

Yukon River In-Season Management Teleconferences, 2007

Final Report for
Study No. FIS 07-209,
FWS Agreement No. 701817M100

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ABSTRACT

Teleconference calls are a practical and useful method for discussing the complexities of salmon management and for gaining immediate real-time information from fishers along the 1,400-mile expanse of the Yukon River. Therefore, the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA) hosted weekly in-season teleconference calls during the 2007 Yukon River salmon fishery season. The teleconference calls, held every Tuesday at 1300 hours (Alaska time), were a means to exchange information on run timing, abundance, and escapement data; discuss management strategies; facilitate open dialogue between users and management entities; and enable salmon resource users drainage-wide, including Canadians, to communicate. In addition to reports of local observations, the calls also provided information to fishers regarding research and escapement monitoring tools operated by State and Federal entities, thereby allowing a two-way street for information sharing and capacity building. Summaries of each call were written and distributed to teleconference participants. In total, 16 teleconferences were held in the 2007 fishing season.

Funding for the Yukon River In-Season Salmon Management Teleconferences was provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Fisheries Information Service-Office of Subsistence Management and the Yukon River Panel-Communications Committee.

Key Words: Alaska, Canada, Chinook, chum, commercial, Federal, in-season fishery management, salmon, State, subsistence, teleconference, Yukon River, Yukon Territory.

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INTRODUCTION

The Yukon River, the fifth largest drainage in North America, covers approximately 330,000 square miles and supports approximately 138,000 people. Within the Alaskan portion of the drainage, 21,000 Alaska residents live in 43 rural communities scattered along the river system from the Canadian border to the coast along the Bering Sea. Within the Canadian portion of the drainage, Whitehorse, the largest city with a population of 23,000 and Dawson City with a population of 1,800, comprise nearly 80% of the Yukon Territory population. Nearly 4,000 Canadians reside outside these larger towns along the Yukon River and its tributaries. These people have long utilized the salmon resource for subsistence and, more recently, for commercial purposes. In Yukon River communities, predominantly characterized as Native Alaskan communities, fishing means more than just food as it is part of a traditional, cultural, and economic system. Outside these larger cities, nearly all the people who reside in the Yukon River drainage are dependent, to varying degrees, on fish and wildlife resources for their livelihood.

In general, salmon runs returning to the Yukon have supported both subsistence and commercial fisheries. However, near the turn of the 21st century there were low salmon returns to the drainage. After an official disaster year in 1998, Chinook salmon runs returned at such low levels for another 2 years that subsistence and commercial fishers suffered. Summer and fall chum salmon runs also hit record lows between 1997 and 2000 (Senecal-Albrecht, 2000).

Around this same time, the management of the fishery became increasingly multifaceted, with dual management by the State of Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). In-season management teleconference calls, already in use since 1994, became an even more practical and useful method for discussing the complexities of salmon management and for gaining immediate real-time information from fishers along the more than 2000 mile expanse of the Yukon River. Facilitated by the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA), these teleconferences have enabled local users to provide valuable insight to State and Federal managers on in-season salmon subsistence needs and location, and abundance and quality of salmon available, thus allowing local users to participate in management decision making. In addition to reports of local observations, in-season management teleconference calls also provide information to fishers regarding research and escapement monitoring tools operated by State and Federal entities, thereby allowing a two-way street for information sharing and capacity building.

OBJECTIVES

As an open forum for exchange between fishers and State and Federal managers, this project helps keep rural residents informed, while building their capacity to collect information and participate in management decision making. Objectives for the In-season Management Teleconferences include:

- Maintaining and expanding communication and information sharing on all aspects of annual salmon runs among diverse Yukon salmon fishery users and Federal and State agency staff through weekly teleconferences;
- Providing valuable insights on the part of rural Alaska residents into Federal management strategies, particularly in respect to accommodating subsistence fishing needs and schedules; and
- Helping subsistence users gain a better understanding of USFWS research and management tools, goals and objectives, as well as knowledge of conditions in other Yukon River communities.

METHODS

In order to organize and carry out weekly teleconference calls during the 2007 summer and fall fishing season, YRDFA sought advice from ADFG and USFWS to assist with teleconference protocol and design both prior to and during the fishing season. The agenda for the weekly teleconference call was reviewed weekly and revised, when necessary, to improve upon the content, format, and flow of those calls. Agenda items included village identification and subsistence reports; management updates and strategy; local input (by YRDFA Board of Directors, USFWS Refuge Information Technicians (RIT), Coordinating Fisheries Committee members, nonprofits, intertribal consortiums, public, etc.); and closing comments (Appendix A). All fishers and rural residents were encouraged to answer the following questions while giving a subsistence report:

- Are subsistence harvests up or down and what is the personal assessment of run strength in your area?
- How far along are other fishers in the area in their subsistence harvests?
- What is the quality of the fish being harvested?
- What are the current water conditions in your area?

To facilitate drainage-wide involvement, preseason announcements, in the form of letters (Appendix A) and reminder business cards (Appendix B), were sent to potential participants, including Yukon River tribal councils and city offices, YRDFA board of directors, State and Federal agency personnel and advisory council members, and tribal nonprofits. These cards were also distributed by YRDFA staff during visits to villages in the Yukon River drainage in June 2007. USFWS RITs from Yukon River communities were encouraged to participate in every teleconference call. Through a separate grant funded by USFWS, YRDFA was able to hire in-season harvest interviewers in several communities who were also able to gather and provide local information during the weekly teleconference calls. Although not required under this project's granting requirements, YRDFA sought participation from the Yukon River salmon fishery's Canadian counterparts, including Yukon River Salmon Committee members,

Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Canada staff, First Nation aboriginal fishers, and Renewable Resource Council members from the Yukon Territory.

From May 29 to September 11, 2007, teleconference calls were facilitated by YRDFA's executive director or communications and outreach coordinator every Tuesday at 1300 hours (Alaska Time) and lasted between 50 and 90 minutes. A brief summary of each call, detailing announcements of Federal management decisions, management rationale, and key points of subsistence users and the public, were written and sent to teleconference participants within 3 days after each call (Appendix C). The YRDFA communication and outreach coordinator was charged with the responsibility of taking minutes, preparing summaries, and distributing the summaries for each weekly teleconference call.

RESULTS

During the Office of Subsistence Management (OSM) Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program granting period (2007 salmon fishery season), a total of 16 in-season management teleconference calls were organized and carried out by YRDFA. Participation in the teleconferences varied throughout the fishing season. Many fishing communities, agencies, tribal organizations, fish processors, and members of the general public participated throughout this time period (Figures 1, 2, 3).

Participation was highest at the beginning of the season, probably because of interest in the initial abundance of the Chinook run and potential commercial openings, and sharply declined in the first half of July (Figure 3). This pattern is consistent with participation trends from the previous four seasons (Figure 4). Also, the average number of communities involved in each call – 13.9 – was slightly above the 5 year average of 13.8 (Figure 5).

The level of teleconference participation consistently tracked more closely with the number of fish coming through the lower part of the river, rather than with the upper river, even though community participation varied by location and was not generally limited to communities of the lower river (Figures 6, 8, 10, 12). Nor were lower-river communities the most consistent participants; consistent community participation varied river-wide. Participation leveled out when the fall chum run started to enter the river and experienced a small increase when the run reached the Middle River (Figures 7, 9, 11, 13).

Some participants passively participated (listened only) and did not announce themselves. Unfortunately, these participants could not be tracked. However, all participation, passive listening as well as active engagement in dialogue, resulted in the sharing of in-season management and fishery information.

Summaries, approximately two pages in length, for each teleconference call provided highlights on run assessment, subsistence updates, management decisions and strategies, and key points

from participants (Appendix C). These summaries were shared electronically before the week's end with teleconference participants.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Participation

The YRDFAs had requested regular and consistent participation throughout each season, but participation in calls typically reflected the salmon fluctuations. Varying degrees of participation could be an indication of the following:

- Participants take part in the teleconference mainly to track when the salmon runs start entering the river.
- A majority of teleconference participants were interested in the lower river because occurrences (i.e., commercial openings, runs entering the river, etc.) in that region have a greater impact on fisheries throughout the rest of the drainage;
- A large portion of teleconference participants saw the beginning of the season as the best time to influence management;
- Some fishers were sufficiently meeting their needs, so didn't have to track the runs once the season progressed.
- Participants didn't feel as though they were being heard or as if their participation mattered.

Community participation seemed to also depend on whether or not the individual participant held a fisheries-related job within his/her community. For example, tribal administrators, RITs, and in-season harvest interviewers participated more frequently than those not holding a fisheries-related job. Federal agency managers, who oversaw the RITs and in-season harvest interviewers, have acknowledged the importance of these in-season catch interviews and used that information to help assess whether or not households were meeting their subsistence needs.

Canadian community participation was consistently low compared to Alaskan community participation. However, Canadian management participation was regular and Canadian managers benefited from information shared by lower-river residents and Alaskan and United States managers. Information gleaned by Canadian fishery managers was used in making management decisions and for informing First Nation representatives of run timing and abundance.

As a means of improving the effectiveness of future calls, an effort should be made to increase participation in villages with limited or nonexistent participation levels to ensure those villages have a sustained voice in management. Also, promotional activities should be continued in villages that already participate regularly in teleconferences to maintain or increase their involvement.

Reporting

In addition to consistent participation, consistent reporting that follows the agenda mentioned in the methodology section was important to ensure that pertinent, parallel information was being shared. Specific questions, however, did not always elicit specific answers from fishers; they sometimes forgot about the questions and drifted from the teleconference format. However, this information was still useful. RITs and in-season harvest interviewers, having conducted in-season subsistence surveys in their regions/communities, presented their findings during the teleconference calls in a more structured manner. Overall, reporting techniques were inconsistent because participants had various ways of relaying information, making a teleconference call of this magnitude longer in duration and more difficult to follow.

When fishers were asked if their subsistence needs had been met, the usual response was phrased to indicate what percentage of their needs had been met. When surveyed, some fishers responded that the percentage they reported was based on a rough guess made by visual observation of their harvest and input from the families. The fishers, RITs, and in-season harvest interviewers also knew if subsistence needs were being met in their community through:

- Visual observation of fishing activity/ visit to see what people have put away/ check of smokehouses and drying racks;
- Previous knowledge of and experience in fishing, as well as in-depth knowledge of the community and its families (family size, sharing harvest with their extended family, purpose of fishing-dogs, memorial potlatch, etc.);
- Questioning of and listening to individuals in the community and neighboring villages;
- Witnessing of the mood of the community (happy in good season, not happy when not doing well, disgust when fishing schedule (windows) doesn't coincide with salmon run and weather conditions); and
- Knowing subsistence needs will always be met as long as sufficient time is given before a commercial opening¹.

Subsistence reporting on the teleconference calls is the crux of this project, and an important factor in managers' assessment of the degree to which subsistence needs are being met. This mainly applies to Alaskan managers, and not to managers within the Yukon Territory. The First Nation fishery (similar to the Alaskan subsistence fishery) is open 7 days per week unless there are severe conservation concerns or a voluntary closure.

Unanswered Questions

During the closing comments portion of the call, it was common for subsistence fishers to pose questions to management. Normally these questions were answered immediately and thoroughly,

¹ This response had previously been given by a teleconference participant from the lower part of the Yukon River. Please note that this is not always true for all parts of the river, and is a generalization made for specific areas of the river.

though there were three instances where management had no answer at the time of the call. These issues were:

1. Dead chums floating on the Koyukuk River;
2. Chinook salmon in the 80 pound range were reportedly caught by fishers, yet there was no documentation to get actual size information;
3. Higher than average portion of summer chum in the fall chum run; and
4. Observations of sizeable female Chinook salmon being attended to by several smaller Chinook males.

Management expressed interest in these issues, and managers did indicate that at least the first and second items would be researched.

CONCLUSIONS

The teleconference calls have proved a valuable resource for members of the public, Yukon River fishers and community members, State and Federal agencies, tribal nonprofits, fish processors, and others. The in-season management teleconferences are a model for managers and local users on how to communicate and share information about the condition of salmon runs and the management strategies. Hearing in-season subsistence reports and learning what percentage of the local harvest has been met, allows managers to anticipate fishing activity and provides pieces of information to better understand the salmon run. Further, this sharing of information allows subsistence fishers along the river to better anticipate, plan for, and harvest their subsistence catch. It also provides them with a simple, viable means of informing and influencing management. Teleconference calls are an effective and rapid means to extend real-time knowledge about the salmon fishery across hundreds of miles.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Subsistence Management, provided funding support (\$15,000) for this project for one year through the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program, under FWS Agreement No. 701817M100, Reference Number 07-209. Additional funding for the in-season management teleconference calls came from the Yukon River Panel.

LITERATURE CITED

Senecal-Albrecht. 2000. King and chum salmon returns at record-low levels. YR DFA Fisheries News 7(1).

FIGURES

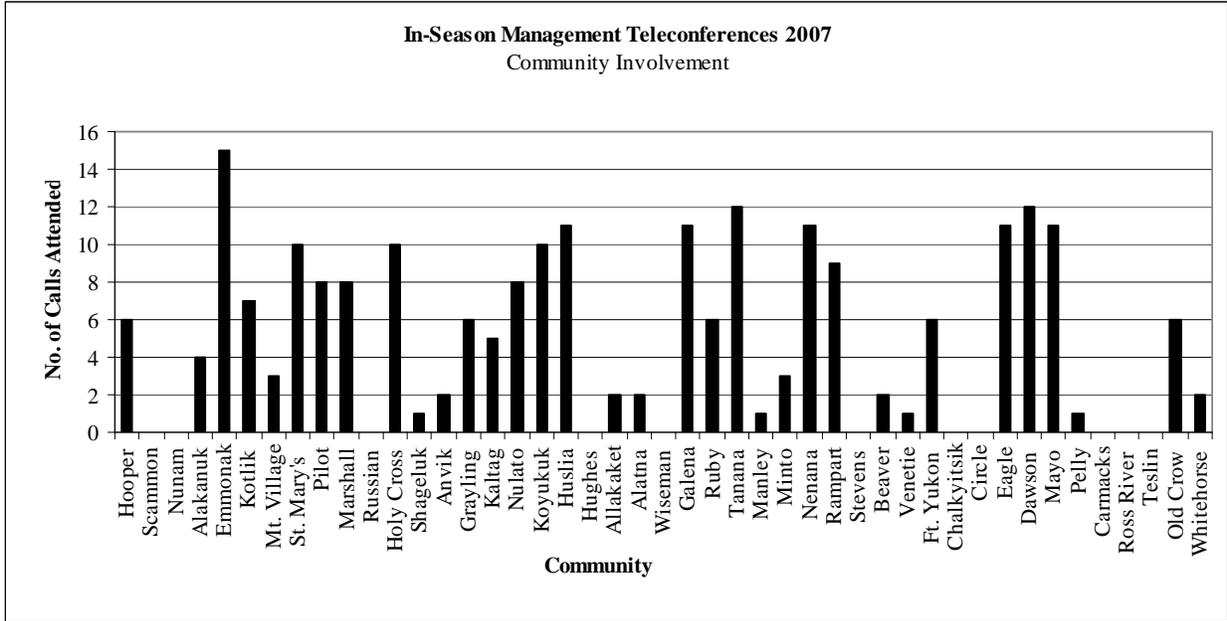


Figure 1. In-Season Management Teleconferences 2007: Community involvement.

