

Yukon River Panel
Project CC-03-19

Yukon River Pre & Post Season Planning Meeting
Final Report

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for:

Yukon River Panel
Restoration and Enhancement Fund

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Abstract: The Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA) planned and hosted a virtual Preseason and Postseason Yukon River fisheries management planning meetings. Due to Covid-19 and State of Alaska mandates we were restricted from hosting any in-person meetings. *Information Insights*, a consulting firm specializing in conference and event planning, assisted in the Post-season meeting with YRDFA's Executive Director, Serena Fitka. Tribal Councils representing Yukon River communities were invited to attend the meeting. YRDFA Board members, commissioners of the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, other Yukon River community representatives, primary fisheries management and associated staff, state and federal subsistence and research scientists also participated in the meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to bring together stakeholders from the Alaska portion of the Yukon River drainage to meet with each other and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on the upcoming salmon fishery season along the Yukon River.

The focus of the meetings were to provide as much information to the communities, and vice versa with fishery managers, during this unprecedented time. With travel restrictions in place and many communities on lock down it was a struggle to provide information directly to Tribal Offices; however, social media played a huge factor in getting information to the communities along the Yukon River. One of the primary goals of the meeting was to address the anticipated 2020 run return strength of Chinook salmon, the need for continued conservation efforts focused on Canadian origin Chinook salmon stocks and efforts that could be made to harvest a portion of an improved Chinook salmon run and available healthy stocks of other salmon in the Yukon River drainage. Another goal of the meeting was to inform Yukon River fishermen in making border passage escapement goals set by the Yukon River Panel through the Yukon River Salmon Agreement with Canada with limited operational projects forecasted. In addition, representative fishermen (a term used to depict men and women who fish along the Yukon River) from a majority of villages along the Yukon River in Alaska called in to participate in the Pre-season Planning and Post-season teleconferences. This annual Pre-season Planning meeting has a central role in Yukon River fisheries management. The importance of this meeting continues to be demonstrated by the careful planning, communication, and implementation of managers and by the continued sacrifice, when necessary, and cooperation by individuals and communities on the Yukon River. Their work together shows what can be accomplished when management affected individuals and communities are included in planning and thus understand the complex issues and challenges affecting this critical part of their lives and culture.

Keywords: Alaska, Chinook salmon, conservation, fisheries management, salmon, subsistence, Yukon River, Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA), Yukon River Panel (YRP).

Citation:

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INTRODUCTION

Over 115 people attended the Pre-Season Planning meeting by teleconference on May 12, 2020 and it lasted 150 minutes. Moderators were the outgoing YRDFA Director, Wayne Jenkins and incoming Director, Serena Fitka. Attendees included Yukon River subsistence and commercial fishers, young adult fishers, community representatives, managers, researchers, and stakeholders involved in the Yukon River fishery. YRDFA staff worked closely with the YRDFA Board, community leaders, Yukon River Fisheries managers, researchers and other stakeholders to plan and implement this critically important annual meeting for preparing both managers and fishers for the 2020 fishing season.

The Yukon River Post-season fishery meeting was held on December 17, 2020 by teleconference with 57 participants and lasted 180 minutes. The YRDFA Board gave reports of fishing conditions followed by reports from Alaska Department of Fish and Game and US Fish and Wildlife Service Yukon Area Fisheries Managers. YRDFA Director, Serena Fitka, worked closely with fishery managers to determine the best date to host the Post-season meeting and develop the agenda. Due to COVID-19 and no in-person meetings took place since March of 2020 it was imperative for YRDFA to provide the platform, for both fishery managers and Yukon River fishers, for communication between one another.

METHODS

The rapid closures of travel and social gatherings due to the pandemic, YRDFA staff worked closely with Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Yukon River fisheries management staff to discuss the different methods of virtual meeting options along with the format of the agenda. YRDFA worked with the fisheries managers to define the primary focus issues for the meeting as well as developed the specific agenda items and how they would be presented by teleconference and little to no visual materials for participants.

In order to increase participation from the communities it was crucial to advertise and inform local Tribes and City Offices of the meetings. Formal invitation letters were mailed to all Yukon River communities and sent to City and Tribal offices on April 27, 2020. Ramifications of COVID-19 affected the operations of offices along the Yukon River, so YRDFA included announcements of the Preseason meeting in the 2020 Spring newsletter and the In-Season Salmon Survey poster. PIP Printing and Marketing of Alaska was used for printing and mailing services. Invitations were also sent to representatives from Canada's Department of Fisheries and Oceans and Canadian Yukon River Panel members and First Nations of the Yukon Territory, Canada. The YRDFA director invited the remaining participants to the meeting from the nonprofit sector and state and federal agencies via email and posted notice about the meeting on the YRDFA website and numerous Facebook postings.

A primary meeting goal was ensuring that the participants were given information in regards to the upcoming fishing season and updated status on current project operations. Another goal was for fishery managers to receive updates on communities' travel restrictions and local COVID mandates that would affect project operations. The overarching goal of every meeting is the conservation of Canadian-origin Chinook, which is in the Yukon River Salmon Agreement of 2000. With limited projects operating due to COVID-19 it would be difficult to capture the run strength and management would need to take a cautious approach.

Due to the circumstances of hosting the Preseason meeting via teleconference, YR DFA insured involvement of Yukon River community's participation by providing them the opportunity for questions and discussion. At the end of the meeting we provided contact information and the opportunity for the fishers to join our Yukon River In-season Salmon Management weekly teleconference calls.

The plans to host an in-person Postseason meeting deemed unsuccessful as travel restrictions and COVID cases began entering the smaller rural communities. Again, YR DFA was compelled to host the meeting by teleconference. Other methods, such as, Zoom were considered. The issue with Zoom with the lower Yukon River and coastal communities was the signal strength for both over the internet and the dial-in option. Tribal and City offices were notified of the meeting and the notices were posted on our website and social media page.

The rapid changes of the meeting, along with the format, did not allow us to conduct evaluations of the Preseason meeting. YR DFA's staff conducted a debrief of the meeting and determined the overall success of the meeting considering the extreme circumstances we had to work with. We continue to seek collaboration with fishery managers on ways to improve our meeting processes. Even after a year of restrictions, vaccinations, and social distancing we still find ourselves seeking virtual methods of coming together to discuss the vital fishery issues that are affecting the Yukon River drainage.

RESULTS

There were 116 in attendance for the Preseason meeting. Due to time, the Preseason planning committee felt it was unnecessary to have everyone introduce themselves. We felt the time would be used better for questions and discussion from the communities. The Preseason call lasted for 150 minutes. A Preseason Summary was provided on our Website and email to all Tribes and First Nations. KEAA Eagle community radio and KYUK Bethel radio stations aired the meeting live on air.

Following an opening prayer, YR DFA's Executive Director, Wayne Jenkins, announced his retirement and welcomed incoming Director, Serena Fitka. The out-going executive director continued to welcome everyone and spoke to the importance of the meeting funded by the Yukon River Panel and the critical role Alaska Yukon River fishers play in meeting escapement goals

for Canadian origin Chinook and fall chum salmon set through the Yukon Salmon Agreement between the United States and Canada.

Summer season manager Holly Carroll reviewed the 2020 fishing season; escapements, subsistence and commercial harvests followed by general questions and discussion.

The Fall season manager, Jeff Estensen, reviewed the 2020 fall chum and coho season followed by his outlook for subsistence and commercial harvest for 2020 , which was followed by questions and discussion.

The primary meeting time was used to provide fishermen with information about which projects would be able to operate under little to no contact with nearby community members due to COVID restrictions. The most interest to the attendees was whether or not they would be able to fish for subsistence and commercial with the limited projects operating. Management felt taking a cautious approach with limiting fishing opportunities and reducing mesh size to 6.5 inch was to give the opportunity to harvest some fish. It was clear that the participants understood the need to take a cautious approach with the limited in-season project operating.

The Preseason meeting continues to prove its value through collaborative planning and inclusive involvement of fishery management personnel with Yukon River fishers in meeting the primary objective of the Yukon River Panel and the Yukon River Salmon Agreement. Careful planning and implementation by managers, and continued cooperation and sacrifice, when needed by individuals and communities on the Yukon River, show what can be accomplished when all parties understand the complex issues and challenges affecting this critical part of their lives and culture.

POST SEASON

After reviewing COVID cases in Alaska and recognizing the Yukon Kuskokwim Delta, which include 18 Yukon River communities, was ranked number 1 in the Nation with COVID cases per 100,000 people; we decided to host the Post-season meeting by teleconference. The Post-season took place on December 17th at 1:00 p.m. and was attended by 47 participants. The call lasted 180 minutes. The devastating low return of fall chum salmon and the restrictions for subsistence fishing were the main topics of discussion. Fishers were frustrated because of the unknown factors that played a part in the return of Chinook and fall chum for the 2020 fishing season. Suggestions were made by users throughout the Yukon River drainage asking for changes in the restrictions to allow for subsistence fishing, changes in gear types, and placing a sonar in the middle river of the Yukon. We heard the people talk about the challenges of getting food for the winter, feeding their dogs and with less discussion about the importance of meeting the escapement goals.

Financial Statement: Budgeted Versus Actual Expenditures

The amended budget was split into two budgets; one for the Pre-season Teleconference and one for an in-person Post-season meeting. The pre-season budget total project costs was \$10,677.95. All of this budget was spent out.

The in-person Post-season meeting total project cost was \$90,069.00. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we were unable to host an in-person meeting, and the meeting was conducted via teleconference. The budget for this meeting has a balance of \$ 84,749.99 remaining and a roll-over request was submitted.

CONCLUSIONS

In designing and implementing this project YRDFA worked to be as inclusive as time and resources would allow for stakeholders throughout the Alaskan Yukon River drainage for providing the opportunity to have their voices and concerns heard. The turnout was strong and participation was effective as could have been with the unforeseen circumstances due to COVID-19. The participants seemed to be positive in nature, showing that stakeholders are interested in actively participating in the management of the salmon resource and state and federal agencies are focused on working closely with stakeholders to achieve that goal. By hosting the Preseason Planning meeting, people from all along the Alaskan portion of the Yukon River were more prepared for the adaptive management actions necessary this past summer. Most fishers who attended or heard about the results of the meeting understood the reasoning of the caution approach for fishing opportunities exercised by management. While the project shifted to a teleconference with little to no presentation material for most participants, other communication efforts carried the same message once the In-season Salmon Management teleconference began and ended with a Post-Season meeting. The Preseason Planning meeting continues to be a forum where fishing communities can talk directly with fisheries managers and researchers and with each other from the entire length of the Alaskan portion of the Yukon River drainage about the fisheries issues that most concern and affect their lives. It is a powerful communications tool with direct benefit indicated by the cooperation exhibited towards implementing conservation during low Chinook salmon runs and resulting in meeting and exceeding Canadian border escapement goals.

