

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

1 (800) 315-6338 (MEET) Code: 58756# (KUSKO)

ADF&G Bethel toll free: 1 (855) 933-2433

Meeting Summary

May 10, 2013

Called to order at 10:00am at ADFG in Bethel and adjourned at 2:30pm. Twelve of thirteen members were present and a quorum was established.

AGENDA ITEMS:

New Business: Discussion topics.

1. Kuskokwim River Chinook salmon forecast 2013.
2. Preseason strategy for Kuskokwim River Salmon Management in 2013.
3. Invasive Plant Watch (effects on fisheries).
4. Meeting Schedules (day vs. night meetings).

Old Business

1. Revisit the Working Group membership/attendance questions.
2. Public outreach: sign up for news releases, schedule radio shows, schedule public meetings in communities, etc.
3. Discussion of changes to the KRSMWG By-laws.
4. Power point: preliminary 2012 run information (subject to change).
5. MSE committee: status update.
6. Letters from the KRSMWG: status update.
7. Ideas for honoring WG members.
8. Discussion on whether to support tributary closures with the addition of buffer zones around tributary mouths (Preseason Strategy).

WORKING GROUP ACTION ITEMS:

1. Call or email Working Group members to determine preference with regard to timing of WG meetings.
2. Speak with those Working Group representatives that chronically do not participate in meetings.

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

- 1.) Approve the Agenda as amended. Motion Passed unanimously.
- 2.) Approve the Departments preseason tributary closures for subsistence fishing of King salmon, consistent with closures in 2012, on Kwethluk, Kasigluk, Kisaralik, Tuluksak, Aniak, and George Rivers, a portion of Kuskokuak slough and all of Old Kuskokuak slough, including buffers, ONLY if Sport fishing closures are placed on those waters at the same time. Motion passed.
- 3.) The Working Group will support starting the 2013 subsistence salmon fishing season without restriction. Motion Failed.
- 4.) The Working Group will support starting the 2013 subsistence salmon fishing season without mainstem restrictions, and in the event the restrictions become necessary, the Working Group will support implementation of restriction with sensitivity to the geographic

distribution of communities, catchability of King salmon in those areas, and the traditional impact of fishing for King salmon in those areas. Motion Passed.

5.) Table the discussion of the By-laws and make them first order of business at the next meeting of the KRSMWG.

PEOPLE TO BE HEARD: *This item was visited out-of-order, between New and Old Business.*

James Charles spoke earlier in the meeting regarding sentiments he had heard expressed by members of the public regarding the motivations of the Working Group in their collaboration with state and federal managers. James said that the speaker had commented that the Working Group worked hard to support the manager's decisions because they had been paid to do so. James said that he was angry to hear this and wanted to make sure that the public knows that the **Working Group are all volunteers**, that meetings frequently are **inconvenient** and costly for members, and that there is no compensation for this work. He wanted to stress to people that the Working Group makes **great sacrifices for the good of all Kuskokwim salmon users** and does not participate for personal gain, beyond that realized through good **stewardship** of the resources. James went on to state that few young people today seem to want to participate in anything they don't get paid to do. He said that they seem to have no conscience driving them to help themselves and each other without some additional compensation.

Casie Stockdale, alternate for the Lower River Subsistence representative, recalled her report during the March meeting regarding a proposal to study the extent of Chinook salmon subsistence harvest in the Bethel area belonging to individuals living outside of and exporting fish from the area. She reported that the proposal had been completed and submitted to OSM and represented a cooperative project between AVCP, KNA, and the Leopold Institute. She said she would update the Working Group on the status of this proposal when she knew more.

Zach Liller, ADFG, reported that the department and ONC would again be partnering to work with subsistence fishers to sample the subsistence Chinook harvest for Age-Sex-Length information. He wanted to thank folks that had participated in this program in the past and let them know that the opportunity would be there again in 2013.

Hiroko Ikuta, ADFG, reported that the subsistence division would be recruiting to hire a subsistence resource specialist to be stationed in the Bethel Area and encouraged interested parties to watch for the job posting and/or contact her for information.

Hiroko also reported that subsistence division had recently completed a series of comprehensive subsistence surveys in the village of Bethel and thanked all who had cooperated/participated in this important work.

Travis Elison reported that the department would soon be hiring two fisheries technicians to work in the Bethel Area during the 2013 salmon season and encouraged interested individuals to contact him at the Bethel office for more information (907) 543-2709.

