

Fishery Management Report No. 08-74

**Activities of the Kuskokwim River Salmon
Management Working Group, 2007**

**Annual Report for Study 06-307
USFWS Office of Subsistence Management
Fisheries Information Services Division**

by

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and

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December 2008

Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Divisions of Sport Fish and Commercial Fisheries



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Weights and measures (metric)		General		Measures (fisheries)	
centimeter	cm	Alaska Administrative Code	AAC	fork length	FL
deciliter	dL	all commonly accepted abbreviations	e.g., Mr., Mrs., AM, PM, etc.	mid-eye to fork	MEF
gram	g	all commonly accepted professional titles	e.g., Dr., Ph.D., R.N., etc.	mid-eye to tail fork	METF
hectare	ha	at	@	standard length	SL
kilogram	kg	compass directions:		total length	TL
kilometer	km	east	E		
liter	L	north	N	Mathematics, statistics	
meter	m	south	S	<i>all standard mathematical signs, symbols and abbreviations</i>	
milliliter	mL	west	W	alternate hypothesis	H _A
millimeter	mm	copyright	©	base of natural logarithm	<i>e</i>
		corporate suffixes:		catch per unit effort	CPUE
Weights and measures (English)		Company	Co.	coefficient of variation	CV
cubic feet per second	ft ³ /s	Corporation	Corp.	common test statistics	(F, t, χ^2 , etc.)
foot	ft	Incorporated	Inc.	confidence interval	CI
gallon	gal	Limited	Ltd.	correlation coefficient (multiple)	R
inch	in	District of Columbia	D.C.	correlation coefficient (simple)	r
mile	mi	et alii (and others)	et al.	covariance	cov
nautical mile	nmi	et cetera (and so forth)	etc.	degree (angular)	°
ounce	oz	exempli gratia	e.g.	degrees of freedom	df
pound	lb	(for example)		expected value	<i>E</i>
quart	qt	Federal Information Code	FIC	greater than	>
yard	yd	id est (that is)	i.e.	greater than or equal to	≥
		latitude or longitude	lat. or long.	harvest per unit effort	HPUE
Time and temperature		monetary symbols		less than	<
day	d	(U.S.)	\$, ¢	less than or equal to	≤
degrees Celsius	°C	months (tables and figures): first three letters	Jan, ..., Dec	logarithm (natural)	ln
degrees Fahrenheit	°F	registered trademark	®	logarithm (base 10)	log
degrees kelvin	K	trademark	™	logarithm (specify base)	log ₂ , etc.
hour	h	United States (adjective)	U.S.	minute (angular)	'
minute	min	United States of America (noun)	USA	not significant	NS
second	s	U.S.C.	United States Code	null hypothesis	H ₀
		U.S. state	use two-letter abbreviations (e.g., AK, WA)	percent	%
Physics and chemistry				probability	P
all atomic symbols				probability of a type I error (rejection of the null hypothesis when true)	α
alternating current	AC			probability of a type II error (acceptance of the null hypothesis when false)	β
ampere	A			second (angular)	"
calorie	cal			standard deviation	SD
direct current	DC			standard error	SE
hertz	Hz			variance	
horsepower	hp			population	Var
hydrogen ion activity (negative log of)	pH			sample	var
parts per million	ppm				
parts per thousand	ppt, ‰				
volts	V				
watts	W				

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ABSTRACT

The Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group (Working Group) was formed in 1988 by the Alaska Board of Fisheries in response to requests from stakeholders in the Kuskokwim River drainage seeking a more active role in the management of salmon fishery resources. Since then, the Working Group has become increasingly active in the preseason, inseason, and postseason management of the Kuskokwim River drainage subsistence, commercial, and sport salmon fisheries. In 2001, the Working Group modified its charter in order to more effectively address the needs of the Federal Subsistence Management Program by including members of the Coordinating Fisheries Committee of the Yukon–Kuskokwim Delta and Western Interior Regional Advisory Councils. The Working Group further modified its charter in 2005 to include representation from the far upriver communities that had not previously had a voice on the Working Group. The Working Group now serves as a public forum through which Federal and State fisheries managers meet several times a year with local users of the salmon resource to review run assessment information and reach a consensus on how to proceed with management of Kuskokwim River salmon fisheries. The Working Group met 10 times in 2007. In 2007, the Fisheries Information Services (FIS) Division of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Office of Subsistence Management (OSM) provided funding for inseason support of the Working Group under the Inseason Support for Cooperative Management of the Kuskokwim River Subsistence Fishery project (FIS 06-307). The first meeting of the year was in April of 2007, with inseason meetings during June, July and August; and summary and review sessions in September and November. Working Group meetings provide the forum for area fishers, user representatives, community representatives, Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Council representatives, Fish and Game Advisory Committee members and State and Federal managers to come together and discuss issues relevant to management of Kuskokwim River salmon populations.

Key words: Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group, subsistence fishing, commercial fishing, recreational fishing, salmon fishery management, Bethel, Kuskokwim River, Chinook, chum, sockeye, and coho salmon.

INTRODUCTION

The Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group (Working Group) was formed in 1988 by the Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF) in response to requests from stakeholders in the Kuskokwim Area that sought a more active role in the management of salmon fishery resources (Francisco et al. 1989). The Working Group has become the forum through which inseason management decisions are made regarding Kuskokwim River subsistence, commercial and sport salmon fisheries (Figure 1). Pre- and postseason Working Group activity provides the opportunity to participate in the regulatory processes that establish fishery management policies and regulations. In 2001, the Working Group modified their by-laws in order to more effectively address Federal Subsistence Management views by including seats for member representatives from the Kuskokwim River Coordinating Fisheries Committee of the Yukon–Kuskokwim Delta and Western Interior Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils (RAC). The Working Group further modified their by-laws in 2005 to include representation from communities at the headwaters of the drainage, which had not previously had a voice on the Working Group.

The Working Group typically meets first in the spring each calendar year, conducts intensive and frequent meetings during the summer, and holds a wrap-up session in the fall or early winter. Working Group members have had the opportunity to testify at BOF and Federal Subsistence Board (FSB) meetings and to participate in Kuskokwim Area Interagency and other associated meetings.

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) maintains primary management authority over fisheries resources within the State of Alaska. Kuskokwim River salmon fisheries are managed according to management plans and associated policies and regulations under state statute and as

adopted through the BOF process. The current Kuskokwim River salmon management plan (5 AAC 07.365) provides guidelines for the management of the Kuskokwim River salmon fishery to promote sustained yield of salmon stocks adequate for escapement needs, subsistence opportunity, and harvestable surpluses for sport and commercial fisheries (Linderman and Bergstrom 2006; Burkey et al. 2000). Under Alaska Statute (AS 16.05.258), subsistence uses maintain a preference over other uses of fishery resources, and Kuskokwim River subsistence fisheries are managed accordingly.

The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) of 1980 mandates that rural subsistence users who have a customary and traditional use of a fish or wildlife resource have a priority over non-subsistence users to harvest these resources on Federal public lands and waters. On October 1, 1999, in response to an ongoing conflict between Federal and State definitions of subsistence priority, the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture published regulations to expand Federal management of subsistence fisheries to Alaskan waters within and adjacent to Federal public lands. The Secretary of Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture delegated their authority in Alaska to the FSB to manage fish and wildlife resources for subsistence uses on Federal public land, including waters running through or adjacent to these lands. Federal subsistence fishing regulations are adopted through the FSB process. The FSB may close fishing to other subsistence and non-subsistence uses in these waters to accommodate a priority for Federally qualified rural subsistence users if it is determined that there are subsistence or conservation concerns.

For the past 2 decades, ongoing efforts have been made to improve monitoring of Kuskokwim River salmon stocks. Annual monitoring programs include evaluation of salmon harvest information, test fish abundance indices, and monitoring escapements using weir, sonar, aerial spawning ground surveys, and mark–recapture programs. Kuskokwim Area salmon monitoring and assessment programs are evaluated inseason to assist managers and the Working Group with management decisions. Kuskokwim Area salmon monitoring and assessment programs are analyzed postseason to evaluate management actions taken, enact regulatory changes, develop management plans and strategies, and forecast future returns.

From July 2002 through October 2004, funding was available for support of the Working Group process through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Office of Subsistence Management (OSM) project FIS 01-116. OSM funding was discontinued in 2005 and reestablished in 2006 under project FIS 06-307. The current OSM project provides funding through 2008 for Working Group member travel to meetings and conferences, meeting supplies and arrangements, and ADF&G staff time to coordinate the Working Group process and to summarize and distribute information to and from Working Group members. In a response to changes in OSM program proposal and funding cycles, a request for continuation of funding through 2009 was submitted to OSM in January 2008.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Working Group process are:

1. Provide local fishers and other users with an avenue for direct involvement in the management of the Kuskokwim River fishery.
2. Work towards the development of a comprehensive management plan, for all Kuskokwim River salmon stocks.

3. Provide a forum for all parties with an interest in Kuskokwim River fisheries to work together to reach a consensus on management of the fisheries.
4. Utilize funding from FIS project 06-307 to strengthen the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group process.

The objective of project FIS 06-307 is to strengthen the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group process by providing funding to support the following activities:

1. Provide inseason run assessment information to all parties participating in cooperative management of the Kuskokwim River subsistence salmon fishery.
2. Provide a forum for RAC members, ADF&G, and other participants of the cooperative management process to discuss inseason run assessment information and fishery management decisions affecting subsistence fisheries.
3. Provide an opportunity for participation in the cooperative management process to forecast and plan (preseason) and to summarize (postseason) the fishing season.
4. Report the discussion and decisions made during the cooperative management process.

PROCESS

The Working Group process is governed by the By-Laws of the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group as amended July 29, 2006 (Appendix A1). The By-Laws describe the purpose, rules of conduct, representation, and selection of officers for the Working Group process. The first Working Group meetings each year are typically held in March or April. Intensive and frequent meetings are held during June, July, and August when the bulk of the salmon runs are occurring. A wrap-up session is held in September, October, or November. Meetings are generally conducted by teleconference with efforts made to conduct 2 meetings per year where all members are able to attend in person. The Working Group is made up of 13 member organizations or constituencies (Appendix B1). These members represent: 2 elders (Upriver, Downriver), 4 subsistence fishers (Lower River, Middle River, Upper River, and Headwaters), one processor representative, one commercial fisher, one sport fisher, one Member-at-Large seat, two Federal Subsistence RAC members (Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, Western Interior), and ADF&G staff. One or more alternates are assigned for each designated Working Group member in the event the primary representative is unable to attend a meeting.

Working Group meetings are conducted according to Robert's Rules of Order (Robert III et al. 2000) following a standard agenda that provides for a full and complete discussion of area and related salmon fisheries. Working Group motions are passed by consensus and ADF&G has no voting status on motions concerning the scheduling of commercial fishery openings. Reports are heard and discussed regarding test fishery, escapement monitoring projects, and subsistence and commercial harvests. Based on these reports, ADF&G makes recommendations to the Working Group concerning management of Kuskokwim River salmon fisheries. The Working Group makes motions on ADF&G recommendations to facilitate discussion and work towards consensus on management decisions. Through this process, the Working Group has the ability influence and effect management decisions, while the authority to implement management actions rests with ADF&G. Additionally, the Working Group passes resolutions stating

consensus positions, recommendations, and opinions from the Working Group to agencies, organizations, and the public. The Working Group also appoints representatives to attend meetings of the BOF, FSB, ADF&G Advisory Committee meetings, RAC meetings, and other public meetings dealing with relevant fisheries issues.

In support of Working Group meetings, ADF&G:

1. Informs Working Group members about scheduled meetings and meeting agendas through phone, mail, email, and fax.
2. Assembles, copies, and distributes materials including meeting announcements, agendas, informational packets (Appendix C1), action statements, meeting summaries (Appendix D1), news releases, and newspaper articles.
3. Initiates Working Group meeting teleconferences.
4. Organizes and provides logistics for member travel.
5. Assists the Working Group to identify potential members to fill vacancies.
6. Drafts an annual report of Working Group meetings and actions.
7. Distributes meeting informational packets and meeting summaries.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Working Group process provides an opportunity for stakeholders in Kuskokwim Area fisheries to make recommendations regarding policies, regulations, and potential actions for Kuskokwim River salmon management. Meetings also allow Kuskokwim Area managers to obtain current feedback from fishers regarding subsistence harvest. The process ensures management agencies keep the public informed of fishery issues, distribute timely fishery run status information, and maintain an open dialogue with area fishers. In addition to interactions with Working Group members, the process encourages and supports participation by a number of tribal organizations and federal agencies including the Kuskokwim Native Association (KNA), the Orutsararmiut Native Council (ONC), the McGrath Native Village Council (MNVC), the Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP), Bering Sea Fisherman's Association (BSFA), Coastal Villages Region Fund (CVRF), the USFWS Yukon–Kuskokwim Delta National Wildlife Refuge, and the USFWS OSM. Participation in this process by such a broad spectrum of area users and user representatives has fostered the development of an informed public, which can have a positive influence on the management of the Kuskokwim River salmon fishery.

Management of Kuskokwim River salmon stocks was successfully conducted during the 2007 season. The majority of salmon escapement goals were achieved or exceeded and opportunity was provided for Kuskokwim Area residents to meet their subsistence needs. Additional harvestable surplus was utilized by commercial and sport fisheries.

Inseason meetings were held to allow an opportunity for public comment, discussions of issues among agency staff, Working Group members and other interested individuals, and review of salmon run status information. Inseason indicators of salmon run strength include the Bethel Test Fish (BTF) project (Bue and Martz 2006), ONC inseason subsistence harvest reports (Dull and Shelden 2007), tributary escapement monitoring projects (Costello et al. 2007a; b; McEwen *In*

prep; Miller et al. 2007; Jasper and Molyneaux 2007; Hildebrand et al. 2007; Plumb et al. 2007), and fish wheel catch rates from the Kalskag mark–recapture tagging project (Pawluk et al. 2006). ONC technicians interview subsistence fishers from the lower portion of the Kuskokwim drainage, including the Bethel area. Information from ONC subsistence surveys and BTF are used inseason to help gauge salmon run timing and abundance, and obtain general fishery insight. Salmon escapements were assessed by weir projects operated in the Kwethluk, Tuluksak, Salmon (Aniak drainage), George, Kogrukluk, Tatlawiksuk, and Takotna rivers and by a sonar project on the Aniak River. In addition, tagging and radiotelemetry studies were conducted on the main stem of the Kuskokwim River near Kalskag.

2007 SEASON

In 2007, Working Group support was funded by OSM project FIS 06-307, Inseason Support for Cooperative Management of the Kuskokwim River Subsistence Fishery. FIS 06-307 provided support for inseason teleconference calls, Working Group travel to Anchorage for Kuskokwim Interagency and Working Group meetings, two month’s salary and benefits for the Working Group Coordinator, and assorted materials for meetings and information distribution. The Working Group met 10 times in calendar year 2007 to support management of Kuskokwim River subsistence, commercial, and recreational salmon fisheries (Appendix E1). One meeting was held in each of the months of April, August, September and November. Four meetings were held in June, and 2 in July. With the exception of the April and November meetings, an agenda and information packet were assembled prior to each meeting and distributed to Working Group members and other interested parties (Appendix C1). Unless otherwise noted, meetings were held in the Bethel ADF&G conference room. Detailed meeting summaries are available from Kuskokwim Area, Division of Commercial fisheries staff in Bethel and Anchorage. The following chronology provides highlights of accomplishments and significant events:

- 1) The first meeting of 2007 was held April 19 in the Aerie conference room of ADF&G’s Anchorage office. This Spring Meeting took place immediately following the Kuskokwim Interagency meetings in Anchorage and member travel to Anchorage was paid using a combination of money from FIS 06-307 and State of Alaska general funds. Attendance at the Kuskokwim Interagency meetings provided Working Group members with comprehensive information on the Kuskokwim River salmon outlook for 2007, the Kuskokwim commercial fishery, and research being conducted throughout the Kuskokwim drainage. The Spring Working Group Meeting covered the 2007 BOF decisions affecting the Kuskokwim Area and information on the proposed Donlin Creek mining development near Crooked Creek.
 - a) In 2007 BOF passed two measures affecting the Kuskokwim Area:
 - i) BOF approved a proposal allowing up to 8-inch mesh gillnet gear to be used in the District 1, Kuskokwim River commercial fishery by emergency order.
 - ii) BOF approved a proposal allowing for the extension of commercial periods in the Lower Portion of Subdistrict 1-B by two hours.
 - iii) The proposal to designate the Holitna River drainage as a fisheries reserve was tabled to committee for further consideration.
 - b) Working Group members discussed, received clarification, and made recommendations on the regulatory actions taken by the BOF.

- c) Representatives from Barrick Gold and the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) presented information on the permitting process and plans to minimize the mine's potential adverse effects on the land and watershed. Working Group members also made recommendations to Barrick Gold for baseline studies they would like to see done prior to and during the permitting process for the Donlin Creek mine.
 - d) Calvin Simeon was named as the Middle River Subsistence Representative and the former seat holder, Wayne Morgan, became the Middle River Subsistence Alternate.
 - e) The Working Group resolved to become more proactive in making the concerns of the Kuskokwim Area known on a larger scale through letter writing campaigns to state and federal government representatives and through use of state-wide and national media.
- 2) In May of 2007 the previous Working Group Coordinator, Chris Shelden, left the position and was replaced by Elizabeth Smith. Duties of Working Group coordinator included planning meeting logistics, compiling informational packets, coordinating Working Group member meeting attendance, summarizing and archiving meeting minutes, authoring the annual Working Group report, and assisting with development and tracking of Working Group budgets and expenditures. The Working Group Coordinator also made arrangements for Working Group travel to Anchorage and Bethel for inseason and post meetings. Salary for this position was provided for by FIS 06-307 and State of Alaska general fund monies.
- 3) Four meetings were held during the height of the Chinook, chum and sockeye salmon runs within the lower river. Meeting dates were June 14, June 19, June 25, and June 27.
- a) Inlet Fish Producers (IFP) announced during the June 14 meeting that they would not operate in the Kuskokwim River during June and July because of the low market value and high abundance of chum salmon relative to Chinook and sockeye salmon. IFP planned to buy salmon during any coho commercial fishing periods in late July or August. This announcement left only one commercial processor, Coastal Villages Seafoods (CVS), operating in the Kuskokwim River during the Chinook and sockeye season.
 - b) Kuskokwim River water levels were well below average for the month of June and remained below the previously recorded lows between June 11 and 23. Water clarity in the Kuskokwim River was well above average during June.
 - c) ONC inseason subsistence surveys indicated difficulties with Chinook salmon subsistence fishing in June. Approximately 32% of families reporting classified Chinook salmon fishing as "normal" and 68% classified it as "poor." No families interviewed during June classified Chinook salmon fishing as "very good." The persistence of low and clear water conditions during the majority of June were thought to be the primary factors contributing to these classifications.
 - d) BTF data and ONC inseason subsistence monitoring summaries were used to assess inseason run strength during the June meetings as few salmon had reached the tributary escapement assessment programs by that time. Kalskag fish wheel counts were unreliable as an indicator of abundance for most of June because it was believed salmon were avoiding fish wheels in the low and clear water conditions.

- e) By the end of June, available information suggested average to above average Chinook salmon abundance and late run timing, average to above average chum salmon abundance, and below average sockeye salmon abundance, possibly attributable to late run timing.
 - f) No Kuskokwim commercial openings were held during the month of June. Despite ADF&G biologists' assessment that salmon abundance was adequate to support a commercial harvest, a majority of Working Group members (including the Commercial Processor Representative) voted against a commercial opening during the June 25 meeting. After June 25, CVS declined to buy salmon because of high chum salmon abundance relative to Chinook and sockeye salmon, both of which are of higher commercial value than chum salmon.
- 4) Two Working Group meetings were conducted during July.
- a) Reports from Working Group members and ONC inseason subsistence surveys during the July 10 meeting indicated most lower, middle, and upper Kuskokwim River fishers were done with or finishing their subsistence harvest for the year. Subsistence users agreed that the 2007 Chinook salmon run was late but adequate to meet subsistence needs.
 - b) When compared to years with similar water levels, BTF data indicated late Chinook salmon run timing and above average abundance, late sockeye salmon run timing and average abundance, and above average chum salmon abundance with average to late run timing. Chinook and chum salmon passage at the majority of Kuskokwim River monitoring projects ranged from average to above average for the time of year, and escapement for both species was expected to meet or exceed all escapement goals.
 - c) On July 10, the Working Group discussed possibilities for and difficulties associated with expanding the Kuskokwim River chum salmon market. ADF&G staff gave an overview of the catcher/seller program and its potential usefulness in the Kuskokwim River commercial fishery, specifically regarding benefits to commercial fishers when commercial processors are unwilling to buy salmon.
 - d) On July 27, the Working Group met to discuss a possible commercial opening for coho salmon. Coho salmon passage at all Kuskokwim monitoring projects was average to above average for the time of year. The Working Group voted to support two six-hour commercial openings, tentatively scheduled for Wednesday August 1, 2007 in Subdistrict 1B (below Bethel) and one on Friday August 3, 2007 in Subdistrict 1-A (above Bethel). ADF&G would finalize the schedule pending more information from BTF.
- 5) The Working Group met on August 9 to discuss coho-directed commercial fishing periods. This was the only Working Group meeting held during the month of August.
- a) BTF and all weir data indicated average to well above average abundance of coho for the time of year. The strong early showing indicated adequate coho salmon abundance to meet or exceed all escapement goals and support a commercial opening.
 - b) The first two Kuskokwim River commercial fishing periods, on August 1 and August 3, showed high harvest and Catch per Unit of Effort (CPUE) above 2004 and slightly below 2003 (a year of record high coho salmon abundance in the Kuskokwim River). Harvest and CPUE were below historical averages in the openings held August 6 and August 8.

Average coho salmon size in 2006 was the lowest on record, but average coho size in 2007 was in line with historical averages.

- c) Both commercial processor representatives agreed that capacity was adequate for a commercial harvest 50% higher than commercial harvest from the previous two openings.
 - d) The ADF&G Kuskokwim Area Management Biologist recommended continued commercial openings on the Kuskokwim River, but was not prepared to announce the dates and times until the most recent commercial harvest information and salmon run assessment data were available. The Working Group voted to support continued Kuskokwim River commercial openings and deferred scheduling of further openings to ADF&G.
 - e) ADF&G staff recommended the Working Group consider implementation of regulations recently passed by the BOF allowing the Lower Section of Subdistrict 1-B (Statistical Area 335-11) to open up to two hours earlier than the Upper Section (Statistical Area 335-12) in response to a request from the public. Because the regulation is allocative in nature, the Working Group's input was important for implementation. The Working Group voted to open the Lower Section of Subdistrict 1-B to commercial fishing 2-hours earlier, as provided for in regulation (5 AAC 07.320).
- 6) An end-of-season summary Working Group meeting was held September 27:
- a) Working Group members and ONC inseason subsistence reports indicated that 2007 salmon abundance was adequate to meet subsistence needs, but many fish rotted because of rainy weather in the Kuskokwim Area. Working Group members discussed the importance of accurate subsistence harvest data for assessing salmon abundance and sustainably managing the fishery. Also discussed was the difficulty in obtaining subsistence harvest data because of budgetary constraints and the cost of conducting personal interviews.
 - b) Chinook, sockeye and chum salmon all exhibited late run timing as recorded by BTF and Kuskokwim River weir projects. Chinook salmon escapement met or exceeded escapement goals on all monitored Kuskokwim River tributaries except the Tuluksak River. 2007 Sockeye salmon escapements were above average, but not as high as the record escapements of 2005 and 2006. Chum salmon escapement in 2007 was well above average on all monitored Kuskokwim River tributaries. Coho salmon passage on middle and upper Kuskokwim River tributaries was average to above average, but below average in lower river tributaries. When compared to weir data, BTF performed well throughout the season as an indicator of Chinook, sockeye, chum, and coho salmon relative abundance and run timing. Kuskokwim River aerial surveys conducted on 9 of the 14 index streams were consistent with Chinook salmon weir data; indicating average to above average abundance and meeting or exceeding all escapement goals. Chinook salmon are the only species counted in Kuskokwim River aerial surveys.
 - c) The only 2007 commercial openings in the Kuskokwim River were in August during coho season. In the initial two commercial openings, CPUE was above or similar to the 5- and 10- year averages. In subsequent openings, CPUE began declining to average and below average through the last commercial opening on August 24.

- d) The Lower Section of Subdistrict 1-B opened to commercial fishing two hours earlier during four commercial periods in 2007. The two-hour extension of time in the Lower Section of Subdistrict 1-B was supported by the Working Group and its implementation appeared to be successful. Fishers took advantage of the extended openings and stayed within regulatory markers.
- e) ADF&G staff outlined a proposal for a coho salmon mark–recapture study to be funded by the Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim Sustainable Salmon Initiative (AYK SSI). The Working Group voted to send a letter to BFSA supporting the proposed coho salmon run reconstruction project (Appendix F1)
- f) Topics for the fall Working Group meeting to be held in Anchorage November 30, following the Kuskokwim Interagency meeting, were discussed and decided on. The two major topics of interest to the Working Group were:
 - i) Possibilities for developing the Kuskokwim River salmon market.
 - ii) Salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) commercial pollock fishery and its effect on Kuskokwim River fisheries.

