

MINUTES
YUKON SALMON COMMITTEE
May 1-3, 2007, Mtg#60
Dawson City, Yukon

MEETING DATES 2007-2008

Past Meeting Dates

Yukon Queen II	May 30, 2007	Dawson
Haines Junction (Public)	June 6, 2007	Haines Junction
YSC & DFO Roles Workshop	June 18-19, 2007	Whitehorse
Faro Mine Tour	July 6, 2007	Faro

Upcoming Meeting Dates (tentative)

Yukon Salmon Committee	September 18-20, 2007	Whitehorse
Yukon Salmon Committee	November 13-15, 2007	Whitehorse
Yukon River Working Group	November 16, 2007	Whitehorse
Yukon Salmon Committee	February 26-28, 2008	Whitehorse

MEETING MINUTES

YSC Present: Carl Sidney, Ed Kormendy, Chuck Hume, Dan McDiarmid, Lorelei Smith, Joe Johnson, Esau Schafer, Craig McKinnon (11:45)

Others present: Frank Quinn (Acting YSC Executive Secretary), Arlene Yeulet (recorder – DFO), James MacDonald (THFN), Roberta Joseph (THFN), Victor Henry (elder, THFN), Ronald Johnson (elder, THFN), Peggy Kormendy (elder, THFN), Julia Morberg (elder, THFN)

11:00 am Meeting called to order. Opening Prayer & introductions

1. Announcements

– Carl’s expense claims

Discussed the process for the chairperson to have the flexibility to attend meetings without prior approval of the YSC. Discussed YSC’s participation as an observer in the negotiation of the Basic Needs Allocation.

DECISION – Approved the two travel claims for Carl and agreed to the Chairperson having the flexibility to attend meetings without prior approval of the committee.

ACTION – Executive Secretary will look after taking these expenses from old year funds.

2. Reviewed agenda and made additions to the agenda

- Alsek River Working Group Update
- Representation at May Gathering by YSC – Joe Johnson suggested DFO attend for learning purposes

- Review Public Meeting Agenda
- Yukon Fish & Wildlife Management Board Update – Dan McDiarmid
- Note items #7, contribution agreement and #10 YSC funding will be in camera tomorrow morning, May 2nd. Also in camera at the same time will be YSC administrative staff and YSC functioning, operating procedures, travel claim protocols.

3. Habitat Consultation Position

A meeting took place last week between Frank Quinn, the acting Executive Secretary and members of the YSC to bring Frank up to date and a contract was drafted for the YSC's review at this meeting. The contract was discussed.

DECISION – YSC will continue with Kelly Hayes on contract for another year as a habitat consultant for the YSC.

ACTION – Executive Secretary will revise the contract and insert the wording at the end of the Land use planning section as follows:

“and agreed upon assignments or projects between the two parties”

12:00 Adjourned for lunch

1:30 pm Meeting resumed

4. Reviewed Action Items

5. Reviewed Minutes from February 2007 Meeting

Minutes reviewed and adopted as revised.

Chuck moved to adopt the minutes as revised, and Joe seconded the motion. All in agreement, passed.

6. Review Public Meeting Agenda

- item 4, add Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association Update – Craig McKinnon
- item 6, Queen II Report, add status by Frank Quinn with respect to enforcement of the Fisheries Act
- item 7, Business from the floor, add Sebastian's last name “Jones”, and remove “Lorelei Smith (YSC)”
- Draw prizes will be given out

7. Rotary Park – salmon session in July

The Yukon Fish and Game Association is planning a fun day at Rotary Park. The committee is waiting for the schedule and will then be looking for volunteers to talk about the salmon life cycle and fishing techniques. YSC interested in becoming part of the fish ladder and interpretation centre. Will discuss this further in the future.

ACTION: Executive Secretary to contact the YF&GA by phone and/or email, find out the date, advise that the YSC members want to attend the fun day at Rotary Park and are willing to sit on a working group. Also, find out the YF&GA meeting dates and provide the YSC meeting dates to them. Executive Secretary will try to set up a meeting.

8. Strategic Plan

Document distributed at February meeting and emailed. Discussed the process to produce a strategic plan and a copy of the YF&WMB's strategic plan was given to Craig from Carl.