POSTSEASON

Unfortunately, during this unforeseen virus that has swept the world, it has placed organizations and funders in unusual financial positions with funds that would have been otherwise spent on travel and to come up with other activity that falls within the scope of their programs. YRDFA has not hosted a Post-season meeting for a few years; however, given the circumstances, it gave the opportunity for fishers from the Yukon River the opportunity to debrief after the fishing season while their concerns were still fresh in their minds. While we still are navigating COVID-19 and the State of Alaska is leading the way in vaccinations we believe that hosting a Post-season meeting is another tool that is beneficial to the Yukon River communities and fishery managers to come together for the time being.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Yukon River Panel Restoration and Enhancement Fund provided funding for the Yukon River Preseason Planning meeting and the YRDFA Board, staff, and members as well as people and communities from Yukon River greatly appreciate the opportunity provided by the Panel and the R&E Fund. YRDFA would also like to offer special thanks to everyone who helped in the planning and participation in this year's program.

Attachments:

- Copy of Preseason teleconference agenda
- Copy of Final Pre-season mailout
- Copy of Final Post Season meeting agenda
- Copy of 2020 Pre-season teleconference summary
- copy of 2020 Post-season teleconference summary NOTES (not published)



YUKON RIVER DRAINAGE FISHERIES ASSOCIATION

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PRESEASON TELECONFERENCE AGENDA MAY 12, 2020 at 1:00 p.m.

Call-in: 800-315-6338, Pin: 98566#

- 1:00 p.m. Welcome; Wayne Jenkins, YRDFA Director
- Invocation
 - Purpose of meeting and meeting goals
 - Introductions
 - Meeting guidelines
- 1:15 p.m. Holly Carroll, ADFG Summer Season Manager
- 2020 Summer Outlook & Management Strategies
 - Question & Answers
- 1:45p.m. Jeff Estensen, ADFG Fall Season Manager
- 2020 Fall Outlook & Management Strategies
 - Questions and Answers
- TBD: Closing Remarks; Wayne Jenkins and Serena Fitka

Teleconference TIPS:

- *We recommend people to call ahead of time to reduce the congestion at the start of the meeting.*
- *IF you do not get through during your first call-in attempt please wait a minute or two and call in again.*
- *If you do not have a 'mute' button on your phone please use ***6 and *7** to unmute your call. This will eliminate any background noise during the teleconference.*



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April 27, 2020

Dear Yukon River fishers, Tribal and community leaders,

Greetings from the YR DFA Board and staff. First, we would like to send our comfort to the communities in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. In times of uncertainty we must rely on one another for hope and support. I hope everyone stays safe and ‘hunkers down’ during this time of crisis.

We had to cancel the face-to-face Annual Board and the Pre-season meetings due to the current State mandates that restrict travel and gatherings. The top priority for us has been coordinating alternative means to conduct the Pre-season meeting because of the importance of effective communication between local fishers and fisheries management.

The annual Pre-season Planning meeting is an essential start of Yukon River’s fishing season and we want to provide you with an alternative opportunity to offer your feedback and concerns to the fisheries management team and to be able to hear their proposed plan prior to the start of the fishing season.

A teleconference Pre-season meeting is scheduled for May 12, 2020 at 1:00 p.m. The call-in number is 1-800-315-6338 code 98566#. Please join us for the May 12th call and every following Tuesday at 1pm from May 19th through the end of August. Your voice is important to the overall success of Yukon River fisheries and communities.

GCI’s Teleconference Bridge is handling much heavier call volumes due to the Covid19 mandates. Call in several minutes early to the May 12 call to spread out connections. If you do not get connected, hangup and try again. It may take several attempts.

We will miss seeing everyone together after a snowy winter and hopefully we will see one another very soon. Good luck in your fishing efforts, be safe on the water and may your subsistence and commercial harvest efforts be rewarded!

YR DFA Board & Staff



Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association

Protecting and promoting all healthy wild fisheries and cultures along the Yukon River drainage

PO Box 2898, Palmer, AK 99645 → ph: 907-272-3141 → fax: 907-272-3142 → www.yukonsalmon.org

2020 YRDFFA Yukon River Fisheries Post-Season Teleconference **Thursday, December 17, 2020 1:00 p.m.** **Call-in number: 1-800-315-6338 pin: 98566#**

- 1:00 p.m. Welcome and Meeting Guidelines
- 1:10 p.m. Invocation
- 1:10 p.m. YRDFFA Board Introduction and Community Reports
- 2:15 p.m. Summer Season Overview
- ADF&G
 - Deena Jallen – Acting Yukon River Summer Season Salmon Manager
 - USF&W
 - Holly Carroll -Yukon River Federal Subsistence Fisheries Manager
 - Gerald Maschmann – Yukon River Federal Subsistence Fisheries Assistant Manager
 - Questions and Discussion
- 3:15 p.m. Fall Season Overview
- ADF&G
 - Jeff Estensen – Yukon River Fall Season Salmon Manager
 - USF&W
 - Holly Carroll -Yukon River Federal Subsistence Fisheries Manager
 - Gerald Maschmann – Yukon River Federal Subsistence Fisheries Assistant Manager
 - Question and Discussion
- 4:15 p.m. Fishing Disaster Determination Update
- Question and Discussion
- 4:30 p.m. Closing Remarks
- Co-chairs



YUKON RIVER DRAINAGE FISHERIES ASSOCIATION

Greetings from the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association!

Here is a summary of the Yukon River Salmon Pre-Season Management Teleconference held Tuesday, May 12, 2020. The call lasted 150 minutes.

Estimate of participants: 116

Background: Yukon River salmon management Pre-season teleconference is usually held face-to-face in conjunction with the Annual YRDFA Board Meeting. Unfortunately, under the circumstances of Covid-19 we had to look to other methods to have managers and fishers throughout the Yukon River drainage to discuss fishing conditions and management strategies. Funded by the Dept. of Interior-Office of Subsistence Management.

Media participating: KEAA Eagle Community radio, and KYUK Bethel, Alaska.

Political Representative or staff: None

Welcome - Wayne Jenkins, YRDFA Out-Going Director:

Welcome everyone to your 2020 Yukon River Fisheries Preseason Planning meeting. This is Wayne Jenkins, YRDFA's Past Director. Before beginning our meeting let's start with an invocation.

Invocation; I'd like to ask YRDFA's co-chair Victor Lord to lead us in an opening prayer. Victor?

Watch out for our villages with this coronavirus, watch over King salmon, it is a resource to us and our livelihood. May everyone have fish on their table by the end of the season. AMEN...

Introductions:

Thank you, Victor so much for those words! As we get underway, I would like to introduce YRDFA's new Director, Serena Fitka and welcome her to all of you as she begins the adventure of directing our many programs for the fishers and communities of the Yukon River. Serena, would you share a few words, please?

Serena Fitka – Thank you Wayne, good afternoon and thank you all for joining our Pre-season call today. It is a privilege and honor to be working as the new Executive Director for YRDFA. I grew up in St. Mary's and travelled to many communities along the Yukon River. I look forward to what lies ahead for this amazing organization and I encourage you all to continue to participate in future calls and meetings. Enjoy the call!

Thank you, Serena! So, for a little background. YRDFA, partnering with ADFG, USFWS are hosting today's call as an alternative approach to our usual Spring in-person meeting which we had to cancel due to the Covid19 pandemic. It is critically important for Yukon River fishers, fishery managers and other stakeholders to communicate prior to our fishing season for preparation and understanding on projected run strengths, management strategies covering harvest and conservation, meeting escapement goals

etc. It is vital that managers and fishers engage before the fish arrive for creating clarity on management approaches, community needs and how communications will be handled this year. Thank you all for joining in on the call today and remember there will be two extra calls this season on May 19 & 26 as we begin our usual fishing season Teleconferences two weeks early for providing a communications link for Yukon river fishers during this challenging time.

Meeting Guidelines:

Here are some meeting guidelines to go by. As we have many more folks on today's call as we usually do on our summer calls, I would like to share some basic guidance for a smooth and constructive meeting today. Please mute your phone by pressing your mute button or pressing *6. To unmute please press *7 and when you are finished speaking press *6 again to mute. Open lines and background noise make it very difficult for folks to communicate well. If someone has an open line, I will need to halt the call and request they mute their phone so we can continue our discussion. Thank you for your cooperation.

Lastly, I want to remind everyone we have a lot of folks on the call. During our periods for asking questions please identify yourself by name, village and whether you are a commercial or subsistence fisher or both. After that the moderator will give you the go ahead. This will help when two folks have a question at the same time. Once the first person is finished the moderator will say "next?" for the next question. Please be patient as we will get to your question. Thank you for working with us on this important call.

Holly Carroll, ADFG Summer Season Manager – It is very sad the Pre-season is not in person. Happy that fishers were able to call in. Fisher's input really helps with the management strategy. Fred West will give a quick summary of our assessment.

Fred West, ADFG Yukon River Biologist –

Chinook Run size – 120,000 -144,000, slightly smaller than last year. Based on Canadian origin Chinook outlook.

Summer Chum size 1.7-2.1 million.

Project status due to Covid-19:

- Emmonak Field Office will be closed, Lower Yukon Test Fisheries middle mouth will be operated by Yukon Delta Fisheries Development Association. LYTF Middle Mouth will not be running,
- Anvik River sonar will not operate, which assesses summer Chum run strength.
- Henshaw Creek weir, run by Tanana Chiefs Conference.
- Pilot Station Sonar will operate.
- Subsistence harvest sampling of Coastal and District 1 to determine origin of stock of subsistence harvest in lower river is funded by the Restoration and Enhancement Fund.
- Samples of age and size for summer Chum if there is commercial fishing.
- Planning on running Chena and Salcha towers, which provides spawning information for chinook and summer chum on Tanana Rivers.
- Eagle Sonar we are currently planning on operating and this is to assess border passage of Chinook and Fall Chum.
- Post-season aerial surveys are planned to operate.

Holly Carroll, ADFG Summer Season Manager – In summary, Fred listed all the other assessments that we do. Some projects will not operate, they assess escapement and do not assess managing fishery in season. Those projects not happening will not affect fishing.

Gerald Maschmann – USFWS

Gerald is Acting Federal Manager for Season. Fred Bue retired. Federal Emmonak Office will also be closed this season. Andrafsky and Gisasa Weirs will be cancelled this season. They will find other ways to assess those streams. Federally funded Henshaw Weir, operated by Tanana Chiefs Conference, had high water last season that caused damage. Weir operation is cancelled, but will use this year to do some repairs.

Holly Carroll, ADFG Summer Season Manager – The Pre-season is to present last year's data and this coming year's season. The in-person meeting would provide Marine Research with graphs and charts; this call is focused on the coming season rather than data presentations.

Mid - point of projected Chinook run is similar to last year. 10-year average run size. Should allow us to do some harvest for subsistence. Could see fishing that looks similar to last year. We did have record warmth main stem water temperatures. Saw a lot of dead chum last year. Addressing that this season, we manage the fishery, we are not managing based on last year, we are managing based on the data presented to us. Tried to keep management strategies similar.

Like to provide a lot of opportunity on the trickle at the beginning of the run. Important for religious reasons and for sheefish. Last year we did it with 7.5" gear with ½ the time. This year we are starting with 6" gear. Biggest fish will go by. Provides opportunity for summer chum.

Then we assess the first and second pulse. To see if we are coming in closer to upper end of forecast, then we would relax. If it is coming in lower, then we will need to adjust management.

