



YUKON RIVER DRAINAGE FISHERIES ASSOCIATION

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**Resolution: 2013-02
Salmon Bycatch**

WHEREAS the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA) works on behalf of subsistence and commercial fishing families within the Alaskan and Canadian Yukon River drainage who depend on wild salmon for subsistence and commercial fisheries; and

WHEREAS Chinook and chum salmon provide an essential source of food, income and culture for the people of the Yukon River, with chum salmon increasingly important for commercial fisheries and subsistence as Chinook salmon decline; and

WHEREAS subsistence harvests of Chinook salmon have been severely restricted in recent years, and no directed commercial harvests of Chinook salmon have taken place on the Yukon River; and

WHEREAS despite these restrictions the Chinook salmon Canadian escapement goal has only been met in 2 out of the last 5 years and mean run size of Canadian-origin Chinook salmon (which comprise approximately 50% of the run) declined 45% for the period 1998-2010 compared to 1982-1997; and

WHEREAS the Board of Fish has recently taken action to restrict subsistence fishing on the first pulse of Chinook salmon as a conservation measure; and

WHEREAS the Bering Sea pollock fishery catches these same salmon as bycatch; catching over 122,000 wild Chinook salmon in 2007 and over 700,000 chum salmon in 2005; and

WHEREAS according to the best available scientific information half to 70% of the Chinook salmon taken as bycatch are of Western Alaska origin, and of this 40% are from the Yukon River; and

WHEREAS the management measures adopted in April 2009 by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (the Council) provide for a 47,591 bycatch level in most years, with the potential for the fleet to reach 60,000 in two out of every seven years without consequence; and

WHEREAS although bycatch has remained well below the cap in recent years, the current management regime allows the potential for the pollock fleet to catch as many as 60,000 Chinook salmon as bycatch; and

WHEREAS Chinook salmon bycatch in the pollock fishery is consistently high from October 1 on, and in 2011 over half of the annual bycatch was taken in October and November; and

WHEREAS in these times of severe Chinook salmon declines, all sources of mortality must be reduced and all harvesters of salmon must bear equitably in conserving Chinook salmon; and


WHEREAS there is currently no limit on chum salmon in the Bering Sea pollock fishery in place;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that YRDFA requests that the North Pacific Fishery Management Council take action immediately to reduce the overall bycatch cap to 30,000 and change the pollock fishing season closing date to Sept. 30 to avoid the consistently high bycatch in October.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that YRDFA requests that the North Pacific Fishery Management Council also take action to adopt chum salmon bycatch management measures which will adequately protect Western Alaska chum salmon runs.

COPIES of this resolution will be sent to the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, National Marine Fisheries Service, Alaska Department of Fish and Game Commissioner, Yukon River Panel, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of State, Bering Sea Fishermen's Association, Association of Village Council Presidents, Tanana Chiefs Conference and other Western Alaska salmon groups.

APPROVED unanimously this 14th day of February 2013 by the Board members and delegates of YRDFA assembled at their Twenty-third Annual Meeting held in St. Mary's, Alaska.

Attest: 
Richard Burnham, YRDFA Co-Chair


William Alstrom, YRDFA Co-Chair