

Eagle Fish & Game Advisory Committee

Interior Region Fish & Game Advisory Committees

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Central	Middle Nenana River
Delta	Middle Yukon River
Eagle	Minto-Nenana
Fairbanks	Ruby
GASH	Stony Holitna
Koyukuk River	Tanana-Rampart-Manley
Lake Minchumina	Upper Tanana Fortymile
McGrath	Yukon Flats

April 26th, 2024

To: Commissioner Doug Vincent-Lang, Alaska Department of Fish & Game

Subject: Request to close 6" set net mesh on the Yukon River for the 2024 Season by Emergency Order

Dear Commissioner,

We request a closure of 6" mesh set netting on the Yukon (mainstem) for the 2024 season, while allowing 6" mesh to be used in side rivers and tributaries.

6" mesh is a very effective gear to capture Chinook Salmon. Poor returns to Canada and the Chena & Salcha rivers which make up 75% of Chinook Salmon contributions of total Yukon Chinook runs have seen back to back, the two lowest years of returns in history.

Returns of Canadian Stock which contribute 40-45% of total contributions river wide, only returned 14,000 Chinook with a 30% female component. (approx 4,200 females)The lowest on record.

Fish are returning younger, smaller and less fecund, (less eggs & egg mass per fish) further reducing successful spawning and compounding serious productivity concerns in the freshwater stages of Chinook.

Concerns for inadequate numbers to Canadian and Alaskan spawning grounds to produce viable spawning success is at an all-time high, with serious concerns for stock extirpation possible if spawning is not increased in the upcoming years.

With the 7 years (agreement) in place for no directed harvest of Chinook Salmon on the Yukon River, it is vital that all conservation measures to rebuild this stock must be put into action. 6" mesh set nets are proven to be an effective gear type to harvest All Salmon. Loss of large

Females and reduced Fecundity to potential productivity highlights the Dramatic need to conserve and protect Every Chinook Salmon where possible given our complete collapse of Chinook runs

see (AYKSSI studies) “Changes of Chinook Salmon Escapements in the AYK Region”
Impacts of Female proportions, reduced Fecundity, reduced size at age impacts to productivity of Yukon Chinook stocks.

With the reduced size at age of Chinook returns, 6’ mesh is even more effective at intercepting critical Chinook returning salmon both to Canada and the US river systems.

Current Recruit Per Spawner (RPS) are less than 1. How is it possible to rebuild a stock with such low RPS

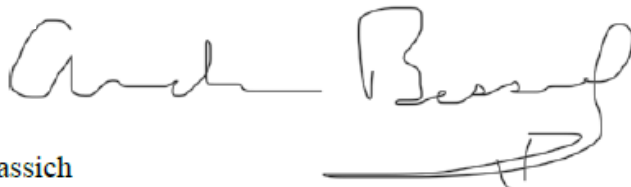
Every Fish Counts at this point in our current disastrous runs

Traditional Knowledge (TK) and Local Knowledge (LK) show that late running Chinook Salmon which are mixed with Summer and Fall chum runs are mostly Large Fecund female salmon, which are the most important Genetics to preserve, and get to Spawning streams to maximize the rebuilding of these depleted stocks.

OPENING UP FISHING FOR CHUM STOCKS WITH 6” MESH WHILE LARGE FECUND FEMALES ARE IN THE MIX IS THE SAME PRACTISE, WE HAVE CONDUCTED FOR 2 DECADES. This has contributed to the slow steady decline of these stocks. We must change our management strategies to align with Gravel-to-Gravel approaches in a new rebuilding plan.

Thinking outside the box is critical, as well as Maximum Conservation, at this time.

Sincerely.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andy Bassich". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Andy Bassich
Eagle Fish & Game Advisory Committee Chair