

**Yukon River Inseason Management Teleconference
Call #13 – August 24, 2010**

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, St. Mary's, Pilot Station, Marshall, Holy Cross, Nulato, Koyukuk, Galena, Tanana, The Rapids, Circle, Eagle, Old Crow

Subsistence Reports: Fishing effort is picking up as the fall chum salmon return. In the lower river there is high water and little fishing activity. Holy Cross also reports little fishing activity and steady water levels. Fishing in Nulato and Koyukuk has been decent, with a few cohos and sheefish also caught. The water has dropped, debris levels are low and the weather is good. The fish are just beginning to hit around Galena and the few active fishers are doing okay so far. More people are waiting for the larger pulse of fish to go out. Further upriver the weather is good and people are anticipating the first pulse of fall chum any day. In Eagle and Circle, the water has risen a bit and there is little debris. No one is fishing. Across the border, Old Crow reports rain, high water and small woody debris. No one has been fishing for the past 3 weeks.

Management Updates:

ADF&G Assessment and Management Strategies: Three pulses of fall chum salmon have passed Pilot Station sonar; the third pulse was the largest at approximately 100,000 fish. An additional pulse may be entering the river this week. Based on run reconstruction, the cumulative fall chum run size to date is 330,000 fish, well below the average of 660,000 fish for this date. Based on historical median run timing, 88% of the run has passed Pilot Station sonar, however the 2010 fall chum salmon run appears to have later than average run timing. The projected total run size is 340,000 to 400,000 fish. Due to concerns for fall chum abundance, windowed subsistence schedules have been implemented in Districts 1, 2, 3, 4 and Subdistricts 5A, 5B, and 5C. One subsistence fishing period was also canceled in Districts 1, 2 and 3. If fall chum salmon projections continue to indicate low abundance, further reductions in fishing time may occur.

The 2010 coho salmon run also appears to be late. To date, the cumulative passage at Pilot Station is estimated at 62,000 fish which is below the cumulative average of 100,000 fish. Based on average run timing, projected total passage of coho salmon past Pilot Station is 95,000 fish; using late run timing this estimate increases to 156,000 fish.

No commercial fall chum or coho salmon periods have been announced. According to their respective management plans, directed commercial fishing for either species may only be considered when the fall chum run is greater than 500,000 fish. A coho salmon fishery may occur also if there is a harvestable surplus of coho salmon identified and if a directed fishery will not have a significant impact on the escapement or allocation of fall chum salmon.

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: At the mouth, the run is at the $\frac{3}{4}$ point. Potentially the run is quite late, but it is unlikely a lot more fish will come in. From subsistence reports, the first pulse got to Koyukuk

right about on time. It should be between Ruby and Tanana now, while the second pulse should be at Koyukuk. The third pulse of fall chum salmon should be around Holy Cross. The coho salmon are also late. The Kuskokwim and Norton Sound coho salmon runs are also not doing particularly well currently.

DFO Input: Total Chinook salmon border escapement is 33,000 fish, which is well below the escapement goal. First Nations significantly curtailed their harvest; DFO does not expect total harvest will be much more than the current harvest of 1,400 Chinook salmon. The fall chum salmon preseason projection puts Canadian management in the Green Zone. The run currently looks lower than the projections, but it is still early in the run. Fishers in Dawson are probably picking up a few chum but not too many yet.

Local Input & Closing Comments:

Questions this week covered fishing schedules, run timing, escapement goals and assessment projects. There was a question about when drifting was scheduled to end in Subdistrict 4A. ADF&G replied that no date had been set and drifting was open for the foreseeable future. There was some confusion over run timing for fall chum and coho salmon. Coho salmon were seen at the north mouth before the fall chum were there. USFWS responded that there were some early fish; the Kuskokwim saw early cohos as well. But they believe the run is late because the strength of the run doesn't seem to be picking up very quickly. The timing of the runs at the north and south mouth of the Yukon are different. Another caller requested clarification about how much of the run had passed Pilot Station and why there were subsistence closures if so much of the run had gone by. ADF&G replied that based on average run timing the fall chum run is 88% past Pilot Station, but that the run is likely late this year. They expect another pulse of fall chum to come into the river, therefore the windows schedule is in place to help distribute harvest pressure over the run and allow for sufficient escapement.

Given that the fall chum salmon run is late, callers wanted to know if Pilot Station sonar would run later than usual and how else the run will be assessed. ADF&G said that they had funding to run the sonar until the 7th of September which will hopefully allow them to assess the fourth pulse. Once the sonar shuts down, the Mountain Village and Big Eddy test fisheries will continue operating until the middle of September. Another caller wanted more information on how the sonar operates. ADF&G explained the normal operation of the sonar and also said that when there is a pulse of fish moving through, the sonar operates for a much greater portion of the day and overnight. It was asked if the high water being experienced around Pilot Station was negatively affecting the sonar. ADF&G has been watching the high water and so far the sonar is still counting accurately. The silt hasn't been too bad and the fish appear to be closer to shore during the high water, which is unlike last year when the sonar undercounted fish.

A review of fall chum escapement goals was requested. As most fish head upriver, there are not escapement goals or assessment projects on the Andreafsky or Anvik Rivers. Chandalar River escapement goal is 74,000 – 152,000; the Sheenjok goal is 50,000 – 104,000 fish. The Fishing Branch weir goal is 22,000 – 49,000 fish. The minimum escapement goal at the border is 70,000 but the target is 80,000. The drainage wide escapement goal is 300,000 – 600,000 fish. Finally, a caller wanted to know more about the sockeyes that are seen in the river. ADF&G shared that occasionally a few sockeye head up the Yukon River and up the Koyukuk and Tanana Rivers or to Canada, but there is no spawning destination for them. When there are real big runs in Bristol Bay, sockeye tend to come up the Yukon River.