampart, including the Koyukuk River - there is not much is happening by way of subsistence fishing. There's some whitefish to be caught and a few summer chums, getting to be in poor condition. In the Tanana River there is commercial fishing for chums, but no kings are present. There's low effort in the Yukon Flats area, but some kings are being caught. In Eagle, the fish are reported to be bigger this year. Reports from Teslin and Old Crow are that people are catching kings, and some summer chum are trickling in.

In general, water levels are low throughout the drainage. The exceptions are in the Tanana River where the water is high, and in Eagle and Circle, where the water is rising. There are smoky conditions throughout much of the interior portions of the river.

Management Updates:

ADF&G Assessment and Management Strategies: The king salmon run is winding down on the Alaska side of the river. At Eagle, just over 65,000 kings have passed the sonar, indicating that the subsistence restrictions put in place to protect the first pulse of kings was effective. The interim management escapement goal of 45,000 kings to Canadian spawning grounds has been met and the harvest sharing agreement for Canadian aboriginal fisheries will also be met.

Most spawning rivers had healthy returns of summer chum, except for the E. Fork Andreafsky, Gissa and Anvik Rivers, which are all below the expected escapements for this date. The Chena and Salcha Rivers, as well as Henshaw Creek, have exceeded their expected counts. Aerial surveys are being used to assess primary locations of summer chum salmon escapement in the lower river to see if there is an explanation for the lower summer chum returns in this area.

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

DFO Input: The Klondike River sonar program has counted 4,443 fish since July 6, indicating there is a significant run of kings in the river. The Big Salmon sonar count as of August 2 is 4,866 fish which is the highest count to this date since 2005. On July 31, 808 fish went past, which is the highest daily count recorded for all years the program has been in operation. Blind Creek weir has counted 288 fish to date, which is about average. The Whitehorse Fishway is also about average with 10 fish so far.

The second pulse of kings has not materialized at Eagle sonar at the expected level; the timing for the last part of the run was likely altered by the harvest pattern in Alaska. Daily king counts are declining. Canadian fisheries are in the Green Management Zone. Yukon First Nations were

advised they may proceed with a normal fishery, and commercial and domestic fisheries were open for 1.5 days last week. The total catch from both these fisheries was 217 Chinook. The recreational fishery has a possession limit of one Chinook daily and two in possession.

The harvest sharing provisions of the Yukon Salmon Agreement allows Canada to harvest 20%-26% of the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) when the Canadian-origin TAC is less than 110,000 Chinook salmon. Based on stock assessment and preliminary Alaskan catch information, the projected Canadian guideline harvest range for the total run is from 9,000 to 11,700 Chinook salmon. Canada will manage its catch to be consistent with Treaty provisions; any extra fish will be passed through to the spawning grounds.

ADF&G Fall Chum Management: A small pulse of fall chum entered the river this past week and passed Pilot Station sonar on Sunday and Monday. Preliminary estimate is that it was a relatively small pulse, containing 30-40,000 fall chum with very few coho salmon. Cumulative passage estimate at the sonar is 53,000 fish, which is well below average. Low commercial catches the past two weeks support the assessment's project accuracy. It is not uncommon to experience a lull between the end of the summer chum and the beginning of the fall chum run. Based on the 2009 summer chum run, total fall chum run size is projected to be 650,000 fish. This should be sufficient to provide for escapement and subsistence needs, with a small surplus available for commercial harvests. Around August 8, management will switch to inseason assessment – basing management actions on what is actually being seen in the river. Assessment is currently based on late run timing.

The preliminary fall season commercial harvest total for Districts Y-1 and Y-2 through August 2 is approximately 25,000 fall chum, 1700 coho and 165 Chinook salmon. If the fall chum salmon run does not significantly improve this week, it will be prudent to suspend additional commercial periods until an adequate amount of salmon are available.

