

Yukon River Panel, Communications Committee  
**Project CC-03-11**

Yukon River Summer Season Preparedness Process  
Final Report

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for:

Yukon River Panel

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*The views expressed do not necessarily reflect the views the funding entity.*

**Abstract:** Preseason projections suggested that the 2011 Yukon River Chinook salmon run would be below average to poor. As such, it was deemed that conservation measures to protect the future health of the run would likely be necessary. Couple this with unprecedented restrictions in 2009 and not meeting international escapement goals by a wide margin in 2010, and there rose a clear need to inform fisheries stakeholders and involve them in discussions regarding management of the 2011 run. With funding and direction from the Yukon River Panel, the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA) hosted a riverwide meeting on April 13, 2011 for Alaskans to discuss the Chinook salmon run and best approaches for handling it.

**Key Words:** Alaska, Chinook salmon, fishers, salmon, subsistence, Yukon River, Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA), Yukon River Panel.

**Citation:**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Preseason projections suggested that the 2011 Yukon River Chinook salmon run would again be below average to poor. As such, it was deemed that conservation measures to protect the future health of the run would likely be necessary. As in 2009 and 2010, it was again important to inform fisheries stakeholders of the situation and include them in the development of a plan to handle any shortfalls.

Given the breadth of communications efforts on this topic over the past two years, stakeholders are already well informed and well versed regarding poor salmon returns. As such, reducing the public pre-season plan development process from a combination of teleconferences and meetings to one riverwide meeting for all Alaskan stakeholder groups was deemed the most efficient and economical approach for stakeholder involvement this year. These groups include Tribal Councils, Regional Advisory Councils to the Federal Subsistence Board, the Yukon River Panel, Inter-Tribal Groups, processors, and the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association. Such a meeting would be meaningless without buy-in and dedicated involvement by managers from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and Alaska Department of Fish & Game; as such, they were heavily involved throughout the process.

End results of this project included an increased awareness and understanding of the current status of the salmon fishery throughout the Alaskan portion of the Yukon River drainage, stakeholder involvement in the management of their fishery, and a prioritized list of specific management approaches for responsibly addressing any shortfalls in the 2011 Chinook salmon run.

## **OBJECTIVES**

The objectives for this project were as follows:

1. Plan, promote, coordinate, facilitate, and summarize one in-person meeting for representatives from the entire Alaskan portion of the Yukon River drainage.
2. Provide a forum for sharing information and ideas, and building understanding and strategies, among all user groups in the Alaskan portion of the Yukon River drainage concerning the 2011 Chinook and fall chum salmon run.
3. Develop a narrowed list of management approaches for responsibly and equitably managing the 2011 Chinook salmon run.
4. Provide educational sessions on current fisheries topics of interest for meeting attendees.

## **METHODS**

### **Invitations and Informational Packet**

For a one-day meeting with numerous stakeholders to be effective, those stakeholders must be present, informed, and prepared. To this end, YRDFA worked with fisheries managers to develop a detailed invitation packet (Appendix A) for all 47 Tribal Councils. This packet included:

1. An introductory letter that discussed in brief the purpose of the meeting.
2. A flyer from the Alaska Department of Fish & Game and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service about Chinook salmon run strength and the need to rebuild the stocks.
3. A list of questions for Tribal Councils to consider in advance of the meeting. These questions would be discussed at the meeting, and would set the tone for the event.
4. An eye catching, high quality invitation, formatted much like a wedding invitation, complete with postage paid reply card, designed to differentiate it from other information received daily by Tribal offices and give the event an air of importance.

These packets were mailed to all Tribal offices six weeks before the meeting to give Tribal Councils adequate time to meet and discuss the topics presented and elect a representative to attend.

Additionally, through emails, phone calls, and personal invitations at various stakeholder meetings, staff invited representatives from other stakeholder groups, including Regional Advisory Councils to the Federal Subsistence Board, the Yukon River Panel, Inter-Tribal Groups, processors, and the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association. These representatives were provided similar information to that sent to Tribal offices. A number of agency personnel were invited to participate as well.

## **Meeting**

The meeting was set for April 13, 2010 at the Clarion Suites in Anchorage—the same venue and time of year as the previous two riverwide pre-season meetings. Participants had rated the location positively in the past, and rates are relatively low.

YRDFA staff reserved meeting space, coordinated catering, contacted all invitees for information on each representative, coordinated travel, and arranged for sound and recording.

At the same time, staff worked with representatives from ADF&G and USFWS to develop the agenda (Appendix B) and to hone the list of management options that should be considered by participants (Appendix C). These options involved pulse closures, how to manage a better or worse run than expected, and commercial fishing. Additionally, staff set up three break-out educational sessions on timely topics of interest. These topics were enforcement, Canadian management, and sonar projects.

Further, staff arranged the meeting structure for maximizing input and participation from the large number of attendees. The primary approach involved dividing participants into groups at separate tables, each with a dedicated note taker who could also answer questions about management. After each management option was presented, participants would discuss the issue in detail within their groups, and the note takers would capture the discussion and report on the opinions presented. Managers would use this input to finalize the pre-season plan on site and present it to attendees.

The meeting and pre-season plan were summarized in YRDFA's newsletter and e-news, and during pre-season regional meetings held in Yukon River villages in May 2011.

## **RESULTS**

All told, 85 people participated in the meeting. This included representatives from 36 Tribes, 3 Regional Advisory Councils, a processor, the Yukon River Panel, YRDFA, and other concerned fishers. This was the highest level of attendance for this riverwide meeting since the program began in 2009.

Attendees heard the outlook for the 2011 salmon runs, and they gave input into how to manage the run. The agenda was ambitious, yet the separate-groups format of the meeting allowed for great depth of discussion and building of understanding and relationships while still keeping the meeting to one day.

State and federal managers used the input from participants to develop the pre-season plan, which was presented at the end of the meeting. Not everyone agreed on every point, but everybody provided input and shared their views on each issue.

Education Sessions were provided on 3 topics. Participants had the option of attending 2 out of three. Of the three topics, enforcement was the most popular.

A detailed summary of the meeting and the education session on enforcement can be found in Appendix D.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

In designing and implementing this project, YRDFA worked to be as inclusive as time and resources would allow, to give stakeholders throughout the drainage the opportunity to have their voices heard. As noted above, participation at this meeting was higher than any previous pre-season planning meeting. More participation directly resulted in a more successful endeavor, as more stakeholders were able to learn and provide the input that shaped the pre-season plan.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Funding for the Yukon River Summer Season Preparedness Process was provided by the Yukon River Panel and USFWS. In addition to our funders, YRDFA would like to offer special thanks to everyone who provided advice and/or participation in this process. A strong presence from all stakeholders—fishers, managers, processors, Tribal representatives, and others—maximizes the effectiveness and utility of such efforts.

## Appendix A: Invitation Packet



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### YUKON RIVER DRAINAGE FISHERIES ASSOCIATION

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725 Christensen Drive, Suite 3-B, Anchorage, Alaska 99501

Tel: 907-272-3141 Toll free: 877-999-8566

Fax: 907-272-3142 Web: [www.yukonsalmon.org](http://www.yukonsalmon.org)

February 25, 2011

Dear «Tribal\_Administrator»:

As the days grow longer and our thoughts turn to summer, it is again time to plan for the return of the Chinook salmon. Once again, the outlook is not encouraging—the run is expected to be below average to poor.

Much like last year, there will be a riverwide fisheries meeting in Anchorage on April 13 to bring together tribal representatives, fisheries managers, and other stakeholders to talk about how the salmon run should be managed. I'm sending this packet to you in advance of the meeting in the hopes that the «Organization» will have time to talk about the main topics that will be covered, so that the person you choose to represent you can be sure to express the views of your Tribe.

I have enclosed the following informational items:

1. A flyer from the Alaska Department of Fish & Game and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service about Chinook salmon run strength and the need to rebuild the stocks.
2. A list of questions for your Tribal Council to consider in advance of the meeting.
3. An invitation and postage paid reply card to the meeting.

If the Chinook salmon run is again poor, as the preliminary outlook suggests, additional management measures will be necessary going into the summer season to ensure we get enough fish to the spawning ground to sustain the run into the future. Fishers and fisheries managers share the responsibility for the survival of the salmon. While we know it is hard on people to consider taking less fish than they need, for the run to continue we need to get enough fish to the spawning grounds.

It is worth noting that this year the requirement to use gillnets with a stretch mesh of 7.5 inches or less will begin. Hopefully this new regulation will translate into larger Chinook salmon on the spawning grounds, which will help create better returns in the future.

Please review the enclosed information and questions at your upcoming Tribal Council meeting. Also, please let us know whom you are selecting to attend the planning meeting in Anchorage on April 13. If you need any additional information, you can reach me at 877-999-8566 extension 102.

Sincerely,  
Jill Klein  
Executive Director



# 2011 Yukon River Chinook Salmon Rebuilding Initiative



Yukon River Chinook salmon are important to all users in the Yukon Area. Unfortunately, they have experienced a drop in production. Current run sizes are about half of historic levels, making it difficult to meet escapement goals and provide for subsistence uses on the river. Harvests have been greatly reduced since 2000 (Figure 1). Despite good parent year escapements in 2007, 2008, and 2010, runs were below expectations and escapement goals into Canada were not met (Figure 2). Preliminary analyses suggest the 2011 Yukon River Chinook salmon run will again be below average to poor. Due to poor production in recent years, it is likely the 2011 Chinook run may not be sufficient to fully support subsistence needs.

