

**Challenges and Tools in the Assessment and Management of Pacific Salmon  
Fisheries**

by

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## Abstract

I'm going to write an abstract to go here. This paragraph will be a brief introduction chapter 1: the overall topic of the research

This is the second paragraph of the dissertation abstract, which will talk broadly about chapter 2: run timing forecast models.

This is the second paragraph of the dissertation abstract, which will talk broadly about chapter 3: in-season MSE models.

This is the third paragraph of the dissertation abstract, which will talk broadly about chapter 4: multi-stock population dynamics models and the best ways to inform management trade-offs.

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## Chapter 1

Evaluation of Intra-Annual Harvest Management Strategies For Kuskokwim River Chinook  
salmon using a Stochastic Simulation Model

### **Abstract**

## 1.1 Introduction

In-season harvest management of Pacific salmon fisheries in large river systems is undertaken in the presence of a large amount of uncertainty about how to schedule fishing opportunities. In order to manage in a fully-informed way, a manager would require continuous and accurate information on arrival timing, run size, fleet dynamics, and harvest. With knowledge on these components, it would be theoretically possible to perfectly harvest the available surplus each year (Adkison and Cunningham 2015). In reality, these quantities, when estimates are available, are often highly uncertain (Adkison and Peterman 2000; Flynn and Hilborn 2004; Hyun et al. 2012) which results in difficulties in decision-making about how to best implement fishing opportunities in order to meet a set of pre-defined objectives dealing with both conservation and exploitation.

In addition to the substantial uncertainty in decision-making, there are often sharp trade-offs between competing objectives, such as the desire to provide adequate and equitable harvest opportunity *versus* the desire to ensure adequate escapement (Catalano and Jones 2014). Oftentimes, managers are also concerned with spreading exploitation evenly among stock subcomponents, but this may conflict with aspects dealing with the ideal time to harvest salmon as a result of weather or fish quality conditions (Carney and Adkison 2014; Adkison and Cunningham 2015). When given the task of balancing trade-offs such as these, the manager has the ability to manipulate the fishing gear used as well as the spatiotemporal distribution of fishing effort by opening or closing the fishery for various amounts of time, though it is rarely clear as to how to manipulate these management “levers” to achieve the desired outcomes. Presumably, different strategies to performing these manipulations (termed “management strategies” or “harvest control rules”) will exhibit differential performance at meeting the objectives and balancing trade-offs, though without testing them it is difficult to have confidence in which among them will provide the best chances of success.

Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) has been proposed as a powerful tool for determining how to manage exploited natural resource systems with competing management objectives (Cooke 1999; Butterworth 2007). MSE is a stochastic simulation-based analytical technique whereby management strategies are evaluated by comparing their relative performance at meeting pre-defined objectives under simulated (though realistic) conditions. A management strategy can be thought of as all of the steps that encompass the collection of data, subsequent analyses, and resulting decision-making surrounding the exploitation of a resource. The MSE approach tests a range of such strategies to find the one(s) that are likely to be most robust to uncertainty and balance trade-offs. This approach is powerful as it can provide general insights without having to test strategies on the real system, which would be incredibly time-intensive (each year is one sample) and costly given that some candidate strategies can be risky (Walters and Martell 2004). Punt et al. (2014) outline a set of seven steps to an MSE that must be conducted in order for the analysis to be meaningful:

- (1) identification of management objectives and performance measures for each; preferably under the direction of stakeholders and managers,
- (2) identification of the key uncertainties present in the system (biological, assessment, implementation, etc.),
- (3) identification of candidate management strategies for evaluation,
- (4) development of one or more models that serve as the representation of the real system including reasonably realistic representations of biological and fishery components (termed the “operating model”),
- (5) selection of parameters to drive the operating model in accordance with the real system,
- (6) simulation of executing each strategy using the operating model(s), and
- (7) summary of performance measures, and presentation to managers and stakeholders.

While MSE analyses are most often used in multi-year evaluations (Cooke 1999), the same concept can be applied to evaluate the performance of in-season strategies at meeting shorter-term objectives as well.

Two broad classes of strategies could be conceived for in-season salmon management: effort control using either a fixed schedule or a more-involved (and data-intensive) process of opening and closing the fishery in response to in-season data (i.e., management by emergency order, Adkison and Cunningham 2015). There exist many substrategies that fall into these two broad categories based on the characteristics of the fishery and the timeliness and reliability of information available to managers. Carney and Adkison (2014) evaluated these two strategies for sockeye salmon stocks in Bristol Bay, Alaska, and found trade-offs between maximizing harvest and reducing inter-annual variability in harvest magnitude as well as spreading harvest pressure among substock components. Su and Adkison (2002) evaluated a set of schedule-based strategies that ranged in their aggressiveness and found differences in strategy performance based on which objective carried most weight in value functions, which of course implies that trade-offs exist.

An MSE analysis for subsistence salmon fisheries in large drainages (such as the Yukon and Kuskokwim systems in Western Alaska) necessitates different considerations than these two examples which focused on commercial fisheries. While the types of strategies considered and conservation-based objectives (adequate escapement and temporally-distributed harvest) are broadly consistent, the fleet dynamics and harvest-based objectives may be different. Subsistence fishers are less concerned with maximizing harvest as they are with maintaining consistent harvests that meet their needs between years and that harvest opportunities allow exploitation consistent with cultural practices (i.e., time of season and frequency of opportunities). The fleet dynamics of subsistence fisheries are quite different than commercial fisheries in that they are limited by processing capacity and have a fixed targeted harvest for the season. Due to this processing capacity, harvest of targeted species (such as Chinook

salmon) in subsistence fisheries are limited by the species composition, sometimes expressed as a ratio of chum/sockeye:Chinook salmon. Subsistence fishers must stop fishing when they reach their processing capacity, and when this ratio is high (e.g.,  $> 20$ ), the catch will be dominated by chum/sockeye. In-season harvest control rules have that acknowledge these characteristics have not been evaluated for subsistence salmon fisheries, highlighting a clear need for work that focuses on this topic.

In this chapter, I investigate the performance of a variety of in-season harvest control rules for subsistence salmon fisheries in large drainage systems using a MSE approach. Though the analysis will be tailored to the Kuskokwim River Chinook salmon subsistence fishery, the framework developed will be general enough for application to other in-river salmon fisheries in large drainages in which the primary users are subsistence fishers. The objectives of the analysis will be to:

- (1) develop a stochastic simulation model of the Kuskokwim River fishery system that allows simulation of a wide range of biological conditions,
- (2) assess the performance of several realistic intra-annual harvest management strategies that capture a range of complexity in their management dexterity and need for information, and
- (3) highlight the strength of trade-offs between competing objectives, and find management strategies that might balance them better than others.

## 1.2 Methods

### 1.2.1 Overview of analytical approach

The analysis for this chapter was carried out by developing a stochastic simulation model of a subsistence salmon fishery system and imposing several management strategies separately. The operating model, which simulated the system dynamics, was tailored to the Kuskokwim River

subsistence salmon fishery and had a spatiotemporal structure; mechanisms are described in Section 1.2.4, with descriptions of empirical information sources provided in Appendix A and a validation of model behavior displayed in Appendix B. Four primary strategies were identified (Section 1.2.3) based on input from managers, biologists, and stakeholders from the Kuskokwim River drainage, as well as from academic experts in the field of Pacific salmon management. These strategies were explicitly selected to explore a range of simple to complex, with complex strategies requiring more information for their implementation. Each primary strategy had several substrategies which represented different ways of implementing that same strategy to ensure inferences were not dependent on the specifications of the implementation. Each management strategy was tested by simulating many hypothetical and independent salmon seasons in a Monte Carlo framework such that performance was tested at different run sizes, run timings, species compositions, etc. Performance of each strategy and substrategy was assessed relative to the attainment of four objectives (Section 1.2.2) using a set of utility functions (Section 1.2.6).

Typically, MSE analyses are conducted in a multi-year framework, where the same strategy is applied year after year and the average yearly performance is compared between strategies applied in the same fashion (Cooke 1999). These analyses require a population model that simulates outcomes of management successes and mistakes from actions taken in any given year forward to future years. The analysis conducted for this chapter includes no such time linkage between years, and considers each as a hypothetical situation that each management strategy may be faced with at some point. Analyses of this type require the assumption that the utility functions selected to measure management performance are representative of long-term performance as well as year-to-year. One primary reason for excluding a population model was the lack (at the time of development, but see Chapter ??) of Chinook salmon substock-specific spawner-recruit parameters that would be necessary to make reliable inferences from such a model.

### **1.2.2 Identification of management objectives**

By speaking with managers and stakeholders in the Kuskokwim River drainage in meetings and one-on-one, and based on my personal observations of the management of this fishery, I identified four main objectives for Chinook salmon management at the intra-annual level. This is a critical component of the work, because the objectives define the necessary complexity of the operating model and they provide the context for measuring which strategies might perform better than others. They can be grouped as follows:

#### Sustainability-based

- (1) Ensure adequate drainage-wide Chinook salmon escapement to the spawning grounds to support sustained subsistence yields into the future,
- (2) Ensure that the burdens of harvest are shared evenly among Chinook salmon substocks within the drainage,

#### Exploitation-based

- (3) Ensure that Chinook salmon subsistence harvest needs are met at the basin-scale,
- (4) Ensure that when Chinook salmon harvest restrictions are necessary, the burdens are spread evenly among the various villages.

This list is provided here to help set the context for the rest of the methods, see Section 1.2.6 for a description of the utility functions used to measure the attainment of each objective. In this analysis, it was assumed that the abundance of chum/sockeye salmon was high enough to meet both harvest and escapement needs, so no objectives were developed regarding their management.

### **1.2.3 Assessed management strategies**

I selected (with input from area managers and biologists) a set of four primary in-season harvest management strategies to evaluate for this analysis. Managers in large salmon-producing river basins have the tools of time, area, and gear restrictions at their disposal

for managing harvest. Strategies assessed here focused primarily on the time (i.e., when in the season fishing is allowed) aspect of these tools. Each of the four strategies represented a different way of determining if the fishery should be open on a given day of the season. Given the historical season for Chinook salmon (the species of interest in this analysis) management in the Kuskokwim River, each strategy focused on a five week period between June 1 and early July. Based on Chinook salmon run timing through the lower Kuskokwim River (Figure ??) and the timing that chum and sockeye salmon become vastly dominant in the species composition of the run (Figure A.2), it is only during this time that management actions affecting subsistence harvest can have any meaningful impact on the attainment of Chinook salmon objectives (both those based in conservation and exploitation). Unless otherwise stated, simulated management actions affected all river reaches equally.

#### **1.2.3.1 Strategy #1: “Closed until open”**

Under this first and most naïve management strategy, the simulated manager selected a single day on which to open the entire fishery, before which it remained completely restricted (closed) and after which it remained unrestricted (open) for the rest of the season. The decision of which day to open was not explicitly informed by any “previous data” on the part of the manager, or changed based on in-season information. I evaluated three reasonable dates to start the fishery: June 1, June 12, and June 23. These dates represent the historical average 1%, 12%, and 55% percentage points of the Chinook salmon run as indexed by the Bethel Test Fishery (Bue and Lipka 2016).

#### **1.2.3.2 Strategy #2: “Forecast-based fixed schedule”**

Under this strategy, the manager used a pre-season run size forecast (described in Section 1.2.5.1) with which to inform the decision about how often fishing opportunities should be provided. This was conducted by developing categories (hereafter “bins”) of run sizes that

triggered a decision regarding how many days to allow fishing in each week: e.g., if the run was forecasted to be less than 80,000 Chinook salmon, the number of days of fishing allowed per week would be less than if the the run was forecasted to be between 130,000 and 180,000. Substrategies were represented by three different sets of schedules conditional on the pre-season forecast, ranging from conservative (fewer fishing days per week) to aggressive (more days per week).

In developing these schedules that dictated how many days ( $D$ ) the fishery would be open during week  $w$  conditional on a forecast falling in bin  $b$ , I relied loosely on conversations with area managers but used my own intuition about the management of the fishery as well. Three main qualities of the schedules were desired:

- (1) for any week  $w \geq 0$  and forecast bin  $b \geq 0$ ,  $D_{w,b}$  for conservative schedules should be less than the neutral and aggressive schedules, and aggressive schedules should have the highest  $D_{w,b}$  in the same  $w$  and  $b$ ,
- (2)  $D_{w,b}$  should generally increase as the forecast bin increases – i.e., years with larger anticipated runs can allow fewer restrictions to the fishery, and
- (3)  $D_{w,b}$  should generally increase as the season progresses (increasing  $w$ ), because the species composition shifts towards chum/sockeye salmon later in the season lessening the concern for high catches of Chinook salmon that may endanger the ability to meet escapement needs.

I developed a linear model that would return  $D_{w,b}$  depending on the week  $w$ , forecast bin  $b$ , and schedule type (i.e., aggressive *versus* conservative). The model took the form:

$$D_{w,b} = \delta_0 + \delta_1 C + \delta_2 A + \delta_3 w + \delta_4 Cw + \delta_5 Aw + \delta_6 b^2 + \delta_7 bw, \quad (1.1)$$

where  $C$  and  $A$  are dummy variables indicating either conservative or aggressive schedules, respectively,  $w$  is the week index (five weeks:  $0 \leq w \leq 4$ ),  $b$  is the forecast bin index (five bins:

$0 \leq b \leq 4$ ).  $A$  and  $C$  are mutually exclusive, and both  $A = C = 0$  for the neutral schedule. The vector  $\delta$  contains coefficients for how  $D_{w,b}$  depends on the values of the covariates ( $C$ ,  $A$ ,  $w$ , and  $b$ ):

$$\delta = \begin{bmatrix} 0.25 \\ -0.25 \\ 0.25 \\ 0.25 \\ -0.50 \\ 0.50 \\ 0.50 \\ 0.50 \end{bmatrix}$$

For example, in the first week ( $w = 0$ ), first bin ( $b = 0$ ), and the neutral schedule ( $A = C = 0$ ),  $D_{w,b} = \delta_0 = 0.25$ . For the same  $b$  and  $w$ ,  $D_{w,b} = \delta_0 + \delta_1 = 0$  for the conservative schedule ( $C = 1$ ) and  $D_{w,b} = \delta_0 + \delta_2 = 0.5$  for the aggressive schedule. The slope of conservative and aggressive schedules differ from the neutral schedule by -0.5 and 0.5 days/week in all bins, respectively, and all slopes increase by 0.5 days/week for each increase in bin. The intercept of all schedules increases by  $0.5b^2$  days for each increase in the bin. Cases in which  $D_{w,b}$  would exceed 7 days were rescaled such that  $D_{w,b} = 7$ , the same was done to prevent  $D_{w,b} < 0$ . All values of  $D_{w,b}$  for each schedule type used in this analysis are displayed in Figure 1.1.

### 1.2.3.3 Strategy #3: “Forecast/ratio-based variable schedule”

This strategy was similar to Strategy #2 in that it used a pre-season forecast to set a schedule for each week, though rather than treating the different possible schedules as conservative or aggressive substrategies, the manager treated them as tactics to be employed selectively based on additional information. The manager made this selection based on in-season species

composition information collected at a simulated test fishery site (Section 1.2.5.2). The species composition (expressed as a ratio in terms of chum+sockeye:Chinook salmon) is an important aspect of the fishery, because subsistence fishers are self-limited in the number of fish they can successfully process per fishing trip, and Chinook salmon harvest can be limited during times when the species ratio is high. Based on the historical percentile of the ratios in the previous week ( $\phi_{p,w-1}$ ), the manager selected either the conservative, neutral, or aggressive schedule for the appropriate forecast bin  $b$  for use in week  $w$  as indicated in Figure 1.1.

Three substrategies were assessed, dealing with how the trigger percentiles were selected, as shown in Table 1.1. The “neutral” set of ratio trigger points specified that the manager would employ conservative schedules in accordance with the forecast bin until  $\phi_{p,w-1}$  exceeded the 33% percentile of all historical ratios, at which point they would use the appropriate neutral schedule. If at any  $w$ ,  $\phi_{p,w-1}$  exceeded the 66% percentile, the manager would switch to the aggressive schedule. The rationale here is that the more chum and sockeye there are relative to each Chinook salmon, the fewer Chinook will be caught and the more opportunity can be allowed for species of non-conservation concern. The “conservative” substrategy used cut-offs of 66% and 85% to make these transitions, and the “aggressive” substrategy used cut-offs at 15% and 33% (Table 1.1). The resulting ratio trigger points are shown in Table 1.2.

#### 1.2.3.4 Strategy #4: “Explicit harvest target”

Under this strategy, the manager took on a much more active decision-making process wherein they decided how many days to allow fishing in each week of the season based on an explicit harvest target ( $H_T$ ) selected probabilistically to ensure some escapement threshold ( $S_L$ ) would be exceeded that season. This was the most complex management strategy, as the manager needed to know how much harvest had been taken to date and how long they should

allow fishing each week based on how many fish they wish to allow to be caught.  $H_T$  was apportioned among weeks ( $H_{T,w}$ ) according to historical Chinook salmon run timing and represented the number of Chinook salmon the manager wishes to see harvested in week  $w$ .  $H_{T,w}$  could be updated in response to:

- (1) whether in-season abundance index data suggest the run is either smaller or larger than forecasted or
- (2) whether harvest data suggest the fishery is either ahead of or behind schedule in meeting  $H_T$ .

This strategy had two main phases as shown in Figure 1.2. In the pre-season phase, managers used a forecast, management target, and risk tolerance to set a value for  $H_T$  and  $H_{T,w}$  to start the season. Then, the in-season phase proceeded as a weekly cycle of Bayesian abundance estimation (described in Section 1.2.5.3), re-evaluation of  $H_T$  in accordance with updated knowledge and  $S_L$ , determination of remaining harvest, a decision of the number of days to fish based on an updated  $H_{T,w}$ , and estimation of harvest outcomes.

Three substrategies were formulated by building three different “harvest tables” which dictated how many days the fishery should be open in week  $w$  based on the value of  $H_{T,w}$  and differed in how aggressive or conservative they were (Figure 1.3). The neutral table started with 0.5 days for the case of  $0 < H_{T,w} \leq 5,000$  and increased by 1 day for each additional 5,000 Chinook salmon in  $H_{T,w}$ . The aggressive harvest table resulted in fishing 1.5 times as many day as the neutral table for all  $H_{T,w} > 0$ . If this rule would result in greater than 7 days it was capped at 7 days. The conservative table was constructed the same way except with 0.5 times as many days as the neutral table.