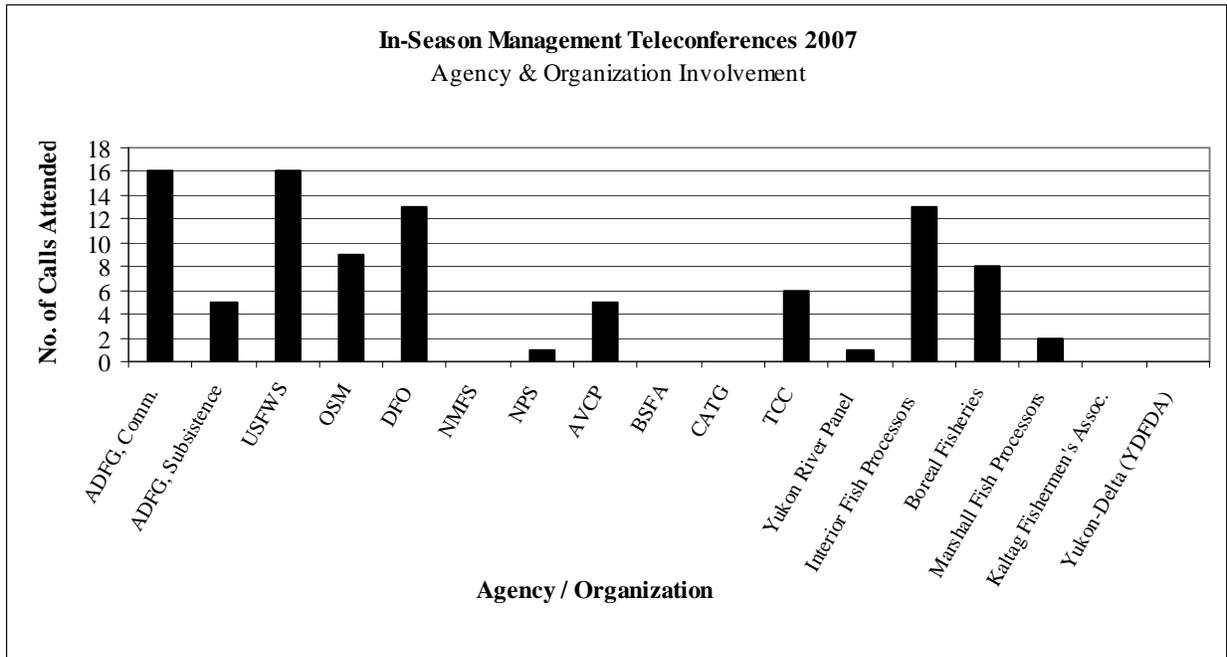


Figure 2. In-Season Management Teleconferences 2007: Agency and organization involvement.

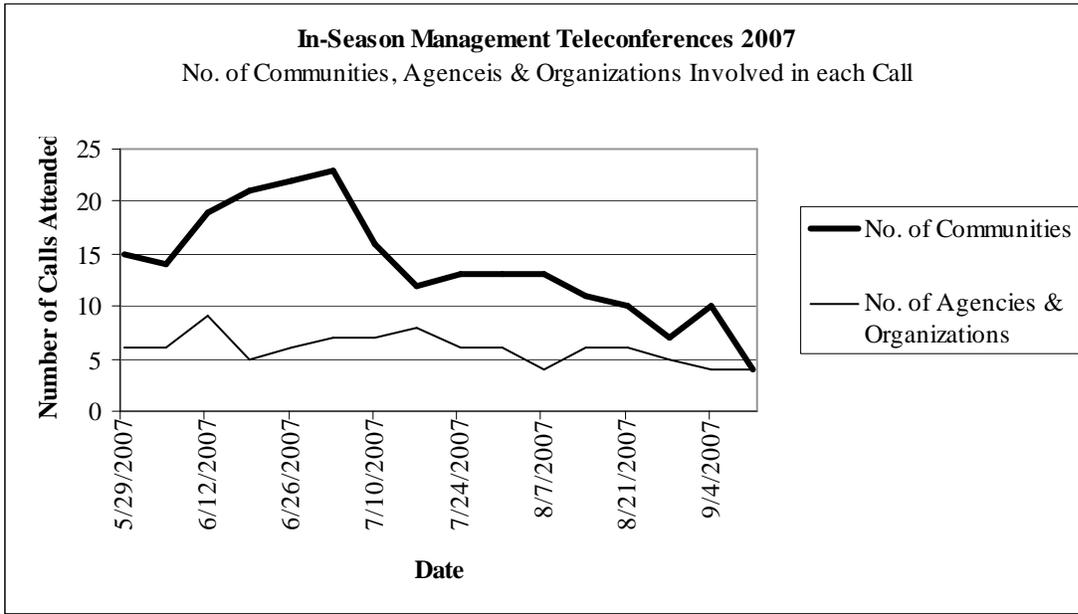


Figure 3. In-Season Management Teleconferences 2007: Number of communities, agencies, and organizations involved in each call.

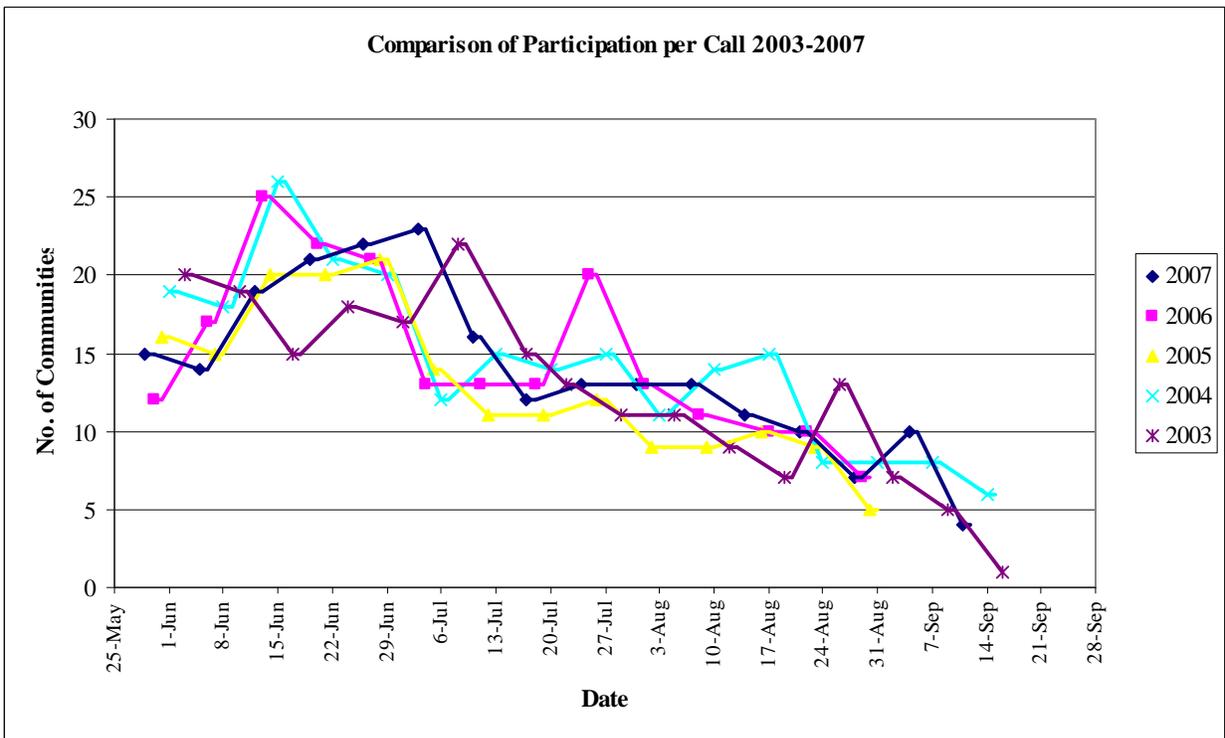


Figure 4. Comparison of participation per call 2003-2007.

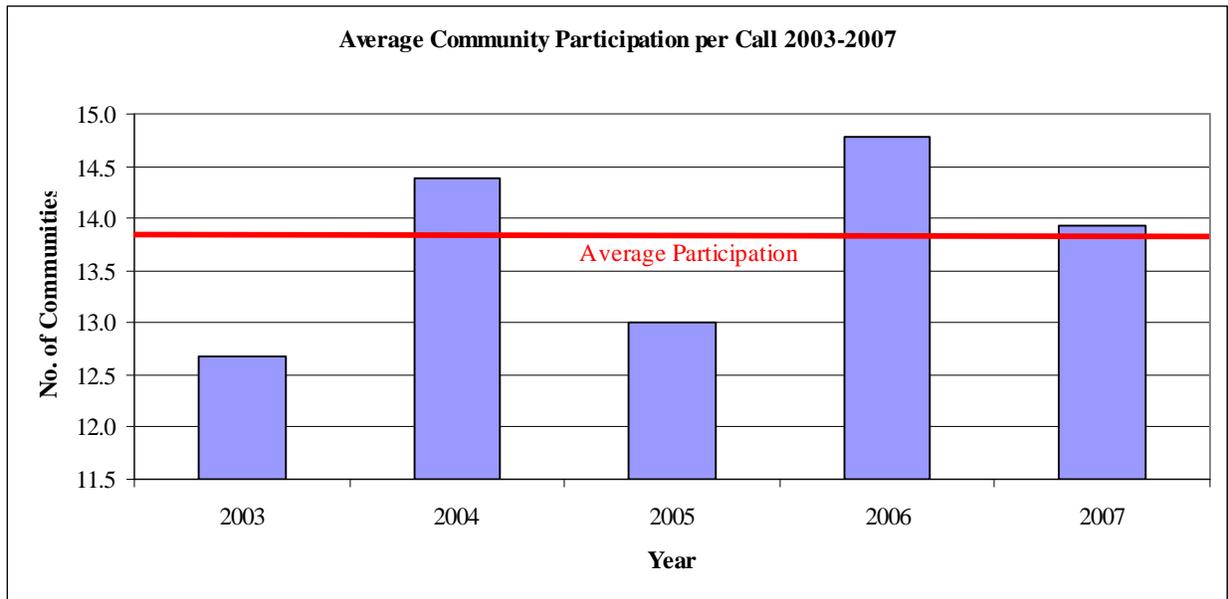


Figure 5. Average community participation per call 2003-2007.

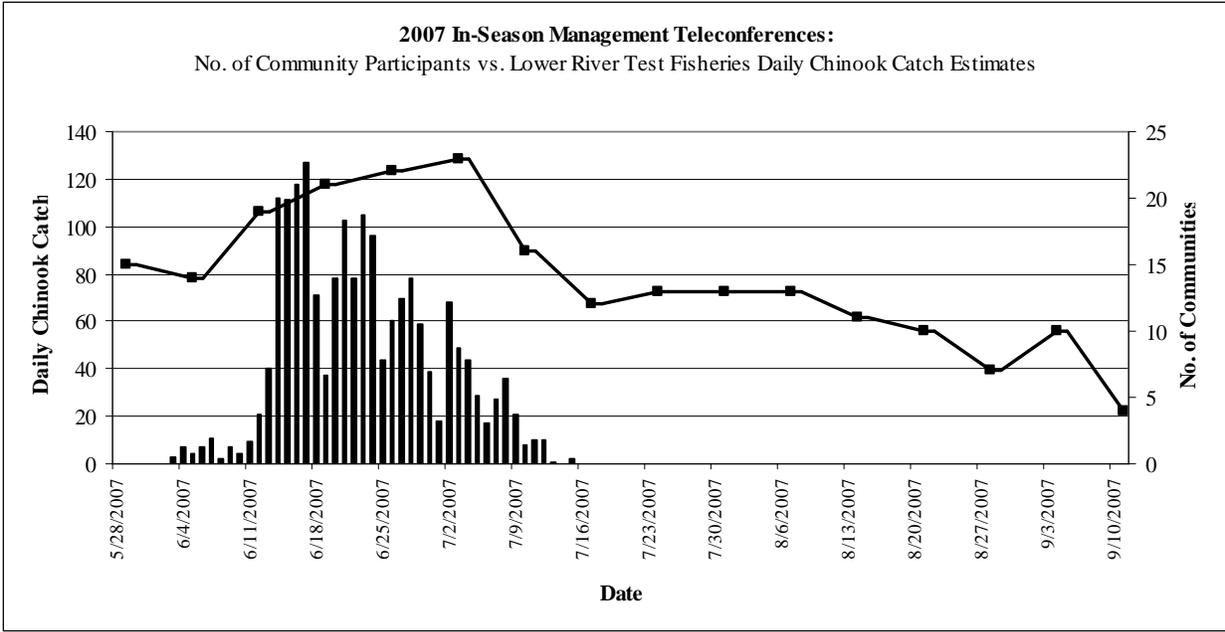


Figure 6. In-Season Management Teleconferences 2007: Number of community participants vs. Lower River test fisheries daily Chinook catch estimates.

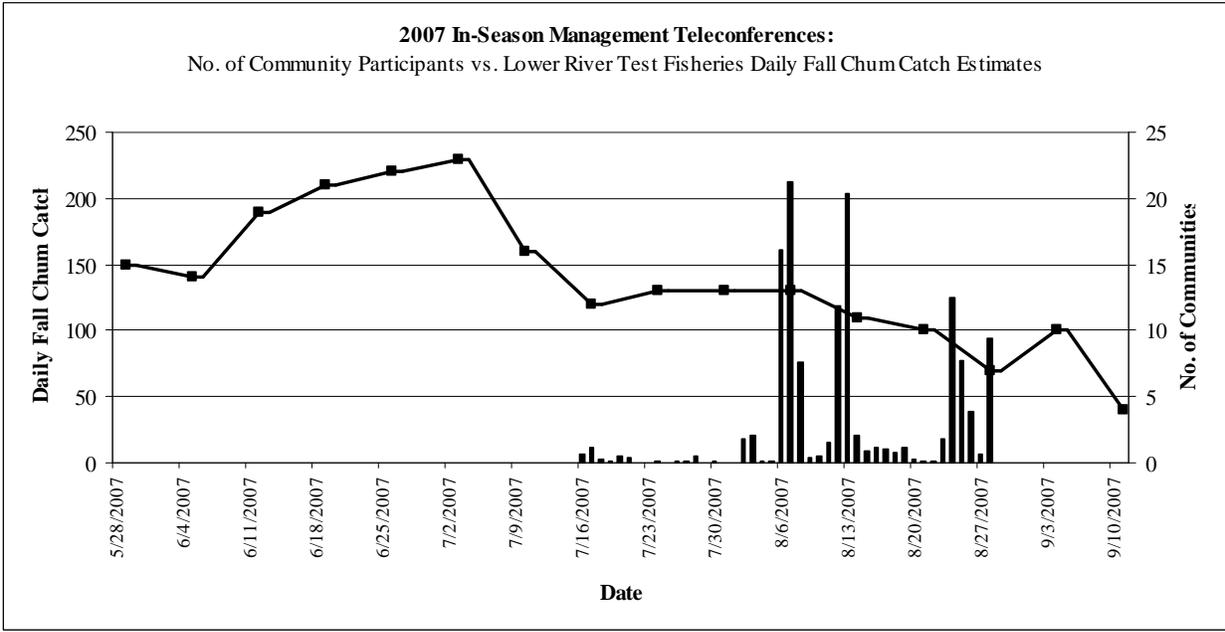


Figure 7. In-Season Management Teleconferences 2007: Number of community participants vs. Lower River test fisheries daily fall chum catch estimates.

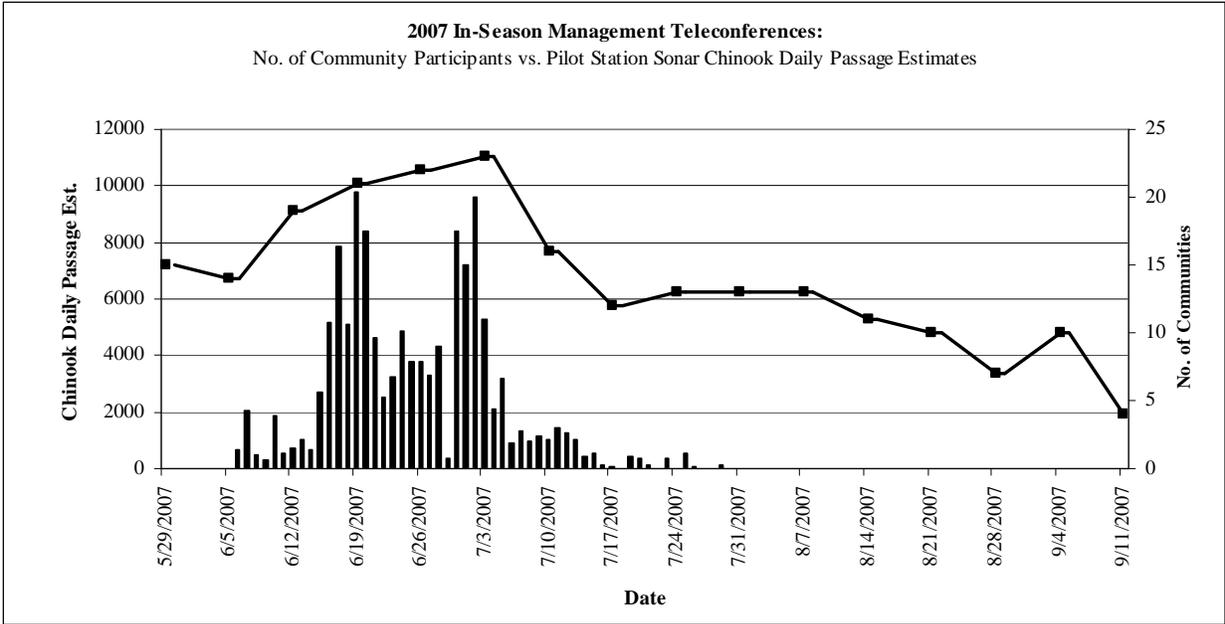


Figure 8. In-Season Management Teleconferences 2007: Number of community participants vs. Pilot Station sonar daily Chinook passage estimates.

