

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

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

June 27, 2018

Meeting called to order at 10:05 a.m. on Wednesday June 27, 2018 and adjourned at 12:26 p.m. Meeting time was approximately 2 hours and 20 minutes. Eight full voting members were present and a quorum was established. Alissa Rogers chaired the 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: N/A

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 recommend to the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (KRITFC) that they provide additional fishing hours for the community of Kasigluk due to recent tragic events in their community. *Passed (6 yeas, 0 nays, 2 abstentions)*
3. For the next Working Group meeting to be scheduled for Friday July 6, 2018 beginning at 10:00 a.m. *Passed (6 yeas, 1 nay)*
4. Adjourn at 12:26 p.m. *Passed (Unanimous)*

USFWS/KRITFC UPDATE: Nick Kameroff (KRITFC) reported that the KRITFC recommended having a six hour opening in federal waters on June 29 using 6" mesh gillnets or less, 25 fathoms in length from the Johnson River upstream and 50 fathoms in length from the Johnson River downstream to the Kuskokwim River mouth. Mr. Kameroff commented that dry fish was an essential part of the diet for Kuskokwim area people and encouraged the sharing of dry fish. Mr. Kameroff reported that the KRITFC 2018 Chinook salmon target harvest had been 16,000 fish; to date an estimated ~20,000 Chinook salmon had been harvested. Mr. Kameroff clarified that the June 29 fishing opening was intended for people who had not harvested any fish to date. Ben Staton (USFWS) reviewed the harvest estimates from the June 24 subsistence fishing opening. Mr. Staton reported that between Tuntutuliak and Akiak an estimated ~6,100 Chinook salmon were harvested out of ~18,650 total salmon. He commented that there was a reduced fishing effort compared to the June 12 and June 16 openings. Gary Decossas (OSM) summarized the netting effort in the non-salmon spawning tributaries.

Discussion: Mike Williams Sr. (Lower River Subsistence) commented that short fishing periods had a greater impact on the fish than longer fishing periods. Mr. Williams commented that people were conserving and harvesting only what they needed. Alissa Rogers (Lower River Subsistence alternate) commented that she did not support the June 29 fishing opener since the harvest goal set by KRITFC had been surpassed. Fritz Charles (Member at Large) commented that conservation efforts were not being considered in recent state and federal management actions. Mary Peltola (Lower Kuskokwim Subsistence alternate) commented that people with a lack of resources were at a higher disadvantage when there were fishing restrictions. She added that although there was a conservation concern for the Chinook salmon resource, ANILCA allowed for the customary and traditional take of this resource. Several Working Group members commented that they supported the

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KRITFC recommendation. *(For more information on harvest and netting effort data, please see the June 27 supplemental documents in the Informational Packet.)*

ADF&G MANAGEMENT ACTIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION: Chuck Brazil (ADF&G AYK Management Coordinator) reported that, to date, there were no new management actions under consideration for state managed waters.

PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:

- Elena Sergie (Lower Kalskag) commented that the king salmon were small in her area and that people were not catching many fish due to high water. Ms. Sergie thanked Mark Leary for providing fishing information to her and others in her area. She commented that some people were firefighting so she had limited people who could fish for her. Ms. Sergie added that some people were confused on the 2018 restrictions.
- Mike Napoka (Tuluksak) asked for clarification on how the sonar project determined the fish diversity. Mr. Napoka commented that some people in his area did not have gas or working motors for fishing. He suggested that the boundary line defined at the bluffs below Kalskag be located further downriver at the Tuluksak regulatory markers.

