

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

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

August 22, 2018

Meeting called to order at 10:05 a.m. on Wednesday August 22, 2018 and adjourned at 11:59 a.m. Meeting time was approximately 2 hours. Eight full voting members were present and a quorum was established. Alissa Rogers chaired the meeting.

AGENDA ITEMS:

USFWS/KRITFC Update:

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:

New Business Discussion Topics:

- Board of Fish update
- Kuskokwim Area Comprehensive Salmon Plan update
- Non-salmon spawning tributaries

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. Add Albert Kawagley as an alternate to the KRSMWG *Member at Large* seat. *Passed (Unanimous)*
3. To adjourn at 11:59 a.m. *Passed (Unanimous)*

USFWS/KRITFC UPDATE: Ken Stahlnecker (USFWS) reported there were no new USFWS updates at the time of the August 22 meeting. James Nicori (KRITFC) commented that the KRITFC had not met since the 2018 management of the Chinook salmon fishery.

ADF&G MANAGEMENT ACTIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION: Aaron Tiernan (ADF&G Area Management Biologist) reported that there were no new management actions under consideration at the time of the meeting.

PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:

- Jen Peeks (ADF&G) thanked the Working Group members and participants for their involvement in the 2018 fishery management discussions. Ms. Peeks commented that after August 31, 2018 Aaron Tiernan would be the Working Group contact.

SUBSISTENCE REPORTS:

- **ONC Subsistence Report:** Mary Matthias (ONC) reported that people in the Bethel area were catching on average five silver salmon per fishing trip; one family caught 17 silver salmon. Ms. Matthias commented that the high water level affected fish “catchability.”
- **Lower River:** Greg Hoffman Jr. (Commercial Fishing) reported that on August 16 he made two short drifts using a short gillnet and caught seven silver salmon. Alissa Rogers (Lower Subsistence alternate) reported that she caught ~18 fish during the weekend of August 18. Fritz Charles (Member at Large) reported that he drifted on August 13 and caught 31 coho salmon and 5 sockeye salmon. During the previous weekend, he reported catching five coho salmon at Magic Creek located on the Kwethluk River. James Nicori (KRITFC) commented that very few people had been actively fishing in his area; people had observed an abundance of silver salmon passing through the lower river.

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- **Middle River:** Lisa Feyereisen (Middle River Subsistence alternate) reported that her family had been rod and reeling for “dinner fish.” Ms. Feyereisen reported that, at the time of the meeting, two fish wheels were operating in Aniak and catching whitefish. She added that two families had recently drifted with gillnets and were catching ~18–22 fish. LaMont Albertson (Sport Fishing) reported that people were catching silver salmon with rod and reel in the Aniak area. He commented that people reported being less dependent on silver salmon than in previous years.
- **Upriver:** Barb Carlson (Upriver Subsistence alternate) reported that people had been putting in a high amount of fishing effort using rod and reel to catch fish. Ms. Carlson commented that the fish wheel was catching chum salmon, silver salmon, and an abundance of humpback whitefish and Bering ciscos.
- **Headwaters:** Ray Collins (Western Interior RAC) reported that, at the time of the meeting, there had been minimal fishing activity in his area and there were no reports coho salmon being harvested in his area.

CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. **Overview of Kuskokwim River Salmon Run Assessment Projects:** Nick Smith (ADF&G Research Biologist) provided an overview of the ADF&G assessment projects. Mr. Smith reported that the BTF had completed operations for the season on August 16 due to an incident. Mr. Smith reported that, to date, the water level was above the historical average. *(For more information on the 2018 inseason assessment projects, please see the August 22 Informational Packet).*
 - **Bethel Test Fish:** As of August 16, the coho salmon run continued to build at the BTF site.
 - **Sonar:** The sonar project operated from June 1 to July 26. During that time there were a few days that the project was partially inoperable. At the time of the meeting, data analysis was in the process of being completed.
 - **Weirs:** Chinook salmon had met the escapement goals at the George River and Kogruklu River weirs. The escapement goal for chum salmon had been met at the Kogruklu River weir and sockeye salmon had met the upper bound of the escapement goal at the Kogruklu River weir. To date, the George River coho salmon escapement numbers were similar to 2017 and there were indications that the 2018 coho salmon run was late based on historical run timing
 - **NVN Projects:** Dan Gillikin (NVN) reported that the Salmon River (Aniak) weir completed operations on August 14. The Math and Science Expedition trip completed on August 18. Mr. Gillikin announced that he was actively seeking funding for future operations of the Salmon River (Aniak) weir and the ATF projects.
2. **Sport Fish:** LaMont Albertson reported that sport fishing guides were catching pike and grayling. John Chythlook (ADF&G) reported low sport fish catches due to the high water level and low water clarity.
3. **Discussion of ADF&G Management Consideration and Discussion of Possible Alternatives:** *There were no management motions made at the time of this meeting.*

