

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

Meeting Summary

November 3, 2012

Called to order at 9:27am at ADFG in Bethel and adjourned after 1:30pm. Nine of thirteen members were present and a quorum was established.

AGENDA ITEMS:

- 1.) Old Business
 - a. Kuskokwim Area Board of Fish Proposals
 - i. Notes from co-chair Greg Roczicka regarding BOF proposals.
 - b. Action items from previous meetings: Not Addressed due to time constraints
 - i. Working Group suggestions for improving the Kuskokwim River management plan.
 - ii. Discussion/approval: Bev Hoffman's letter to recruit an upriver elder (letter distributed on September 29th).
 - iii. Select a representative to attend the Board of Fish on behalf of the KRSMWG
 - iv. Discussion of the Iyana Gusty Award (*raised by Bob Aloysius during the August 22 meeting*).
 - v. Lamont Albertson's letter in support of HB332 (*March 30 meeting*)
 - vi. Lamont Albertson's letter in support of USFWS participation in the KRSMWG (*March 30 meeting*)
 - vii. Review of KRSMWG Bylaws *Tabled until 2013*
 - viii. Update KRSMWG Seats (roll-call list, possible alternates) *Tabled until 2013*
- 2.) New Business: Not Addressed due to time constraints
 - a. Report: ADF&G Chinook Salmon Symposium in Anchorage on October 22-23 (Greg Roczicka)
 - b. USFWS Information request Letter

WORKING GROUP ACTION ITEMS:

- 1.) The Management Plan development "guidance" committee will continue to work together to find consensus and have a viable alternative management plan to present to the Board of Fisheries in January 2013.

MEETING ACTION ANNOUNCEMENT:

The next KRSMWG meeting will be 9:00am November 30, 2012 at the ADFG offices in Bethel. This meeting will be teleconferenced.

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

- 1.) Approval of the agenda. Motion passed unanimously.
- 2.) To support BOF proposal 104 with regard to the following:
 - Update to ANS for the Kuskokwim River will be made using the entire revised subsistence harvest dataset (1990-2009).
 - Chinook salmon ANS will be represented as a range with the lower bound defined as the lowest estimated annual harvest and the upper bound defined as the highest estimated annual harvest.
 - Chum, sockeye, and coho salmon ANS would be represented as ranges with the lower bound defined as the lowest estimated annual harvest for each species; the upper bound will be defined as the average annual harvest for each species across the 20 year dataset.

Motion passed unanimously.

- 3.) To support BOF proposal 107. Motion passed.
- 4.) To support BOF proposal 108. Motion passed unanimously.
- 5.) To support BOF proposal 109. Motion passed unanimously.
- 6.) To support BOF proposal 110. Motion passed unanimously.
- 7.) To support BOF proposal 111. Motion passed.
- 8.) To support BOF proposal 112. Motion passed.
- 9.) To support the efforts of the Management Plan development "guidance" committee to move forward with development of an alternative Kuskokwim River salmon management plan. Motion passed unanimously.

PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:

- Moses Owen of Akiak stated that he did not support rolling closures as a management tool because when the closures elapse in the Bethel area, such a large number of people go fishing that very little is left for villages immediately upriver to harvest. He also stated a widely held view that restricting fishers to smaller mesh net had a detrimental effect on salmon. People believe that small salmon in the river are immature and that they will return to the sea to continue growing and come back again when larger. People believe that by using smaller mesh net you will decimate future runs. Philip Peter of Akiachak and John Nicholas of Kasigluk had similar comments about conserving small kings for the future.
- Doug Molyneaux pointed out that the perception, that small king salmon passing up the Kuskokwim will go back to sea and return in later years, is false. All king salmon, large and small, returning to fresh water in a given year will spawn and die that year. They do not return to the sea. Harvest of these fish has the same effect on the population as any harvest in that it may alter escapement numbers. In other words, small fish harvested this year were going to die this year anyway.
Although correct in his comments, Mr. Molyneaux spoke in rebuttal to Mr. Moses. The Chair took exception to this behavior, pointing out that people to be heard was designated time to allow individuals to speak their opinion and bring up concerns not on

the agenda. The Chair called point-of-order on this behavior; however, Mr. Molyneaux asserted his clarification despite correction.

