

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working group

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

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

July 6, 2020

Meeting called to order at 6:00 p.m. on Monday July 6, 2020 and adjourned at 9:30 p.m. Meeting time was approximately 3 hours and 30 minutes. Seven full voting members were present, and a quorum was established. Alissa N. 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:

Old Business Discussion Topics:

- Meeting attendance and vacant seats
 - This topic was tabled but will be discussed at a future meeting.

New Business Discussion Topics:

WORKING GROUP ACTION ITEMS:

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

1. Approve the agenda. *Passed (Unanimous)*
2. Motion to extend the meeting until 8:30 p.m. *Passed (Unanimous)*
3. Motion to extend the meeting until agenda is finished. *Passed (Unanimous)*
4. Motion to open the subsistence fishery from the mouth of the Kuskokwim River to the Headwaters effective as soon as possible with 6 inch mesh or less, 45 meshes deep, 25 fathoms in length above the Johnson and same regulations but 50 fathoms below the Johnson River. *Passed (Unanimous)*
5. Adjourn at 9:30 p.m. *Passed (Unanimous)*

KRITFC/ USFWS UPDATE: Ray Born (USFWS; Acting Refuge Manager) reported no actions pending. Mary Peltola (KRITFC) reported no actions pending.

ADF&G MANAGEMENT ACTIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION: Nick Smith (ADF&G, Area Management Biologist) announced plans for a 24-hour subsistence period opener on Wednesday June 8, and a 48-hour subsistence opener Friday June 10 through Saturday June 11 with gillnet restrictions of 6 inch mesh or less mesh, 45 meshes in depth and 50 fathoms in length below the Johnson River. Above the Johnson River gillnet restrictions to 6 inch or less mesh, 45 meshes in depth, and 25 fathoms on length. Mr. Smith announced plans on July 13, to open the entire Kuskokwim River mainstem until further notice with gear restrictions in place.

PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:

- Robert Nick (Nunapitchuk) commented that peoples fish racks are empty and that the heavy restrictions are to blame for this problem.
- Bev Hoffman (Bethel) commented that the heavy restrictions have become a cause of frustration on the Kuskokwim River. Ms. Hoffman commented that she is concerned about the low numbers and return runs for future generations. v
- Laurie O'Brien (Bethel) commented that people would appreciate an opportunity to fish. Ms. O'Brien commented that she would like consideration that they do not have a fishing opener on a weekday.
- Ruth Evan (Bethel) commented that she and her family are behind in the numbers of fish they need

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harvested for the winter.

- Evan Waska (Bethel) commented that people are unhappy with the heavy restrictions on the Kuskokwim this season.
- Earl Samuelson (Napaskiak) commented that the closures this season have been too long. Mr. Samuelson commented that his family's numbers are short on Chinook salmon for this time in the season.
- Anna Moses (Akiachak) commented that her family is short on their numbers of Chinook salmon for this time in the season. Ms. Moses commented that people have done as they were told and followed restrictions, but its time to open the river.
- Martin Nicolai (Kwethluk) commented that he does not understand why the restrictions have kept getting extended this season. Mr. Nicolai commented that it is time to open the Kuskokwim River for subsistence fishing.
- Mark Springer (ONC) commented that he is skeptical of the heavy restrictions this season. Mr. Springer commented that there is an enormous amount of unease all along the Kuskokwim River and he believes that it is time to open the Kuskokwim River for subsistence fishing.
- Joe Amick (Napaskiak) commented that based on fishing recently he has seen a dramatic drop in Chinook salmon being caught. Mr. Amick commented that he believes the Chinook run has passed and that the Kuskokwim river should be opened for chum and sockeye fishing.
- David Alexie (Tuluksak) commented that many people are not catching Chinook salmon this season. Mr. Alexie commented that he believes that it is time they open the Kuskokwim River for subsistence fishing.
- Henry Titkuna (Atmautluak) commented that the Chinook run has passed and that the Kuskokwim River should be opened to subsistence fishing.
- Adolf Willie (Tuluksak) commented that people are getting frustrated with the restrictions and that subsistence fishing should be opened on the Kuskokwim River.
- Peter Gregory (Tuluksak) commented that people are having trouble reaching their quota of salmon this season. Mr. Gregory commented that for the health of the people subsistence fishing should be opened on the Kuskokwim River.
- Ivan Ivan (Akiak) commented that this is the first year he has seen so many restrictions on the Kuskokwim River. Mr. Ivan commented his concerns that if subsistence fishing is not opened soon people will not meet their salmon quotas for the season.
- Wilson Twitchell (Kasigluk) commented that he would like to encourage management to open the Kuskokwim River to subsistence fishing.
- Noah Alexie (Tuluksak) commented that the restrictions this season have been too long, and it is time to open the Kuskokwim River to subsistence fishing.
- Helen Ivan (Akiak) commented that she has not made her quota of Chinook salmon this season and is concerned that if heavy restrictions stay in place, she will not meet her quota for sockeye or chum salmon either this season.
- Willie Atlee (Kwethluk) commented the restriction have been very heavy this year and he believes people have waited long enough. Mr. Atlee commented that it is time to open the Kuskokwim up to subsistence fishing.

