



Advisory Announcement

CONTACT:

Holly Carroll, Area Management Biologist
(907) 267-2385

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Toll free fishing schedule and counts: (866) 479-7387

In Fairbanks fishing schedule hotline: 459-7387

2020 Yukon River Salmon Summer Fishery Announcement #30

Summer Update # 5, Yukon Area Salmon Fishery

Districts Affected: Yukon Area

By this time, the majority of the Chinook salmon run has entered the lower river, and current projections for the end of season drainage-wide run size at Pilot Station Sonar is approximately 150,000 Chinook salmon, which is near the lower end of the preseason forecast (Figure 1). A run of this size should meet escapement goals, but with less surplus for harvest, so fishermen should adjust their harvest goals to be about half of what they harvested last year.

The summer chum salmon run appears to be late and tracking lower than the run size in 2019. The average midpoint at the sonar project for summer chum in years with late run timing is July 1 and the midpoint in 2019 was July 3. At this time, run projections for summer chum salmon indicate the run may be coming in below the preseason forecast of 1.7–2.1 million fish (Figure 2). Small groups have been entering the lower river, but the first large catches in many days began at LYTF the evening of June 6.

The extended early trickle of Chinook salmon is just now being counted at the Eagle sonar. Low initial counts since beginning of operations on July 1 likely indicates we did not miss the front end of the run. Historical swim speeds are used to track salmon and listed here, however because of unseasonably high water; fish may travel slower this season. As of July 7, the first pulse of Chinook salmon should be nearing Tanana. The second pulse of Chinook salmon should be near Ruby. A third pulse of Chinook salmon should be approaching Kaltag and a fourth pulse is currently passing through District 2. Early summer chum salmon should be up the Tanana river drainage and the first pulse of summer chum salmon should be near Kaltag. A second pulse should be approaching Anvik, and the third pulse is currently passing by the Pilot Station sonar.

The inseason salmon management teleconferences hosted by the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association are held every Tuesday, at 1:00 p.m. To participate, call (800) 315-6338, and enter code: YUKON# (98566#).

Assessment Projects

Lower Yukon Test Fishery (LYTF)/ ADF&G and YDFDA

Operations for 2020 have been altered. The set net (for Chinook salmon) and drift test fish sites for summer chum will not operate at Middle Mouth during the summer season. In the South Mouth at Big Eddy, drift operations for summer chum and Chinook salmon are unchanged. The set net length has been altered during the season, and, starting on July 4 we've deployed a 7.5-inch mesh set net (reduced from 8.5-inch mesh) in an effort improve catch efficiency due to the smaller than average fish observed this year. Due to these changes, the historical test fishery cumulative catch per unit effort (CPUE) and numbers reported inseason should not be compared to past reports.