More details are warranted on how the season-wide harvest target ( $H_T$ ) was probabilistically selected and updated in this fourth and most complex assessed management strategy, as this is a relatively novel approach to the management of Pacific salmon fisheries (but see Catalano and Jones 2014, for another application using simulation techniques). The problem

is to select some value for  $H_T$  that will ensure the drainage-wide total escapement ( $S$ ) will exceed some critical escapement limit threshold ( $S_L$ ) with probability equal to  $1 - P^*$ . The quantity  $P^*$  represents a manager's tolerance for risk of seeing the outcome of  $S < S_L$  occur (an undesirable outcome).  $\Pr(S < S_L | H_T)$  can be calculated from a cumulative probability density function expressing beliefs about total run size. If  $F_N$  is this expression of beliefs, then  $F_N(S_L + H_T) = \Pr(N < S_L + H_T) = \Pr(S < S_L | H_T)$ . The value  $H_T$  can be manipulated to ensure the condition  $\Pr(S < S_L) < P^*$  is satisfied. When new information accumulates in  $F_N$  (through Bayesian updating; Section 1.2.5.3),  $H_T$  can be updated as well to ensure the condition is still satisfied. For this analysis,  $S_L = 65,000$  (the lower bound of the current drainage-wide escapement goal for Chinook salmon; Hamazaki et al. 2012) and  $P^* = 0.1$ . This probabilistic harvest control rule is similar to those used in marine fisheries when setting sustainable fishing mortality targets (Prager et al. 2003; Shertzer et al. 2010), and explicitly accounts for uncertainty and risk when determining allowable fishing activity based on limit reference points.

This policy is a computer-based implementation of the strategy implemented by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife and the Kuskokwim River Inter-tribal Fisheries Commission (KRITFC) for the portion of the fishery within the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge (YDNWR) in the years 2015 – 2018. Each year has differed in the method and rigor used to initially select  $H_T$ , use in-season information to update  $H_T$  and  $H_{T,w}$ , and determine how much fishing opportunity should be allowed conditional on  $H_{T,w}$ . The overarching structure (e.g., the use of  $H_T$  based on an escapement limit threshold), however, is the same the the simulated strategy and the probabilistic selection of  $H_T$  from  $P^*$  and  $S_L$  was conducted for the first time in 2018.

#### **1.2.4 Description of the operating model**

The role of the operating model was to simulate the true dynamics of the fishery system, which included the important dynamics of the biological (i.e., the salmon) and social (i.e., the fishers) components of the fishery. The operating model was structured such that important spatial and temporal dynamics of fish and fishers in the Kuskokwim River subsistence salmon fishery could be captured. The biological and fishery components of the operating model were informed using as much empirical information as possible (see Appendix A for a description of data sources and preparation for use in these contexts). Furthermore, simulated outcomes of the fishery components (i.e., magnitude and spatiotemporal distributions of Chinook salmon harvests) under a “no management” scenario were compared to those observed in historical data in years the subsistence fishery was unrestricted (Appendix B). This was an important validation of the behavior of the operating model to ensure it adequately represented the behavior and variability of the real system according to the best available scientific information.

The operating model tracked in-river salmon abundance, fishing effort, harvest, and escapement in each of 26 discrete river reaches (hereafter indexed by  $r$ ) along the main stem Kuskokwim River over the span of approximately 130 days (late-May to the start of October; hereafter indexed by  $d$ ). Although the month of June and early July are the primary salmon harvest periods in the Kuskokwim River subsistence fishery, this long temporal scale was needed to allow all simulated fish to migrate completely through the entire Kuskokwim River model. The operating model was written in Program R (R Core Team 2018).

##### **1.2.4.1 Biological components**

The biological submodel was made up of two aggregate salmon populations: one Chinook salmon population and one of chum and sockeye salmon together. Chinook salmon are the

species of primary management interest in this analysis; the other species were included because harvest dynamics for Chinook salmon are influenced by the relative abundance of all three species in the harvesting gear. The Chinook salmon population was subdivided into three spatially-explicit subpopulations representing spawning aggregations in the lower, middle, and upper reaches of the drainage, which was necessary to assess the equal exploitation rate objective and enforce the realities of in-river “gauntlet” fisheries. River entry timing and relative abundance of each Chinook subpopulation was informed by Kuskokwim River telemetry studies (Stuby 2007; Smith and Liller 2017a,b). These studies indicate that the middle river subpopulation is the largest (~60% of the total abundance) and enters the river mixed with the tail-end of the upper river subpopulation (~20% of the total abundance). The lower river subpopulation enters mixed with the middle river subpopulation and is approximately the same size as the upper river subpopulation.

To initialize the model, the size of the total abundance of Chinook salmon ( $N_{tot}$ ) that would return to the system in the simulated year was obtained as a random sample from a distribution with density equal to that fitted to the historical distribution of run sizes over the period (1976 – 2017; as presented in Liller et al. 2018, and further described in Appendix A.1.1). The total annual abundance of each Chinook salmon substock ( $N_s$ ) was then obtained:

$$N_s = N_{tot}\pi_s, \quad (1.2)$$

where  $\pi_s$  is a Dirichlet random vector representing the proportion of the total run made up of fish returning to each of the three Chinook salmon substocks with hyperparameters informed by the distribution of radio telemetry tagged fish (see Appendix A.1.2 for details). The number of fish from each Chinook salmon substock that entered the first reach each day of the season was then populated:

$$A_{d,1,s} = N_s p_{d,s}, \quad (1.3)$$

where  $A_{d,1,s}$  is in-river abundance on day  $d$  in reach  $r = 1$  for substock  $s$  and  $p_{d,s}$  is a run timing variable representing the fraction of the run from that substock entering on that day of the season.  $p_{d,s}$  was modeled using a logistic density function, standardized to sum to one within each substock over the season:

$$p'_{d,s} = \frac{e^{\frac{d-D_{50,s}}{h_s}}}{h_s \left(1 + e^{\frac{d-D_{50,s}}{h_s}}\right)^2}, \quad (1.4)$$

$$p_{d,s} = \frac{p'_{d,s}}{\sum_d p'_{d,s}}, \quad (1.5)$$

where  $p'_{d,s}$  are elements of the unstandardized timing curve as given by the substock-specific location ( $D_{50,s}$ ) and scale ( $h_s$ ) parameters, also informed using the telemetry data (Appendix A.1.3.2). Detailed information regarding total abundance or spatial differences in run timing of various substocks of Kuskokwim River chum and sockeye salmon is not available. Accordingly, the aggregate population representing these species was modeled using historical estimates of daily relative abundance from a long time series of a standardized catch-per-effort (CPE) index (the Bethel Test Fishery – BTF; Bue and Lipka 2016). Daily relative abundance was represented by  $\phi_d$ , calculated as the observed ratio of the CPE of chum + sockeye salmon to Chinook salmon (Appendix A.1.5). Simulated entry timing and abundance of the chum/sockeye aggregate stock was obtained from the total daily entering abundance of Chinook salmon and a randomly drawn annual vector of  $\phi$  from the historical data set:

$$A_{d,1,4} = \phi_d \sum_{s=1}^3 A_{d,1,s} \quad (1.6)$$

The movement of fish through the main stem of the river was modeled using a “boxcar” approach (Walters and Martell 2004), in which each reach had associated rates of in-river “mortality” (i.e., the removal of fish from the main stem due to fishery harvest and escapement). The main stem mortality rate resulting from fish escaping to spawning tributaries for reach  $r$  for subpopulation  $s$  ( $\psi_{r,s}$ ) was obtained using the historical telemetry studies (Appendix A.1.4) and represented the fraction of all fish from substock  $s$  that survived all harvesters prior to and including reach  $r$  that would spawn in a tributary with a main stem confluence in reach  $r$ . As telemetry information was only available for Chinook salmon ( $s = 1, 2$ , or  $3$ ),  $\psi_{r,s}$  for the chum/sockeye subpopulation ( $s = 4$ ) was assumed to be the same as for Chinook salmon, though with the removal of the spatial substock structure (Table A.2). Many factors contributed to the simulated fishing mortality rate in reach  $r$  on day  $d$ , as described below in Section 1.2.4.2, though it was assumed that fishing mortality occurred before escapement mortality:

$$S_{d,r,s} = \psi_{r,s} (A_{d,r,s} - H_{d,r,s}), \quad (1.7)$$

where  $S_{d,r,s}$  is escapement and  $H_{d,r,s}$  is harvest. Any fish that survived these sources of main stem mortality remained in the main stem, but would transition to the next reach on the next day with probability equal to one:

$$A_{d+1,r+1,s} = A_{d,r,s} - H_{d,r,s} - S_{d,r,s} \quad (1.8)$$

All reaches were assigned a length of 35 km, which is the approximate mean estimated travel distance per day for Chinook salmon in the main stem Kuskokwim River (Smith and Liller 2017a,b).

#### 1.2.4.2 Fishery components

There were five primary factors used to model the subsistence fishery dynamics in each reach:

- (1) maximum daily effort ( $E_{MAX,r}$ ; effort expressed in boat trips per day),
- (2) total maximal salmon need by species,
- (3) maximum daily salmon catch per boat per day (abbreviated by  $CPB$ ; maximum is denoted  $CPB_{MAX}$ ),
- (4) effort responses to fishery conditions, and
- (5) a measure of fishery selection for different species.

Since 1990, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) has conducted rigorous post-season sampling from the 26 villages in the Kuskokwim River documenting the number of fishing households and salmon harvest by species (these estimates are presented in Hamazaki 2011; Carroll and Hamazaki 2012; Shelden et al. 2014; Shelden et al. 2015; Shelden et al. 2016a; and Shelden et al. 2016b). This wealth of information was used to inform maximum effort and maximal salmon need (described in Appendices A.2.1 and A.2.2). Maximum salmon daily catch per boat and effort responses were informed by recent studies of the in-season subsistence fishery dynamics (Staton and Coggins 2016, 2017; Staton 2018) and fishery selection was obtained by comparing these data with the catches at the BTF on the same day in the same years. The rest of this section is devoted to describing how these five factors influenced the behavior of the fishery dynamics to obtain harvest ( $H_{d,r,s}$ ) from in-river salmon abundance ( $A_{d,r,s}$ ).

An effort response model was needed to replicate observed patterns in effort dynamics in recent years, namely that effort declines as the season progresses (Staton and Coggins 2016, 2017; Staton 2018). This decline is thought to be a result of two primary factors: attainment of harvest needs and in-river species composition, but finer-scale factors are certainly at play as well. A logit-linear model was constructed to specify the fraction of maximum fishing effort that would fish in each reach each day if the fishery were open ( $p_{E,d,r}$ ):

$$\text{logit}(p_{E,d,r}) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 full_{d,r} + \beta_2 stop_{d,r} + \beta_3 \delta_{d-1,r,CH} + \beta_4 \delta_{d-1,r,CS} + \beta_5 \phi_{d,r} \quad (1.9)$$

The effort response model operated on a reach-specific basis, and had five terms in addition to the intercept ( $\beta_0$ ):

- $\beta_1$  and  $\beta_2$  were “time-of-season” effects. It is reasonable to expect that effort should be low very early in the season (approximately 50% of the maximum) as a result of perceived poor fishing conditions driven by low in-river abundance of salmon. Thus,  $\beta_1$  controlled the response to a fixed date afterwhich we might expect most fishers in a reach to be willing to fish given the fishery is open (the binary indicator  $full_{d,r}$  denoted when this would occur – all days prior to approximately June 1 were set to 0 and all days after were set to 1 for the first reach villages, and this date occurred one-quarter day later than the previous reach for all other reaches). Additionally, it is clear from in-season effort monitoring studies that effort declines throughout June (Staton and Coggins 2016, 2017; Staton 2018), and it is thus reasonable to expect that essentially all lower river fishers will be done fishing for Chinook, chum, and sockeye salmon by mid-July, with upriver villages lagged by one-half day just as for  $full_{d,r}$ , which is reflected by the binary indicator  $stop_{d,r}$  and the  $\beta_2$  coefficient.
- $\beta_3$  and  $\beta_4$  were key effects dealing with attainment of maximal salmon harvest needs. The covariates  $\delta_{d-1,r,CH}$  and  $\delta_{d-1,r,CS}$  represented the cumulative fraction of met needs by villages in reach  $r$  as of the previous day for Chinook and chum/sockeye salmon, respectively. The coefficients for these covariates had negative values, which reflected the nature of a subsistence fishery that more fishers will exit the fishery as the season progresses and more harvest needs are met.

- $\beta_5$  was a response to the local in-river species ratio of chum+sockeye:Chinook salmon.

It has been observed in recent years that effort declines as the season progresses (and chum/sockeye become more abundant in-river) even when Chinook, chum, and sockeye salmon needs are far from being met (as defined by the Amounts Reasonably Necessary for Subsistence Needs as determined by the Alaska Board of Fisheries; ANS; Table A.4). The important mechanism captured here is that the species composition and abundance of chum and sockeye salmon becomes so high in late June (Figure A.2) that it is not uncommon to catch several dozen fish of these species in a single gill net drift, which may be undesirable to some fishers given limited processing and storage capacity.

The general pattern that arises from this model is low effort early in the season due to low in-river abundance and catch rates, a peak when most harvesting activity occurs due to favorable catch rates, and a rapid decline as salmon needs are met. The coefficients were selected to generally reproduce recent observations of effort dynamics (Staton and Coggins 2016, 2017; Staton 2018) and historical harvest timing data (Hamazaki 2008, 2011, and see Appendix B for a validation). Coefficient values were  $\beta_0 = 0$ ;  $\beta_1 = 3$ ;  $\beta_2 = -100$ ;  $\beta_3 = -4$ ;  $\beta_4 = -5.5$ , and  $\beta_5 = -0.05$  – note that the effect for attainment of Chinook salmon needs was weaker than that of chum/sockeye. This indicates that effort should decline more quickly with the attainment of chum/sockeye needs rather than for Chinook salmon, which was intended to reflect the desirability of the latter species to subsistence fishers in the Kuskokwim drainage.

Subsistence fishers are limited by processing time and space, and thus have a self-imposed catch limit.  $CPB_{MAX}$  was needed to prevent  $CPB$  from being proportional to in-river abundance at high salmon densities. A value of 100 total salmon per day was used, and came from a mixture of recent observations (Staton and Coggins 2016, 2017; Staton 2018) and from speaking with stakeholders about their harvest and processing behavior.

It has been observed that fishers in the Kuskokwim River do not target all salmon species in proportion to their relative abundance as indexed by the BTF (Staton and Coggins

2016, 2017; Staton 2018). Whether due to a size-selective bias of the gear or due to fisher preference, the observed species ratio in the fishery is typically skewed more towards Chinook salmon than is the BTF on the same days, by a factor of approximately 0.6. That is, if the BTF (which is assumed to sample the vulnerable relative abundance representatively) exhibits a species ratio of 15:1 (chum+sockeye:Chinook), the fishery would be expected to exhibit a species ratio of 9:1. This selectivity correction was included into the fishery model when apportioning harvest to species.

Realized effort on day  $d$  in reach  $r$  ( $E_{d,r}$ ) was calculated by combining  $E_{\text{MAX},r}$ ,  $p_{E,d,r}$ , and the fraction of a 24-hour day the fishery was open ( $F_{d,r}$ ):

$$E_{d,r} = p_{E,d,r} E_{\text{MAX},d,r} F_{d,r} \quad (1.10)$$

$F_{d,r}$  was manipulated by the management strategies presented in Section 1.2.3. Total salmon harvest ( $H_{d,r,tot}$ ) was obtained as:

$$H_{d,r,tot} = \min \left( 1 - e^{-E_{d,r}q} \sum_{s=1}^4 A_{d,r,s}, E_{d,r} CPB_{\text{MAX}} \right) \quad (1.11)$$

The term  $1 - e^{-E_{d,r}q}$  is equivalent to a daily exploitation rate in the absence of processing capacity, and includes effort and catch efficiency (i.e., catchability;  $q$ ). The minimum statement in (1.11) enforces the maximum daily harvest per boat trip. This total salmon harvest was apportioned to each Chinook salmon subpopulation based on (1) the known level of selectivity towards Chinook salmon and (2) the relative abundance of each subpopulation  $s$ . That is, the species ratio of  $H_{d,r,tot}$  was reduced from the true species ratio  $\phi_{d,r}$  by a factor of 0.6 to obtain Chinook and chum/sockeye salmon harvest, then the Chinook salmon harvest was apportioned by the subpopulation relative abundance. The maximum daily exploitation rate of any  $A_{d,r,s}$  was capped at 0.9.

### 1.2.5 Simulated assessment data collection

The simulated assessment structure differed based on the management strategy used based on the richness of information required for each management strategy: for example, Strategy #1 (closed until open) required no information whatsoever whereas Strategy #4 (explicit harvest target) required a pre-season forecast, in-season abundance data, a method to update abundance perceptions, and weekly in-season harvest estimates. Only data sources that could be useful for in-season management were simulated, e.g., because escapement assessment projects (i.e., weirs on spawning tributaries) are located so far from the bulk of the fishery they are not useful to determining in-season harvest opportunities.

#### 1.2.5.1 Pre-season run size forecast

Pre-season forecasts of Chinook salmon total abundance were obtained as a bias-corrected lognormal random deviate from the true run:

$$\log(N_{tot,f cst}) \sim N\left(-\frac{\sigma_F^2}{2}, \sigma_F\right) \quad (1.12)$$

where  $\sigma_F = 0.27$  which is the estimated standard deviation of historical forecast errors using the current forecast method (presented in Staton and Catalano In Press<sup>1</sup>). When used in Strategies #2 and #3, only the point estimate of  $N_{tot,f cst}$  was used to categorize the run as being a member of one of five discrete run size “bins”, as displayed in Figure 1.1. When used in Strategy #4, the precision of the forecast method was incorporated by treating the forecast as a bias-corrected lognormal probability density function (PDF), with standard deviation equal to  $\sigma_F$ .

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<sup>1</sup>DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1139/cjfas-2018-0176>

### 1.2.5.2 Test fishery index

A test fishery that produced daily catch-per-effort for each salmon stock  $j$  ( $n_j = 2$ ; one aggregate Chinook salmon stock and one aggregate chum/sockeye stock) was simulated in the first river reach and was assumed to index the run prior to fish becoming vulnerable to fishery harvest ( $CPE_{TF,d,j}$ ). The test fishery had an expected daily catchability ( $q_{TF}$ ) and two sources of sampling variability: a catchability deviation representing annual fluctuations in river conditions and age/size composition of the incoming run (Flynn and Hilborn 2004) and daily fluctuations in fish vulnerability:

$$CPE_{TF,d,j} = A_{d,1,j} \frac{e^{q_{TF} + \varepsilon_{TF,y} + \gamma_{TF,d}}}{1 + e^{q_{TF} + \varepsilon_{TF,y} + \gamma_{TF,d}}} \quad (1.13)$$

where  $A_{d,1,j}$  is the total abundance of fish from species  $j$  each day in the first reach, and  $\varepsilon_{TF,y}$  and  $\gamma_{TF,d}$  are logit-scale sampling errors operating on the annual and daily time scales, respectively. These sampling errors were normally-distributed with standard deviations equal to  $\sigma_\varepsilon = 0.15$  and  $\sigma_\gamma = 0.2$  and  $q_{TF}$  was set to 0.004. These quantities were tuned to provide similar magnitude and variability in the simulated CPE data as has been historically observed at the Bethel Test Fishery index site. Daily species compositions were expressed as the ratio of chum+sockeye:Chinook salmon:

$$\phi_{TF,d} = \frac{CPE_{TF,d,CS}}{CPE_{TF,d,CH}} \quad (1.14)$$

where  $j = CH$  for Chinook salmon and  $j = CS$  for chum/sockeye salmon.

