

**Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group**  
**1 (800) 315-6338 (MEET) Code: 58756# (KUSKO)**  
**ADF&G Bethel toll free: 1 (855) 933-2433**

**June 15, 2022**

On Wednesday, June 15th, 2022, the KRSMWG meeting was called to order at 10:01 a.m. and adjourned at approximately 12:45 p.m. Meeting time was approximately 2 hours and 45 minutes. A quorum was not established initially, with a few members filtering in late. Shortly after introductions, quorum was established with 8 full voting members and 1 alternate in attendance. One other member joined later in the meeting, which made 9 full voting members. During voting, 2 members failed to respond when their names were called for roll call. It is assumed they left the call. Quorum was maintained throughout the remainder of the meeting, with a minimum of 7 full voting members. Lamont Albertson chaired the meeting. A primary theme of this meeting was federal jurisdiction over the lower portion of the river.

**AGENDA ITEMS AND SUMMARY INFORMATION:**

**A. USFWS/KRITFC UPDATE:** *Audio for this update begins at 15:45 – Meeting Audio – 6/15/22*

- Boyd Blihovde, USFWS, summarizes the KRITFC and USFWS meeting that had occurred the day prior, June 14<sup>th</sup>, and mentioned a few proposals that had come out of that meeting. Discussions for these proposals had been tabled until the KRITFC and USFWS meeting on Friday, June 17<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 p.m. with no definitive action made.
  - To open the Aniak box to hook and line fishing gear for the retention of King salmon, 24 inches or less with a bag limit of one per day.
  - To open the river at the Kalskag line, sometime between June 19<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>.
- Spencer Rearden, USFWS, gives a brief update on the Kwethluk weir smolt trap project which should be concluded around June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2022.
- Frank Harris, USFWS, gives an update on the progress of the Kwethluk weir and hopes to start counts between June 20<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2022, depending on if the water levels drop.

**B. ADF&G MANAGEMENT ACTIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION:** *Audio for this update begins at 21:57 – Meeting Audio – 6/15/22*

- Nick Smith made recommendations to the group including:
  - Providing a subsistence gillnet fishing opener on June 21<sup>st</sup>, downriver from the Kalskag Bluffs with 6 inch or less mesh, drift or setnet from 6:00 a.m. to 6 p.m.
    - Below the Johnson River, gillnets would be restricted to 50 fathoms in length and 45 meshes in depth
    - Above the Johnson River, gillnets would be restricted to 25 fathoms in length and 45 meshes in depth
  - Keeping the Aniak box closed to gillnet fishing, but allowing subsistence rod and reel fishing beginning on June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2022, at 12:01 a.m. with the following restrictions:
    - Retention of Chinook salmon would be allowed with a size limit of 24 inches or less in length measured from the tip of the snout to the longer lobe of the tail.
    - All Chinook larger than 24 inches would be required to be returned to the water alive.
    - The daily limit would be 1 King salmon per day and 1 in possession.
    - All other salmon would be allowed to be retained.

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- Opening the portion of the river between the Kalskag Bluffs to the Aniak Box to subsistence fishing with 6-inch or less mesh gillnets, not to exceed 25 fathoms in length and 45 meshes in depth beginning 12:01 a.m. June 21, 2022, and until further notice.
- Mr. Smith summarized the data used to justify the ADF&G recommendations made.
- There was some discussion about how fishing is handled in the Kalskag area and how the area has been handled in previous years. A motion is made regarding the portion of the river between the Kalskag Bluffs to the Aniak Box. *Audio for this discussion begins at 27:11 – Meeting Audio – 6/15/22*
- There was a motion made on this topic. Please see Motion 2 for details and discussion points.