SUBSISTENCE REPORTS:

- **ONC Subsistence Report:** Janessa Esquible (ONC) provided an overview of the ONC inseason harvest monitoring project. *(For more information on the ONC subsistence survey report, please see the July 6, 2020 Informational Packet. Page 3)*
- **Lower River:** James Charles (Downriver Elder) reported that subsistence fishing is going well. Mr. Charles commented that people have concerns about the heavy restrictions this season. Mary Peltola (Lower River

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Subsistence Alt.) reported that she set a net in the Gweek River on July 2, and caught 1 Chinook and 4 sockeye. Mike Williams (Lower River Subsistence) reported that many people do not have enough harvested fish for the winter.

- **Middle River:** Lisa Feyereisen (Middle River Subsistence) reported that people have been begun to catch fish. Ms. Feyereisen commented that people are not done fishing but are happy with the numbers coming into the river.
- **Upriver:** Barbara Carlson (Upriver Subsistence) reported that the Aniak fish wheel has been running the last 48 hours and not many fish have been caught. Ms. Carlson commented that people drift net fishing are not catching many Chinook salmon and that many people are waiting for the sockeye run.
- **CONTINUING BUSINESS:**
 1. **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 July 6 Informational Packet, Pages 5-15).*
 - **Bethel Test Fish:** Mr. Larson reported that as of July 5, the cumulative CPUE of Chinook salmon at the BTF was 368. Based on historical data, the 2020 Chinook salmon run appeared to be tracking slightly lower than average at this point in the season. Mr. Larson also explained a formula error in the BTF spreadsheet that resulted in slightly higher chum/sockeye CPUE values for 2019 and 2020.
 - **Aniak Test Fish:** Mr. Larson reported that as of July 5, the cumulative CPUE at the ATF was 1,298. 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 July 4, an estimated 71,200 Chinook salmon have passed through the sonar site. 16,800 chum salmon have passed through the sonar site. 236,800 sockeye salmon have passed through the sonar site.
 - **Weirs:** Mr. Larson commented that it is still early for the weir projects, but there are some Chinook and chum salmon making their way past the weirs.
 - **Subsistence Division project update:** *No projects in the water.*
 2. **Sport Fishing:** *There was no sport fishing representative present at this meeting.*
 3. **Discussion of ADF&G Management considerations and discussion of possible alternatives:** Nick Smith (ADF&G, Area. Management Biologist) reported that he will be opening the Kuskokwim River mainstem fulltime to gillnets until further notice, beginning 12:01 a.m. on July 7. Gillnets must be 6 inch mesh or less, 45 meshes in depth, and up to 150 feet in length above the Johnson and 300 feet in length below the Johnson River

OLD BUSINESS:

- Meeting attendance and vacant seats
 - This topic was tabled but will be discussed at a future meeting.

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

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 - a. Lisa Feyerisen made the motion and Each Working Group member that spoke to this motion was in strong support
5. Adjourn at 9:30 p.m. Passed (Unanimous)

COMMENTS FROM THE WORKING GROUP: *No additional comments from the working group.*

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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	Absent
SPORT FISHING	Absent
PROCESSOR	<i>Vacant</i>
KRITFC	James Nicori
ADF&G	Nick Smith
CHAIR	Alissa N. Rogers

Other Participants:	
<u>ADF&G Comm. Fish:</u> Ben Gray, Sean Larson, Keegan Birchfield, Andrew Kastning, Bobette Dickerson. Lily Reichard <u>Sport Fish:</u> John Chythlook <u>Subsistence Division:</u>	
<u>USFWS:</u> Ray Born, Gary Decossas, Aaron Moses <u>OSM:</u> Eva Patton, Frank Harris	
Mark Springer (ONC) Janessa Esquible (ONC) Danielle Lowery (ONC) Avery Hoffman (ONC) Van Kapsner (ONC) Jim Simon (KRITFC) Dan Gillikin (NVN)	<u>Media:</u> Anna Rose MacArthur <u>WG Alternates:</u> Mary Peltola (Lower River Sub. Alt.) Alissa Rogers (Lower River Sub. Alt.)

GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS:

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (**ADF&G, department, State**), Orutsaranmiut 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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