

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

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

July 6, 2022

On Wednesday, July 6th, 2022, the KRSMWG meeting was called to order at 10:02 a.m. and adjourned at 11:55 a.m. Meeting time was approximately 1 hour and 53 minutes. A quorum was initially established with 7 full voting members in attendance; however, quorum was lost when a member had to leave at approximately 11:00 a.m. Barbara Carlson chaired the meeting.

AGENDA ITEMS AND SUMMARY INFORMATION:

A. USFWS/KRITFC UPDATE: *Audio for this update begins at 11:29 – Meeting Audio – 07/06/22*

- Boyd Blihovde (USFWS) summarizes the fourth federal special action allowing rod and reel fishing within the Aniak Box with the retention of 2 Chinook salmon per day. Mr. Blihovde also speaks about the most recent setnet openers on June 29-30th and July 3rd-4th. He states that on June 29th-30th 83-89 boats were counted and there were fewer boats out on the 3rd-4th. Mr. Blihovde said the refuge was concerned that many Chinook salmon were still caught during these openers. USFWS and KRITFC plan to meet at 3:30 and hope to make an announcement for another opening.
- Mr. Blihovde also updates the group on the Kwethluk weir project headed by Frank Harris. The weir has been operational for about a week and a half. So far there have been over 1,400 King, 41 chum, and 4,036 sockeye, and 1 pink salmon. The crew are using cameras to do counts and collecting age, sex, and length (ASL) data as well.
- Prompted by a question from a Working Group member a discussion follows Mr. Blihovde's report about how estimates are calculated, why the departments use estimates and how data is collected from multiple sources to come up with estimates. *Audio for this discussion begins at 16:17 – Meeting Audio – 07/06/22*
- Lamont Albertson gives a brief update on KRITFC actions. Community harvest monitors were working for the most recent openers and USFWS flew over and observed good numbers of people fishing for the June 29th-30th opener; less on the July 3rd-4th opener. Right now, fishing is concentrated on the reds, not King or chum salmon. *Audio for this update begins at 25:54 – Meeting Audio – 07/06/22*

B. ADF&G MANAGEMENT ACTIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION: *Audio for this update begins at 28:35 – Meeting Audio – 07/06/22*

- Nick Smith suggests no further actions for sections 4 and 5 of the Kuskokwim and to continue status quo.

C. PEOPLE TO BE HEARD: None

D. CONTINUING BUSINESS:

- Subsistence Reports: Lower River, Middle River, Upper River, ONC In-season Subsistence Report
 - Lower River
 - Albert Kawagley (Bethel) said that he had fished with a setnet near Akiachak. Mr. Kawagley stated that in one day he caught 37 salmon; 3 Kings, 1 chum, and the rest reds. Mr. Kawagley also stated that most people he spoke with were

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finished fishing for the season. *Audio for this update begins at 29:50 – Meeting Audio – 07/06/22*

- Avery Hoffman (Bethel) said that his family had not yet fished. He said that he heard from others after the opener on June 29-30th that there were lots of flies out, so many were freezing their fish rather than drying them. He also said that his parents fished on the Gweek River for 6 hours and had caught 1 red salmon within the first 10 minutes. *Audio for this update begins at 32:00 – Meeting Audio – 07/06/22*
- Robert Hoffman (Bethel) said that most fishermen are happy they were able to fish while there was good weather for drying. There has been many camps smoking fish this year. Mr. Hoffman said that he was able to put away his winter and freezer supply of fish this year before the wet weather that July usually brings. *Audio for this update begins at 33:43 – Meeting Audio – 07/06/22*
- John Andrew (Kwethluk) said that he has only fished 3 times. The third time he fished he did good using 5 ¼ inch and 29 mesh deep net. Mr. Andrew said that he caught 75 sockeye, 3 chums and 3 King jacks on July 3rd. He only saw 3 or 4 people set netting. *Audio for this update begins at 35:41 – Meeting Audio – 07/06/22*
- Middle River
 - Allen Simeon (Aniak) said that he fished on July 1st on the North side of Birch Tree Crossing and caught a lot of reds, 26 Kings and 13 chum. The chum he caught was three times as much as last year. Mr. Simeon said he moved his net to the South side of Birch Tree Crossing and caught reds that were still silver and more Kings on that side. He stated on the South side fish were brighter and bigger. Mr. Simeon added that usually there is very little reds and a few chums on the South side, but this year was different. *Audio for this update begins at 37:50 – Meeting Audio – 07/06/22*
 - Dan Gillikin (NVN) said people were fishing and pleased to be catching sockeye, Kings, and some chum salmon. Mr. Gillikin said that he saw 20 or more people fishing on the beach in Aniak the night before, July 5th. He said that people are seeing a lot of Chinook jacks. Mr. Gillikin had gone dipnet fishing over the weekend and caught sockeye. Mr. Gillikin adds he has seen 3 fish wheels active: one in Georgetown, Midway, and Crooked Creek. *Audio for this update begins at 42:40 – Meeting Audio – 07/06/22*
- Upper River
 - Barbara Carlson (Sleetmute) said that she and others are seeing a surprising amount of jack King salmon. She added that most Kings are being released and people are keeping mostly reds. Ms. Carlson said that the fish have been mostly shiny with a few starting to pink. She also stated that she is seeing more chums than last year, but only at night. People are pleased with the red and Chinook