2007 WORKING GROUP FALL MEETING

The Working Group met November 30 at the Rabbit Creek Rifle Range in Anchorage. The Downriver Elder, Co-Chair/Sport Fish Representative, Co-Chair/Sport Fish Alternate, Co-Chair/Lower River Subsistence Alternate, Middle River Subsistence Representative, Upper River Subsistence Representative, Headwaters Subsistence Representative, Member At Large, CVS Commercial Processor Representative, Yukon-Kuskokwim (YK) Delta RAC Representative, and Western Interior RAC Representative attended. Travel for the YK Delta and Western Interior RAC Representatives was funded by the Federal Subsistence Management Program. All other member travel was funded by FIS 06-307, except for the CVS Commercial Processor Representative, who is based in Anchorage during the winter. The following topics were discussed:

- a) An overview of past and present Kuskokwim River commercial fisheries was given by ADF&G staff. The presentation included a history of the Kuskokwim River commercial fishery, including comparison of historical and current commercial harvests and exvessel values. Historical and current salmon monitoring projects throughout the Kuskokwim River drainage, salmon exploitation rate, and the 2008 Kuskokwim River salmon outlook were also covered.
- b) The CVS Commercial Processor Representative presented the Kuskokwim commercial fishery processor outlook and an overview of CVS and Coastal Villages Region Fund (CVRF) activities in and contributions to Kuskokwim Area communities. The Representative also outlined plans for the commercial fish processing facility in Platinum, scheduled to begin construction in spring of 2008.
- c) Mike Plotnik, a Research Analyst from ADF&G Headquarters gave a presentation on the ADF&G processor and permitting program. The presentation focused on Catcher/Seller, Fish Transporter, and Direct Marketing Fisheries Business Permits; all useful for Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) permit holders who would like to expand their ability to sell fish directly without going through large scale commercial processors.

- d) Terry Reeve from the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) Marine Advisory Program (MAP) presented information on resources available through MAP for commercial fishers, such as a recently completed *Fishermen's Direct Marketing Manual*. The presentation also specifically addressed opportunities for Kuskokwim River Catcher/Sellers.
- e) The ADF&G, Division of Commercial Fisheries, AYK Regional Supervisor described recent budget cuts from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to the U.S. / Canada Yukon River Joint Technical Committee (JTC) and the potential effects on salmon monitoring projects throughout the AYK Region. The Working Group voted to send letters urging State Representative Mary Nelson and State Senator Lyman Hoffman to address this funding shortfall, and urging the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) and NMFS representatives to reinstate funds previously allocated to JTC (Appendix G1).
- f) The ADF&G AYK Regional Supervisor gave an overview of Chinook and chum salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea-Aleutian Islands (BSAI) commercial pollock fishery and the effect on Western Alaska fisheries. The Record-breaking bycatch of 130,000 Chinook salmon in the 2007 BSAI commercial pollock fishery and subsequent record bycatch in each of the 3 previous years concerned Working Group members greatly. Because of little available data, the precise impact of high bycatch on individual fisheries was unknown. Scale pattern analysis studies from the late 1990s indicated that of the bycatch from Western Alaska, 40% originates from the Yukon River, 26% from the Kuskokwim Area and 34% from the Bristol Bay Area (Meyers et al. 2003). To better assess the impact of salmon bycatch on Western Alaskan fisheries, age composition data and more thorough stock assessment through genetic analysis is needed.
- g) Becca Robbins-Gisclair, Policy Director for the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFFA) and member of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) Chinook Salmon Bycatch Working Group, presented more information on BSAI bycatch. The presentation focused on management of the BSAI pollock fishery and current and potential tools for limiting Chinook salmon bycatch.
- h) The Working Group voted to submit a letter to NPFMC establishing their concern regarding Chinook salmon bycatch in the commercial pollock fishery (Appendix I1).

DISCUSSION

Residents of the Kuskokwim Area intend to be directly involved in management of the salmon fishery resource. This goal has been achieved through the inception of the Working Group process, which has been an annual event since its inception by the BOF in 1988. This process has been and remains successful in its attempt to bring together representatives from different groups of fishers, allowing them to express their views and take an active roll in resource management.

Working Group representatives reside throughout the drainage and represent a broad range of user groups. In general, Working Group members and fishers agree on the basic principles of conservation and use. All Working Group members agree that ensuring sustainable salmon escapement is the highest fisheries management priority, followed by providing opportunity for subsistence fishers to meet their needs, and allowing for additional uses of fisheries resources.

Working Group representatives recognize that lower river fishers have access to a greater number of fish. The spawning populations of all Kuskokwim River salmon species must pass through the lower river during their annual spawning migration. Run size is diminished as fish travel up river and disperse from the mainstem Kuskokwim River to their respective spawning streams. Therefore, fishers higher in the drainage have fewer fish available for harvest.

The subsistence fishing schedule, in place from 2002–2006, was intended to allow salmon to pass through the lower river during subsistence fishery closures and spread lower river subsistence harvest out across the run. The schedule was implemented to prevent overexploitation of specific stocks and provide middle and upper river fishers adequate opportunity to harvest salmon and meet their subsistence needs. The subsistence fishing schedule was a tool implemented partially in response to the 2000 BOF “stock of yield concern” designation for Kuskokwim River Chinook and chum salmon. In 2007 the “stock of yield concern” designation for Kuskokwim River Chinook and chum salmon was discontinued by BOF in response to recent above average and record runs of these species. The subsistence fishing schedule remained part of the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management plan to use as a management tool if warranted; however, there is little expectation if utilizing the schedule in the future if pre season salmon run forecasts indicate escapement needs will be achieved and harvestable surpluses will be adequate to provide for subsistence uses.

The implementation of the subsistence fishing schedule seems to have had unforeseen impacts on subsistence fishing practices. As expected, the actual harvest of salmon per household probably did not change significantly. However, the subsistence harvest was not evenly spread throughout the season as intended, but fishing effort increased on “open” days. Fishers may have harvested more fish in a given week than they would have without the schedule in place. Also, in an attempt to avoid the inconvenience of the subsistence schedule, fishers may have begun fishing earlier than normal, increasing pressure on earlier arriving fish. In either case, the subsistence fishing schedule may not have spread harvest out as intended and harvest timing may have been shifted toward the earlier portion of the run (T. Hamazaki, Commercial Fisheries Biometrician, ADF&G, Anchorage; personal communication). Some fishers disapproved of the subsistence fishing schedule and reported that subsistence fishing closures broke the rhythm of their subsistence harvest and disrupted fish camp activities. Because the majority of subsistence fishers reside in the lower river and have the greatest access to fish, some middle and upper river fishers felt the subsistence fishing schedule should only be implemented in the lower river.

Disagreement has arisen between fishers and ADF&G regarding interpretations of run status information and acceptance of policies and regulations. Specifically, controversy and disagreement exists among Working Group meeting participants as to whether established escapement goals are appropriate and if there is adequate opportunity provided to subsistence fishers relative to other user groups. At least one Working Group member has expressed the opinion that, according to Kuskokwim Area elders, Chinook and chum salmon runs prior to extensive ADF&G monitoring were higher than the “record-breaking” runs in the past few years. Some Working Group members believe escapement goals should be increased to allow more salmon upstream and increase salmon abundance to increase nutrients in the watershed. Currently ADF&G sets escapement goals in order to achieve sustained yield. When escapement goals are not met, management actions are triggered, including commercial, recreational, and subsistence fishery closures. Increased escapement goals would require ADF&G managers to close commercial and recreational fisheries, and possibly subsistence fishing, when those goals

are not met. Raising escapement goals higher than necessary to foster sustainable salmon populations could be detrimental to Kuskokwim Area fishers.

Low commercial salmon prices in recent years have caused concern among some Working Group members. Because of low chum salmon market value and high abundance relative to other species, commercial processors can be hesitant to buy fish in June and July during the Chinook and sockeye salmon runs. Working Group meeting participants disagree on whether a harvestable surplus exists and whether it is adequate to support a commercial fishery. Weighing the economic benefit to Kuskokwim River residents against the ecological benefit to the Kuskokwim watershed is a struggle for some Working Group members. In addition, some Working Group members feel inseason abundance indicators are inadequate to assure subsistence opportunity and commercial openings.

There has been significant improvement in the number and quality of fishery assessment projects implemented during the last few years. The Chinook salmon mark-recapture radiotelemetry project has provided estimates of Chinook salmon upstream of the Aniak River. In 2006 and 2007, this project was expanded to include the Aniak River through the implementation of a weir on the Salmon River (Aniak tributary) and additional mark-recapture activities in cooperation with the ADF&G Aniak River Sonar project. The Chinook salmon aerial survey program continues to be improved and is used for determining Chinook salmon distribution and abundance and for establishing escapement goals on systems that would otherwise go unmonitored. In addition, improvements have been made in Chinook salmon genetic stock identification, which will be useful to identify the stock of origin of harvested Chinook salmon. Results from all Chinook salmon monitoring programs including mark and recapture studies, weir escapement monitoring, test fishery data, commercial and subsistence harvest statistics, and aerial surveys are being used in a run reconstruction program. This program is designed to estimate annual Kuskokwim River Chinook salmon run abundance dating back to the mid-1970s. Information from the run reconstruction program can be used to estimate current and historical exploitation of Kuskokwim River Chinook salmon and will allow for the development of brood tables and drainage wide escapement goals. The statistical model being developed from the reconstruction program is being designed to allow for estimating total run abundance in future years based on data inputs from longer term monitoring programs such as weirs, aerial surveys, and harvest statistics without the need for annual mark and recapture abundance estimates.

In 2005, 2006, and 2007, a radiotelemetry study of sockeye salmon has led to an improved understanding of the distribution and abundance of this species as it gains importance for both subsistence and commercial fishing in the Kuskokwim Area. In 2007, 7 weirs and 1 sonar project evaluated salmon escapements throughout the Kuskokwim River drainage. The weirs assess escapement of all salmon species and the sonar project (Aniak River) estimates chum salmon escapement. These projects are well distributed geographically throughout the drainage to allow evaluation of escapements spatially and temporally. Coho salmon are currently the most valuable commercially harvested species in the Kuskokwim River and recent changes in run abundance necessitate better understanding of these stocks. Beginning in 2008, a 3-year mark-recapture radiotelemetry project will assess the stock-specific run timing, distribution, and abundance of Kuskokwim River coho salmon. Similar to the Chinook salmon run reconstruction program, this project will also allow for the development of a statistical model to estimate historical total annual coho salmon run abundance from 1981 to 2009 using mark and recapture, harvest, test-fish, and tributary escapement data.

The ONC inseason subsistence harvest monitoring program in the lower river near Bethel provides qualitative run timing and relative abundance information through surveys of local subsistence fishers. Project findings are incorporated into the management process along with information from other sources. This information, in conjunction with the BTF project and commercial harvest catch rate information, provides an early season index of salmon abundance and run timing as fish pass through the lower river. The inseason subsistence monitoring process also provides an avenue for local user input in determining salmon run abundance and corresponding management strategies.

Mundy (1995) provided an independent evaluation of Kuskokwim River salmon research and monitoring titled "Recommendations for Strengthening the Cooperative Management Process of the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group". He made 3 recommendations: 1) Develop detailed agreements and understandings on procedures to be followed during the season, and on the needs of the user groups, prior to each harvest season. Communicate the agreements and understandings by mailing to the villages and harvesters and other concerned parties; 2) Commission an annual postseason audit of how well the management program achieved the agreed upon objectives, including an analysis of how to improve attainment of the objectives in the next season; 3) Continue and accelerate the process of improving the quality of information and the rigor of the assumptions on which fishery management decisions are based. Improvements continue to be made toward strengthening the cooperative management process of the Kuskokwim Salmon Management Working Group through incorporation of these recommendations.

CONCLUSIONS

Continued discussion through the Working Group Process between fishers from throughout the drainage and State and Federal agency representatives encourages dialogue between all parties. Fishers are informed of findings from salmon run assessment projects and are given the tools to interpret the information. Agency personnel have a chance to hear fishers' points of view and gain by traditional knowledge and perspectives. All parties are able to share valuable information regarding the status and success of fishing activities at any given time or from an historical perspective. Through this process, agency and Working Group members reached consensus in fishery management actions taken during the 2007 season.

Participation in the Working Group process requires a great deal of time from Working Group members and agency staff. Funding provided by FIS 06-307 is an essential part of enhancing the Working Group process. The funding provided by OSM allows ADF&G staff to more effectively prepare for meetings through better and more frequent distribution of updated fishery status information in a standardized format. The funding also provided travel for Working Group members to participate in fishery meetings relevant to issues concerning Kuskokwim River fisheries, such as the postseason meeting in Anchorage and Kuskokwim Area interagency meetings. In 2007, OSM funding allowed some Working Group representatives to participate in the BOF process and attend the AYK SSI symposium. Additional funds for ADF&G staff time in support of the Working Group process throughout the year was provided through state general funds. These additional funds provided a substantial match to the Working Group from OSM funding. The combined federal and state funds have further strengthened the Working Group process.

Working Group representative participation in meetings located outside the Kuskokwim drainage allows for an exchange of information between members and fishery assessment project leaders and research planners. Working Group representatives were also able to testify at regulatory meetings in support of Working Group positions. The relationship between Working Group members, project leaders, research planners, and policy makers continues to be fostered, and these interactions are critical to the Working Group process. This relationship ensures that stakeholders remain up-to-date on new information and maintain their direct involvement in the management of the fishery.

Agreements and understanding of the fishery management procedures are dictated by the policies and regulations that guide the management of the Kuskokwim River salmon fishery. To meet Mundy's (1995) recommendation of communicating this information with fishers, the information is distributed preseason as the annual outlook and management strategy. Information from the outlook and management strategy is included in articles submitted to local media and during some years, ads have been included in local newspapers to further inform fishers of fishery management strategies.

Many of the recommendations made by Mundy (1995) have been acted upon to improve the quality of the information and the rigor of the assumptions that fishery management decisions are based upon. The test fish program has been further standardized (Bue and Martz 2006), a stock identification program is ongoing, a Chinook and sockeye salmon assessment programs have been implemented, escapement objectives have been established, and an inseason subsistence monitoring program has been developed to assist in management decision processes. Additionally, many cooperative fishery assessment projects have been established between agencies and local organizations such as ONC, AVCP, KNA, CVRF, BSFA and the MNVC. These cooperative programs have gone a long way toward gaining local fisher acceptance for program support and project findings.

Although progress has been made toward strengthening the cooperative management process, efforts are ongoing and will require continued participation by area stakeholders. It will be essential to maintain the interaction of Working Group members with fishery managers, researchers, and policy makers. The task of strengthening the Working Group process and elevating it to its current status was made possible by funding provided by OSM for staff support, member travel, and communications through teleconference, fax, and phone.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Working Group process should continue and be supported. Local residents want and need to be informed of area fishery status and issues and want to be involved in the management process. This interest comes from their dependence on fisheries resources for their sustenance, spiritual well being and income to afford participation in their subsistence way of life. We recommend that the current process be maintained and the following actions be pursued:

1. While the preseason meeting can be conducted by teleconference, every effort should be made to get Working Group members together in person post season to review management strategies and forecasts for the upcoming season and discuss relevant issues.

2. ADF&G staff and Working Group efforts should be maintained to inform area fishers of fishery status and management strategies through discussion, news releases, newspaper articles, and radio talk shows.
3. The current method of distributing pre-meeting information packets to Working Group members and interested parties by fax or email should be maintained. When possible, the summary of the most recent meeting should be distributed with the information packet for the next meeting.
4. Resources should be maintained to provide Working Group members with travel funds for participation in regulatory and policy meetings with the BOF (and FSB?). Their involvement in this process (these processes?) is essential in developing and reaching understanding and agreement on regulatory fisheries issues in the Kuskokwim Area.
5. Travel funds should be maintained for Working Group member participation in other fishery related meetings associated with the Kuskokwim Area, such as the bi-annual interagency meetings in Anchorage, to allow them to contribute and stay informed of management and research planning programs and regulatory issues.
6. Efforts must continue to select and maintain informed alternates for each Working Group seat. Currently the upriver elder representative does not have an alternate. Some seats that have ample representation are often unfilled at meetings. It is important to consider the possibility of scheduling conflicts for meetings and to gauge the interest and commitment of prospective members in order to ensure balanced representation from across the Kuskokwim River drainage for each meeting.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to thank the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group members, ADF&G Kuskokwim Area and Regional fishery staff, USFWS Yukon–Kuskokwim Delta Refuge staff and OSM staff, RAC members and those individuals and groups that have participated in this open and voluntary cooperative management process. Thanks to those that reviewed this document to the Working Group process: Donald Rivard, OSM, Fisheries Division, USFWS.

Improvements have been made toward strengthening the cooperative management process of the Kuskokwim Salmon Management Working Group through funding provided by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Subsistence Management in support of project FIS 06-307. The funding provided by OSM in 2007 allowed dedicated staff to more effectively prepare for meetings by providing complete and frequent distribution of updated fishery status information in a standardized format. The funding also allowed travel for Working Group members to participate in fishery meetings located outside the drainage. Success of the Working Group relies on funding for material preparation, communication, and travel to maintain the interaction of Working Group members with fishery managers, fishery project leaders, research planners, and policy makers.

From 2002 to 2004, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Subsistence Management, provided \$130,900 (\$52,200 annually) in funding support to ADF&G for the Working Group

Support project (FIS 01-116) through the Fisheries Resource Monitoring program, under OSM Agreement Number 701812J442, ADF&G Cooperative Agreement Number 02-086.

Beginning in 2006 and through 2008, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Subsistence Management, will provide \$97,154 (\$32,385 annually) in funding support to ADF&G for the Inseason Support for Cooperative Management of the Kuskokwim River Subsistence Fishery project (FIS 06-307) through the Fisheries Resource Monitoring program, under OSM Agreement Number 701812J620, ADF&G Cooperative Agreement Number 06-093.

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FIGURES



Figure 1.—Kuskokwim Management Area.

APPENDIX A

BY-LAWS OF THE
KUSKOKWIM RIVER SALMON MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP

PURPOSE

To provide local fishers and other users with an avenue for being directly involved in the management of their fishery. The goal is for all parties to work together to reach a consensus on management of the fishery. Final emergency order authority continues to rest with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

RULES OF CONDUCT

Meetings will be conducted by Robert's Rules of Order. The sequence of meetings is as follows:

- I. Call to order (by chair)
- II. Roll Call (by chair)
- III. Invocation
- IV. Approval of Minutes
- V. Approval of Agenda
- VI. People to be heard
- VII. Continuing Business

A. Reports

1. False Pass Fishery
2. Processor Report
3. Traditional Native Fishery Knowledge
4. Subsistence Reports
5. Test Fisheries
6. Commercial Catch
7. Escapement Projects
(sonar, towers, weirs)
8. Aerial Surveys

-continued-

- 9. Weather
 - B. Recommendation
 - C. Motion for Discussion and Action
-
- VIII. Old Business
 - IX. New Business
 - X. Meeting Action Announcement
 - XI. Date, Time, and Place of next meeting
 - XII. Adjournment
- (This sequence may be changed at the discretion of the Group)

Continuing Business reports may not exceed 3 minutes in length, excluding questions and answers.

Under the ‘People to be heard’ agenda item the public would be provided an opportunity to discuss only topics or items which are **not** already listed as specific agenda items. A member of the public may also ask the Group to place an issue on the agenda.

Unlike other institutions or committees, the Working Group operates on a consensus basis. A simple majority vote of the members is not sufficient to pass a motion. For the purposes of the Group all motions must pass by a consensus of the members present at the meeting. If 7 (seven) or less of the members are present, then consensus is defined as a situation wherein either all voting members vote "yea" or all voting members vote "yea" except for one "nay" vote. If 8 (eight) or more of the members are present, then consensus is defined as a situation wherein either all voting members vote "yea" or all voting members vote "yea" except for two "nay" votes. Note that the Alaska Department of Fish and Game does not have voting status on motions concerning the setting of commercial openings.

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ARTICLE I, OFFICE

The principal office of the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group (Working Group) shall be located in the City of Bethel, Alaska 99559.

The current address of the principal office is, P.O. Box 1467, Bethel, Alaska 99559. The physical address is 570 4th Avenue.

ARTICLE II, MEMBERS

Section 1. Members: The Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group shall have 13 member organizations or constituencies. These members represent: Elders (Upriver, Downriver) (2), Subsistence Fishermen (Lower River, Middle River, Upriver, and Headwaters) (4), Processors (1), Commercial Fishermen (1), Sport Fishers (1), Member at Large (1), Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Committees (Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, Western Interior) (2), and the Department of Fish and Game (1). Each member of the Working Group will designate a representative and an alternate in the event the representative is unable to attend a meeting. In the case where more than one person is nominated to represent a member organization or constituency, the Working Group will appoint one of the nominees to represent the member organization or constituency.

Section 2. Annual Meeting:

An annual meeting of the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group may be held in Bethel during the month of March at the call of the Co-Chairs. The purpose of the meeting will be to conduct any unfinished administrative functions that the Working Group needs to complete for the following year.

Section 3. Special Meetings:

Special meetings of the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group may be called by the Co-Chairs.

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Section 4. Notice of Meetings:

The Department of Fish and Game will be responsible for informing the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group members of the time, place and date of any meetings. Notification of meetings to the Working Group will be not less than 48 hours (when possible) or more than 30 days in advance.

Section 5. Quorum:

In order for a meeting of the Working Group to be held and for actions taken at a meeting to be legitimate, it is necessary for there to be a quorum at a meeting, that is at least 7 of the 13 member constituencies must be represented.

If a quorum of the full committee is not present, business may be conducted in executive session. The executive committee is composed of at least 5 representatives: one Co-Chair, any two representatives of the following member groups; Member at Large, Processors, Commercial Fisherman, and any two representatives of the following member groups; Lower, Middle, Upriver and Headwaters Subsistence, Federal RAC, Sport Fisher.

ARTICLE III. REPRESENTATIVES

Section 1. Working Group:

The Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group shall be comprised of 13 representatives from the areas described in Article II, Section 1.

Section 2. General Powers:

The Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group shall make recommendations to the Department of Fish and Game for the purposes of managing the salmon fisheries on the Kuskokwim River after subsistence and commercial catch, test fishery, weir, tower and sonar reports and other information are provided to the group.

Section 3. Voting Rights:

Each Working Group member shall be entitled to one vote. Alternates designated by the member in writing shall also be entitled to one vote in the absence of that member's representative. Members may abstain from voting on any motion.

The Elder member shall designate any respected Elder to serve as their alternate.

Working Group members must hear all the Continuing Business reports to vote on a motion to set commercial openings

Section 4. Resignation:

Any member or representative may resign by submitting a letter of resignation to a Co-Chair of the Working Group. The resignation must give the Working Group at least 4 weeks notification so that a new member or representative may be appointed.

Section 5. Vacancies:

A vacancy on the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group because of death, resignation, removal, disqualification, forfeiture or otherwise, may be filled by the Working Group from nominations by member groups for the remainder of the term.

Section 6. Forfeit, participation or removal:

- A. FORFEIT. The Working Group will give written notification, by certified mail, to any member organization, their representative and alternate whose seat has not been represented for 2 consecutive meetings that their membership in the Working Group will be forfeited if the seat is not represented by the following meeting. Whereas, a member's failure to be represented at a meeting is excused by the Working Group, as appropriate, such failure shall not be considered an absence within this section.

- B. PARTICIPATION. No representative will be allowed to participate in a Working Group meeting who is deemed to be under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs.

- C. REMOVAL. A representative may be removed from their seat on the Working Group for cause and must be provided the opportunity for a hearing before the Working Group. A representative may be removed for cause for any reason allowed, including but not limited to, conviction of a felony, gross misconduct, violation of their trust to the Working Group as a representative, or harassment of any kind to the other representatives of the Working Group.

ARTICLE IV. OFFICERS OF THE WORKING GROUP

Section 1. Officers:

The Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group shall elect Co-Chairs for the

-continued-

purpose of conducting meetings. The Co-Chairs will be elected annually at the first meeting occurring after March 1st. The Working Group shall elect or appoint other officers as deemed necessary. An officer of the Working Group may not hold more than one position. The Co-Chairs must be official representatives of the Working Group.

Section 2. Terms of Office:

Each representative of the Working Group shall be elected or appointed every 2 years. A representative shall hold their position until their successor has been duly elected or appointed and has been qualified

Section 3. Co-Chair:

A Co-Chair of the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group shall preside at all meetings of the Working Group.

Section 4. Other Committees:

The Co-Chairs shall have the authority to appoint representatives to serve on committees as deemed necessary. Any representative appointed to a committee may be removed in the best interest of the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group.

ARTICLE V. DEFINITIONS

- 1. Member.** The member organizations or constituencies of the Working Group as listed in Article II, Section 1.
- 2. Alternate.** An individual designated to act in the place of a member or representative unable to attend a meeting.
- 3. Representative.** Person designated by a Working Group member organization or constituency to represent that member organization or constituency at Working Group meetings.
- 4. District W-1.** The Lower Kuskokwim River consists of the Kuskokwim River from a line between Apokak Slough and Popokamiut, upstream to a line between ADF&G regulatory markers located about eight miles above the Tuluksak River.

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5. **District W-2.** The middle Kuskokwim River consists of the Kuskokwim River from ADF&G regulatory markers located at the upstream entrance to the second slough on the west bank downstream from Kalskag to the regulatory markers at Chuathbaluk.
6. **Elder.** Any respected Elder that resides within the Kuskokwim Area.
7. **Headwaters Subsistence.** Representatives that are active subsistence users in the Kuskokwim River drainage from McGrath upstream to the headwaters of the Kuskokwim River.
8. **Upriver Subsistence.** Representatives that are active subsistence users in the Kuskokwim River drainage above Chuathbaluk.
9. **Middle River Subsistence.** Representatives that are active subsistence users in the Kuskokwim River drainage from Lower Kalskag to Chuathbaluk within District W-2.
10. **Lower River Subsistence.** Representatives that are active subsistence users in the Kuskokwim River drainage from Eek to Tuluksak within District W-1.
11. **Processor.** Representatives that own or operate commercial salmon buying and/or processing businesses within District W-1 and W-2.
12. **Member at Large.** Representatives that are Area residents selected by the Working Group for their knowledge of, appreciation for, and experience with Kuskokwim River fisheries.
13. **Federal Regional Advisory Council.** Representatives that are current members of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta and Western Interior Advisory Councils and reside in the Kuskokwim Area.
14. **Commercial Fishermen.** Kuskokwim commercial fishing permit holder or crew member, supported by commercial fishing permit holders who fish primarily within Districts W-1 and W-2.
15. **Sport Fisher.** Representatives that actively participate in sports fishing within the Kuskokwim River drainage.

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- 16. Alaska Department of Fish and Game.** Representatives that are presently employed with ADF&G in Bethel. This position is an associate member and has no voting powers but has the authority to veto recommendations for commercial fishing periods from the Working Group. Final emergency order authority continues to rest with the ADF&G.