Over half of the Yukon River Chinook salmon that are harvested in Alaska are Canadian-origin. Therefore, it is very important to keep Canadian as well as Alaska stocks healthy. Conservation of fisheries resources by all users is extremely important for ensuring future salmon runs. It is now prudent to enter the 2011 season with the expectation that conservation measures will be required in an effort to meet escapement goals and share the available subsistence harvest.

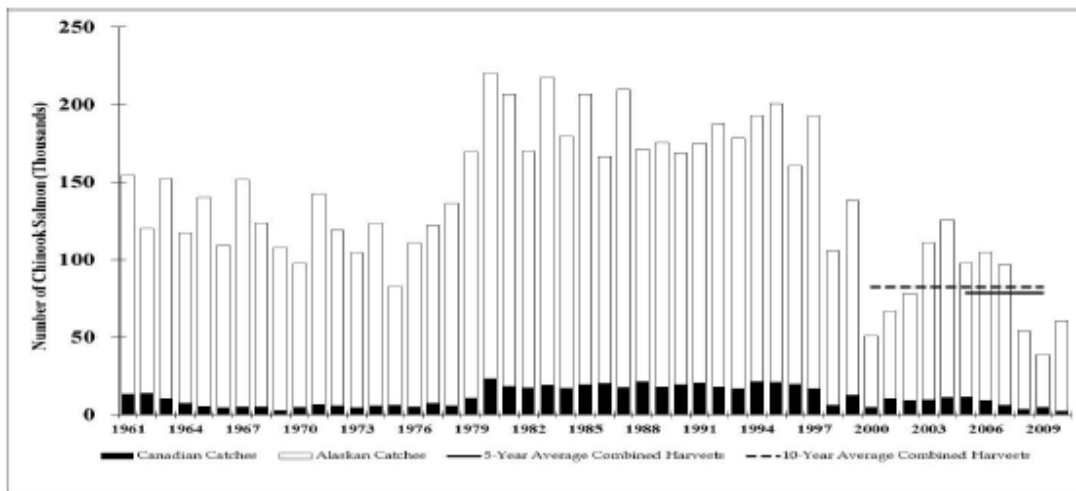


Figure 1. Total utilization of Chinook salmon, Yukon River, 1961-2010. 2010 data are preliminary.

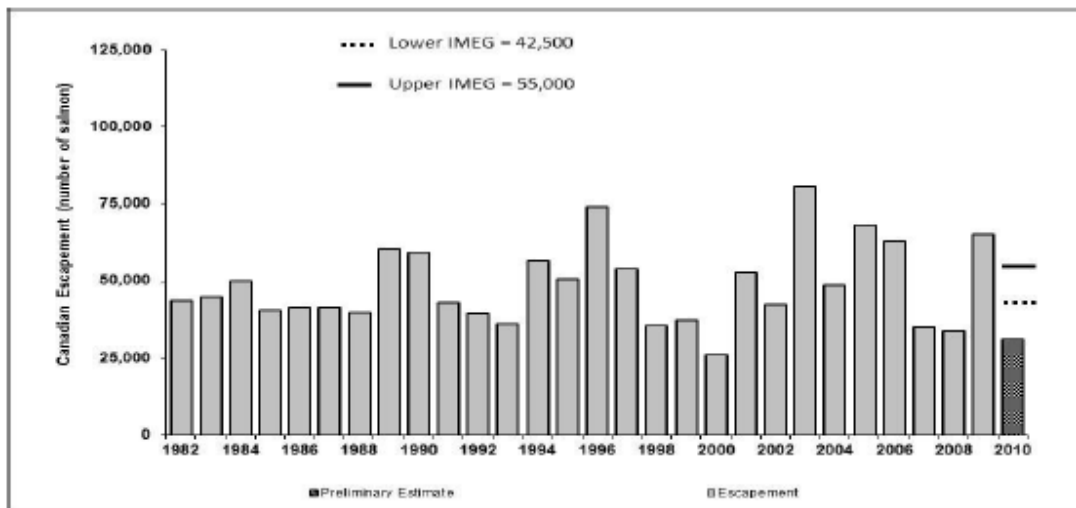


Figure 2. The estimated number of Chinook salmon reaching spawning grounds in the Canadian portion of the mainstem Yukon River drainage, 1982-2010. The dotted and dashed lines represent the 2010 interim escapement goal range (IMEG).



## 2011 Yukon River Chinook Salmon Rebuilding Initiative



It is necessary for all users to help in meeting escapement goals. In recent years, Canadian fishermen have voluntarily reduced their subsistence harvest, sometimes by more than 50%, in order to allow fish to reach the spawning grounds (Figure 1). During these low runs, it is necessary for all users to look at the amount they harvest and determine how they can help ensure adequate Chinook salmon escapement.

Given the users' concerns over the future of Yukon River Chinook salmon runs, it is necessary to develop a management plan focused on rebuilding the stocks. The initial objectives of the plan would be to achieve escapement goals in the Alaska portion of the drainage and meet escapement and harvest sharing commitments to Canada. Furthermore, this plan must provide for subsistence use of Chinook salmon in the Alaska portion of the drainage and management of overlapping summer chum salmon fisheries.

Yukon River fisheries managers need your assistance developing options and management strategies for 2011 that will assist in getting fish to the spawning grounds should the Chinook salmon run be similar to the poor runs of 2007, 2008, and 2010. Because of the trend of low productivity, it is anticipated that a conservative rebuilding plan will be in place for the next few years.

During the winter and spring, State and Federal fisheries managers will attend several meetings to inform fishermen and user groups of the 2011 outlook, and to receive input on management options for the 2011 fishing season. Yukon River fisheries managers are soliciting practical ideas for reducing Chinook salmon harvests from resource users on the river. All people who depend on Yukon River salmon have a role in protecting these special fish for future generations.


**For additional information:**  
ADF&G: Steve Hayes in Anchorage 907-267-2383  
USFWS: Fred Bue in Fairbanks 907-455-1849



## Questions to Consider

During the upcoming riverwide fisheries meeting on April 13 in Anchorage, tribal representatives, fisheries managers, and other stakeholders will discuss specific management actions and trigger points for managing the 2011 Chinook salmon run. Everyone at the meeting will have a voice in the discussion, and the main outcome will be used to create the preseason management strategy. Please discuss the following questions with your Tribal Council prior to the meeting so that your representative can be sure to express the views of your Tribe in this discussion.

- 1.** Does your Tribe support cutting back subsistence harvests to get enough Chinook salmon to the spawning grounds in years of poor salmon returns?
- 2.** Does your Tribe support pulling, or cancelling, subsistence fishing periods on the first or second pulse of Chinook salmon as a way to get enough Chinook salmon to the spawning grounds?
- 3.** How does your Tribe feel about using voluntarily harvest reductions to get enough Chinook salmon to the spawning grounds?
- 4.** Does your Tribe support the use of different Chinook salmon management tools/approaches in different parts of the river?



You are invited to the  
2011 Yukon River Pre-Season  
Fisheries Planning Meeting  
in Anchorage on  
April 13, 2011.

Please select a representative  
from your Tribe  
to attend.

All travel expenses will be covered.  
RSVP using the enclosed  
postage paid envelope.  
Additional details will be available  
later in March.

We hope you are able to join  
representatives from other Tribes,  
fisheries managers, and other  
stakeholders in working to create  
a fair management plan  
&  
rebuilding the Chinook salmon run  
on the Yukon River.

Questions?  
Call Jason Hale with the  
Yukon River Drainage  
Fisheries Association  
at 877-999-8566 extension 105.

YRDA  
700 Chena Street, Suite 118  
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

## **Appendix B: Agenda**

### **2011 Yukon River Pre-Season Planning & Communications Meeting**

Clarion Suites, Anchorage

April 13, 2011

- 8:30 a.m. Opening prayer  
Introductions, purpose, & opening comments
- 9:15 a.m. **Background**  
Yukon River Salmon Agreement – *Fred Bue, USFWS*  
Review of Chinook Salmon management for 2009 & 2010 – *Steve Hayes, ADF&G*  
2011 run outlook – *Dr. Katie Howard, ADF&G*
- 9:55 a.m. Open discussion, questions, and public comment – *moderated by YRDFA*
- 10:30 a.m. BREAK
- 10:45 a.m. **Group Discussions – Steve Hayes, ADF&G, Fred Bue, USFWS, and Jason Hale, YRDFA**  
Presentation of Topic #1: Pulse Closure  
Discussion at tables on Topic #1: Pulse Closure  
Report from tables on Topic #1: Pulse Closure
- 11:45 a.m. Presentation of Topic #2: How to Manage a Better or Worse Run than Expected  
Discussion at tables on Topic #2: How to Manage a Better or Worse Run than Expected
- 12:30 p.m. LUNCH / optional working lunch
- 1:30 p.m. Report from tables on Topic #2: How to Manage a Better or Worse Run than Expected
- 1:45 p.m. Presentation of Topic #3: Commercial Fishing  
Discussion at tables on Topic #3: Commercial Fishing  
Report from tables on Topic #3: Commercial Fishing
- 2:45 p.m. BREAK
- 3:00 p.m. **Education Sessions (45 minutes each)**  
Break-out educational sessions #1
- Enforcement – *Jim Neely, USFWS, and Lance Dahlke, ADF&G*
  - Canadian Management – *James MacDonald, DFO*
  - Sonar – *Bruce McIntosh, ADF&G*
- 3:50 p.m. Break-out educational sessions #2 (same topics)
- 4:40 p.m. **Meeting Wrap-Up**  
Presentation of preseason plan – *Steve Hayes, ADF&G, and Fred Bue, USFWS*  
Closing remarks
- 5:30 p.m. Adjourn

