

**For immediate release**

Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee  
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## **SALMON ARE BORN TO RUN**

### **Yukon River salmon are in crisis and need our help**

[Whitehorse, YT, March 30, 2023]— Yukon River salmon are at a historic low, with Chinook salmon facing potential extinction. This calls for drastic action now and underlines the importance of international meetings taking place in Whitehorse this week.

Members of the Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee (YSSC) comprise the majority of the Canadian delegation on the Yukon River Panel, which is holding its Pre-Season Meeting April 1-5 in Whitehorse. The Panel was established by the *Yukon River Salmon Agreement*, an international commitment signed in 2002, and consists of 12 members (six from Canada, six from the United States) and alternates. It meets twice a year to make recommendations to management entities on both sides of the border concerning the conservation and management of salmon originating in Canada, including the setting of escapement goals.

Both countries need to act immediately and move forward with a shared vision, a shared commitment, and a shared objective so salmon stocks can recover and return to the entire Yukon River watershed for the benefit of the land and all people.

### **Born to Run**

The odds are stacked against salmon at all stages of their life cycle in both freshwater and ocean environments. Stress from climate change is compounding these effects and threatening the resiliency of salmon. The YSSC believes what matters now is putting salmon first and focusing on long-term conservation goals. That means allowing salmon to do what they were meant to do—return to the streams where they were born to spawn. It means making sacrifices, likely for many years, to enable better outcomes for salmon, salmon peoples, salmon habitat, and ecosystems.

The new YSSC campaign, Born to Run, hopes to provide a bi-lateral opportunity for Canada and the United States to come together around a shared vision on both sides of the border.

It is essential that Yukoners stay connected to salmon and keep salmon a high priority during this challenging time. We therefore encourage Yukoners to take part in the public session of the Yukon River Panel Pre-Season Meeting.

### **Yukon River Panel Pre-Season Meeting April 1-5**

- April 1-3: Closed Sessions
- April 4 & 5: Public Session, starting at 9:00am both days (Location: Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre, Whitehorse)
- April 4: Public Reception, 7:00-8:30pm (Location: Miner's Daughter, Whitehorse)

The public session is open to everyone, and there are opportunities each day to provide comments/testimony to the Panel (pre-registration required). View the agenda and other information at [yukonriverpanel.com/meetings](http://yukonriverpanel.com/meetings). The public session will be live-streamed on the website and a phone-in (audio only) option is also available. The recorded video will be available to watch on the Panel website at a later date.

### **Quotes for Media Use**

*“Every year growing up, I used to go to the Whitehorse Fish Ladder to see the salmon. I think that’s where my passion came from. Then, learning about them in my job, it made me want to start fighting for them.”*

*“Our ancestors had fish camps all along the river. They survived off them. That’s why it’s so important to keep that culture alive. Salmon were a huge part of our lives. And they’re almost gone. It’s extremely disheartening to see the low numbers and to come to terms with the possibility that we may not have salmon in the very near future.”*

-Cheyenne Bradley, YSSC Vice-Chair and Land Steward Officer with Kwanlin Dün First Nation

*“Yukon River salmon are quickly approaching the point of no return. Fewer than one salmon is returning for every Yukon River salmon that spawns in Canada. The few that do return are getting smaller and weaker every year. Unless we change the way we use our lands and waters, we’re going to lose them. People who eat salmon are going to have to find something else to eat. People who earn their living in salmon habitat are going to have to take greater care to protect that habitat. If we’re going to save our salmon, we’re all going to have to tighten our belts and make sacrifices—along the entire length of the river in Alaska and Canada. In truth, that’s our only choice.”*

-Tim Gerberding, YSSC Chair

## 2022 Statistics

- Yukon River Chinook salmon: Only 12,025 Canadian-origin Chinook salmon crossed the border, according to sonar station records. This is the lowest Chinook run on record and well below the average annual run size of 64,109 from 2012-2021. It is also well below the Interim Management Escapement Goal of 42,000-55,000.
- Yukon River Mainstem chum salmon: 22,075 Canadian-origin chum salmon crossed the border compared to 226,000, the average annual run size from 2012-2021. The years 2020-2022 have seen a drastic decline in Yukon River chum stocks, with runs well below the Interim Management Escapement Goal of 70,000-104,000.
- Porcupine River (Fishing Branch) chum salmon: 2,695 is the estimated total run size. This has also seen a drastic decline in recent years, compared to an average annual run size of 31,000 from 2012-2021 and well below the Interim Management Escapement Goal of 22,000-49,000.

## Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee

The YSSC is a non-government public advisory body, established under the Umbrella Final Agreement as the main instrument of salmon management in the Yukon. We are a sub-committee of the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board. The YSSC makes recommendations to the governments of Canada, Yukon, and Yukon First Nations on all matters related to salmon and their habitat. We work to preserve salmon stocks in the Yukon Territory in order to maintain this vital part of the Yukon ecosystem, economy and lifestyle. Our focus is on salmon in the Yukon, Porcupine, and Alsek River watersheds. For more information, please visit our website [yssc.ca](http://yssc.ca) or contact us.

## Media Contact

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