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Alaska Wildlife Troopers Investigate Claims of Illegal Fishing on Yukon

(ANCHORAGE, Alaska) – The Alaska Wildlife Troopers are in the process of conducting an investigation into reports of illegal subsistence fishing near the village of Marshall, located along the lower Yukon River. These reports came about in part from statements made to reporters by villagers. The reports allege that residents from Marshall participated in a king salmon harvest when the season was not opened.

The Yukon River salmon run is jointly managed by both the Federal and State government. The king salmon forecast for this year was projected to be low. Alaska Wildlife Troopers participated in many community meetings before the season to help ensure the message of possible reduction in fishing times were likely. To date, subsistence salmon fishing opportunities for local residents in the area have been reduced from normal fishing periods along with net mesh size restrictions.

“Alaskans are a unique people in the fact that everyone values their natural resources. One common goal shared by most everyone is the desire to ensure future opportunities for our children to enjoy the bounties of our fish and wildlife,” said Colonel Gary Folger, Director of the Alaska Wildlife Troopers. “Alaska Wildlife Troopers, along with citizens of Alaska, stand on guard protecting our resources across this great state. While we wish there was an abundance of king salmon along the Yukon River for everyone to enjoy, that is not the case this year.”

“If in fact a protest fishery occurred, I am very disappointed,” said Colonel Folger. “We will conduct an investigation and if it discloses criminal behavior occurred, we will present our findings to the District Attorney’s Office for review.”

As with most fish and game violations, this type of crime is considered a misdemeanor with a maximum fine of \$5,000 and/or one year in jail. Depending on the severity of the incident, equipment used could also be seized. The type of violation, prior criminal history and impact on the resource are all taken into account when sentencing occurs.

Monitoring our natural resources is not an exact science. Whenever possible, we want to err on the side of sustaining our bounty for the future. When protest fisheries occur, not only are participants hurting themselves, they also hurt opportunities for villages to participate along the river system, and we could easily find ourselves with a loss of the resource similar to many wild fisheries stocks in the Lower 48 states.

If you are aware of a fish and game violation or have knowledge of illegal fishing, please contact the Alaska Wildlife Safeguard at 1-800-478-3377. Tipsters may be eligible for a reward.