

## Traditional Knowledge of Long Term Changes in Salmon Runs in the Copper River Drainage, Alaska

**Abstract.** This research combines Ahtna traditional environmental knowledge (TEK) with data from the biological and social sciences and the historical record to document the history of the upper Copper River salmon fishery. Information in this report covers the period from 1900 to 2004. Traditional knowledge ascribes that over time contemporary fisheries management and competition from other users have affected the productivity of subsistence harvests. Traditional Ahtna knowledge also attributes adverse effects on salmon spawning in the headwaters of the Copper River due to commercial and recreational fisheries. Since 1889, when the commercial fishing industry began, historic reports document various effects on Copper River salmon stocks and subsistence harvests. It remains uncertain as to the effect of commercial fishing on the long-term abundance of salmon stocks spawning in the headwaters. Global climate change may be playing a role in salmon abundance and subsistence harvests, but its effect is difficult to distinguish from natural variation and local environmental conditions. This project is the first of its kind to document the history of the upper Copper River salmon fishery using written historic and scientific documents and Ahtna oral accounts. It provides insights for further research on understanding the long-term effects of human use and environmental changes on these fisheries.

**Citation:** Simeone, W. E. and E. McC. Valentine 2006. Traditional knowledge of long-term changes in salmon runs in the upper Copper River drainage, Alaska. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Subsistence Management, Fisheries Resources Monitoring Program, Final Report (Study No. 04-553). Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Subsistence, Juneau, Alaska.