Local Input & Closing Comments: This week's teleconference had only a brief discussion session. A few of the comments were about Canada. One caller from the village of Koyukuk requested a letter from Canadian First Nations recognizing the Koyukuk Tribal Council for being the first to put forth the plan to close fishing on the first pulse of Chinook. Another caller wanted to review the numbers of Chinook caught in the Canadian commercial and domestic fisheries. DFO responded that about 200 Chinook had been harvested by 8 commercial fishermen in the first opening and 17 Chinook by one domestic fisherman and stated that it was unlikely the Canadian catch would reach the TAC allowed under the treaty.

The rest of the discussion centered on ADF&G projects. There was a question whether ADF&G's aerial surveys had located any summer chum. ADF&G responded that the surveys are on-going, but they should have more information during next week's teleconference. Another caller wanted to know where the sockeyes that enter the Yukon are heading and whether their populations are increasing. USFWS shared that each year a handful of to a couple hundred sockeye are counted through the weirs at Andreafsky and Gisasa Rivers. In general, sockeye salmon are relatively rare within the Yukon River drainage. There was also discussion on the Pilot Station sonar, with multiple callers reiterating the importance of improved accuracy. Several suggestions were given for potential relocation sites, including around Pitka's Point, around Russian Mission and Dogfish Village or around Paimiut. ADF&G responded that they appreciate the suggestions for new sites and are evaluating a site near Pitka's Point, as well as looking at other ways to improve counting fish during high water events.

Yukon River Inseason Management Teleconference
Call #12 – August 11, 2009

Facilitated by: Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YR DFA)

Funded by: US Fish and Wildlife Service – OSM and the Yukon River Panel

Communities involved in the call: Emmonak, Kotlik, Mt. Village, St. Mary's, Pilot Station, Holy Cross, Nulato, Koyukuk, Huslia, Allakaket, Galena, Ruby, the Rapids, Rampart, Fairbanks, Circle, Eagle, Whitehorse, Teslin, and Old Crow.

Subsistence Reports: Water levels are low or dropping along most of the river. Few people on the Alaskan side of the border are subsistence fishing. Some whitefish, sheefish, and a few chums are being caught, but subsistence efforts in many communities have turned to berry picking, and moose hunting on the lower river, while people wait for the fall chum. In the Tanana River, commercial fishing for summer chum is ending. On the Canadian side of the border, Chinook salmon are being caught and fishing is reported as much better than last year. The Chinook salmon are of good quality.

Management Updates:

ADF&G Assessment and Management Strategies: Chinook and summer chum salmon runs are essentially over in Alaska. The current commercial summer chum period in District Y-6 will be its last. Approximately 68,600 Chinook salmon have passed the Eagle sonar, indicating that the subsistence restrictions put in place to protect Canadian bound Chinook salmon was effective. The interim management escapement goal of 45,000 Chinook to the Canadian spawning grounds and the harvest sharing agreement for Canadian aboriginal fisheries has been met.

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

USFWS Input: Chandalar sonar is up and operational. So far just over a thousand chum salmon have been counted.

DFO Input: The Klondike River sonar program has counted 4,615 fish to date; daily counts have declined and the run appears to be over. The Big Salmon sonar count to August 9 is 8,126 fish which is the highest count to this date. The average is 3,445. Blind Creek weir has counted 651 fish as of August 10, which is above the average of 560. The Whitehorse Rapids Fishway count as of August 11 is 90 fish, below the average of 286. Fish appear to be building in numbers but moving slower than expected through the fishway. An aerial survey of the Miner River, believed to be the main Chinook salmon spawning tributary within the Porcupine drainage, was conducted last week. This is the first year of aerial counts and 319 Chinook salmon were counted.

Daily Chinook salmon counts at the Eagle sonar are declining. The number of fish entering Canada is higher than expected, attributed to the conservation measures implemented on the Alaskan portion of the Yukon River. Canadian fisheries are in the Green Management Zone. Yukon First Nations are proceeding with a normal fishery; their recorded catch so far is 1,074 Chinook salmon with fishing still taking place and some communities having yet to report. The commercial and domestic fisheries were open for 2 days last week. The total catch for the week was 160 Chinook and 2 chum salmon with 8 fishers reporting. The sport fishery is open with limits of one Chinook salmon daily and two in possession.

