

Check out the Upper Yukon River Salmon Run by reading:

Rapids Daily Email Updates 2008

A Daily Log of Project, Subsistence and Commercial Etc. Activity

In season short comments on activity in the Tanana, Rapids and Rampart area through word of mouth and observation are sent in with the daily data worksheet updates. Combined these give an idea of the season from 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 2008 season's daily updates:



Project reports etc. at web site RapidsResearch.com

6/16/08

- Video wheel ran for 5 hours on 15th with live box closed and was turned on today about 3pm with all the fish capture electronics working. Should have CPUE data tomorrow. Seems to be a small run of bering cisco migrating now but that is all so far.

- Three wheels operational at Rapids now with some nets in also but fishers pretty much waiting for first king to be caught before running wheels and nets constantly. Mostly "experimental" fishing going on and some small mesh whitefish/dog food effort

- This years video fish wheel project should be about the same but we received some great funding from AYK SSI to have students continue the existing database and collect Chinook info on size and visible Ichthyophonous disease. They will also be collecting ICH histology samples for our visible ICH confirmation study by an independent lab, Chinook genetic samples for ADF&G), PCR / ICH / Chinook samples for ADF&G, whitefish genetic samples for USFWS), and assisting USFWS in a salmon contaminates study. So lots of info this summer.

- Will start 2008 worksheets tomorrow and clear away the 2007 data.

Picture: 2 subsistence wheels (upriver) waiting for the king salmon to arrive and the video wheel searching for them today in Rapids



6/17/08

- No kings again after running video wheel all night. Other wheels continue to fish in day and just cisco running.
- I got question on if the first king run in different places than normal and all I can say is there are lots of fishers theories but I don't think so. Another question on when first king come: This is the first kings since the Chinook project started in 2000: (2000 - 6/22) (2001 - 6/25) (2002 - 6/17) (2003 - 6/13) (2004 - 6/9) (2005 - 6/16) (2006 - 6/20) (2007 - 6/18)
- Some years they build up fast like 2000 (ultimately a disaster year). Some years they come on slower like 2003.

(here's numbers for 1st couple of weeks - approx. / 24 hr CPUE):

| 2000 | 2003 |
|------|------|
| 8 | 11 |
| 18 | 17 |
| 26 | 11 |
| 34 | 39 |
| 44 | 24 |
| 38 | 19 |
| 44 | 23 |
| 68 | 15 |
| 104 | 7 |
| 49 | 7 |
| 54 | 6 |
| 76 | 21 |
| 106 | 19 |
| 40 | 19 |

In memory the earliest a king has come is June 6th and the latest is July 4th. Since I fished at Rapids the latest was July 1st.
First part of the run always is made up of the larger sized king which is why net fishers think there are less females in that part of the run. It's more a function of no male "Jacks" flooding the population pool.

- Picture: Marten - got another good picture this winter of one in a tree while trapping.



6/18/08

- [First Chinook got caught](#) in Rapids in video wheel early in morning (19th). This will get everyone to put all their gear in. Now I cut up fish and pass it around Rapids to all fishers here (traditional). So should have at least a good king meal for the Canadians visiting on Saturday and Sunday (YRDFA cultural exchange group) if we catch more, which will probably happen. Looks like it will be a good week before any real numbers show when viewing lower river data.

- Water level stable but low (data since 1977). Water temperature stable and average (data since 2003).

Picture:

- 1. Yukon Quest and Iditarod champs Charlie and Robin Boulding pushing wheel through Rapids yesterday. They used two boats and came all the way from Tanana where the wheel is pulled out by bulldozer each fall. It takes a drum of gas or more and about 7 - 11 hours depending on horsepower and current. A 50 horse engine can do it but is slow and minimum. Some wheels are pulled out right at Rapids by homemade winches.

- 2. Series of pictures of first king taken by video capture system used by project fishwheel. On days when we count thousands of fish, each will have a series of pictures like this. All pictures are run together at days end like a video and actually don't take to long to count.



6/19/08

- Most fishers starting to pick up a couple of king a day and all seems normal. Second king had ICH spores in heart but that doesn't mean anything as I'm sure it was just an odd duck as most are pretty healthy this time of season. YRDFA biologist Bob Dubay here checking out our sampling methods and helping out with things.

- Gear closure now so no one fishing till 6 pm tonight.

Picture:

- 1. Charlie Campbell cutting up king to be passed out to all area fishers.
- 2. first two king caught in Rapids (18 and a 11 lbs approx.)



6/20/08

- Fishers turned wheels back on and set nets tonight at six so should have a good report on the king buildup tomorrow. Some of the subsistence wheels consistently catch 2 to 3 times what the video wheel does so fish numbers of king being caught in Rapids is often higher than the video wheel might suggest. We'll see tomorrow.

- Water slightly going down and water temp steady.

-

Picture:

- 1. Bob Dubay (YRDFA biologist) on a subsistence wheel in Rapids.
- 2. Bob kissing a bering cisco.
- 3. Big king caught yesterday.



6/21/08

- King leveled off today, but with some nice fish caught.
- Yukon River Educational Exchange group from Canada arrived in camp and were thoroughly impressed with the accuracy of the data and the efficiency of the Rapids Research Center. They are considering defecting.

Picture:

- 1. Noreen Hirtle and Jeffrey Peter from Yukon Canada stealing US fish which will be figured into the Canadian border passage escapement.

This update written with help.



6/22/08

- King catch rates up (22 per 24 hrs.) and some good size to the ones being caught. Normally the kings caught in the first week or more of the run are of the best size we'll see during the run. Once the first real pulse hits (numbers wise) the size will drop and "jacks" will become commonplace. This should happen at Rapids about July 1st or 2nd. Just caught first "jack" of season which is a fish under about 28" overall.

- Subsistence closed tonight at 6 pm so all subsistence wheel and net fishing stopped. Video wheel continues with livebox open to river so fish are video recorded and go right back into the river

Picture:

- 1. YRDFA staff members Bob & Jason work with YRP Canadian educational exchange participants sampling king salmon for Ichthyophonus, genetic stock identification, and SLWG data at Rapids Research Center.

- Two biggest king caught today.



6/23/08

- About half the camps populated with the rest to happen very soon as king arriving in good enough numbers to really fish. Most fish so far going for eating fresh but next opening should be start of subsistence. For instance this camp just hung our first king yesterday.

- Starting to get first Student Data Project data entered. (see KingData08):

Up to fish sample number 19:

* Average weight: 17.2 lbs

* Average length: 78.1 cm

* Percent of females: 21%

* Percent of Ichthyophonus (all king): 10.5%

- Really can't say much with this small sample size but weight/size is high.

- Subsistence still closed (2 days).

- Early but added ChumPilot08 and 07

Picture:

1. Don Andon of Tanana cutting filets to bring to town for his family to eat fresh. A lineman by trade he grew up in Rapids in summers and was the perfect boat captain for the YRDFA Educational Exchange.

2. More from the Ed Exchange group.



6/24/08

- Decent king numbers continue for this early point in the run, but fishers are very concerned about weakness reported with the major pulses on the way. The word is out and fishers are scrambling to get going and/or get to camp. Almost all have basically 0% of even household needs met. Many talked about how they would curtail different needs to do something to help fish get through. Net fishers are concerned as many have no small gear to use and even if they did, once worn out summer chums show up it is impossible to fish without discarding chums which no one will do.

- Cisco run has dropped off considerably.
- Water temp rising to above average.

Picture:

1. Yukon 800 (Fairbanks to Galena and back) just happened. I believe only 3 of the 11 racers finished with the grueling pace and distance taking it's toll on motors and boats. Two of the student techs that take data at Rapids each year raced but took out their lower unit in an accident (red boat). These boats are works of art and the care put into them is obvious.



6/25/08

- Kings steady, fishers cutting fish and last of camps opening up and getting going. Some of the nets catching slower than expected but numbers good for this early in run.

- Fish starting to get smaller which is normal as run progresses.

Picture:

1. Cy, Andy, Esra and Lara doing fairly complex sampling for Ichthyophonus disease. it is a collaborative effort between independent researchers, ADF&G, and the Rapids Research Center Student Data Collection funded by AYK SSI. Along with all the weight and measures each Chinook has heart samples taken for PCR ICH testing at two different labs, ICH histology for two other different labs and our own visible ICH disease determination. Here complete sterility is necessary to insure uncontaminated samples (PCR). Hopefully this work will shed light on comparative results from the various sampling techniques.



6/26/08

- Kings up slightly but size going down even more which means more "jacks" and therefore less females. Students did 50 more samples in last days and only got 4 females. This is opposed to the first part of the run where we were running 20% females. This is all rather normal for the years the project has been collecting full season data since 2004. Fish look all nice and firm and healthy though.

- Cisco run making another climb to the highest point of the season so far at 181 per 24 hours.

- Water temp climbing and high, and water level remains low for this time of year.

- Small numbers of Broad whitefish showing up in all the wheels.

Picture:

Two ways of running dogs:

1. Opening up a trapline at 5 mph using a single loose leader out in front to break trail last fall.
2. Arleigh Renolds winning the Tanana Open Championship last spring in a snow storm at 20 mph



6/27/08

- Kings up again. The small numbers of hours fishers have been going since startup at 6 pm show most fishers with some okay numbers for this stage of the run (prior to first pulse).

- This is getting to be prime fishing time with almost all camps open or activity happening in them. Some fishers have a few days of cutting hanging in smokehouses or fish in freezers now.

- Project cumulative is slightly low for this time but in 2001 it was way lower (lowest of all years from 2000 to 2008) and that year eventually was the best king run through Rapids in those years with fishers having great catches and the Canadian border fish wheels catches going off the graph.

- Great news about some better king numbers at mouth but not out of trouble yet.

Picture:

1. Dave Daum, USFWS Fairbanks biologist, travels each year to Nenana, Tanana and Rapids to evaluate and help with the 3 fish wheel video project there. Here we are doing important electronic component research evaluation (or better put - looking busy for the camera). Actually Dave is quite a brain when it comes to electronic components and invaluable to have when trouble arises.



6/28/08

- Have 119 lines of data in tab KingData08:

Average weight: 13.1 lbs

Average length: 73.4 cm

Percent of females: 10.9%

Percent of Ichthyophonus (all king): 5%

- Average weight heading down as it did for last four years.

- All gear even nets reporting smaller fish now that beginning of run has past, hence the lowering female rate.

- Visible ICH disease nice and low but that is normal this time of year.

- Rainy weather but cutting goes on as fishers afraid things will end - either run or legal openings.

- Water height up

- Second pulse at lower river coming on strong. Yahoo - hope it continues.

Picture:

1. Some Peters, Andon, Derrickson, Weihl, and Brigham family members at fish camp 20 miles above Tanana. They run nets and have their smokehouse going after a few days of fishing. Hope the rain lets up.



6/29/08

- King numbers down slightly for wheels and nets down more as size stays down with abundant "jacks"
- Water has risen a good bit which should help most fishing sites here as kings get pushed closer to shore based gear like wheels and nets.
- The first pulse is days away from showing it'd head and the next increase should be it. It may not be long but should be stronger than anything we have seen so far by a lot.

Picture:

1. Harris and Nick Hyslop run nets in Rapids for their family. Nice to see young people fishing. They have a camp just below Rock island.
2. For days now this is a typical catch out of the fishwheels with a larger one once in a while. Many of these king are just above 70 cm (total length) but are what fishers call "jacks" as they are almost all males. The two in the tub are net caught fish with most of the nets reporting small fish also and smaller numbers than the wheels as these size fish mostly go right through the nets. They seem to be the bulk of what is in the river now.
"Happy spawning" guys!



6/30/08

- King numbers down again - may be the low spot just before pulse #1 as seen at lower river test nets and Pilot Sonar. Quality is down but only seen in video as closure now - darker kings.
- Pulse 1 will bring fresh new fish and hopefully some bigger ones and some females.
- Water still rises and today we got a wash of trees and brush from a local north bank creek right on the wheels. No damage.
- Got more reports from above Rapids of nets doing poorly. One family used a 7" mesh net and that caught more pounds than their 8 1/4" which was fished at same time. Next opening they are going to try a 6" chum net for king.
- Water height close to normal now.

Picture:

1. Malaki (grandson) heading to the video wheel to count fish. It's closure so subsistence wheels ahead are off, and jacked out of water.



7/1/08

- Some more king measurements entered in KingData08 plus some large mesh set net data (27 samples):

Up to fish fishwheel sample number 151:

Average weight: 12.6 lbs and ave. dropping

Average length: 72.4 cm and ave. dropping

Percent of females: 9.9% and ave. dropping

Percent of Ichthyophonus (all king): 4.6% - one bright spot is low ICH rate, but then small fish are usually not as diseased.

- Most complaints I have ever heard about small king and no females from all gear types - hopefully this pulse will bring a change but not looking good so far.

