

The Contemporary Harvests and Use of Resident Fish Species in the Copper River Basin, East Central Alaska

Abstract: This report documents Ahtna traditional knowledge of non-salmon species fish and provides quantitative data on the current harvest of non-salmon species by residents of the Copper River Basin. Up until the middle of the 20th century non-salmon fish species played an important role in the traditional economy of the Copper Basin. The Ahtna elders interviewed for this project have considerable knowledge about non-salmon species and their comments reveal a keen understanding of ecosystem dynamics recognizing the connection between annual fish migrations, seasonal water fluctuations and hydrology. This information adds insight to the general scientific knowledge of non-salmon species the Copper Basin.

The harvest survey conducted in connection with this project documented the continued use of non-salmon fish by Basin residents. Species taken in greatest quantities, in terms of pounds harvested, were rainbow trout, grayling, whitefish, burbot, and Dolly Varden. Communities reporting the largest harvest of non-salmon species, over 1,000 pounds, were Copper Center/Silver Springs, Slana, Gakona, Tazlina/Copperville, Glennallen, Lake Louise, and Kenny Lake. The most frequent gear types used were rod and reel and jigging through the ice. Communities generally harvested non-salmon species that were locally available.

Key Wording Referencing: Copper River Basin, non-salmon resident species: whitefish, burbot, trout, steelhead, grayling, harvest survey, Ahtna traditional knowledge of non-salmon species.

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