## C. PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:

- Member of the public, Stephen Alexie expresses his concern over the chum salmon and asks for a conservative approach. Mr. Alexie also offers some traditional knowledge and hopes that there will be more openings. Mr. Alexie also expresses his frustration over the failure of USFWS and ADF&G to work together and reminds the group that all the agencies work for the same people. James Nicori and other members of the public echo the concern over chum and worry about opening the river too early. Mr. Nicori also explains why he supports the ADF&G recommendations. Following a question from a member of the public, Mr. Smith explains the departments concern over chums and his reasoning for not including chum salmon in his management recommendations at this time.
  - *Audio for this commentary begins at 55:00 – Meeting Audio – 6/15/22*

## D. CONTINUING BUSINESS:

- Subsistence Reports: Lower River, Middle River, Upper River, ONC In-season Subsistence Report
  - Lower River - *Audio for subsistence reports begins at 1:08:50 – Meeting Audio – 6/15/22*
    - Mary Peltola (Bethel) had nothing to report
    - Alissa Rogers (Bethel) chooses to not harvest Chinook salmon since there is a conservation concern and others are more in need, such as elders. Her family does not start fishing until late June.
    - James Nicori (Kwethluk) said he caught 3 salmon on the June 12<sup>th</sup> opener and 6 on the previous opener. Mr. Nicori said that he had to leave early but his son in law caught 7 and the rest of the people he spoke to had an average harvest. *Audio for this subsistence report begins at 1:14:40 – Meeting Audio – 6/15/22*
    - John Andrew (Kwethluk) said he did not go out for the setnet opener but did go out on June 12<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Andrew said that he caught 2 king salmon over 10 pounds and 10 jack salmon over the sandbars. *Audio for this report begins at 1:16:42 – Meeting Audio – 6/15/22*
  - ONC In-season Report - *Audio for this discussion begins at 1:10:58 – Meeting Audio – 6/15/22*
    - Avery Hoffman gives a brief update on ONC projects. Harvest survey commentary and catch reports were discussed with a comparison of previous years. Details can be found on pages 3-5 of the information packet. ONC has

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distributed 24 Chinook salmon, 1 chum salmon, and 2 whitefish to Bethel area elders.

- Middle River
  - Walter Morgan (Kalskag) said that he did 5 drifts on June 12<sup>th</sup> and got 1 king. He counted 14 boats on the river. Out of the people Mr. Morgan spoke to, all had low numbers of salmon, the highest number being 4. Mr. Morgan estimates that there were 20 King salmon total caught on 15 boats in the Kalskag area of the river. *Audio for this discussion begins at 1:18:54 – Meeting Audio – 6/15/22*
- Upper River
  - Allen Simeon (Aniak) said he used a setnet at Bridge Crossing and caught 3 jack salmon and 4 sheefish. *Audio for this report begins at 1:20:24 – Meeting Audio – 6/15/22*
  - Rebecca Wilmarth (Red Devil) said that she has caught 11 King salmon, mostly jacks. Ms. Wilmarth stated that she was catching too many sheefish and whitefish with her setnet, so she decided to switch to a driftnet, but only caught sheefish and whitefish. She stated that she would be taking a break from fishing for now. *Audio for this discussion begins at 1:22:28 – Meeting Audio – 6/15/22*
- Sport Fish:
  - Lamont Albertson (Aniak) said he believes the muddy water has affected fishing in the Aniak area. Pike and some sheefish are biting and being caught on rod and reel. Mr. Albertson said that guides upriver report they are not catching the usual amount of Dolly Varden and char in the clear water. He states Dolly Vardens follow the chum salmon, which have been low. *Audio for this discussion begins at 1:21:20 – Meeting Audio – 6/15/22*
- Overview of the Kuskokwim River salmon run assessment
  - *Audio for this discussion begins at 1:24:35 – Meeting Audio – 6/15/22*
  - Sean Larson gives a report on the salmon run as of June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2022. Some highlights include Bethel Test Fishery summary, species composition and sonar project update. Mr. Larson states there has not been a large push of salmon, but he remains hopeful and reminds everyone that it is still early in the season. He makes mention that the information from the last openers harvest estimates align with what could be expected by the preseason forecast.
    - Boyd Blihovde echoes that he hopes to be able to learn more about the 2022 salmon run by next week with information gathered the remainder of this week.
  - Detailed information can be found on pages 8-15 of the information packet.
  - NVN Report
    - *Audio for this discussion begins at 1:31:25 – Meeting Audio – 6/15/22*
    - Mackenzie Smith gives a brief report. She states that only a couple of sheefish and no salmon have been caught at the Aniak Test Fishery. The

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weir crew is on their way to check the Salmon River weir for any possible damage the fire may have caused.

