

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

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

June 14, 2017

Meeting called to order at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday June 14, 2017 and adjourned at 11:55 a.m. Meeting time was approximately two hours. Nine full voting members were present and a quorum was established.

AGENDA ITEMS:

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) Management Actions Under Consideration:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Management Actions:

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: *No Action Items at the time of this meeting.*

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

1. Approve the agenda as amended. *Passed (Unanimous)*
2. Support the ADF&G recommendation to delay the next Chinook salmon directed opportunity in state managed waters from Aniak up to the Holitna River mouth until more information can be reviewed from the assessment projects. *Passed (6 yeas, 1 nay)*
3. Adjourn at 11:55 a.m. *Passed (Unanimous)*

ADF&G MANAGEMENT ACTIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION: Aaron Tiernan (ADF&G Assistant Area Biologist) reported that ADF&G was not considering additional harvest opportunities at this time and would continue to monitor the inseason assessment projects. He commented that, to date, Chinook salmon numbers remained low at the assessment projects.

USFWS MANAGEMENT ACTIONS: Benjamin Staton (USFWS) reported the June 12 harvest estimates in federally managed waters from Tuntutuliak up to Akiak. Data was collected from 191 interviews and 2 aerial surveys. USFWS estimated ~5,510 total salmon were harvested; ~2,360 Chinook salmon; ~2,370 chum salmon; and ~780 sockeye salmon. Nick Kameroff (KRITFC) reported that the KRITFC recommended delaying the next subsistence opening for an additional week due to the low Chinook salmon numbers; the next KRITFC meeting was scheduled for June 16. Ken Stahlnecker (USFWS) reported that the Chinook salmon inseason data was “extreme enough” to suspend the pre-season harvest objectives until there was more information on the 2017 Chinook salmon run strength and timing.

PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:

- Bev Hoffman (Bethel) commented that harvest numbers were low during the June 12 opportunity and that she supported more conservation. She requested information regarding trawl fisheries and the number of Chinook salmon caught as bycatch to date during the 2017 season.
- Aaron Poetter (ADF&G) announced that he accepted a new position within ADF&G effective July 1, 2017. Aaron Tiernan (ADF&G) would become the acting Area Management Biologist for the Kuskokwim region.
- Warren Nicolai (Kwethluk) commented that he caught one chum salmon by the Johnson River. He reported that fishers using deeper nets than his own averaged nine Chinook salmon and seven chum salmon.

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- Gerald Kameroff (Kalskag) reported that he caught four chum salmon and one sheefish during the June 12 opening. He commented that others caught one to three Chinook salmon per boat.
- Darren Deacon (Kalskag) requested information regarding Chinook salmon bycatch in the BS/AI pollock fishery.

SUBSISTENCE REPORTS:

- **Lowest River:** Charlie Brown (Commercial Fisher) reported that one fisher caught nine Chinook salmon. John Andrew (Downriver Elder alternate) commented that during the June 12 subsistence opening harvest numbers were minimal; one boat caught 20 fish total by sweeping a sandbar. Mr. Andrew recommended delaying fishing for an additional week and shortening the fishing period.
- **ONC Subsistence Report:** Janessa Esquible (ONC) reported that 24 fishcamps had been surveyed by ONC as of June 9. Ms. Esquible noted that in the June 14 ONC written report, the data may have been incorrect for the number of fishcamps that began fishing on June 12 and the number of fishcamps that had not started fishing. *(For more information on the ONC report, please see the June 14 Informational Packet.)*
- **Lower River:** Mary Peltola (Lower River Subsistence alternate) reported that her family caught three Chinook, three chum, and two sockeye salmon in their setnet. Alissa Rogers (Lower River Subsistence alternate) reported that fishers on average made six drifts and caught three to eight Chinook salmon. Fritz Charles (Member at Large) commented that his father-in-law caught approximately five Chinook salmon in six hours above Bethel. Charles Guest (Member at Large alternate) reported that people fishing above the Johnson River had low harvest rates during the June 12 opening; he supported conservation efforts for Chinook salmon. Mike Williams Sr. (Lower River Subsistence) reported that Akiak area fishers had several ripped nets due to snags during the June 12 opening. He commented that Elders had said Chinook salmon would swim through the main river channel due to the 2017 river conditions.
- **Middle River:** Dave Cannon (Middle River Subsistence) reported that fishing had been slow during the June 12 opportunity. He commented that one family below Aniak caught four Chinook salmon and four chum salmon in 15 drifts; two boats near Chuathbaluk caught seven Chinook salmon and several chum salmon. Mr. Cannon reported that several people suggested closing the river to fishing due to the low Chinook salmon numbers. Lisa Feyereisen (Middle River Subsistence alternate) observed 21 boats drifting and 10 setnets from the bluffs below Kalskag up to Chuathbaluk during the June 12 opportunity; oral reports from fishers indicated few fish were harvested and some fishers commented that they would focus on sockeye and coho salmon during the 2017 season. Nick Kameroff (KRITFC) commented that he made four drifts and caught one chum salmon.
- **Upriver:** Mark Leary (Upriver Subsistence) reported that the Napaimute fish wheel had been operating for five days and had not caught any fish. During the June 12 opening, Mr. Leary was the only fisher in the Napaimute area and reported catching nine Chinook salmon and three chum salmon within 16 hours of fishing; nine of the fish were caught at night. Barbara Carlson (Upriver Subsistence alternate) reported that the Sleetmute fish wheel caught one Chinook salmon, which was released. She caught one sheefish and one small male Chinook salmon using a drift gillnet; and one whitefish and one pike overnight in her setnet. Ms. Carlson reported that some people were waiting to fish for sockeye salmon.
- **Headwaters:** Dan Esai (Headwaters Subsistence) reported that his brother-in-law caught four whitefish, a few suckers and one sheefish. He commented that a Stony River fisher caught nine kings and some whitefish. Mr. Esai supported delaying additional openings until the Chinook salmon numbers increased. Ray Collins (Western Interior RAC) reported that a fisher caught one broad whitefish using a net.

