

Check out the Yukon River Salmon and Whitefish Runs by reading:

Rapids Daily Email Updates 2013

A Daily Log of the Fishing activity around Mile 731, Yukon River

In season pictures and short comments on activity in the Tanana, Rapids and Rampart area, obtained through word of mouth and observation, are sent out daily with data worksheet updates. Combined these give an idea of the season at ground zero through the eyes of a non objective observer. Often with some sarcasm, always with an agenda, sometimes trying to be professional - Inside are the 2013 season's daily updates.



6/16/13

- Season 2013 hello to all. Subsistence fishermen and fishwheel project very much behind this year due to Yukon River conditions. As king salmon are late, things should be ready by time they get here however. Arrival projection is for just before July 1st sometime.

- Water was at extreme high level and is only just now going down (very fast drop). A barge was stuck in Rapids till this morning for 12 days unable to push through and just yesterday I was finally able to put test wheel in it's spot due to extreme currents. Expect project to be running in less than a week now.

- 4" mesh nets are catching humpback and larger cisco whitefish but only two camps open at Rapids so far.

- Only a few king have been caught at mouth test nets and none at Pilot sonar yet. King take 16 to 18 days to get to Tanana/Rampart area.

Picture (today): Just days ago water was well into bushes on each side of river. Over a 10' drop and dropping fast.



6/18/13

- Water showing signs of stabilizing and actually is not that high above average for date anymore (see **WaterHeight** graph). Fishing sites are able to be fished it's just few camps have only begun to be set up.
- From looking at **ChinLY13** and **ChinPilot13** graphs you can see some small numbers of king salmon into lower river. Large pulses coming in will have 4,000 to 10,000 at Pilot Sonar as seen in the 2011 and 2012 graphs. Today Pilot recorded almost 1400.
- Water temp rising fast but below average (**WaterTemp**).

Picture: 2013 April Races in Tanana. John Erhart makes the turn to head across river to finish line with two teams hot on his trail. Held since 1934 when trappers and mail team drivers got together in spring to see who had the fastest dogs. It's a professional sport now.



6/19/13

- ChinLY13 and ChinPilot13

graphs show little more increase in king salmon numbers. Never know how it goes - Pulse 1 could develop any time or wait a week. Pulse 1 will be closed to fishing regardless of strength of run and possibly Pulse 2.

- Water temp continues rising fast and about average now due to the extreme hot days (**WaterTemp**).

- Some more activity as far as fish camps opening up. Seems quiet for this time of year however. Only one boat went by camp all day.

Picture: Everything but salmon in the nets today. Pike, humpies, broads, cisco, suckers, shæfish all go into a fish stew for the dogs. Haven't fed them yet as it's cooling but I know they'll love it. Me too. Almost all the fish in the inside end of the net today.



6/20/13

- Start of Pulse 1 could be at Pilot Sonar (**ChinPilot13**). At 4915 Chinook that is higher than some main pulses other years. Just need more days of high numbers but this could be it.
- Video Fishwheel project up and running today. Bering cisco and other whitefish is all so far. See tomorrow as it will run all day but of course expect no salmon till about 26th to 28th.

Picture: Probably the first fishwheel running in the Yukon. Used for subsistence by a number of households and to count fish for Yukon River Panel. Once 150 plus ran from Fairbanks to the rivers mouth (historic papers) and I'd imagine about same from Tanana to into Canada - now only a handful remain operating. They are a function of fishcamp lifestyle, dog teams, and all summer fishing which are things disappearing from the landscape. Most fishermen have switched to gill nets which can be put in and taken out quickly and require no all season babysitting.



6/21/13

- Water temp normal and water height slightly above. Smoke filling Rapids valley from Big Salt River fire.
- Pilot Sonar Chinook numbers continue rise - see tomorrow when it'll maybe officially labeled 1st pulse or not. Some years like 2010 (see graph lower right) 1st main pulse comes right away with no build up.
- Rapids getting about 2 Bering cisco whitefish an hour and no other migrating fish yet.

Picture: So if you saw a moose calf drowning what would you do? - Give it a ride? These two guys came by camp today and showed me these pictures. Thought a grizzly (lots of big bear tracks along shore) got the mom and sent this little calf into the river so scared it stayed in the current to long. Couldn't get it to shore out of boat so put it in. Shaky when released it headed into woods for an uncertain future. Happened a few miles down from here. Give these guys a humanity award.



6/22/13

- Pilot Sonar Chinook numbers continue rise - no question now Pulse 1 is passing Pilot Sonar. Largest first pulse in years and it's not even over with. Before the season had some biologists say this may happen due to late ice blocking river and Chinook building outside of mouth and coming all together right away at runs start.
- Very large numbers of summer chum entering river also (see **ChumPilot13**)

Picture: Yukon 800 riverboat race from Fairbanks to Kaltag (this year 1000 miles long) went by Tanana today. Limited to 50 hp these lightweight "kites" travel at speeds up to 70 mph with little more than the lower unit and a small amount of the rear of the boat in the water. Tanana boys Joey Zuray and Robert Wright with Clyde Mayo and his boat "Buck Wild" go past Tanana in 3rd place out of 11 teams. They'll spend night in Kaltag 300 miles downriver and start back at 6 am tomorrow morning.



6/23/13

- Pilot Sonar Chinook and summer chum numbers keep rising. Almost 14,000 king and 208,000 chum in one day (see **ChumPilot13** and **ChinPilot13**). While almost each year some Chinook pulses get this big the chum one is unusually high.

- Still just cisco whitefish in fishwheel. start watching closer for King salmon in a few days.

Picture: Should have a picture tomorrow of Tony Peters - the 2013 Yukon 1,000 race winner. Running boat Gwich'in Warriors he stayed out in front all the way and said it was smooth sailing. Our young men of Tanana, in the picture yesterday, had second place up to 50 miles out of Fairbanks when the lower unit gave up the ghost. More than half the racers didn't finish.

My favorite picture from this past winter. Was out with a friend who had a sno go.



6/24/13

- Pilot Sonar Chinook and summer chum numbers both showing signs of cresting. Almost 52,000 kings have been estimated passing at Pilot Sonar which is approaching half the total amount expected pre-season (98,000 to 144,000). This all in a first pulse not even over with.

- Almost 1 million summer chum have past Pilot in the first 11 days of counting or more than twice that in the first 11 days of last year.

- Water temp rising and expect higher if projected sunny days happen in next week. Sun controls river temp almost without exception.

Picture: Yukon 800 1st place team going by Tanana on their way back to Fairbanks. Captain and boat owner Tony Peter, engineer Earl Mahler and navigator Prestley Peter, Tony's nephew, guided their 24-foot boat ashore at Pike's Landing while a few hundred spectators cheered. Here they lean to help turn their boat called the Gwich'in Warrior.



6/25/13

- Pilot Sonar Chinook Pulse 1 has past and heading up river. High proportion of Canadian fish in it (genetic research info).
- Summer chum numbers still recording high at Pilot.
- River here getting busy as more fishermen move about and researchers head to their projects up and down the Yukon.
- Tomorrow is the 26th and we start looking for that first king to get caught. 16 days ago (June 10th) some were caught entering rivers mouth.

Picture: Bill Carter and Randy Brown from the USFWS Field Office in Fairbanks have been doing whitefish research on the Yukon for years. At the Rapids video fishwheel today are doing a radio telemetry project where they insert transmitters surgically and then the whitefish are tracked in the drainage using receiver towers up and down the Yukon. These guys research is known worldwide. Prior to their work with sheefish for instance all us fishermen thought sheefish migrated downriver to spawn and now we know they live in the lower river (semi salt water) and make spawning runs about every 2-3 years to above Ft Yukon.



6/26/13

- King numbers low in lower river now as we wait for the second pulse to come into river. Summer chum still coming in at over 100,000 a day.
- By regulation 1st pulse is not being fished on in lower districts and will not be all the way up river because of the cronicly poor returns into the river in the last decade. What started as a loss of the older age classes of king salmon noticed by Canadian and US fishermen has become a problem meeting basic escapement numbers despite complete commercial and drastic subsistence closures in recent years. The biggest problem I see is the lifestyle surrounding the king salmon fishery is dying a fast death especially around here where there are no other species to take their place. This year is the least amount of river activity ever.

Picture: One of the few places in this area that didn't make it through the spring flood danger okay. This of course is peanuts next to devastation 200 miles downriver in Galena. Not only are their fishcamps gone, the village will be years recovering from the flooding and loss of homes. A small localized ice jam caused this smokehouse to almost topple.



6/27/13

- 2nd Chinook Pulse may be starting at Pilot Sonar. Went up to 4 thousand fish. See tomorrow. Chum numbers remain over 100,000.
- Water temp high and water height about average for date.

Picture: Randy Brown standing next to Ravens Ridge radio telemetry tower 6 miles above Rapids. Tower now belongs to ADF&G and they allowed it to be used for the Bering cisco telemetry project which is designed to find the cisco spawning areas. Originally these were put up to track chum salmon and later Chinook salmon. The chum telemetry project was done out of the Rapids video fishwheel and is partly responsible for showing the damage done to livebox held chum and the need to find another way to count fish. Hence the development of the first video fishwheel at Rapids (USFWS Fairbanks and Rapids Research Center).



6/28/13

- **First King salmon caught at Rapids.** It was closed fishing at time and only proof was a number of pictures taken by the video fishwheel counting program. Maybe 12 lbs or so. Another was caught in a subsistence wheel later this evening also.

- This area is now operating under a sort of first layer of restrictions which is a two 48 hour a week open schedule. Added to that is a restriction of only using 6" mesh nets or smaller (which catch an average size king of about 15 lbs) or fishwheels (which catch an average size king of about 12.5 lbs). The idea is to get as many of the larger sized and female king to the spawning grounds as possible. The more normally used 8 1/2" mesh nets used prior to the 2010 Board of Fish ruling eliminating anything over 7 1/2" caught 20 lb. average fish and high percent's of females.

- 2 fishwheels operating at present here and possibly that will be it for Rapids. No nets in yet as almost no one has any 6" mesh nets.

Picture: 1. Fishwheel getting pushed upriver by boat at Rapids today. Nice shot of the canyon hills also. 2. 1st King on video. Hopefully get a real one soon.



6/29/13

- About 4 nets and 2 fishwheels in the Rapids area and all have gotten a couple or 3 king. All smaller fish - none 20 lb plus .
- No lower Yukon project data till Monday due to internet problems down there.
- Water at average height so should be good for counting by fishwheel video project.

