

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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Meeting Summary

August 7, 2013

Meeting called to order at 10:02 am and adjourned at 12:50 pm at ADF&G in Bethel. Eight full voting members were present and a quorum was established.

AGENDA ITEMS:

Continuing Business:

- Run assessment and management actions.

Old Business Discussion Topics:

- Unalakleet Chinook Summit
- End of year strategy meeting

New Business Discussion Topics:

- Electing John W. Andrew as alternate to the Downriver Elder seat.

WORKING GROUP ACTION ITEMS: none

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

1. Approval of the agenda as amended. Motion passed unanimously.
2. To accept the ADF&G Recommendation to open commercial salmon fishing in Kuskokwim River Subdistrict 1-B on Friday, August 9, for four hours in the upper section and six hours in the lower section. Motion failed (3 yeas, 5 nays).
3. To open commercial salmon fishing in Kuskokwim River Subdistrict 1-B on Monday, August 12, for four hours in the upper section and six hours in the lower section. Motion passed unanimously.
4. To elect John W. Andrew as alternate Downriver Elder member. Motion passed unanimously.

PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:

1. Tim Andrew (AVCP) asked to see the Bethel Test Fish (BTF) Cumulative Chinook CPUEs. Travis Elison explained that BTF had not caught a Chinook salmon for weeks, so the data in the July 30 Information Packet remained accurate. Travis reported that the cumulative Chinook CPUE was 261.
2. Greg Roczicka (Lower River Subsistence) said that the Senior Center in Bethel asked him to thank the Bethel Test Fishery for donating coho salmon, and that the fish were helping many families.

CONTINUING BUSINESS:

Subsistence Reports

- Lowest River Reports:

Henry Lupie (Member at Large) reported that people in Tuntutuliak had not been subsistence fishing, other than catching fresh fish for dinner. He said that some people were waiting for drier weather to put up coho.

James Charles (Downriver Elder) said his report was the same as Henry Lupie's.

- Lower River Reports:

Greg Roczicka (Lower River Subsistence) reported that people subsistence fishing for coho the past week had been successful. He said that many people had been careful to only use one-third or one-half of their net and then pull it back in right away so that it didn't sink from catching too many fish. Greg remarked, "That's the danger of fishing for silvers around here. You can end up catching far more than you want." Greg said that only one person he talked to said that they had to make two drifts, instead of one. He summed up by saying, "Even with the commercial period, I have had no concerns from anybody about being able to get what they want."

Bev Hoffman (Sport Fish alternate) said that one family caught 157 coho in two drifts, so she "wanted to urge people to be careful because that does happen." She noted that people who didn't get as many strips as they wanted were fishing for silvers.

Both Bev and Greg Roczicka wanted to stress the message to fishermen to only use part of their net if they don't want to catch too many coho.

John Andrew (Downriver Elder alternate) commented, "There's still fish out there. They are picking up pretty good right now." He said that people had been catching coho at the Kwethluk Y last week, but hardly anyone was fishing now. He noted that there were many rod and reel sport fishers on the Kwethluk River. He said that he saw eight boats from Bethel there last Friday, which were probably people catching fish for their parents.

- KNA Inseason Reports:

Dan Gillikin (KNA) said that KNA did not have a formal report for last week. He commented that a family in Aniak drifting for coho last night "did fairly well."

- Middle River Reports:

Bob Aloysius (YK Delta RAC) reported that there was not much fishing activity in Kalskag. He said people had been drying salmon in the "dry house" not the smokehouse.

Dave Cannon (Middle River Subsistence) said that he saw several people catching coho with rod and reel and one person using a driftnet. He added that there were about 4 sport fishing boats at the mouth of the Aniak River last weekend.

Wayne Morgan (Middle River Subsistence alternate) commented that many people were jarring or freezing silvers. He said that catch rates were slow so far but that the reports of good coho numbers downriver were promising. Wayne also noted that people were still catching chum salmon with rod and reel and that the water level was rising.

- Upper River Reports:

Mark Leary (Upriver Subsistence) said that he did not see very much subsistence fishing when he floated from Napaimute to Bethel, and only saw one boat, which was caught on a snag.

Ray Collins (Western Interior RAC) said that he had been out of state and hadn't been able to talk to any fishermen recently. He said he wasn't sure about coho fishing, but he had observed people rod and reeling for sheefish.