## Appendix C: Handouts Describing Management Options

### Topic #1: Pulse Closure

**A. Do you support cutting back subsistence harvests to get enough king salmon to the spawning grounds in years of poor returns?**

Yes	No

**B. Do you support pulling, or cancelling, subsistence fishing periods on the first or second pulse of king salmon as a way to get enough king salmon to the spawning grounds in both Alaska and Canada?**

Yes	No

## **Topic #2: How to Manage a Better or Worse Run Than Expected**

**A. Do you support using voluntarily harvest reductions to get enough king salmon to the spawning grounds?**

Yes	No

**B. Do you support the use of different king salmon management tools/approaches in different parts of the river?**

Yes	No

### **Topic #3: Commercial Fishing**

#### **A. When should commercial summer chum fishing start?**

As soon as king and summer chum salmon runs appear to be strong enough to meet spawning, treaty, and subsistence needs	At the end of the king salmon run

#### **B. Should summer chum commercial fishing be scheduled during subsistence fishing periods when possible?**

Yes	No

**Topic #3: Commercial Fishing (continued)**

**C. When should sale of king salmon incidentally caught in a commercial chum fishery be allowed?**

Never	Early July	Other

**D. Do you support summer chum commercial fishing in areas such as Kaltag that use fish wheels and can avoid incidental harvest of king salmon?**

Yes	No

## **Appendix D: Detailed Meeting Minutes/Summary**

### **2011 YUKON RIVER PRE-SEASON PLANNING & COMMUNICATIONS MEETING**

Clarion Suites  
Anchorage, Alaska  
April 13, 2011  
8:30 a.m.

#### Attendees:

Jill Klein, YRDFA  
Bill Alstrom, St. Mary's  
Nick Andrew, Jr., Marshall  
Camille Augline, Alakanuk  
Andy Bassich, Eagle  
Norbert Beans, St. Mary's  
Christopher Beans, St. Mary's  
Dan Bergstrom, ADF&G  
Caroline Brown, ADF&G  
Fred Bue, USFWS  
Richard Burnham, Kaltag  
John Burr, ADF&G  
Rod Campbell, OSM  
Marvin Deacon, Grayling  
Alfred Demientieff, Jr., Holy Cross  
Peter Demoski, Nulato  
Debra Duny, Marshall  
Jeff Estensen, ADF&G  
Brewster Fields, Ft. Yukon  
Robyn George, Nulato  
Jason Hale, YRDFA  
Steve Hayes, ADF&G  
Katie Howard, ADF&G  
Orville Huntington, Huslia  
Fred Huntington, Sr., Galena  
Benedict Jones, Koyukuk  
Clifford Kaganak, Sr., Scammon Bay  
Lisa Kangas, Fairbanks, TCC  
James Landlord, Mountain Village  
Mick Leach, ADF&G  
Heathery Leba, ADF&G  
Bryan Maracle, Ft. Yukon  
Gerald Maschmann, USFWS  
Bob Massengale, YRDFA  
Carl Jerue, Anvik  
Martin Kelly, Pilot Station



Victor Lord, Nenana  
Vince Mathews, USFWS  
Jeremy Mears, USFWS  
Sheila Minock, Russian Mission  
Doug Molyneaux  
Catherine Moncrieff, YR DFA  
Peter Moore, Emmonak  
K.J. Muschovic, OSM  
Jim Neely, USFWS  
Agnes Okitkun, Kotlik  
George Pappas, ADF&G  
Wilma Pitka, Beaver  
Christine Rifredi, Ft. Yukon  
Joyce Roberts, Eagle  
Harding Sam, Alatna  
Gene Sandone  
Pollock Simon, Sr., Allakaket  
John Stam, Ruby  
Ben Stevens, Ft. Yukon  
Casie Stockdale, Bethel  
Dominica Strongheart, Nunam Iqua  
Patrick Tall, Chevak  
Tom Taube, ADF&G  
Darrell Vent, Huslia  
James Walker, Holy Cross  
Robert Walker, Anvik  
June Walker, Hughes  
Polly Wheeler, OSM  
Amanda Wiese, ADF&G  
Larry Williams, Venetie  
Jeff Regnart, ADF&G  
Gary Edwards, USFWS  
Tim Andrew AVCP  
Jan Conitz, ADF&G  
Rod Simmons, USFWS  
Robyn Azarue, Nulato  
Crystal Leonetti, USFWS  
Donald Mike, OSM  
David Jenkins, OSM  
Caroline Behe  
Nancy Swanton, NPS  
Lester Wilde, YKRAC  
Daniel Sharp, BLM  
Kathleen Peters-Zuray, Tanana  
Paul Lamont, Jr., St. Mary's  
Ted Suckling, Nenana  
Al Unak, Kotlik

Frank Turner, Holy Cross  
Mary Jo Turner, Holy Cross  
Debby Burwen, ADF&G  
Patrice Kohl, Kenai  
Ted Kruger, Anvik  
David Bunyan, Hooper Bay  
Walter Peter, Porcupine  
Daren Vent, Huslia  
Michael Jimmy, Emmonak

### Call to Order

Mr. Jason Hale called the meeting to order at 9:45 a.m.

### Opening Prayer:

The opening prayer was given by Mr. Benedict Jones.

### Opening Comments

Mr. Hale stated that over 80 percent of the tribes on the Yukon were represented at the meeting.

### Introductions:

Those present introduced themselves.

### Purpose:

Mr. Hale stated the purpose of the meeting was to talk about how the salmon run should be managed this summer, specifically the king salmon run and summer chum. Another purpose was to learn from each other and hear about current fisheries issues. Attendees were asked to pass on what was learned to others when they get home. He thanked those who provided funds for the meeting for their support: Yukon River Panel and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Mr. Hale went over the ground rules for the meeting: (1) do not interrupt others, only one person speaking at a time; (2) give others time to share their ideas; (3) show respect for each other; (4) stay on topic when speaking; (5) if anyone had an issue that was not on the agenda, they were to bring it up to a staff person during a break; and (6) minimize repetition. He reminded everyone to speak into a microphone.

Ms. Jill Klein welcomed the attendees and thanked them for their participation. She gave a brief introduction to YRDFA, which was formed in 1991 by people from the Yukon River. The mission is to protect and promote the wild salmon fisheries and traditional subsistence cultures of the Yukon River. Their purpose is to bring people together. She also discussed an upcoming meeting with First Alaskans Institute. There will also be regional village-based meetings starting in Nulato May 12<sup>th</sup>, St. Mary's May 18<sup>th</sup>, and Fort Yukon May 25<sup>th</sup>.

### Background Information:

Mr. Fred Bue, USFWS, gave an overview of the Yukon River Salmon Agreement. It was signed by representatives from the U.S. and Canada after 16 years of negotiation on the conservation and allocation of the Canadian origin salmon. Its principal goals are the rebuilding and conservation of salmon stocks. A rebuilding plan for fall and chum salmon and a stock stabilization plan for Chinook salmon were initiated in 1990. An interim agreement was reached in 1995. A long-term agreement was reached in 2001. The Yukon River Panel makes recommendation to management entities on both sides of the border concerning the conservation and management of salmon originating in the Canadian portion of the Yukon River. The Panel has responsibility for setting and adjusting annual salmon spawning escapement objectives based on pre-season projections, stock status and recommendation from the JTC, and to oversee the use and administration of R&E fund which supports projects on either side of the border that contribute to restoration, conservation, enforcement and stewardship of Canadian-origin salmon.

Mr. Steve Hayes, ADF&G, reviewed the Chinook salmon management for 2009 and 2010. In 2009 they expected a below average Chinook salmon run. The spring annual outlook meeting came up with five key management strategies to be implemented in order to meet escapement goals and to share the available subsistence harvest throughout the river: (1) no directed Chinook salmon commercial fishing; (2) delay the windowed subsistence regulatory schedule until the first week of June; (3) no fishing on the first pulse of Chinook throughout the Alaskan main stem portion of the river; (4) reduce the remaining subsistence fishing in half; and (5) Chinook salmon harvest was restricted to Federally-qualified rural subsistence users only. In addition mesh size was reduced to six-inch or smaller in the lower river. The subsistence harvest of Chinook salmon in 2009 was approximately 34,000. Overall the subsistence harvest was reduced by about 35 percent and subsistence harvest on Canadian fish was reduced by approximately 50 percent. There was no sale of incidentally-caught Chinook until July 16<sup>th</sup>. During commercial periods for fall chum there were approximately 131 caught. Most escapement goals were met for 2009 for Chinook salmon. Close to 70,000 Chinook salmon passed the Canadian border. The U.S. treaty obligations were met. The 2009 harvest for summer chum was approximately 171,000.

In 2010 they expected an average to below average run. The annual outlook meeting came up with four key conservation measures: (1) no directed commercial fishing on Chinook salmon; (2) delaying the start of regulatory windows until June 7<sup>th</sup> starting in District Y1 and then placed upriver chronologically as the fish migrated; (3) directed summer chum commercial fishing would be dependent on the Chinook run. Voluntary reductions were also discussed at that meeting, but participants overall indicated a preference for equal restrictions along the river. Preliminary numbers for 2010 have the subsistence harvest at approximately 43,000. There were no restrictions on the subsistence fishery, but weather was a factor. There was no directed Chinook commercial fishery. The total incidental Chinook commercial harvest was about 9,900 fish. The summer chum run was projected pre-season to be average with escapement goals met as well as the subsistence priority and that there would be a surplus of 250,000 to 500,000 fish available for other uses. Total harvest of summer chum was approximately 232,900 fish, which was above average. The Chinook run was poorer than anticipated pre-season. Most escapement goals were not met.

