

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

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

November 20, 2019

Meeting called to order at 9:02 a.m. on Wednesday November 20, 2019 and adjourned at 12:03 p.m. Meeting time was approximately 3 hours. Ten full voting members were present and a quorum was established. Alissa N. Rogers chaired the meeting.

AGENDA ITEMS:

People to be Heard

Continuing Business

1. 2019 Preliminary Kuskokwim River Season Summary (ADF&G)
2. 2020 Alaska Board of Fisheries Proposal 280 – Proposed by the Organized Village of Kwethluk to allow the use of 6-inch setnets in times of Chinook Salmon conservation (ADF&G)

Working Group Business

1. Procedures regarding the submission of documents associated with KRSMWG (Name/Logo)
2. Letter of Support for Smelt Spawning/ Migration in the Kuskokwim River (Dave Cannon)
3. Letter of Support for Native Village of Napaimute: Fisheries Projects and Community Harvest Research (CHR)
4. *Letter of Support for ONC: Fisheries Projects and CHR – Janessa Esquible (ONC, Bethel) asked to remove this item from the agenda. It was removed.*
5. *Letter of Opposition for Donlin Gold Mine – Tabled, Will be discussed at a future meeting*
6. *Donlin and Fishery Restrictions concerns – Tabled, Will be discussed at a future meeting*
7. Recommendation for 2020 Salmon Management to be under ADFG, oversight by USFWS, only if numbers do not appear to be returning will USFWS resume management
8. *Letter of Support for ADFG Fisheries Projects and Funding – Tabled, Will be discussed at a future meeting*

WORKING GROUP ACTION ITEMS: No action items

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

1. Approve the agenda. *Passed (Unanimous)*
2. Motion for the Working Group to support Proposal 280 as written. *Passed (6 yes, 2 no, 1 abstained)*
3. Motion for the Working Group to support Native Village of Napaimute midriver, inseason Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program (FRMP). *Passed (Unanimous)*
4. Adjourn at 12:03 p.m. *Passed (Unanimous)*

PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:

- Kevin Whitworth (KRITFC, McGrath) stated that his family and others did not meet their Chinook subsistence needs during the 2019 season and that it was not for a lack of trying / fishing restrictions. Mr. Whitworth also stated that there were few sockeye caught and that chum and coho were not of good quality. He voiced concerns regarding recent escapement numbers at Salmon Pitka Fork and Kwethluk River Weirs.
- Nick Kameroff (Aniak) voiced concerns regarding Donlin Mine and the impact it would have on the smelt population.

Meeting summaries are prepared and distributed by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G). The department is responsible for summary content. Summaries are not comprehensive or considered meeting minutes, and are designed to provide context on meeting proceedings for the convenience of interested parties/participants. Audio recordings of meetings can be found at: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareakuskokwim.kswg#2019>

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

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

CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. **Overview of the 2019 Preliminary Kuskokwim River Season Summary (ADF&G):** Nick Smith (ADF&G, Area Management Biologist) provided an overview of the Preliminary Season Summary to the Working Group. (*For more information regarding the 2019 preliminary season summary, please see the November 20 Informational Packet / listen to the meeting audio.*)
2. **2020 Alaska Board of Fisheries Proposal 280 – Proposed by the Organized Village of Kwethluk to allow the use of 6-inch setnets in times of Chinook Salmon conservation (ADF&G):** Mr. Smith provided an overview of the Proposal 280 to the Working Group. (*For more information regarding Proposal 280, please see the November 20 Informational Packet / listen to the meeting audio.*)

Working Group Business

1. **Procedures regarding the submission of documents associated with KRSMWG (Name/Logo):** Lisa Feyereisen (Crow Village) commented that letters or materials disseminated on behalf of the Working Group need Working Group approval *prior* to dissemination. She stated that this may require revisions to the Working Group bylaws. This subject was tabled until the Spring Meeting, at which time new verbiage (developed through collaboration between ADF&G staff and the Working Group) will be discussed amongst group members.
2. **Letter of Support for Smelt Spawning/ Migration in the Kuskokwim River (Dave Cannon):** Mr. Cannon (Aniak) reviewed research that had been conducted regarding Kuskokwim River smelt and the negative impacts on smelt that may occur from the proposed Donlin Gold project. Working Group members discussed options to minimize these impacts. Working Group members requested that Mr. Cannon draft a resolution that would list possible options for harm reduction. Mr. Cannon commented that he would provide this resolution at the Spring Meeting.
3. **Letter of Support for Native Village of Napaimute: Fisheries Projects and CHR:** Dan Gillikin (Napaimute) was in favor of the Working Group drafting a letter of support for the ongoing Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program (FRMP), taking place in the midriver.
4. **Letter of Support for ONC: Fisheries Projects and CHR – Janessa Esquible (ONC, Bethel)** asked to remove this item from the agenda
5. **Letter of Opposition for Donlin Gold Mine – Will be discussed at a future meeting**
6. **Donlin and Fishery Restrictions concerns – Will be discussed at a future meeting**
7. **Recommendation for 2020 Salmon Management to be under ADFG, oversight by USFWS, only if numbers do not appear to be returning will USFWS resume management:** Mary Peltola (Bethel) questioned Ray Born (USFWS; Acting Refuge Manager) on what the Chinook salmon run-size threshold would need to be for USFWS to not take a Special Action in the 2020 season (thereby ADF&G would manage). Mr. Born replied that the forecasted run size would need to be 200,000 or slightly less than that for a Special Action to take place, *however*, the Federal Subsistence Board will be the ultimate say in whether there is Special Action taken in 2020. LaMont Albertson (Aniak) remarked that while last year was a good year, we should still be in a conservation mode. Ray Collins (McGrath) stated that until the run stabilizes, he would like to see input by all agencies. Alissa Rodgers (Bethel) asked Nick Smith (ADF&G, Area Management Biologist) how the state would manage the Chinook fishery if USFWS did not take a Special Action. Mary Peltola added an additional question regarding the timing of the 2020 front-end closure. Mr. Smith replied that ADF&G would manage the Chinook fishery in accordance with the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Plan (5 AAC 07.365), with further details to be added in the

