

Building & Maintaining Public Support of Salmon Resource Management

RM-01-12

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1. Introduction:

Summary:

To effectively build and maintain public support of, and meaningful participation in, salmon resource management, the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFFA) proposed a multi-pronged approach comprised of numerous tasks, each with a slightly different focus and tactic. Together, these projects formed a cohesive information and education program regarding implementation of the Yukon River Salmon Agreement, the activities of the Yukon River Panel, and management of Yukon River salmon. The primary audiences for this information were the Alaska portion of the drainage, and Canadian fishers and entities.

YRDFFA carried out the YRDFFA Annual Meeting & Fisheries Symposium, which is the only forum held in a village within the Yukon River drainage that brings fishers together from the entire length of the river to discuss important fisheries issues facing salmon resource management. This was the 22nd consecutive year for this event. Additional elements such as newsletters, in-season teleconferences, internet based outreach and communications, and an educational exchange worked together to promote the public support of resource management along the Yukon River. Further, YRDFFA facilitated and provided support for the U.S. Yukon River Panel Section Advisory Group teleconferences as they occurred throughout the year. Finally, YRDFFA was responsive to fisheries issues as they arose and educated the public with additional resources as needed and funding permitted.

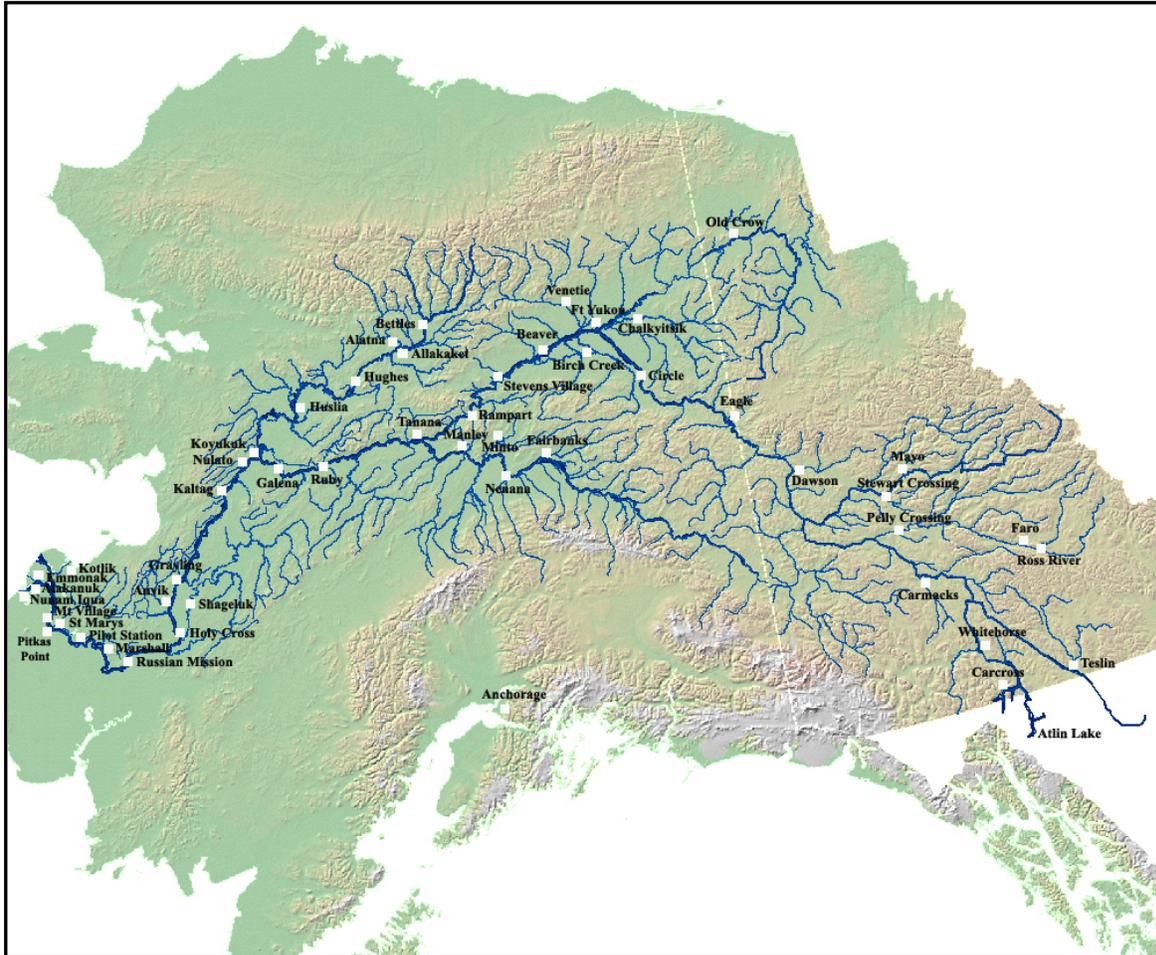
State and federal Yukon River fisheries regional management staff members were involved in the planning and development of this project. This involvement was critical to the success of these endeavors, and YRDFFA is pleased to have partnered with these management agencies for the good of the fish and fishers of the Yukon River.