Picture: First king sampled by the Rapids Data Collection Project (Allen and Taylor are student techs and Katlyn a supervising tech). Looking at Chinook size and disease data since 2001 with a database going back to 2004. Weights only will again be collected on 300 Chinook during the Pulse closures. This project has run each year with no admin or equipment budget and only provides pay compensation for the younger students who work here. This will be our last year - the reason for the project was to show there was a decline in the average size and presence of the disease Ichthyophonus in Chinook salmon, and a ultimately a reason to manage the fishery more conservatively. While we failed in our mission we feel we collected some good data which can be looked back on some day by researchers.



6/30/13

- Lower Yukon set net and Pilot Sonar project data available again. Pilot chum numbers high at 140,000 and Pilot Chinook are in a low spot at present. The set nets downriver at the mouth however are showing the biggest set net Chinook numbers all season by far, so 2 days and that pulse will hit Pilot Sonar 100 miles upriver and we'll get another assessment of strength.

- Rapids king are increasing a little (3 today) Graph below (**ChinPilot13**) starting to show what to expect and when as Rapids numbers build.

- Fishing closed at 6 pm tonight till Tuesday at 6 pm. One more (my best guess) 2 day opening before Pulse 1 and maybe Pulse 2 closure. These two days coming up will be the only king fishing days many will see all season as most will go home once the long closure starts.

Picture: The first King salmon these Rapids fishers will eat. Today as is the tradition here the first two got cut up into steaks and delivered to Tanana to share with others as much as possible.



7/1/13

- Few more king per hour through Rapids video wheel. Fishing opens for 2 days Tuesday at 6 pm using fishwheel or 6" nets or less. Possibly may be a restricted (not sure of requirements) opening between 1st and 2nd Pulse.

- Not much of a 2nd pulse but imagine what went through Pilot between 6/26 and 6/30 could be considered a small pulse??

- YRDFA fishery teleconference tomorrow 1pm.

1 800 315 6338, code - 98566#

Picture: All the parts of a fishwheel. Lead fence blocks upriver fish travel in that area and most salmon go to deeper water and maybe get dipped by basket if timing is just right. Main cable is 1/2 " and tightrope taut. Spare pole keeps front of raft out and there is a rope to fishwheel rear to keep the rear end in.



7/2/13

- Rapids testwheel doing about 1 Chinook and hour (ChinPilot13 blue bars). As you can see we expect possibly 200 a day during the closure at the height of the 1st Pulse. This is the kind of days in the past that net and wheel fishermen would put gear in for a matter of hours and have enough fish to cut all day.

- Not much happening at Pilot Sonar but test nets at mouth having some of their best days this last week.

Picture: Frankie, Caleb, Katlyn and Nataawnee make up some of the second group of students working at Rapids Data Collection project. 3-4 new ones each week for 6 weeks (most have been coming for years). An older supervisor and two college age main techs stay all summer and work the kids. One of the most important times is coming up with the protected 1st Pulse and tonights open fishing which allows for complete sampling for size, genetic clips, and disease.



7/3/13

- Rapids testwheel counted 26 king again today. Not much but one more day and Pulse 1 will ramp up big time (ChinPilot13).

- Pilot Sonar counts shot up to 9000 today so may be 2nd larger Pulse materializing. see tomorrow.

- People cutting king now.

Picture: Just like a wolf hanging out with a caribou herd these eagles up here sometimes hang with the geese. Often calmly sitting on the same sandbar as it was when this boat went by and everyone flew. Eagle calmly waiting for it's next mealtime and geese waiting to be next meal.



photo by Joseph Zuray

7/4/13

- Rapids Chinook counts up today as Pulse 1 gets ready to arrive tomorrow. The big numbers should last for 5 or 6 days and then will drop as a smaller Pulse 2 takes over (ChinPilot13). Fishing closed at 6pm and is suppose to stay closed till the fish of Pulse 1 have passed.

- Caught first summer chum salmon also. This is not a good thing in this area as it can shut down king fishing as they clog nets and majority are of such poor quality they are not even suitable winter dog food. Maybe 1 in 10-20 are red fleshed but the problem is what to do with the other 9-19. as nobody believes in wanton waste.

Picture: Kathleen Zuray cutting strips and an American flag hanging on this 4th of July. Don't get more Yukon than that. Tomorrow hope to have a bunch more of the family here working on the fish we caught during the opening.



7/5/13

- Expected more king in Rapids testwheel today but give it another day. Fully expect it to increase to even 200 per day shortly as Pulse 1 hits (ChinPilot13).

- At Pilot Sonar 3rd Pulse dropped off fast after just two days of decent numbers. Hopefully see another Pulse come in,

- Summer chum numbers are very high this year - well over 2 million so far. These fish while not in good shape by the time they get this far up river are excellent food in the lower river.

Picture: Batch of king salmon caught just before closure of season in a fishwheel. Depending on how many more king come into river, upriver run reports from fishermen's, and even the Rapids fishwheel project the season could remain closed for a long time. Much is unknown about this years run due to high water and debris, etc. at assessment projects downriver. been a tough year for counting fish.



7/6/13

- Rapids Video Chinook counts are starting to form a 1st "pulse" and it doesn't look very strong (**ChinPilot13**) compared to estimates downriver. Not good as Pulse 1 is suppose to be a significant amount of the total run estimate so far.

Run timing and water levels at Rapids and heavy fishing downriver should not be factors this year so don't know what is up??. Give it another day and see then.

- In 2008 and 2010 fishwheel project saw similar counts vs. Pilot Sonar but those were years the run was poor and fished on heavy and fish didn't make it to upper river or meet escapement into Canada. See 2008 and 2010 over at right under red data box.

Picture: Caleb and Ethan helping me wrap up 2 day smoked salmon filets today, to be frozen for winter food. Some prefer a lighter 24 hour smoke and some like the "sour" taste of 3-4 days. It's all good.



7/7/13

- Right after midnight last night the Chinook salmon started pouring in the video testwheel. 264 king per day rate. So sure managers and fishermen will be happy. Still a very poor run but some open fishing was allowed on the early fish thinking Pulse 1 was healthy and turns out it's looking as estimated at Pilot here so far - finally.

- So 14 to 15 days travel from Pilot to Rapids is about average for king and looks like this year it took 16 days which is probably from the extreme high water they had to travel through to get to Rapids (731 from mouth).

Picture: 1. From left: half dry for eating in a few days, smoked filets (over stove) for canning or frozen packaged fish and on right the strips for lightweight traveling or anytime great eating. Stove is barely smoking (cottonwood) and is called a "cold smoke" and things like strips can take weeks to cure/dry.

2. Peregrine falcon checking photographer out. They are nesting all over since the DDT comeback. Little bird population is not liking it much.



photo by Joseph Zuray

7/8/13

- Pulse 1 crested today and weakening lots as the day ended. A weak pulse 2 should show in a few days. Looks now like 1st Pulse didn't really travel any faster than normal it just had a weaker front than Pilot showed. In the recent past fishing pressure on weaker runs did this often but again this year that shouldn't be an issue with all the closures??.

- Summer chum salmon are continuing to increase.

- Should have King measures and other data posted soon. Techs are very busy at moment due to Pulse 1..

Picture: Tug is called the Rampart after the village upriver 35 miles. Pushing two barges at once from homeport of Nenana but here is trying unsuccessfully to make it through the Rapids with just one of them. It had to sit for about 12 days and wait for the water to go and current lessen to finally get through. There are a number of similar fast places along the Yukon I found out from the captain. Barges are the cheapest way to move supplies and only way to move big equipment to the Yukon villages



7/9/13

- Added **AllChinCum** tab which shows Chinook counts over the years and 2013 to date.

- 2nd highest Chinook day - #1 not over yet. 250 /day through video cameras.

Picture: Randy Brown standing next to Ravens Ridge radio telemetry tower 6 miles above Rapids. Tower now belongs to ADF&G and they allowed it to be used for the Bering cisco telemetry project which is designed to find cisco spawning areas. Originally these were put up to track chum salmon and later Chinook salmon. The chum telemetry was done out of the Rapids video fishwheel and is partly responsible for showing the damage done to livebox held chum and the need to find another way to count fish. Hence the development of the first video fishwheel at Rapids (by USFWS and Rapids Research Center). Yukon seen through trees below right - good climb for Randy.



7/10/13

- Very little to no subsistence activity on river due to King salmon closures.
- Working hard on King data - preliminary 2013 average weight for fishwheel kings in Pulse 1 is 12.3 lbs. Average weight for Pulse 1 king during years of complete protection (2009,11,12+13) continues to decline. See charts on right.

Picture: Busy day at fishwheel. Left to right: Local student data crew in boat weighs and immediate releases Kings (one raised up in net in picture) as it's the only way to get size data during conservation closure in effect. John Burr (green jacket by pole) with Sport Fish Div. permit office watching for proper execution and any harm to fish. Dave Daum (Orange float coat) provides support for installed fishwheel video system for all season counting of all fish species. Far right Randy and Theresa with USFWS Fairbanks surgically implant radio transmitters in whitefish to determine critical spawning populations upriver.



7/11/13

- Numbers of King salmon into Yukon have slowed. By this date the large groups of king have usually stopped. Estimate of run size by Pilot Sonar to date is about 113,000 and similar to the past 3 years poor runs.

- Historically past run sizes had to be at least 3-350,000 king when one considers the past but extensive subsistence fishery in Canada and US, the past 100,000 fish commercial harvests for years and the large healthy escapements put on the spawning grounds each year that supported those numbers of fish. Because of the severe reduced size of king now in the Yukon some estimates put the spawning value (or amount of eggs put on the spawning grounds) by todays 100,000 fish at half that or 50,000 fish. We have come a long way baby. One of the present "solutions" being pushed by some fisheries people is to again reduce the Canadian spawning ground escapement goals. Sounds crazy - but who want to bet they do it again??. It **just** happened on the Kuskokwim River.

Picture: Three sisters - Faith, Helen and Kathleen. They have nice smiles but big knives.





7/12/13

- Added **ChinEag13** graph which is Rapids compared to Eagle Sonar at Canadian Border. This project will be the one to watch pretty soon as it will determine whether the US meets it's treaty obligations with Canada. Rapids King numbers still strong (**ChinPilot13**).

Picture: 9'x9' trapping/shelter cabin about 30 miles north of Tanana. Seen better days but heaven on earth at 30 - 50 below. Dirt floor and can't stand up in it so it's called Backache Cabin cause after a day of driving dogs or snogo through the rough country there and a night of not being able to stand up straight it's a guaranteed sore back in the morning.



7/13/13

- 24 hour King opening for those fishermen having 6" mesh nets (almost nobody) and fishwheels can't be used even though they catch a significantly smaller average size king than 6" nets. So basically very little fishing at Rapids tonight. If management is going to have openings it should be fair to all fishermen and using the best gear to let the bigger and female king go by. Neither is happening from where I stand. One net fishermen reported a good early opening catch so far. Rapids testwheel had it's 2nd best day today ([ChinPilot13](#)) - can't figure that one as it's higher than should be.

Picture: Got lots of comments on last nights picture so here's another winter one. Trapping 20 miles out of Tanana and heading to Tozitna River another 20 more. Early December day - little snow so rough dog sledding and short days also - so drop down in valley on left and stay in shelter cabin for night. Then on to as far as eyes can see tomorrow. Friend Ryan took this picture.

7/14/13

- Cumulative King count at Rapids testwheel project rises above the 13 year average (see **AllChinCum**). Water height running about average so counting efficiency should be normal and not exaggerated as seems to happen in record high water years (2011, 2012). Eagle Sonar will tell in end.

Picture: Tanana fishermen Nick and Travis, and Minto fisherman DinJii Ju share some King they caught during today's net only opening with my family. They had a good catch and only fished part of the opening. Usually cutting smaller fish from our fishwheel, it was nice to have a bunch of larger size king to cut as these were from 6" mesh nets.

- Much better than bumming fish would be the idea of shared or community fishwheels (which we tried, obviously unsuccessfully, to get accepted), where "fish friendly" fishwheels would be able to provide small king to anyone wanting to take a turn manning a wheel. Nets would still be used but the wheels could help lower the average size of king harvested in a number of ways depending on how poor the run was. Jacks only on a bad run and regular 12.5 lb. average king on a better year.



7/15/13

- Numbers at Eagle just starting the climb (**ChinEag13**). The run was late and maybe ends early so be nice if numbers do as well as Rapids counts and Canadian Border escapement is met. From talking to most that fished the last opening around Rapids the testwheel video numbers seem correct. Some catches were very good and some even pulled nets before the 24 hrs. were up. So good sign in that way that Testwheel is maybe not over counting. ??

Picture: University of Alaska held a canoe building class through their Folk School Program: http://thefolkschoolfairbanks.org/ai1ec_event/birch-bark-canoe-class
Randy Brown with USFWS is a local master birch bark canoe builder and he ran the class. I got a hundred pictures of the whole process from him. Had another one of his on last years updates.



7/16/13

- Added **KingData** worksheet which is all the Chinook measures and info to date. Project relies on a subsistence harvest to collect info and this is not available as in past so some data will be from small sample sizes. One of the reasons project is ending after this year. Data such as Ichthyophonous, lengths, and % of females should be viewed with this in mind. Weights on the other hand should be fine.

- In the next week Eagle Sonar should be seeing some real numbers. Big numbers of Pulse 1 about a week away though.

- Fishing opens again for 6" net fishers only at 6pm tonight. Some fishwheel fishermen must have pissed of someone in management.

Picture: Top to Bottom - These are the main migrating species through Rapids. Broad whitefish, Sheefish, Coho and chum salmon and humpback whitefish. At right - 2 king or Chinook salmon and a Bering cisco. All make a journey of from hundreds to 1500 (in Canada) miles to spawn. Most whitefish live to do it again but salmon and Bering cisco die.



7/17/13

- Eagle Sonar had 415 king go by. Expect a couple thousand in less than a week (see **ChinEag13**).

- Summer chum numbers at mouth have dropped real low. Next there will be the fall chum run which is much prized in the upper river (and lower). They mostly are traveling far enough above this area of the Yukon (unlike summer chum) that they have considerable fat reserves and are in good shape. That means good food. I spent 11 years on a spawning creek eating salmon that actively were spawning. Their white mushy flesh was edible but I put up grayling for dry fish instead of the chum as it was so lean it dried to cardboard. Things seemed like heaven for dogs and I when I moved to the Yukon.

Picture: My daughter Kate and I trying to save a fishwheel but in the end it busted up to bad. A friends wheel, it got stuck in mud and water raised up real fast. One rear corner finally popped up and racked the whole thing and the baskets and tower came down. Friend gave it to me for firewood in trade for some fish out of my wheel.



7/18/13

- In less than a week the King run past Rapids will be winding down considerably. Many of these fish after the last main pulse are the stragglers or compromised individuals who have injuries, the Ichthyophonus disease or whose timing is off and are ready to spawn NOW and have white flesh and loose eggs etc. Each year I wonder how many actually make it the hundreds of miles more to spawn (a process that takes up to 2 weeks and is a huge effort).

- Water height up and drift coming down. All whitefish nets out of main river now. Not looking good for net fishers Saturday night at 6pm king opening as water doesn't crest till Friday.

Picture: Wheel was all high and dry earlier and with this latest high water decided to get it floating in the main river and turned into a firewood and fish raft for this fall. On man's trash is another's treasure I say. Went up on hillside and chainsaw winched the baskets off. Lots of good lumber left but get that another day. Raft sitting in front of my camp now.



7/19/13

- Looking at **ChinPilot13** I'd say the first part of Pulse 3 has come and gone. Noticed more nice front runner fish in the video again today. In any pulse or large grouping of fish which is what a pulse is the first are the fastest, healthiest and visibly look that way. At the end of the pulse the stragglers come. Then it repeats itself for the next pulse. Should be about 3 more days of king and then the end will come fast - and the real stragglers.

- Rise in water has stopped - not much drift anymore.

Picture: I saw this I said "whoa" immediately to myself. These are some big dogs. No wolves or bears going to bother this team. Caption on the picture read: This picture was taken by Joe "The Malamute Man" Henderson from his recent Alaskan Arctic Expedition. This was a typical day. The snow was 45 inches deep when he took this shot - and they're still smiling!!



7/20/13

- Eagle Sonar latest count is 1600 king (ChinEag13). Real rough Border passage estimate based on Rapids Testwheel CPUE is for about 55,000 at Eagle. This type of quesstimating is not good science but is more valid this year than others due to average water conditions at wheel - and it's one of the most asked email questions lately (I don't get paid for this update so you get what you pay for).

- Any time (or may have happened) one of the rises in chum counts at Pilot Sonar will be the first fall chum. Genetics are done on them so try to get info to you. Some reports of bright (fall) chum moving up Yukon but they may be Tanana River bound summer chum??.

Picture: (Top to bottom) 1. Male summer chum, white flesh, close to spawning grounds (dries like cardboard) 2. Male fall chum, prized for food 3. Female summer 4. Female fall. **See study over at right.**

Katlyn and Joe (long ago) by chum salmon dog food racks. Dog food is usually put up later in season when fall chum quality declines somewhat.



7/21/13

- Latest genetic testing (thanks to Fred Bue, USFWS) to determine when the summer chum run turns into the fall chum run at the mouth of Yukon for week of 7/5/13 to 7/11/13 shows summer chum still coming in at 97.5%. Genetics take time and while not real recent it does translate to no fall chum before about Aug 2 in Rapids area. Earliest ever saw them was July 25 in 2000 and July 26 in 2002. Latest - Aug 8.

- Testwheel uses method in red textbox at right to determine when to start counting all chum through wheel as fall chum. They are two distinct runs and spawn in different places for the most part.

Picture: Water dropping so fast and beach so flat I woke up to this in morning. Just spent 8 hours getting fishwheel raft behind boat back in water, and thought I'd take a picture break. Days like this are like a real bad day at the office. Nothing great about being on the Yukon today (said with a smile).



7/23/13

- Eagle Sonar passage slows for the day (just like Pilot and Rapids??). Bet tomorrow numbers go up fast again. (ChinEag13)

Picture: Joe and Tsood grew up each summer at fishcamp. Here in 2010 they are holding the 2nd largest King salmon (49.5 lbs.) sampled by the Student Data Collection project around Rapids in now 10 years of sampling 9468 fish. Largest was 54 lbs. but was weighed and immediately released. Just 20 years ago 50+ lb. king were fairly common. Now 30 lb. king are more rare with only 3 larger than 30 lbs out of 277 sampled by the project in 2013 so far

This size decline is one thing to consider when agreeing to reduce the amount of king put on the spawning grounds in Canada. This "solution" is presently being pushed for political reasons because of our treaty agreement with Canada over amounts needed for the US to put at the Border. We failed at this most of the last half dozen years. Some estimates of the loss of eggs to the spawning grounds because of this decline in size (smaller females hold less eggs) are put at 50%. So we have in effect been implementing a policy or "solution" of continual reduction of eggs on the spawning grounds for multiple king generations now - and guess what - it ain't working. Many years ago I made it a point to say at every fish meeting I went to "mark my words if we don't do something about this decline in size and numbers the day will come when we will not even have any commercial king fishing but our subsistence will be gone. King run is over pretty much for 2013 in this area and our family got to fish king 4 legal open fishing days since June 28th. We are there I think. It's so sad.



7/23/13

- Much attention is now on Eagle Sonar and do we meet US/Canada agreed upon numbers for the spawning grounds and minimal Canadian harvest. Graph below called **ChinEag13** needs to have Eagle numbers track somewhat as high as the Rapids or better or king run will fail to achieve escapement again. Treaty calls for about 50,000 minimum. The present 2 day stall is a concern but should go higher soon??.

- Fall chum genetics show they have entered the river mouth and should be in this area around Aug 4 to Aug 10. (from Fred Bue USFWS)

Picture: Like a cloud just dropped down over everything. No wind, the dogs mellow from work and into a fast walking pace, they lead out across the open flats while I hope they don't loose the trail. Helping this many dogs "find" the next tripod (x in distance) can be not fun you might say. Your lead dogs make all the difference and I've had the ones that rarely miss a trail or command and ones that I have to snowshoe in front of all day.



7/24/13

- Added more King salmon data in **KingData** tab below. Most are weights only because of all season closures and lack of subsistence harvested fish to sample. Sample size on the king (immediately released) weights however is large, and spread throughout the run enough to be meaningful.

- Average weight for 403 wheel king is now 12.9 lbs. and the continuing trend of declining size since the first year of protecting pulses in 2009 continues and is seen most dramatically in the % of king 25 lbs. and over category, which this year is a tiny 2.7%.

- Eagle sonar is getting worrisome as it needs to be rising now and isn't. Could simply be late running Pulse 1 fish but this segment of the run was suppose to have a very high Canadian component and was the largest pulse at both Pilot and Rapids by far.

Picture: Rapids fishermen, researchers, and visitors all got together tonight for a meal. Kinda a big deal because of the first real fish opening since the start of summer. Big smiles as they know they are going to be in tonight's update. I got out of being in another picture



7/25/13

- Pulse 1 seems to have passed Eagle and at a much lower size than expected. The rest of the pulses now need to make up for it.
- Added ChinEagAll graph - all years at Eagle
- Fishermen ran gear and between the poor quality end of run king and increasing presence of ICH disease everyone will wait for fall chum before fishing again for any more people food.

Picture: King salmon are sampled at Rapids for size, sex, and also Ichthyophonus disease. In this last part of the run we are again finding infected fish with 15% of today's fish being visibly diseased. ICH as it's called locally, causes swelling of the heart and reduced stamina and is terminal. While no data exists for years prior to 1999 most fishermen remember the mid 90's as being the worse with large amounts of diseased king being discarded. Many researchers feel these high rates of diseased females for so many years were another significant factor in the king crash we are now facing. For more see:
http://rapidsresearch.com/html/ichthyophonus_disease.html



7/26/13

- Eagle Sonar not showing any signs of meeting border passage like it's going. Something needs to change soon.
- Testwheel down to 2 worn out king and one small jack in video today. Run was not only late but looking at past years it was also ended early.
- Summer chums were very good numbers however (2.8 million about)

Picture: Two friends, Eric and Andrew borrowed a fishwheel to get some nice chums. Only gear out in Rapids now. They stay on the wheel and net them as they come off the baskets and only keep the top quality 5% about. Most are going to spawning creeks right in the local area and are very poor quality but a small amount are traveling even as far as Canada and have significant fat reserves and are almost as good as king. You just have to spend all day to get them and that leaves no time to work them into dry fish or strips. Most regular fishermen here will wait for the beginning of the fall chum run which will have 60 to 90% red fleshed fish in it. Good ones for people food and poorer ones for dry dog food.



7/27/13

- 2nd pulse should hit Eagle tomorrow or so. 16,000 king past sonar so far - need 3 times that - minimum.

- Cisco whitefish passing in good numbers again. These have a few good pulses a summer and are the one whitefish species that dies after spawning like salmon.

Picture: Looking upstream at Rapids canyon with Rock Island in mid river. This is the narrowest place in river for a long ways up or down and gets it's reputation from good fishing spots and the danger to scows and rafts that used to try to navigate through in old days. Modern riverboats with outboards have no trouble. Smoke from fires is in the air on this day. The proposed Rampart Dam of many years ago would have gone right here had it not been fought off. Would have created the largest man made lake in North America and backed up and flooded villages to above Ft Yukon 300 miles upriver. Would have destroyed the wild salmon runs. Fishwheels by arrow.



7/28/13

- Safe to say the fall chum run is building at mouth and - Eagle Sonar king are seeing another pulse thinking of building maybe ??

Picture: Student Data Collection project at Rapids is finishing the last of the seasons work now. Project will not be continuing next season - we feel the objective has been accomplished (or finally realized) which was to show fishermen that the size of king had declined dramatically and there was a significant prevalence of a deadly disease in the larger king salmon (Ichthyophonus). This picture was from 2002 the second year. For 3 years we worked on protocols and training. Data taken from this year (and 2001 to 2003) has never been released and never will as it does not meet standards we determined were critical for data such as random full catch sampling, no 1st year tech ICH disease determinations, complete gear separation and etc. etc. It's been a great run. Our whitefish data is associated with a published migration paper and our disease data is the publication - **Transactions of the American Fisheries Society (Zuray et al. 2012)**. Alot of kids saw alot of science through this project.



7/29/13

- Bering cisco whitefish up to 310 a day in video testwheel. Quite a pulse going through.

- For the fall chum season testwheel converts to 24 hr counts soon. Wheel will use generator and lights to get video camera through the dark of night. Expect them during the 1st week of August and are testing for them now at Rapids.

- Eagle sonar up to 1452 king today for total cumulative of almost 19,000 to Border.

- Should have last of **KingData** soon.

Picture: My friend Chuck 6 miles upriver took this in the heat today. Pups enjoying the 1st summer of life as a sled dog. Life's not all lounging but they'll find out soon.



7/30/13

- Some researchers and managers are talking not getting enough King salmon to Canada again this year (**ChinEagAll**).
- Eagle not getting the second pulse with much strength now. Looking potentially at the worse king year yet. Because of the past some are saying it could get worse before better. We have yet to see the return years from say 2010 when we recorded the average size of king in Rapids fishwheels at 10.8 lbs and only 14.1% female out of 1002 fish sampled. In 2008 pulse 1 king averaged 9.7 lbs. - that's our 2013, 5 year old king (5 and 6 year olds make up most of the run anymore).

Picture: Fishwheel subsistence catch at 9 pm tonight. Will test flesh color of chum (colored bars on sides) tomorrow but looks like summer chum still to me. We are watching for the fall chum now. Small silver fish are Bering cisco and getting over 300 a day in video testwheel. Big silver fish are sheefish and they are just starting to show signs of a migration through here. They will live beyond spawning and head to river mouth to live for a few years and do it again. One lone small grey king (jack) in upper left.



7/31/13

- That catch in yesterday's picture I said looked like still summer chum, well when cut today 58% were red flesh fish so yesterday was **Official Fall Chum Arrival Day**. For the purpose of counting, all chum from now on are considered fall chum.

- Added 2011 and 2012 Eagle/Rapids graphs and lowered Eagle axis on all. Usually don't change axis but looks like possibly the Eagle to Rapids relationship may need it. Will redo all years if it stays this way. Also adjusted 2013 Eagle run timing to 13 days (seen that in past before) as it maybe matches better. Makes for an interesting new look if you're into graphs/numbers etc. **ChinEag11,12,13**

Picture: No Photoshop or color adjustment here. Fall chum equal to a king salmon as far as oil content. This is the chart we use to determine flesh color. It works - it's not genetics but it's what (the eyes) has been used by fishermen probably since before contact to tell when the fall chum arrive with a little science discipline thrown in. See red textbox on far lower right for explanation.





8/01/13 - Not many fall chum in Rapids yet - expect a bigger numbers in a few days (**ChumPilot13**). People talking about getting back to fishing now that they are here. This weekend opening should see more fishermen. Added last of **KingData** for season. I'll figure it all in tomorrow. Not much will change except the ICH disease was heavier at end.

Picture: Only gear fishing for miles today. Only person for miles also. Rapids testwheel with the caribou hills behind.

8/02/13

- Eagle sonar could have a week of low but decent king passage or a matter of days depending on run timing and if they get much of the last pulse. Rapids did not see the last pulse and it often has few Canadian bound king in it. All stuff to watch for.
- Fall chum are slowing down at Rapids (small bump of falls came and went) and yesterday only 35% were red fleshed fish. About August 4 numbers and % should go up for good. Pilot getting good numbers for 2nd day now (ChumPilot13)

Picture: Cutting some chum to be winter dry fish for dogs. Tomorrow family will be here and we'll cut dry fish for people food. Some other camps will start back up soon and things will come alive a little at Rapids. Weather is ideal now for drying but rain is forecasted. That can put a stop to people food and make dog food hard. Often the hardest thing in recent years is trying to get the reduced fish openings and the good drying days to happen together.



8/03/13

- Tomorrow may see increase in fall chum (**ChumPilot13**) if run timing is 23 days to Rapids.
- Tomorrow may see drop to end (**ChinEag13**) or climb to last pulse (**ChinPilot13**) at Eagle Sonar.
- Tomorrow may never come.

Picture: Faith Peters and Kathleen Peters Zuray of Tanana making dry fish and strips from fall chum salmon today at Rapids. Here they hang the cut and brined fish on open racks for about a day or till they get a "coat" or semi dried surface - then they go in smokehouse for weeks till cured and real dried. About 50% of the chum have quality red flesh and I cut the poorer ones for dry dog food and they dry without smoke or salt (racks on beach filling up - lower right). They have been coming here since little girls and remember all the families, camps and big smokehouses all over Rapids in those days.



8/04/13

- Chum decreased so no pulse yet. This anticipated increase will be the fall chum officially known as the "Brights" as they are silver sided due to not being very far along in the spawning mode and full of fat reserves (ChumPilot13). They can number in the hundreds per day in the my wheel or if real good 500/day for a few days or more. Second pulse is good also but noticeably more spawning marked. By the end of the season in late September the fall chum have degenerated into heavily marked pale fleshed fish that one wonders how they will make it to spawning grounds.

Picture from past: One of my favorites and again no Photoshop stuff here. Sun just rising in notch in hills on a cool fall morning. Ground wet from rain day before and the warming moisture is filling the canyon. Heading to do my morning fishwheel check.





8/05/13

- King salmon run at Border seems to be at it's end (**ChinEag13**). Be lucky to make 30,000 total this year I'd guess.
- Small amount of fall chum that passed Pilot about July 12 not materializing much here. May have to wait a little more ??

Picture: Back 40 years ago I lived on a salmon spawning creek for 11 years and would fertilize every females eggs I caught (of the half that were free flowing). I did instream gravel incubation with a hand pump that looked like a huge hypodermic needle and also had about 20 of these boxes made that when faced into the current would provide upwelling water to the eggs. Each box would hold about 8000 eggs (and layers of gravel) and in spring when I removed them from river just before breakup almost all the eggs would be hatched out and gone. Got books from a friend at ADF&G and designs from an old Columbia River hatchery guy who said, "Give a guy a 5 gal. bucket (mix the eggs and sperm), a shovel and put him out on a spawning creek and he'll do more good than a million dollar hatchery". These methods he said, did the least damage to the genetics of the wild

8/6/13

- Fall chum finally (possibly) increasing late today - see tomorrow.

- Bering cisco still the main fish in river at 371 through Rapids video wheel today.

Picture: Breaking first trail of year about 38 miles north of Tanana and 2 miles from a nice cabin. Dogs dead tired (me to). Notice snow hook not even being used to lock down sled as the last thing the dogs want to do is move. So you wait and let them build energy and then go another 1/8 of a mile and rest again for 15 minutes. This is part of driving distance dogs sometimes and you just have to go with the flow cause there is a point you can push them to much. If you pass that point you'll never get to cabin and dogs don't trust you for a good while after. If you do it right they just more amazing.



8/7/13

- So not much fall chum out of that first "bright" run and hard to fish. Had to sit on wheel and let all the poor ones go as otherwise you end up with too much dog food (poor summer chum types).
- Looks like the main fall pulses are building as we speak (ChumPilot13)

Picture: Good old buddies Russ Wood and John Hewitt at their fish camp shack in Rapids. Russ is retired National Guard (Fairbanks) and fished here in the 70's and 80's. John has lived in Fairbanks and spent a life outdoors hunting and writing about it for Grey's Sporting Journal (for 31 years). I once described him as ex marine and he let me know "once a Marine always a Marine". Anyway a plate in head from a Vietnam grenade and a bad stroke back some can't keep him from getting out. Just wrote a book of stories of his early life and gave me one. On sale online at: <http://hoppercreekpress.com/>



8/8/13

- Changed travel time on chum to Rapids graph to 21 days. Possibly a better match and would explain why chums numbers dropping today instead of the increase expected yesterday. This is why run timing is so important to get right. It's like using a map and if you don't know where you are on it, it's hard to find where you're going (ChumPilot13).

- Eagle Sonar numbers dropping slow which helps add a few to total count - still a disaster run however. Writing on the wall - already numbers of camps more talking closing down and not fishing next year due to expected all season closure again.

Picture: In better days (2001). While by 2001 the king salmon were noticeably in bad trouble with severe reduced size and heavy ICH disease in the females, the fishcamps still showed some healthy signs like kids in most of the camps, constant traffic on the river and fish hanging in all the smokehouses. That's all ending now too - right before our eyes.



8/9/13

- Fall chum limping along at about 40% red flesh fish. Not the best "bright" run we've seen. All 3 camps at Rapids are cutting them - it just takes time to deal with 60% poor quality fish. They either get cut for dog food or someone sits on wheel, both of which takes time away from the task at hand which is people food. The good ones are nice and red though.

- **ChumPilot13** says we got a small increase coming in next week ??.

- **WaterHeight** right at average for date and **WaterTemp** is at 11 year high for date. River temp in summer is driven by sun - period. All the hot weather has it up.

Picture: Had a picture back a while of the building of a traditional birch bark canoe at a UAF "Folk School" program. Well here it's all done and launched. Photo sent by Randy Brown (master canoe builder)



8/10/13

- Ran the numbers for this years final **KingData**. Sample size and the bias from not sampling full season (because of closures) are a problem for length, sex and ICH disease data, however weight data should be very good. At 12.3 lbs average for 1st pulse king the declining size trend for the 4 recent protected years continues. The most concerning data is the "% of king over 25 lbs" which has gone from 9.4% in 2009 to 2.7% in 2013.

Picture: Good to see a young couple and kids on the river. Andrew and Tracyann hanging by the fishwheel netting the better looking chum that come down the wheel chute. They will keep 20 - 40 a day and turn them into smoked dry fish. In this picture today he actually has a sheefish netted which he's saving for me. They are staying at one of the camps that shut down last year and both the wheel fishermen here are helping them get their fish.



8/11/13

- Fall chum total passage for date at Rapids is about half the 17 year average and at Pilot Sonar near mouth, it's low also. Not really a huge concern yet as the fall run is very variable as to when the bulk of the run comes into mouth. It has sparked a commercial fishing slow down in the lower river for now as managers be careful until more fish are seen.

- Past traditional harvest on the fall run was primarily commercial with a heavy subsistence dog food and people food and smoked dry fish. Dogs largely are out of the picture river wide in recent history. Even in one of the few places that have held on to some dogs like Tanana, the village is down a dozen teams. In 1977 there were 47 teams in the village (TDMA survey)

Picture: Yukon Men/Women - Joey, Chuck, Stan, Kathleen, Katlyn. My brother Chuck came from Boston and went out on the trapline with us. Here we are at Tozi cabin 40 miles north of Tanana. Chuck caught a wolverine that day.



8/12/13

- Fall chum now being counted at Chandalar Sonar upriver 240 miles so I added **RapChan13** graph below. Chandalar River is the biggest spawning grounds for Yukon fall chum with an escapement goal larger than the Tanana River drainage.

Picture: Father and son floating for hundreds of miles on the Yukon. Just came through the Rapids canyon today. They have been coming on this annual trip for as long as I can remember - usually to collect many cords of driftwood as they travel down and then sell it in their once home town of Ruby 120 miles downriver of Tanana. This year they say they're taking a break on the wood and want to bring a caribou home. I floated with them for awhile. Every year I take their cool picture and put it on this update.



8/13/13

- Very large fall chum catch in test driftnets at river mouth yesterday. In 2 days they will hit Pilot Sonar. This is the pulse needed to help make it a good run.

- Chandalar Sonar getting about 1000 fall chum/day for last 5 days and is 12 day travel time from Rapids - That means Canadian Border at 16 day travel time, should be getting some good first chum numbers right now. Eagle sonar usually counts just a little less what Chandalar gets - roughly.

Picture: Around 1912 Tanana was kind of two settlements. Ft Gibbons an army settlement, and just upriver the native village of Tanana. Today most of the now one village is where the Fort used to be. To me it's incredible how built up it was back then. In the upper picture the big building is a church which is empty but still stands today.



8/14/13

- First little pulse of fall chum peaking at Rapids (ChumPilot13).

Picture: All this river talk about the fall chum and "bright" chum coming and waiting for the red fleshed fish - well these two pictures kinda catch some of that change over a weeks time up to today. Summer chum spawn locally and do not need heavy oil reserves for travel much beyond here. They have strong developed spawning colors and teeth. Fall chum are going as far as Canada and pass here with heavy oil content and little spawning characteristics. Picture on left has maybe 50% high quality fish and one week later the better fall run takes over the river more and we see maybe 75% high quality. This is why one week ago I was alone in my camp and now there are 9 others here today with me and more expected in the next days. Everyone want the good fish in one way or another.



8/15/13
- 120,000 chum counted at Pilot Sonar, from big bunch seen at mouth nets 2 days ago - possibly more tomorrow (**ChumPilot13**).
- Rapids fall chum at season high of 195 and high quality. Fishermen cutting people food and small commercial going on.

Picture: Van, Virgil, Aiden and Shelbie come hundreds of miles by truck and boat from Interior Alaska Fish Processors in Fairbanks to buy some special Yukon Fall Chum at Rapids. They sell them at their plant at 2400 Davis Rd. and online <http://www.santassmokehouse.com> Joe and Ruth pitching fish into Virgil's ice totes. Some of these fish just came out of a live box 1 hour before and all are immediately chilled in cold water. It's a family operation and Yukon is the richest salmon in the world as proven in laboratory testing.



8/16/13

- Another 70,000 chum counted at Pilot Sonar, from big bunch seen at mouth nets 3 days ago. Brings total run size up to above 400,000 now (ChumPilot13).

- Water temp running very high for date due to unseasonably warm days and water height very low for date due to little rain. See graphs below.

Picture: Andy, Eric and Dan work for AK Dept. of Fish and Game and are on the river taking size and age samples of the fall chum. They sampled 150 fish in no time at all. The Yukon is a very hard river to manage with multiple species, some plentiful and others in low numbers. Making sure there's enough for all the uses, getting enough on the spawning grounds and all the politics of in river commercial fishing are a big challenge to say the least.



8/17/13

- Rapids, Chandalar and whole upper river will see lower numbers of fall chum pretty much till into September. This is fine as there's enough for subsistence at this level. Do need a couple more good pulses into mouth before it'll be safe to say it's a good run however.

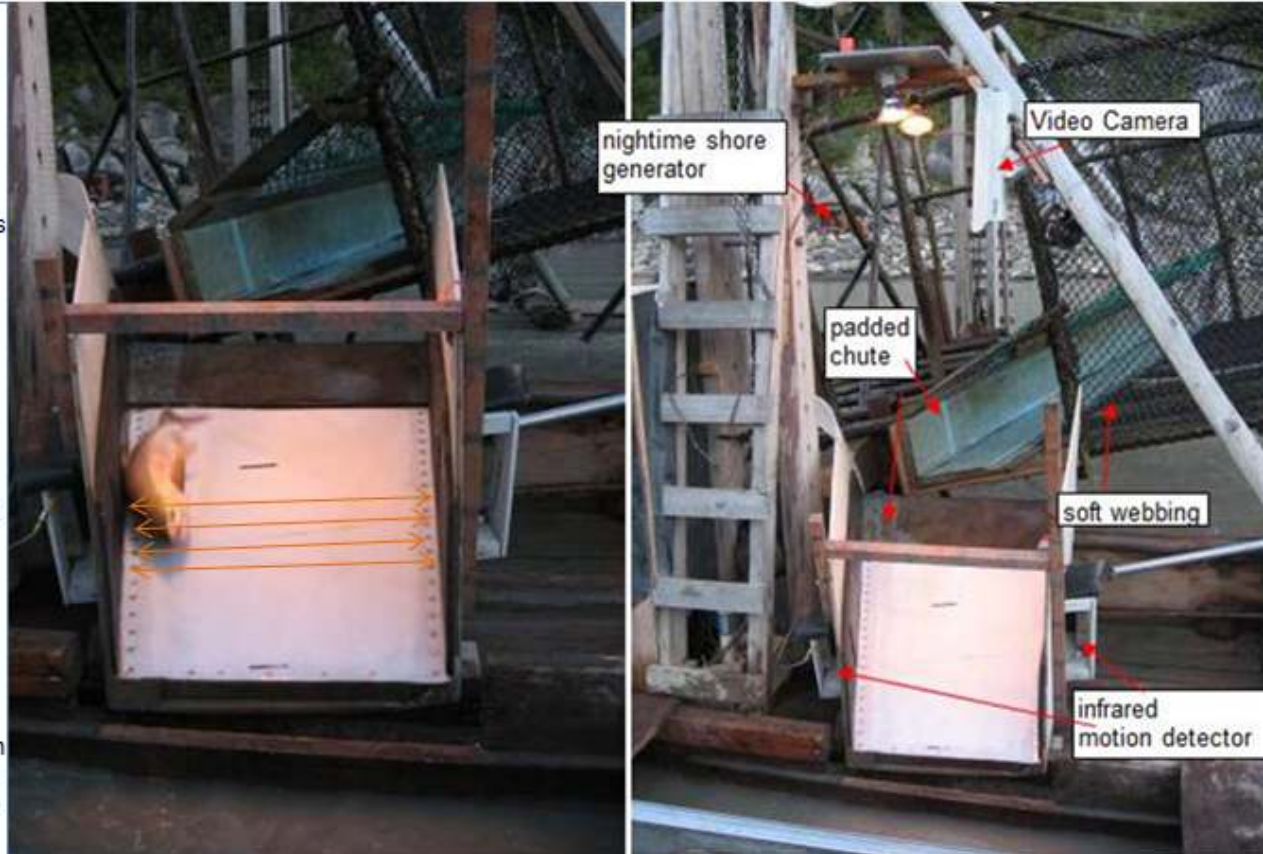
Picture: Some of the last family fishing of the season as the weather will probably start to turn cold and rainy soon which means the end to good people fish drying. Joe and Faith cleaning the fishwheel as it gets slippery to walk on and Kate and Kathleen netting the fish out of the livebox. I'm on shore moving the wheel out as the water goes down so it doesn't hit bottom as it turns. Everyone cutting dry fish or "edibles" out of the best fish and dog food out of the others. Soon I'll be mostly here by myself running fish counting project and getting winters supply of dog food till end of September.



8/18/13

- Chum rising at Rapids - estimated 4500 through here today. Cumulative is however only half historical average.

Picture: Much of the Yukon River data talked about in this update comes from projects run from the mouth to 1200 miles upriver near the Canadian Border. At Rapids, data are taken by local techs physically sampling fishermen's catches and by a fishwheel I run (since 2000) which has had numerous electronic devices added to it to "count" all the species of fish it catches for about 100 days each summer. 1st picture is of a chum just breaking the infrared light beams (gold colored) This then signals a camera/computer system to save pictures at that moment in time. At the end of the day the operator is simply viewing this "movie" of one fish after another and recording a count. This system was developed in partnership with Dave Daum, Retired USFWS Fairbanks. Need a video counting system - call Dave at 907 456 0290 or email me. http://rapidsresearch.com/html/video_equipment.html





8/19/13

- King at Eagle Sonar has broken over the 30,000 mark which is the lowest number ever recorded (ChinEag13). Water temp down as rains come.

Picture taken years ago: These young kids grew to be some of my main fish technicians in later years. Max and Fayleen hauling king back to camp to sample for their project. Fayleen and Haley getting ready to weigh and measure. They produced all the data on the right which eventually formed the basis for a published paper on a deadly disease in the Yukon king salmon over the last 25 years: http://rapidsresearch.com/Zuray_etal_2012.pdf

8/20/13

- Fall Chum season is moving along and as it does quality of the fish goes down (and is right now) to the point where by the end of September most of the fish are pale or white fleshed inside with little fat. I have added a graph below (red05) of a two year study we did that shows the transition from summer to fall chum and then the decline of quality as the fall season moves along. This is important for fishermen, as it shows why one should not wait to cut people food to much after they first arrive.

Picture: Flowers and tomato plants at fish camp. We like something that is not work and pressure to mess with, if only for a few moments a day and these are that. Some tomatoes are just thinking of turning red now that the danger of frost approaches (how stressful). That's normal and many make the trip to Tanana at seasons end green.



8/21/13

- Rapids cumulative (total) chum only half the historical average due to a slow start but pulses are starting to come in mouth back to back lately and total there is 533,000 and above average. I'd say fishermen are gun shy about the possibility of a chum run failure due to what has happened to our King salmon. Little more worried than normal but all looking pretty good so far. Hopefully never see a problem like the King.

Picture: 1. Boat load of fish cutters showed up today to put up a big supply of chum for the Elders Home in Tanana. Been doing this 25 years or so but always with King salmon before. 2. Irene and Lois working the finish product tables up top. 3. Little "Bitsy" taking charge of the whitefish. 4. And Kath, Faith, and Kate doing the heading, gutting and washing on the beach. They all took off tonight with their load as fast as they came.



8/22/13

- 570,000 fall chum counted at Pilot Sonar now. Getting better but last year this time no more pulses of any size came in mouth so anything can happen still. That's the nature of fall chum (ChumPilot13).

- Chandalar River and Fort Yukon area should start seeing a slow but steady increase in the nice fall chum now (RapChan13).

Picture: The hills right above Rapids Canyon with the Yukon River in the distance. Everyone getting blueberries and looking for caribou a few days back. It's a steep hike for a mile and a half then into the open country. Going down with a pack of caribou can be fun on the knees - blueberries are easier.



8/23/13

- Rapids chum counts climb to a new pulse. Season daily high today (237). Wait till 1st week of Sept. and maybe be 1000 through wheel a day (**ChumPilot13**).

- Chandalar River Sonar counts almost doubled - should continue to climb now (**RapChan13**).

Picture: Crackers is a famous reality TV star. From the Tanana - Moore family kennel originally, she couldn't quite do the full speed thing out of the race chute so I acquired her for my trapline team where total speed is not needed just a good work ethic, healthy appetite, and ability to travel all day. After her close brush with death from a tumor and salvation at the hands of Doctor John, all on nationwide "Yukon Men" TV, I get lots of letters and messages asking how she is. Picture taken just hours ago in Tanana where she bear guards the house all summer for my wife. Had to take 20 pictures just to get one of her standing still.



8/24/13

- Chum cumulative passage estimate at Rapids is under half of average for date and will not start looking better for more than a week. This is because of slow run start. Overall run looks in good shape for this year with most of the large pulses towards the last half of the season (ChumPilot13).

Past Picture: The black thing is a water turbine that was installed in 2010 and has provided 100% of camp power each year since. At this moment that's enough power to run (without any drain on the battery bank) a desktop computer, modem, router, satellite dish, large inverter, light bulbs, assorted small chargers and a small freezer. Unbelievably care free - needs no gas and oil or starting. Water runs into box below and then into a pipe to beach where it's used to keep the fish in the fish totes cold. Produces about 300 watts but could do 1000 if I opened nozzles full. Pretty critical about alot of alternative energy ideas - this one works and pays for itself over and over.



8/25/13

- Water temperature falling by two degrees the last two days. It's that time of year that the sun gives up control over the water temp and hand it over to old man winter is coming (see **WaterTemp**).

- Some nice chum still but less of them and more with heavy spawning colors.

Picture: Rapids neighbors Owen and Andrew went up into the hills yesterday to hunt and didn't see anything - traveled all over. Camped out and when they opened their eyes this morning 3 bull caribou were 100 yards away looking at them. Andrew said it was the first time he ever shot anything from inside his sleeping bag. Came out of the hills at my camp so I'm helping him keep the flies away in the smokehouse. Owen packed a big bag of meat down and was a proud hunter. Then it took all day till dark to get the rest of the meat down.



8/26/13

- Added Eagle Sonar Chum graph (RapEag13). This will show US/Canada official passage into Canada for 2013. Numbers just starting to rise but, as all fall chum projects this year, cumulative will probably run below average until late in season when the bulk of the run comes.
- Small but significant numbers of fall chum still coming in mouth.

Picture: Got a truck at an end of the road village (Manley Hot Springs) and want to get it to Tanana (no roads in or out). You can barge it for \$1500 - or you can get some strong young Yukon men to go and make a raft of driftwood, drive the truck on it and push it by river boat 70 miles to Tanana. Faith (lower right) is that kind of woman and the men above helped her (Joey, Tyson, and Ralph). Raft will double as firewood for the winter months. Pictures by Faith Peters. Yahoo



8/27/13

- Fall Chum total run size prediction of up to 1 million fish now from ADF&G. This is good and plenty should make it to spawning grounds as the commercial and subsistence harvest is not as high as years ago. Decent commercials for downriver fishermen and plenty of people and dog food hopefully in the month to come before the ice runs in the river and shuts it all down. Nice fall season after a summer season of terrible king numbers - or should I even mention it.

Picture: Stan and Dave Daum do fine tuning to a microwave receiver dish that takes in real time video from a camera on the fishwheel. This video system is used to produce daily counts of all species of fish in a manner much more fish friendly than the traditional methods of holding fish in liveboxes and netting them out and counting them, as it eliminates all that entirely. Dave just retired from the USFWS Fairbanks Field Office but still helps keep the project running smoothly. Without him and others like Randy Brown, Tevis Underwood and Jeff Adams this technology would not exist.



8/28/13

- Water temp continues to drop.
Water height just below average.
- Lower but steady numbers at
Rapids, but now only a week away
from the 2 biggest pulses of the
season (ChumPilot13)

Picture: Most dog team pictures are
of those moments when all is working
great. Here's some of the other side.
1. My leaders - enough said.
2. Somebodies tired at the end of the
day. Got 10 miles of almost all downhill
and Toughie is getting a no problem
ride. Even when regular traveling with
dogs if you can recognize some
weakness in one of them and give
them a lift for a short time they can
come back and be a solid puller the
rest of the day. If not you got a all day
basket case. They are just like people
- get stomach aches, sore joints etc.
etc. Most of the time however they just
amaze one with their incredible
toughness.



8/29/13

- Chum increasing and finished off day at 37 per hour through video fishwheel (10-11pm) (ChumPilot13). Numbers could keep ramping up and often do even though pulse not quite expected for days yet. With so many fish coming in these big pulses the fast ones make a difference. Check out 2012 graph (ChumPilot12) - same happened then to the September pulses.

Picture: A rock island in the middle of the river in the narrowest portion of the Yukon is what is called in the history books "Rampart Rapids". It's a great place to raise puppies as it gets scrubbed cleaned each year and never had a bear or wolf get a pup from it as it's hard for them to gauge how to swim to it. Pups can't be around camp loose as they tear the place up but on Rock Island they are free to roam without being penned.



8/30/13

- Chum going way up - over 13,000 estimated through Rapids today with 936 counted in video fishwheel. Days like these are when fishermen run their wheels for a just a couple of hours and nets fill up right after you set them. It could be like this for a couple of weeks and should reach a peak around Sept 7 - 13th. Very little of these fish will be harvested with the vast majority heading to the spawning grounds.

- Sheefish are really moving through also with 41 counted. No population estimates are figured for any other species than fall chum however.

Picture: Open beach racks full of drying fall chum for winter traveling food for dogs. Fish closest with skin side out have just been cut and will be turned skin in in a day for the final long drying like the ones in middle. Ones way in back are fairly dry and packed tight together. While pretty crude blood and guts work getting a supply of fish through the process without damage and destruction from flies, damp weather and ravens is a real life skill - one I value more than anything I do on this computer.



8/31/13

- Added **KingEagAll** graph below - just another way to look at the steadily declining king run since 2005 at Canadian Border (Eagle Sonar).
- Over 1000 chum in Video counts today and rising more at days end.
- All gear (which is only 1 other wheel and a net as not many left at Rapids) is experiencing huge catches when running. A small net set yesterday caught a full load right after being set. Wheels run only short time periods.

Picture: You meet some characters on the river here (and all over Alaska). Cotton and Bela have been Gold mining this summer around this area and are now heading home. Heavily loaded (with no gold) but happy as hell they head to the Yukon Bridge (100 miles) at what looked like 2 miles per hour. They stopped at our camp long enough to yell goodbye and salute. Bela was an Olympic skier years back. I'll see these guys again I'm sure. Got a unique outboard - shallow water - no water pump cooling needed.



9/1/13

- Chum up more and cumulative on it's way to catching up to average for date. Long way to go but lots of big number days ahead at Rapids.

- Chandalar and Eagle Sonar projects rising in numbers as Rapids did.

- Water temp at lowest for date in 11 years of data collection.

- Water height right at average for this date.

Picture 2012 (A favorite of mine):

35 below all day so male dogs all blanketed up on undersides. Last 10 miles into Tanana are downhill and an easy go no matter how tired we all are. Maybe give someone a ride here if they are really tired - tired dogs get hurt easy.

Temperature going to be 10 degrees colder or more at the Yukon (seen in distance) Sun and reflection are awesome and the colds got a bite.

Traps all checked and time to put another log on the fire and relax - as soon as the dogs are unhooked, fed and blankets drying and all the unknowns of being away from home for days are attended to. No complaining allowed though, in this heaven on earth - ha ha.



9/2/13

- Water temp continues drop
- now at 49.1. Easily the
lowest in 11 years of
collecting data (see
WaterTemp). No more
swimming for me.
- Chum up more with one
hour of the day recording 80
fish an hour in wheel. If run
timing correct on **ChumPilot13**
graph pulse peak is still 4
days away.

Picture: Over the years I
video counted maybe 1/2
million chum and seen that
many again and never seen
anything like this before.
Sometimes you get some
exaggerated black or red or
green but this female stood
out with these rusty colored
spots. One of those new fish
from Japan??.



9/3/13

- 20,000 estimated through Rapids today with one hour 94 chum being recorded (ChumPilot13). Latest ADF&G assessment has run at almost 1 million which is a good run. Yahoo.

Pictures (clockwise): Lately this is what happens over 1000 times a day as about 15,000 chum/day migrate through Rapids. They have traveled 731 miles to here and some will go into Canada almost as far again. Counting them here and at other projects in lower river and on the spawning grounds allows management to have an educated guess at how much to allow for commercial openings and how good they did or screwed up post run. At Rapids the wheel has been modified to be do as little harm as possible. Pic 1 shows fish just being picked up by basket with soft seine web sides and in 2, sliding towards the padded basket chute which directs fish with little drop (3) to a white video chute (4) where it gets it's picture taken 15 times as it slides 3' back into river. Prior to 2000 and the development of this system at Rapids Research Center up to 250,000 fish each year were held in often crowded underwater boxes for 6,12 and 24 hours, netted out and manually counted all over the state. For more info go to: http://rapidsresearch.com/html/fish_friendly.html



9/4/13

- Estimated 24,000 chum through Rapids today (ChumPilot13). Maybe have a few more days of increasing counts before drop.

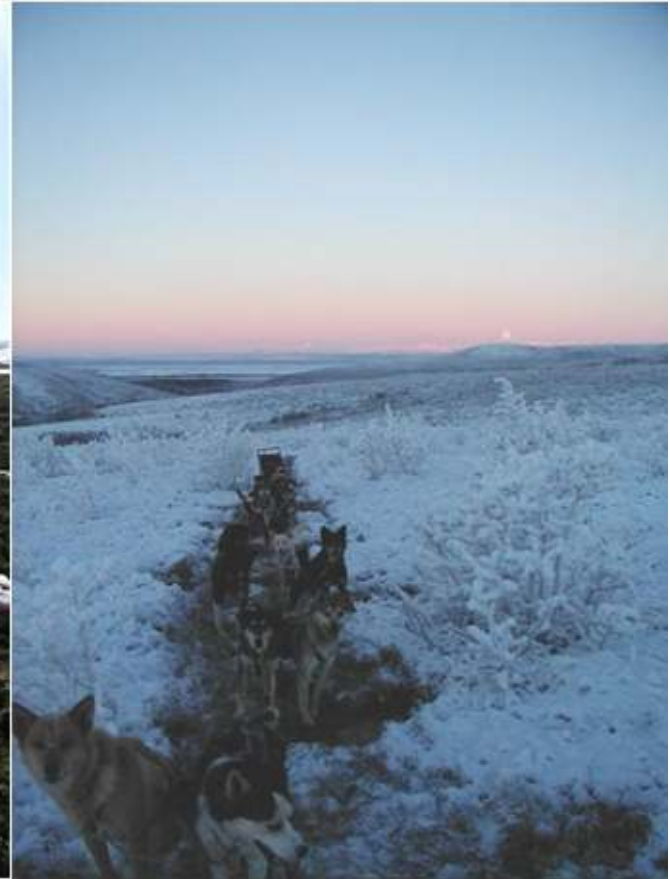
Picture (2011): The odd colored chum I posted 2 nights ago has generated a lot of comments but chum are naturally very colorful when in their spawning streams. Esra holding a healthy but ready to spawn chum salmon. When this male was in the ocean more than a month ago he had completely silver sides, no hooked nose and no teeth. Inside now he has no more stomach - it replaced by large sperm sacs as the female does with eggs. In maybe 1 week he will be pretty worn out and almost out of sperm and depending on competition on the spawning grounds be unable to stand his ground. After two weeks he'll be drifting back down stream, getting hung up on a log jam or washed up on bank, food for next spring's hatch of chum fry, flies, bears, foxes, wolves, and ravens. Good fish runs benefit nature many ways - nothing goes to waste.



9/5/13

- 1st large chum pulse may be cresting. In two days numbers should rise again as another big one coming (ChumPilot13). These later fall chum seem to be traveling a couple of days faster. Time will tell.

Picture: Really not much snow falls in this part of Alaska. In fall and spring you can find yourself traveling on a lot of bare ground especially out in the windblown flats and hills. First picture (spring) - heading north 40 miles out of Tanana to shut down trap cabin. In a few days it'll be all bare. In second picture it's the short days of fall and running trapline on almost just frost. In conditions like this I never rest too long and often camp not at my cabins but where I have a better take off as one has no control on the bumpy ground with wild rested dogs. I have a saying after all these years on how to control them on rough ground, "Drive 'em till they drop and then don't stop". It's only a saying I say.



9/5/13

- Most of 1st large chum pulse has past. Should rise again but a fair amount of commercial took place on it and it will have a higher Tanana River component in it so some will go there (**ChumPilot13**).

- Changed run timing on graph to 21 days from Pilot to Rapids. Traveling faster in the lower water. Fishermen use this timing to know when they can get their late whole fish for dogs. This year is not an issue as the whole late part of the run is good.

Picture: 1. Each fall as moose season opens there is a very noticeable increase in boat traffic (6 boats in picture). Mostly larger boats coming from the Yukon River bridge 100 miles upriver. Some will go 100 or well more miles downriver from here to the better hunting grounds. Both local and non local hunter boats have diminished drastically in the last 20 years and I'd guess it is mostly gas prices that does that.

2. Have a large winch that hauls out my fishwheel at Rapids each year and it was not working. Valves and magneto yesterday and today the carb comes apart and gets a new gasket made of a cardboard box. No parts store here. Winch finally running - YAHOO.



9/7/13

- Chum numbers steady (**ChumPilot13**).

- After all these big number chum days the season cumulative passage (about 250,000) is approaching the projects 17 year average of 280,000. With more big days to come it should pass it and record an above average year.

- **WaterTemp** graph shows an abrupt rise in river temperature as all the cold nights get replaced with rainy milder weather. This is good as people were remembering the year the ice came early and stranded hunters and made river travel impossible. I could not break camp fast enough to save everything on a year like that. Temp is still low.

Picture: Hauled a load of dry dog fish to Tanana today. Just finished hanging on racks there. They are bunched close as no more drying is needed and they'll make it to freeze up now without much problems (flies and mold). I wait as long as I can though as bears are a problems especially without me in Tanana to guard them - although the wife and kids have taken care of the problem many times before. You could never dry fish in trees like this - no air circulation.



9/8/13

- Chum numbers up some as second large late pulse starts to arrive at Rapids (**ChumPilot13**). When you get these big pulses one after another, some late ones from one get mixed with early ones from the next and so forth. Remarkably they stay mostly together after 731 miles from ocean.

- Chandalar River (240 miles upriver) just days away from experiencing massive invasion of fall chum (thought I'd add some drama) (**RapChan13**)

Picture: Today things ain't green like they use to be. Some trees loosing leaves. Kinda a colorful time of year. Next it all just turns grey then white. Wheel will run till declining days of last chum salmon pulse (around Sept 20). By then wheel may have seen some icing and almost always the hill tops and sometimes the beach can have snow on it. This canyon is a good week or more ahead of Tanana 40 miles downriver as to oncoming fall weather.

400' of 1/2 " cable holds fishwheel in current. I can stand on it.



9/9/13

- Chum numbers at Rapids could be seasons highest tomorrow (**ChumPilot13**).
 - Pilot Sonar all through counting chum.
- Total run will be 900,000 to 1 million.

Picture: (clockwise top left) How to get a winters wood and years dog food to the village of Tanana on 5 gal of gas. 1. This spring high water and ice took out a fisherman's wheel that he stored up a small creek for winter. 2. Make a deal with him for the salvage - a fish trade of course. 3. Bring it back to camp - clean it up and add more logs found in and along river (todays picture). 4. is a 2011 picture of what will happen in next week. Seine web will be nailed to raft - tarp put on top - cold creek water run in by plastic pipe and then filled with 1300 fish. Then I wait, with fish kinda staying cool in the creek water, till the day I shut fish counting project down and push raft to Tanana. It's my heating fuel for house and gas for dog team. Green alternative energy invented thousands of years ago.



9/10/13

- Looks like last big pulse is slowing and traveled faster than one before by one day. The later the pulse the faster they move this year it seems (ChumPilot13). Water getting lower (current slower) probably has a lot to do with it.

- Chandalar Sonar starts climbing in counts just like expected (RapChan13).

