

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

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

Meeting Agenda

Date: May 5-6, 2020

Time: 9:00am–5:00pm

Place: Teleconference

Time Called to Order:

Chair:

Time Adjourned:

ROLL CALL TO ESTABLISH QUORUM:

Upriver Elder:

Downriver Elder:

Commercial Fisher:

Lower River Subsistence:

Middle River Subsistence:

Upper River Subsistence:

Headwaters Subsistence:

QUORUM MET? Yes / No

Processor:

Member at Large:

Sport Fisher:

Western Interior RAC:

Y-K Delta RAC:

KRITFC:

ADF&G:

INTRODUCTIONS:

INVOCATION:

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: *the agenda may be amended at this time.*

PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:

A. Review of Meeting Conduct (Nick Smith, ADF&G)

B. 2019 Season Recap/ Presentations

- Subsistence Section Project Overview (Dave Runfola, ADF&G)
- Southern Bering Sea Survey (Sean Larson, ADF&G)
- Assessment projects review (Weirs, Aerial, Sonar, ASL)
- Chinook salmon total run and drainage wide escapement estimate
- 2020 Chinook Salmon Forecast

C. 2020 Fishery Management:

- 2020 Assessment projects (Sean Larson, ADF&G)
 - ADF&G
 - NVN
 - USFWS
 - BSFA/ KRITFC
 - ONC (Janessa Esquible, ONC)
- 2020 Alaska Board of Fisheries Summary (Nick Smith, ADF&G)
- ADF&G Management Presentation & Discussion On Specific Management Actions For 2020 (Nick Smith, ADF&G)
 - Date to begin early season closure
 - Set gillnet fishing periods during early season closure
 - Post-Front End Closure management
 - Tributary Management
 - Salmon Tributaries (Kwethluk, Kisaralik, Kasigluk, Tuluksak, and Aniak rivers)
 - Non-Salmon Tributaries (i.e. Gweek, Tunt, Johnson rivers)
 - Use of live release gear (fish wheels, dip nets, beach seines, and hook and line)
 - Chum/sockeye salmon management
 - Sport Fishing (John Chythlook, ADF&G)
- Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge (Ray Born, USFWS)

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D. DONLIN MINE

- **Draft Letter of Support for Smelt Spawning/ Migration in the Kuskokwim River (Dave Cannon)**
- **Letter of Opposition for Donlin Gold Mine (KRSMWG)**

E. WORKING GROUP BUSINESS:

- **Election of Co-Chairs**
- **Working Group In-Season Meeting Schedule**
- **Nominate WG representative to serve at KRITFC inseason meetings**
- **Procedures regarding the submission of documents associated with KRSMWG (Name/Logo)**

F. COMMENTS FROM WORKING GROUP MEMBERS:

NEXT MEETING DATE: _____ **Time:** _____ **Place:** _____

Information Packets *ARE*:

- **Intended to help inform Working Group discussions.**
- **To be viewed and used in context with Working Group meetings only.**

Packets *ARE NOT*:

- **To be viewed as standalone documents.**
- **A final say on fisheries management decisions.**

Please use this information responsibly:

Packet information is an incomplete snapshot of an ongoing discussion and changing conditions. Packet information should not be reproduced for any purpose other than to describe Working Group meeting discussions.

Misuse of Packet information can contribute to misunderstandings that can **cause harm to salmon users** and potentially **damage salmon resources**.

Ask Questions: ADF&G staff will be happy to answer biology and management questions. Please call **1-855-933-2433** to reach ADF&G Kuskokwim Area staff.

Attend Meetings: Each Working Group meeting is announced at least 48 hours prior to time and date of meeting. In addition, each meeting is recorded. Recordings can be found here:
http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyarea_kuskokwim.kswg

Viewing the information packet while listening to meetings/recordings will provide a better understanding of the information presented in this packet.

**Thank you,
Nick Smith and Ben Gray
Working Group Coordinators**

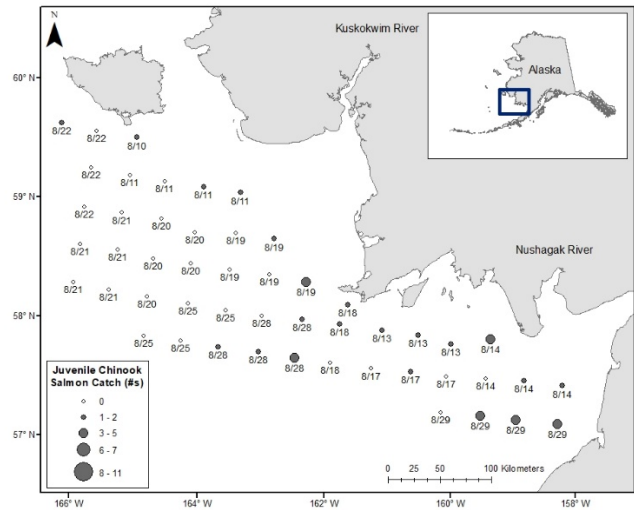
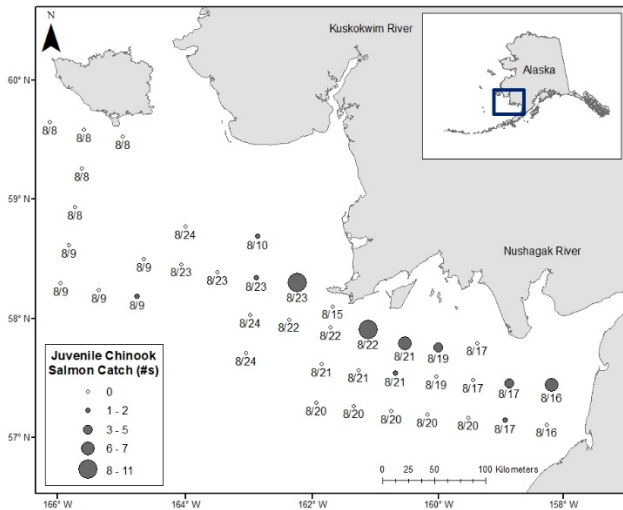
Southern Bering Sea Juvenile Chinook Salmon Survey

sabrina.garcia@alaska.gov

Background & Methods

- Survey objectives were: 1) estimate juvenile Chinook salmon abundance in 2018 and 2019 and, 2) assess life history characteristics (diet and trophic status using stable isotope analysis, results TBD)
- ADF&G's vessel *R/V Pandalus* towed a Nordic 264 trawl net at the surface to capture juvenile salmon
 - Same methods as used in the Northern Bering Sea on the *R/V Pandalus*, 2014–2016

Results



- 39 out of 56 stations were sampled from August 8 – 24, 2018 (top figure).
 - Rough weather precluded sampling the entire grid
 - 46 juvenile Chinook salmon were caught in 11 stations, mostly nearshore
- 50 out of 56 stations were sampled from August 10 – 29, 2019 (top figure).
 - 42 juvenile Chinook salmon were caught in 22 stations
 - Offshore stations caught juveniles at the end of August

Discussion and Future Steps

- The low catches and catch locations during the SBS surveys suggests there was a mismatch between survey timing and juvenile Chinook out-migration from rivers into the nearshore marine environment
 - Juveniles may be residing in Kuskokwim and Nushagak bays for extended periods of time
 - SBS juvenile Chinook salmon dynamics appear to be different from NBS juveniles
- Surplus funds are being used to fund a 3rd year of survey operations in 2020
 - *R/V Pandalus* will trawl the same nearshore stations from mid-August to late September (42 days) to identify peak outmigration timing for juvenile Chinook salmon
 - Results from 2020 survey can be used to inform the timing of future surveys aimed at generating an abundance estimate

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2019 Assessment Review

Sean Larson
Alaska Dept. Fish and Game

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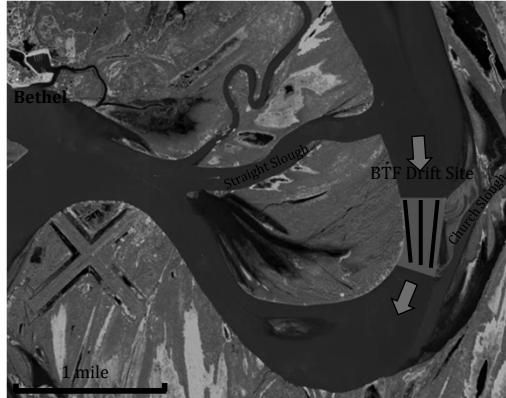
Bethel Test Fishery



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Bethel Test Fishery

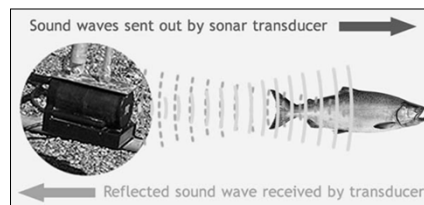
- Objectives:
 - Daily CPUE for salmon from June 1 through August 24
 - Relative abundance and timing of salmon
 - Collect age, sex, length, and genetics data from Chinook
- Comparisons across years problematic due to varying water levels, crew fishing styles, and gear alteration
- Drifting begins an hour after high tide



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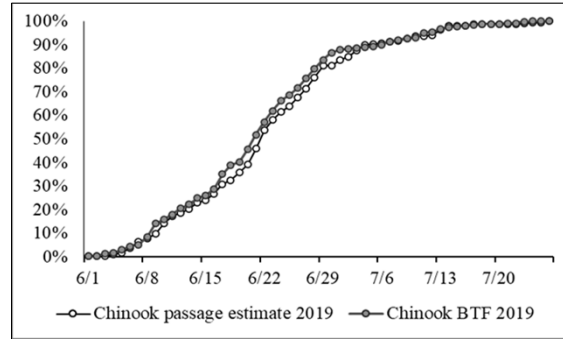
Kuskokwim River Sonar

- What it does:
 - Display all fish moving through the beam
 - Even in muddy water
 - Show distance and direction from transducer
 - Improve inseason estimates of abundance
- What it doesn't do:
 - Count fish for us
 - Span the entire river
 - Distinguish between species



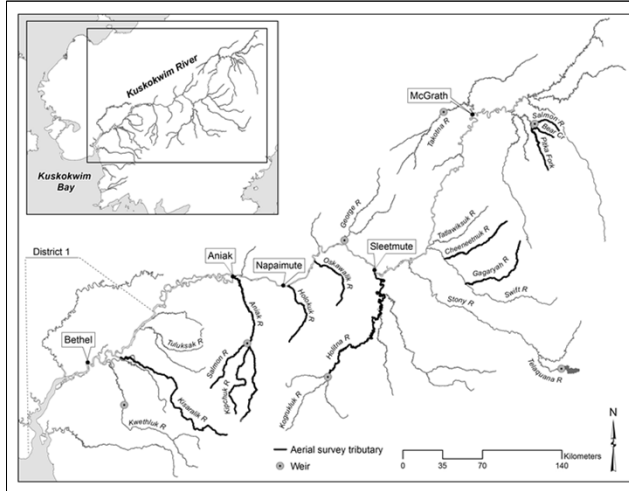
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Run Timing - Sonar vs BTF



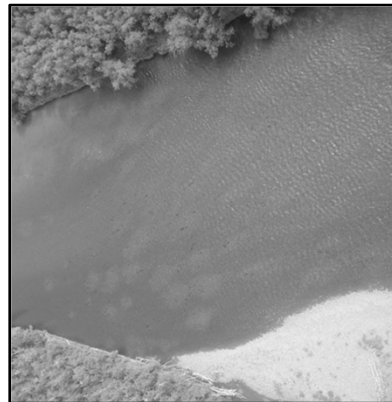
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Escapement Monitoring: Weirs



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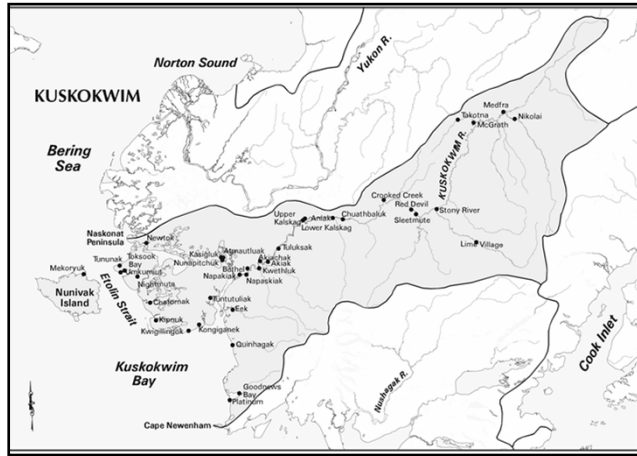
Escapement Monitoring: Aerial



8 Subsistence Harvest Monitoring and ASL Collection



9 Subsistence Harvest Monitoring Post Season



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2019 Season



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Chum, Coho, and Sockeye Salmon Escapement Goal Performance

	Escapement			
	2016	2017	2018	2019
CHUM SALMON				
Middle Fork Goodnews River	Met	Met	NS	Exceeded
Kogrukluk River	Met	Exceeded	Exceeded	Exceeded
COHO SALMON				
Middle Fork Goodnews River	NA	NA	NA	NA
Kogrukluk River	NA	NA	Under	Met
Kwethluk River	NA	Met	NA	Exceeded
SOCKEYE SALMON				
North (Main) Fork Goodnews R.	Exceeded	NS	NS	Exceeded
Middle Fork Goodnews River	Exceeded	Exceeded	NS	Exceeded
Kanektok River	Exceeded	NS	Exceeded	Exceeded
Kogrukluk River	Exceeded	Exceeded	Exceeded	Exceeded

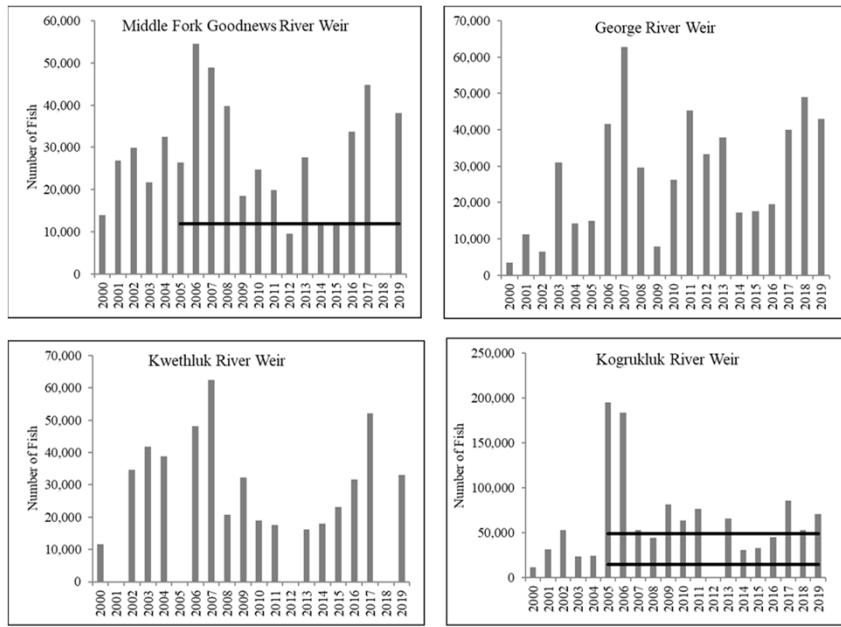
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Chum, Coho, and Sockeye Salmon Escapement Goal Performance

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	2016	2017	2018	2019
CHUM SALMON				
Middle Fork Goodnews River	Met	Met	NS	Exceeded
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COHO SALMON				
Middle Fork Goodnews River	NA	NA	NA	NA
Kogrukluk River	NA	NA	Under	Met
Kwethluk River	NA	Met	NA	Exceeded
SOCKEYE SALMON				
North (Main) Fork Goodnews R.	Exceeded	NS	NS	Exceeded
Middle Fork Goodnews River	Exceeded	Exceeded	NS	Exceeded
Kanektok River	Exceeded	NS	Exceeded	Exceeded
Kogrukluk River	Exceeded	Exceeded	Exceeded	Exceeded

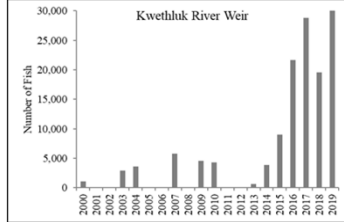
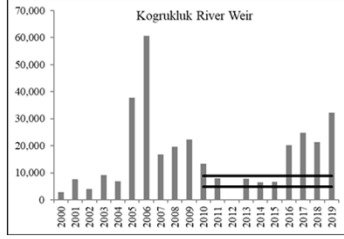
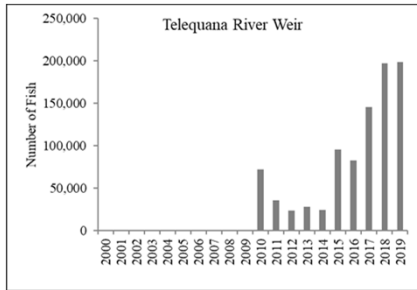
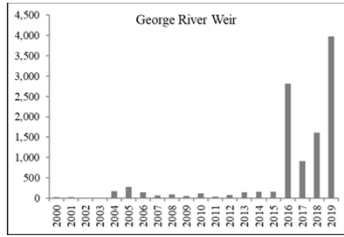
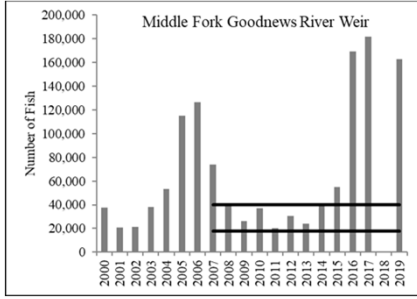
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Chum Salmon



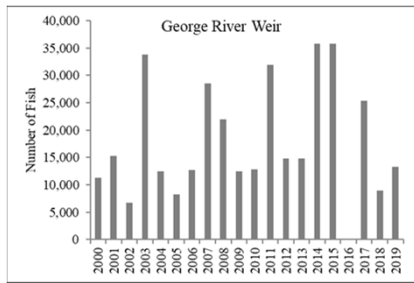
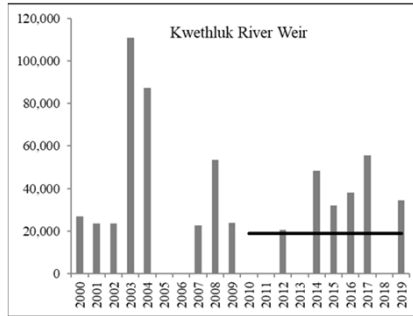
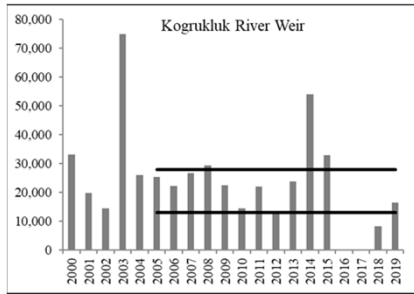
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Sockeye Salmon



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Coho Salmon



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Chinook Salmon Escapement Goal Performance

	Escapement			
	2016	2017	2018	2019
CHINOOK SALMON				
Kuskokwim River	Met	Met	Met	Exceeded
Middle Fork Goodnews River	Met	Met	NS	Exceeded
Kanektok River	Met	NS	Met	Met
Kogruklu River	Met	Exceeded	Met	Exceeded
Kwethluk River	NA	Met	NA	Exceeded
George River	Under	Exceeded	Exceeded	Exceeded
Kisaralik River	Met	NS	Met	Met
Aniak River	Under	Met	Met	Exceeded
Salmon River (Aniak R)	NS	Met	Met	Met
Cheeneetnu River (Stony R)	Under	Met	Met	Exceeded
Gagaryah River (Stony R)	Under	Met	Met	Met
Salmon River (Pitka Fork)	Met	Met	Met	Exceeded

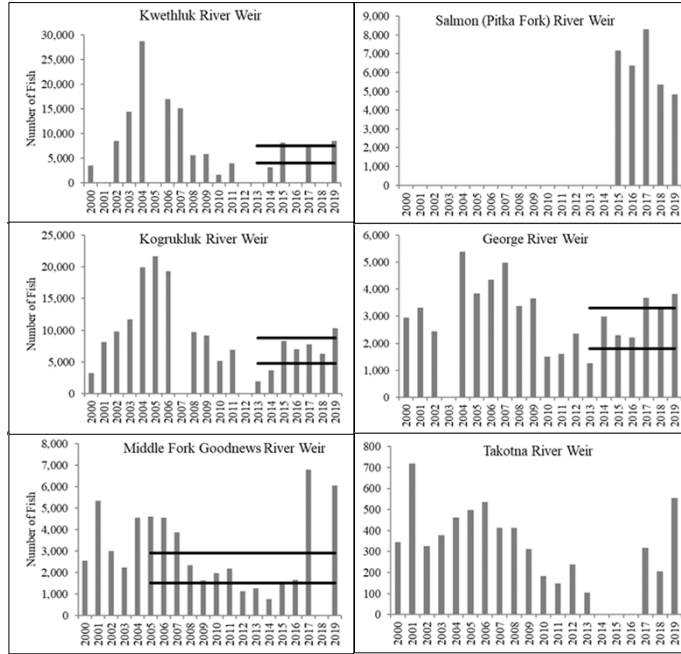
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Chinook Salmon Escapement Goal Performance

	Escapement			
	2016	2017	2018	2019
CHINOOK SALMON				
Kuskokwim River	Met	Met	Met	Exceeded
Middle Fork Goodnews River	Met	Met	NS	Exceeded
Kanektok River	Met	NS	Met	Met
Kogruklu River	Met	Exceeded	Met	Exceeded
Kwethluk River	NA	Met	NA	Exceeded
George River	Under	Exceeded	Exceeded	Exceeded
Kisaralik River	Met	NS	Met	Met
Aniak River	Under	Met	Met	Exceeded
Salmon River (Aniak R)	NS	Met	Met	Met
Cheeneetnu River (Stony R)	Under	Met	Met	Exceeded
Gagaryah River (Stony R)	Under	Met	Met	Met
Salmon River (Pitka Fork)	Met	Met	Met	Exceeded

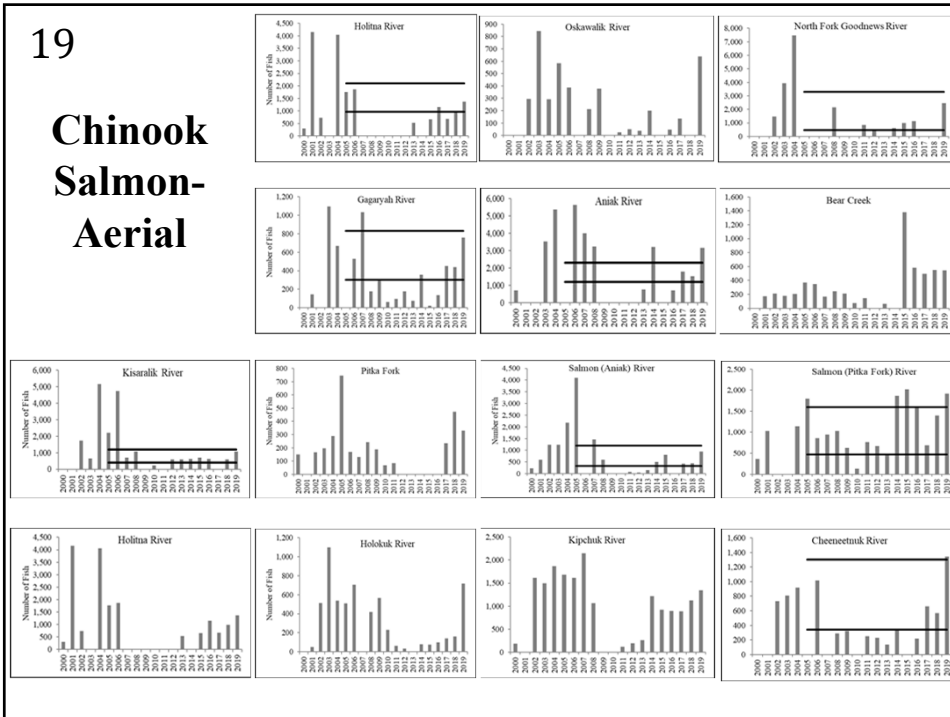
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Chinook Salmon-Weirs



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Chinook Salmon-Aerial

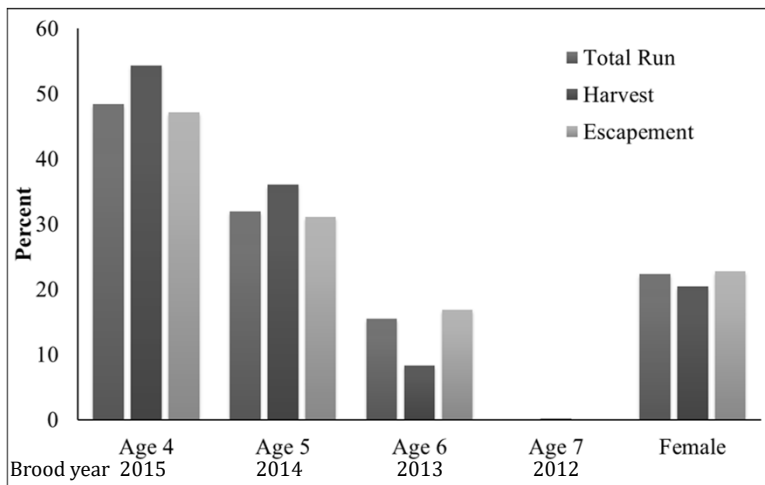


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Chinook Salmon Age and Sex Summary