- Henry William of Atmautluak talked about how important commercial fishing is to members of some lower river communities. He stated that it costs a lot of money to live a subsistence life style, especially where villages and fishing areas are widely separated. He said that there are few jobs in the area and it was getting harder and harder to make a living commercial fishing. Mr. William said that conditions seem to have gotten worse since the Working Group started, and that if the Working Group works for the people it should work for everyone.
- John Nicholas reiterated much of what was said by Henry William and Moses Owen, and went on to say that he didn't understand why people had been fined for [illegal] fishing this season. He said that he thought Fish and Game wanted to make money from citing fishers.

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

MOTION 1: Approval of the Agenda. Motion Passed unanimously (9 yeas).

COMMENTS FOR MOTION 1:

Co-chair Greg Roczicka suggested that discussion of Proposals 105 and 106 be placed following all other proposal discussions.

Bev Hoffman and Casie Stockdale expressed a desire to discuss Escapement Goal recommendations if time allowed.

MOTION 2: To support BOF proposal 104 and suggest criteria for determining ANS for each salmon species harvested in the Kuskokwim River. Adjustments to ANS will be based on harvest estimates from a recent study that reexamined historical harvest estimates and provide a new dataset from 1990-2009. The WG suggested setting an ANS bound for Chinook salmon from lowest to highest recorded Harvest and ANS bounds for chum, sockeye, and coho salmon from lowest estimate to average across all years. The Working Group did not address ANS for that portion of the Kuskokwim Area that falls outside the Kuskokwim River. Motion Passed unanimously. *The full text of the proposal may be found in the November 3 informational packet.*

COMMENTS FOR MOTION 2:

Working Group members discussed the proposal and the merits of using one date range over another to determine ANS. Some thought newer numbers more accurately portrayed current fishing practices. Others thought older numbers were more appropriate as they represented a stable time prior to the fluctuations of abundance seen in recent years.

Lisa Olson with ADFG Subsistence Division explained that the BOF is presented with options when considering revisions to ANS ranges.

Casie Stockdale requested some guidance from the department on how to choose ANS ranges and what the implications might be. Casie also stated that it was her understanding that the

board would benefit more from Working Group suggestions identifying an actual ANS range rather than just a vote to support or not support proposal 104.

Travis Elison, the ADFG Commercial Fisheries manager explained that, as he understood it, the ANS range lower end is usually the lower end of harvest estimates in years of unrestricted harvest. He explained that ANS was used in determining how best to provide adequate subsistence opportunity. For implications, Travis suggested that the lower bound of ANS is crucial for determining when restrictions to subsistence will apply. The higher the 'lower bound,' the more likely restrictions will be considered necessary in low abundance years. However, the 'higher bound' has stronger implications as to identifying harvestable surplus above the priority needs of escapement and subsistence. If the upper bound is higher, larger abundances must be present to make commercial fishing acceptable.

MOTION 3: To support BOF proposal 107. Motion passed (7 yeas, 1 nay). *The full text of the proposal may be found in the November 3 informational packet.*

COMMENTS FOR MOTION 3:

Greg Roczicka explained that the purpose of this proposal was to protect cultural integrity in the Kuskokwim Area. He said the proposal grew directly out of the AVCP State of the Salmon Symposium from earlier in 2012 in which it was suggested that people find a way to address the issue of individuals trying to take advantage of subsistence to make a profit. Greg said that this would probably be a new area for the BOF. He said one downside of the proposal, if accepted, would be that people would have to prove they used a fish camp to process harvest. He went on to state that this proposal would require some sort of permitting to prove that you could harvest more than 10 king salmon to process in acceptable fashion. He said that this proposal was a starting point in addressing the harvest in Bethel as an intermediate toward a tier II fishery. Greg responded to a question regarding those households that would be eligible to harvest more than 10 kings: what portion of the harvest would have to be processed by those means deemed desirable in the proposal? Greg indicated that a harvester would only have to prove that he/she used a fish camp and numbers of fish processed in one way or another would not be designated through the permit process.

James Charles of Tuntatuliak stated that the YK Delta RAC, a council on which he is also a member, opposed this proposal because it wasn't presented to the people for approval prior to being put forward. He also said the RAC did not support another permit requirement.

Bev Hoffman talked about how families that process fish in a number of ways, but do not have a formal fish camp away from home, would be left out by this proposal. She stated that her own family fell into this category.

Clarifying discussion continued. People wanted to understand exactly how many fish would be allowed, whether the proposal referred only to kings or to other species, whether there were limits on any process other than freezing fish, whether the rule would apply to everyone or would be applied differently to natives, etc.

