



Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee
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June 17, 2014

The Honourable Gail Shea
HOUSE OF COMMONS
Minister, Fisheries and Oceans
Parliament Buildings, Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Shea:

RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE 2014 YUKON RIVER SALMON ALLOCATION

The Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee (YSSC) is providing the following recommendations for the 2014 allocation of Yukon River salmon to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) in accordance with the YSSC's authorities and responsibilities defined within the *Umbrella Final Agreement, 1993* (UFA) and subsequent to individual *Yukon First Nation Final Agreements*.

Chinook Salmon:

The 2014 pre-season forecast developed by the DFO and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) estimates the return of Canadian-origin Chinook salmon at 32,000 to 61,000. This is considered an extremely poor run and possibly the worst on record. It should be noted that despite a statistical data analysis correction factor added since 2009, the run has materialized consistently on the lower end of that predicted range, resulting in both border and spawning escapement not being met in five of the last seven years.

In March of 2014, the International Yukon River Panel re-confirmed the Interim Management Escapement Goal (IMEG) of 42,500 Canadian-origin Chinook salmon to the Canadian border. At this time it is not anticipated that this target will be met. The IMEG represents the minimum-spawning escapement for Canadian-origin Chinook salmon.

Effective May 26, 2014 the United States announced a full closure of all directed harvest of Chinook salmon in the Alaskan portion of the Yukon River in order to provide protection for

Canadian-origin Chinook salmon migrating to their spawning grounds. Although this management approach may be varied by U.S. agencies based on in-season run assessment information, this decision establishes that the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) of Canadian-origin Chinook salmon by U.S. harvesters is at zero (0).

It is the position of the YSSC that the priority allocation for Chinook salmon should be for conservation purposes to support the IMEG. As a result **the YSSC recommends that the TAC for Yukon River Chinook salmon in Canada be varied to zero (0)** in advance of the arrival of adult salmon at the international border. This approach is intended to put Yukoners on notice and provide protection for migrating Chinook salmon until such time as a more robust in-season estimate may be derived from information collected through the Eagle Sonar assessment program.

The YSSC provides this recommendation under the authority of section 16.10.1 and 16.10.1.1 of the UFA whereby:

16.10.1 - The Sub-Committee, pursuant to 16.7.17.12 (b), may recommend to the Minister the establishment, modification or removal of the Total Allowable Catch for salmon from time to time in a drainage basin, but shall do so only if required:

16.10.1.1 – for conservation, public health or public safety.

Further, the YSSC recommends that DFO closely monitor the in-season return of Canadian-origin Chinook salmon and immediately notify the YSSC should the number of Canadian-origin Chinook salmon projected to cross the international border exceed 42,500. Should this occur, the YSSC is prepared to work closely with Fisheries and Oceans Canada and Yukon First Nations to coordinate the allocation of any salmon available for harvest beyond the 42,500 escapement requirements (with a first priority for any TAC provided for a First Nations subsistence harvest).

The YSSC respects that the recommendation to vary the TAC for Chinook salmon to zero (0) will result in significant hardship to Yukon River First Nations, and in this regard is only intended to achieve the IMEG specified under the provisions of the Yukon River Salmon Agreement and as required for stock conservation purposes.

Fall Chum Salmon:

Mainstem Fall Chum:

The YSSC understands that the mainstem Yukon River Fall Chum salmon run is projected to be average to above average between 200,000 and 260,000, with a projected border passage target of 129,548 to 153,920. Based on a spawning escapement target range of 70,000 to 104,000 Chum salmon, this would result in a Canadian TAC of approximately 33,154 to 49,920 for

Canada. Based on the pre-season outlook we expect to be in the GREEN ZONE. The management zones for Chum salmon will be as follows:

RED ZONE:

- <40,000
- all fisheries closed

YELLOW ZONE:

- 40,000 – 73,000
- FN fisheries, with restriction likely

GREEN ZONE:

- >73,000
- all fisheries open, managed in accordance with abundance and international harvest sharing provisions.

Porcupine Fall Chum:

The YSSC understands that the Porcupine River Fall Chum salmon run is projected to be below average to average between 40,000 and 52,000. Based on a spawning escapement target range of 22,000 to 49,000 Chum salmon, this would result in a Canadian TAC of approximately 5,760 to 9,600 for Canada. The average Vuntut Gwitchin harvest is approximately 3,500 Fall Chum salmon. Based on the pre-season outlook we expect to be in the GREEN ZONE.

The YSSC concurs with the above listed harvest management plan for the mainstem and Porcupine River Yukon River fall chum and recommends the acceptance of this approach.

The YSSC understands that all forecasts are subject to change and will be adjusted based on in-season information with allocations adjusted accordingly. We expect DFO will consult with the YSSC as outlined in the UFA should the in-season TAC change significantly from the pre-season forecasts, particularly if the change in the TAC moves us from one management zone to another.

Public Engagement:

This recommendation is made pursuant to Yukon First Nation Self-Government Agreements sections 16.7.17.12 and subsequently section 16.10.2. The development of these recommendations is an iterative process that takes place throughout the year that involves significant public meetings, committee meetings, presentations, consultations, written, email and online correspondence.

In addition to the above-mentioned initiatives, the YSSC, with technical support from DFO, met with the following First Nation Governments, communities and Renewable Resource Councils in advance of providing the 2014 recommendations:

- Annual Bi-Lateral DFO / Yukon First Nations Fisheries Meeting
- Teslin Renewable Resources Council
- Teslin Tlingit Council
- Labarge Renewable Resources Council
- Northern Tutchone May Gathering (Pelly Crossing; includes Government representatives and citizens from Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation, First Nation of Nacho Nyak Dun and Selkirk First Nation)
- Dawson City public Meeting
- Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Deputy Chief and Council
- Nacho Nyak Dun First Nations Citizens Meeting
- Vuntut Gwitchin Government
- North Yukon Renewable Resources Council
- Vuntut Gwitchin Government Citizens Meeting, and the
- CYFN Leadership Meeting.

The YSSC will continue to engage on the topic of Yukon River Chinook Management in-season and commits to working with Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Yukon First Nations Governments and other salmon stakeholders on the management of salmon.

Further, the YSSC recommends that DFO engage with Yukon First Nation Governments to monitor the management of the Canadian-origin Chinook salmon run this season.

Sincerely,



Pauline Frost
Chair, Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee