

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

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

June 23, 2017

Meeting called to order at 1:01 p.m. on Friday June 23, 2017 and adjourned at 3:51 p.m. Meeting time was approximately 2 hours and 50 minutes. Ten full voting members were present and a quorum was established.

AGENDA ITEMS:

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

People to be Heard:

Continuing Business: Run assessment and management actions

Old Business Discussion Topics:

- Law Enforcement update

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 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)/ Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (KRITFC) recommendation for a 12-hour opening on June 24 for 6" mesh or less, 25 fathom gillnets from Aniak to the Kuskokwim River mouth with the stipulation that the same opening be provided in the upper river. *Failed (7 yeas, 3 nays)*
3. For a 12-hour opening in state managed waters from Aniak to the Holitna River mouth and to encourage people to let Chinook salmon go if alive, only taking Chinook salmon for a taste of fresh fish. *Passed (9 yeas, 1 nay)*
4. For ADF&G to exercise their authority in an emergency order to close all drainages immediately. *Failed (2 yeas, 8 nays)*
5. Adjourn at 3:51 p.m. *Passed (Unanimous)*

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE ACTIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION: Nick Kameroff (KRITFC) reported that a 12-hour opening for 6" mesh gillnets in federally managed waters on June 24 was recommended to USFWS by the KRITFC. Ken Stahlnecker (USFWS) reported that USFWS intended to provide the recommended opportunity. Some Working Group members were concerned regarding the June 24 opening due to Chinook salmon conservation.

ADF&G MANAGEMENT ACTIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION: Aaron Poetter (ADF&G Area Management Biologist) requested recommendations from Working Group members regarding state managed waters from Aniak to the Holitna River mouth.

PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:

- Walter Jim (Bethel) was concerned about fish being caught at the mouth of the Kuskokwim River and questioned the legitimacy of the pre-season forecast. Mr. Jim commented that, due to the restrictions, people had to travel to non-traditional fishing grounds; the ONC Subsistence Board supported opening the river to fishing. Zach Liller (ADF&G) explained how the pre-season forecast was used in management decisions and that the 2017 forecast had predicted a below average run.
- Chariton Epchook (Kwethluk) commented that people wanted an opportunity to fish for chum or sockeye salmon.

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- Ray Watson (Bethel) commented that he supported having designated fishers. He commented that fishing with a kayak and a small net was not “subsistence.” Mr. Watson commented that he did not like the term “opportunity” when referring to subsistence fishing.
- Martin Andrew (Kwethluk) commented that the fish being caught near the mouth were salmon returning to the Kuskokwim River and he wanted everyone to share the “brunt in king conservation.”
- Tonya Epchook (Kwethluk) summarized the Kwethluk Joint Group resolutions 17-04 and 17-03.
- Tim Zaukar (Crooked Creek) commented that he supported a 12-hour fishing opportunity on June 24, 2017.
- Walter Morgan (Kalskag) requested that management consider adjusting the middle river boundary line as was done in 2016.

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 23 Informational Packet*).
- **Bethel Test Fishery:** As of June 22, the cumulative CPUE for Chinook salmon was 109, which was the lowest on record since 2008. It was estimated that Chinook salmon were currently at the mid-point of their run at the BTF site. The cumulative CPUE for chum salmon was 483; to date they were the most abundant species in the BTF. The sockeye salmon cumulative CPUE was 188, larger than most years since 2008.
- **Aniak Test Fishery:** The ATF continued to be dominated by Chinook salmon. June 22 was the first day that chum and sockeye salmon catches exceeded Chinook salmon.
- **Sonar:** Chum and sockeye salmon were more abundant than Chinook salmon during the previous several days.
- **Radio Tagging Project:** The radio tagging crew continued to catch Chinook salmon near Fauller Island.
2. **Discussion of ADF&G Management Consideration and Discussion of Possible Alternatives:** Working Group members discussed the 2017 subsistence harvest of Chinook salmon from the non-salmon spawning tributaries of the Kuskokwim River and near Quinhagak. Some members were concerned that these harvests would impact the 2017 Chinook salmon escapement. (*See Motions 2–4 below.*)

OLD BUSINESS:

- **Law Enforcement (LE) update:** Dave Cannon (Middle River Subsistence) reported that people had observed illegal fishing practices in the middle river. Aaron Poetter commented that he would provide the information to the appropriate authorities. Ken Stahlnecker (USFWS) commented that federal LE would be patrolling federally managed waters during the June 24 fishing opportunity.