The harvest sharing provisions of the Yukon Salmon Agreement allows Canada to harvest 20%-26% of the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) when the Canadian-origin TAC is less than 110,000 Chinook salmon. The projected Canadian guideline harvest range for the total run is from 9,000 to 11,700 Chinook salmon. Canada will manage its catch to be consistent with Treaty provisions, though it is expected the total catch will be well under the TAC; any extra fish will be passed through to the spawning grounds.

ADF&G Fall Chum Management: The first small pulse of fall chum should be around the Kaltag area. Over the weekend, fall chum had started entering the river in increasing numbers as the winds shifted from southeasterly to northerly. More recent indicators from the test fisheries show they may be dropping off again. Many of the fish are entering through the Middle and North mouths, which is more typical later in the run. The cumulative passage estimate at the sonar as of August 9 is 64,400 fish, which is well below the average of 352,000 fish. The sizes of pulses of fall chum make the run difficult to predict due to erratic entry timing. At this time, the magnitude of the run appears weak. It's important to note that the run has been late the past two seasons and recent increases in catches indicate this year's may also be late. Age composition of test fish samples indicate more fall chum are in the water as compared to summer chum.

Because August 8 is the average midpoint of the run, management is shifting to inseason assessment. Commercial fishing is being delayed in the lower river districts until abundance increases, as the run appears to be exceptionally late and the abundance is extremely low. The preliminary fall season commercial harvest total for Districts Y-1 and Y-2 through August 9 is approximately 23,000 fall chum, 5,096 coho and 236 Chinook salmon. No changes are anticipated in the subsistence fishing schedule this week.

Local Input & Closing Comments:

Questions began with one lower river caller wanting to know when commercial fishing would be open again in Y-1. ADF&G responded that it wouldn't be until enough fall chum have come in to support an opening. In response to another caller's question, ADF&G went on to explain that in order for there to be a commercial fall chum fishery, there has to be a projected surplus of fall chum above 600,000. Another caller wanted an update on the number of Chinook salmon past Pilot Station, which ADF&G gave as 122,474 fish. A Y-4 caller requested that the subsistence period in Y-4 be open 7 days per week as no one in the district got enough Chinook salmon. ADF&G agreed to consider changing from the current 5 days per week to 7 days.

An update on last week's request by the village of Koyukuk for a letter from Canadian First Nations recognizing the Koyukuk Tribal Council as the first to put forth the plan to close fishing on the first pulse of Chinook salmon was requested. DFO responded that they had forwarded the teleconference summary to the First Nations, as few were on last week's call. The North Yukon Renewable Resource Council also shared that they and the Vuntut Gwitchin Government were writing letters to the Koyukuk Tribal Council. A Canadian caller wanted to learn more about a resolution that was discussed at the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council summit, which had recently occurred in Whitehorse. The resolution was about requesting the US government to shut down the pollock fishery. No one from YRITWC was on the call to give the details, but one of the attendees shared that about half of the necessary signatories for the resolution to pass were present at the summit, so the resolution is on hold until the other half can be contacted. YRDFA will try to make sure someone from YRITWC is on next week's call to give more information on this resolution. A representative from the Teslin Tlingit Council also shared their resolution, passed in July, to voluntarily reduce their community's catch of Chinook salmon this year.

**Yukon River Inseason Management Teleconference
Call #13 – August 18, 2009**

Facilitated by: Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA)

Funded by: US Fish and Wildlife Service – OSM and the Yukon River Panel

Communities involved in the call: Emmonak, Kotlik, St. Mary's, Marshall, Holy Cross, Koyukuk, Huslia, Galena, the Rapids, Fairbanks, Ft. Yukon, Eagle, and Old Crow.

Subsistence Reports: Subsistence fishing effort is low in most communities. Fall chum and coho are being seen in the lower river; Marshall residents reported decent catches over the week. Holy Cross fishermen also were successful with fall chum fishing. In Galena, fishermen reported an increase in fall chum numbers over the weekend, and fishermen from the village of Tanana believe they are beginning to see the front end of the first pulse. Further upriver few people are fishing while they await the fall chum arrival. The only report from Canada was from Old Crow, which reported there was currently no fishing. Water levels continue to be exceptionally low throughout most of the drainage, except for Old Crow which is reporting high water levels.