Barbara Carson (Upriver Subsistence alternate) commented that several people were fishing hard with rod and reel to try to get fish to smoke since they didn't get many Chinook salmon this year. She said that the rod and reel fishing for coho had been "pretty good," and the only people using driftnets were fishing for whitefish.

Overview of Kuskokwim River salmon run assessment projects:

- **Bethel Test Fishery:**

Travis Elison (ADF&G) presented water quality and Bethel Test Fish (BTF) data. He reported that the water temperature had been warm compared to the historical range, but had started to cool off in the last few days. He reported low water clarity and near average water levels. *Please see August 7th Information Packet.*

Chinook, Chum, and Sockeye Salmon

Travis stated that current catches of Chinook, chum, and sockeye in the BTF were few to none, and that the Department was now looking at escapement numbers for these species.

Coho Salmon

Travis noted that the August 5th CPUE for coho salmon was higher than any daily CPUE in 2012. He commented that the CPUE had been tracking low (like 2010 and 2012) until recently; and the high CPUE indicated that good numbers of coho salmon are getting through the commercial district to provide for escapement and upriver subsistence needs.

Discussion:

Bev Hoffman commented that the coho CPUE's were lower than most years, and asked if the current CPUE was adequate to schedule a commercial period. Travis replied yes, and that the other big indicator was the commercial catch statistics. He explained that escapement goals for coho were achieved in 2010 and 2012 after regularly scheduled commercial periods, "and it's definitely looking stronger this year. It doesn't look like a huge run, but it's adequate to fish two times a week." He agreed that it had been looking low early on, prompting the department to cancel a commercial opening scheduled for August second.

Bob Aloysius asked what mesh size was currently being used in the BTF, and Travis Elison replied 5 3/8-inch mesh gillnets.

James Charles asked for clarification on the CPUE for August 6. Travis replied and discussed an increase in the slope on the BTF Cumulative CPUE figure, indicating the building strength of the run.

Weirs:

Brittany Blain (ADF&G) presented updates from salmon escapement projects. *Please see August 7th Information Packet for tables and figures.*

Operational Summary: Brittany said that all operations were normal, unless otherwise noted. Kogrukluk River weir had a partial day of counting on August 4th and August 6th, and then became inoperable due to high water. Brittany said that operations would resume when water levels become more manageable.

Chinook: Relative to past years, Chinook salmon escapement was low. Passage percentages for Chinook were based on late run timing. Chinook passage at most locations was zero, indicating that the run may have been over at that time.

- Kwethluk River weir escapement was still tracking at the bottom of the figure;
- Tuluksak River weir escapement was tracking near 2010;
- Salmon River weir escapement was tracking lower than 2007 and 2008;
- George River weir escapement was tracking low;
- Kogrukluk River weir: *Please see operational note above.*
- Tatlawiksuk River weir escapement was tracking below 2010;
- Takotna River weir escapement was tracking below 2011.

Chum:

- Kwethluk River weir escapement was tracking just below 2011;
- Tuluksak River weir escapement was tracking similar to 2009;
- George River weir escapement was tracking above 2012;
- Kogrukluk River weir has exceeded the upper end of the escapement goal. *Please see operational summary above.*
- Brittany gave updated passage numbers for Salmon River, Tatlawiksuk River, and Takotna River weirs.

Coho: Brittany gave updated passage numbers and commented that coho passage had just started to increase.

Discussion:

Greg Roczicka asked how long Kogrukluk River weir would be out of operation. Brittany Blain replied that she expected the weir to remain inoperable for a few days because of rainy weather. She noted, "Right now is a good time to be out [of operation] because coho are just starting to ramp up and we are at the end of the sockeye, Chinook, and chum [runs]."

James Charles asked if the water level had risen at all the weirs. Brittany Blain replied that it had. She explained that most weirs were floating weirs, so high water can pass over the panels. However, Salmon River and Kogrukluk River weirs are "fixed" weirs, requiring they be partially dismantled during high water events.

Bev Hoffman asked USFWS and ADF&G to comment on escapement numbers.