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salmon return and she has noticed smokehouses are going in the area. *Audio for this update begins at 45:15 – Meeting Audio – 07/06/22*

- **ONC In-season Report**
 - Avery Hoffman gives a report on responses to survey questions at the boat harbor during the June 29-30th setnet opportunity as well as fish distribution performed by ONC. The details can be found on pages 3-5 of the information packet. ONC will now be shifting away from harvest surveys and concentrating its efforts on their Science and Culture Camp, which occurs from July 19th-21st. *Audio for this update begins at 49:00 – Meeting Audio – 07/06/22*
 - Robert Hoffman makes a comment immediately after the ONC report given by Avery Hoffman reminding the group that not all fishermen are surveyed, for example fishermen who start and quit early. Mr. Hoffman feels it would be better if there were people to survey the entire duration of the fishing opportunities.
- **KRITFC In-season Report**
 - Lamont Albertson reminds the group that information is gathered from Community Based Harvest Monitors between Eek and Tuluksak. Mr. Albertson said that in Eek most people are finished fishing for the season. Some will go out for silver or coho salmon later in the summer and those fish will mostly be reserved for the freezer or to eat fresh. They will also be catching a lot of whitefish. It is about the same in Tuluksak. *Audio for this update begins at 57:51 – Meeting Audio – 07/06/22*
- **Overview of the Kuskokwim River salmon run assessment**
 - *Audio for this update begins at 1:00:12 – Meeting Audio – 07/06/22*
 - Sean Larson (ADFG) gives an update on counts at Bethel Test Fish and Sonar passage. This information can be found on pages 8-13 of the information packet. Some additional notes that Mr. Larson that he believes the Chinook run will be within the forecasted range and is about 80% complete. The chum salmon run is better than last year but still not great and is tracking the same trend as 2020. The sockeye run is above average and tracking 2018-2019 runs. Mr. Larson also notes the sockeye run has been late the last 8 years. Mr. Larson said he will be starting to email weir data to Working Group members and others soon and will include averages.
 - **Subsistence Division Project Update:**
 - *Audio for this update begins at 1:08:46 – Meeting Audio – 07/06/22*
 - Katie Hayden (ADFG) gave the group an overview of ongoing and upcoming projects that the Subsistence division is involved in.
 - The ethnography project will begin in August in Napakiak, Nunapitchuk, and Kasigluk and will continue next year with Tuntutuliak and Eek. The project will be studying customary and traditional ways and locations

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fish were harvested and how that has changed due to environmental and other factors and how people are meeting their subsistence needs now.

- Ms. Hayden said in late May Chris McDevitt, Jeff Park, and herself traveled by boat upriver with Ann Rearden of Bethel to document natural indicators of the salmon arrival. The group made it from Bethel to McGrath but was unable to continue upriver further. The group hopes to continue in late August.
- Ms. Hayden added that the subsistence division will be working with ONC in September and October with the post season surveys.
- Ms. Hayden stated that Jeff Park had interviewed people in Kwethluk and Akiachak regarding moose and caribou hunting and is finishing up the project.
- NVN Report
 - *Audio for this update begins at 1:13:00 – Meeting Audio – 07/06/22*
 - Dan Gillikin gives a brief report stating that Aniak Test Fish has been counting fish. Chinook salmon counts are a little better than last year. Chum salmon are just starting to move in. The sockeye salmon numbers have been very good. The Salmon River weir is fish tight as of June 29th and has started counting, including its first chum salmon.
- KRITFC representative report
 - Lamont Albertson notes that although KRSMWG and KRITFC covers much of the same information, the KRITFC meetings reference more historical information, talk about how people are eating less salmon and talk about climate change and heat stress. *Audio for this update begins at 1:14:10 – Meeting Audio – 07/06/22*
 - There is a brief conversation between Dan Gillikin, Sean Larson, and Lamont about heat stress, noting the temperature of the water that causes issues with fish is about 70°F while current water temperatures are about 60°F.
- Sport Fish:
 - Lamont Albertson (Aniak) said that the pike are as voracious as always and that people are catching sheefish where the muddy and clear water meets. Mr. Albertson states sheefish hit better in the clear water. He had nothing to add for subsistence. *Audio for this update begins at 41:17 – Meeting Audio – 07/06/22*
 - Mr. Albertson makes a comment that the Aniak River is the only river with sport fishing guides on it in the middle river area and there are currently no controls. *Audio for this update begins at 1:25:55 – Meeting Audio – 07/06/22*
- Intercept Fishery Report
 - *Audio for this update begins at 1:25:55 – Meeting Audio – 07/06/22*
 - Lamont Albertson talks about maps of the Alaska Peninsula and areas included in the intercept fishery and how he feels that the intercept fishery is at least

