Tanana Chiefs Conference

Appendix 8: Presentation to the North Pacific Fishery Management Council

Krystal Lapp, Natural Resource Policy Analyst
Tribal Resource Stewardship Department
Tanana Chiefs Conference
Krystal.Lapp@tananachiefs.org

Tanana Chiefs Conference

Dena’ Nena’ Henash - “Our Land Speaks”

Our Vision: Healthy, Strong, Unified Tribes

Our Mission:

Tanana Chiefs Conference provides a unified voice in advancing sovereign tribal governments through the promotion of physical and mental wellness, education, socioeconomic development, and culture of the Interior Alaska Native people

Appendix 8-1

Appendix 8-1: Commentary

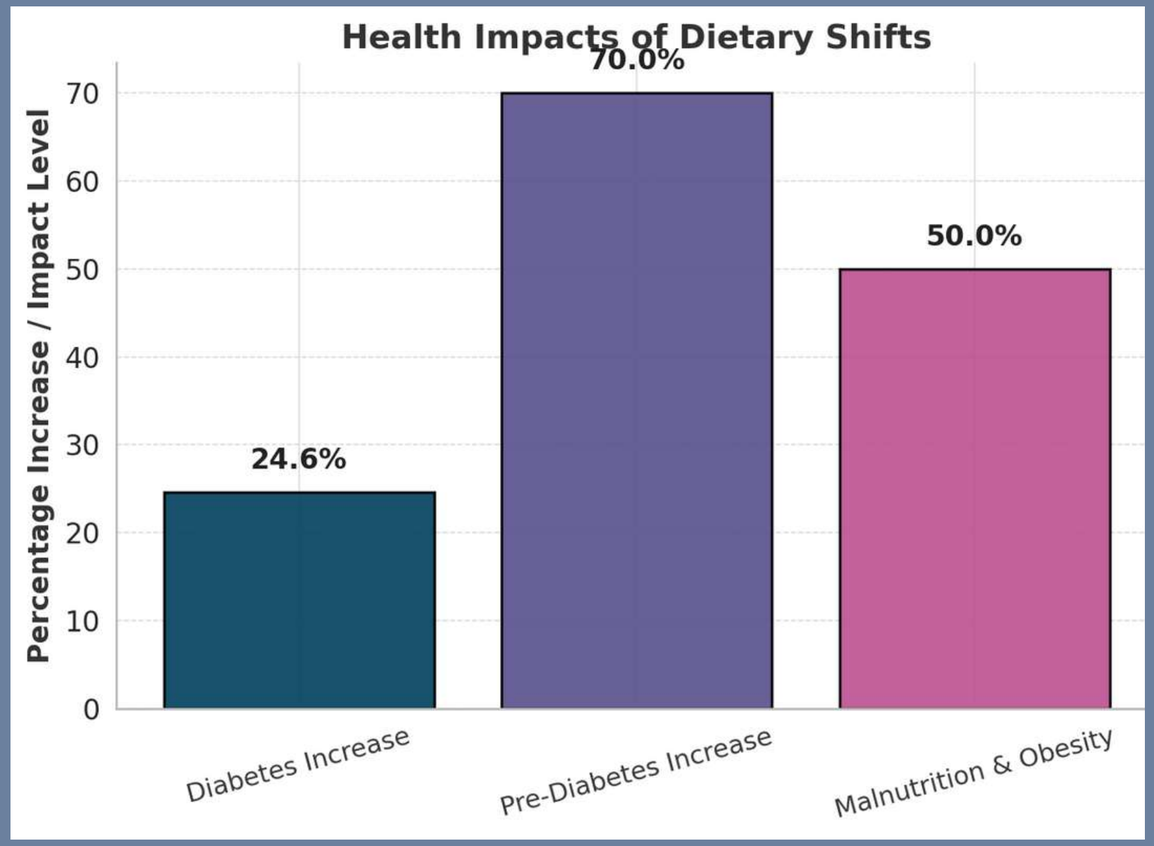
For time immemorial, the Tribes of the Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) region have been dedicated stewards of their natural resources—a responsibility that is both sacred and essential for survival.

Their ancestral lands stretch over 235,000 square miles of Interior Alaska, which equates to 37% of the State of Alaska land mass. Through generations, these communities have developed intricate systems of knowledge to manage resources sustainably, ensuring the land, waters, and wildlife continue to thrive. Their traditional practices are more than survival methods; they reflect a holistic worldview, one that recognizes the interconnectedness of people, animals, and ecosystems in a delicate balance.

TCC Tribes have a history of resilience and advocacy in protecting their lands. In 1915, Tribal Chiefs from across the region united to defend their land and resource rights, taking a stand against external threats. This legacy of advocacy continued, leading to the formation of TCC in 1962, bringing together 42 members, including 39 villages and 37 federally recognized Tribes, in a collective effort to protect their way of life and the integrity of their environment.

The stewardship of TCC Tribes remains a powerful testament to their deep-rooted values, cultural resilience, and unwavering commitment to preserving the land that has sustained them for generations. Their story is one of harmony, endurance, and a continued renewal of the sacred relationship between people and their environment—a relationship that ensures future generations can live, hunt, fish, and thrive as their ancestors have for thousands of years.