ARTICLE VI. AMENDMENT TO BY-LAWS

These by-laws may be altered, amended or repealed and new by-laws may be adopted by consensus of the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group representatives present at any regular or special meeting, if at least thirty (30) days written notice is given by certified mail, phone call, or intention to alter, amend or appeal or to adopt new by-laws at such meeting.

APPENDIX B

Appendix B1.-Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group Representation.

Effective April 19, 2007		
Seat	Member	Alternate
Downriver Elder	James Charles	Peter Miller
Upriver Elder	Iyana Gusty	vacant
Lower River Subsistence	Mike Williams	Greg Roczicka
Middle River Subsistence	Calvin Simeon	Wayne Morgan
Upper River Subsistence	Evelyn Thomas	Pete Mellick
		Sophie Gregory
Headwaters Subsistence	Nick Petruska	Nick Alexia Sr.
Processor	Vince Goddard (IFP)	Steve Sathers
	Joe Hall (CVS)	Perry Hendricks
		Jim Sartelli
Member at Large	Henry Lupie	Ron Simon
YK Delta RAC	Bob Aloysius	Mary Gregory
Commercial Fisher	Charlie Brown	Sam Alexie
Western Interior RAC	Ray Collins	Carl Morgan
Sport Fishing	LaMont Albertson	Bev Hoffman

19-Apr-07 Calvin Simeon, formerly Middle River Alternate, was named as Middle River Representative. The previous Middle River Subsistence Representative, Wayne Morgan, became Middle River Subsistence Alternate at his request.

APPENDIX C

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group		
IN-SEASON AGENDA FORM		
Teleconference Operator 1-800-235-0684		
Date: <u>September 27, 2007</u> Time: <u>10:00 a.m.</u> Meeting Place: <u>Bethel Fish and Game Office</u>		
CALL TO ORDER:	<u>LaMont Albertson</u>	<u>10:09 a.m.</u>
	Chairperson	Time
ROLL CALL:		
Upriver Elder: <u>Iyana Gusty</u>	Processor:	
Downriver Elder: <u>James Charles</u>	Member at Large: <u>Henry Lupie</u>	
Commercial Fisher: <u>Henry Lupie Hoffman</u>	Sport Fisher: <u>LaMont Albertson,</u>	
	Sport Fisher Alternate: <u>Bev Hoffman</u>	
Lower River Subsistence: <u>Greg Roczicka</u>	Western Interior RAC: <u>Ray Collins</u>	
Middle River Subsistence: <u>Calvin Simeon</u>	Y-K Delta RAC:	
Upper River Subsistence:	ADF&G: <u>John Linderman</u>	
Headwaters Subsistence: <u>Nick Petruska</u>		
INVOCATION: <u>James Charles</u>		
APPROVAL OF AGENDA: _____		
PEOPLE TO BE HEARD: _____		
COMMENTS FROM WORKING GROUP MEMBERS: _____		
CONTINUING BUSINESS:		
1. Final Subsistence Reports:		
a. Lower River: _____		
b. Middle River: _____		
c. ONC Subsistence Summary _____		
d. Upper River: _____		
e. Headwaters: _____		
2. Overview of 2007 Kuskokwim River salmon run assessment projects:		
a. Bethel Test fish _____		
b. Weirs/Sonar/Mark-Recapture/Aerial Surveys/Other: _____		
3. Commercial Catch Report: _____		
4. Processor Report: _____		
5. Sport Fish Report: _____		
6. Area M Report: _____		
7. Recommendation: _____		
8. Motion for Discussion and Action: _____		
9. Meeting Action Announcement: _____		
OLD BUSINESS: _____		
NEW BUSINESS:		
1. TEK of Customary Trade of Subsistence Harvested Salmon on the Yukon _____		
2. Review Coho Proposal _____		
3. Topics of discussion for Fall Meeting _____		
TIME, DATE AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING:		
Time	Date	Place
ADJOURNMENT TIME <u>12:55 p.m.</u>		

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Historical Summary, ONC Inseason Subsistence Catch Reports

Summary of Subsistence Salmon Information Collected by ONC Technicians^a

Year	Week Ending	Number of Families			Chinook salmon ^b			Chum salmon ^b			Sockeye salmon ^b		
		Inter-viewed	Fishing	Not Fishing	Very Good	Normal	Poor	Very Good	Normal	Poor	Very Good	Normal	Poor
2002	Jun 08	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND
	Jun 15	27	23	4	21	2	0	3	8	7	3	11	3
	Jun 22	33	25	8	17	5	3	12	9	3	2	10	10
	Jun 29	34	22	12	16	6	0	21	0	0	0	3	16
	Jul 06	34	5	29	0	2	3	3	2	0	0	0	5
	Jul 13	36	10	26	0	3	5	8	0	0	0	0	8
2003	Jun 07	18	9	9	7	2	0	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND
	Jun 14	33	24	9	22	2	0	0	2	0	0	3	0
	Jun 21	48	32	14	30	2	1	1	0	0	7	18	3
	Jun 28	50	34	16	30	4	0	3	9	13	27	7	0
	Jul 05	45	21	24	16	5	0	8	13	0	16	5	0
	Jul 12	46	14	32	0	12	2	13	1	0	0	12	2
2004	Jun 05	31	10	21	6	4	0	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND
	Jun 12	41	37	4	27	8	2	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND
	Jun 19	35	31	4	23	8	0	4	27	0	4	27	0
	Jun 26	43	31	12	19	12	0	24	7	0	5	22	4
	Jul 03	44	22	22	3	17	0	10	10	0	0	13	7
	Jul 10	44	13	31	0	10	0	8	2	0	0	4	6
2005	Jun 06	34	12	22	0	12	0	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND
	Jun 11	39	26	13	20	6	0	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND
	Jun 18	48	42	6	36	6	0	14	28	0	31	11	0
	Jun 25	48	34	14	25	5	0	19	15	0	28	6	0
	Jul 02	32	2	30	3	0	0	2	1	0	3	0	0
	Jul 09	22	2	20	0	2	0	1	1	0	1	1	0
2006	Jun 03	22	0	22	0	0	0	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND
	Jun 10	32	19	13	6	13	0	0	0	0	ND	ND	ND
	Jun 17	36	6	30	18	12	0	18	12	0	16	14	0
	Jun 25	48	43	5	34	9	0	39	4	0	8	24	11
	Jul 02	46	14	32	3	11	0	10	4	0	6	8	0
	Jul 09	38	8	30	0	8	0	2	6	0	3	5	0
2007	Jun 03	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND
	Jun 12	39	28	11	0	8	20	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND
	Jun 17	40	33	7	0	10	23	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND
	Jun 24	44	40	4	0	14	26	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND
	Jul 02	36	20	12	9	9	2	16	4	0	0	8	12
	Jul 08	33	10	23	6	4	0	8	2	0	3	7	0
Jul 14	33	6	27	0	0	6	0	2	4	0	1	5	

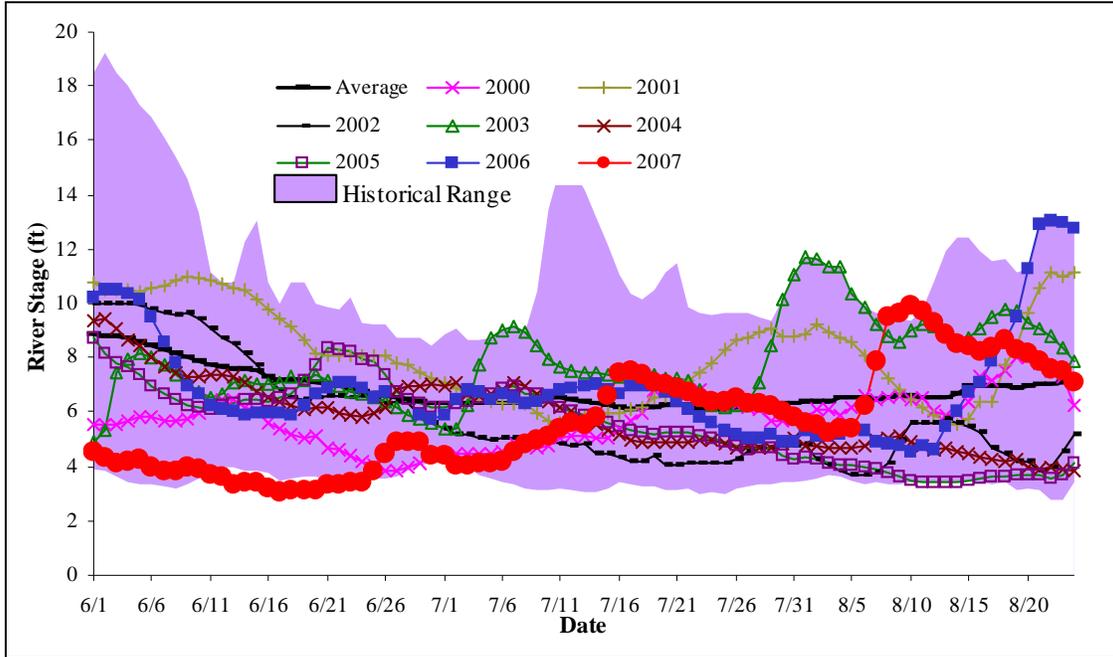
^a Only reports from the month of June and the first two weeks of July were used for comparison between years.

^b Responses from the question: "Compared with this time in a "Normal" year, how were catch rates for salmon this week"?

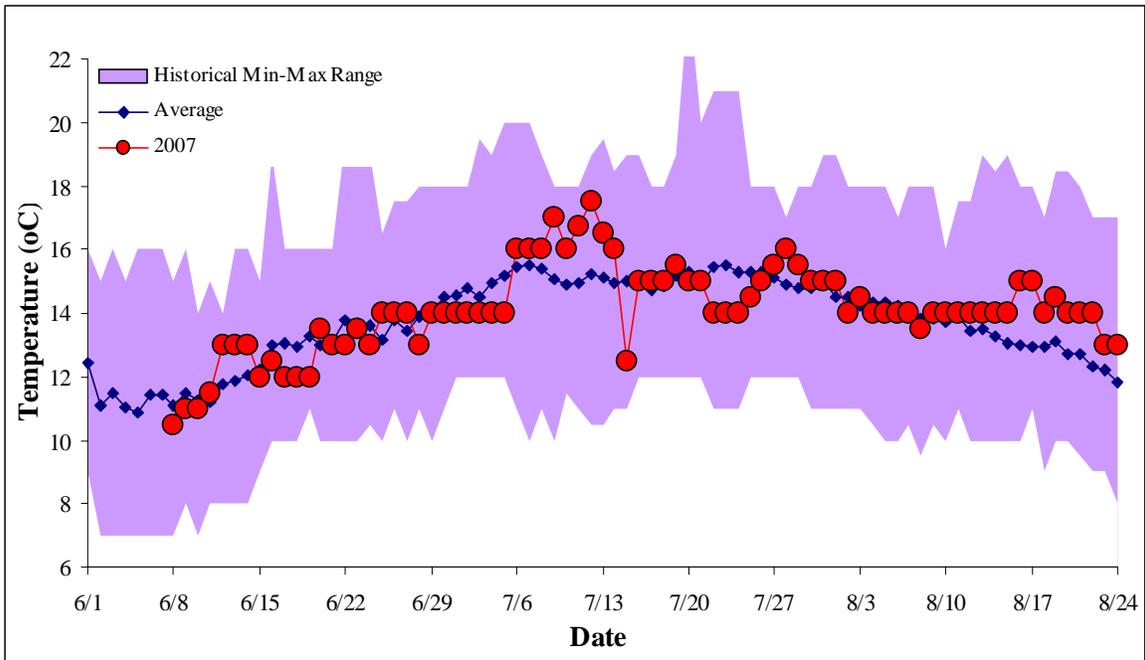
"ND" indicates that no data was collected.

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Historical water level, Kuskokwim River at Crooked Creek, 1984-present, USGS.

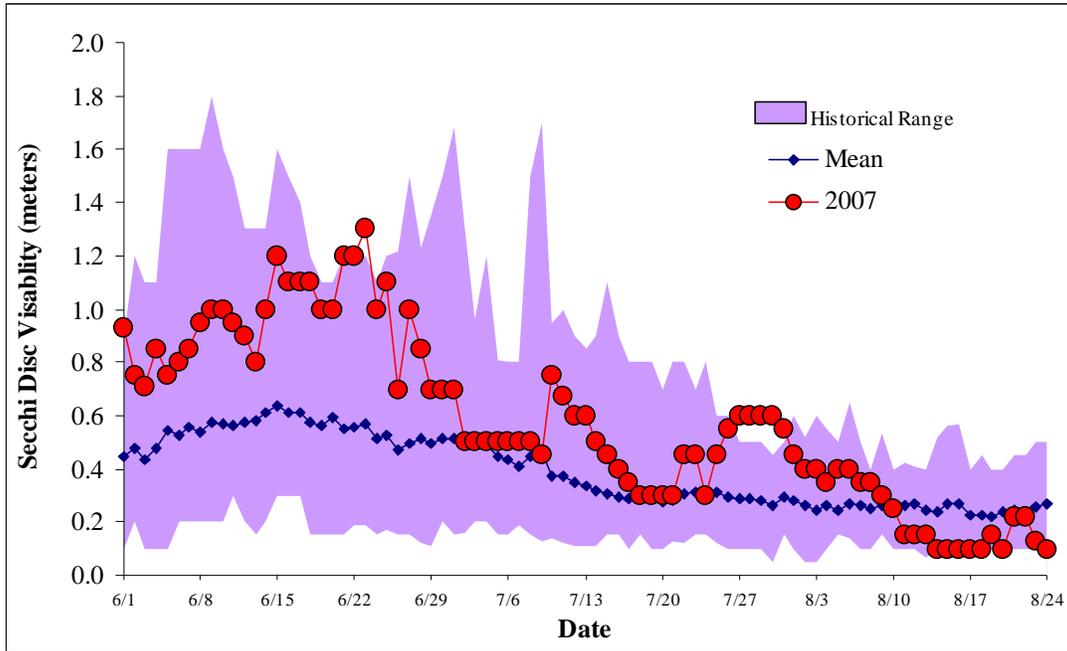


Historical water temperature, Kuskokwim River, 1984-present, BTF.



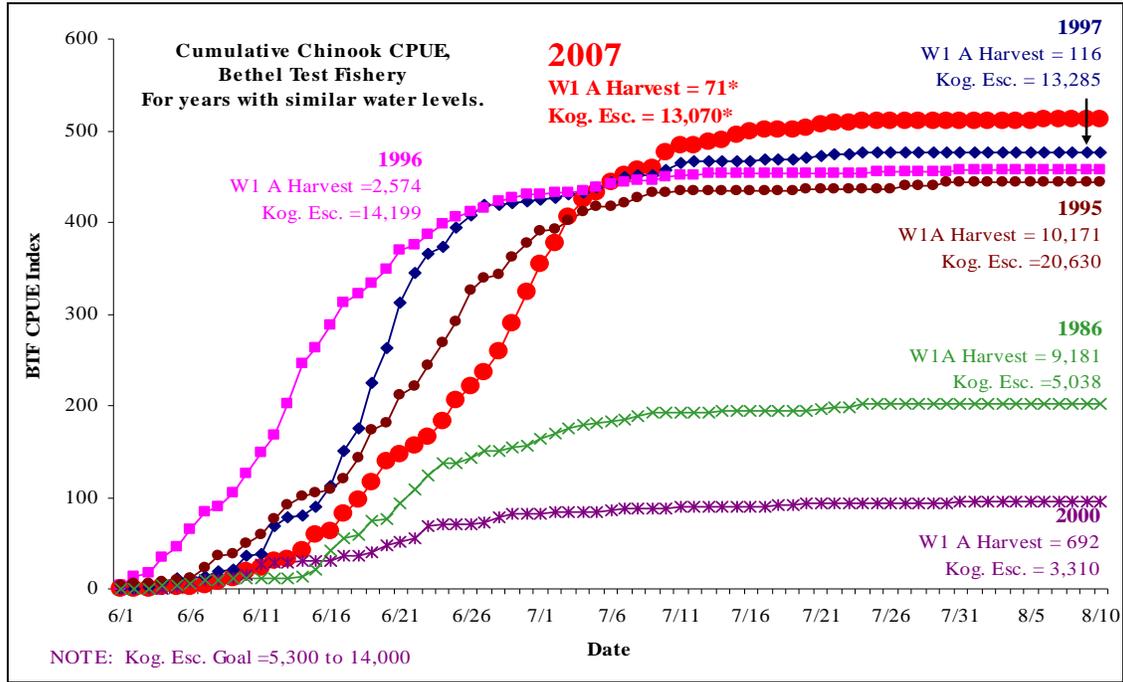
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Historical water clarity, Kuskokwim River, 1984-present, BTF.



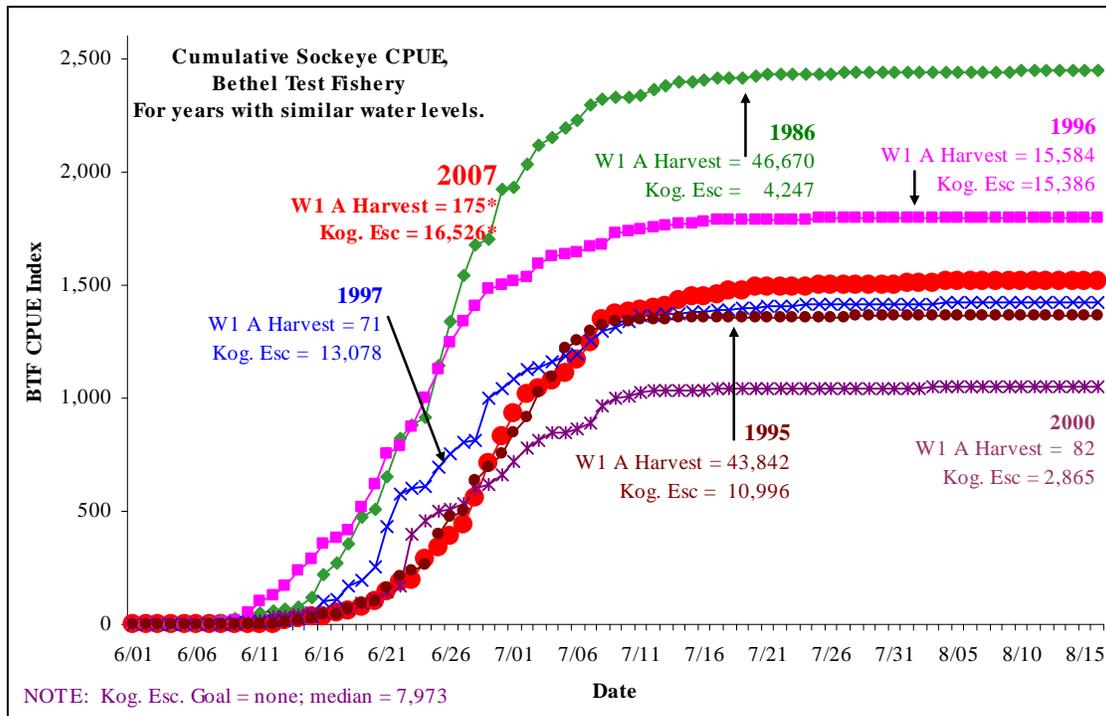
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Bethel Test Fishery, Chinook Salmon.



*Escapement estimates are preliminary and subject to revision.

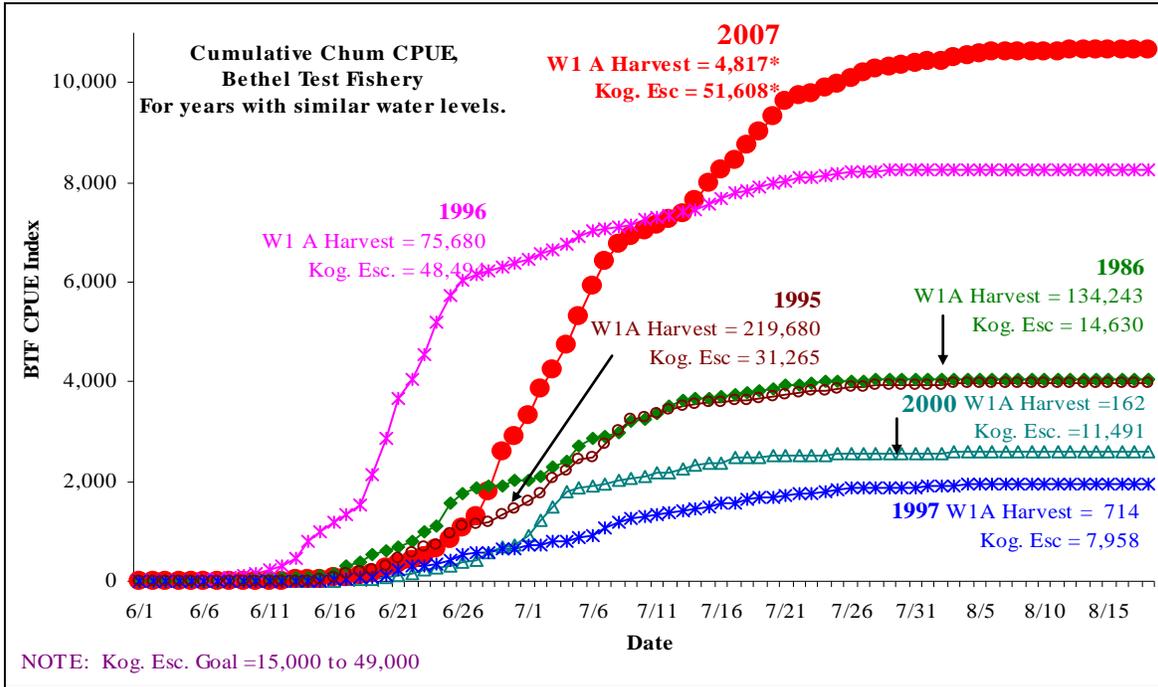
Bethel Test Fishery, Sockeye Salmon.



*Escapement estimates are preliminary and subject to revision.

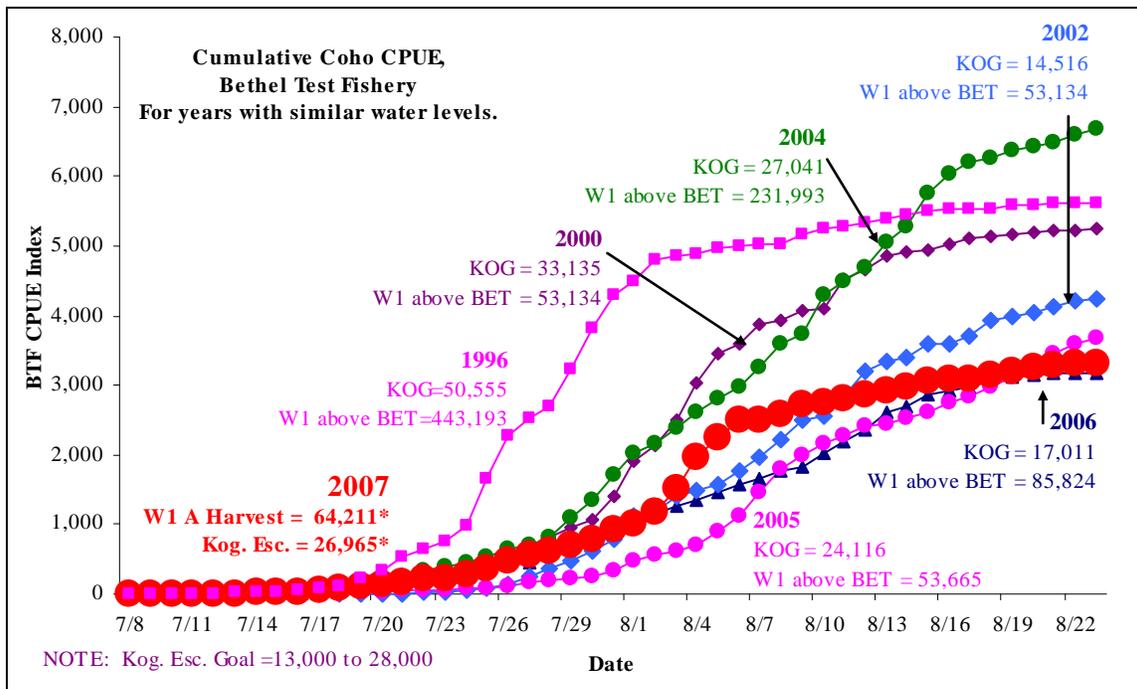
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Bethel Test Fishery, Chum Salmon.



*Escapement estimates are preliminary and subject to revision.

