

# Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working group

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

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

June 22, 2020

Meeting called to order at 6:00 p.m. on Monday June 22, 2020 and adjourned at 8:23 p.m. Meeting time was approximately 2 hours and 26 minutes. Eight full voting members were present, and a quorum was established. LaMont Albertson chaired the meeting.

## AGENDA ITEMS:

### **A. USFWS/KRITFC UPDATE:**

### **B. ADF&G MANAGEMENT ACTIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION:**

### **C. PEOPLE TO BE HEARD: *Non-Working Group Members***

### **D. CONTINUING BUSINESS:**

- Subsistence Reports: Lowest River, ONC Inseason Subsistence Report, Lower River, Middle River, Upper River, Headwaters
- Overview of Kuskokwim River salmon run assessment:
  - a. Test Fisheries (Bethel and Aniak):
  - b. Sonar/Weirs/Aerial Surveys/Other:
  - c. Subsistence Division Project Update:
  - d. NVN Report:
- Commercial Catch Report:
- Sport Fish Report:
- Discussion of ADF&G Management considerations and discussion of possible alternatives (recommendations from the Working Group):
- Motion for Discussion and Action:

### **E. OLD BUSINESS:**

- Meeting attendance and vacant seats

### **F. NEW BUSINESS:**

### **G. COMMENTS FROM WORKING GROUP MEMBERS:**

## WORKING GROUP ACTION ITEMS:

- Include pertinent excerpts from bylaws regarding vacancies and Working Group membership (Working Group / ADF&G)
- Begin contacting villages in search of nominations to fill vacant or delinquent Working Group seats (Working Group / ADF&G).

## WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

1. Approve the agenda. *Passed (Unanimous)*
2. Motion to mirror the US Fish and Wildlife Service's Wednesday, June 24, 6 am to 6 pm subsistence gillnet opener from the mouth of the Kuskokwim River to the Kalskag Bluffs (within subsistence sections 1-3). *Passed (6 yes, 1 no)*
3. Motion to extend the meeting until 8:20 p.m. *Passed (Unanimous)*
4. To schedule the next Working Group meeting for Monday July 1, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. *Passed (Unanimous)*
5. Adjourn at 8:23 p.m. *Passed (Unanimous)*

- A. KRITFC/ USFWS UPDATE:** Ray Born (USFWS; Acting Refuge Manager) announced that subsistence fishing will be open from 6 a.m. until 6 p.m. on June 24. Section 1 (below Johnson River) gillnets are restricted to 6-inch or less mesh, 45 meshes in depth, and 50 fathoms in length. Sections 2 and 3 (above Johnson River) gillnets are restricted to 6-inch or less mesh, 45 meshes in depth, and 25 fathoms in length.

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**B. ADF&G MANAGEMENT ACTIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION:** Nick Smith (ADF&G, Area Management Biologist) reported plans to mirror the USFWS subsistence opener following identical restrictions in order to provide law enforcement for the fishery. Subsistence fishing will be open from 6 a.m. until 6 p.m. on June 24. Section 1 (below Johnson River) gillnets are restricted to 6 inch or less mesh, 45 meshes in depth, and 50 fathoms in length. Sections 2 and 3 (above Johnson River) gillnets are restricted to 6 inch or less mesh, 45 meshes in depth, and 25 fathoms in length.

**C. PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:**

- Tad Lindley (Bethel) via text message reported that high water coming out of the Johnson River is keeping the salmon out. Mr. Lindley commented that catches are not as good as in the years past and it is reflected in the reduction of fishing effort.
- Theresa Quiner (Bethel) reported that the Bethel Lions Club foodbank has seen a significant increase in demand due to COVID-19. She commented that she was asked to share this information in case it affects any decisions made by the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group.

