



Arctic Salmon Project

Traditional Ecological Knowledge & Harvest Monitoring of an Emerging Salmon Fishery in Two North Slope Villages: Wainwright & Point Lay

WHAT IS THIS PROJECT ABOUT?

Though less visible and widely used than subsistence resources such as whale and caribou, fish continue to be an important subsistence resource for residents of North Slope villages. This project will document subsistence salmon and nonsalmon fishery TEK and harvest trends in Point Lay and Wainwright. There are 3 parts to this project:

1) TRADITIONAL ECOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE

- Conduct interviews with knowledgeable fishers: Document and catalogue TEK of subsistence salmon and nonsalmon fishing.
- Synthesize existing data relating to subsistence fisheries in Point Lay and Wainwright.

2) HARVEST MONITORING PROGRAM

- Develop and implement a harvest monitoring program for 2012, 2013, and 2014.
- Map general areas where subsistence salmon and nonsalmon fisheries take place.

3) COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- Create a set of species identification educational materials.
- Hire and train community members to work as research assistants collecting harvest data and conducting interviews with knowledgeable fishers.

WHY IS THIS PROJECT IMPORTANT?

Polar regions are recognized as sentinels of global climate change with real-world and visible impacts such as vanishing glaciers and diminished sea ice. Changes to northern habitats, such as warming oceans and diminishing sea ice are believed to impact salmon population distributions.

Interviews conducted by ADF&G researchers in 2009 and 2010 in Wainwright and Point Lay found that local fishers have traditionally harvested and used salmon species in the past, though harvest of salmon species has been largely opportunistic as fishing and hunting camps and cabins are located at areas where

caribou have historically migrated, and as incidental catch of targeted nonsalmon fisheries.

It is believed that rapid climatic changes that might affect fish abundance, combined with socioeconomic shifts affecting the annual seasonal round, is providing greater opportunity for fishers to harvest both salmon and non-salmon species.

This project coincides with two current ADF&G (Division of Commercial Fisheries and Division of Habitat) research projects endeavoring to provide significant new biological data for salmon and nonsalmon species in several river drainages that empty into the Chukchi Sea and

the Beaufort Sea. ADF&G is responsible for maintaining anadromous waters data and this research can be used to help to inform those collecting the data. This information also will contribute to ongoing discussions and planning for future commercial fisheries in Arctic waters as well as industrial development planning activities.

WHEN IS THE PROJECT HAPPENING?

In summer 2012, community meetings to formally launch the project will be held in each community. Also, training sessions will take place to teach local research assistants to distribute, conduct, and collect harvest calendars. Assistants will also be trained to help organize and conduct interviews with knowledgeable fishers.

The harvest monitoring program will be implemented for a 3-year period. During that time, project personnel will continue to conduct TEK interviews and participate in and document fishing harvesting and processing activities in Wainwright and Point Lay.

The final report will be completed in summer 2015 and distributed to villages and other agencies in fall 2015.

WHAT WILL BE DONE WITH ALL THE INFORMATION GATHERED?

- Findings will be summarized in a final report, which will include ethnographic data with photographs, maps, and selected sections of narratives extracted from the interviews.
- Harvest information will be included in the Division of Subsistence Fisheries Database and reported in the Alaska Subsistence Fisheries Annual Report.
- A short findings summary will be provided to all households in the communities.
- A technical paper describing the methods and results of the project will be published as part of the ADF&G Division of Subsistence technical paper series and will be distributed to the study communities.

Questions? Comments?

Want to get involved?

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