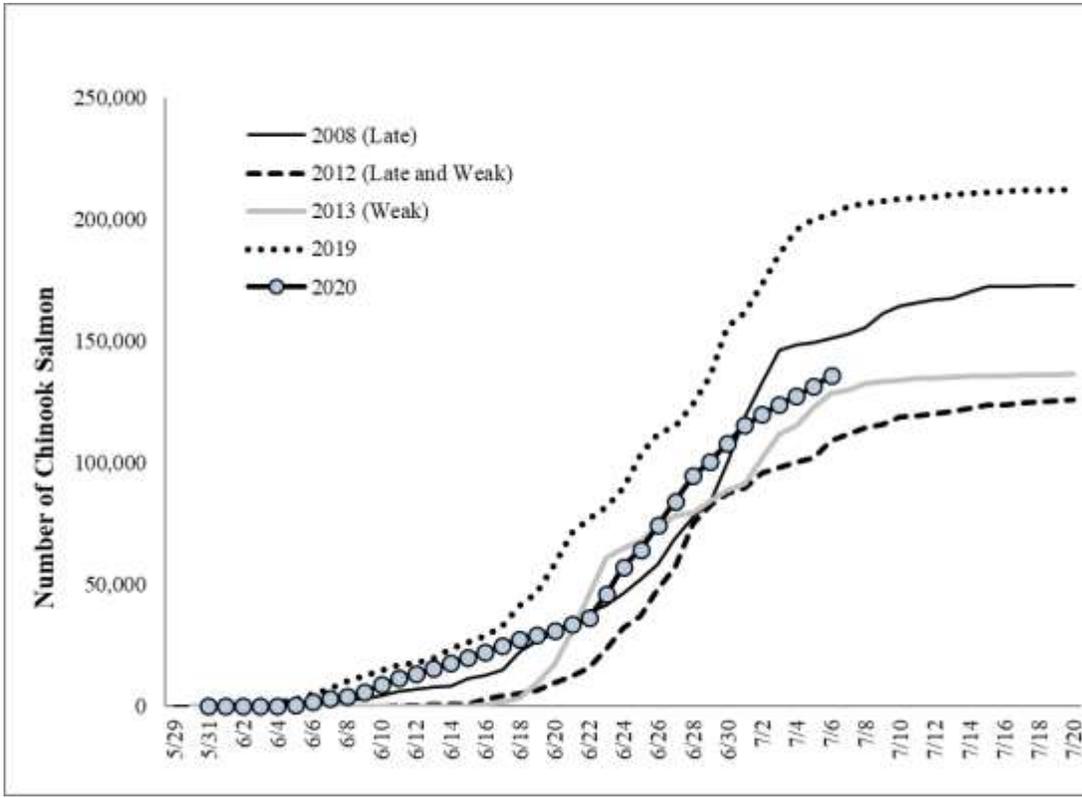


Figure 1. Cumulative passage of Chinook salmon at the Pilot Station sonar compared to late and/or weak years.