Objectives:

- 1) To build and maintain public support of, and meaningful participation in, salmon resource management.
- 2) To maintain a dependable communications and education infrastructure that can be built upon every year.
- 3) Facilitate and provide support for the U.S. Yukon River Panel Section Advisory Group teleconferences.

2. Study Area:

All villages in the U.S. portion of the Yukon River drainage, as well as in the Canadian portion, will be reached by one or more of these projects.



3. Licenses and Permits: Not applicable

4. Methods:

In-Season Management Teleconferences

Operation: June through August. During the 2012 salmon fishing season, YRDFA organized and carried out a total of 13 in-season management teleconferences.

Data Analysis: September

Educational Exchange

Operation: June. Five (5) Yukoners visited Alaska for eight days in June, touring Fairbanks, St. Mary's, the Pilot Station sonar, Galena, Koyukuk, Nulato, and Kaltag.

Data Analysis: Level of sharing was assessed during and after the event.

Yukon Advisory Group Teleconferences

Operation: Summer and spring. Three teleconferences were conducted.

Data Analysis: Participation was assessed during each call.

Newsletter

Operation: September, October, April, May. The fall newsletter was planned, articles were solicited and/or written and edited, design was completed, the mailing list was updated, and newsletters were mailed.

Data Analysis: Not applicable.

E-News & Website

Operation: June through February there were nine (9) editions of the YR DFA E-News were distributed, each containing five stories and distributed to roughly 500 recipients. Due to staff resignation and transition, the electronic newsletter was discontinued. The YR DFA website was updated with regularity, and a new website has been created in Word Press to enable a fresh look and ease of updates, again initiated by a staff transition. YR DFA utilizes Twitter and sometimes Facebook to distribute information as well.

Data Analysis: Open rates were tracked after each e-news distribution.

Annual Meeting

Operation: YR DFA's 22nd Annual Meeting & Fisheries Symposium was held in St. Mary's from February 11-14, 2013.

Data Analysis: Not applicable.

5. Results:

In-Season Management Teleconferences

The in-season management teleconferences took place for the 19th year of this project and were funded in conjunction with the Office of Subsistence Management. The calls were moderated by YR DFA staff members and weekly summaries were written and distributed to an e-mail list serve. The summaries were also posted to the YR DFA website and tweeted. Information about the teleconferences was shared with Yukon River Panel members as part of the communications committee presentations at Yukon River Panel meetings.

The number of phone lines used in a single week showed an 11.5% increase over the next highest year. There were 174 phone lines used on 6/26/12 versus 156 on 6/30/09 and the average over the entire season (9 percent over next highest year--2010; 93.5 versus 85.5) both exceeded past records; more people are calling in.