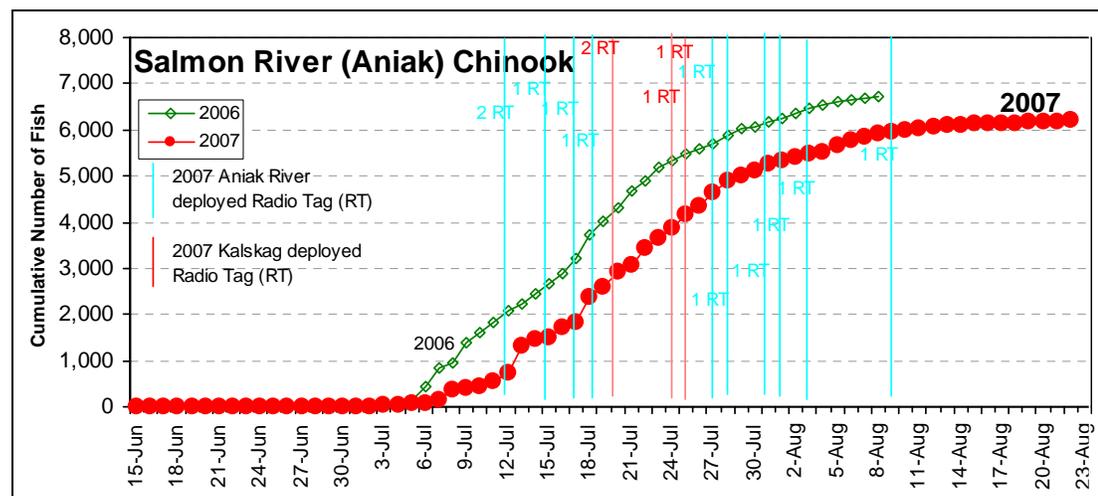
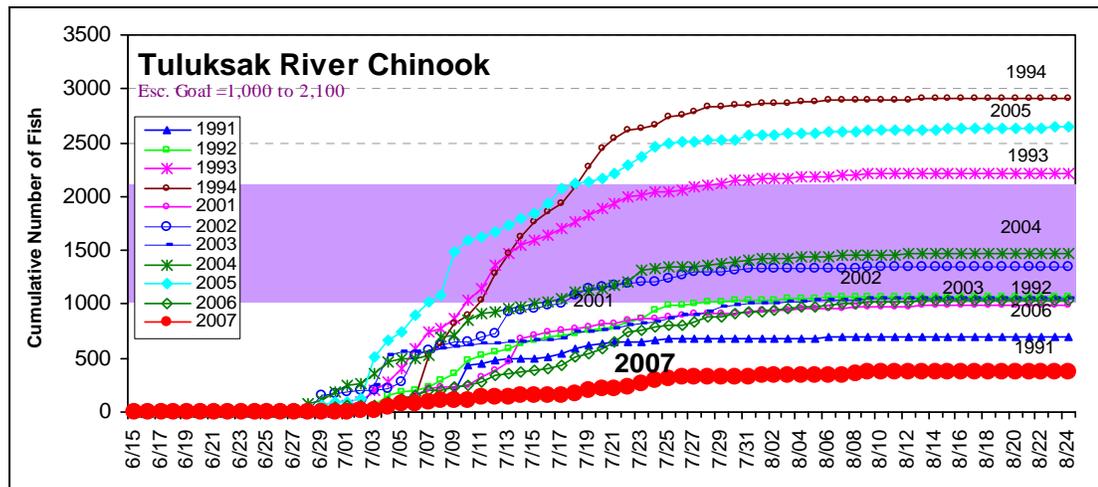
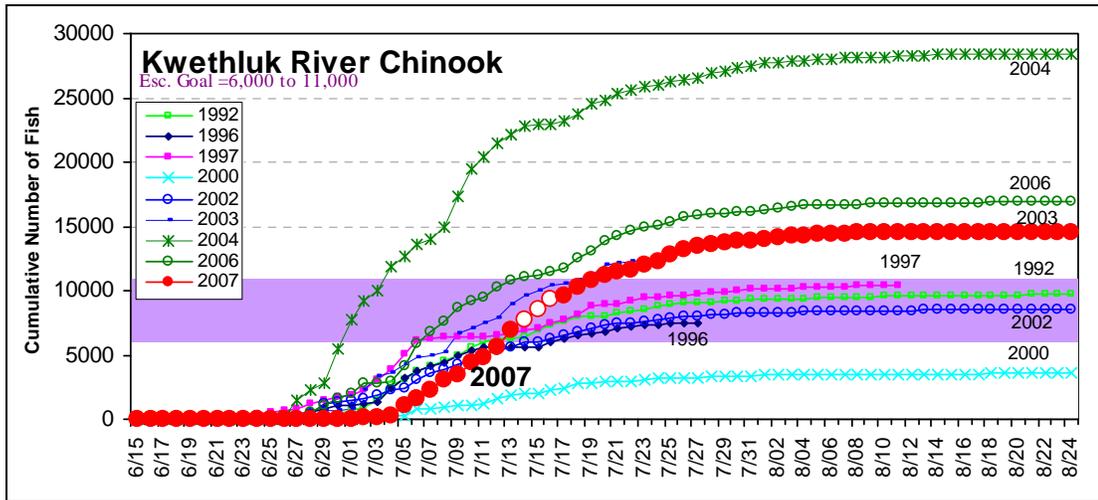
Bethel Test Fishery, Coho Salmon.



*Escapement estimates are preliminary and subject to revision.

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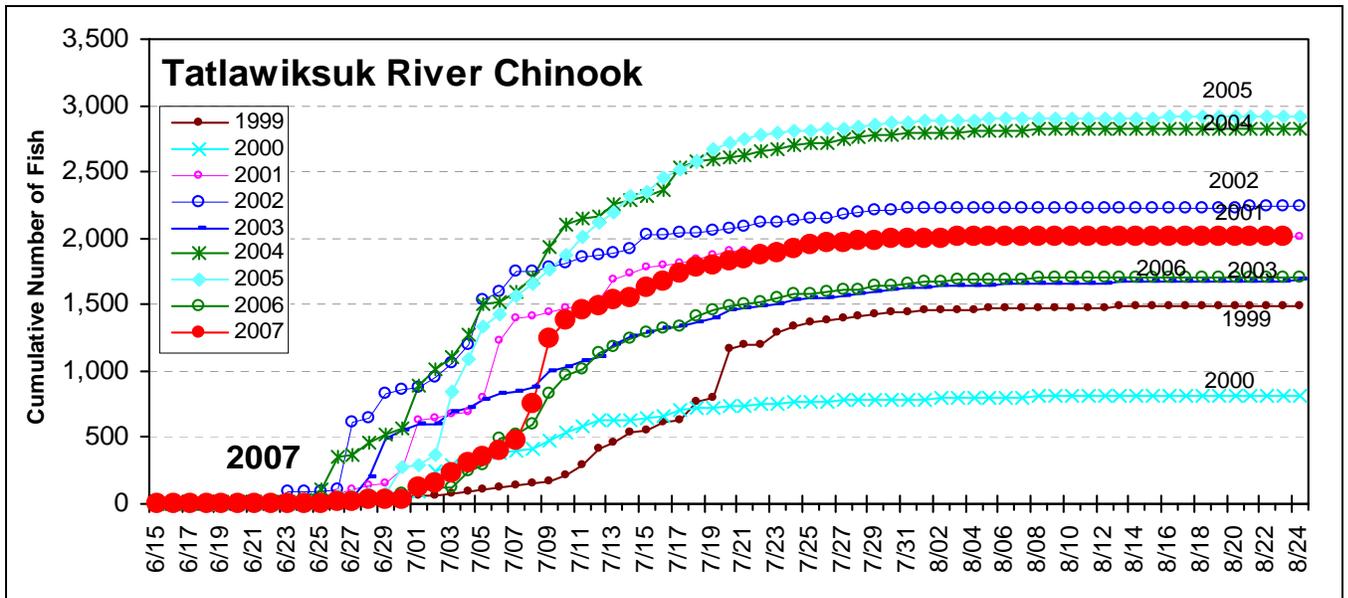
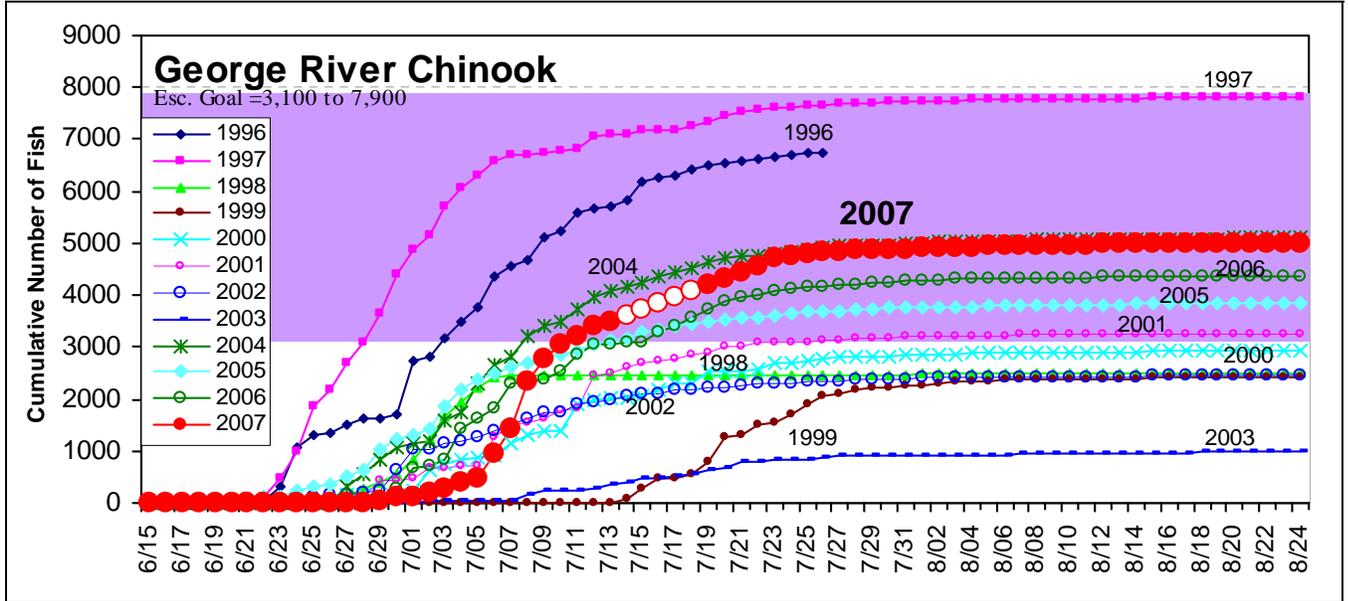
Cumulative Chinook Salmon Weir Passage.



Note: Clear data points indicate incomplete daily counts.

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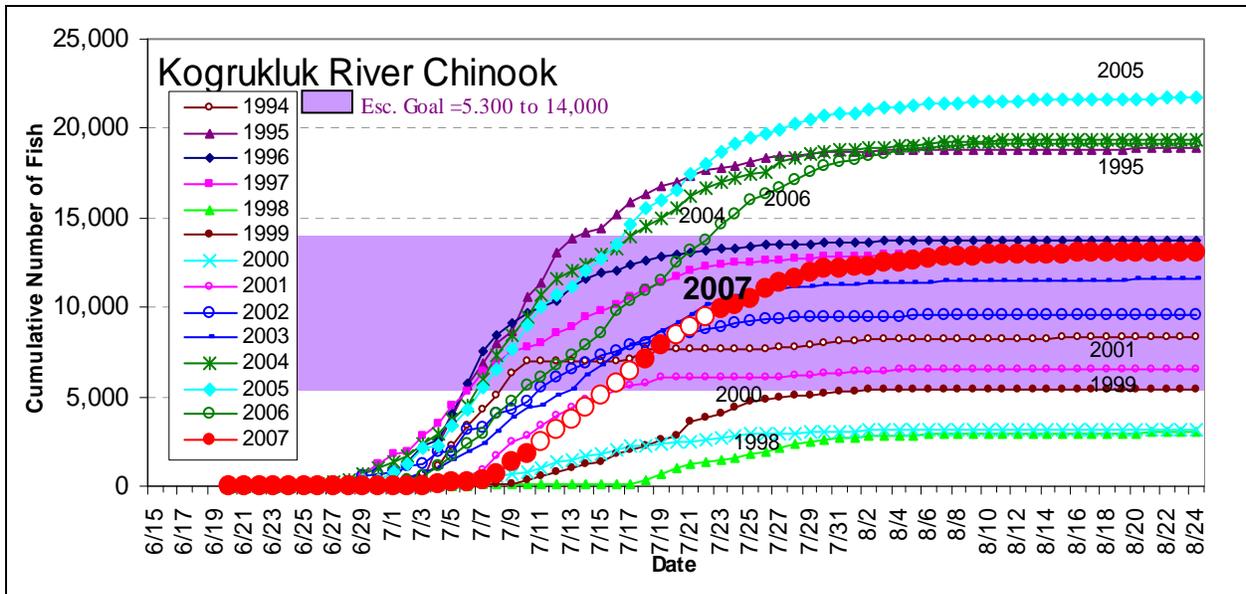
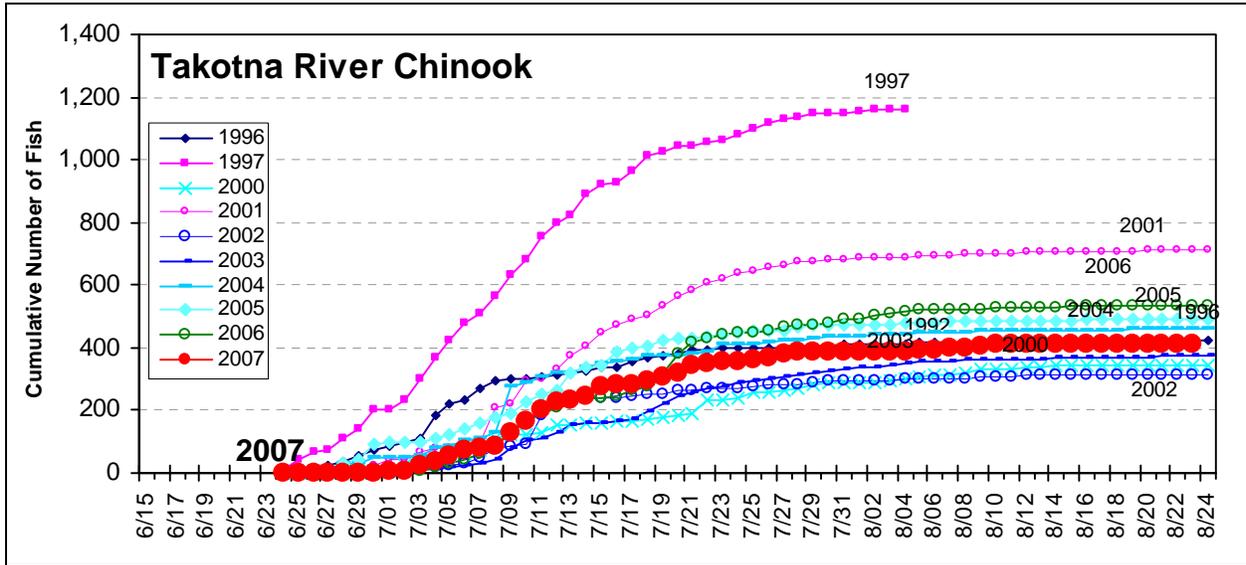
Cumulative Chinook Salmon Weir Passage (cont.)



Note: Clear data points indicate incomplete daily counts.

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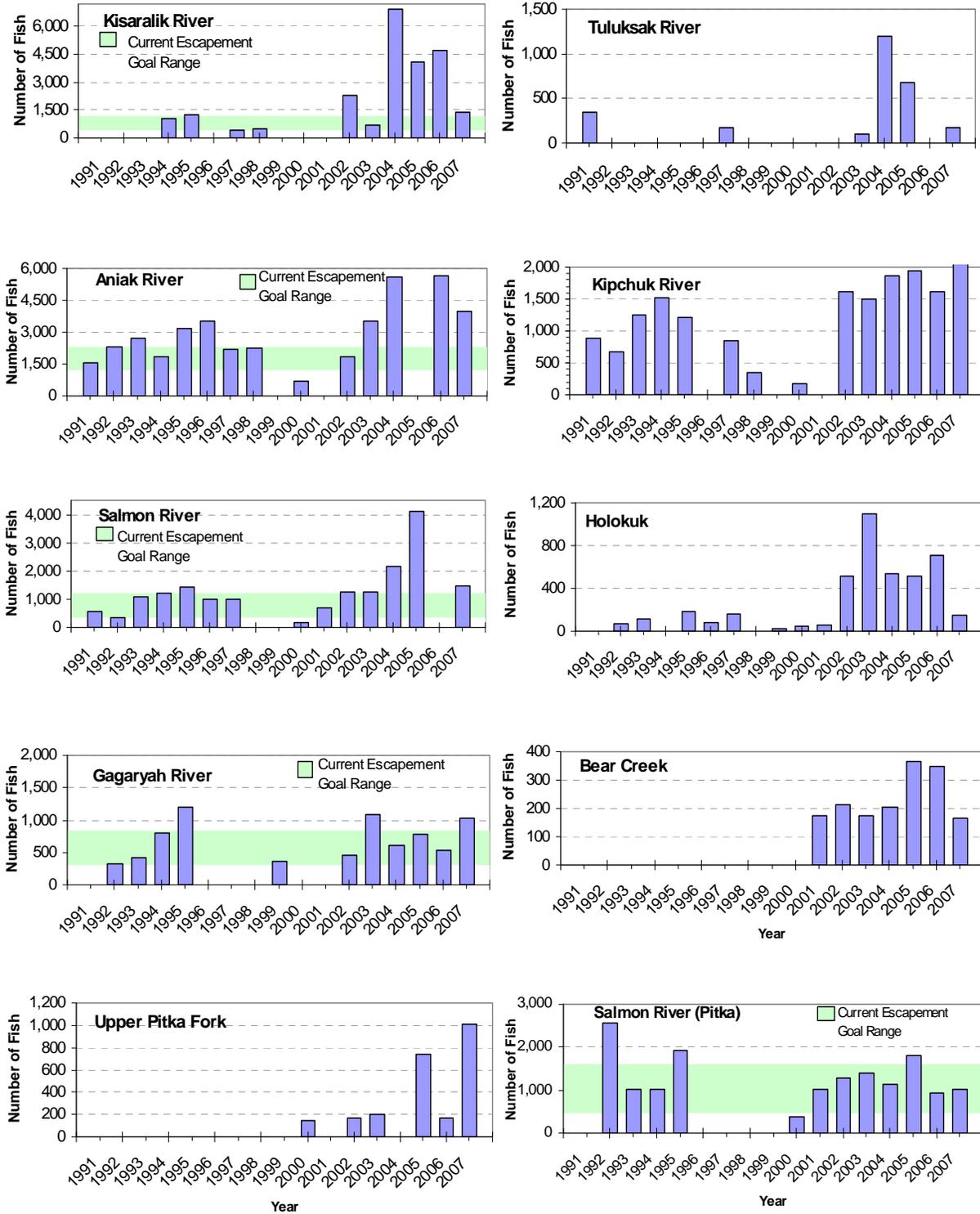
Cumulative Chinook Salmon Weir Passage (cont.)



Note: Clear data points indicate incomplete daily counts.

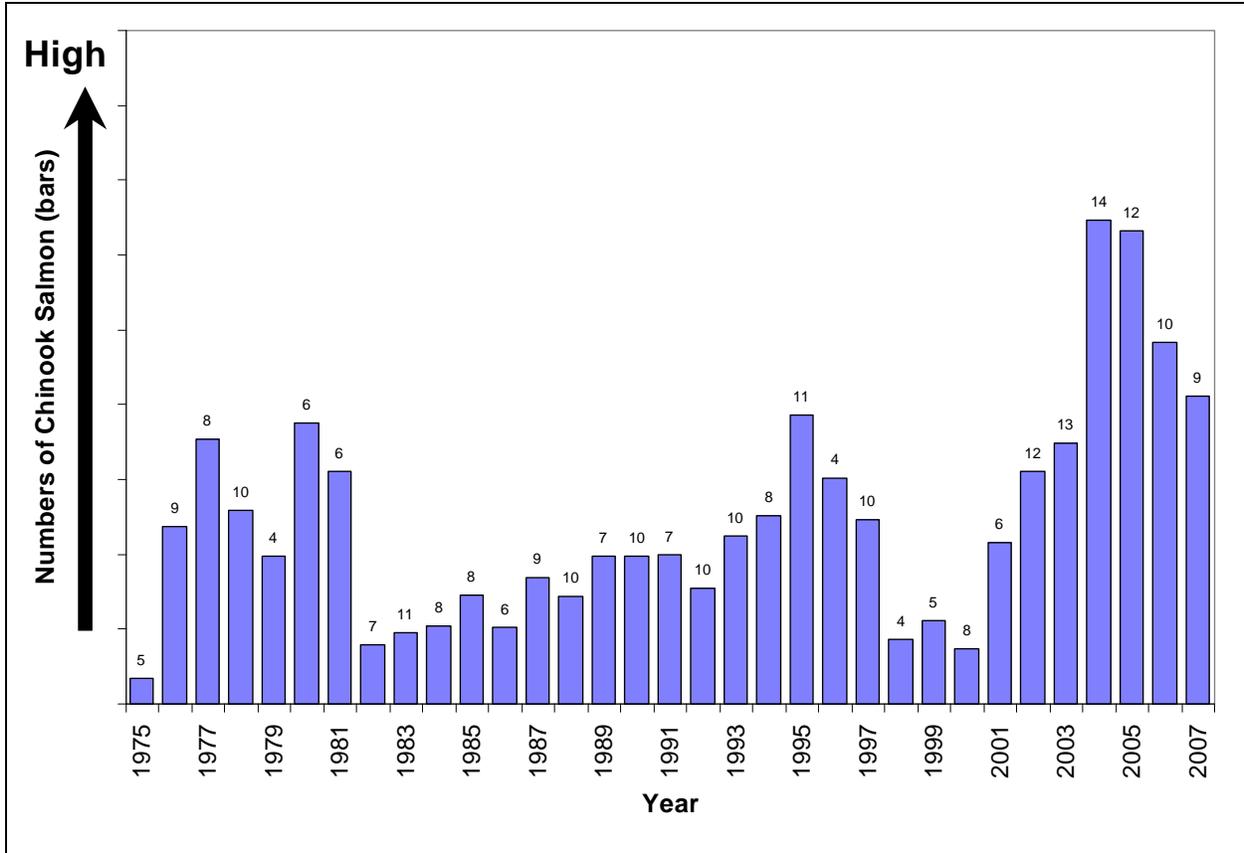
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Aerial Survey Totals, Chinook Salmon



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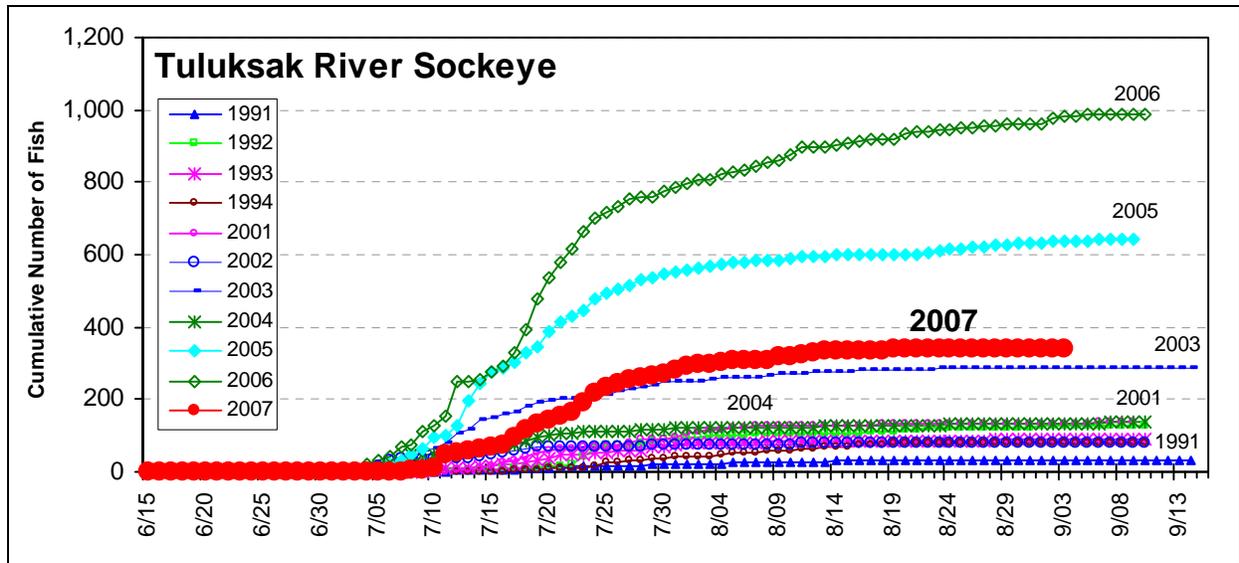
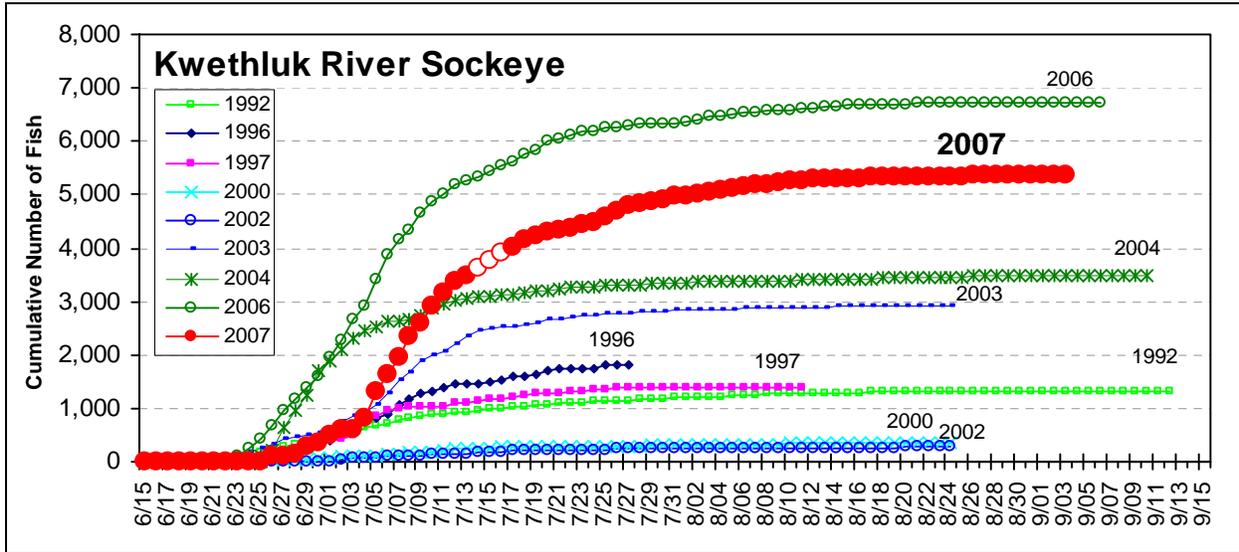
Kuskokwim River Chinook Salmon Escapement Index



Kuskokwim River Chinook salmon escapement trends, 1975 to 2006. The Kuskokwim River Chinook salmon escapement index is a composite of median historical escapements for 13 possible index streams throughout the Kuskokwim River drainage. The index is solely designed to show trends in Chinook salmon escapement in the Kuskokwim River drainage since 1975. The number on the top of each bar represents the number of streams where escapement was successfully evaluated in that year.

