

# Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

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

July 2, 2014

Meeting called to order at 1:30pm on Wednesday July 2, adjourned at 4:30pm. Total meeting time was 3 hours. Eight voting members were present and a quorum was maintained throughout the meeting.

## AGENDA ITEMS:

### **People to be heard**

**Continuing Business:** Run assessment and management actions

- Explanation of how BTF CPUE is being used as a Chinook salmon assessment tool in 2014.

**Old Business Discussion Topics:** N/A

### **New Business Discussion Topics:**

1. Discussion with Myron Naneng (AVCP) regarding the Inter-Tribal Fish Commission.
2. Update on the Yupit Nation Tribal Fish Forum on 1 July 2014 in Napaskiak. (*Tabled*)

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

- Distribute to Working Group participants a copy of the joint press release regarding the Inter-Tribal Fish Commission. (*7/2/14, Jen Peeks*)

## WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

1. Approval of the agenda as amended. *Motion passed (unanimously).*
2. Adjournment. *Motion passed (unanimously).*

## PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:

Elena Sergie, an Elder from Lower Kalskag, commented that her family caught 1 king salmon during the first opener and another king salmon in the second opener. However, they primarily caught chum salmon. Ms. Sergie reported that otter, beaver and brown bear were eating fish from their setnets.

## CONTINUING BUSINESS:

### **1. Subsistence Reports:**

- **Lowest River Reports:** Charlie Brown (Commercial Fisher) said that subsistence fishing was over in the lowest part of the river and people were busy smoking their catch.
- **ONC In-season Subsistence Report:** Alissa Joseph (ONC) reported that ONC had surveyed 42 families total, 37 families were still fishing. She commented that all the setnets were 4-inch mesh gillnets and smaller; the 12 driftnets were 6-inch mesh with 1 family using a 5 7/8-inch mesh gillnet (*See the July 2 Informational Packet for full survey results.*)
- **Lower River Subsistence:** John Andrew (Downriver Elder alternate) reported that the Chinook salmon run was early during the 2014 season. He said that three boats had gone dipnetting and caught a total of 1 sockeye salmon. He commented that people were discouraged with the dipnet fishery. Mr. Andrew said that people caught whitefish, pike, Dolly Varden and small sockeye, chum and jack king salmon in the 4-inch mesh setnets. Mr. Andrew caught ~34 sockeye, ~ 6 king salmon and other fish species during his subsistence harvest in the 2014 season. He reported that he had not met his harvest goal for the summer. Mr. Andrew said that most people had not done well during the last two 6-inch mesh subsistence openers. He reported catching 11 fish during the June 20<sup>th</sup> opener, and ~11 sockeye

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salmon and ~29 chum salmon in a 10 minute drift during the June 24<sup>th</sup> opener. Mr. Andrew said people had been catching primarily chum salmon during the June 30<sup>th</sup> opener.

Mary Sattler reported that on June 27<sup>th</sup> she caught 21 chum salmon with a driftnet, and that she pulled her family's 2 setnets from the river on July 28<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Sattler reported a ratio of 20:1 sockeye to chum salmon in the setnets and 20:1 chum to sockeye salmon in the drift net. She said that they hung 90-100 fish, most of which had been caught with the setnet. She commented on catching a lot of Dolly Varden, whitefish, pink salmon and jack king salmon during the 2014 season. Due to the small size of the fish she caught, her harvest was half her goal in pounds. Ms. Sattler reported that she had not heard of any success from dipnetting on the Kuskokwim River.

- **KNA Inseason Subsistence:** Megan Leary (KNA) reported on the middle river inseason subsistence surveys. She commented that people reported a slow catch rate during the June 27th opener. (*See the July 2 Informational Packet for full survey results. \*\* Note: the Average Catch based on families surveyed was the total number of fish caught, not average*)
- **Middle River Subsistence:**

Lisa Feyereisen (Middle River Subsistence alternate) reported that she drifted on Friday June 27th and caught a total of 40 fish: 23 chum, 8 king, and 9 sockeye salmon. Ms. Feyereisen said that on June 30<sup>th</sup> she caught 4 chum, 2 big king and 2 sockeye salmon using a 6-inch mesh driftnet. Ms. Feyereisen commented that some people would need to subsistence fish until freeze-up to meet their harvest goals. She reported that people were concerned regarding the high number of whitefish harvested during the 2014 season.