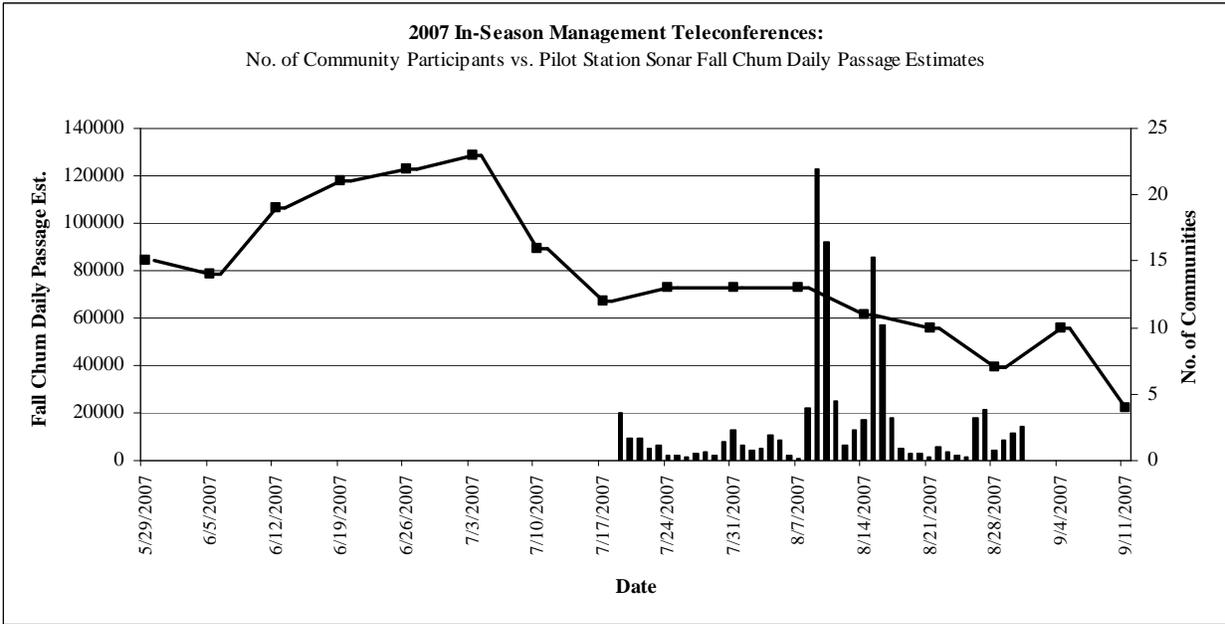


Figure 9. In-Season Management Teleconferences 2007: Number of community participants vs. Pilot Station sonar daily fall chum passage estimates.

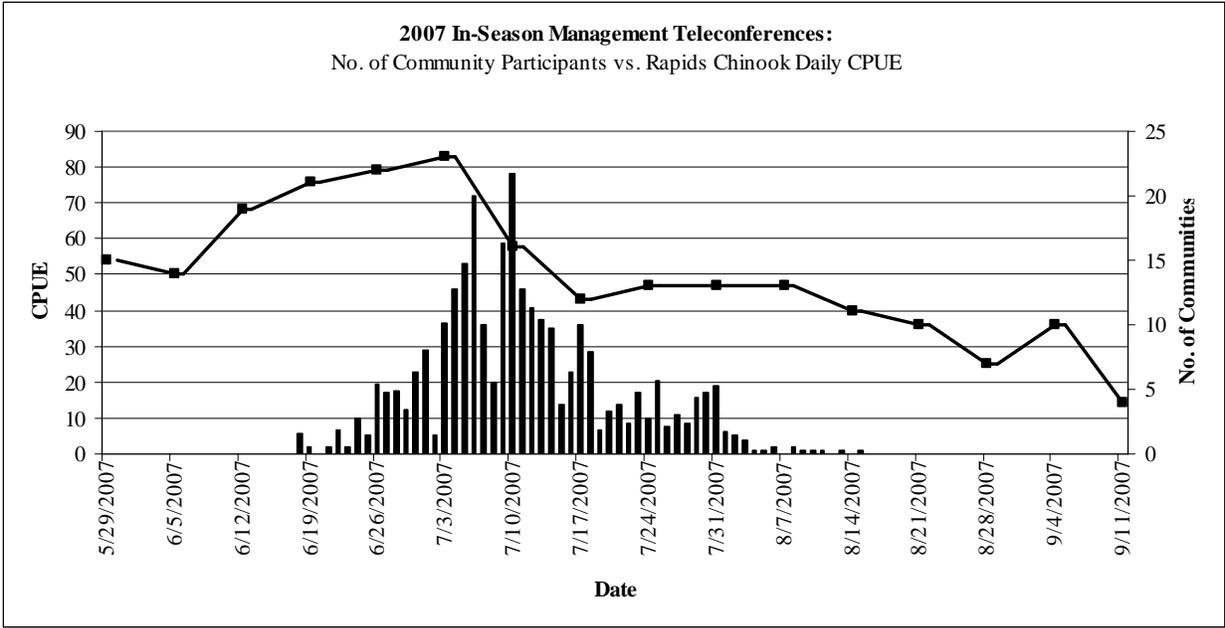


Figure 10. In-Season Management Teleconferences 2007: Number of community participants vs. Rapids Chinook daily CPUE.

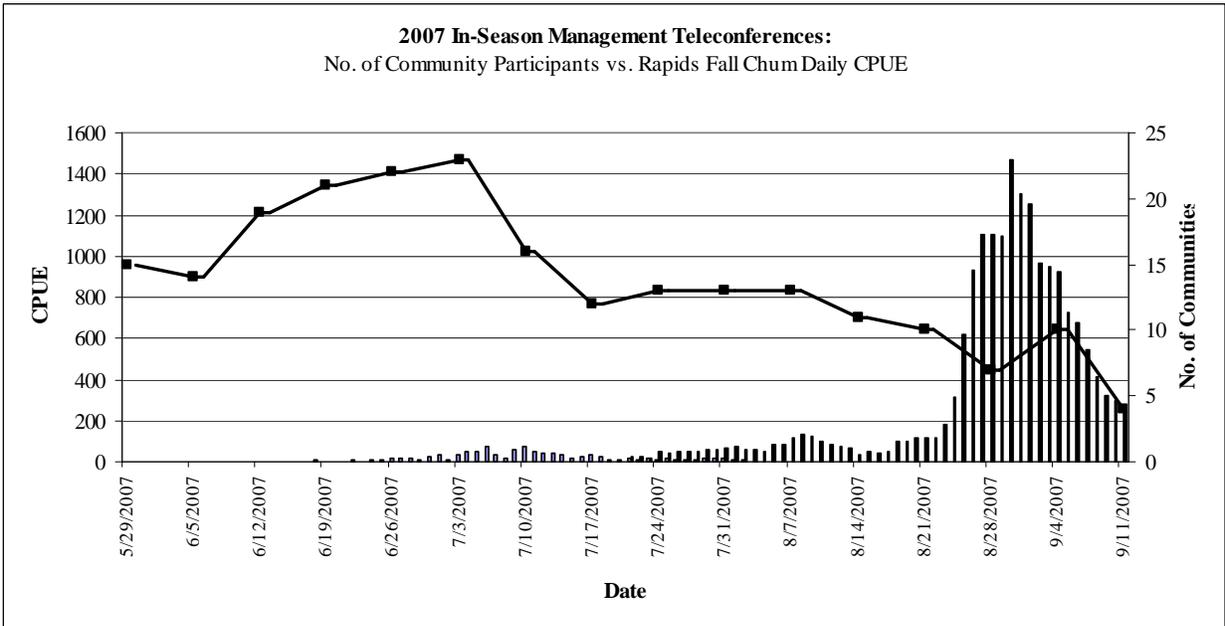


Figure 11. In-Season Management Teleconferences 2007: Number of community participants vs. Rapids fall chum daily CPUE.

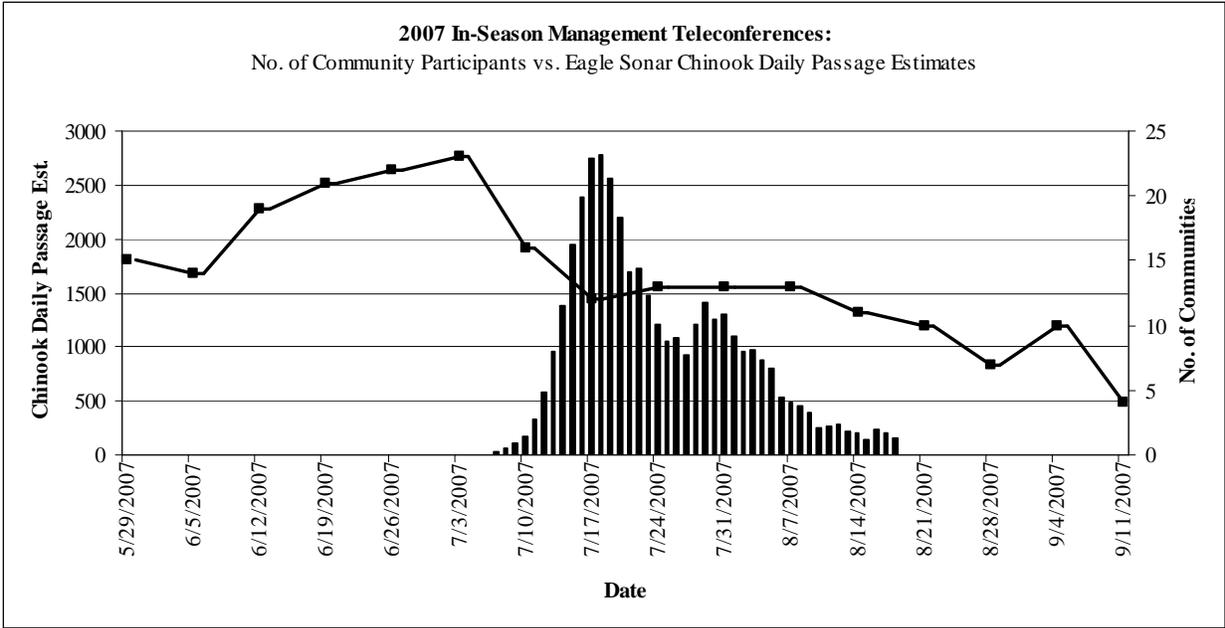


Figure 12. In-Season Management Teleconferences 2007: Number of community participants vs. Eagle sonar Chinook daily passage estimates.

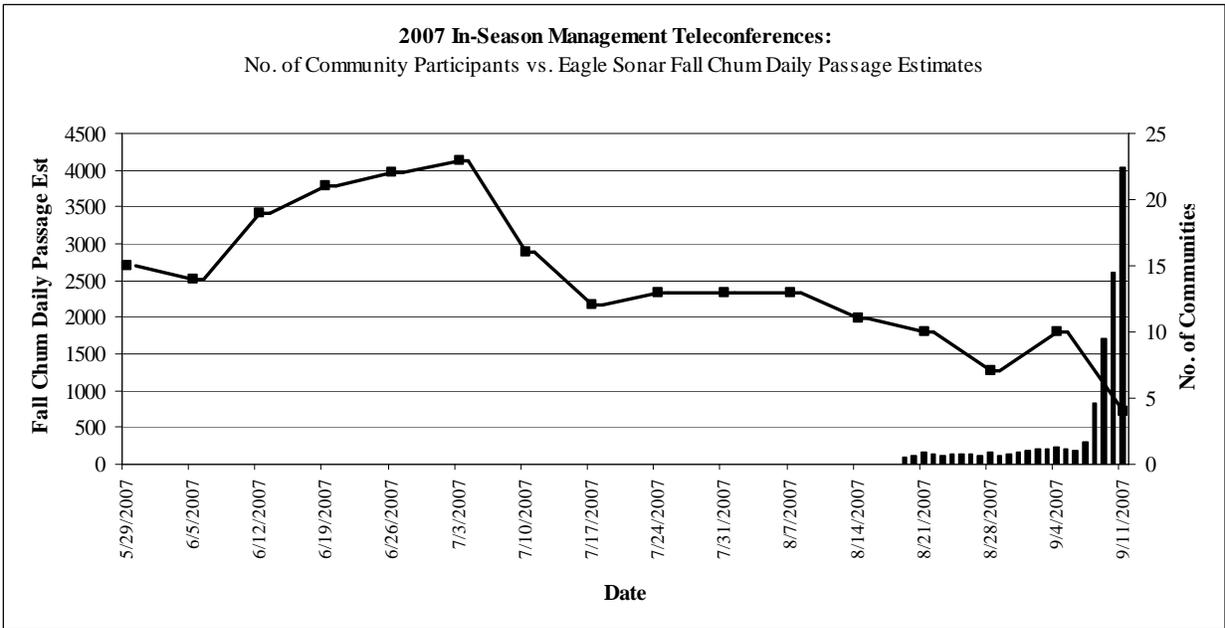


Figure 13. In-Season Management Teleconferences 2007: Number of community participants vs. Eagle sonar fall chum daily passage estimates.

APPENDIX A

Pre-Season letter (Example)



YUKON RIVER DRAINAGE FISHERIES ASSOCIATION

725 Christensen Drive, Suite 3-B, Anchorage, Alaska 99501 Tel: 907-272-3141 Toll free: 877-999-8566
Fax: 907-272-3142 E-mail: info@yukonsalmon.org

In-Season salmon Management Teleconferences 2007

**Teleconference Number: 1-800-315-MEET (6338)
participant code: 9966815#**

Mission of the teleconferences:

- ❖ exchange information on run timing, abundance, and escapement data and
- ❖ Discuss management strategies
- ❖ facilitate dialogue between users and managers and
- ❖ Enable fishery users up and down the river, including Canadians to talk.

Details of the teleconferences:

- ❖ Start date: May 29, 2007
- ❖ 1:00 pm Alaska time
- ❖ Tuesdays until the fish reach the spawning grounds
- ❖ Usually one (1) hour long
- ❖ Open to the public
- ❖ Consistent participation is helpful to participate in decision-making
- ❖ Meet at the Tribal and city offices or call from home, but lines are limited
- ❖ Designated speakers enable us to make better use of time.

Agenda of the teleconferences:

- ❖ Village Identification & Subsistence Reports
- ❖ Management Update
- ❖ Management Strategy
- ❖ Local Input
- ❖ Closing Comments

Subsistence Questions for the teleconferences:

- ❖ Are your catches up or down and what is your assessment of run strength?
- ❖ How far along are fishers in their subsistence harvests?
- ❖ What is the quality of the fish?
- ❖ What are the current river conditions?

Rules of the teleconferences:

- ❖ A river-wide perspective
- ❖ Priority to meet escapement (this includes US/Canada treaty obligations)
- ❖ Priority use for subsistence fishers
- ❖ Other uses such as commercial fisheries, personal use and sport when there are enough fish
- ❖ State your name and village location before speaking
- ❖ Calls will require brief, concise and short statements to enable all participants to communicate
- ❖ Listen to others, be polite, and state your opinion clearly.

Get involved

Learn about fisheries management

Make your voice heard

Go fishing and tell us about it!

One more time...

