

# Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

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

June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2024

On Wednesday, June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2024, the KRSMWG meeting was called to order at 10:06 a.m. and adjourned at 11:40 a.m. Meeting time was approximately 1 hour and 35 minutes. A quorum was established with 7 full voting members in attendance. One member joined in later, bringing the number of full voting members to 8. LaMont Albertson chaired the meeting. Primary themes and recurrent discussions can be summarized if it seemed to be a main topic of the meeting.

## **AGENDA ITEMS AND SUMMARY INFORMATION:**

### **A. USFWS/KRITFC UPDATE:** *Audio for this update begins at 11:20 – Meeting Audio – 6/26/24*

- Aaron Moses, USFWS, describes the recently announced subsistence opportunities to open July 1<sup>st</sup> and July 6<sup>th</sup> to setnets only with 6-inch mesh no longer than 75 feet.
  - Albert Kawagley asked for clarification and Nikki Pollock, ONC, asked about the justification for the opener which Mr. Moses addresses. *Audio for this update begins at 12:55 – Meeting Audio – 6/26/24*

### **B. ADF&G MANAGEMENT ACTIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION:** *Audio for this update begins at 16:25 – Meeting Audio – 6/26/24*

- Sam Decker, ADFG, said there were no management actions to consider.

### **B. PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:**

- Briana Henry, ONC, asked a question about the possibility of salmon traveling to new spawning grounds. Aaron Moses, USFWS, spoke about the high water and how that has affected Kwethluk weir this year. Mr. Albertson said he did not think the fish were spawning elsewhere. *Audio for this update begins at 16:55 – Meeting Audio – 6/26/24*

### **D. CONTINUING BUSINESS:**

- Subsistence Reports: Lower River, Middle River, Upper River, ONC In-season Subsistence Report
  - Lower River
    - Avery Hoffman, Bethel, spoke about his family fishing. They waited until the tide came in. Mr. Hoffman heard that people were doing better than during the previous openers and were catching a bigger mix of species. He said that he had tried dip-netting on that day and still caught a few. Mr. Hoffman added that people seemed to be happy to be putting fish up in the dry weather. *Audio for this update begins at 20:30 – Meeting Audio – 6/26/24*
    - Albert Kawagley, Bethel, said that seagulls stole his sisters fish from the previous opener, but she still has fish in the drying rack and has cut about 57 fish. Mr. Kawagely said that there was more mixed fish species during the last opener. He said he has not been out on a boat yet this summer. *Audio for this update begins at 22:05 – Meeting Audio – 6/26/24*
    - Henry Hunter, Bethel, said that he was not able to fish the last two openers but he has discussed how fishing has been with other fishers and set-netters. The overnight average catch from those he spoke to was 10 fish per night that the setnet was left out. The catch was made up of Kings, reds, and a couple chums. Mr. Henry said that his fish camp neighbors had caught 30 salmon in 4 drifts,

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with a mix of chums, Kings, and sockeye. Mr. Hunter said he also spoke to people at the boat harbor and people seemed to do well. He heard similar reports from people fishing from Kalskag down that had attended the KRITFC meeting on June 25<sup>th</sup>; people upriver were just starting to see Kings. He said his nephew in Chuathbaluk did very well. Mr. Hunter added that KRITFC had received information from US Fish and Wildlife that they would be unlikely to meet their escapement goals, so they had decided on a setnet only opportunity. *Audio for this update begins at 23:05 – Meeting Audio – 6/26/24*

