

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

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

June 9, 2021

This meeting of the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group was called to order at approximately 10:01 a.m. and adjourned at approximately 12:45 p.m. A quorum was established with 12 full voting members present. Fritz Charles (1st Member at Large) chaired the meeting.

AGENDA ITEMS

A. USFWS/KRITFC UPDATE: *Audio for this update begins at 12:20 – Meeting Audio – 06/09/21*

- a. Avery Hoffman (KRITFC) stated that the fish commission had examined data from the first two setnet opportunities (*see the Information Packet – 06/09/21 pages 5-8*) and that drift net periods were scheduled for June 12 and 15. KRITFC and USFWS will evaluate data from these periods and assessment data to determine when/if additional drift periods should occur.
- b. Mary Peltola (2nd Member At Large; KRITFC) stated it would probably be June 17 until harvest estimates were available for the June 15 drift period and for the group to stay tuned past that point for information on future openers.

B. ADF&G MANAGEMENT ACTIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION: *Audio begins at 15:32 – Meeting Audio - 06/09/21*

- a. Ben Mulligan (Deputy Commissioner, ADF&G) informed the Working Group that Kuskokwim Area Management Staff had been directed by the ADF&G Commissioner to manage fisheries on the entirety of the Kuskokwim River (including the waters within subsistence sections 1-3) in accordance with the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Plan.
- b. Nick Smith (ADF&G) informed the Working Group of his intentions to mirror the USFWS drift net openers set to take place on Saturday, June 12 and Tuesday, June 15 in subsistence sections 1-3.

C. PEOPLE TO BE HEARD: *Non-Working Group Members: Audio begins at 21:22 – Meeting Audio – 06/09/21*

- a. Jonathan Samuelson (KRITFC) asked Nick Smith (ADF&G) some clarifying questions about subsistence fishing in sections 4 and 5. Avery Hoffman (KRITFC) asked who could apply for the king salmon subsistence harvest permit. Mr. Smith replied that the permit was available to Alaska state residents.
- b. Steven Alexie (Napaskiak) disagreed that anyone should be able to apply for the permit and stated that it would enable people from the lower river to fish in subsistence sections 4 and 5.
- c. Jim Simon (KRITFC) asked Nick Smith if ADF&G had considered implementing an elder fishery (60 years plus) which is in the state management plan. Mr. Smith replied that it had been considered, but since the Chinook salmon run was projected to return within the bounds of escapement, the one fishing period per week option was most warranted.
- d. There were some further comments regarding reservations of allowing all state residents to apply for a permit and participate in the fishery. Chris McDevitt (ADF&G Subsistence) clarified that when the permit was in place in 2018, 188 permits were issued and of those, 184 were issued to Kuskokwim River residents meaning there was not a large influx of state residents from other areas of the state participating in the fishery in 2018.

D. CONTINUING BUSINESS: *Audio for subsistence reports begins at 43:56 – Meeting Audio – 06/09/21*

- Subsistence Reports: Lowest River, ONC Inseason Subsistence Report, Lower River, Middle River, Upper River, Headwaters
 - Lower River Reports –
 - James Charles (Tuntutuliak, Downriver Elder) stated that the 100-yard boundary markers at the non-salmon spawning tributaries needed to be put in. He said that he had caught some lush, pike, and a few other non-salmon species.
 - Charlie Brown (Eek, Commercial Fishing) reported that he had fished Pailleq (pronounced Bythluk) Slough last week and that there was a misunderstanding between him and Federal Law Enforcement Officers but that it had been resolved. He did not catch any fish.

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- Adolph Rupie (Tuntutuliak) reiterated what James Charles said about the 100-yard boundary markers needing to be placed in the non-salmon spawning tributaries.
- John Andrew (Kwethluk; Downriver Elder / YK Delta RAC) said that he did not participate in the June 5 setnet opener because the water remained high, Others that participated caught mostly sheefish and a few small kings. Kings were being caught mostly near the bottom of the nets. He said it was still early but looking promising.
- Mike Williams (Akiak; Lower River Subsistence) said that limited amounts of fishers participated in the first two openers. Fewer participated in the first opener due to high water with more going out for the second. The average catch in the first period was between 2-6 kings and one red salmon was caught. There were a few more fish caught in the second opener and the water continues to go down.
- **ONC Inseason Subsistence Report**
 - Jaden Andrew (ONC) presented the ONC Inseason Subsistence Report. Please see the *Information Packet pages 3-4* for this presentation.
- **Middle River**
 - Walter Morgan (Lower Kalskag; Middle River Subsistence) reported that he had drifted 17 times and caught one sheefish and one chum. He said that fishing was difficult near Kalskag.
- **Upper River**
 - Ruby Egrass (Red Devil; Upriver Subsistence) stated that one person in Red Devil had caught a king and shared it with other people in the community. One other person had also caught a sheefish.
- **Headwaters**
 - Daniel Esai (Nikolai; Headwaters) reported that no one was currently fishing in Nikolai and that the water levels had fluctuated from high-to-low and high again. He reiterated what John Andrew had said about the first king salmon in the river swimming deep. He said that he did not anticipate much fishing effort in the headwaters this year.
 - Kevin Whitworth (McGrath, Western Interior RAC) said that a few setnets had been put out near McGrath. He had heard that a few pike, sheefish, and humpback whitefish had been caught. Some people were out rod-and-reel fishing. The water has gotten lower but was starting to rise again.
- **Inseason Harvest Report (ONC/KRITFC):**
 - Katie Russel (ONC) presented information on the ONC/KRITFC Inseason Harvest Reports from the June 2 and 5 setnet periods. For further information on this presentation please refer to *pages 5-8 of the Information Packet and Meeting Audio – 06/09/21, beginning at 1:13:20*.
- **Overview of Kuskokwim River salmon run assessment: *Audio for this presentation begins at 1:22:45 – Meeting Audio - 06/09/21***
 - **Test Fisheries (Bethel and Aniak):**
 - **Sonar/Weirs/Aerial Surveys/Other:**
 - Sean Larson (ADF&G) gave an update on the status of ADF&G assessment programs currently underway. He presented the assessment packet for June 7 (see *Informational Packet pages 16-23*) and gave a detailed presentation on how to interpret the data once more data became available.
 - Mr. Larson let the group know that weir installs would be taking place in the next couple of weeks.
 - **Subsistence Division Project update: *Audio begins at 1:38:40 – Meeting Audio - 06/09/21***
 - Chris McDevitt and Dave Runfola (ADF&G Subsistence) informed the group that ADF&G Subsistence will be conducting interviews in four non-salmon spawning tributaries during the month of June – the Gallic, Pailleq, Johnson, and Gweek. This survey will shed light on the amount of effort in these areas during mainstem closures.

