

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

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

June 20, 2018

Meeting called to order at 10:05 a.m. on Wednesday June 20, 2018 and adjourned at 12:12 p.m. Meeting time was approximately 2 hours and 10 minutes. Seven full voting members were present and a quorum was established. Alissa Rogers chaired meeting.

AGENDA ITEMS:

USFWS/KRITFC Update:

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

People to be Heard:

Continuing Business: Run assessment and management actions.

Old Business Discussion Topics:

- Salmon Hatchery Discussion

New Business Discussion Topics: N/A

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. To support the ADF&G recommendation to open state waters 24 hours/ 7 days a week from the National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) boundary at Aniak upstream to the Holitna River mouth [Section 4] beginning on Tuesday, June 26, 2018 to gillnets 6" mesh or less, 45 meshes or less in depth, and 25 fathoms in length, keeping the Aniak closed waters' box in place. *Passed (Unanimous)*
3. To recommend that the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) open federal waters from a line near the bluffs located below Kalskag upstream to the NWR boundary at Aniak beginning on Tuesday, June 26, 2018 to gillnets 6" mesh or less, 45 meshes or less in depth, and 25 fathoms in length. *Passed (Unanimous)*
4. To extend the June 20, 2018 Working Group meeting until the agenda items have been completed. *Passed (Unanimous)*
5. For the next Working Group meeting to be scheduled for Wednesday June 27, 2018 beginning at 10:00 a.m. *Passed (Unanimous)*
6. Adjourn at 12:12 p.m. *Passed (Unanimous)*

USFWS/KRITFC UPDATE: Ken Stahlnecker (USFWS) reported that on June 19 the USFWS and KRITFC in consultation with ADF&G postponed deciding the date for the next subsistence fishing opener in federal waters until June 22 in order to further assess the BTF Chinook salmon data. Mr. Stahlnecker commented that USFWS and KRITFC were "looking for a more favorable ratio" to reduce the Chinook salmon harvest. During the June 19 meeting, the USFWS and KRITFC approved allowing an additional 12 hours of fishing opportunity in the Kalskag area when the next federal opener was scheduled. Ben Staton (USFWS) reviewed the harvest estimates from the June 16 fishing opening in federal waters. Mr. Staton estimated that ~5,500 Chinook salmon; ~2,600 chum salmon; and ~450 sockeye salmon were harvested on June 16 in the mainstem between Tuntutuliak and Akiak. (*For more information on harvest and netting effort data, please see the June 20 supplemental documents in the Informational Packet.*)

ADF&G MANAGEMENT ACTIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION: Aaron Tiernan (ADF&G Area Management Biologist) reported that Section 5, the Holitna River mouth to the headwaters, remained opened for fishing with gear restrictions. For Section 4, the Aniak refuge boundary to the Holitna River mouth,

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ADF&G recommended to continue the implementation of the king salmon subsistence harvest permit fishery until June 26 at which time the department recommended opening Section 4 until further notice to 6" mesh, 25 fathoms in length gillnets while maintaining the "closed waters" box" in front of Aniak. Mr. Tiernan asked the Working Group for their management suggestions to guide the department's management actions.

PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:

- Albert Kawagley (Bethel) commented that high water may assist fish in migrating to their spawning grounds.
- Kevin Whitworth (KRITFC) reported that in McGrath one fisher caught three Chinook salmon and one sheefish over two and a half days with a set gillnet; another fisher caught 3 Chinook salmon and 18 sheefish over a four day period using a set gillnet. At the time of the June 20 meeting, both fishers had removed their nets from the river. Mr. Whitworth commented that one family in Blackwater had harvested a total of 27 king salmon to date.
- Bill Bechtol (KRITFC) reported that the Community Based Monitoring Program conducted 86 interviews during the June 16 subsistence opening in federal waters. Mr. Bechtol provided an overview of fisher comments.
- Rebecca Wilmarth (NVN) reported that people in her area of the river appreciated the 24 hour fishing opener. On June 19, she caught five king salmon in two drifts using a gillnet.