Roberta Chavez reported that ONC would soon be beginning its annual Inseason Subsistence Survey program which works in conjunction with the ASL sampling discussed by Zach Liller. She said that experienced surveyors Alissa Joseph and Iyana Dull would be visiting fish camps along the Kuskokwim River in the proximity of Bethel and nearby communities. She said she hoped for continued cooperation in the collection of this vital inseason data.

NEW BUSINESS:

1.) Kuskokwim River Chinook salmon Forecast 2013.

- Travis Elison and Kevin Schaberg, the ADF&G Kuskokwim Area Commercial Fisheries Biologists, discussed the 2013 Chinook Salmon forecast:

After an exhaustive reinvestigation of forecasting models used for Chinook salmon, including intensive "hindcasting" (following the results back to their origins to determine how well forecasting models are performing) ADF&G staff determined that the methods that were being used for forecasting were the most appropriate currently available.

Current forecasts are developed using the Chinook salmon run reconstruction, with attention to the various age groups expected to return and the strength of their parent runs/years. Various models are used to forecast each age group and the model that shows the most promise is chosen for that age group and added together with forecasts for the other age groups.

It should be noted that there is significant uncertainty associated with forecasts, and the "best" forecast should be treated only as an advisory point; especially in years when conservation could be of concern.

The Kuskokwim River Chinook salmon forecast for 2013 is 160,000 to 240,000.

The current forecast suggests that there will be enough Chinook salmon returning to the Kuskokwim to meet escapement goals and provide enough fish for average subsistence harvest.

This forecast is similar to the one from the previous year, and the actual return of fish was well below forecast in 2012, so caution is warranted.

- Question/Answer:

James Charles, Downriver Elder, asked how the forecasts had been done in the past. Doug Molyneaux, a former employee of ADF&G said that he had simply assumed that the number of fish would be similar to the previous year unless there was some compelling reason to think there would be a change. For example, a strong showing of Age 4 fish in a year might suggest that a similarly strong showing of Age 5 fish would appear the following year (reasoning that these fish were produced from the spawning of a single year and that they should show up strong in each of the years they and their siblings return to the Kuskokwim). In a case like that, the forecast would be for similar to somewhat higher returns of Chinook in the coming year.

Casie Stockdale, the alternate for the Lower River subsistence seat, asked whether the forecast for 2013 was likely to be more accurate than the forecast had been in 2012. Travis Elison responded that yes, it could be more accurate, because looking back to the parent years that will be represented by returning fish in 2013, spawning populations escaped in numbers that fall within a range of more "normal productivity", or years in which the numbers of spawners was more likely to produce a similar number of fish returning (or a closer relationship than the previous several years, moving in the direction of "spawners at equilibrium"). Travis said that the relationships suggested that escapements could come in at the high end of the forecast range, but because of poor returns in recent years, he tended to think they would come in closer to the low end. Kevin Schaberg expanded on the point, saying that such things as ocean conditions could contribute to returns coming back near the lower end of the forecast.

Ray Collins, the Western Interior RAC representative, said that he felt that management is putting most of its emphasis on the production model. He asked whether such things as climate events could be used to influence the forecast. Kevin Schaberg responded that it was difficult to incorporate such factors and their possible affect on the population of fish bound to return in a given year. He said that there is currently little in the literature that could be used to predict the influence of climate events on returns. He said that nothing he had yet looked at had given a better look forward than the spawner/recruit relationship.

Doug Molyneaux asked how much trust could be put on the forecast and how well it had worked historically. Kevin said that of the various forecasting models available performed similarly. He said that some years were consistently over forecast, and some consistently under forecast. He said that this is an artifact of the methodology and its tendency to pull things back toward an average. Doug said that he thought that a graphical presentation of this type of analysis would improve understanding.

Casie Stockdale asked whether the 2012 age data gave any indication of increasing abundance, such as a strong showing of a young age-class of fish. Kevin responded that there wasn't a strong indicator in 2012, but they were hoping to see one in 2013, perhaps in the form of a strong showing of 4 year old fish.

Fritz Charles, the acting member at large, said that the Chinook salmon run had been poor statewide in 2012. He asked if staff had considered forecasts for other areas to provide perspective on 2013 Kuskokwim returns. Kevin Schaberg said that he had given some attention to Yukon and Nushagak forecasts but that they hadn't provided much insight.

James Charles asked if weather conditions could change the salmon forecast. Kevin responded that although these factors would influence the actual returns, they were not part of the forecast. He said that the forecast is a first look at what we would expect based only on what the parent years had done. He said that factors like climate might be used by managers to give context to the forecast, but they don't actually change it.