- Tom Doolittle (USFWS) replied that Chinook salmon escapement had been poor, according to all the weirs and other assessment tools. He said, "It will have to be evaluated post-season....to work through run reconstruction model and look at where we were relative to predictions." Tom noted that many times predictions are wrong, and other times they are close.
- Travis Elison (ADF&G) agreed with Tom regarding the strength of the Chinook salmon run in 2013. He said, "We aren't meeting any of our tributary escapement goals..." However, Travis reminded the group that there are Chinook spawning, as indicated by weir counts. He agreed that everyone needed to work together over the winter and spring to come up with strategies for achieving Chinook escapement next year.

- **Aerial Surveys:**

Travis Elison reported that all high priority tributaries on the Kuskokwim River had been surveyed by ADF&G, and that ideal weather during peak spawning time resulted in a successful survey season. Travis said that survey methods were the same as they have always been, and that counts only from specific index reaches were used for comparison. He said that often more fish are counted than reflected in survey results because fish observed outside of the index area are not included. *Please see August 7 Information Packet for aerial survey table and figures.*

Chinook salmon aerial survey results: Travis reported that 2 aerial survey goals had been met (Kisaralik River and Salmon River), but he would have liked to have achieved all of them. In general, counts had been below average.

- Kwethluk River: *Please see Kwethluk River aerial survey discussion below.*
- Kisaralik River estimate achieved the aerial survey escapement goal range of 400 to 1,200 fish; is similar to 2011 and 2012; and higher than 2010.
- Aniak River estimate was below the escapement goal;
- Kipchuk River (on the Aniak River) estimate was higher than 2011 and 2012;
- Salmon River (on the Aniak River) estimate was below the escapement goal, but above aerial survey estimates for 2011 and 2012;
- Holokuk River estimate was well below average, similar to 2011, and higher than 2012. Travis noted that fish observed in the upper two reaches of the stream had not been included in the aerial survey estimate, because those reaches are not consistently surveyed every year.
- Oksawalik River estimate was below average and in between 2011 and 2012;
- Holitna River estimate was below the escapement goal but better than 2010;
- Gagarayah River estimate was similar to 2010 and 2011;
- Cheeneetnuk River estimate was below 2011 and 2012;
- Salmon River Pitka Fork estimate achieved the aerial survey escapement goal; was below 2011 and 2012, and higher than 2010;

Kwethluk River aerial survey:

Travis Elison reported that the Kwethluk River aerial survey estimate was 1,165 Chinook salmon. He stated that only 5 of those fish had been below the weir. The results had created some concern over the validity of the Kwethluk weir counts, prompting a follow-up survey with a helicopter to determine, with certainty, whether a greater number of fish had passed the weir than had been reported. A helicopter has the ability to fly slower and closer to the river, improving aerial fish counts. Travis said he counted 1,252 Chinook on the second survey; Steve Miller (USFWS), who accompanied Travis, counted 582 Chinook.

Travis Elison stated that the Department was not planning on using the data from the Kwethluk weir in 2013 run estimates, because the aerial survey identified more Chinook than the weir escapement on multiple surveys. He explained, "There are several things besides aerial surveys that indicate that fish were missed."

- As far as the difference between two surveyors on a single flight, Travis said that he was in the front seat with better visibility than Steve Miller in the back seat. He said counts from the front usually are higher.
- He referred to 2013 Kwethluk River chum salmon run timing, which had tracked on the x-axis until July 17th, when it appeared to have increased dramatically. He noted that prior to July 17th Kwethluk weir numbers indicated that the run was far below the range of all previous years. Travis added that chum salmon run timing at all other weirs had been in the historical range.
- Travis reminded the Working Group that daily passage of all salmon species at the Kwethluk weir was questioned during July meetings: "We had questions. We prosecuted commercial fishing because we didn't believe those numbers, because we had zero chum salmon passage in the middle of July. We have never seen that at another weir on the Kuskokwim River in the middle of July." He said that if chum counts were questionable to the Department, then escapement numbers for all salmon species passing through Kwethluk weir were in question.
- Travis noted that aerial survey counts are a minimum estimates that typically count 20% to 60% of a weir estimate.
- The total aerial survey estimate for a nearby tributary, the Kisaralik River, was 967 Chinook salmon, which was very similar to the Kwethluk River weir estimate.

