

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

June 22, 2022

On Wednesday, June 22nd, 2022, the KRSMWG meeting was called to order at 10:03 a.m. and adjourned at 11:20 a.m. Meeting time was approximately 1 hours and 20 minutes. A quorum was not established with 5 full voting members in attendance. Barbara Carlson chaired the meeting. The main topic of the meeting was how to allow opportunity for sockeye harvest without impacting the Chinook any further.

AGENDA ITEMS AND SUMMARY INFORMATION:

A. USFWS/KRITFC UPDATE: *Audio for this update begins at 12:26 – Meeting Audio – 06/22/22*

- Boyd Blihovde, USFWS, discusses previously announced subsistence opportunities and states he has heard that there has been a good number of sockeye salmon being caught. Mr. Blihovde says he would like to discuss ideas on how to provide opportunities for sockeye harvest while still conserving chums and Chinook salmon. He does not believe there is much more opportunity for King salmon and believes setnet opportunities oriented close to the bank, similar to last year is a good option. Mr. Blihovde mentions that USFWS will be meeting with KRITFC on Friday to discuss further openings and how the recent harvest opportunities turned out.
- Nick Smith (ADF&G) asks Mr. Blihovde if he had considered allowing rod and reel fishing within the Aniak Box and the retention of one 24 inch or less Chinook salmon. Mr. Blihovde answers he does not believe that there is a biological concern and hopes to address the issue at the upcoming KRITFC/USFWS tribal consultation.

B. ADF&G MANAGEMENT ACTIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION: *Audio for this discussion begins at 19:49 – Meeting Audio – 06/22/22*

- Nick Smith summarizes his recommendations for salmon management. Mr. Smith believes that next week will be the transition point to begin focusing on conserving chum salmon. To that end he suggests one last 12-hour gillnet opportunity with the same restrictions as previous openers for section 1-3. Projections for the king salmon run remain the same at 130,000. Mr. Smith states that July 5th, on average, is the midpoint of the chum salmon run, however these last few years the midpoint has occurred sometime between July 9th through the 16th. This year chum salmon harvest rate is 220, compared to 440 this time last year. Mr. Smith hopes to discuss ways to allow for sockeye harvest opportunities while conserving chum salmon. Some ideas include alternative fishing methods, like beach seines and fish wheels, with live release of chums. Mr. Smith states he is in support of allowing hook and line fishing within the Aniak Box with the retention of king salmon that are 24 inches or less and a daily limit of one. He looks forward to working with Mr. Blihovde later this week on that point.
- Boyd Blihovde comments about the weirs that USFWS is managing and asks about the weirs that ADF&G is managing.
- Following a question from Barbara Carlson, Mr. Smith explains how setnets target sockeyes, but allow for chum salmon passage.

C. PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:

- Dan Gillikin, Native Village of Napaimute (NVN), requests to continue discussion about hook and line opportunity within the Aniak Box, allowing retention of one Chinook salmon 24 inches or

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less. Mr. Gillikin also states he would like to talk about chum salmon conservation. *Audio for this request begins at 10:20 – Meeting Audio – 06/22/22*

D. CONTINUING BUSINESS:

- Subsistence Reports: Lower River, Middle River, Upper River, ONC In-season Subsistence Report
 - Lower River - *Audio for this report begins at 28:47 – Meeting Audio – 06/22/22*
 - Albert Kawagley (Bethel) stated he had been in meetings, so he has not been able to fish. Mr. Kawagley said he had heard that people are catching a few more Kings than last year. He said he is happy the weather has been drier this year than last, because it is better for drying fish. Last year he had heard about trouble with spoilage because of the wet conditions.
 - Middle River - *Audio for this report begins at 30:32 – Meeting Audio – 06/22/22*
 - Walter Morgan (Lower Kalskag) stated he had fished Tuesday and had caught 1 small jack King salmon, 1 small sockeye, and 1 chum salmon. Mr. Morgan stated that it has been slow fishing in his area. One person he spoke to drifted 5 times and only caught 1 King salmon. With the price of gas, it makes fishing expensive. He plans on waiting till the numbers pick up.
 - Upper River - *Audio for this report begins at 31:52 – Meeting Audio – 06/22/22*
 - Barbara Carlson (Sleetmute) said that she has been fishing between Red Devil and Sleetmute with a fishwheel and that she has had decent numbers the last 3 days. Ms. Carlson stated she caught what she needed to smoke in 2 days. She said she is catching between 10-20 King salmon per day, but most are small. Someone else is now using the fish wheel. She said 11 fish were caught in the fishwheel on Tuesday that were all good size. Ms. Carlson had spoken to one person who had fished with a setnet, but they were not catching much. She heard Rebecca Wilmarth from Red Devil had been doing well with a driftnet. Ms. Carlson said that she has not heard of anyone catching any chums. Sheefish and whitefish are doing well in Ms. Carlson's area.
 - Headwaters - *Audio for this report begins at 34:25 – Meeting Audio – 06/22/22*
 - Dan Esai (Nikolai) stated that he does not have a lot to report. He had heard 1 salmon was caught in McGrath but has not heard anything else. Mr. Esai said that he had heard from family who traveled down to Kwethluk to fish, and they said that the size of the fish is increasing.
 - Immediately after Mr. Esai's report there is some discussion touching on topics of whitefish and aerial surveys in the Salmon River area.
 - ONC In-season Report - *Audio for this report begins at 40:51 – Meeting Audio – 06/22/22*
 - Delen Hooper gives a brief report on ONC harvest surveys and distribution from Bethel Test Fish. Details can be found on pages 4 and 5.
 - KRITFC In-season Report
 - None