### 1.2.5.3 Bayesian updates to perceived run abundance

In assessed Strategy #4, the manager used in-season information regarding run abundance contained in the sampled values of  $CPE_{TF,d,CH}$  to update the PDF provided by the pre-season forecast in a Bayesian framework. The analytical methods to perform this Bayesian

update were identical to those presented in Staton and Catalano (In Press), however, a brief description will be provided here. Based on a regression relationship fitted to historical data of the form:

$$\log(N_{tot,y}) = \hat{\beta}_{0,d} + \hat{\beta}_{1,d} \sum_{k=1}^d CPE_{TF,k,CH,y} + \hat{\varepsilon}_{N,y,d}, \quad (1.15)$$

it is possible to predict total annual abundance on any day  $d$  of the season from the sum of all observed  $CPE_{TF,CH}$  data through day  $d$ . Thirty historical years were simulated for fitting this historical relationship, which is highly variable for low values of  $d$  as a result of run timing and sampling variability, though becomes more informative as  $d$  increases and the run approaches completion. Prediction uncertainty was propagated to predictions of abundance *via* Monte Carlo simulation of the regression parameters and residuals from their respective estimated sampling distributions as described in Staton and Catalano (In Press). This process yields a daily distribution of likely run size outcomes according to the in-season data alone, and can be viewed as new evidence with which to update prior information. The prior distribution each day was the PDF of the pre-season run forecast, and the PDF of abundance predictions from (1.15) was used as the likelihood to obtain the posterior PDF, denoted by  $\Pr(N_{tot}|CPE_{TF,d})$ .

#### 1.2.5.4 Weekly harvest estimates

In assessed Strategy #4, the manager had the ability to track in-season Chinook salmon harvest, such that progress toward attainment of the season-wide harvest target ( $H_T$ ) could be monitored. Weekly harvest estimates were produced as random deviates from a symmetric truncated normal distribution with mean equal to the true weekly harvest, coefficient of variation (CV) equal to 15%, and lower and upper boundaries at 0 and  $2 \times$  true weekly harvest, respectively. A CV of 15% was used because this is the approximate CV obtained

using the in-season harvest estimation method developed and employed by Staton and Coggins (2016), Staton and Coggins (2017), and Staton (2018). Cumulative estimated harvest was obtained by summing weekly estimates; uncertainty in harvest estimation was not considered. Estimates were created only for the villages within the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge (YDNWR; reaches 1 – 9; Table A.4); this is a small enough area to be surveyed feasibly and it accounts for approximately 95% of all historical Chinook salmon harvest.

### **1.2.6 Utility functions**

Due to the lack of a common scale to the various objectives (Section 1.2.2), it was important to determine metrics than can be compared between objectives. These metrics are termed “utility functions”, and here they are on the scale of [0,1], where 0 indicates complete failure to meet an objective and 1 indicates complete success. Objectives can then be weighted based on their importance to and an aggregate score can be obtained as a weighted sum across the different utilities. Each objective received a unique utility function, as described below.

#### **1.2.6.1 Attainment of escapement needs**

Adequate escapement is the primary conservation objective, and is necessary to ensure the Chinook salmon stock can continue to produce adequate subsistence yields in the future. Thus, a rational metric to use is one based on the ability of the escaping spawning abundance to produce enough adult recruits to allow for attainment of subsistence harvest needs. The best scientific understanding of this ability is based in population dynamics of the stock, specifically the spawner-recruit dynamics. If the Ricker (1954) spawner-recruit model is believed (as is often done in salmon population analyses, Fleischman et al. 2013, see Chapter ?? as well), then there is a theoretical spawner abundance, termed  $S_{MAX}$ , that is most likely to produce maximum recruitment, termed  $R_{MAX}$ .  $R_{MAX}$  may be a more important metric for subsistence salmon fisheries than maximum sustained yield, given subsistence

fishers tend to value consistently high abundance and catch rates over simply maximizing their long-term catch (Hamazaki et al. 2012). I generated the utility function using a curve that represented the probability that a given escapement will produce 90% of  $R_{MAX}$  under equilibrium conditions, which would ensure high future catch rates and enough surplus of Chinook salmon to meet subsistence needs in the long-term.

To obtain this curve, termed a probability profile (Fleischman et al. 2013), I fitted the Bayesian state-space model presented in Hamazaki et al. (2012) to the Kuskokwim River aggregate population data over the period 1976 – 2017. This utility function assigned high utility ( $> 0.9$ ) to escapements between approximately 70,000 – 125,000, with lower utility on either end outside of this range (Figure 1.4). One important consideration, however, is that if the Chinook salmon run is larger than approximately 230,000 fish, the subsistence fishery alone, which has historically harvested a maximum of approximately 110,000 fish (Hamazaki 2011), cannot harvest enough fish to place escapement within that range. This fact is important when considering the value of this metric in very large runs.

#### **1.2.6.2 Evenness of substock exploitation rates**

In the absence of any information regarding the productivity of the different Chinook salmon substocks within the Kuskokwim River drainage, the default preference would be that all substocks should receive the same exploitation rate ( $U_s = \frac{H_s}{N_s}$ ; but see Chapter ?? for a study regarding methods used to get such estimates). Thus, I attempted to find a metric that would have a high value (near 1) if all Chinook salmon substocks had relatively equal  $U_s$  and that would provide a low value (near 0) if the  $U_s$  were vastly uneven. One such metric is the Schutz coefficient (Schutz 1951; Habib 2012), which is often used in econometrics to measure income inequality (e.g., Kennedy et al. 1996). The Schutz coefficient takes the form:

$$z = \frac{\sum_i^n |x_i - \bar{x}|}{2 \sum_i^n x_i}, \quad (1.16)$$

where  $x_i$  is the income of earner  $i$ ,  $\bar{x}$  is the average income among all  $n$  earners, and  $z$  is the Schutz coefficient. Technically speaking, this index represents the fraction of the total income that would need to be redistributed reach perfect equity ( $z = 0$ ), which has earned it an alternate name: the “Robin Hood Index”. Here it is viewed simply as an index of evenness among substock-specific exploitation rates within a given year.

I made several modifications to the Schutz coefficient in (1.16) for use in this utility metric. First, I substituted  $U_s$  in for  $x_i$  and  $n = 3$  to represent the three Chinook salmon substocks. Second, given perfect equity (or evenness) of exploitation rates would be deemed a success, I obtained the complement of the Schutz coefficient for the utility function:  $z' = 1 - z$ . Third, the smallest value attainable for  $z'$  is  $\frac{1}{n}$  and I needed a complete failure to be represented by a 0, so I normalized  $z'$  to be on the [0,1] scale:

$$z'' = \frac{z' - \frac{1}{n}}{1 - \frac{1}{n}} \quad (1.17)$$

Finally, if all  $x_i$  elements are 0,  $z''$  is undefined. In these cases, I assigned the utility of 1, given they are even. Several examples of this utility function are presented in Table 1.3.

### 1.2.6.3 Attainment of aggregate subsistence needs

The Alaska Board of Fisheries has produced ANS ranges, which represent the range of salmon harvests by species that would reasonably be expected to meet subsistence salmon needs of fishers in the Kuskokwim River drainage. This range is 67,200 – 109,800, with a midpoint of 88,500. I developed a utility function for drainage-wide Chinook salmon harvest that reached its maximum at 1 if harvest was above the midpoint of the ANS range, and a fraction of it ( $H_{CH}/88,500$ ) otherwise.

#### **1.2.6.4 Evenness of subsistence harvests**

In addition to meeting the needs of the aggregate population of subsistence fishers, it is also generally desirable that Chinook salmon harvest be distributed evenly among the villages in each region (relative to their salmon needs). Thus, I used the same modified Schutz coefficient ( $z''$ ) shown in Section 1.2.6.2 to quantify evenness of need-adjusted harvests (harvest/need) for villages located in the lower, middle, and upper regions of the Kuskokwim Drainage (Table A.4). In this case, high utility would be placed on outcomes in which a relatively equal fraction of Chinook salmon needs were harvested by villages in these regions.

#### **1.2.6.5 Total Utility**

The four objectives and utility metrics described above were collapsed into one measure that allowed quantification of overall performance and simple comparisions between strategies. This metric, termed total utility ( $V_T$ ) was calculated as the weighted sum across each of the four objective-specific metrics:

$$V_T = V_S\omega_S + V_U\omega_U + V_H\omega_H + V_E\omega_E \quad (1.18)$$

where  $V_x$  and  $\omega_x$  represent the utility measure and weighting factor for objective  $x$ , respectively ( $S$  = aggregate escapement,  $U$  = even  $U_s$ ,  $H$  = aggregate harvest,  $E$  = equitable harvest). The default case assigned equal weight to each objective, but three alternate weighting schemes were assessed as well to determine the sensitivity of conclusions to this choice (Section 1.2.8.3).

#### **1.2.7 Monte Carlo simulation**

For each assessed strategy,  $M = 5,000$  hypothetical runs were simulated with different total Chinook salmon run size, aggregate and substock-specific entry timings, substock

compositions, and species compositions. Assessment errors were introduced randomly as well and each substrategy was tested on the Monte Carlo sample. The utility for each objective was calculated for each simulated year and strategy and was saved for summarization.

### **1.2.8 Summarization of management performance**

Two levels of post-stratification of run types was conducted to facilitate inference:

- (1) Runs were stratified into 5 categories based on total Chinook salmon abundance ( $N_{tot}$ ): [50K,80K], (80K,130K], (130K,180K], (180K,230K], and (230K,450K]. These were roughly selected based on my perceived level of needed management restrictions to ensure the subsistence fishery would not harvest too many fish to damage escapement utility. Runs in the first two strata may require substantial restrictions, those in the third and fourth may require light or no restrictions, and the majority of runs in the fifth strata should require no management whatsoever to ensure near full attainment of the escapement and harvest objectives.
- (2) Run timing was also stratified, but only into 3 categories: >3 days early, >3 days late, and all runs.

The average utility value across Monte Carlo samples for each strategy/substrategy was calculated for each objective in each stratum.

#### **1.2.8.1 Within-strategy comparisons**

Substrategies within each of the four primary strategies were compared at each run size stratum for each utility metric. The effect of run timing variability was assessed by qualitatively assessing which strategies had largely different outcomes for either the “early” or “late” strata than the “all” stratum.

### 1.2.8.2 Between-strategy comparisons

The best-performing substrategy in each run size stratum for all run timing scenarios according to the total utility measure was extracted and its performance was compared to that of other strategies. In selecting the best substrategy, it often occurred that negligible differences were found between substrategies according to the total utility metric ( $V_T$ ): in these cases of a “tie” (defined as a case where the second best substrategy was within 5% of the best) the substrategy that performed best with respect to escapement utility was selected for comparison, if that was again a tie, then utility measures from all substrategies included in the tie were averaged and noted as a “hybrid” substrategy.

### 1.2.8.3 Evaluation of sensitivity to weighting schemes

The default case was to weight all four metrics equally when obtaining total value ( $\omega_S = \omega_H = \omega_E = \omega_U = 1$ ), but three other weighting schemes were used for sensitivity analyses:

- *Simple-view*:  $\omega_S = 1; \omega_H = 1; \omega_E = 0; \omega_U = 0$
- *Escapement-oriented*:  $\omega_S = 1; \omega_H = 0.5; \omega_E = 0.25; \omega_U = 0.75$
- *Harvest-oriented*:  $\omega_S = 0.5; \omega_H = 1; \omega_E = 0.75; \omega_U = 0.25$

The “simple-view” is intended to focus only on the two primary objectives of salmon management, and the escapement- *versus* harvest-oriented scenarios are opposites of one another, with the aggregate goal in each case carrying the most weight followed by the spatial distribution objectives.

In calculating the total utility ( $V_T$ ; the only basis for comparison here), it was important to restandardize it for comparisons between weighting schemes ( $\omega_x$ ). This is because these different combinations have differing maximally-attainable  $V_T$ . For example, the maximum attainable  $V_T$  for the “simple-view” case is 2, but it is 4 for the default case. For this comparison, I restandardized the different  $V_T$  values for each weighting scheme to be a fraction of the maximally-attainable  $V_T$  for that weighting scheme.

## 1.3 Results

### 1.3.1 Operating model realism

The operating model was found to adequately capture the important dynamics of the fishery when left unrestricted with respect to total harvest magnitude as well as spatiotemporal patterns in the distribution of Chinook salmon harvest at a range of all simulated run sizes, timings, and species/stock compositions (Appendix B). Some amount of fine-tuning was required of the catchability parameter ( $q$ ) and the effort response model coefficients ( $\beta_n$ ) to reproduce these patterns, however no behaviors arose that seemed highly questionable. In general, the level of simulated inter-annual variability was similar to that observed in the historical data (Appendix B). Based on these findings, inference regarding policy performance proceeded under the assumption that the operating model reasonably captured the system dynamics.

### 1.3.2 Within-strategy comparisons

#### 1.3.2.1 Strategy #1: “Closed until open”

Strong patterns were found in the relative performance of the different substrategies of assessed Strategy #1 (Figure 1.5), particularly with regards to the aggregate harvest and escapement objectives. In the very smallest simulated runs ( $< 80,000$ ), only the June 23 substrategy resulted in any measurable amount of escapement utility (approximately  $V_S = 0.2$ ), the other two assessed earlier dates resulted in  $V_S$  near 0. This finding in the smallest runs was not at all sensitive to the timing with which simulated Chinook salmon entered the river (as indicated by the overlap in the three lines, Figure 1.5). In “small” simulated runs (80,000 – 130,000), more escapement utility was attained for each substrategy, but the declining pattern remained. In these runs, however, run timing variability did greatly impact the ability to meet escapement needs: late runs had the tendency to result in more escapement utility

even when the river was opened completely beginning on June 1. Escapement utility was generally highest in the “medium-sized” runs (130,000 – 180,000), with all three substrategies resulting in  $V_S \geq 0.8$  and little sensitivity to run timing. The June 23 substrategy resulted in the lowest  $V_S$  in “large” runs between 180,000 – 230,000, as a result of allowing many Chinook salmon to escape; the case was the same for all substrategies of the largest runs, but in these runs there is no management action that could allow the subsistence fishery to harvest enough fish to obtain high escapement utility according to the function used (Figure 1.4). Greater harvest utility was obtained with earlier opening dates, as would be expected given Chinook salmon abundance becomes overwhelmed by chum and sockeye salmon in the later part of June. These results highlight a trade-off between harvest and escapement in runs smaller than 130,000: earlier fishing resulted in more harvest, but less escapement utility.

Harvest equity ( $V_E$ ) was maximized at the intermediate substrategy (June 12) for small runs, but reached its maximum with the earliest date with larger runs. The utility resulting from equal exploitation rates ( $V_U$ ) was surprisingly flat over the continuum of assessed start dates, however there was a slight trend for later fishing dates to have higher values of  $V_U$ . Run timing influenced the value of  $V_U$  as well, with earlier runs generally having greater utility. The default total utility metric ( $V_T$ ; obtained with all weights  $\omega_x = 1$ ) was roughly equal between substrategies in small runs (indicating that each balanced the trade-offs differently), whereas  $V_T$  was greatest for the intermediate and earliest start dates in larger runs (i.e., more aggressive start dates).

Given the relatively small changes in the  $V_E$  and  $V_U$  metrics between substrategies, I decided to look more closely at patterns with the raw output of exploitation rate by substock ( $U_s$ ; Figure 1.6) and the fraction of salmon needs that were met (Figure 1.7). With respect to  $U_s$ , the most noticeable difference between substrategies was that the exploitation rate for all substocks was lower for the late opening dates than for early opening dates (Figure 1.6). Due to the limiting nature of the subsistence fishery, the exploitation rates declined with

increasing run sizes. In all substrategies, the exploitation rate of the upper river substock was greater than for the lower and middle river substocks, however this difference declined as the opening date was delayed. Regarding the evenness of attainment of harvest needs between villages in different regions of the drainage, the greatest unevenness was found for large runs combined with the June 23 substrategy, in which upper river fishers often exceeded their minimal needs but lower river fishers obtained less than half of theirs. Overall, the changes in these raw output values seemed more substantial than what was indicated by the use of the modified Schutz coefficient, as shown in Figure 1.5.

### 1.3.2.2 Strategy #2: “Forecast-based fixed schedule”

Just as in assessed Strategy #1, the aggregate harvest and escapement objectives were those most influenced by the choice of substrategy of assessed Strategy #2. The conservative substrategy resulted in higher  $V_S$  in small runs, but at the cost of lower aggregate harvest utility ( $V_H$ ; Figure 1.8). In large runs, however, there was much less contrast in substrategy performance. Run timing variability again played a key role in determining management success: small runs tended to have higher  $V_S$  when the run was late (but lower  $V_H$ ), whereas late runs were a detriment to the success of both objectives in larger runs. It was only in small runs that harvest equity ( $V_E$ ) or harvest rate evenness ( $V_U$ ) were sensitive to the selection of substrategy – in medium and the large run scenarios these metrics were essentially equal along the continuum of conservative to aggressive fishing schedules. In general, Strategy #2 was also influenced by run timing variability (though less so than Strategy #1), and particularly in larger run sizes.  $V_T$  was largely the same between substrategies, with a slight tendency to favor more aggressive schedules in nearly all run size categories.

### **1.3.2.3 Strategy #3: “Forecast/ratio-based variable schedule”**

Substrategies of assessed Strategy #3 (Figure 1.9) showed surprising similarity to the patterns in Strategy #2. The only difference of note between these two strategies was the difference in utility between substrategies was smaller for Strategy #3 than for Strategy #2 (i.e., overall shallower slopes in Figure 1.9) than in Figure 1.8.

### **1.3.2.4 Strategy #4: “Explicit harvest target”**

The choice of the particular substrategy used for Strategy #4 had less of an impact on escapement or harvest utility than substrategies of Strategies #1-3 (1.10 in small runs. This indicates that the performance of this strategy was insensitive to the particular harvest table used (i.e., the linkage between the weekly harvest target and number of fishing days, Figure 1.3). This is likely a result of the probabilistic choice of a harvest target – because this method accounted for uncertainty in run abundance and risk in failing to meet the escapement limit, the harvest target was probably low enough in these small runs to where it did not matter which substrategy was used, they would all suggest very few fishing days per week. In larger runs, where the harvest target was larger, more contrast was found between substrategy performance with respect to harvest and escapement. Run timing variability affected the performance of this strategy, and as in other strategies the effect was strongest at large run sizes.  $V_E$  and  $V_U$  were generally unaffected by the choice of substrategy, but there was a slight tendency for the aggressive harvest table to exhibit lower values than the conservative one.