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CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. **Overview of Kuskokwim River Salmon Run Assessment Projects:** Zach Liller (ADF&G Research Biologist) provided an overview of the inseason assessment projects. (*For more information on the 2017 inseason assessment projects, please see the June 14 Informational Packet*).
- **Bethel Test Fish:** As of June 13, the cumulative Chinook salmon CPUE was 23. To date, ADF&G estimated that ~13–16% of the Chinook salmon run had passed Bethel based on historical data. BTF indicated a weak Chinook salmon run as of June 13. The cumulative CPUE for chum salmon was 60 as of June 13; historically ~2% of the run have passed Bethel to date.
- **Aniak Test Fish:** As of June 12, there were more Chinook salmon than chum and sockeye salmon caught at the ATF.
- **Sonar:** As of June 13, an estimated ~11,000-12,000 Chinook salmon had passed the sonar project site. Chum salmon abundance exceeded Chinook salmon abundance.
- **Radio Tagging Project:** As of June 13, a total of 76 Chinook salmon had been tagged. ADF&G noted that data from the 2017 season could not be compared to previous years.
- **Subsistence Division project update:** David Runfola (ADF&G, Subsistence Division) summarized subsistence harvest and effort data from the June 12 opportunity in the lower river.
2. **Sport Fishing:** John Chythlook (ADF&G, Sport Fish Division) reported that, to date, sport fishing for Chinook salmon in the Kuskokwim River drainage remained closed.
3. **Processor Report:** Aaron Tiernan (ADF&G) reported that Pacific Harvest Seafoods had withdrawn their 2017 processor registration; no processors were registered to date.
4. **Intercept Fishery Report:** Charles Brazil (ADF&G) reported on bycatch data from the 2017 BS/AI pollock fishery. Zach Liller (ADF&G) commented that he would work with ADF&G staff to compile additional bycatch information for the June 21 Working Group meeting.
5. **Discussion of ADF&G Management Consideration and Discussion of Possible Alternatives:** (*See Motion 2*)

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

1. **Approve the agenda as amended. Passed (Unanimous)**
2. **Support the ADF&G recommendation to delay the next Chinook salmon directed opportunity in state managed waters from Aniak up to the Holitna River mouth until more information can be reviewed from the assessment projects. Passed (6 yeas, 1 nay)**
Some members requested that an emergency Working Group meeting be called prior to June 21 if assessment project numbers significantly changed.
3. **Adjourn at 11:55 a.m. Passed (Unanimous)**

COMMENTS FROM THE WORKING GROUP:

- Mark Leary commented that the credibility of USFWS and KRITFC had been “boosted” by their decision to delay the next harvest opportunity in the lower river.
- Fritz Charles commented that fishers had reported that the range finder used by USFWS to measure net length appeared inaccurate. Ken Stahlnecker (USFWS) responded that he would follow up with the concern. Mr. Charles also recommended delaying the next fishing period due to low Chinook salmon numbers.

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WORKING GROUP ATTENDANCE:

MEMBER SEAT:	NAME:
DOWNRIVER ELDER	Absent
UPRIVER ELDER	<i>Vacant</i>
LOWER RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Alissa Rogers
MIDDLE RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Dave Cannon
UPRIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mark Leary
HEADWATERS SUBSISTENCE	Daniel Esai
MEMBER AT LARGE	Fritz Charles*/ Barbara Carlson
WESTERN INTERIOR RAC	Ray Collins
YK DELTA RAC	Bob Aloysius
COMMERCIAL FISHING	Charlie Brown
SPORT FISHING	LaMont Albertson
PROCESSOR	<i>Vacant</i>
KRITFC	Nick Kameroff
ADF&G	Aaron Tiernan
CHAIR	LaMont Albertson

**Fritz Charles was excused at 11:10 a.m. and Daniel Esai at 11:15 a.m.*

Other Participants:		
ADF&G Comm. Fish: Aaron Poetter, Aaron Tiernan, Zach Liller, Chuck Brazil, Nick Smith, Jen Peeks Sport Fishing: John Chythlook Subsistence Division: Lisa Olson, Dave Runfola, Anna Godduhn, Odin Miller, Daniel Gonzalez, Deanne Lincoln, Chris McDevitt Commissioner's Office: Jill Klein		
USFWS: Ken Stahlnecker, Lew Coggins, Ben Staton, Ken Harper, Frank Harris OSM: Pippa Kenner, Gary Decossas		
Janessa Esquible (ONC) Tim Andrew (ONC) Elijah Lindley (ONC) Madeline Jovanovich (ADF&G Intern) Orië Reich (KRITFC) Ben Guest (KRITFC) Bill Bechtol (KRITFC)	Dan Gillikin (NVN) Gerald Kameroff (Kalskag) Warren Nicolai (Kwethluk) Albert Kawagley (Bethel) Kate Schaberg (GTC) Bev Hoffman (Bethel) Darren Deacon (Kalskag)	WG Alternates: Greg Hoffman Jr. Lisa Feyereisen Mary Peltola
	Media:	

GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS:

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (**ADF&G, department, State**), Orutsararmiut Native Council (**ONC**), 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**), Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (**KRITFC**), Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands (**BS/AI**).

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