

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

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

June 21, 2017

Meeting called to order at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday June 21, 2017 and adjourned at 1:22 p.m. Meeting time was approximately 3 hours and 20 minutes. 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:

ADF&G Leadership Introductions/ Q&A:

Continuing Business: Run assessment and management actions.

Old Business Discussion Topics: *N/A*

New Business Discussion Topics:

- Update on state and federal law enforcement (LE)

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. To extend the Working Group meeting until 12:30 p.m. *Passed (Unanimous)*
3. To extend the Working Group meeting until all agenda items have been discussed. *Passed (Unanimous)*
4. Adjourn at 1:22 p.m. *Passed (Unanimous)*

ADF&G MANAGEMENT ACTIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION: Aaron Tiernan (ADF&G Assistant Area Biologist) reported that there were no new management actions under consideration to date. He commented that Chinook salmon numbers remained weak at the Bethel Test Fishery (BTF). To date, ADF&G managers were focused on meeting Chinook salmon escapement goals.

USFWS MANAGEMENT ACTIONS: Nick Kameroff (KRITFC) reported that KRITFC and USFWS were delaying additional management actions until their meeting on June 23, 2017.

PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:

- George Guy (Kwethluk) commented that people from his community were frustrated with the 2017 restrictions and he was concerned that 4" mesh gillnets were depleting the whitefish.
- Ivan M. Ivan (Akiak) commented that Akiak residents were experiencing "mental anguish" and asked managers to allow people to fish.
- Chariton Epchook (Kwethluk) commented that the use of "fishing windows" as a management tool had been successful in the past. Mr. Epchook reported that a Kwethluk joint group would be submitting resolutions regarding sport fishing and hunting on the Kwethluk River and the use of 4" mesh gear.
- Tad Lindley (Bethel) asked the Working Group to consider a continuous setnet opportunity providing that the fisher remains with the net while in operation.
- Tiffany Zulkosky (YKHC) requested, on behalf of the YKHC Board, an increase in Chinook salmon ocean habitat research because people had been mentally and physically affected by the subsistence closures.
- Lena Foss (Akiak) reported that people were stealing fish and requested a fishing opening.

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- Walter Jim (ONC) commented that the BTF site was not a traditional fishing location. He reported that many fishcamps were empty and that people were no longer able to practice their “way of life,” which had been taught by their ancestors.
- Jennie Zaukar (Crooked Creek) commented that no fish were hanging on the dry racks in her area and requested that managers open the river to fishing.
- Albert Kawagley (Bethel) commented that he was concerned about food security during the winter if people were unable to fish.
- Julia Zaukar (Crooked Creek) commented that people were not at fault for the low Chinook salmon run, but that it was the river’s fault. She added that delaying fishing would result in catching poorer quality fish.
- Moses Owen (Akiak) commented that there were too many regulations and was concerned that it would be a difficult winter if people were not able to catch fish. He commented that it was his belief that his “Creator” made the fish.
- Mishka Andreanoff (Crooked Creek) commented that fish were his traditional food and it would be difficult to endure without them. He recommended working together to address the problem of low Chinook salmon runs.
- John Andrew (Kwethluk), representing Kwethluk IRA, commented that on June 20 he received three fish and gave them away to other community members. He asked for an additional opening before the end of June. He commented that some people were traveling downriver to fish.
- Bev Hoffman (Bethel) was concerned by the low fish numbers at the assessment projects. Ms. Hoffman was also concerned by the Chinook salmon bycatch in other fisheries.
- Sandra Nicori (Kwethluk) compared the fishing restrictions to not being allowed to buy store food.
- Joe Kameroff Jr. (Aniak) reported that he was promoting conservation in his area.
- Sam Jackson (Akiak) reported that he traveled over 100 miles to fish, which was not a traditional practice.
- Christine Sakar-John (Crooked Creek) commented that she wanted commercial fishing to stop and that many people depended on fish for food.
- Robert Lekander (ONC) commented that there had been poor public communication regarding BTF data. He commented on the importance of subsistence activities.
- Bernice Sakar (Crooked Creek) recommended that priests bless the river.
- Father Martin Nicolai (Kwethluk) commented that Chinook salmon bycatch could feed families along the Kuskokwim River and requested fishing openings before the end of June 2017.

ADF&G LEADERSHIP INTRODUCTIONS / Q&A: Commissioner Cotton (ADF&G), Hazel Nelson (ADF&G Subsistence Division) and Jill Klein (ADF&G Commissioner’s Office) heard public concerns from Working Group participants. Several participants discussed salmon bycatch in the pollock fishery and issues related to ocean habitat.

SUBSISTENCE REPORTS:

- **Lowest River:** James Charles (Downriver Elder) commented on the unique river conditions during the 2017 fishing season. He reported that in recent days there had been an increase in catch rate. Charlie Brown (Commercial Fisher) reported that he had not been fishing due to a traditional 40–day abstinence that follows the death of a community member.