Feedback from last preseason meeting, reduction of fishing time, fishers said they wanted to fish on weekends. In every district they try to make sure that each district opening has a weekend included.

In 2018, at preseason planning meeting, fishermen feedback said the use of 6" in upper portion in river. This is a good management tool. In district 5, majority of Chinook are headed to Canada. We restrict District 5 to 6". We will be doing that this year.

Why don't we restrict to 6" everywhere? We do that because of the clog of summer Chum.

In all districts you will see a lot more use of 6" this year. We are hoping that we will harvest more summer chum and smaller Chinook. Local details are essential to management. Please keep sharing your information.

Questions:

Sven - St. Mary's - When Fred was talking, did he say Pilot will be operational this summer?

Holly - Yes, our team has been working on a safety plan and has been working with St. Mary's and Pilot Station. Yes, we are planning on operating the project with Covid-19 adjustments and ensuring safety of staff and communities.

Victor - Nenana- A+ Holly for your efforts, thank you for making fishing available for memorial services for Chinook. Fishermen must work with managers, help them, and share information. To help the Chinook.

Eddie Summer - Every summer we get city people who come home to fish, villagers who come home. Will there be enough fish for city folks and village folks?

Holly - Everyone is eligible to fish from State standpoints. Every community will have to see how this looks for them. State of Alaska, it is everyone's right to come home and fish. Our regulations will not affect this. Normally we fish for our loved ones and to share. That will not be different, but if the run strength of chinook is not great, make up with chum salmon.

Charlie Wright - Rampart- Want to echo Victor, you guys are doing a great job. This year and next year, please remember that we are still in conservation of kings. We need to conserve everywhere that we can. We are far from historical numbers. We have to lean on the summer and fall chums and hold out on the kings to make sure there is some for future generations.

Holly - Thank you. Last year we had a really good run size even though we took a conservative approach, but we did not get enough kings to Canada. Maybe the kings cannot be the bulk of our harvest. We have to be conservative in a way for those unknowns that we can't measure. We need to be careful, which is also why we are using 6" more.

Don Honea – Ruby – What kind of measurements are we going to make to get those numbers into Canada that we need? Are you taking extra steps?

Holly - chum run was late and that made it easier to get king salmon. Also, fish died before they made it to Canada and we have no way to measure. Most people now have 6" gear but if they don't have it they should find a way to invest in a 6" net. Last year was the first time in 4 years we came under Canadian passage goal.

John Lamont – Emmonak- Of the kings that did not make it to Canada, do we know how many were taken by subsistence? Only 3,000 kings taken in lower river, 250,000 kings counted at Pilot. Using a 6" is a bad idea.

Holly – Our total Canadian run last year was 73,000, our total subsistence take was 48,000. I do not have exact subsistence numbers, but knows there were more than 3,000 kings taking in lower river.

John Lamont - Emmonak –sonar numbers, thinks many were lost due to 6" gill nets. Witnessed this on Kuskokwim. Thinks using 6" is a mistake.

Bill Alstrom - St. Mary's – I'm glad the subject of kings at Pilot compared to border at Eagle came up. There is a disparity. What happened to those missing kings? There's a long stretch from Pilot to Eagle with no real monitoring going on. Lower river gets first of everything. When fish come in - chum or chinook, we are first to hit them. Lots of times fishermen, subsistence fishermen, are done with Chinook. Then you throw your 6" gear in the river and you get a bunch of chums that you do not want. We want couple hundred chums and maybe 50 kings. We don't want that much chums (that a 6" net produces). Will there be any monitoring the fish crossing the border?

Holly - If you have fish dropping out of a net dead, you would want to monitor that. But we do not have a way to monitor that. Districts 1-4 are going to encounter chums with that 6" net. Does not believe that king drop out in a chum clogged net, kills kings. Thinks fishermen need to check nets regularly. Basket kings.

Ed Sartor- Ruby – I heard about stress testing on fish. I heard about this at AFE.

Holly - Vanessa Von B is working on this. She may be able to give an update or we can do it on a future call.

Fred Huntington – Galena - most of tributaries to Yukon have been gaining in Chinook salmon. Passage at Canadian border was low. Last 10 years we have been fishing conservatively. Once the Chinook salmon get past Tanana, they are in the main Yukon on up. What we are doing is building up the other streams on the tributaries, but not Canada kings. I think we are going to mid-summer high water during the middle of season, lot of snow pack will be melting.

David Walker- Holy Cross - I notice in 2009-2013, there was good handle on bycatch, but now it is increasing. Heard it was up to 16K. I know that pollock fishing is affecting our stock. We are conserving,

I wish they would conserve in the Bering Sea. Good to have rule, but you have to enforce those rules. Last year we tried to report someone using an 8" net and law enforcement looked the other way.

Holly - Bering sea fishery is heavily regulated with fines. Their interceptions of salmon have gone way down.

Robert Okitkun - Kotlik - Concern on mining issues. Donlin Gold mine on the Kuskokwim; I heard that their tailings would drain to the Yukon? I have never got an answer to that questions.

Mickey Stickman - Nulato - Thanks to all managers and YRDFA for all their work. Charlie Wright talked about conservation, my family's subsistence calendars show our king numbers have gone down in 20 years. We also fish for other families. I was surprised by the 48,000 harvest last year because that is close to those years when the king numbers were high; 30 years ago.

Benedict Jones - Koyukuk - Water is really low. Expected high water due to snow but snow run off is seeping into the ground.

Martin Kelly- Pilot Station - How accurate is genetic testing from recent years compared to earlier years? Also, we to know point of contact for go ahead on Pilot?

Holly- Point of contact is Carl Fisher. As far as measurements at Pilot depends on getting a lot of samples. Last year we had good catches of Chinook at test fishery, increases accuracy. When we are looking as proportion of Canadian, we look at it by pulse.

Fred West – Overall, in most years, we have been doing genetics since 2005. Most of the time falls within confidence intervals. Some years that genetics over-represent or under-represent, but in general is good.

Martin Kelly- Pilot Station – In the last few years we talk about Traditional Ecological Knowledge being shared every Tuesday on Teleconferences. We are showing high numbers and we always ask that this be used as a tool.

Holly - Yes, we are using the TEK. In fact, last summer when our sonar counts were great, it was the fishermen who helped us understand if it is accurate. Last year, everything matched up, but we still can't account for the missing fish.

Alfred Dementieff – Holy Cross- Concern about fish near Holy Cross, seems like we get the tail end of every opener. Hard to catch fish when they are all gone.

Holly- We have heard that before about District 3. The whole point of the windows is to have a predicable fishing schedule, but this has no relation to when fish are present. The concept that fish will be there for at least one of the openings they need. We do not manage like we used to. Maybe we should think about the stagger of the openings.

Mike Peters- Marshall - Heard water is going to be high. Ice is still running in Marshall. Concerned about windows, schedule, etc. We are concerned because we have been conservative all these years.

Arnold ? – Our numbers since 2014 have been way below average for kings, a lot of people don't like the word "Moratorium", but I think we should start thinking about it if our numbers don't increase.

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are also legal gear for subsistence.

Robert Okitkun- Kotlik – I heard moratorium earlier. Our fishermen on the Yukon have practiced conservation a long time. Pollock fishermen been breaking our backs from the Bering Sea. Perhaps Bering Sea pollock fishery should go into moratorium. If that happened, I'm sure we'd have more kings return to the Yukon. I attended a conference in Anchorage one time, with presentations from all over. The Yukon kings are the biggest in the world.

Stanley George - Mountain Village - Advice on 4" net. When you do set a 4" net kings and chum bounce off and thinks there is some mortality. What happens when kings gills get closed and they get disorientated and they float down river.

Holly - Great point, but want to point out that when you have a 4" net in the water, it is not meant to target salmon. We intend for people to use that net to catch other species. When fishing for salmon you are going to be allowed to use 7.5" or 6" nets.

Stanley George – Mt. Village – When you use 6" gear for the salmon, the kings do bounce off, their gills close and they drop under the water. Have you done any studies of this?

Holly - Yes, I understand but we do not have the research to know if it is really lethal. We do tag fish. We do see fish do exactly what you are saying. We see some mortality but not excessive mortality.

Bill Alstrom- St. Mary's – Because of Covid-19 we are getting more emphasis on getting salmon as people run out of meat and other food. When it comes to other species, we don't really target them in the summer because the meat is mushy then. On dip netting, is that right when subsistence is open that dip netting cannot be used?

Holly- You can use dipnet when there is an opening.

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Holly- Haven't heard from biologist made comments that it was an issue. They will look into it.

Virgil - We use to have test fish wheels; the department did on the Tanana river for 20 years and down where the Tanana River dumps into Yukon. I use to have commercial openings. They would run live boxes. There used to have king salmon; a lot of those salmon would have net marks and swim all the way to Nenana before they got caught. 40-50 years ago studies about the size of nets and it goes all the back to 1981 to Board of Fish. There were 13 different studies. Richer model comes from this. Stan Zuray and I have years of studies. I back-up Holly with her decision on using 6".

Marvin Parent-Marshall- Last year's heat wave can be used for projection forecast for this year?

Holly – No, based on escapement from last few years. In any stream with an escapement goal. We try to follow management measures. Koyukuk last year was not great, but no way to factor in one year impact on stock.

Martin Kelly – Pilot Station- Is this day one of a 3 day conference.

Serena Fitka - YRDFA- We are going to have early in- season teleconferences that start next week. Any more discussion for the summer season outlook? Any more questions?

Rex Nick – Pilot Station- Are we talking subsistence only?

Holly- No, we can talk about commercial. Summer Chum will be dependent on buying capacity. Start

with dip nets and live release gear.

Rex Nick – Pilot Station- I had a question about test fish at sonar. Every year as I'm passing by, I stop and see how they are testing fish. Seems like they have high turnover. New people every year, even the people who have worked there for a while, I'm still see them throwing fish out of their net and back into the water, practically dead. Might want to keep an eye on that. That is one of my concerns about the test fish and the sonar.

Holly- I appreciate that feedback. Will talk to the crew. I am glad that we will be able to operate the sonar. We do have an AVCP staffer there who is on his 20th year.

Rex Nick-Pilot Station - Just want to make sure that people get their needs met in the village.

Holly - Whatever affect from the summer chum last year, we will see the results in 4 years. This year, the parent year is from 4 years and 5 years ago. We need to be careful with the commercial fishing because we do not have that assessment.

Wayne Jenkins - YRDFA – Holly, any last words before move on to Fall season?

Holly – Keep'em coming, remember that you can ask questions next week too.

Dorothy Shockley – Manley – How soon do sonar crew go to St. Mary's? I also want to echo what Charlie Wright said about conservation.

Holly - If you mean sonar crew, they head out end of May and are in place in early June.

Victor - Where would you set your test nets in the lower river?

Holly- Emmonak is furthest down river and will be operational usually around May 27th. Our local fishermen will tell us when it's time to set those nets.

John Lamont - Emmonak- Wondering if all the Tribal Councils are on the call to talk about their Covid plan?

Wayne Jenkins - YRDFA - I do not know.

John Lamont - Emmonak - Okay I thought that's why we were having this call.

