

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

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

July 08, 2015

Meeting called to order at 10:00am on Wednesday July 08, 2015 and adjourned at 12:25pm. Total meeting time was 2 hours and 25 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:

- Tier II discussion- *Tabled to July 15th*

New Business Discussion Topics:

WORKING GROUP ACTION ITEMS: *There were no "action items" at the time of meeting.*

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

1. Approve the agenda as amended. *Passed (Unanimous)*
2. For all subsistence opportunities from the mouth of the Holitna to the headwaters be 24 hours in length, starting Friday July 10. *Passed (Unanimous)*
3. To remove the 4-inch setnet restriction on the river to allow for whitefish harvest, with bank orientation restrictions applied. *Passed (Unanimous)*
4. To extend the meeting to 12:45pm. *Passed (Unanimous)*
5. Adjourn. *Passed (Unanimous)*

CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. **ADF&G Management Actions under consideration:** Aaron Poetter (ADF&G) reported that the department continued to manage conservatively for the remaining Chinook salmon and an apparently low chum salmon run. Subsistence fishing was on a two day per week schedule along with providing additional time, gear types and gear lengths as the season progressed. The department requested recommendations from the Working Group regarding future subsistence fishery openers. Mr. Poetter noted that commercial fishing was not currently being discussed due to the poor chum salmon run.
Discussion: Ray Collins (Western Interior RAC) commented that a subsistence opportunity less than 24 hours was not worth the effort in the upper Kuskokwim River due to the travel distance and the low amount of fish caught in that area. He added that much of the king salmon run had already moved passed the McGrath area. *(See Motion 2 on p.3)*
2. **Overview of Kuskokwim River Salmon Run Assessment Projects:**
 - **Bethel Test Fish:** Zach Liller (ADF&G) reported that the water temperature was above average, water clarity had dropped to below average, and the water level was below average but within the historical range. Mr. Liller reviewed the daily CPUEs for Chinook, chum and sockeye salmon at the BTF. Mr. Liller commented that chum salmon were tracking well below recent years. He informed the group that the decimal points for the BTF graph would be removed for future Informational Packets. Mr. Liller added that the new min., max., ave. graphs in the Informational Packets resulted from Working Group requests to see all previous years' data. *(For more information on the BTF, please see the July 8th Informational Packet).*
 - **Aniak Test Fish:** Zach Liller reviewed the daily CPUEs for the ATF. He commented that the peak of Chinook salmon run had likely passed the Aniak area while sockeye and chum salmon continued to build. *(For more information on the ATF, please see the July 8th Informational Packet).*
 - **Weirs:** Brittany Blain (ADF&G) reported on the available weir data for Chinook, chum and sockeye salmon. She noted that water temperature at the weirs had decreased during the previous week. *(For more information on weirs, please see the July 8th Informational Packet).*

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- **Radio Tagging Project:** Jordan Head (ADF&G) reported that Chinook salmon catches had decreased at the tagging site. *(For more information on the tagging project, please see the July 8th Informational Packet).*
 - **Inseason Subsistence Harvest Assessment Project:** Dave Runfola (ADF&G) reported on the subsistence harvest surveys conducted for the previous openers. He commented that during the July 4th opening, fewer people reported fishing and some were finished fishing for the season.
3. **Subsistence Reports:**
- **Down River:** Charlie Brown (Commercial Fishing) commented that most of the people had quit fishing because the flies were laying eggs.
 - **ONC Inseason Subsistence Report:** Dustin Wagner (ONC) reported that the ONC crew was nearing the end of their salmon distribution. *(For full survey results, please see the July 8th Informational Packet).*
 - **Lower River:** Mike Williams Sr. (Lower River Subsistence) commented that the few king salmon allotted during the season had helped people in his area. He reported that during the July 4th opening people met the majority of their needs but still needed an additional opener to complete their subsistence goals for the winter. He commented that people would like the opportunity to set their 4” nets for whitefish and other non-salmon species.
Fritz Charles (Member at Large) commented that his family had not started drying fish and had only frozen 4-5 king salmon. He added that he planned to jar silver salmon later in the season.
 - **USFWS Lower River Update:** Neil Lalonde (USFWS) reported on the Community Harvest Permit program that completed on June 30th. He commented that based on the received reports, the total Chinook salmon harvest was ~4,625. The estimated total Chinook salmon harvest for the June 23rd, 26th and 30th subsistence openings was ~4,353 with a total fish harvest of ~34,000. Mr. Lalonde added that USFWS would continue with two telemetry flights per week.
 - **Middle River:** Dave Cannon (Middle River Subsistence) commented that people in Aniak were grateful for the Aniak Test Fishery. He reported a mixture of success from people during the previous openings. He noted that one dip netter had been successful in catching salmon.
 - **Upriver:** Mark Leary (Upriver Subsistence) reported that the Napaimute fishwheel had been providing fish for several communities. They were catching 20-25 red salmon per night and very few chum salmon. Mr. Leary commented that July 8th would be their last day of use.
Barb Carlson (Upriver Subsistence alternate) reported that Red Devil and Sleetmute had been fishing during the openers and using a combination of set and drift nets. She commented that people were happy to get fish but it was taking a lot of time and gas effort. Ms. Carlson reported that people had not met their subsistence needs. She added that smoking fish had been difficult due to the flies and humid weather; more people were canning and freezing.
 - **Headwaters:** Ray Collins (Western Interior RAC) commented that few people were fishing. He reported that people were looking forward to harvesting coho salmon. Mr. Collins commented that some people were fishing for pike and Sheefish with hook and line.
Dan Esai (Headwaters Subsistence) reported that the salmon run was good at the Salmon River (Pitka Fork). He commented that salmon were observed at Tonzona but there were no setnets out.
1. **Intercept Fishery Report- Area M:** Aaron Poetter reported on the Area M June chum salmon harvest for 2015. He noted that, in previous years, the Kogruklu River consistently met, or exceeded, its escapement goal regardless of the Area M harvest. The Area M June 2015 harvest was the lowest chum salmon harvest for all years in the data with the exception of 2001. He commented that there was no indication that the Area M June harvest would have any notable effect on the Kogruklu escapement for 2015.
2. **Discussion of ADF&G Management consideration and discussion of possible alternatives:** Aaron Poetter commented that the department would continue to assess the chum salmon run and would be providing additional subsistence opportunities. Dave Cannon suggested that dipnet openings be consistent along the river. Aaron Poetter responded that dipnets were a tool used only in times of Chinook salmon conservation and that once the Chinook salmon had passed a certain portion of the river, dipnets could no longer be used. Mr. Cannon also mentioned the inconsistency between sport and subsistence fishing