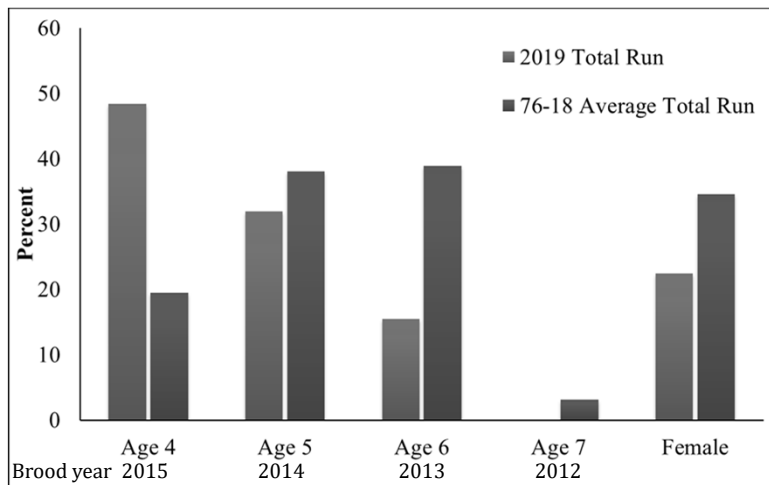
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Chinook Salmon - Age/Sex Composition



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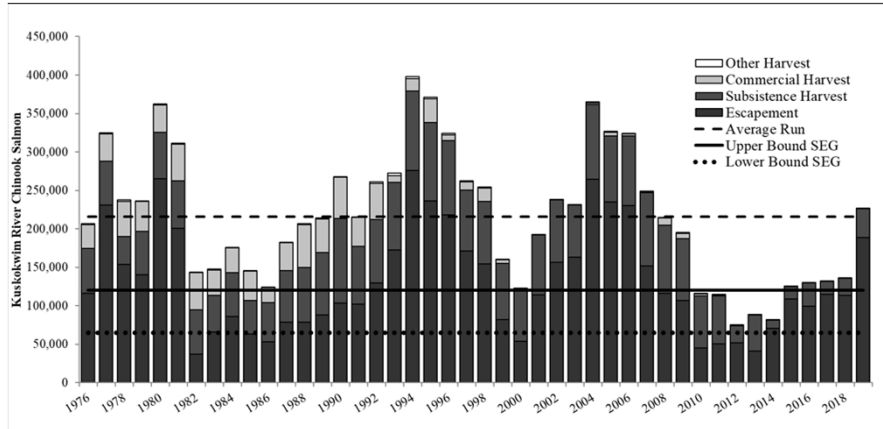
Chinook Salmon - Age/Sex Composition



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2019 Kuskokwim River Chinook Salmon Run Reconstruction

24 Chinook Salmon Run Reconstruction



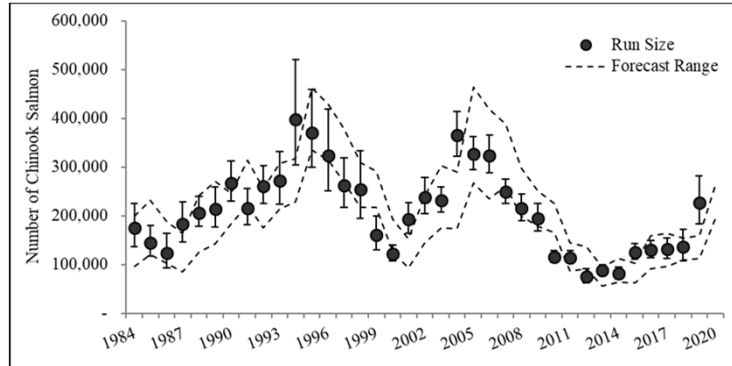
- Total Run Size – 227,000 (95% CI: 183,000–282,000)
- Total Escapement – 188,000 (95% CI: 144,000–243,000)
- Total Harvest – 38,000 (95% CI: 35,000–41,000)

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2020 Kuskokwim River Chinook Salmon Forecast

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Chinook Salmon Forecast



Forecast Range: 193,000 – 261,000

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Summary

- Escapement goals for all species were met or exceeded
- Percentage of age-4 Chinook salmon was well above average
 - Many age-5 in 2020?
- Total Run Size ~ 227,000
 - Slightly above 216,000 fish average
- Total Escapement ~ 188,000
 - Above 130,000 fish average
- Total Harvest ~ 38,000
- Forecast Range ~ 193,000 – 261,000



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Questions?

2020 Kuskokwim River Assessment Projects

Overview:

Project	Location	Start Date	End Date	Species	Data Availability	Organization
<u>Test Fishery</u>						
Bethel Test Fishery	Bethel	June 01	August 24	K, C, R, S	Daily	ADF&G
Aniak Test Fishery	Aniak	June 01	July 15	K, C, R	Daily	Napaimute
<u>Mainstem</u>						
Sonar	Bethel	June 01	August 26	K, C, R, W, S	Daily	ADF&G/ONC
<u>Harvest</u>						
Subsistence Surveys	Bethel	May 29	July 15	K, C, R	Weekly	ONC
Subsistence Surveys	Lower River	June 12	Open	K, C, R, W	As needed	KRITFC
Subsistence ASL	Bethel	June 01	Open	K	End of season	ONC
Subsistence ASL	Lower River	June 02	Open	K	End of season	KRITFC
<u>Weir</u>						
Salmon (Aniak) River	Middle River	June 15	Sept. 20	K, C, S	Daily	NVN
George River	Middle River	June 15	Sept. 20	K, C, S	Daily	ADF&G
Kogruklu River	Holitna River	June 26	Sept. 20	K, C, R, S	Daily	ADF&G
Telaquana River	Stony River	July 03	August 15	R	Daily	NPS
Takotna River	Upper River	June 24	August 15	K, C	Daily	KRITFC
Salmon (Pitka) Fork	Upper River	June 20	August 15	K	Daily	ADF&G
<u>Air Survey</u>	Drainage	July 17	August 05	K	End of season	ADF&G
<u>Juvenile Salmon Survey</u>	Southern Bering Sea	Mid-August	Late-Sept	K, C, R, S	End of season	ADF&G

Species Key: **K** = "King" or Chinook; **C** = chum; **R** = "Red" or sockeye; **S** = "Silver" or coho; **W** = whitefish.