Dave Cannon (Middle River Subsistence alternate) reported that during the last opener in Aniak there were 7 or more boats drifting near town with mixed results. He commented that people caught primarily chum salmon with very few king salmon and some sockeye salmon. One person in Chuathbaluk told Mr. Cannon they caught over 100 chum salmon on June 27th. Since Monday, June 30<sup>th</sup> Mr. Cannon said that people were catching more chum salmon.

Bob Aloysius (YK Delta RAC) reported that many people were done fishing in the Kalskag area because there were too many chum salmon in the river.
- **Upriver Subsistence**

Mark Leary (Upriver Subsistence) reported that people were no longer net fishing near Napaimute, but the community continued to keep the fish wheel running to harvest salmon for an Elder. Mr. Leary reported that the fish wheel was catching an average of 12 chum salmon a day and had caught only one king salmon.
- **Headwaters Subsistence**

Dan Esai (Headwaters Subsistence) reported that many king salmon had traveled to the headwaters. He said that the run was early in the 2014 season.

Ray Collins commented that the water had been high so they were unable to fish with gillnets.

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## 2. Overview of Kuskokwim River Salmon Run Assessment Projects:

- Explanation of how BTF CPUE is being used as a Chinook salmon assessment tool in 2014: Kevin Schaberg (ADF&G) presented on the Chinook salmon assessment tools used during the 2014 season. *(For more information please see the July 2 Informational Packet on p. 22-26 and the audio recording).*
  - Bethel Test Fish: Colton Lipka (ADF&G) reported that the water temperature remained within the historical average range, water clarity dropped below the average range, and the water level was still above average with debris. Mr. Lipka reviewed the daily CPUEs for the BTF. *(For more information on the BTF, please see the July 2 Informational Packet)*
  - Aerial Survey: Aaron Poetter (ADF&G) reported that aerial surveys would begin on July 17-18<sup>th</sup> for ~10 days of surveying in the headwaters. He said that ADF&G had scheduled helicopter surveys for July 24-26<sup>th</sup> for a few lower river tributaries.
  - Weirs: Steve Miller (USFWS) reported on the Kwethluk and Tuluksak River weirs. The Tuluksak weir was water tight as of June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2014. Brittany Blain (ADF&G) reported on the ADF&G weir projects. ADF&G weir projects were reporting numbers for Chinook, chum and sockeye salmon. *(For more information on weirs, please see the July 2 Informational Packet)*
  - Radio Tagging Project: Kevin Schaberg (ADF&G) reported on the tagging projects in the lower river and near Kalskag. *(For more information on the tagging projects please see the July 2 Informational Packet).*
3. **Commercial Catch Report:** Aaron Poetter (ADF&G) said there were no commercial fishery catch reports at that time. Mr. Poetter reported being in contact with the processor, Coastal Villages Seafoods, in regards to a directed commercial fishery opener in July.
4. **Intercept Fishery Report:** Kevin Schaberg (ADF&G) reported no new information.
5. **Weather Report:** Colton Lipka reported on the weather for the lower, middle and upper river.
6. **Recommendations:** Aaron Poetter (ADF&G) announced that on July 3<sup>rd</sup> the entire Kuskokwim River drainage would be opened to 6-inch mesh gillnets until further notice. He said they were also establishing a rod and reel opportunity in Section 5 with the daily bag of 3 fish and no possession of Chinook salmon. Mr. Poetter reported that management would begin focus on commercial opportunities as soon as processors became available. Mr. Poetter commented that a harvestable surplus of chum salmon was available for commercial openings. He said that management remains in Chinook salmon conservation mode. No recommendation as of July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2014.