Meeting summaries are prepared and distributed by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G). The department is responsible for summary content. Summaries are not comprehensive or considered meeting minutes, and are designed to provide context on meeting proceedings for the convenience of interested parties/participants. Audio recordings of meetings can be found at: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareakuskokwim.kswg#2019>

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

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

Spring Meeting. Additional questions were raised by Mary Peltola (echoed by LaMont Albertson) regarding the decreasing size / weight of Chinook salmon returning to the Kuskokwim River. The discussion on this topic was based on Chinook data taken over a wide timeseries and by different gillnet mesh sizes, making comparisons problematic. *Please listen to the audio recording of the meeting for further information.*

8. ***Letter of Support for ADFG Fisheries Projects and Funding*** – *Will be discussed at a future meeting*

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

1. **Approve the agenda. Passed (Unanimous)**
2. **Motion for the Working Group to support Proposal 280 as written. Passed (6 yes, 2 no, 1 abstained)**
 - This proposal (if accepted by the Board of Fisheries) would allow for the use of 6-inch or less set nets during times of Chinook conservation and remove bank orientation requirements. The Working Group voted in support of this proposal, but the vote was not unanimous. There were six yes votes (James Charles (Tuntutuliak), Mike Williams Sr. (Akiak), Charles Guest (Bethel), Charlie Brown (Eek), LaMont Albertson (Aniak), and Robert Lekander (Bethel)), two nay votes (Lisa Feyereisen (Crow Village) and Ray Collins (McGrath)), along with one abstention.
3. **Motion for the Working Group to support Native Village of Napaimute midriver, inseason FRMP Project. Passed (Unanimous)**
4. **Adjourn at 12:03 p.m. Passed (Unanimous)**

COMMENTS FROM THE WORKING GROUP: *No additional comments were provided from the Working Group members.*

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

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

WORKING GROUP ATTENDANCE:

MEMBER SEAT:	NAME:
DOWNRIVER ELDER	James Charles
UPRIVER ELDER	Absent
LOWER RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mike Williams Sr.
MIDDLE RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Lisa Feyereisen
UPRIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mark Leary
HEADWATERS SUBSISTENCE	Absent
MEMBER AT LARGE	Charles Guest
WESTERN INTERIOR RAC	Ray Collins
YK DELTA RAC	Absent
COMMERCIAL FISHING	Charlie Brown
SPORT FISHING	LaMont Albertson
PROCESSOR	<i>Vacant</i>
KRITFC	Robert Lekander
ADF&G	Nick Smith
CHAIR	Alissa N. Rogers

Other Participants:		
<u>ADF&G Comm. Fish:</u> Nick Smith, Ben Gray, Sean Larson, Charles Brazil, Zach Liller, Bobette Dickerson, Keegan Birchfield <u>Sport Fish:</u> John Chythlook <u>Subsistence Division:</u> Dave Runfola, Chris McDevitt		
<u>USFWS:</u> Ray Born, Aaron Moses, Aaron Webber, Gary Decossas, Christopher Tulik <u>OSM:</u>		
Dan Gillikin (NVN) Janessa Esquible (ONC)	Jennifer Hooper (AVCP)	
		<u>Media:</u> Anna Rose MacArthur
		<u>WG Alternates:</u> Mary Peltola

GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS:

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (**ADF&G, department, State**), Orutsararmiut Traditional Native Council (**OTNC**), 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**), Alaska State Troopers (**AST**), University of Alaska Fairbanks (**UAF**)

Meeting summaries are prepared and distributed by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G). The department is responsible for summary content. Summaries are not comprehensive or considered meeting minutes, and are designed to provide context on meeting proceedings for the convenience of interested parties/participants. Audio recordings of meetings can be found at: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareakuskokwim.kswg#2019>