

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

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

June 10, 2015

Meeting called to order at 10:00am on Wednesday June 10, 2015 and adjourned at 12:30pm. Total meeting time was 2.5 hours. Ten 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:

New Business Discussion Topics:

- USFWS Special Action #5 discussion.
- Unit 4 resolution to dissolve the Working Group.- *Tabled*
- Report on Donalson's Marine Supplies.

WORKING GROUP ACTION ITEMS: *These items were not called "action items" at the time of meeting; however work was assigned or volunteered.*

- Send a letter to Wayne Morgan regarding participation and attendance on the Working Group.

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

1. Approve the agenda as amended. *Passed (8 yeas, 1 nay)*
2. Request that an Elder Fishery be instituted for the upriver and headwater communities. *Passed (Unanimous)*
3. That we receive an answer from the department on the question of an Elder Fishery by the next meeting, June 17, 2015. *Passed (7 yeas, 0 nay)*
4. Extend the meeting by a maximum of ½ hour to cover the agenda. *Passed (Unanimous)*
5. Adjourn. *Passed (Unanimous)*

CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. **ADF&G Management Actions under consideration:** Aaron Poetter (ADF&G) reported no new management actions or considerations.
2. **Overview of Kuskokwim River Salmon Run Assessment Projects:**
 - **Bethel Test Fish:** Colton Lipka (ADF&G) reported that the water temperature was slightly above average but within the historical range, water clarity was above average and within the historical range, and the water level was below average but within the historical range. Mr. Lipka reviewed the daily CPUEs for Chinook and chum salmon at the BTF. *(For more information on the BTF, please see the June 10th Informational Packet).*
 - **Aniak Test Fish:** Colton Lipka reviewed the daily CPUEs for the ATF. Dan Gillikin (NVN) commented that the fish were distributed to the Aniak community at large and the Aniak Tribal Council *(For more information on the ATF, please see the June 10th Informational Packet).*
 - **Weirs:** Brittany Blain (ADF&G) reported that the Salmon River (Pitka Fork) weir was operational with the exception of a few days due to heavy debris. No salmon had passed through the weir. ADF&G was in the process of installing the Tatlawiksuk and George River weirs; both had an operational target date of June 15th. Neil Lalonde (USFWS) reported that the Kwethluk River weir had been in operation however due to high water it was not currently operational. He noted that personnel and gear would soon be deployed to the Tuluksak weir.

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- **Radio Tagging Project:** Nick Smith (ADF&G) reported that the lower river Chinook salmon tagging project was operating smoothly. He commented that 128 Chinook salmon had been tagged. The June 9th telemetry download detected 28 fish, the furthest being near Chuathbaluk. Lew Coggins (USFWS) reported that USFWS flew from the tagging site to Tuluksak and up the Kwethluk River on June 8th. They detected 11 tags, the furthest being near Akiak. *(For more information on the tagging project, please see the June 10th Informational Packet).*
- 3. Subsistence Reports:**
- **ONC In-season Subsistence Report:** Dustin Wagner (ONC) reported that for the week ending on June 7th 50 families had been surveyed; 18 families were fishing. *(For more information on the ONC subsistence survey, please see the June 10th Informational Packet).*
 - **Headwater Subsistence:** Dan Esai (Headwaters Subsistence) commented that his community was seeing increased Sheefish; and one king salmon had been caught in McGrath. He reported that he was not aware of any setnets in the water.
 - **Upriver Subsistence:** Barbara Carlson (Upriver Subsistence alternate) commented that people in Area 5 were fishing with 6" gear and catching Sheefish, pike and broad whitefish. Ms. Carlson caught pike and one humpback whitefish in her 4" net during the 72 hour opening. Mark Leary (Middle River Subsistence) reported that he had been working on their fishwheel. Tim Zaukar (Member at Large alternate) commented that he had caught one pike in his setnet.
 - **Middle River Subsistence:** Lisa Feyereisen (Middle River Subsistence alternate) reported that Lower Kalskag residents were catching more Sheefish than whitefish. She had not observed any setnets between Crow Village and Aniak. Dave Cannon (Middle River Subsistence) commented that fishers at Birch Tree Crossing caught one sockeye salmon, two Sheefish, several whitefish and numerous pike.
 - **Lower River Subsistence:** Mike Williams Sr. (Lower River Subsistence) reported that the 72 hour harvest schedule had been difficult for people in his community. Mr. Williams had caught pike and whitefish in the sloughs. Other people were catching whitefish, Sheefish and jack salmon. John Andrew (Downriver Elder alternate) commented that he caught a few salmon and gave them away. Mary Sattler (Lower River Subsistence alternate) noted that she had not had any fresh salmon to date.
 - **USFWS Lower River Update:** Neil Lalonde (USFWS) reported that USFWS remained in conservation mode. The Community Harvest Permit had started on June 10th with 14 communities participating. He noted that fish would not be redistributed if communities chose not to participate. Mr. Lalonde commented that they had 13 federal officers in Bethel. He noted that 135 nets had been checked, 7 warnings and 2 citations issued, and 23 nets seized. Officers would be working 24 hours a day to mitigate the concerns of illegal fishing at midnight. Lew Coggins (USFWS) reported on the setnet fishing efforts in the lower river. *(For more information on the USFWS fishing effort survey, please see the June 10th Informational Packet).* Greg Roczicka (Lower River Subsistence alternate) noted that some upriver communities requested a designated fisher within the Bethel area for the Community Harvest Permit program. He provided each village with the name of a designated fisher for their community.
- 4. Discussion of ADF&G Management consideration and discussion of possible alternatives:** Aaron Poetter reported that ADF&G was considering an Elder Fishery but needed further inseason assessment of the Chinook salmon run before implementing any directed harvest opportunity.
- 5. Motion for Discussion and Action:** Ray Collins (Western Interior RAC) made a motion to support an Elder Fishery for upriver and headwater communities. *(See Motion #2 on page 3).*

PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:

- Chris Shelden (ADF&G) reminded Working Group participants to speak loudly into the microphones and for people on teleconference to mute their phones. Excess noise had been disrupting the meeting.
- Kevin Bartley (AVCP) commented that he witnessed meaningful collaboration during inseason management meetings between the ITFC, USFWS and ADF&G.

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OLD BUSINESS: N/A

NEW BUSINESS:

1. **USFWS Special Action #5 discussion:** Neil Lalonde (USFWS) reported that Special Action 5 addressed the issue of Chinook salmon being incidentally harvested during other opportunities and it closed all fishing in federal public waters to non-federally qualified users. USFWS made a statement that the Working Group had not been consulted due to the immediate need for action. John Chythlook (ADF&G) reported that the Special Action superseded the state's authority, including the Division of Sport Fishing. **Discussion:** Working Group members encouraged the state and USFWS to work together to re-word Special Action 5 so it served its intended purpose. John Linderman (ADF&G) noted that the department was willing to work with USFWS, however the Special Action superseded the state's authority on the matter so there was no specific action the department could take.
2. **Unit 4 resolution to dissolve the Working Group:** *Tabled to the June 24th meeting.*
3. **Report from Donalson's Marine Supplies:** Bev Hoffman reported that she had spoken with Donalson's Marine Supplies regarding Kuskokwim River nets. Ms. Hoffman commented that Donalson's hung nets per client request and that 20 people in 2015 had requested nets hung specifically to target king salmon. She commented that no current regulations were in place to prevent those particular nets from being made.

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

Motion 1: To approve the agenda as amended. Passed (8 yeas, 1 nay)

LaMont Albertson (Sport Fishing) requested that a lawsuit discussion be added under New Business of the agenda. Bev Hoffman (Chair) commented that a lawsuit discussion was not appropriate for the Working Group to address and that she would not accept it for the agenda. ADF&G noted that a lawsuit discussion would be in violation of the Working Group's agreement with the state.

Motion 2: Request that an Elder Fishery be instituted for the upriver and headwaters communities.

Passed (Unanimous)

Ray Collins commented that by the time the Chinook salmon run was assessed, the fish may have already passed through the upper river and headwater areas.