Management Updates:

ADF&G Assessment and Management Strategies: The first small pulse of fall chum should be near Ruby and the second larger pulse should be around Anvik. As of August 16, 173,000 fall chum salmon had passed Pilot Station sonar. This is well below the average of 473,000 fish and is the second lowest on record since 1995. Low catches of fall chum salmon have made species apportionment at the sonar difficult. The project has attempted fishing downriver, as well as contracting a local fisherman to drift a 50 fathom net through the area, but neither was effective at increasing catches. The run is being assessed as weak and well below expectations. The projected run size is currently between 300,000 and 400,000 salmon.

The coho salmon run is off to a good start, with higher than average passage estimates at the sonar. As of August 16, 62,000 coho salmon had passed the sonar, compared to an average of 38,000. ADF&G and cooperating fishermen have been conducting additional test fishing to supplement assessment project information, because minimal subsistence fishing is occurring in the lower river with which to compare catches. These additional catches agree with the other assessment projects in that there is an unusually high abundance of coho salmon relative to fall chum salmon

Management shifted to inseason assessment on August 8, the average midpoint of the run. Preseason projections indicated a small surplus of fish available for commercial harvest, therefore limited commercial fishing was allowed early in the season. Commercial fishing has since been halted because the fall chum salmon run appears late with very low abundance. In accordance with the Yukon River Drainage Fall Chum Salmon Management Plan, which specifies a minimum run size of 300,000 fall chum as necessary to meet escapement goals, subsistence fishing time is being reduced in the lower river. Reduced fishing time should still provide opportunity to harvest the abundant coho salmon. Similar management actions will be implemented upriver as the salmon move upstream. Two 24-hour periods per week in Y-1, Y-2 and Y-3 will be allowed.

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

DFO Input: The Klondike River sonar program counted 4,725 fish as of August 15, the last day of operation. The Big Salmon sonar count to August 16 is 9,019 fish, which is the highest count to this date. Blind Creek weir count is above average at 680 fish as of August 10. The Whitehorse Rapids Fishway count as of August 18 is 413 fish, which is below average. Fish are holding below the fishway and moving slower than expected upriver.

With the Eagle sonar count at 69,501 as of August 16, Canadian fisheries are in the Green Management Zone. Yukon First Nations recorded catch so far is 1,599 Chinook salmon but fishing is still taking place and some communities have not reported yet. Due to limited effort, the total commercial catch for the season was 364 Chinook and 2 chum salmon with 8 fishermen reporting. The harvest sharing provisions of the Yukon Salmon Agreement allows Canada to harvest 20%-26% of the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) when the Canadian-origin TAC is less than 110,000 Chinook salmon. Canada will manage its catch to be consistent with Treaty provisions, though it is expected the total catch will be well under the TAC; any extra fish will be passed through to the spawning grounds.

Local Input & Closing Comments:

There was some confusion and questions about why commercial fishing wasn't being allowed in the lower river, and when it was expected to open again. ADF&G responded that the management plan sets guidelines for opening commercial fishing when the projected fall chum salmon run size is greater than 600,000. The current projections are for a run between 300,000 to 400,000 fish. Unless the fall chum salmon abundance increases significantly, ADF&G is not anticipating additional commercial periods.

With the unexpected low returns of fall chum, the subject of chum salmon bycatch in the Area M sockeye fisheries was raised as a potential contributing factor. ADF&G is aware of the fishery and has been watching it. At the time of the call, ADF&G knew that this year's total chum catch was well above the years when there was a chum cap. However, they did not know how the catch broke out between the June fishery and the post-June fishery; each fishery may pertain differently to western Alaska summer and fall chum stocks. There is a large genetic study underway that is collecting samples all along western Alaska coastal fisheries and the Area M fisheries to help answer some of the questions regarding intercept fisheries. Other callers expressed a desire to discuss the subject more at a later date.

