

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

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

June 2, 2021

This meeting of the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group was called to order at approximately 10:05 a.m. and adjourned at approximately 12:15 p.m. A quorum was established with seven full voting members present. Alissa Rodgers and LaMont Albertson chaired the meeting.

AGENDA ITEMS

- A. USFWS/KRITFC UPDATE:** *Audio for this update begins at 20:40 – Meeting Audio - 06/02/21*
- a. Boyd Blihovde (USFWS) gave a brief update and spoke of some of the programs that are currently in place such as the KYUK Fish Talk and other meetings being had to keep the public informed.
 - b. Mary Peltola (2nd Member At Large; KRITFC) gave a brief update about happenings at the KRITFC. There was an annual meeting at the beginning of April and elections occurred.
- B. ADF&G MANAGEMENT ACTIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION:** *Audio begins at 29:01 – Meeting Audio - 06/02/21*
- a. Nick Smith (ADF&G) informed the Working Group that the implementation of subsistence harvest permits in sections 4 and 5 was under consideration.
- C. PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:** *Non-Working Group Members*
- a. There were no people to be heard for this meeting.
- D. CONTINUING BUSINESS:** *Audio for subsistence reports begins at 31:40 – Meeting Audio - 06/02/21*
- Subsistence Reports: Lowest River, ONC Inseason Subsistence Report, Lower River, Middle River, Upper River, Headwaters
 - Lower River Reports –
 - John Andrew (Kwethluk; Downriver Elder / YK Delta RAC) said that smelt fishing had been good near Kwethluk. Prior to the frontend closure there had been mostly sheefish caught with only a few kings harvested. Fishing for pike and whitefish had been tough due to high water.
 - Mary Peltola (Bethel; 2nd Member at Large) had not caught any fish yet but only drifted a couple of times. She informed the group that there was a very large snag in the Bethel Test Fish drifting zone and for people to be aware of that while fishing there.
 - Charles Guest (Bethel; Commercial Fishing) had heard of a couple kings being caught near Napaskiak on May 29 and 30, but mostly sheefish had been caught. He said that the water has been high and full of debris.
 - James Nicori (Kwethluk; KRITFC) said that he was mostly catching sheefish but had caught a couple smaller kings on May 31.
 - Alissa Rodgers (Bethel; Lower River Subsistence) said that she had not been out yet due to boat work but had heard that kings had been caught near Tuntutuliak, Bethel, and Kwethluk using either set or drift gillnets.
 - Mike Williams (Akiak; Lower River Subsistence) said that people were catching some sheefish, broad whitefish, and pike up until May 31st with setnets. Some drifting was done on May 31st and a few jack kings were caught.
 - ONC Inseason Subsistence Report
 - Danielle Lowery (ONC) informed the group that as of June 2 ONC would begin harvest surveys at area fish camps and at the boat harbor. ONC will provide a report of those surveys at the June 9 meeting. ONC has delivered 2 king salmon and 4 sheefish (caught at BTF) to elders in Bethel.
 - Middle River
 - LaMont Albertson (Sportfishing) remarked that water was high in the middle river and that people were catching some pike and sheefish.
 - Dan Gillikin (Aniak) said that there was not much fishing activity yet and no salmon caught. The water levels were still high and some people were catching some large broad whitefish.

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>

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- Headwaters
 - Kevin Whitworth (McGrath, Western Interior RAC) said that fishing was slow so far. The water has been coming down in the river but was still high and murky in the creeks and lakes.
- Overview of Kuskokwim River salmon run assessment: *Audio for begins at 56:29 – Meeting Audio - 06/02/21*
 - Test Fisheries (Bethel and Aniak):
 - Sean Larson (ADF&G) informed the group that BTF officially started operations on June 1 and had not yet caught a king.
 - Dan Gillikin (NVN) informed the group that ATF had started and that nothing had been caught yet. He said that the high water was influencing catch effort.
 - Sonar/Weirs/Aerial Surveys/Other:
 - Sean Larson (ADF&G) let the group know that the sonar was operational, and that test fishing had begun. He stated that the weirs would not be installed for another couple of weeks.
 - Frank Harris (USFWS) let the group know that the Kwethluk River weir will be operating this year. Aaron Moses (USFWS) informed the group that survey flights would be occurring during openers to count nets.
 - NVN Report: *See information above from Dan Gillikin.*
- Working Group KRITFC Representative Report
 - LaMont Albertson stated there was nothing to report at this time.
- Trawl Bycatch Report
 - Sean Larson (ADF&G) presented a trawl bycatch report. *Please see the Information Packet – 06/02/2021 page 4 for more information. Audio begins at 1:05:15 - Meeting Audio – 06/02/21*
- Discussion of ADF&G Management considerations and discussion of possible alternatives (recommendations from the Working Group):
 - Nick Smith (ADF&G) informed the Working Group that the implementation of subsistence harvest permits in sections 4 and 5 was under consideration. *Audio begins at 1:13:05 - Meeting Audio – 06/02/21*
- Motion for Discussion and Action.
 - See below summary of Working Group motions.

