For thousands of years, Indigenous Peoples have been the stewards and caretakers of the land, water, fish, and animals. It is well known that 80% of the world's remaining biodiversity is found in Indigenous Peoples' territories. Our stewardship practices are guided by traditional values unique to each cultural group in Alaska. The most important values guiding hunting and fishing practices are sharing and caring—taking care of our families, community, and Elders, and taking only what is needed from the land and waters. Traditionally, Alaska Native people lived a cyclical lifestyle, following animals and fish with the seasons. This meant winters in remote trapping camps, spring camp, summer fish camp, and fall hunting, resulting in consistent active movement throughout the year. Many generations now feel a pressing urgency to protect our ways of life by safeguarding our salmon
The Alaskan Yukon Kuskokwim (AYK) region includes the traditional homelands of several Alaska Native groups, with Inupiat and Yup'ik people typically living in coastal regions, and Dene and Gwichin people living in upriver regions for millennia (Langdon 2002, Wolfe and Spaeder 2009). The cultures, economies, and nutritional foundation of tribes throughout the AYK region are intimately woven with salmon, particularly chum salmon and Chinook salmon. Sockeye, pink, and coho salmon are also harvested, along with a variety of freshwater resident species, given this cultural, economic, and nutritional value, the recent declines in subsistence harvests have imposed unimaginable harms on communities in the AYK region.

ADFG subsistence division report:
"Social relationships are a fundamental part of subsistence economies in the Yukon River region and throughout rural Alaska. Family and friends often combine their labor and resources to harvest and process subsistence foods cooperatively, and then further share their harvests with others. When people work together to harvest and process salmon, they form and strengthen social relationships that connect people within and between families. Similarly, when people share salmon, these exchanges provide material and emotional support that extend throughout the community and beyond. Similar relationships tied to harvesting, processing, and sharing exist for other subsistence resources. These relationships are intertwined with many other aspects of life, linking subsistence to the personal experiences and cultural practices, values, and knowledge that shape a person's sense of identity and community." (Trainor et al., 2021, p.4)

What is the current state of salmon on the Yukon? Our smokehouses remain empty, and we ration what little we can harvest through limited whitefish net opportunities. The places where we process, harvest, and cut salmon with multigenerational family members are now inactive. There are 40 communities on the Alaskan side of the Yukon, representing over 10,000 people, and more than 13 First Nations in Canada. These communities live in some of the largest and most remote subsistence areas, where the cost of living is high. Our Tribes are not disadvantaged; rather, they are well equipped to provide their families with healthy traditional food sources from the surrounding land and waters, offsetting high costs and harsh winters.

As decades of intercepted salmon continue all families and communities depend on them are deeply impacted. In Native languages, there is no word for waste; every single part of the salmon holds value and meets the traditional dietary needs of thousands of families and Elders. From the tail to the head, every part is carefully taken care of, eaten, shared, and put away for the harshest and extreme temperatures. The salmon tails are sacred and keep families safe, 10

years ago, you would see tails above the door, a sign of spiritual protection. Wild chum salmon is a great source of essential nutrients, with significant levels of Omega-3s (DHA & EPA) for brain, heart, and eye health, and provides natural Vitamin D. These nutrients are crucial for overall wellness, especially in traditional diets. Chum is a **nutrient-dense food,** although it has lighter fat than other salmon, a serving of chum salmon provides over 700mg of Omega-3s, exceeding daily recommendations. **Please indicate what store-bought vitamin D-rich foods are an alternative for the loss of both king and chum salmon in our daily diet.** Omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids are precursors to a large family of important signaling molecules. These are necessary functions, but they can be associated with disease when chronically elevated. In contrast, eicosanoids derived from omega-3 fatty acids tend to lower blood pressure, inflammation, and blood clotting, functions that can benefit heart health. These long-chain polyunsaturated fatty acids have been shown to help lower blood triglycerides and blood pressure, reduce inflammation, and prevent blood clot formation. They also promote normal growth and development in infants, especially in the development of the brain and eyes. Both of these important omega-3 fatty acids can be synthesized in the body from ALA, so **they are not considered essential fatty acids**. However, the rate of conversion of ALA to these omega-3s is limited, so it is beneficial to consume them regularly in the diet. **Fish, shellfish, fish oils, seaweed, and algae are all good sources of EPA and DHA**. DHA is also found in human breast milk in quantities dependent on the mother's own intake of DHA sources.