Dr. Katie Howard, ADF&G, discussed the 2011 run outlook. Their best estimate is for a poor to below average Chinook run. They are estimating 130,000 to 178,000 fish for the total run which is similar to what they have seen in the last three years. There have been changes noted in the marine environment reported such as more jellyfish, as well as changes in the permafrost along the river which could result in erosion and how it might affect the salmon eggs and the young salmon in the rivers. There are three management priorities: (1) escapement; (2) subsistence use on the Alaskan side and meeting the harvest sharing with the Canadians; and (3) commercial, sport and other fisheries on any surplus fish. There are seven escapement objectives in the Alaska portion of the drainage for Chinook salmon: West Fork Andreafsky, 640 to 1600 fish; East Fork Andreafsky, 2100 to 4900 fish; Anvik, 1,100 to 1,700 fish; Nulato, 940 to 1900 fish; Chena, 2800 to 5700 fish; Salcha, 3300 to 6500 fish. The objective for escapement into Canada is 42,500 to 55,000 fish, plus the TAC which is estimated at 5,000 fish for this year. She stated they expect a run size of about 65,000 to 89,000 Canadian fish (approximately half of the total run). At 65,000, the U.S. harvest would be less than 17,000 Canadian origin fish only. At 89,000 Canadian fish, the U.S. harvest would be 26,000 to 36,000 fish. The average subsistence harvest of Canadian fish in a typical year is about 30,000 fish. The high end of the projection could support a normal subsistence fishery. Based on the projection they expect at this time, there is not a lot of room for harvest on fish.

Dr. Howard also addressed summer chum. They are expecting an average run in 2011, or a run size of approximately 1.3 to 1.6 million fish. It is expected to meet subsistence needs and escapement as well as provide for an additional 300,000 to 600,000 for commercial and other uses.

Mr. Tim Andrews asked about the Canadian projects and whether they made their escapement goals. Dr. Howard stated that they will include more information on the Canadian escapements in the future. They do not have individual tributary escapement goals. They base their decisions on the Eagle sonar numbers.

Mr. Orville Huntington expressed concern about having restrictions of people who come home to fish. It is important for elders to have the help of younger family members. He also expressed concern about just looking at the Eagle sonar for numbers of fish crossing the border. He also felt that Dr. Howard needed to run regression analyses on her data.

Mr. Fred Bue stated they received a lot of feedback regarding people not being able to come home to fish. He pointed out that it was just waters adjacent to federal management units and not throughout the drainage.

Mr. Dan Bergstrom addressed the Eagle sonar. In any given year there will be potential difficulties due to high water conditions. On the Alaska side they look at everything, not just one project. In Canada last year they voluntarily reduced their subsistence harvest and only took 2500 Chinook because they were not seeing fish, which indicates there were not a lot of fish across the border.

Mr. Hale stated that during the workshops there will be a representative from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans in Canada talking about Canadian management.

Mr. Bryan Maracle clarified that escapement means a one-way directional into the spawning grounds. He asked how they factor in the actual departure from the spawning grounds. Dr. Howard stated they use historical patterns of how many fish made it to the spawning grounds and what returned to those spawning grounds four to six years later. Those patterns give an indication of how many fish return per fish that spawned in the parent year. Mr. Maracle asked what mortality factors they used. Dr. Howard stated they used counts at spawning locations on the Alaska side of the drainage. For the Canadian fish, they subtract out the Canadian harvest to get the escapement into the Canadian spawning grounds. In response to Mr. Maracle, Dr. Howard stated that they get the number of fish as well as the ages of the fish to calculate what spawning group produced that fish. They use those patterns and the relationships between what spawned and what returned for all of the brood years to predict what's going to happen in the future. Mr. Maracle requested that the data behind the escapement goals be provided as well as how that relates to when those fish are passing by.

Mr. Peter Demoski stated they were there to discuss the management of Chinook salmon on the Yukon River because they all share the responsibility for the survival of Chinook salmon. He felt that neither state nor federal managers know how to take meaningful action. The federal government has a Congressional mandate to prohibit use of a renewable resource, i.e. Chinook salmon, by anyone other than Alaska Native subsistence users whenever that resource is declining and depended on by Alaska Natives for subsistence. He also commented on the 2011 Yukon River Chinook Salmon Rebuilding Initiative. He stated that figure 1 of that paper did not show a harvest breakdown between subsistence and commercial fishing. He stated that commercial fishing and its resulting bycatch of Chinook salmon is not compatible with subsistence fishing. He felt the projected poor run is the result of commercial fishing off the coast of Alaska. He recommended co-management with a committee or delegation of Yukon River subsistence fishermen be recognized and sit at the same table with ADF&G and USFWS when management issues are being determined. Management plans must be consistent along the whole Yukon River. He also recommended curtailing driftnetting for Chinook salmon for a season. He felt the use of driftnets was the most positive way to deplete a resource.

Mr. Robert Walker asked for some information on the Yukon River Panel. Mr. Fred Bue stated the Yukon River Panel addresses a lot of issues. There were some Yukon River Panel members, alternatives and advisors at the meeting. Most of them are fishermen although ADF&G and USFWS also have a member each. They discuss fisheries issues. The Joint Technical Committee is comprised of biologists who make presentations to the Panel. The Panel members make decisions on what goals to get across the border as well as goals in Alaska. Mr. Dan Bergstrom stated that there has been information every year in the newsletters regarding the Panel. He has recommended they hold a meeting along the Yukon so people along the river in Alaska could see the Panel in action.

Mr. Norbert Beans stated that the Pilot Station sonar was messed up last year. This resulted in their being cut off in their subsistence fishing. He commended Marshall for taking the initiative to feed their elders. Mr. Hale stated they hear concerns about the Pilot Station sonar every year. Sonar will be discussed in two of the workshops in the afternoon.

Mr. Nick Andrews stated they all represent from the coast to the Canadian border. He requested that as common users of salmon they not allow this important resource become a dividing factor.

They need to be unified. He has not heard in the gathering that they were meeting government-to-government with the state and federal government.

Mr. Bill Alstrom stated they have been trying to figure out what is happening to the fish for years. They see changes happening in the world now that are hard to explain. There is a lot of concern among all the people along the Yukon River and the coast not just with the Chinook, but also with the crash of the fall chum last summer. They need now to be concerned about the summer and fall chum as well as the Chinook. They do not know what is happening in the Bering Sea or what is happening in Canada. He stressed that they need to work together.

Mr. Peter Moore stated a lot he has heard are equal to things his grandfather told him. The fish are declining. His grandfather said if you fight over food, it will decline fast. His grandfather also said the day will come will starvation will come again.

## **GROUP DISCUSSIONS**

### **TOPIC #1: PULSE CLOSURE**

Mr. Steve Hayes discussed the why the first pulse for possible closure. The first pulse is the hardest hit from the mouth of the river to the border and even into Canada for fresh fish and fish to put away for the winter. Not fishing on the first pulse in 2009 was successful in getting fish to Canada. Over 50 percent of the early portion of the run is Canadian-bound fish. Harvest can be shifted to the second pulse. If the early part of the run is well below expected, they may have to look at doing further conservation measures on the middle portion of the run. Mr. Fred Bue added that a lot of the late pulse in July are lower river fish and may not be accessible to upper river fishermen.

Mr. Lester Wilde asked how many closures there have been on the first pulse in the last few years and what year will they see the results of it. Mr. Hayes stated that 2009 was the first year they pulled subsistence fishing periods. Mr. Bergstrom added that those fish would come back in 2014 and 2015 as five and six-year olds.

Mr. Tim Andrew asked if there was a way to utilize some current existing projects to develop a correlation of whether or not they will be able to meet escapement goals. He felt a problem with laying off the first pulse for the lowest part of the Yukon River is that many of the people on the Lower Yukon are inclined to harvest those early fish primarily because of weather conditions that occur in July that effect drying fish. He recommended the regulatory agencies seriously look at some of the subsistence harvest practices throughout the entire river to further refine management options. He encouraged people to think outside the box. Mr. Hayes felt Mr. Andrew had brought up a good point. If the runs continue to be poor they may have to look at potentially doing things differently in the different areas.

The group broke in to table discussions.

Table 12: Mr. Mick Leach reported that on question 1A their table was in favor of it with one opposed. As subsistence needs grow, they want to make sure future generations have available food. It was also important to share subsistence resources all along the river. If this measure

helps with that, then they supported it. On question 1B, they were in favor of it. They added they consider some partial fishing on the first or second pulse.

Table 11: Mr. Jeff Estensen reported they supported it with one abstention. With respect to 1A, if it helps, they supported it. Sharing along the river is very important. One comment was that if there has to be reductions in subsistence, there should be preference given to those who need it. With respect to 1B, they stated is there any choice.

Table 10: Mr. Vince Mathews reported that on question 1A, 4 were in favor, 1 was against. One of the main points was that there would need to be some kind of village agreement across the drainage. They talked about possibly a percentage reduction per village. They also stated that everyone needs to carry the conservation burden. They also discussed that it was a salmon production concern. With respect to 1B, there was 1 in support, 3 against, one abstention. Those who were against it felt they need to look at possibly a couple of days' reduction. It was also felt it should not cut across the whole drainage, but that it should be tailored to the area for different factors.

Table 9: Mr. Orville Huntington reported that their vote was 3 yes and 1 no on 1A, and 1 yes, 2 no, and 1 abstain on 1B. He suggested not looking at percentages per village. He did not feel that would be fair to the fishermen. Some people fish for a lot of people. It should be done individually, i.e. if it is restricted 75 percent, then each fisherman would restrict their harvest. The delegate from down river at Table 9 felt it was not wise to look just at one part of the fishing season, but that they should look at the whole season.

