

# Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

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

August 08, 2015

Meeting called to order at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday August 8, 2015 and adjourned at 11:10 a.m. Total meeting time was just over one hour and ten minutes. Eight full voting members were present and a quorum was established.

## AGENDA ITEMS:

### **People to be Heard:**

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

**Old Business Discussion Topics:** N/A

**New Business Discussion Topics:** N/A

**WORKING GROUP ACTION ITEMS:** *There were no action items at the time of this meeting.*

## WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

1. Approve the agenda as amended. *Passed (Unanimous)*
2. To accept the department's recommendation for a 6 hour commercial opening on Monday, August 10. *Passed (Unanimous)*
3. Adjourn. *Passed (Unanimous)*

## CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. **ADF&G Management Actions under consideration:** Aaron Poetter (ADF&G) reported that the department was considering a six hour coho salmon commercial opportunity for Subdistrict 1-B, with a two hour extension in the lower portion, on August 10. Mr. Poetter commented that the coho salmon run appeared consistent with the 2005, 2010, 2012, and 2013 seasons and that the recommendation was a conservative approach. He added that the department was not considering additional opportunities at this time.  
**Discussion:** USFWS reported that they were comfortable with the ADF&G recommendation. Charlie Brown (Commercial Fisher) commented that, based on his experience with historical lower river test fisheries, the fish were approximately one week late this season. He supported a commercial fishing opportunity so people could have money for moose hunting and noted the fishing sacrifices local residents had already made.
2. **Overview of Kuskokwim River Salmon Run Assessment Projects:**
  - **Bethel Test Fish:** Zach Liller (ADF&G) reported that modest numbers of coho salmon were being caught in the BTF and daily CPUEs had increased over the previous three days. The cumulative CPUE was below the 5 and 10-year averages and was at the bottom 40% of CPUEs recorded at Bethel. He reported that BTF data indicated that the run was either late or weaker than expected. The average peak of the coho salmon run was on August 8 and current BTF projections indicated a below average run size with an end of season CPUE ranging from 2,000-3,000 fish. Mr. Liller commented that, historically, when the cumulative CPUE exceeded 2,000 in the BTF, escapement goals had been met at the Kogrukluk and Kwethluk weirs, along with meeting subsistence needs and providing commercial harvest opportunities. *(For more information on the BTF, please see the August 8 Informational Packet).*
  - **Weirs:** Zach Liller reported that it was still early in the season for coho salmon at the escapement projects. He commented that the Kogrukluk weir was slightly below the long term average and the Kwethluk weir was 33% of the historical average for this time in the season. *(For more information on weirs, please see the August 8 Informational Packet).*
3. **Subsistence Reports:**
  - **Down River:** James Charles (Downriver Elder) reported that during a 15 minute drift he caught nine coho salmon and two chum salmon. He commented that people did not harvest many fish for drying when the weather was wet. Charlie Brown (Downriver Elder alternate) commented that an Eek fisher reported

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catching too many fish for his freezer during a recent outing and shared fish with Mr. Brown. Mr. Brown added that there had been few southerly winds throughout the season, which may have affected the fishery.