SUBSISTENCE REPORTS:

- **Lowest River:** Jen Peeks (ADF&G) reported that William “Charlie” Brown (Commercial Fishing) had commented prior to the meeting that fishing had been “poor” in the Eek area and he had not met his harvest needs.
- **OTNC Subsistence Report:** Janelle Carl (OTNC) summarized the OTNC interview activities and fisher comments regarding the 2018 subsistence fishery. Avery Hoffman (OTNC) reported that OTNC continued to distribute the BTF to community members; he reviewed the harvest data collected from the June 24 subsistence fishing opener. *(For more information on the OTNC summary, please see the June 27, 2018 Informational Packet.)*
- **Lower River:** Fritz Charles commented that he traveled to Quinhagak the week of June 17 and harvested 16 king salmon along with chum salmon, “red” salmon, and a Dolly Varden. Alissa Rogers reported that she fished for two hours on June 24 and harvested 6 king, 10 chum, and 8 “red” salmon. Mike Williams Sr. reported that ~90% of people in the Akiak area had harvested the majority of fish they needed; ~10% of people in his area needed additional fish. John Andrew (Downriver Elder) thanked the area managers for the June 24 opening. Mr. Andrew reported that he caught 38 Chinook salmon, 12 “red” salmon, 31 chum salmon, and a sheefish in the morning of June 24. Mr. Andrew commented that the water level was high and “murky” preventing people from dipnetting or using rod and reel to harvest fish. He noted that a few people from his area had traveled to the unrestricted areas to harvest fish.
- **Middle River:** Mike Savage (Middle River Subsistence) commented that since the June 24 opening in the Kalskag area the households he was fishing with were averaging 5–10 king salmon per day; he estimated that he was “half done” as of June 27. Darren Deacon (Middle River Subsistence alternate) reported that in two separate fishing trips he harvested a total of 9 king salmon, 3 “red” salmon, 31 chum salmon, and one sheefish. Lisa Feyereisen (Middle River Subsistence alternate) reported that people in the middle river continued to harvest fish to meet their needs. Nick Kameroff reported that he harvested 19 king, 46 chum, and one “red” salmon in 4 drifts using a gillnet.

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- **Upriver:** Mark Leary (Upriver Subsistence) commented on how the high water may be affecting the fish. He reported that June 27 was the first day that the Napaimute fishwheel had been catching “decent numbers of “reds.” Barb Carlson (Upriver Subsistence alternate) reported that the first “reds” were caught in the Sleetmute fish wheel on June 27.
- **Headwaters:** Ray Collins (Western Interior RAC) reported that during the week of June 24 people had started to catch salmon near McGrath. He commented that Elders believed salmon had “their own trail” and that when the water level was high they migrated through the middle of the river, bypassing McGrath. Mr. Collins commented that people in the headwaters were live releasing large female Chinook salmon. Dave Runfola (ADF&G Subsistence Division) reported that around June 12 people from Blackwater caught their first king salmon and, to date, had caught a total of 40 king salmon.

CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. **Overview of Kuskokwim River Salmon Run Assessment Projects:** Nick Smith (ADF&G) provided an overview of the ADF&G assessment projects. Mr. Smith reported that, to date, the water temperature and water clarity were below the historical average; the water level was higher than average. *(For more information on the 2018 inseason assessment projects, please see the June 27 Informational Packet).*
 - **Bethel Test Fish:** As of June 26, the Chinook salmon cumulative CPUE was 385; 62% of the Chinook salmon run was estimated to have passed Bethel based on historical run timing data. Mr. Smith noted that Chinook salmon catches at the BTF had increased over the last several days. As of June 26, the chum salmon cumulative CPUE was 998 and the sockeye salmon cumulative CPUE was 184. Mr. Smith commented that the ratio of chum and sockeye salmon to Chinook salmon continued to be low for this time in the season.
 - **Sonar:** Since June 21, the sonar project had been partially operating and the data collected since June 21 was from the left bank passage only.
 - **Subsistence Division Projects:** Dave Runfola reported that staff continued to conduct creel surveys in Atmautluak and Kasigluk.
 - **NVN Projects:** Rebecca Wilmarth (NVN) reported that the Salmon River (Aniak) weir was expected to be fully operational by July 1, but was currently experiencing high water. ATF was fully operational and the king salmon caught at the ATF were observed to have net marks on them. As of June 26, 76 king salmon had been harvested through the king salmon subsistence harvest permits in Crooked Creek.
2. **Discussion of ADF&G Management Consideration and Discussion of Possible Alternatives:** *There were no ADF&G management motions made at the time of this meeting.*

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

1. **Approve the agenda as amended. Passed (Unanimous)**
2. **To recommend to the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (KRITFC) that they provide additional fishing hours for the community of Kasigluk due to recent tragic events in their community. Passed (6 yeas, 0 nays, 2 abstentions)**
Due to tragic events that occurred in Kasigluk in June of 2018, which caused several household to suspend fishing activities, some Working Group members wanted to support the community by requesting that they be allowed additional fishing time.