Appendix 8-2: Health Impacts



Chum salmon declines has reduced access to nutrient-dense, high-protein foods.

Increase in patients with	2013 to 2016	2016 to 2019	2019 to 2023
Diabetes	24.6%	11.3%	24.6%
Pre-diabetic patients	21.9%	19%	70%

Chum salmon is a staple of the traditional diet, providing lean protein and omega-3 fatty acids essential for heart health and diabetes prevention.

Declining salmon stocks force communities to rely on processed, high-carb, and high-sodium foods.

Shelf-stable, high-sugar, and high-fat alternatives replace fresh, wild-harvested foods.

Health & Nutrition Factor	Traditional Diet (Subsistence Foods)	Western Diet (Market-Based Foods)
Omega-3 Fatty Acids	**High** – Supports heart and metabolic health	**Low** – Deficiency linked to heart disease and inflammation
Heart Disease Risk	**Low** – Natural, nutrient-rich foods	**High** – Processed foods contribute to cardiovascular issues
Diabetes Risk	**Low** – Balanced nutrients and lower sugar intake	**High** – High sugar and refined carbohydrates increase risk
Obesity Risk	**Low** – Lean proteins and natural fats	**High** – Processed foods high in unhealthy fats and calories
Sodium Intake	**Low** – Minimal processed food consumption	**High** – Processed foods contain excessive sodium
Carbohydrate Intake	**Moderate** – Primarily from natural sources	**High** – Refined carbohydrates contribute to metabolic disorders

Appendix 8-2: Commentary

Between 2019 and 2023, pre-diabetes cases in the Interior region increased by 70%, while diabetes among TCC beneficiaries grew by 24.6%.

As traditional diets shift toward processed foods, rates of diabetes, obesity, and nutritional deficiencies have worsened. Food insecurity, which affects both mental and physical health, disproportionately impacts remote Alaska Native communities, creating a growing public health crisis alongside the salmon crisis.

The ongoing decline in salmon availability has significantly weakened food security and nutrition, leading to worsening health conditions. Without intervention, the continued lack of quality food and traditional nutrition sources is expected to contribute to a long-term rise in chronic illnesses.

The impact extends beyond physical health—food insecurity and the loss of traditional foods deeply affect mental and emotional well-being. Salmon is more than just food; it represents cultural identity, self-sufficiency, and community connection. The inability to harvest this staple food has contributed to increased stress, anxiety, depression, and loss of cultural traditions. Many communities are also experiencing higher rates of substance abuse, often linked to economic and social stressors caused by declining food access.

Without access to salmon and other traditional foods, many Alaska Native communities face food insecurity and rising costs of imported, less nutritious foods. This reliance on expensive, low-quality options leads to limited fresh food availability, increased rates of malnutrition, and the paradox of rising obesity and diabetes.

If this trend continues, communities will experience worsening overall health, including increased chronic illnesses and long-term health complications, as diets become increasingly disconnected from their traditional nutritional foundations.

Appendix 8-2: Financial Impacts

A charter flight unloads Bristol Bay salmon in Venetie, one of the 42 Interior villages that received fish donations.

Cost of Emergency Salmon Distribution

- Annual expenditure: $1.96 million (combined average)
- TCC’s direct spending: $713,866.44 per year *(average)*
- Tribal governments' contribution: $1,254,640.38 per year *(average)*

Appendix 8-2: Commentary

The cost of salmon distribution in the Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) region extends beyond financial expenses, as it does not account for volunteer labor, transportation, or additional support for elder nutrition programs and urban-based Alaska Natives. These hidden costs further strain already limited resources. The annual expense of distributing replacement salmon averages $1.96 million, diverting critical funds from healthcare, education, and infrastructure—services that are essential to Tribal well-being.

Since 2020, the TCC region has spent an average of $1,968,506.82 per year to replace chum salmon lost due to subsistence harvest restrictions. Of this amount, TCC alone spends $713,866.44 annually on salmon purchases for Tribal Citizens, while regional Tribal governments collectively contribute an additional $1,254,640.38 per year toward fish distribution. These costs highlight the unsustainable financial burden of sourcing, shipping, and distributing salmon to maintain food security.

In 2022 alone, TCC distributed over 90,000 pounds of salmon to provide protein, sustenance, and cultural continuity to its members. However, relying on commercially sourced salmon is not a viable long-term solution, as state and federal funding remain limited, and disaster relief programs provide only temporary support. Continued reliance on purchased salmon is both financially and environmentally unsustainable, emphasizing the need for long-term investments in habitat restoration and food sovereignty.

High distribution costs, combined with increased fishing pressure elsewhere, contribute to worsening salmon scarcity, prompting discussions on diversifying food sources and expanding local storage capacity. However, geographic isolation and limited funding remain significant barriers to implementing long-term, sustainable solutions.

