

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

July 3rd, 2024

On Wednesday, July 3rd, 2024, the KRSMWG meeting was called to order at 10:0 a.m. and adjourned at 12:21 p.m. Meeting time was approximately 2 hours and 21 minutes. A quorum was established with 7 full voting members in attendance. However, 2 members joined in later, making a total of 9 voting members in attendance. Barbara Carlson chaired the meeting. Primary themes included ongoing and potentially upcoming assessment projects and collaborative salmon passage monitoring.

AGENDA ITEMS AND SUMMARY INFORMATION:

A. USFWS/KRITFC UPDATE: *Audio for this update begins at 26:00 – Meeting Audio – 7/3/24*

- Aaron Moses, USFWS, spoke about the upcoming 48-hour subsistence opener that had been announced by the Yukon Delta NWR for Saturday, July 6 starting at noon. USFWS and KRITFC do not have harvest estimates for the most recent opener yet but hope to have them ready soon.
 - Henry Hunter, Bethel, made a comment that he would like to make sure that people understand the rules so that nets are not confiscated. This comment led to a conversation about how openings are announced, and information is distributed as well as some of the regulations and how they have been enforced. Barbara Carlson requested someone from law enforcement be present at the next meeting so that the group could discuss what they have been seeing as far as violations and try to make the public more aware of what is and isn't legal. *Audio for this update begins at 28:25 – Meeting Audio – 7/3/24*
 - Robert Hoffman, Bethel, said that people have been catching abundant fish in the tributaries and wonders if that is so, why not have a driftnet opportunity. Aaron Moses, USFWS, explains that they are trying to protect the Chinook run while targeting the more abundant sockeye and that traditional knowledge says that sockeye run shallow and along the bank. Mr. Hoffman made a comment about the impact of fishing near the mouth of the Kuskokwim River. *Audio for this update begins at 34:50 – Meeting Audio – 7/3/24*

B. ADF&G MANAGEMENT ACTIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION: *Audio for this update begins at 27:45 – Meeting Audio – 7/3/24*

- Sam Decker, ADFG, said that there were no new management recommendations and that fishing upriver of Aniak is still open to a variety of gear.

B. PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:

- Terese Vincente, KRITFC, said that she wanted to make a comment about the report on page 12-13 of the Information Packet. She noticed that the 2023 harvest and stock composition numbers and genetic percentage of 7.3% presented is for the entire 2023 fishing season, yet most of the CWAK stocks traveling through the area occurs in June. About 28% of the chum salmon caught in the 2023 June fishery were Coastal Western Alaska stocks. *Audio for this update begins at 40:50 – Meeting Audio – 7/3/24*

D. CONTINUING BUSINESS:

- Subsistence Reports: Lower River, Middle River, Upper River, ONC In-season Subsistence Report
 - Lower River

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- Albert Kawagely, Bethel, said that his family in Akiachak caught a few but he has not been able to go out himself. *Audio for this update begins at 48:25 – Meeting Audio – 7/3/24*
- Robert Hoffman, Bethel, said that tribes in the area say they are fishing in the tributaries including the Johnson and the Gweek and he has heard that fish are abundant there. Mr. Hoffman expressed that he would like a driftnet opportunity. He said it is getting late for the drying season. *Audio for this update begins at 49:40 – Meeting Audio – 7/3/24*
- Henry Hunter, Bethel, reported that people are catching King salmon and some sockeye and chum salmon. Mr. Hunter said that people would like a driftnet opportunity and agreed that we are headed into the rainy season. He said that KRITFC would meet the following week for an update on the setnet period and that is a good time to make recommendations. He mentioned there would be another setnet opening and the next one will be a 48-hour period. Mr. Hunter said he believes the Chinook are past Bethel and fishing periods are meant to target sockeye and chum salmon. He continued that if people wanted a driftnet period, they should voice their concerns. *Audio for this update begins at 52:00 – Meeting Audio – 7/3/24*
 - Nate Akers, USFWS, said the KRITFC and USFWS management meeting would be held July 10th. Therese Vincente, KRITFC, commented that they hold a river wide public teleconference every week in-season on Tuesdays to listen to concerns and comments from the public. The feedback that is heard is then discussed during the management meetings. Avery Hoffman, KRITFC, added that people can also call into Fish Talk radio show on KYUK. *Audio for this update begins at 55:20 – Meeting Audio – 7/3/24*
- Avery Hoffman, Bethel, said that he did not go fishing during the most recent opener, but he did participate in aerial surveys. He said most setnets that he saw were near Bethel. He finished that it was a nice day to watch nets and spend time with family. *Audio for this update begins at 58:45 – Meeting Audio – 7/3/24*
- Tad Lindley, Bethel, said that he fished the Johnson River during the most recent opener instead of the mainstem. He thought the timing of the opener was good because the “water below Bethel had turned around.” Mr. Lindley said he noticed setnets in places that he would not normally see nets set. Mr. Lindley stated that the problem with setnet-only opportunities is that all the good setnet eddies are taken. He estimated that 9,000 people were fishing and he saw some poor setnet sites. He continued that when there is a driftnet opportunity everyone can get a “good spot.” However, Mr. Lindley said people