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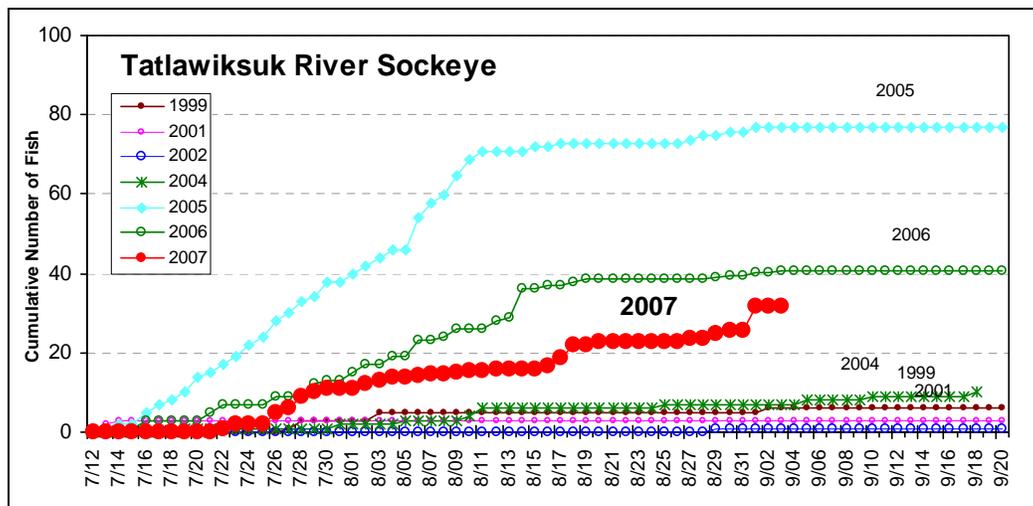
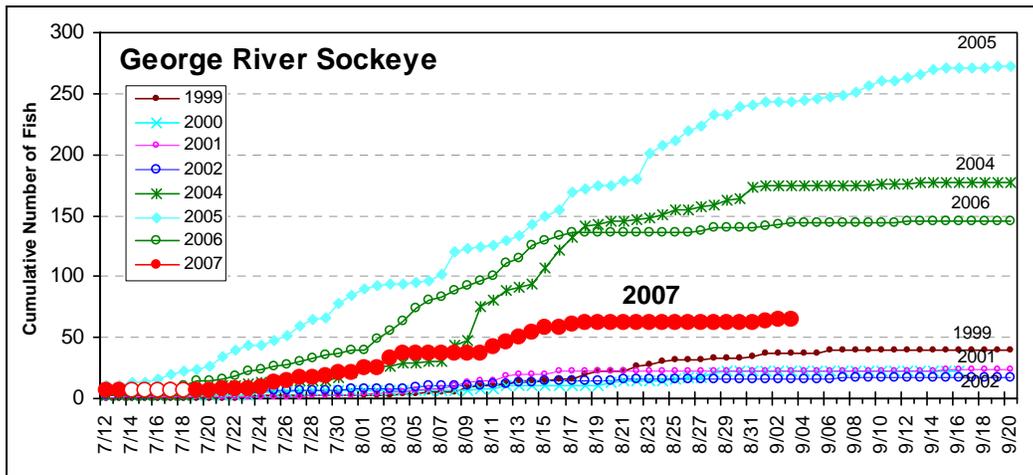
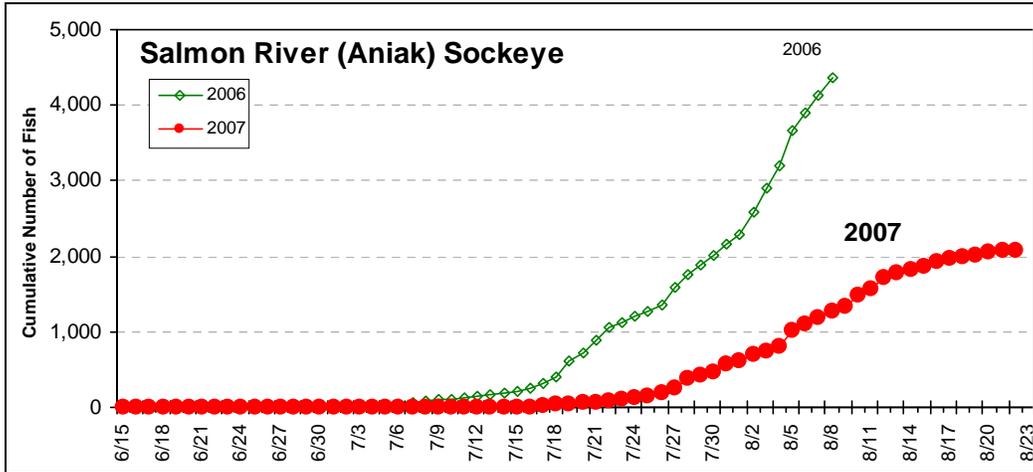
Cumulative Sockeye Salmon Weir Passage.



Note: Clear data points indicate incomplete daily counts.

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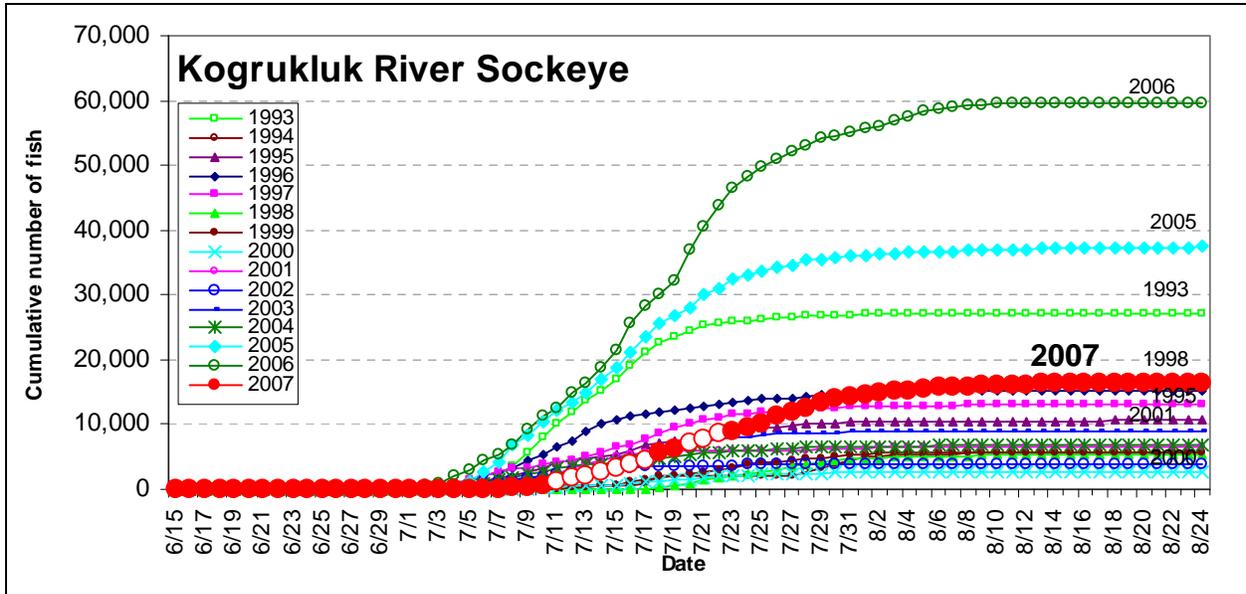
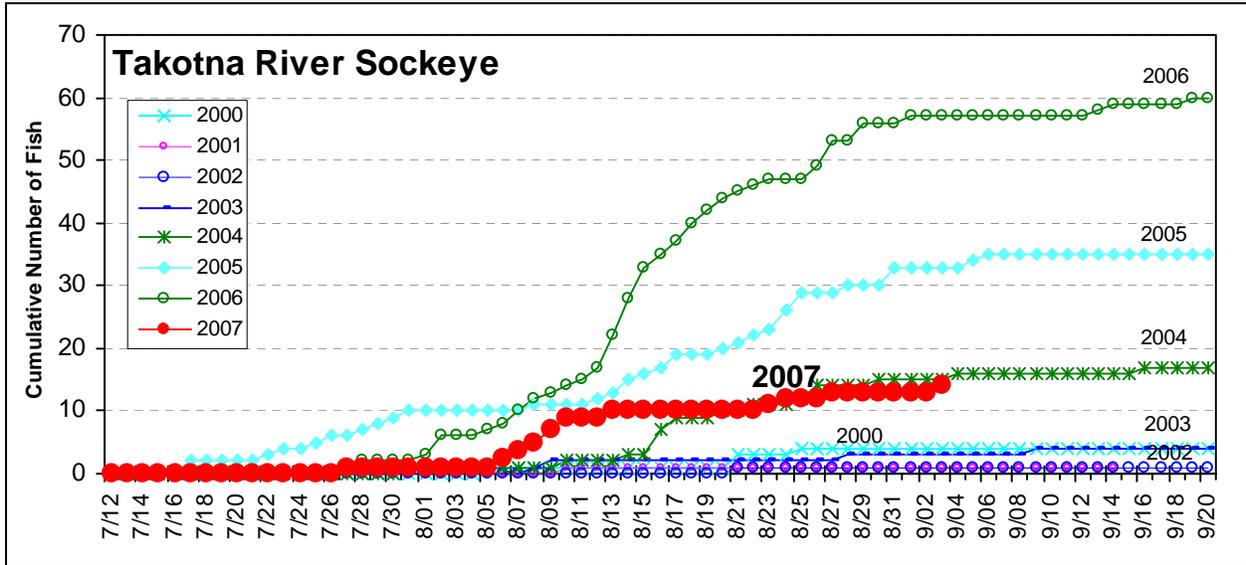
Cumulative Sockeye Salmon Weir Passage (cont.)



Note: Clear data points indicate incomplete daily counts.

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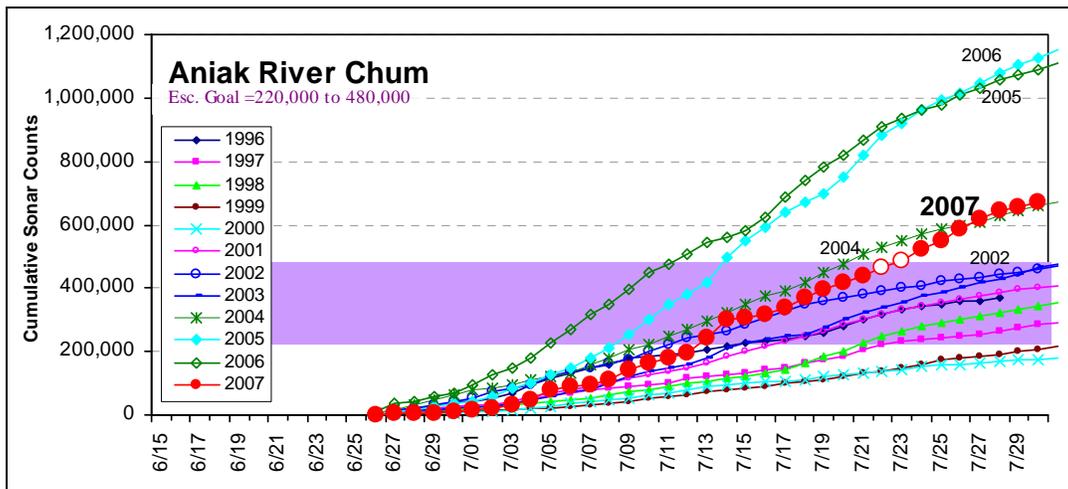
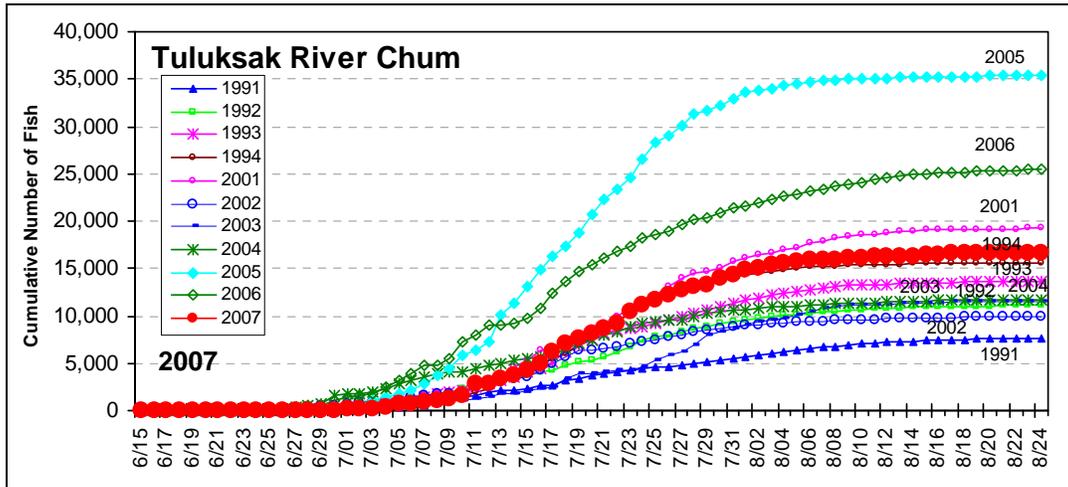
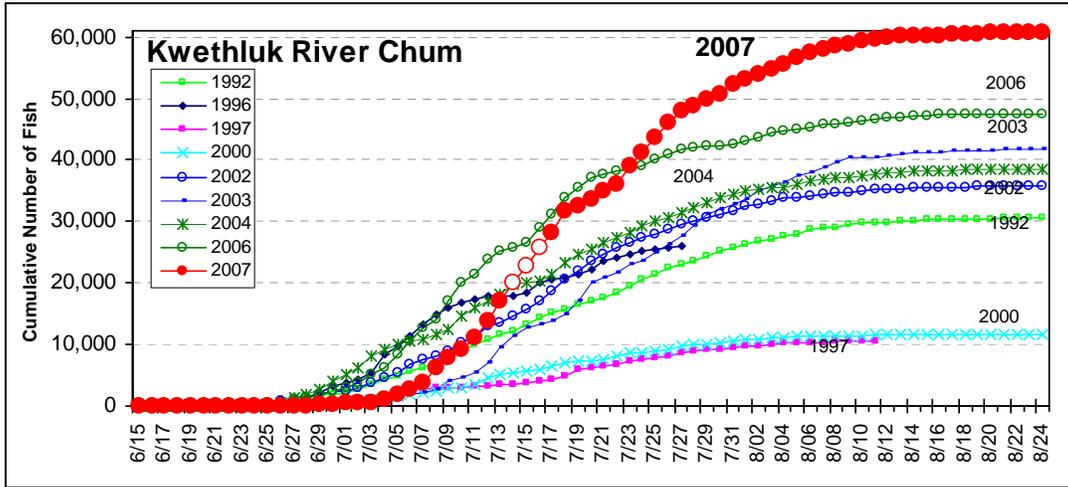
Cumulative Sockeye Salmon Weir Passage (cont.)



Note: Clear data points indicate incomplete daily counts.

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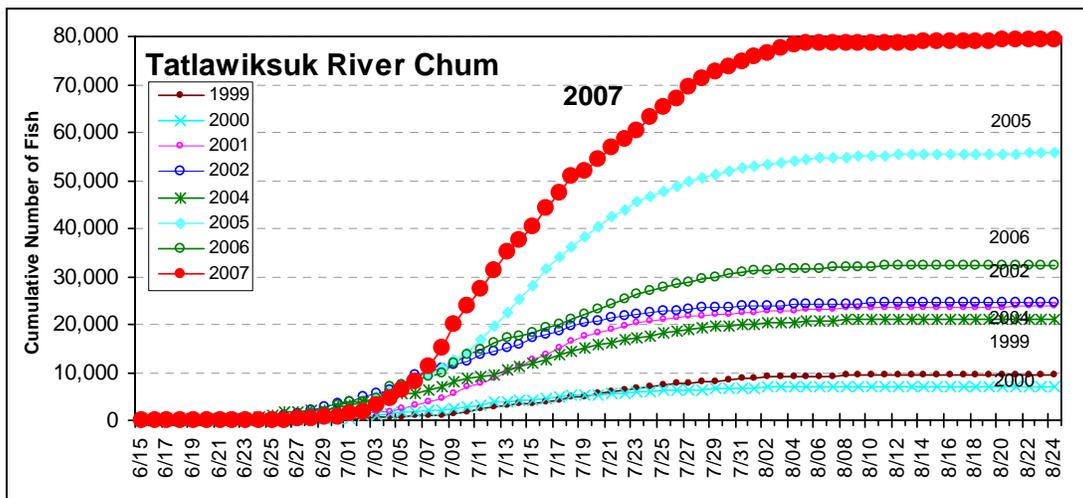
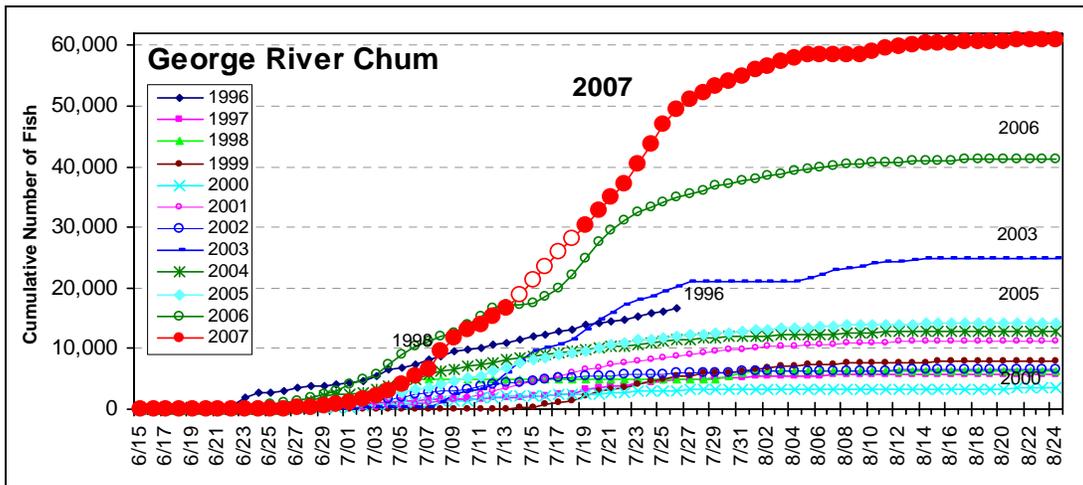
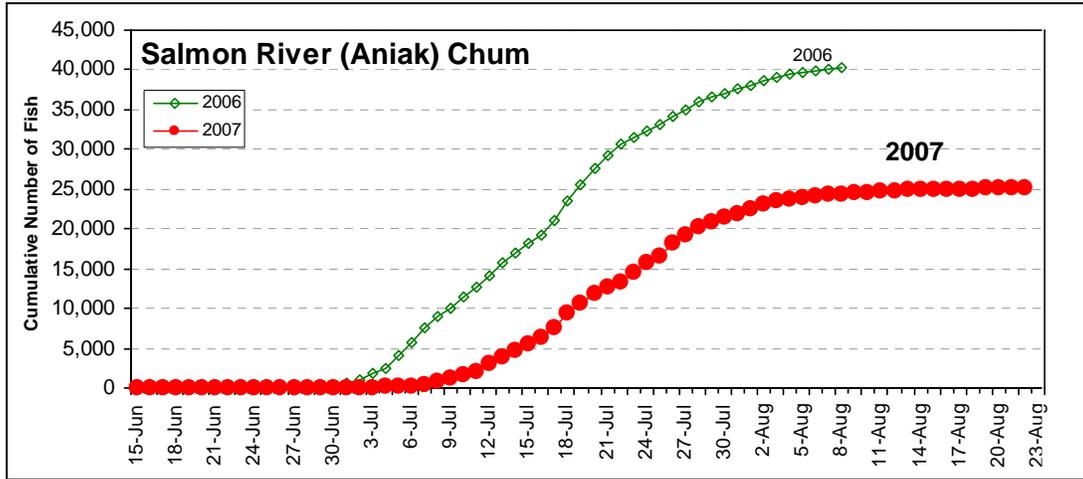
Cumulative Chum Salmon Weir Passage.



Note: Clear data points indicate incomplete daily counts.

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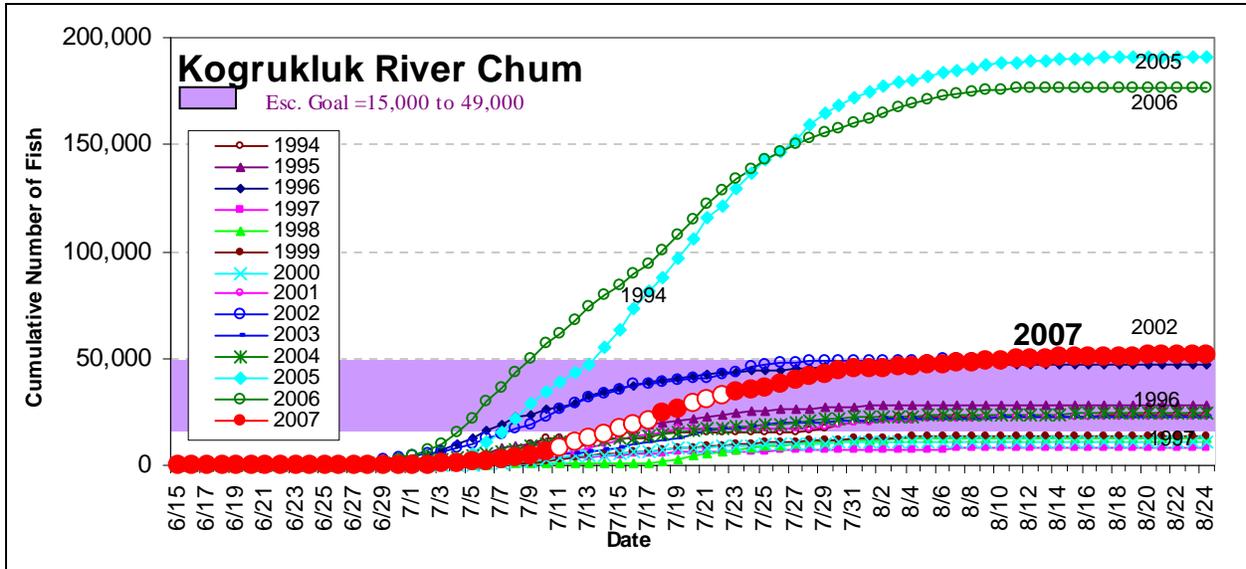
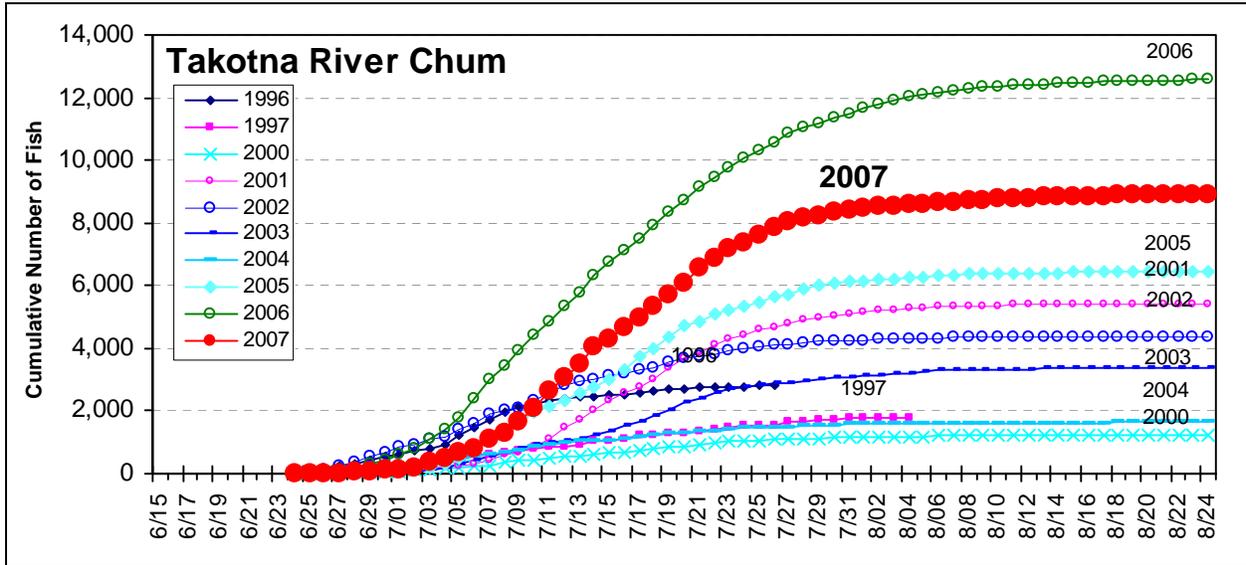
Cumulative Chum Salmon Weir Passage(cont.)



Note: Clear data points indicate incomplete daily counts.