**D. CONTINUING BUSINESS:**

**SUBSISTENCE REPORTS:**

- **ONC Subsistence Report:** Janessa Esquible and Danielle Lowrey (ONC) provided an overview of the ONC inseason harvest monitoring project. *(For more information on the ONC subsistence survey report, please see the June 22, 2020 Informational Packet, pages 3–5)*
- **Lower River:** James Charles (Downriver Elder) reported that all was well in the lower river and people are happy with the run so far. Charlie Brown (Commercial Fishing) reported that fishing is slow in the lower part of the river. Mike Williams (Lower River Subsistence) reported that people are grateful for the 12-hour subsistence openers. Mr. Williams commented that the fish seem to be coming in slower than the 2019 Chinook run.
- **Middle River:** Lisa Feyereisen (Middle River Subsistence) reported that she has not started fishing yet. Ms. Feyereisen commented that people's soak times are longer this year than during the 2019 season and that the Chinook salmon that are being caught are on the smaller side.
- **Upriver:** Barbara Carlson (Upriver Subsistence) reported that people are out fishing and seem to be putting in more effort than usual. Ms. Carlson commented that people are catching Chinook salmon and seem happy with their catches.
- **Overview of Kuskokwim River Salmon Run Assessment Projects:** Sean Larson (ADF&G) provided an overview of the ADF&G assessment projects. *(For more information on the 2020 inseason assessment projects, please see the June 22 Informational Packe pages t).*
  - **Bethel Test Fish:** Mr. Larson reported that as of June 21, the cumulative CPUE at the BTF was 176. Based on historical data, the 2020 Chinook salmon run appeared to be tracking slightly lower than average at this point in the season.
  - **Aniak Test Fish:** Mr. Larson reported that as of June 21, the cumulative CPUE at the ATF was 245. Based on historical data, the 2020 Chinook salmon run appeared to be tracking slightly lower than average at this point in the season.
  - **Sonar:** Mr. Larson reported that as of June 20, an estimated 20,900 Chinook salmon have passed through the sonar site. 1,000 chum salmon have passed through the sonar site. 17,200 sockeye salmon have passed through the sonar site.
  - **Weirs:** Mr. Larson stated that it was still too early for any interpretation of weir counts. That said, George River weir passed 7 Chinook salmon at the time of this meeting.

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- Subsistence Division project update: No projects to discuss at this meeting
- **Commercial Catch Report:** While not a catch report, Ben Gray (ADF&G, Assistant Management Biologist) informed the group that there will be a commercial fishery in Districts W-4 (Quinhagak) and W-5 (Goodnews Bay) during the summer of 2020. Mr. Gray stated that the processor and buyer were primarily interested in sockeye salmon. Working Group members were generally in opposition to the idea of a commercial fishery during times of Chinook salmon conservation.
- **Sport Fishing:** LaMont Albertson (Sport Fishing) reported that sport fishing guides are doing well.
- **Discussion of ADF&G Management considerations and discussion of possible alternatives:**  
(Please see Motion 4 on page 3).

## OLD BUSINESS:

- Meeting attendance and vacant seats
  - Deep discussion into this topic was tabled until the June 29 meeting. The brief discussion that did take place resulted in the above action items.

**NEW BUSINESS:** *No new business to report at the time of this meeting*

## **WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:**

1. **Approve the agenda. Passed (Unanimous)**
2. **Motion to extend the meeting until 8:20 p.m. Passed (Unanimous)**
3. **Motion to mirror the US Fish and Wildlife Service's Wednesday, June 24, 6 am to 6 pm subsistence gillnet opener from the mouth of the Kuskokwim River to the Kalskag Bluffs (within subsistence sections 1-3). Passed (6 yes, 1 no)**  
After some deliberation about the timing of the opener brought up by Charlie Brown (Commercial Fishing), who preferred an 11:00 am to 11:00 pm schedule, Working Group members ultimately made a motion to support ADFG's plan to mirror the US Fish and Wildlife Service's June 24 opener described above. The motion passed but was not unanimous.
4. **To schedule the next Working Group meeting for Monday July 1, at 6:00 p.m. Passed (Unanimous)**
5. **Adjourn at 8:23 p.m. Passed (Unanimous)**

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

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## 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	Barbara Carlson
HEADWATERS SUBSISTENCE	Absent
MEMBER AT LARGE	Fritz Charles
WESTERN INTERIOR RAC	<i>Vacant</i>
YK DELTA RAC	John Andrew
COMMERCIAL FISHING	Charlie Brown
SPORT FISHING	LaMont Albertson
PROCESSOR	<i>Vacant</i>
KRITFC	Absent
ADF&G	Nick Smith
CHAIR	LaMont Albertson

<b>Other Participants:</b>	
<u>ADF&amp;G Comm. Fish:</u> Ben Gray, Sean Larson, Keegan Birchfield, Bobette Dickerson. Lily Reichard <u>Sport Fish:</u> John Chythlook <u>Subsistence Division:</u> Dave Runfola	
<u>USFWS:</u> Ray Born, Aaron Moses <u>OSM:</u> Eva Patton, Frank Harris	
Jennifer Hooper (AVCP) Janessa Esquible (ONC) Danielle Lowery (ONC) Bill Bechtol (KRITFC) Amanda Hoeldt (NVM)	<u>Media:</u> Anna Rose MacArthur (KYUK)
	<u>WG Alternates:</u>

## 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)

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