

Abundance and Run Timing of Adult Salmon in Tanada Creek in the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve 2000-2003 Study No 00-013

The upper Copper River drainage provides spawning habitat for sockeye salmon, *Oncorhynchus nerka*, and Chinook salmon, *Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*. Significant numbers of adult salmon are harvested in commercial drift gillnet operations near the mouth of the Copper River from mid-May to September. Salmon escapement into the upper Copper River system contributes to Federal and State subsistence fishing through September 30. The monitoring and evaluation of these runs is essential to ensure that Wrangell - St. Elias National Park and Preserve (WRST) maintains natural and healthy populations of fish as required by the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA).

The Copper River system supports over 124 known stocks of sockeye salmon of which at least 12 occur above the confluence of the Copper and Slana Rivers (Roberson 1987). Two of these stocks migrate through Tanada Creek and spawn along the shores of Tanada Lake or in the lake outlet (Figure 1). Chinook salmon are present in incidental numbers in Tanada Creek (Veach and Scotton, 2001).

Tanada Creek sockeye are one of the uppermost runs of sockeye in the Copper River and support a subsistence salmon fishery both in the Copper River and in Tanada Creek. Two native villages harvest salmon in the Batzulnetas Area fishery. Batzulnetas, the Ahtna name for the traditional fishing site on Tanada Creek, has been used by the Ahtna people for over 1,000 years (Kari, 1986). The Batzulnetas fishery was in litigation from 1985 –2000 as Katie John and others attempted to reestablish their traditional subsistence fishery. The “Katie John Decision” resulted in the expansion of Federal management of fisheries in waters under Federal jurisdiction throughout Alaska.

The Tanada Lake sockeye salmon stocks typically compose the largest population of sockeye spawning and rearing within Wrangell-St. Elias National Park/Preserve, among those stocks which spawn upstream of the Gulkana River. Good escapement data will allow us to assess management of these important sockeye salmon stocks.

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