



YUKON RIVER DRAINAGE FISHERIES ASSOCIATION



**Regional Advisory Council Report Fall 2020**

**Pre-Season Yukon River Salmon Management Teleconference:**

**Purpose:** To conduct an annual meeting of active Yukon River fishers and fishery managers to build an aware public constituency that is motivated to maintain and protect Yukon River salmon stocks with special regard for the Yukon Salmon Agreement with Canada.

**Funded by:** Yukon River Panel: Restoration and Enhancement Fund (R&E) through December 31, 2020. 2021 proposal submitted and approved.

The Annual Pre-season meeting was conducted by teleconference due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The top priority for YR DFA was to coordinate alternative means to conduct the Pre-season meeting because of the importance of effective communication between local fishers and fisheries management. All Tribes, City Municipalities, and Canadian First Nations were invited to participate.

On May 12, 2020, 116 participants convened in a 150 minutes Pre-season teleconference and was broadcasted on KEAA Eagle Community Radio and KYUK Bethel. The top concern brought by the fishers was the ability to fish due to the current pandemic and potential limited assessment projects by ADF&G and USFWS.

An amendment to our project was approved to host a Post-season meeting in the Fall of 2020, so fishers and managers would be able to convene. At this time a face-to-face meeting is still not an option due to the rise in COVID-19 cases in Alaska. Planning for alternative methods are being coordinated by key personnel and will be announced in the coming months.

**YR DFA Building & Maintaining Public Support of Salmon Resource Management**

**Purpose:** Build and maintain public support and meaningful participation in Yukon River salmon resource management by maintaining community capacity to participate, by developing mutual understanding between management agencies and the public for encouraging conservation and stewardship of salmon resources.

**Funded by:** Yukon River Panel: Restoration and Management Fund (R&M) through December 31, 2020. 2021 proposal submitted, decision at next Yukon River Panel meeting.

This project supports communication and outreach to Yukon River communities by maintaining a collective voice and organization of the Yukon River fishers for developing and improving public knowledge, increasing participation and support of Yukon River fisheries management.

The ability to share community level fishery concerns with managers and other key stakeholders has become vital to conservation approaches and guidance along the Yukon River. Over time a working relationship and better understanding of all sides of fisheries issues have been developed, leading to cooperation and success in conserving declining stocks for meeting escapement, commercial, and subsistence harvest goals.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic YR DFA was unable to conduct a face-to-face Annual Board meeting. Our program funding has been extended to ensure the Board Delegation convenes to

discuss and take action on any issues that have emerged within the last year. Dates and times will be announced once they are determined.

**Yukon River In-Season Salmon Management Teleconferences:**

**Purpose:** To provide a forum for people from the Yukon River to engage with fisheries managers on sharing information about subsistence harvests during the fishing season.

**Funded by:** OSM: Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program (FRMP) through March 31, 2024

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and increased need for communication between fishers and managers, we started our teleconferences 2 weeks early on May 19. The 2020 teleconferences have had higher than usual attendance and longer discussions, averaging closer to 2 hours. Below is a table summarizing the participation and highlights of the discussions to date.

<b>2020 In-Season Salmon Management Teleconference Summary</b>			
<b>Date</b>	<b># of Participants</b>	<b>Total Time in mins.</b>	<b>Highlights</b>
5/19/20	53	55	-High water w/debris throughout drainage
5/26/20	50	63	-High water with some areas fluctuating along with debris -Lake ice in Canada going out -Pilot Station Sonor due to open June 5th -Emmonak Office Closed due to COVID-19
6/2/20	64	63	-High water with some areas of levels fluctuating along with debris. -Marshall reported 1 king caught -Concerns of low number of fish entering the Yukon River.
6/9/20	82	82	-High water with debris -Monitoring between Pilot Station and Eagle
6/16/20	71	90	-High water w/little to no debris in LY -Fish trickling in LY; slow runs in middle Yukon -Passage for Chinook below historical average; Chum below cumulate median -Statewide - Kusko, Norton, Bristol have not seen fish yet
6/23/20	134	177	-Northerly winds on coast for weeks; maybe holding fish back -Coastal communities' tides need to be considered when making management decisions on openings. -High waters throughout drainage w/debris