MOTION 4: To support BOF proposal 108. Motion passed unanimously. *The full text of the proposal may be found in the November 3 informational packet.*

[COMMENTS FOR MOTION 4:](#)

Greg Roczicka explained that this proposal had been developed to address the issue of unknown quantities of salmon being exported from the area by sport fishers or nonresident citizens fishing under the guise of subsistence fishers. He reiterated the history of requests made by the Working Group for state and federal managers to step in and monitor these exports and the Working Group having been told by both agencies that they had no jurisdiction with respect to the documentation of transport of legally caught fish.

Ilarian Nicolai of Kwethluk voiced concern about this proposal. He stated that people with relatives outside the area often send fish out and this proposal might lead to some curtailment of that activity.

MOTION 5: To support BOF proposal 109. Motion passed unanimously. *The full text of the proposal may be found in the November 3 informational packet.*

[COMMENTS FOR MOTION 5:](#)

Greg Roczicka explained that this proposal was intended as a way to limit those individuals that might be using subsistence as a cover for harvest and sale of fish which could lead to significant cash income.

Philip Peter of Akiachak compared customary trade to commercial harvest. He said that sale of Chinooks has recently been prohibited and that customary trade should be under similar restrictions.

MOTION 6: To support BOF proposal 110. Motion passed unanimously. *The full text of the proposal may be found in the November 3 informational packet.*

[COMMENTS FOR MOTION 6:](#)

This proposal was developed and submitted by the Working Group. The Working Group voted to support it, but there were not comments beyond an explanation of the proposal.

MOTION 7: To support BOF proposal 111. Motion passed (7 yeas, 1 nay). *The full text of the proposal may be found in the November 3 informational packet.*

[COMMENTS FOR MOTION 7:](#)

Regarding this proposal to ban sport fishing on the Eek River, Bev Hoffman talked about the development of sport fishing in the area and how she and her family had built a sustainable and respectful sport fishing business in the Kuskokwim. She suggested that this proposal and 112 might both be a bit short sighted.

MOTION 8: To support BOF proposal 112. Motion passed (7 yeas, 1 nay). *The full text of the proposal may be found in the November 3 informational packet.*

COMMENTS FOR MOTION 8:

Sandra Nicori of Kwethluk stated the perception that sport fishers are given priority use over subsistence users and that sport fishing should be limited on the Kwethluk River.

John Chythlook, ADFG sport fish division, clarified that any time subsistence has been limited on the Kwethluk River (2010, 2011, 2012), sport fishing has been closed first.

Greg Roczicka pointed out that on the Kanektok River, which (like the Kwethluk) flows through a wildlife refuge; sport fisher operators are issued a limited number of permits each year.

Ilarian Nicolai clarified that this proposal was just to affect sport fishing, not subsistence hook and line. Robert Sundown of USFWS, YK Delta National Wildlife Refuge, pointed out that the verbiage of the proposal suggested a full closure to fishing between the dates of June 1 and July 25.

When asked about the extent of the closures, John Andrew of Kwethluk clarified that the proposal was written to govern the Kwethluk River only and not to affect other rivers flowing into Kuskokuak slough.

MOTION 9: To support the efforts of the Management Plan development committee to move forward with development of an alternative Kuskokwim River salmon management plan. Motion passed unanimously.

COMMENTS FOR MOTION 9:

Discussion surrounding proposal 105 (*The full text of the proposal may be found in the November 3 informational packet*) led to the formation and subsequent vote on **Motion 9**.

Travis Elison introduced the proposal, saying that it had been intended for the purpose of updating the existing management plan and making it more in line with the practices that had developed in Kuskokwim River salmon fisheries in recent years. He stated that 2011 had been different than any previous year and that managers were still learning how to manage subsistence in the Kuskokwim. He pointed out that the mission of the department was not only to manage Chinook salmon, but all salmon species, which creates a mosaic of management obligations and options that require careful and ongoing consideration throughout the season.

Greg Roczicka described attending the BOF work session in October and the discussion surrounding the various proposals being presented, principally 105 and 106. The result of that discussion was the formation of a committee to discuss options for the development of an alternative management plan to present to the BOF in January. The Committee would include members of state and federal regulatory agencies and working group members. Greg stated that he contacted Doug Molyneaux, a former employee of the state of Alaska with a history of working with Kuskokwim River salmon issues, to act as a participant and facilitator for this process. Greg was careful to point out the Doug had volunteered for this work and was not being compensated beyond reimbursement of expenses.