The current salmon distribution model, while necessary in the short term, is not sustainable. While it provides immediate food security, the high costs strain Tribal resources and limit investments in community development, cultural preservation, and local infrastructure. However, no financial support or purchased salmon can replace the cultural, spiritual, and communal significance of subsistence fishing.

The salmon currently distributed to communities comes from various regions across Alaska, often sourced from commercial fisheries rather than traditional subsistence harvest areas. These salmon are frequently different species than those historically harvested along the Yukon River, where chum and Chinook salmon have been dietary staples. The logistical challenges of purchasing and transporting salmon from distant locations—including high shipping, storage, and distribution costs—can also impact freshness, quality, and taste. Many Tribal citizens have expressed dissatisfaction with the texture and flavor of commercially sourced salmon, which is often frozen or processed differently than salmon traditionally harvested in subsistence practices.

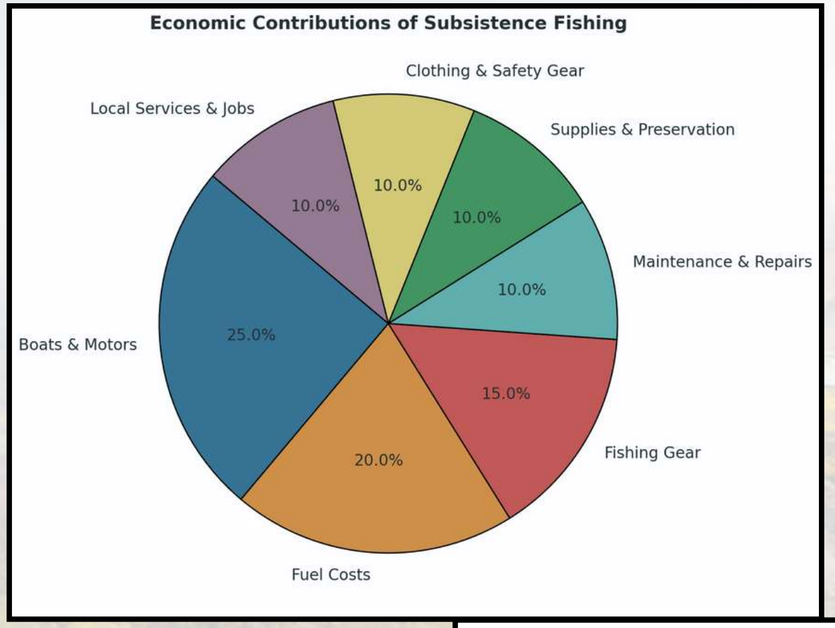
The average fall chum salmon use per household was 363.38 fish from 1990-1994, slightly decreasing to 339.46 fish per household from 1995-1999. However, by the early 2000s, subsistence harvests had dropped dramatically, with household averages falling to 116.88 fish per household from 2000-2004. Use rates stabilized somewhat between 2005-2014, averaging 318.86 fish per household from 2005-2009 and 321.29 fish per household from 2010-2014. However, by 2015-2019, the downward trend resumed, with household use dropping to 247.67 fish per household, and further dropping to zero in 2024 as the fish reported for subsistence mainly came from a test fishery site. The average subsistence harvest of fall chum salmon between 2019-2023 was 15,585 for all fishing districts along the Yukon.【This data is also found in Appendix 8-3】.

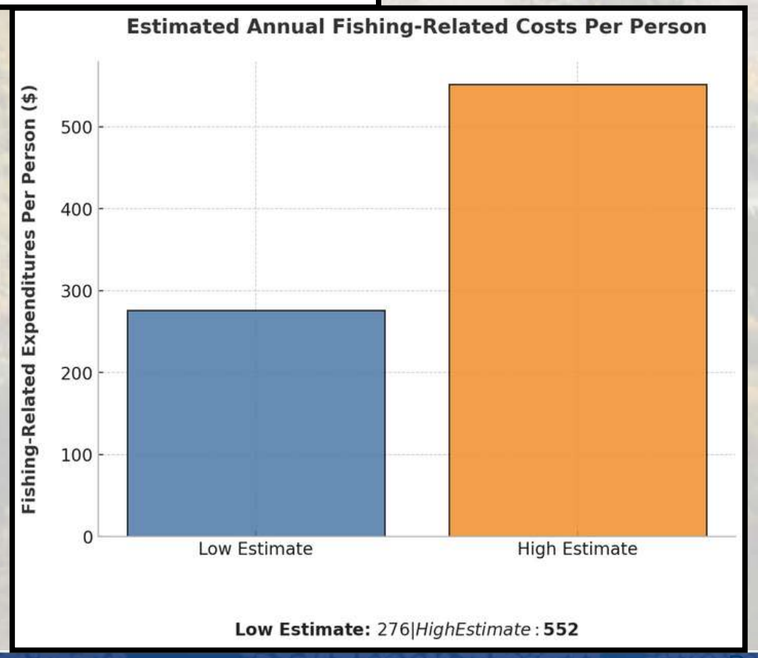
For summer chum salmon, household use rates were historically lower than fall chum, averaging 57.97 fish per household from 1990-1994, 59.77 fish per household from 1995-1999, and 49.04 fish per household from 2000-2004. From 2005-2014, summer chum use per household remained steady at 53 to 53.6 fish, before declining to 41.79 fish per household in 2015-2019【Appendix 8-3】.