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Many communities have no dipnets</li> <li>-No airlines, limited supplies, relying more on subsistence harvest</li> <li>-Small windows; it takes time to move fish wheels to find the fish.</li> </ul>
6/30/20	110	153	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-High waters throughout drainage</li> <li>-Ichthyophonous showing up in fish</li> <li>-Fishing is slow</li> <li>-Eagle Sonor setting up.</li> <li>-No fish to be flown in to Teslin due to COVID-19</li> <li>-Both Chinook and Chum numbers below average</li> <li>-Diana Stram, NPFMC gave a presentation on bycatch</li> <li>-Coastal communities report of large pod of belugas staying off the mouth of Yukon</li> <li>-Worries about Fall Chum dependency since Chinook and Summer Chum numbers are low</li> </ul>
7/7/20	99	122	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-High water in LY and Eagle area; water levels dropping in Middle Yukon, Flats and head waters, but still higher than normal</li> <li>-Commercial fishing closed due to low returns and COVID-19</li> <li>-Many have not harvested enough fish</li> <li>- Ichthyophonous still prevalent in fish</li> <li>-Run size in the drainage is borderline, but not large enough to meet the goals.</li> </ul>
7/14/20	82	140	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-High water in LY; water dropping in Middle Yukon on up</li> <li>-Many have not met subsistence needs</li> <li>-Families will be financially hurting due to commercial fishing closure</li> <li>-Ichthyophonous still prevalent in fish</li> <li>-Old Crow reports of Chinook harvest</li> <li>-Summer Chum estimates well below average, which predicts a well below forecast for Fall Chum</li> <li>-Test fisheries are operational at the Mouth and Mt. Village</li> <li>-Concerns about ocean conditions due to low returns in both Chinook and Chum, i.e, hatchery fish, environmental issues, warming waters</li> <li>-Encourage people to start participating in meetings; i.e. BOF</li> </ul>
7/21/20	87	131	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-High water in LY and Headwaters; dropping in Middle Yukon</li> <li>-Ichthyophonous still prevalent in fish</li> </ul>

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Many have not met subsistence needs</li> <li>-Concerns about low numbers at Eagle</li> <li>-Summer Chum estimated to be below 800,000, which is below average</li> <li>-Preliminary projections for Fall Chum is less than 450,000</li> <li>-Concerns about Fall Chum spawning areas in Henshaw</li> <li>-Concerns of closures on the Tanana</li> <li>-Ocean monitoring and Bycatch</li> <li>-Food security due to COVID-19</li> <li>-Cultural importance and future generations; we are not listening to the forewarnings</li> <li>-Encouragement to younger people to get involved in the Panel and fishery issues</li> <li>-Hatchery concerns competing with wild fish stocks</li> </ul>
7/28/20	79	157	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Water is dropping in LY and headwaters; rising waters in upper Yukon</li> <li>-Little to no fishing in LY</li> <li>-Upper Yukon struggling due to high water, fishing needs not met</li> <li>-Poor fish quality reported</li> <li>-Ichthyophonous still prevalent in fish; information about disease needs to be dispersed</li> <li>-Canada report run size at project sites are at half of the average</li> <li>-Incorporating Traditional Knowledge into Management</li> <li>-Important to protect spawning grounds</li> </ul>
8/4/20	57	70	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Water levels dropping/staying the same in LY and Middle River; water levels rising/high in Upper Yukon and Headwaters</li> <li>-Fish ladder had 1 fish pass</li> </ul>
8/11/20	69	120	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Water levels high throughout drainage</li> <li>-Poor fish runs, minimal fishing throughout drainage.</li> <li>-Presentation by Krista Oke on 'Decline on Salmon Body Size'</li> <li>-Fishing disaster declaration discussion - Subsistence and Commercial</li> <li>-CARES Act funding made available; outline being drafted</li> </ul>
8/18/20	N/A		Report submitted before teleconference
8/25/20	N/A		Report submitted before teleconference

**Yukon River In-Season Subsistence Salmon Surveys:**

**Purpose:** The YRDFA In-season Subsistence Salmon Survey provides an important communication tool that qualitatively informs managers how fishers in key locations throughout the drainage are doing in-season, enabling managers to make timely decisions allowing the maximum number of fishers to meet their subsistence needs.

