

**FISHERIES UPDATE FOR THE WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 16-22, 2018.**

Report #17 - Compiled by George Pappas - (907) 786-3822, [George.Pappas@fws.gov](mailto:George.Pappas@fws.gov) Office of Subsistence Management, USFWS.

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 managers and OSM staff that provided weekly updated information by the close of business on Friday of the reporting week. My goal is to have the report sent by the close of business the following Monday. Web links have been included to provide additional information. You may obtain additional information on a fishery of particular interest by contacting the in-season manager, provided contacts, follow the provided web links, or contact me.

**SOUTHEAST ALASKA**

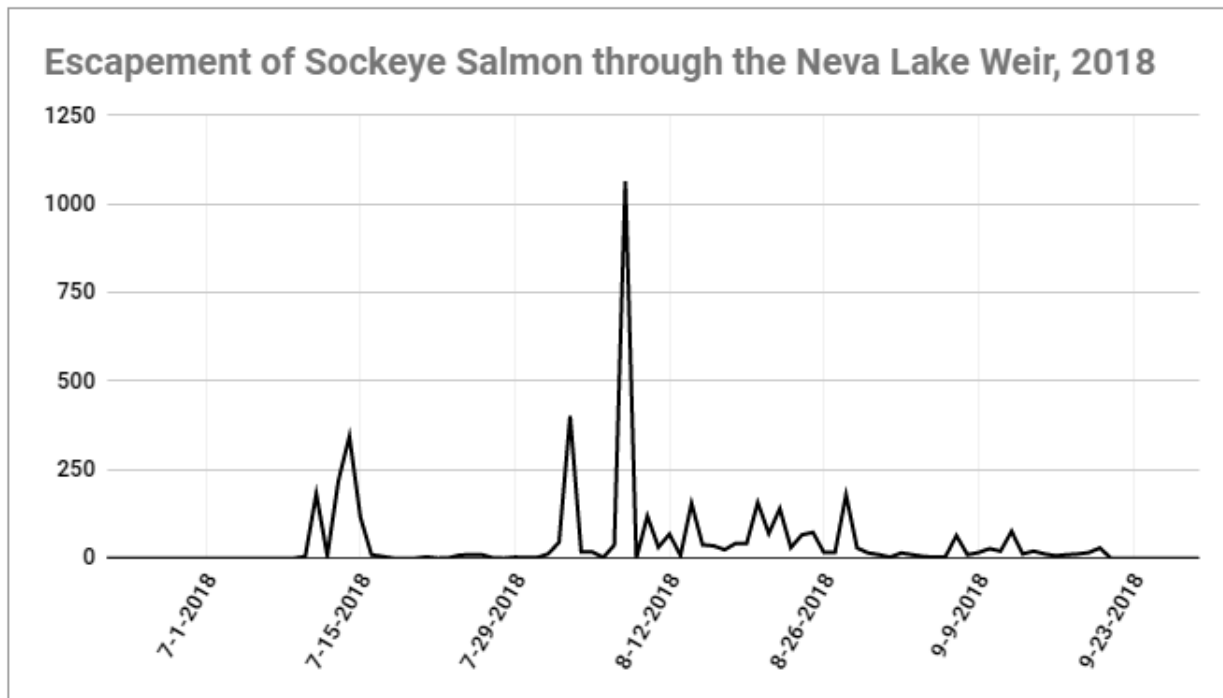
**Sitka and Hoonah Area – Justin Koller, Forest Service, Tongass National Forest** Justin Koller, (907)747-4297 [jpkoller@fs.fed.us](mailto:jpkoller@fs.fed.us)

Reporting concluded for season. Contact author with questions and comments at above contact information.

**Yakutat, Juneau, and Admiralty areas of Northern Southeast Alaska - Jake Musslewhite** (907-789-6256; [jgmusslewhite@fs.fed.us](mailto:jgmusslewhite@fs.fed.us)), **Forest Service, Tongass National Forest**  
September 21, 2018

**Neva Lake Sockeye Salmon:** Crews from the Forest Service and the Hoonah Indian Association installed the remotely monitored 24/7 swim-through video weir at the outlet of Neva Lake on June 21 and 22. The pair of picket weirs lead fish through a video chute with four cameras set to record motion (fish) triggered footage on on-site SD memory cards and an off-site computer running the Blue Iris video record and review program. We installed an additional three above water cameras, two fixed and one pan-tilt-zoom, to allow constant monitoring of the weir site. Since August 10, the crew has been counting fish from the HIA office in Hoonah using video streamed over the internet from the project site.

