

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

Meeting Agenda

Date: **April 3 and 4, 2014** Time: **9:00 am** Place: **William Jack Hernandez Hatchery, Anchorage**
The meeting will break for lunch on both days and then continue until recessed or adjourned.

Teleconference: 1-866-720-4570 Passcode: 8226702* *6 to mute.

Teleconference services graciously provided by US Fish and Wildlife Service. **Limit of 10 lines available, so please share with your neighbors.**

Time Called to Order Chair Time Adjourned

ROLL CALL TO ESTABLISH QUORUM: **QUORUM MET? Yes / No**

Upriver Elder:	Processor:
Downriver Elder:	Member at Large:
Commercial Fisher:	Sport Fisher:
Lower River Subsistence:	Western Interior RAC:
Middle River Subsistence:	Y-K Delta RAC:
Upper River Subsistence:	ADF&G:
Headwaters Subsistence:	

INTRODUCTIONS:

INVOCATION:

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: *the agenda may be amended at this time.*

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:

NEW BUSINESS:

- I. **EMERGENCY PETITIONS: Status Update**
- II. **THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT: What it is, and what it isn't. -Dave Cannon**
- III. **POSSIBILITY OF FEDERAL TIER II DESIGNATION KUSKOKWIM KINGS (804 determination). -suggested discussion, led by Greg Roczicka**
- IV. **2014 MANAGEMENT TOOLS: how will they be applied-led by Travis Elison**
 - A. New Regulation?
 - B. Schedule
 1. Early Season
 2. Late Season
 3. Main Schedule (from previous discussion)
 - C. Bethel Test Fish
- V. **2014 MANAGEMENT: Communicating the Working Group message.**
- VI. **LOOKING AHEAD: Possible Regulatory Proposals from the KRSMWG.**
- VII. **Working Group Business meeting:**
 - A. Membership
 1. Election of officers (co-chairs)
 2. Seat and alternate elections
 3. Meeting participation
 4. Adding additional representative seats to the Working Group-suggested discussion, led by Mark Leary.

COMMENTS FROM WORKING GROUP MEMBERS:

NEXT MEETING DATE: _____ **Time:** _____ **Place:** _____

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Information Packet

Excerpt from the January 8-9 meeting summary:

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

Motion 1: to approve the agenda as it appears. Motion Passed (6 yea, 2 no).

The Working Group discussed rearranging the agenda to move presentations to the end of the meeting in order to get to the management recommendations discussion first. Managers and several Working Group members agreed that, similar to inseason meetings, the presentations would provide context for the recommendation discussion and should be first. A roll call vote decided the approval of the agenda as it was originally presented.

Motion 2: to accept the “objectives” defined by the letter from Kuskokwim Native Association to the Working Group (December 23, 2013): 1. Achieve the management objective of a Basin Wide escapement of 85,000 Chinook salmon, incorporating the uncertainty of Bethel Test Fishery (BTF) data. 2. Provide reasonable opportunity for harvest of other salmon species. 3. Insure harvest opportunity will be equitable to all subsistence fishers on the Kuskokwim. Motion Passed (unanimous).

During day one of the meeting, the Working Group discussed a letter that it had recently received from KNA (*distributed to the Working Group via email on December 30, 2013*) urging the group to forward recommendations to fisheries managers at the conclusion of the January 8-9 meeting. The letter included suggested objectives, guidelines, and criteria for those recommendations. On January 8, the Working Group considered and accepted the objectives suggested in the KNA letter.

Motion 3: to adopt selected guidelines and assumptions from the letter from Kuskokwim Native Association to the Working Group (December 23, 2013). Of the 7 items listed in the letter, the Working Group reached consensus to accept the following four at that time: 1. Chinook return will be poor, similar to 2012 & 2013 estimated at approximately 100,000. 2. Escapement will not be met without restricting subsistence harvest. 4. Available surplus is thought to be 12-20K Chinook available only for subsistence harvest. 5. No Chinook harvest will be available for commercial or sport fisheries. Motion passed (unanimous).

Following the passage of Motion 2, discussion of the KNA letter continued. The guidelines and assumptions suggested in the letter were considered. Four of the seven were adopted as part of Motion 3. The suggested guidelines that were not agreed upon/adopted at that time included: 3) The season will begin closed and remain so until certain conditions are met (“*conditions*” listed as criteria in the KNA letter); 6) BTF data is accurate for determining species composition and to predict run timing of Chinook at Bethel; and 7) BTF data is reasonably accurate but will be used cautiously to project escapement until early data from monitoring projects becomes available.