ACTION: Lorelei and Craig to take the history list of documents produced February 14th and do further work to produce a report that fits into the strategic plan with goals and outcomes.

9. Members' Updates

Environmental Modernization Process Plan (Carl) – Attended a meeting in Victoria which was an opportunity to provide input and ideas for improvements on management practices. Discussion often centered around fish farming and it was noted that this was a beneficial forum for many groups to work together. Discussion stemmed from the question “How can we improve habitat protection?” Some suggestions were to education other government departments. Provided comments to involve First Nations' traditional knowledge and identify where the traditional knowledge comes from, and to use that knowledge along with the scientific knowledge. Also suggested rating watersheds to show different salmon production to help monitor projects

Yukon River Panel

(Dan) – Attended first panel meeting as an alternate, where \$1.2 million dollars was allocated to projects. Scientist, Kate Myers spoke about the off-shore fishery, by-catch and hot-spots which fishermen are to move away from if they come across one in the ocean. Frank Quinn and Sandy Johnston discussed the exchange of genetic samples, however the US is not prepared to provide genetic samples at this time. Frank will be discussing this further at the next meeting. Discussed data collection between sonar and tag recovery.

(Chuck) - Attended the meeting as well and after watching the elders, thought they did not understand the numbers being discussed. Suggested a portion of the Yukon funds could be used to bring a group of Alaskans and Canadian elders together and interpret the meeting to the elders who could then act as a steering committee to the committee as a whole. Net size and escapements were discussed.

(Joe) Noted that today's focus is on management of people and dollars more than salmon, and sonar technology today is advanced.

Discussion also took place on the benefits of going on the joint Yukon River trip as well as data gathered by the Didson sonar compared to mark-recapture. It was noted that fishnets on the river banks need cleaning up.

Porcupine River Working Group (Esau) – The timing of the meeting was not good. Interest was expressed to DFO at the meeting for Esau and Carl or another member of the YSC to spend a week at Fishing Branch River to watch the counting of fish and daily activities. The group agreed with DFO's management plan for the season.

ACTION: Executive Secretary will arrange for Esau and Carl to visit the Fishing Branch River site which will be funded by DFO.

Alsek River Working Group (Chuck) – Meeting held in Whitehorse. Concern raised that YSC was replacing the Champagne/Aishihik First Nation's capability of government to government meetings, and Lawrence Joe wants to set up a meeting with Frank Quinn in May for a government to government meeting. Fishing is expected to be the same as last year and there is a plan for Linaya Workman to showcase gaffing. Concern was raised about a trail being opened and are looking at 4x4

access away from the mouth, as well as looking at moving the road. It was also noted that bears keep destroying the counter.

4:25 pm Meeting adjourned for the day

May 2, 2007, Dawson City, Yukon

9:00 am Meeting called to order - **(In Camera)**

10. YSC Funding

11. Contribution Agreement

a) YSC Administrative/Operating procedures

12:10 Break for lunch

1:30 pm Resumed Meeting – **(Open to Public)**

12. Habitat Update presentation – Kelly Hayes

Yukon Queen II

Kelly Hayes was introduced and she presented her report on EDI's Study of the Yukon Queen II. A hard copy of her report was distributed to the members (Appendix I attached). Kelly noted the study only looked at what could affect the stranding of juvenile salmon fry as a result of the Yukon Queen II, although there were also environmental and public safety concerns which were not addressed in this report. Kelly noted the specific recommendations from the study.

Kelly said that overall, the report suggests there are ways of lowering the risk of stranding juvenile Chinook salmon as a result of the Yukon Queen's operations. However, with such low numbers it is difficult to draw real conclusions and mitigations will only reduce the potential number of fish killed.

An open meeting of the working group is scheduled in Dawson on May 30th, where the authors of the study will be at that meeting to answer questions about the conduct of the study or the methods, etc., and the public will have the opportunity to provide input to the working group.

