

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

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

April 20, 2016

Meeting called to order at 9:02 a.m. on Wednesday April 20, 2016, broke for lunch between 12:00 p.m. and 1:30 p.m., and adjourned at 4:20 p.m. Meeting time was approximately six hours. Ten full voting members were present and a quorum was established.

AGENDA ITEMS:

People to be Heard:

2016 Fishery Management

- ADF&G 2016 Fishery Project Updates
- Board of Fish (BOF) 2016 decisions and how they affect management
- Management in 2016

Working Group Housekeeping

- Election of Chairs
- By-Laws
- Foraker Group Documents and Suggestions

WORKING GROUP ACTION ITEMS: *No Action Items at the time of this meeting.*

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

1. Approve the agenda as amended. *Passed (Unanimous)*
2. Upper and Lower Kalskag joint resolutions be recorded within the meeting summary for April 20. *Passed (Unanimous)*
3. KRSMWG break for lunch and meet back at 1:30 p.m. *Passed (Unanimous)*
4. That the Working Group support co-management between State and federal managers that incorporates the whole river harvest concept as put forward by the Inter-Tribal Fisheries Commission. *Passed (Unanimous)*
5. Regardless of who manages what part of the river, managers should manage for the top 15% of the established Chinook salmon escapement goals in 2016. *Passed (Unanimous)*
6. To initiate the Board of Fisheries prescribed closure on the 20 May 2016 below the Holitna River (subsistence section 5), and on June 1 above the Holitna River. *Passed (8 yeas, 1 nay)*
7. On the date of the Chinook salmon closure, all nets including 4" mesh gillnets will be out of the water on the Kuskokwim main stem and salmon spawning tributaries. Any 4" gillnetting opportunity during the closure will be at the discretion of the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and the Inter-Tribal Fisheries Commission. *Passed (7 yeas, 2 nays)*
8. The salmon spawning tributaries will remain closed after June 12 and be reassessed on a case-by-case basis. *Passed (8 yeas, 0 nays)*
9. The Working Group will elect LaMont Albertson, Fritz Charles, Beverly Hoffman, and Mary Sattler to serve as Working Group Chairs for 2016. *Passed (Unanimous)*
10. For the 2016 season, the Working Group agenda will show the following reorder:
 - a. ADF&G Management Actions for Consideration will appear before People to be Heard.
 - b. Subsistence Reports will appear after People to be Heard and before the Overview. *Passed (Unanimous)*
11. Regular meetings will be scheduled each Tuesday, at noon with a goal of a two hour cap, throughout June and July 2016. The chairs may decide not to meet. *Passed (Unanimous)*
12. Approve Mary Sattler to serve as second alternate for Member at Large. *Passed (Unanimous)*
13. To adjourn the meeting at 4:20 p.m. *Passed (Unanimous)*

Meeting summaries are prepared and distributed by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) in cooperative agreement with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service Office of Subsistence Management (USF&WS OSM). The department is responsible for summary content. Summaries are not comprehensive or considered meeting minutes, and are designed to provide context on meeting proceedings for the convenience of interested parties/participants. Audio recordings of meetings can be found at: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareakuskokwim.kswg#2016>

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PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:

- Walter Morgan (Lower Kalskag) requested Working Group support for the Lower Kalskag Tribal Council's resolution to support the use of 6" mesh gillnets, not exceeding 25 fathoms in length and 45 meshes deep on the Kuskokwim River from the Johnson River up, rather than restricting gear to 4" mesh gillnets.
- Ray Born (USFWS) reported that the USFWS Resource Information Technicians (RIT) were conducting outreach to all the villages in the refuge. Working Group members discussed the importance of understanding traditional knowledge and finding respectful ways to disseminate federal and state scientific knowledge.

2016 FISHERY MANAGEMENT:

- **ADF&G 2016 Fishery Project Updates:** Zach Liller (ADF&G) reminded the group of the inseason data sources available online. (*For more information on data sharing, please see the April 20 Informational Packet*). Mr. Liller reviewed the 2015 salmon run. Based on the assessment projects and models, Mr. Liller reported that the 2015 Chinook salmon run was below average; however it met the drainagewide escapement goal and was larger than the 2014 run. The 2015 chum salmon run was late and the tenth smallest run since 1984. ADF&G had managed chum salmon conservatively in 2015. The 2015 sockeye salmon run timing had been late and was the fourth largest on record at the Bethel Test Fishery. Coho salmon run timing was one of the latest on record and preliminary results indicated a total run size slightly below average. The coho salmon drainagewide escapement for 2015 had been above average. ADF&G had managed coho salmon conservatively. (*For more information on the 2015 salmon run overview, please see the April 20 Informational Packet*).
Mr. Liller summarized the planned 2016 assessment projects. He noted that 2016 would be the final year for the lower river Chinook salmon tagging project and the sonar feasibility project. Dave Runfola (ADF&G) reported on the 2016 subsistence division projects focusing on gathering inseason fishing data and catch reports.
- **Board of Fish (BOF) 2016 decisions and how they affect management:** Aaron Poetter (ADF&G Area Management Biologist) discussed the 2016 BOF proposal decisions. He gave special attention to the BOF decision for an early subsistence closure for Chinook salmon through June 11.
- **Management in 2016:** Mr. Poetter discussed the 2016 ADF&G salmon management plan. ADF&G and USFWS collaborated regarding the 2016 forecast. The drainagewide escapement goal was 65,000–125,000 Chinook salmon and the 2016 forecasted range was 125,000–219,000 Chinook salmon. If the run returned within the forecasted range it would meet escapement and subsistence needs. ADF&G requested Working Group input on management tools for the 2016 season.
Ray Born (USFWS) discussed the federal management plan for 2016. He noted that a projection of less than 200,000 Chinook salmon for 2016 could trigger a federal special action to limit the fishery to federally qualified users within the federal boundaries. He requested management recommendations from the Working Group (*For more information on the USFWS management plan, please see the April 20 Informational Packet*). Working Group members discussed strategies for making fishing opportunities more equitable throughout the entire river. (*See Motions 5–8*)