These figures highlight the significant decline in subsistence harvests over the past decades. The loss of access to traditional fishing practices has increased food insecurity and economic hardship, as families struggle to replace a staple food source with store-bought alternatives.

As salmon populations continue to decline, the challenges surrounding food security, cultural survival, and economic stability grow more urgent. While salmon distribution programs help mitigate short-term hunger, they do not replace the deep cultural and economic benefits of subsistence fishing.

Appendix 8-3: Financial Impacts





The subsistence economy accounts for 30% to 80% of a community's total production and income. Its key components include:

Boats and Motors: Many families invest in motorized boats, allowing them to navigate fishing grounds with ease

Fishing Gear: Expenditures cover essential tools such as gillnets, fish wheels, and other vital fishing apparatus.

Fuel Costs: The operation of boats and journeys to fishing locales incurs considerable gasoline expenses.

Equipment Maintenance: Regular care of boats and fishing gear not only ensures their reliability but also nourishes local artisans and businesses.

Local Services: Utilizing local mechanics and repair shops fosters a circulation of wealth within the community.

Supplies: Acquisitions of fishing lines, hooks, and preservation materials (like salt and canning jars) fortify the local economy.

Clothing and Safety Gear: Investments in suitable apparel and safety equipment support local retailers.

Job Creation: Subsistence activities can spawn seasonal employment in areas such as fish processing and equipment sales.

Support for the Service Industry: Spending on fuel, equipment, and supplies invigorates local businesses, enhancing the overall economic vitality of the village.

Body

Appendix 8-2: Commentary

The money spent on subsistence fishing does not simply disappear—it circulates within the local economy, creating jobs and business opportunities for other residents. Households that participate in subsistence fishing support multiple local businesses and service providers.

Since subsistence fishing comes with substantial costs, many households must have employment or other sources of income to afford it. This means that families often rely on a mix of subsistence activities and wage-based labor to sustain their livelihood. Jobs in education, healthcare, public services, construction, and seasonal industries provide the income necessary to fund the equipment, maintenance, and fuel required for fishing.
Without employment, many households would not be able to afford the essential supplies needed to participate in subsistence fishing.

This reality strengthens the economic interdependence within the village. When people work to support their fishing needs, they spend money locally, creating demand for businesses and services. In turn, local businesses generate more income, employ more people, and further circulate money within the community. This cycle of financial activity ensures that the village remains economically sustainable and resilient.

Beyond direct financial benefits, subsistence fishing also reinforces cultural traditions and ensures food security. Every time a household buys fuel, repairs a boat motor, or purchases fishing supplies locally, they are not just supporting their own needs—they are contributing to the economic sustainability of the entire village.

Subsistence fishing is not just about harvesting food—it is a complex and vital economic activity that connects employment, business, and financial stability. By recognizing the interdependence between jobs and subsistence activities, we can appreciate how our traditional way of life continues to sustain our economy and our future.

Photo Credit: Eric Carlson

Upward Sun River

Permission was graciously granted by the Healy Lake Tribe, Mendas Cha'ag, to present their historical drawings of the Upward Sun River Site.

Upward Sun River Site - Commentary

For over 11,500 years, Indigenous peoples have relied on chum salmon not just for sustenance, but as a cornerstone of culture, identity, and survival. The Upward Sun River site stands as proof of this deep connection, showing that salmon have always been vital to the people of this land.

Traditional Knowledge (TK) has guided this stewardship for generations, emphasizing balance, sustainability, and gratitude. Teachings stress taking only what is needed, avoiding waste, and honoring salmon through ceremonies and rituals. The discovery of salmon remains at the Upward Sun River site confirms the enduring reliance on this vital resource, demonstrating sustainable harvest practices dating back over 11,500 years.

As salmon populations decline, the impact extends beyond food security, affecting cultural traditions that have been passed down for generations. Indigenous knowledge and stewardship have played a crucial role in sustaining salmon populations for millennia. Integrating these practices into modern management strategies can support efforts to restore and maintain this essential resource.

Tanana Chiefs Conference

Thank You in Interior Native Languages

Benhti Kokhut’ana Kenaga’ (Lower Tanana): Ana Basi’

Deg Xinag: Dogidingh

Denaakk’e (Koyukon): Baasee’/Maasee’

Dihthaad Xt’een Aandeg’ (Tanacross): Tsin’ęę

Dinak’i (Upper Kuskokwim): Tsen’anh

Dinjii Zhuh K’yaa (Gwich’in): Hąį’ęę

Hän: Mahsi’ choo’

Holikachuk: Xisigidasidhut

Nee’aanèegn’ (Upper Tanana): Tsen’įį

Tanana Chiefs Conference

Slides Not Presented at the North Pacific Fishery Council but Contain Key Information from the Appendices