Picture: (clockwise from top)

1+ 2. Pulse 1 chinook - these 2 subsistence wheels had a few after turning on but it will take lots of these size Chinook to feed families.

3. Video wheel catch after 4 hours - all not much bigger than a broad whitefish.



7/2/08

- Again lots more in KingData08.
- Size still dropping as seen in data and noticed by fishers. Rapids tracking more like Pilot Sonar ChinPilot08 than set nets at mouth ChinLY08
- Out of 216 Chinook sampled only 19 are females and they are relatively small to. The thing that bothers fishers like myself is this issue has not even begun to be addressed after all these years of upriver fishers complaining about this. We can't expect to have Chinook, 5 and 6 years from now, if this is what gets sent into the upper river year after year. This is not the size and sex ratio that came in the mouth and blaming fish wheel sampling for the small size data is not addressing the problem - it's hiding from it.

Picture:

1. This is some of the main crew for the summers data collection.
2. Halley and Fayleen have worked before and are the future experts. Joe just graduated and has 8 data years and a summer with USFWS behind him. Cy moved into a main man position this year and Esra is a senior and has 8 years on him also going back to the years Dick Kocan worked with the Rapids students.



7/3/08

- Added average and daily cumulative king columns to ShortSum and average cum line to AllChinCum graph.
- Very slow king day for all I talked to as we approach the peak of pulse 1 as seen at Lower River Set Net Project. Pulse 1 at the set net project at Yukon mouth (ChinLY08 graph) was 3 days climbing, one day peak and 2 days going down. After about 3 days of river travel to Pilot Sonar and a heavy harvest of the king during prime time fishing, pulse 1 now changes to what it looks like in ChinPilot08. This is probably why Rapids sometimes tracks Pilot better.
- Water temp kinda low as rains flush cold creek water into Yukon up this way and water height right about normal.
- 5 summer chum (24hr) today - nobody likes the summer chum here - they just make fishing harder and are mostly worn out white flesh fish.

Picture:

1. Fish camp (Rapids) right after breakup 2008. This was the first year in many the ice actually rubbed along the bank and it was not that high when you consider that the smokehouse close to the bank would have been crushed on some past years. Seems like breakups have been pretty mild lately.



7/4/08

- Pulse 1 is not showing up. Every fisher I talk to, net or wheel, had better fishing and bigger king a week ago before pulse 1 was suppose to be here. We will probably see numbers start to ramp up soon as we approach the pulse 2 days. Restrictions will kick in though and that will be a problem.

- We have lost one major family camp due to bad fishing and more are talking about leaving as soon as restrictions start. This is not a good year. We have 17 people at this camp tonight so you can imagine when I came from the wheel tonight with the 6 fish at right. Even the kids were amazed.

Picture:

1. Complete king catch five hours after turning on this evening. These males which average 7.5 lbs are heading to Canada to spawn so our kids will have lots of fish when they grow up.

2. Usually these small size king do not develop ICH disease like the big fish but here's a heart from a 10.4 lb one that did.

- Tomorrow I will have a happy report just cause I'm tired of bad ones. Just don't look at the data.



7/5/08

- Fishing slowed a little but quality still good.
- 427 king sampled so far for measures but getting behind on entering - have it soon.
- Water steady and right at normal level.

Picture:

1. A beautiful wonderful Happy Fourth of July, 2008. The men usually try to stay away from the cutting table - to much work going on there.



7/6/08

- Pulse 1 draws to a close and fishers shut off for closure at 6 pm. Last catch of day was 21 Chnook at a 6.9 lb average. Being the backside of the pulse the quality was a little poorer and the visible disease ICH rate was 24 %. What made this very unusual was the size of king that had ICH as these small king almost never have it. Small fish are just as likely to be infected (other studies show) but the visible disease usually does not manifest as much at all. ADF&G employees were here to witness it first hand and it surprised us all.

- Long climb to peaks of Pulse 2 and 3 should start any day, and with time and mesh restrictions on this part of the run in lower river the upper river may see size and numbers like back in 2001. Pretty heavy restrictions will be in place here also, but it will be important to see some quality fish get to Canada.

Picture:

1. At Rapids Research Center only the most skilled techs take data, insuring quality measures so our managers can get the info they need to provide for good escapement.
2. High ICH disease rate for small king.



7/7/08

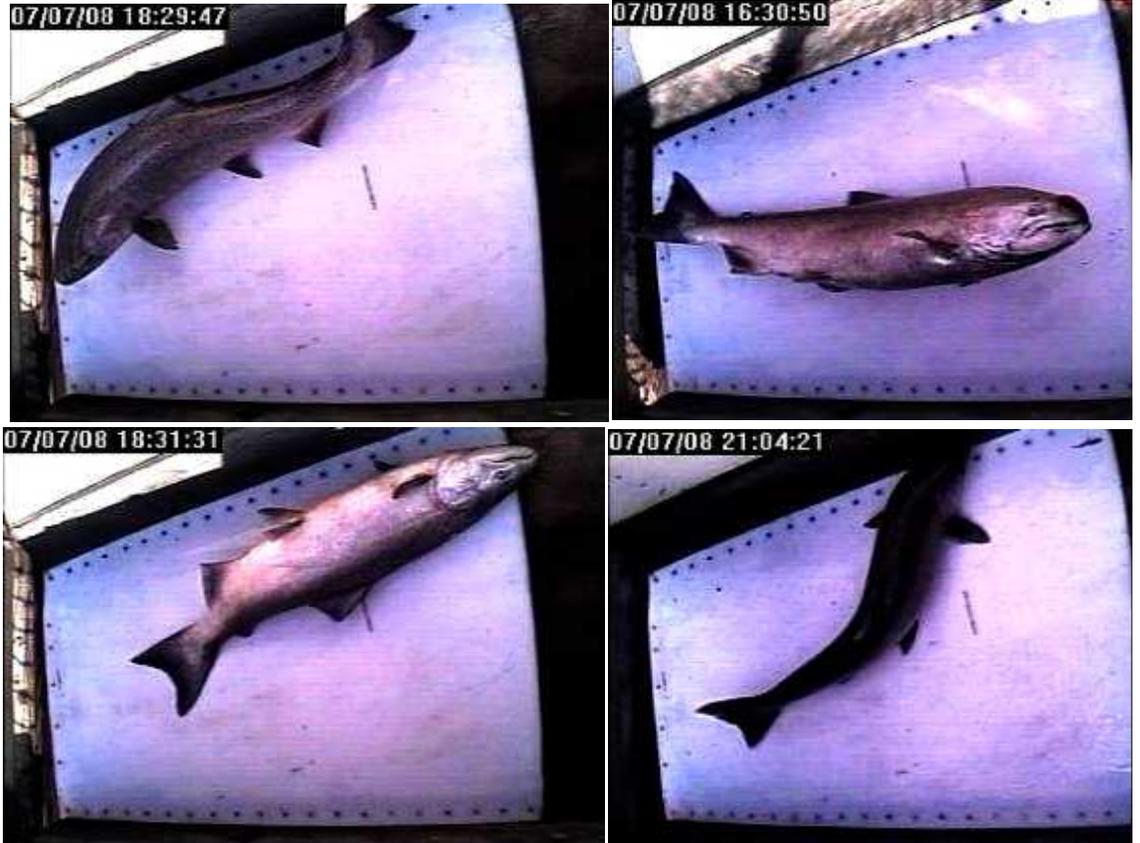
- More data in KingData08 - Up to fish sample number 387:
Average weight: 11.4 lbs - Average length: 70.3 cm
Percent of females: 8.6% - Percent of visible Ichthyophonus
(all king): 5.6%

- Chums still at low level. As seen on other years the amount in lower river has often little to say about what this small run up here will build to. Quality is very good as always with the very first summer chum with red flesh in almost half of them. Very quickly they'll turn to 90% pale flesh or less. I use to see this each year for 11 years 60 miles up the Tozitna River right on the spawning grounds where I lived. The first week of the run was the only time I would see any good amount of color in the chum flesh. I use to dry graying for people food instead. Most of the salmon was too poor for dried people food although cooked fresh it was okay.

- Water level up a little and drift making running dangerous for wheel - it's been digesting some big pieces of wood.

Picture:

1. Late in day some larger king came through (only seen on video). These are maybe 18 to 22 lb fish and that is really good for lately and all caught in 6 hours or so. Looking at lower river graphs, pulse 2 should start to show signs today of a 5 day or so build to it's peak. These larger fish are encouraging and some are females it looks like.



7/8/08

- Pulse 2 definitely here and fishers with new fresh looking and slightly larger king being caught. To early to tell true pulse makeup however as first fish of each pulse are usually the best.

- Tons more samples in KingData08, with 450 sampled to July 6th:

Average weight: 10.8 lbs - dropping and lowest ever (2004 to 2008)

Average length: 69.2 cm - same as weight.

Percent of females: 8.2% - same as weight

Percent of Ichthyophonous disease (all king): 7.6% - about normal and rising, but this is normal as the season moves on.

Picture:

1. Katlyn Zuray starting up the video wheel this morning - because of the drift we were shutting it off at night even when subsistence was open. Kate's been going to fishcamp since I use to load her in a fish box to go to camp. I asked her to come back and help with our abnormally heavy work load with data collection. Just finished her 2nd year at UAF.

2. Kate and Cy at data table.

3. Entering the raw paper datasheets into excel to be put in KingData08



7/9/08

- All net and wheel fishers, from 20 miles down to above Rapids, that I talked to reported higher numbers, bigger size and more females yesterday. During day today all mentioned it dropped off a bit but that is what Pilot Sonar did at this point of the run also. Should pick up tomorrow and keep rising steady hopefully. Some fishers should get what they can handle somewhat during the 2 days it is open in the coming week, as the pulse is supposed to be so large, but it would be nice to see lots of extra head to Canada to spawn.

- I've been working more than 24 hours now on computer / internet / satellite problems and hope I can even get this update sent. I'm a fried egg at this point.

Picture:

1. 6 pm opening night. After wheels and nets go in, 4 boat loads of fishers congregate to see how kings are running and say hello. Here we all look over at first king in fishwheel basket. These two wheels here provide fish for many families to put up.



7/10/08

- King numbers up in video wheel and larger size continues. Report downriver of a 50 lb king during last opening - (closed now).
- Cisco making a comeback slightly (105 in 24 hr.) and seeing a Broad Whitefish or two lately.
- Was in Rampart this evening and fishing there (almost all net fishers) seemed poor I think for the same reason net fisher at Rapids did poor during 1st pulse - few fish big enough to get caught in regular king nets. They did report as Rapids that larger ones seem to be showing up now.

Picture:

1. Video wheel - goes round and round for 4 months. The last two (chum season) it never stops as it's on 24 hr duty. During king season as a means of impacting such an important species as king as little as possible, we get the data from 12 hours of running a day. Also many years because of the drift at that time of year nighttime running would be suicide with these big wheels. They don't stop or stay stopped (by drift logs) kindly for very long like a small wheel.
2. Little / big king, bigger king, Broad whitefish, and sheefish.



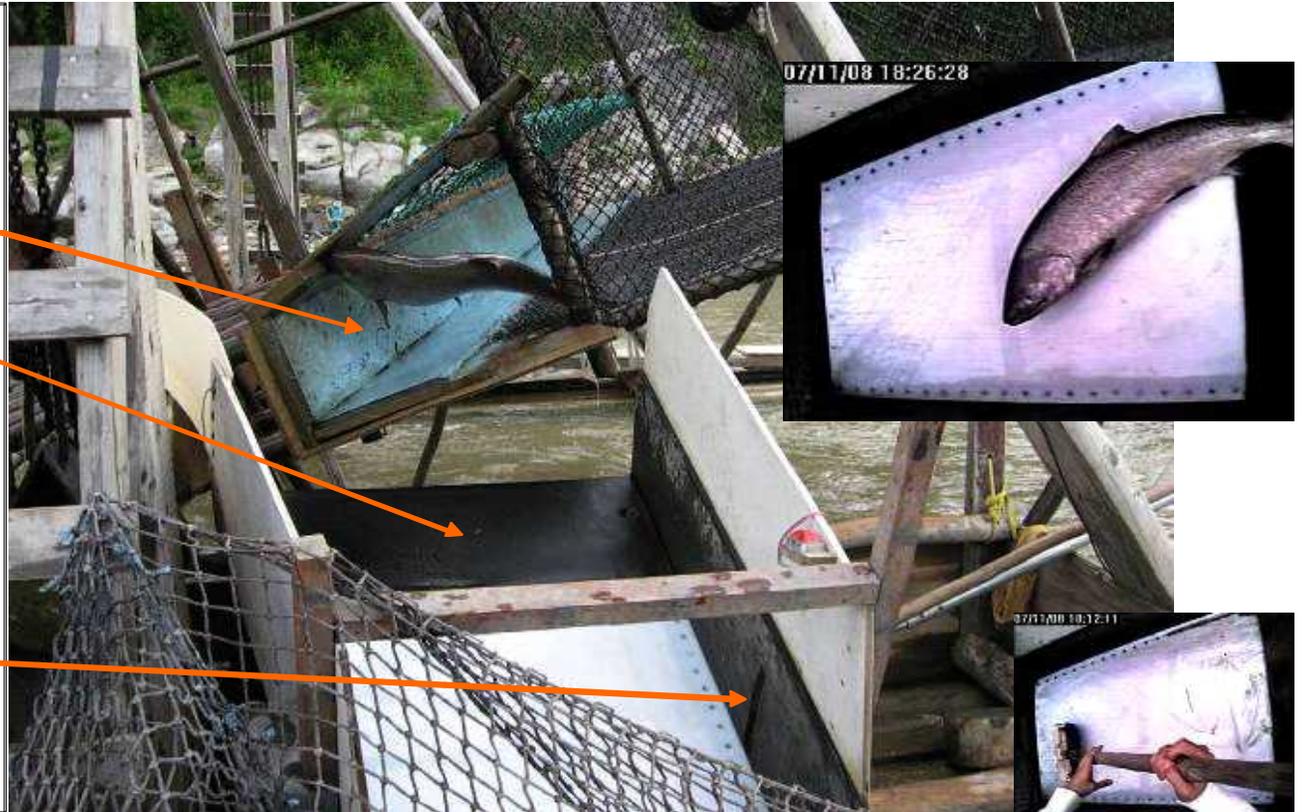
7/11/08

- Bigger king continue during second pulse - like night and day next to the small fish of first pulse.
- KingData08 up to date now - data there today but will average it all tomorrow.

