

FISHERIES UPDATE FOR THE WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 17-23, 2017. Report #17 – Final update for 2017 season. Compiled by George Pappas - (907) 786-3822, george_pappas@fws.gov, Office of Subsistence Management, USFWS. USFWS employee Don Rivard retired on August 31, 2017 and his contributions to the 2017 reporting process was appreciated.

The purpose of the weekly fisheries update is to provide the reader with an overall summary of the status of subsistence related fisheries throughout the state of Alaska. The target audience is the Federal Subsistence Board and its Staff Committee. The report was compiled with the assistance of the Federal in-season fisheries managers that provided weekly updated information by the close of business on Friday of the reporting week. The goal is to have the weekly report posted on the OSM website, <https://www.doi.gov/subsistence/news/fishing>, by the close of business the following Monday. Additional information on a fishery of particular interest may be obtained by contacting the in-season manager, visiting the additional web links at the end of each area report, or by contacting George Pappas.

SOUTHEAST ALASKA

To date, 274 permits have been issued for the 2017 subsistence salmon fishery for Southeast Alaska and Yakutat areas.

Sitka and Hoonah Area – Justin Koller, Forest Service, Tongass National Forest
(907)747-4297 jpkoller@fs.fed.us

[Reporting complete for the 2017 season.](#)

Prince of Wales and Ketchikan District Area – Jeff Reeves, Forest Service, Tongass National Forest. (907) 826-1649 jreeves@fs.fed.us

Reporting complete for the 2017 season.

Yakutat, Juneau, and Admiralty areas of Northern Southeast Alaska - Ben Van Alen
(907-789-6257; bvanalen@fs.fed.us) and Jake Musslewhite (907-789-6256;
jgmusslewhite@fs.fed.us), **Tongass National Forest**

Reporting complete for 2017 season.

Wrangell/Petersburg Area Forest Service, Tongass National Forest, Contact to be announced.

Report complete for 2017 season.

Southeast Alaska Web Links

Tongass National Forest News Room <http://www.fs.usda.gov/news/tongass/news-events>

Federal Subsistence Fisheries Regulations for Southeastern Alaska Area
http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/regulation/fish_shell/upload/Southeast.pdf

ADF&G Sport and Personal Use Fishing News Release and Emergency Order Link
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/EONR/index.cfm?ADFG=region.R1>

ADF&G Commercial Fisheries News Release and Emergency Order Link
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cfnews.main>

Weekly ADF&G Sport Fishing Reports for Southeast Alaska
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/FishingReports/index.cfm?ADFG=R1.home>

Statewide ADF&G Fish counts
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/FishCounts/>

SOUTHCENTRAL ALASKA

Prince William Sound – Copper River

Copper River – Dave Sarafin, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park/Preserve, (907) 822-7281, dave_sarafin@nps.gov

Reporting complete for 2017 season.

Links

ADF&G Miles Lake daily sonar estimates
http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareacopperriver.salmon_escapement

NVE's Chinook Escapement Monitoring project in the Copper River
<http://eyak.fishscan.com/Summary/DailySummary.aspx>

ADF&G Copper River Inseason Commercial Harvest Estimates
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareacopperriver.harvestsummary>

Gulkana River counting tower – ADF&G
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/FishCounts/index.cfm?ADFG=main.LocSelectYearSpecies>

PWS and Copper River Delta – Milo Burcham, Chugach National Forest, Cordova. (907) 424-4759 mburcham@fs.fed.us

Reporting complete for 2017 season.

Cook Inlet Area – Jeff Anderson, Field Supervisor, Kenai Fish and Wildlife Field Office (907) 260-0132 jeffry_anderson@fws.gov

Final report for season was submitted last week.

Fish counts at some Alaska Department of Fish and Game operated assessment projects are available on-line at:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/FishCounts/index.cfm?ADFG=main.home>

Alaska Department of Fish and Game emergency orders and news releases affecting upper Kenai Peninsula sport fisheries can be found at:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/EONR/index.cfm?ADFG=area.list&Year=2017&AreaID=5>

SOUTHWEST ALASKA

Kodiak Island Area – Michael Brady, Refuge Manager, - Kodiak NWR

(907) 487-0226 or michael_brady@fws.gov or Kevin Van Hatten (907) 487-0230

kevin_vanhatten@fws.gov

Reporting complete for 2017 season.