The number of communities actively participating tracked well with number of phone lines used but it did not exceed records. The growth in phone lines was likely from non-active participants such as passive listeners, benefiting from the discussion without weighing in.

As seen in years past, the presence of an in-season harvest interviewer in a community increased the participation rate in that community and on the teleconference overall, though other communities with a dedicated fisher/caller also showed high participation rates.

Participation in terms of number of phone lines used again tracks well with the timing of Chinook salmon entering the river. See tables in the appendix for charts.

Educational Exchange

The education exchange took place in the U.S. portion of the Yukon River in 2012. Five Canadian participants came over to the U.S. to tour the lower and middle river villages of Saint Mary's, Galena and Koyukuk, Nulato and Kaltag. Area trips included visiting Interior Alaska Fish Processors in Fairbanks, boating to the Pilot Station sonar and touring fish camps around Saint Mary's and Boreal Fisheries. Highlights of the trip included Eskimo dancing and drumming in Saint Mary's, and driftnet fishing in Koyukuk with local residents.

Participants were asked evaluation questions which can be found as an appendix to the report that shows participants learning that they took away with them from the exchange. A video was made of the trip by Dennis Zimmerman of the Yukon Salmon Sub Committee and was shared by him as part of the communications committee presentation at the spring Yukon River Panel meeting in Whitehorse.

Yukon Advisory Group Teleconferences

YR DFA coordinated and hosted three Yukon Advisory Group (YAG) teleconferences. The number of YAG teleconferences was less than the year prior. One was held in July during the 2012 fishing season and two were held this winter, one before the spring Yukon River Panel meeting to prepare and one before the 2013 fishing season to prepare. The third call of the season after the spring panel meeting was not that productive according to both panel members and state and federal agencies. Panel members were frustrated to have to participate in the call and felt that the topics should have been discussed at the panel meeting that just took place. Managers responded that panel members need to request for time on the panel meeting agenda to cover these topics in closed door U.S. section meetings. Managers felt that panel members were not that productive in their conversations and perhaps this was due to their level of frustration at having to participate in call. Summaries of all calls are written by YR DFA and distributed to all participants.

Newsletter

Three newsletters were printed during this project. All three newsletters were distributed via U.S. postal service to Yukon River residents and also posted to the YR DFA website. This year the newsletters were printed in the fall and spring. Due to staffing transition at YR DFA, the usual newsletter printed in the winter was printed in the spring leading to two spring newsletters. They came out back to back and were a little shorter than usual. The third newsletter color was changed from orange to green to differentiate it. This change will flow through to the next year's newsletters with each one being a different color to differentiate them if there are multiple copies at someone's house or office.

E-News & Website

The YR DFA E-news was sent out on a monthly basis from June through February. The news covered five articles of interest and was sent out through Vertical Response.

Annual Meeting

The annual meeting took place in Saint Mary's from February 11 – 14, 2013. About twenty-five YR DFA delegates from the entire length of the Yukon River met together for 2&1/2 days and were joined by staff and agency personnel from Alaska Department of Fish and Game and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Nine resolutions were passed by the YR DFA delegation and included the following: Thanking the community of Saint Mary's, Salmon bycatch, hatcheries, mining in the Yukon River region, international cooperation, reducing fishing time in area M June salmon fisheries, thanking the Elders, a unified Yukon River conservation plan, and harvesting summer chum salmon. Additional highlights of the meeting included visitors such as Pauline Frost from the village of Old Crow and a Yukon River Panel and Yukon Salmon Sub Committee member, Orville Huntington of Tanana Chiefs Conference and Tim Andrew of Association of Village Council Presidents.