One fisher reported catching fall chum mixed in with the summer chum catch, and wanted to know if those fish would have been counted as summer chum. ADF&G responded that they were and that post-season, through genetic sampling, they would try to determine species composition more accurately. Details of the operations at the Pilot Station sonar were requested. ADF&G shared that the sonar runs 9 hours a day with 6 hours of test fishing. During the previous pulses of fall chum, the sonar was running 24 hours per day. The sonar has been counting high numbers of coho salmon. Another caller wanted to know where all the coho salmon travel to. While the Tanana River is the single biggest destination, they also go to the Andreafsky and are spread throughout many smaller streams which contribute small concentrations to the overall run.

Yukon River Inseason Management Teleconference
Call #14 – August 25, 2009

Facilitated by: Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA)

Funded by: US Fish and Wildlife Service – OSM and the Yukon River Panel

Communities involved in the call: Emmonak, Kotlik, St. Mary's, Pilot Station, Holy Cross, Koyukuk, Huslia, Galena, Tanana, the Rapids, Rampart, Minto, Fairbanks, Ft. Yukon, Eagle, Dawson, Teslin, and Old Crow.

Subsistence Reports: Subsistence fishing effort is low throughout the river. Families that are fishing are catching a few fall chum and coho. The village of Tanana reports a good run of fall chum going through currently. Whitefish were reported in Holy Cross, and other communities are preparing to go fishing for whitefish and sheefish. In Canada, Chinook fishing is winding down with little fall chum fishing yet. Water levels continue to be exceptionally low throughout most of the drainage. Rampart, Tanana and Fort Yukon all reported water levels rising.

Management Updates:

ADF&G Assessment and Management Strategies: Three pulses of fall chum salmon have entered the river to date; the first small pulse of fall chum should be near Beaver and Fort Yukon, the second pulse is expected to be near Ruby and the third pulse should be around Holy Cross. Cumulative fall chum salmon passage is estimated to be at a record low of just under 209,000 fish as of August 24. The average for this date is 589,000 fall chum. Based on the sonar passage estimate and historical average run timing, the current fall chum salmon run is assessed as weak with a projected total size of 300,000 fish. The age composition from the 6-inch drift net test fishery through August 18 shows a slightly higher than average amount of age-4 fish. However, based on the record high parent year escapement in 2005, this year's age-4 component was expected to be much higher if production was good.

The coho salmon run is looking strong. A cumulative passage estimate at Pilot Station sonar of 152,000 as of August 24 is well above average. The run should be at approximately 65% passage, based on average run timing. Results from additional test fishing to supplement assessment project information agree that coho salmon abundance is high relative to fall chum.

Based on the current low abundance of fall chum salmon, and in accordance with the Yukon River Drainage Fall Chum Salmon Management Plan, subsistence fishing time is being reduced along the Yukon River. This action is being taken in an effort to achieve the drainage wide escapement goal of 300,000 salmon while still allowing opportunities to harvest the abundant coho salmon. Restrictions in Districts Y-1, Y-2 and Y-3 are already in effect. Portions of District Y-4 will go onto a reduced schedule this week, and similar management actions will be implemented as the salmon move upstream. Although late pulses of fall chum salmon have occurred in past years, it is unlikely there will be additional commercial fishing periods in the lower river to target coho salmon because of the low fall chum abundance.

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

DFO Input: The Eagle sonar season estimate is 69,653 Chinook salmon. The overall total run size of Canadian-origin Chinook salmon is below average but the number of fish entering Canada is higher than expected. Chinook salmon assessment projects in Canada are wrapping up, with the following final counts: 4,725 fish at the Klondike River sonar program; 9,621 fish at the Big Salmon sonar; and 716 fish at the Blind Creek weir. 43% of sampled fish at this project were female. The Whitehorse Rapids Fishway count as of August 24 is below average with 708 fish. Of these fish, 324 are hatchery-origin and 384 are wild. Of the hatchery fish, 8% were female while 19% of the wild-origin fish were female. Fish are still holding below the fishway.