2:50 p.m. – End of Summer Season discussion with 98 participants.

Jeff Estefson, ADFG Fall Season Manager

Bonnie Borba and I work on the presentations, but I will be giving the report. Understand unusual times because of Covid 19. The biggest concern is the safety and health of communities as well as our staff. Unique in the Yukon because we have a summer and fall season. We are committed to manage the Fall season that begins July 16th, but a lot could be different by July 16th. Because of Covid and other issues, likely nothing will be normal about this season.

Fall Chum salmon outlook for 2020 run size is 827,000- to just over a 1 million. Above an even year run size of 843K, we are looking good. Back in 2016, at Kluane Lake a geological incident, part of a glacier melted and spawning habitat was lost. This was 4-years ago so this could impact the Canadian origin fall chum, so we are watching the run. Many of you know that we give a forecast now, but we have a unique tool in the summer chum run. We can use it to project and revise our projection for fall season. It works well. We will have a report on this as we get closer to the fall season. Revision in our Outlook guides our early season management actions.

Coho, tends to follow a 4 or 5 year cycle. We have been seeing a below average run size, average run size is 240,000 fish. Finally got the funding for run timing and distribution project, but unfortunately, we

will be delaying that project due to Covid-19 and beginning it in 2021.

- Emmonak field office will likely be closed. Opening will be dictated by travel restrictions.
- Lower Yukon Test Fishery – This will provide run timing and abundance. Yukon Delta Fisheries Development Association (YDFDA) will conduct test fisheries for us at Big Eddy and Middle Mouth sites. After Department is finished operating this each year, YDFDA has been taking it over for fall.
- Mountain Village test fishery - run timing and abundance information funded by Restoration & Management. Most folks are from Mountain Village, so there are no outside people coming in for that.
- Main stem sonar at Pilot is a go for fall season. These measures run size and harvestable surplus. Also, a platform to collect tissues. Good indication for how many fish are moving upriver.

July 16th – District 1 Fall Chum season starts and moves up river with the fish. Subsistence fisheries management could increase in fall chum and Coho need. We will consider to allow for 7.5" mesh and schedules open 7/7's. Chronic inability to meet treaty objectives with the Porcupine River, so likely some sort of reduced subsistence schedule. Not sure what is going on with buyers in Lower Yukon River on commercial fishing. We will update as we get information. We take a very cautious approach as we begin season and assess how run is coming in. The goal is to balance some commercial harvest to provide for upriver subsistence and treaty objectives.

- Sheenjik and Chandalar are looking to operate along with Eagle. Things will change between now and July 15th and we can do the best we can we keep you the public informed regarding the fall season.

I have an open door and open phone policy. If you for some reason you cannot get ahold of me please let Serena know and she can get ahold of me.

Gerald - we are planning to operate Chandalar Sonar.

Mickey Stickman - Nulato - Fall chum run, 50% spawn in Henshaw Creek. Hoping that the closing of that weir is not political, because the State has given out money for the Ambler Road and it crosses Henshaw Creek. I agree with the moratorium on Chinook, but it would make us dependent on the Fall chum run. This is a big concern for me as a fisherman. I know that when we say we support a moratorium on Chinook fishing, we are relying on fall chum.

Bonnie Borba - Henshaw is usually closed before fall Chum arrive.

Bill Alstrom – St. Mary's - Down here in the lower river there are some subsistence for Fall Chum and Silvers. I know fall chum go into Canada. But what about the Silvers? Where are their main spawning ground?

Jeff Estefson- Some Coho have been documenting on mainstem into Canada, but not many. Mainly, they spawn in the Tanana River drainage and Delta Clearwater, which is a tributary of the Tanana.

Bonnie Borba – Some travel up the Porcupine. A couple of salmon stocks on the Tanana River. This Coho telemetry project in 2021 is going to be very helpful to learn where these fish go.

Jeff Estefson- Coho are important for subsistence and they have some value in the commercial fishery.

Andy Bassich – Eagle - Next year we are predicted less salmon, what are your thoughts (Jeff and Bonnie)? I know you rely on the relationship between summer and fall chum salmon. Do you think there will be weaker runs next year? Can you project?

Jeff - You were referring to the cycling of high abundance of fall chum followed by periods of lower

abundance. I think we look at this stuff every year. We don't just automatically assume everything will be fine. Strategy is to take things cautiously. Remains to be seen if we are going to go into a lower period cycle.

Bonnie- We have 2017 coming back will be next year's 4-year old's. Richer model will say it is going to be lower because we had a huge escapement. 1.7 million. Even though models will show that it will be poor. That is the only run that we expect to be weaker.

Andy Bassich - Eagle – I have a concern that I keep hearing people say that they need to catch more fall chums. Take that into management considerations. Do the best you can. I look forward to good run where everyone gets what they need.

Jeff- That is why we do these meetings, to give us things to think about.

Christopher Beans - St. Mary's. Question, on the fry's going out to give a good estimate of what might be coming back from the ocean.

Fred – We have been running the Juvenile program since early 2000s getting a good forecast on what's coming in.

Martin Kelly -Pilot Station- Conditions are normal. Raining and hoping for a good season. Cool 37F, light flurries and no subsistence activity at this time.

Closing:

Wayne Jenkins – YRDFA - In closing we wish to thank everyone on the line, all those who participated with your great questions and input, our fisheries management and staff.

I would also like to thank each of you; YRDFA Board & staff, Yukon River fishers, managers and others for your support and kindness while I was YRDFA's director. It was an honor and a privilege to work with you all on the many fisheries related issues that are so critical to the cultures and communities of the great Yukon River and it's bountiful and beautiful fish. Thank you all! Serena, would you close us out please?

Serena Fitka – YRDFA - Again, thank you all for calling in and hopefully we will be able to meet face-to-face. Thank you Holly, Jeff, Gerald and Fred for your reports. I enjoyed hearing from all the people from the River and please involve your young fishers to listen in on the meetings and hope to see them fill leadership roles in the future. Please don't hesitate to give me a call if you have questions, concerns or just want to talk.

Last, YRDFA would like to say thank you to Wayne for everything that he has done over the years. At this time, we offer our gratitude and appreciate his leadership and dedication to the people of the Yukon River. In the last couple months, Wayne has guided me through the organization, and I hope to exceed everyone's expectations as I move forward as Executive Director for YRDFA. I wish everyone a wonderful start to the fishing season and hope to hear everyone on the weekly in-season calls starting next week. Quyana

Call ended @ 3:29 p.m.

Thank all of you for all your hard work!



YUKON RIVER DRAINAGE FISHERIES ASSOCIATION

Greetings from the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association!

Here is a summary of the Yukon River Salmon Pre-Season Management Teleconference held Tuesday, May 12, 2020. The call lasted 150 minutes.

Estimate of participants: 116

Background: Yukon River salmon management Pre-season teleconference is usually held face-to-face in conjunction with the Annual YRDFA Board Meeting. Unfortunately, under the circumstances of Covid-19 we had to look to other methods to have managers and fishers throughout the Yukon River drainage to discuss fishing conditions and management strategies. Funded by the Dept. of Interior-Office of Subsistence Management.

Media participating: KEAA Eagle Community radio, and KYUK Bethel, Alaska.

Political Representative or staff: None

Welcome - Wayne Jenkins, YRDFA Out-Going Director:

Welcome everyone to your 2020 Yukon River Fisheries Preseason Planning meeting. This is Wayne Jenkins, YRDFA's Past Director. Before beginning our meeting let's start with an invocation.

Invocation; I'd like to ask YRDFA's co-chair Victor Lord to lead us in an opening prayer. Victor?

Watch out for our villages with this coronavirus, watch over King salmon, it is a resource to us and our livelihood. May everyone have fish on their table by the end of the season. AMEN...

Introductions:

Thank you, Victor so much for those words! As we get underway, I would like to introduce YRDFA's new Director, Serena Fitka and welcome her to all of you as she begins the adventure of directing our many programs for the fishers and communities of the Yukon River. Serena, would you share a few words, please?

Serena Fitka – Thank you Wayne, good afternoon and thank you all for joining our Pre-season call today. It is a privilege and honor to be working as the new Executive Director for YRDFA. I grew up in St. Mary's and travelled to many communities along the Yukon River. I look forward to what lies ahead for this amazing organization and I encourage you all to continue to participate in future calls and meetings. Enjoy the call!

Thank you, Serena! So, for a little background. YRDFA, partnering with ADFG, USFWS are hosting today's call as an alternative approach to our usual Spring in-person meeting which we had to cancel due to the Covid19 pandemic. It is critically important for Yukon River fishers, fishery managers and other stakeholders to communicate prior to our fishing season for preparation and understanding on projected run strengths, management strategies covering harvest and conservation, meeting escapement goals

etc. It is vital that managers and fishers engage before the fish arrive for creating clarity on management approaches, community needs and how communications will be handled this year. Thank you all for joining in on the call today and remember there will be two extra calls this season on May 19 & 26 as we begin our usual fishing season Teleconferences two weeks early for providing a communications link for Yukon river fishers during this challenging time.

Meeting Guidelines:

Here are some meeting guidelines to go by. As we have many more folks on today's call as we usually do on our summer calls, I would like to share some basic guidance for a smooth and constructive meeting today. Please mute your phone by pressing your mute button or pressing *6. To unmute please press *7 and when you are finished speaking press *6 again to mute. Open lines and background noise make it very difficult for folks to communicate well. If someone has an open line, I will need to halt the call and request they mute their phone so we can continue our discussion. Thank you for your cooperation.

Lastly, I want to remind everyone we have a lot of folks on the call. During our periods for asking questions please identify yourself by name, village and whether you are a commercial or subsistence fisher or both. After that the moderator will give you the go ahead. This will help when two folks have a question at the same time. Once the first person is finished the moderator will say "next?" for the next question. Please be patient as we will get to your question. Thank you for working with us on this important call.

Holly Carroll, ADFG Summer Season Manager – It is very sad the Pre-season is not in person. Happy that fishers were able to call in. Fisher's input really helps with the management strategy. Fred West will give a quick summary of our assessment.

Fred West, ADFG Yukon River Biologist –

Chinook Run size – 120,000 -144,000, slightly smaller than last year. Based on Canadian origin Chinook outlook.

Summer Chum size 1.7-2.1 million.

Project status due to Covid-19:

- Emmonak Field Office will be closed, Lower Yukon Test Fisheries middle mouth will be operated by Yukon Delta Fisheries Development Association. LYTF Middle Mouth will not be running,
- Anvik River sonar will not operate, which assesses summer Chum run strength.
- Henshaw Creek weir, run by Tanana Chiefs Conference.
- Pilot Station Sonar will operate.
- Subsistence harvest sampling of Coastal and District 1 to determine origin of stock of subsistence harvest in lower river is funded by the Restoration and Enhancement Fund.
- Samples of age and size for summer Chum if there is commercial fishing.
- Planning on running Chena and Salcha towers, which provides spawning information for chinook and summer chum on Tanana Rivers.
- Eagle Sonar we are currently planning on operating and this is to assess border passage of Chinook and Fall Chum.
- Post-season aerial surveys are planned to operate.

