

# Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

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

July 15, 2015

Meeting called to order at 10:00am on Wednesday July 15, 2015 and adjourned at 12:10pm. Total meeting time was 2 hours and 10 minutes. Nine full voting members were present and a quorum was established.

## AGENDA ITEMS:

**Continuing Business:** Run assessment and management actions.

**People to be Heard:**

**Old Business Discussion Topics:**

- Tier II discussion
- Update on the Inter-Tribal Fish Commission

**New Business Discussion Topics:**

- Summary of LaMont Albertson's meeting with Commissioner Cotton

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

- To email Kuskokwim River BOF proposals to Jen Peeks, [Jennifer.peeks@alaska.gov](mailto:Jennifer.peeks@alaska.gov), by Tuesday July 21 for Working Group distribution. *(All)*

## WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

1. Approve the agenda as amended. *Passed (Unanimous)*
2. To extend the meeting 10 minutes to cover *Comments from the Working Group*. *Passed (Unanimous)*
3. Adjourn. *Passed (Unanimous)*

## CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. **ADF&G Management Actions under consideration:** Aaron Poetter (ADF&G) reported that the Kuskokwim River from the mouth of the Kuskokwim to the Holitna would be opened for subsistence fishing with 6" mesh gear or smaller until further notice beginning at 9:00pm on July 15. An area near the mouth of the Aniak River would remain closed to protect schooling Chinook salmon. Mr. Poetter requested that the Working Group provide recommendations to the department for the 2015 coho salmon fishery.
2. **Overview of Kuskokwim River Salmon Run Assessment Projects:**
  - **Bethel Test Fish:** Zach Liller (ADF&G) reported that ~95-98% of the Chinook salmon run had passed through the lower portion of the river and run timing for 2015 was near average but considerably protracted. Mr. Liller commented that the inseason projections suggested the run was considerably less than historical average but within the range of the pre-season forecast. Mr. Liller reported that the peak of the chum salmon run had passed through the lower and middle portion of the river. The inseason projections suggested the chum salmon run would be comparable to the low runs in 1985, 1991 and late 1990's. The peak of the sockeye salmon run had also passed through the lower river. Mr. Liller remarked that the sockeye salmon run started slow but built quickly and was strong passing through Bethel. *(For more information on the BTF, please see the July 15<sup>th</sup> Informational Packet).*
  - **Aniak Test Fish:** Zach Liller reported that the peak of the Chinook salmon run passed through the middle river during the first two weeks of July. *(For more information on the ATF, please see the July 15<sup>th</sup> Informational Packet).*
  - **Weirs:** Zach Liller reported that the peak of the Chinook salmon spawning escapement was detected at tributary weirs in the lower, middle and upper river. He commented that it was likely the escapement goals would be met on the Kwethluk and George Rivers, but the KogrukluK escapement goal was uncertain. Mr. Liller reported that chum salmon escapement was low at all monitoring sites and projections suggested that the run would unlikely meet the KogrukluK escapement goal. The Kwethluk River sockeye salmon

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escapement was looking strong however other weir projects were well below average for this time of year. (For more information on weirs, please see the July 15<sup>th</sup> Informational Packet).

Aaron Tiernan (ADF&G) reported on the Kuskokwim Bay fishery: the sockeye salmon escapement was looking good and the Chinook salmon numbers were improving at the Kanektok weir. He noted that the Goodnews River Chinook salmon escapement remained low.

- **Radio Tagging Project:** Zach Liller reported that during the 2015 season 1,100 Chinook salmon had been tagged. ADF&G observed a 6% harvest rate of tagged fish during the limited subsistence opportunities. Mr. Liller added that telemetry data confirmed that the majority of tagged fish had entered spawning tributaries and were no longer vulnerable to harvest (For more information on the tagging project, please see the July 15<sup>th</sup> Informational Packet).
  - **Inseason Subsistence Harvest Assessment Project:** Dave Runfola (ADF&G) reported that a crew from the Subsistence Division was in the Aniak area and would be in Kalskag on July 16<sup>th</sup> to start their inseason creel surveys. They planned to visit communities between Kalskag and Stony River in the upcoming weeks.
3. **Subsistence Reports:**
- **Down River:** James Charles (Downriver Elder) reported that people downriver were feeling satisfied with their harvest.
  - **ONC Inseason Subsistence Report:** Dustin Wagner (ONC) reported that half of the families surveyed were waiting for coho salmon to finish their subsistence needs. (For full survey results, please see the July 15<sup>th</sup> Informational Packet).
  - **Lower River:** John Andrew (YK Delta RAC alternate) reported that some people had not met their subsistence needs. He commented that few chum salmon had been observed. Mr. Andrew reported that people were asking about commercial opportunity for silver salmon.  
Mike Williams Sr. (Lower River Subsistence) commented that the village of Akiak had met its harvest limit for the federal community harvest permit opportunity. He added that with the limited openings people had been able to harvest some fish. Mr. Williams reported that Tuluksak had not participated in the community harvest permit program and continued to struggle in meeting their subsistence needs. He commented that regulations had been confusing during the 2015 season and communication with villages needed to improve.  
Fritz Charles (Member at Large) commented that his family would rely on silver salmon this season.
  - **Middle River:** Lisa Feyereisen (Middle River Subsistence alternate) reported that people in Kalskag were waiting for silver salmon due to the low Chinook and chum salmon runs.
  - **Upriver:** Mark Leary (Upriver Subsistence) reported that people were slowing down on harvesting.  
Barb Carlson (Upriver Subsistence alternate) reported that people had been fishing but anticipated harvesting coho salmon to meet their subsistence needs. She commented that smokehouses had been used for short periods. Ms. Carlson added that recently more chum salmon had arrived.
  - **Headwaters:** Ray Collins (Western Interior RAC) reported that not many people had fished due to the net restrictions and no one had met their subsistence needs. He commented that the McGrath community had caught three mature king salmon and five jack salmon. People were catching Sheefish and one chum salmon had been caught.
4. **Sport Fishing:** LaMont Albertson (Sport Fishing) commented that people were sport fishing on the Aniak River. Bev Hoffman reported that the first raft groups were focusing on rainbow trout and Dolly Varden.
5. **Intercept Fishery Report:** Aaron Poetter reported that the 2015 Area M June chum salmon harvest was the lowest seen in several years. He commented that although Western Alaska chum salmon were present in Area M; there was no observable relationship between Area M and the Kogruluk weir escapement.
6. **Discussion of ADF&G Management consideration and discussion of possible alternatives:** Wayne Morgan (Middle River Subsistence alternate) suggested that management add buffer zones to the major tributaries during the 2016 season. He commented that people would be relying on coho salmon to meet subsistence needs. Ray Collins suggested that the department protect silver salmon for upriver