SUBSISTENCE REPORTS:

- **OTNC Subsistence Report:** Avery Hoffman (OTNC) summarized the OTNC subsistence harvest data. Janessa Esquible (OTNC) summarized the ASL data collection and fish distribution program. Ms. Esquible commented on the reported changes in subsistence harvest goals by subsistence fishers in the Bethel area. *(For more information on the OTNC summary, please see the June 20, 2018 Informational Packet.)*
- **Lower River:** John Andrew (Downriver Elder alternate) reported that on June 16 he harvested 15 Chinook salmon, 7 sheefish and a broad whitefish in less than four hours; he shared those fish with other households. Mr. Andrew commented that he observed people having increased harvest rates on June 16 when compared to the June 12 opening. Mr. Andrew asked for an additional fishing opening to harvest chum and "red" salmon. Fritz Charles (Member at Large) commented that he fished near the Kialik River on June 16 and caught ~5-6 king salmon along with chum salmon and sheefish; his total soak time was ~seven hours. Mr. Charles commented that people fishing in the Bethel area had "done well" on June 16. Alissa Rogers (Lower River Subsistence alternate) reported that on June 16 her family caught five small king salmon and one broad whitefish within two hours of fishing near Schwalbe Island. Ms. Rogers commented that one female king salmon had roe as small as "herring roe." Mike Williams Sr. (Lower River Subsistence) commented that he was grateful for the June 12 and June 16 subsistence openers. He reported that fishing effort was less on June 16 compared to June 12. Mr. Williams reported that ~75% of fishers in the Akiak area had harvested the majority of what they needed and ~25% of people were hopeful for an additional opener.
- **Middle River:** Darren Deacon (Middle River Subsistence alternate) reported that on June 16 he fished with a gillnet ~six miles below Lower Kalskag and harvested four "jacks," five king salmon, one chum salmon, and one sheefish within ~8 drifts.

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- **Upriver:** Mark Leary (Upriver Subsistence) reported that on June 19, he fished for 18 hours and caught 20 king salmon, 17 chum salmon, and 2 “red” salmon. The king salmon averaged ~15–20 pounds and were “highly colored.” Mr. Leary commented that 24-hour fishing periods were difficult for people. Mishka Andreanoff (Upriver Elder) reported that his son fished on June 19 and harvested three king salmon and one sheefish in three drifts using his gillnet; on June 20 he caught seven “jacks,” five “dogs,” and one sheefish. Barb Carlson (Upriver Subsistence alternate) commented that the Sleetmute fish wheel had been harvesting ~1–2 king salmon during the night. Ms. Carlson commented that a “good number” of Bering cisco were being caught.
- **CONTINUING BUSINESS:**
 1. **Overview of Kuskokwim River Salmon Run Assessment Projects:** Keegan Birchfield (ADF&G) provided an overview of the ADF&G assessment projects. (*For more information on the 2018 inseason assessment projects, please see the June 20 Informational Packet.*)
 - **Bethel Test Fish:** Mr. Birchfield reported that the Chinook salmon cumulative CPUE as of June 19 was 198 and ~37% of the run has passed Bethel based on historical run timing. As of June 19, the cumulative CPUE for chum salmon was 313 with ~4% of the run passed Bethel; and the CPUE for sockeye salmon was 20 with ~10% of the run passed Bethel.
 - **Sonar:** As of June 17, ~22,500 Chinook salmon and ~3,200 sockeye salmon had passed through the sonar site. Mr. Birchfield reported that as of June 19, ~1,300 chum salmon had unofficially passed the sonar site.
 - **Weirs:** To date, the Salmon River (Pitka Fork) and George River weirs were fish tight. The Kogruklu River weir was in the process of being installed at the time of the meeting. Ken Stahlnecker (USFWS) reported that the Kwethluk River weir continued to be inoperable due to high water.
 - **Subsistence Division Projects:** Dave Runfola (ADF&G Subsistence Division) reported that staff was in the process of gathering inseason harvest information from lower and middle river fishers. ADF&G was working in collaboration with NVN to gather data from Kalskag and Aniak. As of June 20, 141 king salmon subsistence harvest permits had been issued.
 - **NVN Projects:** Rebecca Wilmarth (NVN) reported that all NVN projects were on schedule. As of June 20, nine king salmon subsistence harvest permits had been issued in Red Devil.
- 2. **Sport Fishing:** LaMont Albertson (Sport Fishing) commented that people were catching pike on the Aniak River sloughs.
- 3. **Intercept Fishery Report:** Aaron Tiernan reported that a Chinook salmon bycatch *Frequently Asked Questions* document and the *Executive Summary* of the revisions to the Kuskokwim River Chinook salmon run reconstruction model had been distributed to Working Group participants on June 20 via email.
- 4. **Discussion of ADF&G Management Consideration and Discussion of Possible Alternatives:** (*For information on management motions please see Motions 1 and 2 on page 4.*)

