

Title: George River Salmon Weir Continuation

Study Number: FIS 12-303

Primary Objective:

1. Estimate daily and total annual escapements of Chinook, chum, and coho salmon to the George River during the target operational period (TOP) of 15 June to 20 September, 2012.

Results: The George River weir operated from 30 June through 16 September. High river stage in June delayed installation of the weir for 16 days past the beginning of the TOP. In addition, the weir was inoperable for one day in the season due to a hole, for seven days due to high water, and removed four days prior to the TOP end date due to high river stage. Standard methods were used to estimate missed passage when the weir was not operational. Total annual escapements of Chinook salmon was 2,302 (10% estimated), which fell short of the 3,100 to 7,900 escapement goal range. Escapement also included 34,336 chum (6.2% estimated), and 15,272 coho salmon (6.4% estimated).

Secondary Objectives:

- Assessment of the adequacy of escapement, both numbers of fish and distribution: George River weir has a formal escapement goal for Chinook salmon (established December 2009) that provides assessment as to the adequacy of annual escapements. Formal escapement goals have not been established for other species, and annual escapement results from the weir provide context as to the adequacy and quality of annual escapements (i.e., age and sex composition). Development of formal escapement goals is a long-term process and George River is considered during each review period. When taken in context with other weirs, findings from George River weir provide assessment as to the distribution of annual escapements throughout the Kuskokwim River drainage. In 2013 the George River weir played an important role in developing a drainage-wide goal using a Chinook salmon run reconstruction. At the 2013 Board of Fisheries meeting the drainage-wide goal was adopted which also changed the George River Chinook salmon escapement goal to a range of 1,800 – 3,300 beginning in 2013.
- Temperature Monitoring: In support of this OSM initiative (FIS 08-701), crew deployed, and maintained equipment provided by OSM for standardized air and water temperature monitoring. Not all equipment was recovered due to high water and the river icing up earlier than anticipated.
- KNA High School and College Internship Programs (OSM project #F12AC00108): High school students from local communities are introduced to fishery management and research activities with the goal of fostering career interests and better local understanding about salmon management. George River weir was used to host 2 local area high school students for two weeks. The project also hosted rotations for 3 KNA college interns.