The teleconference number:

1-800-315-MEET (6338)

Participant code: 9966815#

APPENDIX B

Pre-Season Reminder Card (Example)



APPENDIX C

Weekly Teleconference Summaries

Call #1 – May 29, 2007

Sponsored by: Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA)

Funded by: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Office of Subsistence Management and
The Yukon River Panel

Communities involved in the call: Alakanuk, Emmonak, Mountain Village, St. Mary's, Pilot Station, Marshall, Holy Cross, Nulato, Huslia, Galena, Nenana, Minto, Tanana, Eagle, Mayo

Government and Other Organizations/Entities:

ADFG - Emmonak, Anchorage, Fairbanks
USFWS - Anchorage, Fairbanks, Galena
AVCP - Bethel
Interior Fish
Boreal Fisheries

Subsistence Reports: Salmon have not been seen on the river yet, and no one is fishing for salmon yet. In many communities, fishers are preparing fish camps. Sheefish, whitefish, and/or pike subsistence fishing is reported in Mountain Village, Holy Cross, Huslia, along the Tanana River, and Tanana.

This year's breakup was reported as uneventful. Generally, debris levels are low to moderate. Water levels are low, especially downriver, but they are beginning to rise upriver. Above average snow pack is reported upriver, so a rise in water levels is anticipated.

Management Updates: Subsistence fishing efforts are light, and there are no confirmed salmon catches to date. The Emmonak Fish & Game office is open, and nets for the test fishery went out May 28 in at Big Eddy. In Pilot Station, boats and sonar are being put into the water ahead of schedule, despite difficulties due to low water levels. USFWS will be doing the same escapement assessment projects that it has done in the past.

Run & Harvest Outlook:

Type of Salmon	Run Size	Provide for Escapement & Subsistence?	Commercial Harvest (# of fish anticipated)
Chinook	Average to below average	Yes	30,000-60,000
Summer Chum	Average	Yes	500,000-900,000
Fall Chum	Average	Yes	50,000-400,000
Coho	Average to above average	Yes	50,000-70,000

Subsistence Fishing Schedule:

<i>Area</i>	Regulatory Subsistence Fishing Periods	Schedule to Begin	Days of the Week
Coastal District	7 days/week	By Regulation	M/T/W/TH/F/SA/SU – 24 hours
District 1	Two 36-hour periods/week	May 28, 2007	Mon. 8 pm to Wed. 8 am /Thu. 8 pm to Sat. 8 am
District 2	Two 36-hour periods/week	May 30, 2007	Wed. 8 pm to Fri. 8 am / Sun. 8 pm to Tue. 8 am
District 3	Two 36-hour periods/week	June 1, 2007	Fri. 8 am to Sat. 8 pm / Tue. 8 am to Wed. 8 pm
District 4	Two 48-hour periods/week	June 10, 2007	Sun. 6 pm to Tue. 6 pm / Wed. 6 pm to Fri. 6 pm
Koyukuk River	7 days/week	By Regulation	M/T/W/TH/F/SA/SU – 24 hours
Subdistricts 5-A, B, C	Two 48-hour periods/week	June 19, 2007	Tue. 6 pm to Thu. 6 pm /Fri. 6 pm to Sun. 6 pm
Subdistrict 5-D	7 days/week	By Regulation	M/T/W/TH/F/SA/SU – 24 hours
District 6	Two 42-hour periods/week	By Regulation	Mon. 6 pm to Wed. Noon /Fri. 6 pm to Sun. Noon
Old Minto Area	5 days/week	By Regulation	Friday 6 pm to Wednesday 6 pm

Notes:

- This schedule is subject to change depending on run strength.
- During subsistence salmon fishing closures, all gillnets with a mesh size greater than four inches must be removed from the water.

Marking of Subsistence Caught Fish:

The Alaska Board of Fisheries passed a new regulation for the 2007 fishing season. In Districts 1-3, from June 1 to July 15 a person may not possess king salmon taken for subsistence uses unless both tips (lobes) of the tail fin have been removed. Marking must be done before the person conceals the salmon from plain view or transfers the salmon from the fishing site. A person may not sell or purchase salmon from which both lobes of the tail fin have been removed.

For more information on management updates, please refer to ADFG’s *2007 Yukon River Summer Salmon Fishery News Release #2, 2007 Yukon River Salmon Fisheries Outlook, and 2007 Subsistence Fishing Schedule*. To receive weekly updates from ADFG, register at <http://csfish.adfg.state.ak.us/newsrelease/select.php?dist=YUS>.

Local Input & Closing Comments: There was much discussion about the new regulation to cut both lobes of the tail fin from subsistence king salmon in Districts 1-3 from June 1 to July 15. It was noted that this change should help with the freezer burn issue caused by the previous marking method of cutting the dorsal fin.

Also, some fishers expressed concern that the current fishing schedule might need to be adjusted to match the salmon run. ADFG assured teleconference participants that the schedule is subject to change based on key conditions.

Call #2– June 5, 2007

Sponsored by: Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA)

Funded by: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Office of Subsistence Management and The Yukon River Panel

- Agenda:**
- Village identification and subsistence reports
 - Management update by Alaska Department of Fish and Game; follow-up by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
 - Local input by YRDFA Board Members, Coordinating Fisheries Committee, Inter-Tribal consortiums, and/or Yukon River Panel Members
 - Public comments

Communities involved in the call: Alakanuk, Emmonak, Mountain Village, St. Mary's, Pilot Station, Marshall, Holy Cross, Nulato, Huslia, Galena, Nenana, Minto, Tanana, Eagle, Mayo

Government and Other Organizations/Entities:

ADFG – Emmonak, Anchorage
USFWS – Anchorage, Fairbanks, Galena
Marshall Fish Processor
Interior Fish

Subsistence Reports: The first Chinook and Chum salmon of the season are being caught on the lower river. High fuel prices are keeping many from fishing until salmon are running “thick” in their areas. Generally, the water level is low but rising. On the middle and upper river levels have risen 2-5 feet this week, carrying lots of debris. Fishers are catching a few whitefish and/or pike outside Emmonak and on the Tanana River.

Management Updates: The first reported subsistence caught king salmon was harvested on June 2 near Emmonak. Water levels have increased slightly but are still lower than normal. The USFWS office in Emmonak is open; the phone number is 949-1798. Subsistence fishers should contact the ADFG office in Emmonak regularly at 949-1320 or channel 7A on VHF with reports of fish caught.

The Lower River test fishery project became fully operational on June 1; a total of 13 kings were caught through the morning of June 5. The Pilot Station sonar project also became fully operational as of June 1; no salmon were caught through the morning of June 5. The Marshall drift project will begin test fishing on June 11.

Run and Harvest Outlook: Although break up in the lower river occurred with near average timing, there is insufficient data at this time to estimate the run timing for king salmon entering the lower river. However, cooler than average sea surface temperatures in April and lingering ice flows near the mouth of the Yukon River may effect run timing. Once salmon abundance increases, the department will move from the preseason run projection to the inseason assessment of the runs. The department may schedule a commercial salmon fishing period near

the first quarter point (historically, June 15) in District 1 or 2, which may be of short duration. Additional commercial periods will be spread over the middle 50 percent of the run. Fishing periods after the third quarter point will depend on information from assessment projects and available markets. The current run projections are as follows:

Type of Salmon	Run Size	Provide for Escapement & Subsistence?	Commercial Harvest (# of fish anticipated)
Chinook	Average to below average	Yes	30,000-60,000
Summer Chum	Average	Yes	500,000-900,000

Marking of Subsistence Caught Fish: The Alaska Board of Fisheries passed a new regulation for the 2007 fishing season. **In Districts 1-3, from June 1 to July 15 a person may not possess king salmon taken for subsistence uses unless both tips (lobes) of the tail fin have been removed.** Marking must be done before the person conceals the salmon from plain view or transfers the salmon from the fishing site. A person may not sell or purchase salmon from which both lobes of the tail fin have been removed.

Subsistence Fishing Schedule:

Coastal District: By Regulation, 7 days per week 24 hours a day.

District 1: Monday 8 p.m. to Wednesday 8 a.m. / Thursday 8 p.m. to Saturday 8 a.m.

District 2: Wednesday 8 p.m. to Friday 8 a.m. / Sunday 8 p.m. to Tuesday 8 a.m.

District 3: Friday 8 a.m. to Saturday 8 p.m. / Tuesday 8 a.m. to Wednesday 8 p.m.

District 4: Will go on regulatory schedule beginning June 10.

Subdistricts 5A, 5B&C: Will go on regulatory schedule beginning June 19.

Subdistrict 5D: By Regulation, 7 days per week 24 hours a day.

District 6: By Regulation, Monday 6 p.m. to Wed. Noon /Friday 6 p.m. to Sunday Noon

Old Minto Area: By Regulation, 5 days per week from Fridays 6:00 p.m. to Wed. 6:00 p.m.

Innoko River: Effective June 1, 7 days per week 24 hours a day.

Koyukuk River: By Regulation, 7 days per week 24 hours a day.

(Note: Schedules are subject to change depending on run strength)

News Releases and Updates: These are available online and available for free subscription. Please visit the Yukon home page at <http://www.cf.adfg.state.ak.us/region3/yukhome.php> to access them and/or sign up for a subscription. Select either the Summer or Fall News Releases.

Local Input & Closing Comments: There was a question as to why there is a subsistence schedule before the commercial fishing season starts. It was indicated that the Board of Fisheries (BOF) assessed that the Chinook yield is still a concern so it is spreading out the early harvest. A listing of BOF members and contact information can be found at <http://www.boards.adfg.state.ak.us/fishinfo/member/fmemadd.php>.

A concern was also raised about a possible increase in fish with diseases or parasites. ADFG will be sampling in Emmonak this summer and should have more information by the fall.

Lastly, as requested, YR DFA is adding an option to its voicemail that will provide callers with the phone number and access code for the teleconferences. This feature will be available as of June 12 at (907) 272-3141 or 1-877-99-YUKON (98566).

Call #3– June 12, 2007

Sponsored by: Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA)

Funded by: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Office of Subsistence Management and
The Yukon River Panel

Communities involved in the call: Hooper Bay, Alakanuk, Emmonak, Mountain Village, St. Mary’s, Pilot Station, Marshall, Holy Cross, Grayling, Allakaket, Huslia, Galena, Ruby, Nenana, Tanana, Rampart, Fort Yukon, Dawson, and Mayo

Government and Other Organizations/Entities:

ADFG – Emmonak, Fairbanks, Pilot Station	Marshall Fish Processor
USFWS – Emmonak, Anchorage, Fairbanks	Interior Fish
AVCP	Boreal Fisheries
TCC	

Subsistence Reports: The first strong pulse of Chinook and Chum salmon has arrived in coastal areas, Alakanuk, and Emmonak. Fish quality is reported to be very high, and those who are fishing reported good success. From Mountain Village to Galena the water is rising, it contains some debris, and there are a few salmon coming through. The furthest upstream reported harvest of Chinook was in Galena on Monday. Upriver from Galena the river level is normal-to-high, and other than a few whitefish and pike no one is catching anything. All along the river the high price of gas is of concern to fishers and causing most to wait for a strong pulse before going fishing.

Management Updates: ADFG has changed the format of its updates. To be added to State news releases or data updates, send a request to maureen_horne-brine@fishgame.state.ak.us.

ADFG is flying aerial surveys to see how many people are out fishing. As noted above, effort is low but expected to increase as the strength of the run increases. Also, in response to Board of Fisheries proposals concerning fish size, ADFG is conducting a study to determine the effects of mesh size on the age, sex, length, weight, girth, and incidental catch. Updates will be given sporadically on the weekly teleconferences. The ADFG office in Emmonak can be contacted at **949-1320** or channel **7A** on VHF.

USFWS will be ready to count fish at the Andrafsky and Gisasa weirs June 22, the Tozitna weir on June 25, and the Henshaw weir on June 29. Information will be posted on the ADFG updates as it becomes available.

Lower River test set net project – Became fully operational June 1. The first king salmon was caught on June 3 in Big Eddy. The cumulative CPUE through June 11 for king salmon is 0.54. The cumulative CPUE is below the 1989-2006 average of 3.81 for this date.

Pilot Station sonar project – Became fully operational June 1. The preliminary Pilot Station sonar passage estimate through June 11 is 5,900 kings and 6,700 summer chum salmon. The current king salmon passage estimate is below the average of 13,600 kings for this date. The current chum salmon passage estimate is below the average of 33,200 for this date.

Marshall Drift project – Began test fishing on June 11. No salmon have been caught.

Age Composition – The king salmon age composition from the set net test fishery through June 10 is 2% age-4, 24% age-5, and 74% age-6 fish. The percentage of age-6 fish in 2007 is 11% above the 1988-2006 average. The percentage of females is 33%. The average weight is 7.9 lbs for age-4, 15.1 lbs for age-5, and 24.3 lbs for age-6 fish. The sample size is 45 fish.

Assessment – All indicators suggest later than normal run timing for king salmon this year, and the timing and size of the run should be similar to 2006. King salmon catches are expected to begin increasing around June 14-16. The run is anticipated to provide for escapements, support a normal subsistence harvest, and a below average commercial harvest. If inseason indicators of run strength suggest sufficient abundance exists to have a commercial fishery, the commercial harvest could range from 30,000 to 60,000 king salmon based on current expectations.

In 2006, ADFG set an early commercial opening in the lower river on the historical first quarter point of the run (on June 15). The opening was 3 hours in duration and was intended to foster early commercial interest in Yukon River kings. Consistent with the preseason management approach, the department is considering a June 15 commercial opening of 3-6 hours for the 2007 season as well. Should commercial fishing occur on June 15, additional commercial fishing would be delayed until the first quarter point of the 2007 king run. At this time the department anticipates an announcement on June 14 for a possible June 15 opening.

Current subsistence fishing schedule –

Coastal District: By Regulation, 7 days per week 24 hours a day.

District 1: Monday 8 p.m. to Wednesday 8 a.m. / Thursday 8 p.m. to Saturday 8 a.m.

District 2: Wednesday 8 p.m. to Friday 8 a.m. / Sunday 8 p.m. to Tuesday 8 a.m.

District 3: Friday 8 a.m. to Saturday 8 p.m. / Tuesday 8 a.m. to Wednesday 8 p.m.

District 4: Sunday 6 p.m. to Tuesday 6 p.m. / Wednesday 6 p.m. to Friday 6 p.m.

Subdistricts 5A, 5B&C: Begins regulatory subsistence schedule on June 19.

Subdistrict 5D: By Regulation, 7 days per week 24 hours a day.

District 6: By Regulation, Monday 6 p.m. to Wednesday Noon /Friday 6 p.m. to Sunday Noon

Old Minto Area: By Regulation, 5 days per week from Fridays 6:00 p.m. to Wed. 6:00 p.m.

Innoko River: Effective June 1, 7 days per week 24 hours a day.

Koyukuk River: By Regulation, 7 days per week 24 hours a day.

Local Input & Closing Comments: There was much discussion around the possible commercial opening on June 15. It was stated that the purpose of this opening is to foster early commercial interest in Yukon River kings, just like last year. Many felt that this approach will be good for fishers all along the river. Also, it was reported that runs are late on the Kuskokwim River and around Hooper Bay.

Call #4 – June 19, 2007

Funded by: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Office of Subsistence Management and
The Yukon River Panel

Communities involved in the call: Hooper Bay, Emmonak, St. Mary’s, Pilot Station, Marshall, Holy Cross, Grayling, Kaltag, Nulato, Alatna, Huslia, Koyukuk, Galena, Ruby, Nenana, Minto, Tanana, Rampart, Old Crow, Dawson, Mayo

Government and Other Organizations/Entities:

ADFG – Emmonak, Fairbanks, Pilot Station	TCC
USFWS – Emmonak, Fairbanks, Galena	Boreal Fisheries

Subsistence Reports: From Pilot Station to the mouth of the river, 40-80% of subsistence fishing is done, the quality of the fish is good, and water levels are holding steady. From the G.A.S.H. region upriver there are not many fish and very little fishing, though there are some reports of pike, whitefish, and sheefish being caught in the Middle River region. The furthest upstream reported harvest of Chinook is in Tanana. In the upper river, water levels are dropping slowly, and people are setting up fish camps and building fish wheels. The price of gas is a major concern along the river, as it continues to rise.

