

ABSTRACT

Through a collaborative effort, inseason subsistence salmon surveys addressing qualitative assessment of run timing and abundance were conducted at selected fish camps and in communities of fishers in the lower, middle and upper mainstem Kuskokwim River during summers 2001-2003. Collaborators included Orutsararmiut Native Council (ONC), Kuskokwim Native Association (KNA), McGrath Native Village Council (MNVC) and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G). Information collected from these surveys was provided weekly to fishery managers. The Kuskokwim River fishery is cooperatively managed by ADF&G, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group. Fishery managers are dependent on information from inseason run assessment projects to evaluate salmon run strength in order to achieve management objectives. One of the primary indicators of inseason salmon run strength is information collected from the test fishing project conducted just upstream of Bethel. Information collected from this project provides a general description of the relative strength of the run by species. This index of salmon abundance is affected by the variability of run timing between years and anomalies created by environmental factors. The inseason subsistence catch monitoring project provided additional information to evaluate salmon run strength by obtaining the relative success of some subsistence fishers in achieving their harvest goals. Additionally, this project provided an avenue for local user input into the evaluation of salmon run abundance and corresponding management strategies. Historically, fishery managers collected information ad hoc from a few subsistence fishers. However, the inseason subsistence monitoring program initiated in 2001 increased the quality and consistency of information obtained from subsistence fishers. This project increased the number and frequency of fishing family interviews increasing the credibility of the salmon catch information. Comparisons of inseason subsistence catch information now can be made between weeks within a year and between years. Inseason subsistence catch information has been used in combination with other information to determine appropriate inseason management decisions.

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