

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

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

June 28, 2016

Meeting called to order at 12:00 PM on Tuesday June 28, 2016 and adjourned at 2:02 PM. Meeting time was approximately two hours. Eight full voting members were present and a quorum was established.

AGENDA ITEMS:

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) Management Actions Under Consideration:

US Fish and Wildlife Service Update:

People to be Heard:

Continuing Business: Run assessment and management actions.

Old Business Discussion Topics:

New Business Discussion Topics:

- Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission update
- Board of Fish proposal update
- Next Working Group meeting

WORKING GROUP ACTION ITEMS: *No Action Items at the time of this meeting.*

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

1. Approve the agenda as amended. *Passed (Unanimous)*
2. For the next Working Group meeting to meet on Wednesday July 6 at 12:00 PM noon. *Passed (Unanimous)*
3. To adjourn. *Passed (Unanimous)*

ADF&G MANAGEMENT ACTIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION: Aaron Poetter (ADF&G Area Management Biologist) reported that ADF&G had no management actions under consideration at this time.

US FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE UPDATE: Ray Born (USFWS) reported that a 72 hour subsistence opportunity would begin at 12:01 PM noon on June 29 from a line below Kalskag to the Kuskokwim River mouth and close at 11:59 AM on July 2. USFWS would assess the chum salmon run following the 72 hour opener for further management action considerations. Mr. Born said USFWS was being cautionary with the chum salmon harvest but did not have major concerns at this time. Lew Coggins (USFWS) reported that the harvest estimate from the June 21–24 opener for all salmon was ~43,000; ~14,000 Chinook salmon, ~17,000 chum salmon, and ~11,500 sockeye salmon. Mr. Born reported a total of 30 violations; the majority being marking violations. Seized nets would be retained for one year.

PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:

- Marc Cloward (Alaska State Trooper) reported that one State Trooper was working with federal law enforcement in the lower river. The State Troopers were conducting routine inspections in State managed waters above Aniak and had observed high compliance rates.
- Tim Zaukar (Crooked Creek) reported that people were happy with their harvest and had observed an abundance of fish. He commented that people continued to fish in his area.

SUBSISTENCE REPORTS:

- **Lowest River:** James Charles (Downriver Elder) reported that people were primarily done fishing for king and chum salmon. Charlie Brown (Commercial Fishing) reported that most people had finished fishing for king salmon. He commented that weather in the Eek area had delayed fishing for some fishers with smaller boats.

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- **ONC Subsistence Report:** Janessa Esquible (ONC) summarized the ONC subsistence report. She commented that ONC had not been asking catch rate and run timing questions due to the 2016 restrictions. ONC would work with ADF&G to better format the survey report. ONC had concluded the BTF distribution program for the season. *(For more information on the ONC report, please see the June 28 Informational Packet).*
- **Lower River:** Bev Hoffman (Sport Fishing) commented that her family had processed half as many fish as was normal. She noted that a few people in Bethel had opted not to fish for Chinook salmon due to conservation concerns. John Andrew (Downriver Elder alternate) reported, prior to the meeting, between twenty percent and thirty percent of people were done fishing for Chinook and sockeye salmon in his area. He added that usually half of the local fishers were done with their harvest by the last week in June.
- **Middle River:** Dave Cannon (Middle River Subsistence) commented that people were doing well with their harvest. Kalskag residents were pleased to have the river in their area open for fishing until further notice. Many families had a harvest goal of ~20 king salmon. Mr. Cannon commented that the south side fish wheel near Aniak had not been catching many king salmon to date and the north side fish wheel had shown decreasing catches of king salmon. Lisa Feyereisen (Middle River Subsistence alternate) commented that people were satisfied with their harvest. She reported that one fish camp harvested ~70 fish. Some people were waiting for chum and sockeye salmon. Bob Aloysius (YK Delta RAC) commented that people were happy and appeared less stressed since the restrictions had been relaxed. He reported that some people observed pockets of puss in chum salmon.
- **Upriver:** Mark Leary (Upriver Subsistence) reported that residents were going to start using the Napaimute fish wheel to target sockeye and chum salmon. He commented that a fisher from Chuathbaluk reported catching more king salmon than usual at this point in the season. Mr. Leary reported approximately two-thirds of people in his section of the river were done fishing. He added that he observed a revival of previously abandoned fish camps.
- **Headwaters:** Dan Esai (Headwaters Subsistence) commented that the fishing was good and that a fisher caught a total of 58 fish with two nets and another family caught 25–30 salmon in 12 hours, the majority being large males. Some people were releasing large caught females. Mr. Esai compared the size of the 2016 season's salmon to those caught in 2002. Ray Collins (Headwaters Subsistence) reported there were a few nets in the river. He added that the fish usually passed the McGrath area through the middle of the river.