Management Updates: USFWS started count fish today at the Andrafsky weir; during installation the crew saw no salmon below the weir. It is anticipated that counting will begin at the Gisasa and Tozitna weirs on June 25. Information will be posted on the ADFG updates as it becomes available.

Lower River test set net project – Detected first pulse of king salmon beginning June 14. The CPUE through June 18 is 6.80, which is below the 1989-2006 average of 9.54 but above the 2006 cumulative CPUE of 4.79 for the same date.

Pilot Station sonar project – Preliminary sonar passage estimate through June 17 is 23,954 kings and 155,123 summer chum salmon. These figures are below historic averages of 42,000 kings and 186,000 chum Salmon through June 17.

Marshall Drift project – Began test fishing on June 11. The cumulative CPUE through June 18 is 118.32, which is above the 1999-2000, 2005-2006 average of 62.32 for the same date.

Age Composition – King salmon from the set net test fishery through June 17: 2% age-4, 21% age-5, 76% age-6 fish, and 1% age-7 fish. The percentage of age-6 fish in 2007 is 13% above the 1988-2006 average. The percentage of females is 49%. The average weight is 7.4 lbs for age-4, 14.8 lbs for age-5, and 22.1 lbs for age-6 fish. The sample size is 196 fish.

The king salmon age composition from the 3-hour commercial harvest in District Y2 on June 15 is 2% age-4, 25% age-5, 71% age-6 fish, and 2% age-7 fish. The percentage of females is 57%. The sample size is 316 fish.

Chum salmon age composition from the subsistence harvest near Emmonak is 16% age-4, 63% age-5, and 21% age-6 fish. The percentage of age-5 and age-6 fish in 2007 is above the average. The sample size is 107 fish.

Commercial Harvest – Similar to 2006, ADFG scheduled a short commercial period to foster early commercial interest in Yukon River kings. The first commercial fishing period in the lower river occurred in District Y-2 on June 15. This was a 3-hour period with unrestricted mesh size gillnets, and the harvest was approximately 2,100 kings (\$3.00 to \$3.50/lb) and 150 chum salmon (\$0.05 to \$0.15/lb).

Assessment – The 2007 king salmon run timing is estimated to be 3-4 days later than average and similar to 2006 run timing.

Current subsistence fishing schedule –

Coastal District: By Regulation, 7 days per week 24 hours per day.

District 1 and 2: Subsistence fishing closures around commercial fishing periods have been changed in Districts 1 and 2 to 12 hours immediately before, during, and 6 hours after each commercial fishing period.

District 3: Fridays 8 a.m. to Saturdays 8 p.m. / Tuesdays 8 a.m. to Wed. 8 p.m.

District 4: Sundays 6 p.m. to Tuesdays 6 p.m. / Wed. 6 p.m. to Fridays 6 p.m.

Subdistricts 5A,B,C: Tuesdays 6 p.m. to Thursdays 6 p.m. / Fridays 6 p.m. to Sundays 6 p.m.

Subdistrict 5D: By Regulation, 7 days per week 24 hours a day.

District 6: By Regulation, Mondays 6 p.m. to Wed. Noon / Fridays 6 p.m. to Sundays Noon

Old Minto Area: By Regulation, 5 days per week from Fridays 6:00 p.m. to Wed. 6:00 p.m.

Innoko River: Effective June 1, 7 days per week 24 hours per day.

Koyukuk River: By Regulation, 7 days per week 24 hours per day.

Current commercial actions – The commercial fishing season will open in District Y-1 on Monday June 18 from 5:00 p.m. Monday, June 18, until 2:00 a.m. Tuesday, June 19. This will be a 9-hour commercial fishing period with unrestricted mesh size gillnets.

In District Y-2 the next commercial fishing period will be at 8:00 a.m., Tuesday, June 19, until 10:00 a.m., Tuesday, June 19. This is a 2-hour commercial fishing period with gillnets restricted to 6 inch maximum mesh size gillnets to target chum salmon.

If you have any questions, you can contact Steve Hayes, Eric Newland, or Kevin Clark in the Emmonak ADF&G office at 949-1320.

Local Input & Closing Comments: It was noted that this week Yukon fish are being sold in the cities of Seattle, Tacoma, Portland, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Denver, Chicago, Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Washington DC, and Charlotte.

There were questions concerning the size of this year's run. The quarter point for the Lower River test set was June 18, and it is too early to project final run size.

A great deal of discussion centered on the commercial schedules and markets. Commercial fishers want/need better prices for chum and more fishing opportunities now, but processors and fishery managers need time to foster better prices for the future. Managers reported that they have shorter fishing periods due to market constraints while they rebuild the Yukon River chum market. They explain that this is due to sparse chum fisheries in the recent past on the River. A lower river fisherman discussed how difficult it is for fishermen to meet their needs and how commercial fishing periods are needed to help alleviate hard economic conditions. He closed the call by stating that everyone needs to work together

Call #5 – June 26, 2007

Funded by: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Office of Subsistence Management and
The Yukon River Panel

Communities involved in the call: Hooper Bay, Emmonak, Pilot Station, Marshall, Anvik, Grayling, Kaltag, Nulato, Alatna, Huslia, Koyukuk, Galena, Ruby, Nenana, Minto, Rampart, Ft. Yukon, Venetie, Eagle, Old Crow, Dawson, Mayo

Government and Other Organizations/Entities:

ADFG – Emmonak, Fairbanks, Galena, Pilot Station	TCC
USFWS – Emmonak, Anchorage, Fairbanks, Galena	Interior Fish
DFO – Dawson, Whitehorse	

Subsistence Reports: From Anvik downriver, it was reported that 5-100 percent of subsistence fishing is done, with most reporting that more than 50 percent is complete. In those areas fish were described as high quality, though in Hooper Bay there are far fewer kings than chums. Water levels are holding steady in the lower river.

From Grayling through Rampart fishers are just getting started, and the first pulse has just past Grayling. Rampart is the furthest upstream that a salmon catch has been reported to date. Reports from Ruby conveyed that fish are of small size and poor quality. On the Koyukuk River fishers are catching some pike and whitefish. Water levels in these areas are dropping slightly. From the Yukon Flats upriver, there are no fish yet and water levels are dropping.

Management Updates: Based on subsistence reports, current test fish catches and sonar passage estimates, the 2007 king salmon run timing is estimated to be 3-4 days later than average. Since June 20, these reports also suggest that king salmon are entering the river at a steady rate rather than the typical pulse pattern and not as strong overall as anticipated.

ADFG’s test nets observed the first pulse of king salmon from June 14 through June 17 and the second pulse from June 20 to June 24. ADFG is projecting the first quarter point will be around June 17-18 at the lower river test fishery this year. With the late run-timing and unusual entry pattern of the king salmon, it is difficult to predict the midpoint of the king run at this time.

The Pilot Station sonar project cumulative passage estimate of 64,900 kings through June 25 is 29% below the average of 91,300 through this date. The projected first quarter point was around June 20-21 this year with a passage estimate range of 39,000 to 52,000 kings.

At this time, summer chum run-timing appears to be approximately normal. The second pulse of chum salmon was detected by lower river subsistence fishers beginning on June 19. The current Pilot Station sonar passage estimate through June 25 of 627,300 summer chum salmon is below the historical average of 770,000 for this date. Summer chum run is projected to total 1.5 million fish for the season.

Assessment Projects –

Lower River test set net project: Cumulative CPUE for king salmon through June 25 is 12.43, which is below the 1989-2006 average of 16.12 for the same date.

Pilot Station sonar project: see figures on page 1 of this summary.

Marshall Drift project: Cumulative CPUE through June 24 is 317.17, which is near the 1999-2000, 2005-2006 average of 343.57 for the same date.

Anvik River sonar & Henshaw Creek Weir: both should be operational within next few days.

E. Fork Andreafsky River Weir, Gisasa River Weir, Henshaw Creek Weir, & Tozitna River Weir: all report low fish passage numbers.

Commercial Harvest – The preliminary season harvest total for Districts Y-1, Y-2, and Y-3 is 20,867 kings and 25,214 summer chum.

Current subsistence fishing schedule; current commercial actions; and age, sex, and weight composition – Please visit <http://www.cf.adfg.state.ak.us/region3/yukhome.php> for this information. For recorded Lower Yukon fishery announcements and updates call the 24-hour hotline in Emmonak at 949-1731. For current subsistence and commercial fishing information concerning the Upper Yukon fishery, call toll free outside of Fairbanks (1-866) 479-7387, and in Fairbanks 459-7387.

Market Report: Interest is strong in Yukon salmon, which is being sold in the Midwestern U.S., the east coast, and Chicago.

Local Input & Closing Comments: There was much discussion about the size and projected quarter point of the king salmon run. ADFG relayed that given the abnormal pattern of fish this year – steady stream instead of several distinct pulses – it is difficult to determine the timing of the run. A theory was presented that this year fish are entering the river from all mouths, which is unusual, and that perhaps this explains the steadier pattern of the kings. Regardless, it was projected that the quarter point was between June 17 and June 18 this year, and that the size of the king run was below average at that time. A subsistence fisher commented that the commercial catch numbers seem high given that the run is below average at this time, and another subsistence fisher noted that everyone needs to work together.

Since Subdistricts 4-B and 4-C were going to one 5-day/week subsistence opening and the federal regulation only provided for one 18-hour opening at the end of a subsistence period, USFWS asked for local input on whether on 18-hour subsistence drift period for subsistence fishers in sub-districts 4B & 4C would be sufficient. Subsistence fishers made it clear that they strongly desired and needed two periods and that more than 18-hours would be helpful to meet their subsistence needs. It was reported that in those sub-districts there are two eddies being used by two families and 2 fishwheels being used by 4 families, and the rest of the people need to drift net to harvest their fish. Concern was voiced for only one drift fishing period per week missing a pulse of fish moving through.

Call #6 – July 3, 2007

Sponsored by: Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA)

Funded by: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Office of Subsistence Management and
The Yukon River Panel

Communities involved in the call: Hooper Bay, Emmonak, Holy Cross, Grayling, Nulato, Huslia, Koyukuk, Galena, Ruby, Nenana, Rampart, Beaver, Ft. Yukon, Eagle, Old Crow, Dawson

Government and Other Organizations/Entities:

ADFG – Emmonak, Anchorage, Fairbanks, Pilot Station, Anvik, Galena	AVCP
USFWS – Eagle, Fairbanks	Interior Fish
DFO - Whitehorse	

Subsistence Reports: The Chinook have crossed the border into Canada! Small harvests were reported in Old Crow and Dawson from the last several days, the water is high, and there is very little debris on the river.

From Eagle down to Rampart, fishing success has been moderate, with zero to 50 percent of subsistence fishing complete. The fish were reported to be of good quality, and the water is rising.

From the Rapids down to Koyukuk, including the Koyukuk River, fishing was reported as generally poor, with less than 50 percent of subsistence fishing complete. Water temperatures are very warm, requiring fishers to check nets regularly so fish do not get mushy and cooked.

From the G.A.S.H. region to mouth of the river, most people are 100 percent done with subsistence fishing, and it was reported that some kings are still in river. Fish were reported to be of good quality, water levels are dropping, and there is little to no debris on the river.

As an interesting side note on fish size, it was reported that an 80 pound king was caught this week around Nulato.

Management Updates:

ADFG Assessment – At this time the 2007 king run is still estimated to be 3-4 days later than average. All indicators currently suggest that the king run is below average and not as strong as the 2006 king run. Summer chum run-timing appears to be near average with a projected run of 1.7 million passed Pilot Station sonar. The chum run is expected to provide for escapement and subsistence uses and a moderate commercial harvest.

The Pilot Station sonar project cumulative passage estimate of 117,900 kings through July 9 is 20% below the average of 146,700 through this date. The projected mid point was around June 26 this year with a passage estimate range of 66,500 to 73,000 kings and the projected 3rd

quarter point occurred near July 2 with a passage estimate range of 93,500 to 105,000 kings. The king salmon run is currently projected to total 125,000 to 135,000 fish passed Pilot Station sonar. However, with the late run-timing and unusual entry pattern of the king salmon, it is difficult to predict the season total run size with certainty at this time.

At this time, summer chum run-timing appears to be approximately normal. Summer chum salmon met the Optimal Escapement Goal (OEG) of 600,000 fish passed the Pilot Station sonar project on June 25. The current Pilot Station sonar passage estimate through July 8 of 1.5 million summer chum salmon is slightly below the historical average of 1.6 million for this date, which may indicate that the run is 1-2 days late rather than below average. The second pulse of chum salmon at Pilot Station occurred from June 23 through July 2; this pulse consisted of more than 765,000 summer chum. A third pulse was observed from July 5 to July 6 totaling approximately 150,000 summer chum. ADFG is projecting a run size of 1.7 million summer chum passed the Pilot Station sonar project for the season.

Commercial Harvest – The total Y-1, Y-2, and Y-3 and Subdistricts Y-5B and 5C preliminary commercial harvest through July 8 is approximately 32,000 kings and 156,000 chum salmon. Reports from the most recent commercial periods to date in the lower river indicate that there is an increase in blushed fish, but overall good fish quality. Buyers in District Y2 will not be buying chums for the remainder of the season due to market conditions and the presence of lower quality fish during early July.

Current Subsistence Fishing Schedule, Current Commercial Actions, Assessment Projects, and Age, Sex, and Weight Composition – please visit the ADFG website at <http://www.cf.adfg.state.ak.us/region3/yukhome.php> for this information. For recorded Lower Yukon fishery announcements and updates call the 24-hour hotline in Emmonak at 949-1731. For current subsistence and commercial fishing information concerning the Upper Yukon fishery, call toll free outside of Fairbanks (1-866) 479-7387, and in Fairbanks 459-7387.

DFO Update: It is still quite early in the Canadian fishing season. The run is below average, and there is a low percentage of female Chinook salmon. Test wheels became operational on July 3 and July 4, and test fisheries will be held today and tomorrow.

Local Input & Closing Comments: It was asked whether anyone is buying fish in the Tanana region. ADFG indicated that there are two or three buyers at present – Interior Fish, Inlet Fish, and Great Ruby.

There was some discussion about strength of brood years for this year's fish. ADFG noted that 2000 was a poor escapement year, 2001 produced well, and 2002 was a problem year. There was also a question about availability of data detailing the size of fish in the test reports. ADFG encouraged fishers to contact their office for this information.

A fisher in Anvik reported that the water temperature on July 3 was 61 degrees, on July 10 it was 63 degrees, and 2 years ago on July 10 it was 61 degrees.

Lastly, fishing schedules were discussed. USFWS noted that as of July 13 fishing in Districts 4B and 4C will be closed, and ADFG mentioned that there will be more commercial periods in Districts 1, 5B, and 5C.

Call #7 – July 10, 2007

Funded by: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Office of Subsistence Management and
The Yukon River Panel

Communities involved in the call: Alakanuk, Emmonak, Kotlik, St. Mary’s, Marshall, Holy Cross, Anvik, Grayling, Nulato, Huslia, Koyukuk, Galena, Ruby, Nenana, Rapids, Rampart, Beaver, Ft. Yukon, Eagle, Old Crow, Dawson, Mayo, Whitehorse

Government and Other Organizations/Entities:

ADFG – Emmonak, Anchorage, Fairbanks, Pilot Station	AVCP
USFWS – Emmonak, Anchorage, Fairbanks, Galena	TCC
DFO – Whitehorse	Interior Fish

Subsistence Reports: From the G.A.S.H. Region downriver, it was reported that most are 50 to 100 percent finished with subsistence fishing, fish quality is good, and there is very little debris on the river.

From Rampart down through Nulato, it was reported that most are far from done with subsistence fishing, the size and quality of the fish is very poor, there are very few king salmon, lots of chum, water levels are dropping, and water temperatures are warm (mid-60’s).

From the U.S./Canada border down to the Yukon Flats Region, fishers are just getting started. The run has not reached this area yet, and the furthest upstream harvest of a king salmon was reported in Eagle Monday night. There is little-to-no debris on the river.

No salmon have reached Canada to date.