Holly Carroll, ADFG Summer Season Manager – In summary, Fred listed all the other assessments that we do. Some projects will not operate, they assess escapement and do not assess managing fishery in season. Those projects not happening will not affect fishing.

Gerald Maschmann – USFWS

Gerald is Acting Federal Manager for Season. Fred Bue retired. Federal Emmonak Office will also be closed this season. Andrafsky and Gisasa Weirs will be cancelled this season. They will find other ways to assess those streams. Federally funded Henshaw Weir, operated by Tanana Chiefs Conference, had high water last season that caused damage. Weir operation is cancelled, but will use this year to do some repairs.

Holly Carroll, ADFG Summer Season Manager – The Pre-season is to present last year's data and this coming year's season. The in-person meeting would provide Marine Research with graphs and charts; this call is focused on the coming season rather than data presentations.

Mid - point of projected Chinook run is similar to last year. 10-year average run size. Should allow us to do some harvest for subsistence. Could see fishing that looks similar to last year. We did have record warmth main stem water temperatures. Saw a lot of dead chum last year. Addressing that this season, we manage the fishery, we are not managing based on last year, we are managing based on the data presented to us. Tried to keep management strategies similar.

Like to provide a lot of opportunity on the trickle at the beginning of the run. Important for religious reasons and for sheefish. Last year we did it with 7.5" gear with ½ the time. This year we are starting with 6" gear. Biggest fish will go by. Provides opportunity for summer chum.

Then we assess the first and second pulse. To see if we are coming in closer to upper end of forecast, then we would relax. If it is coming in lower, then we will need to adjust management.

Feedback from last preseason meeting, reduction of fishing time, fishers said they wanted to fish on weekends. In every district they try to make sure that each district opening has a weekend included.

In 2018, at preseason planning meeting, fishermen feedback said the use of 6" in upper portion in river. This is a good management tool. In district 5, majority of Chinook are headed to Canada. We restrict District 5 to 6". We will be doing that this year.

Why don't we restrict to 6" everywhere? We do that because of the clog of summer Chum.

In all districts you will see a lot more use of 6" this year. We are hoping that we will harvest more summer chum and smaller Chinook. Local details are essential to management. Please keep sharing your information.

Questions:

Sven - St. Mary's - When Fred was talking, did he say Pilot will be operational this summer?

Holly - Yes, our team has been working on a safety plan and has been working with St. Mary's and Pilot Station. Yes, we are planning on operating the project with Covid-19 adjustments and ensuring safety of staff and communities.

Victor - Nenana- A+ Holly for your efforts, thank you for making fishing available for memorial services for Chinook. Fishermen must work with managers, help them, and share information. To help the Chinook.

Eddie Summer - Every summer we get city people who come home to fish, villagers who come home. Will there be enough fish for city folks and village folks?

Holly - Everyone is eligible to fish from State standpoints. Every community will have to see how this looks for them. State of Alaska, it is everyone's right to come home and fish. Our regulations will not affect this. Normally we fish for our loved ones and to share. That will not be different, but if the run strength of chinook is not great, make up with chum salmon.

Charlie Wright - Rampart- Want to echo Victor, you guys are doing a great job. This year and next year, please remember that we are still in conservation of kings. We need to conserve everywhere that we can. We are far from historical numbers. We have to lean on the summer and fall chums and hold out on the kings to make sure there is some for future generations.

Holly - Thank you. Last year we had a really good run size even though we took a conservative approach, but we did not get enough kings to Canada. Maybe the kings cannot be the bulk of our harvest. We have to be conservative in a way for those unknowns that we can't measure. We need to be careful, which is also why we are using 6" more.

Don Honea – Ruby – What kind of measurements are we going to make to get those numbers into Canada that we need? Are you taking extra steps?

Holly - chum run was late and that made it easier to get king salmon. Also, fish died before they made it to Canada and we have no way to measure. Most people now have 6" gear but if they don't have it they should find a way to invest in a 6" net. Last year was the first time in 4 years we came under Canadian passage goal.

John Lamont – Emmonak- Of the kings that did not make it to Canada, do we know how many were taken by subsistence? Only 3,000 kings taken in lower river, 250,000 kings counted at Pilot. Using a 6" is a bad idea.

Holly – Our total Canadian run last year was 73,000, our total subsistence take was 48,000. I do not have exact subsistence numbers, but knows there were more than 3,000 kings taking in lower river.

John Lamont - Emmonak –sonar numbers, thinks many were lost due to 6" gill nets. Witnessed this on Kuskokwim. Thinks using 6" is a mistake.

Bill Alstrom - St. Mary's – I'm glad the subject of kings at Pilot compared to border at Eagle came up. There is a disparity. What happened to those missing kings? There's a long stretch from Pilot to Eagle with no real monitoring going on. Lower river gets first of everything. When fish come in - chum or chinook, we are first to hit them. Lots of times fishermen, subsistence fishermen, are done with Chinook. Then you throw your 6" gear in the river and you get a bunch of chums that you do not want. We want couple hundred chums and maybe 50 kings. We don't want that much chums (that a 6" net produces). Will there be any monitoring the fish crossing the border?

Holly - If you have fish dropping out of a net dead, you would want to monitor that. But we do not have a way to monitor that. Districts 1-4 are going to encounter chums with that 6" net. Does not believe that king drop out in a chum clogged net, kills kings. Thinks fishermen need to check nets regularly. Basket kings.

Ed Sarton- Ruby – I heard about stress testing on fish. I heard about this at AFE.

Holly - Vanessa Von B is working on this. She may be able to give an update or we can do it on a future call.

Fred Huntington – Galena - most of tributaries to Yukon have been gaining in Chinook salmon. Passage at Canadian border was low. Last 10 years we have been fishing conservatively. Once the Chinook salmon get past Tanana, they are in the main Yukon on up. What we are doing is building up the other streams on the tributaries, but not Canada kings. I think we are going to mid-summer high water during the middle of season, lot of snow pack will be melting.

David Walker- Holy Cross - I notice in 2009-2013, there was good handle on bycatch, but now it is increasing. Heard it was up to 16K. I know that pollock fishing is affecting our stock. We are conserving,

I wish they would conserve in the Bering Sea. Good to have rule, but you have to enforce those rules. Last year we tried to report someone using an 8" net and law enforcement looked the other way.

Holly - Bering sea fishery is heavily regulated with fines. Their interceptions of salmon have gone way down.

Robert Okitkun - Kotlik - Concern on mining issues. Donlin Gold mine on the Kuskokwim; I heard that their tailings would drain to the Yukon? I have never got an answer to that questions.

Mickey Stickman - Nulato - Thanks to all managers and YRDFA for all their work. Charlie Wright talked about conservation, my family's subsistence calendars show our king numbers have gone down in 20 years. We also fish for other families. I was surprised by the 48,000 harvest last year because that is close to those years when the king numbers were high; 30 years ago.

Benedict Jones - Koyukuk - Water is really low. Expected high water due to snow but snow run off is seeping into the ground.

Martin Kelly- Pilot Station - How accurate is genetic testing from recent years compared to earlier years? Also, we to know point of contact for go ahead on Pilot?

Holly- Point of contact is Carl Fisher. As far as measurements at Pilot depends on getting a lot of samples. Last year we had good catches of Chinook at test fishery, increases accuracy. When we are looking as proportion of Canadian, we look at it by pulse.

Fred West – Overall, in most years, we have been doing genetics since 2005. Most of the time falls within confidence intervals. Some years that genetics over-represent or under-represent, but in general is good.

Martin Kelly- Pilot Station – In the last few years we talk about Traditional Ecological Knowledge being shared every Tuesday on Teleconferences. We are showing high numbers and we always ask that this be used as a tool.

Holly - Yes, we are using the TEK. In fact, last summer when our sonar counts were great, it was the fishermen who helped us understand if it is accurate. Last year, everything matched up, but we still can't account for the missing fish.

Alfred Dementieff – Holy Cross- Concern about fish near Holy Cross, seems like we get the tail end of every opener. Hard to catch fish when they are all gone.

Holly- We have heard that before about District 3. The whole point of the windows is to have a predicable fishing schedule, but this has no relation to when fish are present. The concept that fish will be there for at least one of the openings they need. We do not manage like we used to. Maybe we should think about the stagger of the openings.

Mike Peters- Marshall - Heard water is going to be high. Ice is still running in Marshall. Concerned about windows, schedule, etc. We are concerned because we have been conservative all these years.

Arnold ? – Our numbers since 2014 have been way below average for kings, a lot of people don't like the word "Moratorium", but I think we should start thinking about it if our numbers don't increase.

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Stanley George - Mountain Village - Advice on 4" net. When you do set a 4" net kings and chum bounce off and thinks there is some mortality. What happens when kings gills get closed and they get disorientated and they float down river.

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Martin Kelly – Pilot Station- Is this day one of a 3 day conference.

Serena Fitka - YRDFA- We are going to have early in- season teleconferences that start next week. Any more discussion for the summer season outlook? Any more questions?

Rex Nick – Pilot Station- Are we talking subsistence only?

Holly- No, we can talk about commercial. Summer Chum will be dependent on buying capacity. Start

with dip nets and live release gear.

Rex Nick – Pilot Station- I had a question about test fish at sonar. Every year as I'm passing by, I stop and see how they are testing fish. Seems like they have high turnover. New people every year, even the people who have worked there for a while, I'm still see them throwing fish out of their net and back into the water, practically dead. Might want to keep an eye on that. That is one of my concerns about the test fish and the sonar.

Holly- I appreciate that feedback. Will talk to the crew. I am glad that we will be able to operate the sonar. We do have an AVCP staffer there who is on his 20th year.

Rex Nick-Pilot Station - Just want to make sure that people get their needs met in the village.

Holly - Whatever affect from the summer chum last year, we will see the results in 4 years. This year, the parent year is from 4 years and 5 years ago. We need to be careful with the commercial fishing because we do not have that assessment.

Wayne Jenkins - YRDFA – Holly, any last words before move on to Fall season?

Holly – Keep'em coming, remember that you can ask questions next week too.

Dorothy Shockley – Manley – How soon do sonar crew go to St. Mary's? I also want to echo what Charlie Wright said about conservation.

Holly - If you mean sonar crew, they head out end of May and are in place in early June.

Victor - Where would you set your test nets in the lower river?

Holly- Emmonak is furthest down river and will be operational usually around May 27th. Our local fishermen will tell us when it's time to set those nets.

John Lamont - Emmonak- Wondering if all the Tribal Councils are on the call to talk about their Covid plan?

Wayne Jenkins - YRDFA - I do not know.

John Lamont - Emmonak - Okay I thought that's why we were having this call.

2:50 p.m. – End of Summer Season discussion with 98 participants.

Jeff Estefson, ADFG Fall Season Manager

Bonnie Borba and I work on the presentations, but I will be giving the report. Understand unusual times because of Covid 19. The biggest concern is the safety and health of communities as well as our staff. Unique in the Yukon because we have a summer and fall season. We are committed to manage the Fall season that begins July 16th, but a lot could be different by July 16th. Because of Covid and other issues, likely nothing will be normal about this season.