- Henry Hunter wanted to add that a lot of subsistence fishers that could not get the fish that they needed during the previous openers due to snags or because of the crowded conditions. He said, even though some did there are those that did not and he would like if we could provide another opportunity but he would still like to see the Kings protected. *Audio for this update begins at 28:35 – Meeting Audio – 6/26/24*
  - Albert Kawagley added that his family caught more during their first drift but then the catch slowed down because of so many boats on the river. *Audio for this update begins at 34:35 – Meeting Audio – 6/26/24*
- Kara Domnick, Bethel, said that her family had gone out between 10:00-2:00 and said she caught an equal number of Kings and sockeye. Ms. Domnick commented that the sockeye were small, but the Kings were a lot bigger than last year. Ms. Domnick said that others she spoke to had commented the same about the size of the sockeye and the Kings. *Audio for this update begins at 27:20 – Meeting Audio – 6/26/24*
- Alissa Rogers joined the meeting but said that she did not have anything to report. *Audio for this update begins at 47:05 – Meeting Audio – 6/26/24*
- Mike Williams, Akiak, said that people were happy with the most recent opener. He said that many people fished the first 4 hours while others were not able to. Some people in the village help others who cannot fish. Mr. Williams said that he fished with a 60-foot setnet with 6-inch mesh and caught about 50 sockeye and 10-15 chums. *Audio for this update begins at 41:30 – Meeting Audio – 6/26/24*
- ONC In-season Report
  - *Audio for this update begins at 31:05 – Meeting Audio – 6/26/24*
  - Delen Hooper, ONC, gave a report of comments given during surveys from the fishing opener on June 22<sup>nd</sup>. Comments made by fishers were mostly positive and people were happy about the opener. People commented that they would like to see more openers or for the river to just stay open. Ms. Hooper summarized the catch reports that ONC had heard during surveys and finished by stating that ONC had distributed 84 King salmon, 23 chum and 14 sockeye salmon that had been caught by Bethel Test Fish.

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- Details about this report can be found on Page 3 of the Info packet.
- Nikki Pollock, ONC, said that during the opener they did conduct fish camp surveys, but it was windy, so the crew was not able to get out to some areas. She thanked the crew for their hard work. Ms. Pollock went on to say that ONC had given out 100 rolls of fly nets to help people preserve their harvest. She did ask if USFWS knew of fishing nets being taken by law enforcement which led to a discussion about how to make the regulations understood better. Some suggestions included interpreting notices into Yupik and for ONC to help disseminate information to tribal members. *Audio for this update begins at 34:05 – Meeting Audio – 6/26/24*
- KRITFC In-season Report
  - KRITFC did not have a report for this meeting. *Audio for this update begins at 41:00 – Meeting Audio – 6/26/24*
- Middle River
  - Allen Simeon, Aniak, said that he had fished on Sunday and Monday. Mr. Simeon said that about 30% of the Chinook he caught were jacks but the rest were a regular size and the females appeared larger that they have been. He said that when he fished the previous weekend he caught more chums than sockeye but that he believed that would change. Regardless, Mr. Simeon said that he pulled his net and was finished fishing. *Audio for this update begins at 44:20 – Meeting Audio – 6/26/24*
  - Lamont Albertson, Aniak, said that he had nothing to report but mentioned that he thought they had too many pike and is anxious to hear about research. He also commented that the sheefish and pike fishing are pretty good in the area. *Audio for this update begins at 46:15 – Meeting Audio – 6/26/24*
- Upriver
  - Barbara Carlson, Sleetmute, said that she had spoken to people in both Red Devil and Sleetmute and they had reported that the Chinook were starting to pick up in that area. Ms. Carlson said that 9 Kings had been caught in Red Devil and some sheefish. Ms. Carlson said that 1 person fishing in Sleetmute had caught 1 King. She said the water was high in the area, but the weather had been dry. Ms. Carlson said that she had not heard about sockeye or chum being reported in the area yet and that the fish wheel was not running this year. *Audio for this update begins at 47:45 – Meeting Audio – 6/26/24*
- Overview of the Kuskokwim River salmon run assessment
  - *Audio for this update begins at 49:05 – Meeting Audio – 6/26/24*
  - Information for this report can be found beginning on page 6 of the Informational Packet.
  - Some highlights include that the Chinook run was at the midpoint and tracking the previous years numbers. Chum salmon looked to be a poor run at Bethel

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Test Fish, but it is still early. The sockeye run has just begun and looked low, but it was still very early in their run and the sockeye run has been trending late.

- At the sonar, the chum and sockeye runs were higher in numbers at the same time of year in 2023; Chinook numbers were also slightly higher.
- Species compositions are in line with historical averages at both Bethel and Aniak Test Fish. Finally, George weir is now in place and counting fish and a crew is at the Kogrukluk weir to get it in place, but they are waiting on water levels to drop so they can get it installed.
- Subsistence Division Project Update
  - *Audio for this update begins at 1:01:05 – Meeting Audio – 6/26/24*
  - Tim Bimbenic, ADFG, said he did not have any updates for subsistence projects at this time, but the harvest calendars have been sent out and he asked that people fill them out over the summer.
- Sport Fish:
  - There was no Sport Fish update during this meeting.
- Intercept Fishery Report
  - Henry Hunter, Bethel, requested that we hear an intercept fishery report at future meetings. *Audio for this update begins at 58:00 – Meeting Audio – 6/26/24*

## E. OLD BUSINESS:

- Fish distribution bin placement update
  - *Audio for this update begins at 1:02:25 – Meeting Audio – 6/26/24*
  - Sam Decker, ADFG, describes proposed placement for the fish distribution bin, following up on a request from the Working Group which had been made at a previous meeting. She said the new placement would be by the boat harbor and fits all criteria the fish bin must have for placement. Members of the Working Group discuss the proposed area and some of the reasons why the move has been requested.