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- NVN Report:
 - Dan Gillikin (NVN) stated that Aniak Test Fish had not picked up any fish as of June 9. The Salmon River weir crews will be putting in the weir in the coming days.
- Working Group KRITFC Representative Report
 - LaMont Albertson (Sportfishing, KRITFC) spoke about the recent setnet openers and said there would be some data coming from those soon. He also spoke briefly about the June 12 and 15 gillnet openers.
- Sport Fish Report:
 - John Chythlook (ADF&G) informed the group that he had extended the king salmon sportfish closure through the end of the season.
- Trawl Bycatch Report
 - Sean Larson (ADF&G) presented a weekly trawl bycatch report and there was discussion that followed. *Please see the Information Packet – 06/09/2021 page 24 for more information. Audio begins at 1:54:09- Meeting Audio – 06/09/21*
- Discussion of ADF&G Management considerations and discussion of possible alternatives (recommendations from the Working Group): *Audio for begins at 2:15:15 – Meeting Audio - 06/09/21*
 - Nick Smith (ADF&G) informed the Working Group of his intentions to mirror the USFWS drift net openers set to take place on Saturday, June 12 and Tuesday, June 15 in subsistence sections 1-3. There was some discussion between Mary Peltola (2nd Member at Large) and Mr. Smith about Emergency Order language for this opener. Mike Williams, Sr. (Lower River Subsistence) voiced his displeasure with ADF&G and their continued going against the recommendations of the Working Group as it pertains to taking management actions in the conservation unit. Ultimately, Mr. Smith referenced what Ben Mulligan had said earlier about the Department's direction by the Commissioner to manage the entirety of the Kuskokwim River.
- Motion for Discussion and Action.
 - See below summary of Working Group motions.

E. OLD BUSINESS: None at this meeting

F. NEW BUSINESS: None at this meeting

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

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

Motion 2: To extend the meeting until 12:30 p.m. Passed (Unanimous)

Motion 3: To extend the meeting until 12:45 p.m. Passed (Unanimous)

Motion 4: To not have state opening concurrent to, or on top of, federal openings. Passed (Unanimous)

- **The motion was made at 2:33:36 Meeting Audio - 06/09/21. Discussion that lead up to the motion began earlier at 2:15:15. Mary Peltola made the motion and it was seconded by LaMont Albertson.**

Motion 5: To adjourn. Passed (Unanimous)

COMMENTS FROM THE WORKING GROUP:

There were no further comments from the Working Group at this meeting.

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WORKING GROUP ATTENDANCE:

MEMBER SEAT:	NAME:
DOWNRIVER ELDER	James Charles
UPRIVER ELDER	Absent (Excused)
LOWER RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mike Williams, Sr.
MIDDLE RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Walter Morgan
UPRIVER SUBSISTENCE	Ruby Egrass
HEADWATERS SUBSISTENCE	Daniel Esai
1 st MEMBER AT LARGE	Fritz Charles
2 nd MEMBER AT LARGE	Mary Peltola
WESTERN INTERIOR RAC	Kevin Whitworth
YK DELTA RAC	John Andrew
COMMERCIAL FISHING	Charlie Brown
SPORT FISHING	LaMont Albertson
KRITFC	Avery Hoffman
ADF&G	Nick Smith
CHAIR	Fritz Charles

Other Participants:		
<u>ADF&G Comm. Fish:</u> Ben Gray, Sean Larson, Ben Mulligan, Charles Brazil, John Linderman		
<u>Sport Fish:</u> John Chythlook		
<u>Subsistence Division:</u> Dave Runfola, Chris McDevitt, Caroline Brown		
<u>USFWS:</u> Aaron Moses, Frank Harris		
<u>OSM:</u> Eva Patton, Cory Graham		
Janessa Esquible (ONC)	Jim Simon (KRITFC)	<u>Media:</u> Greg Kim (KYUK)
Danielle Lowery (ONC)	Dan Gillikin (NVN)	
Katie Russel (ONC)		<u>WG Alternates:</u> Alissa Rodgers (Lower River Subsistence) Charles Guest (1 st Member at Large; Commercial Fishing) Albert Kawagley (1 st Member at Large)
Jaden Andrew (ONC)		
Terese Schomogyi (KRITFC)		

GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS:

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