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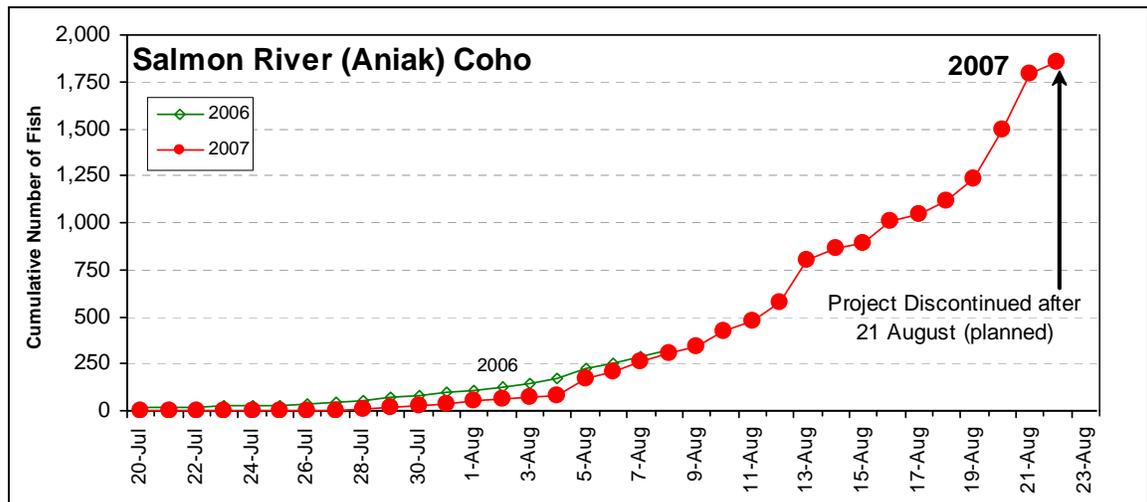
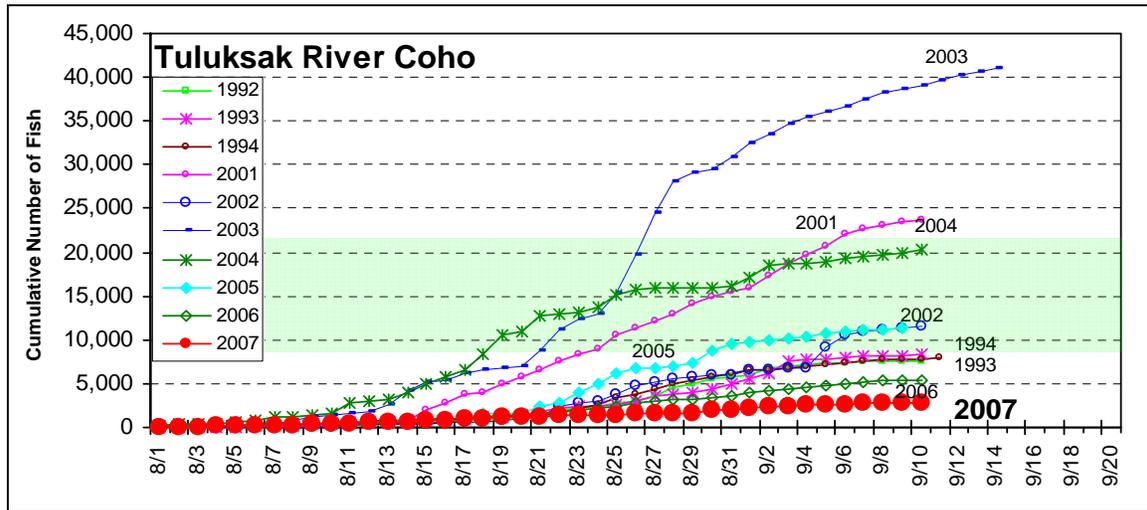
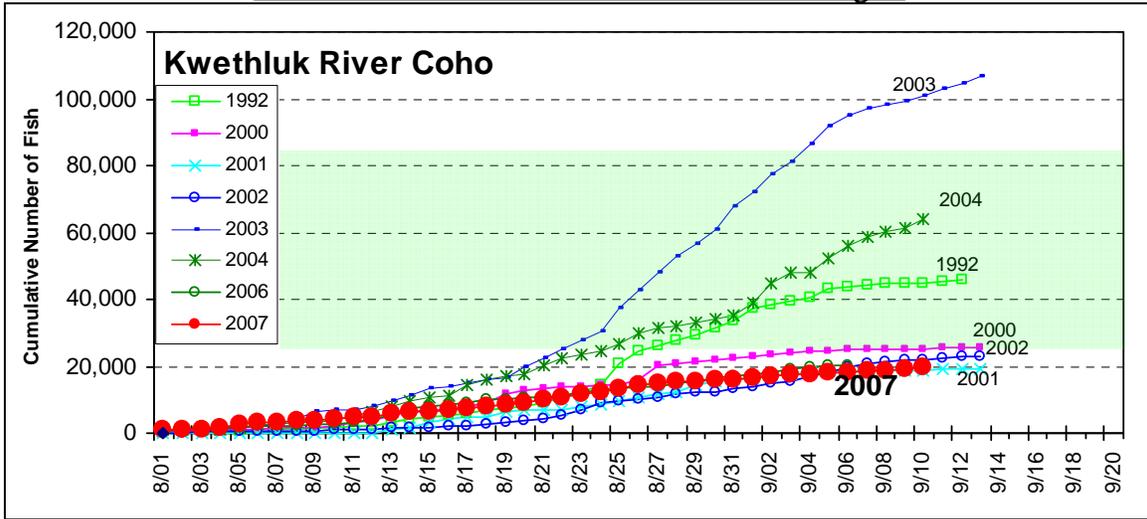
Cumulative Chum Salmon Weir Passage(cont.)



Note: Clear data points indicate incomplete daily counts.

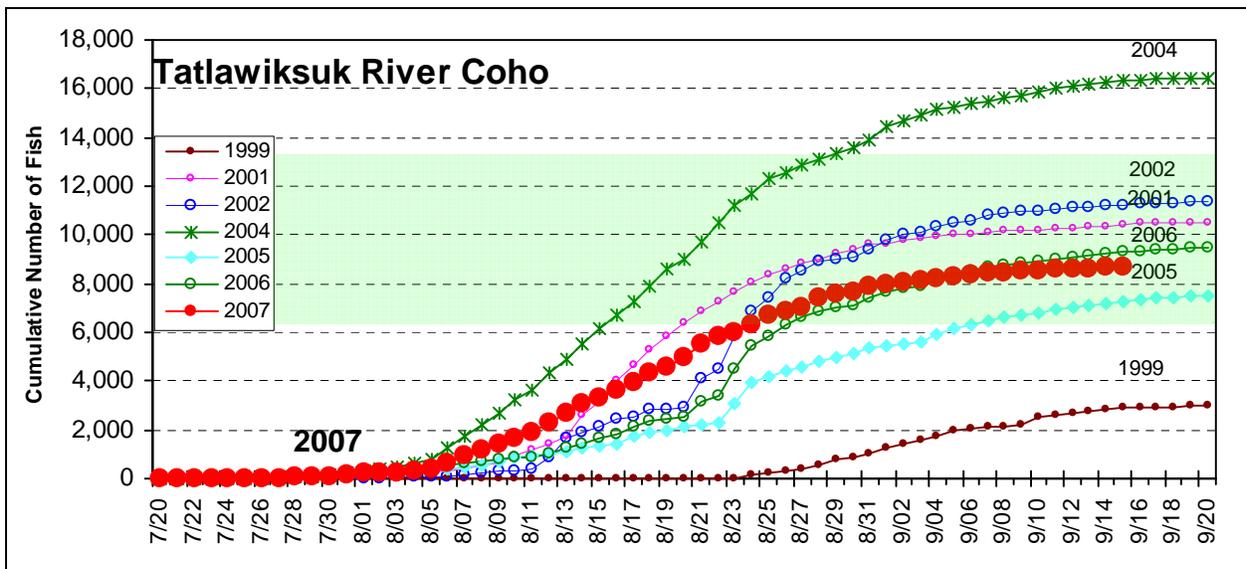
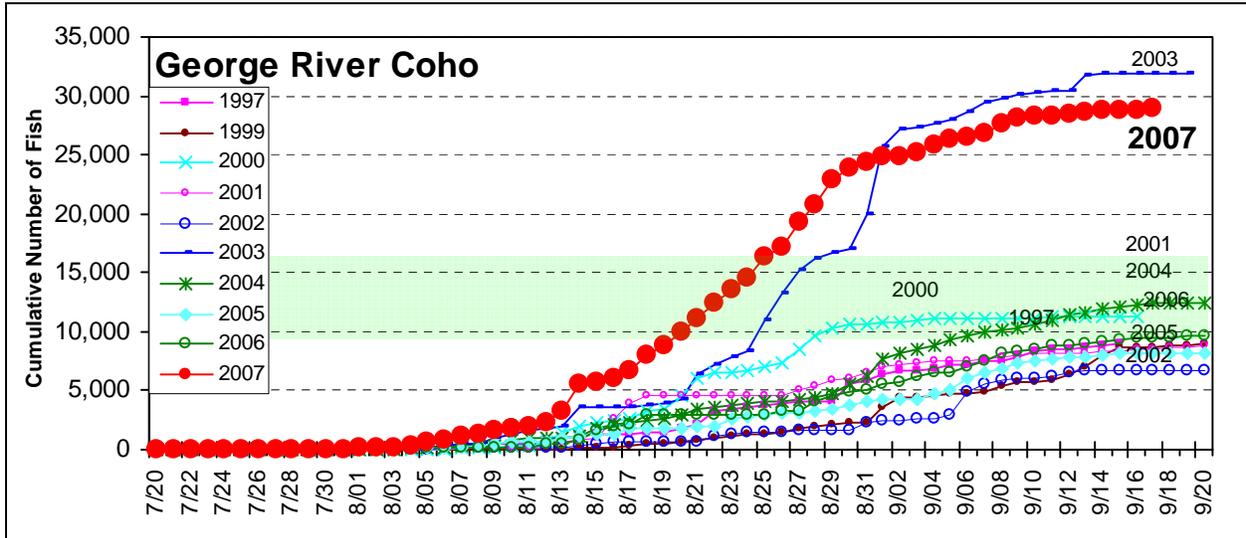
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Cumulative Coho Salmon Weir Passage.



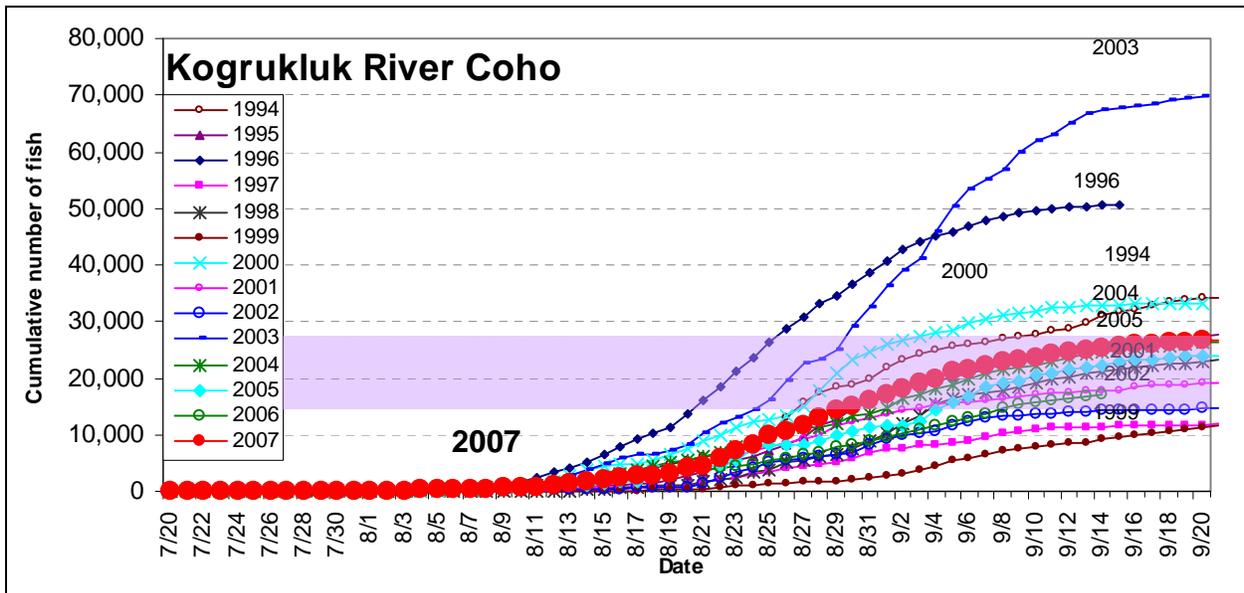
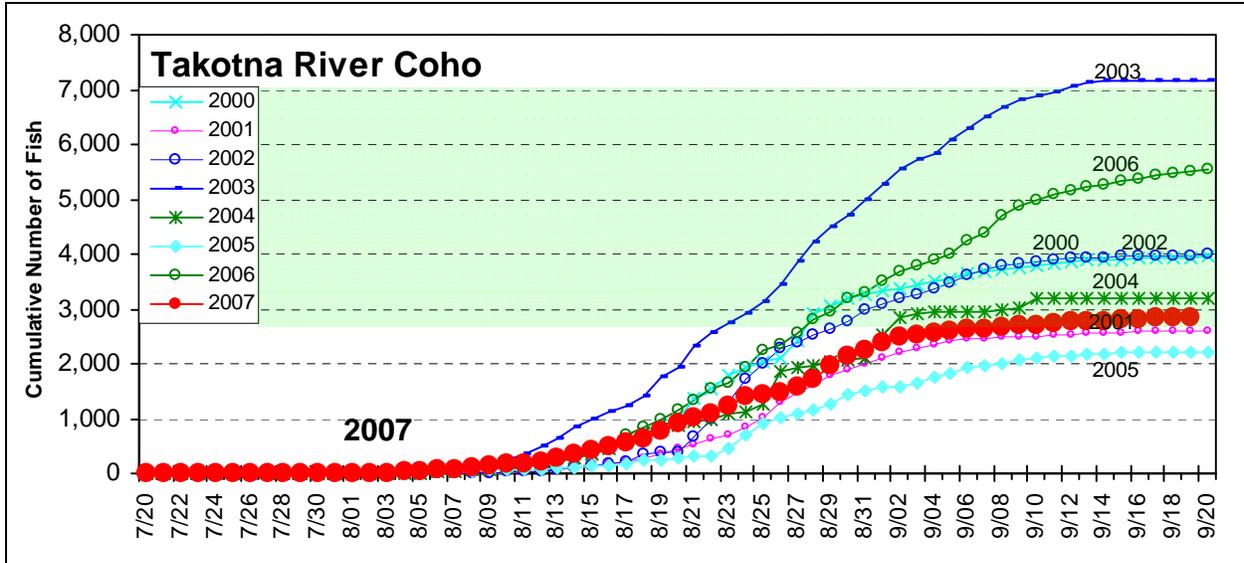
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Cumulative Coho Salmon Weir Passage (cont.)



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Cumulative Coho Salmon Weir Passage (cont.)



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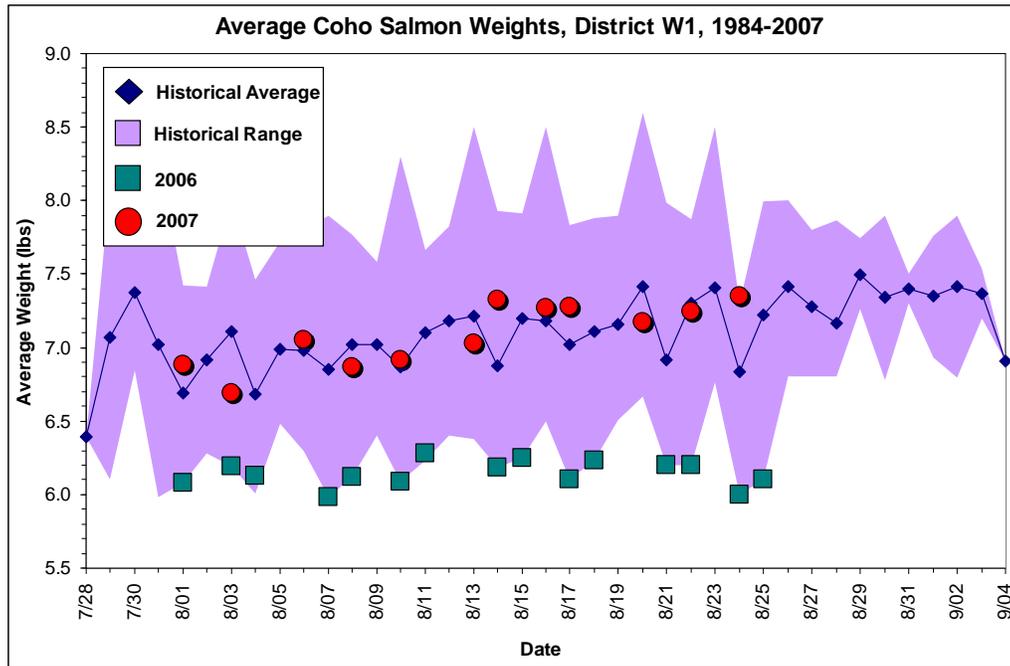
Kuskokwim River Commercial Catch Report

District W1 Coho Salmon Commercial Harvest Statistics			
Historical Comparison			
District	Time Period	Harvest	CPUE
W-1B	Commercial Harvest, Aug 01, 2007	19,133	22.94
	5-Year Avg. for Aug 01 +/- 1 Day ('02-'06)	7,794	20.24
	10-Year Avg. for Aug 01 +/- 1 Day ('97-'06)	13,184	17.65
W-1A	Commercial Harvest, Aug 03, 2007	19,728	30.73
	5-Year Avg. for Aug 03 +/- 1 Day ('02-'06)	12,036	25.75
	10-Year Avg. for Aug 03 +/- 1 Day ('97-'06)	19,680	34.00
W-1B	Commercial Harvest, Aug 06, 2007	15,926	15.34
	5-Year Avg. for Aug 06 +/- 1 Day ('02-'06)	16,379	23.36
	10-Year Avg. for Aug 06 +/- 1 Day ('97-'06)	18,235	17.43
W-1A	Commercial Harvest, Aug 08, 2007	14,402	19.36
	5-Year Avg. for Aug 08 +/- 1 Day ('02-'06)	27,506	36.20
	10-Year Avg. for Aug 08 +/- 1 Day ('97-'06)	24,821	30.84
W-1B	Commercial Harvest, Aug 10, 2007	13,059	11.64
	5-Year Avg. for Aug 10 +/- 1 Day ('02-'06)	19,133	20.65
	10-Year Avg. for Aug 10 +/- 1 Day ('97-'06)	20,868	19.17
W-1A	Commercial Harvest, Aug 13, 2007	12,491	16.65
	5-Year Avg. for Aug 13 +/- 1 Day ('02-'06)	25,965	36.00
	10-Year Avg. for Aug 13 +/- 1 Day ('97-'06)	27,418	33.10
W-1B	Commercial Harvest, Aug 14, 2007	15,411	14.59
	5-Year Avg. for Aug 14 +/- 1 Day ('02-'06)	14,521	23.45
	10-Year Avg. for Aug 14 +/- 1 Day ('97-'06)	13,212	19.63
W-1A	Commercial Harvest, Aug 16, 2007	7,696	10.60
	5-Year Avg. for Aug 16 +/- 1 Day ('02-'06)	24,182	29.14
	10-Year Avg. for Aug 16 +/- 1 Day ('97-'06)	20,369	20.25
W-1B	Commercial Harvest, Aug 17, 2007	6,231	7.69
	5-Year Avg. for Aug 17 +/- 1 Day ('02-'06)	8,299	11.56
	10-Year Avg. for Aug 17 +/- 1 Day ('97-'06)	9,205	8.76
W-1A	Commercial Harvest, Aug 20, 2007	3,266	6.80
	5-Year Avg. for Aug 20 +/- 1 Day ('02-'06)	10,439	15.60
	10-Year Avg. for Aug 20 +/- 1 Day ('97-'06)	8,654	12.23
W-1	Commercial Harvest, Aug 22, 2007	7,447	8.80
	5-Year Avg. for Aug 22 +/- 1 Day ('02-'06)	12,999	15.23
	10-Year Avg. for Aug 22 +/- 1 Day ('97-'06)	11,814	12.30
W-1	Commercial Harvest, Aug 24, 2007	6,259	8.09
	5-Year Avg. for Aug 24 +/- 1 Day ('02-'06)	15,439	13.63
	10-Year Avg. for Aug 24 +/- 1 Day ('97-'06)	12,670	11.65
W-1	Cumulative Harvest to date, 2007	141,049	
	5-Year Cumulative Avg. Harvest ('02-'06)	225,851	
	10-Year Cumulative Avg. Harvest ('97-'06)	194,533	

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Kuskokwim River Commercial Catch Report (cont.)

Summary of the District W1 (Kuskokwim River) commercial fishery, 2007.										
Date	Sub-district	Permits Participating	Coho Salmon		Chinook Salmon		Chum Salmon		Sockeye Salmon	
			Catch	Cumulative	Catch	Cumulative	Catch	Cumulative	Catch	Cumulative
1-Aug	W1-B	138	19,133	19,133	32	32	3,500	3,500	131	131
3-Aug	W1-A	107	19,728	38,861	41	73	2,530	6,030	62	193
6-Aug	W1-B	172	15,926	54,787	28	101	1,082	7,112	153	346
8-Aug	W1-A	124	14,402	69,189	9	110	1,208	8,320	55	401
10-Aug	W1-B	187	13,059	82,248	29	139	724	9,044	128	529
13-Aug	W1-A	125	12,491	94,739	10	149	463	9,507	13	542
14-Aug	W1-B	176	15,411	110,150	11	160	436	9,943	44	586
16-Aug	W1-A	121	7,696	117,846	3	163	316	10,259	17	603
17-Aug	W1-B	135	6,231	124,077	4	167	112	10,371	31	634
20-Aug	W1-A	80	3,266	127,343	3	170	110	10,481	4	638
22-Aug	W1	141	7,447	134,790	8	178	154	10,635	24	662
24-Aug	W1	129	6,259	141,049	1	179	148	10,783	41	703



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Area M Report

Total Alaska Peninsula Harvest Through 9/12/2007					
	<i>Chinook</i>	<i>Sockeye</i>	<i>Coho</i>	<i>Pink</i>	<i>Chum</i>
<i>Total South Peninsula</i> Reported Total to date	5,233	2,400,890	135,965	7,300,215	676,097
<i>Total North Peninsula</i> Reported Total to Date	4,260	3,405,445	69,136	1,317,423	178,036
2007 Total Harvest (Through September 12)	9,493	5,806,335	205,101	8,617,638	854,133
2006 Total Harvest (Ending September 26)	13,037	4,210,376	258,917	4,325,437	1,307,561
2005 Total Harvest (Ending September 20)	13,685	5,452,889	212,297	9,420,027	781,999
2004 Total Harvest (Ending September 19)	17,452	4,633,722	269,520	6,681,659	805,066

Area M Report: Additional Southeastern District commercial openings have occurred periodically from September 11-21, but harvest from these openings is not included in 2007 totals. This additional harvest is not expected to increase Chinook, sockeye, chum, and pink salmon season totals by significant amounts, but may have an affect on total coho salmon harvest in 2007.

Chum salmon harvest through September 12 this year is higher than total harvest in 2004 and 2005 and lower than total harvest in 2006. Chinook salmon harvest through September 12 this year has remained lower than harvest in 2004, 2005, and 2006. Sockeye salmon harvest through September 12 this year has remained higher than harvest in 2004, 2005, and 2006. Coho salmon harvest through September 12 this year has remained lower than harvest in 2004, 2005, and 2006; however, it is possible that additional harvest since September 12 has increased 2007 coho salmon harvest to a level comparable with 2005. Pink salmon harvest through September 12 this year is higher than harvest in 2004 and 2006, and has remained below harvest in 2005.

APPENDIX D

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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September 27, 2007

The Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group (Working Group) meeting was called to order at 10:09 a.m. on Thursday, September 27, 2007, at the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) conference room in Bethel. The Working Group adjourned at 12:55 p.m. Eleven of thirteen representatives were present; a quorum was established.

Agenda Items:

- 1) Continuing Business:
- 2) New Business:
- 3) Old Business:

Working Group Motions:

- 1) Motion made and carried to approve agenda.
- 2) Motion made and carried to send a letter to Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim Sustainable Salmon Initiative (AYK SSI) supporting the proposed coho run reconstruction study.

Working Group action items:

- 1) The Working Group voted to send a letter to AYK SSI supporting the proposed coho run reconstruction study.

ADF&G Recommendation: ADF&G had no recommendation at this meeting.

After the agenda was approved the Co-Chair/Sport Fishing Representative asked for comments from the Working Group:

- The Downriver Elder commented that subsistence fishers preserved fewer salmon than average during the 2007 fishing season because rainy weather hindered resident's ability to smoke and dry salmon.

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- The Upriver Elder agreed that the high amount of rain during 2007 caused fish to spoil, but added that salmon abundance was more than adequate to meet subsistence needs.
- The Middle River Subsistence Representative noted that the total subsistence harvest would not accurately reflect the amount of fish stored by subsistence users as so many fish rotted in the wet weather. The Representative continued that the high amount of rain was worrisome as the high Aniak River could potentially wash out redds and salmon eggs.
- The Downriver Elder asked who would conduct postseason subsistence surveys.
- The ADF&G Kuskokwim Area Research Biologist emphasized to all subsistence users that any possible reason for an unusually low (or high) subsistence harvest, such as decreased fishing effort because of unusually wet weather, should be conveyed to postseason subsistence surveyors. The Biologist continued that the inseason subsistence monitoring done by Orutsararmiut Native Council (ONC) is separate from the postseason subsistence surveys conducted cooperatively through ADF&G Subsistence Division, ONC, and Kuskokwim Native Association (KNA). Subsistence harvest calendars and door-to-door interviews from September through November are both part of the postseason surveys.
- The Lower River Subsistence Alternate noted that United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Office of Subsistence Management (OSM) did not release monies previously committed to fund 2008 postseason subsistence surveys. ADF&G Subsistence Division and Division of Commercial Fisheries provided additional funding to complete the postseason surveys.
- The ADF&G Kuskokwim Area Management Biologist added that ADF&G Division of Commercial Fisheries has put in increment requests to fund postseason subsistence surveys beginning in 2008. If approved, these increments should provide a permanent source of funding for subsistence surveys.
- The ADF&G Kuskokwim Area Research Biologist emphasized the need to accurately document subsistence harvest in the Kuskokwim Area. Highlighting the significance of the Kuskokwim River subsistence fishery is critical to secure funding for continued research and monitoring projects.
- The Co-Chair/Sport Fishing Representative reminded the Working Group that the ADF&G Subsistence Specialist in Bethel resigned recently and had not been replaced. The Representative also expressed concern that ADF&G does not adequately support subsistence fishery studies.
- The Member at Large pointed out that some subsistence fishers hesitate to give interviewers accurate information. When asked for ideas of how to address this concern, the Member suggested a wider dispersal of information to correct the perception that low subsistence harvest would lead to restrictions on the subsistence fishery. Person to person contact was recommended as a preferred method of communication and information dispersal.
- The ADF&G Kuskokwim Area Research Biologist noted that personal interviews are highly effective, but labor-intensive and costly. Radio interviews might be the best

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option given budgetary and time constraints. The Biologist allowed that subsistence harvest information might be used to limit subsistence harvest, but it is also used to safeguard the fishery for subsistence needs.