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regulations and requested that the regulations be made clearer. Ray Collins suggested having consecutive two day subsistence opportunities in the McGrath area. Working Group members discussed the need to remain in conservation mode until more chum salmon passed through the river. Mark Leary suggested unrestricted fishing opportunity be considered after July 18th or 20th.

3. Motion for Discussion and Action: (See Motion 3 on p.3)

PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:

- Herman Morgan from Aniak commented that having two openings a week targeted fish bound for the same tributary. He suggested that ADF&G consider the “Oregon style” of management. Mr. Morgan reported that people were not finished subsistence fishing in Aniak.

OLD BUSINESS:

- **Tier II Process:** *Tabled to July 15th*

NEW BUSINESS:

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

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

Dave Cannon requested that the Informational Packet format and the consistency of management regulations be discussed during the *Run Assessment and Management Actions*.

Motion 2: For all subsistence opportunities from the mouth of the Holitna to the headwaters be 24 hours in length, starting Friday July 10. Passed (Unanimous)

Working Group members commented that people from the upper Kuskokwim and headwater communities needed a minimum of 24 hours of setnet opportunity due to the low fish numbers in that area. Members mentioned that king salmon were currently moving through the area.

Motion 3: To remove the 4-inch setnet restriction on the river to allow for whitefish harvest. Passed (Unanimous)

Working Group members commented that since there was an increase in whitefish and Sheefish in the river, removing the restrictions for 4” gear was warranted. Members commented that there would be fewer people using 4” setnet at this time in the season.

Motion 4: To extend the meeting to 12:45pm. Passed (Unanimous)

Motion 5: Adjourn. Passed (Unanimous)

COMMENTS FROM THE WORKING GROUP

- Mark Leary (Upriver Subsistence) commented on the possible effects the 2010 Kuskokwim River breakup had on juvenile salmon.
- Charlie Brown (Commercial Fishing) requested clarification on fishing opportunities for the Eek River. He commented that people had to travel far to the traditional fishing locations. With the restrictions in 2015, he commented that people in his area had not been able to harvest much fish. Mr. Brown suggested that the Eek River be unrestricted.
- Dave Cannon (Middle River Subsistence) commented that many people would be relying on coho salmon to meet their subsistence needs.
- Mark Leary (Upriver Subsistence) commented that he would prefer that *People to be Heard* be moved to the beginning of the Working Group meetings.
- Dan Esai (Headwater Subsistence) agreed with Mr. Leary that public comments should be heard at the beginning of the meetings.
- Ray Collins (Western Interior RAC) suggested that the McGrath area and headwaters be managed differently as they were not getting a reasonable portion of fish.
- Barb Carlson (Upriver Subsistence alternate) suggested that the river be managed based on the needs of specific areas.

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WORKING GROUP ATTENDANCE:

MEMBER SEAT:	NAME:
DOWNRIVER ELDER	John Andrew
UPRIVER ELDER	<i>Absent</i>
LOWER RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mike Williams Sr.
MIDDLE RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Dave Cannon
UPRIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mark Leary
HEADWATERS SUBSISTENCE	Dan Esai
MEMBER AT LARGE	Fritz Charles
WESTERN INTERIOR RAC	Ray Collins
YK DELTA RAC	<i>Absent</i>
COMMERCIAL FISHING	Charlie Brown
SPORT FISHING	LaMont Albertson
PROCESSOR	Henry Mitchell
ADF&G	Aaron Poetter
CHAIR	LaMont Albertson/ Fritz Charles

Other Participants:

ADF&G Comm. Fish: Zach Liller, Brittany Blain, Aaron Poetter, Chris Shelden, Aaron Tiernan, John Linderman, Jordan Head, Nick Smith, Jan Conitz, Jennifer Yuhas, Jen Peeks,

Sport Fishing: John Chythlook, Tim Viavant

Subsistence Division: Jim Simon, Hiroko Ikuta, David Runfola, Andrew Brenner, Lisa Olson, Jeff Park

USFWS: Lew Coggins, Ken Harper, Brian McCaffery, Neil Lalonde, Robert Sundown, Aaron Moses, Patton Corbett, Janice Andrew

OSM: Pippa Kenner, Kay Larson-Blair

Dustin Wagner (ONC)	Lisa Feyereisen (Middle River Subsistence alternate)
Dan Gillikin (NVN)	Barbara Carlson (Upriver Subsistence alternate)
Bill Bechtol	John Andrew (Downriver Elder alternate)
Gerry Sumpter (Sen. Murkowski's office)	Wayne Morgan (Middle River Subsistence alternate)
Ben Matheson (KYUK)	Barbara Carlson (Upriver Subsistence alternate)
Lisa Demer (ADN)	Herman Morgan (Aniak)
	Doug Molyneaux

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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