Management Updates:

ADFG Assessment – At this time the 2007 king run is still estimated to be 3-4 days later than average. All indicators currently suggest that the king run is below average and not as strong as the 2006 king run and the chum run is near average. Due to the uncertainty about the king salmon run strength this year, management of the commercial fishery has been conservative in order to meet escapement and subsistence needs and the Canadian Border passage obligation. It is unlikely that ADFG will have additional commercial fishing periods directed at king salmon in the lower river. ADFG will continue to assess the king salmon run daily using test fishing projects, reported subsistence catches and Pilot Station sonar.

At this time, summer chum run-timing appears to be near average with a projected run of 1.7 million passed Pilot Station sonar. The chum run is expected to provide for escapement and subsistence uses and a moderate commercial harvest.

Buyers have been attempting to develop a market for lower Yukon chum salmon. Based on the current abundance of chum salmon, ADFG anticipates that there may be additional commercial periods directed at chum salmon in the lower river.

USFWS Input – The king salmon run is below average, and nearly 30,000 kings have been harvested by commercial fishers in the lower river. With more than three-quarters of the run

being over in the lower river, it seems odd that Lower River subsistence fishers are not yet done. Also, in the Middle River fishers are only one-quarter to one-third done with subsistence fishing and in the Upper River they have not yet begun. Given these conditions, it seems unlikely that subsistence and escapement goals for king salmon will be met, and USFWS recommends that no more commercial periods be scheduled to maximize opportunity for subsistence.

Commercial Harvest – The preliminary season harvest total for Districts Y-1, Y-2, and Y-3 through June 30 is 29,111 kings and 101,309 summer chum.

Current Subsistence Fishing Schedule, Current Commercial Actions Assessment Projects, and Age, Sex, and Weight Composition – please visit the ADFG website at <http://www.cf.adfg.state.ak.us/region3/yukhome.php> for this information. For recorded Lower Yukon fishery announcements and updates call the 24-hour hotline in Emmonak at 949-1731. For current subsistence and commercial fishing information concerning the Upper Yukon fishery, call toll free outside of Fairbanks (1-866) 479-7387, and in Fairbanks 459-7387.

Local Input & Closing Comments: Several upper river fishermen expressed deep concern, distress, and disappointment over commercial fishing being scheduled before subsistence needs were met. They made it clear that they meant no disrespect to the commercial fishermen, but they need subsistence fish to live, and they want ADFG to manage the fishery accordingly. They also pointed out that high gas prices make fishing during a very weak run economically infeasible. ADFG conveyed appreciation for the comments and indicated it will take them to heart.

In a continuation of the discussion about commercial fishing, ADFG was asked whether there will still be commercial fishing in the Upper River. ADFG replied that the openers already scheduled will not be cancelled, though it does not expect the pulse to reach Districts 5B&C until July 4 or July 5. Also, ADFG reminded fishers that they are allowed to take home commercial catches for subsistence use if they choose to, and that subsistence fishers can go out during commercial openings in the Upper River districts.

ADFG reiterated that this year fish are entering the river at a steady rate, and that people should be ready to fish. It was pointed out that at Pilot Station the fish are more spread out, and they are staying deeper in the river and further from the shore.

Moreover, ADFG relayed that fishing in the Kuskokwim has recently picked up. Further, at present the Bering Sea has the coolest pool of water ADFG has seen, which could be affecting the influx of fish into the Yukon River. So, there is still a possibility that conditions could improve and ADFG will continue to monitor conditions.

It was asked whether the USFWS recommendation regarding no new commercial periods in the Lower River applied to both kings and chums. USFWS replied that it did, due to the number of incidental catches of kings during chum openings in that area. In addition, USFWS relayed that it recommends no new commercial fishing periods directed at king salmon in District 4. USFWS is less concerned about commercial fishing directed at summer chum salmon in District 4 due to the shore based gear utilized there and the very few number of Chinook likely to be caught as bycatch.

Lastly, USFWS confirmed that we need to be “extremely concerned” about escapement.

Call #8 – July 17, 2007

Funded by: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Office of Subsistence Management and
The Yukon River Panel

Communities involved in the call: Emmonak, Marshall, Kaltag, Allakaket, Huslia, Koyukuk, Galena, Ruby, Nenana, Old Crow, Dawson, Mayo

Government and Other Organizations/Entities:

ADFG – Emmonak, Anchorage, Fairbanks	TCC
USFWS – Anchorage, Fairbanks, Galena	Interior Fish
DFO – Whitehorse	Boreal Fisheries

Subsistence Reports: Reports were somewhat sparse this week, but fishers in Emmonak, Marshall, and Kaltag reported that they are mostly finished with subsistence fishing for Chinook and summer chum, and they are waiting for the fall chum. Water levels are generally up, and quality of meat is generally good.

Around Huslia, Koyukuk, and Galena, fishing for kings has been poor, but summer chum fishing has been good. Some fishers have stopped fishing for kings due to the low success rate coupled with the high price of gas. Water levels are higher than average, and in Koyukuk subsistence fishing is only one-quarter complete. The Rapids also reports higher than average water levels, warm water temperatures, and low quantities of Chinook.

Fishers in Nenana are catching some kings and summer chum, and at least some of the flesh is very good.

In Canada, subsistence fishers are catching some kings around Old Crow and Dawson, and fish appear to be in good condition. The run has not yet reached Mayo.

Management Updates:

ADFG Assessment – At this time the 2007 king run has come to a close in the lower river and is still estimated to be 3-4 days later than average. All indicators currently suggest that the king run is below average and not as strong as the 2006 king run. The king salmon run is currently projected to total approximately 126,000 fish passed Pilot Station sonar.

At this time, summer chum run appears to be tapering off in the lower river and run-timing still appears to be approximately normal. The current Pilot Station sonar passage estimate through July 15 of 1.68 million summer chum salmon is slightly below the historical average of 1.76 million for this date, which may indicate that the run is 1-2 days late rather than below average. ADFG is projecting a run size of 1.72 million summer chum passed the Pilot Station sonar project for the season.

Commercial Harvest – The total commercial harvest in Districts Y-1, Y-2, Y-3, Y-4A and Subdistricts 5B and 5C through July 15 is approximately 33,500 kings and 182,000 chum salmon.

Subsistence Fishing Schedule Changes –

Subdistrict 4-A: Effective 6:00 p.m. Monday, July 16, ADFG is allowing the use of drift gillnets for subsistence salmon fishing from 6:00 p.m. Monday, July 16, until 12:00 midnight Monday, July 23, in Subdistrict 4-A. Subsistence salmon fishing periods with set gillnets and fish wheels are unaffected by this subsistence drift gillnet extension and will remain open 7 days per week, 24 hours per day in Subdistrict 4-A until further notice.

Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B&5-C: Open to subsistence from 6 p.m. Tuesdays until 6 p.m. Sundays.

Current Subsistence Fishing Schedule, Current Commercial Actions, Assessment Projects, and Age, Sex, and Weight Composition – please visit the ADFG website at

<http://www.cf.adfg.state.ak.us/region3/yukhome.php> for this information. For recorded Lower Yukon fishery announcements and updates call the 24-hour hotline in Emmonak at 949-1731. For current subsistence and commercial fishing information concerning the Upper Yukon fishery, call toll free outside of Fairbanks (1-866) 479-7387, and in Fairbanks 459-7387.

USFWS Update: Currently, the first pulse of salmon is around the Canadian boarder, the second is between Beaver and Ft. Yukon, and the third is in the Rampart / haul road bridge area. As for assessment projects for Chinook, the E. Fork Andreafsky River Weir looks better than expected, but all other USFWS projects show below average run figures.

ADFG Fall Chum Management: The fall chum season started on July 16, and preliminary projections indicate a run size of 900,000 to 1 million. ADFG does expect to hold commercial fisheries in the lower river, and perhaps in Districts 5 and 6.

DFO Update: Aboriginal fisheries are open with no restrictions, but commercial and domestic fisheries are closed until DFO has more information. DFO feels that the first pulse is reaching the border a few days early. There were fairly good fish wheel catches July 13-16, and there will be two 4-day test fisheries next week.

Local Input & Closing Comments: There was a long discussion about the breakdown of male versus female kings this season. ADFG reported that the ratio is roughly average for this year. It was suggested that nets with 8.5 inch mesh size harvest more females, and that more information will be available once the ADFG mesh selectivity study is complete.

There was also much discussion about the effects of water temperature and time of day on how deep the fish swim and what time they are active. It was noted that in different areas the fish are more active at different times of day, whether at night (when it is cooler) or some other time.

One caller asked why the actual king salmon numbers were so much lower than ADFG's projections. ADFG replied that other areas of western Alaska also had king runs below expectations and that they will be researching this issue further post-season.

Lastly, a Canadian representative / fisher asked about preliminary border escapement projections for Chinook. ADFG relayed a projection of roughly 60,000 fish based on the Eagle sonar, though noted that it is still too early in the timing at that project to make an accurate prediction, especially considering the unusual entry pattern this year.

Call #9 – July 24, 2007

Funded by: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Office of Subsistence Management and The Yukon River Panel

Communities involved in the call: Emmonak, Kotlik, St. Marys, Pilot Station, Kaltag, Nulato, Huslia, Koyukuk, Galena, Rapids, Eagle, Dawson, Pelly Crossing

Government and Other Organizations/Entities:

ADFG – Emmonak, Fairbanks, Pilot Station	AVCP
USFWS – Anchorage, Emmonak, Fairbanks, Galena	Interior Fish
DFO – Whitehorse	

Subsistence Reports: From Emmonak to Pilot Station fishers are essentially done meeting subsistence needs for kings and summer chum, and there is no debris on the river. In Kaltag, subsistence fishers reported that the last of the kings went by on July 19, water levels are holding steady, and fishers are waiting for the fall chum.

A subsistence fisher from Huslia indicated that many people have not met their subsistence needs. He also shared that he has witnessed numerous chum salmon floating down the river, dead, with no obvious signs of a cause of death.

A report from the Rapids conveyed that subsistence fishing has slowed due to the low quantity and quality of kings on the river. Water levels are average and temperatures are warm (67 degrees).

In Eagle, it was reported that water levels are stable, there is no debris on the river, not many people are fishing, but there are some good quality male Chinook salmon being caught.

In Canada, a fisher from Dawson indicated that people are meeting with mixed success in their fishing – some are doing very well while others are not. Fishing was reported as being slow in Pelly Crossing.

Management Updates:

ADFG Assessment – At this time, the 2007 king run has come to a close in the lower river and is still estimated to be 1-2 days later than average. All indicators currently suggest that the king run is below average and not as strong as the 2006 king run. Despite lower than anticipated run strength, the 2007 king salmon run appears to be providing for subsistence harvests, has met biological escapement goals, and is on track to meet the Canadian border escapement goal. The Pilot Station sonar project cumulative passage estimate is 124,620 kings through July 23.

At this time, summer chum run-timing appears to be near average with a season total run estimate of 1.7 million fish passed Pilot Station sonar. The summer chum run is expected to provide for escapement and subsistence uses and a moderate commercial harvest. The second pulse of chum is projected to reach the Tanana river tributaries on July 26.

Commercial Harvest – The total preliminary commercial harvest for all districts through July 22 is approximately 33,630 kings and 183,000 chum salmon.

Current Subsistence Fishing Schedule, Current Commercial Actions, Assessment Projects, and Age, Sex, and Weight Composition – please visit the ADFG website at <http://www.cf.adfg.state.ak.us/region3/yukhome.php> for this information. For recorded Lower Yukon fishery announcements and updates call the 24-hour hotline in Emmonak at 949-1731. For current subsistence and commercial fishing information concerning the Upper Yukon fishery, call toll free outside of Fairbanks (1-866) 479-7387, and in Fairbanks 459-7387.

USFWS Update: The cumulative fish passage figures from the Gisasa River and Henshaw Creek Weirs were 50 percent below average for kings and summer chum, and the figures for the Tozitna River Weir were 75 percent below average.

DFO Update: Given the relatively low number of Chinook salmon DFO projects for the Canadian portion of the river drainage this year, Aboriginal and sports fisheries are open, but there are no plans to open commercial or domestic fisheries, and sports fishing may be closed in the future depending on actual run size. Run timing is more of a variable this year given the irregular pattern of the Chinook run, so the projected run size may be low. DFO will hold another four day test fishery this week to gather more information.

ADFG Fall Chum Management: Fall chum typically enter the river in an erratic pattern, and at this time there are not significant numbers on fall chum in the river. Management will shift to an in-season approach in early August, and the average midpoint of the run is August 8. Preliminary projections indicate a run size of 900,000 to 1 million.

Local Input & Closing Comments: Fishers from the middle river and Huslia discussed difficulties meeting subsistence needs in their regions, and they stressed that people are fishing the whole season, paying high rates for gas, and still not meeting subsistence needs. The fisher from Huslia also asked ADFG about the dead chums he has seen floating in the Koyukuk River. ADFG indicated that at that point they know nothing about it.

Another fisher cautioned ADFG to be careful when scheduling commercial openings for fall chum; he felt that the Chinook openings had a drastic negative effect on subsistence fishing. ADFG replied that there is no firm information about the magnitude of the fall chum commercial fishery.

Lastly, a fisher asked why everyone along the river does not use the same type of fishing gear. Callers replied that in some cases gear choices may be based on what people in an area have historically used, and that river conditions such as snags and eddies affect such decisions.

Call #10 – July 31, 2007

Funded by: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Office of Subsistence Management and The Yukon River Panel

Communities involved in the call: Hooper Bay, Emmonak, Kotlik, Kaltag, Huslia, Galena, Rapids, Rampart, Eagle, Old Crow, Dawson, Mayo, Whitehorse

Government and Other Organizations/Entities:

ADFG – Emmonak, Anchorage, Fairbanks, Pilot Station, Whitehorse	DFO – Whitehorse
USFWS – Anchorage, Fairbanks	TCC
Yukon Salmon Committee	

Subsistence Reports: From Hooper Bay to Kotlik, few people are fishing. Fishers reported catching a small number of kings, most of which were of poor quality, and a few fall chum, most of which were of good quality. They are also catching some halibut and sockeye salmon. No one is fishing in Kaltag, and the water levels are holding steady at an average depth.

In Huslia, a fisherman reported that there are no Chinook salmon in the area at this time; subsistence fishing has not been completed, and people are making due with chum salmon. He noted that light colored chum have deteriorating flesh, but there are dark colored chum that are of good quality which may be fall chum. Water levels are low.

The update from Galena revealed that in general people are done with subsistence fishing, and the water levels are high but dropping. In the Rampart region, reports relayed that most people will complete their subsistence fishing this week. Water levels are high, and water temperatures are warmer than average at 68 degrees Fahrenheit. There are still some kings passing through the area, but they are of very poor quality.

A fisherman in Eagle relayed that most people have completed their subsistence fishing, low numbers of fall chum are starting to pass through, water levels are high, and there is no debris on the river.

In Old Crow and Mayo, reports conveyed that fishers have nearly completed their subsistence fishing, water levels are down, and there is little debris on the river. In Dawson subsistence fishers are still active. Roughly 1,000 fish have been caught in the Canadian Aboriginal fishery to date, and reports indicate that most people are meeting their subsistence needs.

Management Updates:

ADFG Assessment – All indicators suggest that the king run is below average and not as strong as the 2006 king run. Despite lower than anticipated run strength, the 2007 king salmon run appears to be providing adequate subsistence harvests, has met biological and sustainable escapement goals, and is on track to meet the Canadian border escapement goal. As of July 30, the Pilot Station sonar project cumulative passage estimate is 125,304 kings and the Eagle sonar cumulative passage estimate is 31,000.

At this time, summer chum run-timing appears to be near average with a season total run estimate of 1.7 million have passed Pilot Station sonar. The summer chum run is expected to provide for escapement and subsistence uses and a moderate commercial harvest.

Commercial Harvest – The total preliminary commercial harvest for all districts through July 30 is approximately 33,630 kings and 188,300 chum salmon.

Current Subsistence Fishing Schedule, Current Commercial Actions, Assessment Projects, and Age, Sex, and Weight Composition – please visit the ADFG website at <http://www.cf.adfg.state.ak.us/region3/yukhome.php> for this information. For recorded Lower Yukon fishery announcements and updates call the 24-hour hotline in Emmonak at 949-1731. For current subsistence and commercial fishing information concerning the Upper Yukon fishery, call toll free outside of Fairbanks (1-866) 479-7387, and in Fairbanks 459-7387.