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partially to blame for the low salmon returns, particularly chum salmon returns. He feels it is important to understand the area that is being talked about. *Audio for this comment begins at 1:28:50 – Meeting Audio – 07/06/22*

- Immediately following Mr. Albertson’s comments there is a brief discussion about proposals that have been submitted to the Board of Fisheries and time frame of when those proposals will be published and available to the public.

E. OLD BUSINESS:

- No old business addressed.

F. NEW BUSINESS:

- No new business addressed.

G. COMMENTS FROM WORKING GROUP MEMBERS:

- Albert Kawagely makes a comment that some fish camps are getting their quota and drying half and canning half. *Audio for this comment begins at 1:43:35 – Meeting Audio – 07/06/22*
- John Andrew made a comment about the size of the fish this year. He stated some of the red salmon have been pan size and the King salmon have been small too. He suggests that people fish with a smaller mesh size gear to catch more fish. Mr. Andrew said that most people have caught what they needed but some people have started late. He stated that he himself was late since he helps fish for 7 households. Mr. Andrews hopes there will be another driftnet opportunity, since setnets are difficult in his area. *Audio for this comment begins at 1:28:50 – Meeting Audio – 07/06/22*
- Boyd Blihovde (USFWS) makes a closing comment that his department is hoping to protect to chum salmon but will still be trying to announce openers. As the chum salmon pass, the refuge will look at relinquishing management of the river and lifting the special actions. Mr. Blihovde believes that will happen near the end of July. *Audio for this comment begins at 1:48:20 – Meeting Audio – 07/06/22*

The meeting was adjourned at 11:55 a.m.

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

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

WORKING GROUP ATTENDANCE:

MEMBER SEAT:	NAME:
DOWNRIVER ELDER	John Andrew
UPRIVER ELDER	Allen Simeon
LOWER RIVER SUBSISTENCE	<i>Absent</i>
MIDDLE RIVER SUBSISTENCE	<i>Absent</i>
UPRIVER SUBSISTENCE	Barbara Carlson
HEADWATERS SUBSISTENCE	<i>Absent</i>
MEMBER AT LARGE SEAT 1	<i>Absent</i>

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MEMBER AT LARGE SEAT 2	<i>Absent</i>
WESTERN INTERIOR RAC	<i>Absent</i>
YK DELTA RAC	Robert Hoffman
COMMERCIAL FISHING	<i>Absent</i>
SPORT FISHING	LaMont Albertson
ADF&G	Nick Smith
CHAIR	Fritz Charles
<u>ADF&G Comm. Fish:</u> Nick Smith, Sean Larson, Ross Renick, Keegan Birchfield, Iris Fletcher, Bobette Dickerson <u>Sport Fish Division:</u> John Chythlook <u>Subsistence Division:</u> Katie Hayden <u>Commissioner's Office:</u>	
<u>USFWS:</u> Boyd Blihovde, Aaron Moses, Jaden Andrew, Chris Tulik, Emmit Nicori <u>OSM:</u> Brooke McDavid <u>NVN:</u> Dan Gillikin <u>ONC:</u> Jamin Crow, Delen Hooper, Taj Tony, Avery Hoffman <u>AVCP:</u> Jennifer Hooper <u>KRITFC:</u> Jim Simon, Terese Schomogyi, Avery Hoffman <u>UAF:</u> <u>WIRAC:</u> <u>YK Delta RAC:</u> John Andrew, Robert Hoffman	
<u>WG Alternates:</u> (not already listed above)	<u>Media:</u> Olivia Eberts Other: Tad Lindley

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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