Picture:

1. First king of opening in video wheel. Blue foam in chute by king is 5/16" thick and has virtually eliminated injuries from the king flopping down the original wooden chute used in the first year of the project. The video chute the king is about to enter has 1" of foam and the whole chute is mounted on a spring pole with sides that give sideways also. The wheel is so fish friendly the fish often come back for another ride (joke).

2. Same king that is in 1st picture. A constant video of the chute is being microwaved back to a computer at camp. There 14 more pictures of the chute is then added to a "movie" constantly in progress when the computer receives a signal to do so from the infrared sensors in the sides of the video chute. Any movement of a passing fish, or person washing chute as seen in last picture will trigger the sensors .



7/12/08

- Average king weight still staying high. Catches dropped off in day today for all I talked to but generally best numbers this year seen in this last opening.
- More in KingData08 plus latest averages.

Picture:

1. This catch averaged 12.6 lbs. which for at least the last 5 years (no comparable all season data before that) is high for main part of run. In our data collection each year the larger healthy king at beginning and larger worn out and /or ICH king at end push the average weight up and we have ended up with about a 12 lb average weight since 2004. So a pulse or catch with 12.6 lb ave. mid season is high.

- To put this in some more perspective however, we the fishers are all saying to one another how good the size is yet we forget that 15 - 20 years ago only 12 of these 39 king would have been sellable as only 14 lb king and over were accepted by our buyer back then. The largest fish in this catch is also only 22.3 lbs. We may be sending, on many of these years lately, enough to meet escapement numbers but the eggs making it to the spawning grounds because of reduced female size may be only half what that escapement number was meant to achieve.



7/13/08

- Was doing 5 king per hour last part of day so numbers are heading back up. Might be towards peak of pulse 3 or maybe last of pulse 2. It's getting confusing as these two are really one big pulse in a way. Anyway next opening may a big king number one again.

- Cumulative graph indicates were going to pass 2007 in overall season king numbers (AllChinCum).

- Another big tree almost took the live box off the wheel and my underwater generator also. Most wheels at Rapids are lucky as drift is out a ways or on north shore (wheels on south) but every now and then one slips in. The bad thing is they are big wheels as I mentioned before and hold back alot of current when stopped by a log.

Picture:

1. Most of the Town of Rampart (35 miles up river). It has gotten smaller in the last bunch of years but population grows each fishing season as people come back to fish each summer. Nice neat fishcamp just below the town.



7/14/08

- 2008 king cumulative so far has passed 2007 total, but is running at 60% of the average for project years starting in 2000.

- At over 5 king per hour this was certainly a big day and size was still up and females present.

- Student techs have sampled about 800 king so far (project funded by AYK SSI):

721 samples entered in KingData08:

Average weight: 10.9 lbs (low)

Average length: 69.0 cm (low)

Percent of females: 11.4% (low)

Percent of Ichthyophonus (all king): 7.1% (normal)

Picture:

1. Famous dog mushers, Charlie and Robin Boulding and their new little girl come each year to Rapids from the Tanana River where they live year round on the river near Manley Hot Springs. They fish a wheel and nets here. Here at Rapids Research Center they are downloading the latest Rapids run information and checking emails off the wireless network run here. It's a traditional subsistence activity common at Rapids.

2. Nice size kings (22-25 lbs ?) today that are still on their way to Canada - closure till tomorrow at 6 pm.



7/15/08

- Added Eagle Sonar graphs ChinEagle08 and ChinEagle07 as attention is now shifting to the border escapement now.

- Numbers don't lie (that's a lie) - anyway a few more good days and cumulative catch will be close to some of the other lower years of this project.

- Nets having a hard time in drift with some not able to set. Some wheels will shut down for night and share with net fishers as catches good. Video wheel will run all night as boats coming for king for Elders Home, Spirit Camp and extended family that still don't have their fish. Nobody cutting at our camp as all went home during closures because of to many no fish days.

Picture:

1. Charlie Campbell walking spare pole tonight at opening. We watch him do this all the time and say no way hosay. This wheel, even though it is the furthest upstream of 3 close together, can sometimes catch the most fish. The lower wheel is the video wheel and even though same size and all, it catches consistantly one third the amount or less of the upper two - even though I got the first shot at the fish on this river bend. As someone once said of fishwheel spots it's all about location, location, location.



7/16/08

- Size still okay and females present but quality is going down and noticed by all talked to. This is normal at this point in run as a pulse winds down which it seems is happening as numbers are down also. So this may be the ending of the good numbers of fish but king will continue into first week of August here in small numbers usually.

- Water level pretty high for this time of year and water temp slightly high.

- Adjusted Lower River to Rapids graph/king speed etc. - check it out - looks better ? - ChinPilot08 and ChinLY08.



Picture: Una Edwardson and family of Tanana came by to get fish to cut and give out to family in Tanana. 100 % of our catch from this opening was given away except for 1sheefish we ate. This happens all the time among all the fishers here at Rapids.



Picture: Lester Erhart, driving the Spirit Camp boat, came by also to get fish for the families and kids there. He's teaching all the youth how to cut fish and work all day. No one knows how to better than him.

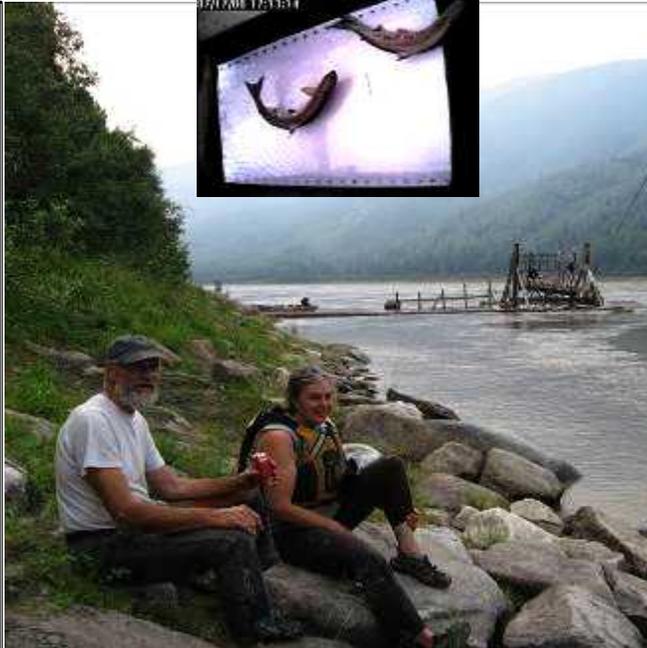
7/17/08

- Chum salmon numbers rising for last two days (picture of two in chute today). Will have enough to sample to start fall chum arrival project at next opening.

- King continuing to look poorer as slow and hurt ones from pulse 3 are more numerous now as pulse winds down (all normal and happens each year).

- Data Collection Project: I was running numbers today and out of 721 king sampled so far:

- 4 were 30 lbs or greater
- 11 were 25 lbs or greater
- Largest was 38 lbs
- this is why the king weight (10.9 lbs) and length average is so poor this year. Less big king, and that means less females and less eggs in the females.



Received requests for more people pictures. So here is Steve and Ann after turning on their wheel in Rapids last opening. Been at Rapids since the early 70's they are from Manley Hot Springs up the Tanana River. It's about 100 miles by river to Manley so they don't travel there much in summer.



Nice day at Rapids. Joe fixin his hot rod, Joe, Ria and Cy hanging by boat and Bob filling the Edwardsons boat up with king. All the local fishers and family members that come to cut or pick up fish support the youth data collection project. For one thing, it keeps the kids on the river.

7/18/08

- Just like at lower river numbers are dropping in this part of the run. Quality definitely way down from all those nice fish of days ago. Should be some fish to cut for awhile. Usually fishers don't stop till 25th or a little more and then most king aren't usable for people food so fishing ends.

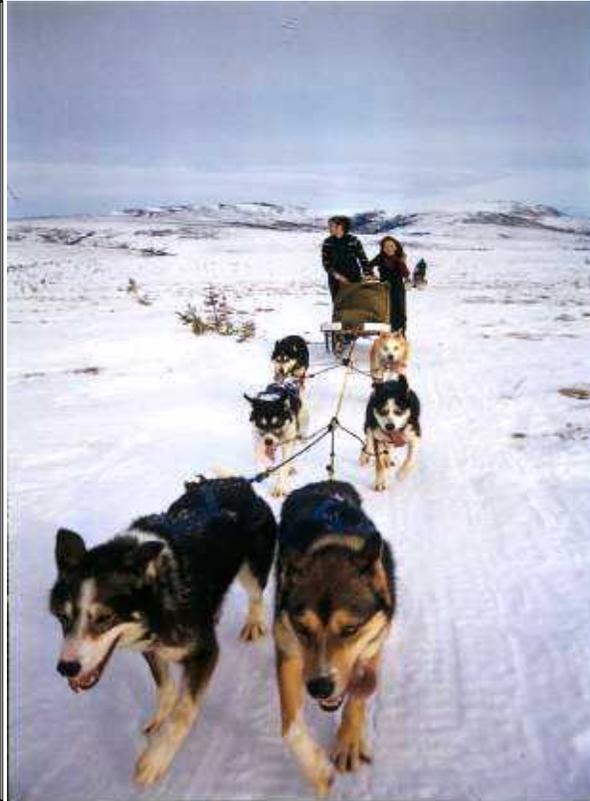
- River still high but dropping and no drift now except a huge tree a few times a day.

- Added Eagle Sonar Passage graph for all years - ChinEagAll

Picture: Going back in time (please forgive me BB for old pictures)

1. Two of my older techs when they were younger, 35 miles north of Tanana. Monica works for NASA as an aerospace engineer and came this summer and volunteered some tech time. Katlyn goes to UAF and was able to come and do all of the computer data entry for a couple of weeks.

2. Paul Hershburger and Dick Kocan teaching the kids how to sample and identify ICH back in 2000.



7/19/08

- Added lots more lines of data to KingData08. 987 fishwheel king samples entered so far and 80 large mesh net king (have a lot more of net data but not entered yet. Anyway still only 4 king 30 lbs or over (nets and wheel) out of 1067 king

- Started chum flesh project to build a baseline of flesh color and get ready to determine an arrival date for the fall chum which can happen here about July 20th to Aug 15th each year.

Picture: 1. 2008 King heart heavily diseased with Ichthyophonus. This is what the students are trained to look for. This one is easy but sometimes the white spots are smaller and number just a few. Being a fisherman orientated project we are interested in keeping track of the visible disease as that "disease rate" is what affects fishers. An infected fish can be caught, cut and dried and eaten and nobody might know anything. A diseased king like at right probably has little hope of spawning and will hopefully never see the inside of a smokehouse. This is why fishers are more interested in the visible disease rate year to year.

We also have 90 ICH samples (visible positive and negative hearts) prepared and ready to go to lab to double check the ICH ID of the students and myself.



2. Today's catch after 11 hours - 5 king - lots more chum now.

7/20/08

- Real slow fishin all today. Someone turned off the faucet. Should start picking up tomorrow but this last pulse may be a lot of Tanana River king so may not see as much fish as would expect looking at lower river graphs.

- water temp going down because of rains and cold days and nights.