**Funded by:** OSM: Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program (FRMP) through March 31, 2024

This program includes local hire of one surveyor in 10 communities; which currently are; Alakanuk, Mountain Village, Marshall, Russian Mission, Anvik, Huslia, Ruby, Tanana, Fort Yukon, and Eagle.

This year due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we were unable to hold an in-person training event and replaced it with a teleconference training. Luckily, 9 of our 10 surveyors were re-hired and experienced in the position. This greatly helped us overcome some of the pandemic challenges. As part of the training, the surveyors received their binders in the mail as well as our new YRDFA hoodies and masks to wear while surveying. Other Covid safe procedures discussed during our training, aside from wearing masks, were social distancing and following your communities most recent recommended protocols.

We hired 11 surveyors in 10 communities this year. In Alakanuk, midway through the season our surveyor became ill and needed to leave the community so we were able to replace Pamela Cook with Ted Hamilton, who has past experience surveying in Emmonak when the program was just beginning in the early 2000s. Additionally, we trained a new surveyor in Anvik, Alberta Walker.

At the time of this reporting, we were able to conduct 384 interviews with 146 households along the Yukon River. Teleconference participation by the surveyors was increased this year as we encouraged the surveyors to call in and update us on their community activities each week. We are currently conducting the post season evaluation with the surveyors, managers, and participants.

<b>Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association</b>			
<b>2020 In-Season Subsistence Salmon Survey</b>			
<b>Village</b>	<b># of households interviewed</b>	<b># of interviews total</b>	<b>date range</b>
Alakanuk	21	26	June 1-July 14
Mountain Village	10	39	June 8 - July 14
Marshall	17	61	June 8 - July 14
Russian Mission	22	52	June 8 - July 14
Anvik	14	32	June 14- July 16

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Ruby	17	33	June 21 - July 27
Huslia	2	13	June 22 – Aug 10
Tanana	7	49	June 22 - July 27
Fort Yukon	31	61	June 22- Aug 3
Eagle	5	18	July 6 - Aug 10
<b>Totals</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>June 1- Aug 10</b>

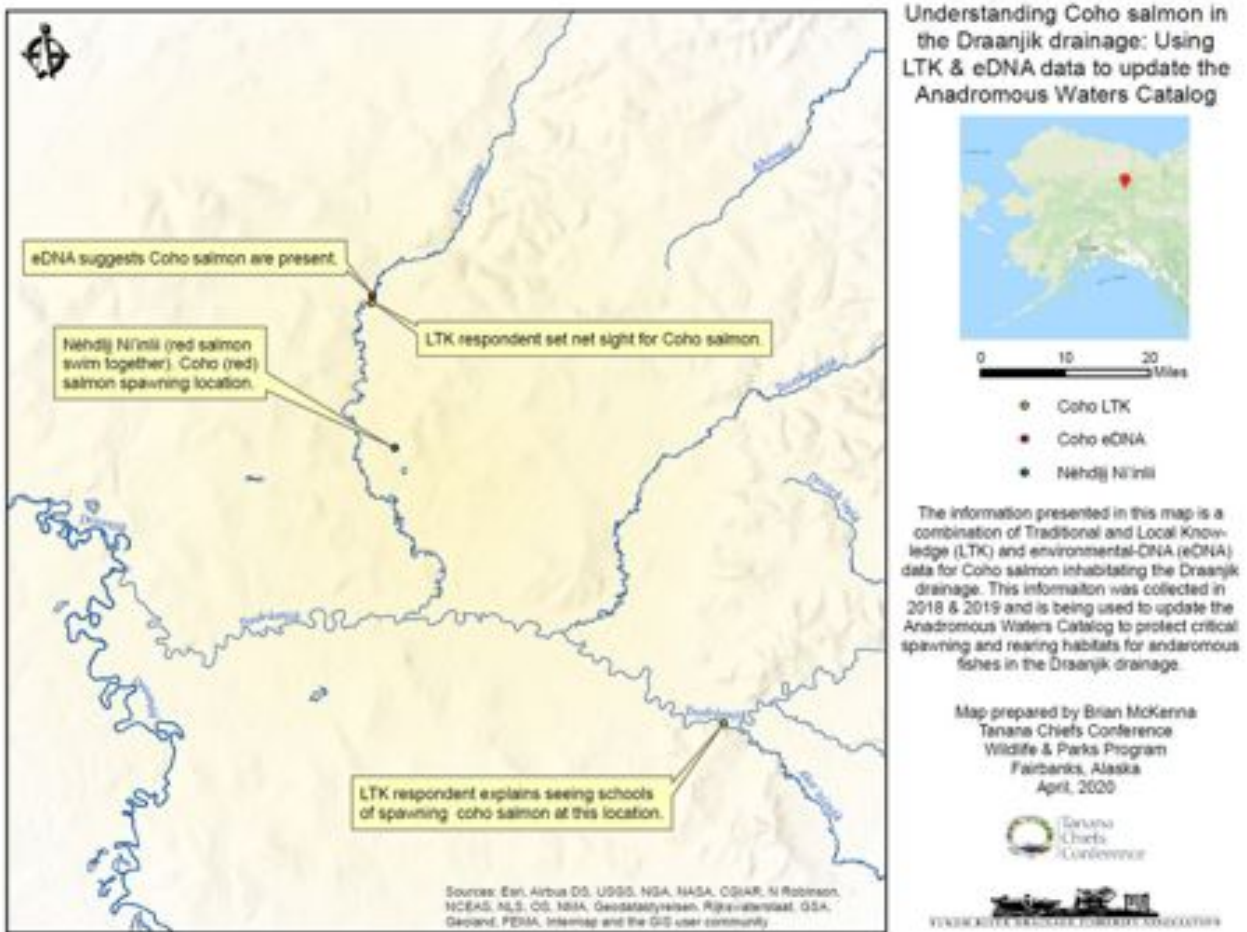
**Traditional Knowledge of Anadromous Fish in the Yukon Flats:**

