

## Yukon River Inseason Management Teleconference

Call #14 – August 31, 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, Mountain Village, St. Mary's, Marshall, Nulato, Koyukuk, Galena, Tanana, Fort Yukon, Eagle, Old Crow

**Subsistence Reports:** Fishing effort is picking up as the fall chum salmon move upriver. In the lower river there is high water, little debris and no fishing activity. Nulato and Koyukuk residents have been fishing and doing well with the fall chum. Galena and Tanana fishers are also starting to see a good number of fall chum in their nets. Tanana reports that the quality of fish has been good. In the Yukon Flats, Fort Yukon reports healthy looking chums being caught and in Eagle there are a few families fishing and they appear to be doing well. Water levels in the Flats region is dropping and there is little drift. Old Crow reports that the river is still dirty and high, though water levels are dropping and there is no debris. People are waiting for the fall chum to arrive.

### **Management Updates:**

*ADF&G Assessment and Management Strategies:* The 2010 fall chum run is later than average and smaller than projected. Three pulses of fall chum salmon have passed Pilot Station sonar with the possibility for one more to come. Based on run reconstruction, the cumulative run size through August 30 is 350,000 fish, well below the average of 752,000 for this date. Ninety-four to 99% of the run has passed Pilot Station sonar. The projected total run size is 360,000 to 400,000 fish.

Due to concerns for fall chum salmon 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, 3 and 4. A period will be canceled in Subdistricts 5A, 5B and 5C this week. If fall chum salmon projects continue to indicate low abundance, further reductions in fishing time may occur. No commercial periods have been scheduled for fall chum or coho salmon. ADF&G is carefully assessing whether there can be a commercial period for coho salmon in the second week of September. If commercial periods were to occur, it would be after 95% of the fall chum run had passed through a district. Subsistence fishing time would then be relaxed progressively upriver as the fall chum salmon run passes through each district.

The 2010 coho salmon run also appears to be late. As of August 30, the cumulative passage at Pilot Station is estimated at 90,500 fish which is below the average of 140,000 fish. An additional pulse might currently be coming into the river. Based on average run timing, projected total passage of coho salmon past Pilot Station is 100,000 fish; using late run timing this estimate increases to 140,000 fish.

*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:* Total Chinook salmon border escapement is 33,000 fish, which is well below the goal of 42,500 fish. First Nations significantly curtailed their harvest and are no longer fishing for Chinook salmon. From the lower river projects, the fall chum salmon run currently looks lower than the projections, but DFO hopes to still be at the low end of Green Zone management. It's still early in the run for the Eagle sonar and the Fishing Branch Weir has not been operating due to high water. Fishers in Dawson are probably picking up a few chum but none have been reported.

**Local Input & Closing Comments:**

The few comments and questions this week covered fishing schedule clarifications, comments on potential commercial periods and a bycatch discussion. ADF&G went over the fishing schedules for the districts where callers asked about them. Additionally, ADF&G agreed to consider changing the timing of the windows in the lower river districts from 8pm to earlier in the evening.

The possibility of commercial periods in the lower river concerned some callers, especially those in the upper river districts who are still trying to catch fish for the winter. ADF&G assured everyone that they were only looking into the possibility of a commercial period for coho salmon, but that they would not go ahead with one if they could not be sure there would not be negative impacts to escapement and allocation of the fall chum salmon. Additionally, if periods were scheduled, there would be a low cap put on incidental harvest of fall chum salmon. If a high incidental harvest of fall chum were seen, the commercial period would be ended.

Incidental harvest of Chinook salmon and fall chum salmon in the ocean is a concern of many people on the call. YRDFA reviewed the numbers of both Chinook and chum salmon that have been taken incidentally to date in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Island pollock fishery (just over 8,000 Chinook and 11,500 chum salmon). Numbers for incidental take in the Area M fishery were not available. The pollock fleet mainly takes 3-5 year old Chinook salmon as bycatch, so the impacts from the high bycatch in 2007 has largely been felt in the river already. A couple of callers exhorted management and fishers to work on a more comprehensive management of the entire salmon lifecycle, rather than just in-river management, and to work towards stopping the intercept fisheries that catch Yukon River salmon.

ADF&G announced that post-season subsistence harvest surveys will be taking place in September and October. Surveyors will be heading to each community to collect information about this summer's fish harvest. Fishers were reminded to return their subsistence calendars.