Appendix 8-3

Fall Chum Salmon Subsistence Harvests (Annual Averages)

1990-1994: 118,266 fish

1995-1999: 94,047 fish

2000-2004: 37,101 fish (significant decline)

2005-2009: 79,386 fish (partial recovery)

2010-2014: 84,438 fish

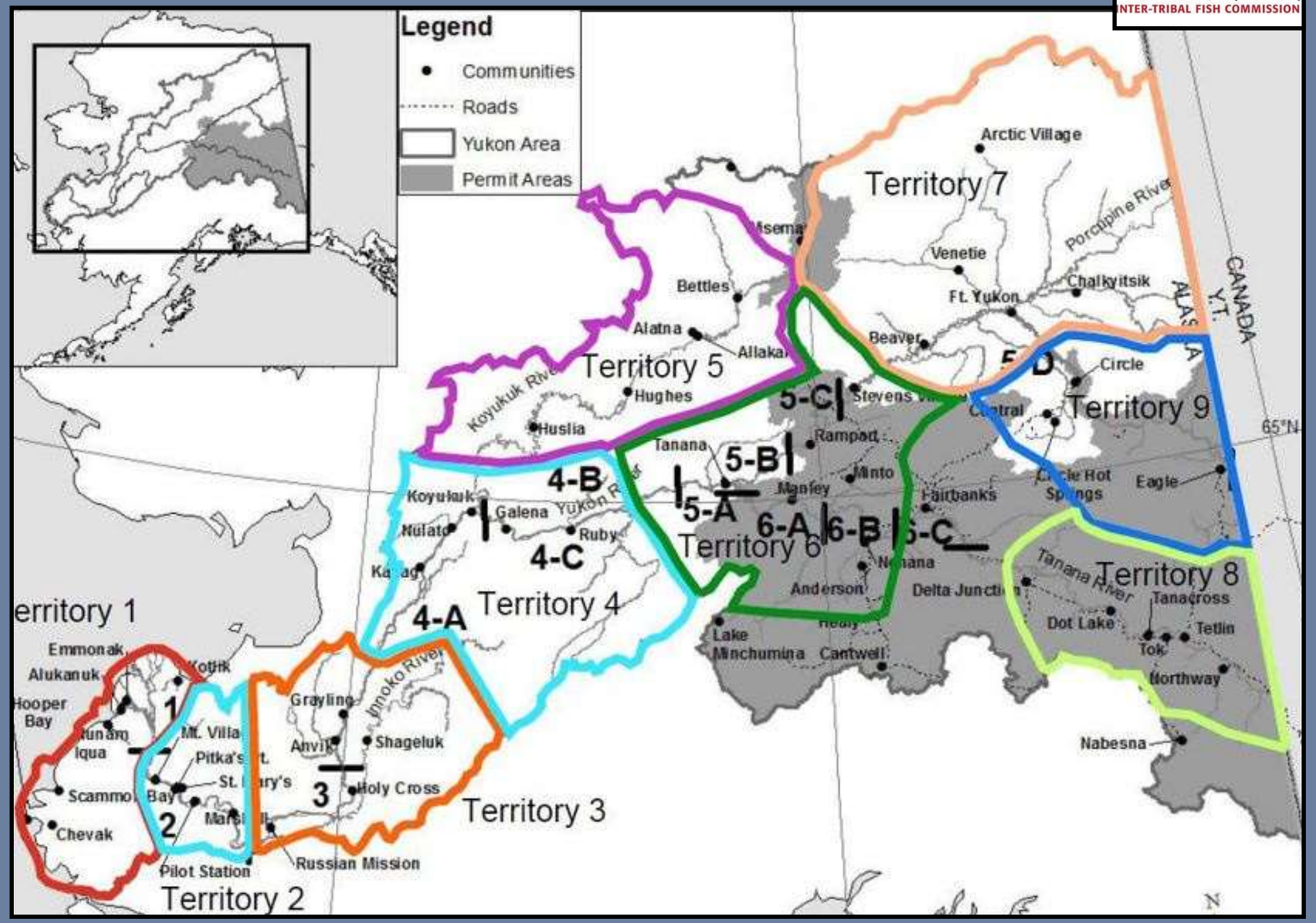
2015-2019: 73,616 fish

2020: 5,128 fish (major collapse)

2021: 704 fish

2022: 2,657 fish

2023: 5,947 fish



Appendix 8-3: Commentary

The Amounts Reasonably Necessary for Subsistence, or ANS, sets the minimum fall chum salmon harvest needed to support Yukon River communities at 89,500–167,100 fish per year. But in recent decades, actual harvests have fallen far short of this target, creating a serious subsistence crisis.

In the 1990s, harvests were relatively stable, averaging around 118,000 fish, meeting or nearing the lower ANS threshold. But by the 2000s, numbers plummeted, with some years averaging as low as 37,000 fish, falling well below subsistence needs. While the 2010s saw a slight improvement, reaching 84,000 fish in some years, it was still below the minimum ANS requirement.