Picture: 35.9 lb king. Largest caught in Rapids this year (sampled or not sampled). Just caught today in video wheel. My last check before closure I got this one and a 3.9 lb jack. This big guy had about 200 ICH spots on heart and spleen. Now there are five 30 lbs and over king out of about 1100 sampled. A 50+ lb king was supposedly caught 20 miles down from here this summer. A .4 lb king was caught yesterday (sampled). It had a fully developed sperm sack and was ready to rock and roll.



7/21/08

- Last unnamed (how belittling) king pulse starting. Let's call it pulse 4. Anyway the fish are nice looking in video and hopefully will provide the last of okay numbers for season. Weather is making it hard to dry fish.

- Big bo bo tonight - log hit lead - broke cable - lead goes under wheel - stops wheel - wheel poles break - I work till midnight.

Picture: Chuck and Carrie Hugny Farr and friend June with "Larson's Eddy" in background. They run a net off the tip of the big rock. It's a king eddy with a 50' channel right next to it. Once a heavy producer of large king it doesn't catch enough in recent years to supply them with fish. He started using 7" mesh and then tried 5 1/2" to get the small king that the wheels get. Chuck is one of the original Ichthyophonous guys and worked with Bill Fliris who first saw the problem in the late 1980's. He teaches science and this year collected most of the net size/ICH data I have, with Carrie and June's help, here 6 miles above Rapids. Their 2 boys were project data techs for a number of years.



7/22/08

- Getting some good numbers of king from this last pulse so far. The percent of Pilot Sonar passage that Rapids is seeing is fairly good also. This may be low fishing pressure on this pulse downriver of here, slightly high counting at Pilot, slightly high counting here, or any combo of those reasons. All normal things in fish monitoring. Should be Tanana River bound kings in this pulse also.

- Fall chum flesh color project going and as expected all signs say no fall chum with only 15% red fleshed chums being caught (little high). Will be reporting more on this later as fall chum are a ways off probably.

Picture: 1. Charlie and Robin Boulding pushing fishwheel, dogs and dried strips, etc to Tanana today (40 miles down). They got enough strips and dry fish and actually stopped fishin a while ago as everything needed to be dry for this trip. They are going back to their home / fishcamp on the Tanana River and will fish two wheels over there for fall chum up to freeze up. This wheel will be pulled out in Tanana by heavy equipment and has seen it's last fish for the season. 2. The City of Tanana supports fishers by charging only \$75 to pull out and push back in a fishwheel. I usually pull them - all at once in early October after I leave here.



7/23/08

- King slowed as expected and this backside of pulse had a ICH disease rate of 39% (23 samples) and most very severe. Try for a few more days but this is what stops king fishing each year. Exterior quality, size + sex is fairly good otherwise but these go on dog rack.

- 3 sheefish today and summer chums staying at a good low level - most white flesh and poor for food.

Picture: Joe, who is real good at numbers, is from Thailand (UAF freshman this year) and has come the last few years to work as data tech at Rapids.. Here we are triple checking (2 paper and one computer) each number vs. data on the formalin fixed tissue in cassettes that contain both visibly negative and positive ICH disease heart samples for later lab analysis. This work was done before but this year will be statistically meaningful as was requested by our AYK SSI funding source. While we don't monitor the infected disease-free king going by, we keep a handle on the amount of visible disease in those king that made it this far and are heading to Canada. Comparing past infection prevalence work from different conflicting studies with our disease rates it seems roughly half the kings infected that come in river develop the disease by Rapids or don't make it this far



7/24/08

- King quality down enough that most cutting has stopped and fishers are talking fall chum. I will try a few more times to cut king.
- Adjusted ChinEag08 and found a day lag mistake. Yes even Rapids Research can make a mistake.

Picture: Tanana Spirit Camp comes to Rapids.
1. Trip up to video wheel to explain the operations there - all they really liked to see was fish taken out of livebox. They helped put the Canadian flag on wheel.
2. Just got through explaining the king measuring/ICH project and fall chum arrival project - both underway in picture.



7/25/08

- Water at max level for 1977 to 2007 years. Drift continuously coming and so much for the "unique currents in Rapids that allow wheels to be run there with little or no down time". Project will stop and take Saturday off and then we'll see how things look. Sorry everyone, no pictures for Saturday.

Pictures: Clockwise from top left.

1. This morning upper wheel which was off, raised up and moved in got hit by the tree missing video wheel in pic 4. Ripped apart dead box and other damage.

2 and 3. Another tree missed upper wheel and hit middle wheel and knocked out spare pole and lead fence and wheel against shore now.

4. Right after this tree just missed, another hit video wheel and hung up on livebox - just got baskets stopped and raised before it broke loose and went right through where baskets were. People were at all three wheels when this was going on. Water is going up at least one more day - I want a wheel to use for rest of season so moved all as close to bank as possible till water crests in a day or so.



7/27/08

- Video wheel pushed back out and running by mid day.

Water has crested and drift let up. Suppose to be another 1' or so rise tomorrow - we'll see.

- A couple of fishers had nets in a few unique drift free spots last few days and reported okay looking king being caught (small numbers). No other wheels are running at present and all are still up against shore. One needs work and may not run anymore this year and another will wait till water goes down or fall chum.

- Will cut small number of chum caught before closure to check for % of red flesh rise (fall chum). Remember last year how a small pulse of them went through Rapids on Aug 5th and a week later we were back to nothing but summer chum again. The real numbers of fall chum then arrived on Aug 23rd. That was late. Only way we have these dates and all is because of the flesh color study the students do.

Pictures: Not much beach to walk on by video wheel today. It's all climbing now. Spare pole (new white log) is about up bank as high as it can go. When water gets higher I have a shorter spare I use. As you can see from tab WaterHeight08 it is often a lot higher than now early in season but the water is usually dropping and drift not as much a problem.



7/28/08

- Final net data entered and essentially all wheel data also in KingData08: Averages for 1109 King sampled (fish wheel)

| | |
|-----------------------------|----------|
| Average weight all | 11.7 lbs |
| Average length all | 70.8 cm |
| Visible ICH all | 9.6% |
| Visible ICH in 65.5 cm or > | 9.8% |
| King 25 lbs or > | 24 |
| King 30 lbs or > | 6 |
| Largest king | 38 lbs. |
| Percent of females | 19% |

Visible ICH from 6/19 to 7/16 in wheels - 8.0% (923 king)

Visible ICH from 6/19 to 7/16 in nets - 7.3% (123 king)

- Fishers waiting for more chum flesh to turn red before starting to fish again. To many kings are not usable now. Chum flesh is running high % of red flesh fish last few days, 15% and up to 30% This is very high (for summer chum) and need to see at Tuesday's opening. 30% is good enough to cut people food on if it holds. When fall chum 1st come % will be 50% to 90% red flesh fish.

Pictures: Tanana 440 boat race (Fairbanks to Tanana and back) just happened. We cheer for # 24. Our data techs Tsood Peters and Joe Zuray.



7/29/08

- King season cumulative going to end up very low but not as bad as last year. While lower river projects show better than last year also, Eagle Sonar doesn't. The Rapids project could have been counting somewhat high because of this years high water during pulse 2 and 3 and the tendency of fish to move towards bank (and therefore fishwheel) in the stronger current. We have a water discharge formula for counting fall chum that takes this into account - but do not for king yet, but are working on it.

- Changed ChinEag08 run timing again - seems they may be slower than graph had them traveling.

- Rain, fog, drift, high wind - like the "most dangerous catch" TV show - well not really.

Pictures:

1. Meal time at camp on a nice day. Not like this today though.

2. Time of year we get bigger king but few. Seems there is a reason for many being late runners just looking at them. Lots of crooked backbones, injuries and ones whose flesh is white and they're all worn out. Nice ones like this usually have ICH disease and they are probably slow pokes cause of that.



7/30/08

- Chum flesh color at almost 30% from last night opening. That and the prior days of rising flesh color is what we look for each year to determine the arrival of the first fall chum in this area. It will take a few more days of this and a higher percent of red flesh (50%) before we determine an "official" date of arrival. These are the fish that will head to the Chandalar, Sheenjek, Fishing Branch and Canada (but let's give it another day or two of data).

- Fall Chum arrival dates using traditional method (TEK) of observing flesh color changes done at Rapids project.

2000 - July 25 2004 - July 27 2008 - ?

2001 - Aug 3 2005 - July 31

2002 - July 26 2006 - Aug 4

2003 - July 30 2007 - Aug 5

- Tomorrow some fishers were talking about trying to cut these nice chum.

Pictures:

1. These are not the same worn out summer chum that were here the last few weeks. Note the lack of developed teeth, lighter colors and fuller bodies.
2. Close up of some of the better ones.
3. Got 4 sheefish today.



7/31/08

- Chum flesh color at 38% red today. So pretty much I think it's safe to say the fall chum are taking over things here. See if it rises more tomorrow - it should but numbers seem low things and it may be different this year. Last year the first fall chum came in low numbers also. Good is 500 a day or more for a few days, in test wheel. That's a decent 1st fall chum pulse. Bad cutting weather but 3 fishers at Rapids cutting them and hoping for good weather soon (I was one of them). Very nice fish as the first fall chum always are the best.

- Water very high but dropping still - not like Tanana River which is in flood. Heard 5A test wheel in Tanana was loosing huge amounts of bank each day and is now pulled cause of drift - I feel lucky.

Pictures:

1. Karen Lord of Nenana (Tanana River) sent pictures of a wheel at the landing there yesterday and today same place (flood).



8/01/08

- Chum down to 19% red flesh today, more females and numbers down. All the ingredients of a small pulse of fall chum going through and now ending - just like last year but even smaller. But we will see what tomorrow brings - Today it's all a guess. Yesterday's 42% was really 38% - dividing mistake late at night - sorry.

- Heard people are losing their wheels on the Tanana River - washed away with the drift and high water. Houses in danger bumper.

- King run is over - just the occasional one going through now.

Pictures:

1. Laverne Hyslop and Curtis Sommer taking a break with their wood raft before heading through Rapids to Tanana. They started collecting it about 50 miles upriver. A very large raft indeed.

2. Real big sheefish going down video chute today.



8/02/08

- Chum numbers started up late in day again so maybe a new pulse - they looked nice and will cut tomorrow. Today's were nothing special at 21% red flesh. Some summers and some fall chum is what that means to us here. Very unscientific knowledge but very traditional and each year it tells everyone here what they need to know and what all the studies so far have not been able to tell them - "when do the first fall chum show up and how strong are their numbers".

- Water height still up there and water temp running cold - for this time of year.

Pictures: Haven't seen sun like this for a while. If sun doesn't come out I'm going to be very stressed as my greenhouse tomatoes will not turn red and sunflower plants will not flower. All grown with fish fertilizer.



8/03/08

- Today is **Official Fall Chum Arrival Day** - 50% red fleshed chum in catch today. All chum numbers from here go towards projects fall chum cumulative. Chum numbers also increased today to it's highest for season (263 in 24hrs). The project calls pale some that would be cut by subsistence persons or liked by fish buyers. So 50% red is actually pretty good quality. All pulses from here on will have declining quality, however good quality for cutting and selling will still exist in some later pulses - just reduced. The last pulses of fall chum in late Sept. will average very pale flesh and poor of quality as the worse Upper Yukon summer chum.

- Last extra tiny pulse (seen at Pilot Sonar) of king hit today - some pretty big ones in video. Amazing how even small pulses hold together enough to be detected here 600 miles from mouth.

Picture: Midnight tonight at the video shack - just getting going on the update. This is where all the precise, mistake free science happens. Laptop is receiving real time video from wheel by microwave. Desktop is where I'll count after transferring video file from laptop.



8/04/08

- Chum up to 58% red flesh. Will not be able to check again till Tuesdays subsistence opening (Wednesday). Nobody cutting people dry fish (chum) as weather is too bad. We were but had to stop as only so much wet fish a smokehouse can force dry. Too bad to as they are beautiful fish.

- King still high Ich rate in few we check - like 50%. And pretty poor quality now - dark etc. Don't think most of these will be making it to Canada as they look ready to spawn now.

Picture: 1. At camp today a fishwheel went floating by and we ran after it - chopped of the baskets and axle that were hanging in water and are pushing it back up to camp here. This will make a perfect crib fish raft in one month from now - and then firewood. Joe and Shawn are enjoying the ride as they get a break from work. They were just getting started on flesh color project from Sunday's chum just before closure. The chum project will wind down now that fall chum are fully here and look at flesh color only once in a while after that - student techs will be gone and I'll do it while cutting my dog food.

2. Two nice chum in one chute



8/05/08

- Now that fall chum are here I added a graph of all the years (AllYrsCum) and also ZRMC08 which shows why we adjust CPUE.

- Chum slightly down - check flesh color tomorrow - subsistence opened at 6pm.

- Only two operating wheels left in Rapids and no nets. About 5 camps open still. It's getting deserted at Rapids.