## **1.3.3 Between-strategy comparisons**

After extracting the best substrategy from each of the four primary strategies at each run size (across all run timing scenarios), it was clear that conservative/neutral substrategies were favored in small runs and aggressive substrategies in large runs (Figure 1.11; note

the predominance of light grey in left panels and darker grey in the right panels). Ties between substrategies were more common in larger runs, indicating the details of strategy implementation had less influence in larger runs. The largest differences in management performance between strategies were with respect to aggregate escapement and harvest in small and intermediate sized runs – the harvest equity and evenness of exploitation rate metrics were largely insensitive to the selection of strategy at all run sizes. In the smallest runs, Strategy #4 was strongly favored over other strategies with respect to escapement, likely as a result of its inherent risk aversion built into the probabilistic selection of the harvest target. However, Strategy #4 tended to result in less harvest utility in nearly all run sizes than the other strategies, indicating that more complexity in the decision rules still leaves room for management mistakes, but that they err on the side caution. Within a run size category, there was a high degree of similarity in total utility among strategies at all run sizes, though a weak pattern emerged that favored more complex strategies (#4) in small runs and simpler strategies (#1-3) in larger run scenarios.

#### 1.3.4 Sensitivity to weighting schemes

It is important to consider how these findings regarding total utility might depend on how the various utility functions were weighted. The major pattern that arose was that when the weights were adjusted to the simple-view or escapement-oriented scenarios, the tendency to favor conservative substrategies in small runs was more apparent – the “harvest-oriented” weighting scenario favored either neutral or aggressive substrategies in even the smallest run sizes (Figure 1.12). The pattern of high similarity in overall performance between strategies remained, but there was a tendency to favor Strategy #4 (the most complex) more in the escapement-oriented weighting scenario than in the harvest-oriented weighting scenario. According to the simple-view weighting scenario, relative performance in the smallest runs was much lower in comparison to other run sizes than using other weighting schemes. This is

because only the aggregate harvest and escapement objectives were considered in the simple view case (and both objectives score low in these smallest runs), whereas other weighting scenarios included the spatial distribution of these quantities in measuring management performance.

## 1.4 Discussion

In this stochastic simulation-based analysis, my intent was to search for strategies for setting fishing schedules that tended to result in favorable management performance and highlight the cases where trade-offs exist between competing management objectives. To accomplish this goal, I developed a complex operating model that adequately captured the biological and fishery components of a large salmon-producing river system in western Alaska. By stratifying the output by run size and run timing, I was able to determine which strategies were sensitive to these factors and which strategies were not. My key findings were:

- (1) the primary trade-off between objectives included here was between harvest and escapement, but only in small runs,
- (2) run timing variability impacted performance in large runs more than in small runs,
- (3) more conservative substrategies were favored at small runs than in large ones,
- (4) high similarity in management performance between strategies, and
- (5) the selection of the best substrategy according to total utility depended on the weighting scheme, but that the patterns in comparing strategies did not.

In the paragraphs that follow, I elaborate on each of these findings and provide some insights regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the approach I used.

The dominant trade-off I found, not surprisingly, was between harvest and escapement in small runs ( $< 130,000$ ). These runs do not have enough fish to allow for both high escapement and harvest utility, and given every fish that is harvested cannot also escape, it is clear as to why this is the case. The trade-off was identified because for most strategies, the more

conservative substrategies tended to have higher escapement utility and lower harvest utility, and *vice versa*. In larger runs, this trade-off was not present, given enough fish were available for both objectives.

In terms of robustness to variability in run timing, I found that all strategies were sensitive in large runs, but that only Strategy #1 was sensitive in small runs. This makes intuitive sense given Strategy #1 used only one “decision”, and that was the day to open the fishery completely. As a result, an early opening date coupled with an early run is likely to produce more Chinook salmon harvest than the same opening and a late run because of the timing with which chum and sockeye salmon begin to dominate the species composition. If the Chinook salmon run shows up early, then a larger fraction of their run is vulnerable to lower river fishers before chum and sockeye salmon enter in large numbers and trigger the processing capacity limit, coupled with an early opening would result in high harvest. Conversely, if the Chinook run is early but coupled with a late opening, then Chinook harvest is likely to be low because much of the run has passed the lower river fishery. These dynamics can be easily understood because of the simple nature of Strategy #1. In the more complex strategies, more factors influenced the number of fishing days per week than simply the time of the season. For example, schedules for Strategies #2-3 were explicitly chosen to have fewer days early in the season than later in the season to prevent catching too many Chinook salmon when their abundance is high relative to other species. Furthermore, sampling variability was introduced into the decision-making process that could also serve to swamp the influence of run timing variability. Increased sensitivity at large run sizes was likely a result of the fact that more is at stake in large runs from a harvest perspective. There is more surplus in these years, and a proportional reduction in a large harvest affects the utility function more than the same proportional reduction in a small harvest.

When picking the best substrategy, I found that often the choice depended on run size: more neutral or conservative substrategies were selected in small runs (< 130,000) and

more aggressive substrategies in larger runs ( $> 180,000$ ). This finding simply suggests that, regardless of the particular strategy being employed, they should not implement it the exact same each year. Fishing schedules must be updated to adequately target which outcomes are likely to influence success that year. For example, in the smallest runs, it is possible to obtain moderate escapement utility ( $V_S = 0.7$  with Strategy #4) with very little fishing activity. However, the most harvest utility possible in these runs is low ( $V_H = 0.4$  with Strategy #1, June 1) and if this were enacted  $V_S$  would be 0. Clearly the more important objective in small runs such as these is escapement, so managers should adapt the strategy to behave in a more conservative way. The situation reverses in intermediate and large sized runs, where it is possible that both  $V_H$  and  $V_S$  benefit from more aggressive fishing (within reason). This finding makes intuitive sense, and to most salmon managers it was almost certainly known *a priori* to this analysis. However, this analysis (and ones like it) are useful in helping define these transition points and defining what a set of conservative *versus* aggressive schedules might look like.

One of the more surprising findings in my view was the high degree of similarity in total utility ( $V_T$ ) between management strategies (after filtering the best-performing substrategy). As an example, I expected that the explicit harvest target approach in Strategy #4 would strongly outperform the fixed schedule strategy (Strategy #2) because of its timely response to information. Two plausible explanations (in no particular order) are:

- (1) The harvest table approach was too simple in Strategy #4. It is likely that managers may adapt the table based on run abundance or species composition. A more involved approach would be to select fishing duration each week ( $D_w$ ) based on an explicit prediction of how many fish would be captured conditional on each value of  $D_w$  under consideration. The candidate that results in predicted weekly harvest nearest to the desired weekly harvest ( $H_{T,w}$ ) would then be selected. Understanding of the fishery dynamics at various run sizes would be required to trust these predictions strongly,

but recent studies (Staton and Coggins 2016, 2017; Staton 2018) have gone a long way towards providing this understanding for runs in the small category. These predictions can be made very simply as the product of three anticipated quantities and one policy variable: total boats/day  $\times$  salmon catch/boat/day  $\times$  % Chinook in catch  $\times D_w$ .

- (2) The dexterity is only as good as the information informing it, and it is possible that it was too weak to implement Strategy #4 well. I attempted to mimic the properties of the data sources collected for in-season management in the Kuskokwim River, it is possible that more precise run assessment methods (e.g., sonar) would provide better information to implement this policy.

Aside from the possibilities of gross misspecification of (a) the operating model with respect to biological or social components and dynamics or (b) utility functions and weights, a third explanation remains, and I believe it likely to be true. It is likely that many strategies may perform equally well in an average year. Strategy #2, after all makes intuitive sense and the schedules were selected with sound rational behind them. In some cases, I found similar performance in total utility between strategies because they balanced trade-offs differently (Figure 1.11, first column) and in others it was because different strategies had the same effect on  $D_w$  and the resulting utilities (Figure 1.11, last column). The inference here is that there are multiple suitable approaches to the in-season management problem for the Kuskokwim River Chinook salmon fishery. The important question now becomes which strategy could meet other objectives not included in this analysis (e.g., fishers' desire to know when to expect fishing opportunities far in advance) and is transparent to the parties involved.

The final primary finding from this analysis was that the weighting of objectives in the total utility function did influence the inference, but only regarding which substrategies (not strategies) were best and only in small runs. The scheme that placed more emphasis on escapement suggested that conservative substrategies performed better in these cases. It did not, however, change the inference that the different strategies performed similarly within a

run size category. This indicates that perhaps managers with different inherent weights on their objectives should not change their fishing strategy entirely from other managers, but instead that they may just fine-tune the details of its implementation.

The analytical approach I employed was strong in that it captured many of the important aspects of the real system (e.g., spatiotemporal structure, multi-stock/species structure, and emergent properties). It was subjected to several layers of uncertainty and variability to assess many different hypothetical situations. These characteristics lend it credibility as a tool for inference regarding expected annual outcomes of a decision when faced with different run scenarios.

The analysis was not perfect, however; it did have some weaknesses. First, inference regarding strategy performance was conditioned on the particular objectives selected for this purpose, and more specifically, on the utility functions used to measure the degree of their attainment for each hypothetical salmon run. Each manager/stakeholder may have different objectives (or different ways to weight them), but I attempted to build the performance metrics around the four dominant themes I have heard discussed regarding management objectives and I investigated the sensitivity to different weighting schemes (which could represent different managers or stakeholders). Second, this simulation analysis required that the management strategy be expressed as a rigorous control rule, where the decision would be made the same way each time the same information was available. In reality, managers do not operate this way – one control rule cannot simultaneously consider all sources of information in such a programmatic way. This fact limits the realism of the analysis, but is not unique. Finally, the approach I took where each year was an independent situation was weaker than if I built in a population dynamics submodel. This would allow management mistakes to propagate forward in time and long-term performance could be tracked. As an example, if a strategy exhibited systematically higher exploitation rates of upper river substocks year after year, then perhaps those stocks would sit at a less productive abundance

than if they were fished less intensively and this might influence long-term harvests. Although these types of feedback were not incorporated in my analysis, I do believe the results are meaningful: it provided insights as to what might be expected from different strategies if they were implemented one year at a time and how these outcomes depend on biological conditions like run size or run timing.

Table 1.1: Species ratio trigger point cut-offs used in Strategy #3.  $\phi_{p,w-1}$  is the percentile of the average daily species ratio detected in the previous week at the simulated test fishery site when taken in context of all historical species ratios for week  $w - 1$ . Different substrategies are shown in the three columns: different thresholds that indicate when the manager should switch from using different schedules (as shown in Figure 1.1). For example, the neutral version of Strategy #3 would employ the conservative schedules following the pre-season forecast as shown in Figure 1.1 until the species ratio exceeds the 33% percentile of all historically observed ratios.

Species Ratio Thresholds for Substrategies of #3			
Schedule	Conservative	Neutral	Aggressive
Conservative	$\phi_{p,w-1} \leqslant 66\%$	$\phi_{p,w-1} \leqslant 33\%$	$\phi_{p,w-1} \leqslant 15\%$
Neutral	$66\% < \phi_{p,w-1} \leqslant 85\%$	$33\% < \phi_{p,w-1} \leqslant 66\%$	$15\% < \phi_{p,w-1} \leqslant 33\%$
Aggressive	$\phi_{p,w-1} > 85\%$	$\phi_{p,w-1} > 66\%$	$\phi_{p,w-1} > 33\%$

Table 1.2: Specific species ratio trigger points used in assessed Strategy #3 when selecting which schedule type (Figure 1.1) to employ. For example, a manager in week 3 using the conservative substrategy would use the conservative schedule unless the average species ratio last week was above 1.4, at which point they would switch to the neutral schedule. Date ranges belonging to each week are shown in Figure 1.1. These trigger points were obtained from the cut-off rules shown in Table 1.1.

Ratio Trigger Substrategy	Week				
	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Trigger Switch from Conservative to Neutral Schedules</b>					
Conservative	0.7	2.4	1.4	4.6	17.1
Neutral	0.2	0.7	0.4	2.6	11
Aggressive	0.1	0.1	0	1.3	9.1
<b>Trigger Switch from Neutral to Aggressive Schedules</b>					
Conservative	1.2	3.1	1.8	6.5	26.2
Neutral	0.7	2.4	1.4	4.6	17.1
Aggressive	0.2	0.7	0.4	2.6	11

Table 1.3: Example values of the modified Schutz coefficient ( $z''$ ; Section 1.2.6.2) used as the utility function for the objectives dealing with evenness of exploitation rates and harvest equity. Examples are in decreasing order of equity, with the top rows representing more equitable/even cases than those at the bottom of the table. When used for evenness of exploitation rates, the  $x_{\text{Region}}$  represent substock-specific exploitation rates ( $U_s$ ). When used to measure equity, the  $x_{\text{Region}}$  represent the fraction of needed Chinook salmon harvested by villages within reaches located in each region.

$x_{\text{Lower}}$	$x_{\text{Middle}}$	$x_{\text{Upper}}$	$z''$
100%	100%	100%	<b>1</b>
10%	10%	10%	<b>1</b>
40%	40%	50%	<b>0.92</b>
40%	40%	70%	<b>0.8</b>
30%	30%	90%	<b>0.6</b>
15%	30%	90%	<b>0.5</b>
0%	10%	90%	<b>0.15</b>
0%	0%	10%	<b>0</b>

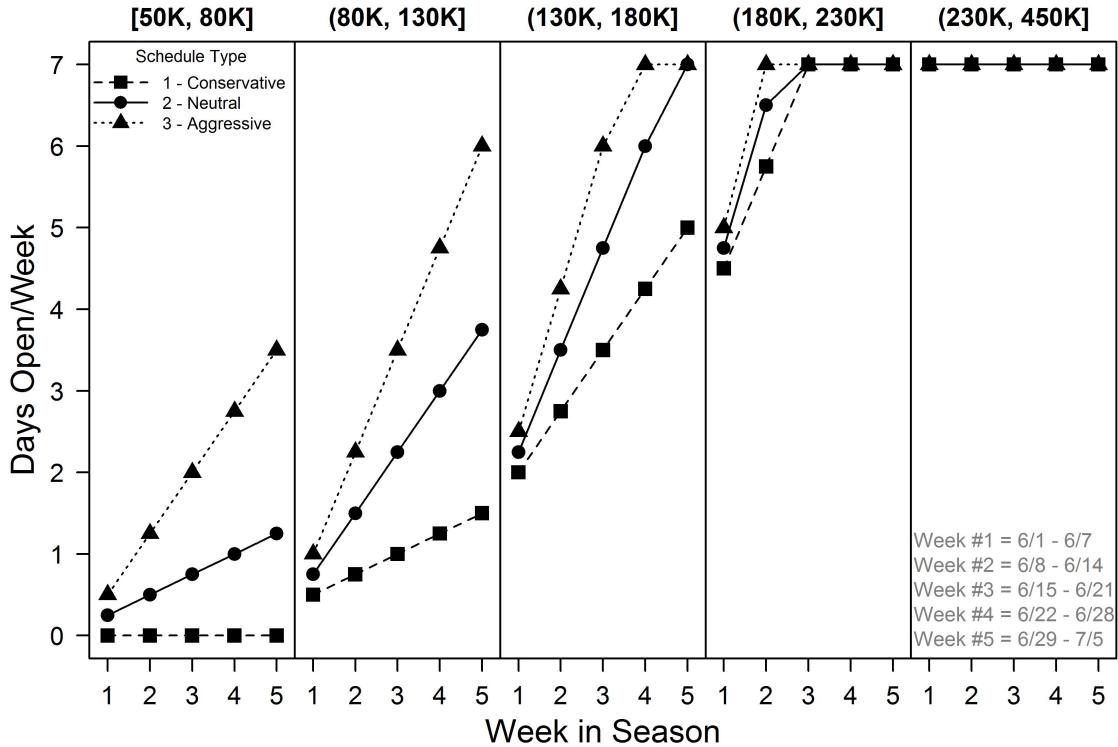


Figure 1.1: Representation of the harvest control rule in assessed Strategies #2 and #3. The number of days the fishery is to be opened per week is a function of the pre-season forecast, as shown by each of the five panels. The three lines in each panel represent the different substrategies of Strategy #2 or schedule types for Strategy #3. In Strategy #3, the manager would select to be conservative, neutral, or aggressive based on the percentile of recently-observed species ratios, as indicated in Table 1.1. In other words, the manager using Strategy #3 could adapt fishing schedules to in-season conditions, whereas the #2 manager could not.

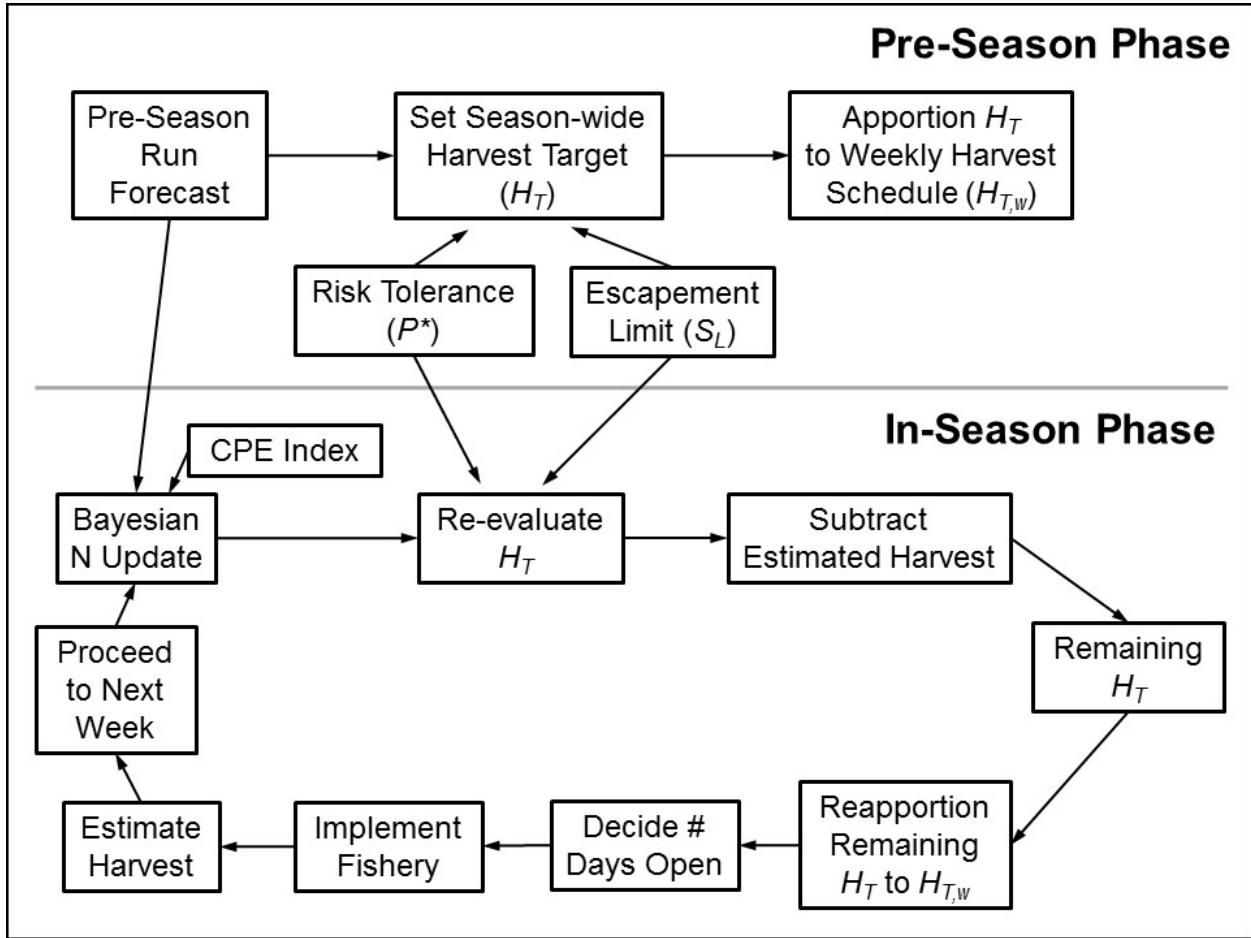


Figure 1.2: Depiction of the use of information to guide decision-making in assessed Strategy #4, partitioned into pre-season and in-season phases. All actions are taken with regards to Chinook salmon. **Pre-season actions** occur only once per season, and involve producing a pre-season forecast (with error) and using it to set a season-wide harvest target ( $H_T$ ) based on (a) the probability distribution representing uncertainty in the pre-season forecast, (b) a limit point that escapement cannot fall below ( $S_L$ ), and (c) the maximal acceptable probability for seeing the outcome  $S < S_L$  ( $P^*$ ). Targeted harvest by week ( $H_{T,w}$ ) is initially set by apportioning the total amongst weeks according to a fixed schedule based on historical run timing data. **In-season actions** are represented by a weekly cycle that involves updating perceptions of abundance and adapting the season-wide harvest target  $H_T$  as appropriate to ensure the current posterior probability of attaining at least  $S_L$  given  $H_T$  still conforms with  $P^*$ , and the remaining allowable harvest for the season is obtained *via* subtracting cumulative estimated harvest already taken. Remaining harvest is then apportioned to the remaining weeks, and based on the value of  $H_{T,w}$ , the fishery will be opened for between 0 and 7 days for the week according to the harvest tables displayed in Figure 1.3. Harvest outcomes are monitored such that a weekly harvest estimate is available for use in the next week, which begins with obtaining a new posterior understanding of total run abundance.