Bev Hoffman, the meeting Chairperson, asked for USF&WS comments on the forecast. Gene Peltola, refuge manager for the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge, said that federal and state staff had collaborated throughout the winter and the federal staff had no objections to the forecast. He said that Refuge staff also lacked the expertise to develop forecasts on their own and rely on state biologists to produce these evaluative tools. Bev said that based on these discussions, she was cautiously optimistic, but realized that the inseason indices would be the more important information.

Greg Roczicka asked about incorporating the uncertainty discovered within the forecasting procedure to make adjustments to the forecast. Kevin stated there wasn't a way to do that with current information. The measure of uncertainty useful to evaluate and compare the different methods and to decide if one is really more reliable than another. He said the nature of the uncertainty does not readily lend itself to correcting the forecast.

Dan Gillikin, the Fisheries Director for Kuskokwim Native Association and the former Fisheries Biologist for the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge, said that in his work for the Refuge earlier that year, He and Ken Harper (USFWS) had worked with Kevin on his forecasting investigations:

- He said that Kevin had done good work evaluating the models and determining the nature of the bias that does occur in the forecasting methodology and planned to address that bias in future forecasts.
- As things currently stand he thought graphs might be a little misleading.
- Some of the existing climate and predator affects are already captured and accounted for in forecasts based on the fact that they have already affected returns and that variability is inherently captured in the assessment. But he pointed out that new and changing conditions cannot be figured into the forecast because it is currently beyond our ability to predict the effects of those changes.

- Traditional Knowledge and “forecasting” salmon runs:

James Charles noted that smelt were showing up earlier than Herring in 2013 and that this was not generally known to occur.

Casie Stockdale asked James about northern pike, noting that he had said in March that a good pike year usually meant a good salmon year. James responded that it had not been a good pike year.

Bob Aloysius, the YK Delta RAC representative, stated that people had lately been catching lots of large whitefish and sheefish in the Kalskag area. He said that this was the first time he could remember reports of this type at this time of year and stage of the season (ice much thicker and persisting much later than normal on the Kuskokwim). He also said that people using ice augers with 5' auger bits were having trouble getting all the way through the ice and that the ice was still shorefast in the area.

Charlie Brown, the commercial fisher representative, said that the water level in the Eek River was abnormally low at that time.

2.) Preseason strategy for Kuskokwim River Salmon Management in 2013

- Travis Ellison discussed the ADF&G plans for preseason management strategy for Working Group discussion:

Assessment Tools and Run Timing-Notes from Travis Ellison

As everyone knows BTF is the only quantitative inseason assessment tool. As presented at the last Working Group meeting, the BTF Tool has been updated with a management target that results in a 90% chance of the escapement ending above the lower bound of the escapement goal, 65,000. On average this BTF management target results in an escapement of about 85,000. Because the uncertainty of the projected end of season escapement is quite large (40,000 fish), subsistence harvest information will be crucial for validating and refining the run assessment inseason.

2012 was one of the latest runs on record and is believed to be a result of a cold pool of water stretching from Nunivak Island down into Bristol Bay. There is a similar cold pool present now, although not as drastic. Also, it has been a late, cold spring. The geese are late and even the herring are appearing to be late this year. All of this makes us think that king run will be late again this year.

A late run complicates run assessment and implementation of management actions. It will be imperative of the managers to observe the run developing and assess run strength before implementing restrictions on the mainstem. Another thing to consider is the potential for shifting harvest efforts earlier in the season and how that would affect the run assessment. For example, early in the run BTF may be showing low numbers, however if subsistence fishermen are catching a lot of kings then the run may actually be better than indicated by BTF.

The projected escapement (forecast minus the average subsistence harvest) is 76,000 to 156,000. Given recent years of low abundance we need consider the midpoint to the lower end of the forecast, which indicates a projected escapement of 76,000-116,000. This is within the escapement goal range.

According to the management plan (c) (2): *when the projected escapement of king salmon is within the drainagewide escapement goal range, the commissioner shall open and close fishing periods, by emergency order, as follows:*

(A) to the extent practicable, at least one fishing period per week will be opened for a directed subsistence king salmon fishery to provide harvest opportunity on surplus king salmon in excess of escapement needs,

The elder's fishery would only be implemented if the surplus is limited, which is not indicated.

Given that the projected escapement is within the drainage-wide escapement goal range conservation measures are warranted.