Motion 4: to accept the presented “Kuskokwim River 2014 Preliminary Management Strategy” with amendments, as follows: •Close king salmon sport fishing. •Tributary subsistence closures Similar to 2011-2013 June 1 – July 25. •The department shall manage/delay the commercial fishery to ensure there is no significant impact on Chinook salmon escapement

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or allocations of Chinook salmon as a result of incidental harvest in commercial fisheries directed at other species (worded for consistency with the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Plan 5 AAC 07.365(e)(6)). •Start the season on a subsistence fishing schedule. (–Starting on May 15, the subsistence salmon season will be closed). –Apply closures/fishing periods based on run timing and travel speed. –Fishing periods restricted to 6-inch or less mesh size once chum and sockeye are abundant. –Provide more opportunity (fishing time) in upper river sections. –Cancel scheduled fishing periods if run assessment indicates abundance is not adequate to achieve escapement goals. –Reduce closures if run assessment indicates adequate abundance to achieve escapement goals). **Motion Failed (5 yea, 3 No)**

During day two of the meeting, the Working Group discussed the preliminary management strategy presented by Travis Elison (*Informational Packet for January 8, Part 2; page 74*). The Working Group developed Motion 4 generally from those points, with two additions: 1) the third bullet of the Motion, regarding the delay of the commercial fishery, was added with instruction from the Working Group that this point would be “worded for consistency with the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Plan.” The intent was to ensure that any prosecution of a commercial fishery would not significantly impact Chinook salmon escapement or subsistence harvest. 2) A date was applied (May 15) to the subsistence closure “early in the season”. There was general discussion on what this date would be, and whether it would be solid or based on “ice out.” The group eventually settled on 15 May. There was also discussion of whether this closure would be applied for the entire river or would be “rolled” upriver consistent with the “rolling closure” scheduling discussed for later in the season. The maker of the motion settled the discussion on Motion 4 to keep the closure date the same for the entire Kuskokwim River.

Motion 5: to adopt the preliminary management strategy as follows (with a change to the first dashed point “starting on May 15...closed in salmon conservation section 1”): •Close king salmon sport fishing. •Tributary subsistence closures Similar to 2011-2013 June 1 – July 25. •The department shall manage/delay the commercial fishery to ensure there is no significant impact on Chinook salmon escapement or allocations of Chinook salmon as a result of incidental harvest in commercial fisheries directed at other species (worded for consistency with the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Plan 5 AAC 07.365(e)(6)). •Start the season on a subsistence fishing schedule. (–Starting on May 15, the subsistence salmon season will be closed in salmon conservation section 1.) –Apply closures/fishing periods based on run timing and travel speed. –Fishing periods restricted to 6-inch or less mesh size once chum and sockeye are abundant. –Provide more opportunity (fishing time) in upper river sections. –Cancel scheduled fishing periods if run assessment indicates abundance is not adequate to achieve escapement goals. –Reduce closures if run assessment indicates adequate abundance to achieve escapement goals.) **Motion Passed (6 yea, 2 no).**

The Working Group discussed the reason for the failure of Motion 4 and determined that it was based on the application of the closure on May 15 in all sections of the Kuskokwim River. Dissenters commented that the timing of this closure would interfere with subsistence activities surrounding non-salmon species in sections of the river where salmon conservation would not yet be of concern. For example, subsistence fishers in the middle and upper river would be prohibited from pursuing sheefish using nets with a mesh size greater than 4-inch. The impact to traditional harvest of non-salmon species, at a time and place when/where salmon conservation would not be an issue, was considered unacceptable. Motion 5 was very similar to Motion 4, but

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limited the May 15 closure to the lowest conservation section of the river, with the understanding that closures would be applied in subsequent sections on a schedule.

Motion 6: the 2014 fishing schedule would be developed with public input to: 1) Provide some opportunity for a taste of king salmon in the early part of the season, 2) Provide some opportunity for other salmon species in the later part of June, and 3) Provide other opportunity for other species in July. Motion Passed (unanimous).

Discussion continued regarding application of fishing schedules, including the scheduling of short openings earlier in the season. It was pointed out that if the department could not project a harvestable surplus of Chinook salmon, that there was justification not to allow any opportunity prior to the arrival of chum and sockeye salmon, and that it might not be practicable to schedule an opening prior to receiving some run indices. There was some discussion about how Chinook salmon caught in the Bethel Test Fishery might be distributed between communities to allow people to get a taste of Chinook salmon; including an offer from USFWS to try to help distribute fish. This conversation led to making of Motion 6; which passed without further discussion.