The Neva Lake sockeye return started worryingly late, but it just keeps going and going like the Energizer bunny (Figure 1). As of September 21, the preliminary count through the weir is 4,261 fish, which is an improvement from the past few years. Sockeye are still trickling through at the rate of 15-20/day, so the count should go a bit higher before it's all over.



**Figure 1.** Daily counts of Sockeye Salmon passing through the Neva Lake video weir, 2018.

**Sitkoh Lake Sockeye Salmon:** The Sitkoh Lake video weir was installed on July 6 by project personnel from the Forest Service and the Angoon Community Association (ACA). The project uses a pair of remotely monitored video net weirs to count fish entering Sitkoh Lake, on the southeast corner of Chichagof Island. Video from the site is streamed to the ACA office, where it is recorded on a computer. The project site is monitored by surveillance cameras (Figure 2) providing staff a constant real-time view of the project.

The Sockeye Salmon return to Sitkoh Lake has been poor this year, and will likely end up as the smallest return by far since monitoring began in the late 1990s. As of September 5, fewer than 1,500 sockeye have been counted through the weirs, compared to 4,000 last year at the same time, and over 12,000 in 2016. The combination of low stream flows and a beaver dam downstream of the lake have likely affected passage into the lake and contributed to the poor return. In addition, we are not seeing the usual large numbers of anadromous Dolly Varden entering the lake as we have in previous years, so they may also be hampered by fish passage barriers. The crew breached a beaver dam downstream of the weirs on August 28, resulting in a brief surge of over 600 sockeye into the lake. It was breached again on September 18 and 19, but very few sockeye took advantage of the opportunity, indicating the run is likely almost over.



**Figure 2.** Surveillance video capture of a pair of eagles battling over a salmon carcass near the Sitkoh Lake video weir, 2018.

This will be my last weekly summary submitted for the 2018 season. Please contact me if you have questions.

## **SOUTHCENTRAL ALASKA**

### **Prince William Sound – Copper River**

**Copper River, 8/18/2018 Update – Dave Sarafin, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park/Preserve, (907) 822-7281, [dave\\_sarafin@nps.gov](mailto:dave_sarafin@nps.gov)**

Reporting concluded for season. Contact author with questions and comments at above contact information.

Links:

ADFG Miles Lake daily sonar estimates

[http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareacopperriver.salmon\\_escapement](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>

ADFG Copper River Inseason Commercial Harvest Estimates

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareacopperriver.harvestsummary>

ADFG Gulkana River counting tower

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/FishCounts/index.cfm?ADFG=main.displayResults&COUNTLOCATIONID=6&SpeciesID=410>

ADFG Emergency Orders and News Releases

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/EONR/index.cfm?ADFG=area.list&Year=2018&AreaID=33>

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

#### **4 September 2018**

Reporting concluded for season. Contact author with questions and comments at above contact information.

**Cook Inlet Area – Jeff Anderson, Field Supervisor, Kenai Fish and Wildlife Field Office** (907) 260-0132 [Jeffry\\_Anderson@fws.gov](mailto:Jeffry_Anderson@fws.gov)

Reporting concluded for season. Contact author with questions and comments at above contact information.

**Kodiak Island Area – Michael Brady, Refuge Manager, - Kodiak NWR** (907) 487-2600/0230 or [michael\\_brady@fws.gov](mailto:michael_brady@fws.gov) or Kevin Van Hatten (907) 487-0230 [Kevin\\_VanHatten@fws.gov](mailto:Kevin_VanHatten@fws.gov)

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#### **Yukon River**

**Gerald Maschmann and Fred Bue, Fish Biologists, USFWS Fairbanks Office.** [Gerald\\_Maschmann@fws.gov](mailto:Gerald_Maschmann@fws.gov) or Fred Bue [Fredrick\\_Bue@fws.gov](mailto:Fredrick_Bue@fws.gov)

The Emmonak Field Office is closed for the season. You can contact management staff at 907-455-1849 or 907-456-0406.

The 2018 Fall Chum Salmon run is essentially over in the lower and middle portions of the Yukon area. Most subsistence fishermen have transitioned to fall season activities such as moose hunting and preparing for the winter. Commercial fishing in the lower Yukon closed by regulation on September 10. The preliminary reconstructed run size based on the Pilot Station sonar plus the estimated harvest downstream is over 1.2 million fish, above the median of 801,300 fish and expectations. This level of abundance is typically sufficient to meet escapement and subsistence needs, and provide a surplus for commercial and personal use purposes. The Coho Salmon run appears to be tracking near the expected average total run size at this time. The preliminary reconstructed run size based on the Pilot Station sonar plus the estimated harvest downstream is 232,000 Coho Salmon, which is above the median of 200,500 fish. At this time managers are following the returns at upriver assessment and escapement projects, particularly the Chandalar River, Eagle, and Porcupine River sonars.

