

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

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

December 17, 2013

Meeting called to order at 1:11 pm and adjourned at 4:30 pm at ADF&G in Bethel. Seven full voting members were present and a quorum was established.

AGENDA ITEMS:

Continuing Business:

- Review of 2013 preliminary escapement results.
- Our management dilemma.
- Draft Mission Statement follow-up and responses received to date.
- Choke point letter follow-up and responses.
 - Management recommendation responses from community meetings and public input received (letters, emails, resolutions, meeting summaries and radio shows).
- Continued management recommendation discussion.

Old Business Discussion Topics:

New Business Discussion Topics:

- Working Group outreach.
 - Facebook page.
 - Idea of Working Group radio public service announcements.
 - Summary of upcoming meetings and outreach opportunities.
- Letter from Akiak.

WORKING GROUP ACTION ITEMS: *these items were not called “action items” at the time of meeting, however work was assigned.*

1. Prepare Emergency Petitions to the Alaska Board of Fish to allow the use of dipnets in the subsistence salmon fishery.-Assigned to: *Dave Canon*
2. Prepare Emergency Petitions to the Alaska Board of Fish to allow the restriction of net length in the subsistence fishery. -Assigned to: *Dave Canon*

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

1. Approve the agenda as amended. Motion passed unanimously.
2. To accept edits made to the Draft KRSMWG mission statement. Edits were submitted by the Georgetown Traditional Council. For details on this submission, please see the Informational packet for the December 17 meeting. Motion failed (5 yeas, 2 nays).

PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:

- 1) Angie Whitman said that she appreciated the purpose and efforts of the group, but that greater effort was needed in both state and federal arenas. She urged that, because the salmon life cycle extends beyond the rivers, management discussions and solutions needed to extend beyond the local rivers as well. She urged the Working Group to engage on a higher level in order to reach those that might be able to affect the forces acting on salmon beyond the local level. Bev Hoffman thanked Angie and acknowledged ongoing efforts to reach these larger arenas by members and participants in the Working Group process.

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- 2) Tim Andrew of AVCP expressed great concern about runs of Chinook salmon on the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers, and beyond. He alluded to the salmon summit in Unalakleet, suggesting that the bar for escapement was being lowered, as targets for escapement have not been achieved. He said that problems similar to those seen in other areas are beginning to appear on the Kuskokwim. He stressed conservation for the benefit of future generations. He noted literature on rebuilding stocks and the long time-spans it could take to rebuild stocks. He suggested that local people did not want to go down that road. Doug Molyneux responded, noting that AVCP had in 2012 celebrated individuals and groups for protest fishing, and noted that this was in contradiction to Tim's comments at this meeting. Chair Bev Hoffman called point of order, suggesting that continued discussion would be better pursued outside of meeting proceedings.
- 3) Jack Reakoff of the WI RAC alluded to a letter sent by the RAC to the Working Group detailing the concerns expressed by the RAC for Chinook salmon runs on the Kuskokwim River. He thanked the Chair and said that he would be listening. Bev Hoffman thanked Jack for the letter, stating that it had been received and that she had read and appreciated it.
- 4) Lisa Feyereisen of Chuathbaluk stated that she and Tracy Simeon were there to participate and express their concern for Chinook salmon and stress conservation for future generations "so that our grandchildren can actually look at a Chinook someday and not just see them in pictures."

AGENDA ITEMS:

CONTINUING BUSINESS:

Review of 2013 preliminary escapement results: Travis Elison, the ADF&G Kuskokwim Area management biologist, provided a synopsis of the run indices for all monitored salmon species in the Kuskokwim River in 2013. This included weir and aerial survey information from 2013. He stated that, although runs of others species looked good, the Chinook salmon run appeared to have been the poorest in recorded history. He stated that Chinook salmon escapement goals had not been met in the Kuskokwim River and apologized for the department's management in 2013.

Our management dilemma: Elison discussed the presented Bethel Test Fishery (BTF) and Chinook salmon run reconstruction information for 2012; historical commercial harvest information (2002-2012) as an index of fishing power in the subsistence fishery; and harvest timing information as indicated by the BTF (1989-1999). Elison discussed the 2012 fishing schedule and its effect on BTF in that year, and the typical harvest timing in the Lower Kuskokwim River as related to BTF. Travis provided a rough idea of the harvest power among subsistence users and how the length and timing of openings could affect the Chinook salmon run. He also noted, while recognizing the hardship experienced by users, the success of closures in 2012 in helping to achieve Chinook salmon escapement goals.

Draft mission statement follow-up and responses received to date: During the August 27 meeting, a draft mission statement was presented to the Working Group for its consideration. The Working Group discussed, but did not adopt the draft at that time, requesting feedback from interested parties. Georgetown traditional council provided comments in the form of an edited draft in late September. The Working Group discussed this edited statement. Some felt that the issue was important, but not time sensitive and requested that it be put off until a later time. A motion was made to adopt the mission

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statement as edited; the motion failed. For details, please see meeting informational packets from August 27 and December 17, 2014; and/or review audio recordings from those meetings.

Choke point letter follow-up and responses: During the August 27 meeting, the Working Group resolved to draft a letter to communities associated with fishing “choke points” identified along the river. This letter can be found on pages 16 and 17 of the December 17 informational packet. The letter requested that villages located around identified choke points join with the Working Group to find solutions to “our common goal which is to preserve our Chinook salmon resource for future generations.”

Letters were received from Oscarville and Napaskiak in response to the letter from the Working Group. These can be found in the August 27 informational packet from pages 18-22. The Working Group discussed these responses. The Discussion included an assertion from villages that choke point issues came from outside their communities. There was also discussion of high seas bycatch, which members agreed was a problem. Members also commented, recognizing that the impact of bycatch on Kuskokwim River Chinook salmon was far less than the impact from local subsistence users.

