

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group
1 (800) 315-6338 (MEET) Code: 58756# (KUSKO)
ADF&G Bethel toll free: 1 (855) 933-2433

June 14th, 2024

On Friday, June 14th, 2024, the KRSMWG meeting was called to order at 10:03 a.m. and adjourned at 11:59 a.m. Meeting time was approximately 2 hours. A quorum was initially established with 7 full voting members in attendance. However, 1 member had to leave shortly after the meeting began. Another member joined in later, establishing quorum again but was having connectivity issues and dropped the call. Alissa Rogers chaired the meeting.

AGENDA ITEMS AND SUMMARY INFORMATION:

A. USFWS/KRITFC UPDATE: *Audio for this update begins at 16:15 – Meeting Audio – 6/21/23.*

- USFWS and KRITFC staff were not present at this meeting to deliver a report.

B. ADF&G MANAGEMENT ACTIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION: *Audio for this update begins at 16:35 – Meeting Audio – 6/14/24.*

- Sam Decker describes where the state’s section of the Aniak Box is, the intention of the Aniak Box and outlines two different management strategies that could be considered for the portion of the Aniak Box that is outside the Yukon Delta Refuge. One option would allow for subsistence fishing with selective gear and the return of Chinook salmon alive to the water or to close it to all gear.
 - Immediately after Ms. Decker’s recommendations and description of the relevant area there is a discussion about how the area is used by locals and guides and the risk of fatality of fish caught by hook and line. Sport fishing is currently closed to Chinook fishing and the bait and hook regulations were discussed. One member suggested encouraging guides to target pike in the area by using floating gear to avoid the salmon and trout. A couple members said they were also concerned with rainbow trout as a subsistence food. Agency staff briefly discussed prior years’ restrictions and options that would be less likely to confuse the public.

B. PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:

- There were no people to be heard at this meeting.

D. CONTINUING BUSINESS:

- Subsistence Reports: Lower River, Middle River, Upper River, ONC In-season Subsistence Report
 - Lower River
 - Albert Kawagley, Bethel, said that he had not been out yet this year but has heard that people are not catching much. *Audio for this update begins at 1:02:00 – Meeting Audio – 6/14/24.*
 - Tad Lindley, Bethel, said that he heard that people did not do well fishing. When he went out during the opener he noticed that there were not many boats in areas that are typically crowded during openers. Mr. Lindley felt that the tides were unfavorable in the lower river. He did not see any fish hanging anywhere and thinks that people overall did not catch enough to start hanging. *Audio for this update begins at 1:02:46 – Meeting Audio – 6/14/24.*
 - Kara Domnick, Bethel, said that she spoke to many people at the harbor and that people were not catching very many fish. Ms. Domnick went out but only

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caught one King salmon. She said that she was not too worried though because “many things you can do with a King you can also do with reds.” *Audio for this update begins at 1:05:18 – Meeting Audio – 6/14/24.*

- Alissa Rogers, Bethel, said that she did not go out during the last opener, but her husband said that the boat harbor was very busy in the early morning, but when she had stopped by the harbor later the people had thinned out. Ms. Rogers said her family usually waits till August to fish. She did not observe anyone leaving the boat harbor with fish when she was there. *Audio for this update begins at 1:06:35 – Meeting Audio – 6/14/24.*
- **ONC In-season Report**
 - Delen Hooper, ONC, gave a report of surveys conducted at the boat harbor, but did not have time to include the fish camp surveys in the report. Comments included concern about trawlers and the desire for more fish and for the river to be open. Three King salmon was the average catch. Twelve King salmon were distributed by ONC. *Audio for this update begins at 1:08:45 – Meeting Audio – 6/14/24.*
 - After Ms. Hooper gave her report she addressed questions from the members regarding the type and size of nets used. Nikki Pollock, ONC, added that most fishers were out for most of the 12-hour fishing period and about half of all fishers caught nothing, while the average was 1-3 King salmon. *Audio for this update begins at 1:11:25 – Meeting Audio – 6/14/24.*
- **Middle River**
 - Walter Morgan, Lower Kalskag, reported that fishing had been slow in his area. He said one fisher went out and did 10 drifts and only caught 7 jack salmon and a couple sheefish. Mr. Walters said that he only saw five boats out during the opener, but most people were not catching, and he caught only one jack salmon in six drifts. Mr. Morgan added that the water is still cold and high, but the level is dropping. He said people in his area are waiting for the King salmon to run. *Audio for this update begins at 1:17:00 – Meeting Audio – 6/14/24.*
 - Allen Simeon, Aniak, said that he did not fish during the most recent opening because of the price of gas but he heard from other fishers who drifted all day. Mr. Simeon said that they caught 3-6 King salmon that were good size, but it was really slow. *Audio for this update begins at 1:18:07 – Meeting Audio – 6/14/24.*
 - Barbara Carlson, Sleetmute, said that she has not been out fishing but she has heard that people are catching sheefish out of Crooked Creek, but no salmon yet. Ms. Carlson said the lodge up the Holitna River has been targeting pike and has had some luck. *Audio for this update begins at 1:18:59 – Meeting Audio – 6/14/24.*

