

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

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

July 7, 2021

This meeting of the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group was called to order at 10:02 a.m. and adjourned at approximately 11:30 a.m. A quorum for the purpose of making motions on fish management decisions was not established (only 6 full voting members plus 1 ADF&G representative present throughout the meeting). Therefore, this KRSMWG meeting was treated as an executive session. Barbara Carlson (Upriver Subsistence) and Mary Peltola (2nd Member at Large) co-chaired the meeting.

AGENDA ITEMS

A. USFWS/KRITFC UPDATE: *Audio for this update begins at 14:30 – Meeting Audio – 07/07/21*

- Boyd Blihovde (USFWS) reported that USFWS, ADF&G, and KRITFC had good meetings last week. Mr. Blihovde gave an overview of plans for management actions in the YK Delta Refuge waters. He stated that the USFWS and KRITFC commissioners were fairly comfortable with the conservation actions in place for Chinook salmon at this time which has given some overlapping protections for chum salmon. There are ongoing discussions about chum salmon conservation procedures. He stated that there needed to be discussions about what to do with the openings above the Kalskag line. He stated that he was considering rescinding the second special action to close the Kalskag line on up to the Refuge boundary so that there was not the appearance of unfairness along the river. He said he was happy for the red salmon return.
- Barbara Carlson (Upriver Subsistence) questioned Mr. Blihovde about the special action procedures to clarify which salmon species were included in the special action. Mr. Blihovde confirmed that currently the special action was for Chinook salmon only and that there had not been anything issued for chum salmon from the USFWS.

A. ADF&G MANAGEMENT ACTIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION: *Audio begins at 20:25 – Meeting Audio - 07/07/21*

- Nick Smith (ADF&G) gave a summary of the current management actions in place. For this meeting there were no additional subsistence restrictions under consideration. He informed the group that a catcher/seller wanted to operate this summer with a commissioner's dipnet permit to catch sockeye. This would allow the catcher/seller to operate commercially and release any kings or chum salmon captured.

B. PEOPLE TO BE HEARD: *None at this meeting.*

C. CONTINUING BUSINESS: *Audio for subsistence reports begins at 26.55 – Meeting Audio – 07/07/21*

- Subsistence Reports: Lowest River, ONC Inseason Subsistence Report, Lower River, Middle River, Upper River, Headwaters
 - Lowest River
 - No report at this meeting.
 - ONC Inseason Subsistence Report: Katie Russel (ONC) gave the report - *Please see pages 3–5 of the Information Packet – 07/07/21, Audio begins at 40:15 – Meeting Audio – 07/07/21*
 - Boyd Blihovde (USFWS) asked Katie Russel (ONC) about harvest goals and if people had chum salmon goals. She said yes, but that there were so few chums that it was difficult for people to put a percentage point on their goals.
 - There was further discussion about subsistence harvest goals being met between Avery Hoffman (KRITFC), Katie Russel (ONC), Barbara Carlson (Upriver Subsistence), Boyd Blihovde (USFWS), and Jim Simon (KRITFC) *please refer to meeting audio for more on this discussion.*
 - Lower River
 - Albert Kawagley (Bethel; 1st Member at Large) said that he fished below Akiachak during the last opening and caught 47 reds, 6 kings, and no chums. He noticed that there were not that many other people out fishing.
 - Mike Williams, Sr. (Akiak, Lower River Subsistence) noticed only two other boats in his fishing spot below Akiak. He said that caught in a few hours he caught 100 reds, 2 chums, and 13 kings.

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Like others, he noticed that people are not fishing as much and that there was no more combat fishing. He said that the challenge now is keeping fish dry so that they do not spoil. He has relatives in the Yukon area that have not been able to fish. He was wondering if there was a way to ship fish to them.

