

**Yukon River Inseason Management Teleconference  
Call #1 – June 1, 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:** Alakanuk, Emmonak, Mountain Village, Pilot Station, Marshall, Holy Cross, Galena, Tanana, Rampart, Minto, Fort Yukon, Venetie, Circle, Eagle, Carmacks, Whitehorse, Old Crow

**Subsistence Reports:** No salmon have been reported in the river, however some subsistence activity is happening. People are fishing for and catching sheefish and whitefish in the lower river as well as in Fort Yukon, Galena, and Tanana where pike are also being harvested. There's a little fishing activity for whitefish occurring in Old Crow. There have been no reports of smelts in the lower river yet; callers indicated that these fish typically show up five days before the Chinook salmon.

The ice is out on the Yukon. Reports from the lower river are of a fair amount of ice still at the coast and a steady north wind holding it there. Overall the river is running unusually low for this time of year. The water is rising by Tanana and Rampart and is high in Venetie. On the Canadian side of the border the water is low, coming up in Carmacks, with Whitehorse reporting the water has taken on some color. There is little to no drift in the river except around Venetie.

**Management Updates:**

*ADF&G Assessment:* No subsistence fishing reports have come in yet. Ice breakup in the lower river was on May 27, which is 5 days later than average; ice remains along the coast. Pilot Station sonar is up and running on both banks as of June 1. Test fishing at Big Eddy has begun and nets should be in the water at Middle Mouth in a few days.

*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 2010 run of Chinook salmon is expected to be below average to average. It is prudent to enter the season with the prospect that subsistence conservation measures, much less severe than those in 2009, may be necessary in order to share subsistence harvest and meet escapement goals. If required, the conservation measures may include promoting voluntary reductions, spreading harvest out over the run, keeping fish within villages and local areas, or reducing extended sharing. If the run develops below expectations, managers will consider implementing other conservation measures, such as no fishing on a portion of the run or reducing fishing time, in an effort to meet escapement goals. A directed king commercial fishery in the mainstem is unlikely. There is the possibility of a small Chinook salmon harvest on the Tanana River.

An average run of summer chum is projected for 2010 that will provide for escapement needs, subsistence use and a commercial harvest. The available surplus for a directed fishery could range from 250,000 - 500,000 summer chum, but the actual harvest will likely be constrained due to the potentially poor Chinook salmon run.

The regulatory subsistence salmon fishing schedule will begin on June 7 in District Y-1 and will be implemented chronologically with the upriver migration. Until then, subsistence fishing is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

*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:* USFWS staff was en route to Emmonak on June 2 to open the field office there. There has been warm weather in the interior. Ice went out early upriver, but there is still extensive ice on the coast. North winds there are holding the ice on the beach.

*DFO Input:* Canadian fishers are gearing up for the season. So far it has been pretty warm; the ice went out 5 days earlier than normal and now there is low water. DFO is anticipating a below average to average run of 78,000 to 113,000 Canadian origin Chinook salmon. There is a new escapement goal range of 42,500 to 55,000 Chinook salmon on the spawning grounds. The Canadian harvest share will be determined from inseason numbers. Fishers have been notified that they should expect restrictions in the domestic, commercial, and sport fisheries.

#### **Local Input & Closing Comments:**

The majority of the questions and comments were about the lower river assessment projects. More information about the Mountain Village test fishery was asked for. ADF&G replied that it was a project of the Yukon Delta Fisheries Development Association, but that it was ADF&G's understanding that the project should begin shortly. Site selection for the test fishery would probably be close to the site used in past years, but that it would depend on what the possible sites look like and the input of local fishers. A caller from Mountain Village shared that a new site would be a good idea. Another caller wanted to know if the other lower Yukon test fisheries had found new sites as well. ADF&G said that currently the nets were in at the same place as last year for expediency, but that they were working with local fishers to identify additional sites now that the ice is out and they can scout locations. An explanation of how the test nets work was requested. ADF&G collects consistent daily data each summer and calculates the catch per unit effort (CPUE), which can then be compared from year to year. This gives ADF&G information about run timing and relative abundance. There are test fisheries offshore, in Y-1, and in Y-2. ADF&G uses data from all of these test fisheries, as well as subsistence reports when assessing the run. The last assessment question concerned the number of sonars that were in use. ADF&G responded that there is a sonar on each bank at Pilot Station. There is also money available for a sidescan sonar, which will be deployed at Pilot Station. Later in the season there will also be sonars at the Anvik River and by Eagle.

An explanation of the subsistence fishing schedule was requested. ADF&G responded that currently subsistence fishing is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The subsistence windows fishing schedule will begin on June 7 in District Y-1 and will move upriver after that. In Y-1, there will be two 36-hour openings a week. The subsistence schedule is available on the ADF&G website, on fliers that were mailed out to villages, in the YRDFA newsletter, as well as included in the ADF&G subsistence calendars.

Clarification was requested of some of the fish species reported during subsistence reports. Participants explained that smelts are also called candlefish and that they are small, 4-6 inches, and similar to whitefish. Jackfish is a pike.