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- Dan Esai, Nikolai, said that one person set a net when the river opened to salmon fishing upriver of Aniak and caught 3 salmon. Mr. Esai went on to speak about traditional knowledge. He added that the headwaters communities have little impact. He said that he had attended the KRITFC meeting on Wednesday and an elder said that it would be a late run this year. Mr. Esai also expressed his frustration that the KRITFC and KRSMWG meetings were held at the same time and thinks that they should join in each other's meetings. *Audio for this update begins at 1:19:35 – Meeting Audio – 6/14/24.*
- KRITFC In-season Report
 - There was no one present from KRITFC to give a report at this meeting.
 - In-season Harvest and Effort Estimates can be found on page 12 of the Informational Packet.
- Overview of the Kuskokwim River salmon run assessment.
 - *Audio for this update begins at 1:25:25 – Meeting Audio – 6/14/24.*
 - Information from this report can be found beginning on page 3 of the Informational Packet.
 - Sean Larson, ADFG, gave an assessment project summary to the Working Group. Some highlights include that the King salmon run is starting off poor similar to last year and could possibly be a late run. Some chums and sockeye have started coming up the river, but Bethel Test Fish has not caught a sockeye as of June 12th. Aniak Test Fish has caught their 1st King salmon on June 13th.
 - NVN Report
 - Dan Gillikin, NVN, gave a report on projects led by NVN. A screw trap has been installed on the George River as part of a salmon smolt outmigration project on the George River and began in late May to early June. One screw trap has been installed some mark and recapture events have occurred. The project will conclude on June 17th and NVN will be setting up for a full study next year. *Audio for this update begins at 1:38:11 – Meeting Audio – 6/14/24.*
 - Subsistence Division Project Update
 - Tim Bimbenic, ADFG, gave a brief update on Kuskokwim projects the Subsistence Division is working on. The traditional knowledge project has been returned from the community review and is in the final phase of writing. The 2022 Post Season Salmon Survey has been published and is available online and the 2023 Post Season Salmon Survey report is being drafted now. The Subsistence Division is currently working with ONC to plan for this year's Post Season Surveys which will begin in September. The Upriver natural indicators project is entering the report writing stage. *Audio for this update begins at 1:36:35 – Meeting Audio – 6/14/24.*

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- Sport Fish:
 - John Chythlook, ADFG, said that he does not have much to report since it is still early in the season, and he has not heard any reports from fishers yet. *Audio for this update begins at 1:35:35 – Meeting Audio – 6/14/24.*

E. OLD BUSINESS:

- Sam Decker, ADFG, reported on the progress made moving the Bethel Test Fish distribution bin. She has contacted the city and they have spoken to their staff and boat harbor staff. Ms. Decker said that a list of criteria to meet when deciding placement was also created. The staff is looking for a spot that will fit those criteria. *Audio for this update begins at 1:47:25 – Meeting Audio – 6/14/24.*

F. NEW BUSINESS:

- No new business was discussed at this meeting.

G. COMMENTS FROM WORKING GROUP MEMBERS:

- Walter Morgan, Lower Kalskag, expressed concern for rainbow trout and suggested that the Working Group encourage guides and their clients to target pike with floating bait that would not interfere with the salmon or the trout. *Audio for this update begins at 57:42 – Meeting Audio – 6/14/24.*
- Dan Esai, Nikolai, expressed his concern over pike and spoke about traditional knowledge. *Audio for this update begins at 59:28 – Meeting Audio – 6/14/24.*
- Walter Morgan, Lower Kalskag, asked when the next subsistence opener would be in the Kalskag area. Mr. Morgan said with the heavy harvests down river, that people in his area are concerned that the openers will only occur in his area after the fish have passed through. *Audio for this update begins at 1:44:55 – Meeting Audio – 6/14/24.*
- Barbara Carlson, Sleetmute, requested that KRITFC does not meet on Wednesdays since it conflicts with the Working Group meetings. *Audio for this update begins at 1:48:30 – Meeting Audio – 6/14/24.*

The meeting was adjourned at 11:59 p.m.

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

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

- *Audio for this update begins at 14:55 – Meeting Audio – 6/14/24.*
- Motion made by Sam Decker, 2nd by Albert Kawagley
- An update actions made toward the movement of the fish distribution box was added to “Old Business” on the agenda.

No other motions were made at this meeting.

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WORKING GROUP ATTENDANCE:

MEMBER SEAT:	NAME:
DOWNRIVER ELDER	<i>Absent</i>
UPRIVER ELDER	Allen Simeon
LOWER RIVER SUBSISTENCE	<i>Absent</i>
MIDDLE RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Walter Morgan
UPRIVER SUBSISTENCE	Barbara Carlson
HEADWATERS SUBSISTENCE	Daniel Esai
MEMBER AT LARGE SEAT 1	Albert Kawagley
MEMBER AT LARGE SEAT 2	Kara Domnick
WESTERN INTERIOR RAC	<i>Absent</i>
YK DELTA RAC	Alissa Rogers
COMMERCIAL FISHING	Tad Lindley
SPORT FISHING	<i>Absent</i>
ADF&G	Sam Decker
CHAIR	Alissa Rogers
<u>ADF&G Comm. Fish:</u> Sam Decker, Sean Larson, Dave Runfola, Zach Liller, Iris Fletcher <u>Sport Fish Division:</u> John Chythlook <u>Subsistence Division:</u> Tim Bembenic <u>Commissioner's Office:</u>	
<u>USFWS:</u> Jaden Andrew <u>OSM:</u> <u>NVN:</u> Dan Gillikin, Audrey Leary <u>ONC:</u> Nikki Pollock, Delen Hooper, Vjosa Pellumbi, Jordan Klejka <u>AVCP:</u> Janessa Esquible <u>KRITFC:</u> <u>UAF:</u> <u>WIRAC:</u> <u>YK Delta RAC:</u> Alissa Rogers	
<u>WG Alternates: (not already listed above)</u>	<u>Media:</u> Evan Erickson, KYUK <u>Other:</u> Stella Alexie, Native Village of Eek; Lucinda Alexie

GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS:

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), 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), ADF&G Subsistence Division (SD), 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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