## F. NEW BUSINESS:

- No new business was discussed at this meeting.

## G. COMMENTS FROM WORKING GROUP MEMBERS:

- Henry Hunter, Bethel, asked if there were recommendation to the fish and game warden which led to a conversation about the trawl and intercept fisheries. Sean Larson, ADFG, had been able to find the numbers for the intercept fishery and went over them for the group. Barbara Carlson, Sleetmute requested an update on the genetics study that the department had been working on. *Audio for this update begins at 1:20:00 – Meeting Audio – 6/26/24*

**The meeting was adjourned at 11:40 a.m.**

## WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

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

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- *Audio for this update begins at 9:50 – Meeting Audio – 6/26/24*
- Sam Decker stated that she had an update for the Working Group regarding placement of the fish bin and it was added to Old Business in the agenda.
- No objections were made.

**Motion 2: To move the fish distribution bin to the suggested location near the entrance of the boat harbor by the “No Wake” sign. Passed (7 yes, 1 abstention)**

- *Audio for this update begins at 1:14:30 – Meeting Audio – 6/26/24*
- Motion made by Avery Hoffman, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Albert Kawagley
- There was some discussion about the placement and the problems that the Working Group was trying to address by having it moved. While members of the Working Group were not sure the new placement would alleviate the issues, they wanted addressed, they decided to try the new placement out and reassess at another time. The Working Group member who abstained did so because a similar motion had already been made at a previous meeting.
  - *This discussion occurred during the “Old Business” portion of the agenda. Audio for this discussion begins at 1:02:25 – Meeting Audio – 6/26/24*

**Motion 3: Adjourn at 11:40 a.m. Passed (Unanimous)**

- *Audio for this update begins at 1:34:55 – Meeting Audio – 6/26/24*
- Motion made by Avery Hoffman, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Henry Hunter.

**WORKING GROUP ATTENDANCE:**

<b>MEMBER SEAT:</b>	<b>NAME:</b>
DOWNRIVER ELDER	<i>Absent</i>
UPRIVER ELDER	Allen Simeon
LOWER RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mike Williams
MIDDLE RIVER SUBSISTENCE	<i>Absent</i>
UPRIVER SUBSISTENCE	Barbara Carlson
HEADWATERS SUBSISTENCE	<i>Absent</i>
MEMBER AT LARGE SEAT 1	Albert Kawagley
MEMBER AT LARGE SEAT 2	Avery Hoffman
WESTERN INTERIOR RAC	<i>Absent</i>
YK DELTA RAC	Alissa Rogers
COMMERCIAL FISHING	<i>Absent</i>
SPORT FISHING	LaMont Albertson
ADF&G	Sam Decker
CHAIR	Lamont Albertson
<u>ADF&amp;G Comm. Fish:</u> Sam Decker, Sean Larson, Dave Runfola, Charles Brazil, Iris Fletcher, John Linderman	
<u>Sport Fish Division:</u>	
<u>Subsistence Division:</u>	
<u>Commissioner’s Office:</u>	
<u>USFWS:</u> Aaron Moses, Nate Ackers, Jaden Andrew	
<u>OSM:</u> Nissa Pilcher	

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<u>NVN:</u>	
<u>ONC:</u> Delen Hooper, Briana Henry, Nikki Pollock, Kara Domnick, Jordan Klejka, Vjosa Pellumbi	
<u>AVCP:</u>	
<u>KRITFC:</u> Avery Hoffman, Henry Hunter Sr.	
<u>UAF:</u>	
<u>WIRAC:</u>	
<u>YK Delta RAC:</u> Alissa Rogers	
<u>WG Alternates:</u> (not already listed above) Kara Domnick (2 <sup>nd</sup> Member at Large)	<u>Media:</u> <u>Other:</u> Lucinda Alexie, Nuk Alexie-Leonard

**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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