Table 8: Mr. Gerald Maschmann reported that on 1A there were 5 yes with some stipulations. A primary stipulation was that there could not be any commercial fishing, including summer chums. Mixing the subsistence interest and commercial interests is too difficult. On 1B they did not vote, but comments included that the reality is that all of the pulses need some level of protection. One comment was that in 5D the large females typically come in later, around the third pulse. Another comment was they need more information on the make-up of the pulses and their percentages. The restrictions need to be fair up and down the river. Different areas have historically weaker fisheries than other areas.

Table 7: Ms. Heather Leba stated they were split on the two issues. Issues were centered on drying times during the beginning of the summer. Another issue was putting food away for the winter. Another concern was many of those at the table live on the coast and do not have the opportunity to capitalize on any of the lower river test fisheries fish that are distributed to community members. Another concern was having just the first pulse closure not restricted for all subsistence fishing, but just to Chinook catch, for those fishing in the main river and in the sloughs to be able to use smaller gear to harvest other fish species.

Table 6: Ms. Amanda Wiese reported they were split on 1A with 3 yes, 2 no and 1 maybe. One main concern was customary trade. They would like the definition of subsistence to be better defined in terms of how it is used. If they have to hold off on subsistence harvest, then they need to be sure that none of that harvest is going to customary trade but is all going to feed families. Other concerns included drying times, and that harvesting in the sloughs is a challenge. With respect to 1B there was 1 yes, 2 no and a couple stipulations. Generally it wouldn't be supported

without restrictions on the trawl fisheries off the coast and other fisheries that intercept Yukon salmon. Harvesting and drying times due to weather later in the season were also a concern.

Table 5: Ms. Caroline Brown reported that there was affirmative consensus on 1A. There was interest in reducing harvest and allowing more fish to the spawning grounds; however reductions in subsistence should only happen as a last resort and for conservation purposes. If reductions are going to be made, then they need to be made across the board, including the high seas fishermen. If subsistence is cut back, then they need to be sensitive and consider the impacts on particular parts of the river; i.e. drying times in the lower river. On 1B there were 5 votes in support and 1 no. The one that did not support it favored voluntary reductions in harvest. They discussed the drawbacks of pulling periods in terms of the hardship in various locations on the river as well as the benefits such as how it has helped the Koyukuk and the Tanana Rivers see more and bigger fish than they normally see. There was concern that if there are restrictions in the periods that those restrictions need to be equal, but also paying attention to the different ways the run manifests throughout the river. Other suggestions included looking at north bank/south bank regulations. There was less agreement over whether or not to ask fishermen to limit their harvest in terms of providing for their social obligations to people outside their own communities.

Table 4: Mr. John Burr reported that on 1A there was generally qualified support, but many found the term cutting or closing alarming and would prefer consider reducing subsistence harvest. Qualifications included making sure the burden was shared as equally as possible up and down the river; that the timing of the reductions should be such that it is a time when they are actually reducing harvest as opposed to just closing it when the water is high and there is a bunch of sticks in the river; and consideration of weather conditions. With respect to 1B, they were split between yes and no. Those who voted yes stressed that the closures need to be effective and they need to be the same to the extent possible all up and down the river. Those who did not support 1B noted they have little faith in the agencies' ability to count fish, particularly in the lower river, and the effectiveness of the test fisheries, as well as their concern that because of drying conditions closing all of the first pulse puts an unreasonable burden on those fishermen. They also suggested sharing the burden of cutting back with the Pollock fishery and let them just not fish for four or five years and see if there is a measurable difference in the number of fish coming back.

Table 3: Mr. Tom Taube reported they had a split vote on 1A with 3 yes and 2 no. Within the yes vote there were provisions that they still need to provide for their family and subsistence needs, but they agreed that preserving the salmon run for future returns was a real important issue. The no votes felt they have already suffered enough with a lot of the restrictions without getting more restrictions. The restrictions impact some districts greater than others. There were concerns that from a management perspective there needs to be better assessment of harvest. If actions are taken, such as gear restrictions, they need to check with the villages to make sure that gear is actually available in those villages. There was also a split vote on 1B with 1 yes and 4 no. The person who voted yes stated that it should be a last resort. Preservation of the stock and making sure fish comes back in the future is important, but making sure the reduction is balanced throughout the entire river. Those who were against 1B would rather see reducing the windows, the duration of time. There were some concerns expressed that they had heard from First Nation communities that there are impacts on juvenile survival by some of the Canadian sightseeing jet



boats that are killing migrating or rearing salmon. Another concern was due to weather they may have to go way from their traditional preservations methods.

## TOPIC #2: HOW TO MANAGE A BETTER OR WORSE RUN THAN EXPECTED

Mr. Steve Hayes and Mr. Fred Bue presented background information. They need to go into the upcoming season with a plan, such as pulling a subsistence period. They need a plan for what to do after getting in-season assessment information, how to adjust the management for a poorer run or a better run.

Mr. Hale stated that the tables will be discussing two questions on this topic: (A) Do you support using voluntary harvest reductions to get enough king salmon to the spawning grounds; (B) Do you support the use of different king salmon management tools or approaches in different parts of the river.

### GILLNETS:

Ms. Lisa Kangas, TCC, spoke about mesh size and the availability of nets. TCC is helping to distribute nets to the villages. Fishermen with gillnets of 7-1/2 inches or larger are eligible for the program. They will have to surrender their old webbing if they have them. With the nets TCC will also provide \$250 net hanging voucher to either hang the nets themselves or to have someone else do it for them. They are trying to set up one village contact for each village.

Mr. Tim Andrew, AVCP, stated he understood that there were various net lengths from the lower river up to the Canadian border. He asked how they will accommodate for those differences. Ms. Kangas stated they were dealing with their region. Currently the nets they have available are 55 fathoms with 6-1/2-inch and 7-inch mesh. When they are set and hung they will come out to 150 feet. She understands that fishermen in Anvik fish with longer nets. She is talking with PSMFC about compensating fishermen who do not fit into the current criteria.

In answer to question, Ms. Kangas stated the nets are estimated to arrive in Fairbanks next week. After they arrive, they will distribute them to the villages. In answer to another question, she stated that there is one net allowed per commercial and subsistence household.

### OPEN MICROPHONE:

Mr. Doug Molyneaux stated that AVCP has asked him to help them develop a program on the Lower Yukon River for sampling subsistence fishermen's Chinook salmon catches. The villages of Emmonak, Alakanuk, and St. Mary's the plan is to have subsistence fishermen collect scales, sex, and length information, and a fin-clip from their subsistence Chinook salmon catch. This information will be used to characterize what the age, sex, length and stock composition is of the Lower Yukon, Y1 and Y2, subsistence harvest. The information will go to Fish and Game for analysis. There will be a village coordinator for Emmonak and Alakanuk and one for St. Mary's.

## TOPIC #2 (CONTINUED)

Table 3: Mr. Tom Taube reported that on question 2A, the vote was 4 yes, 1 no. The comments were that they would agree to cut back by some percent if it would provide for spawning as long as they were still able to get some level of fish. The dissenter felt they have already done some reduction based on where they fish and times fished. On question 2B it was unanimous in support of use of different king salmon management tool approaches in different parts of the river. Different areas have different success rates. They also felt that gear should be based on how efficient it is in the fishing site. Also the fishing time should vary depending on areas of density of fish.

Table 10: Mr. Vince Mathews reported that on 2A the vote was 4 yes, 1 no. Those who supported it agreed as long as it is based on a village agreement. They felt it also needs to apply across the entire salmon migration route. Another caveat was that they supported it as long as 100 percent of the fish are counted passing the sonar. The dissenter said this has not worked in the past, and with the low numbers it will cause animosity between fishermen as to what is considered voluntary. On 2B the vote was unanimous in support of the use of different management tools and approaches. They felt that different parts of the river have different make ups, such as multiple channels, which require different management tools. The group also discussed that the state needs to put more money into sonar. They felt that it needed to have the village's agreement. Tools that were mentioned in their discussion included pulse protection in some districts, voluntary reductions where it would work, Tier II/some kind of permit system, area or district quotas.

Table 8: Mr. Gerald Maschmann reported that on 2A they were unable to give a solid yes or no. They felt that voluntary reductions would be nice, but they were skeptical whether they would work. Several said they are already voluntarily reducing their harvest. They felt that in reality restrictions need enforcement. They were in support of 2B because different areas of the river have different gear types and different fishing methods. Efficiency differs in different parts of the river as well as in different types of weather.

Table 5: Ms. Caroline Brown reported that on 2A there was consensus in support of using voluntary harvest reductions with the caveat that it would only work if everybody does it, which is challenging to achieve. They felt it was important for fishermen to focus on evenly reducing their harvest across the run. They also felt that voluntary reductions have to be balanced against environmental conditions at different types of the summer and different places in the river. They found question 2B to be a difficult question. They felt that the answer would depend on the tools and approaches used. Available tools would have different impacts in different parts of the river. In general everyone should experience restrictions if restrictions are going to be experienced.

Table 12: Mr. Mick Leach reported that on 2A there was unanimous support for voluntary reductions, but there was some question as to how effective it would be as some families would sacrifice and others would not. They also were not sure that voluntary restrictions would be enough of a factor to actually contribute. There was concern expressed about some families cutting back and then running out of fish supplies earlier in the winter and they see customary trade sales going on in different parts of the state. On 2B there was also unanimous support. They felt any management tools and approaches should protect subsistence users and give them priority as well as ensuring future runs for future generations. There was discussion of fairness

and keeping the political peace of implementing a closure on the first pulse and that it would be a good idea to stay consistent all the way up the river.

