

# Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

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

June 24, 2015

Meeting called to order at 10:00am on Wednesday June 24, 2015 and adjourned at 12:10pm. Total meeting time was 2 hours and 10 minutes. Ten full voting members were present and a quorum was established.

## AGENDA ITEMS:

**Continuing Business:** Run assessment and management actions.

**People to be Heard:**

## **Old Business Discussion Topics:**

- King salmon subsistence harvest table- *Dave Cannon*

## **New Business Discussion Topics:**

- Update from USFWS on Law Enforcement policies
- Unit 4 resolution letter- *Mike Williams, Sr.*
- Tier II process- *Tabled to July 1, 2015*

**WORKING GROUP ACTION ITEMS:** *These items were not called "action items" at the time of meeting; however work was assigned or volunteered.*

- Email the date of the upcoming July Unit 4 meeting to the Working Group Co-chairs and ADF&G staff. (*Mike Williams Sr.*)

## **WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:**

1. Approve the agenda as amended. *Passed (8 yeas, 2 nays)*
2. For a 6 hour, 25 fathom opening from Aniak to Sleetmute, open to all residents, and a 24 hour setnet opening above Sleetmute to Nikolai on Saturday June 27, 2015. *Passed (9 yeas, 0 nays)*
3. Extend the meeting 10 minutes to cover agenda items. *Passed (Unanimous)*
4. Adjourn. *Passed (Unanimous)*

## **CONTINUING BUSINESS:**

1. **ADF&G Management Actions under consideration:** Aaron Poetter (ADF&G) reported that ~25 boats participated in the Elder fishery above Aniak on June 20<sup>th</sup>. He commented that the department was considering another harvest opportunity from Aniak to the headwaters. ADF&G would also consider additional gear types to address local area practices. Mr. Poetter discussed swim speed and run timing of Chinook and chum salmon. (*For more information on swim speed and run timing, please see the June 24<sup>th</sup> Informational Packet.*)

**Discussion:** Mark Leary (Upriver Subsistence) reported that fewer than 125 king salmon had been caught during the Elder fishery. Lisa Feyereisen (Middle River Subsistence alternate) commented that the average harvest for the fishery had been three king and three chum salmon. Many of the Working Group members recommended an additional harvest opportunity in the state waters above Aniak and suggested it be held on a weekend during afternoon and evening hours to accommodate those employed. Some of the members commented that a setnet opportunity in the headwaters should have extended time periods since they were unable to drift.

2. **Overview of Kuskokwim River Salmon Run Assessment Projects:**

- **Bethel Test Fish:** Colton Lipka (ADF&G) reported that the water temperature was high and had set new records, water clarity was above average, and the water level was within the historical range but very low. Mr. Lipka reviewed the daily CPUEs for Chinook, chum and sockeye salmon at the BTF. (*For more information on the BTF, please see the June 24<sup>th</sup> Informational Packet.*)

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- **Aniak Test Fish:** Colton Lipka reviewed the daily CPUEs for the ATF. Zach Liller (ADF&G) added that one of the motivations for the ATF project was to monitor species' ratio at that location. (*For more information on the ATF, please see the June 24<sup>th</sup> Informational Packet*).
  - **Weirs:** Brittany Blain (ADF&G) noted the format change of the weir information included in the packet from previous years. Ms. Blain reported on the available weir data for Chinook, chum and sockeye salmon. She commented that it was still early for fish to be passing through the weirs. (*For more information on weirs, please see the June 24<sup>th</sup> Informational Packet*).
  - **Radio Tagging Project:** Zach Liller (ADF&G) reported that nine tagged fish had reached the McGrath area. Mr. Liller noted that tagged fish were traveling ~22 miles per day. (*For more information on the tagging project, please see the June 24<sup>th</sup> Informational Packet*).
3. **Subsistence Reports:**
- **ONC In-season Subsistence Report:** Greg Roczicka (ONC) reported that the Bethel Community Harvest was ~75% complete.
  - **USFWS Lower River Update:** Neil Lalonde (USFWS) reported that 20 communities had participated in the Community Harvest Permit program; five communities had either reached their allocation or had opted out. He noted that 4,154 Chinook salmon had been harvested through the program. Mr. Lalonde reported on the June 22<sup>nd</sup> subsistence opener in the lower river. USFWS observed ~235 boats participating with an estimated harvest of 6,033 salmon: ~4,210 chum, ~912 sockeye, and ~910 Chinook salmon. Mr. Lalonde noted that river conditions had been rough and the harvest was conservative. USFWS anticipated additional harvest opportunities from the Johnson River down to the mouth once the ratios improved at the BTF. An additional opener upriver from Kuskokuak Slough to Johnson River, limited to 25 fathoms, was also under consideration. USFWS had met with ADF&G prior to the June 22<sup>nd</sup> opener to assess the numbers at the BTF. Mr. Lalonde reminded the Working Group that during the inseason, runs could develop quickly making it necessary to make management decisions in between Working Group meetings. Better communication regarding management decisions was requested from several Working Group members.
  - **Discussion of ADF&G Management consideration and discussion of possible alternatives:** Aaron Poetter commented that ADF&G did not have the authority to specify operation methods for 6" gear.
4. **Motion for Discussion and Action:** *See Motion 2 on page 3.*

## PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:

- Herman Morgan from Aniak commented that smokehouses were empty in the middle river and requested a harvest opportunity.
- Orville Huntington (BOF) thanked the Working Group for the two meetings he attended. He commented that he appreciated the efforts made toward conservation and providing harvest opportunities along the river.
- Tom Kluberton (BOF) commented that he appreciated the Working Group's concern for the fishery resource and equity of harvest opportunities along the river. He added that the Working Group appeared well organized and he appreciated their work.
- Doug Molyneaux commented on the early history of the Working Group and how it evolved to address subsistence issues with consensus from the BOF, the department, USFWS and the public.