- KRITFC In-season Report
  - *Audio for this discussion begins at 1:32:20 – Meeting Audio – 6/15/22*
  - Lamont Albertson states that the KRITFC has nothing to report at this time as it is early in the salmon run.
- Intercept Fishery Report
  - *Audio for this discussion begins at 1:33:13 – Meeting Audio – 6/15/22*
  - Nick Smith presents data from the Alaska Peninsula Inseason Commercial Harvest Estimate that can be found on page 16 of the information packet. Information can also be found at <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareaakpeninsula.salmoharvestsummary>.
  - Lamont Albertson requests information on harvest of salmon in the Nushagak River. There is a brief discussion about this request and how the fishery is handled on the Nushagak.
  - Alissa Rogers requests information about catch following up the coast from False Pass, Dillingham, Togiak, Quinhagak, and other coastal areas in order to better assess what is happening with the salmon run as they move toward the Kuskokwim. Nick Smith and Jim Simon relay some information that they have heard on this topic, including some information about a genetic study and information that was shared at the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (or YRDFA) meeting recently.

## E. OLD BUSINESS:

- **Nominate WG representative to serve at KRITFC inseason meetings.**
  - Lamont Albertson was nominated and elected as WG representative to serve at KRITFC inseason meetings. *Please see Motion 11.*
- **Election of Co-Chairs**
  - All Co-chairs shall remain the same. *Please see Motion 12.*

## F. NEW BUSINESS:

- No new business was addressed.

**The meeting was adjourned at 12:45 p.m.**

## **WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:**

### **Motion 1: Approve the agenda**

- Lamont asks the group if there needs to be any changes or if there are any objections to the agenda as written.

**Motion 2: To open the river above Kalskag Bluffs to the Aniak Box and stay open along with state-controlled waters upriver of Aniak beginning June 16<sup>th</sup>** *Passed (8 yes, 0 no)*

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- *Audio for this motion begins at 36:00– Meeting Audio – 6/15/22*
- This motion was made by Lamont Albertson and seconded by Avery Hoffman.
- Biological concerns are questioned and there is some discussion about how this portion of the river has been managed traditionally.
- In favor of this motion: if this portion of the river were opened there would not be expected to have much impact, traditionally the openings on this portion of the river have matched openings upriver of Aniak, and because of the geography of this portion of the river people must share the river and cannot all fish at the same time.
- In opposition to this motion: other lower river fishermen may travel upriver if they know this portion of the river is open, there is not time to put out a proper notice, and it could appear as unfair to lower river people.

## **Motion 3: To table ADF&G recommendations for the Aniak Box until the next KRSMWG meeting**

*Passed (Unanimous)*

- *Audio for this discussion begins at 1:44:50 – Meeting Audio – 6/15/22*
- Motion made by Lamont Albertson and seconded by Alissa Rogers.
- There is some discussion about the Aniak box recommendation made by ADF&G and if it would be prudent to table the topic immediately prior to the motion being made. The time stamp above is where the discussion begins.

## **Motion 4: To extend the meeting until 12:30** *Passed (Unanimous)*

- *Audio for this discussion begins at 1:51:40 – Meeting Audio – 6/15/22*
- Motion made by Avery Hoffman and seconded by Lamont Albertson.

## **Motion 5: To allow for a subsistence gillnet (drift or set) fishing opener on June 21<sup>st</sup> for the mainstem Kuskokwim from the Kalskag Bluffs downriver to the mouth from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.** *Failed (5 Nos, 2 Abstentions)*

- *Audio for this discussion begins at 1:55:05 – Meeting Audio – 6/15/22*
- Motion made by Alissa Rogers and seconded by Walter Morgan.

## **Motion 6: To reconsider Motion 2 to open upriver of the Kalskag bluffs to the Aniak box** (7 Yes, 0 Nos)

- *Audio for this discussion begins at 2:06:08 – Meeting Audio – 6/15/22*
- Motion made by Avery Hoffman and seconded by Kevin Whitworth.

## **Motion 7: Table the recommendation from ADF&G to open the river above the Kalskag Bluffs to Aniak until after the June 16<sup>th</sup> opener and taken up at the KRITFC-USFWS meeting on Friday, not by the Working Group** *Fails (6 yes, 1 abstention)*

- *Audio for this discussion begins at 2:13:00 – Meeting Audio – 6/15/22*
- Motion made by Kevin Whitworth and seconded Avery Hoffman.

