

**Yukon River Inseason Management Teleconference  
Call #8 – July 20, 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:** Hooper Bay, Alakanuk, Emmonak, Kotlik, Mountain Village, St. Mary's, Pilot Station, Marshall, Holy Cross, Nulato, Allakaket, Galena, Tanana, The Rapids, Rampart, Eagle, Mayo, Teslin, Old Crow

**Subsistence Reports:** Most middle and upriver communities are still fishing for kings and hoping to fulfill their subsistence needs. Nulato reports that people are waiting for the fall chum to arrive to supplement their poor Chinook salmon harvest. The Koyukuk River communities report a fair amount of chums in the river, but that it is too wet to dry fish. Moving upriver, communities are still actively fishing, reporting that families are from 30% to 75% done fishing. In Tanana, the large Chinook salmon that have been caught are of good quality though there are many small fish. The Rapids reports that king numbers and quality are down this year compared to past. Eagle shared that the fishing is good for those with fish wheels, but not for nets because of high water and drift. Fish are large to medium sized and healthy looking. In Canada, little subsistence activity is reported except in Old Crow where people are catching kings, chum and whitefish. Coastal communities up through Holy Cross have completed their king and summer chum harvest and await the fall run of chum and cohos.

Most areas of the drainage on the call report rainy weather. Water levels are high or rising in the lower river, dropping in Holy Cross, Nulato, and Galena, and high in Allakaket and Eagle. Mayo reports water levels going down and Old Crow reports the water as high.

**Management Updates:**

*ADF&G Assessment:* The lower river switched to fall season management on July 16. The LYTF and Chinook salmon drift test fishery have ceased operations as of July 15. Final cumulative Chinook salmon CPUEs were 18.67 and 482.26, respectively, both of which are below average. The summer chum drift test fishery final cumulative CPUE is 4271.9, which is above average. Through July 19, 114,000 Chinook and 1,327,000 summer chum salmon have passed Pilot Station sonar. These are below average numbers for both species. Chum passage after July 19 will be considered fall chum salmon. Test fisheries at the Rapids and Nenana are reporting below average catches of Chinook salmon for this date. Summer chum numbers at the Rapids are above average, but below average at Nenana. Eagle sonar has counted 4,460 Chinook salmon as of July 19, well below the average of 17,500.

*Run and Harvest Outlook:* The Chinook salmon run appears to be below average to poor and weaker than the preseason projections. Age-5 fish dominate the run. Some Alaskan escapement goals have been met and it is anticipated that all Alaskan escapement goals will be met, but there is concern for meeting escapement and harvest-sharing goals to Canada. Managers are asking for voluntary conservation measures of Chinook salmon. Management-imposed restrictions may become necessary if Canadian-origin fish passage does not improve.

Total summer chum passage at Pilot Station is 1.3 million fish. Total summer chum harvest in the directed fisheries in Y-1, Y-2 and Y-4a is 209,573 fish. 9,842 incidental Chinook salmon were

harvested in Districts 1 and 2, of which approximately 25%, based on historical genetics percentages, were of Canadian origin. Commercial periods are open in Y-4a and Y-6 this week.

There is uncertainty in the fall chum salmon projections, but currently the estimate is for a run size of approximately 600,000 fish. A run of this size should provide for subsistence and escapement goals as well as some commercial opportunity. Any decisions about opening a fall chum commercial fishery will be delayed until the end of the month.

*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:* As of July 18, the Andraefsky and Gisasa weirs have counted 64,200 and 40,700 summer chum respectively. Both counts are above average. The summer chum salmon escapement goal for East Fork Andraefsky River has been met. Chinook salmon counts are below average at both weirs. The Henshaw River weir has counted approximately 335 Chinook and 56,200 summer chum salmon.

*DFO Input:* Eagle sonar is approaching its quarter point; DFO should have an inseason projection soon. From preliminary data and given subsistence and commercial fisheries in the U.S. it is challenging to see how treaty obligations will be met. Currently DFO is estimating a potential border escapement closer to 30,000 Chinook salmon, well below the spawning escapement objective of 42,500 fish. However, it is still early in the run and projections may change as more fish pass Eagle and run timing is better understood. There will be no Canadian commercial fishery and the sportfish quota is set at zero. First Nations are presently unrestricted.

**Local Input & Closing Comments:**

There were a number of questions about the U.S. commercial fisheries. One caller wanted a better explanation of how commercial opportunity is distributed throughout the river. Each fishing district has a Guideline Harvest Level, but because each district has different fishing conditions and effort, ADF&G explained that they take that into consideration when opening commercial periods. Another caller asked about the legality of selling incidental Chinook salmon during the chum commercial fishery. The sale of such fish is legal, however ADF&G has the authority to restrict sale if there are subsistence restrictions. As there were none this year, and roughly 25% of the incidental Chinook salmon (approx. 2,400) were headed for Canada, sale was not restricted. Finally, a caller wanted to know how decisions about opening the fall chum commercial fishery would be made. ADF&G answered that they would hold off on making any decisions until there is a better assessment of the run.

There appeared to be disparity between ADF&G's projection of border escapement and DFO's and a caller asked for clarification. ADF&G and DFO try to coordinate their numbers. It is still very early to project from Eagle and run timing is late and difficult to determine. There is uncertainty in the Pilot Station numbers, and high water conditions have affected some upriver projects. As Eagle reaches the quarter point, more accurate projections should be possible.

A few callers wanted to express their disappointment and concern over the low numbers of kings passing upriver. Suggestions were made for conservation measures such as not fishing on the first pulse in the future, reducing mesh size in the commercial fishery, and restricting the sale of incidental kings in the chum commercial fishery.