CONTINUING BUSINESS:

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

- **Bethel Test Fish:** Zach Liller (ADF&G) reported that water temperature, water clarity, and water level were within the historical range. Mr. Liller reviewed the daily CPUE for Chinook, chum, and sockeye salmon at the BTF. The cumulative Chinook salmon CPUE for 2016 had been consistently above the 5 and 10-year averages. On average 71% of the Chinook salmon run had passed Bethel as of June 28. Mr. Liller reported that chum salmon had exceeded all other salmon species in the lower river but were below average for this date in the season. On average 20% of chum salmon had passed Bethel as of June 28. Data indicated that the run was weak, late or both. Sockeye salmon were tracking similar to the 2015 season. BTF staff began the Brown Slough fish distribution tote on June 24. *(For more information on the BTF, please see the June 28 Informational Packet).*

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- Aniak Test Fish: Mr. Liller reported that daily catches of Chinook salmon had started to decline in the ATF. Chum salmon were the most abundant species in the middle river to date. ATF had caught one sockeye salmon to date. (*For more information on the ATF, please see the June 28 Informational Packet*).
 - Weirs: Mr. Liller reported that all of the Kuskokwim River weirs were installed and all were counting fish with the exception of the Kwethluk River weir due to high water. To date all escapement projects had passed Chinook salmon. The majority of the escapement projects were reporting low numbers of chum salmon. Telaquana Lake weir was scheduled to be installed the first week of July.
 - Radio Tagging Project: Mr. Liller reported that the tagging crew continued to catch Chinook salmon. He commented that over the past week daily catches had averaged 43 fish. Over 160 tagged fish had been harvested during the subsistence openers; ~15% of the total fish tagged this season. Fish were swimming 20–25 miles per day and tagged fish were just entering the tributaries.
 - Subsistence Division: Andrew Brenner (ADF&G) reported on the subsistence feasibility project. (*For more information on the feasibility project, please see the June 28 Informational Packet*).
2. **Intercept Fishery Report**: Bill Bechtol (KRITFC) provided data from the NOAA-National Marine Fisheries Service website regarding the intercept fisheries in the Bering Sea and Area M.
 3. **Discussion of ADF&G Management Consideration and Discussion of Possible Alternatives**: ADF&G had no management actions under consideration.

OLD BUSINESS: N/A

NEW BUSINESS:

- **Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC) update**: Ms. Hoffman reported on the recent meeting she attended for the PSMFC in Anchorage. She commented on intercept fisheries and reported that only \$71,000 from the Kuskokwim River disaster fund had been used; \$1.1 million still needed to be spent.
- **State Harvest Permit update**: Lisa Olson (ADF&G) commented on the two proposals presented to the BOF during the January meeting addressing equitable salmon harvest in times of conservation. She reported that the proposals had been tabled until ADF&G was able to further discuss options with the Working Group.
- **Next WG Meeting Date**: (*See Motion 2*)

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

1. **Approve the agenda as amended. Passed (Unanimous)**
2. **For the next Working Group meeting to meet on Wednesday July 6 at 12 PM noon. Passed (Unanimous)**
3. **To adjourn. Passed (Unanimous)**

COMMENTS FROM THE WORKING GROUP:

- Charlie Brown commented that he was concerned fishers in his area had been negatively affected by bad weather during the previous openers. He also wanted clarification from USFWS on area restrictions near Eek.
- Mark Leary commented that he was happy the Salmon River (Pitka Fork) weir had passed several salmon to date.
- Dan Esai said he was happy with the size of the king salmon in his area. He reported that some of the king salmon had long teeth, which Elders said was an indication that the fish had been in the river for a long time.
- Lisa Feyereisen recognized the conservation efforts made by subsistence users along the river.

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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	Dave Cannon
UPRIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mark Leary
HEADWATERS SUBSISTENCE	Daniel Esai
MEMBER AT LARGE	<i>Absent</i>
WESTERN INTERIOR RAC	Ray Collins
YK DELTA RAC	Bob Aloysius
COMMERCIAL FISHING	Charlie Brown
SPORT FISHING	LaMont Albertson
PROCESSOR	<i>Absent</i>
ADF&G	Aaron Poetter
CHAIR	Bev Hoffman & LaMont Albertson

Other Participants:

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

Sport Fishing: Tim Viavant

Subsistence Division: Andrew Brenner, Lisa Olson

Commissioner's Office:

USFWS: Ken Stahlnecker, Ray Born, Lew Coggins, Ben Staton, Aaron Webber, Ken Harper

OSM: Karl Lindberg, Gary Decossas

Janessa Esquible (ONC)

Bill Bechtol (KRITFC)

Doug Molyneaux

WG Alternates:

Lisa Feyereisen

Media: Lisa Demer (ADN)

GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS:

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (**ADF&G, department, State**), Orutsararmiut Native Council (**ONC**), 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**), Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (**KRITFC**)

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