Kuskokwim River Tributaries:

For the purpose of conserving king salmon, from June 1 through July 25, the following restrictions would apply to these Kuskokwim River tributaries. These would be the exact same tributaries and boundary markers as were in place in 2012 and include:

- The Kwethluk River drainage including its confluence with Kuskokuak Slough and downstream to ADF&G regulatory markers located at the downstream mouth of the slough. The remainder of Kuskokuak slough from the mouth of the Kwethluk upstream to the confluence with the Kuskokwim River will be open to subsistence salmon fishing.
- The Kasigluk and Kisaralik river drainages including Old Kuskokuak Slough to ADF&G markers at the confluence of Old Kuskokuak Slough with Kuskokuak Slough.
- The Tuluksak River drainage including its confluence with the Kuskokwim River and downstream approximately 1-mile to ADF&G regulatory markers.
- The Aniak River drainage to ADF&G regulatory markers at its confluence with the Kuskokwim River.
- The George River drainage including its confluence with the Kuskokwim River and downstream approximately a half mile to ADF&G regulatory markers.

The following conditions constitute a closure to subsistence fishing on the above tributaries:

- Subsistence fishing for king salmon with hook and line gear will be closed.
- Subsistence fishing will be restricted to gillnets with 4-inch or smaller mesh, not to exceed 60 feet in length.
- Emergency orders may supersede these restrictions.

Kuskokwim River Mainstem:

Given that the projected escapement will be within the Drainage-wide escapement goal range considering average harvest, we recommend beginning the season unrestricted on the mainstem.

If the run comes in below forecast closures and/or restrictions will be necessary.

If a conservation concern develops before chum and sockeye become abundant, then a rolling closure may be necessary. Rolling closure sections and boundaries would be identical to 2012. As the Management Plan states, *provide at least one period per week for directed king salmon subsistence harvest as long as the projected escapement is within the escapement goal range.* This implies unrestricted gillnet mesh size. The fishing period could be open for days or hours depending on the projected escapement. The fishing periods would be increased in duration in upriver sections.

If there is a conservation concern after chum and sockeye become abundant, then 6-inch or less mesh size restrictions would likely be adequate for conserving king salmon. People should be prepared to fish with a gillnet that has 6-inch or less mesh size.

- John Chythlook, the Kuskokwim Area Sport Fish Manager, also addressed preseason closure measures, saying that lower river tributaries would be closed to sport fishing consistent with subsistence closures, however, with respect to middle and upper river tributaries, the division of sport fish would adopt a “wait-and-see” attitude for closures, reasoning that there would be time to make that decision once inseason indices become available. *Further discussion of this point appears below under Comments for Motion 2.*

3.) Invasive Plant Watch

Casie Stockdale and Dave Cannon, the alternate to the Middle River Subsistence seat, passed out leaflets and booklets containing information on identifying invasive, or nonnative and potentially problematic, plants. Dave and Casie talked about an invasive plant workshop that had recently been held in Bethel with participants from a number of nearby communities. They drew particular attention to three species of aquatic invasive plants that may have the ability to affect salmon habitat: Reed Canarygrass, White Sweetclover, and Elodea. Each of these plants has the ability to alter or take over aquatic habitats where salmon spawn and/or rear. *For photos of these plants, please see the Informational Packet for photos of these species.*

Dave and Casie said that people should keep their eyes out for anything unusual in their areas. They said that currently, the truly troublesome species aren't known to be in the Kuskokwim, but they could easily be spread by human activity. They said that if people see anything unusual they shouldn't hesitate to contact Pat Sampson of the Kuskokwim Watershed council (invasives@kuskokwimcouncil.org) or Gina Graziano at UAF (gagraziano@alaska.edu).

For more information, please visit the following websites: <http://www.uaf.edu/ces/imp/invasiveplants/>; <http://www.kuskokwimcouncil.org/>

4.) Scheduling Meetings

Desire to add this agenda item was inferred from comments made by James Charles and listed above in People to be heard. The idea of moving meetings to evenings to accommodate people due to work concerns was revisited. It was noted that meetings used

to be held in the evenings and that occasionally the suggestion to hold meetings in the evenings comes up again. It was decided that WG members would be canvased to determine whether there will be significant interest in the idea of scheduling evening meetings (*see Action Item 1 above*).

OLD BUSINESS:

1.) Revisit Working Group membership and attendance questions:

Greg Roczicka confirmed that he had spoken with Sophie Gregory and she wished to be removed from the Working Group alternate position for Upper River Subsistence. He said that he had not been able to reach Pete Mellick.

LaMont Albertson agreed to speak with Middle River Subsistence Alternates that have not been in attendance in some time.

There was some mention of sending letters to some communities to ask interested individuals to volunteer to serve on the Working Group.