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3. **For the next Working Group meeting to be scheduled for Friday July 6, 2018 beginning at 10:00 a.m. Passed (6 yeas, 1 nay)**
4. **Adjourn at 12:26 p.m. Passed (Unanimous)**

COMMENTS FROM THE WORKING GROUP:

- Mike Williams Sr. suggested that LE officers introduce themselves and be courteous when approaching boats. Mr. Williams commented that he appreciated the fishery conversation and respected the views of everyone.
- Fritz Charles thanked participants for sharing their comments and concerns. Mr. Charles commented that some people were confused about the 2018 regulations and restrictions; he encouraged the Working Group and KRITFC members to increase community outreach. Mr. Charles commented that there were fish species other than Chinook salmon that were available for harvest and added that “no one will starve because they do not have king salmon or fish.” He encouraged people to work together regardless of the outcome.
- Mark Leary commented that the 2018 fishing season had been confusing with two different management systems and that, as a Working Group member, it was “his job” to help people better understand management actions. Mr. Leary shared with the Working Group his experience using the king salmon subsistence harvest permit.
- Ray Collins commented that he felt anxious about the 2018 Salmon River (Pitka Fork) weir escapement.
- Mike Savage commented that the first run of Chinook salmon historically passed through the Kalskag area around May 26; he asked ADF&G staff if weirs could be installed earlier in the season. Nick Smith (ADF&G) responded that the escapement projects were typically fully operational prior to the arrival of salmon at the weir locations.
- Alissa Rogers requested that KYUK announce the June 29 fishing opener and that they ask people to consider Chinook salmon conservation. Ms. Rogers commented that although the Chinook salmon decline was not a direct result of subsisting fishing; subsistence fishers needed to “play a factor” in protecting the salmon stocks. Ms. Rogers commented that she appreciated the involvement of Working Group participants.

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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	Lisa Feyereisen/ Mike Savage, <i>Arrived at 10:15 a.m.</i>
UPRIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mark Leary
HEADWATERS SUBSISTENCE	<i>Absent</i>
MEMBER AT LARGE	Fritz Charles
WESTERN INTERIOR RAC	Ray Collins
YK DELTA RAC	Absent
COMMERCIAL FISHING	Greg Hoffman Jr.
SPORT FISHING	<i>Absent</i>
PROCESSOR	<i>Vacant</i>
KRITFC	Nick Kameroff
ADF&G	Chuck Brazil
CHAIR	Alissa Rogers

Other Participants:		
ADF&G Comm. Fish: Nick Smith, Keegan Birchfield, Zach Liller, Jen Peeks		
Subsistence Division: Lisa Olson Dave Runfola, Anna Godduhn		
Sport Fishing: John Chythlook		
USFWS: Ken Stahlnecker, Lew Coggins, Ben Staton, Aaron Webber		
QSM: Gary Decossas, Karen Deatherage		
Megan Leary (Kuskokwim Corporation)	Chelsey Zaukar (Crooked Creek)	Orie Reich (BSFA)
Avery Hoffman (OTNC)	Brittany Rutherford (KRITFC)	<u>WG Alternates:</u>
Janessa Esquible (OTNC)	Sarah Mutter (AVCP)	Darren Deacon
Janelle Carl (OTNC)	Elena Sergie (Kalskag)	Mary Peltola
Mary Matthias (OTNC)	Lucy Simeon (Chuathbaluk)	Barbara Carlson
Rebecca Wilmarth (NVN)	Meredith Witte (GTC)	<u>Media:</u>
Marcy Simeon (NVN)	Patricia Yaska (Chuathbaluk)	Anna Rose MacArthur (KYUK)
	Teresa Hunter (Chuathbaluk)	Petra Harpak (KYUK)

GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS:

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