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communities who were more dependent on them. Mark Leary recommended there not be a subsistence schedule at this time for coho salmon.

7. **Motion for Discussion and Action:** N/A

**PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:** N/A

## **OLD BUSINESS:**

- **Tier II Process:** John Linderman (ADF&G) commented that Tier II was an allocative structure and ADF&G would remain neutral on all allocative issues. ADF&G would formulate comments for the BOF Tier II proposal based on background research and information which would be reviewed by the Commissioner's office. Mr. Linderman reported that the BOF would be seeking input from the public. He commented that the department and local staff could provide guidance in writing proposals but were not able to develop, write or submit an allocative proposal on the Working Group's behalf.  
**Discussion:** James Charles commented that people from his area did not want to see a Tier II system because they were already federally qualified subsistence users. Barb Carlson reported that the Stony-Holtna Advisory Committee submitted a package of three proposals that addressed the same issues that Tier II would address. Ray Collins commented that a Tier II system may limit younger generations, without a history of fishing, access to the available permits.
- **Update on the Inter-Tribal Fish Commission:** Mike Williams Sr. commented that 32 tribes would continue to meet and develop the ITFC with the goal of having a unified management system.

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

- **Summary of LaMont Albertson's meeting with Commissioner Cotton:** Mr. Albertson provided a brief summary of his meeting with Mr. Cotton. He suggested to the Commissioner that management decisions include the ITFC and USFWS. Mr. Albertson said he was encouraged by the meeting.

## **WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:**

### **Motion 1: To approve the agenda as amended. Passed (Unanimous)**

Bev Hoffman requested that ADF&G provide an update on the Kuskokwim Bay fishery and that Mike Williams Sr. provide an update on the Inter-Tribal Fish Commission.

### **Motion 2: To extend the meeting 10 minutes to cover Comments from the Working Group. Passed (Unanimous)**

### **Motion 3: Adjourn. Passed (Unanimous)**

## **COMMENTS FROM THE WORKING GROUP**

- Fritz Charles (Member at Large) commented that there had been confusion on the entities involved with fisheries management decisions. Mr. Charles recommended no commercial fishing opportunities until subsistence needs were met along the river. He suggested that People to be Heard (PTBH) be moved back to the beginning of the meeting. He also stated that weekly meetings were difficult for those working during the day.
- Lisa Feyereisen (Middle River Subsistence alternate) thanked the firefighter crews that came to Aniak to help with the area fires.
- Mike Williams Sr. (Lower River Subsistence) commented that people needed to continue their involvement with fishery discussions. He recommended at some point cutting down on advisory meetings, but looked forward to further conversations regarding the best interest of the fish and people.

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## **WORKING GROUP ATTENDANCE:**

<b>MEMBER SEAT:</b>	<b>NAME:</b>
DOWNRIVER ELDER	James Charles
UPRIVER ELDER	<i>Absent</i>
LOWER RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mike Williams Sr.
MIDDLE RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Lisa Feyereisen
UPRIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mark Leary
HEADWATERS SUBSISTENCE	<i>Absent</i>
MEMBER AT LARGE	Fritz Charles
WESTERN INTERIOR RAC	Ray Collins
YK DELTA RAC	John Andrew
COMMERCIAL FISHING	Greg Hoffman Jr.
SPORT FISHING	LaMont Albertson
PROCESSOR	<i>Absent</i>
ADF&G	Aaron Poetter
CHAIR	Bev Hoffman

## **Other Participants:**

ADF&G Comm. Fish: Zach Liller, Brittany Blain, Aaron Poetter, Chris Shelden, Aaron Tiernan, John Linderman, Nick Smith, Jan Conitz, Jen Peeks,

Sport Fishing: John Chythlook, Tim Viavant

Subsistence Division: Jim Simon, Hiroko Ikuta, David Runfola

USFWS: Aaron Webber

OSM: Don Rivard

Dustin Wagner (ONC)

Gerri Sumpter (Sen. Murkowski's office)

Doug Molyneux

Barbara Carlson (Upriver Subsistence alternate)

Wayne Morgan (Middle River Subsistence alternate)

## **GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS:**

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (**ADF&G**), Orutsararmiut 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**), Law Enforcement (**LE**), Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (**ITFC**)

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