

Traditional Ecological Knowledge of Customary Trade of Subsistence Harvested Salmon on the Yukon River

In January 2003, the Federal Subsistence Board adopted new regulations clarifying statewide customary trade practices of subsistence-caught fish and identified the need for additional information, to enable it to further refine regulations. This project addresses that need by documenting customary trade practices of salmon in three villages on the Yukon River. Interviews were conducted with 28 key informants, and included both interviews with individuals and groups. Results from the study indicate that customary trade supports subsistence economies by providing much-needed cash. Customary trade of salmon is part of a social system that distributes resources over time and space. In Alakanuk customary trade was described as opportunistic, only conducted in high-harvest years with the exception of a few households that supply those who are unable to fish. In Holy Cross, customary trade was not unusual with 7 out of 8 participants engaging in customary trade. In Tanana, 6 of the 13 participants were active in customary trade, whereas the remaining 7 either did not conduct customary trade or participated at a minimal level. Throughout the study communities, customary trade of fish was a way to earn cash when few other opportunities were available. Customary trade was not conducted for profit nor is it conducted in isolation from other subsistence activities. The money earned was used to support a lifestyle, buying equipment and supplies used in pursuing subsistence activities.

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