Picture: Tevis Underwood (USFWS Fairbanks) helped start the Student Data Collection project back in 2001. In 1999 he and I partnered (with an R&E grant) to find a way to count salmon that did not require livebox holding and harm to the salmon that resulted. He forced me to turn on my first computer and type the first words of my adult life - hence the video fishwheel project grant (in 2000) and these very updates. Here Tevis is explaining (2003) how to weigh bering cicso eggs to some of the same students that worked this year at Rapids. I get jokingly reprimanded for using old pictures and try not to, but a little history is cool on occasion.



8/06/08

- Last year average king traveled to Canadian border in about 13 days at 38 miles a day (from Rapids 493 miles). This year average king took 17 days at 29 miles a day. So high water as we've seen before does slow fish down - particularly it seems when moving through Yukon Flats. Adjusted ChinEag08 graph run timing. Thanks Sandy.

- Water high but below max level. Water temp coldest since temperature monitoring start in 2003 for this time of year. All the cold cloudy days!

- Chum numbers dropping slightly but flesh color still good at 52% red. Don't want to see numbers and flesh quality go down like last year though.

Picture: Dick Kocan sent in this picture of Pat Moore of Tanana "CUTTIN' FISH ON THE YUKON". I know in these times of acute political/social correctness this picture may be uncool but then neither Dick, Pat or I are all that correct (but we're cool). Looks like a nice king.



8/07/08

- Chum numbers here should start tracking Pilot Sonar more closely from now on ChumPilot08. If so we should see a numbers rise some time soon.

- Was trying out new formulas for turning fishwheel catch numbers into passage estimate and had some mistakes on last few days passage estimate for chum because of it. Got it back to normal - sorry will not happen again - I'm sure everyone noticed. This is the ZRMC2 formula:

Instant CPUE to daily fish passage estimate converter
Days CPUE / (days discharge - 160,000 / 1000) * (.02889 + 1) * (10) * 2

In Excel you would have something like this applied it to every day of each year:

=AM54/((AO54-160000)/1000*0.02889+1)*(10)*2

Picture: Just a nice day and clear picture of the upper Rapids fishwheel today. This one and my video wheel (which I'm on here) are the only wheels in use, to at least the Yukon River bridge. When I first came to Rapids there were at least 20 wheels in that stretch all season. Older persons remember 10 wheels on the river bend I'm on alone before that, and 30 to 40 in Rapids area.



8/08/08

- Chum down a bit to 151 in 24 hrs. Still good quality though. Does not seem to be many summer chum mixed in. Numbers may start to rise tomorrow as Pilot did at this point in run.

- Only gear in Rapids now is one net and two wheels. 4 camps still open. Constant rain has ruined the fish cutting now for a long time. The fish we cut two weeks ago has used up a big pile of cottonwood just keeping it from spoiling. Running heating stove in smokehouse instead of smoker. It's hardly worth it. Still some of the fall chum season left if weather will just get nice.

Picture: Tanana April Races 2008. The biggest event in town each year. Clockwise: 1. Francis Roberts kicking hard second day in a snow storm. 2. Most mushers bring their dogs to races in these box sleds. The outside mushers come from the end of road in Manley Hot Springs to Tanana using these also (65 mi). 3. Last day awards just before the big dance. 4. Tanana's own rock and rollers.

Check out the 2008 Open Race Video and Website at:
<http://www.tananadogmushers.com/>



8/09/08

- Chum numbers still steady and low. Lower river data shows fall chum making up more and more of the fish in this part of the run in the coming week. As opposed to summer chum the majority of falls go by Rapids on they're way to upper river spawning streams. So bigger numbers are coming.

- Small chum commercial going on here - sold about 50 fish. May have another. Not going to get rich but hopefully it will help develop markets.

- Whitefish are regularly coming in wheel now but in small numbers still.

- Rain all day off and on and still raining as I'm doing this. My sunflower plants keeled over and died. How stressful having a garden - almost as bad as fishing.

Picture: 1. My grandson - next year he'll be old enough to catch a live one.

2. Dark large king - only a couple a day coming in now. As I mentioned before most have some visible reason for being late runners like injury etc. The days of good quality king going by are past now.

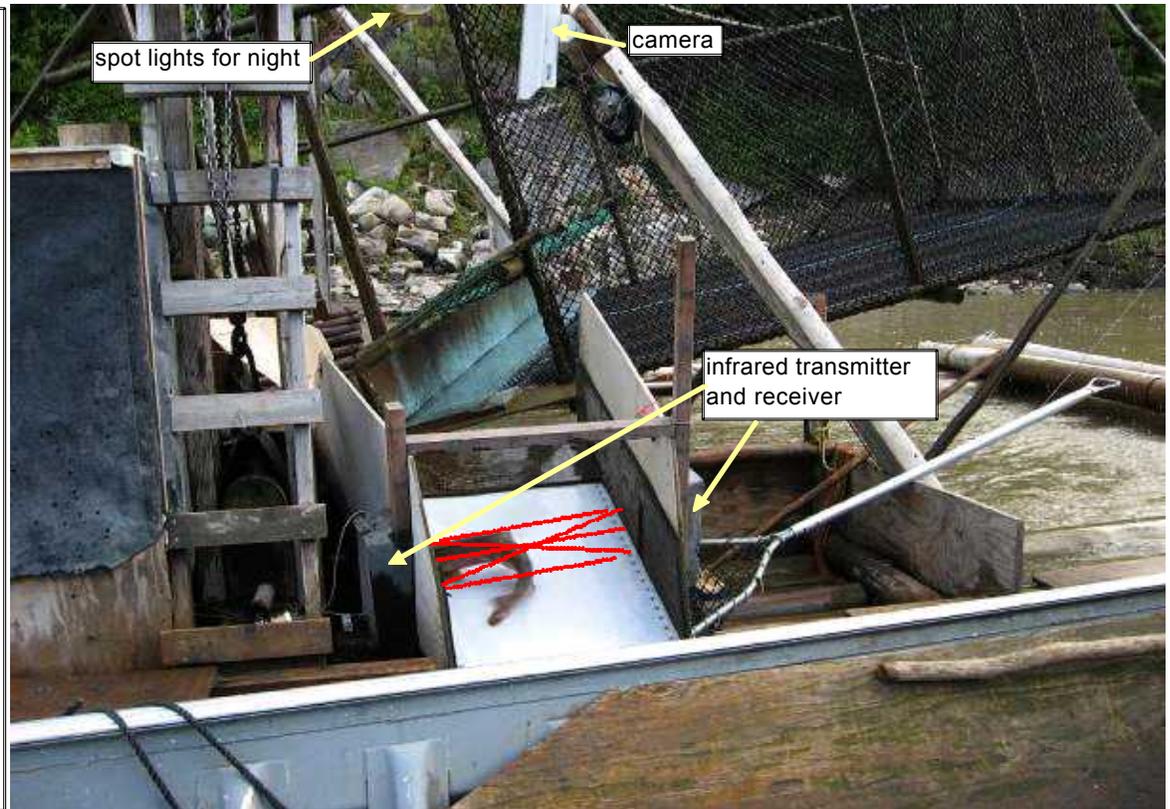


8/10/08

- Chum up slightly in numbers.
- Check out: Fish wheel crashing into Old Bridge
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G_5OaF9QZ1I

Picture: Each year I like to explain video system for new persons on the email list. Some changes have been made to system over the years but this is a 2008 shot of video wheel. This chum just got caught in wheel basket and is now sliding down video chute under a surveillance camera mounted above. Real time video (12 frames a second) is being transmitted back to an always on, laptop computer at camp 1/4 mile away by a microwave transmitter on a post on back of wheel. When the fish goes past the invisible infrared light array (red dotted lines) mounted on either side of video chute the system creates a signal that travels back on same microwave and "tells" computer to keep 14 frames (pictures) of the chute at that moment. Well at that moment a fish was in chute so at end of day I got thousands of frames of only fish, that I run together, movie fashion and count them. This chum is a second away from freedom and will experience none of the harmful live box holding and manual netting and release of the older live box method.

This system was developed in partnership with Dave Daum + USFWS Fairbanks. Get the latest - switch to video counting - call Dave at 907 456 0290 or email me.



8/11/08

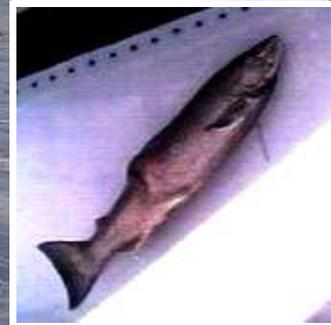
- 20 sheefish today (Will be taking sheefish genetic samples for Randy Brown (USFWS whitefish expert) from now on.

- Chum should be increasing but as one fisher pointed out high water will probably throw the run timing off this year to slower than the 20 days we have it set for in ChumPilot08.

Picture: 1. Dog tracks out and back. The hills just north of Tanana. God's country - Sure ain't no one else out there. Farthest out you can just see the Ray Mountains which supply the Tozitna River, at it's base, with the clear water for all those salmon to spawn in.

2. Very big sheefish.

3 + 4. Two king today and both have obvious reasons for being late as you can see.



8/12/08

- Chum up somewhat (221 in 24 hrs.).

Nice fresh looking fall chum - was 66% red flesh couple of days ago and tonight's look even better.

Fishing opened at 6 pm.

- Only four camps open at Rapids now. Some may try to cut dry edible fish tomorrow and the sun today has fishers hoping for more good weather. Edibles are finely vented chum filets dried and smoked like strips but usually not soaked in salt brine. They are hard to put up without good weather. I'll get a picture of some soon.

Picture: 1. Dogs along the Yukon - Fat and happy in the sun today.

2. After 3 weeks of rain the sunflower plants gave up the ghost.



8/13/08

- The video project releases all fish to river in theory. I however run a livebox for subsistence on the same wheel so not all actually make it back during open fishing times. Today I did some double checking and approx 60% of the chum jumped out of livebox. I even pulled up livebox to check for holes etc and there were none. This is not unusual for king salmon and I have to run a net over livebox in that season but these fresh first strong fall chum are just as likely to do it also. In the first year of the video project we were going to use the livebox as a means of assessing the video accuracy - well it took one day's data to realize that the livebox was not going to be able to do that as it had less fish than the video cause they were jumping out. No one realized that for years till the first video project ran. The chum don't do it as much when you're there.

Picture: Super quality fall chum. Pretty soon the quality will start to decline a little - skin color will darken and flesh get a lighter red, but last couple of weeks have been nice like these.



8/14/08

- Chum up a little and quality still great. Getting questions about fall chum being here or not. Also one report has them just arriving at Rapids and another has them already at Eagle.

- The first decent numbers came weeks ago here and if fishers keep waiting for the fall chum to arrive they will miss the best ones. Eagle should now have some of the ones that came here around end of July. ADF&G goes by significant pulses, and because of low fall chum numbers we have not had a pulse in that sense. That does not mean fall chum are not here yet. Some fishers here have already removed the first dried fall chum from smokehouses after 2 weeks of smoking.

- Water quite cold and rather high for time of year. See WaterTemp08 and WaterHeight08

- Added average chum cumulative data to ShortSum and an ave. line to AllChumCum

Picture: Some king half dry and canned king. Put up at Tanana Tribal Council's "Spirit Camp" - 18 miles below Rapids



8/15/08

- Chum numbers up a good bit to 320 in 24hr. Sheefish continue steady in small numbers. See more of Sheefish in next few weeks probably. They all meet up in Yukon Flats area, spawn, and head back to river mouth in November to wait a few years and migrate and spawn again. Cisco spawn and die like salmon.

Picture: 1. Starting to put up dog food for winter. I don't race so about 99% of the calories the dogs get come from fish. This is the dry traveling food and later, around Sept. 10, I'll get the whole fish for cribbing which gets fed while in Tanana.

2. Cut 60 fish today and got 80% red flesh chum. Always talking so much % of red, well this is visually what 80% red flesh looks like. While the two on left may be good to eat, for project purposes we call them pale (# 3 or 4 on color chart). The 8 to the right are red. All we are doing is what fishers in this area have done since as long as elders can remember with a little science (consistency, data taking and graphing) thrown in. Getting lots of questions on validity of this method and where 1st fall chum are (Border is my guess). For more description of this method download our last Final Report at: http://rapidsresearch.com/Rapids_Data_Collection__2006_Final_Report.pdf



8/16/08

- King cumulative final each year on Aug 15th. Ended up at 1622 which is 2nd lowest number with 2007 being lowest at 1008 king. High water should have influenced this year slightly (made number higher). Eagle sonar for instance has these two years more similar. Regardless they are both disaster years in terms of quality of escapement (small size and lack of females), overall numbers and the fact that for two years most Canadian fishers have not been able to harvest any king due to restrictions. We are just harvesting what we have sowed for many years now as far as I'm concerned.

- Getting some okay chum numbers at Pilot - hope it continues.

History Picture: Years ago the Fairbanks USFWS ran the Rampart Rapids Fall Chum Tagging Project with tagging wheels at Rapids and recapture wheels at Rampart. It was a population estimate project. Here they are drift netting for fall chum salmon out in the river (near Rampart) to see if any difference exists in salmon size, sex and condition etc. compared to wheel caught ones. A report is available but I believe they found no significant differences. It's a nice picture though.

