

# Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

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

May 26, 2016

Meeting called to order at 12:00 p.m. on Thursday May 26, 2016 and adjourned at 1:52 p.m. Meeting time was approximately two hours. Nine full voting members were present and a quorum was established.

## AGENDA ITEMS:

### **Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) Management Actions Under Consideration:**

#### **People to be Heard:**

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

- Discussion of 4" mesh gillnet opportunities

#### **Old Business Discussion Topics:**

- Upriver Elder seat

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

- Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (KRITFC) update

**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. To support the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission's recommendation for a 72 hour opener for 4" mesh, setnets only, on the main stem of the river. *Passed (8 yeas, 1 nay).*
3. To adjourn. *Passed (Unanimous).*

**ADF&G MANAGEMENT ACTIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION:** Aaron Poetter (ADF&G Area Management Biologist) reported that ADF&G was not considering additional fishing opportunity during the closure regardless of gear type. Mr. Poetter commented that the management action that was in place allowed for subsistence fishing, for non-salmon species, with gears such as hook and line, dip nets, fish wheels with live boxes or chutes, and beach seines with the requirement of live releasing any Chinook salmon caught. The only tributaries closed were those stated in the Kuskokwim River Salmon Fishery Announcement #2. ADF&G implemented the current management strategy based on recommendations from the Working Group and the KRITFC.

#### **PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:**

- Walter Morgan from Lower Kalskag requested a 12 hour fishing opportunity with gillnets.
- Ray Born (USFWS) commented that the USFWS supported the State's emergency order #3-S-WR-01-16. Mr. Born reported that law enforcement would be conducting outreach activities on the Kuskokwim River starting the week of May 29. USFWS created a Facebook page to provide public updates.
- John Zeller from Red Devil commented that he only had setnet gear and lived too far from open tributaries. He requested an opportunity to fish on the main stem of the Kuskokwim River.
- Willie Pitka Jr. from Kalskag commented that the remote communities depended on fish to feed their families.
- Jack Stewart from Kalskag asked for clarification regarding the reliability of the State's fish counting assessment projects.
- Adolph Lupie from Tuntutuliak commented that the people had been deprived from using 4" mesh nets and requested a subsistence opener.
- Alexie Michael from Napakiak, requested an update on the escapement numbers since the May 20 closure. ADF&G explained that fish had not made it to the weirs at this time.

*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.ADF&G.alaska.gov/index.cfm?ADF&G=commercialbyareakuskokwim.kswg#/2013>*

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- Elizabeth Dillon from Kwethluk requested that her village be allowed to fish for a funeral feast. Orutsararmiut Native Council (ONC) said they would coordinate with her to send fish from the Bethel Test Fishery (BTF).
- Evon Waska from Bethel requested an opportunity to fish with chum salmon gear.
- David Simeon from Bethel asked for clarification from the State on the use of dip nets and beach seines.
- Gerald Kameroff from Kalskag commented that allowing a subsistence fishing opener would help ease people's craving for fresh fish.

## **CONTINUING BUSINESS:**

### **1. Overview of Kuskokwim River Salmon Run Assessment Projects:**

- **Bethel Test Fish:** Colton Lipka (ADF&G) reported that the BTF started on May 23 and had been catching ~1 Chinook salmon every tide. Mr. Lipka commented that operations were normal. BTF was working with ONC to distribute fish. LaMont Albertson (Sport Fishing) thanked the department for starting the 2016 BTF earlier than normal.
  - **Aniak Test Fish:** Mr. Lipka reported that the target start date for the 2016 Aniak Test Fishery (ATF) was June 1.
- 2. Discussion of ADF&G Management Consideration and Discussion of Possible Alternatives:** The Working Group recommended a 72 hour subsistence opportunity with the use of 4" mesh setnets. (*See Motion 2*).

## **OLD BUSINESS:**

- **Upriver Elder seat:** The Working Group Upriver Elder seat remained vacant. Mark Leary (Middle River Subsistence) volunteered to follow up with two possible candidates.

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

- **Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (KRITFC) update:** LaMont Albertson reported on the May 11&12 KRITFC meeting. Working Group members expressed the need to continue working together with ADF&G, USFWS, and the KRITFC.

## **WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:**

- 1. Approve the agenda as amended. Passed (Unanimous).**
- 2. To support the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission's recommendation for a 72 hour opener for 4" mesh, setnets only, on the main stem of the river. Passed (8 yeas, 1 nay).**

Some Working Group members commented that the length of time for the subsistence closure to all gillnets on the Kuskokwim River was too long and that an opportunity would have little impact on the Chinook salmon run this early in the season. A few members reported that setnets could not be used near the mouth of the Kuskokwim River due to its width and tidal influence. Dave Cannon (Middle River Subsistence alternate) commented that the strength of the Chinook salmon run could not be determined at this point in the season and that Kuskokwim River residents had testified during the spring Alaska Board of Fisheries meeting requesting for a conservative management approach in 2016.

- 3. To adjourn. Passed (Unanimous).**

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## **COMMENTS FROM THE WORKING GROUP:**

- Charlie Brown (Commercial Fishing) commented that it was too early in the season to close the river to subsistence fishing.
- Mike Williams Sr. (Lower River Subsistence) thanked the Working Group for supporting a 4" mesh opportunity. He reminded people that left over freezer burnt meat could be donated to local dog mushers.
- Mark Leary commented that he hoped the State would support the motion made by the Working Group.
- Bob Aloysius (YK Delta RAC) commented that the live release gear options allowed during the closure were not practical in many parts of the river.
- Fritz Charles (Member at Large) commented on the width of the lower river and that some of the gear options could not be used in the lower river; setnets could only be used during slack tide.
- John Andrew (Downriver Elder) reported that prior to the closure people in his area had caught several Sheefish. Mr. Andrew commented that a 4" mesh setnet opportunity would not work well in his area due to the large amount of debris in the water.
- LaMont Albertson commented that the KRITFC was both "inter-tribal" and "inter-regional."
- Greg Roczicka (Lower River Subsistence alternate) commented that the Working Group weighed in twice on the issue regarding the 4" mesh gillnet opportunity.

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## WORKING GROUP ATTENDANCE:

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

## **Other Participants:**

ADF&G Comm. Fish: Colton Lipka, Jen Peeks  
Sport Fishing: John Chythlook  
Subsistence Division: Monica Wellard

USFWS: Ray Born, Lew Coggins, Ben Staton  
OSM: Don Rivard

Media: Lisa Demer (ADN), KYUK

Henry Cole (Bethel)  
 Paula Schiefer  
 Walter Morgan (Lower Kalskag)  
 Dan Gillikin (Napaimute)  
 Gerald Kameroff (Kalskag)  
 Jerry Demientieff  
 Evon Waska (Bethel)  
 Jack Stewart (Kalskag)  
 Willie Pitka Jr. (Kalskag)  
 John Zeller (Red Devil)

Janessa Esquible (ONC)  
 Alissa Joseph (ONC)  
 Bill Bechtol (ITFC)  
 Megan Leary (Aniak)  
 Robert Golley (Chuathbaluk)  
 Angela Morgan (Aniak)  
 Darlene Heckman (Lower Kalskag)  
 David Simeon (Bethel)  
 Adolph Lupie (Tuntutuliak)  
 Alexie Michael (Napakiak)  
 Elizabeth Dillon (Kwethluk)

## **GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS:**

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

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