Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA)

Alaska’s Fishing Communities ~ Harvesting the Future
September 21, 2006, Anchorage, Alaska
Presented by Jill Klein, Executive Director
The Yukon River

- 2,300 miles long from the headwaters in Yukon Territory Canada to the mouth at the Bering Sea in Western Alaska. There are more than 50 communities in Alaska and Canada that rely on salmon.
The people and their lifestyle
Yukon River Salmon provides:

- Food for people
- Healthy lifestyles for fishing families
- Food for dogs; transportation, recreation
- Cultural preservation
- Cash
- Livelihood
Reasons for organizing:

• Different regions of the Yukon River were in conflict with each other
• Low salmon returns
• Low prices for commercial fisheries
• U.S. and Canada were organizing the Yukon River to enter into negotiations as part of the Pacific Salmon Treaty.
The Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association

- YRDFA acts as a connector of all the elements that go into sustainable salmon management. The fishermen and their local knowledge is connected with each other and with management.
Organizational Tenets in 1990

- To establish communications between all user groups: subsistence, commercial, personal use, and sport, the management agencies to include all state, federal and Tribal Governments that have jurisdiction over any activity that will affect the fish stocks in the Yukon River drainage whether it be direct or indirect.

- To take whatever actions are necessary to insure that all fish stocks in the Yukon River drainage are managed in such a manner as to provide for a stable and healthy fishery in the future.
Mission Statement

• The Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YR DFA) is a non-profit association of subsistence and commercial fishers with a mission of providing a collective voice for the people of the Yukon River to ensure the long-term sustainability of the river, its cultures and economies by promoting healthy, wild salmon fisheries on the Yukon River.

• Updated in 2005
Current YRDFA Goals

- Provide a forum for river-wide communication and solve problems, through stakeholder collaboration, in fisheries management.
- Conserve Yukon River wild salmon throughout their lifecycle.
- Strengthen long-term economic viability of Yukon River fishing communities.
- Sustain subsistence fisheries and traditional cultures.
- Build capacity for YRDFA, its membership and Yukon River fishing families.
How we work with communities

- YRDFA Board of Directors come from Yukon River communities and represent fishing districts.
- YRDFA’s membership is open to the public. Subsistence fishers, commercial permit holders, processors, recreational users and other stakeholders are encouraged to join.
- Board members are nominated and members vote to elect a board member for their district.
- YRDFA Board of Directors meet annually in a Yukon River village and work by consensus to make decisions that affect the salmon fishery.
How we work with government

- YRDFA incorporates fishermen into fisheries management by state and federal agencies.
- YRDFA board members and staff have built working relationships with state, federal and tribal entities.
- YRDFA has affected management plans as well as directed funding and research efforts.
- Through salmon management teleconferences, YRDFA brings upriver and downriver fishers together with managers during the fishing season.
Important issues facing the Yukon River salmon fishery

• River-wide collaboration
• Sustainability of the fishery
• Fishing times
• Commercial fisheries development
• Marketing
• Salmon interception
• Climate change
River-wide collaboration

- Various stakeholders at private, state, federal and tribal leads to multiple meetings, different outcomes and divergent voices. YR DFA works to bring these voices together to solve complex problems at the state and federal board meetings.
Sustainability of the Fishery

- YR DFA works to balance subsistence and commercial harvests with conserving salmon runs for future generations.
Subsistence Windows

• Parts of the river are on fishing schedules, while others are allowed to fish 24/7 if it is a harder area to catch fish. Windows are not coordinated with nature for drying fish, but people understand the need to move fish upriver for subsistence, border passage & escapement.
Commercial Fisheries

- YRDFA works to market salmon at a river-wide level by incorporating processors into a marketing association. We also work on quality programs for icing and bleeding fish.

- YRDFA promotes commercial fisheries in order to support the economy of rural Alaska villages. Commercial fisheries are some of the only source of income for many villages and assists local people in their subsistence hunting and fishing activities.
Origin of Chinook Salmon Caught as Bycatch in the BSAI Pollock Fishery 1997-1999

YR DFA’s Vision

• The Yukon twenty years from now is a thriving ecosystem with salmon. We see sets of management policies and protocols that are product of integrated work by all stakeholders and are keyed to sustainability.

• This can be achieved by continued involvement by communities in salmon management as it is their lives that are most dependant on the resource.
Thank you

- Jill Klein
- Executive Director, YRDFA
- 725 Christensen Drive, Suite 3B
- Anchorage, AK 99501
- Tel: 907-272-3141, extension 102
- E-mail: jill@yukonsalmon.org