Kwethluk River aerial survey discussion

Bev Hoffman commented that it seems like the new technology at Kwethluk weir should give accurate numbers, so it makes sense to use the weir number. She said, "I would like for you guys to go back up again and do it again. It just seems like crazy numbers." She said that rafters coming down the Kisaralik and Kwethluk Rivers were seeing few Chinook, and that she "was feeling frustrated, too."

Mark Leary said that he thought under the new management plan, "we weren't worried about tributary escapements, and now we suddenly are." Travis Elison replied, "We have always have been concerned with tributary escapements. That's why we kept escapement goals on the tributaries. The reason we are not meeting our tributary goals is that we likely will not meet our drainage-wide escapement goal. They are all related."

Tom Doolittle (USFWS) commented that the Kenai fishery office followed up with another aerial survey of the Kwethluk River. He said, "There needs to be a timely evaluation between the agencies on the quality of the weir data. It does not change the overall large picture of the Kwethluk meeting escapement; it does not change the big picture of the cumulative information from the other weirs..." Tom said he didn't want people to "get hung up on one issue that clouds the bigger issue." He commented that Travis and USFWS had taken "the appropriate approach" by taking additional aerial surveys.

Ken Harper (USFWS) said that he flew an aerial survey on August 2 "to personally observe what was going on," and counted 331 live Chinook salmon and 15 Chinook carcasses (total 346). He noted, "My survey was not done under the ideal conditions," due to wind and a higher elevation than the helicopter survey. When asked about his survey experience by Fritz Charles, Ken replied that he had not done many surveys since he was in Bristol Bay in the 1980's. Tim Andrews asked if there was a difference in the area covered by the Kwethluk surveys. Ken replied that he did not fly any of the forks because it was not the standard ADF&G procedure. Out of the five index areas, Ken said that he flew some of the first area, and all of the second, third, and fourth areas. He summed up by saying, "My conditions may not have been as good as the others, but it's still an index that we have."

Greg Roczicka asked how the dates of the Kwethluk aerial surveys compared. Travis Elison replied that his survey with the Super Cub (the standard methodology) was on July 27th, and the helicopter survey four days later on July 31. He noted that the Department accepts aerial surveys completed before August 2, with some variability year to year as to the timing of peak spawning. He said that if the survey is flown before much spawning activity is evident another survey will be done a few days later, in which case the higher index is used.

Tom Doolittle commented that the reason weirs are used is because of the variability of aerial surveys. He said that the aerial survey indices are "not a tool that should be thrown out of the toolbox, but remember that there is a fair amount of bias with the method." He reminded the group that even if there were 1,160 Chinook on the Kwethluk, it would still be a low escapement.

Dave Cannon asked what aircraft Ken Harper used, to which Ken replied the USFWS Super Cub on. Dave then asked if the weir counts for the Kwethluk incorporated the video camera. Ken replied, "It does include video counts."

Ken Harper pointed out that the historical aerial survey figures were done under variable conditions. Travis Elison clarified that all ADF&G surveys are rated on a scale of 1 to 4, based on sky, water, wind, and other conditions. He stated, "All surveys in this table are from good to fair (rated 1 or 2) surveys." Travis reiterated that 2013 had ideal aerial survey conditions.

Kate Schaberg (Georgetown) asked if weir numbers were weighted differently than aerial survey numbers in the run reconstruction. Kevin Schaberg (ADF&G) replied that the run reconstruction uses "a differential weighting" in which aerial surveys are used as a minimal estimate and weir counts are used as a census of fish passage. He noted that aerial surveys usually represent 20% to 40% of weir passage.

Commercial Catch Report:

Travis Elison reviewed commercial catch numbers from the August 6 Kuskokwim River Subdistrict 1-B opening compared to historical averages going back to 1985. He commented that the coho commercial harvest in the last 10 years had almost always been below the historical average, and that 2013 was tracking similar to cumulative harvest in recent years. Travis commented that catches from the August 6th commercial period indicated that the Chinook, sockeye, and chum salmon runs are more or less done, and we are now managing for coho. He noted that the most recent commercial coho harvest of 23,195 fish was near the historical average harvest and CPUE, and higher than any single harvest in the last three years. *Please see August 7 Information Packet for commercial catch table and figure.*

Discussion

Chris Shelden (ADF&G) asked how the number of permits in the August 6 period compared to previous years. Travis Elison replied that the number of permits was near the historical average and slightly higher than the last few years. He attributed the increase in permits to fishermen who moved to Subdistrict 1-B because Subdistrict 1-A was not open this year. Travis noted that the CPUE in Subdistrict 1-B was good, even with the number of boats fishing.