WORKING GROUP HOUSEKEEPING:

- **Election of Chairs:** (*See Motion 9*)
- **By-Laws:** (*See Motion 10–11*)

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- **Foraker Group Documents and Suggestions:** Chris Shelden (ADF&G) requested that Working Group members review the Foraker documents and decide if any actions needed to be taken.

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

Motion 1: To approve the agenda as amended. *Passed (Unanimous)*

Motion 2: Upper and Lower Kalskag joint resolutions be recorded within the meeting summary for April 20. *Passed (Unanimous)*

Motion 3: KRSMWG break for lunch and meet back at 1:30 p.m. *Passed (Unanimous)*

Motion 4: That the Working Group support co-management between State and federal managers that incorporates the whole river harvest concept as put forward by the Inter-Tribal Fish Commission.
Passed (9 yes, 0 no)

Motion 5: Regardless of who manages what part of the river, managers should manage for the top 15% of the established Chinook salmon escapement goals in 2016. *Passed (9 yes, 0 no)*

Motion 6: To initiate the Board of Fisheries prescribed closure on the 20th of May 2016 below the Holitna River (subsistence section 5), and on June 1 above the Holitna River. *Passed (8 yes, 1 no)*
The Working Group discussed potential dates for implementing the 2016 Chinook salmon closure.

Motion 7: On the date of the Chinook salmon closure, all nets including 4" mesh gillnets will be out of the water on the Kuskokwim main stem and salmon spawning tributaries. Any 4" gillnetting opportunity during the closure will be at the discretion of the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and the Inter-Tribal Fish Commission. *Passed (7 yes, 2 no)*
USFWS and ADF&G explained how they estimated the amount of Chinook salmon caught in 4" mesh gear during the 2015 season. Some Working Group members were concerned that the use of 4" mesh gillnets would catch too many whitefish and that people would target Chinook salmon.

Motion 8: The salmon spawning tributaries will remain closed after June 12 and be reassessed on a case-by-case basis. *Passed (8 yes, 0 no)*

Motion 9: The Working Group will elect LaMont Albertson, Fritz Charles, Beverly Hoffman, and Mary Sattler to serve as Working Group Chairs for 2016. *Passed (Unanimous)*

Motion 10: For the 2016 season, the Working Group agenda will show the following reorder:
a. **ADF&G management actions for consideration will appear before People to be Heard.**
b. **Subsistence reports will appear after People to be Heard and before the Overview.**
Passed (Unanimous)

Motion 11: Regular meetings will be scheduled each Tuesday, at noon with a goal of a two hour cap, throughout June and July 2016. The chairs may decide not to meet. *Passed (Unanimous)*
Working Group members discussed options that would accommodate all members' schedules.

Motion 12: Approve Mary Sattler to serve as second alternate for Member at Large. *Passed (Unanimous)*

Motion 13: To adjourn the meeting at 4:20pm. *Passed (Unanimous)*

COMMENTS FROM THE WORKING GROUP:

- Mike Williams Sr. (Lower River Subsistence) thanked everyone for the MOU between the USFWS and the KRITFC. He invited the public to witness the celebration and signing on May 10–11. He commented that the Akiak Native community submitted a special action request to the Federal Subsistence Board regarding Chinook salmon.
- Charlie Brown (Commercial Fishing) commented that the slough upriver from Eek was a key location for subsistence fishing in his area.

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WORKING GROUP ATTENDANCE:

MEMBER SEAT:	NAME:
DOWNRIVER ELDER	James Charles
UPRIVER ELDER	<i>Absent</i>
LOWER RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mike Williams Sr.
MIDDLE RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Lisa Feyereisen
UPRIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mark Leary
HEADWATERS SUBSISTENCE	Dan Esai
MEMBER AT LARGE	Fritz Charles
WESTERN INTERIOR RAC	Ray Collins
YK DELTA RAC	John Andrew
COMMERCIAL FISHING	Charlie Brown
SPORT FISHING	LaMont Albertson
PROCESSOR	<i>Absent</i>
ADF&G	Aaron Poetter
CHAIR	Fritz Charles

Other Participants:

ADF&G Comm. Fish: Nick Smith, Brittany Blain, Chris Shelden, Zach Liller, Chuck Brazil, Aaron Tiernan, Aaron Poetter, Jan Conitz

Sport Fishing: John Chythlook, Tim Viavant

Subsistence Division: Lisa Olson, Dave Runfola

Commissioner's Officer: Jill Klein

USFWS: Ken Stahlnecker, Ray Born, Lew Coggins, Christopher Tulik, David Therchik Toksook Bay, David Fox

OSM: Don Rivard

Media: Lisa Demer (ADN)

Geri Sumpter (Sen. Murkowski's office)

Paula Schiefer

Walter Morgan

Jonathon Samuelson (Georgetown)

Dan Gillikin (Napaimute)

Marc Cloward (AST)

Doug Molyneaux

Henry Cole

Gerald Kameroff

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**), Law Enforcement (**LE**), Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (**ITFC**)

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