2.) Public outreach:

Bev Hoffman noted that the first radio call-in show for 2013 on KYUK radio had been scheduled for May 16th. She said that there would be others.

Fritz Charles noted that he had been doing salmon updates an almost all of the recent Yuk to Yuk programs on KYUK Radio (Yupik language radio program).

Greg Roczicka and James Charles were planning to speak at upcoming State Advisory Council meetings.

Greg Noted that ONC would soon be sponsoring an environmental summit for residents from around the delta and that this would be a good opportunity for outreach (May 21-23)

USFWS noted that they had been visiting most of the Kuskokwim Villages to inform the people of developments. They also suggested visiting festivals and doing announcements on VHF radio.

ADF&G would proceed with their regular news release activity as a primary source for fishing information and would also participate in public meetings in villages, produce and distribute posters, and participate in radio call-in shows.

Mark Leary suggested that the department work to simplify language and clarify points in news releases for the many people who speak English as a second language. He suggested allowing members of the Working Group to review news releases before publishing.

James Charles suggested announcements be made in the newspaper.

Travis Elison noted that there would be more effort to put up flyers and announcements all around Bethel to get word out locally.

3.) Discussion of changes to KRSMWG By-laws:

Discussion of the By-laws was tabled until the next meeting under motion 6.

Working Group members are asked to review the proposed changes to the by-laws and be prepared to discuss and vote on them at the next meeting.

4.) Power point: preliminary 2012 information (subject to change):

An Action item from the previous meeting, Power Point slides were provided with information about the 2012 Chinook salmon run as part of the May 10 informational packet.

5.) MSE committee: Status update:

Casie Stockdale reported that Karen Gillis of BSFA had offered to provide support services for the MSE process. A date for this had not yet been set.

6.) Letters from the KRSMWG:

LaMont Albertson reported on progress in writing letters supporting KRSMWG involvement in government.

7.) Ideas for honoring WG members:

There was discussion and general agreement that there should be some form of recognition given to Working Group members for the commitment and sacrifice involved with long term service. There was no clear agreement on what form that should take. Some ideas included awarding a plaque to long term participants. Some suggested that such a plaque be awarded after a set number of years. Others talked about posthumously awarded plaques given to families of participants that died while serving.

8.) Discussion on whether to support tributary closures with the addition of buffer zones:

This point was actually discussed during the portion of the meeting pertaining to preseason management strategy. Most comments related to this point occur under Motion 2 below.

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

MOTION 1: Approve the Agenda. Motion Passed unanimously.

COMMENTS FOR MOTION 1:

There was a brief synopsis of the Agenda items and discussion of agenda structure. It was agreed that New Business would be moved before Old Business.

MOTION 2: Approve the Department's preseason tributary closures for subsistence fishing of king salmon, consistent with closures in 2012, on Kwethluk, Kasigluk, Kisaralik, Tuluksak, Aniak, and George Rivers, a portion of Kuskokuak slough and all of Old Kuskokuak slough, including buffers, *only* if Sport fishing closures are placed on those waters at the same time. Motion passed; 8 yeas and 2 neighs.

COMMENTS FOR MOTION 2:

Discussion on this motion occurred out-of-order (prior to the making of the Motion).

The main contention that prompted the specific wording of the motion came from the assertion by the ADFG Division of Sport Fish that, consistent with the new Management plan and citing the relatively good forecast for returning Chinook salmon, the division could not close middle and upper river tributaries to sport Chinook fishing preseason (the Division of Commercial Fisheries had asserted that it would close these tributaries preseason and consider rescinding those closures if Chinook salmon returned as well or better than expected). Sport Fish would agree to close lower river tributaries preseason as a protective measure, citing that BTF information might not be available early enough to protect these waters if returns were weak, but it would be available early enough to close the upper tributaries in that case.

Working Group members that spoke universally took exception to the closure of the subsistence fishery on these tributaries if sport fishing remained open. USFWS Yukon Delta NWR staff was equally unwilling to allow that kind of situation to develop and suggested that a Special Action

might be in order to close all waters within the Federal Conservation Unit to subsistence salmon fishing if an agreement could not be reached.

All parties agreed that further discussion would be necessary, but the Working Group made their position plain for agencies to consider in the interim.

LaMont Albertson was not in favor of the motion because the division of Sport Fish had already determined that it could not comply, thus putting the department and the Working Group into conflict without a practical outcome.

MOTION 3: The Working Group will support starting the 2013 subsistence salmon fishing season without restriction. Motion Failed 7 yeas and 3 neighs.