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

1. **Approve the agenda as amended. Passed (Unanimous)**
2. **Support the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)/ Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (KRITFC) recommendation for a 12-hour opening on June 24 for 6" mesh or less, 25 fathom gillnets from Aniak to the Kuskokwim River mouth with the stipulation that the same opening be provided in the upper river. Failed (7 yeas, 3 nays)**

Some Working Group members were concerned that a 12-hour opening on June 24 would negatively impact the Chinook salmon escapement. Nick Kameroff commented that an opening could provide some food security for people and help eliminate social unrest. Ken Stahlnecker (USFWS) commented that, for

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federal waters, the opening was intended to be a chum and sockeye salmon directed fishery and that USFWS had taken conservative measures “to the extent reasonable” to reduce the harvest of Chinook salmon during this opening.

- 3. For a 12-hour opening in state managed waters from Aniak to the Holitna River mouth and to encourage people to let Chinook salmon go if alive, only taking Chinook salmon for a taste of fresh fish. Passed (9 yeas, 1 nay)**

Some Working Group members wanted to encourage fishers to live release Chinook salmon from their gillnets for conservation purposes. Aaron Poetter commented that ADF&G would not require live releasing of Chinook salmon during the recommended gillnet opportunity.

- 4. For ADF&G to exercise their authority in an emergency order to close all drainages immediately. Failed (2 yeas, 8 nays)**

Several Working Group members were concerned regarding the people who would be impacted by closing all drainages.

- 5. Adjourn at 3:51 p.m. Passed (Unanimous)**

COMMENTS FROM THE WORKING GROUP:

- Barbara Carlson recommended that there be a longer notice time prior to fishing openers.
- John Andrew commented that he was happy to inform people of the June 24 opening and thanked the Working Group and USFWS staff.
- Mike Williams Sr. thanked everyone for the June 24 opportunity.
- Charlie Brown commented that the use of fishing “windows” as a management tool had worked well during previous years.

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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	Absent
MEMBER AT LARGE	Barbara Carlson
WESTERN INTERIOR RAC	Ray Collins
YK DELTA RAC	Bob Aloysius
COMMERCIAL FISHING	Greg Hoffman Jr.
SPORT FISHING	LaMont Albertson
PROCESSOR	<i>Vacant</i>
KRITFC	Nick Kameroff
ADF&G	Aaron Tiernan
CHAIR	LaMont Albertson

Other Participants:

ADF&G Comm. Fish: Aaron Poetter, Aaron Tiernan, Zach Liller, John Linderman, Chuck Brazil, Nick Smith, Jen Peeks

Sport Fishing:

Subsistence Division: Dave Runfola

Commissioner's Office: Jill Klein

USFWS: Ken Stahlnecker, Lew Coggins, Ben Staton, Frank Harris, Christine Bremmer

OSM:

Jennifer Hooper (AVCP)	Tim Zaukar (Crooked Creek)	Sandra Nicori (Kwethluk)
Janessa Esquible (ONC)	Kate Schaberg (GTC)	Dan Gillikin (NVN)
Tim Andrew (ONC)	Gerald Kameroff (Kalskag)	Paula Schiefer (Univ. of Aberdeen)
Dannielle Lowery (ONC)	Glenn Kameroff (Kalskag)	Nicholai Phillips (Bethel)
Avery Hoffman (ONC)	Walter Morgan (Kalskag)	<u>Media:</u> Anna Rose MacArthur (KYUK)
Anna Pavila (ONC)	Bonnie Person (Kalskag)	<u>WG Alternates:</u>
Walter Jim (ONC)	William Pitka (Kalskag)	James Nicori
Ray Watson (ONC)	William Pitka (Kalskag)	Lisa Feyereisen
Bill Bechtol (KRITFC)	Lorraine Parent (Kalskag)	Alissa Rogers
Jim Simon (BSFA, KRITFC)	Father Martin Nicolai (Kwethluk)	Mary Peltola
Ben Anderson Agimuk (KRITFC)	Tonya Epchook (Kwethluk)	John Andrew
Sam Jackson (Akiak)	Liz Michael (Kwethluk)	
Mike Riley (Bethel)	Chariton Epchook (Kwethluk)	

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**)

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