Doug Molyneaux of Anchorage provided a PowerPoint presentation and handout describing the efforts of the committee. The presentation included a brief summary of changes being made to management strategies in the Kuskokwim salmon fisheries in the near future, such as the initiation of a total Kuskokwim River Chinook salmon escapement goal, adjustments to existing tributary escapement goals, and adjustments to the salmon management plan. Doug listed details on the changes and concerns with those changes. Highest stated concerns were for ensuring that subsistence resources be available to fishers above major population neck points and that female salmon arrive in adequate quantities to the spawning grounds. Doug Also listed a number of illustrative points with regard to developing language within the alternative management plan and suggestions from people on the committee including Molyneaux. Some of these points are listed below:

- Set the earliest date that a commercial opening may be called, which subdistrict would be opened first, and how soon afterward another subdistrict opening may be called. This assumes a forecast of adequate Chinook salmon abundance and was suggested as a way to ensure that run strength would meet expectations.
- Incidental harvest caps suggested for each species. A cap on the number of Chinook salmon that may be taken commercial in a year of low abundance. Harvest in excess of this number would close the fishery in those years.
- Provisions for managing for multiple species when one species is not arriving in healthy numbers.
- Manage for the midpoint of the escapement goal range to account for any uncertainty that may exist the ability to achieve the goal.
- If projections indicate meeting the escapement goal and not meeting the midpoint, subsistence fishers would be limited in gear type (set nets or fish wheels) but would be allowed to fish.
- Establish an additional buffer on tributary goals (suggesting an increase in the goal to account for female salmon that occur in lower relative numbers than males).

The primary purpose of the presentation was to introduce the effortso of the committee, and not to discuss the fine points of the alternative plan.

Bev Hoffman asked the Department to respond to the presentation. Travis Elison, Area management biologist, stated that the department was not committed to proposal 105 as written and was very open to the process of alternative plan development. However, he stated that although Mr. Molyneaux was presenting a draft, some of the content was of concern. Mr. Elison was concerned by the recurring emphasis on managing for the mid-point of the range, stating that the goal is expressed as a range to account for uncertainty, but that escapements within that range were considered desirable. He said that risk goes in both directions: too few fish were certainly a problem, but all the recent research reinforces the conclusion that too many fish were also a problem. He said that as our understanding evolves, we take new information into account when making decisions. Too much emphasis on one fine point or another in a management plan would be very limiting for managers and might have negative impacts that were unintended.

With regard to the suggestion that gear types could be limited in years when forecasts were below a certain threshold, Travis stated some uncertainty as to whether that was a legal approach, whether the Department or even the BOF could take an approach that would exclude some and not others. More importantly, the Department has no evidence to suggest that this would provide the conservation for which it had been suggested. We don't know how many fish are truly taken by subsistence in each gear type and allowing setnets ignores the fact that

certain neck points exist in the river and are popular for set netters. These would likely be more heavily used.

With regard to incidental harvest caps, the department would like to retain more control. Perhaps the caps being suggested are too high.

With regard to a buffer being built into tributary goals, Mr. Elison pointed out that there is already a buffer built in. The total river goal is not set to provide maximum sustained yield, but has been set higher, constituting a buffer. This is extrapolated to the tributaries since those goals are derived as subsets of the larger total goal. *For more details on the built in buffer, see the September 27 meeting summary (last page).*

Casie Stockdale asked for input from USFWS. Robert Sundown of USFWS stated that the most valuable thing that the Kuskokwim Area has is the cooperation in management. Robert saw Proposal 106 (*not directly addressed at this meeting*) as a way of achieving a higher order of cooperation. Dan Gilikin responded that the agency was committed to the process of working with the committee and agreed that the management plan could continue to be developed independent of the discussion on escapement goals. Dan continued with discussion on managing for the midpoint: if the uncertainty associated with the goal is evenly distributed above and below the midpoint, than USFWS would accept this type of management. If the uncertainty is associated more with one side or another, than it would be best to lean toward that side of the goal. Dan also commented on the guideline harvest caps for Chinook salmon, saying that he thought that language should be crafted to allow for the ability to scale the guideline harvest limit in season based on conditions being observed. It would be good to be cautious about setting a hard number. *Doug Molyneaux interrupted without being recognized by the chair, stating that flexibility was built into the guideline by making that number the upper limit, not the lower.*

Phil Peter of Akiachak stated that he was concerned about the trend of not being able to sell commercially caught kings in recent years. He told the Working Group that they needed to help commercial fishermen at the same time they were meeting other concerns.