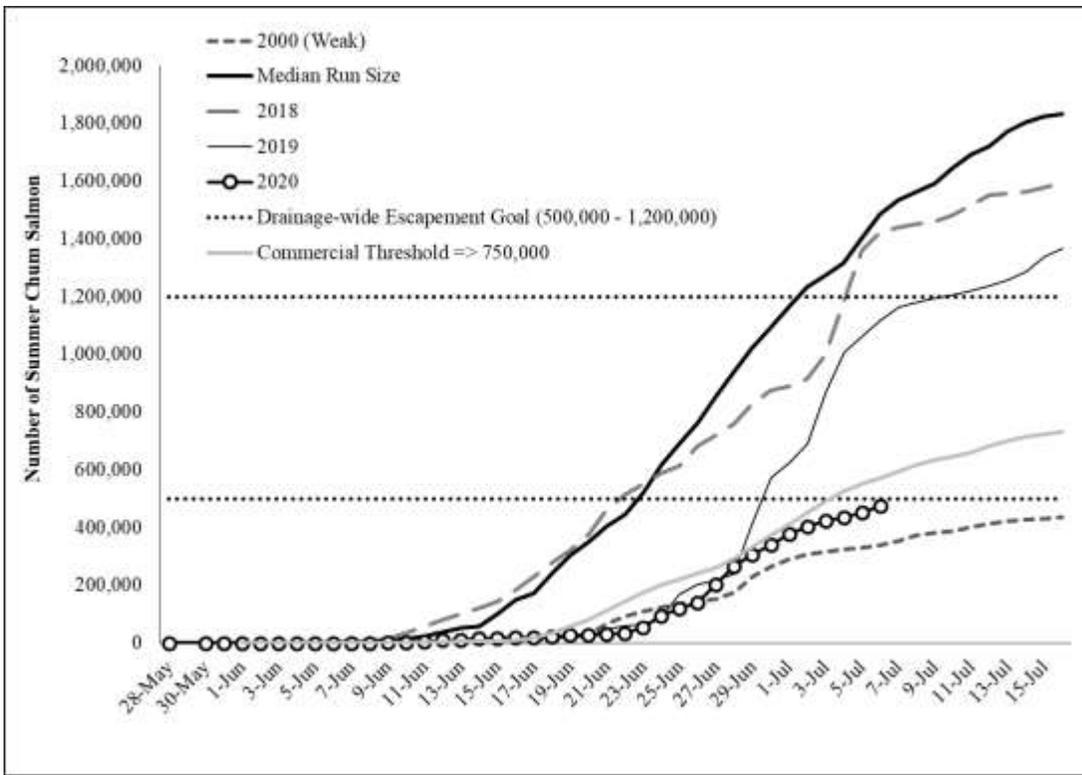


Figure 2. Cumulative summer chum salmon passage at the Pilot Station sonar compared to late and weak years. The management “commercial threshold” of 750,000 summer chum salmon needed for commercial harvest based on late run timing is included for reference. The horizontal dotted lines represent the lower and upper bounds of the drainage-wide escapement goal.

Assessment Projects

Lower Yukon Test Fishery (LYTF)/ ADF&G and YDFDA (continued)

The Big Eddy Chinook and summer chum salmon drift gillnet sites were operational on May 29. The cumulative Chinook salmon catch per unit effort (CPUE) in the 8.25-inch drift gillnet is 286, which is below the historic average of 390. The cumulative CPUE for summer chum salmon is 3,887, which is well below the Big Eddy historical median of 9,031. All CPUEs are current through July 6.

The Big Eddy set gillnet site began operations on June 3. The cumulative Chinook salmon CPUE for the set gillnet at Big Eddy is 15.88. This year's CPUE values are not directly comparable to historical CPUEs but should still give an indication of large groups of fish entering the river.

Any Chinook salmon healthy enough will be released alive from the test nets. Injured salmon and mortalities will be distributed to community members by the Tribal council, or on a first come, first-served basis from a public dock.

Sonar Project near Pilot Station/ ADF&G

The Pilot Station sonar began full operations on June 7. Water levels remain high with moderate debris. Chinook salmon passage is estimated to be 133,955 fish, which is below the historical cumulative average of 166,862 fish. Summer chum salmon passage is estimated to be 475,605 fish, which is below the historical cumulative median of 1,454,507 fish. All estimates are current through July 6.

Eagle Sonar / ADF&G

The Eagle sonar began operations on July 1. Chinook salmon passage, as of July 6, is estimated to be 214 fish, which is below the historical cumulative average of 1,246 fish for this date. The Interim Management Escapement Goal for Canadian-origin Chinook salmon is 42,500-55,000 fish and is assessed at the Eagle sonar. Water levels at the Eagle sonar are very high for this time of year.

Chena River Tower and Sonar / ADF&G

The Chena River tower and sonar project is back in the water as of July 6. High water is still hindering visual counts, but the sonar is operational. Zero fish were seen on the first partial day of counts.

ADF&G, USFWS, and TCC projects that will not operate in 2020

Due to COVID-19 travel restrictions or funding concerns, these projects will not operate: East Fork Andreafsky Weir, Anvik River Sonar, Gisasa River Weir, Henshaw Creek Weir, and Salcha River tower/sonar.

Stock Identification

Genetic mixed stock analysis (MSA) on the early group of Chinook salmon (stratum 1, sampled at the Pilot Station sonar project June 7 to June 22) indicated that 62% of this group of fish were of Canadian-origin. The first and second pulses (stratum 2, June 23–June 28) had 50% Canadian-origin fish. Together, these results indicate that much of the run so far has had a strong Canadian stock component. Currently the projections for the Canadian-origin run indicate we will end up with a run size near the midpoint of the preseason outlook of 59,000 to 99,000 Canadian-origin Chinook salmon.