The recorded First Nations catch for the Upper Yukon River is 2,832 Chinook salmon and for the Porcupine drainage it is 185 Chinook and 35 chum. One community has yet to report and fishing may still be occurring. The commercial and domestic fisheries were open for a total of 3.5 days. There was limited commercial effort; the total catch was approximately 364 Chinook salmon and 2 chum salmon with 8 fishers reporting. It is expected that the total Canadian catch will be well under the Total Allowable Catch provided for in the Yukon Salmon Agreement; extra fish will be passed to the spawning grounds.

Eagle sonar estimates are being used for assessment of the Upper Yukon River fall chum return and the Fishing Branch River weir should be in later this week. Currently the Upper Yukon and Porcupine First Nations fisheries are open for fall chum, but as the run appears to be weak fishery restrictions may be announced as more information becomes available.

Local Input & Closing Comments:

On the topic of reduced subsistence periods, there was a request from a caller in Koyukuk that the windows schedule end by mid-September to give fishers enough time before freeze-up to harvest whitefish. Questions about potential commercial fishing periods led ADF&G to clarify the requirements specified in the Yukon River Coho Salmon Management Plan. Under these guidelines, the fall chum run projection needs to be for a run of at least 550,000 fall chum in order to hold a coho commercial period. The fall chum run is currently expected to fall short of that amount; therefore it is unlikely there will be any more commercial periods scheduled.

A number of questions were asked about ADF&G's assessment projects, including operation of the sonar at Pilot Station and the accuracy of counts there given its distance from the mouth of the Yukon. ADF&G explained how the sonar operates and how the data gathered over the course of a day is used to achieve total daily counts of salmon. Compared to the length of the river, the distance from the sonar to the mouth of the river is not that great, and ADF&G is aware of the fish that spawn below the sonar which do not get counted there. Another caller wanted to know how long Eagle Sonar would be operational. DFO responded that usually runs until about October 6th. A caller from Kotlik shared the results from test fishing conducted over the weekend at the North Mouth, which was sponsored by Kwikpak.

ADF&G announced that post-season subsistence salmon harvest surveys will be starting in early September, with surveyors traveling to each community over the next two months. People were reminded to send in their subsistence calendars. It was also decided that another teleconference call will be held next week and will be the last of the season.

**Yukon River Inseason Management Teleconference
Call #15 – September 1, 2009**

Facilitated by: Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA)

Funded by: US Fish and Wildlife Service – OSM and the Yukon River Panel

Communities involved in the call: Emmonak, Kotlik, Mountain Village, St. Mary's, Holy Cross, Grayling, Wiseman, Ruby, Rampart, Dawson, and Old Crow.

Subsistence Reports: Little fishing activity is happening. In the lower and middle river, people are turning to moose hunting and continuing to berry pick. Where people are fishing, they are reporting catches of cohos, some fall chum and whitefish. Reports from Ruby are that people are still catching some silvers, chum and whitefish and have put away about half the number of fish they want. Fish are currently going by the village of Rampart. Water levels are variable, but generally are low and rising in most places that reported this week.

Management Updates:

ADF&G Assessment and Management Strategies: The fall chum run is currently assessed as weak, with a projected total size of 300,000 to 325,000 fish. As of August 31, the cumulative fall chum salmon passage at Pilot Station sonar was estimated at a record low of 212,000 fish, well below the average of 657,000 fish. The sonar may be a conservative estimate, based on annual reconstruction of previous runs. Additionally, unusually shallow water on the left bank sonar site during August and early September appeared to be causing salmon to migrate further offshore which has been compensated for by extending the range of the sonar so that fish detection is not a problem. However, species apportionment, due to very low test fish catches, may be mis-assigning the counts between species. Other test fisheries and subsistence reports indicate a higher percentage of fall chum salmon than what is shown from test fishing at the left bank sonar site. Fishermen in the lower river have also observed salmon holding in sloughs in the delta, which is not typical and may be due to very low water conditions or acclimating to warmer than normal water temperatures before proceeding up river.