OLD BUSINESS:

- **Board of Fish (BOF) update:** Jen Peeks reported that the Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim (AYK) BOF proposals were available to review for the upcoming AYK BOF meeting. Ms. Peeks announced that the Joint Board of Fish and Game would be meeting in 2019 and proposals for that meeting were also available. Working Group members discussed having a fall Working Group meeting to review the proposals.
- **Kuskokwim Area Comprehensive Salmon Plan update:** Barbara Carlson provided an overview of the Regional Planning Team (RPT) focus and announced that the next meeting was scheduled for September 25–26, 2018 in Bethel. She encouraged members of the public to attend and provide input on salmon enhancement in the Kuskokwim area.

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- **Non-salmon Spawning Tributaries:** LaMont Albertson commented that he observed management inconsistencies regarding fishing in the non-salmon spawning tributaries. Mr. Albertson suggested that USFWS and ADF&G develop a “consistent” management policy for these tributaries from the mouth of the Kuskokwim River to its headwaters.

NEW BUSINESS:

- Consideration of appointing Albert Kawagley to the *Member at Large* seat as an alternate: (*See Motion 2 on page 3.*)

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

1. **Approve the agenda as amended. Passed (Unanimous)**
2. **Add Albert Kawagley as an alternate to the KRSMWG Member at Large seat. Passed (Unanimous)**
Working Group members were supportive of adding Mr. Kawagley as an alternate to the *Member at Large* seat. Barbara Carlson requested that she be repositioned as the last alternate on the list for the *Member at Large* seat.
3. **To adjourn at 11:59 a.m. Passed (Unanimous)**

COMMENTS FROM THE WORKING GROUP:

- Ray Collins commented that traditional knowledge was lost as Elders passed away and that it was important to document historical information. Caroline Brown (ADF&G Subsistence Division) commented that the ADF&G Subsistence Division would consider compiling a list of their harvest and ethnographic research from the Kuskokwim River and provide it to the Working Group members for reference.
- LaMont Albertson commended the Kuspuk School District and others for their work with the 2018 Math and Science Expedition. Mr. Albertson commented that he had recently observed coyotes on his “side of the slough” near Aniak.
- Fritz Charles thanked staff and other organizations for their involvement in the 2018 fishery management inseason meetings and for providing “good” data for discussion. Mr. Charles commented that he looked forward to seeing Working Group participants at the 2019 spring meeting.
- Alissa Rogers commented that 2018 had been an interesting year. Ms. Rogers offered condolences for the families involved in a recent boating accident. She thanked the Working Group participants for their involvement in the 2018 management discussions.
- Albert Kawagley thanked the Working Group participants for attending the meetings and commented that he “enjoyed” hearing the fishing reports from the entire Kuskokwim River. He wished everyone a “good year.”

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WORKING GROUP ATTENDANCE:

MEMBER SEAT:	NAME:
DOWNRIVER ELDER	Absent
UPRIVER ELDER	Absent
LOWER RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Alissa Rogers
MIDDLE RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Lisa Feyereisen
UPRIVER SUBSISTENCE	Barbara Carlson
HEADWATERS SUBSISTENCE	Absent
MEMBER AT LARGE	Fritz Charles
WESTERN INTERIOR RAC	Ray Collins
YK DELTA RAC	Bob Aloysius
COMMERCIAL FISHING	Greg Hoffman Jr.
SPORT FISHING	LaMont Albertson
PROCESSOR	<i>Vacant</i>
KRITFC	James Nicori
ADF&G	Aaron Tiernan
CHAIR	Alissa Rogers

Other Participants:		
<u>ADF&G Comm. Fish:</u> Nick Smith, Colton Lipka, Zach Liller, Jen Peeks		
<u>Subsistence Division:</u> Caroline Brown		
USFWS: Ken Stahlnecker, Aaron Webber, David Phillips		
<u>OSM:</u> Christine Bremmer, Gary Decossas		
Bill Bechtol (KRITFC) Mary Matthias (OTNC)	Jim Simon (BSFA, KRITFC) Meredith Witte (GTC)	Dan Gillikin (NVN) Albert Kawagley (Bethel)

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, 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**), Alaska State Troopers (**AST**)

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