Table 11: Mr. Jeff Estensen reported that on 2A there was a split vote, 2 yes, 2 no. Those who voted no felt it would not be 100 percent effective and that not everyone would participate or be honest about it. They felt there would need to be some sort of management action in place to make sure everyone was doing it. Those who voted yes felt that it should be left up to the individual to comply. Another suggestion was to have shorter windows to begin with and then as the run progressed and became more U.S. stocks the windows could be longer. On question 2B, they were again split with 2 yes and 2 no. Those who voted no felt it was important to spread the burden out across all users. Those who voted yes felt that things are different in different parts of the river and that should be taken into account. Differences include the current, amount of silt, etc.

Table 4: Mr. John Burr reported that on 2A they were generally against it. Most of those who voted no feel they are already voluntarily reducing harvest and only harvest what they need. They did not feel there could be any additional voluntary reduction without information on the impact by other users such as the trawl fishery and commercial fisheries in other districts. There also was not much support for 2B. They discussed the intent of the management approaches. They felt it was important to be consistent over the entire river and to treat all the districts the same to the degree possible.

Table 6: Ms. Amanda Wiese reported they were split on 2A with 3 yes, 2 no, and 1 maybe. There was discussion that users only take what they need already and to cut back on that means they are going to have to fill in somewhere else. There was some discussion about changing run timing and salmon biology. With kings now being smaller, it takes more of them to make up the same amount of food. They are migrating different places and their biology is changing. With respect to 2B, there were 3 yes, a maybe, and 1 neutral. They discussed staggering closures throughout the river, dividing some districts so that closures can be better staggered throughout the run. They discussed having sonar at the Yukon bridge. Another idea was monitoring at Tanana to see what stocks go into Tanana to help see what is going to actually travel upriver. They also felt there needed to be more funding for assessment projects along the river so they can get a better idea and be more informed.

Table 7: Ms. Heather Leba reported that on question 2A there were 5 voting no. The reasons for this were that even though voluntary restrictions are good for conservation, they felt they do not necessarily work because the burden is not necessarily shared and it is not equitable. They felt mandatory closures would work better and would ensure that conservation needs were in fact met. It was also suggested that the test fish projects in the lower river could be better at spreading out the test fishery caught fish to other subsistence users other than just in the immediate local communities and just a few families. On 2B there were 5 voting yes. They felt different management strategies along the river would work better because of the differences in different places along the river. Different districts have different hardships and difficulties in fishing.

Table 9: Ms. Lisa Kangas reported that on 2A the vote was 4 yes, agreeing that it is important to voluntarily reduce the harvest. They also do not want to be penalized in the future if, for

example, future management strategies would involve cutting down based on historical uses of fish per region. One fisher stated that they have to follow the regulations anyway so is it really voluntarily reducing harvest. They also discussed that the Pollock fishery needs to be reduced as well. With respect to 2B, there were 3 yes and 1 abstaining. They agreed that one conservation tool was not appropriate to use for the entire river due to different environmental concerns and the pulses that go through.

### TOPIC #3: COMMERCIAL FISHING ON SUMMER CHUM

Mr. Steve Hayes and Mr. Fred Bue addressed commercial fishing on summer chum. Questions in this area include when to start commercial fishing for summer chum. They project a surplus of 300,000 to 600,000 fish available for commercial harvest. In recent years they have had to delay the commercial opening due to the king salmon runs. This has resulted in putting a surplus of chum upriver that go unharvested. Another question is whether the sale of incidentally caught Chinook should be allowed; should fishermen take them home for subsistence use; or should the sale of incidental kings be delayed until it was mostly Alaska stocks. Ideas to be considered include, for example, on the lower river could they allow summer chum commercial fishing earlier than they have been if they are overlapped with subsistence periods; allow early summer chum fishing if the fishery can avoid the Chinook salmon (District 4A). Mr. Dan Bergstrom added that the 4A fishery is with fishwheels so they target more on the summer chum and do not catch very many Chinook.

The table discussions focused on the questions of: (3A) when should commercial summer chum fishing start; (B) should summer chum commercial fishing be scheduled during subsistence fishing periods when possible; (C) when should sale of king salmon incidentally caught in a commercial chum fishery be allowed; and (D) do they support summer chum commercial fishing in areas such as Kaltag that use fishwheels and can avoid incidental harvest of king salmon.

Table 9: Mr. Orville Huntington reported that on question 3A there were 2 yes, as soon as the run appears strong enough to sustain it. Two people suggested the opening be at the end of the king run. They felt that when the first chum pulse is passing through, they could have one with a limit on the bycatch. One fisher did not like the idea of incidentally caught fish being sold when all regions on the river do not have the same opportunity and escapement has not been satisfied to that point of the run. On question B the vote was 3 yes and 1 abstain. Comments included if the numbers are there, then yes, especially around Y6. Another comment was, yes, if they are purely subsistence fishers; it should not be open for subsistence fishers to commercial fish. The person who abstained wanted more information. On question C, one said never; two said for an early July season; and one did not know. After the first pulse, the king salmon have gone by. Another comment was after subsistence users have met 100 percent of their needs. With respect to question D, the vote was 4 yes. Kings caught in the fishwheels is insignificant. Another comment was yes, but stay within the quota.

Table 5: Ms. Caroline Brown reported that on question 3A there was a complicated collection of answers. Three people felt summer chum commercial opportunities should begin as soon as abundance allows for it. One person abstained. One person felt strongly that they really need to protect the king salmon run so no commercial opportunities for summer chum should occur until that run is largely over. Another person suggested that because later in the run supplies a lot of

fish for the lower middle Yukon area, they would suggest protecting that, although an opportunity between the second and third pulse might be okay. There was concern expressed that there would be enough or accurate information early enough to make an accurate decision, nor can fishing conditions upriver which might make it harder for them cannot be predicted. Those in favor of an earlier opening noted that chum gear harvest mostly small males; and it was important to provide for economic opportunity. On question B, there were 4 no and 2 abstained. They felt it depended on run abundance. In general, they were less concerned about commercial fishing but wanted to make sure that the subsistence fishery was protected. On question C one individual felt that the sale of king salmon incidentally caught in a commercial fishery should never be allowed. Three felt it could be allowed in early July. With respect to question D, there were 4 yes and 2 abstained.

Table 11: Mr. Jeff Estensen reported that on question 3A there was a consensus of yes. Comments included it has been the trend to do it. Another comment was they cannot wait until the end of the king run to catch chum. It would be too late. A question they had was who determines whether the abundance is there. With respect to B they also were in favor of this. Comments were that it has been done in the past and they did not see any problem with doing it in the future. On question C two people said never, due to the state of the Chinook status, there should be no sale of Chinook. Two people said that if 3B was met, then 3C would be allowed. With respect to question D, it was unanimously yes.

Table 12: Mr. Mick Leach noted that the majority of those at Table 12 were from coastal villages and they basically deferred to the Yukon villagers. On question 3A it was unanimous. They understand this is a complex issue and trusted the managers will allow summer chum commercial fishing as soon as possible. On question B it was unanimously yes. If subsistence fishermen indicate that there is good fishing, then they thought it would be a good idea to allow the commercial fishermen to get in on the surplus at that time. There was a comment that this could cause some enforcement issues some confusion between the gear types. On question C the vote was unanimously yes on early July. They supported king sales during the decent runs, recognizing that the chums are worth less and the incidentally-caught king salmon help pay for fuel for the fishermen. They also recognized that it is good to restrict sales during poor years. On question D the vote was also unanimously yes. The feeling was that basically the fishwheels take good measures to return king salmon alive and in good shape back to the river.

Table 3: (Microphone not on) Mr. Tom Taube reported that on question 3A three people voted for at the end of the king salmon run, one neutral and one felt they could go one way or the other depending upon what part of the river it was allowed in. They felt question B was somewhat confusing. The vote was 2 yes, 2 neutral, 1 undecided. The two who said yes felt it could be done particularly in Y4 with fishwheels where the kings would go to subsistence. Other comments were that in the lower river there would be more bycatch and in the upper districts there would be less; delaying the commercial opening would protect kings. Concern was expressed that if someone was commercial fishing had incidental catch of salmon that they were supposed to save for subsistence, if they were a distance away from home, how could they keep that king salmon in good condition for subsistence use. On question C three said never to allow sale of king salmon incidentally caught; two said other. One of the "other" felt it could be allowed when all the king pulses were past the Pilot Station sonar and no king salmon were being caught in the test fisheries. The other "other" felt that it would be fine unless they were able to be kept

in good condition for subsistence use. On question D the vote was unanimously yes. It was felt that it was an area where there were primarily fishwheels.

Table 7: Ms. Heather Leba reported that for question 3A there was a split. Some felt they should do the commercial fishing as soon as it looks like there are enough Chinook for subsistence and escapement needs; others felt the chum fishery should be implemented after the first pulse of Chinook; and still others felt it should be as soon as there is enough Chinook for subsistence and escapement, but the earlier the better. On question B, there was also a split with 3 no, 1 yes and 1 other. Those voting no did not think it would be appropriate because it would affect subsistence fishing and people might fight for spots or get tangled up and there would be too many people on the river fishing at once. Another comment was that it would be okay, but make sure that subsistence fishermen have priority as far as time and area. Another participant felt there would be more conflict between fishermen for sites. On question C one participant said sale of incidental Chinook should not be allowed mainly due to conservation concerns. Sale of Chinook should not be allowed because there would be a potential danger that some fishermen would target areas where more Chinook are mixed with chum. Incidentally-caught Chinook fish should be given to elders and other users. Other participants felt that sales of incidentally-caught Chinook should be allowed later in the season. People should be allowed to sell them for money for gas to supplement their fishing costs. On question D there were 5 yes votes as long as the fishermen in Kaltag can ensure that they are not targeting Chinook.