**OLD BUSINESS:** N/A

**NEW BUSINESS:**

1. **Discussion with Myron Naneng (AVCP) regarding the Inter-Tribal Fish Commission:** Mr. Naneng recalled a resolution that was created during the State of the Salmon Convention in 2012 exploring the possible establishment of an Inter-Tribal Fish Commission on the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers. Mr. Naneng commented that this would increase the involvement of the tribes in fisheries management. *(A draft of the resolution was emailed out to Working Group participants on 7/2/14)*

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## WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

**Motion 1: To approve the agenda as amended.** *Motion passed (unanimous)*

**Motion 5: Adjournment.** *Motion passed (unanimous).*

## COMMENTS FROM THE WORKING GROUP

Mary Sattler said she was concerned regarding potential commercial fishery openers for salmon. She commented that people were still relying on chum salmon to meet subsistence harvest needs.

Lisa Feyereisen commented that people were concerned with the low chum salmon return numbers in the middle river. Ms. Feyereisen suggested that managers assess whether chum salmon were being depleted by the use of smaller mesh gillnets during the 2014 season. She urged management to be consistent with fishery decisions regarding the Chinook salmon conservation and the risk of incidental harvest. Ms. Feyereisen expressed the importance of utilizing local knowledge when discussing natural resource issues.

Dan Esai suggested that management conduct their aerial surveys in the headwaters sooner than the scheduled date in mid-July due to the abundance of Chinook salmon already in the Tonzona River and other headwater streams.

Dave Cannon commented that many people will be reliant on coho salmon this 2014 season to maximize their subsistence harvest.

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## WORKING GROUP ATTENDANCE:

<b>MEMBER SEAT:</b>	<b>NAME:</b>
DOWNRIVER ELDER	John Andrew
UPRIVER ELDER	<i>Absent</i>
LOWER RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mary Sattler
MIDDLE RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Dave Cannon
UPRIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mark Leary
HEADWATERS SUBSISTENCE	Dan Esai
MEMBER AT LARGE	<i>Absent</i>
WESTERN INTERIOR RAC	Ray Collins
YK DELTA RAC	Bob Aloysius
COMMERCIAL FISHING	Charlie Brown
SPORT FISHING	<i>Absent</i>
PROCESSOR	<i>Absent</i>
ADF&G	Aaron Poetter
CHAIR	LaMont Albertson

## **Other Participants:**

ADF&G Comm. Fish: Aaron Poetter, Aaron Tiernan, Brittany Blain, Chris Shelden, Kevin Schaberg, Colton Lipka, John Linderman, Jen Peeks

Sport Fishing: John Chythlook, Tom Taube

Subsistence Division: Dave Runfola, Andrew Brenner, Oden Miller, Hiroko Ikuta

USFWS: Brian McCaffrey, Ken Harper, Steve Miller, Lew Coggins

OSM: Don Rivard, George Pappas, Pippa Kenner

Megan Leary (KNA)  
Dan Gillikin (KNA)  
Roberta Chavez (ONC)  
Alissa Joseph (ONC)  
Tim Andrew (AVCP)  
Myron Naneng (AVCP)  
Kate Schaberg (NVGT)

Lisa Feyereisen (Middle River Subsistence)  
Carl Morgan (Western Interior RAC)  
Greg Hoffman Jr. (Commercial Fishing alternate)  
Ben Matheson (KYUK Radio)  
Fred Phillip (Kwigillingok)  
Bill Kristovich (Bethel)  
Elena Sergie (Lower Kalskag)  
Doug Molyneaux (Unaffiliated)

## **GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS:**

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (**ADF&G**), Orutsararmiut Native Council (**ONC**), Kuskokwim Native Association (**KNA**), Association of Village Council Presidents (**AVCP**), Georgetown Traditional Council (**GTC**), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (**USFWS**), Bethel Test Fishery project (**BTF**), Catch Per Unit Effort (**CPUE**), Coastal Village Seafoods (**CVS**), ADF&G Commercial Fisheries Division (**CF**), ADF&G Sport Fisheries Division (**SF**), Regional Advisory Council (**RAC**), Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group (**KRSMWG**, **Working Group**, or **WG**), Sustainable Escapement Goal (**SEG**), Biological Escapement Goal (**BEG**), Management Objective (**MO**), Amounts Reasonably Necessary for Subsistence (**ANS**), Emergency Order (**EO**), Bering Sea Fishermen's Association (**BSFA**)

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