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- Overview of the Kuskokwim River salmon run assessment - *Audio for this update begins at 45:00 – Meeting Audio – 06/22/22*
 - Nick Smith summarizes the salmon run assessment. The information that is summarized can be found on pages 7-14 of the information packet. Some additional points made are that the run size for Chinook is what can be expected and matches projections; sockeye are at the beginning of their run; and the chum run is doing poorly, similar to last year.
 - Mr. Smith speaks briefly about the cumulative sonar estimates and comments that the numbers reflected in the information packet are current up to June 18th, 2022. The preliminary results as of Tuesday, June 21st, include a total estimated Chinook salmon passage of 34,700, a sockeye salmon estimated total passage of 41,000, and no chum.
 - Barbara Carlson asks a question about the size of the sockeye passing by sonar. The question is handled by Keegan Birchfield, who states that they are still seeing a lot of the small sockeye, but they are starting to see more sizeable fish coming.
 - NVN Report - *Audio for this report begins at 51:40 – Meeting Audio – 06/22/22*
 - Dan Gillikin gives a summary of projects on the middle river and comments that the numbers at Aniak Test Fish are the lowest CPUE since beginning the project. Mr. Gillikin states the Salmon River Weir has a target date of July 1st to begin operations and they are keeping an eye on a fire about 6 miles southwest of the camp.
- ADF&G Subsistence Division - *Audio for this update begins at 53:46 – Meeting Audio – 06/22/22*
 - Katie Hayden makes comment that the subsistence division does not have any inseason projects happening this summer but will be starting a sonography project in the lower river communities starting in August.
- Intercept Fishery Report
 - This report can be found on page 18 of the information packet.

E. OLD BUSINESS:

- There is no old business to address.

F. NEW BUSINESS:

- No new business was addressed.

G. COMMENTS FROM WORKING GROUP MEMBERS:

- There is a discussion between the Working Group members present, Boyd Blihovde (USFWS), Nick Smith (ADF&G) and Dan Gillikin (NVN) concerning management decisions and ideas how to preserve Chinook and chum salmon while still providing opportunity to harvest sockeye. Boyd Blihovde states that he believes there will be one more opening for driftnet and that will probably be the last of the season. No decisions or announcements were made. Conversation continues with a brief mention of the Unimak and Shumigan June fisheries and how high waters

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help fish reach headwaters to spawn and the peak runtime in the Sleetmute area. Finally, there is a discussion about the Aniak Box and allowing rod and reel fishing. Mr. Gillikin explains that he feels allowing a retention of one king 24 inches or less would have little impact. He goes on to say that the only concern that he has are how people release fish, which he suggests putting up signage and educating people on proper methods for live release. *Audio for this update begins at 57:30 – Meeting Audio – 06/22/22*

The meeting was adjourned at 11:20 a.m.

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

- No Motions made since quorum was not established

WORKING GROUP ATTENDANCE:

MEMBER SEAT:	NAME:
DOWNRIVER ELDER	<i>Absent</i>
UPRIVER ELDER	<i>Absent</i>
LOWER RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mike Williams Sr.
MIDDLE RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Walter Morgan
UPRIVER SUBSISTENCE	Barbara Carlson
HEADWATERS SUBSISTENCE	Dan Esai
MEMBER AT LARGE SEAT 1	Albert Kawagley
MEMBER AT LARGE SEAT 2	<i>Absent</i>
WESTERN INTERIOR RAC	<i>Absent</i>
YK DELTA RAC	<i>Absent</i>
COMMERCIAL FISHING	<i>Absent</i>
SPORT FISHING	LaMont Albertson
ADF&G	Nick Smith
CHAIR	Barbara Carlson
<u>ADF&G Comm. Fish:</u> Nick Smith, Ross Renick, Chuck Brazil, Keegan Birchfield, Zach Liller, Iris Fletcher, Bobette Dickerson	
<u>Sport Fish Division:</u> John Chythlook	
<u>Subsistence Division:</u> Katie Hayden	
<u>Commissioner's Office:</u> John Linderman	
<u>USFWS:</u> Boyd Blihovde, Catherine Bradley	
<u>OSM:</u> Brooke McDavid, Kevin Foley	
<u>NVN:</u> Dan Gillikin	
<u>ONC:</u> Delen Hooper, Gisella Chapa	
<u>AVCP:</u> Jennifer Hooper	
<u>KRITFC:</u> Jim Simon, Terese Schomogyi	
<u>Other:</u> Maridon Boario; Senator Hoffman's office	

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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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