Motion 7: Regarding the draft Emergency Petition before the Working Group intended for the Board of Fish in support of adopting dipnets as a potentially legal subsistence salmon gear for the Kuskokwim River; the motion was “to support the first paragraph... describing the purpose”... of the letter, with an amendment as follows: The purpose of this letter is to request the Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF) consider an emergency petition to add dipnets as legal gear for the taking of salmon other than king salmon in the Kuskokwim Area during times of king salmon conservation. Under the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Plan, 5AAC 07.365. (2) (a), in addition to the gear specifications and operations provisions of 5 AAC 01.270(n), when the commissioner determines that it is necessary to conserve king salmon to achieve escapement goals, the commissioner may, by emergency order, open salmon fishing to dipnets only; however, all king salmon caught with a dipnet must be released ~~dead or~~ alive to the water. (Motion Passed; unanimous).

At the December 17, 2013 meeting, the Working Group requested that Dave Cannon, Middle River Subsistence representative, draft two emergency petitions (*January 8 Information Packet, Part I*). The Working Group opened discussion of these petitions by recalling an ACR to the Board of Fish in 2013, and discussions of options for management that occurred at that time. The possibility of using dipnets was discussed, as it would allow subsistence users to harvest chum and sockeye salmon and release Chinook salmon unharmed. Casie Stockdale provided further background, including some history of the use of dipnets among Kuskokwim fishermen and the fact that the acceptance of emergency petitions would be contingent on the Board of Fish recognizing that an emergency exists. The Emergency Petitions, if accepted, would lead to temporary regulation, and would only be affective in 2014. Motion 7 clarified the acceptance of the first paragraph of the letter with an amendment that king salmon “must be released alive to the water.”

Motion 8: The Working Group supports requesting the Alaska Board of Fish to consider an Emergency Petition to add the addition gear limitation of 25 fathoms net length [for the purpose of king salmon conservation]. Motion Passed (unanimous).

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The second draft emergency petition was discussed. The main concern for Working Group members was that fishers not be required to cut their nets to accommodate the regulation. When it was clarified that nets could be measured, tied, and left intact, Working Group members supported the petition.

Motion 9: That both of these letters [afore mentioned Emergency Petitions] be submitted by the Working Group, as revised by the co-chairs. Motion Passed (unanimous).

There was discussion to clarify whether the Working Group would submit the petitions, in its own name, or would provide support for someone else to submit them. Motion 9 clarified that the Working Group would make the submission.

Motion 10: To draft a letter in support of Art Nelson's appointment to the NPFMC. Motion Passed (unanimous).

It was brought to the Working Group's attention that Art Nelson, Policy & Outreach Director of BSFA, was being considered for an appointment to the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council. Citing Art's support for the Working Group over the years, Casie Stockdale suggested that the Working Group provide a letter of support for appointment to the council. Some members asked for more information about both Art and the appointment, and Casie agreed to furnish this information at a later time.

Motion 11: For the working group to send a letter to CVRF to consider providing 4-inch and 6-inch mesh to Kuskokwim Fishers. Motion Passed (unanimous).

The Working Group recalled that Coastal Villages Region Fund had donated 6-inch mesh to Kuskokwim fishers in 2011, allowing some fishers to take advantage of subsistence fishing openings with mesh-size restrictions. The Group discussed writing a letter requesting that a similar donation be considered in 2014.

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Schedule WG voted on in January

Preliminary 2014 Subsistence Fishing Schedule

		May																													
Rolling Closure/Open Section		11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31									
		Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat									
Section 1: Lower Section of 1-B																															
Section 2: Lower Section 1-B to Tuluksak																															
Section 3: Tuluksak to Chuathbaluk																															
Section 4: Chuathbaluk to Holitna River mouth																															
Section 5: Holitna River mouth to Headwaters																															

		June																									
Rolling Closure/Open Section		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21					
		Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat					
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Section 5: Holitna River mouth to Headwaters																											

		June										July												
Rolling Closure/Open Section		22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12		
		Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat		
Section 1: Lower Section of 1-B		4 hrs							4 hrs															
Section 2: Lower Section 1-B to Tuluksak		4 hrs					4 hrs																	
Section 3: Tuluksak to Chuathbaluk		6 hrs																						
Section 4: Chuathbaluk to Holitna River mouth		12hrs																						
Section 5: Holitna River mouth to Headwaters		24hrs																						

		July																				August		
Rolling Closure/Open Section		13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2		
		Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat		
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Section 4: Chuathbaluk to Holitna River mouth																								
Section 5: Holitna River mouth to Headwaters																								

Key	No restrictions
	Closed to salmon fishing
	Gillnets restricted 6-inch or less mesh size and livebox is required on fishwheels