USFWS Update: The Andreafsky and Gisasa River Weirs have ceased operations for the remainder of this year. The Henshaw Creek Weir will stop counting next week, and the Tozitna River Weir will cease operations in approximately 10 days.

DFO Update: At this point, DFO projects that border escapement will be roughly 25,000-30,000 for Chinook salmon; 33,000 Chinook salmon are needed to meet spawning needs, and 6,000 are needed to meet First Nations subsistence needs. Given these projections, there have been no commercial or domestic fisheries in Canada, and later this week DFO will announce a zero retention policy for sport fishing. No kings have moved through the Whitehorse fishway yet, but some have been observed below the fishway.

ADFG Fall Chum Management: No pulses have entered the mouth of the river at this time, and as of July 30 the Pilot Station sonar project cumulative passage estimate is 71,000. This number is well below the historic average of 169,000 fall chum for this date. Reports from lower river test net projects also convey low numbers of fall chum. As such, the run is behind schedule and may be late. Preliminary projections indicate a run size of 900,000 to 1 million. There is commercial interest in both the lower and upper river, but no commercial periods will be announced until more fall chum enter the river.

Local Input & Closing Comments: One fisher asked ADFG about the latest date that fall chum have historically entered the river. An ADFG representative responded that it is unusual for the run to be this late, but the first pulse should occur soon. In a related discussion, ADFG projected that some fall chum should reach the Rapids region on August 5.

Another caller asked ADFG at what point it will consider fall chum restrictions. An ADFG representative relayed that for now they will follow the 2007 fall chum salmon management plan, which is based on preseason projections, but they may consider further restrictions based on run status at the historic midpoint – August 8 or 9 at Pilot Station. He also mentioned that ADFG originally planned for an early commercial opening, but that is unlikely at this point.

A lower river fisherman inquired about fish passage figures at Pilot Station after ADFG began the restricted mesh size openings. An ADFG representative replied that after the last unrestricted mesh size opening on June 26, roughly 55,000 kings passed the Pilot Station sonar.

Lastly, the 2007 Yukon River Educational Exchange is in process, with a group of five American representatives visiting Canada for 9 days. These representatives relayed that Chinook salmon in Old Crow are not as large as those in the lower river, but they are still “tasty.” They also noted that they are learning quite a bit and are ready to convey this knowledge to their villages – Nunam Iqua, Emmonak, and Eagle.

Call #11 – August 7, 2007

Funded by: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Office of Subsistence Management and The Yukon River Panel

Communities involved in the call: Hooper Bay, Emmonak, Kotlik, St. Marys, Pilot Station, Marshall, Holy Cross, Koyukuk, Nenana, the Rapids, Eagle, Dawson, Mayo

Government and Other Organizations/Entities:

ADFG – Emmonak, Anchorage, Fairbanks, Pilot Station	DFO – Whitehorse
USFWS – Anchorage, Fairbanks	Boreal Fisheries

Subsistence Reports: Reports from Mayo conveyed that most Aboriginal fishers have completed their harvests and water levels are low. A caller from Dawson relayed that people are fishing longer and harder than normal to meet their needs, and some have given up before meeting their needs.

In Eagle, everyone is finished harvesting Chinook salmon, they are waiting for the fall chum, and water levels are up. A report from the Rampart Region relayed that the fall chum have arrived in small numbers, but no one is fishing at present due to inclement weather. The caller indicated that there is a strong run of Ciscos in the area.

In Nenana, there have been three commercial openings. Two fish wheels are in the water, catching 45-100 chum per day, most of which are summer chum. Water levels rose one foot earlier in the week. From Koyukuk downriver to Kotlik, fishers reported that there is little to no fishing effort, people are waiting for the fall chum run, and water levels are holding steady.

A fisher from Emmonak relayed that nearly 200 fall chum and 10 coho were caught during two short drifts on Monday night, possibly indicating that the first strong pulse of fall chum has entered the river. Water levels are up in that area.

Management Updates:

ADFG Assessment – The king run is below average and not as strong as the 2006 king run. The Pilot Station sonar project cumulative passage estimate is 125,000 kings through August 6. This is 20% below the average of 157,000 for this date. Since July 29, no kings have been counted. The third pulse of king salmon has passed Eagle sonar with a cumulative passage estimate of 38,000 through August 6, which is 30,000 below the estimate for the same date last year.

Despite lower than anticipated run strength, the 2007 king salmon run appears to be providing adequate subsistence harvests although fishers have had to work harder to meet their needs. Biological and sustainable escapement goals have been met in the U.S. However, the king salmon run appears to be falling short of the Canadian border passage escapement goal. The summer chum run appears to have provided for adequate subsistence harvests, has met biological escapement goals, and has allowed for a moderate commercial harvest.

Commercial Harvest – The total Y-1 through Y-6 commercial harvest through August 5 is approximately 33,600 kings and 193,000 chum salmon.

USFWS Update: The East Fork Andreafsky and Gisasa River weir projects have finished for the season. The Henshaw Creek weir being operated by TCC and the Tozitna River weir operated by BLM are still in the field but nearing season end with Tozitna experiencing recent flooding.

DFO Update: Based on the Mark / Recapture program, DFO projects that 22,000-26,000 Chinook salmon will cross into Canada this year. The Big Salmon sonar count to August 5 is 3,166; the counts to the same date in 2005 and 2006 were 3,743 and 3,282, respectively. More than 400 fish were counted on both July 31 and August 1 this year, however daily counts have since declined and 210 were counted on August 5. The fish wheels have caught 1,335 kings, 1322 of which have been tagged. Generally, 67 percent of the run has passed the border by this time. Given these numbers, only the Aboriginal fishery is open at this time. As of August 6, 11 kings have passed through the Whitehorse fishway; average passage for this date is 122. Contributing factors may include high water, a high number of 6 year olds in this year's run (6 year old kings rarely return to the fishway), and low hatchery releases corresponding with 4 and 5 year old fish returning. To date, 8 chum salmon have been caught.

ADFG Fall Chum Management: The 2007 fall chum run appears to be either late or weak. At this time, no large pulses of fall chum have entered the mouth of the Yukon River. The Pilot Station Sonar cumulative passage estimate for fall chum through August 6 is approximately 122,000. This is well below the average passage estimate of approximately 274,000 for this date, which represents the first 45% of the fall chum run on average. Unless the passage rate increases significantly, the fall run size will be below 600,000.

Management of the fall fishery is shifting to inseason assessment information. No commercial fishing periods for fall chum in the lower river will be announced until a significant pulse of fall chum has moved into the river. The run size projection must increase sufficiently enough to indicate there will be a surplus above the 600,000 fish threshold necessary for a commercial fishery. There are no changes to the subsistence schedules at this time; adjustments could be made to the schedule if the run does not improve this week.

Coho salmon have been observed early this season. The cumulative passage through August 5 is 10,000 which is above the historical average for the project of 4,500 fish for that date. However, it is still very early in the coho run which has an average first quarter point of August 16 at the Pilot Station sonar project.

Local Input & Closing Comments: One caller expressed concern that subsistence fishing schedules for fall chum are not being restricted in Alaska despite the relatively poor status of the fall chum run at this time. An ADFG official responded that not many fishers are harvesting fall chum at present, the pulse entering the river right now should improve the numbers, and ADFG is watching conditions closely and is being conservative in its management approach.

Another caller noted that the fall chum he has seen thus far are fairly large. A processor commented that this is typical of the beginning of the fall chum run.

Lastly, a fisher asked ADFG about the number of Ciscos passing through the river. An ADFG representative shared that they are seeing 250-300/day, but that these fish are one-time spawners – they will not return downriver.

Call #12 – August 14, 2007

Funded by: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Office of Subsistence Management and The Yukon River Panel

Communities involved in the call: Emmonak, St. Marys, Holy Cross, Nulato, Koyukuk, Galena, Tanana, Rampart, the Rapids, Eagle, Dawson, Mayo

Government and Other Organizations/Entities:

ADFG – Emmonak, Anchorage, Fairbanks, Pilot Station	DFO – Whitehorse
USFWS – Anchorage, Fairbanks	Interior Fish
Boreal Fisheries	

Subsistence Reports: Fishermen in Alaska conveyed that few people are subsistence fishing, water levels are very high, and there is a moderate amount of debris on the river. In St. Marys, fishers reported catching fall chum and coho salmon. In Nulato, one fisher caught 7 coho salmon and 1 summer chum on Friday. Reports from the Rampart Region relayed that some poor quality summer chum are being harvested for dog food, and high numbers of Ciscos are passing through the area.

In Canada, water levels are dropping and there is little-to-no debris. Fishers in Dawson are done fishing for kings, and the quality of kings being caught has been declining.

Management Updates:

ADFG Summer Salmon Fishery Assessment – The king and summer chum salmon runs are coming to a close in the Alaskan portion of the Yukon River drainage. The king run was approximately 20% below average with a cumulative count of 125,300 kings at Pilot Station sonar and 40,200 kings at Eagle sonar to date.

Summer Salmon Fishery Commercial Harvest – The total preliminary commercial harvest for all districts through August 12 is approximately 33,630 kings and 199,000 chum salmon. There will be no additional commercial periods in district Y-6.

DFO Update: 272 Chinook salmon have been counted at the Blind Creek Weir as of August 12; the 10-year average is 709. At the Big Salmon Sonar, 3,894 Chinook salmon have been counted; the 2-year average is 5,573. At this point fewer than 100 kings are being counted per day at the sonar. 122 Chinook salmon have passed through the fishway in Whitehorse; the 10-year average is 526. DFO officials believe that the fish may be having problems finding the ladder due to high water levels over the spillway. Another contributing factor may be that releases were low from the brood years for 4 and 5 year old kings.

1,428 Chinook salmon have been tagged in the mark-recapture program as of August 13; the average for that date is 1,542.

The fall chum run appears to be late. 29 fall chum have been tagged as of August 13. The average for that date is 53.

ADFG Fall Chum Management: The 2007 fall chum run appears to be either below average in abundance or unusually late. The fall chum run began slowly with three weeks of very low passage until August 6 when the first pulse began entering the river. This strong pulse was estimated by the Pilot Station sonar to be composed of approximately 265,000 fall chum. The pulse lasted three days and should be in the vicinity of Holy Cross. A second pulse has begun entering the South Mouth as indicated by an abrupt increase in the catch rate recorded by the test fishery located at Big Eddy near Emmonak. However, the size of the second pulse will not be determined until it is assessed by the Pilot Station sonar.

The Pilot Station Sonar cumulative passage estimate for fall chum through August 12 is approximately 391,800. This estimate is slightly below the average passage estimate of approximately 412,000 for this date, which represents the first 59% of the fall chum run on average. At this time, the run size is projected to range between 675,000 and 775,000 fall chum. Commercial fishing periods for fall chum have been announced for Districts Y-1 and Y-2.

Inseason assessment indicates that coho salmon are early and abundance is above average for this date. The Pilot Station sonar cumulative passage estimate through August 12 is approximately 69,000 which is well above the historical average for the project of 25,000 fish for this date. However, it is still very early in the coho run which has an average first quarter point of August 16 at the Pilot Station sonar project.

Current Subsistence Fishing Schedule, Current Commercial Actions, Assessment Projects, and Age, Sex, and Weight Composition – please visit the ADFG website at <http://www.cf.adfg.state.ak.us/region3/yukhome.php> for this information.

Local Input & Closing Comments: A processor asked whether jacks are included in the official count of Chinook salmon, and pointed out that she saw jacks as small at 4-6 pounds this year. An ADFG representative responded that jacks are included in the count, and that ADFG did see a higher than average proportion of jacks this year.

One caller asked a USFWS representative about genetics studies concerning summer and fall chum. The USFWS representative replied that it does appear that there is a higher than average proportion of summer chum in the fall run, and his agency is working to verify this.

A caller from Canada asked whether ADFG had an estimated border escapement for fall chum at this time. An ADFG representative responded that generally 25-30 percent of the run is of Canadian origin. So 25-30 percent of the total run minus a portion of the harvest is what could be expected for Canadian escapement.

A fisher from Mayo shared his personal perspective on this year's run and asked fishery managers to keep it in mind: 50 percent of the king salmon in the Yukon River spawned in Canada, he cannot fish this year because he is not of the First Nation and counts are not high enough to support additional fisheries, so he has no fish for himself this year.

Another fisher asked whether the drift net period will be extended in District Y4-A since people in that area did not harvest enough kings to meet their needs. An ADFG representative replied that a large pulse should arrive on August 19 or 20, a second pulse should arrive on August 26, and people need to be prepared.

Call #13 – August 21, 2007

Funded by: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Office of Subsistence Management and The Yukon River Panel

Communities involved in the call: Emmonak, Kotlik, Holy Cross, Huslia, Koyukuk, Nenana, the Rapids, Rampart, Eagle, Dawson

Government and Other Organizations/Entities:

ADFG – Emmonak, Anchorage, Fairbanks	DFO – Whitehorse
USFWS – Anchorage, Fairbanks	Interior Fish
Boreal Fisheries	

Subsistence Reports: A fisher from Kotlik reported catching 21 fall chum, 10 coho salmon, 10 sheefish, and 2 sockeye salmon last week. A report from Holy Cross conveyed that some fishers are catching 70-80 fall chum per drift, and both water and debris levels are high.

In Huslia, it was reported that one fisher is catching sheefish and whitefish. A caller from Koyukuk relayed that he caught a few fall chum while drift netting on Saturday, water levels rose 1 foot during the last week, and there is some debris in the river.

A caller from the Rapids revealed that fishers are putting up some high quality fall chum, Cisco numbers are looking good, sheefish numbers are decent, water levels are high, and the water temperature is normal.

Reports from Emmonak, Nenana, Rampart, Eagle, and Dawson conveyed that no one is fishing in those areas at this time.

Management Updates:

ADFG Fall Chum Management: As of August 20, the cumulative fall chum passage was estimated to be approximately 593,000 by the Pilot Station sonar. The current fall chum salmon total run size is projected to range from 650,000 to 750,000. However, physical appearance and preliminary genetic information indicate that some of the early fall season sonar count may have included an unusually high proportion of summer chum which could reduce the fall chum run size estimate.

Coho salmon began entering the Yukon River early and passage rates continue to be strong as the run approaches the average mid-point of August 21. The cumulative coho estimate of approximately 135,000 past the Pilot Station sonar through August 20 is well above average for the project of 73,000.

The first pulse was estimated to include approximately 260,000 fall chum and should be near Galena. The second pulse was estimated to include approximately 140,000 fall chum and should be near Anvik. It is possible that a third pulse could be holding offshore until favorable weather conditions bring them into the river.

Fall Commercial Salmon Fishing: The preliminary total harvest for Districts 1 & 2 is approximately 20,465 fall chum and 14,634 coho salmon. It is anticipated that commercial fishing periods for Districts 1, 2, and Subdistricts 5-B & 5-C will be announced later in the week.

DFO Update: DFO completed its annual aerial surveys last week; combined counts are 49 percent of the 10 year average. All indications show that the Chinook salmon run into Canada was very weak this year, with an estimated border escapement of 24,000.

To date, 65 fall chum have been captured through the mark-recapture program, and all of these fish have been tagged. There will be no recovery from that program for the next two weeks. The Fishing Branch weir will be operational by the end of next week. From U.S. information, DFO officials believe that the fall chum run is late, it may be weak, and there is a fairly strong component of summer chum.

Local Input & Closing Comments: A fisher from Nenana asked ADFG about plans for commercial fall chum openings on the Tanana River. An ADFG representative responded that those openings will be managed primarily based on numbers of fish entering the Tanana River, and he thinks some commercial fishing will occur there. He added that due to the late timing of the fall chum run and the early timing of the coho run fishers will likely catch as many of each. Another fisher inquired about the quality of the fish in the fall run. Two callers relayed that quality has been high, particularly for the coho salmon.

A caller from Canada expressed concern about ADFG holding commercial fisheries for fall chum in Alaska given the projected number of fall chum, the lateness of the run, and the problems he saw with management of the Chinook run. He requested that ADFG manage the run conservatively to be certain that enough fish reach Canada. An ADFG representative replied that they are being conservative in their management approach. He pointed out that they are scheduling commercial periods in the later portion of the run; last year there had been 16 commercial periods by this date, while this year there have only been 4; and that generally Canada meets its goals as long as run size is over 500,000. He also noted that he shares the caller's concern for making sure enough fish reach the border.

