



## YUKON RIVER DRAINAGE FISHERIES ASSOCIATION

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### *Report to the Western Interior Regional Advisory Council*

*March 2022*

#### **FRMP PROJECTS**

##### **In-Season Salmon Survey:**

The In-season Subsistence Salmon Survey Program is an important communication tool that helps managers ensure that both Yukon River escapement is met and, in a normal year, as many subsistence fishers are meeting their goals as possible. YRDFA hires a local person in 10 communities along the Yukon River stretching from Alakanuk to Eagle to survey fishers during the Chinook salmon season in their community. The observations fishers share with YRDFA surveyors are summarized by the community to protect anonymity and then shared with Yukon River In-season Managers and the Yukon River community through the In-season Salmon Management Teleconferences. This project is funded by the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program through March of 2024.

Since we last reported to you on this project, there has not been a lot of activity. We are getting ready to plan for summer 2022 and are reviewing recommendations from our post season evaluation for any changes to make to the program. We will start rehiring our surveyors in March in preparation for the upcoming summer surveying.

**Traditional Ecological Knowledge of anadromous fish in the Yukon Flats with an emphasis on Draanjik drainage:** This project, funded by the FRMP, was extended until March of 2022 due to the pandemic. The biological field team conducted an aerial survey of the Kevinjik Creek in the Teedraanjik drainage to identify and locate a Coho salmon spawning area (Nèhdlijj 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. They flew in December and spotted coho salmon! We have plans to travel to Venetie and Fort Yukon to present the results to their tribal councils, community and do an activity with their schools. We are not planning to travel to Chalkyitsik due to the pandemic and their preferences. We will provide Chalkyitsik with materials summarizing the project results and reach out to them virtually to gather any feedback they want to share.

**OTHER PROJECTS:**

***They Told Us There'd Come a Time, Conserving Fish, Preserving Tradition on the Yukon River, A catalog of Elders Warnings:*** This project, funded by the North Pacific Research Board, has YRDFA partnering with the Tanana Chiefs Conference young adult Emerging Leaders to research documented Local and Traditional Knowledge of salmon and search for advice or warnings from the Elders. We are entering year two of our project and planning our second training event. It will take place in Fairbanks in March and the goal of the training is to prepare to do qualitative interviews with today's Elders and record them in a high quality way that can be submitted to the archives. We currently have 3 young adults who have spent the last year digging through the archives and learning about Elders from their communities and other interests to each of them.

**Integrating Local and Traditional Ecological Knowledge into Anadromous Waters Cataloging and Fish Inventories of select drainages of the Tanana and Yukon rivers 2021-2023:** This funded, project by the Alaska Sustainable Salmon Fund (AKSSF), is a partnership between YRDFA and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Together, we are working with the communities of Tanana, Nenana, and Manley Hot Springs to identify important areas with anadromous fish and other fish for investigations to nominate areas for the anadromous waters catalog and the fish inventory. Last summer we traveled to all three study communities and held LTK interviews and mapping activities with knowledgeable fishers and hunters. We were able to conduct a total of 20 interviews; five in Manley Hot Springs, five in Tanana, and ten in Nenana. These knowledgeable subsistence providers shared important information about fish locations. During the summer of 2022 ADF&G and YRDFA staff will attempt to document fish presence, rearing and spawning in these locations through river boat and helicopter surveys and include them in the fish inventories and anadromous waters catalog. They have three trips planned from Nenana to Tanana to document the different fish species in the Tanana River and its tributaries. These trips are planned to take place in early June, late July, and the end of September. We hope to stop in at each community as we pass through and share information about the project.

**Meetings:**

The YRDFA E-board held a meeting in Anchorage, October 26-27,2021. The E-board members are the following:

<b>E-Board</b>	<b>E-board Alternates</b>
Coastal Seat 1 - Lester Wilde, Hooper Bay	Alternate: Richard Tuluk, Chevak
Y-1 Seat 1 - Allen Hansen, Alakanuk	Alternate: Paul Andrews, Emmonak
Y-2 Seat 1 - Bill Alstrom, St. Mary's	Alternate: None
Y-2 Seat 2 - Mike Peters, Marshall	Alternate: None
Y-3 Seat 1 - Alfred Demientieff, Holy Cross	Alternate: Basil Larson, Russian Mission
Y-4 Seat 2 - Richard Burnham, Kaltag	Y-4 Seat 1 Fred Huntington, Sr.
Y-5 Seat 2 - Stan Zuray, Tanana	Y-5 Seat 1 Charlie Wright
Y-6 Seat 2 - Victor Lord, Nenana	Y-6 Seat 1 Tim McManus

Koyukuk - Pollock Simon, Sr., Allakaket	Alternate: None
Flats - Jan Woodruff, Eagle	Alternate: Rochelle Adams, Beaver
Canada - James MacDonald, Whitehorse	Alternate: Carl Sidney, Teslin

Updates were given by ADF&G and USFWS Yukon River Area Managers with an open discussion. An impromptu presentation was given by Vanessa Von Biela with USGS on heat stress.

The E-board's priority for the meeting was to discuss and plan for the upcoming AYK cycle with the Board of Fisheries. The e-board determined four areas of concern.

1. Increasing genetic analysis of salmon stocks in Area M.
2. Hatchery production affecting wild salmon stocks.
3. Increasing genetic analysis of salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea.
4. Provide an opportunity for Yukon River communities a small salmon harvest to alleviate food security and keep traditional culture practices active.

YR DFA hired a part-time consultant, Hannah Heimbuch with Ocean Strategy, to assist with policy with a Yukon River focus.

The Comprehensive Salmon Plan committee has not met. Karen Gillis is not long the Chair and it was handed over to Jill Klien. However, Jill had to step down as Chair. YRFDA E-board appointed Stan Zuray to assist with coordinating a meeting with the CSP Committee.

#### **NEW OPPORTUNITY**

YR DFA received a grant from the Alaska Venture Fund to continue the Yukon River Advocacy Series. A part-time coordinator will be hired to assist in developing a 4-part series. The series will include, but not limited to the following topics of interest: North Pacific Fisheries Management Council, National Marine Fisheries Service, Alaska Marine Science Center, Alaska Department of Fish and Game - Board of Fisheries, and US Department of Interior Federal Subsistence Board. Our goal is to provide the communities with the necessary information about each agency to effectively be a part of the public process and to increase interest in serving on various boards.

#### **FISHERY DISASTER UPDATE**

In October, Serena Fitka, Executive Director, traveled to Washington D.C. to meet with the U.S. Delegation. She provided the delegation with the distress of subsistence users along the Yukon River and the loss of traditional practices that revolve around our salmon. Serena stressed that assistance is needed now and not 5 years from now and the total collapse of chum salmon stocks calls for immediate action. There has been no response from Secretary Raimondo.

Senator Sullivan and Senator Murkowski introduced an Alaska Salmon Research Task Force Act on December 17, 2021. We will be tracking the bill as it moves forward. The Research Task Force

would be composed of 13-19 members. More information can be found at <https://www.murkowski.senate.gov/press/release/sullivan-and-murkowski-introduce-alaska-salmon-research-task-force-act> .

**Upcoming meetings:**

*Yukon River Salmon Management Pre-Season Planning meeting*

March 24, 2022 in Anchorage, Alaska

Embassy Suites

*YRDFA Annual Board meeting*

March 22-23, 2022 in Anchorage

BP Energy Center

*YRDFA Weekly In-season Salmon Management Teleconferences*

First call is scheduled for June 7, 2022 at 1:00 p.m.

Calls will be every Tuesday until the end of August.

Call-in number: 1-800-315-6338, Pin: 98566#