

## Association of Village Council Presidents Press Release

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Contact:

Gage Hoffman

907-543-7308

ghoffman@avcp.org



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **AVCP Working to Protect Y-K Delta Salmon**

With the concern over salmon on the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers, the Association of Village Council Presidents has drafted a strategy to address the decline and collapse of the salmon fisheries. This strategy was developed with input from the Natural Resources Department, Administration, and the Executive Board and was shared with the Tribes at the most recent Quarterly Tribal Teleconference meeting. It will also be shared at the upcoming AVCP annual convention.

AVCP has developed the strategy which also includes detailing the emergency response to the 2021 Yukon River Salmon crisis, our short-term strategy goals to address the subsistence fishing crisis on both rivers, and the long-range goals and plan of action for AVCP. The scope of the strategy is very broad and is being updated continuously as new information becomes available, and when new actions are initiated. It consists of five components including the Yukon River Salmon Emergency Response; Fisheries Economic Disaster Requests; Federal Engagement; State Engagement; and Regional Engagement. The following is a brief summary of the different components of the strategy, including the most current information and updates.

#### Yukon River Salmon Emergency Response

AVCP has helped coordinate at present five waves of donated salmon from around the State of Alaska to 19 Tribes on the Lower Yukon River and the Delta Coast. The first waves of donated salmon were coordinated through Sea Share with salmon from the Bristol Bay and Kodiak regions. The subsequent waves have been coordinated through the Governor's Office and the Alaska Department of Fish & Game with salmon from the Copper River Region.

Numerous entities including major Alaska air carriers, transportation businesses, the US Coast Guard, and many others have been involved. In the region, Kwik'pak Fisheries is coordinating the re-packing and distribution of the salmon to Yukon River Tribes from Russian Mission to Nunam Iqua including Scammon Bay, Hooper Bay, Paimiut and Chevak. The waves of donated fish started in July and is expected to continue to the end of August.

For the most up to date information about the salmon crisis and other natural resource issues, please visit our NEW AVCP Natural Resources Facebook page. You can type AVCP Natural Resources into the search or find a link from our main AVCP Facebook page. Constructive feedback is always welcome on Facebook.

AVCP's Natural Resources Department is developing a survey for our Tribal members to document what is currently known about the impacts of this salmon crisis. This information will be used to support Emergency Declarations and other advocacy efforts in the year to come. Please look for information about this survey in coming weeks and we encourage all members of impacted communities to fill out the survey.

### Fisheries Economic Disaster Requests

AVCP is pushing hard for a response to the 2020 (last year) Emergency Declaration that has been pending since March of this past spring. AVCP has written letters to both the State of Alaska's Governor's Office and the Department of Commerce requesting an update on the request.

In the meantime, AVCP worked with the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association, Tanana Chiefs Conference/Yukon River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, and Yukon Delta Fisheries Development Association to prepare for a new 2021 Disaster Declaration which was submitted to the Governor on August 23, 2021. A letter was sent out to all the Traditional Alaska Native Fishing families and Tribes along the Yukon River asking for supporting Tribal Resolutions on August 17, 2021, to be sent to the YRDFA Executive Director. AVCP provided a letter of support directed to the Governor on September 2, 2021.

AVCP has also been working with the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission to address fisheries disasters on the Kuskokwim. The fish commission submitted a disaster request for 2020 to the Governor in December 2020; that request is pending just as the Yukon 2020 request. We will also be engaging with them to consider a disaster request for 2021.

A disaster request takes time and requires data to justify and demonstrate the complete situation. There are Tribes in our region who have already adopted resolutions requesting disaster declarations and assistance identified, and AVCP's Natural Resources Department will be coordinating the effort to gather evidence, resolutions, and/or letters of support in the months to come so we urge Tribes to please respond when you receive a request for information this fall and winter.

### Federal Engagement

On June 7, 2021, the Alaska Federation of Natives hosted a listening session to provide testimony to Congressman Don Young and Congressman Jared Huffman on the Magnuson-Stevens Act Reauthorization. AVCP's CEO gave testimony for AVCP, which included the recommendation to add tribal seats to the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC). AVCP also co-signed a letter with several other Alaska tribal entities to Rep. Huffman on July 1, urging him to support including language designating no less than two tribal seats. The MSA reauthorization bill presented in the House earlier this month includes the recommendation adding two Tribal seats to the NPFMC. We wait to hear if this will pass.

AVCP is spearheading a request to the Congressional Delegation to sponsor a field hearing on "The State of The Salmon in Alaska". A letter was sent on September 8, 2021, to Senator Murkowski, Senator Sullivan, and Congressman Young from AVCP, Kawerak, TCC and AFN requesting the field hearing. Governor Dunleavy's office was copied on the letter as well. AVCP's Executive Board passed a resolution in August calling for the field hearing and the resolution has been forwarded for consideration of the full board at the AVCP annual convention in September.

### State Engagement

AVCP will be working with our coalition partners to identify opportunities to engage at the State level with the Board of Fisheries and Alaska Department of Fish and Game to address fisheries that have an impact on salmon returns to Western Alaska, including the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers.

There are fisheries that have long been thought to have an effect on salmon returning to river systems in Western Alaska, including commercial fisheries and hatcheries.

### Regional Engagement

In the past several weeks we have received several resolutions from Tribes requesting the federal government to declare a fisheries disaster on the Yukon River. We continue to receive those resolutions which will be collected through the Natural Resources Department. The Natural Resources Department has also given updates on the plans and the work completed so far to AVCP staff, Executive Board, Quarterly Tribal Teleconference and is planning to share at the upcoming AVCP Annual Convention in September.

AVCP will continue to work with our regional partners to address the many different aspects of the fisheries and the affects from such disastrous salmon returns.

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*For additional information, please contact AVCP Communications Director, Gage Hoffman at 907-543-7308 or email at [ghoffman@avcp.org](mailto:ghoffman@avcp.org)*

*AVCP is a regional nonprofit tribal consortium comprised of the 56 federally recognized tribes of the YK Delta. The geographic boundaries of AVCP extend from the Yukon River Village of Russian Mission downstream to the Bering Sea coast, north up through Kotlik and south along the coastline to Platinum and then extending up the Kuskokwim River to Stony River, including Lime Village on the Stony River tributary. The area encompasses approximately 6.5 million acres, or 55,000 square miles, in Western Alaska.*