

Lower Kuskokwim River Inseason Subsistence Salmon Catch Monitoring, 2005.

Through a collaborative effort with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) the Orutsararmiut Native Council (ONC) conducted inseason subsistence salmon surveys addressing qualitative assessment of run timing and abundance at selected fish camps and in communities of fishers in the lower Kuskokwim River during the summer of 2005. The project ran for 6 weeks starting May 29 to July 9. Information collected from these surveys was provided to fishery managers on a weekly basis. The Kuskokwim River fishery is cooperatively managed by ADF&G, United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group (Working Group).

Fishery managers are dependent on information from inseason run assessment projects to evaluate salmon run strength in order to achieve management objectives. One of the primary inseason indicators of salmon run strength is information collected from the test fishing project conducted just upstream of Bethel. Information collected from this project provides a general evaluation of the relative strength of the run by species. This index of salmon run strength is affected by the variability of run timing among years and anomalies created by environmental factors. The inseason subsistence catch monitoring project provided additional information to evaluate salmon run strength by obtaining the relative success of some subsistence fishers in achieving their harvest goals. Additionally, this project provided a venue for local user input into the evaluation of salmon abundance and corresponding management strategies. Historically, fishery managers collected information ad hoc from a few subsistence fishers. However, the ONC inseason subsistence monitoring program initiated in 2001 increased the quality and consistency of information obtained from subsistence fishers. This project increased the number and frequency of fishing family interviews, thereby increasing the credibility of the salmon catch information. Comparisons of inseason subsistence catch information now can be made among weeks within a year and among years. Inseason subsistence catch information has been used in combination with other information to determine appropriate inseason management decisions.

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