2. Another big sheefish today.



8/17/08

- Chum and broad whitefish made number increases today. This may be the beginning of advancing chum numbers if run timing in ChumPilot08 is correct.
- Having small chum commercials during openings lately (5 B+C). Only one buyer and he can only haul about 230 fish per trip between all fishers so most aren't participating as it's not worth it. I'm here anyway so am. Fishers just split the quota evenly. Giving buyer the nice big ones and cutting small and spawners for dog food so it works out and make some gas money.

Picture: 1. These nice guys were traveling since Yukon Territory. Someone told them to stop at my camp cause I'd probably have a salmon. They were pretty excited about makin camp and eating it tonight and wanted to clean it themselves. Couldn't believe they didn't have to pay for it. From Austria but knew some english.

2. I call these late for the party King. Looks like he needs a makeover before he gets there too - poor guy. Livebox open, so video only tonight - so he's still on his way.



8/18/08

- Chum way up - 924 in 24 hrs. Could be pulse that peaked at Pilot Sonar on July 30 (30.5 miles/day) or high water may have slowed them down and this is the pulse through Pilot on July 24 (about 24 miles/day) ChumPilot08. Time will tell.

- Anyway 3 camps left now and all fishers here putting up dry edible chum and dog food before closure. Subsistence gear will hardly run from now on because of high numbers of chum. One hour today I had 66 chum and we can expect numbers to rise.

Picture: Pascoe, Stuart and owner Virgil Umphenour of Interior Alaska Fish Processors (Santa's Smokehouse on 2400 Davis Road, Fairbanks) picking up our Keta Salmon. These fish are still twitching as they are put on ice in our YRDFA donated blue insulated totes for transport to town same day.

Shop online at: <http://www.santassmokehouse.com/>
Just trying to be helpful - you know me.



Specials
smoked keta salmon



8/19/08

- Chum cumulative at 30% of average for this time of year but 2007 was only 8% at this time and overall run ended up fairly good because of strong late pulses.
- Commercial openings are put on hold here in 5 B+C as you cannot count on that happening again. Take a chance and it works out and fine, but if it doesn't we end up with no fish on spawning grounds. With king size declining, poor numbers and lack of king commercials there may be increasing tendency in future to put that pressure on chum and other species. We need to be careful or we will not even be passing on decent chum runs to our kids.
- Water height right at max level and water temp at low.

Picture: 5 travelers from Latvia stopped by camp to stretch their legs. Traveling from Circle to river mouth (1061 miles) and doing a documentary. I asked and they wanted a salmon to take with them for tonight's supper so we went to wheel and were amazed at all of them coming in. They wanted a female so they could make some egg caviar dish thing. The camera guy does environmental films and I'm sure he saw how happy the fish were being caught in my wheel.

Interesting article related to the declining size of king:
<http://www.conbio.org/CIP/article63poi.cfm?>



8/20/08

- Chum cumulative climbing good and looks like chum traveling at 30.5 miles a day to Rapids. If we're on track tomorrow should be bigger chum day - we'll see. ChumPilot08

- Added online link to all 2008 Photos and comments to Aug 19. at top right. Each year this is the most downloaded item on the project website next to the fishwheel catching 6 chum in one basket and the song "Spawn". Can be gotten also by going to:
http://www.zuray.com/Daily_Email_Updates_2008.pdf

- Had 79 chum in one hour today about noontime. High water making fishwheel catch good but discharge formula adjusts for that.

Picture: 1. Just some dogs making their way through some low visibility. We put up tripods, like the one in picture, in open country to keep the trail straight and find way in bad weather.

2. Synchronized swimming chum

3. Two sheefish at once - very unusual. Look like males - no big bellies.



8/21/08

- Removing some Eagle king graphs and be adding upper river chum graphs - Chandalar for starters tonight - RapChan08. Eagle Sonar is done counting kings at border and came up short at 38,428 which is way below the amount needed for escapement and basic Canadian subsistence needs. Escapement target alone was for a minimum of 45,000.

- Chum numbers up a bit today and cumulative running at 37% of average using data from 1996-2007.

- Water finally dropping but still at max level for this time of year.

Picture: 1. Kathleen (my beautiful wife), Malaki (at least someone like's those "jacks"), Fayleen and Halley coming from wheel this earlier this summer. People getting scarce at Rapids lately although tomorrow some are coming to cut dry people fish (edibles there called) for a few days.

2. Chum run changing - still nice but signs of aging: (top) - nice red flesh probably but getting darker on outside. (bottom) - Darker still and maybe poor flesh color.



8/22/08

- Sheefish up and lots of big ones. Maybe be a good year as predicted earlier by Randy Brown at USFWS Fairbanks.

- Chum numbers steady and cumulative rising good. Still about 40% of this projects normal however.

- Water height dropping fast and getting close to normal for this time of year.

Picture: Ruth, Cy, and Charlie at their camp at Rapids. Some more camps actually opened back up to cut fall chum now that weather better. These guys are done and standing by there winters supply of edibles as they give one more drying outside of smokehouse before moving them to town. Each one of these is one half of a filet cut down the middle and dried as much as a fish strip. Usually not soaked in brine they are quick dipped or not at all. They are often preferred by elders and people wanting to eat a lot of fish as they are not as salty. One winter when a bacholor I ate a dried filet a day almost every day.



8/23/08

- Added Sheenjek graph (RapShe08), and fixed a mistake on Chandalar graph. I was entering my CPUE instead of estimated passage. I noticed it today when Chandalar Sonar was getting so many fish next to the Rapids passage - no wonder - sorry. Never happen again - seems like I've said that before. I need a secretary.

- Chum definitely changing now - many more pale fleshed ones and outsides darker. Still nice and healthy and if you select the good ones still great for cutting for people food - but changing as they always do each year as the run gets on in the season. I heard from 5A test wheel research specialist Pat Moore that Tanana River chum are the better ones now

Picture: 1. Starting to see some yellow leaves of fall. Most of the day the wheel (in center) gets no sun. This site is not the best late in Sept. as once the nights get cold enough to ice the wheel it can stay on even though a sunny next day. Walking on an icy wheel is quiet interesting, enough I have boot cleats in my boat just for it.

2. Three chum in chute at once - rare. Sometimes there might be say 8 in basket at once but not all make it to chute at same exact time.



8/24/08

- Chum numbers continue to stay high which is making me look at run timing differently. Changed to a 22 day lag and 28 miles a day. You would expect them to run slower than the 30.5 they did last year anyway, with all this high water.

- All other species about the same numbers also. Whitefish should rise more as time goes on and chum should decrease over next week looking at Pilot numbers.

- Beautiful weather for fish drying lately - wish we had this back when nice fall chum first came.

Picture: Mother and daughter finish off the last of a seasons fish cutting today (Kathleen and Katlyn). Fall chum are hung one night in smokehouse and cut into ready to eat pieces for town freezer the next. Last of strips and edibles came out of smokehouse also. Now all that's left is food for the dogs. I just run around and take pictures all day.



8/25/08

- Chum numbers starting to drop so yesterday was peak of pulse I guess. Hope for a good late pulse - last year the highest number chum day at Rapids was from a pulse that went past Pilot Station village in first days of Sept (ChumPilot07) so still some chance.
- 2008 Rapids chum cumulative will probably start to loose ground to average over next week, as this time of year there are usually good numbers.
- Sheefish are doing good and large size ones too.

Picture: 1. Tanana traditional dancers outside new Morris Thompson building in Fairbanks. They performed there recently at the opening. Between the Fairbanks Fair and Morris Thompson dedication Tanana emptied out a bit for a few days. It's real good to see all generations participating with so much energy in things like this.

2. Medium sized male sheefish looks like. Got a good one sent in for tomorrow to.



8/26/08

- Chums numbers head downward and sheefish stay same.

- Added some columns to ShortSum so one can compare both discharge adjusted cumulative and regular daily CPUE cumulative to their respective 96 - 07 average cumulative. It's pretty confusing unless you like numbers like me but basically on a high water year like this my unadjusted 2008 CPUE is saying it's an almost average year but my 2008 adjusted passage numbers shows it to be 44% of average. This project put it's money with the adjusted.

Picture: 1. Mike at ADF&G with a nice female sheefish. Don't know how he got this fish because the area in the picture is closed to all fishing - oh well.

2. This is how the video wheel camera works in the dark - make light with two 90 watt spotlights. One runs off a bank of batteries on wheel and other off a generator that I fired up about 10 pm tonight. Both have light sensing switches to turn on and off lights. By 11 pm the river is very dark as you can see .

Note: I hate to say it but I have to, comment about Mike is a joke - some people would take me serious otherwise.



8/27/08

- Chum numbers down again here. First good numbers of chum look like they may start at Chandalar Sonar RapChan08.

- Just received results from Washington State University lab on our AYK SSI Ichthyophonus study - will post soon. Study was done to check projects accuracy on identifying ICH positives.

- Dave Daum (USFWS Fairbanks) out here testing a number of our new video ideas and doing exploratory work on his juvenile Chinook project. Have more on that also.

Picture: Tug pushing two heavily loaded barges up river past Rapids camp today. Usually they need to unhook one of the barges and take them through the narrow part of Rapids one at a time but this tug did two at once. Water was not as high so may be why. Could be going as far as Ft Yukon sometimes.



8/28/08

- Doing some interesting video system upgrade work with Dave Daum: New assessment program to check daily operation that is faster and better than the old weekly assessments - made possible by the last years infrared fish detection sensor upgrade. Working on energy efficient night light system that may eliminate need for gas generator at wheel. System gets simpler and easier to install on wheels each year.

- There is a rise in water height coming - at Eagle it rose 5' in two days and the river at Rapids is narrower than Eagle. This will hit in a few days with a smaller rise in next two. We anticipate more drift and height than highest water this season. Wheel fishers are planning on pulling them to shore. I will not be taking any chances either as still a bit of season to monitor.

- Chum down as at Pilot Sonar 22 days ago.

Picture: Dogs, YRDFA fish processing shack, smokehouse, fish racks of fall chum dog salmon, river and sky. All in one picture.



8/29/08

- Chum leveling off and sheefish still climbing slightly.
- Water still not coming up but heard the level as it past the border shut down sonar and fishwheels there. Fishers preparing for the worst here. We'll see.
- Quality of chum poor enough now that fishers are mostly waiting for weather to cool when they can crib chum for dog food around mid September. Not much people food being put up anymore.

Picture: 1. Dave Daum (USFWS Fairbanks) sampling Bear Creek near Rapids for juvenile Chinook. As you can see he got some. This is part of a large study to document the distribution of non-natal juvenile Chinook rearing areas in the upper U.S. portion of the Yukon drainage. From past genetic work, these fish are largely coming from the Carmacks area of Canada, around 1,000 miles upstream of Rapids (a long way to come to get a bit of chow!). Looking on are Jim and Carol from Maine. Jim hadn't seen me in 37 years (Jim was a high school student in a communal school in New Hampshire where I taught astroprojection and other metaphysical classes in the 1960's). He says I haven't changed a bit.

2. Very big female sheefish.



8/30/08

- Significant chum numbers starting to hit Chandalar and Sheenjek Rivers (RapChan08 and RapShe08) right on schedule. Chum took a little longer to get to Rapids this year because of higher water but their travel to Chandalar and Sheenjek was in more normal water height and seems to be taking a more normal amount of time.

- Identified a couple of least cisco in video today. This time of year a few of the cisco we see will be least with most by far being bering cisco. Cisco are very low right now however at 18 in 24 hrs.

Picture: 1. Charlie and Jackie heading to town with the bulk of their winter's dry dog fish. That's a lot of weight and they're just barely on step. Jackie Edwin is another of Tanana's elders that grew up at Rapids. His family actually has 2 homesteads right in Rapids and he's really enjoying helping Charlie move his fish.

2. Least cisco - as compared to bering cisco they are small and have dark fins, scales look bigger and body is less round and flatter. That's my description anyway.



8/31/08

- Some fairly good chum pulses that will last into late September have happened at mouth - ChumPilot08. Dog mushers should do good this year. Most rely on those late pulses to put up frozen fish for dogs. When they are late like this year and last they don't over sour and flies are not a problem.

- Water rising fairly fast and drift starting but tomorrow will really go up supposedly. All nets out and the other Rapids fishwheel is against the shore. I hope I'm not being stupid by running tonight and expect to get by day tomorrow by staying at wheel a lot and shut down for tomorrow night or pull wheel to shore depending on drift and water. We'll see what the day brings.

Picture: Marshmallow roast on Rock Island - the young people at Rapids have been eyeballing the huge drift pile on the rock island in the middle of the river all summer wanting to burn it. With the water coming up to a level that will take it away in a few days all the parents let them burn it. It's in the middle of a bunch of big rocks and mud and water channels and no good for getting to for firewood.