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- **ONC Subsistence Report:** Janessa Esquible (ONC) reported that 46 unique fish camps had been surveyed as of June 8, 2017. *(For more information on the ONC report, please see the June 21 Informational Packet.)*
- **Lower River:** Mike Williams Sr. (Lower River Subsistence) commented that some people were fishing near Quinhagak and in non-salmon spawning tributaries of the Kuskokwim River. He commented that people had been stressed due to the restrictions and some were stealing fish from fish camps.
- **Middle River:** Dave Cannon (Middle River Subsistence) commented that people in Aniak were thankful for the Aniak Test Fishery fish and would like more fishing opportunities. Lisa Feyereisen (Middle River Subsistence alternate) commented that people were concerned regarding the low Chinook salmon numbers.
- **Upriver:** Mark Leary (Upriver Subsistence) reported that the Napaimute fish wheel had been operating but not catching fish. He observed empty fish racks while traveling from Napaimute down to Bethel by boat. Barbara Carlson (Upriver Subsistence alternate) operated the Sleetmute fish wheel for 24 hours on June 20 and caught six Chinook salmon, which were live released; two sockeye salmon; and one chum salmon.
- **Headwaters:** Dan Esai (Headwaters Subsistence) commented that no nets were being used in Nikolai. Ray Collins (Western Interior RAC) reported that people had not been using nets due to high debris in the river.

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 21 Informational Packet).*
 - **Bethel Test Fish:** Mr. Liller indicated that the Chinook salmon run appeared weak and may not meet the escapement goals. To date, chum and sockeye salmon were exceeding Chinook salmon in BTF catches.
 - **Aniak Test Fish:** ATF indicated Chinook salmon remained the most abundant species in the middle and upper river.
 - **Radio Tagging Project:** To date, Chinook salmon catches had increased at the lower river tagging site.
 - **Weirs:** The majority of escapement projects were installed and operating. The Kogruklu River weir expected to be fish tight by July 21 and the Salmon River (Pitka Fork) weir by June 22, 2017 as scheduled.
 - **Subsistence Division project update:** David Runfola (ADF&G Subsistence Division) summarized the inseason Subsistence Division project in the lower and middle river.
2. **Intercept Fishery Report:** Zach Liller reviewed the Bering Sea bycatch document prepared by Mr. Liller and Dr. Katie Howard (ADF&G).
3. **Discussion of ADF&G Management Consideration and Discussion of Possible Alternatives:** Charles Brazil (ADF&G) reported that there were no new management actions as of June 21.

NEW BUSINESS:

- **Law Enforcement update:** Ken Stahlnecker (USFWS) reported that as of June 20 there had been good compliance with the fishing regulations.

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COMMENTS FROM THE WORKING GROUP:

- Fritz Charles (Member at Large) reported that, to date, Elders were encouraging regulation compliance. He commented on the amount of Chinook salmon caught as bycatch in other fisheries.
- Bob Aloysius (YK Delta RAC) commented that the decrease in Chinook salmon was a result of human actions and, historically, people did not target Chinook salmon.
- Ray Collins commented on the impact that commercial fishing had on the Kuskokwim River and on the change in gear size used.
- Mike Williams Sr. asked managers to consider supporting an Elder fishery opportunity.
- Mary Peltola encouraged communities to coordinate with ONC to receive BTF fish.
- John Andrew (Downriver Elder alternate) commented that lower river community residents expressed interest in being on the Working Group.

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WORKING GROUP ATTENDANCE:

MEMBER SEAT:	NAME:
DOWNRIVER ELDER	James Charles
UPRIVER ELDER	<i>Vacant</i>
LOWER RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mike Williams Sr.
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 11:08 a.m.*

Other Participants:		
ADF&G Comm. Fish: Aaron Poetter, Aaron Tiernan, Zach Liller, Chuck Brazil, John Linderman, Nick Smith, Jen Peeks Sport Fishing: John Chythlook Subsistence Division: Hazel Nelson, Lisa Olson, Dave Runfola, Anna Godduhn, Odin Miller, Daniel Gonzalez, Deanne Lincoln, Chris McDevitt Commissioner's Office: Sam Cotten, Jill Klein		
USFWS: Ken Stahlnecker, Lew Coggins, Ben Staton OSM: Pippa Kenner, Frank Harris		
Jennifer Hooper (AVCP) Ben Anderson Agimuk (KRITFC) Bill Bechtol (KRITFC) Orië Reich (KRITFC) Jim Simon (KRITFC, BSFA) Janessa Esquible (ONC) Tim Andrew (ONC) Elijah Lindley (ONC) Avery Hoffman (ONC) Walter Jim (ONC) Robert Lekander (ONC) Tiffany Zulkosky (YKHC) Moses Owen (Akiak) Sam Jackson (Akiak) Ivan M. Ivan (Akiak) Lena Foss (Akiak)	Megan Leary (Aniak) Tad Lindley (Bethel) Albert Kawagley (Bethel) Bev Hoffman (Bethel) Rose Sakar (Crooked Creek) Agnes Andreadoff (Crooked Creek) Jenny Zaukar (Crooked Creek) Bernice Zaukar (Crooked Creek) Gerald Kameroff (Kalskag) Billy Alexie (Kalskag) George Guy (Kwethluk) Sandi Nicori (Kwethluk) Warren Nicolai (Kwethluk) Father Martin Nicolai (Kwethluk) Chariton Epphook (Kwethluk) Jonathan Samuelson (GTC)	Joe Kameroff (NVN) Dan Gillikin (NVN) Jacob Wise (NVN) Paula Schiefer (Univ. of Aberdeen) WG Alternates: John Andrew Lisa Feyereisen Greg Hoffman Jr. Mary Peltola Alissa Rogers Lisa Feyereisen Charles Guest Media: Lisa Demer (ADN) Anna Rose MacArthur (KYUK)

GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS:

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (**ADF&G, department, State**), Orutsarmiut 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**), Native Village of Napaimute (**NVN**), Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation (YKHC)

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