The first stratum of chum salmon genetic samples has been processed from the Pilot Station sonar test fishery for stock composition. Stratum 1 (from June 7 through June 28) consisted of 99% summer chum salmon, of which, 94% were lower river stocks and 5% were bound for the middle Yukon River. In 2019, the middle river stock represented a larger proportion of the first stratum (18%), which was near the average of 19%.

Age, Sex, and Length Composition

The age composition of 377 Chinook salmon sampled from the drift gillnets in the Pilot Station test fishery through June 28 was 10% age-4, 50% age-5, and 38% age-6 fish. The percentage of age-6 fish and the percentage of females (51%) were above average. Chinook salmon within each age class were smaller than average, and the average length of 727 mm across all age classes is smaller than the recent 10-year average length of 740 mm, corroborating what fishermen have been observing.

The age composition of 353 summer chum salmon sampled from the LYTF project (June 2–June 30) indicates the run is composed of 88% age-5 fish. This suggests a very poor survival of the age-4 summer chum salmon from the 2016 parent year. The average length is 572 mm from a sample of 365 summer chum salmon, which is slightly above the 10-year average of 563 mm. The samples were 70% female, which is above the long-term average. These size and percent female trends are likely being driven by the lack of 4-year old fish in the samples.

Management Strategy

Due to unseasonably high water, early closures, and poor weather, fishing effort and catch efficiency has been reported as very low for most of the season for both Chinook and summer chum salmon throughout the drainage. The bulk of the Chinook salmon run has passed through Districts 1–4, therefore, in order to allow fishermen opportunity to catch some Chinook salmon in the presence of larger numbers of chum salmon, gillnet restrictions are being relaxed to a maximum mesh size of 7.5-inch or smaller mesh. In District 5, where few summer chum are present, 6-inch gillnet restrictions remain in place and fishing opportunity is on a reduced schedule. Large groups of Chinook salmon will need to be protected with closures in the upper river in order to limit the harvest and meet escapement objectives. The opportunity to harvest non-salmon with 4-inch or smaller mesh gillnets is available during salmon closures.

Current Subsistence Management Actions

South Coastal District (from the Naskonat Peninsula north to 62 degrees North latitude which includes Hooper Bay and Scammon Bay):

Subsistence fishing is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week with 7.5 inch or smaller mesh gillnets.

District 1 and the North Coastal Area (from 62 degrees North latitude north to Point Romanof, including the Black River, and communities of Emmonak, Nunam Iqua, Alakanuk, and Kotlik):

Effective 2 p.m. Tuesday, July 7, fishing is open with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets on a schedule of two 18-hour periods per week from:

2 p.m. Tuesdays to 8 a.m. Wednesdays

2 p.m. Fridays to 8 a.m. Saturdays

District 2 (including Mountain Village, Pitkas Point, St. Mary's, Pilot Station, and Marshall):

Fishing is open with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets on a schedule of two 36-hour periods per week from:

8 p.m. Wednesdays to 8 a.m. Fridays

8 p.m. Sundays to 8 a.m. Tuesdays

District 3 (including Russian Mission and Holy Cross):

Fishing is open with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets on a schedule of two 36-hour periods per week from:

8 p.m. Wednesdays to 8 a.m. Fridays

8 p.m. Sundays to 8 a.m. Tuesdays

Innoko River:

Subsistence fishing is open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets.

Subdistrict 4-A Lower (from $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile downstream from Old Paradise Village upstream to Stink Creek including the communities of Grayling and Anvik):

Effective 6 p.m. Tuesday, July 7, subsistence fishing is open with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels on a schedule of two 24-hour periods per week from:

6 p.m. Tuesdays to 6 p.m. Wednesdays

6 p.m. Saturdays to 6 p.m. Sundays

Subdistricts 4-A Upper, 4-B and 4-C (from Stink Creek upstream to Illinois Creek, including the communities of Kaltag, Nulato, Koyukuk, Galena, and Ruby):

Subsistence fishing is open for one more 24-hour period with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh from 6 p.m. Tuesday, July 7 to 6 p.m. Wednesday, July 8.