Fall Chum salmon outlook for 2020 run size is 827,000- to just over a 1 million. Above an even year run size of 843K, we are looking good. Back in 2016, at Kluane Lake a geological incident, part of a glacier melted and spawning habitat was lost. This was 4-years ago so this could impact the Canadian origin fall chum, so we are watching the run. Many of you know that we give a forecast now, but we have a unique tool in the summer chum run. We can use it to project and revise our projection for fall season. It works well. We will have a report on this as we get closer to the fall season. Revision in our Outlook guides our early season management actions.

Coho, tends to follow a 4 or 5 year cycle. We have been seeing a below average run size, average run size is 240,000 fish. Finally got the funding for run timing and distribution project, but unfortunately, we

will be delaying that project due to Covid-19 and beginning it in 2021.

- Emmonak field office will likely be closed. Opening will be dictated by travel restrictions.
- Lower Yukon Test Fishery – This will provide run timing and abundance. Yukon Delta Fisheries Development Association (YDFDA) will conduct test fisheries for us at Big Eddy and Middle Mouth sites. After Department is finished operating this each year, YDFDA has been taking it over for fall.
- Mountain Village test fishery - run timing and abundance information funded by Restoration & Management. Most folks are from Mountain Village, so there are no outside people coming in for that.
- Main stem sonar at Pilot is a go for fall season. These measures run size and harvestable surplus. Also, a platform to collect tissues. Good indication for how many fish are moving upriver.

July 16th – District 1 Fall Chum season starts and moves up river with the fish. Subsistence fisheries management could increase in fall chum and Coho need. We will consider to allow for 7.5" mesh and schedules open 7/7's. Chronic inability to meet treaty objectives with the Porcupine River, so likely some sort of reduced subsistence schedule. Not sure what is going on with buyers in Lower Yukon River on commercial fishing. We will update as we get information. We take a very cautious approach as we begin season and assess how run is coming in. The goal is to balance some commercial harvest to provide for upriver subsistence and treaty objectives.

- Sheenjik and Chandalar are looking to operate along with Eagle. Things will change between now and July 15th and we can do the best we can we keep you the public informed regarding the fall season.

I have an open door and open phone policy. If you for some reason you cannot get ahold of me please let Serena know and she can get ahold of me.

Gerald - we are planning to operate Chandalar Sonar.

Mickey Stickman - Nulato - Fall chum run, 50% spawn in Henshaw Creek. Hoping that the closing of that weir is not political, because the State has given out money for the Ambler Road and it crosses Henshaw Creek. I agree with the moratorium on Chinook, but it would make us dependent on the Fall chum run. This is a big concern for me as a fisherman. I know that when we say we support a moratorium on Chinook fishing, we are relying on fall chum.

Bonnie Borba - Henshaw is usually closed before fall Chum arrive.

Bill Alstrom – St. Mary's - Down here in the lower river there are some subsistence for Fall Chum and Silvers. I know fall chum go into Canada. But what about the Silvers? Where are their main spawning ground?

Jeff Estefson- Some Coho have been documenting on mainstem into Canada, but not many. Mainly, they spawn in the Tanana River drainage and Delta Clearwater, which is a tributary of the Tanana.

Bonnie Borba – Some travel up the Porcupine. A couple of salmon stocks on the Tanana River. This Coho telemetry project in 2021 is going to be very helpful to learn where these fish go.

Jeff Estefson- Coho are important for subsistence and they have some value in the commercial fishery.

Andy Bassich – Eagle - Next year we are predicted less salmon, what are your thoughts (Jeff and Bonnie)? I know you rely on the relationship between summer and fall chum salmon. Do you think there will be weaker runs next year? Can you project?

Jeff - You were referring to the cycling of high abundance of fall chum followed by periods of lower

abundance. I think we look at this stuff every year. We don't just automatically assume everything will be fine. Strategy is to take things cautiously. Remains to be seen if we are going to go into a lower period cycle.

Bonnie- We have 2017 coming back will be next year's 4-year old's. Richer model will say it is going to be lower because we had a huge escapement. 1.7 million. Even though models will show that it will be poor. That is the only run that we expect to be weaker.

Andy Bassich - Eagle – I have a concern that I keep hearing people say that they need to catch more fall chums. Take that into management considerations. Do the best you can. I look forward to good run where everyone gets what they need.

Jeff- That is why we do these meetings, to give us things to think about.

Christopher Beans - St. Mary's. Question, on the fry's going out to give a good estimate of what might be coming back from the ocean.

Fred – We have been running the Juvenile program since early 2000s getting a good forecast on what's coming in.

Martin Kelly -Pilot Station- Conditions are normal. Raining and hoping for a good season. Cool 37F, light flurries and no subsistence activity at this time.

Closing:

Wayne Jenkins – YRDFA - In closing we wish to thank everyone on the line, all those who participated with your great questions and input, our fisheries management and staff.

I would also like to thank each of you; YRDFA Board & staff, Yukon River fishers, managers and others for your support and kindness while I was YRDFA's director. It was an honor and a privilege to work with you all on the many fisheries related issues that are so critical to the cultures and communities of the great Yukon River and it's bountiful and beautiful fish. Thank you all! Serena, would you close us out please?

Serena Fitka – YRDFA - Again, thank you all for calling in and hopefully we will be able to meet face-to-face. Thank you Holly, Jeff, Gerald and Fred for your reports. I enjoyed hearing from all the people from the River and please involve your young fishers to listen in on the meetings and hope to see them fill leadership roles in the future. Please don't hesitate to give me a call if you have questions, concerns or just want to talk.

Last, YRDFA would like to say thank you to Wayne for everything that he has done over the years. At this time, we offer our gratitude and appreciate his leadership and dedication to the people of the Yukon River. In the last couple months, Wayne has guided me through the organization, and I hope to exceed everyone's expectations as I move forward as Executive Director for YRDFA. I wish everyone a wonderful start to the fishing season and hope to hear everyone on the weekly in-season calls starting next week. Quyana

Call ended @ 3:29 p.m.

Thank all of you for all your hard work!

Post Season Meeting Notes

December 17, 2020

14@12:58

20@1:00 p.m.

Serena: Thank you all for joining in on the call today, this is your host Serena Fitka, Executive Director of the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association. This meeting is funded by the Pacific Salmon Commission under the Restoration and Enhancement Grant and we thank them for their generous support.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the cancelation of our annual face to face preseason planning meeting and replacing that meeting with a teleconference, YRDFA set plans to host a fall post season meeting in Anchorage. However, the pandemic has extended into the winter months and has become clear that another teleconference would be best for everyone. This meeting is useful and necessary for fishers and fishery managers to follow up on the preceding fishing season, which has been the most challenging for everyone, and begin preparations and planning for the 2021 fishing season.

Before we get started I would like to go over some housekeeping for the meeting. We will be using YRDFA's core values in this meeting, which are:

- *Sustain wild salmon fisheries and other natural resources in the Yukon River watershed*
- *Maximize fishing opportunity for people living along the Yukon River*
- *Promote understanding, communication and cooperation between fisheries users*
- *Fair play equity and sharing*
- *Empower people and build their capacity to participate in fisheries management decision making*
- *Assist the people and the natural resources they depend on*
- *Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.*

*I will be muting everyone on the call today and when it is time for questions and discussion I will unmute the lines. If you would to mute please press *6 and *7 to unmute. Background noise is disruptive to those who are speaking.*

42@1:13pm

To begin the meeting I would like to ask Victor Lord, Co-Chair to provide an invocation.

Thank you.

I would like to welcome the YRDFA Delegation to the meeting. They will be providing community reports. We will begin in the Coastal District.

Coastal: Lester Wilde -

Margaret with Pitka's Point

Martin Kelly - P

Y1-Allen Hansen - I spoke with fishermen from my area. They all reported very low numbers of salmon coming into the river. They are predicting the same amount of run that we had last year but there was no fish. Stanley Pete and I discussed this and wondered why. We note that there were pods and pods of beluga whale at the south mouth. We thought maybe that was why the salmon didn't come into the river. I'm used to seeing 30 or 40 but there were hundreds of them. HE reported that while he was watching his net, he had a short king salmon net. He reported

that he saw a king salmon jump out of the water and a beluga jump out after him. Wonders is NOAA or the Whale commission can get involved. Send some scientists this spring to take a look at this. Also, all the commercial fishermen were really bewildered about no salmon on the river this year. The subsistence fishermen said that there were more king salmon than summer and fall chum salmon this year. Everyone around our area, Y1 did NOT meet their subsistence needs. So they are doing alternate fishing now for whitefish, etc.

Paul Andrews - Emmonak - I agree with what Allen said regarding low numbers. Him talking about the whales, I think that is a very big factor. Salmon are very afraid of them. Some hunters looked in a whale's stomach and they were salmon that were still alive, so they were good to cook and eat. Very few people got their needs on subsistence. It was very hard for everyone to even ask for dried salmon, it was embarrassing because we usually get our own. Next year, we should start earlier when the salmon start coming into the river.

42@1:19pm

Y2 - Bill Alstrom - St. Mary's - I serve as the lower river Co-Chair for YRDFA. I have to agree with Paul and Allen and their reports for the lower river. In Y1, salmon were very scarce this summer. A few times, I had to make quite a few drifts just to catch what I needed for the winter. It was very slow. There were a few kings out there. Like Allen said, it seemed like there were more kings than chums this year. They usually run with the kings and we didn't see any. They usually come in after the king run. That was a big question mark among all the fishers in this part of the river. We had a lot of fish racks that were empty in this part of the river. We had our pandemic on top of all that. We also had very high water after breakup and it continued for the rest of the summer. That made it very difficult for some fisher who usually drift, to catch any fish, although most of that may have had to do with so few salmon in the river.

Michelle Peterson - The last fishing season this summer, I didn't get to subsistence this year because of my mom has strong cultural values and it was still my dad's one year so we didn't do any subsistence. I'm a little further up from Emo. So I wasn't aware of the belugas eating the salmon down there.

Y3- Alfred Demientieff - Holy Cross - Our report is that about 15 fishers all summer and there were no fish coming up the river. Every time we had our 18 hour opening, it was like combat fishing because of the high water. For the whole summer, I don't think anyone caught over 15 salmon. The water was really high. Every time the Yukon is high, there is no fish. Maybe they are swimming up the wrong river.

Victor asks who fished the Paimuit slough - Alfred said the water changed and no one fishes there now.

Basil Larson - Russian Mission - It was pretty much the same here as everywhere else. There were actually a couple of families who took the summer off to go after the fall fish but that didn't happen. There was one family who put a net in after the fall season ended and he got enough fall fish to make half dried. And he got enough kings also that were good. We have dogs so we have a 4" net every day. I had to ask the manager if I could set my net and she said I could 1 mile up a tributary for pikes. I am still getting fall chum and cohos and a couple old sockeyes.

40@1:28

Y4 - Fred Huntington Sr. - I was fishing. I had 2 partners. We shared gas and boat. We had an 18 hr opening and we probably caught 50 kings. 15 of them were discarded or cut for dog

food. There was a lot of debris in the river, a lot of sticks under water for drifting. People were getting their nets hung up. Galena has a large amount of fisheries. 40-50% of the fishermen didn't get any fish out of the king salmon run. Then we were expecting the fall chum run, we estimated with the pilot station sonar was saying and when they'd be in Galena. I went out to different spots all the way down to tNulato. I got one fall chum and then it closed off. A lot of folks in Galena are doing without fish right now. Its a critical time between now and breakup, people usually use fish they preserve for the winter during this time period.