Table 8: Mr. Gerald Maschmann reported that some participants felt 3A was a misleading or unfair question because it says when should commercial summer chum fishing starts which they felt presupposes that there is going to be a summer chum fishery. There were five votes for at the end of the king salmon run, although they did not feel they should even be talking about a commercial fishery when the king runs are so low, and that any commercial fishery should only take place when no kings would be taken. They also felt it was difficult to be mixing subsistence and commercial and that it was hard for them to be restricted on subsistence and then hear that there is a commercial opening somewhere else on the river. They wanted to emphasize that the federal government has a trust responsibility to protect subsistence. With respect to question B, they felt this was a moot point considering what they said on question A. On question C they all said never. On question D they all said yes, but they wanted to make sure that this fishery was using the whole fish and not just stripping roe. They do not want the summer chum depleted like the king run. Subsistence has to come first. If the king salmon continue to decline, they will need to rely on the summer chum. If there is any incidental harvest of king salmon, they should be given away to subsistence folks.

Table 4: Mr. John Burr noted that less than half of participants at table 4 are involved in commercial fishing. One participant felt commercial fishing should be curtailed altogether for the time being. There was an unwillingness to vote on some of the questions because of lack of involvement with commercial fishing. On question 3A, the participants were split between fishing as soon as possible and one vote for at the end of the king salmon run. On question B the vote was 1 yes and 1 no. On question C they thought the sale of incidentally-caught king salmon should occur at all times there was a commercial fishery for chum salmon. There was a discussion of the impact of customary trade on the legal sale of king salmon. On question D there was support for this as long as there was reasonable opportunity in other parts of the river

for commercial fishing activity. There was discussion about the concern of continuously watching fishwheels. If they are not check regularly, the king salmon cannot be released alive.

Table 10: Mr. Vince Mathews reported that with respect to question 3A, three participants felt it should be as soon as the king returns are strong enough as there were resource protections for the Chinook in place; one felt at the end of the season as everything needs to be done to get the king salmon numbers up; and one abstained as they did not feel they had enough information to make a decision. On question B there were 2 no votes and 1 yes. The participant voting yes stated that a dead fish is a dead fish. Allowing them to take kings for subsistence would reduce the number of kings taken during the subsistence opening. On question C there were two votes for never, zero for early July, and three for other. Under other, one would be when there were enough king salmon present; one was biological parameters, basically when there are mostly males and when not restricting subsistence; and one would be when the first period opens in late June. On question D the vote was 2 yes, 2 no, and 1 other. The no votes were because they were against other commercial sales. The yes votes were because it was a clean fishery and summer chum are concentrated in that area along the river. The other was, yes, when the fish reach the upper portions of the river.

Table 6: Amanda Wiese reported that on question 3A the vote was four for option one and two for at the end of the king salmon run. This was a tough question depending on the region the participants were from. Last year's incidental king salmon catch was about 10,000. It was pointed out that it only takes 1500 to 2,000 king salmon to feed the Yukon Flats. Another point was the measurement of how the spawning, treaty, and subsistence needs are met is based on sonar. There was not a lot of trust in those numbers. It was also indicated that commercial fishing is an important industry particularly for the lower river and people rely on it for income. On question B there was a unanimous vote of no. People were concerned about trading their subsistence for commercial. Subsistence needs to be the priority. People were concerned about regulation and about illegal sales of subsistence fish in the commercial fishery. On question C there was one never, one early July, and two others. The others were possibly when the runs are healthy or sales at the end of July. On question D there were 4 yes and 2 no. The point was made that they want to be sure that killing of Chinook salmon can be avoided.

## BREAKOUT GROUPS

The participants broke into educational breakout groups. There were two sessions each of three topics: Enforcement with Jim Neely, USFWS, and Lance Dahlke, ADF&G, Canadian Management with James MacDonald, DFO, and Sonar with Bruce McIntosh, ADF&G.

The enforcement session, session 1, met with Jim Neely, USFWS, and Lance Dahlke, ADF&G. Mr. Neely stated that their role in enforcement is not to craft the laws and regulations, nor are they involved in the science, but to support the resource managers and their decisions as well as enforce the regulations that are adopted by the Federal Subsistence Board and the State Board of Fish. All they are looking for is compliance with the regulations. They do outreach, walking and talking with people, explaining what the regulations call for. He felt that it was important for both the federal and state law enforcement people apply the regulations as consistently and fairly as much as they possibly can up and down the river.

Mr. Larry Williams stated that historically the Athabascan people have been at odds with enforcement. He asked what instructions were given law enforcement personnel to deal with situations a person from a village is not supposed to fish and the person enforcing the rules does not seem to care. Mr. Neely stated the officers do care about the resource. In enforcement they have a test of reasonableness. They also talk about the spirit of the law versus the letter of the law. The objective is the long-term health and sustainability of all the salmon resource. They recognize their work is controversial.

Mr. Andy Bassich stated that for a number of years he has heard the term burden of conservation. He would like to see people start to think of conservation as a responsibility as stewards of the resources, both fish and game. He asked what policies might be in place for the next year or so with respect to customary trade. He felt this was very important to take back to their communities. Mr. Neely stated their policy has not changed nor has the definition of customary trade. If there is an enterprise that falls outside of that definition, they will look at it. They do need clarification of what constitutes a commercial enterprise. There continues to be a move afoot to further define customary trade.

Mr. Rod Campbell stated that the Federal Subsistence Board deferred some of the customary trade proposals in January. They have set up a working group with the Councils on the Yukon to help clarify the definition.

Mr. Tim Andrew expressed his appreciation for enforcement's willingness to go out and educate rather than issue citations. He questioned how the Department of Interior's tribal consultation policy will be applied in the law enforcement division. He felt tribal consultation was extremely important. Another question he had was what was done with confiscated salmon. He recommended it be given to another village, an elders group or some other way to distribute it to people who really need the salmon. His third question was whether there would be confiscation of nets in any enforcement action and what would be done with those nets. Those nets are needed year after year. Mr. Neely stated that with respect to government-to-government consultation, he saw value in this. Primarily these are orchestrated through the refuge manager. The refuge managers he works with have been encouraged to take their law enforcement officers with them in government-to-government consultation. He is trying to get out on as many of them as he can himself. He felt issues can be solved with dialogue. Mr. Jim Helgrin stated he stresses all the time to their officers that they go out to villages in their regular uniform to meet with folks and just say hello without an agenda. This is one of the biggest emphases he has as chief of refuge law enforcement for Fish and Wildlife Service. Mr. Neely stated that with respect to confiscated fish the officers have been instructed to go to the next village upriver or downriver, meet with the elders and ask them to distribute the fish. With respect to nets, Mr. Neely stated they have gotten guidance from fisheries management. They will enforce the restriction. He encouraged people to take advantage of the net exchange program. If the nets are necessary evidence, they will confiscate them but once a case is adjudicated they will be returning the net unless the court directs them otherwise.

Mr. Robert Walker stated the Western Interior RAC came up with a plan in October to have a joint meeting with Eastern Interior and Y-K RACs where they can come to some kind of agreement on customary trade. He felt like this has been stalled and wanted to know if their agency was responsible for holding this back. He also wanted to know what the troopers had



planned for enforcement this summer and fall. Mr. Dahlke stated they will be enforcing the net size also. They will basically be doing everything in the state waters that the federal officers will be doing on the federal waters. Their policy for seized evidence, such as nets, also depends on the court's decision. Any net utilized for this fishery that is not 7-1/2-inch mesh will be illegal and will probably not be given back. The owner will need to articulate to the court that the net will be used for other subsistence fisheries; the court may then decide the owner gets the net back. He added that they will also be enforcing other regulations that pertain to everything that goes on the river. Safety is the number 1 priority. This means boat registration as well as the requirements for safety equipment on the boats such as PFDs. Mr. Neely stated that his section is not involved with holding back the meeting on customary trade.

Mr. Neely stated that cooperation is just as important as compliance.

In the second session on enforcement, Mr. Peter Demoski stated the reason the federal and state enforcement have a difficult time is because Congress has not lived up to its trust responsibilities and the state of Alaska does not want to recognize rural preference for subsistence users. He asked about consistency in enforcing regulations passed by the Boards of Fish and Game and the Federal Subsistence Board. He agreed with the fishermen of Marshall who went out last summer and subsistence fished for their elders. The people of Nulato want to know why people in Marshall can violate a regulation and not get cited for it while elders in Nulato have their nets taken by Fish and Game and get cited for fishing during a closed season. Mr. Helgrin stated that he was the one who went out and issued the ticket for the Marshall fishing protest in 2009. There are people above him who have the ability to change what he has done as an officer in the field. They were the ones who made the ticket go away. Mr. Neely stated officers apply the law as fairly and as equitably and within the spirit of the law as they can and then carry it through the process. Other influences that enter into it are outside their realm. There has been discussion within their agency about what happens when other influences get involved once a prosecution has entered the system. They have been assured that this will not happen again. Mr. Demoski stated that this was not something he could explain to his people in Nulato. Mr. Neely stated he would be glad to come out and explain it to them. He will be at the meeting in Nulato on May 12.