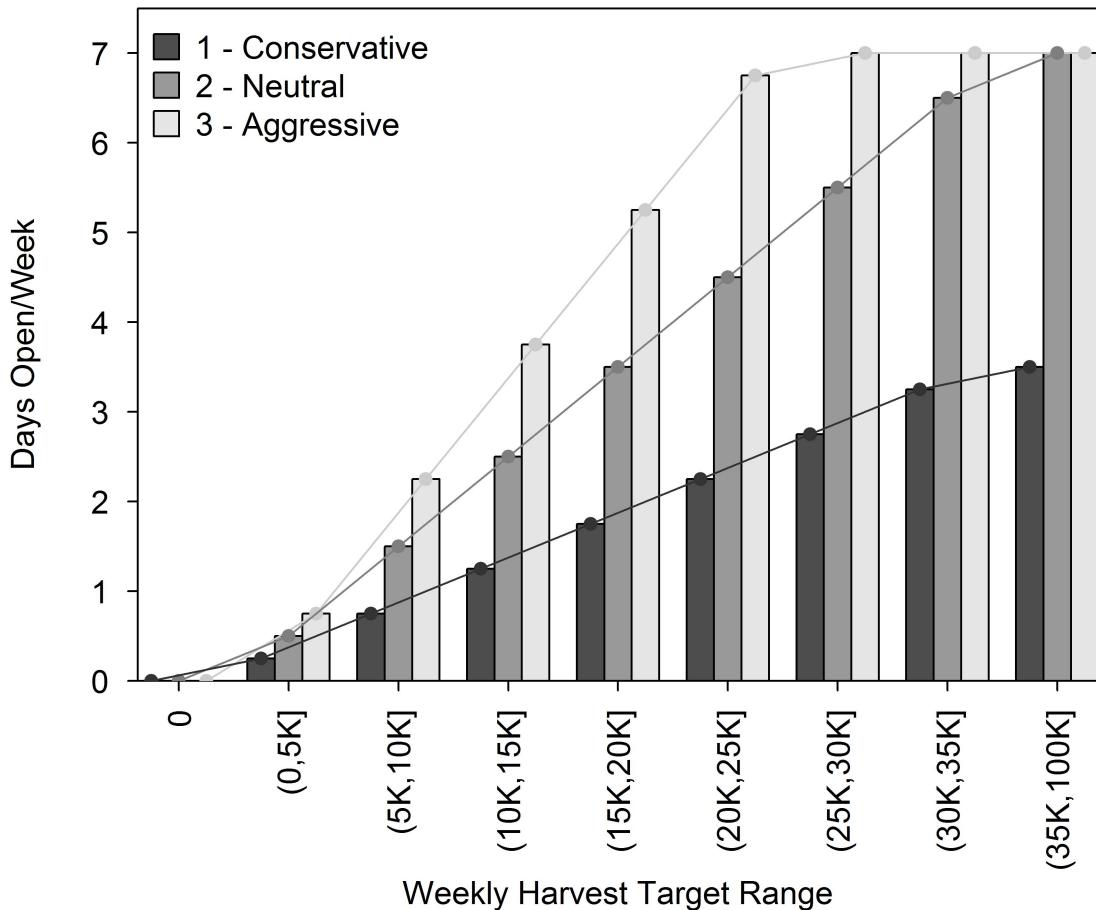


Figure 1.3: Representation of the “harvest tables” used in assessed Strategy #4. Based on how many fish are targeted each particular week ( $H_{T,w}$ ), the manager would select the number of days to open the fishery. The process to obtain  $H_{T,w}$  was rather involved, requiring pre-season forecasts, in-season abundance index data, and in-season harvest data to inform its value, as shown in Figure 1.2.

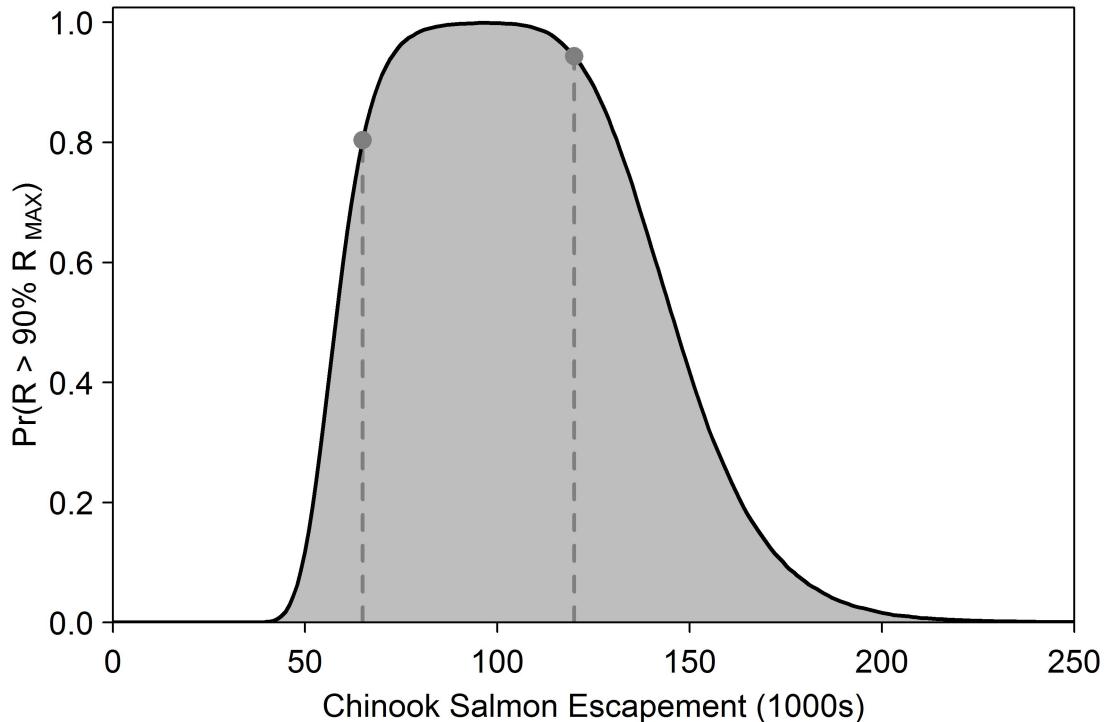


Figure 1.4: Estimated probability profile for Kuskokwim River Chinook salmon used as the utility function for drainage-wide escapement in this analysis. The height of the curve represents the currently understood probability that expected recruitment produced by a given escapement level will exceed 90% of  $R_{MAX}$ , and was obtained for the aggregate Chinook salmon stock using the Bayesian state-space estimation model presented in Hamazaki et al. (2012) updated with abundance, harvest, and age composition data through 2017. The vertical dashed lines are the endpoints of the current escapement goal range.

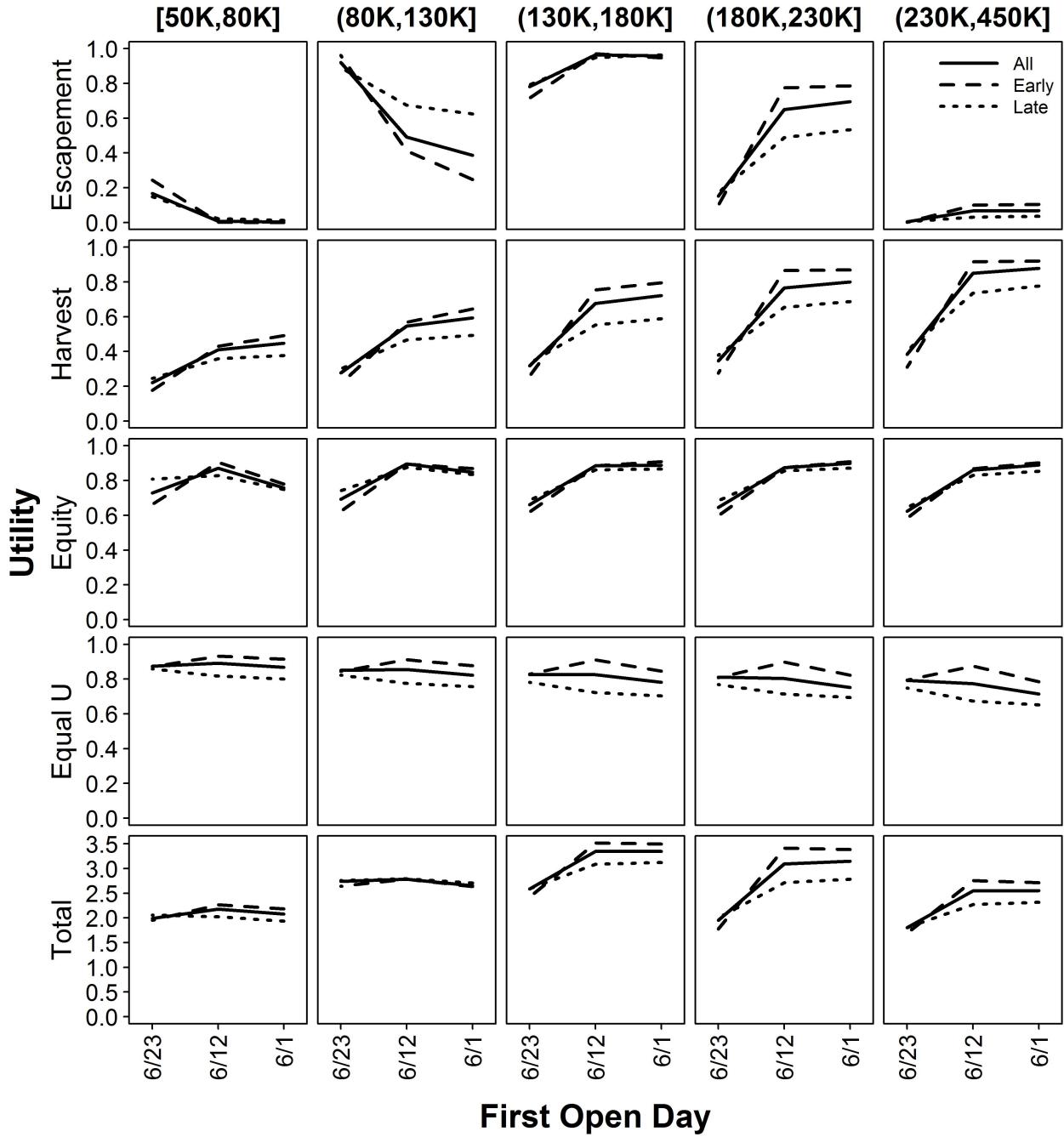


Figure 1.5: Detailed performance of assessed Strategy #1. Values of the utility functions (rows) separated by run size category (horizontal panels), run timing category (line type), and substrategy ( $x$ -axis, ordered from most conservative to aggressive). Substrategies of this policy differ in the date at which the fishery is opened completely. The form of each utility function is described in Section 1.2.6, and the total metric shown uses the default weighting scheme (all objective weights equal to 1).

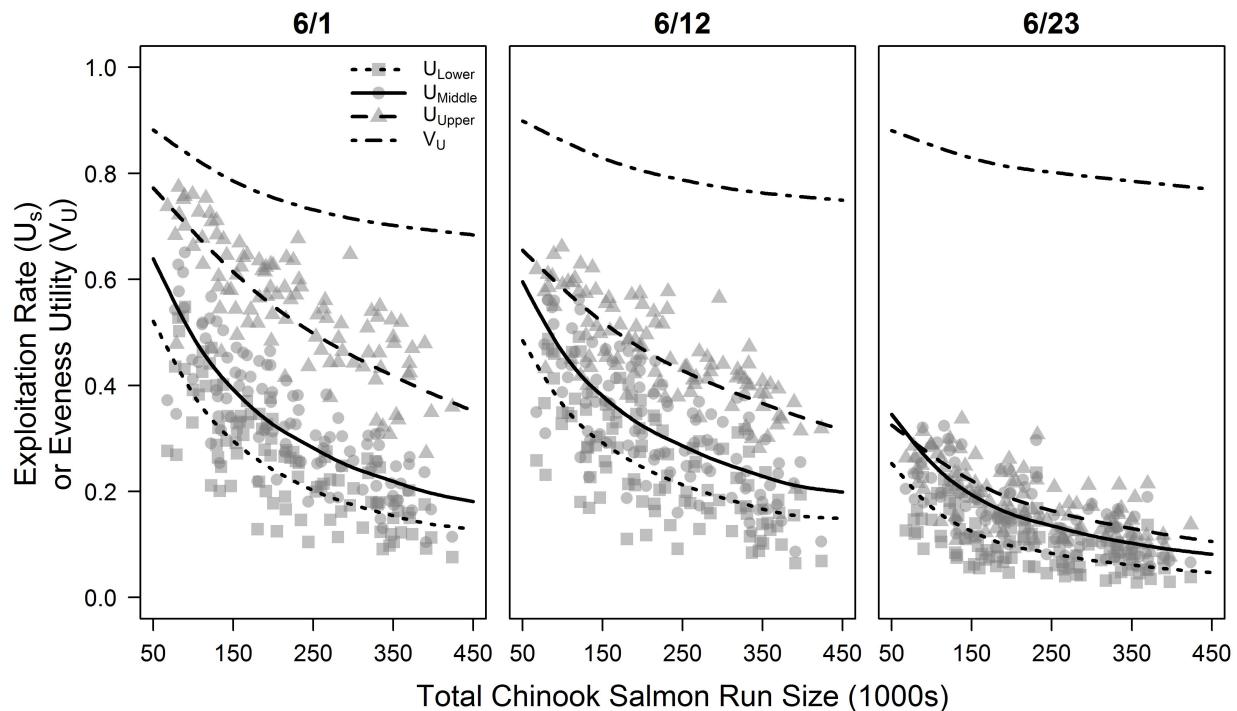


Figure 1.6: Chinook salmon substock-specific exploitation rates as a function of run size, separated by different substrategies (i.e., opening dates) of assessed Strategy #1. Lines are fitted generalized additive models. The line denoted by  $V_U$  represents the model fitted to the utility metric as defined by the modified Schutz coefficient used.

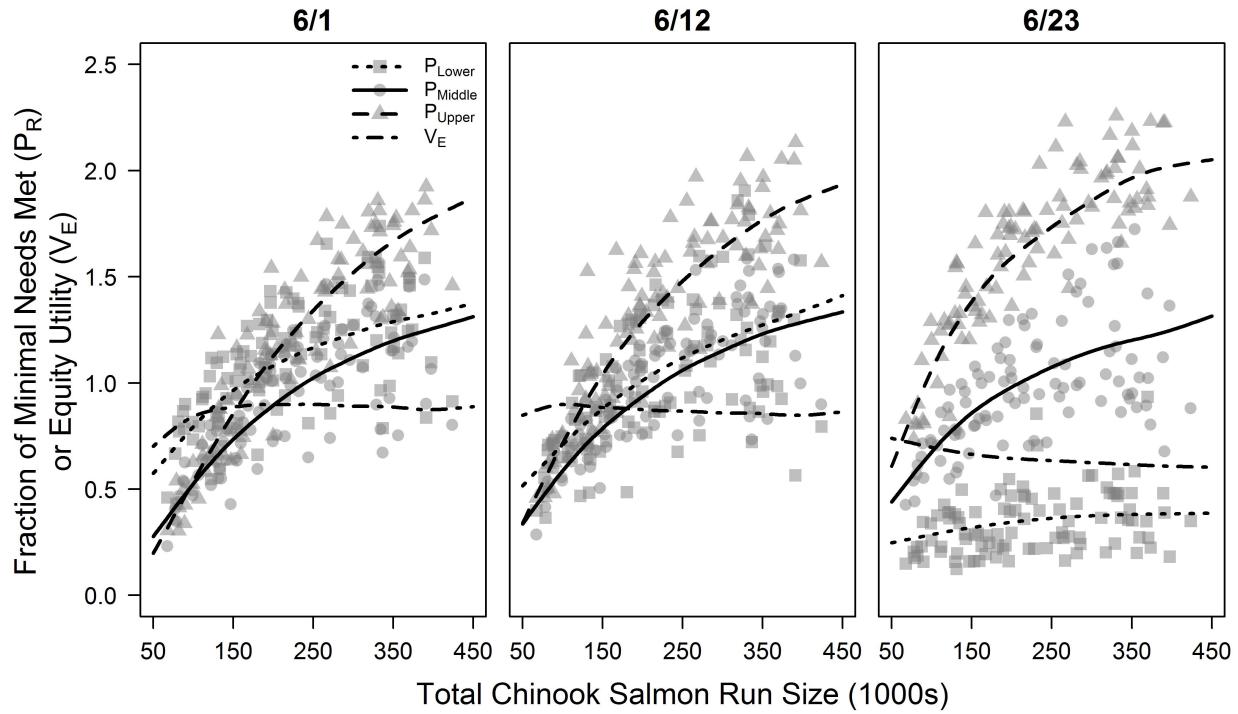


Figure 1.7: The fraction of minimal Chinook salmon harvest attained by villages in the lower, middle, and upper regions of the simulated Kuskokwim River as a function of run size, separated by different substrategies (i.e., opening dates) of assessed Strategy #1. Lines are fitted generalized additive models. The line denoted by  $V_E$  represents the model fitted to the utility metric as defined by the modified Schutz coefficient used.