## OLD BUSINESS:

- **King salmon subsistence harvest table:** Dave Cannon commented on the subsistence fishing difficulties for middle and upriver villages. He also noted the challenges for villages near the mouth.

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## NEW BUSINESS:

- 1. Update from USFWS on Law Enforcement policies:** Bill Raften (USFWS) reported that the Law Enforcement (LE) policies during king salmon conservation were consistent with previous years. He commented that there had been no seizure of nets or fish from fishcamps. Mr. Raften informed the Working Group that officers had been instructed to not enter fishcamps without permission and were not allowed to confiscate fish from fish racks. Mr. Raften assured the group that officers had been following this policy. He added that out of 218 observed violations, 15 tickets and 70 warnings had been issued. He noted that when they seized a 6" mesh or less net, they returned it to its owner upon giving the violation notice. Mr. Raften commented that LE had conducted Youth Game Warden camps in 12 villages serving ~385 youth.
- 2. Unit 4 Resolution letter:** Mike Williams Sr. reported that he attempted to educate the Unit 4 communities on the history and purpose of the Working Group. Mr. Williams reported that he abstained from voting on the resolution. He invited the Working Group chair and ADF&G Area Biologist to the next Unit 4 meeting in Tuluksak to help explain the purpose of the Working Group. John Linderman (ADF&G) commented that the Working Group had been jointly created from the desire of stakeholders to have a more active role in the advisory of inseason management decisions. He added that although its inception was to focus on commercial fisheries, its creation was not specific to the commercial fishery. Mr. Linderman noted that the process was adaptive with respect to salmon management and that the department was committed to the Working Group process.

## WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

**Motion 1: To approve the agenda as amended. Passed (8 yeas, 2 nays)**

**Motion 2: For a 6 hour, 25 fathom opening from Aniak to Sleetmute, open to all residents, and a 24 hour setnet opening above Sleetmute to Nikolai on Saturday June 27, 2015. Passed (9 yeas, 0 nays)**

Some of the Working Group members expressed concern that people were losing sight of Chinook salmon conservation. Others commented on the lack of harvest opportunity for upriver residents, and that the middle and upper river residents would harvest less than the lower river communities. ADF&G commented on the run timing of the salmon and that non-Chinook salmon species were just beginning to pass through the middle and upper river. Aaron Poetter requested recommendations from the Working Group on other gear opportunities including hook and line.

**Motion 3: Extend the meeting 15 minutes to cover agenda items. Passed (9 yeas, 1 nay)**

**Motion 4: Adjourn. Passed (Unanimous)**

## COMMENTS FROM THE WORKING GROUP

- James Charles (Downriver Elder) commented that there were still some king salmon in his area.
- Nick Kameroff (Middle River Subsistence alternate) commented on the efforts people had made toward conservation along the entire river. He noted his appreciation of another possible harvest opportunity for people above Aniak. Mr. Kameroff mentioned that he would also like an opening from Kwethluk down river, but reminded the group that conservation continued to be needed as the second run of kings had not fully materialized.
- Mike Williams Sr. (Lower River Subsistence) commented that he appreciated all the efforts people were making along the river for conservation.
- Lisa Feyereisen (Middle River Subsistence alternate) commented on the villages that were being protected from the fires and thanked the firefighting crews.

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## WORKING GROUP ATTENDANCE:

<b>MEMBER SEAT:</b>	<b>NAME:</b>
DOWNRIVER ELDER	James Charles
UPRIVER ELDER	<i>Absent</i>
LOWER RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mike Williams
MIDDLE RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Dave Cannon
UPRIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mark Leary
HEADWATERS SUBSISTENCE	Dan Esai
MEMBER AT LARGE	<i>Absent</i>
WESTERN INTERIOR RAC	Ray Collins
YK DELTA RAC	Greg Roczicka
COMMERCIAL FISHING	Greg Hoffman Jr.
SPORT FISHING	LaMont Albertson
PROCESSOR	Henry Mitchell
ADF&G	Aaron Poetter
CHAIR	Bev Hoffman

## **Other Participants:**

ADF&G Comm. Fish: Zac Liller, Brittany Blain, Chris Shelden, Aaron Poetter, Colton Lipka, John Linderman, Nick Smith, Jen Peeks

Sport Fishing: John Chythlook, Terry Thompson

Subsistence Division: Lisa Olson, David Runfola, Andrew Brenner, Oden Miller

USFWS: Neil Lalonde, Lew Coggins, Robert Sundown, Brian McCaffery, Bill Raften, Aaron Martin

OSM:

Ben Matheson (KYUK)

Lisa Demer (ADN)

Orville Huntington (BOF)

Tom Kluberton (BOF)

Lisa Feyereisen (Middle River Subsistence alternate)

Barbara Carlson (Upriver Subsistence alternate)

John Andrew (Downriver Elder alternate)

Mary Sattler (Lower River Subsistence alternate)

Nick Kameroff (Middle River Subsistence alternate)

## **GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS:**

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (**ADF&G**), Orutsararmiut Native Council (**ONC**), Kuskokwim Native Association (**KNA**), 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**), 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**)

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