Dave Cannon asked why commercial catch numbers for coho had remained below the historic average for the last several years. Travis Elison said that he was not sure of the reason, especially since there had been less participation in the commercial fishery in the last two decades. Travis explained that that coho salmon are currently being managed for Kogrukluk and Kwethluk River escapement goals using Bethel Test Fishery indices. He said that commercial catch and weir passage data will be available in a few weeks, and that Kevin Schaberg's coho salmon run reconstruction may provide some answers, as well.

Bev Hoffman requested that Kuskokwim Bay commercial catch information be sent to her.

Greg Roczicka commented that 1998 and 1989 had "off the charts" coho harvests, and wondered if the CPUEs for Subdistrict 1-B for these years were available for comparison to 2013. Travis Elison replied that Janet Bavilla (ADF&G) had been researching historical data going back to 1985. However, he explained that it is difficult to compare CPUE's year to year, period to period, because of changes in markets, participation, and fishing areas. Travis said that he had been looking at cumulative harvest instead, which is clearer. Greg then asked about fish sizes. Travis replied that coho harvested in 2012 averaged about 6 pounds, which is one pound smaller than normal. However, he said that 2013 Coho had averaged 7 pounds so far, which was a normal size.

James Charles commented that he saw many more boats fishing in the Tuntutuliak area recently. He noted that the plentiful berries have allowed people more time to go commercial fishing, and that they were also motivated by good prices from the buyer. James mentioned that people in Subdistrict 1-A may not want to fish downriver because they would have to transfer their license.

Mark Leary commented that the economic value of commercial fishing to the region was important. He did a quick calculation and estimated that each fisherman made about

\$600 in the last period, before subtracting the cost of gas. Travis Elison said that the ex-vessel value paid to fishermen will be included in the end of season summary.

Processor Report: none

Sport Fish Report:

Bev Hoffman commented that she had been picking up rafters and locals on the Kisaralik and Kwethluk Rivers, many of whom say that they had seen many chum salmon. She said that people who go on the two rivers every year say that water levels are the lowest they have ever seen.

LaMont Albertson deferred his report to Dave Cannon and Wayne Morgan.

Dave Cannon reported that he talked to a flight seeing guide in Aniak who said that sport fishing activity had been slow until coho season.

Wayne Morgan commented that if rain continued, the Aniak River may get too murky for sport fishing.

Intercept Fishery Report: none

Weather Forecast:

The forecast was for rain and temperatures in the 50's and 60's. No south winds were forecasted.

ADF&G Recommendation: To open commercial salmon fishing in Kuskokwim River Subdistrict 1-B on Friday, August 9, for four hours in the upper section and six hours in the lower section.

Separately from the recommendation, Travis Elison commented that he anticipated using a Tuesday/Friday schedule as long as coho numbers were adequate.

Discussion:

Please see discussion under Motion 2 in Continuing Business.

OLD BUSINESS:

- **Unalakleet Chinook Summit on August 16:**

Bev Hoffman, who has been selected to represent the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group in Unalakleet, asked people to email her at bev@kuskofish.com with their thoughts on strategies for Chinook salmon management in coming years. She explained that the purpose of the Summit is to examine management practices used throughout Alaska.

- **End of year strategy meeting:**

Members discussed having a meeting with a special agenda to brainstorm Chinook management strategies. The group agreed to have the meeting on Tuesday, August 27th at ADF&G in Bethel, beginning at 1:00 pm.

Bev Hoffman commented that the meeting needed to happen before moose hunting season, "while ideas are fresh in our minds." She said that she would give a report from the Unalakleet Chinook summit, as well. Bev requested all relevant Chinook data from the department, such as end of season summaries and comparisons to other years.

Dave Cannon commented that he and Casie Stockdale had begun an outline of discussion points, which he will continue to compile with input from members.

LaMont Albertson said that he hopes to discuss broader topics, such as “who we are as a group” and having third-party mitigation at meetings. He said that he wanted the group to do some soul searching in regard to king salmon and subsistence fishing.