Daily Assessment Document:

- USFWS and ADF&G will continue to produce a daily assessment document summarizing the most relevant inseason data about Chinook, chum, sockeye, and coho salmon run timing and abundance.
- This document will focus exclusively on inseason data from Bethel Test Fishery, Aniak Test Fishery, harvest estimates, and mainstem Sonar.
- The assessment documents will be publicly available via email and posted online. ADF&G will distribute the document to the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group email distribution list. Contact Sean Larson (sean.larson@alaska.gov) or Nick Smith (nick.smith@alaska.gov) if you want to be added or removed from this list.

Project Descriptions:

- **Bethel Test Fishery** – ADF&G, Division of Commercial Fisheries will operate the Bethel Test Fishery in the same location and use the same methods as in prior years. This project will produce daily catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE) for Chinook, chum, sockeye, and coho salmon. Data will provide information about inseason run timing, relative abundance (e.g., species ratios), and run strength. Data will be included in the daily assessment update and posted to the ADF&G Fish Counts webpage by 10AM, Monday through Friday:
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareakuskokwim.salmon#fishcounts>

Note: The top of the head will be removed from all Chinook salmon to collect otoliths (ear bones) for a separate study designed to determine where each fish was born.

- **Aniak Test Fishery** – Native Village of Napaimute will operate the Aniak Test Fishery in the same location and use the same methods as in 2015 – 2018. This project will produce daily catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE) for Chinook, chum, and sockeye salmon. Data will provide information about inseason run timing and relative abundance (e.g., species ratios). Data will be included in the daily assessment update.
- **Kuskokwim Sonar** – ADF&G, Division of Commercial Fisheries will operate sonar upriver from Bethel near the upper end of Church Slough and just downriver from the Kwethluk “Y”. Orutsarmiut Native Council (ONC) is a partner on this project and will assist with project operations in August. This project will produce daily inseason estimates of abundance for Chinook, chum, sockeye, coho, whitefish, and other species passing the sonar site. Total cumulative abundance with 95% confidence intervals will be estimated daily. Data will be included in the daily assessment update.
- **Subsistence Harvest Surveys** – There will be several overlapping and complimentary efforts to collect inseason information about subsistence harvest, catch, and effort. Information will be used to monitor fishing progress as the salmon run develops. In addition, detailed catch and effort information may be used by USFWS to estimate inseason subsistence harvest within specific areas of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge during specified fishery openers.
 - ONC – will conduct weekly fish camp surveys throughout the Bethel area similar to past years. Additional survey effort will be conducted at the Bethel boat harbor as needed and provided to USFWS for estimating inseason subsistence harvest. A summary of survey results will be presented weekly at scheduled Working Group meetings.
 - Kuskokwim River Intertribal Fish Commission (KRITFC) – will collect catch and effort information from several communities.
- **Subsistence Age-Sex-Length (ASL) Sampling** – As in past years, ONC will recruit and train subsistence fishers to collect scales, sex, and length data from Chinook salmon harvested by subsistence fishers in the Bethel area. KRITFC will also assist with collection of Chinook salmon ASL from lower river communities through their community monitoring program. ASL summaries will be generated post-season.

*Note: Training and sampling supplies will be provided for anyone who wants to participate in the ASL program. Training is scheduled in Bethel for **June 1 and June 8, 2020 from 11AM–4PM at the Cultural Center.** Contact Janessa (ONC) or Sean (ADF&G) if you want to schedule training in your home community.*

- **Weirs** – A total of six weirs will be operated (3 – ADF&G; 1 – NVN; 1 – NPS; 1 – KRITFC) to monitor salmon escapement throughout the lower, middle, and upper portions of the Kuskokwim River drainage. Final estimates of escapement for each location will be made post-season. Daily escapement counts will be updated on the ADF&G Fish Counts webpage daily by 10AM, Monday through Friday:
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareakuskokwim.salmon#fishcounts>
- **Aerial Surveys** – Surveys will be flown throughout select lower, middle, and upper river tributaries to index Chinook salmon escapement in late July. Aerial survey results will be provided post-season once surveys are completed.
- **Juvenile Salmon Survey** – ADF&G in collaboration with NOAA and Alaska Pacific University will be conducting the second year of feasibility work in the southern Bering Sea. A main objective of this study is to estimate the abundance of southern Bering Sea juvenile Chinook salmon. Results will be provided post-season once the survey is completed.

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2020 Board of Fisheries Summary

Proposal 280 –Passed with amendments

-Originally proposed to change set gillnet to 6" or less mesh with no bank orientation.

-Amended to allow 6" or less mesh to be used during front-end closure when the escapement goal is projected to be exceeded. 6" mesh was also added as an option after the front-end closure for setnets. Bank orientation still required.

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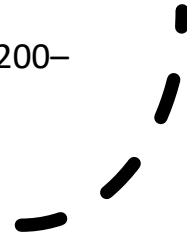
2020 Kuskokwim River Management Outlook and Strategy

Nick Smith ADF&G

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What Guides Preseason Chinook Discussions?

- KRSMWG
- Drainage wide escapement goal of 65,000–120,000 Chinook salmon
- Forecast (193,000–261,000 fish)
 - Recent performance
- Management Plan
 - Developed through BOF process over many cycles
- Chinook Salmon ANS 67,200–109,800



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Inseason Chinook Management

Assessment Tools

- Preseason forecast
- Bethel Test Fishery
- Sonar
- Inseason subsistence harvest reports

Management Toolbox

- Management Plan
- Time and area authority
- Different gear types (gillnets, fish wheels, beach seines, dip nets, and hook and line)
- Gillnet mesh size and length restrictions

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Front
End
Closure

Start Date –
June 11

- **Mainstem River closed to gillnets**
 - Roll closure upriver
 - At least one weekly 6" set gillnet fishing period
 - Selective legal methods with no King retention
- **Lower Kuskokwim River Spawning Tributaries**
 - Closed to gillnets
 - Selective legal methods with no King retention
- **Non-spawning tributaries**
 - Close to gillnets from their confluence with the Kuskokwim River upstream 100 yards.
- **Sport fishing for King salmon will be closed by Emergency Order from May 1 through June 11 in alignment with the management plan.**

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After Front
End Closure
June 12 –
End of
Season

- **Tributaries**
 - Allow retention of Kings with rod and reel in tributaries.
- **Mainstem**
 - 24-hour Drift Gillnet period every other day 12th-20th in Subsistence Sections 1-2; 6" mesh 25 fathom length; 50 fathom below Johnson R.
 - Open Subsistence Sections 3-5 until further notice; 6" mesh, 25 fathom length
 - Aniak box goes into effect for gillnets. Selective legal methods allowed; Kings must be returned to water. June 23 allow retention of Kings with selective gear.
 - Mainstem subsistence fishing with selective gears allowed with retention of Kings
 - After June 11th, management of the King salmon sport fishery will be dependent on escapement and management of the subsistence fishery
- Once Chum and Sockeye become dominant species, switch management focus to these species.

