

Continuity and Change in Salmon Harvest Patterns, Yukon River Drainage, Alaska

Weak salmon runs and restricted fisheries have stressed the villages of the Yukon River drainage, illustrated by changes within five case communities along the lower, middle, and upper river in Alaska. Increased fishing costs from weak runs and decreased earnings from commercial salmon fisheries posed substantial hardships for fishing households. Recent trends associated with weak salmon runs included fewer fish wheels, increased drifting for salmon, decreased fish camp use, increased difficulties attaining subsistence foods, increased costs of dog food, and decreased use of sled dogs. Alternative wild resources had not replaced salmon shortfalls reported in lower river and upper river communities during the study year. Middle river communities showed increased reliance on Chinook salmon. Upriver villages displayed substantial out-migration, falling populations, and dual urban/rural residencies with seasonal returns for subsistence salmon fishing. Regulatory issues included short subsistence fishing periods and Chinook salmon drop-out losses from six-inch nets. Overall, weak salmon runs undermined the viability of mixed, subsistence-cash economies and village populations in the Yukon drainage.

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