Bob Aloysius suggested that having the meeting in person would be more effective than teleconference, but Bev Hoffman commented that she thought that comments were heard just as well over the phone.

Travis Elison announced that he would not be able to attend the meeting because of prior obligations. He said that ideas at the strategy meeting need to come from members instead of staff, and he hoped that people will think both inside and outside of the management plan. Travis asked the Working Group to discuss the topic of dipnets for commercial and subsistence use, including whether Chinook salmon could be released alive using this method.

NEW BUSINESS:

- Electing John W. Andrew as alternate to Downriver Elder seat

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

MOTION 1: To accept the agenda as amended. Motion passed unanimously (9 yeas, 0 nays).

MOTION 2: To accept the ADF&G Recommendation to open commercial salmon fishing in Kuskokwim River Subdistrict 1-B on Friday, August 9, for four hours in the upper section and six hours in the lower section. Motion failed (3 yeas, 5 nays).

COMMENTS FOR MOTION 2:

Fritz Charles commented that people had called his KYUK talk show and asked why the upper section of Subdistrict 1-B had not been open for six hours like the lower section. Travis Elison replied that the reason this section had not been open longer was related to processor capacity. He said that he counted over 100 boats in line at the Napakiak tender on August 6 and explained that CVS only had three tenders operating this year, instead of four, and no processor at the Bethel dock. James Charles and Henry Lupie said that they agreed with longer periods for the lower section because there the river is wider and more difficult to fish.

LaMont Albertson stated that he disagreed with the recommendation. He said, “Since the downriver folks have pretty much gotten all the kings that they wanted, and that we didn’t get what we wanted upriver, it might be better to defer this opening a few days and let a better slug of silvers head upriver.”

John Andrew asked if the Department could move the upper end of Subdistrict 1B farther upriver so that fishermen from Tuluksak and Kwethluk did not have to travel so far. He explained that if fishermen have motor problems or other bad luck they don’t have as long to fish, and therefore don’t make any money. Travis Elison replied that the districts above and below Bethel are already established. He reminded John that fishermen have as many hours as they need to travel to and from the commercial fishing area.

Greg Roczicka commented that he “had a slight worry” about the recommendation. He said that he appreciated the Department allowing the first coho pulse to pass through the district by canceling the July 2 commercial period, and noted that this is the first year that there has not been a buyer above Bethel. Greg said that the coho run seemed decent, but not on the upper range, and he was concerned about upriver subsistence needs. Bev Hoffman agreed with Greg, and also encouraged the Department to wait a few more days before commercial fishing.

Travis Elison explained that there was an identified surplus of coho salmon: “Our Test Fish, commercial harvest numbers, and even many escapement numbers, are above what we have seen in the last few years, and we have met our escapement goals every year for coho salmon.” He reminded the group that the recent pulse seen at the BTF was not harvested and was headed upriver, commercial fishing was limited to two periods per week, and that current subsistence reports indicated very little subsistence fishing effort. He added that, “We need to keep [coho] escapements within the escapement goals, and to do that we need to continually fish throughout the run at a nice, steady, low rate for this size run...” He summed up by saying “right now the numbers look good,” and since there was an identified surplus and a buyer, the Department must provide commercial fishing opportunity.

Middle River representatives had different opinions about the motion. Mark Leary commented that people who want to harvest coho upriver will be able to catch what they want. He said that everyone wants a few silvers, but he only knows one person what wants “lots.” Dave Cannon said that he “was torn” about the decision, and that he understood all the concerns. Dan Gillikin estimated that a family harvested about 30 coho in Aniak on August 6. Dan then commented that coho carcasses could add valuable nutrients to the ecosystem essential for high productivity.

Ray Collins commented that he was concerned because McGrath doesn’t see high numbers of salmon. He said that coho are preferred over chum for eating because chum are not in very good condition that far upriver.

Greg Roczicka said asked if the Department would stop commercial fishing if the run “tipped over” and flattened out in August like in 2012. Travis replied yes, which is why he canceled a period last week in order to allow a whole week for fish to pass through the district. He made it clear that the recommendation was only for a period on August 9, and then he would look at the numbers before announcing the next opening. Greg then stated that he supported the recommendation.