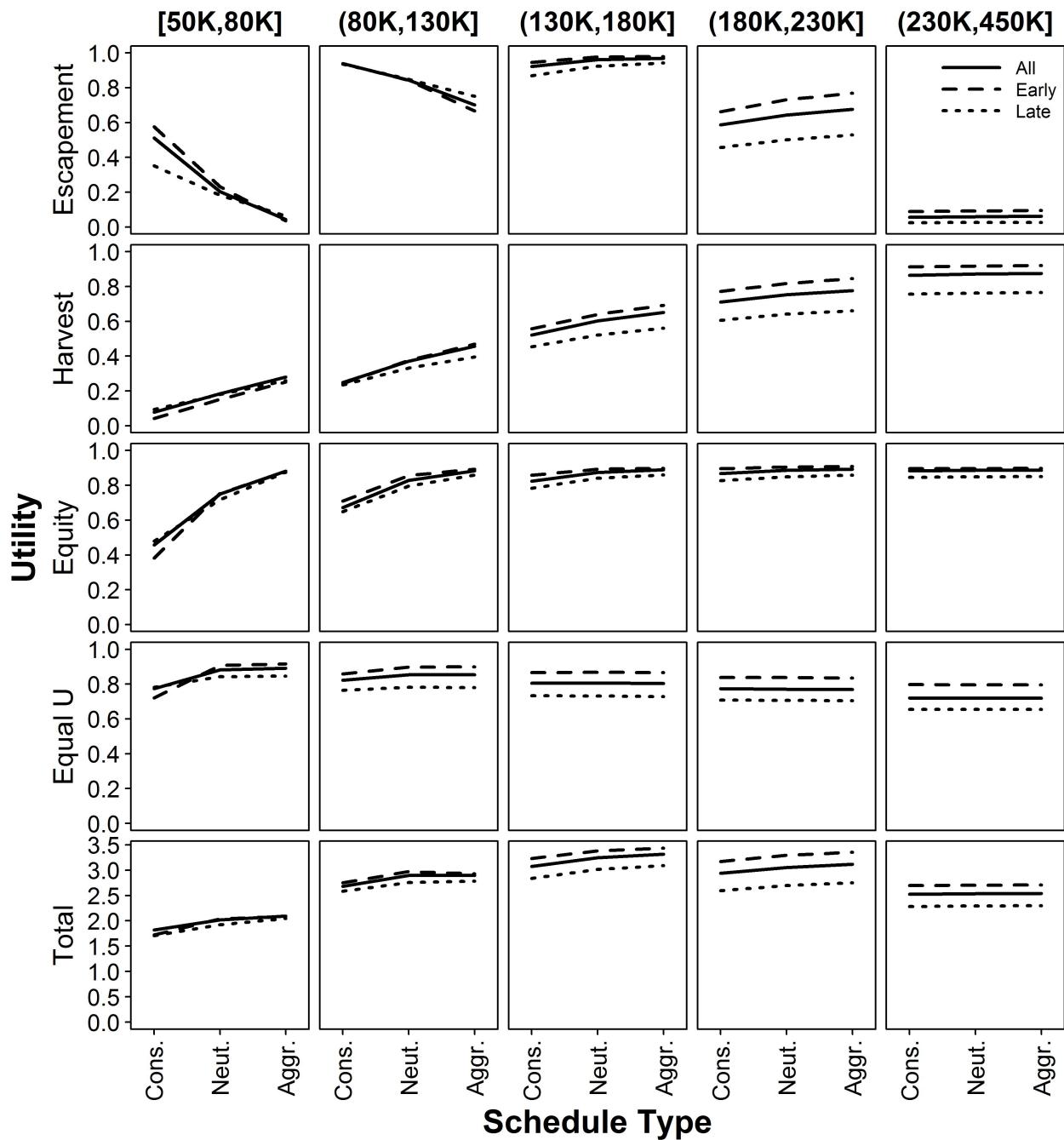


Figure 1.8: Detailed performance of assessed Strategy #2. The layout of panels in this figure is the same as in Figure 1.5, only substrategies represent different schedules conditional on a pre-season run size forecast (schedules shown in Figure 1.1).

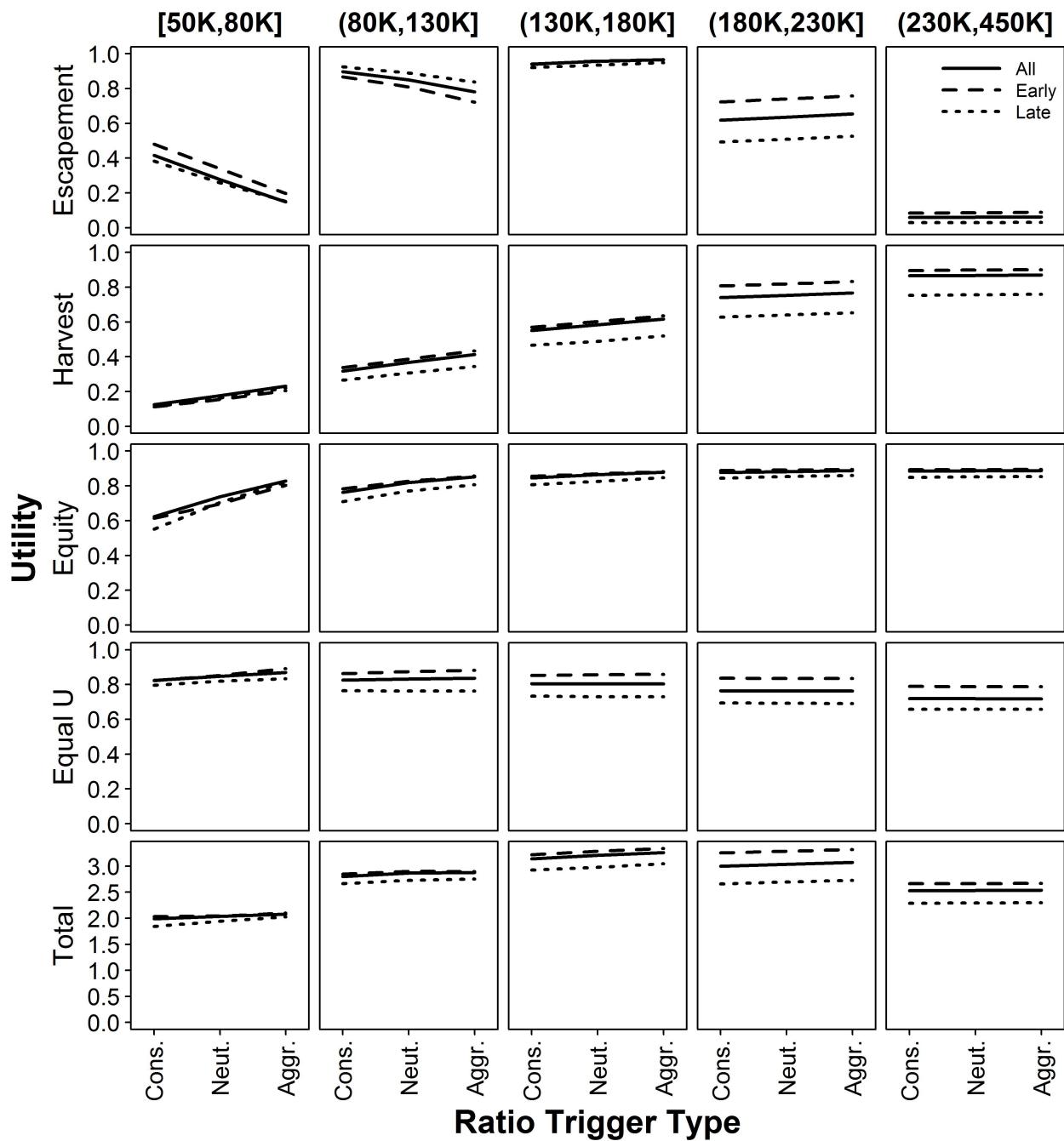


Figure 1.9: Detailed performance of assessed Strategy #3. The layout of panels in this figure is the same as in Figure 1.5, only substrategies represent different species ratios cut-offs used to pick fishing schedules conditional on a pre-season run size forecast (schedules shown in Figure 1.1, ratio thresholds shown in Table 1.2).

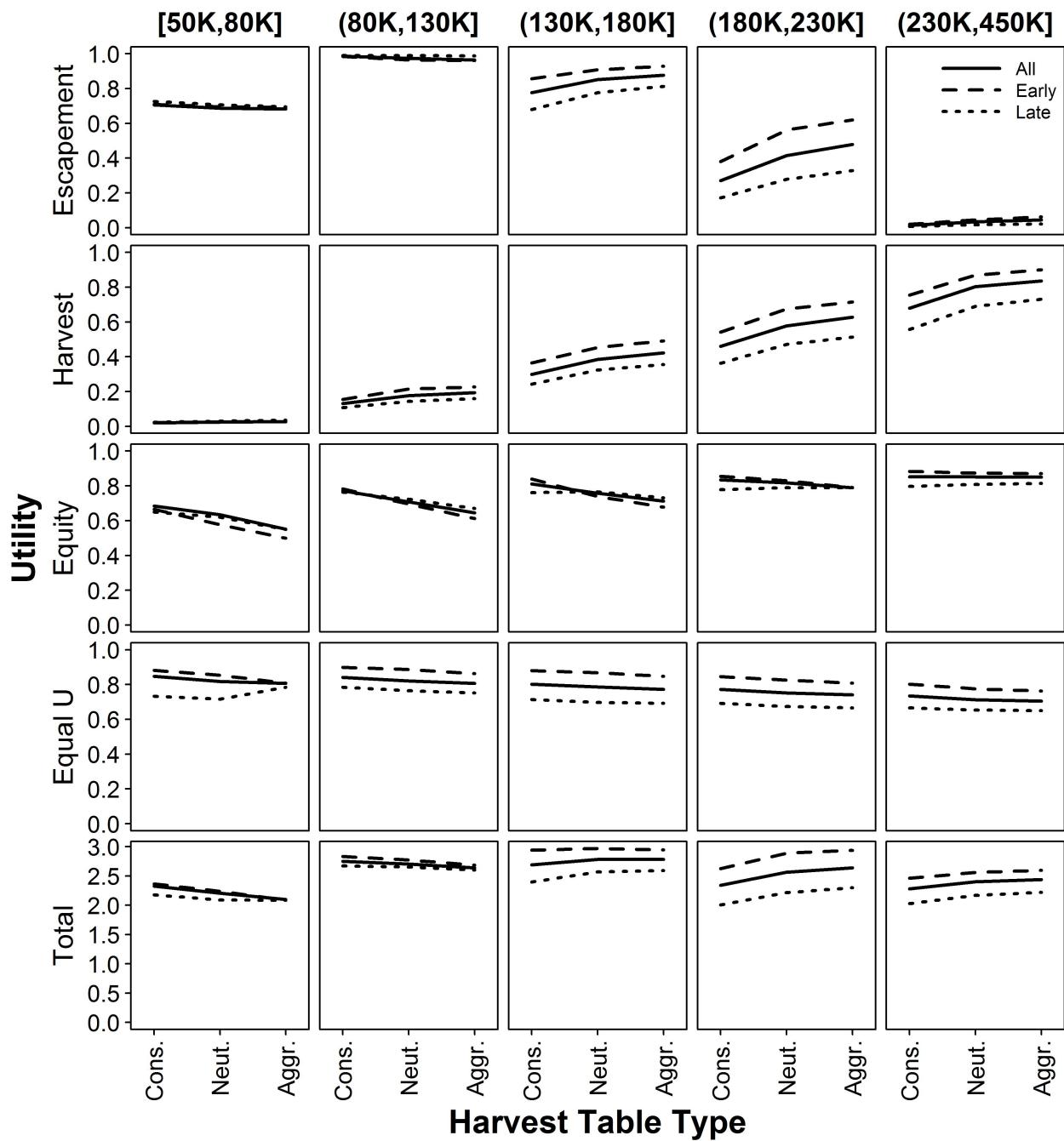


Figure 1.10: Detailed performance of assessed Strategy #4. The layout of panels in this figure is the same as in Figure 1.5, only substrategies represent different harvest tables used to set the number of days of open fishing per week based on how many fish are targeted to be harvested that week (harvest tables shown in Figure 1.3).

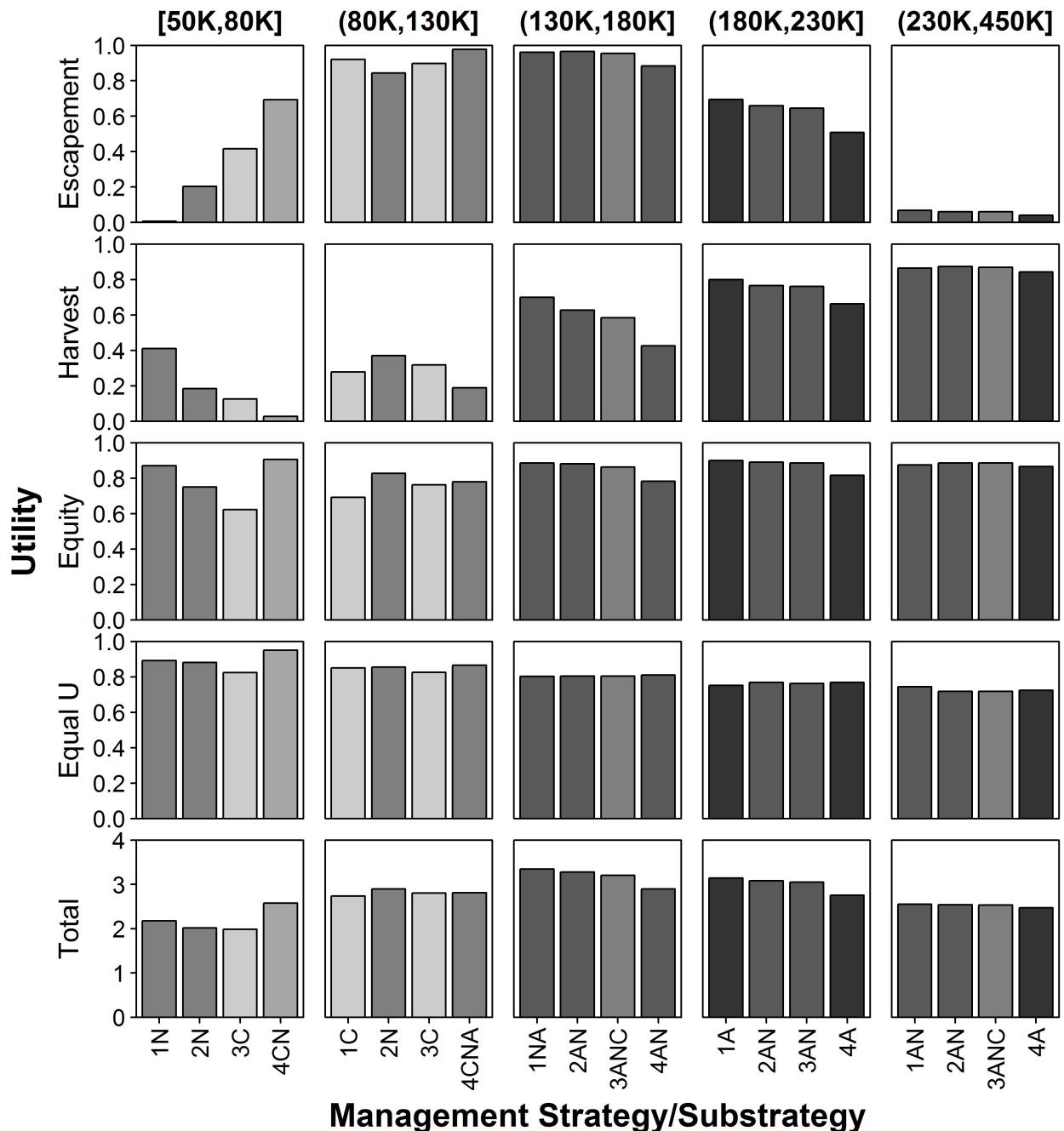


Figure 1.11: Comparison of utility according to the different metrics between strategies (with the best substrategy selected for comparison) and run sizes. Numbers represent the strategy, letters and colors indicate the selected substrategy (darker colors represent more aggressive substrategies; C = conservative, N = neutral, A = aggressive; multiple letters indicate a tie). Total utility was calculated according to the default weighting scheme, where all objectives received equal weight.

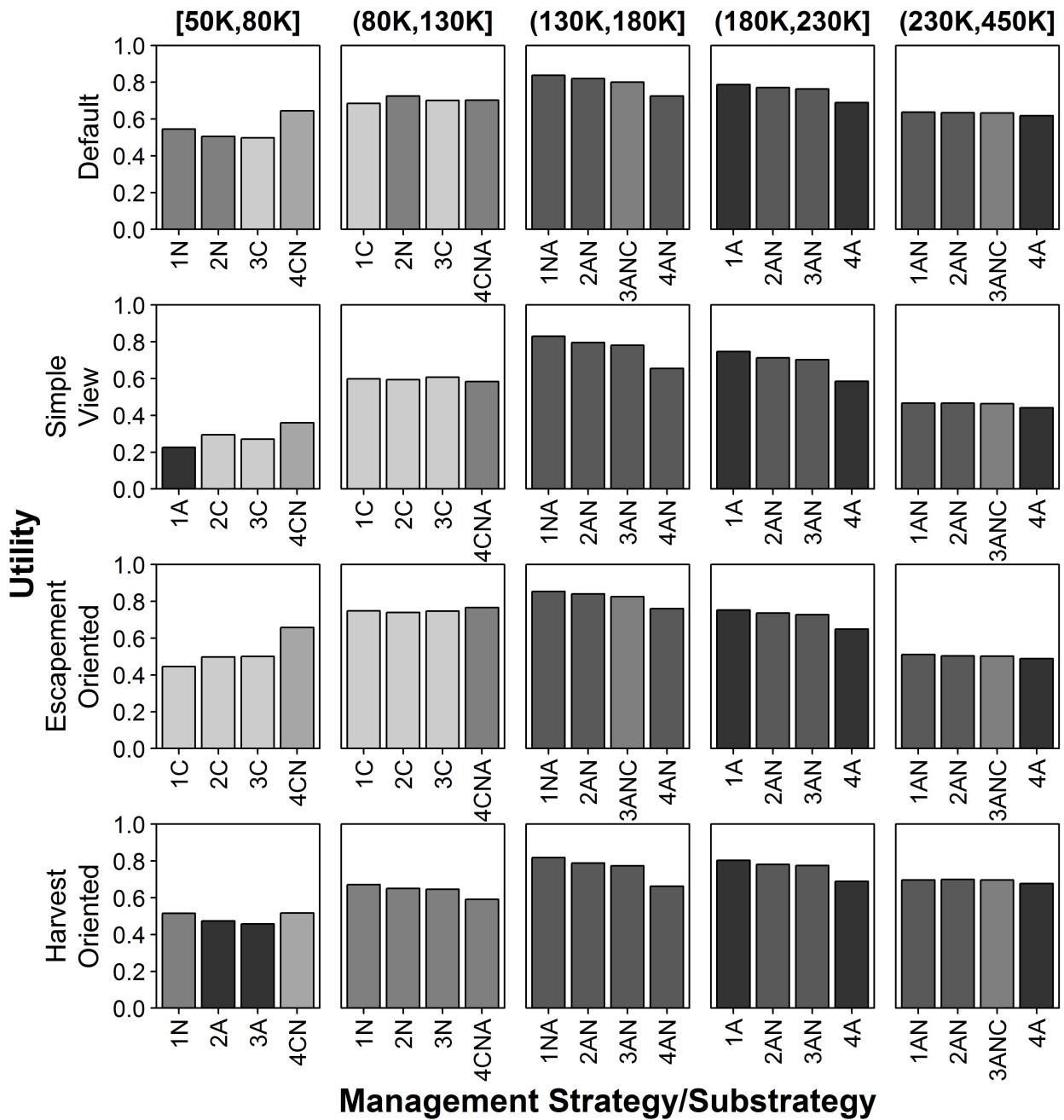


Figure 1.12: The total utility metric of the best-performing substrategy (letters/colors) for each strategy (numbers), when considering different weighting schemes (schemes described in Section 1.2.8.3). Bars are shaded based on the best substrategy, with darker greys representing more aggressive substrategies (C = conservative, N = neutral, A = aggressive; multiple letters indicate a tie). Total utility was scaled to the maximum attainable total utility for each weighting scheme, which is equal to the sum of the weights.