COMMENTS FOR MOTION 3: *Discussion on this motion occurred out-of-order (prior to the making of the Motion).*

Supporting:

Fritz Charles noted that the Working Group had voted in March to support starting the subsistence salmon fishing season with a restriction to using 6" mesh for the purpose of allowing larger fish to reach the spawning Grounds. Travis Elision drew the WG's attention to a pair of graphs in the Info Packet in which the effectiveness of 6" vs. 8" mesh was compared for catching kings in the early and later parts of the fishing season. The Graph clearly showed that when only Chinook salmon are in the River, 6" mesh is extremely effective in catching Kings of all sizes, while later, when chum and sockeye are present, this mesh size catches all species and reduces the catch of kings. He pointed out that when we are concerned about conservation, 6" mesh had a positive affect late season but a negative effect early season. Greg Roczicka, noting a concern that people would begin the season fishing early and hard, said that he had reconsidered his support for starting the season with smaller mesh gear.

Robert Sundown spoke of a recent visit to Chuathbaluk in which residents requested that any mainstem subsistence closures in their area be two days shorter than those prescribed for the lower river closure areas. Mike Williams, Mark Leary, and others supported this type of approach with respect to the upper River. Travis Elision stated that this was actually a very well-constructed part of the management plan said that such actions were warranted and allowed. He stated that consideration of these concerns would be part of the implementation of any closures that would occur on the mainstem in 2013.

James Charles said that he supported starting the season without a mesh size restriction. He said that based on his experience as both a subsistence and commercial fisherman, he knew that 6" mesh would catch everything but 8" will often allow some fish through.

Mike Williams noted that the elders had told him that in the past, larger mesh nets were made for fishing in the mouth of the Kisaralik.

Opposing:

Ray Collins expressed concern with the management actions being considered having a disproportional effect on headwaters spawning populations. He said that by starting the season with 8" mesh, we could adversely impact the smaller population of spawning females bound for the upper system and that by closing lower river tributaries we would

move pressure onto the mainstem where fish bound for upriver are concentrated. He stated that all these actions would put pressure on fish that may have passed upriver unmolested in the past. Travis Elison noted that, although there is some evidence to suggest that fish bound for further upstream enter the river earlier, that this point has been over stressed in the past. The evidence much more strongly suggests that Chinook salmon bound for up and down the drainage are mixed and overlapped. Travis said that any fishing in the river was likely to impact a much wider geographic area than just the headwaters.

Other questions and concerns:

Bob Aloysius asked which tributaries are the primary producers of Chinook salmon in the Kuskokwim drainage. Kevin Schaberg responded that Holitna, Aniak, and Kwethluk Rivers were the biggest contributors.

Greg Roczicka asked about the metric that would be used for determining whether a subsistence closure would be scheduled. He said that the prior year the "trigger" had been set around the 25th percentile of the Chinook run and he was assuming a similar marker would be used. Travis Elison responded that 2013 would present a much different set of realities than 2012, and that because escapement goals are now set, the dates that correspond to an assessment of run strength and need to conserve will be different and that the margin of error was wider giving managers more confidence in being able to respond quickly. He said that the department would prefer to assess the run and decide based on what they see rather than setting a hard date that didn't allow for other information.

Bev Hoffman noted that an elder had told here that in the early days, people used to make smaller mesh nets so that large kings wouldn't tear them so badly. Bob Aloysius noted that in the area where he grew up, fishwheels had been common

MOTION 4: The Working Group will support starting the 2013 subsistence salmon fishing season without mainstem restrictions, and in the event the restrictions become necessary, the Working Group will support implementation of restriction with sensitivity to the geographic distribution of communities, catchability of King salmon in those areas, and the traditional impact of fishing for King salmon in those areas. Motion Passed 9 yeas and one abstention.

COMMENTS FOR MOTION 4:

Mike Williams and several others commented that, considering the major differences between motion 3 and 4 were a clarification of the management plan, that this motion was simply a reintroduction of the previous motion.

Fritz Charles pointed out that any strategy, whether determined preseason or inseason could and would be rescinded if it were found to be inconsistent with inseason data once that becomes available.

Bev Hoffman pointed out that the new management plan already took many of the concerns being discussed into consideration, as was intended by the nature of collaborative drafting of that plan. Discussion was good to determine what concerns were addressed, but if the plan dealt with the situation adequately, motions might not be necessary.

Casie asked whether it was possible for the department to act on a motion, and if it were not, to try to find an action for discussion that the department could indeed act upon.

MOTION 5: Table the discussion of the By-laws and make them first order of business at the next meeting of the KRSMWG. Motion Passed unanimously.

