

Yukon River Subsistence Fisheries (3 proposals)

PROPOSAL 15

5 AAC 01.249. Yukon River Drainage Fall Chum Salmon Management Plan.

Place a 2 year closure on harvest of Yukon River Fall Chum salmon, as follows:

Close harvest of Yukon River Mainstem Fall Chum Salmon when these stocks are detected at Lower Yukon Test Fishing site (LYTF) in DISTRICT 1. Walk the closures up river through fishing District 1-5 as fish enter each district.

Reopen mainstem fishing progressively up river as Fall Chum end of the run has moved through each District. These closures must be in effect for 2 years to allow full potential of Fall Chum to jump start rebuilding efforts.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?

Conservation of Yukon River Mainstem Fall Chum Salmon

Yukon Mainstem Fall chum have not met escapement goals for 5 consecutive years (1 full life cycle) Only approx. 16,000 fall chum (15% of max escapement goal) crossed the border into Canada at Eagle sonar site in 2024, LOWEST ON RECORD. Current escapement goals are set at 75,000-105,000

1. These stocks are in critical danger of extinction.
2. These stocks are essential for the health of all Salmon spawning streams they run to, both Chum and Chinook by delivering critical marine derived nutrients
3. Marine derived nutrients in spawning habitat is essential for productive spawning ecosystems
4. Fall chum are critical to upper Yukon river districts for Subsistence use, and food security.
5. Maintaining LONG TERM sustainable fish stocks is critical to a Subsistence Lifestyle
6. Rebuilding this critical stock as quickly as possible needs to be a top priority given the dangerously low runs
7. Given the low numbers of returning fish, every FISH & EGG counts to avoid extirpation of these stocks.

It is recognized the short term hardship this 2 year closer will impose on fishers, drainage wide. The Extirpation or Extinction of these stocks would be a much greater hardship FOREVER, both in food security, and cultural longevity.

There is a long history of fishing these stocks in-river early in the run, then closing fishing to other fishers, and not meeting set escapement goals.

This proposal would prevent fish managers from committing in season management actions that would negatively impact a critically low and vital fish stock. Short term sacrifice is the only way to achieve long term gains for all. Escapement goals must be met.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. This Proposal was developed through the Eagle AC, with experience from fishers engaged with Eagle AC, local fishers, representatives from the EIRAC, Yukon River Panel members, and Tribal Chief of Eagle Village. The Koyukuk River AC elected to co-sponsor this proposal with a majority vote during a meeting held on April 9th, 2025.

Coordination of knowledge gained through participation with Fairbanks AC, BBAYK Coalition, and some members of Minto-Nenana AC further substantiated development of this proposal.

PROPOSED BY: Eagle Fish & Game Advisory Committee & Koyukuk River Fish & Game
Advisory Committee Andy Bassich, Chair of Eagle AC (EF-F26-132)

PROPOSAL 16

5 AAC 01.249I. Yukon River Drainage Fall Chum Salmon Management Plan.

Close the mainstem Yukon River to the use 4” or less mesh gillnets for Fall Chum salmon conservation, as follows:

The use of 4” mesh gillnets shall be closed on the Yukon River Mainstem, starting when Fall Chum salmon are detected at Lower Yukon Test Fishery (LYTF) in DISTRICT 1 with subsequent closures walked up river through fishing District 1-5 as Fall Chum enter each district.

Reopen mainstem fishing to 4” mesh gear progressively up river as Fall chum tail end of the run has moved through each District.

These closures should be in effect until Mainstem Fall Chum have achieved current escapement goals 75,000-115,000 for one life cycle, defined as 4 years. This is to allow full potential of Fall chum to jump start long term rebuilding efforts.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?

Conservation of Yukon River Mainstem Fall Chum Salmon

4” mesh gillnets are well known to be a very effective gear type to catch Chum Salmon.

Use of this gear type during the Fall chum migration up the Yukon river is having a serious negative impact to critically low mainstem Fall Chum runs.

This gear type is intended to fish for NON SALMON species, however Fall Chum are being intercepted by fishers both intentionally and unintentionally using 4” mesh gillnets.

Allowing this gear type with cumbersome regulations imposing various time and area restrictions in an effort to protect depleted stocks is incredibly complicated and thus ineffective, for both fishers and law enforcement.

- (e) These stocks are in critical danger of extinction.
- (f) These stocks are essential for the health of all Salmon spawning streams they run to, both Chum and Chinook by delivering critical marine derived nutrients
- (g) Marine derived nutrients in spawning habitat is essential for productive spawning eco systems
- (h) Fall chum are critical to upper Yukon river districts for Subsistence use, and food security.
- (i) Maintaining **LONG TERM sustainable** fish stocks is critical to a Subsistence Lifestyle
- (j) Rebuilding this critical stock as quickly as possible needs to be a top priority given the dangerously low runs
- (k) Given the low numbers of returning fish, every FISH & EGG counts to avoid extirpation of these stocks.

The simple solution for meaningful protection of mainstem Fall chum, is to close the use of this gear type until such time that Mainstem Fall Chum have achieved escapement goals currently in place, for 1life cycle. i.e. 4 years.

It is recognized the short term hardship this gear closer will impose on fishers' drainage wide. However, the Extirpation or Extinction of these stocks would be a much greater hardship FOREVER, both in food security and cultural longevity.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. This Proposal was developed through the Eagle AC, with experience from Fishers engaged with Eagle AC, Local Fishers, Representatives from the EIRAC, Yukon River Panel members, and Tribal Chief of Eagle Village.

Coordination of knowledge gained through participation with Fairbanks AC, BBAYK Coalition, and some members of Minto /Nenana AC further substantiated development of this proposal.

PROPOSED BY: Eagle Fish & Game Advisory Committee Andy Bassich, AC Chairman
(EF-F26-131)

PROPOSAL 17

5 AAC 01.220. Lawful gear and gear specifications.

Allow the use of 6” or less mesh gillnets during times of salmon conservation, as follows:

In Hamilton Slough, Anen’eq River (Unuk River), and Ingricuar River, set gillnets of six inch or smaller mesh may be used from September 1 to September 30; gillnets must be 60 feet or less in length and at least 300’ upstream from the mouth.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Lift the restriction from 4-inch mesh 60 feet gillnets to 6-inch or less mesh 60 feet long gillnets in three areas below Mountain Village; Hamilton Slough leading to 3 Finger Lake, Anen’eq (Anuk) River and Ingricuar River so that sheefish and whitefish can be harvested in the month of September when they are abundant. Salmon species are not a concern.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. [The Mid-Lower Yukon AC met on March 6 and discussed and drafted this proposal. The Mid-Lower Yukon AC met again on March 31; and voted X to X to accept this proposal as written.]

PROPOSED BY: Mid-Lower Yukon AC
(EF-F26-047)