9/2/08

- Sheefish had second highest daily number at 98 today (since project start in 2000 - 101 sheefish in 2003). Lots of big ones again. Bering cisco at low and all are berings today - no least for couple of days now.

- Next chum pulse may be coming with numbers up a good bit. It is early when viewing graph (Chum Pilot08) but unlike first chums that traveled through lots of high water these didn't and may have the more normal 20 day run time from Pilot or 30.5 miles a day. Time will tell.

- Water making big leaps up but relatively little drift. there were high winds here however and if that is upriver as well, it can keep drift to shore depending on direction. Wheel did get hit and stopped straight up in air but only damaged lead fence a little. Running tonight and until drift gets me concerned more.

Picture: 1. Follow the leader. Canadian Geese (honkers) landed at Rapids on their journey south today. I tried to say hi but they walked away from me.

2. Chum in sync.



9/2/08

- Water up but drift seems light for this fast a rise. Some trees coming however. Wind may be keeping it to shore. Couple more days of rise before crest

- Entered last of Student Data Project data in KingData08. It didn't change averages much as we have so much already - 1137 sampled. It does show the absolute need for full season data however, with end of run disease data higher than first 3/4 of the run.

- The project has had a lot of people question the validity of the Chinook visible disease sampling so the funders (AYK SSI) have asked us to have a lab look at our visible positives. While I'm waiting on some accuracy figures on the method (histology) used to look at our samples I will say that the test showed a very high rate of confirm and further, that we called negative for ICH, all but 3.2% of those that histology shows as negative. Not bad for fishcamp kids. I'm having a better statement worked up by the lab people and others.

History Pictures: 1. In 2003, using left over money in a 3 year project the kids cleared brush, we hired some local carpenters and bought 2 tents for future projects.

2. Five in this picture have been going to UAF and the other two will be starting this fall (2003 pic).



9/3/08

- Chum numbers up and visibly nicer fish. My guess is given the numbers of pulses coming, chum cumulative will probably do okay but be below Rapids average. Average is skewed high by big years like 2005 so slightly below average for Rapids may not be all that bad (AllChumCum).

- Looks like water is close to cresting here. Once it starts dropping good the other wheel left in Rapids will be pushed out and put back in operation and nets will be fished again. Most fishers from now on are mushers and will be putting up the bulk of their winters whole fish (cribs).

Pictures: 1. Rampart Rapids from the hills above earlier in summer (looking upriver towards village of Rampart, 35 miles). Solid rock island in middle of river. Hardly whitewater but you don't want to go over it when it is just covered either. A single deep channel divides into two just below island and water shallows to half the depth on either side of island creating swifter water that moves fish closer to shore.

2. Snow always lays in deep and stays long on the north face of the hills above Rapids - these are July pictures



9/3/08

- Chum at highest numbers for season so far. Quality good as front side of pulses always are. Few more days and we'll get an idea of travel time for this pulse.

- Chum numbers going up at Canadian Border - will add Eagle Sonar graph tomorrow.

- Water crested and just starting down. Cannot figure where all the drift went that we heard past Eagle - must be hung up in Yukon Flats as most never made it to here. Never had to shut down project but wheel did digest some logs without to much damage.

Pictures: 1. Front and back same day in spring 2008 hauling wood. I tried to take a "cool" video of wood hauling this day and crashed sled instead - put it on "You Tube" - see at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QuZ_PLLIxf0

2. A rare event in my small world of fish counting - two bering cisco and a chum in video chute at once.



9/5/08

- Chum up to high for season - 1419 in 24 hours.
That's about 20,000 pictures the video system took today. Takes me about an hour to run through and another 1/2 to enter data and check graphs, pictures etc. It's a dirty job but someone has to do it.

- Not much fishing here now except daily dog and people food. In Tanana however a number of fishers are cutting dog food and some people food (dry edibles).

- Added Eagle Sonar graph - RapEagle08

- Check out Sheenjok graph?? - unusual but that's fish for you. RapShe08

Pictures: 1. Scenery pic - 16 mile island above Tanana today. Lot less yellow leaves than at Rapids which is the hills and colder.

2. First coho of year. Do not see many at Rapids as most go up Tanana River. After this project shuts down a significant number go through however, around Oct 1st and after right up till ice flows.

3 and 4. Chum run made up of some that have distinct spawning colors, probably white flesh inside, sharp teeth and some that still have that silver look and probably red flesh inside.

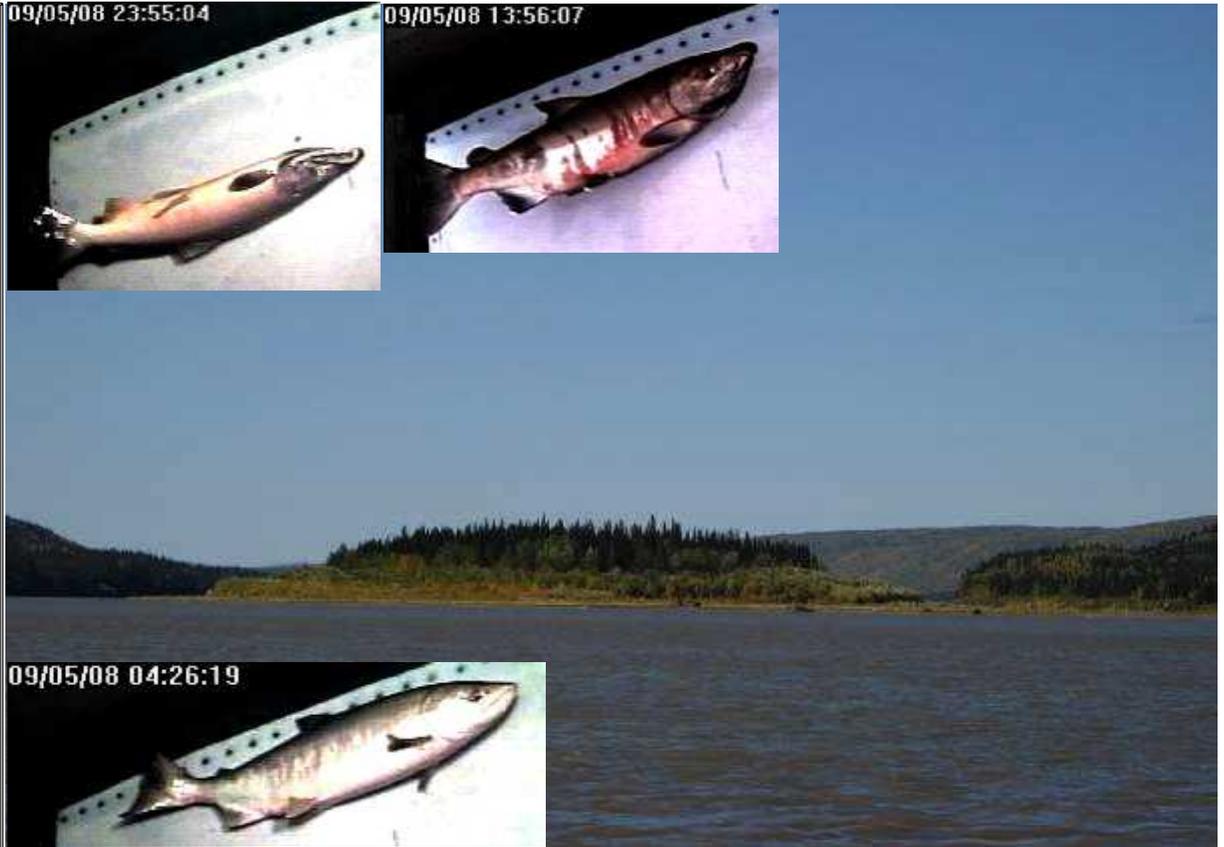
09/05/08 23:55:04



09/05/08 13:56:07



09/05/08 04:26:19



9/6/08

- Present chum pulse may be cresting and certainly is showing signs of it as quality is down and more injured fish coming through wheel with things like fungus spots, thin bellies, bulging eyes etc. These are of course completely normal for all runs and still are only a small percent of the fish - they do make fish travel slower and are therefore more seen as a pulse ages.

- Water height still at max level for this time of year. And water temperature getting closer to average from all these sunny days (was pretty cold from all the earlier rainy days)

Pictures: Russ and BJ helping me move my dry dog fish to town. Russ fished wheels and nets in Rapids during the 70's and 80's before going full time with the Army National Guard in Fairbanks. Before he left he gave me his camp, fishwheel and site which is where the video wheel operates today. Retiring next spring he and BJ are moving to Rapids again.



9/7/08

- Chum down - pulse may have traveled a little faster than last one. These last pulses coming will have to deal with the high water that just headed down river though.
- Sheefish staying high and lots of big females loaded with eggs.
- Expect to see some dog mushers start to put up crib fish in the coming week. Distance mushers and trappers will be first as they want the fish to sour so they don't have to cook it when they come off the trail late at night etc. Later around Sept 20th on, the kennels that do some racing will start as they want unsoured fish to cook and mix with commercial feed, chicken, beef, fat vitamins etc.

Pictures: Bear and Aaron at the Kozevnikoff family fish camp today, 15 miles below Rapids. Their family has been coming here to fish for many years and they have some excellent net eddies in the area. These two have been putting up dry edible chum the past few weeks and are working on getting their fishwheel finished.

I was just remembering how years ago, when chum markets were a plenty, every fish board cycle we would have to run to the State Board of Fish meetings to try to stop the never ending proposals to stop feeding fish to dogs by those who valued selling next to feeding dogs. It's a pleasure to not have to do that lately.



9/8/08

- Chinook size and ICH data in KingData08 is complete and 99 - 08 ICH rate and 08 ICH size class graphs added. Will be removing raw data from this update tab tomorrow and putting online to reduce email size of the daily update. Online link and graphs will still be under KingData08 tab.

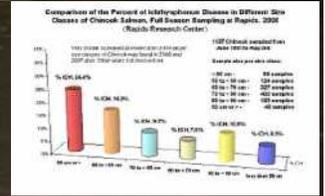
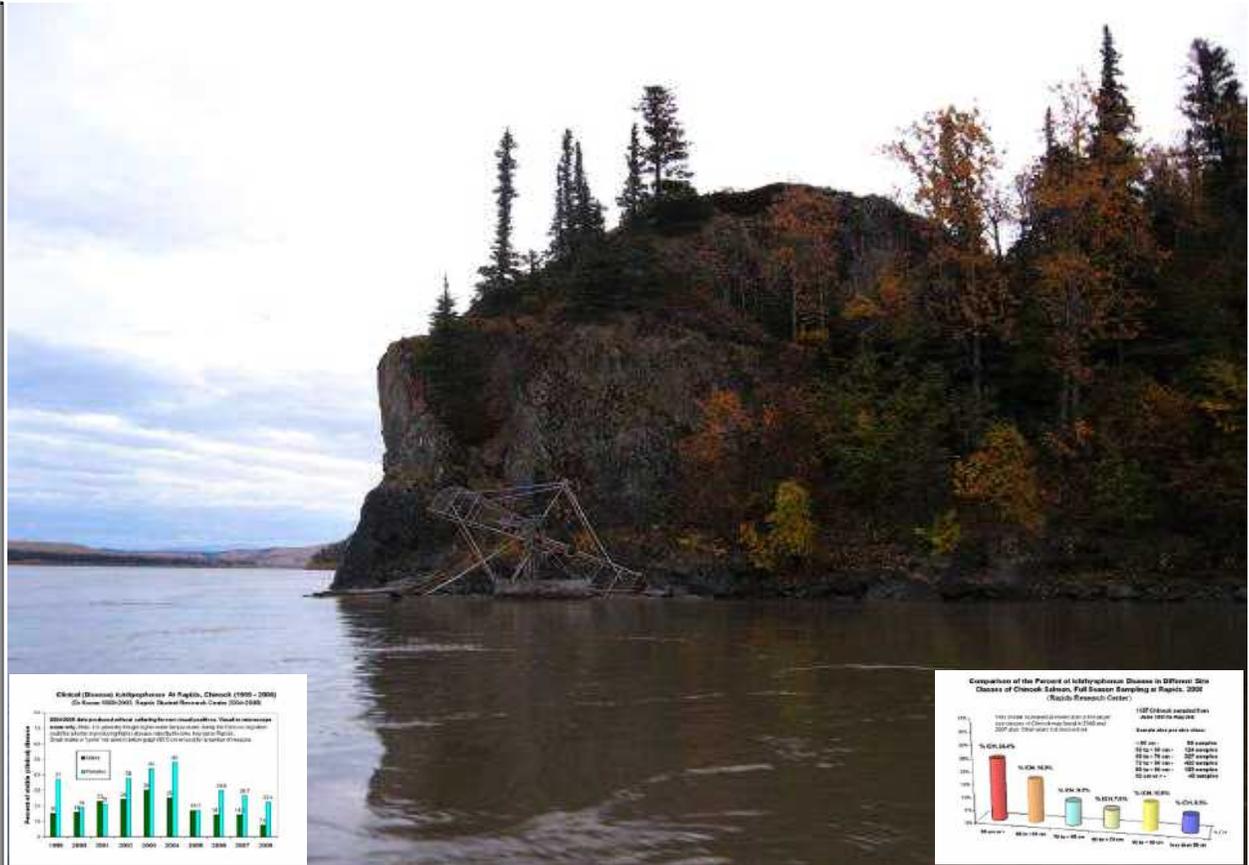
- Some final figures:

Averages and info for 1137 Chinook over full season

| | |
|-----------------------------|----------|
| Average weight all | 11.7 lbs |
| Average length all | 70.5 cm |
| Visible ICH in 65.5 cm or > | 12.1% |
| # of King 25 lbs or > | 24 |
| # of King 30 lbs or > | 6 |
| Largest king | 38 lbs. |
| Percent of females | 19.6% |

Pictures: 1. Lester Erharts fishwheel floating safely in Turk Rock eddy 10 miles below Rapids yesterday. Great place to sit out the drift and high water. This is a south bank wheel (his king wheel) and it is through fishing for season. Lester has his north bank one fishing now in Tanana for dog food.