Discussed the figures on page 25 of the report and the percentage of fish found, and the intent of the commission of the study. DFO is working with Holland America for a mitigation and monitoring plan and Holland America will be applying for an authorization under S. 32 and S.35 of the Fisheries Act this year so the Minister of DFO will have to make a decision on either the boat stops or he authorizes the operation of the vessel with compensation and mitigation involved. That application will trigger a YESAA review, and in addition, Frank has been appointed to the steering committee to bring this to closure.

Gerry Couture, Ed Kormendy, Esau Schafer, Kelly Hayes and any other members that can make it, should attend the open working group meeting on May 30th in Dawson City.

Concerns of the Holland America boat were discussed with respect to fishwheels, nets and drift wood being swept back into the water from the wake of the boat. There was also a suggestion to interview all of the fishers along the river in particular to hear the First Nations views, and a recommendation for the monitoring plan to include a student observer on the boat.

ACTION: Kelly Hayes to review Jake Duncan's reports with respect to the Yukon Queen II.

ACTION: Kelly Hayes to draft a letter to Chief in Council of THFN to ask to work together with the First Nation and YF&WMB to survey and document testimonies from trappers, fishers and hunters along the Yukon River, which will be used for future reference material.

Dawson Sewage

Kelly Hayes gave a presentation and discussion took place on the proposed Dawson City Sewage Lagoon from Gartner Lee's report. The company is at the point to take their proposal to YESAA for a water licence. Kelly will follow the process.

Yukon Oil & Gas

Discussion on a request for public comments regarding proposed Yukon Oil & Gas postings. Of 25 postings, there was only 1 which could have an overlap with a potential salmon area in the Whitefish River. Kelly drafted a letter for Carl's signature which was submitted with respect to the posting being a potential problem and if it is approved that any activities would have to comply with Yukon government's guidelines. Kelly reviewed the North Yukon Land Use Plan maps to find the one area which had confirmed the Chinook spawning area and potential chum spawning area.

Northern Cross

Kelly told the YSC that there are no salmon issues from Northern Cross's proposal and that YESAA has a decision document on this application with 80 conditions.

13. Members' Updates continued:

- YF&WMB – Dan McDiarmid

Further to an earlier meeting, the YF&WMB is looking at putting on a symposium for "Fish & Wildlife at 2020 Vision". The board has spoken with Premier Fentie who will be striking a steering committee with the YF&WMB. Also spoke with all of the RRCs to find out what involvement they want, which may be at the community level. As many organizations as possible are encouraged to be involved to participate and provide the YF&WMB with some vision and direction to what they want to see from the board in 2020. At what level does the salmon committee want to be involved? Steering Committee level or further down the road? Carl asked for a letter from the YF&WMB to ask the committee these questions.

- Yukon River Fisheries Drainage Association – Carl Sidney

Attended meeting as an observer and was often asked to provide comments. The salmon committee will now be able to be a non-voting member to sit at the table to provide input into their discussions and management plans.

4:20 pm Meeting adjourned

May 3, 2007, Dawson City, Yukon

9:00 am Meeting opened

14. Reviewed action items from the Public Meeting last night.

ACTION: At the public meeting, commercial fishermen asked about the possibility of the YSC purchasing recovered tags and being reimbursed from DFO at a later date. Executive Secretary will look into this and report back to Carl Sidney.

15. Review Calendar

- YSC meetings
 - o July 6 & 7 – Faro (travel on 5 & 8)
 - Faro Mine Tour – July 6
 - YSC Meeting – July 7
 - o September 18 – 20 – Whitehorse
 - o November 13 – 15
 - November 16 – Yukon River Working Group Meeting
 - o February 26 – 28

- May Gathering – Carl will attend on the 17th. Dan is attending on behalf of the YF&GA

- May 10 – Yukon River Working Group Meeting – Whitehorse, Members attending are Ed, Lorelei, Dan, Gerry, Carl & Roberta and James are also available

- May 16 – Whitehorse Public Meeting – Whitehorse at 6:30 pm. Executive Secretary will book the large boardroom on Range Road.

- May 30 – Yukon Queen II Public Meeting – Members attending are Ed, Gerry, & Carl. Executive Secretary will confirm the location.

- June 6 – Alsek River Public Meeting – Craig will confirm this date. Members attending are Carl, Craig & Chuck.

