

**YUKON SCHOOLS FRY RELEASES AND HABITAT STUDIES
Final Report to the Yukon River Panel**

Project Number: CRE-67-11



**Submitted by: Streamkeepers North Society
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Acknowledgements:

Teachers at Yukon Schools provided class instruction and organized field trips. They were assisted on field trips by **parents and other volunteers**. **Fisheries and Oceans Canada** conducted the chum egg takes for the schools and assisted with facilitation of the Kluane fry release field trips. **Yukon College** students working at the **Northern Research Institute** McIntyre Creek incubation facility looked after the chum salmon from the egg stage through to release.



Kluane Chum Fry Release 2011 (DFO photo).

Yukon Schools Fry Releases and Habitat Studies

Project Number: CRE-67-10

Abstract:

Yukon students from three schools in three Yukon communities (Beaver Creek, Destruction Bay, and Whitehorse) participated in fry releases and/or aquatic studies field trips in the spring of 2011. Two schools released chum fry back to the Kluane River. A third school carried out aquatic studies activities at a local salmon-bearing stream. These field trips enabled students, teachers and volunteers to gain a better understanding and appreciation of Yukon River salmon and their habitat.

Introduction:

Conservation of Yukon River salmon runs depends on the maintenance and development of a stewardship ethic among those who live in the watershed. The Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) "Stream to Sea" program helps to foster this ethic in students by helping them to gain a better understanding and appreciation of salmon and their habitat requirements. The program provides online resources for teachers to use in guiding classroom and field studies. It also includes a classroom incubation component that engages students in the nurturing of salmon. Students' understanding of the connection between the scientific concepts learned in the classroom and the natural habitat of the salmon is strengthened when students are able to participate in field studies. Field trip funding enables students involved with classroom incubation of salmon to participate in fry releases and various aquatic habitat studies and activities. Although field trip funding was available, many schools were not prepared to organize field trips without the assistance of a DFO Education Coordinator. Because teachers had not adjusted to assuming the role of facilitators, the number of classes that took advantage of this field trip program was very limited in 2011.

Project Location:

Students from Beaver Creek, Destruction Bay and Burwash Landing participated in a field trip to the Kluane River. Students at Golden Horn School participated in a field trip to Wolf Creek, in the City of Whitehorse.

Project Summary:

The primary objective of this project was to provide transportation funds to enable students involved with the DFO "Stream to Sea" program to participate in field trips that would enable them to better understand the nature of salmon habitat. The Yukon Panel funding helped three Yukon classes to participate in field trips during which students conducted various aquatic habitat studies and activities. Beaver Creek and Kluane Lake School participated in a joint field trip, to the Kluane River. A DFO biologist provided facilitation support and transported the Kluane chum that had been incubated at McIntyre back to the Kluane River for students to release. A teacher with experience in aquatic habitat studies facilitated her class's field trip at Wolf Creek. Parent volunteers assisted with activities. DFO personnel were available to facilitate the fry releases and various field trip activities. Activities varied with the age of the students, the focus of the teacher, and the time available. They included fry releases, aquatic invertebrate and fish studies, water quality studies, life cycles discussions and habitat disturbance impact discussions.

While students did not have the opportunity to incubate salmon in their classrooms in the 2010-2011 school years, the students who participated in the field trips did have the opportunity to release fry back into their natal streams, and thus make the connection between their classroom studies and the natural habitat of salmon. The field trip activities gave students, teachers and parent volunteers a better understanding of and appreciation for salmon habitat.

Fry releases and aquatic studies: The chum fry releases and the Golden Horn field trip occurred in early June, 2011. (See Table 1.)

Students were bused to field trip sites. Volunteers drove to the sites to assist with class activities.

The highlights from 2011 are:

- Kluane Lake School and Nelnah Bessie John School released chum salmon that had been incubated at the McIntyre Salmon Incubation facility back into the Kluane River. Students released 265 chum fry.
- Golden Horn School facilitated their own aquatic studies field trip to Wolf Creek, in Whitehorse, on June 15.



Kluane Chum Fry Release 2011 (DFO photo).

Chum salmon broodstock collection:

DFO collected an estimated 400 Kluane River Chum eggs on October 26, 2011. These chum salmon are currently incubating at the Kluane Lake School, at St. Elias School in Haines Junction, and at the McIntyre Hatchery. They will be released back to the Kluane River this spring.

- Yukon College students assisted DFO with egg takes, but no K to 12 classes participated in broodstock collection.

Ongoing:

Experienced teachers at three Yukon Schools set up classroom aquaria to undertake the incubation portion of the "Stream to Sea" Program in the 2011-2012 school years. They plan to release their chum fry in the upcoming spring. DFO expects to have much greater class participation in the "Stream to Sea" program and aquatic studies field trips in the upcoming academic year, as teachers will have the support of Yukon River Panel funded Salmon Stewards.

It is anticipated that field trips will be scheduled for May and June 2012 for the release of Kluane River Chum and Fox Creek Chinook that are currently incubating in the McIntyre Facility.

Table 1. Yukon Schools Salmon Fry Release and Habitat Studies Field Trips: Spring 2011			
School:	Community	Field Trip Date	Trip Destination
Golden Horn Elementary School	Whitehorse	June 15, 2011	Wolf Creek
Nelna Bessie John School	Beaver Creek	June 1, 2011	Kluane River
Kluane Lake School	Destruction Bay	June 1, 2011	Kluane River



Kluane Chum Fry Release 2011 (DFO photo).