

Eastern Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

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In Reply Refer To:
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Sara Boario, Regional Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1011 East Tudor Road
Anchorage, AK 99503

Doug Vincent-Lang, Commissioner
Alaska Department of Fish and Game
333 Raspberry Road
Anchorage, AK 99518

Dear Regional Director Boario and Commissioner Vincent-Lang,

I write on behalf of the Eastern Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council) to request funding be prioritized to better monitor escapement of Yukon River fall Chum Salmon in tributaries of the Upper Yukon River and for finer-scale genetic and spatial analysis of those stocks. The Council strongly believes that understanding the underlying stock structure of Yukon River fall Chum Salmon is essential. Without it, managers cannot detect which stocks are in collapse, which are shifting their spawning grounds, or which are at risk of extirpation.

The Council met in Fairbanks March 3-5, 2026, and unanimously voted to send a letter requesting that funding be prioritized for this effort. Council members expressed deep concern that although Chinook Salmon receive substantial research and public attention, fall Chum Salmon have not been treated with the same urgency despite their equal or greater importance to many Upper Yukon communities where they have historically been the most stable and reliable subsistence resource. While Chinook Salmon have fluctuated historically, fall Chum Salmon have traditionally provided consistent returns, with short-term declines lasting only a year or two. However, we are now entering the seventh consecutive year of severe decline and although Chinook returns show slight indications of improvement, fall Chum shows virtually none.

A primary barrier to effective management and recovery is the lack of dedicated funding for in-river monitoring of tributary escapements and associated fine-scale genetic work to tease out

these discrete stocks. Managing agencies have made clear that limited budgets constrain their ability to expand monitoring and research. The Council emphasizes that this research must be treated as a top priority. Without this work, the Yukon River fall Chum Salmon may lose genetic diversity that cannot be recovered.

For these reasons, the Council urges U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to prioritize and jointly seek funding for:

- In-river monitoring of tributary escapements, with an emphasis on using new technology in an attempt to save costs and allow for greater geographic coverage
- Discrete stock identification and mapping throughout the drainage, with emphasis on Alaskan tributaries of the Upper Yukon River
- Monitoring shifts in spawning distribution, including potential emergence of new or relocated spawning sites
- Partnerships with local communities and Tribal organizations that will help develop their research capacity and enhance co-stewardship

The Council recognizes that resource management budgets are constrained but feels that the cost of inaction will be far higher. Without immediate attention to stock-specific information and the means to monitor it, we risk permanent loss of critical salmon populations and the cultural systems tied to them.

The Council appreciates your continued commitment to collaborative salmon management and securing the resources needed for this essential work. We look forward to the opportunity to further discuss salmon research priorities at an upcoming Council meeting. If you have any questions or would like to follow up, please contact us through our Subsistence Council Coordinator Brooke McDavid at (907) 891-9181 or brooke_mcdavid@ios.doi.gov.

Sincerely,



Robert "Charlie" Wright, Sr.
Chair

cc: Federal Subsistence Board
Interagency Staff Committee
Eastern Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Office of Subsistence Management
Benjamin Mulligan, Deputy Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Aaron Poetter, Federal Subsistence Liaison, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Holly Carroll, Yukon River In-season Manager, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
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