### **Fall Assessment Information**

Lower Yukon assessment projects have ceased operations for the season. The Lower Yukon Test Fishery, Mt. Village Test Fishery, and Pilot Station sonar ended above the median for the season and showed a Fall Chum run about seven days later than normal, the latest on record. The Chandalar River sonar began operations on August 12 and has an estimated passage of 111,231 Fall Chum Salmon through September 23, well below the median of 198,951. However, the project has exceeded the lower end of its escapement goal range of 74,000 to 152,000 and is currently experiencing high Fall Chum Salmon passage rates. The Eagle sonar transitioned over the fall season on August 21 and has a cumulative passage estimate of 50,000 Fall Chum Salmon through September 23, well below the average of 98,548. Due to the late run timing in the lower river, low passage at both the Chandalar and Eagle sonar projects was expected. Fall Chum Salmon passage at the Eagle sonar has been increasing over the last few days.

Coho Salmon typically overlap the second half of the Fall Chum Salmon run. The Lower Yukon Test Fishery, Mt. Village Test Fishery, and Pilot Station sonar ended below the median for the season and showed a Coho Salmon run about four days later than normal and the latest run on record.

### **Fall Season Management Actions**

The Coastal District and Districts 1 through 3 are open to subsistence salmon fishing 24 hours a day, seven days a week. District 4 and Subdistricts 5A, 5B, and 5C have had subsistence fishing opportunity increased from 5 to 7 days per week as an effort to compensate fishermen for foregone harvest when conserving Chinook Salmon earlier in the season. Subsistence fishing in Subdistrict 5D is open on its full standard schedule of 24 hours a day, seven days a week and Subdistricts 6A and 6B are on their standard schedules of two 42-hour periods per week. At this time, all areas allow 7.5" or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels during salmon fishing periods. Subsistence fishing in the Alaska portion of the mainstem Porcupine River has been restricted to 4 days per week to provide protection for Fishing Branch stocks that have shown lower productivity in recent years. Managers will be closely watching the passage past the Porcupine River sonar in Old Crow to determine when and if to relax the subsistence salmon fishing schedule in the Porcupine River mainstem.

Twenty fall season commercial periods have occurred in District 1 and twenty-one in District 2 this season with a preliminary combined harvest of 370,266 Fall Chum Salmon and 106,079 Coho Salmon. Subdistrict 4-A had one fall season commercial period with an estimated harvest of 596 Chum Salmon. Commercial fishing is open 24-hours per day, seven days per week in Subdistricts 5-B and 5-C with 900 Fall Chum Salmon harvested through August 20, the last period fished. This is a small scale commercial fishery with an expected harvest of around 2,000 Fall Chum Salmon. Commercial fishing began in District 6 on August 17. Preliminary harvest estimates are 1,153 Fall Chum Salmon and 81 Coho Salmon.

### **Consultation**

Extensive public outreach and consultation was performed during the fall of 2017 and spring of 2018 to inform and seek input from Yukon River fishermen and stakeholders. Outreach efforts continued during the season. The thirteenth and final YRDFA weekly teleconference was held on August 28 with very few subsistence fishermen reporting. Some fishermen were satisfied

with their Chinook Salmon harvest this season and others were short of filling their subsistence needs. Furthermore, the fall season outlook and management strategies were discussed on the later YR DFA teleconferences. Participants communicated the importance of the fall chum salmon run in meeting their subsistence needs due the lack of Chinook salmon in this year's harvests.

## **KUSKOKWIM RIVER**

**In Season Manager – Ken Stahlnecker, Refuge Manager, Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge Contact [Kenneth Stahlnecker@fws.gov](mailto:Kenneth_Stahlnecker@fws.gov); (907) 543-3151 or [Lewis Coggins@fws.gov](mailto:Lewis_Coggins@fws.gov) or author Aaron Moses [Aaron Moses@fws.gov](mailto:Aaron_Moses@fws.gov)**

Reporting concluded for season. Contact author with questions and comments at above contact information.

### **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](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](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.**  
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Reporting concluded for season. Contact author with questions and comments at above contact information.

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