Management recommendation responses from community meetings and public input received: Various Working Group members and state and federal staff reported on the results of public meetings in a number of villages throughout the Kuskokwim River drainage. Participants reported that on first contact, community members tended to be reluctant to accept suggestions of upcoming restrictions in 2014, but on further discussion of the danger to Chinook salmon, many communities showed a willingness to work toward an agreement. Reports included village meetings in Chuathbaluk, Aniak, Lower Kalskag, Atmautluak, Kwethluk, Akiachak, Bethel (ONC), and a radio call in show on the local radio station (KYUK Bethel). There were also plans to meet with Kasigluk, Tuntutuliak, and Upper Kalskag. Other input came in the form of letters from the communities of Lower Kalskag, Akiak, Chuathbaluk, Napaimute, and Kuskokwim Native Association. Some communities commented strongly about conservation of Chinook salmon, others commented about the rights of local communities to practice their subsistence lifestyle without interference; and their belief that local traditions were more effective in properly managing salmon resources than recently adopted regulations. Responses to these included recognition that many of the practices in use today had not been available in past generations, and that these practices (such as the use of commercial fishing gear for subsistence) contradicts the assertion that people are fishing today as they always have.

Continued management recommendation discussion: The group decided to focus on discussion at that point. Discussion included issues of bycatch, the possibility of eliminating commercial fishing in the Kuskokwim, early season closures each year to allow kings to migrate, perpetual restrictions on mesh size, imposing a tier I conditional permit for specific subsistence uses, exploration of what a federal 804 restriction would look like, the possibility of a household quota for subsistence chinook salmon, possible reduction in net length, and a request by an Akiak resident to keep local tributaries open to subsistence Chinook salmon fishing. The department agreed to provide a preliminary plan for discussion at the upcoming two day Working Group meeting in January.

OLD BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS:

Working Group Outreach: There was discussion on plans for future community meetings, radio shows and announcements, and VHF radio announcements for addressing Chinook salmon subsistence fishing. The Working Group went on to discuss the creation of its Facebook page for local outreach. The Working Group also spoke of reaching out to local groups like AVCP for help with getting messages out.

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Letter from Akiak: Akiak residents were not prepared to comment on a letter sent recently from the tribal council. The letter detailed intent on the part of Akiak residents to fish in their traditional way in 2014. Akiak residents commented that a meeting would be occurring on January 19-20 in which several of the villages from Kwethluk to Tuluksak would meet to discuss options and intentions for the 2014 fishing season.

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

Motion 1: Approve the agenda as amended. Motion passed (unanimous):

Members requested the agenda be amended to add discussion of recent village meetings and the Yupik radio talk show under the agenda item discussion feedback on recent outreach attempts. Members also asked to add a new agenda item under New Business to address the recent letter from the village of Akiak regarding its intent with regard to 2014 subsistence Chinook salmon fishing.

Motion 2: To accept edits made to the Draft KRSMWG mission statement. Motion failed (5 yeas, 2 nays): Edits were submitted by the Georgetown Traditional Council. For details on this submission, please see the Informational packet for the December 17 meeting.

Some members suggested that this was an important item, but that it was not timely and should be tabled for a future meeting. There were statements made about postponing the issue, but there was no motion made to table this item for future consideration.

COMMENTS FROM THE WORKING GROUP:

Travis Elison commented about reduction in net length, saying that restrictions of this type are not allowed under current regulation, but that Emergency Petitions to the Board would be one way of exploring this and other possibilities for gear restrictions, such as the use of dip nets. There was agreement among Working Group members that this was a good path to pursue.

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WORKING GROUP ATTENDANCE:

MEMBER SEAT:	NAME:
DOWNRIVER ELDER	James Charles
UPRIVER ELDER	<i>Vacant</i>
LOWER RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mike Williams
MIDDLE RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Dave Cannon
UPRIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mark Leary
HEADWATERS SUBSISTENCE	<i>Absent</i>
MEMBER AT LARGE	Henry Lupie
WESTERN INTERIOR RAC	<i>Absent</i>
YK DELTA RAC	Bob Aloysius
COMMERCIAL FISHING	<i>Absent</i>
SPORT FISHING	LaMont Albertson
PROCESSOR	<i>Absent</i>
ADF&G	Travis Elison
CHAIR	Bev Hoffman

Other Participants:

ADF&G Comm. Fish: Aaron Tiernan, Chris Shelden, Zac Liller

Sport Fish: John Chythlook, Tom Taube

Subsistence Division: Dave Runfola

USFWS: Brian McCaffery, Robert Sundown, Spencer Rearden, Patrick Snow, Steve Berendzen, Trent Liebich,

OSM: Don Rivard,

Rebecca Frye (KNA)

Tim Andrew (AVCP)

Greg Roczicka (ONC)

Mary Sattler (Bethel)

Jackson Williams (Akiak)

Lilian Lliabon (Akiak)

Angie Whitman

Ivan M. Ivan (Akiak)

Ron Simon (Tuntutuliak)

Doug Molyneaux (Unaffiliated)

Jack Reakoff (Western Interior RAC)

John W. Andrew (Downriver Elder Alternate)

Meagan Leary (Native Village of Napaimute)

Casie Stockdale (AVCP)

Fritz Charles (Member at Large Alternate)

Lisa Feyereisen (Native Village of Chuathbaluk)

Tracy Simeon (Native Village of Chuathbaluk)

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS:

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (**ADF&G**), Orutsararmiut Native Council (**ONC**), Kuskokwim Native Association (**KNA**), Association of Village Council Presidents (**AVCP**), 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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