Fish & Game's Division of Subsistence "30-70 rule" shows that 30% of households in many Alaska villages, are responsible for harvesting roughly 70% of the community's wild food. When those primary fishing families are shut down, the entire food-sharing network collapses, leaving elders and households without boats or gear with nothing. These are not just cultural losses — they are measurable food-security impacts recognized by the very agency that holds a voting seat on this Council and is mandated to uphold subsistence priority.

In times of king salmon shortages, we've always depended on chum salmon, but now we are seeing an unprecedented multi salmon species collapse of both king and chum concurrently.

On the Yukon River, subsistence salmon fishing has been effectively shut down for six years. Families are prohibited from using the salmon gear that sustained us for generations. We are told to fish with **fyke nets, 4 in. nets, spears, and hook-and-line** —gear that don't meet a family's needs as the same salmon we are asked to protect are being intercepted.

Research has less time hunting and fishing has adverse effects on Indigenous communities' physical, emotional, and spiritual health and disruptions to Indigenous ways of life, and Traditional Harvest Practices (THP) have been associated with the rise of suicide and mental health disparities in Alaska Native populations

Tribes face significant subsistence restrictions, leading to limited to no fishing opportunities and closures and bans.

To further complicate the dual management structure, the Yukon River is managed by fragmented fishing districts, regulatory fishing schedules, and selective gear types, treaty obligations with Canada to manage, escapement goals, First Nation harvest, as well as other fisheries; it's a very complex management system, especially when salmon runs overlap, and there are declines. This structure doesn't always allow for equitable subsistence opportunities throughout the river when it is offered. You must know your district's schedule and gear type to be legal and not face citations that entail possession of a fish net, or even your boat, a court hearing, and a fine.

Salmon ANS on the Yukon

	King	Summer chum	Fall chum	Coho	Pink
ANS range	45,500–66,704	83,500–142,192	89,500–167,900	20,500–51,980	2,100–9,700
Year	Estimated subsistence harvest, all districts				
1995	50,620	136,083	130,860	28,377	***1,061***
1996	45,671	124,738	129,258	30,404	5,331
1997	57,117	112,820	95,141	23,945	***483***
1998	54,124	87,366	***62,901***	***18,121***	8,979
1999	53,305	83,784	89,940	20,891	***694***
2000	***36,404***	***78,072***	***19,395***	***14,939***	***1,591***
2001	55,819	***72,155***	***35,703***	22,122	***403***
2002	***43,742***	87,056	***19,674***	***15,489***	8,423
2003	56,959	***82,272***	***56,930***	23,872	2,167
2004	55,713	***77,934***	***62,526***	20,795	9,697
2005	53,409	93,259	91,534	27,250	3,134
2006	48,593	115,078	***84,002***	***19,706***	4,854
2007	55,174	92,926	101,221	***19,624***	2,118
2008	***45,186***	86,514	***89,357***	***16,855***	9,612
2009	***33,805***	***80,539***	***66,119***	***16,006***	2,301
2010	***44,559***	88,373	***68,645***	***13,045***	4,302
2011	***40,980***	96,020	***80,202***	***12,344***	2,325
2012	***30,415***	126,992	99,309	21,533	5,150
2013	***12,533***	115,114	113,393	***14,457***	***1,076***
2014	***3,286***	86,900	92,529	***17,098***	6,932
2015	***7,577***	83,567	***86,600***	***18,107***	2,645
2016	***21,612***	87,902	***84,617***	***8,815***	8,863
2017	***37,412***	86,388	***86,139***	***7,414***	2,457
2018	***31,986***	***74,482***	***69,207***	***8,267***	3,712
2019	48,377	***63,296***	***63,734***	***5,818***	5,031
2020	***21,714***	***41,741***	***5,728***	***2,330***	7,581
2021	***1,995***	***1,266***	***705***	***296***	2,650
2022	***1,827***	***6,724***	***2,778***	***1,090***	5,240
2023	***1,630***	***27,488***	***6,990***	***1,476***	–
2024	***1,875***	***32,155***	***3,618***	***1,730***	–