

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

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

August 12, 2015

Meeting called to order at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday August 12, 2015 and adjourned at 12:00 p.m. Total meeting time was two hours. Nine 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:

- Kuskokwim Subsistence Salmon Panel (KSSP) update- *Glenn Haight*
- Placement of *People to be Heard* on the Working Group agenda

New Business Discussion Topics: N/A

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

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

1. Approve the agenda as amended. *Passed (Unanimous)*
2. To support the department's recommendation to continue assessment of the coho salmon run and make a Friday, August 14, decision on a possible Monday, August 17, commercial fishing opportunity. *Passed (7 yeas, 1 nay)*
3. To place *People to be Heard* after the *ADF&G Management Actions under Consideration* on the KRSMWG agenda. *Passed (Unanimous)*
4. Adjourn. *Passed (Unanimous)*

CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. **ADF&G Management Actions under consideration:** Aaron Poetter (ADF&G) reported that due to low coho salmon daily CPUEs at the BTF during recent days, the department recommended continued assessment of the run until Friday, August 14, to make a decision on a possible commercial opening for August 17. Mr. Poetter commented that announcing an opportunity on a Friday morning would allow fishers time to complete their commercial fishing paperwork at the ADF&G office prior to the opening. **Discussion:** Neil Lalonde (USFWS) commented that the department's strategy was conservative and that USFWS agreed with the recommendation.
2. **Overview of Kuskokwim River Salmon Run Assessment Projects:**
 - **Bethel Test Fish:** Zach Liller (ADF&G) reported that coho salmon were the most abundant species in the lower portion of the Kuskokwim River. He commented that only modest numbers of coho salmon were being caught in the BTF and the peak daily CPUE was observed from August 5-7. He commented that the BTF indicated that the run timing was either late, weak, or a combination of both; and the inseason projections suggested that the end of season BTF CPUE would likely range from 1,900-2,300. To date, the cumulative CPUE was below average and, historically, in the bottom 30th percentile. *(For more information on the BTF, please see the August 12 Informational Packet).*
 - **Weirs:** Zach Liller reported that coho salmon escapements were below average at all weirs; however it was too early in the season to accurately interpret escapement numbers. Mr. Liller commented that the Kwethluk River weir escapement to date was the lowest on record; the Kogrukluuk weir escapement was below average, but historically had only passed 2% of the coho salmon run by this date. He reported that historically when BTF exceeded 2,000 CPUE by the end of the season, escapement goals were achieved on both systems. Mr. Liller added that all of the tributary monitoring locations were seeing low and clear water conditions. *(For more information on weirs, please see the August 12 Informational Packet).*

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3. Subsistence Reports:

- **Down River:** James Charles (Downriver Elder) reported that people were still catching king salmon near the Kuskokwim River mouth. Mr. Charles commented that he had been catching trout in areas where trout were not historically observed. He added that the majority of people had met their subsistence needs. Charlie Brown (Downriver Elder alternate) commented that people had met their subsistence needs in the Eek area.
 - **Lower River:** Bev Hoffman (Sport Fishing alternate) commented that a few people still wanted ~10 fish for jarring and freezing. Mike Williams Sr. (Lower River Subsistence) emailed that subsistence needs in his area had been met. John Andrew (Downriver Elder alternate) reported that people were catching ~16-25 silver salmon each time they went out.
 - **Middle River:** Lisa Feyereisen (Middle River Subsistence alternate) commented that people had not finished meeting their subsistence needs but would likely by the end of the season. She added that people had to increase their fishing efforts compared to 2014 and were catching ~10 silver salmon per effort. Ms. Feyereisen commented that people rod and reeling on the riverbank were catching more chum salmon than was normal at this time in the year. Ms. Feyereisen provided a verbal report from Barb Carlson (Upriver subsistence alternate), reporting that silver salmon were now more abundant than chum salmon in the Sleetmute area.
 - **Upriver:** Mark Leary (Upriver Subsistence alternate) commented that he caught a 30lb. female king salmon. He had observed boats at fishcamps between Chuathbaluk and Aniak.
 - **Headwaters:** Dan Esai (Headwaters Subsistence) reported that a fisher caught ~60 chum and 2-3 silver salmon within three days of fishing halfway between Nikolai and McGrath. He commented that only one family was currently fishing in his area. Ray Collins (Western Interior RAC) commented that people were waiting for an increase in silver salmon to go fishing.
4. **Commercial Catch Report:** Aaron Poetter reported that the August 10 commercial opening in Subdistrict 1-B harvested ~23,300 coho salmon with 199 permit holders reporting. He commented that the harvest and CPUEs were consistent with historical commercial catches at this time in the season.
5. **Sport Fishing:** John Chythlook (ADF&G) reported that sport fishing catches had been average.
6. **Discussion of ADF&G Management consideration and discussion of possible alternatives:** (*See Motion 2*).

PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:

- James, from Napakiak, commented that it had been good weather for the silver salmon run. He requested that commercial opportunities be announced prior to the weekend. James commented that people in Napakiak had met their subsistence needs.
- Robert Lekander (ONC) commented on the number of permit holders fishing compared to the amount of fish caught during the August 10 commercial harvest. He commented that his family was able to put away enough fish for their needs with the community harvest king salmon and sockeye salmon; they were pressure cooking and freezing coho salmon.

OLD BUSINESS:

- **Kuskokwim Subsistence Salmon Panel (KSSP) update:** Glenn Haight (ADF&G) provided information regarding the August 24 & 25 KSSP meeting in Bethel. He commented that the focus of the meeting was to discuss additional management tools that had not already been submitted as proposals to the BOF.
- **Placement of *People to be Heard* on the Working Group agenda:** (*See Motion 3*).

NEW BUSINESS: N/A

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WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

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

Motion 2: To support the department's recommendation to continue assessment of the coho salmon run and make a Friday, August 14, decision on a possible Monday, August 17, commercial fishing opportunity. Passed (7 yeas, 1 nay)

Some Working Group members were concerned about meeting coho salmon escapement goals and getting enough marine derived nutrients for the river system. Other members were comfortable with the department's conservative approach to continue coho salmon assessment prior to opening additional commercial periods. Charlie Brown commented that he wanted a commercial opener as soon as possible; and that silver salmon swim fast and mill in certain areas on their way through the river.

Motion 3: To place People to be Heard after the ADF&G Management Actions under Consideration on the KRSMWG agenda. Passed (Unanimous)

Mark Leary commented that other meetings typically place PTBH at the beginning of the agenda; and that he was concerned that members of the public were not getting a chance to provide input to the Working Group. Bev Hoffman commented that the reasoning behind moving PTBH to the end of the agenda was to encourage the public to hear all of the fishery information that is taken into consideration during Working Group meetings.

Motion 4: Adjourn. Passed (Unanimous)

COMMENTS FROM THE WORKING GROUP:

- Bev Hoffman (Sport Fishing) announced the Bethel silver salmon derby fundraiser scheduled for August 16 to support the daughters of Seth Fairbanks, who recently passed away.
- Charlie Brown (Commercial Fishing) commented that historically he observed two coho salmon runs; the later run typically being larger than the first.
- Mark Leary (Upriver Subsistence) requested that the department inform Working Group members of the August 17 commercial fishing decision prior to public distribution. He commented that he appreciated the department's conservative management approach during the silver salmon season. Mr. Leary also commented on the high salmon escapement numbers seen at the Salmon River (Pitka Fork) and Telaquana Lake weirs in 2015.
- Ray Collins (Western Interior RAC) commented on the commercial payment of \$0.50/lb. for Kuskokwim salmon and that residents in his area would likely be willing to spend that amount for silver salmon rather than going through the harvest efforts.

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WORKING GROUP ATTENDANCE:

MEMBER SEAT:	NAME:
DOWNRIVER ELDER	James Charles
UPRIVER ELDER	<i>Absent</i>
LOWER RIVER SUBSISTENCE	<i>Absent</i>
MIDDLE RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Lisa Feyereisen
UPRIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mark Leary
HEADWATERS SUBSISTENCE	Dan Esai
MEMBER AT LARGE	Fritz Charles
WESTERN INTERIOR RAC	Ray Collins
YK DELTA RAC	John Andrew
COMMERCIAL FISHING	Charlie Brown
SPORT FISHING	Bev Hoffman
PROCESSOR	<i>Absent</i>
ADF&G	Aaron Poetter
CHAIR	Bev Hoffman

Other Participants:

ADF&G Comm. Fish: Aaron Poetter, Zach Liller, Chris Shelden, Nick Smith, Jen Peeks

Sport Fishing: John Chythlook, Tom Taube

Subsistence Division: Dave Runfola, Jim Simon, Andrew Brenner

USFWS: Neil Lalonde, Brian McCaffery, David Phillips

OSM: Pippa Kenner

Doug Molyneaux (unaffiliated)
Geri Sumpter (Sen. Murkowski's office)
Robert Lekander (ONC)
James (Napakiak)

Greg Hoffman Jr. (Commercial Fishing)
Barbara Carlson (Upriver 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**), Law Enforcement (**LE**), Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (**ITFC**)

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