- The Western Interior RAC Representative suggested that responsible parties highlight the Kuskokwim River as the largest subsistence fishery in Alaska when submitting grant proposals. The Representative continued that without adequate subsistence harvest data, Chinook salmon management in the Kuskokwim River is difficult.
- The ADF&G Kuskokwim Area Research Biologist agreed and added that statistical analysis and other labor intensive tools are necessary for accurate subsistence harvest estimates. Differing ideas on how data should be collected and analyzed contribute to the disagreement between OSM and ADF&G regarding funding.
- The Middle River Subsistence Representative reminded the Working Group that several Kuskokwim salmon monitoring projects are partially funded by OSM through KNA and OSM financial support is critical to the continuation of these studies.
- The ADF&G Kuskokwim Area Management Biologist noted that of four increment requests regarding the Kuskokwim River, the single highest priority is additional funding for subsistence surveys. The Division of Commercial Fisheries Director has expressed a commitment to support subsistence surveys, but implementation is dependent upon legislative approval.
- The ADF&G Kuskokwim Area Research Biologist informed the Working Group that funding requests for the subsistence surveys have been submitted for years and not passed. The Biologist noted that the importance of subsistence data collection is not adequately communicated to people in charge of allocating funding, such as legislative representatives.
- When questioned by the Co-Chair/Sport Fishing Representative regarding the dedication of the ADF&G hierarchy to supporting Subsistence Division, the ADF&G Kuskokwim Area Management Biologist clarified that the Division of Commercial Fisheries Director allocated additional funding to conduct 2007 subsistence surveys. The Co-Chair/Sport Fishing Representative acknowledged the effort made to fund 2007 subsistence surveys and added that monies should be allocated for subsistence surveys on a permanent basis, eliminating the need to search for funding at the last minute.
- The ADF&G Kuskokwim Area Research Biologist cited a recent report which found northern pike had higher levels of mercury than many other fish and offered to send it out to any interested parties.

I. Agenda Items: Continuing Business:

A. Subsistence fishing reports:

a. Lower River Subsistence:

- The Downriver Elder noted that residents of Tuntutuliak normally fished for coho salmon from the village, but in 2007 they had to go to the mainstem Kuskokwim River for their harvest and leave their nets out for longer time periods than normal. The Elder suggested this as a sign that coho salmon

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- abundance was below average during 2007.
 - The Lower River Subsistence Alternate reported that most lower river residents were satisfied with Kuskokwim River salmon abundance and caught enough fish for their subsistence needs. Lower river residents reported catching more coho than needed into early September. Lower river residents were also pleased that the subsistence fishing schedule (“fishing windows”) was not implemented during 2007.
- b. Lower Kuskokwim Subsistence Catch Monitoring Project: Orutsararmiut Native Council (ONC) has finished conducting subsistence interviews for the season. No new information was available, but a complete season summary was included in the meeting packet.
- The Lower River Subsistence Alternate noted that the summary table reflected no data (ND) when subsistence interviewees had no information to report on the salmon run when interviewed. This designation does not mean interviews were not conducted, rather, it indicates there was no information to report.
 - ONC collects Age, Sex and Length (ASL) data from subsistence fish camps. To date they have collected samples from 1,229 Chinook salmon.
- c. Middle River Subsistence: The Middle River Subsistence Representative repeated that some residents in and around Aniak did not preserve as many salmon as needed because of wet weather.
- d. Upper River Subsistence: The Upper River Representative was not present at the meeting. The Western Interior RAC Representative reported that residents in and around McGrath got what they needed for subsistence. Coho salmon harvest was lower than average because high water levels and the amount of debris increased fishing difficulty.
- e. Headwaters Subsistence: The Headwaters Subsistence Representative reported that, based on few reports, Chinook seemed average to above average during 2007. Fall chum abundance seemed above average. The Representative added that coho salmon subsistence harvest was low, but coho had been seen on the spawning grounds.
- B. Overview of 2006 Kuskokwim River salmon run assessment projects by ADF&G staff:
- a. Bethel Test fishery (BTF):
- For most of June, Kuskokwim River water level (as indicated by the USGS water gauge located at Crooked Creek) was at the lower end of the range including years from 1984 to the present. Water level increased in July, and mid-month to the beginning of August was closer to average. During August water levels increased and have remained above average. Water clarity as recorded by BTF crew was well above average for most of June, about average during most of July, and

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slightly above average to below average during August. Water surface temperature as recorded by BTF crew tracked with historical averages throughout June, July, and August with the exception of a brief low point mid-July.

- BTF performed well throughout the season as an indicator of Chinook, sockeye, chum, and coho salmon relative abundance and run timing, as shown by-continued-
- subsequent escapement project data. Chinook, sockeye and chum salmon all exhibited late run timing as recorded in BTF and on Kuskokwim River weir projects. BTF data indicated a slightly higher relative abundance of Chinook salmon than weir escapement data, but sockeye, chum, and coho salmon abundance estimates from the test fishery and escapement projects correlated well.
- The Co-Chair/Sport Fishing Representative noted that the BTF project leader has worked in the Bethel area for 29 years and thanked him for his continued service and dedication to the Kuskokwim River fishery.
- The ADF&G Kuskokwim Area Management Biologist noted that the increase in water level corresponded with a drop in BTF coho salmon catch, as indicated by packet graphs.
- The Downriver Elder noted that 2007 Chinook salmon run timing indicated by the BTF graph shows a late early showing of Chinook followed by the highest catch per unit of effort (CPUE) of all other represented years and asked if that meant 2007 set a record for Chinook salmon cumulative CPUE in BTF. The Elder had the same question regarding chum salmon.
- ADF&G staff replied that graphs showed historical CPUE from relatively recent, comparable water years only, not all years BTF has operated. Comparing cumulative CPUE between two years without taking other factors into account could lead to an inaccurate interpretation of the data. For example, low water level increases catchability to a point, but increased water clarity might decrease catchability.
- ADF&G staff reminded the Working Group that the intent of BTF is not to catch as many fish as they can, but to fish in a consistent manner and provide comparable data across years. The BTF crew fishes in the same three locations, regardless of water level, to accomplish this goal.
- The Commercial Fisher Representative asked what type of net BTF used. ADF&G staff replied that BTF uses an 8” mesh net that is 35 meshes deep and a 5-3/4” mesh net which is 45 meshes deep. ADF&G tries to keep the type of webbing as consistent as possible over the years.

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- The Member at Large asked if 2007 Chinook salmon abundance indicated a high return because of previous Kuskokwim fishery management. ADF&G staff replied that management is based on escapement goals, which ensure enough salmon reach spawning grounds to provide a sustainable population in future years. However, conditions following spawning, such as winter temperature and/or Bering Sea conditions are important for salmon growth and also contribute to future year's escapement. High salmon escapements in recent years correlate with favorable Bering Sea conditions. However, conditions in the Bering Sea during 2006 and 2007 have been unfavorable for salmon growth and might cause a decline in salmon abundance in the next few years. Chinook and coho salmon escapement showed a slight decrease over the past two to three years.
- b. Weirs/Sonar/Mark–recapture/Aerial Surveys/Other:
 - Weir Projects:
 - a. Chinook salmon passage through the Kwethluk River weir exceeded the upper end of the escapement goal. Chinook passage through the George and Kogrukuk River weirs fell within escapement goal ranges. Tuluksak River weir Chinook salmon passage set a record low, well below the escapement goal range. 2007 Chinook salmon passage through the Salmon River weir was close to that of 2006. This was the second of three years that tags will be recovered at the Salmon River weir. Tatlawiksuk and Takotna River weirs do not have established escapement goals, but 2007 escapements on both rivers fell in the middle of historical escapement counts. When asked why Tatlawiksuk River has no escapement goal, ADF&G staff replied:
 - IV. An escapement goal was recommended to the ADF&G escapement goal committee for the Tatlawiksuk River in 2007. Establishing escapement goals requires certain criteria to be met, such as an adequate number of years of escapement data and the quality of data available. The escapement goal committee determined that these criteria had not yet been achieved for the Tatlawiksuk River.
 - V. One school of thought questions whether it is appropriate to establish escapement goals on every tributary.

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VI. Escapement goals function as a management tool, and if not met will trigger management actions such as restricting harvest.

VII. When asked about the white dots in the weir escapement graphs, ADF&G staff replied that they represent days when daily passage was estimated because the weirs were out of operation.

- b. Kuskokwim River Sockeye salmon returns in 2007 were above average, but lower than in 2005 and 2006. Sockeye passage through the Kwethluk River was the second highest on record. Takotna, Tatlawiksuk and Tuluksak River weirs each saw the third highest sockeye passage on record. The Salmon River weir had fewer sockeye than in 2006. Sockeye salmon passage through the George and Kogrukluk River weirs was fourth highest on record.

IV. The Commercial Fisher Representative asked if the commercial processors were aware of sockeye abundance in the Kuskokwim River. ADF&G staff replied that commercial processors had received regular updates on sockeye salmon abundance through Working Group packets. ADF&G had recommended a commercial opening in late June to take advantage of the harvestable surplus of sockeye salmon. Processors refused to buy on the basis that they were unable to profit from chum salmon, which were abundant at the same time as sockeye.

- c. Kuskokwim River chum salmon returns were high in 2007. Kwethluk, George, and Tatlawiksuk River weirs each recorded the highest chum salmon passage on record. Tuluksak River chum passage fell into the middle of the range. Aniak River sonar estimated the third highest chum salmon passage on record, well above the escapement goal range. Chum passage on the Salmon River weir was lower than in 2006, but still high. Takotna River weir chum passage was the second highest on record and chum passage at Kogrukluk River weir met the upper end of the escapement goal.
- d. Coho salmon passage through Kwethluk River weir tied as the lowest on record. Tuluksak River weir also

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recorded record low coho passage. George River weir coho passage was the second highest on record. Coho salmon passage through the Tatlawiksuk and Takotna River weirs was average. Kogruklu River weir coho passage met the upper end of the escapement goal. No coho salmon escapement goals have been established on the Tuluksak and Tatlawiksuk River rivers.

IV. The ADF&G Kuskokwim Area Research Biologist brought the Working Group's attention to the trend of low coho escapement in the lower Kuskokwim River, high escapement in the middle Kuskokwim, and average escapement in the upper river.

V. The Sport Fishing Alternate asked if the Kwethluk and Tuluksak River weirs were out of operation at any time and ADF&G staff replied those weirs were operational most of the season and the escapement numbers are solid.

VI. ADF&G staff commented that coho salmon run timing was early in 2007 and many migrated upstream prior to the first Kuskokwim River commercial opening. Concurrent with the initial commercial opening in early August was a significant rise in water level, likely decreasing catchability and allowing more coho to pass upstream. As water level decreased in mid-August, harvest efficiency likely increased and a higher percentage of the run passing through the district at that time may have been harvested. In general, upper river salmon stocks return earlier in the season and lower river stocks return later. When fishing became more efficient in mid-August, it's possible that commercial harvest was weighted towards lower river stocks.

VII. The Sport Fishing Alternate recalled that the ADF&G Kuskokwim Area Research Biologist had predicted a weak coho salmon return for 2007 and asked for an updated opinion. The ADF&G Kuskokwim Area Research Biologist acknowledged that once all Kuskokwim River data was compiled and analyzed, he expected to see coho abundance lower than in previous years, but higher than pre-season predictions.

VIII. The Sport Fishing Alternate asked why a

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IX. commercial opening was held if area managers were concerned coho abundance would be low. ADF&G staff replied that during the two initial commercial openings coho CPUE was second only to 2003, a year of record coho abundance. During the early portion of the coho salmon run, commercial catch statistics and BTF data indicated adequate abundance for a harvestable surplus. In later openings, CPUE dropped to below average as water levels rose. Overall Kuskokwim River coho salmon escapement was well balanced with commercial harvest, although commercial harvest may have been weighted towards lower river stocks towards the end of the season. The ADF&G Kuskokwim Area Research Biologist noted that low coho escapements on the Tuluksak and Kwethluk Rivers may not have been caused by commercial fishing pressure, but by unfavorable stream conditions. Tuluksak River weir had record low Chinook salmon passage while every other monitored Kuskokwim River tributary had average to well above average Chinook escapement, This indicates in-stream conditions on the Tuluksak River may have negatively affected the 2007 return.

- Aerial Surveys: ADF&G staff summarized Kuskokwim River aerial surveys:
 - a. The Kuskokwim River Chinook salmon escapement index is composed of aerial survey estimates and Kogruklu River weir escapement. Chinook salmon escapement index in 2007 is above average, but lower than in 2004, 2005, and 2006. Chinook salmon abundance estimates from aerial surveys met or exceeded all escapement goals currently in place.
 - b. Satisfactory surveys were completed on nine of the fourteen index streams in 2007. Although additional surveys were flown in 2007, rain and poor water clarity in late July and August hindered surveyors' abilities to successfully complete these aerial surveys.
 - c. The ADF&G Kuskokwim Area Research Biologist clarified the Kuskokwim River Chinook Salmon Escapement Index graph from the meeting packet. The graph shows an index of escapement relative to

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previous years, but does not indicate the actual number of total Chinook salmon escapement. A study to develop a Chinook salmon run reconstruction is currently underway and is designed to estimate the actual total escapement of Chinook salmon and the total run.

- d. The Western Interior RAC Representative noted that Chinook escapement on the Upper Pitka Fork is much higher than average while nearby streams of Bear Creek and Salmon River (Pitka Fork) had average escapements. ADF&G staff commented that aerial surveys were conducted later than normal because of late Chinook salmon run timing during 2007, but still may have been earlier than peak abundance.
 - e. When asked about numbers above the Chinook escapement index bar graph, ADF&G staff clarified that they represent how many of the 14 index streams were successfully surveyed each year.
- Mark–Recapture: The Kuskokwim River mark–recapture project went well and data analysis will take place over the winter.
 - Genetic Sampling: Genetic samples were collected throughout the Kuskokwim River in 2007.
 - a. When asked whether genetic sampling should be included in the Working Group agenda for 2008, ADF&G staff noted that there is no data available inseason, but genetic analysis information will be presented at the Kuskokwim interagency meetings.
 - b. The Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP) Fisheries and Forestry Director noted that genetic work is important, but funding for Western Alaska Salmon Stock Identification Project (WASSIP) is not solid at this point.
 - c. The ADF&G Kuskokwim Area Research Biologist replied that WASSIP is conducting studies on salmon from the Bering Sea, particularly chum and sockeye. Many other genetic studies are being conducted separate from WASSIP. Some projects do have funding in place to conduct analysis while others, such as WASSIP, had funding to collect samples and are pursuing additional funding to conduct analysis.
 - d. The Research Biologist also noted that the usefulness of genetic data is limited unless data can be linked to

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abundance information.

- C. **Commercial Catch Report:** A table on page 20 of the meeting packet included number of fish harvested and CPUE by commercial fishing period for District W-1. The ADF&G Kuskokwim Area Management Biologist summarized commercial catch for the 2007 season:
- a. In the first commercial opening on August 1, CPUE was higher than the 5- and 10-year averages. CPUE during the commercial opening August 3 was above the 5-year average and below the 10-year average. In the August 6 opening, CPUE was below both averages and continued to be for the rest of the season.
 - b. The first two openings likely coincided with the peak of the coho salmon run and subsequent openings took place as the run was declining
 - When asked if there was consistent number of fishers throughout the season, the ADF&G Kuskokwim Area Management Biologist answered that the number of fishers remained relatively consistent throughout most of the season. During the last two commercial openings the number of fishers decreased.
 - c. Four commercial periods were opened two hours earlier in the Lower Section of Subdistrict 1-B, as allowed by the regulation passed this year by BOF. The two-hour extension in the Lower Section of Subdistrict 1-B seemed to work well. Fishers took advantage of the extended openings and stayed within regulatory markers
 - The Downriver Elder agreed that the new regulations worked well and local residents appreciated the opportunity to fish longer and had followed the regulations. The Elder had made an announcement in Yupik on the local radio station, KYUK, to inform as many local residents as possible of the new regulations.
 - The Commercial Fisher Representative agreed, but noticed that some fishers initially had trouble understanding where exactly the boundaries were. Maps provided by ADF&G in news releases helped fishers to understand these boundaries.
 - The Lower River Subsistence Alternate had expected complaints from commercial fishers from Subdistrict 1-A about the extended openings in 1-B, but had received none.
 - d. In response to a question from the Sport Fishing Alternate, ADF&G staff clarified that the total number of commercial harvested salmon cited on page 1 of the Preliminary 2007 Kuskokwim Area Salmon Fishery Summary does include Districts W-4, W-5, and W-1 (Quinhagak, Goodnews Bay, and the lower Kuskokwim River). The season summary was not part of the Working Group packet, but was provided to Working Group members attending the meeting in Bethel and is available online at <http://csfish.adfg.state.ak.us/newsrelease/select.php?year=2007&dist=KUR&species=400&submit=Go>

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- e. As shown on the graph on page 21 of the meeting packet, average weight of commercially caught coho salmon in 2007 tracked very closely to historical averages. In 2006 coho salmon weights were about a pound below historical averages and set record lows.
 - The Western Interior RAC Representative asked if the difference in weights was caused by feeding conditions during the last year of coho ocean residency. The ADF&G Kuskokwim Area Research Biologist confirmed that adult weight of coho salmon is dependent on ocean conditions as coho migrate to saltwater when they are very small. Coho salmon spend only one year in saltwater before migrating back to natal streams to spawn.
 - The Bering-Aleutian Salmon International Survey (BASIS) has found that Bering Sea conditions have been unfavorable for salmon growth in the last two years. Coho salmon that returned to the Kuskokwim River in 2006 were in the Bering Sea during 2005-2006 and coho returning this year were in the ocean from 2006-2007
- D. Processor Report: No processor report was given as no processor representative was present at this meeting.
- E. Sport Fish Report: The Co-Chair/Sport Fishing Representative noted that sport fishing had been poor on the Aniak River because of low water clarity. The Upriver Elder had heard similar reports.
 - a. The Middle River Representative added that because of increased enforcement, some sport fish guides in the Aniak area recently received tickets for violating sport fish regulations.
 - b. The Sport Fishing Alternate reported that on the Kisaralik River sport trout fishers were satisfied early in the season, but became unsatisfied as the weather became rainy.
 - c. The Sport Fishing Alternate asked if information on sport fish harvest from guides will be included at the interagency meeting. ADF&G staff replied that results from 2006 would likely be available, but not from 2007.
- F. Area M Report: Additional Southeastern District commercial openings have occurred periodically from September 11-21, but harvest from these openings is not included in 2007 totals. This additional harvest is not expected to increase Chinook, sockeye, chum, and pink salmon season totals by significant amounts, but may have an affect on total coho salmon harvest in 2007.
 - a. Chum salmon harvest through September 12 this year is higher than total harvest in 2004 and 2005 and lower than total harvest in 2006.
 - b. Chinook salmon harvest through September 12 this year has remained lower than harvest in 2004, 2005, and 2006.
 - c. Sockeye salmon harvest through September 12 this year has remained higher than harvest in 2004, 2005, and 2006.

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- d. Coho salmon harvest through September 12 this year has remained lower than harvest in 2004, 2005, and 2006; however, it is possible that additional harvest since September 12 has increased 2007 coho salmon harvest to a level comparable with 2005.
- e. Pink salmon harvest through September 12 this year is higher than harvest in 2004 and 2006, and has remained below harvest in 2005. The ADF&G Kuskokwim Area Management Biologist recalled that pink salmon harvest in Area M was lower than average into July and increased in August.
 - The Commercial Fisher Representative asked for the name of the Alaska Peninsula/ Aleutian Islands Area Management Biologist. ADF&G staff replied that Aaron Poetter holds that position currently.

G. ADF&G Recommendation: ADF&G had no recommendation during this meeting.

II. Agenda Items: Old Business: None

III. Agenda Item: New Business:

- A. The ADF&G Working Group coordinator had received copies of the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFFA) report, *Traditional Ecological Knowledge of Customary Trade of Subsistence Harvested Salmon on the Yukon River* and offered them to any interested parties.
- B. Coho Salmon Mark–Recapture Proposal: The ADF&G Kuskokwim Area Research Biologist outlined a proposal for a coho salmon mark–recapture study and asked for a letter of support from the Working Group:
 - i. Infrastructure to conduct mark–recapture studies is currently in place on the Kuskokwim River in the form of radio receiver stations, weirs throughout the drainage, and the fish wheel camp at Kalskag. This infrastructure is expensive and it’s in the best interest of Kuskokwim River fisheries to take advantage of it for research opportunities while still in place. 2007 was the final year of data collection for the Kuskokwim River Chinook and sockeye salmon mark–recapture and radio-telemetry projects. A pre-proposal to conduct a coho salmon run-reconstruction study on the Kuskokwim River has been submitted to the Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim Sustainable Salmon Initiative (AYK SSI) committee and forwarded to the full proposal stage. The full proposal is due October 15, 2007.
 - ii. Coho salmon are currently the most commercially valuable species in the Kuskokwim River and populations and average weight have fluctuated markedly in recent years. In 1997 escapement and commercial harvest were extremely low while in 1996 they were among the highest on record. Both harvest and escapement have remained low compared to pre-1997 historical averages, with the exception of a few years. The proposed study would help pinpoint which streams are most important for coho salmon spawning habitat.

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- iii. The proposed study will address stock-specific run timing, whether Kuskokwim River weirs are adequately placed to monitor coho salmon, and genetic composition of Kuskokwim River coho salmon.
- iv. The Sport Fishing Alternate asked what the requested budget was and if the coho proposal jeopardized funding for other projects. The ADF&G Kuskokwim Area Research Biologist stated that if approved \$700,000 would come from AYK SSI and \$100,000 from Coastal Villages Region Fund (CVRF) over the next three years. The coho run reconstruction would be a cooperative project between ADF&G, KNA, Takotna Tribal Council and Bue Consulting LLC.
- v. Information obtained from the proposed coho study will be useful far into the future to calculate total run abundance estimates using harvest and escapement data.
- vi. A motion was made and seconded to support the coho proposal. Discussion followed:
 - i. The KNA Partners Biologist described the organization’s potential contributions to the project. These included providing high school and college interns, KNA fisheries technicians, and lead support of the Salmon River weir. The Partners Biologist stressed that this will be the best, and possibly last, chance for such a study on the Kuskokwim River before radio receiver stations are taken down and staff experienced in radio-telemetry and mark–recapture are lost to other projects.
 - ii. The Sport Fishing Alternate asked how many other proposals there were for research on the Kuskokwim River. ADF&G staff was unsure of the total number, but knew of at least 6 studies submitted to AYK SSI.
 - iii. The Western Interior RAC Representative commented that the data collected by the proposed study would enhance the ability of Kuskokwim Area fishery management biologists to take advantage of harvestable surpluses while ensuring adequate coho escapement. The importance of this information was exemplified earlier in the meeting during the coho salmon commercial catch and weir reports.
 - iv. A motion to send a letter to AYK SSI supporting the proposed coho salmon run reconstruction project was made and passed unanimously.

C. Topics of discussion for fall Working Group meeting.

- i. The end of season Working Group meeting will be held in Anchorage on November 30, following the Kuskokwim Area Interagency meeting November 28 & 29. Funding is adequate to provide transport and lodging for Working Group members interested in attending. Working Group members are

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- encouraged to attend both the interagency and Working Group meetings for comprehensive information about fishery studies in the Kuskokwim Area.
- ii. An exploration of possibilities to develop markets for Kuskokwim River salmon will be one topic of the Fall Working Group meeting.
 - iii. The Sport Fish Representative/ Co-chair recommended commercial bycatch statistics be discussed. The Representative believed bycatch on the high seas has increased tenfold in recent years and asked why that doesn't result in a tenfold decrease of salmon in the Kuskokwim. The ADF&G Kuskokwim Area Research Biologist replied that the number of Chinook salmon bycatch has increased, but comprises a relatively small percentage of total spawners. Bycatch statistics and studies will be part of the Kuskokwim Area Interagency meeting and the Working Group meeting.
 - iv. The Lower River Subsistence Alternate noted that the BOF will rule on the proposed Holitna Reserve before the November meetings. The ruling will be discussed during the interagency meeting.
 - v. The Member at Large asked to include information on funding subsistence surveys in the Working Group meeting. The Lower River Subsistence Alternate commented that that issue will be addressed during the interagency meeting and Working Group members can vote to write letters of support, etc. during their meeting.
- The Sport Fishing Alternate asked if Kuskokwim Area Biologists foresaw any staff changes in the next year. ADF&G staff replied that the Assistant Area Research and Assistant Area Management Biologists had both vacated their positions recently. Staff turnover is an issue throughout ADF&G and State of Alaska because wages are not competitive with comparable positions in the private sector or with other government agencies.
 - Motion made and carried to adjourn at 12:55 P.M.

APPENDIX E

Appendix E1.–Executive Summary of Working Group and ADF&G actions, 2007.