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Working
Group
Decisions
and Input-

Front End

1. Starting Date (s) of Front-End Closure

- Roll Closure Upriver?
 - Section 1 -
 - Section 2 -
 - Section 3 -
 - Section 4 -
 - Section 5 -

2. Front-End Setnet Fishing Periods

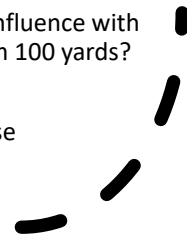
- One or more weekly?
 - Dates - ?
- Duration of fishing periods? (6, 12, 16, 24hr...etc)

3. Non-Spawning Tributaries

- Close to gillnets from their confluence with the Kuskokwim River upstream 100 yards?

4. Selective Gear Types

- Allow use with Chinook Release
 - Mainstem?
 - Spawning Tributaries?



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Working
Group
Decisions
and Input-

After
Front-End

1. Pre-release of Fishing Schedule?

2. Non-spawning Tributaries

- Close to gillnets from their confluence with the Kuskokwim River upstream 100 yards?

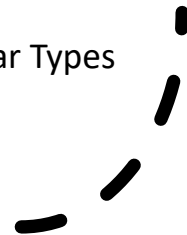
3. Spawning Tributaries

- Allow Rod and Reel retention of Kings?

4. Aniak Box?

5. Mainstem Selective Gear Types

- Allow Chinook Retention?



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Like our Facebook page to stay up to date on Kuskokwim
Area fisheries:

<https://www.facebook.com/KuskoRiverFishingADFG/>



Kuskokwim River angler days and king salmon harvests in the sport fishery as estimated by the Statewide Harvest Survey, 2016-2018.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Anglers</u>	<u>Angler Days</u>	<u>King Salmon</u>
2006	2,215	10,707	444
2007	2,626	11,434	1,482
2008	2,764	14,808	739
2009	3,506	17,797	1,399
2010	2,310	10,859	354
2011	2,414	10,280	757
2012	1,814	8,660	0
2013	1,381	7,450	0
2014	1,190	7,165	0
2015	1,673	5,342	0
2016	1,778	7,362	0
2017	1,053	4,116	0
2018	852	5,126	0
10 yr. ave.	1,988	9,384	325
5 year ave.	1,415	6,287	0

Freshwater logbook participation in angler days in the Kuskokwim River watershed (not including Kuskokwim Bay), 2006-2016.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Anglers</u>	<u>Angler Days</u>
2006	22	1,019
2007	16	1,416
2008	59	1,928
2009	52	1,351
2010	31	1,669
2011	38	1,130
2012	4	1,111
2013	14	1,139
2014	118	1,210
2015	44	1,028
2016	24	819
10 year ave.	40	1,280
5 year ave.	41	1,061



Sport and personal use fishing remain open

There appears to be some confusion regarding an announcement the Department made today regarding sport and personal use fishing. The Department understands the value of these activities to Alaskans and supports Alaskans having the opportunity to get out and fish to feed their families and fill their freezers.

Sport and Personal Use fishing in the State of Alaska will remain open, consistent with published regulations during the 2020 season, subject to compliance with State of Alaska Public Health Mandates.

Although travel between communities is prohibited under the issued health mandates, the public may still travel to fishing locations. When traveling to participate in sport or personal use fisheries that occur outside of their communities of residence, the public must follow these guidelines:

- 1) Conduct your fishing activities as close to your home residence as possible;
- 2) Local mandates may be authorized under Public Health Mandate 012. Find out local mandates in communities through which you plan to travel and abide by them;
- 3) Totally provision your trip from your community of origin. Don't plan on buying food, drinks or even fuel (if possible) after you begin your trip and until you return home;
- 4) Practice social distancing while sport or personal use fishing; and,
- 5) Highly suggest anglers wear face coverings as suggested in Health Alert 010 issued April 3, 2020.

Adherence to these stipulations will allow Alaskans the opportunity to fish and put food on their tables while taking measures to protect public health and allow time to build needed health infrastructure.

Also, subsistence fishing remains open and unrestricted under the issued health mandates.

Be safe and considerate of others as you venture out to fish.



Attn: Sport Fishing Guides and Businesses,

The Division of Sport Fish, ADF&G, is informing sport fishing guides and businesses about the current travel limitations and workforce restrictions in the state of Alaska resulting from efforts to minimize the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Governor Mike Dunleavy, Division of Health and Social Services (DHSS) Commissioner Adam Crum, and Chief Medical Officer Dr. Anne Zink have issued 12 Health Mandates as of March 27, 2020. These mandates can be viewed at: <https://gov.alaska.gov/home/covid19-healthmandates/>. Of greatest relevance to the sport fish guiding industry are Health Mandate 010 – International and Interstate Travel; Health Mandate 011 – Social Distancing; and Health Mandate 012 – Intrastate Travel. These mandates limit travel to and within Alaska, require a mandatory 14-day quarantine to persons traveling to Alaska (residents and nonresidents), and require social distancing statewide. In addition, small communities (less than 3,000 residents) off the road system may adopt travel restrictions that are more restrictive than those outlined in Health Mandate 12. This includes the ability to prohibit outside travelers to that community.

Fishing has been identified as critical infrastructure industry in Health Mandate 012 – Attachment A(g) (see updated Attachment A at the link below). Sport fish guides and businesses will need to comply with all issued Health Mandates to operate in Alaska at this time. In addition, as a critical infrastructure industry, you must take reasonable care to protect your staff and operations during the pandemic. You must submit a travel plan or protocol for maintaining critical infrastructure to akcovidplans@ak-prepared.com. This plan should outline how you will avoid the spread of COVID-19 and not endanger the lives of the communities in which you operate, of others who serve as a part of that infrastructure, or the ability of that critical infrastructure to function. This is also described in Health Mandate 012.