COMMENTS FOR MOTION 5: *None.*

COMMENTS FROM WORKING GROUP MEMBERS:

Stuart Curry, the Processor Representative, commented that Kuskokwim Seafoods would not be operating during the chum/sockeye fishery in 2013 and might not be able to operate during the coho fishery either.

LaMont Albertson commented that he hoped that the issue of a buffer zone around the Aniak River could be resolved. He cited the precedent of "manatee zones" in Florida water ways where 1,000 foot buffers exist for the shoreline areas of waters known to be manatee habitat. No buoys are used and approximately 30 states have some similar form of regulation for habitat. He suggested something of the sort could be pursued for the Aniak River. He said that otherwise, guides would be "all over that."

Ray Collins remarked that a long range look was needed for where management was headed in the Kuskokwim River. He said that he wished there was a reconstruction of historical subsistence use patterns that could be referenced for discussion purposes. He suggested that changes to communities along the river might reveal that "traditional" use was no longer valid, as the size and character of a community might have evolved well beyond its earlier character, and that attempting to continue to use the resource without restriction was no longer a valid approach. He finished by saying that if users continue to shift their harvest back to the mainstem, with no limits on catch, village growth might outstrip the resource and that allowing everyone to subsist unrestricted was not sustainable.

Dave Cannon said that he agreed with Ray's remarks. He said that it seemed that people in the past had been content with catching whatever came to their nets, but now the focus was single mindedly on kings. He also said that it would be strange to see the perception that sport fishing could be open when subsistence would be closed. He pointed out that several rivers in the middle river area should be considered for protections, including the Owhut and Holukuk.

Mark Leary noted that his hunting partner, who had been listening to the meeting while waiting for Mark, had left without him. However, he had listened for three hours and had a much better understanding of the fisheries management process than before.

James Charles talked about Working Group membership. He said that many of our alternate members didn't attend meetings and that we should try to recruit new members. But he noted that it was increasingly difficult to get young people to volunteer for things without compensation. He said the Working Group and the whole process of fisheries management is very important to him and to the whole region. He believed that participation was worth the sacrifice and hoped that others would see the value and volunteer. He pointed out that by participating in the Working Group, individuals were helping people up and down the river, including all their family and friends and all their neighbors near and far. He also wanted to see more young people get involved.

Bob Aloysius said: "As I grow older and more observant, I recall one of the main things that the old people told us is that we are connected to all creation. But we have forgotten that. Especially [with respect to] the salmon that come up this river to feed us for a year. We don't go to them. They come to us and we have forgotten how to honor that and respect that connection we have. I haven't seen that [respect in] the last 50 years or more... [In the old days] there was no such thing as waste. Today [there is] so much waste it's pitiful. I lived in Bethel for 27 years and the unrestricted way the new people come and use the resource, they catch a lot and then don't know what to do with it and they throw it out. It is disheartening that this is happening. We wonder where the hell our fisheries going? They are going to waste!" Bob went on to say "we are helpless to affect the by-catch; there has to be something more done to the intercept. We need to get down to the basics of why our salmon are declining... Big money talks louder than no money."

Greg Roczicka echoed Bob's remarks, saying that he was "agonizing" over the balance between technology and tradition. He said that it's often "political suicide" to bring the issue up. The power of the subsistence "fleet is as big a threat to our way of life" as any other factor. He asked "how do we protect" traditional use? He alluded to proposals put in to the Board of Fish during the last cycle that sought to encourage traditional harvest and food preparation and discourage creeping change. He noted that people used more chums and reds in days before freezers because they dry better while Chinook salmon spoils without freezing. He also noted that if you aren't saying what people want to hear "you don't know a damn thing." Greg also said that he hoped and prayed that the department's Chinook salmon forecast was correct.

Casie Stockdale said that she strongly wanted to encourage the division of sport fish to reconsider their position on keeping the middle river tributaries open to sport fishing while they are closed to subsistence fishing. She said she hoped they would "consider taking the recommendation of the Working Group" and said she hoped "we can continue to work together this season." She said she thought things were going well so far. She had appreciated the discussion regarding traditional and historic use, traditional forecasting and weather observations, and hoped these would continue in future meetings. She also said she appreciated Greg's comments regarding the difficulty in voicing unpopular concerns, saying they took courage and she appreciated that effort and hoped it would continue.