LaMont Albertson remarked, “What we are hearing are fundamentally the same recommendations we hear back in at the beginning of the king season... Let’s set aside the commercial needs, the mandate from the Alaska Chamber of Commerce, and let’s think about the needs upriver on this. Then Fish and Game will do what they want anyhow, regardless of what we say.”

Casie Stockdale (Lower River subsistence alternate) commented that if there was a period on Friday, the Working Group would not have influence over the next Tuesday opener unless a meeting was called for Monday, August 11. Ray Collins suggested that if the motion failed, another motion could be made to delay commercial fishing until Monday or Tuesday (August 12th or 13th).

Mark Leary asked Travis Elison if he would follow through with the recommendation if the motion failed. Travis replied, "You guys have to vote how you feel."

MOTION 3: To open commercial salmon fishing in Kuskokwim River Subdistrict 1-B on Monday, August 12, for four hours in the upper section and six hours in the lower section. Motion passed unanimously.

COMMENTS FOR MOTION 3:

Greg Roczicka commented that moving the commercial opener to Monday, August 12, would put it right in the middle of the peak of the coho run, which is usually August 10th-14th. He reiterated his concern about the "run tipping over and being burned like we were with kings."

Mark Leary commented that the motion was a good opportunity to compromise.

Discussion after voting:

When asked whether or not the Department would accept Motion 3, Travis Elison replied, "I didn't hear anything in this meeting that is giving me any different assessment than I had walking in here...We've got the surplus identified that we need, we've got buyers interested, we have commercial fishermen interested, and the fish are beautiful right now and in great condition. We want to fish through the peak, not just one period on the peak, so we are going to announce a commercial opener on Friday...and proceed from there."

Bev Hoffman replied, "This is a good Working Group, Travis, and we have come up with a good compromise. I can't believe that you have not heard the people upriver and their concerns. I can't believe that you didn't hear what they were saying. I am very disappointed with your statement."

Karen Gillis (BSFA) said that she agreed with Bev, "That if Travis did not hear today the message from the stakeholders, then you are not listening, and you are not even trying. So if you came in today with this decision in mind, then you have wasted everyone's time here."

LaMont Albertson commented that Chris Shelden's research on the utilization of silver salmon upriver shows that the number of coho harvested is up, which LaMont attributed to "the problems with king salmon that we have been having." He added, "I just can't believe the amazing amount of insensitivity that I am hearing on behalf of the Department. However, I am not surprised, and I appreciate the point that you are making for me, Travis."

Bev Hoffman said she hoped that Travis would reconsider, and he replied that he would discuss Motion 3 with research and regional staff before making a final decision.

Karen Gillis commented, "So, whether it's 500 or 1,000 Chinook, it would still be the lowest run ever recorded on the Kwethluk. Knowing that information and making the decision to throw out the USFWS count, before reviewing the web video, is defensible?" In response, Travis Elison asked Karen what Chinook salmon escapement had to do with coho salmon commercial fishing. She replied, "I think that one of the things we have is differentiation in data...The concern for Chinook was not heard, and the concern for coho now is again not heard. So it's just a pattern that I wanted to note."

MOTION 4: To elect John W. Andrew as alternate Downriver Elder member. Motion passed unanimously.

GENERAL COMMENTS FROM WORKING GROUP MEMBERS:

Greg Roczicka commented that he heard much frustration directed toward Travis Elison regarding the Department's recommendation. Greg stated, "He has been put in a position with his back against the wall, in that we have asked him to make a political, not a biological, decision- or a social decision, as opposed to a biological decision. He has indicated that he is willing to withhold final action on it until he talks to his 'upstairs people,' which is what he has to do in this case." Greg reiterated, "As a biologist he made the decision that he had to make." Greg then compared ADF&G to USFWS, saying that one federal staff member publically stated, "People are just going to have to find something else to eat." Don Rivard later explained that the context for that person's comment was encouragement of people to eat salmon species other than Chinook.

Ray Collins commented that he hoped the Department would consider the Working Group's compromise to the recommendation. He added, "It's almost like we need an escapement goal up here, like Canada has. Although Canada contributes a lot more fish; we don't contribute that many to the overall river." Ray said that a lot of decisions meet the needs of the lower river but do not meet escapements upriver, "partly because of the change in fishing methods on the main river that do not allow salmon to pass unmolested upstream."