Bev Hoffman said that she appreciated the work of the management plan guidance committee and could see that it was evolving. She suggested that Fish and Game be more open to submitting a management plan to which all stakeholders had contributed. She thought that the plan needed input from a wider group and she wanted to "open the door" to this plan being a "work in process."

Fritz Charles of Bethel commented that he had strong disagreement with any commercial harvest plan that could potentially impact kings in any year when subsistence closures were considered necessary. He said that he understands that the current work is a draft, but he didn't want to see these elements get passed into regulation: "there is no going back."

Casie Stockdale of Bethel shared Fritz's concern about commercial fishing. She also stated that she would like to continue to work to find creative ways to let people fish and asked for other ideas. *At this point it was determined that there was insufficient time to continue the discussion. The motion was made and voted on, and the meeting quickly adjourned.*

OLD BUSINESS:

The only Old Business that was addressed was BOF proposals 104,105,107-112.

With respect to Proposal 105, Doug Molyneaux gave a presentation on an alternative Management plan being developed cooperatively by Working Group members and state and federal managers, with Molyneaux as facilitator. Points from this presentation are listed above under "comments for motion 9."

NEW BUSINESS:

Due to time constraints, New Business items were not addressed.

GENERAL COMMENTS FROM WORKING GROUP MEMBERS:

Comments were not taken from Working Group members. The meeting started late due to logistical problems with the teleconference and discussion of proposals overran the time limit of the meeting by an hour and a half. The meeting was adjourned with the hope of scheduling a further meeting in late November to address management plan and escapement goal issues prior to the Board of Fish.

WORKING GROUP ATTENDANCE:

MEMBER SEAT:	NAME:
UPRIVER ELDER	<i>Vacant</i>
DOWNRIVER ELDER	James Charles
COMMERCIAL FISHER	Charlie Brown
LOWER RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Casie Stockdale
MIDDLE RIVER SUBSTENCE	Gerald Simeon
UPPER RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Evelyn Thomas
HEADWATERS SUBSISTENCE	Nick Petruska
PROCESSOR	<i>absent</i>
MEMBER AT LARGE	Fritz Charles
SPORT FISHER	LaMont Albertson
WESTERN INTERIOR RAC	<i>absent</i>
Y-K DELTA RAC	John Andrew
ADF&G	Travis Elison
CHAIR	Greg Roczicka

Other Participants:	
<p><u>ADF&G Comm. Fish</u> : John Linderman, Kevin Schaberg, Zac Liller, Brittany Blain, Rob Stewart, Maureen Horne-Brine</p> <p><u>Sport Fish</u> : John Chythlook</p> <p><u>Subsistence Division</u>: Lisa Olson, Brandon Chapman, David Runfola,</p>	
<p><u>USFWS</u>: Ken Harper, Dan Gilikin, Paula Harts, Steve Miller, Robert Sundown,</p> <p><u>OSM</u>:</p>	
<p>Art Nelson (BSFA)</p> <p>Doug Molyneaux</p> <p>Philip Peter- Akiachak</p> <p>Ilarian Nicolai-Kwethluk</p> <p>Peter Joseph- Tuntatuliak</p> <p>George Billy-Napakiak</p> <p>Roberta Chavez (ONC)</p> <p>Ickey Charles- Akiachak</p> <p>Ben Wassillie- Akiachak</p> <p>Henry William – Atmautluak</p> <p>Bev Hoffman – Alternate Sport Fisher</p>	<p>Moses Owen - Akiak</p> <p>Mike Riley- Bethel</p> <p>Sandra Nicori (Kwethluk)</p> <p>Jackson Williams - Akiak</p> <p>Derek Black – Bethel</p> <p>William Philip – Tuluksak (provided translation)</p> <p>John Nicholas - Kasigluk</p> <p>Mike Thalhauser – KNA</p> <p>LaDonn Robbins – KNA</p> <p>Chuck Chaliak – Alternate Downriver Elder</p> <p>Mark Leary – Alternate Upriver Subsistence</p>

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS:

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (**ADF&G**), Orutsarmiut Native Council (**ONC**), Kuskokwim Native Association (**KNA**), Association of Village Council Presidents (**AVCP**), 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**), Regional Advisory Council (**RAC**), Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group (**KRSMWG** or **Working Group, WG**), Sustainable Escapement Goal (**SEG**), Biological Escapement Goal (**BEG**), Management Objective (**MO**), Amounts Reasonably Necessary for Subsistence (**ANS**), Emergency Order (**EO**)