- **Lower River:** Bev Hoffman (Sport Fishing alternate) commented that she needed ~15 more fish and that ~80-90% of people in the Bethel area were finished fishing. Of those still needing fish, she reported they wanted to jar and freeze approximately 10 more coho salmon. Mike Williams Sr. (Lower River Subsistence) reported that Akiak fishers observed early silver salmon this season. He commented that 95% of residents in his area had met their needs. John Andrew (Downriver Elder alternate) reported that residents in the Kwethluk area were catching between 10-30 silver salmon; and on August 6 a fisher reported catching 80 silver salmon. Mr. Andrew added that the catch rate was better in the afternoon and the run looked average. He supported a commercial opener since most of the needs were met in the lower river and the run would be ending soon down river.
  - **Middle River:** Lisa Feyereisen (Middle River Subsistence alternate) commented that people were catching ~5-10 fish per drift. She reported that some people had just started fishing because they had been waiting for high volumes of fish to process quickly and dry all at once. Dave Cannon (Middle River Subsistence alternate) reported that a few people had done well fishing; one person caught 75 fish in three drifts. He had concern regarding the amount of fishing effort expected in the lower river and suggested that the department pay close attention to the BTF and escapement numbers before offering commercial opportunities. Wayne Morgan (Middle River Subsistence alternate) reported that he had gone rod and reel fishing on August 7 up the Aniak River and was more successful at the mouth of the Aniak. He supported a commercial opener, but with caution due to the low numbers.
  - **Upriver:** Mark Leary (Upriver Subsistence alternate) commented that he used the fishwheel on August 6 and caught one silver salmon and a few bright chum salmon. He drifted on August 7 with a 60 ft., 4 in. mesh net and caught 20 silver salmon in one drift. He supported an opener on August 10. Barb Carlson (Upriver Subsistence alternate) commented that people within the past two days had started drifting and catching ~10-20 fish within a couple of drifts. She commented that they observed a 1:1 ratio of chum to silver salmon. Ms. Carlson commented that the fish numbers warranted a commercial opening, but with caution, and that focus needed to be on numbers available for a commercial opening rather than on personal motivations. David John (Upriver Elder) provided a report on August 7 that people in his area were doing poorly in meeting their subsistence needs and that a few families had to fish for the entire community. He commented that the run appeared late and the numbers low compared to previous years. With a whitefish net Mr. John harvested 30 whitefish and 10 silver salmon. He added that they were observing fish with sores and puss on them.
  - **Headwaters:** Dan Esai (Headwaters Subsistence) reported that not many people were fishing and people were concentrating on chum salmon. He commented that Elders had informed them that the silver salmon would arrive in late August.
4. **Sport Fishing:** John Chythlook (ADF&G) and Bev Hoffman both reported that sport fishers were having a mixture of catch success.
  5. **Discussion of ADF&G Management consideration and discussion of possible alternatives:** (*See Motion 2*).

## **PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:**

- Bev Hoffman reported that Charles Guest, a commercial fisher from the lower river, supported a commercial opener and that his family relied on the money made during commercial openings to support other subsistence activities.
- Bev Hoffman reported that Nathan Underwood from Aniak did not support a commercial opening because he did not think there was an abundance of fish.
- Mike Williams Sr. commented that several people had informed him that they would like a commercial opener.

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**OLD BUSINESS:** N/A

**NEW BUSINESS:** N/A

## **WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:**

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

**Motion 2: To accept the department's recommendation for a 6 hour commercial opening on Monday, August 10. Passed (Unanimous)**

Bev Hoffman commented that she supported the department's recommendation, however suggested they continue to consider upriver needs and the run strength.

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

## **COMMENTS FROM THE WORKING GROUP:**

- Dan Esai (Headwaters Subsistence) suggested that aerial surveys be conducted earlier in the season. He also thanked ADF&G for putting in the headwaters' weir.
- James Charles (Downriver Elder) commented that he had gotten fresh cisco and had been seeing trout in places where they had not historically found them.
- Lisa Feyereisen (Middle River Subsistence alternate) encouraged Working Group members to be supportive of all the resource needs along the Kuskokwim River. She also commented on the importance of looking at biomass escapement and nutrient needs of the river system.
- Mark Leary (Upriver Subsistence) commented that he was not bothered by lower river reports of people relying on commercial fishing to support other subsistence opportunities.
- Bev Hoffman (Sports Fishing alternate) thanked Fritz Charles for chairing the meeting and the other Working Group members for their commitment to the process.

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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	Dan Esai
MEMBER AT LARGE	Fritz Charles
WESTERN INTERIOR RAC	<i>Absent</i>
YK DELTA RAC	<i>Absent</i>
COMMERCIAL FISHING	Charlie Brown
SPORT FISHING	Bev Hoffman
PROCESSOR	<i>Absent</i>
ADF&G	Aaron Poetter
CHAIR	Fritz Charles

## **Other Participants:**

ADF&G Comm. Fish: Aaron Poetter, Zach Liller, Chris Shelden, Dan Bergstrom, Jen Peeks  
Sport Fishing: John Chythlook  
Subsistence Division:

USFWS: Neil Lalonde  
OSM:

Doug Molyneaux (unaffiliated)

Wayne Morgan (Middle River Subsistence alternate)  
 Barbara Carlson (Upriver 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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