

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

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

July 8, 2014

Meeting called to order at 1:30pm on Tuesday July 8, adjourned at 4:00pm. Total meeting time was 2.5 hours. Five voting members were present and a quorum was not established. The meeting was run as an executive session per the *Working Group by-laws (article II, section 5)*.

AGENDA ITEMS:

People to be heard

Continuing Business: Run assessment and management actions

Old Business Discussion Topics:

1. Update on the Yupiit Nation Tribal Fish Forum on 1 July 2014 in Napaskiak

New Business Discussion Topics:

1. Discussion of a Tier II proposal letter submitted to the Board of Fish for the Kuskokwim River

WORKING GROUP ACTION ITEMS: *these items were not called "action items" at the time of meeting; however work was assigned or volunteered.*

- Distribute directions for navigating the BTF and Escapement Monitoring webpage on the ADF&G Fish Counts webpage (7/10/14, Jen Peeks)
- Request for ADF&G to consider including historical data back to 2004 in the Bethel Test Fish graphs/tables provided in the Working Group Informational Packets

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS: *None.*

PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:

- Nick Kameroff from Aniak requested not to have a commercial fishing opener in the lower river due to continued subsistence harvest occurring in the middle and upper river.
- Walter Morgan (Aniak) reported that some families had been catching fish in river eddys. He said that many people were having difficulty catching enough fish to meet their subsistence needs. Mr. Morgan commented that he had caught fewer fish during the 2014 season than in previous years. Mr. Morgan said there had been 1-2 days of good chum runs in the middle river before it slowed down. He heard a report of a fisher catching a total of 15 fish: 1 king, 2 sockeye, and 12 chum salmon in 5 drifts. Mr. Morgan expressed concern about the possible commercial opener targeting chum salmon. He commented that many people in the middle river rely on chum salmon to meet their subsistence needs.
- Dan Gillikin (KNA) said that the subsistence needs had not been met in the middle river based on surveys and comments. He wondered how much the additional harvest and the "chucking" of chum salmon were factored into the management decision to open a commercial fishery in the lower river. He suggested that management consider acting on the side of conservation and moving the opener to the following week to provide for additional opportunity to meet subsistence needs. Mr. Gillikin commented that he would prefer that managers wait until the historical 50% passage point for chum salmon in the BTF index, prior to opening a commercial fishery.

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CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. Subsistence Reports:

- **Lowest River Reports:** Charlie Brown (Commercial Fisher) said that subsistence fishing was over in the lowest part of the river.
- **ONC In-season Subsistence Report:** Roberta Chavez (ONC) reported that ONC surveyed 30 families, 5 were fishing with driftnet or setnet. (*See the July 8 Informational Packet for full survey results.*)
- **Lower River Subsistence:** Mary Sattler reported that her family put out their setnet on July 4th for three tides and caught a total of 53 fish. She commented that on July 5th the flies were abundant so they put smoke under their drying racks to reduce the spoil. She had not observed many full drying racks along the sloughs in Bethel and said that most people were finished harvesting for subsistence.
- **KNA Inseason Subsistence:** Rebecca Frye (KNA) reported on the middle river inseason subsistence surveys. She commented that most people said they would need to fish through the coho salmon run to meet subsistence needs. (*See the July 8 Informational Packet for full survey results.*)
- **Middle River Subsistence:**

Lisa Feyereisen (Middle River Subsistence alternate) reported people were waiting to fish until there was a push of chum salmon in order to conserve gas. She commented that many people had not used their boats early in the season and were experiencing typical early season mechanical problems late in the season, impacting their ability to take advantage of the recently provided opportunity to fish. Ms. Feyereisen said that people in the middle river were concerned that a commercial opener in the lower river would prevent them from meeting their subsistence needs. She reported that on July 6th, she drifted in front of Crow Village catching 15 fish total: 2 king (released), 9 chum, and 4 sockeye salmon. One family in Aniak reported to Ms. Feyereisen that they were less than 25% complete with their harvest goals. She said that in Chuathbaluk, about 50% of families were finished. Ms. Feyereisen commented that people who had been drifting in state managed waters during the 4-inch mesh gillnet restrictions were closer to meeting their subsistence goals than those who had only been able to fish in the federally managed waters at that time.

