

Pikmiktalik River Salmon Escapement Enumeration and Sampling Project 2003-2007

ABSTRACT

The communities of Stebbins and St. Michael rely on the Pikmiktalik River, or the immediate adjacent marine waters, for their subsistence salmon harvest. The Pikmiktalik River is part of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge, and is therefore one of the few Federal subsistence fisheries in the Norton Sound area. This project was proposed to address the concerns of local residents, who believed strongly that improved timely escapement information would improve management of these fishery resources. Kawerak, Inc. collaborated with the Stebbins Community Association to successfully provide baseline data regarding salmon abundance, run-timing and biological (age, sex and length) data to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game from 2003-2007. Chum salmon returns increased each year, from 7,707 in 2003 to 21,518 in 2007. Coho salmon experienced higher returns in the odd years (17,424 in 2005 and 13,777 in 2007) as compared to the even years counted (11,799 in 2004 and 8,575 in 2006). Chinook salmon numbers were relatively low in all years counted, however the number of Chinook salmon counted decreased almost every year, from 345 in 2003 to 99 in 2006. In most years sampled, the majority of chum salmon returning to spawn were age 0.3, followed by age 0.4 and the most abundant age class for coho salmon was consistently age 2.1 fish. Biological information was only attempted on Chinook salmon in 2006, and was not overly successful due to difficulties seining the relatively rare Chinook salmon on this river. Without additional funding for this project, managers must, at a minimum, continue to fly aerial surveys and collect post-season salmon harvest information from adjacent communities. It is imperative that managers actually take notice of this important system as an indicator stream for the subsistence resources in the area and formulate a long-term monitoring strategy for the Pikmiktalik River.

Citation: Dunmall, K.M. and T.J. Kroeker. 2008. Pikmiktalik River salmon escapement enumeration and sampling project 2003-2007. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Subsistence Management, Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program, 2008 Final Report (Study No. 06-101). Kawerak, Inc., Fisheries Department, Nome, Alaska.

In an effort to have all data easily accessible, this report also summarizes:
Kroeker, T.J and K.M. Dunmall. 2006. Pikmiktalik River Salmon Escapement Enumeration and Sampling Project, 2003-2005. Final Report for Study 04-105 Phase II. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Subsistence Management, Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program, Anchorage, Alaska.