The coho salmon run is above average. The Pilot Station sonar cumulative passage estimate of 188,000 through August 31 is well above the average of 137,000 coho salmon for this date. Additional test fishing on Flat Island in the southern mouth is being done to supplement assessment project information. These additional catches agree with the assessment projects that the coho salmon abundance is high relative to fall chum salmon.

The Yukon River Drainage Fall Chum Salmon Management Plan specifies a minimum drainage-wide escapement goal of 300,000 fall chum. Therefore, based on the current abundance of fall chum salmon, subsistence time is being reduced along the river in an effort to meet escapement goals while still allowing opportunity to harvest the abundant coho salmon where available. Subsistence fishing time in Districts 1, 2, and 3 has been reduced to a schedule of two 24-hour periods per week. Beginning Thursday, September 3 these districts will return to their 7 days a week schedule. As of September 2, District 4 and Subdistricts 5A, 5B and 5C are on a reduced schedule of two 32-hour periods per week. Subdistrict 5D and District 6 can expect a reduced schedule later this week. The Innoko and Koyukuk River drainages will not be restricted. Personal use salmon fishing in the Tanana River is closed as of noon on September 2 until further notice. Although late pulses have occurred in past years, no additional commercial periods to target coho salmon are anticipated due to the low fall chum salmon abundance.

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

USFWS Input: The Chandalar sonar camp last day of counting was August 23 with a cumulative count of 6,183 chum salmon. The camp closed early this season due to crew and safety concerns.

DFO Input: Eagle sonar estimates are being used for assessment of the Upper Yukon River fall chum return. The Fishing Branch River weir is in place and should be operational in a few days. A catch per unit effort program has been initiated near Old Crow. Currently it looks unlikely that there will be a commercial or domestic fall chum fishery. There are no plans, however, to restrict First Nations fisheries at this time. DFO will be waiting for more information to come from the Eagle sonar for future management decisions.

Local Input & Closing Comments:

As many assessment projects are winding down, participants wanted to know who will monitor and manage the fish after the lower river projects end. Callers also wanted to make sure that ADF&G kept everyone informed through village faxes and other means, as this was the last teleconference of the season. ADF&G will continue monitoring and managing the run until it is over. Announcements will be released on the internet and faxed to villages. By the time the assessment projects end, the bulk of the fish should be in the river and ADF&G plans to relax subsistence fishing to 7 days a week again. Also, ADF&G is looking into having fishermen test fish and keeping Mountain Village test fishery running later than planned. A coho salmon commercial fishery is unlikely because of the weak fall chum run and the likelihood of chum bycatch. With the poor projected fall chum run, the priority is for escapement then subsistence.

A question was asked of what happened to the fish and why did they not come back in decent numbers. Was it possible that fish were missed in the counts at the sonar, as some subsistence catches were good? ADF&G shared that there is no clear answer as to where the fish went. There was an exceptionally strong parent year for these fish, so overescapement could have been a factor, as could water conditions, other harvests and the condition of the river water over the winter. As for fish being missed as they went up river, ADF&G responded that in general fishing has been slow, except on the pulses when there were a lot of fish. The upriver assessment projects are also in agreement with Pilot Station where the front half of the run was very weak.

There was another question about the Area M fishery and incidental take of fall chum. Genetic samples are being taken from fisheries throughout western Alaska, an analysis of which will give a much better idea of the extent of incidental take in the Area M fishery. However, this data will not be available until 2012. There was also a question of where fall chum go in the river and if they migrate up the Andreafsky River. ADF&G said that not many fall chum head up the Andreafsky or spawn in the lower river; most go to upper portions of the Koyukuk and Tanana Rivers, other upriver tributaries, and into Canada.

A number of callers shared their thoughts on the fall chum run. One lower river caller said that water had been so low but now finally is some high water. He thinks fish are still coming in and will continue to do so with high water. Another caller commented that the run seems quite late this year and wondered if global warming could be a possible factor. ADF&G agreed that it's quite late, and late runs tend to be weak. While recent years have been late, and some have picked up at the very end, it would be an exceptionally late year if that were to happen this year.