Dave Cannon (Middle River Subsistence alternate) reported that a few families had met their subsistence needs. He said that other families were still fishing and had reported that the chum salmon were not excessively heavy in the river. Mr. Cannon said that a sport fishing guide reported to him that he had not seen many chum salmon in the Aniak River. He said that several people were planning to harvest coho salmon to meet their subsistence needs.

Nick Kameroff reported that in Sleetmute people were still working to harvest for their subsistence needs.

- **Upriver Subsistence:** N/A
- **Headwaters Subsistence:**

Dan Esai (Headwaters Subsistence) reported that 4 days prior he had flown to his guiding camp and observed big king salmon in the Salmon River and Bear Creek. He requested that the aerial surveys be conducted earlier than planned. He mentioned many salmon had also been observed in the Tonzona River.

Ray Collins commented that the water was high, so there were few setnets. He reported that one person was catching Sheefish.

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2. Overview of Kuskokwim River Salmon Run Assessment Projects:

- **Bethel Test Fish:** Colton Lipka (ADF&G) reported that the water temperature was near average, water clarity had dropped below the historical range, and the water level was well above average but within the historical range. Mr. Lipka reviewed the daily CPUEs for the BTF (*For more information on the BTF, please see the July 8 Informational Packet*).
- **Weirs:** Steve Miller (USFWS) reported on the Kwethluk and Tuluksak River weirs. The Tuluksak weir had a hole on July 7th. Kevin Schaberg (ADF&G) reported on the ADF&G weir projects. He said the projects were reporting numbers for Chinook, chum and sockeye salmon. Mr. Schaberg commented that the conservation measures during the 2014 season appeared to have helped in the escapement of king salmon (*For more information on weirs, please see the July 8 Informational Packet*).
- **Radio Tagging Project:** Kevin Schaberg (ADF&G) reported on the tagging projects in the lower river and near Kalskag. He commented that limited timing information showed a run timing of 3 days from the mouth of the Johnson River to Bethel. (*For more information on the tagging projects please see the July 8 Informational Packet*).

3. Commercial Catch Report: N/A

4. **Processor Report:** Henry Mitchel with Coastal Villages Seafoods (CVS) reported being ready to process as soon as ADF&G determined there was an appropriate level of fish to be caught without interfering with subsistence or other needs. He said that CVS would not buy Chinook salmon. He also suggested that if there were a July 11th opener that management consider limiting it to 4 hours.

5. **Sport Fish Report:** LaMont Albertson said that there was some sport fishing near Aniak and that the pike fishing was very good.

6. Intercept Fishery Report: N/A

7. **Weather Report:** Colton Lipka reported on the weather for the lower, middle and upper river. Forecast called for overcast and rain along the Kuskokwim River.

8. **Recommendations:** Aaron Poetter (ADF&G) reported that ADF&G was ready to provide a commercial opportunity in the Lower River Sub-district 1B as early as Friday, July 11 from 12noon-6:00pm. He commented that the last four days had single digit CPUE's for Chinook salmon in the BTF. He reported that currently management was in a mixed stock approach conserving one species and having a harvestable surplus of another. Mr. Poetter said that management considers subsistence harvest when making their decisions.

Brian McCaffrey (USFWS) reported that the USFWS Special Action would remain in effect through July 18th and they had no intention of eliminating the 6-inch mesh restriction for subsistence harvest.

The Working Group requested that ADF&G consider delaying the first potential commercial opener up to a week and reconsider after another Working Group meeting.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. **Update on the Yupiit Nation Tribal Fish Forum on 1 July 2014 in Napaskiak:** Brian McCaffrey (USFWS) reported that USFWS participated in the forum and discussed management issues with the Yupiit Nation. He commented that tribal members then met to further discuss the Inter-Tribal Fish Commission.

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NEW BUSINESS:

- 1. Discussion of a Tier II proposal letter submitted to the Board of Fish for the Kuskokwim River:** The Working Group discussed a possible Tier II permit system on the Kuskokwim River. Art Nelson from the Bering Sea Fishermen Association commented on his experience with the Norton Sound Region Tier II permit system. There was uncertainty regarding the status of the letter submitted to the BOF, which John Linderman agreed to investigate (*For more information, please see the July 8 Informational Packet and audio recording*).