Mr. Orville Huntington stated that in order to change the federal law they would have to go through Congress. He felt that down the road they will run into more instances of subsistence fishermen making statements. With respect to customary trade, he stated that they were selling strips at a higher rate today than they did a few years ago. ANILCA does not say they cannot do this. People do feel it was important to conserve the resource for future generations. He also felt the state needs to come into compliance with ANILCA. Mr. Neely stated that state and federal enforcement officers try to operate off the same sheet of music. They meet on a regular basis to discuss how they are going to enforce, what they are going to enforce, what officers they will use, operational plans, etc. to simplify it for themselves as well as for the public as much as possible. Mr. Huntington stated that there is some confusion about where the refuge boundary was. Everybody working together will make it easier. Mr. Neely stated that the idea of getting to a point of trust and cooperation was important.

Mr. Michael Jimmy stated when he was a child they were trying to enforce the Migratory Bird Treaty on them without educating them on why they were taking away their birds and weapons.

Management on the Yukon River will never work. They need to manage the fish everywhere they are, including the Bering Sea, the Gulf of Alaska, and other areas and from juveniles to adults. He felt the Yukon River needs a protected area. There needs to be a meeting of Alaska, Canada, Bering Sea fleets, trawlers, CDQ operations, and everyone who has an interest in the fisheries along the entire migratory route. Mr. Neely agreed that it is about organizing, coming together as a group, building consensus, and then taking that message forward. If people feel this is important, he encouraged them to do it.

Mr. Neely discussed the 7.5-inch mesh restrictions that will go into effect this fishing season. He explained to this group that they will be enforcing it. He encouraged the participants to participate in the net exchange program and to do whatever was necessary so they have legal gear. There will be outreach from the federal and state agencies. In response to Ms. Lisa Kangas, Mr. Neely explained the procedure they will use when they see a net that is greater than 7.5-inch mesh. The person will be cited for the violation. In the federal system the bailable fine is \$150; the court would determine the fine if it goes to trial. If it is deemed necessary to take the net into evidence, they will take it into evidence. If there is a prosecution on the cage, a court will determine whether the net is returned to its owner. It would be difficult for the court to return the net unless an argument is made that there is another legitimate fisheries use for that net. Mr. Dahlke stated that under the state system it would be a misdemeanor offense and the fine would be up to the court under the guidelines for the year. In response to Ms. Kangas, Mr. Dahlke stated that he could not say when the guidelines will be out.

## MEETING WRAP-UP

### PRESENTATION OF PRESEASON PLAN:

Mr. Steve Hayes presented ideas they had come up with for management strategies for this summer. They will be working after the meeting to get the management plan out to people as well as the flyer. They plan to have it out by next week.

The plan is based on before they get assessment data information in-season, so it is based on pre-season projections. The plan could change based on in-season information. There will be no directed Chinook salmon commercial openings. A normal subsistence salmon fishing schedule will begin on June 6<sup>th</sup> in District Y1 and implemented chronologically with upriver migration. This will allow fishermen more time to fish on the early run kings and other species. To conserve the greatest number of Chinook salmon, there will be reduced fishing on the first pulse of Chinook salmon. Beginning in Y1, one fishing period will be pulled and then implemented upriver districts and subdistricts based on migratory timing. If in-season assessment indicates Chinook salmon run strength continues to be poor after pulling the first period, an additional period may be pulled or subsistence fishing time may be reduced. If the run in-season shows it is much better than projected, they would just be looking at the one period pulled and not having to do further reductions.

The Tanana River has its own management plan. The Tanana River personal use fishery will be managed to meet escapement objectives for the Chena and Salcha Rivers. Because of the sacrifice fishermen on the mainstem have to take to get those fish to the spawning grounds, the buyer on the Tanana River has always volunteered not to buy incidentally caught kings if they do chum salmon fishing.

A surplus of summer chum salmon is anticipated above escapement and subsistence needs. The extent of a directed chum salmon commercial fishery will depend on the strength of the Chinook salmon run. There will be no sale of incidentally caught Chinook salmon harvested during summer chum commercial periods. If in-season they see that the Chinook run is doing hugely better than projected, they may be able to adjust the incidental sales and potentially allowing some sales in July.

Mr. Hayes reminded people of the new mesh size regulation with a maximum of 7-1/2-inch mesh size for commercial and subsistence fishing.

Mr. Fred Bue spoke about the voluntary harvest reduction. Everybody is trying to conserve. They are trying to avoid regulating and imposing a lot of restrictions on people where it is unnecessary, but if they do not see enough fish getting through they may have to institute another pulled period.

Mr. Hayes stated that some of the questions the group worked on would take more discussion, for example the overlapping of subsistence and commercial fishing. He assured the group that just because they have not mentioned things that were discussed did not mean they were not going to try to implement something if they can and if it works. It all depends on what is going on in the river at the time with the fish. He thanked everyone for their input. It helps them come

up with the management strategies and how to implement them to where they work to meet the goals and be less of a problem for fishermen. Unless something major changes, they are looking at this type of plan for a couple years.

Mr. Dan Bergstrom reminded people that the net size is 7-1/2-inch mesh or less so 6-inch mesh can be used. The one buyer on the river has said that with incidentally caught Chinook that are not needed by the fishermen, they would do as they have done in the last couple years and ship fish upriver to villages.

#### CLOSING REMARKS:

Mr. Jason Hale thanked the workshop speakers, the managers and the participants for coming. He reminded them that there are regional meetings coming up: May 12<sup>th</sup> in Nulato, May 18<sup>th</sup> in St. Mary's, and May 25<sup>th</sup> in Fort Yukon. The managers will be present. Starting the first Tuesday in June and running through August there will be a teleconference every Tuesday at 1:00 p.m. Alaska time.

Mr. Tim Andrew expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to participate in the meeting and for all the presenters. He asked how long the prohibition on the sale of incidentally caught Chinook would be. Mr. Hayes stated that the preseason plan says no sale of incidentally caught kings allowed. Once they are in-season and indications are that the run is much better than projected, they will reassess and decide whether or not to allow the sale of incidentally caught Chinook.

Ms. June Walker requested a copy of the plan. Mr. Steve Hayes stated they will try to get it out to people as soon as it is completed.

Mr. Walter Peter asked how many commercial fishermen were present. He stated that at the Yukon Flats the river divides into three channels and he felt this was a big factor in the management plan for Y5. He felt Y5 should be broken down into smaller areas as it is about 200 miles long. Mr. Fred Bue stated that this is something they have been planning if in fact there was a closure and how they would move the closure sequentially up the river. They are looking at breaking Y5D into three separate areas. Mr. Dan Bergstrom stated this was something that could be discussed at the regional meeting in Fort Yukon.

Mr. John Stam asked if the State has begun discussions on the customary and traditional sale of subsistence fish. Mr. Dan Bergstrom stated that customary trade is being dealt with in the federal system. Under state regulations it is still prohibited.

Mr. Peter Demoski expressed his appreciation to Mr. Jason Hale for allowing him to attend. He stated that their ancestors were natural conservationists and now they are fighting for subsistence rights. It should be granted to them. He appreciated the preseason projections and would like a copy as soon as it is available. If it is amended during the season he would like to know it beforehand.

Mr. Gene Sandone questioned if they have to pull a second period would that be on the first pulse or on the second pulse. Mr. Hayes stated that it depends on the run strength at the time

whether they have to reduce subsistence fishing or pull another period. This would be determined in-season. By the time they have a good assessment of the run, it could happen more on the second pulse.

Mr. Alfred Demientieff, Jr., asked how long a subsistence period closure would be. Mr. Hayes stated he was not sure of the exact hours but it would be roughly 94 hours or four days.

Ms. Kathleen Peters-Zuray expressed her appreciation for being invited to the meeting. In times of shortage they are all willing to cooperate. She stated that under the net replacement program for their region, a lot of names were left out. They are working to get those names added to the list. She asked why some people were getting 350-foot nets while others were getting 150-foot nets. With respect to customary trade, that is a traditional practice that has been going on for generations and she would not like to see dollar limits put on it. It is allowed under ANILCA. She was concerned about all the restrictions subsistence people face. She asked if the meeting in Nulato was a continuation of developing the preseason management plan. Mr. Hayes explained that they will be presenting the management plan at the three regional meetings as well as answering questions about the plan. They will not be changing anything in the plan at that time.

Mr. Orville Huntington reiterated the question on why the difference in net lengths that were being distributed.

Ms. Lisa Kangas explained that TCC did not make up the list of recipients. It is contracted out to Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission which worked with ADF&G. She stated TCC is urging tribal councils to create a separate list of those who are not on the initial list and why they should be on there. With respect to the net lengths, TCC is trying to replace the existing fishing gear that people are using. They are doing their best to work with the tribes. She thanked Mr. Hale for inviting her to the meeting. She felt she had learned a lot.

Mr. Lester Wilde stated the Y-K RAC submitted a proposal to cut down customary trade when there is a cut-back in subsistence. He added that under the federal program customary trade only covers salmon in the round. It is illegal to sell smoked salmon on the market without a license. That is a problem they see on some parts of the Yukon.

Mr. Bill Alstrom asked about people who do not live on the River who come in. In the past the management plan stated that people who do not live in the rural areas were not allowed to fish. He wasn't sure if it was just federal waters or the whole Yukon drainage. Mr. Fred Bue stated that it was a special action by the federal manager in 2009 to give a local preference. Those from non-rural areas could not go into those areas to fish. It was for waters adjacent to federal management units. They heard a lot of frustration with this from people who have family members in some of those communities that they need to come home to help their family put up fish. In retrospect they did not think there was an appreciable savings of fish from this. At this point they were not looking to do it again. If the run comes in really poor they would consider it.

Mr. Walter Peter commented that they were getting regulations forced upon them when the real problem is the Pollock industry bycatch.

Meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m.