Federal Subsistence Fisheries Regulations for Kodiak Area

<http://alaska.fws.gov/asm/pdf/fishregs13/kodiak.pdf>

Bristol Bay and Chignik – Johnathon Gerken Fisheries Branch Chief Anchorage Fish and Wildlife Field Office (907) 271-2776 jonathon_gerken@fws.gov

Reporting complete for the 2017 season.

Federal Subsistence Fisheries Regulations for Bristol Bay Area

http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/regulation/fish_shell/upload/Bristol.pdf

Federal Subsistence Fisheries Regulations for Chignik Area

http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/regulation/fish_shell/upload/chignik.pdf

YUKON REGION

Yukon River – Gerald Maschmann, Fish Biologist USFWS Fairbanks Office.

gerald_maschmann@fws.gov or Fred Bue fredrick_bue@fws.gov

Emmonak Summer Office (907) 949-1798

This is the final report for the 2017 season.

Fall Season Outlook

The Yukon River Drainage Fall Chum Salmon Management Plan went into effect for District 1 beginning July 16 and is under fall season management throughout the Alaska portion of the drainage. Based on current assessment information, the 2017 Fall Chum Salmon in-season run projection is for a record run size near 2.2 million fish, well above expectations. This level of abundance is sufficient to meet escapement and subsistence needs, as well as provide a large surplus for commercial and personal use purposes. The Fall Chum Salmon and Coho Salmon seasons are done in the lower and middle Yukon, and winding down in the Alaskan part of the upper Yukon. Liberal subsistence and commercial fishing opportunities were provided throughout the Yukon River Area with the exception of restricted fishing time in the Porcupine River due to precautionary management to help the Canadian Fishing Branch River escapement.

Fall Season Assessment Information

The LYTF ended the season with a cumulative Fall Chum Salmon CPUE of 3,821 through September 10 (last day of operations), well above the median of 1,923. The Mountain Village test fishery (MVTF) ended with a cumulative CPUE of 6,430 through September 12 (last day of operations), well above the median of 2,034. Through September 7 (last day of operations), the Pilot Station sonar project has a cumulative passage estimate of 1.83 million Fall Chum Salmon which is also well ahead of the median of 700,000. The first pulse of Fall Chum Salmon began passing Pilot Station on July 20, the second pulse began on July 29, and the third on August 3. A fourth passed the sonar August 13 through August 18 and totaled a whopping 1.0 million Fall Chum Salmon in a single pulse! Fifth and sixth pulses passed on August 21 and 28, respectively, and a final small bump hit the sonar on September 2-3.

The LYTF ended the season with a cumulative Coho Salmon CPUE of 784, above the median of 535. The MVTF ended with a cumulative CPUE of 1,669, above the median of 1,111. Total Coho Salmon cumulative passage estimate past the Pilot Station sonar through the end on September 7 is 166,000, near the median of 160,000.

The Chandalar River sonar began operations on August 8 and counts were disrupted August 30 through September 2 due to rapidly rising water levels. The Chandalar sonar has an estimated Fall Chum Salmon passage of 423,000 through September 21, above the median of 179,000. The project is just past the $\frac{3}{4}$ point of the run. The Porcupine River sonar at Old Crow is near the $\frac{3}{4}$ point and has an estimated passage of 49,000 Fall Chum Salmon. This project is relatively new so historical comparisons are of limited value, but appear to be well above the median at this time. The Fishing Branch weir is at the mid-point and has a passage of 20,000 Fall Chum, above the average of 13,000. This project is anticipated to meet its escapement goal of 22,000-49,000 Fall Chum Salmon. The Eagle Sonar near the U.S./Canada Border transitioned to fall season on August 21 with Fall Chum Salmon counts increasing steadily. The estimated passage past the Eagle sonar through September 21 is 228,000 Fall Chum Salmon, well ahead of the median passage at this time of 80,000. The Eagle Sonar is near the average mid-point of the run and is projecting a likely passage estimate above 400,000 Fall Chum Salmon. This would

be well above the abundance necessary to meet both the Canadian escapement objectives and their Canadian TAC (total allowable catch share) under the Treaty Agreement

Fall Chum Salmon genetics from the Pilot Station sonar test fishery has been analyzed for the entire run, and stock proportions are within expected ranges.