E. OLD BUSINESS:

- a. **Review of Harvest Trends: Chris McDevitt (ADF&G)** *Please see the Information Packet – 06/02/2021 pages 7-12 for more information. Audio begins at 1:18:00 - Meeting Audio – 06/02/21*

F. NEW BUSINESS:

- a. **In-person meetings (See Motion #6)**

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WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

Motion 1: Approve the agenda as amended. Passed (Unanimous)

Motion 2: To accept the Alaska Department of Fish and Game's recommendation to implement a subsistence harvest permit in sections 4 and 5 of the Kuskokwim River. Passed (Unanimous)

- *There was minimal discussion after Nick Smith (ADF&G) explained the permit system (Audio begins at 1:18:00- Meeting Audio – 06/02/21). The motion was made by Mary Peltola and seconded by Mike Williams, Sr.*

Motion 3: To suspend the agenda. Passed (Unanimous)

- *Audio begins at 1:32:00 - Meeting Audio – 06/02/21. Motion was made by Mary Peltola seconded by Kevin Whitworth. This motion suspended the order of the agenda to address a question raised by Mike Williams, Sr. about ADF&G announcing openers concurrent to those scheduled by the USFWS during the Federal Special Action. The Working Group previously voted in favor of ADF&G not having concurrent openers to those announced by USFWS during a FSA. Nick Smith explained that he was obligated to provide subsistence fishing opportunities during the frontend closure through regulation set forth by the State of Alaska Board of Fisheries.*

Motion 4: To recommend that ADF&G not issue any further openers during the Federal Special Action. Passed (Unanimous)

- *Discussion pertaining to this motion begins at 1:32:00 - Meeting Audio – 06/02/21. The motion itself was made at 1:48:29 by Mike Williams Sr. and it was seconded by John Andrew.*

Motion 5: To extend the meeting until 12:30 p.m., if needed. Passed (Unanimous)

Motion 6: To allow in person meetings so long as people are doubly or fully vaccinated. Passed (Unanimous)

Motion 7: To adjourn. Passed (Unanimous)

COMMENTS FROM THE WORKING GROUP:

Mike Williams, Sr. (Akiak; Lower River Subsistence) Thanked the group and participating organizations for working together during difficult situations.

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WORKING GROUP ATTENDANCE:

MEMBER SEAT:	NAME:
DOWNRIVER ELDER	John Andrew
UPRIVER ELDER	Absent
LOWER RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mike Williams Sr.
MIDDLE RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Absent
UPRIVER SUBSISTENCE	Absent
HEADWATERS SUBSISTENCE	Absent
1 st MEMBER AT LARGE	Absent
2 nd MEMBER AT LARGE	Mary Peltola
WESTERN INTERIOR RAC	Kevin Whitworth
YK DELTA RAC	Absent
COMMERCIAL FISHING	Charles Guest
SPORT FISHING	LaMont Albertson
KRITFC	Avery Hoffman
ADF&G	Nick Smith
CHAIR	Alissa Rodgers / LaMont Albertson

Other Participants:		
<u>ADF&G Comm. Fish:</u> Ben Gray, Sean Larson, Bobette Dickerson <u>Sport Fish:</u> John Chythlook <u>Subsistence Division:</u> Dave Runfola, Chris McDevitt		
<u>USFWS:</u> Boyd Blihovde, Aaron Moses, Gary Decossas, Chris Tulik, Frank Harris <u>OSM:</u> Eva Patton		
Janessa Esquible (ONC) Danielle Lowery (ONC) Katie Russel (ONC) Arles Andrew (ONC) Terese Schomogyi (KRITFC)	Jim Simon (KRITFC) Dan Gillikin (NVN)	<u>Media:</u> <u>WG Alternates:</u> Alissa Rodgers (Lower River Subsistence)

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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