Effective 6 p.m. Saturday, July 11, subsistence fishing will open with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels on a schedule of two 24-hour periods per week from:

6 p.m. Saturdays to 6 p.m. Sundays

6 p.m. Tuesdays to 6 p.m. Wednesdays

Koyukuk River (Huslia, Hughes, Alatna, Allakaket, and Bettles):

Subsistence fishing is currently open 24-hours per day, 7 days per week with 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels. **Effective 6 p.m. Saturday, July 11, fishermen may use 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels.**

Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C (Tanana and Rampart):

Subsistence fishing will open from 6 p.m. Tuesday, July 7 to 6 p.m. Wednesday, July 8 with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh and fish wheels.

The subsistence fishing period from 6 p.m. Friday, July 10 to 6 p.m. Saturday, July 11 is cancelled.

Fishing will reopen Tuesday, July 14 with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh and fish wheels on a schedule of two 24-hour periods per week from:

6 p.m. Tuesdays to 6 p.m. Wednesdays

6 p.m. Fridays to 6 p.m. Saturdays

Subdistrict 5-D (Stevens Village, Beaver, Fort Yukon, Venetie, Birch Creek, Chalkyitsik, Circle, Central, Eagle):

Subsistence fishing is **open with 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels on a schedule of one 84-hour (3.5 day) period per week from:**

10 a.m. Fridays to 10 p.m. Mondays

A subsistence permit is required to fish for all species in portions of Subdistricts 5-C and 5-D from the western most tip of Garnet Island upstream to the mouth of Dall River (Dalton Highway bridge area) and from the upstream mouth of 22 Mile Slough to the U.S./Canada border.

Subdistricts 6-A and 6-B (from the mouth of the Tanana River upstream to the Wood River, including Manley, Minto, and Nenana):

Subsistence fishing is **open with 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels on a schedule of two 24-hour periods per week from:**

6 p.m. Fridays to 6 p.m. Saturdays
6 p.m. Mondays to 6 p.m. Tuesdays

Kantishna River:

Subsistence fishing is open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels.

Old Minto Area:

Subsistence fishing is **open with 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels on a 5-day per week schedule from:**

6 p.m. Fridays to 6 p.m. Wednesdays

Upper Tanana Area (the Tanana River from the confluence with the mouth of Volkmar River on the north bank and the mouth of the Johnson River on the south bank upstream to the Tanana River headwaters):

Subsistence fishing is open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels.

Subdistrict 6-C Salmon (Personal use fishery from the regulatory marker at the mouth of the Wood River upstream to the downstream mouth of the Salcha River, which includes the communities of Fairbanks, North Pole, and Salcha):

Personal use fishing is **open with 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels on a schedule of two 24-hour periods per week from:**

6 p.m. Fridays to 6 p.m. Saturdays
6 p.m. Mondays to 6 p.m. Tuesdays

In the Tanana River up to the Wood River (Subdistrict 6-A and 6-B), and in the Upper Tanana River Area, a subsistence permit is required for salmon fishing. A personal use permit is required to fish for salmon and other species from the mouth of the Wood River upstream to the mouth of the Salcha River (Subdistrict 6-C). Fishermen may only use set gillnets and fishwheels in the Personal Use salmon fishery.

A subsistence permit is required for northern pike in the Tolovana River drainage, including Minto Flats.

Subsistence harvest calendars and subsistence fishing permits are available from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game Fairbanks office (459-7274) or online at www.adfg.alaska.gov/store/.

Commercial fishing

There are currently no commercial periods announced. While good numbers of chum salmon entered the river starting June 6, chum salmon abundance is so low, we need to allow increased escapement until a harvestable surplus is projected.



This is an announcement by the ADF&G in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

To reach the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Fairbanks call 456-0406.

Announcements will be shared on Facebook at www.facebook.com/YukonRiverFishingADFG