- June 19 & 20 - DFO Staff & YSC
 - o Roles and Responsibilities

16. Other Business

- Salmon catch card

Discussion took place on the good intentions of this program, however there was no authority to collect money in a bank account.

ACTION: Letter to be drafted stating no wrong doing was done, no money was spent personally and the YSC will have no future involvement with the salmon catch card bank account. The YSC members will be removed from the bank account and the money in the account will be returned to the general revenue fund. Executive Secretary will draft the letter.

- Management Tools

Lorelei would like approval to continue working on the management tools for the YSC with respect to salmon as outlined in the UFA. Lorelei is working with Kelly Hayes and the first book is expected to be completed by July. The first book is a general overview which describes the watersheds, management, habitat, species as outlined in the UFA, socio-economic, forestry, agriculture, mining, watersheds (Mackenzie, Liard, Peel, Alsek & Yukon, North Slope) and anything that affects salmon. She will then meet with the departments. The next books will be

more site specific and from these, the YSC will develop their management plan. Lorelei expects this to cost \$2,500.00.

DECISION: Committee gave approval for Lorelei to continue working on the Management Tools.

- Agenda for next YSC Meeting
 - Operating Procedures Review
 - Develop protocol for travel expense claims
 - Management Tools (Lorelei)
 - Strategic Plan

- Community Updates

Carl reminded the members that this is a time for story telling and not just issues.

Craig attended a presentation by Erik Val on bear viewing. Kluane Park Management board held a conference on co-management with aboriginal groups. Dan noted the Peel River Land Use Plan is close to completion. Esau noted Old Crow is looking at having a salmon gathering and going into the DFO Fishing Branch River camp. Joe attended the meeting in Fairbanks and noted his appreciation of the negotiators work. Chuck, as an elder is attending a lot of meetings to provide traditional knowledge and sits on the Parks Management Board. Discussed involvement with the Aboriginal Leadership Program

Carl discussed his involvement with the Yukon River Inter-tribal Council which is one of the largest organizations from around the world.

Discussed the status of the processing plant. It is conditionally approved for Dawson and the applicant has been asked to consult with First Nations and provide additional specific information.

The preliminary forecast run for Chinook is average and the chum run is average to below average. All fisheries should be open and are in the green zone.

Discussion took place on who will be doing the test fishery. It was noted that in the past, a steering committee was formed that coordinated the contracts and selected the applicants. Dan thought Sebastian Jones would be taking the lead.

ACTION: Executive Secretary will follow up on this.

Yukon Salmon Committee

Habitat Consultant Update

May 2007

Yukon Queen II

The operation of the Yukon Queen II, a high-speed catamaran, between Dawson and Eagle Alaska has been a topic of debate for many years. The central issue of the boat is its potential impact on juvenile salmon fry (killing them in the jet intake of the boat or stranding on shoreline through wave action) and the destruction of shoreline as a result of the boat's wake.

Over the years, there have been a series of public, government and industry working groups that have examined this issue. Studies have been conducted and results have been published. The most recent study, prepared for the Yukon River Panel, was conducted by EDI Environmental Dynamics Inc. and released in April 2007.

This report includes the findings from a series of field investigations conducted during the summer of 2006 in order to gain a clearer understanding of the variables that influence the stranding of fish as a result of the operations of the Yukon Queen II. The study area covered approximately 145 kms of the river between Dawson and the Yukon/Alaska border. Like many high-speed catamarans, the Yukon Queen II produces a significant wake. Public concerns raised by the operations of the boat include the following:

- Environmental Concerns
 - Juvenile fish stranding on shoreline from YQII wake
 - Juvenile fish being killed by jet intakes of YQII
 - Excessive bank erosion and damage as a result of YQII wake
 - Harassment of wildlife and birds
- Public Safety and Navigational Concerns
 - River navigation conflicts with smaller craft
 - Damage to fishing nets and fish wheels
 - General safety concerns

The 2006 investigations only focused on the issue of shoreline stranding of fish, in particular juvenile Chinook salmon. Prior to this study, three investigations on fish stranding were conducted. However, these studies did not evaluate the variables that influence stranding, so the 2006 study expanded on these works. The objectives of the project included the following:

- Test and confirm patterns of fish stranding found by previous studies
- Attempt to correlate wave runout height with fish stranding
- Determine which shoreline types are most susceptible to stranding
- Determine how YQII operating variables (speed, distance, depth) impact wave runout characteristics
- Evaluate how natural variables (water level, seasonal timing and shoreline characteristics) impact wave runout heights and fish stranding.
- Attempt to determine the accuracy of the methods used for surveying fish stranding

In order to develop a better understanding of these topics, a variety of research methods were employed. These included:

- Vessel tracking and route monitoring
- Shoreline mapping
- Bathymetry
- Stranding surveys and wave runout trails
- Beach seining
- Intensive wake trials
- Stranding survey accuracy tests

Overall, this study found a smaller number of stranded fish than previous studies. Since 2002, when the number of stranded juvenile Chinook tested was the highest, the detected level of stranded fish has declined. However, it is not clear if this is directly linked to the abundance of salmon based on fluctuations in spawning escapement or other factors such as changes in the YQII operations since the studies began.

Regarding factors that seem to influence stranding, it was confirmed that stranding appears to be related to availability of fish in the nearshore zone such as creekmouth areas. Wave runout heights and their impact on stranding were not so clearly determined as a variety of results were found that seemed to depend on a variety of factors. Some of these factors included the slope of the shoreline, the direction the vessel was traveling, the distance the vessel was from shore, the river depth, vessel speed, the actual location of the site (eg. Creek mouths), and the seasonal timing.

The results of the survey build on the results of previous surveys and provide more information on the factors that affect stranding. However, considering the small data sets for stranding occurrences, the report states that it is not possible to predict with certainty the operating practices that are responsible for stranding. Rather, they were able to predict which operating variables appear to impact the likelihood of stranding (mainly vessel speed, direction and distance from shoreline).

Overall, they found that stranding occurs most often when water levels are low and fish densities are high. Based on these findings, they report identifies specific creek and river mouths along the Yukon River that may be the most problematic locations for fish stranding and wave runout from the YQII operations.

Finally, the report includes a series of recommendations or a mitigation plan for the operations of the YQII. This mitigation plan is based on the Department of Fisheries and Ocean's Habitat Risk Management Framework. The framework involves the use of a Risk Management Matrix which incorporates fisheries habitat values and the severity of effects resulting from the operation of the YQII under different operating conditions.

The risk management matrix can be used to estimate how vessel operating variables can be changed in order to reduce the risk to juvenile Chinook salmon under different environmental variables. According to this matrix, it appears possible to reduce the potential risk to salmon by modifying the vessels operation.

More specifically, the report makes the following recommendations for the overall operations of the YQII:

- Traveling planed within 75 m of any shoreline should be avoided when possible
- Accelerating from idle to operating speed near any creek mouth or sensitive shoreline should not be done.
- Travel at lower than normal operating speed when planed is not recommended
- YQII should only be operated with the vessel's bow trimmed down.
- Collection of route data for all days of operation should be collected
- Fishers along Yukon River should not deposit fish remains directly adjacent to shoreline (attracts other fish close to shore)

Overall, the report suggests there are ways for lowering the risk of stranding juvenile Chinook salmon as a direct result of the YQII's operation.

A separate component of this project looked at the likelihood that waves from the YQII would affect commercial fishing nets. The results of this literature review suggest a lack of scientific or other technical information on vessel-generated or naturally-occurring wave impacts on drop-out in gill net fisheries.

Dawson Sewage Treatment Facility

The Yukon Government's Community and Transportation Services Branch has recently been holding a series of public meetings to explain their proposal for a new sewage treatment facility in Dawson. The municipality's current sewage treatment dumps raw sewage directly into the Yukon River. For almost a decade, there has been a movement to find a solution that would bring the treatment system into compliance with its water licence requirements. Over the past few years, the Yukon Government has undertaken a series of studies to examine different types of facilities. The proposal now being presented represents the findings of this research.