Fall Season Management Actions

The Alaskan portion of the drainage is under fall season management. Subsistence fishing in the Coastal District and Districts 1-5 is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Subsistence fishing in District 4 and Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C was relaxed from two, 48-hr. periods per week to 5 days per week at the start of their fall season. Subsistence fishermen in the middle river requested additional subsistence fishing time to harvest a strong pulse expected to pass their area during a scheduled closed fishing period. Because assessment near the mid-point in the run indicated with confidence that the Fall Chum Salmon run could support the additional fishing opportunity, District 4 and Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C were liberalized to 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. Subsistence fishermen in all areas throughout the river may use gillnets with a maximum mesh size of 7.5 inches. The abundance of fall chum salmon in the upper Porcupine River has been low in recent years when compared to other stocks in the Yukon River drainage. Fall chum salmon escapements into the Canadian Fishing Branch River, a tributary of the Porcupine River, have fallen short of meeting the escapement objective agreed upon by U.S. and Canadian representatives in 5 of the last 10 years despite other Yukon River stocks meeting or exceeding their escapement goals and objectives. Subsistence salmon fishing in the main stem Porcupine River was closed for 3 days per week. Managers lifted this restriction on September 22 as the Fishing Branch is projecting to fall within its escapement goal range this season.

Eighteen commercial fishing periods occurred in District 1 with a preliminary harvest of 328,000 Fall Chum Salmon and 96,000 Coho Salmon. Fifteen commercial fishing periods occurred in District 2 with a preliminary harvest of 136,000 Fall Chum Salmon and 33,400 Coho Salmon. Commercial market capacity in District 2 was greatly reduced from previous years, which has led to a significant portion of the fishing fleet shifting to District 1. The Fall Chum Salmon commercial season ended by regulation in the lower Yukon on August 31 and the Coho Salmon commercial season ended by regulation on September 10. Fall season commercial salmon fishing started in Subdistrict 4-A on July 29 and ended on August 12 when the fish buyer discontinued operations. Preliminary harvest after 4, 24-hr. commercial fishing periods is 1,402 Fall Chum Salmon. Two commercial periods in Subdistricts 5-B and 5-C have a preliminary harvest of 1,952 Fall Chum Salmon. Commercial periods in District 6 have been open on a schedule with very limited participation having a preliminary harvest of 3,553 Fall Chum and 892 Coho Salmon through September 20, additional periods are expected. The combined preliminary total Fall Chum Salmon commercial harvest through September 21 of 471,476 is the largest on record since 1961. The combined preliminary total Coho salmon commercial harvest of 130,172 is the second highest on record since 1961.

Consultation

Extensive public outreach and consultation had occurred during the fall of 2016 and spring of 2017 to inform and seek input from Yukon River fishermen and stakeholders. Run outlook and possible management strategies were discussed at Federal RAC meetings and State AC meetings, the Yukon River Panel meeting and at the annual Yukon River Drainage Fishermen's Association Board meeting. In April, a pre-season planning meeting was held in Fairbanks that brought together representatives from most Alaskan Yukon River communities to discuss the run outlook and management options. Assessment and management strategies were discussed weekly on thirteen Yukon River Drainage Fishermen's Association teleconferences with the last one held on August 29.

KUSKOKWIM REGION

Kuskokwim River – Ken Stahlnecker, Refuge Manager, Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge. Contact kenneth_stahlnecker@fws.gov; (907) 543-3151 or lewis_coggins@fws.gov

Reporting complete for the 2017 season.

Yukon-Kuskokwim-Interior Alaska Web Links

Federal Subsistence Management Fisheries News Releases:

<http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/news/fishing/index.cfm>

Federal Subsistence Fisheries Regulations for Yukon–Northern Area

http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/regulation/fish_shell/upload/Yukon.pdf

Kuskokwim River Updates Hosted on OSM Website

<http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/kuskokwim.cfm>

Federal Subsistence Fisheries Regulations for Kuskokwim Area

http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/regulation/fish_shell/upload/Kusko.pdf

ADF&G Sport and Personal Use Fishing News Release and Emergency Order link:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/EONR/index.cfm?ADFG=region.R3>

ADF&G Commercial Fisheries News Release and Emergency Order Link:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cfnews.main>

Weekly ADF&G Sport Fishing Reports for Interior Alaska:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/FishingReports/index.cfm?ADFG=R3.home>

Statewide ADF&G Fish counts:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/FishCounts/>

Northwest Alaska – Ken Adkisson, National Park Service, Nome.
(907) 443-2522 ken_adkisson@nps.gov

Reporting complete for the 2017 season.

Federal Subsistence Fisheries Regulations for the Kotzebue Area
<http://alaska.fws.gov/asm/pdf/fishregs11/norton.pdf>