The situation has worsened drastically since 2020, with harvests collapsing to just 5,128 fish in 2020, and even lower in 2021, with only 704 fish harvested—a fraction of what's needed to sustain communities. In 2022 and 2023, numbers remained critically low, with 2,657 and 5,947 fish, respectively. These levels are nowhere near the 89,500-fish minimum required for food security

This ongoing shortfall is more than just a numbers problem—it's a direct threat to Indigenous survival, cultural traditions, and long-term sustainability. Without urgent action to restore salmon populations, many communities will continue to struggle with food insecurity and the erosion of traditional ways of life

YUKON RIVER
INTER-TRIBAL FISH COMMISSION

Appendix 8-3

Table A2. Overview of the role of chum salmon in the total subsistence economy of tribally defined Yukon River YRITFC territories.

Proportions of Total Subsistence Harvests (%)	Territory 1	Territory 2	Territory 3	Territory 4	Territory 5	Territory 6	Territory 7	Territory 8	Territory 9
Chinook Salmon	7.00	10.51	13.96	13.21	4.09	10.19	22.50	0.71	11.57
Summer Chum Salmon	**6.04**	**10.23**	**11.55**	**36.23**	**29.67**	**14.41**	**12.62**	**0.00**	**0.00**
Fall Chum Salmon	**0.03**	**2.30**	**4.27**	**11.09**	**3.48**	**37.87**	**20.77**	**0.00**	**74.24**
Unknown Chum Salmon	**9.51**	**9.81**	**0.00**	**0.03**	**17.80**	**0.00**	**1.64**	**0.14**	**0.00**
Coho Salmon	1.78	2.37	2.94	1.68	0.15	8.14	0.17	3.46	0.00
Other Salmon	1.59	0.91	0.21	0.26	0.15	0.49	0.12	5.10	0.11
Non-Salmon Fish	24.68	34.37	19.00	8.93	15.07	15.35	10.24	42.82	1.41
Large Land Mammals	12.86	17.37	36.78	24.49	23.97	9.54	23.71	32.19	10.33
Small Land Mammals	1.79	3.70	6.20	2.10	1.79	1.66	3.57	7.10	0.34
Marine Mammals	26.09	3.53	0.18	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Birds and Eggs	5.75	3.18	3.61	1.08	2.86	1.43	4.13	4.64	0.90
Marine Invertebrates	0.11	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00
Vegetation	2.76	1.69	1.29	0.89	0.97	0.93	0.53	3.84	1.08
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

The pattern of chum salmon, and salmon overall, contributing approximately half or more of the total subsistence economies of Territories 4, 5, 6, 7, and 9 contrasts with Territories 1, 2, and 3 where 15%, 22%, and 16% of their total subsistence harvests comprise chum salmon and all salmon combined represent 26%-36% of the overall subsistence economies of these lower river and coastal territories. It is also important to note that commercial salmon fisheries in the lower river have contributed important income that is often reinvested into their subsistence economy (e.g., Wolfe 1981), which is not accounted for in comprehensive subsistence harvest survey data reported here.

Declining overall salmon returns lead to fewer spawners reaching their discrete spawning grounds

Appendix 8-4

Table 7.–Fall chum salmon passage or escapement estimates for selected spawning areas, Yukon River drainage, 2004–2024.

	Alaska						Canada		
		Tanana River drainage		Upper Yukon River drainage		Yukon River mainstem (Eagle) passage estimate[f]			
Year	Yukon River drainagewide escapement estimate[a]	Delta River[b]	Bluff Cabin Slough[c]	Teedriinjik (Chandalar) River[d]	Sheenjek River[e]		Mainstem escapement estimate[g]	Porcupine River sonar[h]	Fishing Branch River[i]
2004	576,800	25,073	10,270	169,848	37,877 [j]	–	154,080[k]	–	20,417
2005	1,906,000	28,132	11,964	526,838	485,886	–	437,498[k]	–	119,058
2006	945,000	14,055	–	254,778	175,620	245,290	220,898[k]	–	30,954
2007	956,500	18,610	–	243,805	69,184	265,008	236,987[k]	–	32,150
2008	639,900	23,055	1,198	178,278	50,348	185,409	167,898	–	19,086
2009	507,900	13,492	2,900	–	54,126	101,734	93,626	–	25,828
2010	507,400	17,993	1,610	167,532	24,669 [j]	132,930	117,789	–	15,413
2011	919,300	23,639	2,655	298,223	97,976	224,355	205,566	–	13,085
2012	691,400	9,377 [l]	–	205,791	104,701	153,248	137,662	–	22,399
2013	854,600	31,955	5,554	252,710	–	216,791	200,262	35,615	–
2014	739,400	32,480 [l]	4,095	226,489	–	172,887	156,796	17,244	–
2015	542,350	33,401 [l]	6,020	164,486	–	125,095	108,658	21,397	8,351
2016	833,700	21,913 [l]	4,936	295,023	–	161,027	145,267	54,395	29,397
2017	1,723,000	48,783 [l]	–	509,115	–	419,099	401,585	67,818	48,524
2018	653,200	39,641 [l]	5,822	170,356	–	168,798	154,126	–	10,151
2019	521,250	51,748 [l]	4,664	116,323	–	113,256	99,866	27,447	18,171
2020	183,200	9,854 [l]	1,124	–	–	23,512	23,512	–	4,795
2021	93,285	1,613	1,085	21,162	–	23,170	23,170	3,486	2,413
2022	170,800	5,670 [l]	1,844	69,333	13,957	22,075	22,034	3,804	2,934
2023[m]	287,900	13,366	–	136,551	15,958	22,179	22,090	15,649	11,528
2024	161,100	16,880	3,732	58,457	14,320	16,204	16,174	8,799	5,933
Average									
2013–2023	574,808	25,847	3,699	189,871	14,958	125,110	115,710	26,405	15,140
2018–2023	251,287	16,450	2,179	85,842	14,958	40,838	38,134	12,597	7,968
SEG Range	300,000	7,000 [a]	–	85,000 [n]	[o]		> 80,000 [p]		50,000
	600,000	20,000		234,000					120,000 [p]
Interim Management Escapement Goal							70,000–104,000 [q]		22,000–49,000 [r]