2. Small pics of final graphs in KingData08 tab.



9/9/08

- Upper subsistence wheel ran for first time in a while (Charlie and Ruth's wheel). It will be running off and on for a week about now, as they and I will get crib fish for winter out of it. They haul by a bunch of boat trips and I'll float mine to Tanana in one trip when project shuts down as it takes too much time to do it while running project.

- Chum between pulses and numbers dropped today.

- All Chinook data moved online - link in tab KingData08. Averages, comments and graphs still there.

Pictures: The face of the run today at 6 pm opening. Much different quality than last time I sent out a picture of a catch of fall chum. Still a few nice ones but not a good time to be cutting people food as you have to do something with the poor ones and they would eat up so much of your time cutting into dog food you wouldn't get any quantity of people food put up.



9/10/08

- If next pulse of fall chum runs from Pilot to Rapids at 29 miles a day like last pulse, then our numbers should start picking up tomorrow. Upper wheel reported slow catches tonight when turning on (only 25 per hour). Video wheel also slow.

- Remember the 2005 run - video wheel was doing about 175 per hour at high point and upper wheel 3x that. Anyway sounds like maybe be a sufficient run this year - if they hit the spawning grounds.

- Water height dropping but still at max level for this time of season - Water temp somewhat normal and water getting clearer (17cm on Secchi disc).

Pictures: Very noticeable lack of moose hunters heading down river this year and is just part of trend in the recent past probably due to gas prices. Most are heading to Nowitna and Koyukuk River areas and come from all over the state. Even in villages like Tanana the fall boat hunt is something people don't do as much.



9/11/08

- Still no sign of next chum pulse - not that it was that big because it wasn't. Getting slowed by something. Anyway both wheels here dropped in numbers more and as of late tonight (1am) nothing coming in to speak of because I can sit here and hear them on my capture computer if they were.

- Mike and Andy from ADF&G came by again and picked up all the samples the students took for genetics and ICH PCR testing. Mike brought his fishing rod - at least it's legal to fish HERE.

- Adjusted Y axis scales for Sheenjek graph to be same as 2007 - looks a little more reasonable now. All upriver project getting same percent of Rapids passage index as 2007 except for Sheenjek which is slightly weaker so far. Thanks for input sent in. Changed Chandalar and Sheenjek run timing also. Fish are slower this year.

Pictures: Trees have lost leaves all the way down to river now. In Tanana downstream 40 miles some leaves are still green. Had first frost last night so went and got some firewood upriver today. Just got it through the big swirls near Rock Island here (and almost hit the rocks). I'll float it to Tanana with crib fish at end of project.



9/12/08

- About noontime chum catch rates started up a little so small pulse may be here. CPUE was actually less today but because the water is dropping the discharge adjusted passage index showed the small pulse. We do have a real good one coming around Sept 19th or so however.

- Genetic testing done in season at mouth says many in that pulse will go up Tanana River but the upper Yukon will get a fair share also.

- Water level finally approaching normal with temp. about average also

Pictures: Upper subsistence Rapids wheel starting to sink with fish. All summer, wheels barely fill the deadboxes as fishers only want enough to cut or the quality is so important they get the fish out every few hours. This time of year fishers want a lot of fish to haul for cribbing dog food, so will let deadbox fill up. When full this wheel will sink a good foot more on outside. You have to watch it though because it can make wheel hit the hard bottom little by little cutting through the baskets and destroying wheel.



9/13/08

- Added AllChumCum2 for couple of days in response to some questions about fall chum run strength. It's another way to look at it that makes 2008 not seem so below average.
- Both wheels chum rates still relatively slow but ZRMC2 is making passage index rise.
- Broad and Humpback whitefish increasing.

Pictures: Charlie Campbell making his 2nd last trip to Tanana loaded with mostly fresh chum and some whitefish. He'll make one more trip back to get the fishwheel. Here he's stopping by today to tell me his wheel is running and it's mine to use. Most years I get my crib fish out of his wheel because the livebox on my project wheel is a pain dealing with netting all the live fish, and his always catches about 3x better. I got 400 as of 11pm. After I get enough for winter (1400 - usually takes one day) the Rapids wheels will catch no more for the season except to video count. In Tanana this type of fishing will continue till ice comes however.

- Fish, left to right: broad and humpback whitefish and pike (very rare in these fishwheels)



9/14/08

- Slight dusting of snow up on hills above canyon. And few flakes in air down low but raining now.

- Chum numbers not doing much but in about 4 days we got the last and okay sized pulse coming. Hopefully it will raise the cumulative and send a fair amount up river.

Pictures: 1. Kathleen, my wonderful wife, unloading fish from deadbox today. Here she has the first king seen since August 18th. It really isn't that bad looking and had red flesh but has been in a pile of salmon all night so kinda squished looking. Kathleen of course looks radiant.

2. King's heart - More than a month late may not have been caused entirely by having a heart like this, but one of the worst cases of Ichthyophonus I've seen did not help it's travel plans either.



9/15/08

- Chum numbers past Rapids continues slow climb - question is whether it is the final pulse or the tiny one just before it. My guess is numbers will just keep rising till they drop on backside of final pulse, ChumPilot08. This is high drama out here at Rapids this time of year. At least I saw some people lately. Caught myself talking to a broad whitefish other day though.

- Water temp and level dropping but doing so right along average line for time of year.

- [2008 Daily Updates Pics + Text](#) in upper right corner is updated to yesterday and has all the comments and pictures from 6/16 to 9/14 in album form.

Pictures: These guys had a bad moose hunt up till today. Blew a motor downriver and left one boat in Tanana and got no moose to boot. They live in Fairbanks and were heading upstream today to Yukon River Bridge and home when right across from my camp they saw a moose, pulled in and shot it. It did a leap into the water so hand winched it out. I was happy for them - I probably wouldn't have seen it anyway.



9/16/08

- Chum cumulative continuing to rise at a time when most other years leveled off. That is similar to 2007 but will end up weaker overall looks like - at least for this project's counts.

- Rain and clouds today but that keeps the ice away so guess that's good.

- Time of year that the water temp makes a steady progression downwards, WaterTemp08.

Pictures: 1. Snow on the mountains. Looking downriver into narrowest part of Rapids.

2+3. Good shot at difference between broad and humpback whitefish. It's in the shape of the hump above the eyes for one thing.



9/17/08

- Chum dipped slightly down today - last pulse should start at the next increasing numbers.

- Broads (28 in 24 hr) and humpback (12 in 24 hr) whitefish increasing. In the past (2000 - 2008) broads can max out at about 40 per day with 20 being good. Humpies will get to 70 per day some years with 20 being good also. Randy Brown, USFWS Fairbanks, has put together some great graphs of this projects whitefish data.

Pictures: Loren and Andy with ADF&G. Despite heavy sleet, high winds and sub zero temps these boys were out sampling chum salmon at the camp today. The extreme weather went away mysteriously for 5 minutes and I got this picture. Andy is looking at a scale to see if it's clear, which is what is needed to get a proper age reading. In the back is the fish crib which has clear cold creek water flowing into it to better preserve fish. They will sit there for a week till I can go to Tanana at projects end and unload them. Under the blue tarp is heavy seine webbing for strength.



9/19/08

- Significant rise in chum numbers which might be final pulse.

- Getting ready to close project. Layed out rollers for wheel pull and boarding windows on spare cabins etc. Because of possible wheel icing and snow in the canyon here I really rush when final day comes - usually around Sept 18th to 22nd. Some years it's nice weather but sometimes I'm digging in snow for tools etc.. When I move to Tanana it's like a second fall as it's always warmer there.

- Final project day is the declining days of last real pulse. Chum however will continue to run even as ice comes down Yukon and probably beyond.

- One year I ran net into November and chum and coho were still running as ice finally stopped

Pictures: One of the camps upriver from Rapids. They have sod roofs on cabin and cache. This is an old traditional camp which has always had an occupant going back for as long as anyone can remember. Just prior to my generation it was owned by a guy named Wolverine Johnson who fished and trapped out of here year round. Among other things he ate wolverine they say. I wonder if they taste like ravens.



9/19/08

- Last chum pulse probably running less than the 2008 season norm of 28 miles a day. No real sign of it yet. Seen these later pulses run slower before.

- More moose hunters been returning from downriver lately and going by here on way back to Yukon Bridge.

- Got another least cisco today - it was the only cisco today at all. Not seeing many least this year so far. They will run real late and be seen in the wheels in Tanana just before the ice comes. In Tanana wheels can be run right up to ice as the heavy equipment to pull them fast is right there and there is no fish camp to break down and move.

Pictures: I get requests for and against certain types of pictures. I got one recently for no more fish pictures which made me smile seeing as this is a fish project. Here's some green summer ones as requested. They are especially nice to look at now that everything has changed. Faith Peters on top and Kathleen Peters Zuray on bottom.



9/20/08

- ChumPilot08 - got chums already running 2 days slower this year on graph and last pulse should be peaking now but still no sign. Even at 22 days to Rapids from Pilot we should have seen sign of them 2 days ago really. Also Pat Moore at 5A testwheel should be seeing numbers a day before me especially on a late pulse as they are heavy on Tanana River chum. His chum numbers dropped today though. However check out ChumPilot08 20 day. I guess if numbers drop tomorrow that's maybe why - last pulse has just passed. ?????

- Whitefish numbers tapering off some. They will run from now till ice and beyond however. We usually get the whole bering cisco run but some sheefish, humpback and broads get missed some years as they run so late.

Pictures: Rapids Research Center today. My better half thinks I need to do some research into environmental cleanup. All I see is nice birch trees and a dog.



9/21/08

- Guess we're in the middle of last pulse. Emailed with Fred Bue (fall chum manager) and he's satisfied that it's here. He says between 1/3 of them going up Tanana River (normal for late pulses) and fair harvest below Rapids (dog food mostly) the moderate amount here at Rapids is reasonable. So we'll wait a little for a decline and then let the wheel rest for the winter.

- Water height slightly above normal and water temp normal for this time of year. Water clearing quite a bit - Seechi disk can be seen at 28 cm now.

Pictures: Young men born on the river and the Tanana 440 earlier this summer - Fairbanks to Tanana and back. When I see this I think back at the days driving my hot rods around the drive in burger joints and going out on the highway to race. Nothin has changed - just trying to see whose fastest.



9/22/08

- Chum counts down mostly from half last of day - so see tomorrow. May run into 24th if chum numbers drop slow but have to pull then as I'm one person and need to start the many trips to town to break camp and need to winch wheel and lead etc up here at Rapids. Often Oct 1st when I finally done and make last run to town - this year maybe later.

- Humpback rising to season high. Water temp rising from all the cloudy warmer days - good.

Pictures: Tonight turning on night lights - Anyone want to walk a tight cable. 1/2" main cable tight from resistance of the lead fence (most pressure), turning baskets and live box. I know of two instances in recent years of this size cable snapping. Each year I oil it to keep from rusting and it lives on beach up by bushes all winter. Too heavy to move back to camp in fall. One year had it cut in two by breakup ice somehow. I take good care of birch tree it's on and pad where cable goes around.



9/23/08

- Chum counts continued to drop. Cleared sky this morning and ice on wheel. We (my dogs and me) are calling it a season even though we really want to stay here forever. Stopped wheel at noon.

- Humpback numbers rising more, broads steady, sheefish down and cisco almost none.

- I will continue to update upriver project graphs as more data comes in, every few days, and would like to thank ADF&G again for another great year accumulating and putting out data for everyone.

- And have pictures of the Tanana fishery also in days to come.



Moved wheel to pull out spot.



Got it just out of water before dark. Will let it dry and lighten, and pull up bank in a few days after a haul trip to Tanana. My back is sore.

