

**Yukon River Inseason Management Teleconference
Call #2 – June 8, 2010**

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: Emmonak, Kotlik, Mountain Village, St. Mary's, Pilot Station, Marshall, Russian Mission, Holy Cross, Anvik, Nulato, Galena, Ruby, Tanana, Rampart, Beaver, Fort Yukon, Circle, Eagle, Old Crow

Subsistence Reports: No salmon have been reported in the river, but Chinook salmon were caught in Hooper Bay late last week. Fishing for sheefish, whitefish, and pike is ongoing. Water levels remain lower than average throughout the drainage. The river is reported as being mostly clear with little to no drift.

Management Updates:

ADF&G Assessment: No subsistence fishing reports have come in reporting salmon yet. Hooper Bay started catching salmon around June 4. Pilot Station sonar was up and running on both banks as of June 1; nets were in the water a few days prior. No salmon have been counted to date. Water conditions at the sonar this year are very good. The Lower Yukon Test Fishery became fully operational on June 5. No salmon have been caught. With the input of local fishers, ADF&G has relocated the set nets at Big Eddy to sites that should be more effective for providing test fish data. The Mountain Village test fishery became fully operational on June 2. No Chinook salmon have been caught to date. The test fishery at Hooper Bay has been delayed because of coastal ice. ADF&G staff were deployed there on June 9.

Run and Harvest Outlook: With the persistence of ice offshore and the associated cold water, the run appears to be a little late this year. It's expected salmon will be in the river in the next few days. 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. A directed Chinook salmon commercial fishery in the mainstem is unlikely. There is the possibility of a small Chinook salmon harvest on the Tanana River. Management decisions will be made consistent with the preseason projection, moving to inseason management of the runs once salmon abundance increases.

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 began on June 7 in District Y-1. It will be implemented on June 9 in Y-2, June 13 in Y-3 and then chronologically up the river. Until then, subsistence fishing is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in those districts as well as in Districts Y-4 and Y-5.

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 crew was en route to the Andrefsky and Gisasa weirs on June 8. The Emmonak field office is open. There is still pack ice extending down to Nunivak Island. Much of the shorefast ice has retreated, but variable winds are holding the pack ice near the beach.

DFO Input: DFO is anticipating a below average to average run of 78,000 – 113,000 Canadian-origin Chinook salmon. The run will be managed for an escapement goal range of 42,500 – 55,000 Chinook salmon. This should not be confused with the border passage objective, which is the spawning escapement plus the Canadian catch share of 20-26% of the total allowable catch. The Canadian harvest share will be determined from inseason numbers; based on the pre-season outlook range a harvest of 8,000-16,000 is anticipated. If fishing opportunity exists after conservation goals have been met, which is anticipated, the First Nation harvest will take priority. DFO is still a few weeks away from implementing their assessment projects.

Local Input & Closing Comments:

Questions this week were about fishing regulations, ice conditions and ADF&G assessment projects. Clarification of the fishing schedule in District Y-2 was requested. Fishing in each district is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week until the regulatory schedule is implemented in that district. For Y-2 the schedule begins on June 9, with the first windowed closure beginning at 8am on June 11. Even with a potentially late run and persistent ice, the subsistence schedule is going into effect as planned. A caller wanted to know if there were any changes to mesh size this year. ADF&G responded that this summer mesh size is unrestricted. The Board of Fisheries and the Federal Subsistence Board adopted regulation changes that reduce the mesh size to 7.5 inches, but these changes do not go into effect until next year. A question was also asked about where the coastal district was in relation to the mouth of the Yukon. ADF&G responded that the coastal district begins one mile offshore of any solid land, which includes islands. The final piece of regulation callers were interested in was whether fishermen who catch a fish with a clipped adipose fin need to turn the head into ADF&G for analysis as they do in the test fisheries. ADF&G answered in the affirmative and said that if a fisherman caught such a fish they could call the Emmonak office and ADF&G would coordinate to get the head from the fisherman.

People wanted to know more about ice conditions on the coast. USFWS replied that as of last Friday there was pack ice around Nunivak Island which goes about halfway out to the Bering Sea. The shorefast ice is off the beach, but winds are keeping the pack ice bouncing off the beach. There is not ice at the mouth of the Kuskokwim River, which started seeing fish last week. Usually the Yukon River gets salmon about 7-10 days after the Kuskokwim River does. If that holds, fish should be in the Yukon River about now.

Finally, Pilot Station sonar was discussed as there was concern that last year's restrictions, resulting in part from inaccurate counts at Pilot Station, were difficult for subsistence fishermen. ADF&G responded that conditions at the sonar this year are much better than last year and are some of the best they've been. In an effort to ensure accurate counting, ADF&G has installed a new down-looking sonar on the left bank. Additionally they are using new 50-fathom drift nets alongside the current 25-fathom nets to see if there is a difference. New sites for the sonar are still being investigated, but so far none look better than the current site. Sites around Pitka's Point and Russian Mission have been looked at, and some near Mountain Village will be visited soon. A caller wanted to know what Pilot Station was counting so far. About 42,800 fish had been counted as of June 7, mostly cisco and sheefish - no salmon - but a breakdown of exact species count was unavailable.