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS: No motions due to not having a quorum

COMMENTS FROM THE WORKING GROUP

Lisa Feyereisen commented on the need for managers to consider traditional ecological knowledge when making fishery recommendations. She stated concern that people would not want to conserve Chinook salmon in the future if there were commercial openings in the lower river prior to the middle river meeting their subsistence needs. She suggested that managers consider whether people have met their subsistence needs when making decisions regarding commercial openings. Ms. Feyereisen requested an update from management on their final decision regarding a commercial opener on Friday July 1, 2014. She also said that she would appreciate hearing more from OSM during the People to Be Heard.

Charlie Brown was in support of the commercial opening. He commented that near the mouth of the Kuskokwim River, residents did not generally harvest coho salmon for drying due to the poor drying weather.

Mary Sattler said that people in the middle river should not be deprived of subsistence chum salmon in favor of a commercial harvest.

LaMont Albertson commented that it would be a “good faith” measure by management to delay the commercial opening due to those still harvesting for subsistence needs.

Ray Collins said that the chum salmon were not an important subsistence harvest species in his region, and that coho salmon were generally better quality. Mr. Collins suggested the use of fish wheel live boxes to help harvest desired subsistence fish.

Bev Hoffman (via email) opposed a potential commercial opener.

Dave Cannon was concerned about the perception that a commercial opener might create among the residents of the Kuskokwim River. He said he would like the Chinook salmon CPUE's in the single digits over the next few days prior to a commercial opener decision. Mr. Cannon commented on his concerns regarding the Kwethluk weir crew who had been harassed over the 4th of July weekend. He suggested that the Working Group address this concern at the next meeting. He thanked USFWS for getting the Tuluksak and Kwethluk weirs operating.

Mary Sattler said that the commercial fishery on the Kuskokwim River had changed over the decades. She reported that many fishers in recent years had not made enough money during the commercial periods to cover expenses. Ms. Sattler commented that management should consider the implications of putting a cash value above a subsistence harvest. She also wondered if people in the middle river would be willing to accept chum salmon from the BTF.

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WORKING GROUP ATTENDANCE:

MEMBER SEAT:	NAME:
DOWNRIVER ELDER	<i>Absent</i>
UPRIVER ELDER	<i>Vacant</i>
LOWER RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mary Sattler
MIDDLE RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Dave Cannon
UPRIVER SUBSISTENCE	Absent
HEADWATERS SUBSISTENCE	Dan Esai (Briefly)
MEMBER AT LARGE	<i>Absent</i>
WESTERN INTERIOR RAC	Ray Collins
YK DELTA RAC	<i>Absent</i>
COMMERCIAL FISHING	Charlie Brown
SPORT FISHING	<i>Absent</i>
PROCESSOR	Henry Mitchell
ADF&G	Aaron Poetter
CHAIR	LaMont Albertson

Other Participants:

ADF&G Comm. Fish: Aaron Poetter, Aaron Tiernan, Chris Shelden, Kevin Schaberg, Colton Lipka, Zach Liller, John Linderman, Dan Bergstrom, Jen Peeks

Sport Fishing: John Chythlook

Subsistence Division: Andrew Brenner, Hiroko Ikuta

USFWS: Brian McCaffrey, Steve Miller, Lew Coggins, Neil Lalonde, Christina Legleu

OSM: Don Rivard

Dan Gillikin (KNA)	Lisa Feyereisen (Middle River Subsistence alternate)
Rebecca Frye (KNA)	Nick Kameroff (Middle River Subsistence alternate)
Roberta Chavez (ONC)	Carl Morgan (Western Interior RAC alternate)
Robert Lakander	Greg Hoffman Jr. (Commercial Fishing alternate)
Bill Bechtol (AVCP)	Ben Matheson (KYUK Radio)
Doug Molyneaux (Unaffiliated)	Walter Morgan
Kate Schaberg (NVGT)	Art Nelson (BSFA)
Buddy Kutch (NVGT)	

GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS:

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), Orutsarmiut Native Council (ONC), Kuskokwim Native Association (KNA), Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP), Georgetown Traditional Council (GTC), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), 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), Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group (KRSMWG, Working Group, or WG), Sustainable Escapement Goal (SEG), Biological Escapement Goal (BEG), Management Objective (MO), Amounts Reasonably Necessary for Subsistence (ANS), Emergency Order (EO), Bering Sea Fishermen's Association (BSFA)

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