Bev Hoffman commented that she was concerned that Gerald Simeon's resignation from the Working Group, and asked if it was because he was frustrated. Dave Cannon replied that he briefly talked to Gerald and that, yes, he was frustrated. Bev said she hoped that Gerald would reconsider.

Bob Aloysius stated, "I have been a member of this Working Group since inception, from the time it was born, as one of the founding fathers. Every year frustration mounts and mounts..." Bob said that managers "put it on paper that king salmon are being eradicated," then go ahead and open the lower river to unrestricted fishing at the start of the season, even though "last fall we talked about a mesh size restriction as soon as Chinook hit the Kuskokwim River," because 95% of the harvest occurs there. Bob said that after two or three hour Working Group meetings nothing gets resolved, and that the voice of subsistence users doesn't mean a thing anymore. Lastly, Bob talked about the elders: "I am one of them. I'm 78 years old and I have lived on this river my whole life. I know what's going on, and I don't like it."

Henry Lupie commented that he hears strong comments from subsistence users, and he would like to see a YK Delta organization created that would specifically deal with subsistence and wasn't departmentalized.

James Charles thanked the group for electing John W. Andrew as alternate Downriver Elder for when he can't attend a meeting.

Dave Cannon reminded people to submit their thought to him so he could compile Chinook management ideas for the August 27 strategy meeting.

Fritz Charles agreed with Bob Aloysius that the elders "have been here since the beginning of the Working Group...and they have seen this happen in the past, through all these years: same situation, same scenarios." Fritz said, "Time's a changing: It's

really hard up and down the Kuskokwim for everybody to accept or deny the state and fed's recommendation, but if we have this strategy meeting something will come in place. They might follow us and they might not, but keep in mind that we are an advisory group. We can't override their decision-making." He then referred to Iyana Gusty, who used to say, "We have to work together to make something possible." Fritz summed up by saying, "All these years we should be listening to elders as well...They have been managing this for thousands of years without weirs, Bethel Test Fish, or aerial surveys. They've managed this for hundreds and thousands of years. We've just gotta have an open mind as a Working Group member."

WORKING GROUP ATTENDANCE:

MEMBER SEAT:	NAME:
DOWNRIVER ELDER	James Charles
UPRIVER ELDER	<i>Vacant</i>
LOWER RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Greg Roczicka
MIDDLE RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Dave Cannon
UPRIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mark Leary
HEADWATERS SUBSISTENCE	<i>Absent</i>
MEMBER AT LARGE	Henry Lupie
WESTERN INTERIOR RAC	Ray Collins
YK DELTA RAC	Bob Aloysius
COMMERCIAL FISHING	<i>Absent</i>
SPORT FISHING	LaMont Albertson
PROCESSOR	<i>Absent</i>
ADF&G	Travis Elison
CHAIR	Fritz Charles

Other Participants:	
<p><u>ADF&G Comm. Fish:</u> Travis Elison, Chris Shelden, Alice Bailey, Kevin Schaberg, Zach Liller, Jan Conitz, Corrine Truesdale, Sarah Adams, Adrian Baer, Brittany Blain</p> <p><u>Sport Fish:</u> John Chythlook</p> <p><u>Subsistence Division:</u> Hiroko Ikuta, Dave Runfola</p>	
<p><u>USFWS:</u> Tom Doolittle, Steve Miller, Robert Sundown</p> <p><u>OSM:</u> George Papas, Ken Harper, Don Rivard, Jeff Brooks</p>	
<p>Kate Schaberg (Georgetown)</p> <p>Dan Gillikin (KNA)</p> <p>Tim Andrew (AVCP)</p> <p>Roberta Chavez (ONC)</p> <p>Doug Molyneaux</p> <p>Kate Schaberg (Georgetown)</p> <p>Sophie Evan (KYUK)</p>	<p>Karen Gillis (BSFA)</p> <p>Art Nelson (BSFA)</p> <p>Gerri Sumpter (Senator Murkowski)</p> <p>Barbara Carlson (Upriver Subsistence alternate)</p> <p>Bev Hoffman (Sport Fishing alternate)</p> <p>Wayne Morgan (Middle River Subsistence alternate)</p> <p>John W. Andrew</p>

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS:

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (**ADF&G**), Orutsararmiut 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**, **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**)