Fritz Charles had these sentiments: "In our way of life we go by faith in what the land tells us is what the salmon are going to do this year and next year. What comes from the teaching of our elders is what we believe in. But back then we didn't have this technology. Back then we went through what elders tell us. Now we have it in black and white [regulation] and we have to abide by it or choose not to. The Working Group works for the people up and down the Kuskokwim River. Comments and recommendations [from the Working Group] should be equal [in power] to the state and federal [agencies]... [I] want to encourage that now and in the future. Consider our recommendations and/or comments."

Bev Hoffman asked for State and Federal comments:

Tom Doolittle of the USFWS Yukon Delta NWR said that the Working Group should know that the Refuge had written a competitive grant to work on "Government to Government consultation with the villages and part of our outreach effort has been the result of that successful funding and in a funding climate for our agency and for the refuge system that is quite frankly one of the worst I have seen in my career. With that, the importance of Chinook as a resource and importance of substance in our communities, at least we have that funding that has come through so we can maintain the communication dialogue [regardless of what

kind of run it is] with our communities.” He said that this had been an offshoot of the Working Group and that people should be proud of that.

Travis Elision announced that Jeff Guyon from National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association, National Marine Fisheries Service was planning to teleconference in to the Joint meeting of the Lower Kuskokwim Advisory Council Meeting and Bearing Sea Coast Advisory Council meeting to provide a presentation on By-catch (May 17, 2013).

Travis went on to say that he really appreciated everyone's comments during this meeting and for being involved. Travis echoed Greg's prayer that the forecast prove true.

Bev Hoffman stated that she knew that a lot of people would be coming to the Kuskokwim to fish from Anchorage and the Yukon this season. She said they had the prior year and they would be returning. She said she thought it important that the conservation posters be put up again. She asked about the question of residency and how that might affect who could fish in the Kuskokwim Area.

Travis answered that according to the State Constitution, any Alaska resident had a right to subsistence fish in the area.

Bev said that she had grown up in Bethel and hoped to always be able to fish there. She said she wanted to hear more from the young people who have strong opinions in 2013. She advised using all the social networking tools available to get the word out. She said she wanted to see a sustainable Chinook subsistence fishery going forward.

WORKING GROUP ATTENDANCE:

MEMBER SEAT:	NAME:
UPRIVER ELDER	<i>vacant</i>
DOWNRIVER ELDER	James Charles
COMMERCIAL FISHER	Charlie Brown
LOWER RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mike Williams
MIDDLE RIVER SUBSTENCE	Gerald Simeon
UPPER RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mark Leary
HEADWATERS SUBSISTENCE	Daniel Esai
PROCESSOR	Stuart Curry
MEMBER AT LARGE	Fritz Charles
SPORT FISHER	LaMont Albertson
WESTERN INTERIOR RAC	Ray Collins
Y-K DELTA RAC	Bob Aloysius
ADF&G	Travis Elison
CHAIR	Bev Hoffman
Other Participants:	
ADF&G Comm. Fish : Travis Elison, John Linderman, Dan Bergstrom, Kevin Schaberg, Chris Shelden, Brittany Blain, Zach Liller, Colton Lipka, Tracy Hansen	
Sport Fish : John Chythlook	
Subsistence Division: Lisa Olson, Hiroko Ikuta, Dave Runfola	
USFWS: Tom Doolittle, Gene Peltola, Robert Sundown, Ken Harper	
OSM: Don Rivard, Pippa Kenner,	
Dan Gilikin-KNA Roberta Chavez-ONC Angela Denning-Barnes -KYUK Kate Thalhauser- GTC, Gerri Sumpter, Senator Murkowski's office, Agatha Erickson, Senator Begich's office, Doug Molyneaux	Casie Stockdale-Alternate Lower River Subsistence Dave Cannon- Alternate Middle River Subsistence Bev Hoffman- Alternate Sport Fisher Greg Roczicka- Alternate Lower River Subsistence

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS:

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (**ADF&G**), Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group (**KRSMWG or Working Group, WG**), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (**USFWS**), Orutsararmiut Native Council (**ONC**), Kuskokwim Native Association (**KNA**), Georgetown Traditional Council (GTC); Association of Village Council Presidents (**AVCP**), Bethel Test Fishery project (**BTF**), Catch Per Unit Effort (**CPUE**), Coastal Village Seafoods (**CVS**), ADF&G Commercial Fisheries Division (**CF**), ADF&G Sport Fisheries Division (**SF**), Regional Advisory Council (**RAC**), Sustainable Escapement Goal (**SEG**), Biological Escapement Goal (**BEG**), Management Objective (**MO**), Amounts Reasonably Necessary for Subsistence (**ANS**), Emergency Order (**EO**)