Motion 3: That we receive an answer from the department on the question of an Elder Fishery by the next meeting, June 17, 2015. Passed (7 yeas, 0 nay)

Motion 4: Adjourn. Passed (Unanimous)

COMMENTS FROM THE WORKING GROUP

- Bev Hoffman (Sport Fishing) commented that she was concerned with the low Chinook salmon numbers at the BTF. Ms. Hoffman noted that she had informed the Unit 4 villages that the Working Group was made up of stakeholders from all areas of the fishery and that she was dismayed by the lack of knowledge of the Working Group expressed in the letter.
- Barbara Carlson (Upriver Subsistence alternate) noted concern with the low Chinook salmon numbers at the BTF.
- Mark Leary (Upriver Subsistence) commented that he was concerned with the low numbers at the BTF. He reported that the king salmon had arrived early in the upper portion of the river. He urged the state to find a way to help upriver residents get a few fish for themselves.
- James Charles (Downriver Elder) commented that the river broke up later in 2015 than the previous year.

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- Dan Esai (Headwaters Subsistence) commented that ~June 7th a McGrath resident caught a jack salmon. He reported that salmon appeared to be running early in the headwaters.
- Nick Kameroff (Middle River Subsistence alternate) commented that Aniak had seven fishers for the Community Harvest Permit program.
- LaMont Albertson (Sport Fishing) noted his appreciation that USFWS and the department were more involved with the Working Group discussions. Mr. Albertson commented that he understood the Working Group to have formed in order to help people who subsist. Mr. Albertson requested that the management use the imperial system rather than the metric system when discussing their projects.
- Bob Aloysius (YK Delta RAC) commented on the difficulty to hear the Working Group meetings due to interference from static and people. Mr. Aloysius commented that he was disheartened that people were blaming USFWS, ADF&G and the Working Group for the low salmon numbers. He requested that people be kind to those managing and conserving the king salmon.
- Lisa Feyereisen (Middle River Subsistence alternate) encouraged USFWS to discuss chum salmon harvest opportunities with the Working Group prior to implementing any openers.
- Fritz Charles (Member at Large) reminded the group that stakeholders needed to conserve the king salmon. He noted that people were provided fish every year and they needed to be considerate of everyone along the river. Mr. Charles wanted the Working Group to continue functioning but wondered if the group was being listening to by management. Chris Shelden (ADF&G) responded that the Working Group was a benefit to management.
- Tim Zaukar (Member at Large alternate) noted that while the Community Harvest Permit program was starting in the lower river, residents in state waters were unable to catch fish near their communities.
- Greg Roczicka (Lower River Subsistence alternate) commented that commercial fishing was the main focus when the Working Group first began, but overtime it had shifted to address subsistence issues.

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WORKING GROUP ATTENDANCE:

MEMBER SEAT:	NAME:
DOWNRIVER ELDER	James Charles
UPRIVER ELDER	<i>Absent</i>
LOWER RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mike Williams Sr.
MIDDLE RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Dave Cannon
UPRIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mark Leary
HEADWATERS SUBSISTENCE	Dan Esai
MEMBER AT LARGE	Fritz Charles
WESTERN INTERIOR RAC	Ray Collins
YK DELTA RAC	Bob Aloysius
COMMERCIAL FISHING	<i>Absent</i>
SPORT FISHING	LaMont Albertson
PROCESSOR	Henry Mitchell
ADF&G	Aaron Poetter
CHAIR	Bev Hoffman

Other Participants:

ADF&G Comm. Fish: Zac Liller, Brittany Blain, Aaron Tiernan, Chris Shelden, Aaron Poetter, Colton Lipka, John Linderman, Nick Smith

Sport Fishing: John Chythlook, Tom Taube

Subsistence Division: David Runfola, Andrew Brenner, Hiroko Ikuta

USFWS: Neil Lalonde, Brian McCaffery, Lew Coggins, Trevor Fox

OSM:

Ben Matheson (KYUK)

Lisa Demer (ADN)

Tracy Simeon (Chuathbaluk)

Gerald Kameroff (Kalskag)

Tracy Simeon (Chuathbaluk)

John Andrew (Downriver Elder)

Lisa Feyereisen (Middle River Subsistence alternate)

Barbara Carlson (Upriver Subsistence alternate)

Greg Roczicka (Lower River Subsistence alternate)

Nick Kameroff (Middle River Subsistence alternate)

Bev Hoffman (Sport Fishing alternate)

Tim Zaukar (Member at Large alternate)

Mary Sattler (Lower River 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**)

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