Picture: Today - 11 of the 14 dogs in the family (rest in Tanana). Two are 14 years old and one of those has been retired for 2 years now (lower left). All males here except 14 year old Sweeper in upper right. Interior Alaska huskies which means they got a little of many breeds in them except not a single bit of any of the northern working breeds. No show dogs here - what works gets bred. What withstands the test of time gets bred most. Main leaders in upper left. Weights are 50 to 64 lbs range.



9/11/13

- All downhill mostly from here as to chum numbers at Rapids. One more smaller pulse left (**ChumPilot13**).
- Chandalar Sonar really up in counts today (**RapChan13**).
- Now Eagle sonar at US/Canada border is close to getting the big pulses (**RapEag13**).
- Water temperature is average for date now but heading down at normal fall rate.

Picture: This spring the water was so high a tug pushing two barges of fuel and equipment upriver had to sit below Rapids near this camp for 12 days unable to make way against the strong current. They were running out of fresh water and on shower restrictions etc. so I mentioned we had a big hose from the creek next to camp all set up so they came by and filled up their tanks.



9/12/13

- Passage estimate at Rapids has solidly passed the average for all past years (1996 - 2012) of the fishwheel counting project. 342,000 fall chum past Rapids to date.
- Look at Chandalar Sonar counts climb today (**RapChan13**).
- Water height and temp right at average for date.

Picture: Yukon Men, Ralph and Joe got their winter meat today. Probably nice and fat also as it shouldn't be rutting heavy yet. They been hunting every day since season opened - great day for them. This is where I always happily feel "Now the work begins".



9/13/13

- Chandalar Sonar counts continue sharp climb today estimating over 11,000 fall chum(RapChan13).

- Little rise in water and some drift passing. A few real wheel killers went by. The 70 footers with green branches that stop for nothing including a cabled off fishwheel.

Picture: So many liked the moose yesterday, here's the other part. Joe, Ralph, Faith and Kate butchered the whole thing and all in the freezer now. Kate said it was a long day.

In the old days before freezers we dried, canned and salted anything shot this time of year (flies are still out and way to warm).

The wonders of the modern world. Up at fishcamp - don't see anyone all day and I can "see" what's going on at home with the family by way of their I phones and my Sat dish email.



9/14/13

- Chandalar Sonar counts continue sharp climb today estimating over 12,600 fall chum (RapChan13).

- Water continues up - expect 2' more. Came out of Porcupine River - funny it looked like Porcupine wheel killer trees drifting by to me.
- 600 fish yesterday, 700 today. My crib fish all done and other Rapids fishermen done days ago - Rapids fishing over for season except occasional dog pot. Another season comes to end.

Picture: Sunday the 15th is my wife Kathleen and I's anniversary. I'll try to make it to Tanana with a load of fish and camp stuff and bring some flowers down - cause I'm so sweet. First picture is this spring by home in Tanana and second is a couple of years (least 20) ago at Rapids fishcamp. We're still in love - and she still gets upset with me when I remind her marriage is forever.



9/15/13

- Big increase in sheefish - to 150/day in video testwheel. Double the highest day yet. Tanana fishermen just sent word that they were coming. Takes 1 day for chum salmon so maybe little more for shees. These are kept for feeding to dogs in coldest part of winter due to higher fat content.

Picture: 1. Four of the main species being caught now. From top - broad whitefish, female then male chum salmon and sheefish (whitefish family). Finally a coho salmon of which only getting 1 or 2 a day. You can see the chum (which make up 80% of the catch) this time of year are much more into their spawning mode and not the rich good silver ones we were putting up for people food earlier. This is normal.

2. Crib raft all full of almost 3 seasons worth of dog food. Yukon water is 50 degrees and this way of temporary storage till moving to Tanana, is about 40 degrees (piped in cold creek water).



9/16/13

- Big news is record number of sheefish - to 168/day in video testwheel. Looking back found about 3 years we just broke over 100 per day but 168 smashes that record. Sheefish are very important subsistence food. Got bags of eggs in the freezer for eating and flesh is very rich. They get up to 30 lbs here and in some northern rivers heavier. They spawn 1000 miles up the Yukon from the mouth in the fine gravel of the Yukon Flats. Then flush out to the brackish ocean water around the mouth to live till maturity (around 7 years of age) and then start making spawning runs every 2-3 years after that. What is amazing to me is the early migrators stop eating in early June and don't start again till they get back to the mouth area after November. In that time they traveled 2000 miles and grew a huge belly of eggs and spawned. Try that on an empty belly. Amazing fish.

Picture: Nice colorful rock outcropping heading upriver on Yukon.





9/17/13 - Icing at night now - no snow in hills yet. Water temp down to 46 degrees (almost average). Water height at average for date. Air temp never got out of the 30's today. Unless a mystery chum pulse hits, project shut down scheduled for Sept 20th (ChumPilot13)

Picture: Charlie all through fishing at Rapids for season and pushing his wheel to Tanana to be pulled out by heavy equipment there. Each spring he pushes it the 40 miles upriver with this boat (10 hours). Only two fishwheels ran in Rapids this summer due to the continued collapse of the King run and the closing of most of the camps there. Next year fishermen are expecting basically a total king salmon fishing closure.

9/18/13

- 7 coho salmon counted. Some years that is the total seasons count. This time of year they are all turning up the Tanana River 40 miles downriver. Later in October and November as the first ice is forming on the Yukon a real run heads past Rapids to spawning areas upriver. These coho here I think got lost - natures way of spreading salmon around.
- River temp heading down - 44.8 today. Getting close to that time of year you have to watch falling in. Only an idiot would go swimming if it gets much colder.

Picture: Just at dark I go turn on a generator that runs lights for video camera and see snow starting to build in hills. Heard Fairbanks and other areas got a fair amount. Wheel is completely water soaked from running for 4 months straight. Lower right in picture the huge log raft is under water just from my weight as I take this picture. Always like this at end of season. Air temp right at 34 degrees now on river. Clouds keeping it above freezing. Next clear night will see wheel icing for sure.



9/19/13

Picture: As the fishing season ends some will look back at the disaster known as our once vibrant King salmon fishery. And all the life on the Yukon River that it once supported - right up to the recent past.

This winter we'll hear again and again at our meetings the science of where did the King all go, as we look at "possibilities". Assure yourself you'll come away feeling the top culprit is the king bycatch in the Pollack Trawl Fleet (took on average, 4% of the Yukon King run for 19 years prior to 2005). Maybe you'll get to hear again how we put to many king eggs on the spawning grounds or global warming did it. What you will hear little of and certainly no action on, is what happened in these pictures (Ichthyophonus disease affected up to an estimated 70% of females entering Yukon and 45% in later years of testing). And absolutely nothing on the overfishing of king that took place for more than a decade when this severe problem was upon us (25 - 50% of entire run taken by in river commercial King openings during these crisis years). To get into that much would mean discussing the possibility of a management problem. And that will not happen.

Pictures are from 3 different Yukon River camps and show a tiny piece of the devastation from the disease. Pics taken in 1999 - 2003. Disease peaked in early and mid 90's and is almost non existent last 4 years. Of course so aren't the King Salmon.



9/20/13

- Border passage estimate jumped to almost 11,000 today (**RapEag13**).
- While Chandalar Sonar has been steady at about the same but less than expected (**RapChan13**). All normal as each year projects do not get the same percent of the run.
- Last day is biggest sheefish day for project at 203 per day.

Pictures (clockwise): 1. The beginning of wheel icing. Just like dipping candles the old fashion way. Every revolution of the wheel and more water freezes. This is nothing as I've seen 6" of ice on every pole and then the axle break from weight. Anyway stopped wheel mid day today. 2. So pop lead, disconnect cables, get livebox up on raft, etc. etc. and back it out into river with boat. 3. Float downriver 1/4 mile to wheel pull out place and take pictures of all the people left in Rapids. 4. Run it into shore across from my camp - hook a winch and lots of pulley blocks (for increasing power) to wheel and haul it up on beach to dry. Come back days later and pull up bank and into woods for winter.



9/29/13

- Canadian Border passage fall chum estimate up to 146,000 which is above average and approaching 2x official goal (**RapEag13**). Project still counting but numbers should drop now.

- Chandalar Sonar project done and reached a cumulative of 225,000 chum which is above average and almost 3x minimum goal (BEG)(**RapChan13**).

- Porcupine River Sonar has chum counts above average and still counting.

- Subsistence fishing in Tanana is heavy with sheefish numbers still running high (50 per day) and 100-200 chum a day numbers in fishwheels. A lot of sharing and some are still short on dog food so fishing will continue.

- Mid Yukon water height right at average for date.

Pictures: Taken earlier in fall on Yukon River. Shows the heavy fog being generated at a narrow place in river as the sun starts to rise and warm things up. Just a nice picture. Drizzle rain in Tanana all night so not nice here now. Hope to have some village pictures next.



10/2/13

- Eagle Sonar (**RapEag13**) counts heading down now as well as Porcupine River Sonar. These two projects still counting and I will continue updates every couple of days until they end.

Picture: One of five wheels still running in Tanana as of today. Across the river is the mouth of the Tanana River, a major tributary that meets the Yukon right here. Weather has warmed and just mild icing at night so fishermen will push to get late running fish. Sheefish still running heavy till just recently.

Most people have their supply but some still putting up people food and of course dog food. Next cold spell will probably shut things down and then there will be a rush to break the wheels down and get them to an area of the town where they will get pulled out before they freeze in the river. These town wheels get pulled out by bulldozer.

With the better internet in Tanana I can, and have been, sending out full quality pictures by email to anyone who has any they really like. Just email me and give me the date of update.



10/11/13

- All upriver salmon counting projects finished. Graphs below updated to end.
- As this is the final fishery update I have put all the seasons graphs and data back in so it can be used as a reference for whole season.
- Those who get this update as a way of keeping up with the lifestyle out on the Yukon can maybe catch some winter/trapping etc. pictures put on my Facebook page. Not sure how much but it's easy to do so will try.
- Yukon Men TV has big announcement on Monday, Oct. 14. (probably the new episodes)

Picture: Fishing mostly over in Tanana and now the dog mushers are getting the dogs in running shape. No snow so anything with wheels including running trucks are used. Each day dog teams are running on the town roads passing people and vehicles. The gravel roads toughen their feet and the control you have with the heavy vehicles trains the dogs to think you are in control. This was my first time out and only went 6 miles. Dogs were crazy to hook up but pretty calm here. Just like a lab goes after a stick and a bird dog points with little training these dogs are bred to run and pull - it's in their blood. You just got to direct it a little. See you next spring at fishcamp. Stan



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