A DFO representative shared that based on genetics information from Pilot Station, he is concerned about the low component of Porcupine River fish in the run. He said that there were conservation problems with that stock in the past, and if genetic information is correct this may be another year of concern.

Another caller asked whether there is a third pulse of fall chum still in the ocean. An ADFG representative answered that there might be. He explained that east winds have been prevalent at the coast for several days, and that fish may be waiting for more favorable wind conditions before entering the river. He also mentioned that fish in the river are still of high quality, so the run is not noticeably winding down at this time.

There was a lengthy discussion about sightings of dead fish in the rivers and creeks of the Yukon River drainage this season. Several callers hypothesized that higher than average water temperatures were the likely cause, and most expressed a desire for future studies on the issue.

Lastly, there was a lengthy discussion about observations of sizable female Chinook salmon being attended to by several smaller Chinook males, as opposed to one large Chinook male, during spawning. This behavior was observed by at least 4 callers from Tanana to Canada.

Call #14 – August 28, 2007

Funded by: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Office of Subsistence Management and The Yukon River Panel

Communities involved in the call: Emmonak, St. Marys, Pilot Station, Koyukuk, the Rapids, Eagle, Mayo

Government and Other Organizations/Entities:

ADFG – Emmonak, Anchorage, Fairbanks, Pilot Station	Boreal Fisheries
USFWS – Anchorage, Fairbanks	Interior Fish
DFO – Whitehorse	

Subsistence Reports: A report from Emmonak conveyed that most people have met their fall chum subsistence needs, water levels are high, and there is little debris on the river. A caller from Pilot Station shared that there is little subsistence fishing activity, there are lots of salmon in the river, and water levels are down.

A fisher from Koyukuk reported doing well in his fishing efforts for fall chum during the past week, with Wednesday being the most productive day and Saturday yielding as many coho’s as fall chum. Water levels are dropping in that area.

In the Rampart region a few fishers are harvesting fall chum for dog food. Water levels are normal, and water temperatures are above average. Mention was made of a 19.9 pound fall chum caught in the area during a recent commercial opening; the quality was reported as being high.

Callers from Eagle and Mayo relayed that no one is fishing in those areas. It was reported that in Mayo the weather has been warm, there has been no rain, and water levels are low.

Management Updates:

ADFG Fall Chum Management: As of August 26, the Pilot Station sonar cumulative fall chum passage was estimated to be approximately 622,000. Based on the sonar cumulative passage estimate and historical average run timing, the current fall chum salmon total run size is projected to be near 675,000.

Coho salmon began entering the Yukon River early and passage rates continue to be strong. The cumulative coho salmon estimate of approximately 152,000 past the Pilot Station sonar through August 27 is above the average for the project of 122,000.

The first pulse of fall chum was estimated to include approximately 260,000 fish and should be near Rampart. The second pulse was estimated to include approximately 140,000 fall chum and should be near Galena. The third pulse is just beginning to pass Pilot Station, and based on the Lower Yukon and Mountain Village test fishery index projects and the commercial fishery harvest rate in District Y-1, it is likely to be comprised of 100,000 fall chum salmon.

The fall season is coming to a close in the lower river. The Lower Yukon test fishery project’s last day of fishing will be August 28 and the Pilot Station sonar project’s last day of counting is expected to be August 31. The Mountain Village test fishery project will continue to monitor the salmon runs through the lower river until September 10.

USFWS Input: The Chandalar River Sonar project began counting on August 8. As of August 26, approximately 9,555 fall chum salmon have passed the sonar, which is well below the average of 36,155 for the project. However, this year's run is later than average.

Fall Commercial Salmon Fishing: The preliminary total harvest to date in District 1 is approximately 33,100 fall chum and 16,600 coho salmon. The preliminary total harvest for District 2 is approximately 23,000 fall chum and 11,600 coho salmon. Salmon quality continues to be reported as good. Subdistricts 5-B and 5-C have had one commercial period to date with a preliminary reported harvest of 427 fall chum landed by 2 fishermen.

The fall commercial salmon fishing season closes by regulation on or before September 1 in lower Yukon River Districts 1, 2, and 3. Pending late run assessment, this would be the last week of the fall commercial salmon fishing season in the lower river. It is anticipated that commercial fishing periods for Districts 1 and 2 will be announced later in the week. ADFG will watch conditions in District 6 and make decisions on commercial fishing accordingly.

Current Subsistence Fishing Schedule, Current Commercial Actions, Assessment Projects, & Sample Data: visit the ADFG website at <http://www.cf.adfg.state.ak.us/region3/yukhome.php> for this information.

DFO Update: 88 fall chum have been captured through the mark-recapture program as of August 27; the average for this date is 336. An average of 3 fall chum salmon were caught each day during the last 5 days. Over the next few days DFO will decide whether to have a live release test fishery or a commercial fishery. DFO officials anticipate the first pulse of fall chum to arrive on September 10 and a second, stronger pulse to arrive on September 16. Based on genetic information from the lower river, DFO officials expect the third pulse will include a fairly good percentage of Upper Yukon fish. The Upper Yukon component of fall chum appears stronger than the Porcupine component based on genetic information. The Fishing Branch Weir will be installed in the next few days, and a tagging program is being initiated fish near the village of Old Crow. A few Chinook salmon are still being captured and tagged. At this point, the aerial surveys of tributary streams are estimated to be roughly 50% of average.

Local Input & Closing Comments: A fisher asked ADFG whether there are still fish coming into the mouth of the river. An ADFG representative replied that it was slow last night, but numbers picked up this morning.

A processor inquired whether roe stripping would be allowed in southeast Alaska / Prince William Sound this year. An ADFG representative replied that it would not be. Further discussion ensued on the topic.

Another caller asked YRDFFA to address the topic of cleaning up abandoned military sites along the river at its annual meeting. A YRDFFA representative responded that she would give the matter due attention, and she noted that the meeting will be held in February in Grayling.

ADFG, TCC, F&W, and USGS are conducting a 2 year telemetry project on fall chum on the Tanana River. 30 fish will be tagged during the period of Sept. 12-14. Fishers who catch fall chum with a red tag are asked to keep the fish and call ADFG. Next year this project will take place during the entire fall chum run. 30 percent of fall chum are from the Tanana River.

Call #15 – September 4, 2007

Funded by: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Office of Subsistence Management and The Yukon River Panel

Communities involved in the call: Emmonak, Kotlik, St. Marys, Nulato, Nenana, the Rapids, Rampart, Ft. Yukon, Dawson, Mayo

Government and Other Organizations/Entities:

ADFG – Anchorage, Fairbanks	DFO – Whitehorse
USFWS – Fairbanks	Interior Fish

Subsistence Reports: Reports from Emmonak to St. Marys conveyed that no one is fishing to meet subsistence needs, the number of fish in the river is decreasing, water levels are dropping, and most people are moose hunting. Some fish are still being caught during commercial periods. A fisher from Nulato shared a similar story, with most everyone in the area out moose hunting. Some people are still catching coho salmon to make half-drieds, but effort is low.

Callers from Nenana reported catching 100 high quality fish on Sunday “without really trying.” They indicated that fish quality is high, water levels are normal, and weather is good.

In the Rampart Region, one report indicated that no one is fishing for people food at this time, quality of flesh is still healthy but declining, water is warm for this time of year, and the second pulse of fall chum is just reaching the area. Another report shared that fishers are going to renew their efforts soon and water levels are dropping.

A caller from Ft. Yukon relayed that there are a few fish wheels in the water, and as of yesterday each is catching approximately 100 chum per day, quality is good, there are equal proportions of males and females, and water levels are dropping rapidly.

Reports from Dawson and Mayo indicated that there is no fishing effort at this time. A DFO representative shared that the reported Aboriginal catch for Chinook salmon on the Canadian portion of the river is 4,000, and the projected final catch will be approximately 5,500.

Management Updates:

ADFG Fall Chum Management: Typically 95% of the fall chum and 80% of the coho salmon are assumed to be in the Yukon River by this date. The current fall chum salmon total run size is projected to be near 700,000. There have been 3 significant pulses of fall chum salmon that have entered the mouth of the Yukon River since the start of the fall season. The first pulse of fall chum was estimated to include approximately 260,000 fish and should be near Ft. Yukon. The second pulse was estimated to include approximately 140,000 fall chum and should be near Rampart. The third pulse was estimated to include approximately 80,000 fish and should be near Grayling.

The cumulative coho salmon passage estimate at Pilot Station sonar was approximately 173,000 fish through the end of the project on August 31, which is above the historical average passage estimate for the project of 140,000 fish. In contrast to the late run timing exhibited by the fall chum run, the coho salmon run began the season strong with passage rates that were much higher than average. By the average midpoint in the coho salmon run the passage rate had decreased.

The end of season cumulative sonar estimate is above average, but below early season expectations.

The fall commercial season is nearing the end in the lower river districts. No commercial fishing in District 4 or additional periods in District 5 are anticipated. Run strength is increasing in District 6 and commercial fishing is anticipated, but will depend on both run development in the Tanana River and market interest. Fishers are reminded that the use of drift gillnet fishing gear is allowed in Subdistrict 4-A upstream of the mouth of Stink Creek.

USFWS Input: Fall chum passage at the Chandalar River Sonar project is well below average at this time. However, this year's run is later than average.

Fall Commercial Salmon Fishing: The combined lower river commercial harvest through September 4 is approximately 70,500 fall chum and 40,800 coho salmon. Salmon quality is reported to be varied. The average weight of fall chum is 7.2 pounds & 7.5 pounds for cohos.

DFO Update: DFO fish wheels have caught and tagged 117 fall chum, which is very low for this date and is evidence that the run is late. A build up of fall chum is expected in the next few days based on information from the Pilot Station Sonar, the Rapids Test Fish Wheel, and DNA data from USFWS. Over the next two days DFO officials will decide whether to have a live release test fishery or a commercial fishery. The Fishing Branch Weir is in and counting. Numbers are well below average, which is further evidence that the run is late.

Local Input & Closing Comments: A DFO representative asked how fall chum passage is calculated at the Rapids Test Fish Wheel. An ADFG representative replied that a formula incorporating wheel efficiency is used, and he shared some details concerning the reasoning behind this formula.

A caller from Nulato asked whether fishers in his area (Subdistrict 4-A) may drift net during the third pulse of fall chum. An ADFG representative replied that they are allowed to drift net through the end of the season during regular fishing periods.

An ADFG representative followed-up on a question from last week's call regarding a regulation change which would give the Commissioner of ADF&G Emergency Order Authority to allow hatcheries to roe strip. He noted that the regulation would go into effect on September 30, but that the final regulation text is not yet available. He also shared that this year roe stripping of pink salmon was allowed in Valdez, but the total amount of roe stripped accounted for 0.2% of the pink salmon roe harvest.

Another ADFG representative announced that annual subsistence salmon surveys will begin shortly, and surveyors will be visiting villages along the Yukon River in the coming weeks. She asked that people mail in their subsistence catch calendars, and noted that this year six of the households returning surveys will be selected at random and awarded \$100.

ADFG, TCC, USFWS, and USGS are conducting a radio telemetry project on fall chum salmon to study the spawning habitats utilized in the upper portion of the drainage. In 2007, 30 radio tags will be deployed on fall chum salmon captured on the Tanana River upstream from the Kantishna River from approximately September 12-14. The radio tagged salmon are marked with an orange spaghetti tag posterior to the dorsal fin. Please return both the spaghetti and radio tags along with the date and location of capture to ADF&G or TCC offices in Fairbanks or to the Tribal Council Office in Nenana.

Call #16 – September 11, 2007

Funded by: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Office of Subsistence Management and The Yukon River Panel

Communities involved in the call: Kotlik, Holy Cross, Huslia, the Rapids

Government and Other Organizations/Entities:

ADFG – Anchorage, Fairbanks	DFO – Whitehorse
USFWS – Fairbanks	

Subsistence Reports: Participation in the call was low this week, with only four fishers providing reports. The callers conveyed the following information:

- ◆ In Kotlik, people are done fishing.
- ◆ In Holy Cross, everyone finished fishing 1½ weeks ago. Water levels are very low.
- ◆ In Huslia, one family reported catching only 3 kings and no fall chum of good quality all season, despite being at fish camp since June. This family also described seeing many dead, swollen fish in the river.
- ◆ In the Rampart Region, fishers intend to harvest the majority of their fall chum in the near future. Water temperatures are higher than average, and water levels are lower than average.

In summary, there is very little fishing activity this week.

Management Updates:

ADFG Fall Chum Management: The majority of the fall chum and coho salmon are assumed to be in the Yukon River by this date. The current total fall chum run size estimate ranges from 650,000 to 750,000 fish. This is well below the preseason projected range of 900,000 to 1.2 million and below the historical average (1974-2006) of approximately 865,000 fall chum in the total run. However, the 2007 fall chum run size is adequate for the drainagewide escapement goal, it provides salmon for subsistence uses, and it can support commercial harvest.

The cumulative coho salmon passage estimate at the Pilot Station sonar was approximately 173,000 fish through the end of the project on August 31, which is above the historical average passage estimate for the project of 140,000 fish.

There have been three significant pulses of fall chum salmon that have entered the mouth of the Yukon River since the start of the fall season on July 16. The first pulse of fall chum was estimated to include approximately 260,000 fish and should be near the Canadian Border. The second pulse was estimated to include approximately 140,000 fall chum and should be near Circle. The third pulse was estimated to include approximately 80,000 fish and should be near Ruby. It should also be noted that numbers of fall chum began increasing August 29 at Nenana on the Tanana River which corresponds to the first and second pulses. Lower river assessment is now done for the season.

USFWS Input: The Chandalar River Sonar project began counting on August 8. As of September 10, approximately 82,500 fall chum salmon have passed the sonar. This is well below average

for the project. Counts have been greater than 10,000 per day for each of the last three days. This project will be in operation for two more weeks.

Fall Commercial Salmon Fishing: The combined lower river commercial harvest through September 9 is approximately 74,200 fall chum and 43,100 coho salmon. Salmon quality is reported to be varied. The average weight of fall chum is 7.2 pounds and 7.5 pounds for coho salmon. Subdistricts 5-B and 5-C have had one commercial period to date with a reported harvest of 427 fall chum landed by two fishermen.

The commercial fishing season is now closed in the lower river Districts 1, 2, and 3. In Districts 4 and 5, no commercial fishing is anticipated for this week. Even though the fall chum run was late entering the lower Yukon River, the run into the Tanana River appears to be normal timing with average to above average run strength for both fall chum and coho salmon. The Tanana River fall season commercial fishery is beginning September 10 in District 6 on the standard schedule of two 42-hour periods a week and will provide commercial opportunity if a market becomes available.

DFO Update: DFO fish wheels have caught and tagged 404 fall chum, many of which are presumed to be from the first pulse. DFO is operating a live release test fishery 4 days each week. A commercial fishery will not be announced until numbers increase.

302 fall chum have been counted to date at the Fishing Branch Weir. The average for this date is approximately 8,000. However, higher numbers of fish have been seen in the area of Old Crow over the past few days. DFO officials are hoping the pulses maintain strength as they continue upriver toward Canada.

Local Input & Closing Comments: A fisher from Kotlik asked whether abnormal water temperatures were stopping fish from entering the river. An ADFG representative replied that the fall chum run was late, but the coho run was early, making it “hard to say.” He noted that the water in the river is warmer than average and weather could be affecting the run.

The fisher also inquired about reasoning behind the timing of the commercial periods on the lower river this year. The ADFG representative replied that schedules were different than last year due to differences in run size, run timing, and the fact that there was commercial fishing in both Districts Y1 and Y2.

An ADFG representative followed-up on discussions from last week’s call concerning roe stripping of pink salmon in Valdez. He shared that this roe stripping did not occur. A YRDFA representative confirmed this.

The ADFG representative also noted that subsistence salmon surveyors are going door-to-door in the lower river right now.

Lastly, a caller from Holy Cross asked what YRDFA will do to help the family that called the teleconference from Huslia asking for help because their harvest was very insufficient this year. A YRDFA representative replied that staff will look into the issue.

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