



Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee
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PRESS RELEASE

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**YUKON SALMON SUB-COMMITTEE MEETINGS CONFIRM THE STATE OF CRISIS WITH
YUKON RIVER CHINOOK SALMON**

The Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee (YSSC) has concluded with two meetings regarding the management and state of Yukon River Chinook salmon. The Canadian portion of the Yukon River Panel met with Alaskan counterparts in Anchorage, Alaska, March 23-28, 2014. Further to this, the Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee supported and participated in the International Salmon Summit held in Fairbanks, Alaska, April 9 and 10, 2014.

Both meetings highlighted the crisis situation for Yukon River Chinook this upcoming season. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF and G) and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) presented their post-season review and pre-season outlook at the Yukon River Panel meeting and painted a dire picture. ADF and G suggested that Alaskan subsistence fishers should target other species and the Canadian outlook stated the possibility of Canada being in the red zone and a complete closure of all Yukon River Chinook fisheries.

The YSSC makes up the majority of the Canadian portion of the Yukon River Panel, which is governed under the Yukon River Salmon Agreement. During the Yukon River Panel meetings, the YSSC members strongly urged a precautionary approach in advance of, and early in the season. In recent years, the pre-season forecast and the early in-season run projections by ADF and G have suggested that there are enough fish to meet border escapement. As the Chinook run develops through the summer, these projections are refined and then adjusted, as they get closer to the Canadian border.

Pauline Frost, acting Chair of the YSSC states “the actual run is often lower than anticipated, later in the season putting an additional burden on Canada to get fish on the spawning grounds”. She states “with runs so low, we need to manage these fish with extreme caution from the mouth of the river and let as many get to the spawning grounds as possible. That should be the number one priority during these challenging times”.

Other points of discussion at the Yukon River Panel meeting, which also sets the YSSC agenda for the upcoming year is a domestic discussion on stock restoration. Stock restoration, defined as returning a wild salmon stock or its habitat to its natural production level, has been the topic of discussion given the low number of returning salmon and their low productivity levels. This year, the YSSC will be reaching

out to the Yukon First Nations, Yukon commercial fishers and the public in order to gather their perspectives on stock restoration.

The International Salmon Summit, hosted by the Council of Yukon First Nations and supported by the YSSC featured engaging discussions by approximately 150 Yukon and Alaskan fishers and managers. The Summit provided an opportunity for users to drive the discussion, share information and build common ground approach to managing the declining salmon run. Users on both sides of the border were well aware of the declining Chinook runs and the need to conserve these salmon for future generations. Pauline Frost states, “we know that the Yukon First Nations, commercial fishers, and public have been sacrificing for some time now. While we are seeing promising reductions in subsistence harvest levels and an increasing in-season management urgency on the part of Alaska, increased communication, understanding and a shared understanding provided through the Summit will get us working together to help save the salmon”.

The YSSC will engage with DFO, Yukon First Nations, commercial fishers and the Yukon public over the next month in an effort to confirm and make recommendations on this season’s Yukon River management plan.

Background:

The Yukon River Panel develops and implements agreed upon research and management programs, makes recommendations to management agencies, sets and adjusts spawning escapement objectives, and oversees the use and administration of the Restoration and Enhancement Fund.

The YSSC works throughout the year to gather information and priorities through numerous regular committee meetings, community visits and outreach activities. This information and the associated priorities are then shared and utilized where appropriate by the Canadian contingent of the Yukon River Panel.

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