Date	Comment
4/19/2007	<p>The Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group (Working Group) met from 9:05 a.m. to 4:50 p.m. breaking for lunch between 12:00 p.m. and 1:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 22, 2005 at the ADF&G Aerie conference room in Anchorage. Eleven of the thirteen Working Group representatives participated; a quorum was established. The Working Group discussed the 2007 salmon fisheries outlook and management strategies, Kuskokwim Area subsistence surveys and Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF) regulatory issues. Representatives from Barrick Gold Corporation and Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) gave presentations on the proposed gold mine near Donlin Creek, its possible effects on local salmon stocks and the permitting process.</p> <p><u>Action Taken:</u> The Working Group approved Calvin Simeon as Middle River Subsistence Representative and Wayne Morgan as Middle River Subsistence Alternate. The Working Group resolved to publicize Kuskokwim Area concerns through letter writing campaigns to state and federal government representatives and use of local and national media.</p>
6/14/2007	<p>The Working Group met at 10:35 a.m. on Thursday June 14, 2007, at the ADF&G conference room in Bethel. The meeting adjourned at 12:00 p.m. Seven of the thirteen Working Group representatives participated; a quorum was established. Subsistence fishing reports indicated low Chinook salmon harvest for the time of year. Bethel Test Fish (BTF) cumulative Catch Per Unit of Effort (CPUE) for Chinook salmon was also lower than average for the time of year. The Kuskokwim River was unusually low and clear for the time of year. A representative from Inlet Fish Producers (IFP) announced that the processor would not buy Chinook or sockeye salmon from the Kuskokwim River in 2007 because of the high cost associated with processing and transporting chum salmon relative to market value. IFP intended to buy coho salmon during August commercial openings. The Coastal Villages Seafoods representative announced that that processor would buy salmon in any June and July commercial openings. ADF&G recommended no commercial opening at the time because reports from BTF and area subsistence fishers indicated inadequate salmon abundance. The Working Group discussed the potential use of 8” mesh gear in the commercial salmon fishery, as recently allowed by BOF. ADF&G stated no intention to allow the use of 8” mesh gear commercially unless the majority of the Chinook salmon run had passed upstream. ADF&G summarized new Kuskokwim River escapement goals passed by the BOF. ADF&G Subsistence Division presented preliminary 2006 subsistence harvest estimates.</p> <p><u>Action Taken:</u> The Working Group accepted ADF&G’s recommendation not to schedule any commercial openings at that time. The Working Group resolved to contact state Senator Lyman Hoffman and Representative Mary Nelson</p>

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Date	Comment
6/19/2007	<p>to supporting extended financial support for ADF&G Subsistence Division.</p> <p>The Working Group was called to order at 10:10 a.m. on Tuesday June 19, 2007, at the ADF&G conference room in Bethel. The meeting adjourned at 11:38 p.m. Ten of thirteen Working Group representatives participated; a quorum was established. The Working Group discussed the current low market value of chum salmon and how to increase it, such as enlisting help from the Lower Kuskokwim Economic Development Council (LKEDC). Reports from Working Group members and Orutsararmiut Native Council (ONC) inseason subsistence surveys indicated low Chinook salmon subsistence harvest for the time of year, which led to concerns that Chinook abundance was low. Kuskokwim River residents were also concerned about unusually low water levels, high water clarity and the effect these conditions had on fishing success. BTF cumulative CPUE indicated low Chinook abundance for the time of year and late run timing. The Working Group was informed of ADF&G’s ongoing effort to completely document and thereby increase protection to all anadromous streams throughout Alaska. Working Group members were encouraged to check maps of streams currently classified as anadromous and submit documentation for any streams they knew to be habitat for anadromous fishes that were not currently classified as such.</p> <p><u>Action Taken:</u> The Working Group accepted ADF&G’s recommendation not to schedule any commercial openings at that time. The Working Group agreed to ask the LKEDC to research marketing to increase the market value of Kuskokwim salmon.</p>
6/25/2007	<p>The Working Group was called to order at 10:10 a.m. on Monday, June 25, 2007, at the ADF&G conference room in Bethel. The meeting adjourned at 12:08 p.m. Eleven of thirteen Working Group representatives participated; a quorum was established. Reports from Working Group members and ONC inseason subsistence surveys indicated increased Chinook salmon subsistence harvest from the previous meeting, but harvest required more effort than usual. Subsistence reports also indicated a higher percentage of small Chinook salmon than usual and, as a result, many fishers were using smaller than 8” mesh. Subsistence fishers reported low sockeye and chum salmon harvest. Kuskokwim River still had extremely low water levels and high water clarity. BTF cumulative CPUE, indicated above average Chinook, below average sockeye, and average chum salmon abundance compared to recent years with similar water levels. Based on information from BTF, Districts W-4 (Quinhagak) and W-5 (Goodnews Bay) commercial harvest, and subsistence reports, ADF&G biologists concluded that Chinook salmon harvest was adequate for and recommended two sub-district commercial openings. The Coastal Villages Seafoods (CVS) Representative declined to support an opening because increasing chum salmon harvest in BTF</p>

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Date	Comment
	<p>suggested that commercial fishers would be overwhelmed with chum salmon.</p> <p><u>Action Taken:</u> The Working Group declined to accept ADF&G's recommendation for Kuskokwim River commercial openings on Wednesday, June 27 and Friday, June 29, 2007.</p>
6/27/2007	<p>The Working Group was called to order at 10:07 a.m. on Wednesday July 27, 2007, at the ADF&G conference room in Bethel. The meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m. Nine of thirteen Working Group representatives participated; a quorum was established. Fishing reports from subsistence users were similar to those in the previous meeting; chum salmon harvest increased in the lower river, water levels had increased and water clarity was decreasing in the middle & upper river. Chum salmon comprised 76% of recent BTF catches; the high percentage of chum caused commercial processors to lose interest in a commercial opening. ADF&G had no recommendation for a commercial opening at this meeting as there was no interested buyer. ADF&G staff outlined the Catcher/Seller Program which allows licensed commercial fishers to sell unprocessed salmon directly to private parties and businesses without going through a commercial processor. Licensed catcher/sellers can make more money per pound of fish and could potentially participate in commercial openings when no commercial processor is willing to buy.</p>
7/10/2007	<p>The Working Group was called to order at 10:10 a.m. on Tuesday, July 10, 2007, at the ADF&G conference room in Bethel. The meeting adjourned at 11:54 a.m. Ten of thirteen Working Group representatives participated; a quorum was established. Reports from Working Group members and ONC inseason subsistence surveys indicated most lower, middle, and upper Kuskokwim River fishers were done with or finishing up their subsistence harvest for the year. Subsistence users agreed that the 2007 Chinook salmon run was late but adequate to meet subsistence needs. Kuskokwim River water levels were rising and water clarity had decreased to approximately average. Chinook and chum salmon passage at Kuskokwim River monitoring projects was low to average for the time of year, but escapement for both species was expected to meet or exceed all escapement goals. The Working Group discussed possibilities for and difficulties associated with expanding the Kuskokwim River chum salmon market. The Working Group also discussed the Catcher/Seller Program and its potential usefulness in the Kuskokwim River commercial fishery.</p>
7/27/2007	<p>The Working Group was called to order at 10:13 a.m. on Friday, July 27, 2007, at the ADF&G conference room in Bethel. The meeting adjourned at 11:18 a.m.</p>

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Date	Comment
	<p>Nine of thirteen Working Group representatives participated; a quorum was established. Although information for Chinook, sockeye, chum, and coho salmon was included in the meeting packet, Working Group members voted to follow an amended agenda and focus solely on coho salmon and the possibility of a coho-targeted commercial opening. Reports from Working Group members indicated most subsistence users had completed their harvest for the season and some fishers were catching high numbers of coho salmon. Kuskokwim River water level and clarity were tracking with historical averages and BTF coho salmon CPUE was above average for years with similar water levels. Coho salmon passage at all Kuskokwim monitoring projects was average to above average for the time of year. ADF&G staff recommended that the Working Group agree to a tentative commercial opening schedule, allowing ADF&G to finalize dates and times for the initial periods in District W-1 based on future BTF coho to chum salmon ratio and the processors' willingness to buy.</p> <p><u>Action Taken:</u> The Working Group voted to support two six-hour commercial openings: one on Wednesday August 1, 2007 in Subdistrict 1B (below Bethel) and one on Friday August 3, 2007 in Subdistrict 1-A (above Bethel). Schedules will become final pending further Bethel Test Fish (BTF) data showing an increase in the ratio of coho to chum salmon.</p>
8/09/2007	<p>The Working Group was called to order at 11:12 a.m. on Thursday, August 9, 2007, at the ADF&G conference room in Bethel. The meeting adjourned at 12:23 p.m. Eleven of thirteen Working Group representatives participated; a quorum was established. The Working Group again focused on coho salmon, as this species would be targeted in any commercial openings. Data from all Kuskokwim River salmon monitoring projects including BTF indicated adequate coho salmon abundance to meet or exceed all escapement goals and support a commercial opening. The first two Kuskokwim River commercial fishing periods, on August 1 and August 3, showed high harvest and CPUE above 2004 and slightly below 2003 (a year of record high coho salmon abundance in the Kuskokwim River). Harvest and CPUE decreased in the openings held August 6 & August 8. Average coho salmon size in 2006 was the lowest on record, but average coho size in 2007 is tracking with historical averages.</p> <p><u>Action Taken:</u> The Working Group voted to support continued commercial openings in the Kuskokwim River, and deferred to ADF&G biologists to schedule the openings in the following week. The Working Group voted to open the Lower Section of Subdistrict 1-B to commercial fishing 2-hours earlier, as provided for in regulation passed by the Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF).</p>
9/27/2007	<p>The Working Group was called to order at 10:09 a.m. on Thursday, September 27, 2007, at the ADF&G conference room in Bethel. The meeting adjourned at 12:55 p.m. Eleven of thirteen Working Group representatives participated; a</p>

-continued-

Date	Comment
	<p>quorum was established. This meeting provided an end-of-season summary. Working Group members reported that salmon abundance was adequate to meet subsistence needs, but many fish rotted because of rainy weather in the Kuskokwim Area. Working Group members discussed the importance of accurate subsistence harvest data for assessing salmon abundance and sustainably managing the fishery. Accurate subsistence harvest data is difficult to obtain because of budgetary constraints and the cost of conducting personal interviews. BTF performed well throughout the season as an indicator of Chinook, sockeye, chum, and coho salmon relative abundance and run timing, as shown by subsequent escapement project data. Chinook, sockeye and chum salmon all exhibited late run timing as recorded in BTF and on Kuskokwim River weir projects. BTF data indicated a slightly higher relative abundance of Chinook salmon than weir escapement data, but sockeye, chum, and coho salmon abundance estimates from the test fishery and escapement projects correlated well. Kuskokwim River Chinook salmon escapement met or exceeded all set goals except in the Tuluksak River. Monitored tributaries with no escapement goals recorded average to above average Chinook escapement. Kuskokwim River sockeye escapement was above average. Chum salmon escapement was average to well above average. Coho salmon escapement in the upper and middle Kuskokwim River was average to above average, but the lower river weirs saw record low coho salmon passage. Interested Working Group members will travel to Anchorage in November to attend the annual Kuskokwim Interagency meetings and the Working Group “fall meeting.” Special topics to be addressed in the November Working Group meeting include development of the Kuskokwim River commercial fishery and Chinook salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea commercial pollock fishery.</p> <p><u>Action Taken:</u> The Working Group voted to send a letter to AYK SSI supporting the proposed coho run reconstruction study.</p>
11/30/2007	<p>The Working Group was called to order at 8:15 a.m. on Friday, November 30, 2007, at the ADF&G Rabbit Creek Rifle Range in Anchorage. The meeting broke for a 1 hour lunch and adjourned at 3:17 p.m. Eleven of thirteen Working Group representatives participated; a quorum was established. Topics covered in this meeting included an overview of current and historical Kuskokwim River commercial fisheries, commercial fishery processor outlook, ADF&G commercial fishing processor and permitting program, University of Alaska Fairbanks Marine Advisory Program and its role in Kuskokwim River commercial fisheries, the projected 2008-2009 ADF&G Division of Commercial Fisheries Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim (AYK) budget shortfall, and salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea commercial pollock fishery. Working Group member travel was paid for by FIS 06-307, Inseason Support for Cooperative Management of the Kuskokwim River Subsistence Fishery.</p>

APPENDIX F

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

P.O. BOX 1467 • BETHEL, AK 99559 • 907-543-2433 • 907-543-2021 FAX

Ms. Karen Gillis
Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim Sustainable Salmon Initiative
c/o Bering Sea Fishermen’s Association
110 W. 15th Avenue, Unit A
Anchorage, AK 99501
15 October 2007

Ms. Gillis:

The Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group (Working Group) met on September 27, 2007 and unanimously chose to support the project proposal entitled “*Kuskokwim Coho Salmon Investigation*”, which is being submitted to AYK SSI under the 2008 Request for Proposals. During this meeting project manager Doug Molyneaux of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), assisted by co-investigator David Orabutt of the Kuskokwim Native Association, provided Working Group members with an overview of the proposed coho salmon project. This was, in fact, the second presentation Working Group members have had regarding this proposal, the first occurring at the spring Kuskokwim Fisheries Interagency meeting held April 17 and 18, 2007. The interagency meeting is a bi-annual event widely attended by some 60 individuals involved with fishery management and research in the Kuskokwim Area, including many stake holders representing subsistence, commercial, and recreational interests.

The appreciation this band of investigators shows to the importance of incorporating public awareness is one of their hallmarks. We salute them for that. Knowledge is power, and the manner in which knowledge is shared by these investigators empowers the Working Group in our decision making process. It is through their thorough past investigations, and their effectiveness at communicating their findings to the Working Group, that our body has grown to have more understanding and trust in the decision making process of ADF&G Commercial Fisheries Division staff in Bethel.

Aside from their public outreach and collaborative efforts, we agree that the results sought through this proposed project contain the basic elements required of sustainable fishery management, and that these elements are fundamental to understanding salmon population dynamics and the causative agents of variation in salmon abundance. How else are we to understand the influence of variables such as changes in climate and fishery management if these variables cannot be viewed and studied within the context of a time series of total annual salmon abundance? From our understanding this is precisely the key product that will be generated from

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this project: both a retrospective run reconstruction of annual coho salmon abundance estimates, and a model to allow fishery biologist to continue to develop annual abundance estimates in the future through the use of harvest statistics coupled with escapement indicators.

We understand that there will be many other deserving projects in competition for the available funds. A few of the proposal titles were mentioned during the discussion that occurred at our Working Group meeting. Still, as potentially insightful as other projects might appear, in most cases the utility of the information they promise is limited without the context of a time series of total annual abundance estimates as a foundation for interpreting results.

A critical element of this proposal is its timing. Currently there exists within the Kuskokwim River drainage an extensive platform of projects that are required for conducting this type of investigation. These platforms include several weirs, a wide-ranging array of fixed radio receiver stations, and equipment needed to efficiently capture and tag large number of salmon. These are the result of a fortuitous turn of events and past projects, and this convergence of resources may well not come together again for some time. To reproduce it would likely increase the cost of this proposal three or four fold.

Considering cost alone as a critical element of the timing of this proposal falls short, because another irreplaceable element is the people who would prosecute the investigation. We feel that these investigators will achieve their stated objectives. Success is in their favor because of their professionalism, their intimate local knowledge of the Kuskokwim and their success with similar endeavors involving other species. Indeed, again this fortuitous convergence of human resources may also well not come together again for some time.

Finally, and as you know, the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta represents the largest concentration of indigenous subsistence users on the North American continent. As such, there is no place in this country where there is a greater dependence on subsistence resources. Coho salmon are rapidly growing in their importance to the overall usage patterns of subsistence fisherfolk in the Kuskokwim, and this has been developing for some time. Unfortunately the benign neglect demonstrated by the State of Alaska towards instituting any creative subsistence research in our region handicaps our ability to definitively document this truth.

We hope you will seriously consider our recommendation for funding “*Kuskokwim Coho Salmon Investigation*”. In addition, we thank you, the staff and members of the AYK SSI, for your interest in our region, and for your efforts in managing this important grant program. We look forward to the fruits of your labors, and we hope that you will see to it that the findings of these labors be available to the broad public and in a layman-understandable format.

Respectfully,

LaMont E. Albertson

Bev Hoffman

Greg Roczicka

Co-chairs, Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Group

APPENDIX G

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

November 30, 2007

Dear Morgan

The Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group (Working Group) would like to commend Coastal Villages Region Fund (CVRF) for funding salmon enumeration projects throughout the Kuskokwim River drainage.

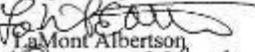
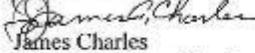
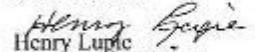
We thank Joe Hall from CVRF for giving a report during the 2007 fall Working Group meeting held in Anchorage November 30, 2007. Joe Hall did a commendable job in presenting all of your programs to members of the Working Group and representatives from many agencies including the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), USFWS Office of Subsistence Management, Kuskokwim Native Association, and Association of Village Council Presidents.

As a group who represents users from through out the Kuskokwim, including many villages not included in the CDQ program, we would like to encourage you to continue to expand enumeration projects on the middle and upper Kuskokwim drainage.

These cooperative projects help ensure the long term sustainability of the Kuskokwim River fishery upon which we all depend.

We would like to encourage your participation in the Working Group as it is invaluable to our decision making process. We extend this invitation to any of your board members and administration. Quyana.

Respectfully,

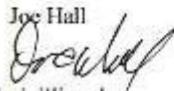

LaMont Albertson

James Charles

Henry Luptic

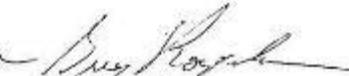
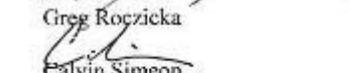
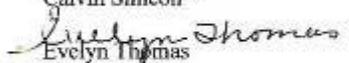
Ray Collins


Beverly Hoffman

Bob Aloysius

Nick Petruska

Joe Hall



Greg Roczicka

Calvin Simeon

Evelyn Thomas

CC: Oscar Evon, President Kwigillingok

APPENDIX H

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

P.O. Box 1467 • Bethel, AK 99559 • 907-543-2433 • 907-543-2021 fax

January 22, 2008

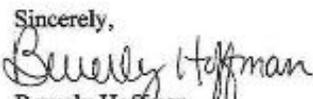
Jim Balsiger
Administrator Alaska Region
National Marine Fisheries Service
PO Box 21668
Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668

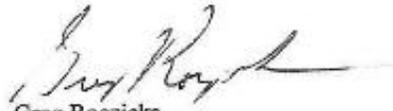
Dear Mr. Balsiger:

We are writing you in regards to the potential loss of the U.S./Canada grant to the State of Alaska Department of Commercial Fisheries Division to conduct fisheries research and monitoring on the Yukon River and to comply with the U.S./Canada Treaty. We were informed that since the Federal Government will likely be running under continued resolution in 2008 that NOAA will no longer be required to adhere to the Federal earmark for the U.S./Canada Yukon River grant and may choose to use the funds elsewhere. We feel that Congress's intent is clearly that these funds be used for the original purpose of providing for research and management of Yukon River fisheries and to comply with the U.S./Canada Treaty. If NOAA decides to use these funds elsewhere, NOAA will be clearly disregarding the intent of Congress and ultimately ignoring a pressing fisheries management need.

The U.S./Canada grant to the State of Alaska Department of Commercial Fisheries is used to conduct essential fisheries research, monitor salmon escapements, and manage Yukon River fisheries. This grant has operated since the mid 1980's and has ranged from \$600,000 to \$1,000,000 per year and is an essential part of Yukon River fisheries management. If this grant is lost, fisheries management and fishers in the Yukon River drainage will suffer as well as other regions as State staff time and resources will be pulled from other regions to "cover" for the loss of these funds.

The Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group requests that the U.S. Canada grant to the State of Alaska Department of Fish and Game Commercial Fisheries Division be fully funded to 2007 levels and that the intent of Congress is adhered to. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Beverly Hoffman
Co-Chair


Greg Roczicka
Co-Chair

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

-continued-

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

P.O. Box 1467 • Bethel, AK 99559 • 907-543-2433 • 907-543-2021 fax

January 22,2008

Denby S. Loyd
Commissioner
Alaska Department of Fish and Game
PO Box 115526
Juneau, Alaska 99811-5526

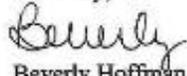
Dear Mr. Loyd:

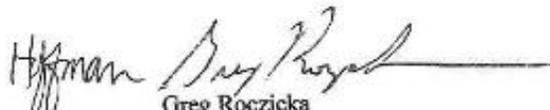
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The Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group requests that the State of Alaska provide substitute funding through the general fund to ensure that the State of Alaska meets its legal responsibilities in managing the Yukon River and other area fisheries. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,


Beverly Hoffman
Co-Chair


Greg Roczicka
Co-Chair

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

P.O. Box 1467 • Bethel, AK 99559 • 907-543-2433 • 907-543-2021 fax

January 22, 2008

Governor Sarah Palin
State of Alaska
PO Box 11001
Juneau, Alaska 99811-0001

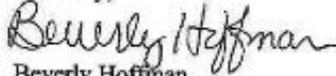
Dear Governor Palin:

We are writing you in regards to the potential loss of the U.S./Canada grant to the State of Alaska Department of Commercial Fisheries Division to conduct fisheries research and monitoring on the Yukon River. We were informed that since the Federal Government will likely be running under continued resolution in 2008 that NOAA will no longer be required to adhere to the Federal earmark for the U.S./Canada Yukon River grant and may choose to use the funds elsewhere.

The U.S./Canada grant to the State of Alaska Department of Commercial Fisheries is used to conduct essential fisheries research, monitor salmon escapements, and manage Yukon River fisheries. This grant has operated since the mid 1980's and has ranged from \$600,000 to \$1,000,000 per year and is an essential part of Yukon River fisheries management. If this grant is lost, fisheries management and fishers in the Yukon River drainage will suffer as well as other regions as State staff time and resources will be pulled from other regions to "cover" for the loss of these funds.

The Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group requests that the State of Alaska provide substitute funding through the general fund to ensure that the State of Alaska meets its legal responsibilities in managing the Yukon River and other area fisheries. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,


Beverly Hoffman
Co-Chair


Greg Roczicka
Co-Chair

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

Cc: Senator Lyman Hoffman
Representative Mary Nelson

-continued-

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

P.O. Box 1467 • Bethel, AK 99559 • 907-543-2433 • 907-543-2021 fax

January 22, 2008

Doug Mecum
Deputy Administrator Alaska Region
National Marine Fisheries Service
PO Box 21668
Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668

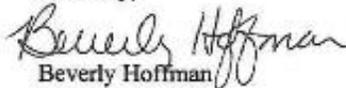
Dear Mr. Mecum:

We are writing you in regards to the potential loss of the U.S./Canada grant to the State of Alaska Department of Commercial Fisheries Division to conduct fisheries research and monitoring on the Yukon River and to comply with the U.S./Canada Treaty. We were informed that since the Federal Government will likely be running under continued resolution in 2008 that NOAA will no longer be required to adhere to the Federal earmark for the U.S./Canada Yukon River grant and may choose to use the funds elsewhere. We feel that Congress's intent is clearly that these funds be used for the original purpose of providing for research and management of Yukon River fisheries and to comply with the U.S./Canada Treaty. If NOAA decides to use these funds elsewhere, NOAA will be clearly disregarding the intent of Congress and ultimately ignoring a pressing fisheries management need.

The U.S./Canada grant to the State of Alaska Department of Commercial Fisheries is used to conduct essential fisheries research, monitor salmon escapements, and manage Yukon River fisheries. This grant has operated since the mid 1980's and has ranged from \$600,000 to \$1,000,000 per year and is an essential part of Yukon River fisheries management. If this grant is lost, fisheries management and fishers in the Yukon River drainage will suffer as well as other regions as State staff time and resources will be pulled from other regions to "cover" for the loss of these funds.

The Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group requests that the U.S. Canada grant to the State of Alaska Department of Fish and Game Commercial Fisheries Division be fully funded to 2007 levels and that the intent of Congress is adhered to. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,


Beverly Hoffman
Co-Chair


Greg Roczicka
Co-Chair

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

APPENDIX I

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

P.O. Box 1467 • Bethel, AK 99559 • 907-543-2433 • 907-543-2021 fax

February 14, 2007

Sue Salvesson
Assistant Regional Administrator
Sustainable Fisheries Division, Alaska Region
National Marine Fisheries Service

Dear Ms. Salvesson:

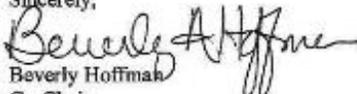
We are writing in regards to the proposed Environmental Impact Statement on salmon bycatch reduction measures in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area (BSAI). The Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group (Working Group) strongly supports a more comprehensive and thorough oversight process determining and achieving these reductions for bycatch-harvested salmon, especially Chinook salmon. The Working Group also recommends collecting age and genetic data on bycatch-harvested salmon to accurately assess the impact of bycatch on Western Alaska salmon fisheries. Age and genetic data on bycatch-harvested salmon will allow identification of salmon stocks and age classes hit hardest by the BSAI commercial pollock fishery, and assist with preserving the resource.

The Working Group is a committee of Kuskokwim Area residents (established through Board of Fisheries action in 1988) who participate in, and are committed to maintaining the long-term sustainability of Kuskokwim River fisheries. The Working Group stays informed on salmon run information and issues affecting Kuskokwim Area fisheries. In addition, the Working Group advises Alaska Department of Fish & Game biologists in all aspects of commercial or subsistence harvest activities. Working Group members, along with other Kuskokwim Area residents, depend upon Chinook salmon subsistence harvest for their way of life. This is dramatically evidenced by the fact that approximately half of the entire Chinook subsistence harvest for the whole state of Alaska is taken from within the Kuskokwim River drainage.

In 2007 over 130,000 Chinook salmon were harvested as bycatch and consecutive record Chinook salmon bycatch levels have been observed over the past four years. The consecutive record high bycatch salmon harvests in recent years have serious implications for Chinook salmon abundance throughout Western Alaska and are of great concern to Working Group members.

The proposed Environmental Impact Statement provides a valuable opportunity to gather critical data on how Western Alaska salmon stocks are affected by BSAI bycatch. The Working Group urges NMFS to take full advantage of this opportunity.

Sincerely,


Beverly Hoffman
Co-Chair


Greg Roczicka
Co-Chair

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group