Richard Burnham -

Y5C - Charlie Wright, Rampart- This past season the king salmon fishing was tough, high water, when we had our opportunities to fish, the fish were full of ICH. Some of the fish literally stunk. We got 3 poles of dried fish. Fall chums didn't show up either and the ones that did were in bad shape. Nothing out there. Except whitefish which were good but nothing else. Just before the ice we checked and there were good whitefish in the river. Not many coho. After the annual meeting with YRDFA I've been thinking we need to share the fish with our cousins up in Canada. We had a long conversation about this. I would NOT like the bottom number to get any smaller. Life is hard on the river. Most people have eaten all the fish they have caught for the year. And the moose are scarce. Times are tough.

44@1:36pm

Stan Zuray Tanana. - 5B - Spent another 4 months at fish camp ran fishermans' survey program at Rapids. YRDFA's in season survey program. king salmon were a complete bust for everyone. Closures. Most fishermen thought that was needed. NO complaining about that. Few times there were openings, the fish did seem larger which we attributed to the closed times. In 2009 had a big increase in size of fish coming up river. I do personal ICH monitoring and last summer saw a lot more. I have run programs with funding before and this one was just personal. Once I saw the early ICH in the early summer, I kept doing it all summer. I saw the most of any monitored year in 10-13 years. The fall chum was completely closed and that caused most kennels to reduce in half by the time winter began. I went from 14 dogs to 6 dogs. Thanks to Stephanie, who personally and Purina and the shipping companies that got that dog food shipped into the village. We now have enough food to keep the dogs that we have. I agree with Charlie about the escapement goals. This is not the time to reduce it. Unless we want to just give up on the king run, which I do not. We need to give some fishermen some fish or we will lose the lifestyle. We saw this in 2013. I expect some camps will close next year. I do not plan to put my fish wheel in the river, I will just use a net. Really we need to be getting those fish to the spawning grounds. We need to get those fish to the border.

Y6- Victor Lord - I didn't go out with my boat but monitored. There were a few guys fishing. They built a wheel. They got some king salmon but not as much as they are used to. Another guy gave me some smoked dried king salmon and it was real good. Excellent dried fish. There were a couple guys going upriver setting nets. Jimmy. There was effort, fishing effort. But pretty slow really.

Koyukuk River - Pollock Simon, Sr. -

*Flats, - Andrew Firmin - I don't have much to say now but can chime in later
Jan Woodruff -*

46@1:46

Canada - Al Von Finster - Whitehorse - *In the Yukon Territory, we are set up almost like you are in Alaska, with the sonar in Eagle that informs the coming districts. Unfortunately the people in Dawson don't know how the run is going to be. If the run doesn't show up much they are the only people who get to fish. Right to fish of first nations, conservation concern but not in law, you have to act on it. Fall chum was so poor at Pilot. Before it got far we asked them not to fish. Followed up with notice that allocation for fall chum is zero. All the way around there was not much fish, In dawson, there were a few fish but what it seemed to be was a couple people hit the fish when they were there, some only caught sticks because water was so high. A little bit of aboriginal fisheries, but again pulling sticks. Poor year for fish and fisheries.*

45@1:56pm

Thank you YR DFA Board members for your time and we will move along on the agenda to the

Summer Season Overview: Do I have Deena on the line?

Questions & Discussion

Roberta Alexie - Y2 - subsistence and commercial . Fishwheels up river - releasing fish. Can we do that down here in the lower river. I know when the water is high, the fish count is low. Elders say that when the water is high, the fish go into the channels.

Deena ADF&G: we don't always say it in announcements but fish wheel can be used in lower yukon. If we know you want to we can mention it. Other selective gear types. Would need to look into commercial use. But for subsistence fish wheels can be used throughout drainage

Fred Huntington - Comments for Holly - last couple of years there wer king salmon hitting pilot station sonar in abundant numbers. In the past we have been shutting down fishing on the first pulse for our 10 years. We know that there are kings coming up. You say that 50% of the early kings are going to Canada. But when you see fish coming early on, that is because they are going to Alaskan tributaries (?). I was told years ago, that we should not pick on only one run, like hte early run. But that is what is happening, (when we do not fish on the first pulse) fish are going to other streams more like Koyukuk etc. Now we are seeing less king salmon going to Canada but the other streams are doing good.

46@2:11

Holly USFWS: you are spot on, let me back up and say if we have to do closure it is because the state requires it. But you are right we found that is not the best approach. Better to take a bit of the whole run. The run is not 50% candaian, 42%. More around 40%. Was trying to imply if the forecast was low it may require a first pulse closure. Our hands may be tied if the forecast is too small.

Fred Huntington - I fish out of Galena for 50 years, I was out on the river with my step parents when I was 13 years old. We fish on the south side, Tanana run. A lot of those fish are getting close to spawning time. Compared to the other fish going up the Yukon. The ones we drift for in front of Koykuk are big round, fresh fish. Different ones. Why shut down fishing site when fish

are pretty well spawned out. By that time our fisheries are near 100% complete but we do not take more than what we need or can handle.

Basil Larson: Echo Fred on Alaskan stock, two villages above pilot station sonar. My traditional fishing spot, 5 miles stretch of beach, when you see one boat it probably has four houses represented in it. We all share spots. Three main spots. We see all stocks of salmon down this way, does not mean we nail them. Go after chum, kings are a bycatch. This summer was awkward because no cummer chum or very little. Caused a lot of camps to wait till fall and then there was no fall. Echo Fred about Alaskan stock, pretty strong. Maybe management will have to adjust to give us a bite out of those pulses as they are passing.

Deena ADF&G - We didn't have a lot of weirs and other projects this season, due to Covid. And we usually have towers on the Chena and Salcha but they are affected by high water. We did have some aerial surveys. We did not see a lot of salmon in the tributaries.

AI - DNA analysis will give indication of how many fish came into Canada. They contribute to the river above Tanana. I would be careful about jumping to the conclusion that it is missing from Canada. When we saw the failure of Chinooks fishery and chums, hoping you are able to get more insight into what happened this year and use it to plan for the coming years. Nice to have more rational use of fisheries. For agency and other staff, it has been difficult this year. Some agencies were not able to maintain and support camps.

47@2:19pm

Alfred: Why does Y3 have 18 hour open when others have 24 open? When we have our open there is no fish. All summer no one is catching fish. Why are we only allowed 18 hours?

- **Holly:** Better question for Deena, has to do with state regulation
- **Deena:** What we did was look at regulatory schedules put in place in 2001. For reduced scheduled cut normal schedules in half. Lower in the river you see all stocks of fish come by, should have more dense numbers compared to farther up the river. They need more time to get the same opportunities.
- **Holly** - follow up to another part of your question. Really good comment, Y3 people reporting terrible luck, just no fish present. One man said he caught 1 fish after fishing for 8 hours. That schedule is set on days of the week. WE are not trying to chase the fish. Problem with set schedule, if there is a pulse moving through, it may not hit you in your village but may hit the next village. Luck of the draw but sometimes it seems like the other village always gets them. Set schedule allows you to plan your schedule and allows some fish to move through untouched.

Alfred - Holy Cross had the bad luck all summer.

Carrie Stevens: My husband is a traditional fisher in Stevens Village. I am not sure if the state or the feds are listening. I don't feel that you even really hear us on the river. Do you understand poverty. People do not have money for gas to fish when there is not any fish. We do not want to take more than they need. They do not want to see the fish not return for their children. Luck of the draw and fishing windows waste time. I ask state and managers how they plan to address that. Employee tribal government. Each community knows when the fish are there to take the fish and share the fish. Hard to listen to these types of comments for years. We caught 1/3 of

catch for at least 6 households. Felt lucky to have any fish at all. Most caught ¼ to nothing. Still confused to why people think king salmon is the only salmon we can catch. There are no summer chum, fall was shut down. When fall is open only the first run is for human consumption. Frustrating hearing the same comments for 20 years. Comments are ignored. Poverty is not understood to waste gas when there are no fish, it is an insult. Still hear the same comments from state and feds, not understanding. No way to go through with our own government structures. Think others on the call feel this way. How do states and feds plan to work in the future with communities so you don't have to hear this for the rest of your career.

Alfred - Thanks for your comments Carrie

Martin - Pilot Station - comment for Holly and Deena. Reiterating what everyone else has stated, past summer season, on record we did have really high water. The entire summer going through fall. I haven't had the chance to go up the Sonar project to go check in and see how everyone is doing with the Sonar. I usually go up and look at the didson and side scan sonar. I expect they have even better tools today. Every time I get on the teleconference, I make a statement that we do catch a lot of Jack king salmon. They are like 10-12 pounds and they can be mistaken for summer chum. With all the closures going on up and down the river, ADFG is not going to compensate me. Especially with our cost of living. If I don't store, cut and dry, my salmon, what is Esp with this pandemic. We should all be aware of the fact that we are in a pandemic. Pilot station had it bad. I don't know any subsistence user that has gotten any help. There teleconferences are for us subsistence users. Thinking about what everybody else is saying, last 15-20 years, I know how much of an impact high water has on us. Back to 1988 when the sonar was pointed into the mud. Its really important, you can't replace whatever loss I had for my entire family, my community. There is no special food boxes coming in. There are 20(?) people with under the ice nets and I bet every community has that situation. If we are going to be restricted to 4" it better be equal all the way around.

- **Deena:** I am not an expert on pilot station sonar. Does use a wide range of mesh size, try to get a representative number. The fish they catch in the net they use to estimate. We know pilot station is an estimate. Past years have been challenging. Late runs of chum and not overlapping with the kings like they used to. Trying to adapt to these changes. In an ideal year, this is allot easier. In a good year 5B district is open 7 days a week. When the runs are not strong enough we have to make hard decisions. Our first priority is the numbers of salmon and getting them to the spawning grounds.

46@2:38pm

Fred - Listening to what is being said, knowing what the harvest is for the subsistence fishermen on the river. Not only, knowing that over the last 30 years, decline of all salmon species, affecting fishermen on the river. Pollock fisheries in the Bering Sea are still raping the ocean, fishing with a sock and filling it up with whatever fish is in the ocean. They only use the Pollock and the rest of the fish are considered bycatch. The fish are damaged by the fishing nets. We don't have representatives from subsistence fishing, and they don't ever come to see what we are sacrificing for our harvest. They need to be accountable for the bycatch they are throwing overboard. Since 1992, there has been a decline. There are counters monitoring but they have no history of being as accurate as they claim to be. We have been sacrificing but they have not been equal with us.