## Appendix A

### Parameterization of the Operating Model in Chapter 1

There were two main components of the operating model that needed to be parameterized based on observed information for it to adequately represent the dynamics of the real Kuskokwim River subsistence salmon fishery:

- (1) *Biological*: abundance, timing, spatial characteristics of the salmon populations (three Chinook salmon substocks and one aggregate stock of chum and sockeye salmon) and
- (2) *Sociological*: spatial distribution of effort and desired/needed harvest and temporal aspects of the effort dynamics.

This appendix describes how empirical information collected in the Kuskokwim River drainage was used to parameterize the operating model used in the Chapter 1 analysis.

#### A.1 Biological quantities

##### A.1.1 Chinook salmon total abundance

Drainage-wide total Chinook salmon run abundance was informed by Liller et al. (2018), which reported estimates in the years 1976 – 2017 from a maximum likelihood run reconstruction model. The model was fitted to 20 escapement indices, commercial fishery catch-per-unit-effort, and nine years of drainage-wide estimates of total abundance obtained *via* large-scale mark-recapture experiments. Based on Liller et al. (2018), drainage-wide Chinook salmon abundance has varied between 79,238 (in 2012) and 411,724 (in 1994), with a mean of 216,929 and standard deviation of 87,556. A kernel density estimator was fitted to this distribution,

and the cumulative density function was obtained to allow sampling of continuous run sizes in accordance with the historical frequency of run sizes (Figure A.1). The distribution was truncated at the smallest and largest runs on record as of  $2017 \pm 30,000$  fish.

### **A.1.2 Chinook salmon substock composition**

Substock composition, or the fraction of the aggregate Chinook salmon run that was made up of fish from each substock, was informed by the proportions of telemetry fish that spawned in each region in the years 2015 and 2016 (Smith and Liller 2017a,b). Although telemetry data from 2003 – 2007 were also available, only these years were used because:

- (1) they allowed the incorporation of information from lower river fish (as a result of the tagging location; see Section A.1.3.2) and
- (2) the management of the fishery resulted in less selection of upper river substocks in the harvest because fishing was pushed later in the season than in the 2003 – 2007 block of years.

In each run of the operating model, a random Dirichlet vector was drawn with parameter vector equal to [lower = 19, middle = 61, upper = 20], which results in an expectation roughly equal to the average contribution in 2015 and 2016. The use of a Dirichlet distribution with these parameters generated a modest amount of variability around the expected substock composition.

### **A.1.3 Chinook salmon run timing**

#### **A.1.3.1 Aggregate timing**

Run timing information for the aggregate Chinook salmon stock was available from the Bethel Test Fishery (Bue and Lipka 2016), which has produced a daily value of catch-per-unit-effort

for each day between June 1 and August 24 for the years 1984 – 2018. The estimates of location ( $D_{50}$ ) and inverse scale ( $h$ ) of a logistic function shown in Table ?? were used to quantify the timing with which the simulated aggregate Chinook salmon stock runs through the lower river.

#### A.1.3.2 Substock-specific timing

The timing of the specific Chinook salmon substocks (i.e., those spawning in lower, middle, and upper river tributaries) were informed by radio telemetry studies (Stuby 2007; Smith and Liller 2017a,b). The tag date and final tributary of each fish was available for the years 2003 – 2007 and 2015 – 2016. In the first block of years, the tagging site was located near Kalskag, which excluded any fish spawning in lower river tributaries. In the second block of years, the tag site was moved near the Johnson River, which allowed the inclusion of fish spawning in the lower river tributaries. Logistic models (??) were fitted to the data from each substock and year separately to obtain estimates of the  $D_{50}$  for each substock in each year data were available, and differences in  $D_{50}$  for the middle river substocks and each of the other substocks were calculated (Table A.1). For parameterizing the run timing of middle river substocks, random values drawn from the aggregate population estimates were used, and random uniform deviations for the lower river and upper river  $D_{50}$  were used in accordance with the deviations shown in Table A.1 (i.e., lower river substocks had a  $D_{50}$  value that was anywhere between 0 and 3 days later than that of the middle river, and upper river substocks had a value that was between 5 and 10 days earlier than middle river substocks).

#### A.1.4 Spatial distribution of escapement

Due to the spatial nature of the operating model, it was important to capture the behavior of fish becoming invulnerable to harvest by swimming up a spawning tributary. This aspect was

informed using data from the telemetry studies: it was possible to quantify the fraction of all tagged fish that made it to a particular reach that ultimately spawned in a tributary with a confluence in that reach in each year. These fractions were averaged across years and the average was used to dictate how many fish from each substock  $s$  in reach  $r$  on day  $d$  would “peel off” from the mainstem into a tributary in that reach on that day. For the aggregate chum/sockeye stock, which does not have this kind of information, the substock structure was removed. These estimates are shown in Table A.2.

### A.1.5 Species ratios

Because chum and sockeye salmon lack the abundance data available for Chinook salmon, their daily entry dynamics were modeled using observed species ratios from the Bethel Test Fishery. These data were prepared by taking the catch-per-unit-effort of chum salmon plus sockeye salmon, and dividing it by the catch-per-unit-effort of Chinook salmon on each day of each year for which data were available (assuming the subsistence fishery uses the same gill net mesh sizes as the Bethel Test Fishery, which is a largely valid assumption in recent years). This represents how many vulnerable chum/sockeye salmon were available for harvest relative to Chinook salmon. Daily values that couldn’t be calculated (i.e., when zero Chinook salmon were caught) were populated with the average value for all years for which a species ratio could be calculated on that same day. These annual time series were highly variable from day to day, likely as a result of sampling variability, so a cubic spline smoother was fitted to remove this variability. The time series of smoothed ratios from all years is shown in Figure A.2.

In each simulated year, one randomly sampled annual time series was selected to generate the daily species composition for that year. To avoid anomalous outcomes, i.e., unlikely combinations of Chinook run timing and abundance matched with very high or low species

ratios in the simulation. I investigated two historical variables for covariance with the species ratio:  $D_{50}$  and total Chinook salmon run size using a  $\chi^2$  test for independence. I categorized run timing, run size, and the date at which a species ratio of 15:1 was observed into three bins, with endpoints delineated by the 33% and 66% percentiles. I was interested in whether Chinook salmon runs with different run timing or size tended to coincide with attaining high species ratios earlier or later in the season. If these sorts of patterns were present, they would need to be accounted for in the simulation.

I found that the first date of 15:1 ratios and Chinook salmon run timing had more non-independence ( $\chi^2 = 11, df = 4, p = 0.027$ ) than Chinook salmon run size ( $\chi^2 = 1.84, df = 4, p = 0.765$ ). This indicated that species ratios could be drawn independently with regards to the simulated run size, but not the simulated run timing. As shown in Table A.3, the probability of having early high ratios has been historically highest in early Chinook runs. Late Chinook salmon runs tended to occur in years that had later dates of 15:1. I incorporated these patterns in the simulation by first sampling the run timing for that simulated year, then assigning it to a category, then sampling a ratio category with probability equal to the appropriate column in Table A.3. Finally, a year was randomly selected from the approximately 10 years in that same category, and the daily species ratios that year were used to drive the species composition in that simulated year.

## A.2 Sociological quantities

### A.2.1 Needed salmon harvest by river reach

The term “minimally needed salmon harvest” salmon harvest refers to the amount of salmon that would satisfy the very basics of the subsistence needs of fishers in the drainage – without meeting this level it is reasonable to assume the fishing population is experiencing hardship.

“Maximally needed salmon harvest” represents the salmon harvest that would completely meet their needs (i.e., if they could harvest as many fish as they would like). The Alaska Board of Fisheries has produced ranges for each species, termed the “Amounts Reasonably Necessary for Subsistence” (ANS) and represents the drainage-wide range of harvest by species needed to sustain subsistence fishers each year. These ANS ranges are 67,200 – 109,800 for Chinook salmon and 73,400 – 175,100 for chum/sockeye salmon. In this analysis, the lower bound of the ANS range was used to specify minimally needed salmon harvest by species, and the upper bound of the range was used to specify maximally needed salmon harvests. Minimal harvest needs were used to measure the attainment of management objectives and maximally needed amounts were used to drive the dynamics of the effort model.

However, these values are only available for the entire drainage – they are not partitioned to individual villages. For this analysis, a minimal and maximal value was needed for the villages located within each reach. The drainage-wide totals were thus partitioned by calculating the average fraction that villages in each reach have harvested of the drainage-wide. Hamazaki (2011) present year-, species- and village-specific salmon harvests for the period (1990 – 2009), and data through 2015 can be found in Carroll and Hamazaki (2012), Shelden et al. (2014), Shelden et al. (2015), Shelden et al. (2016a), and Shelden et al. (2016b). Only years 1990 – 2000 were included for the spatial distribution of salmon need because stakeholders indicated the restrictions in recent years make the harvest proportions non-representative and that the earlier years are more reflective of how harvest should be distributed. The partitioned values by species are shown in Table A.4.

#### A.2.2 Maximum daily effort by river reach

A key aspect of the sociological component to the operating model was the spatial distribution of maximum fishing effort, i.e., the greatest number of boat days that can be exerted by

villages in each reach when the fishery is open. This maximum effort was altered as the simulated salmon season progressed based on the effort response submodel. The important characteristic to capture is the proportion of all effort that is attributable to each reach, i.e. the scale is not important as the efficiency of any one unit can be adjusted by altering the  $q$  parameter. To determine how effort should be apportioned to each reach, I devised a simple index of effort for each village and year based on the number of reported fishing households. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game has collected this information since 1990, and it is presented in the same studies that quantified subsistence harvest patterns: Hamazaki (2011), Carroll and Hamazaki (2012), Shelden et al. (2014), Shelden et al. (2015), Shelden et al. (2016a), and Shelden et al. (2016b). The data were reported as the number of households that “usually fish” and the number of households that “do not usually fish” as surveyed each year (as well as the number of “unknown” fishing status households). First, I apportioned any unknown households probabilistically to the other two categories by assuming the information was missing at random: if 60% of the fishing households belonged to the “usually fishes” category in a village in a year, I apportioned 60% of the unknown households to “usually fishes” and 40% to “does not usually fish”. I then calculated the effort index for each village as  $1 \times \# \text{ usually} + 0.5 \times \# \text{ not usually}$ , summed the values across villages within each reach and year, calculated the annual proportion belonging in each reach, and averaged these values across years.

Table A.1: Difference between  $D_{50}$  for tagged fish destined for lower or upper river tributaries and those destined for middle river tributaries. These estimates were used to inform Chinook salmon substock-specific run timing.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Lower</b>	<b>Upper</b>
<b>2003</b>		-2.0
<b>2004</b>		-9.5
<b>2005</b>		-4.9
<b>2006</b>		-7.8
<b>2007</b>		-2.5
<b>2015</b>	-0.7	-10.7
<b>2016</b>	2	-9.8

Table A.2: Spatial distribution of escapement in the operating model. The number in each cell represents  $\psi_{r,s}$ : the fraction of fish from a stock that make it to a reach and survive the fishery that ultimately escape and spawn in a tributary with a confluence with the main stem Kuskokwim located in that reach. These estimates were obtained from radio telemetry studies as described in Section A.1.4, and the chum/sockeye salmon estimates were obtained by removing the substock structure from the Chinook salmon data.

Reach #	Tributaries in Reach	Chinook Salmon			
		Lower	Middle	Upper	Chum/Sockeye
<b>Lower River</b>					
4	Kwethluk	65.3%	0%	0%	12.4%
5	Kasigluk, Kissaralik	80.1%	0%	0%	6%
6	Tuluksak	100%	0%	0%	1.7%
<b>Middle River</b>					
9	Aniak	0%	28.1%	0%	24.6%
10	Owhat	0%	0.5%	0%	0.4%
11	Holokuk, Sue Creek, Veahna	0%	3.7%	0%	3.4%
12	Oskawalik	0%	2.7%	0%	2.4%
13	Crooked Creek, George	0%	6%	0%	4.8%
15	Vreeland, Holitna	0%	77.3%	0%	64.6%
16	Stony	0%	32.8%	0%	25.8%
17	Swift, Tatlawiksuk	0%	100%	0%	55.9%
<b>Upper River</b>					
20	Selatna, Black	0%	0%	6%	6%
22	Takotna	0%	0%	17.5%	17.5%
24	Middle Fork	0%	0%	94%	94%
26	South Fork, East Fork	0%	0%	100%	100%

Table A.3: Non-independence of historically-observed Chinook salmon run timing and the date at which the species ratio of 15:1 chum+sockeye:Chinook was obtained. Columns sum to one and represent the empirical probability of observing a ratio type in each of the three categories along the rows. Independence would have all cells equal to 33.3% – note that early high ratios tend to occur in years with early Chinook salmon runs, and *vice versa*.

Ratio Category	Chinook Salmon Run Timing		
	Earliest 33%	Middle 33%	Latest 33%
<b>Earliest 33%</b>	66.7%	11.1%	20%
<b>Middle 33%</b>	33.3%	44.4%	20%
<b>Latest 33%</b>	0%	44.4%	60%

Table A.4: Key sociological quantities used in the operating model, broken down by spatial area (reach). Each reach is 35 km in main stem river length. Effort ( $E_{MAX,r}$ ) is expressed as the maximum number of boats fishing per day in reach  $r$ . The % columns represent the average fraction of the total harvest by species that was harvested by villages within each reach over the period 1990 – 2000. Harvest values have been rounded to the nearest 100 for ease of presentation, but the total column represents the sum of non-rounded quantities. Although these data were available through 2015, region stakeholders indicated that the recent years have been contaminated by harvest restrictions, and that these earlier years would be more representative.

Reach #	Villages in Reach	Effort	Chinook Salmon			Chum/Sockeye Salmon		
			%	Min.	Max.	%	Min.	Max.
<b>Lower River</b>								
1	Tuntutuliak, Eek	42	7.6%	5,100	8,300	6.2%	4,600	10,900
2	Atmautluak, Kasigluk, Nunapitchuk	74	11%	7,400	12,000	13.6%	10,000	23,900
3	Napakiak, Napaskiak, Oscarville, Bethel	415	40.5%	27,200	44,500	34.1%	25,000	59,600
4	Kwethluk, Akiachak	74	17.2%	11,600	18,900	15.2%	11,200	26,600
5	Akiak	18	4.3%	2,900	4,800	4.9%	3,600	8,600
6	Tuluksak	21	3.9%	2,600	4,300	4.4%	3,300	7,800
<b>Middle River</b>								
8	Lower Kalskag, Upper Kalskag	33	5.1%	3,400	5,600	4.2%	3,100	7,400
9	Aniak	46	4.2%	2,800	4,600	4.6%	3,400	8,100
10	Chuathbaluk	9	1.3%	900	1,400	2.1%	1,600	3,700
13	Crooked Creek	9	1%	600	1,100	1.5%	1,100	2,600
14	Red Devil	6	0.3%	200	400	1.1%	800	2,000
15	Sleetmute	12	1.1%	800	1,200	2.1%	1,500	3,600
16	Lime Village, Stony River	10	0.7%	500	700	4%	3,000	7,000
<b>Upper River</b>								
22	McGrath, Nikolai, Takotna, Telida	42	1.7%	1,100	1,800	1.9%	1,400	3,300
<b>Total</b>		<b>800</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>67,200</b>	<b>109,800</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>73,400</b>	<b>175,100</b>

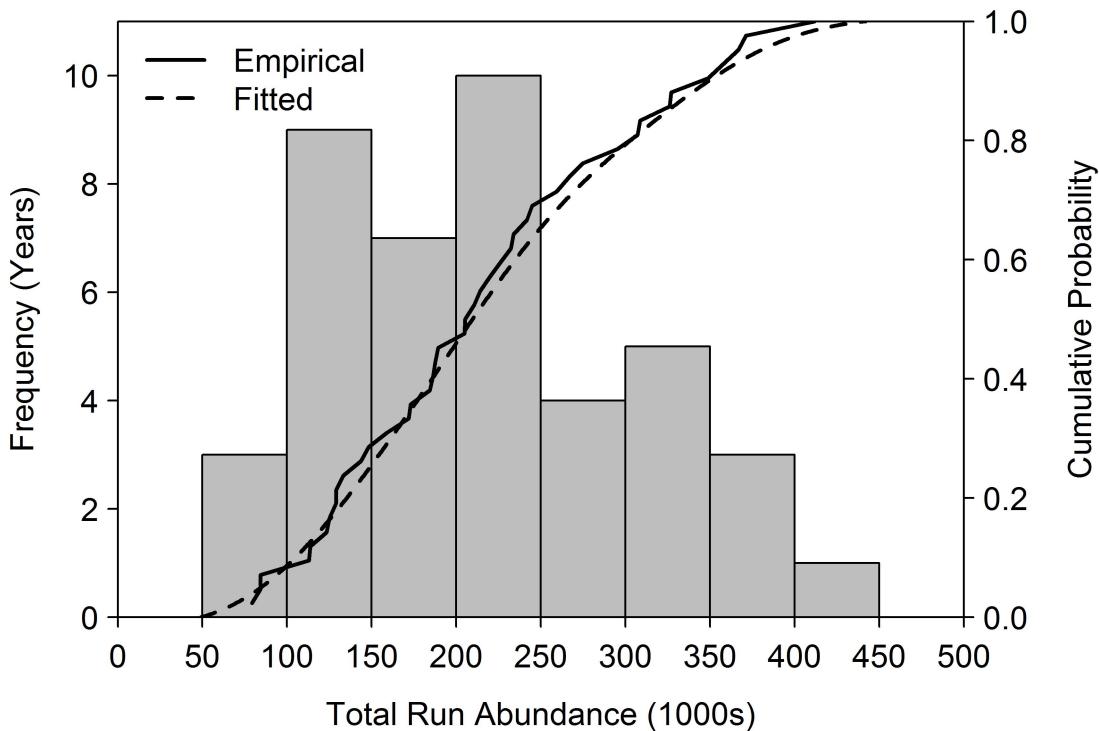


Figure A.1: Distribution of total drainage-wide run size for Kuskokwim River Chinook salmon, as presented in Liller et al. (2018). This distribution was used to generate the run size of the aggregate Chinook salmon populations entering the fishery system in a simulated year. The secondary  $y$ -axis represents the probability of a run falling below a given run size according to the historical frequency of run sizes; where the solid line shows the empirical cumulative distribution function and the dashed line shows one obtained by fitting a kernel density smoother to the empirical data. The fitted distribution was used for simulation to prevent the same 42 run size values from being replicated in the analysis.