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did good and were happy to have the opportunity. *Audio for this update begins at 59:35 – Meeting Audio – 7/3/24*

- Alissa Rogers, Bethel, said that most people that she spoke to are done fishing and those who went out were getting fish for the freezer but that people outside of Bethel still need fish and many have only caught half of their goal of 300-550 fish. She has heard that people are seeing more chums this year. *Audio for this update begins at 1:02:15 – Meeting Audio – 7/3/24*
- Mike Williams, Akiak, said that people were happy for the recent setnet opportunities meant to target sockeye. He understands the concern for Chinook and chum salmon and that they swim upriver toward the middle of the river while sockeye stay near the banks. Mr. Williams said that he did well during the opener and was happy that he did not catch any Chinook. He noticed more chums this year than there has been but commented that it isn't as many as there used to be. He said people are happy with the opener and looking forward to the upcoming 48-hour subsistence opener. *Audio for this update begins at 1:08:55 – Meeting Audio – 7/3/24*
- Middle River
 - Lamont Albertson, Aniak, said that he did not have a subsistence report, but that people are concerned about the pike in the Aniak River and around Aniak and hopes that research can be done on the pike in the area. He would like to know who is doing research in the Area M commercial fishery. He concluded that if you can find clear water there is good fishing. *Audio for this update begins at 49:40 – Meeting Audio – 7/3/24*
 - Dan Gillikin, NVN, said that the fishing has been picking up and he thinks activity will peak within a week. Mr. Gillikin said that most people have reached about half of their subsistence needs and that the catch has been good. Rod and reel fishing has been minimal because of high and murky waters but some small Chinook salmon have been caught. *Audio for this update begins at 1:16:25 – Meeting Audio – 7/3/24*
 - Allen Simeon, Aniak, said that he did not use his 60-foot net and instead did 3 sets with a 25-foot net earlier in the season and is finished fishing. His grandson fished the previous Saturday and caught 10 chum, 10 Chinook, and 45 sockeye salmon. Mr. Simeon said he may go out fishing again for sockeye. He expressed concern about the growing pike population. He said there are a lot of pike in the Aniak box on the side within the YK Delta NWR and asked if there could be an opener before the Chinook salmon get to that part of the river to target pike with setnets. *Audio for this update begins at 1:17:40 – Meeting Audio – 7/3/24*
- ONC In-season Report
 - Delen Hooper, ONC, said that she had been gone for the most recent opener and did not have a report prepared. Briana Henry, ONC, said that she did boat

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harbor surveys for the first 2 hours of the opener. She said that she was not able to survey very many people, but that people are fishing less in general. People started taking their nets out around lunch time. *Audio for this update begins at 1:05:20 – Meeting Audio – 7/3/24*

- KRITFC In-season Report
 - Avery Hoffman, KRITFC, said that the deadline to submit data was the previous night at midnight so they are still working on estimates. He said that would have something next week. *Audio for this update begins at 1:07:40 – Meeting Audio – 7/3/24*
- Overview of the Kuskokwim River salmon run assessment
 - *Audio for this update begins at 1:21:55 – Meeting Audio – 7/3/24*
 - Information about this update can be found beginning on page 5 of the Informational packet.
 - Sean Larson, ADFG, gave a report on salmon assessment projects in the Kuskokwim River. Some highlights include that Chinook salmon are 73-84% through their run past Bethel and the end of season estimate is included on page 6 of the Informational packet. Bethel Test Fish numbers for sockeye have been low this year but it is still early in their run. Chum salmon are doing much better this year than the past few. Bethel Test Fish shows lower counts for Chinook and sockeye salmon than both sonar and Aniak Test Fish. Mr. Larson finished by summarizing progress at the weirs.
 - There were some questions about the difference in counts at Bethel Test Fish compared to sonar and Aniak Test Fish. Some possibilities that are identified are that due to erosion and changing river conditions the fish may have changed the channel they are swimming in, the fish have changed their migration path, or the fish are small enough that they are not being caught in Bethel Test Fish nets. Avery Hoffman, KRITFC, requested a longer discussion about Bethel Test Fish at a future meeting when more time can be allotted to the issue. Briana Henry, ONC, asked if the Department of Fish and Game had plans to study where the fish may be going. Sam Decker, ADFG, summarized potential upcoming projects for the Kuskokwim. The discussion continues on the subjects of upcoming projects, verification and collaboration of escapement and fish passage counts by tribal entities, funding, and aerial surveys and the drone project. *Audio for this update begins at 1:07:40 – Meeting Audio – 7/3/24*
- NVN Report:
 - See Dan Gillikin's Middle River subsistence report above. *Audio for this update begins at 1:16:25 – Meeting Audio – 7/3/24*
- Sport Fish:

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- Intercept Fishery Report
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E. OLD BUSINESS:

- There was no old business addressed at this meeting.

F. NEW BUSINESS:

- There was no new business addressed at this meeting.

G. COMMENTS FROM WORKING GROUP MEMBERS:

- Henry Hunter, Bethel, asked questions regarding the Area M fishery, their fishing schedule and regulations for that fishery. A discussion follows about who can make recommendations for management of the fishery and who can make them. *Audio for this update begins at 12:30 – Meeting Audio – 7/3/24*

The meeting was adjourned at 12:21 p.m.

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

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

- *Audio for this update begins at 22:50 – Meeting Audio – 6/21/23*
- Motion made by Lamont Albertson, 2nd by Alissa Rogers.
- There is a discussion about whether to add the letter that Kevin Whitworth wrote regarding trawlers in Kuskokwim Bay to the agenda. Barbara Carlson suggested adding the letter to next week's agenda under "Old Business."

Motion 2: To include all members of the NPMFC in the CC list on Kevin's letter. *Passed (Unanimous)*

- *Audio for this update begins at 52:05 – Meeting Audio – 7/3/24*
- Motion made by Sam Decker, 2nd by Alissa Rogers.

Motion 3: To extend meeting until 12:30. *Passed (Unanimous)*

- *Audio for this update begins at 1:50:35 – Meeting Audio – 7/3/24*
- Motion made by Alissa Rogers, 2nd by Tad Lindley.

Motion 4: To move the next meeting time to 1:00 P.M. to avoid overlapping times with KRITFC meeting. *Motion Withdrawn*

- *Audio for this update begins at 2:16:30 – Meeting Audio – 7/3/24*
- Motion made by Mike Williams, no 2nd.
- *Discussion about this motion begins at 2:09:10 – Meeting Audio – 7/3/24-Discussion*
- After some discussion it was realized that there was confusion about the time of the meeting and that the KRSMWG meeting time would not overlap with the KRITFC meeting after all, so the motion was withdrawn.

Motion 5: To adjourn at 12:21 p.m.

- *Audio for this update begins at 2:20:55 – Meeting Audio – 7/3/24*
- Motion made by Alissa Rogers, 2nd by Tad Lindley.

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WORKING GROUP ATTENDANCE:

MEMBER SEAT:	NAME:
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	Tad Lindley
SPORT FISHING	LaMont Albertson
KRITFC	Henry Hunter Sr.
ADF&G	Sam Decker
CHAIR	Barbara Carlson
<u>ADF&G Comm. Fish:</u> Sam Decker, Sean Larson, John Linderman, Bobette Dickerson <u>Sport Fish Division:</u> <u>Subsistence Division:</u> <u>Commissioner's Office:</u>	
<u>USFWS:</u> Aaron Moses <u>OSM:</u> Brooke McDavid, Kevin Foley <u>NVN:</u> Dan Gillikin <u>ONC:</u> Delen Hooper, Jordan Klejka, Vjosa Pellumbi <u>AVCP:</u> Jennifer Hooper, Emma Daniel <u>KRITFC:</u> Terese Vincente, Avery Hoffman, Henry Hunter Sr., Justin Leon <u>UAF:</u> <u>WIRAC:</u> Kevin Whitworth <u>YK Delta RAC:</u> Alissa Rogers, Robert Hoffman	
<u>WG Alternates: (not already listed above):</u> Robert Hoffman (YK Delta RAC)	<u>Media:</u> <u>Other:</u> Maridon Boario (Sen. Lyman 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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