The proposed facility would be an aerated lagoon system with three cells. This is less expensive than a mechanical treatment facility and would be within the abilities of the community to pay for the operations and maintenance of the lagoon system. The site for the lagoons would be located on the southeast side of the Dome Road junction on the Klondike Highway, just north of the Klondike Bridge. The area consists of the remains of old tailings ponds and currently has no development on it. Two of the three cells would be fully aerated, with the third cell being only partially aerated to allow for settling. Sewage for the facility would be pumped from town or delivered by truck. Once the sewage moves through the facility, treated water would be pumped back to the existing outflow pipe and into the Yukon River.

The current water licence guidelines require a Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BODs) of less than 45 mg/L and Total Suspended Solids (TSS) of less than 60 mg/L. The design of the facility would anticipate that the treated water being released into the Yukon River would contain BOD and TSS counts of less than 25 mg/L. This would meet both current and future regulatory requirements.

In order to help address aesthetic and sensory (smell) issues, the lagoon's berm would be created in a way that would make it appear similar to the old tailings remains that are seen throughout the Klondike Valley. Trees would also be planted to break any visual opportunities. Based on the experience from other facilities, it is not expected that smell will be an issue for the site.

The Yukon Government has tested aerated lagoons in Dawson and has determined that the climate is appropriate for this procedure. They have also investigated similar facilities in other northern communities in both Alaska and British Columbia and it appears this is a sustainable choice that is suitable to Dawson's size and location, cost-effective to construct, and affordable for Dawson residents to operate and maintain.

Studies were also conducted to look at the possibility of water contamination if the lagoons were to leak. It was determined that only a catastrophic failure would create any negative impact on the Yukon River system or on Dawson's drinking water. However, a catastrophic failure would probably include a major earthquake or rockslide, which would most likely create other more significant problems for Dawson and the state of the Yukon River. It should be noted that this type of lagoon system is successfully operating on the Mirimichi River in New Brunswick, one of the last Atlantic Salmon rivers in Eastern Canada.

Over the next few months, the Yukon Government will prepare their application to YESAB and the Yukon Water Board. It is anticipated that the approval process could take up to three years, but construction of the facility could begin as early as 2009.

The next court date for the City of Dawson to discuss their non-compliance with their water licence is scheduled for June 28, 2007.

Yukon Oil and Gas Call

In March, the Government of Yukon initiated the public review process for its Oil and Gas Rights Disposition

Process. The Department of Energy, Mines and Resources received a total of 25 Requests for Postings (RFP) from companies earlier in the year. All RFPs or areas of oil and gas interest were in northern Yukon: 24 in the Eagle Plains oil and gas basin, and one in the Peel Plateau-Plain oil and gas basin.

During the public review, these areas of interest were referred to Yukon First Nations whose traditional territories may be affected by the RFPs, other Government of Yukon departments and special interest groups. As well, the Yukon public was invited to submit comments regarding environmental, socio-economic, and surface access concerns that could arise as a result of possible oil and gas activities in these locations. The deadline for comments was April 27, 2007.

The Yukon Salmon Committee submitted a short letter providing comments on the proposed areas. While there is no significant concern as most of the RFPs are not in areas known to be important salmon spawning or habitat streams, there was one RFP that did touch on the Whitestone River. This river has some known salmon values that could be compromised if development goes ahead in this area. The YSC letter outlined this concern and requested that any developments follow the guidelines established by the Yukon Government for low-impact seismic.

The next step in the process will be a call for work bids, which may happen as soon as May or June 2007.

Northern Cross

Northern Cross currently holds permits for oil and gas exploration in the Eagle Plains Basin. They have recently proposed to do some work on three of their wells and conduct some studies on their flows in order to get better information on the reservoirs. In order to do this, they have proposed to build first a winter road and then an all weather road to the well sites. This road will be approximately 21 kms long. Other developments would include a site for a camp and some related development to the well sites (pads, etc...). Oil and gas produced from these wells would be trucked to Fort St. John for testing and possible sale. Overall, the purpose of this development is to develop a better understanding of the reservoir before making additional development or investment decisions.

Several environmental groups raised concerns about this proposal, primarily for wildlife and cumulative impact reasons. From a salmon perspective, there appears to be little reason for comment.

YESAB's decision document on this proposed project was released on April 4, 2007. It approved the project, but recommended many requirements for any permits that may be applied for.