## **Motion 8: To extend the meeting until 1:00 p.m.** *Passed (Unanimous)*

- *Audio for this discussion begins at 2:24:39 – Meeting Audio – 6/15/22*
- Motion made by Avery Hoffman and seconded by Lamont Albertson.
- Alissa Rogers states that she must leave by 12:45. Savannah Hollingworth, makes note that when Ms. Rogers leaves the meeting the Working Group will no longer have a quorum.

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## **Motion 9: To recommend a closure box between Napaskiak and Oscarville area to alleviate crowding in that portion of the river (Motion died)**

- Audio for this discussion begins at 2:28:17 – Meeting Audio – 6/15/22
- Motion made by Alissa Rogers, no second.

## **Motion 10: For the state to not announce any further openings in waters that are under federal jurisdiction. Passed (6 yes, 1 no)**

- Audio for this discussion begins at 2:30:05 – Meeting Audio – 6/15/22
- Motion made by Avery Hoffman and seconded by Lamont Albertson.

## **Motion 11: Lamont Albertson to serve as KRSMWG representative at inseason KRITFC meetings.**

Passed (7 yes, 0 no)

- Audio for this discussion begins at 2:35:00 – Meeting Audio – 6/15/22
- Motion made by Avery Hoffman and seconded by Mary Peltola.

## **Motion 12: To keep all co-chairs of the Working Group the same. Co-chairs include Lamont Albertson, Mary Peltola, Alissa Rogers, Fritz Charles, and Barbara Carlson. Passed (7 yes, 0 no)**

- Audio for this discussion begins at 2:38:43 – Meeting Audio – 6/15/22
- Motion made by Avery Hoffman and seconded by Kevin Whitworth.

### **WORKING GROUP ATTENDANCE:**

<b>MEMBER SEAT:</b>	<b>NAME:</b>
DOWNRIVER ELDER	John W. Andrew
UPRIVER ELDER	Allen Simeon
LOWER RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mary Peltola
MIDDLE RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Walter Morgan
UPRIVER SUBSISTENCE	<i>Absent</i>
HEADWATERS SUBSISTENCE	Kevin Whitworth
MEMBER AT LARGE SEAT 1	<i>Absent</i>
MEMBER AT LARGE SEAT 2	<i>Absent</i>
WESTERN INTERIOR RAC	Rebecca Wilmarth
YK DELTA RAC	Alissa Rogers
COMMERCIAL FISHING	<i>Absent</i>
SPORT FISHING	LaMont Albertson
ADF&G	Nick Smith
CHAIR	Lamont Albertson
<u>ADF&amp;G Comm. Fish:</u> Nick Smith, Ross Renick, Sean Larson, Chuck Brazil, Zach Liller, Keegan Birchfield, Iris Fletcher, Savannah Hollingworth	
<u>Sport Fish Division:</u> John Chythlook	
<u>Subsistence Division:</u>	
<u>Commissioner's Office:</u>	
<u>USFWS:</u> Boyd Blihovde, Spencer Rearden, Aaron Moses, Chris Tulik, Frank Harris, Emmit Nicori, Catherine Bradley	
<u>OSM:</u> Brooke McDavid	
<u>NVN:</u> Dan Gillikin, Mackenzie Smith, Brianna Sherer	
<u>ONC:</u> Jamin Crow, Danielle Lowery, Delen Hooper, Jamin Crow, Taj Tony	

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<u>AVCP:</u> Jennifer Hooper	
<u>KRITFC:</u> Avery Hoffman, Jim Simon, Terese Schomogyi	
<u>UAF:</u>	
<u>WIRAC:</u> Rebecca Wilmarth	
<u>YK Delta RAC:</u> Alissa Rogers	
<u>WG Alternates:</u> (not already listed above) James Nicori (KRITFC)	<u>Media:</u> Anna Rose MacArthur
	<u>Other:</u> Tad Lindley Maridon Boario; senator Hoffman's office

**GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS:**

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (**ADF&G**), Orutsararmiut Native Council (**ONC**), 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**), ADF&G Subsistence Division (**SD**), 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**),

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