Appendix 8-4: Commentary

Over the past several years, we've seen a dramatic decline in overall salmon returns, affecting not just fishing communities but the entire ecosystem.

Salmon don't just spawn anywhere—they return to very specific locations, often the same streams and riverbeds where they were born. These discrete spawning grounds provide the right water temperature, flow, and habitat conditions needed for successful reproduction. If salmon cannot reach these areas in sufficient numbers, entire runs can collapse, disrupting the natural cycle.

With fewer salmon returning each year, we see fewer spawners reaching these critical habitats. This means fewer eggs laid, fewer juveniles emerging, and ultimately, fewer salmon returning in the next generation. The loss of spawners directly weakens the stability of salmon runs, making recovery even more difficult.

Both summer and fall chum salmon are crucial to this cycle, but they use different spawning areas. Summer chum typically spawn in smaller tributaries, while fall chum rely on larger, groundwater-fed streams that keep their eggs from freezing over winter. When overall salmon numbers drop, both of these habitats suffer, but fall chum are particularly vulnerable because their spawning grounds require stable environmental conditions.
When salmon cannot return in strong numbers, the impact ripples through the ecosystem. Other wildlife that depend on salmon, from bears to wolves to eagles, also suffer. The loss of spawners weakens genetic diversity, making salmon populations less resilient to environmental changes like warming waters and habitat degradation. In turn, Indigenous communities who depend on salmon for food, culture, and identity face increasing hardship.

The decline in salmon returns isn't just about fewer fish—it's about the survival of an entire system. Without strong returns, discrete spawning grounds become barren, natural cycles are disrupted, and the long-term sustainability of salmon runs is put at risk.

Appendix 8-5

Disregard for Traditional Knowledge (TK): Indigenous knowledge, which includes sustainable fishing practices and deep ecological understanding, is often overlooked in favor of Western scientific approaches. This marginalization perpetuates environmental mismanagement and disrupts natural cycles.

Marginalization of Traditional Knowledge
Indigenous knowledge, which embodies sustainable fishing practices and a deep ecological understanding, is often dismissed in favor of Western scientific methods. This exclusion leads to environmental mismanagement, disrupting natural cycles that Indigenous communities have carefully maintained for generations.

Subsistence Rights vs. Commercial Interests
Regulatory frameworks prioritize commercial and industrial fisheries, favoring profit-driven extraction over Indigenous subsistence needs. While industrial fleets operate with fewer restrictions, Indigenous fishing is heavily regulated, limiting access to a traditional and essential food source.

Spiritual and Cultural Erosion
For many Alaska Native communities, salmon is more than sustenance—it is a sacred, living entity central to spiritual beliefs and cultural identity. Exclusion from fisheries management reflects a broader disregard for Indigenous sovereignty and spiritual connections to land and water. Disruptions to salmon cycles sever rituals and ceremonies that have sustained Indigenous peoples for generations.

Environmental Justice Disparities
Indigenous communities face environmental injustice when fisheries policies disproportionately impact their way of life. Limited representation in fisheries governance deepens food insecurity, cultural loss, and economic instability, widening existing disparities and threatening the survival of Indigenous traditions.

"The tribes along the Yukon have completely shouldered all of the ramifications of the salmon collapse, yet they were not the cause of it." — Chief Chairman Brian Ridley

Appendix 8-5: Commentary

For generations, Indigenous people have been the stewards of salmon, using sustainable fishing practices rooted in deep ecological understanding. Yet, our knowledge is often dismissed in favor of Western scientific methods. When traditional knowledge is ignored, it leads to mismanagement and disrupts the natural cycles we have long protected.

Despite our historical and spiritual ties to salmon, commercial and industrial fisheries are given priority. Policies favor profit-driven extraction while placing heavy restrictions on Indigenous subsistence fishing. While industrial fleets continue to operate with fewer regulations, our communities struggle to access a resource that has sustained us for thousands of years

For us, salmon is more than food—it is a sacred being, central to our identity and spiritual beliefs. Yet, exclusion from fisheries management reflects a deeper disregard for our sovereignty. Our ceremonies, stories, and traditions tied to salmon cycles are being severed, breaking an ancestral connection that has defined who we are.