OLD BUSINESS:

- **Salmon Hatchery Discussion:** LaMont Albertson announced that the Kuskokwim Area Regional Planning Team was meeting in Bethel June 21–22, 2018. Mr. Albertson commented that there had been a significant amount of concerns from people regarding the effects of beaver and intercept fisheries on Kuskokwim River salmon and encouraged members from the public to attend. Jim Simon (BSFA) added that participation via teleconference would be available.

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Mike Williams Sr. commented that in previous years management actions for the Kalskag area had been similar to management actions in state waters and he supported the motion.
4. To extend the June 20, 2018 Working Group meeting until the agenda items have been completed. *Passed (Unanimous)*
5. For the next Working Group meeting to be scheduled for Wednesday June 27, 2018 beginning at 10:00 a.m. *Passed (Unanimous)*
6. Adjourn at 12:12 p.m. *Passed (Unanimous)*

COMMENTS FROM THE WORKING GROUP:

- Mike Williams Sr. commented that he was disappointed that an additional opening would not occur during the upcoming weekend.
- LaMont Albertson thanked Alissa Rogers and agency staff for supporting the management efforts on the Kuskokwim River.
- Alissa Rogers commented that she was "not fond" of developing a hatchery on the Kuskokwim River. Ms. Rogers thanked the participants for the meeting.

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WORKING GROUP ATTENDANCE:

| MEMBER SEAT: | NAME: |
|--------------------------|--|
| DOWNRIVER ELDER | John Andrew |
| UPRIVER ELDER | Mishka Andreanoff |
| LOWER RIVER SUBSISTENCE | Mike Williams Sr. |
| MIDDLE RIVER SUBSISTENCE | Mike Savage/ Darren Deacon |
| UPRIVER SUBSISTENCE | Mark Leary |
| HEADWATERS SUBSISTENCE | <i>Absent</i> |
| MEMBER AT LARGE | Fritz Charles, <i>Excused at 11:23 a.m./</i> Barbara Carlson |
| WESTERN INTERIOR RAC | <i>Absent</i> |
| YK DELTA RAC | <i>Absent</i> |
| COMMERCIAL FISHING | <i>Absent</i> |
| SPORT FISHING | LaMont Albertson |
| PROCESSOR | <i>Vacant</i> |
| KRITFC | <i>Absent</i> |
| ADF&G | Aaron Tiernan |
| CHAIR | Alissa Rogers |

| Other Participants: | | |
|---|--|---|
| <u>ADF&G Comm. Fish:</u> Keegan Birchfield, Zach Liller, Jen Peeks | | |
| <u>Subsistence Division:</u> Chris McDevitt, Dave Runfola | | |
| USFWS: Ken Stahlnecker, Lew Coggins, Ben Staton | | |
| <u>OSM:</u> Christine Bremmer, Eva Patton | | |
| Jennifer Hooper (AVCP) Megan Leary (Napaimute) Shelly Leary (Napaimute) Bill Bechtol (KRITFC) Elijah Lindley (OTNC) Avery Hoffman (OTNC) Janessa Esquible (OTNC) Janelle Carl (OTNC) | Jim Simon (BSFA, KRITFC) Albert Kawagley (Bethel) Chelsey Zaukar (Crooked Creek) Maridon Boario (Senator Hoffman's Office) Jonathan Samuelson (KRITFC) Kevin Whitworth (MTNT) Rebecca Wilmarth (Red Devil) | Tad Lindley (Bethel) Orie Reich (BSFA) Brittany Rutherford (KRITFC) Alex Nicori (KRITFC) <u>Media:</u> Anna Rose MacArthur (KYUK) Petra Harpak (KYUK) |

GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS:

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (**ADF&G, department, State**), Orutsararmut Traditional Native Council (**OTNC**), 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, 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**), Native Village of Napaimute (**NVN**), Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation (**YKHC**), Alaska State Troopers (**AST**)

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