

Celebrating 20 Years
YRDFA Holds 20th Annual Meeting in Nulato
By Jill Klein, Executive Director

It was with great honor and appreciation that YRDFA held its 20th anniversary year meeting in Nulato along the Yukon River. With an almost full delegation at the table and representation from most villages along the Yukon River in attendance, YRDFA was able to conduct a successful meeting. Hosted by the community of Nulato, the meeting took place at the Andrew K. Demoski School. We had our meals and lodging at the school and had many gracious helpers from the community who worked to provide meals for us, drive us around town and coordinate home stays—always a great welcome to our board members and other attendees and a great way to get a true flavor for the community we are visiting.

Traveling to the meeting, the lower river delegation had a scenic tour up to Nulato, while the interior folks also all made it in due to good weather all around western and interior Alaska. This nice weather spanned to the coast, so our friends from Hooper Bay and Scammon Bay could be in attendance. We also had Carl Sidney and Ron Chambers from the Canadian headwater communities of Teslin and Haines Junction, respectively, at the table as ex-officio board members.

The first meeting day was framed by the attendance of our guests from Senator Murkowski's office and Senator Kookesh who updated us on legislative issues impacting rural Alaska and listened to the concerns of YRDFA and the public.

There was a good turnout from Nulato and the neighboring communities of Kaltag and Koyukuk. People came to meet and hear from their legislators and their offices, as it was mentioned that legislators have not been out to the middle Yukon River very much in the past to hear directly from the people.

The end of the first meeting day was highlighted by a presentation on traditional knowledge natural indicators by Catherine Moncrieff of YRDFA. Attendees reviewed the findings from the four year project YRDFA and Alaska Department of Fish & Game Subsistence Division carried out and then talked about how to use traditional knowledge in western fisheries management.

The second meeting day started off with a presentation by Sarah Palmer and Brian Manwaring from the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution. They shared their thoughts and observations about YRDFA and where it has been successful in its work compared to other environmental challenges facing the U.S. This led to attendees sharing stories about how YRDFA has built relationships among the different people who live along the Yukon River and how we can keep doing this into the future. We also learned about a smattering of topics from Paula Cullenberg with the Marine Advisory Program of the University of Alaska, including climate change, outreach efforts from the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council, and efforts to get more students from rural Alaska into the undergraduate and graduate fisheries degree programs at the University of Alaska.

The YRDFA board and others in attendance worked to pass resolutions that covered many interesting, timely, and relevant topics (see related article on page 3). The community hosted a covered dish dinner where many delicious foods such as beaver bacon from the local area were served. As a special item on

the menu, Lester Wilde from Hooper Bay brought up coastal treats such as walrus, seal, and smelts to share for a true river-wide exchange of culinary tastes.

YRDFA hosted a raffle with awesome prizes that drew in the community members and in YRDFA fashion we had our own musicians including Lester Erhart and Bill Derendoff who played with the best of the local talent. We were treated to traditional Athabaskan songs and dance and also Ron Chambers from Haines Junction in Canada presented his traditional dance, song and regalia to the meeting attendees and the school kids in their classrooms.

YRDFA feels it is important to give back to the communities in which we meet. This year we did this by working with the school to present activities in the classrooms with the school children. We were able to have a YRDFA AmeriCorp Volunteer with us who carried out both active and artistic activities with the younger children. He also worked with the older students on developing questions for them to ask the YRDFA board members about in the meeting forum. Bringing youth into the meeting is always important to try to have the generations learn from each other.

Overall the YRDFA meeting was a success, and we all enjoyed our time in Nulato. We looked back at our accomplishments over the past two decades with pride, we worked hard on current issues, and we look forward to continuing our work well into the future.

2010 YRDFA Resolutions

Resolution 2010-01: Gratefully thanking the people of Nulato for their generosity and hospitality. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the YRDFA Board Members, delegates and staff of YRDFA gratefully thank the Andrew K. Demoski School, the City and Tribal Council, and the people of Nulato for their generosity and hospitality.

Resolution 2010-02: Salmon Bycatch. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that YRDFA requests that the Secretary of Commerce rejects the Council's approved management action, and use his emergency regulation authority to implement a hard cap of 32,500 effective immediately.

Resolution 2010-03: Chinook Salmon Escapement Data Gathering. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that YRDFA recommends that the Yukon River Panel address the quality of escapement by gathering data and creating a method to utilize this data in assessing acceptable border passage.

Resolution 2010-04: Area M Wanton Waste. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that YRDFA asks the State of Alaska to review fish ticket information submitted by Virgil Umphenour on chum harvests to the Alaska State Board of Fisheries in addition to historical fish ticket information to review chum harvests and potential under-reporting of chum harvests in Area M.

Resolution 2010-05: THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that YRDFA strongly recommends that the Governor of the State of Alaska take the utmost consideration of potential BOF members to ensure they are suitable candidates to make decisions on salmon fisheries in the AYK region of Alaska.

Resolution 2010-06: Net Replacement. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that YRDFA will work river-wide to determine the number and size of new nets needed and the amount it will cost to purchase these nets and asks to be involved in determining a process for affordable, efficient and fair distribution.

Resolution 2010-07: Subsistence Harvest Data. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that ADF&G carry out analysis of post-season harvest surveys in a timely manner to deliver it to the public for use in post-season review and planning for the following season.

Resolution 2010-08: Water Temperature Monitoring. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that YRDFA supports increased water temperature monitoring at the near-marine estuary of the Yukon River Delta, which includes the four main mouths, especially at low tides and that this information be used to learn about the relationship between water temperature and in-river migration and be made available to the public on an annual basis.