Holly: Address Carrie's comments. First thank you Carrie. We do care what is said on these teleconferences. Take it to heart we appear to seem condescending. This is your forum to give us feedback and we need to hear the feedback. We write own everything you say. We are torn sometimes because we don't know if we need to provide the answers to the questions you asked without sounding like we are trying to get the last word on everything. ONE of the comments you brought up, what are we going to do wo twork with the tribes for the areas we manage. What I learned from Canada, the tribes have their own management plans. THAT is not the way the state law is setup. The federal law is also set up that way, Regulations we have to adhere to. Have a mandate to work with tribes and provide access. I like your ideas that communities can come up with their own management plans. I think that is a great idea, come up before. Not everyone in community agrees but it starts a discussion. The fish commission is hopefully doing that work to unite tribes and reach out to agencies. If there is more we should be doing or work more directly we would like to have that discussion with you, meet and talk on the phone. We have allot to learn. I appreciate your comments and would like to hear the conversation change and what we can do to help that. Thank you again.

45@2:47

Stan Zuray - I like what I hear coming from Carrie, and also what I hear coming from people like Holly. I think everybody is expressing the frustration that fishermen are feeling right now up and down the river, and rightfully so. Their lifestyles are changing because of the situtinoa. ADFG is in a tough position being the bad guys having to shut down the fishery. But fact of the matter is, we are in a different position than we were 20 years ago. I have been on the river for 45 years and 11 of it was on the spawning grounds. And the rest of the time I was one the river 4 months every year. 20 years ago when we were getting 3 and 400,000 king salmon on the river. It was suggested that we shut down king fishing entirely for a cycle of fish. That is how much we thought the run was in trouble. A lot of people on the river tried to reduce mesh, reduce fishing time, have windows, pulse protection. To me, ADFG deserves to have some negative words said to them for what took place in the past. NOne of that was listened to. We were having big troubles on the river and we were trying to get help and we got no where on it. Even with a big study on it, it felt like a cover up. But now, ADFG is in a different position. We don't have any excess fish to go to the spawning grounds. WE don't have any extra fish, even for the subsistence. 10 years ago, or more, we past the point where we can really do anything about this run. So what are we going to do with a run that cannot re produce itself unless everything is perfect. And nothing is perfect, there has always been disease or a warm year. No we have these real bad things, and the run is so small now, even on a decent year. The numbers coming in and the size of the fish, which is a BIG deal because the size of the fish determines the number of eggs. We could be putting like 50% less eggs on the spawning grounds than we used to. SO WHAT DO WE DO? Do we shut down fishing completely which will kill the subsistence lifestyle. I hear about reducing the escapement goals. Well that didn't work in the past. Reluctance in the Dept to shut down commercial fishing, that to me, has put us where we are now. WE could have back off on commercial fishing but that didn't happen because of the immense pressures on the river. That didn't happen because of one board member voted that there was something wrong on the river. That was 2009. People say we have been conserving for so long. That is not true. I believe that ADFG sold us a story. They present and tell us that the fish are increasing and we are putting too many fish on the spawning grounds. Now we have

the situation and ADFG is walking this fine line of trying to give people a little bit of fish. Now ADFG is trying to be good to the people and good to the fish but that is NOT the way to go. I think it is good for people to express their frustration and be mad because there is something to be mad about.

Otis Sipary: Boats in the ocean are using three mile nets, should use dip nets like us. Need shorter hours for them too.

Dorothy Shockley: Express my frustration, allot of factors going on here, low run and management state or federal. My frustration is listen to people and local knowledge, people have been expressing that for 40/50 years. And still things that Stan said are better, so people are listening. Whether or not they are doing anything is a different story. When a decision needs to be made by management, what percentage of local knowledge is used? As far as the first priorities, getting fish to spawning grounds, with the state it is written that subsistence is priority but it really is not. Other fishing, money talks (commercial, sports, etc). One or two in subsistence role. So frustrating to year this year after year. Other questions, if you keep doing the same time over and over and expect a different outcome it just isn't not going to happen. What do we need to change in making these decisions so we have a better outcome. What are your plans as managers? We are already predicting a couple years of low runs, what are your plans? What are you going to to that is different?

Deena Jallen- In season, we listen to the YRDFA calls. Holly's cell phone number is out there. Fishermen call her all the time. I encourage you to call us. We get feedback from fishers all the time. Its not just TEK its also local knowledge, allowable gear, observations. When we have proposals, we get to hear about how they would affect things. Even if we do the same thing, we come up with a management strategy that we think will work, we don't always get the same outcome because we have different conditions. But conditions are always changing, we have to be really adaptive. We have to wait until we get fish in the river and see what their timing is, abundance. Each year we have to react to the run.

Allen Hansen: Been involved with YRDFA for many years, past uncle and all his buddies have been in YRDFA for many years. They have been struggling like we are right now. Trying to make best determination for what is happening. Maybe we need to try something different, something like what Canada is doing. Just something to throw in.

Ben Stevens - As most folks know, I fish between Stevens Village and Beaver. A lot of folks depend on us to share and a lot of folks eat from our fish camp. These days that is impossible. I am feeling a pain. It is getting really hard to continue to trudge on every year hearing the same thing from fishers and agency folks. We are having a hard time and the trend continues to go down. I want to support comments people made about us always doing the same thing and expect the same results. Maybe it is time to step out of the role and things we have been doing the same thing. I don't know if the people along the river can handle not pulling at least some salmon out of the river. I am not sure telling the people to conserve more is the best idea. Maybe we need to look somewhere else. The marine environment. Huge commercial environment out there. Esp since the salmon spend 85-90% of their time in the ocean. I also think YR fishers do not understand the NPFMC. Maybe it is time for a change about that.

Fall Season Overview: Do I have Jeff Estensen on the line?

44@3:13pm

45@3:25

Questions & Discussion

Victor: Do you still have an office in the federal building in fairbanks?

- **Gerald:** Yes, but working from home not sure when we will be back in office

Dorothy: Looking at the fall chum runs, being the lowest on record. Have you talked to elders in villages, have they seen this before? Thoughts? Predictions?

- **Jeff:** Yes we have. Not so much for future, but how they looked in general. One elder in Tanana did make a comment that last time he saw something like this was before the 2000 run. We have gotten input if this has been seen before. We are fully prepared that this could be sustained, could be in the same boat next year. We take information to heart and it is good information to have.

Fred: When you talk about the crash and history of the Yukon, my step father explained to me: the temperature was very cold for six weeks. Freeze up goes into gravel where the spawning salmon where and they died off. 1928 no salmon on the river whatsoever. Stories from elders about the salmon were passed on before they started recording temperatures and other things. I don't consider myself an elder, but everyone else does. Been fishing on river for all my life, 71 years.

Someone?: At the preseason meeting we are going to want input from folks who have seen this before and what they think are going to happen and apply it to next year. Hear comments through the winter as well.

Ben Stevens: One thing to mention to Gerald, he mentioned three projects that didn't get off the ground because of COVID. What is the difference between the projects?

- **Gerald:** Henshaw creek and ? Henshaw TCC operates in upper koyukuk.? Is towards the mouth of Koyukuk. Similar projects, one counts fish in lower drainage and other in the upper
- **Ben:** science is same, one administered by TCC and other you guys. If you can't do the project there are others that can do it. Do not want to lose another year of data.

Fred: 3 or 4 hundred river miles between two projects

- **Gerald:** through genetic testing, even though same stocks they are related to other regional stocks
- **Fred:** Henshaw received more dog salmon

Martin - Pilot Station, the villages below used to harvest lampreys or eels. We usually get them in early November, mid Nov. Its been 4 years since we've been able to get any eels. They are really fat here where we get them. Part of the catch we give to the dogs. On the Kusko, they were expecting a second run of eels. I don't know if there is anything that has caused this. I don't know any village that has caught any eels up to Pilot Station.

Deena: We do pay attention to the lampreys fisheries, there has been allot of issues with ice conditions to go out and look for eels. There is a winter commercial lamprey fishery. Tag trials in fairbanks with shipped eels. Ideally we will tag eels in the river and learn where they go. Its just really hard with the ice.

Fishing Disaster Declaration Update:

Serena - We just had our annual board meeting. YRDFA board did pass a resolution asking the Governor to declare a fishing disaster for the Yukon River. A letter was sent to the Gov in Nov from YRDFA, YDFDA, YRITFC. Rep Foster gave an update on where they are at. etc..We are still waiting to hear back from the Gove. House District 39 foster and donny olson submitted a letter urging gov to make a decision. We have received more resolution so I will be forwarding this to the Gov office. We will also be requesting support from Senators and Dan Sullivan (politicians) urging them to push forward and have their support.

40@3:44pm

Question and Discussion:

Roberta: Is it part of COVID relief funds? Earlier this year there was a letter saying fisherman could apply for disaster funding. Called number in Palmer. Where is this funding coming from?

- **Serena:** one funding is for tariff relief, other funding from CARES has not come through yet. Does anyone know the status for the CARES money? YRDFA did put in comments for the percentage of 3% for subsistence being too low, subsistence increased to 5%.
- **Roberta:** If fisherman did not fish or could not fish in 2019, if no poundage they would not get relief from this funding. I for one could not fish because my motor broke and no one would call me back from kwikpak for 5 weeks. When we want help no one calls us back. To have no poundage, for not commercial fishing when we have motor problems, and then they close Y2 because of Covid.
- **Serena** - The tariff, that is for commercial fishing, if the governor does declare a fishing disaster then the department of commerce would determine funding..... And that process is going to take a while, a year or two. Unless we can really advocate for that funding to take place. For the CARES relief, I did see something posted yesterday to ADFG website, but I think you are specifically talking to the CARES relief act. If you need assistance with getting through to someone at Kwikpak, we can help you with that.
- **Roberta:** Was not sure part if CARES or disaster. I believe everyone who has a permit should get relief, not base it on poundage. We tried to get the motor fixed to fish.

39@3:48

Fred: CARES act funds was \$50 mill for state, 63% went to commercial, 33% sport, 3% (may have gone up one or two percent) for subsistence(?) They were not able to fish some years. I felt the subsistence fishermen on the Yukon river were not represented. The state board of fisheries determined what they were going to get. We should have had representation. Not in my view, the proper way to distribute it.

Serena - there was a release that was sent out Dec 7th for the final draft plan, showing the breakdowns of those allocations.

Martin- Can i get that person's name with the Lamprey tagging?

Deena - Please get a hold of me. 907-459-7309. Sabrina Garcia and others are working on this.

Allen: Facebook page for YRDFA?

Gerald - News. President elect Joe Biden has nominated Deb Holin from New Mexico and if confirmed she would be the first Native American in the cabinet in history.

37@3:56

Victor - For dorothy, she said money talks. The pollock fisheries out there are in the billions. That's the fishery in the Bering Sea outside the mouth of the Yukon.

Allen - Even though they are a billion dollar industry, I am pretty sure we can get a hold of our representatives and they can do something different.

Bill- Thats a multi billion dollar industry and we are just a drop in the bucket.

Fred - They are all wearing rolex watches and driving cadillacs.

Closing Remarks:

- Co-chairs?
- **Serena** - Thanks everyone for joining in on the call. Great discussion. Reminder about off season teleconference on Jan 19th at 1pm. Diana Stram will be giving an update on Bycatch. Same number, same pin.
- Management?

Registrants:

https://www.eventbrite.com/attendees-pdf/128170654879/attendees-128170654879.pdf?sortBy=last_name&ticket_224134585=1&alternate_barcode=on