These mandates will be reevaluated on April 11, 2020 (Mandates 11 and 12) or April 21, 2020 (Mandate 10) and may be extended or modified at that time. Sport fishing guides and businesses are encouraged to follow COVID-19 updates in Alaska at the Division of Health and Social Services website at:

<http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Epi/id/Pages/COVID-19/default.aspx>

Thanks for your patience and understanding during these difficult times. Please contact Tom Taube, Deputy Director at (907)465-6184 if you have questions.

KUSKOKWIM SALMON MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP
Resolution xx-xx

A resolution of the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group (KRSMWG) with the intent to protect the long-term viability of the rainbow smelt run of the Kuskokwim River.

WHEREAS, the Kuskokwim River rainbow smelt are unique for such a large river system because the entire population migrates 190-miles upstream, all together, to the spawning grounds near the villages of Upper and Lower Kalskag.

WHEREAS, the adult smelt, once they reach the spawning ground, all spawn within a few days, then migrate back down river.

WHEREAS, the tiny, fragile eggs, after settling on the river bottom, are susceptible to disturbances during their roughly-21-day development period.

WHEREAS, the water levels in late May and early June have been exceeding low in five out of the last ten years when the adult smelt were spawning and the eggs were developing – a period when water levels are normally high.

WHEREAS, only two years of extensive studies were conducted by fisheries scientists in 2014 and 2015 as part of the Donlin Gold Environmental Impact Study (EIS) that meticulously documented where and when spawning occurred in those years, and was included in the Army Corps of Engineers' impact assessment.

WHEREAS, both study years documented that the length of river where spawning occurred was relatively short, less than four-miles long.

WHEREAS, the EIS concluded: *During the 2015 rainbow smelt spawning survey, spawning occurred as shallow as 8.7 feet along a relatively confined channel segment. The propeller scour of passing tug traffic in such locations could have resulted in detectable incidents of injury or mortality to incubating fish eggs or population-level effects depending on the tug's horsepower rating and engine speed. Because of the relatively shallow depth across this particular channel segment, it is unlikely that impacts to incubating rainbow smelt eggs could have been avoided by altering the line of travel of barge traffic.....Based on this analysis, prop wash from a tug in passage is expected to cause a medium to high intensity of scouring to gravel-size riverbed substrates at localized areas along the navigation route, particularly in waters with an under keel depth shallower than approximately 8 to 10 feet. Such impacts would extend over a long-term duration from construction through operation.*

WHEREAS, the Donlin Gold transportation plan calls for an average of 2.2 tug/barge tows per day passing any given point on the river being pushed by 2,000 h.p. engines; resulting in approximately forty-six barge tows passing by the vicinity of, or over, the developing eggs during the development stage each year.

WHEREAS, the EIS' Record of Decision states the following regarding Donlin Gold's proposed Smelt Monitoring Plan: *If rainbow smelt population changes are observed over a defined time period,*

additional work would need to be undertaken to investigate the reason for those changes. If observed changes were attributed to project-related activities, Donlin Gold would implement an assessment of measures available to address or mitigate those activities.

WHEREAS, no studies conducted to date have attempted to quantify smelt abundance, which would be extremely difficult to accurately estimate.

WHEREAS, several fisheries scientists (i.e., Dave Cannon, Dr. Daniel Schindler, & Dr. Peter Moyle) believe that because of natural year-to-year variability that it would be extremely difficult to detect any trend in abundance or population characteristic, and in particular, attribute the change to any particular activity or natural event...especially, teasing out the difference between the two.

WHEREAS, one example of the inherent difficulty in assessing fluctuations in a given fish population occurred during the November 2019 KRSMWG meeting, where a discussion of what was causing the variation in Chinook salmon numbers of the Salmon Pitka Fork River over time.

WHEREAS, during that discussion, which involved data from forty-three years of aerial survey counts and five years of weir counts, neither the Department of Fish & Game nor area residents could determine, with any certainty, the causes of the fluctuations of the Chinook population.

WHEREAS, the influences of climate change are readily apparent to all of us who are dependent on the river for travel.

WHEREAS, Michael Williams Sr., Chief of the Akiak Native Community, presented the following testimony in Washington D.C in February of 2020, before the U.S. House of Representatives regarding climate change: *“Throughout the nation in Indian Country, traditional foods are declining, local landscapes are changing, rural infrastructure is being challenged, soils are drying, and lake and river levels are declining. Tribes are experiencing droughts, loss of forests, fishery problems, and increased health risks from heat strokes and from diseases that thrive in warmer temperatures. On almost all tribal lands, enhanced climate change will threaten our sacred waters, essential to our physical and cultural survival.”*

WHEREAS, the implications of the recent COVID-19 pandemic highlight the threats to food security in our region, accentuating how it is more important than ever to ensure that none of our fish, wildlife, and other subsistence resources are jeopardized in any way.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group does not believe that the Smelt Monitoring Plan of the Donlin Gold EIS Record of Decision is adequate to protect the smelt population of the Kuskokwim River if the mine were to be built.

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED, that the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group respectfully requests that if the mine proceeds as planned, that Donlin Gold cease barging activities during the time that the adult smelt are spawning, the eggs are developing, and the newly hatched larvae are migrating out to Kuskokwim Bay.

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED, that should the mine proceed, that Donlin Gold annually monitor the smelt run to determine when and where all of the life history stages are in the system so that the barges traffic does not overlap with the smelt migration.

CERTIFICATION

The resolution was passed and approved at a duly convened meeting of the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group at which required a voting quorum was present and voted _____ Yes _____ No _____ Abstaining. This _____ day of May 2020.

Co-Chair _____

Co-Chair _____

Options for language to be added in Working Group Bylaws that address the use of “Kuskokwim River Salmon Working Group” on letters or materials disseminated on behalf of the Working Group.

Approved bylaw addition will be placed in a new section under:

Article II, MEMBERS

Section 6. Material disseminated on behalf of the Working Group:

***The following options are intended to be starting language that will be discussed, revised and voted upon by the Working group.**

Option 1 – During the regular meeting season (May – August), all materials that will be disseminated on behalf of the Working Group shall be added to and voted upon as a new business agenda topic. A special meeting (Article II; Section 3) of all working group members shall be scheduled to discuss and vote upon all material that will be disseminated on behalf of the Working group during the non-meeting season (Sept – April).

Option 2 – During the regular meeting season (May – August), all materials that will be disseminated on behalf of the Working Group shall be added to and voted upon as a new business agenda topic. During the non-meeting season (Sept – April), all material that will be disseminated on behalf of the Working Group requires unanimous consent from current Working Group co-chairs.