

Radio Tag Recovery – Lower Yukon Fisheries – Final Report

By:

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Title: Radio Tag Recovery – Lower Yukon Fisheries – Final Report

Study Number: URE-01-03

Investigator(s) Information:

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Project Location: Lower Yukon River Basin

Project Partners: Holy Cross, Grayling, Kaltag and Nulato village councils, YRFDA,
ADF&G, NMFS

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Abstract

To facilitate the recovery of radio-tags from chinook salmon caught in lower Yukon fisheries, local persons from Holy Cross, Grayling, Kaltag and Nulato were employed to gather radio-tags and return them to the radio telemetry project leader for Alaska Dept of Fish and Game. Radio-tags were used to monitor Yukon River chinook salmon migration. Because of a lower ratio of tagged to untagged chinook salmon in 2003, roughly half (20) as many radio-tags were returned as were returned in 2002. Because TCC was collecting genetic or ASL data in this region, BSFA technicians collected no samples.

Introduction

A study of chinook salmon run timing and distribution using radio-tracking gear was conducted by ADF&G and NMFS on Yukon River. Approximately 1,100 fish were tagged with radio transmitters, which cost (\$175/transmitter). In addition, a small number (37) of archival radio-tags (\$500/tag) were deployed.

To facilitate tag returns in 2003, local hires in the villages of Holy Cross, Grayling, Kaltag and Nulato assisted local fishers to return radio tags and record important information associated with the marked fish. The returned tags were sent back to the tagging site or to ADF&G in Anchorage. Using local hires continues the building of local stewardship of salmon resources.

Results

Using a combination of phone calls and site visits, BSFA hired technicians in each of the proposed 4 villages (Nulato, Kaltag, Grayling and Holy Cross) and gave them a brief orientation as to their work duties and shipped them return mailing materials. These four technicians were the same persons hired in 2002. ADF&G, YRDFA and USFWS biologists and staff assisted in numerous phases of this operation. The technicians assisted in the return of 20 tags to ADF&G in 2003. All technicians did a fine job and all finished the season except for the Holy Cross technician, who, prior to finishing the fishing season and returning the tags collected (if any), left to fight fires and has been out of contact since. Numerous attempts to contact the technician have been (and will continue to be) made by BSFA. The Holy Cross technician was not paid and returned no tags.

While the URE-01-03 proposal states that one of the two objectives was to collect genetic and age-sex-length (ASL) information, no samples were collected by BSFA technicians because Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) was collecting that information. No funds from the URE-01-03 award was used for genetic or ASL collections. Of the requested \$7,000 budget, the total project expenditures were \$2,380.00.

Nearer Christmas, a thank you note and postage reimbursement were sent to individual Yukon chinook fishers who mail radio tags directly to ADF&F, independent of BSFA's technicians.

The project leader, Chris Stark, was the BSFA contact with the technicians, and relevant agency and NGO staff. BSFA staff also attended YRDFFA teleconferences weekly.