**Purpose:** The purpose of this project is to provide information critical to the management of anadromous fishes and the habitat that supports them. This is being accomplished through Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) interviews and mapping activities with knowledgeable fishers and hunters in the region to identify areas in the Yukon Flats and Draanjik basin with salmon and whitefish spawning and rearing areas. This will then be verified by helicopter and river boat field work and finally nominations of new areas will be submitted to the Anadromous Waters Catalog to protect critical habitat for these salmon species. This project is a partnership with Tanana Chiefs Conference, YRDFA, and the communities.

**Funded by:** Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program (FRMP) through March 31, 2022.

Biological fieldwork was expected to take place in the spring, summer and fall of 2020 but due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we have postponed the spring and summer biological field work to 2021. TCC staff will be conducting an aerial survey of the Kevinjik Creek in the Teedraanjik drainage in October 2020 to identify and locate a Coho salmon spawning area (Nèhdlì ì Ni'inlii) that has not yet been added to the Anadromous Waters Catalog. This location has been identified by traditional knowledge and with positive eDNA analysis (Figure 1). TCC staff will travel to the spawning area in the fall of 2020 to document its location. While on site, they will collect age, sex, and length (ASL) samples as well as tissue samples for genetic analysis for this baseline population. Additional fieldwork is planned for the spring and summer of 2021 to document rearing juvenile and spawning adult Chinook and chum salmon.

We had community meetings planned for the late fall and winter of 2020/2021 and we are monitoring the pandemic and will hold the meetings once it is safe or find another way to share important information about this project with the communities. To allow time for these two extended activities, we have requested and received approval for an extension of this project until March of 2022.



**New Project:**  
**They Told Us There'd Come a Time... A Catalog of Elders Warnings**

**Purpose:** The purpose of this project is to review archival and contemporary Yukon River TEK with a team of young adults from TCC for warning of potential salmon declines and other conservation practices.

**Funded by:** North Pacific Research Board. December 2020-November 2023

YRDFA is gearing up to begin a new project reviewing Yukon River archival Traditional Ecological Knowledge materials describing conservation practices and warnings of potential declines in salmon housed at the University of Alaska Fairbanks Alaska and Polar Regions Collections and Archives and other sources. We will be partnering with the Tanana Chiefs Conference's young adult Emerging Leaders and receive training support from the UAF Library Archives and the TCC Communications staff. After the archival research, we will do follow-up interviews with local Elders with the support of the Denakkanaaga. Finally, we will produce outreach materials that summarize and share our results.