This is not just a policy issue—it is an environmental justice crisis. Indigenous communities experience environmental racism when fisheries management disproportionately harms our way of life. The lack of Indigenous representation in governance only worsens food insecurity, cultural loss, and economic instability, making it harder for our communities to thrive.

Protecting salmon means protecting Indigenous rights, culture, and sovereignty. We must recognize traditional knowledge, ensure Indigenous voices are heard in fisheries management, and fight for policies that support our subsistence way of life. The future of our communities depends on it.

Appendix 8-5

Salmon fishing rituals reflect the deep respect for nature's balance, fostering gratitude and harmony within Indigenous communities. Unfortunately, the decline in salmon populations threatens these spiritual and cultural traditions, impeding the transfer of knowledge to younger generations.

- The criminalization of subsistence fishing and the implementation of restrictive policies disrupt Indigenous spiritual connections to salmon, adversely affecting identity and cultural continuity.

- While communal fishing promotes social bonds and unity, the diminishing salmon stocks fragment these connections.

- Salmon play a central role in oral traditions, symbolizing respect for nature and the interconnectedness of life. Their decline stifles storytelling and cultural expression.

- Indigenous communities have historically acted as guardians of salmon, practicing sustainable harvesting through:
  - Taking only what is necessary
  - Minimizing waste
  - Supporting the entire salmon lifecycle

Disruption of Cultural Tradition

The absence of Elders to impart fishing techniques and cultural values undermines community cohesion. Moreover, Indigenous stewardship—rooted in sharing and sustainability—is frequently overlooked in fisheries management.

Spiritual Connection

The decline of salmon severs vital spiritual ties, posing a threat to Indigenous identity and cultural survival. Salmon symbolize life, renewal, and resilience; their loss endangers deeply sacred traditions.

Appendix 8-5: Commentary

Salmon fishing rituals embody a deep respect for nature's balance, fostering gratitude and harmony within Indigenous communities. However, declining salmon populations threaten these spiritual and cultural traditions, disrupting knowledge transfer to younger generations. The criminalization of subsistence fishing and restrictive policies further sever Indigenous connections to salmon, endangering identity and cultural continuity.

Communal fishing, which strengthens social bonds, is being fragmented by diminishing salmon stocks. Salmon also hold a central place in oral traditions, symbolizing respect for nature and the interconnectedness of life—yet their decline stifles storytelling and cultural expression.

For generations, Indigenous communities have been stewards of salmon, practicing sustainable harvesting by taking only what is necessary, minimizing waste, and supporting the entire salmon lifecycle. However, the absence of Elders to teach fishing techniques and cultural values weakens community cohesion. Indigenous stewardship—rooted in sustainability and sharing—is often overlooked in fisheries management.

Ultimately, the loss of salmon severs vital spiritual ties, posing a profound threat to Indigenous identity and cultural survival. Protecting salmon means preserving traditions, resilience, and the balance of life.

Appendix 8-5

With salmon populations declining, our way of life is at risk—our food security, cultural identity, and the passing down of knowledge to future generations are all threatened

“Going to Fish Camp” Allakaket 1930's - Bergman-Moses Family

Madeline Bifelt in her smokehouse in Huslia, Alaska in 1992.

1980's Yukon River - Hazel Strassburg of Galena.

“If the fish is good, we’ll have a good winter. If the fish is poor, we’ll have a poor winter. It’s not like we can go to a store and pick out our supper. We have to look in our freezer at what we processed.”

— Kathy Chase, Holy Cross, June 2004

Body

Appendix 8-5: Commentary

Traditional Knowledge as Salmon People is built on generations of stewardship, sustainability, and deep respect for salmon, which are central to our culture and survival. We have learned from our ancestors how salmon behave, when they spawn, and how to care for their habitats to ensure their return year after year. But with salmon populations declining, our way of life is at risk—our food security, cultural identity, and the passing down of knowledge to future generations are all threatened. This is an issue of environmental justice.

The loss of salmon is not just about the fish—it is about the rights of Indigenous communities to access and protect the resources we have relied on since time immemorial. Protecting salmon means protecting our sovereignty, our traditions, and our ability to sustain ourselves as we always have.

Tanana Chiefs Conference

Thank You in Interior Native Languages

Benhti Kokhut’ana Kenaga’ (Lower Tanana): Ana Basi’

Deg Xinag: Dogidingh

Denaakk’e (Koyukon): Baasee’/Maasee’

Dihthaad Xt’een Aandeg’ (Tanacross): Tsin’ęę

Dinak’i (Upper Kuskokwim): Tsen’anh

Dinjii Zhuh K’yaa (Gwich’in): Hąį’ęę

Hän: Mahsi’ choo’

Holikachuk: Xisigidasidhut

Nee’aanèegn’ (Upper Tanana): Tsen’įį