- Avery Hoffman (Bethel, KRITFC) fished almost the entire past opener and caught 13 kings, 73, reds, and 3 chums near Joe Pete's. He said that everyone he talked to did well, but that no one was catching many chums. He said that there were still reds jumping in the river. He noticed that people are starting to not fish as much.
- Mary Peltola (Bethel; 2nd Member at Large) fished for awhile during the Friday opening and said that her smokehouse was full. She also noticed that there were not many people out near where she fished near the Gweek. She was happy for the fish, but worried about the weather so far as drying and smoking goes.
- Middle River
 - No report given at this meeting.
- Upper River
 - Barbara Carlson (Sleetmute; Upriver Subsistence) stated that while she was gone the fishwheel ran during June and caught a few fish. Since she has been back the fishwheel has been running and they have not been catching many chums. She said that fishing has been good for reds and kings though. The kings have been good size and the reds have been getting larger.
- Headwaters
 - No report at this meeting.
- Inseason Harvest Report (ONC/KRITFC):
 - Katie Russel (ONC) gave the report for the June 28 and July 2 subsistence openers. *Please see the Information Packet pages 6–13 Audio for this presentation begins at 58:05 – Meeting Audio – 07/07/21*
- Overview of Kuskokwim River salmon run assessment: *Please see the Information Packet pages 6–13 Audio for this presentation begins at 59:30 – Meeting Audio - 07/07/21*
 - 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. He stated that the king run on the Kuskokwim was nearing completion, the chum salmon run is the lowest on record since 2008, and that the sockeye salmon run was still coming in in good numbers.
 - NVN Report:
 - Mackenzie Smith (NVN) stated that the Aniak Test Fish project has been operating well, but they have not seen many chums. The Salmon River weir crew has arrived at the weir site and waiting for the water levels to go down
 - Subsistence Division Report –
 - Dave Runfola (ADF&G) informed the group that the subsistence division had completed this year's field work for the non-salmon spawning tributaries project and that they would be working with analysts to review what was accomplished.
 - Working Group KRITFC Representative Report
 - No report for this meeting.
- Sport Fish Report:
 - John Chythlook (ADF&G) reported that most sport fishers and guides were currently focused on resident species and reporting difficulty with high water conditions.
- Trawl Bycatch Report
 - Sean Larson (ADF&G) presented a weekly trawl bycatch report. *Please see the Information Packet*

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– 07/07/21 page 26 for more information.

- Donlin Gold
 - No report at this meeting.
- Intercept Fishery Report
 - No report at this meeting.
- Discussion of ADF&G Management considerations and discussion of possible alternatives (recommendations from the Working Group): *Audio for begins at 1:15:50 – Meeting Audio - 07/07/21*
 - Because there was no quorum there were no motions made regarding ADF&G management decisions.
 - There was brief discussion between Barbara Carlson (Upriver Subsistence) and Nick Smith (ADF&G) regarding the catcher/seller operating with the commissioners dipnet permit, and the catch-reporting stipulations under that permit. *Please refer to the audio for this discussion.*
- Motion for Discussion and Action.
 - There was not a quorum therefore there were no motions made.

D. OLD BUSINESS: None at this meeting

E. NEW BUSINESS: None at this meeting

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 | Absent |
| UPRIVER ELDER | Absent |
| LOWER RIVER SUBSISTENCE | Mike Williams, Sr. |
| MIDDLE RIVER SUBSISTENCE | Walter Morgan |
| UPRIVER SUBSISTENCE | Barbara Carlson |
| HEADWATERS SUBSISTENCE | Absent |
| 1 st MEMBER AT LARGE | Fritz Charles / Albert Kawagley |
| 2 nd MEMBER AT LARGE | Mary Peltola |
| WESTERN INTERIOR RAC | Absent |
| YK DELTA RAC | Absent |
| COMMERCIAL FISHING | Absent |
| SPORT FISHING | Absent |
| KRITFC | Avery Hoffman |
| ADF&G | Nick Smith |
| CHAIR | Barbara Carlson |

Other Participants:

ADF&G

Comm. Fish: Nick Smith, Ben Gray, Sean Larson, John Linderman, Chuck Brazil, Bobette Dickerson

Sport Fish: John Chythlook

Subsistence Division: Dave Runfola

USFWS: Boyd Bilhovde, Aaron Moses, Spencer Rearden,

Chris Tulik, Frank Harris

OSM: Cory Graham

Katie Russel (ONC)

Terese Schomogyi (KRITFC)

Jim Simon (KRITFC)

Adolph Lupie (KRITFC)

Jennifer Hooper (AVCP)

McKenzie Smith (NVN)

Media:

Greg Kim (KYUK)

WG Alternates:

Albert Kawagley (1st Member at Large)

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**), Alaska Wildlife Troopers (**AWT**)

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