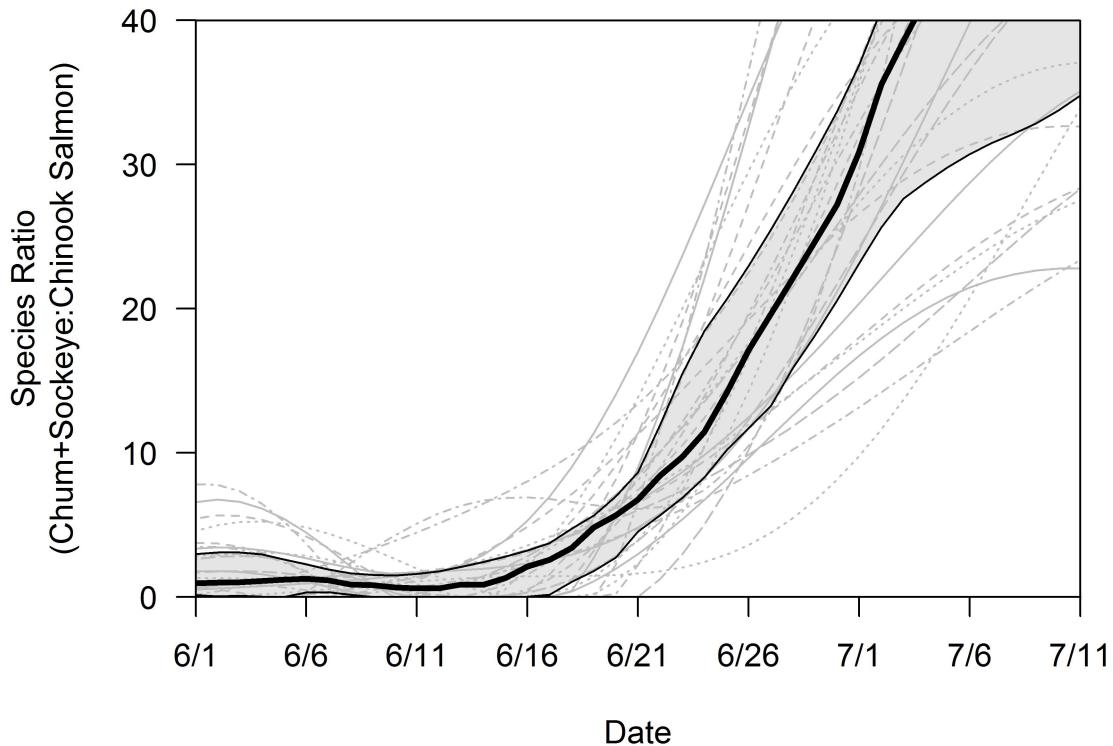


Figure A.2: Smoothed species ratios of chum+sockeye:Chinook salmon as detected by the Bethel Test Fishery. Individual grey lines represent separate years from 1984 – 2017, the grey region represents the central 50% of all smoothed ratios on each day and the thick black line represents the daily median. Only this time period is shown because at ratios larger than 20, the differences in the influence of chum/sockeye salmon on Chinook salmon harvest by the subsistence fishery are negligible.

## Appendix B

### Validation of the Operating Model in Chapter 1

For any simulation model used in the context of Management Strategy Evaluation, the reliability of inferences drawn will be conditional on the ability of the model components to capture the important behavioral properties of the real system. Here, I provide a brief validation that the fishery component of the operating model does in fact provide a reasonable model of the real system when the fishery was unrestricted.

First, I thought it important that the model be able to replicate the relationship between total Chinook salmon run size and total subsistence salmon harvest. Capturing this pattern was important to ensure that the fishery would not inadvertently harvest an unrealistically large or small amount of fish in different run sizes if management mistakes were made, which would confound my conclusions. As shown in Figure B.1, this historical relationship has been quite noisy for the observed historical time series, though an increasing pattern has emerged: in general, more fish have been harvested in years with large runs than years with small runs. I found that by tuning the catchability ( $q$ ) and effort response coefficients, I was able to reproduce the pattern and variability quite well. Additionally, the scale and variability of modeled chum/sockeye harvests were also similar to the historically-observed distribution B.2 – this was not key given chum/sockeye harvests did not inform any objectives, but the agreement contributes more evidence that the effort response model was adequately calibrated.

The next behavior of interest was the spatiotemporal distribution of harvest. Because in-river salmon fisheries are sequential, fish harvested in one area are invulnerable to harvest

(and escapement) in upriver areas. It also means that communities in downriver communities may finish fishing earlier in the season because they are the first to experience favorable fishing conditions (i.e., high in-river abundance and resulting catch rates; in the Kuskokwim River drying weather also plays an important role). If the timing of harvest was not captured adequately, this would be an indication that the effort response coefficients were improperly tuned and could result in unrealistic conclusions. The patterns and variability in the day of the year at which various percentiles of Chinook salmon harvest was attained by reach compared between observed data and the modeled outcomes are shown in Figure B.3. It seems that the patterns and variability in harvest timing were reasonably well-captured, particularly for downriver reaches. Reaches 14, 15, 16 and 22 seemed to have had the largest deviations between observed and modeled patterns, but given communities in these reaches harvest a negligible amount of Chinook salmon in comparison to the downriver villages (Figure B.4), I was not concerned by this finding.

The final important characteristic was the spatial distribution of end-of-season harvest. Accurately representing this component of the system would further indicate model adequacy. Figure B.4) shows a comparison of the proportion of total drainage-wide Chinook salmon subsistence harvest attributable to communities in each reach between observed and modeled outcomes. While the overall pattern was fully captured, there were moderate deviations between the model and observations in reaches 2, 3, and 4.

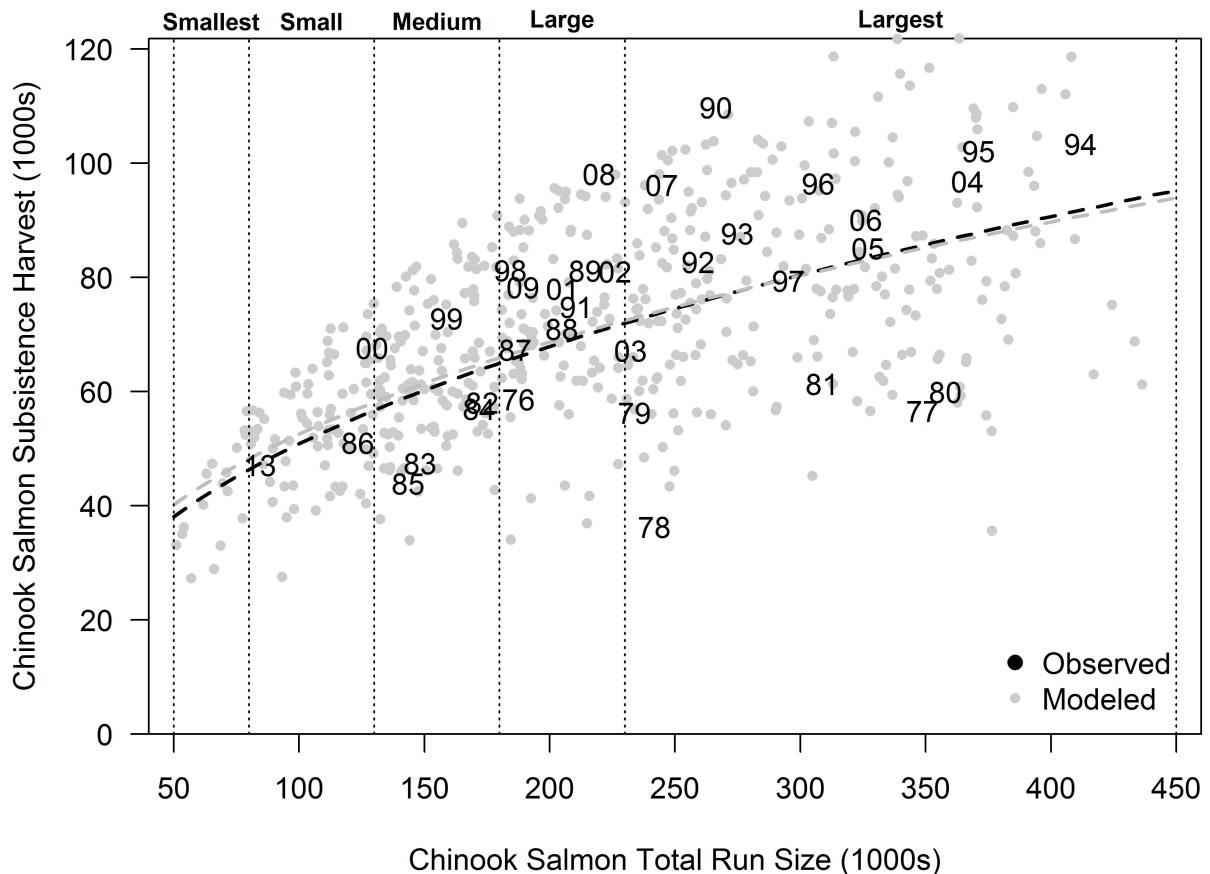


Figure B.1: Observed and modeled Chinook salmon subsistence harvest as a function of total Chinook salmon run size. Individual black numbers are historical realizations in years with no harvest restrictions on the subsistence salmon fishery. Individual grey dots are modeled outcomes, each representing a hypothetical salmon run with different random subpopulation compositions, run timing, and species ratios. Fitted models display close agreement between the average simulated and observed harvest outcomes across the range of run sizes. Vertical dotted lines show the important run size strata used in this analysis.

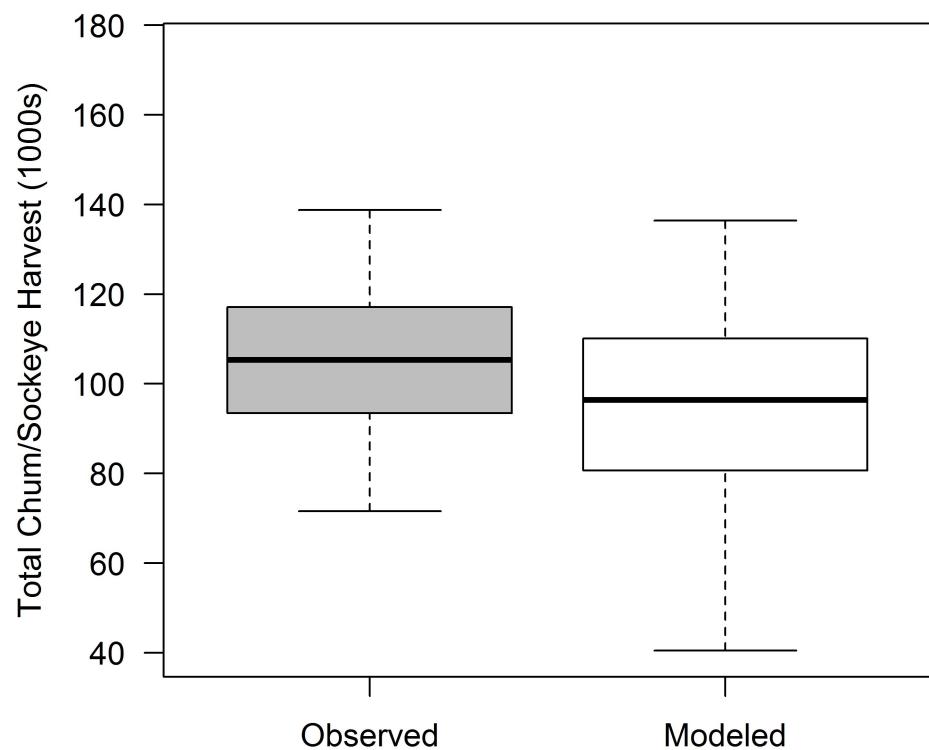


Figure B.2: Comparison of the inter-annual distribution of observed and modeled chum/sockeye salmon harvests by villages located in the Kuskokwim River.

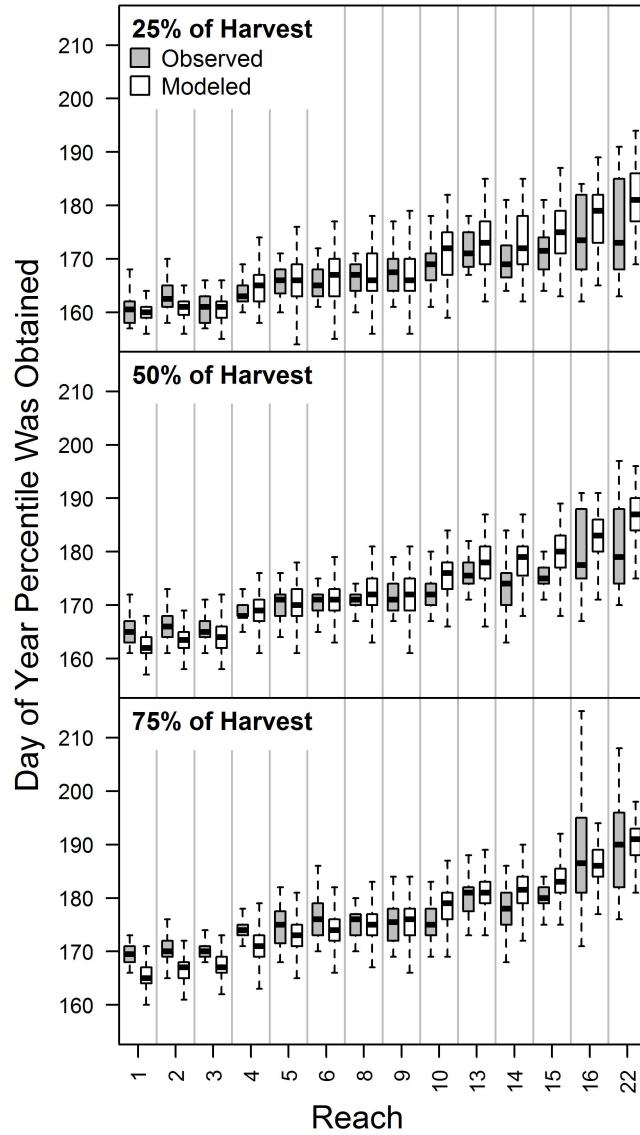


Figure B.3: Comparison of the day of the year at which various percentiles of Chinook salmon harvest was attained by reach between observed and modeled outcomes. Variability in the observed boxplots is due to inter-annual variability in run size and timing and represents between-simulation variability for the modeled outcomes. Reach numbers are ordered from downriver to upriver. Note that not all reaches contain communities that harvest salmon.

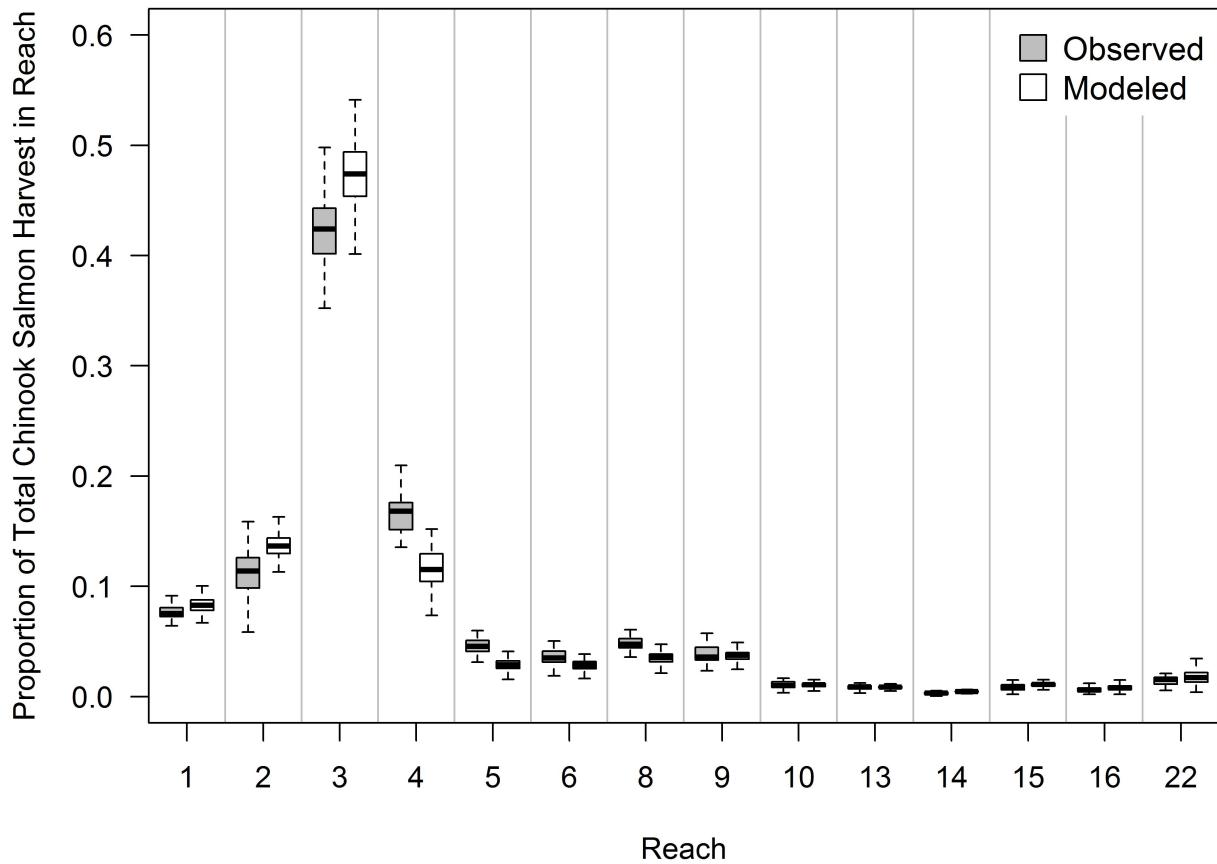


Figure B.4: Comparison of the proportion of total drainage-wide Chinook salmon subsistence harvest attributable to communities in each reach between observed and modeled outcomes. Variability in the observed boxplots is due to inter-annual variability, and represents between-simulation variability for the modeled outcomes. Reach numbers are ordered from downriver to upriver. Note that not all reaches contain communities that harvest salmon.

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