6. Discussion:

There are many components to this project and all of them are continuously being carried out and evaluated in preparation for the task to be carried out again. This process has helped to meet the objective of maintaining a dependable communications and education infrastructure that can be built upon every year. Having the same activities on an annual basis has created stability for people from the Yukon River and for fisheries managers to rely on. There has also been a group of fishermen that have been consistently part of these projects. Their participation usually brings new people along who are newcomers. It is a little bit intimidating to younger people to participate in our process and they are busy working or taking care of families. The fishing activities are also taking place less than they used to, which has led to a decrease in participation perhaps in some of these communications projects.

There are areas to address and reflect on with each of the components of this infrastructure. We can work on improving participation, not only in terms of getting more people to attend the meeting, but getting more people to actively participate in the discussions that take place at these events. We also have a mix of very knowledgeable people that get mixed in with people who do not regularly stay updated and are not as informed. This leads to an event where the new people need to be brought up to speed and this slows down the people that want to just delve into the issue. We also have people that are at very different parts of the spectrum as it relates to the fishery issue of king salmon fisheries declines. We have a range of beliefs of what the problem really is and what is causing it and if it is a trend or if it is reversible or not. We also have a differing view by people who want to address the issue of who is sitting at the table and how discussions take place and whose right it is to tell people they can fish or not versus people who want to just talk about the fisheries issues and learn more so that they can give meaningful input. This range of viewpoints and perspectives makes progress seem at a distance sometimes.

In order to really know how successful we are being in terms of building and maintaining public support of and meaningful participation in salmon resource management, we would need to do a

larger evaluation of our work and not just the individual evaluations we do of each specific component of the work. We have the newsletters, the YRDFA website, the in-season salmon management teleconferences, the Yukon Advisory Group, the educational exchange amid other venues and events in addition to the ones sponsored by this project. While it is challenging to gauge the impact, we know that we are one of the only groups working to have river wide participation at discussions about the salmon where local people can give input to the fisheries managers about the decisions they are making. In light of the king salmon declines in Alaska, we have seen larger participation by the State of Alaska and the Arctic Yukon Kuskokwim Sustainable Salmon Initiative to hold larger forums that go beyond the individual river system and include entire regions. When we go to this larger region or statewide scale, then our individual participation from the many Yukon River villages decreases. Not everyone can participate in the events and we constantly have to find new ways to include people. A recent observation from another project leads us to realize that we mainly have fishermen at our meetings and while women sometimes participate, if we really want to address the issue of conservation, we need to include the fish cutters and women into the conservation discussions. They are the ones telling the fishermen how many fish they need to cut. And of course we need to address the youth. New aspects of this program would need to be developed to reach out to youth. We have tried to include youth in these components of this program, but the formats are not appropriate for youth audiences based on our locations and times of our meetings or trips.

YRDFA facilitated and provided support for the U.S. Yukon River Panel Section Advisory Group teleconferences as part of this project. We carry out this objective at the direction of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

YAG improvements include getting information from participants who cannot make the call so members and managers feel confident they will get the information they need on the topics they would like to discuss.

Education exchange improvements are to focus on a smaller trip with pre-arranged presentations that cover agreed upon in advance topics that panel members, communications committee members and agencies feel are important to discuss.

7. Conclusion:

This program hosts valuable meetings, trips, teleconferences and information dissemination that people have grown to rely upon. These forums enable people to tap into a variety of different methods that they can participate in – it can range from an active trip to a phone call to reading a newsletter delivered to their home. YRDFA remains the only river wide group that works on fisheries issues. While there is room for improvement, the main objective of building and maintaining public support of, and meaningful participation in, salmon resource management remains a consistent objective to address. Due to consistently changing resource conditions and changing and challenging conditions of the people that utilize the salmon resource, the need for a reliable communications and education infrastructure remains necessary.

References: N/A

Appendices Available Upon Request:

Appendix A. – Teleconference charts

Appendix B. – Education exchange evaluation

Appendix C. – YRDFA resolutions from the Saint Mary's annual meeting 2013