

# Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

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

June 14, 2016

Meeting called to order at 12:06 p.m. on Tuesday June 14, 2016 and adjourned at 2:30 p.m. Meeting time was approximately 2 hours and 30 minutes. 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.

**Old Business Discussion Topics:**

**New Business Discussion Topics:**

**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 extend the Working Group meeting until 2:30 p.m. *Passed (Unanimous)*
3. For the remainder of the State water from the mouth of the Holitna to the refuge boundary near Aniak to be open 24/7 by Thursday 16 June for 6" mesh or less, 25 fathoms or less, gillnets. *Passed (8 years, 0 nays, 1 abstain)*
4. To adjourn. *Passed (Unanimous)*

**ADF&G MANAGEMENT ACTIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION:** Aaron Poetter (ADF&G Area Management Biologist) commented that ADF&G would obtain harvest information from the June 12 opener in State waters above Aniak. Mr. Poetter reported that ADF&G had no management actions under consideration at this time.

## PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:

- Ray Born (USFWS) reported that the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (KRITFC) recommended a 24 hour opener beginning on June 15 for 6" or less mesh, 50 fathoms in length gillnets within the Kuskokwim River federal refuge waters. Lew Coggins (USFWS) reported that ~5,000 salmon, ~4,200 Chinook salmon, were harvested during the June 12 subsistence opener. Law Enforcement (LE) seized five nets since June 11. Mr. Born commented that LE was working with fishers to be in compliance with the regulations and were only issuing citations for gross violations. Mr. Born added that the fine was \$250 for net infractions and \$250 for non-federally qualified users who were found fishing.
- Dave Dorris from Upper Kalskag commented that on June 12 there were a few set nets in the Kalskag area; one fisher reported catching seven king salmon and another fisher caught nine king salmon. Mr. Dorris reported that on June 11 their fish wheel caught 10 king and 1 chum salmon, which were released; on June 12 the fish wheel caught five king and two chum salmon.
- Tim Zaukar from Crooked Creek commented that on June 12 the village caught ~26 king salmon and fewer than that on June 13. He noted that most of the fish were smaller than average.
- Mike Savage from Lower Kalskag reported that he fished in a new location due to the amount of people on the river. Within 12 hours of fishing he caught 15 king salmon and 4 Sheefish. Mr. Savage commented that the middle and upriver communities harvested fewer fish than in the lower river.
- Walter Morgan from Lower Kalskag commented that their fish wheel had been catching a few fish to date. During the June 12 opener Mr. Morgan reported there were few fish in the river. He recommended that

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managers close the river until it becomes more abundant with fish. Mr. Morgan suggested that Kalskag management regulations be consistent with the State managed waters.

## SUBSISTENCE REPORTS:

- **Lowest River:** James Charles (Downriver Elder) commented that people were happy with their catch during the June 12 subsistence opener.
- **ONC Subsistence Report:** Greg Roczicka (ONC, Lower River Subsistence alternate) reported that ONC conducted harvest surveys during the June 12 opener. He commented that people observed large fish hitting the 6" mesh gillnets and falling out. Reports indicated that king salmon were more abundant than sockeye or chum salmon.
- **Lower River:** Mike Williams Sr. (Lower River Subsistence) commented that people were happy with the June 12 fishing opportunity. He reported that interviews conducted in Akiak estimated ~426 Chinook, 67 chum and 12 sockeye salmon were harvested and that few people fished the full 12 hours. Bev Hoffman (Sport Fishing) reported catching two king, five jack, and one sockeye salmon during two hours of fishing. She commented that one fisher caught 39 king salmon. She added that people were happy with the fishing opportunity. Ms. Hoffman commented that the definition of "federally qualified user" had been confusing to some people. Fritz Charles (Member at Large) observed below average harvest near Fauller Island but that it improved further down river with the slack tide. The majority of the Chinook salmon he caught were small males. Bob Aloysius (YK Delta RAC) reported needing to cut his net due to a large snag. He did not support the use of 50 fathom nets in the entire river due to Chinook salmon conservation. Mary Sattler (Lower River Subsistence alternate) reported catching 20 jack and 7 large king salmon, 1 female sockeye salmon and 1 Sheefish near the Gweek River.
- **Middle River:** Dave Cannon (Middle River Subsistence) commented that historically people in the middle river began fishing at this time in the season. He observed "combat" fishing in front of Aniak and that people had fairly productive fishing. Setnets appeared more successful than driftnets and relatively few chum salmon were caught. He reminded the group that there continued to be the need to conserve Chinook salmon. Mr. Cannon commented that the State Troopers who had been patrolling the area relayed confusing information regarding the regulations.
- **Upriver:** Mark Leary (Upriver Subsistence) commented that the amount of fish harvested to date was unusual for this point in the season. He fished a total of 13 hours during the 48 hour opener in State waters. He estimated that ~20% of the fish that hit the net were falling out. Mr. Leary observed that the king salmon appeared more red than usual at this point in the season.
- **Headwaters:** Ray Collins (Headwaters Subsistence) commented that there were no reports of king salmon harvested near McGrath.

## CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. **Overview of Kuskokwim River Salmon Run Assessment Projects:**
  - **Bethel Test Fish:** Zach Liller (ADF&G) reported that water temperature was above average, water clarity was clearer than average and water level was below average. All were within the historical range. Mr. Liller reviewed the daily CPUE for Chinook salmon at the BTF. Chinook salmon to date were the most abundant salmon species in the river and were above the recent 5 and 10-year averages for this date. On average, 16% of the Chinook salmon run had passed Bethel. *(For more information on the BTF, please see the June 14 Informational Packet).*

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- Aniak Test Fish: Mr. Liller reported that Chinook salmon were the predominant species at the ATF. (*For more information on the ATF, please see the June 14 Informational Packet*).
  - Weirs: Mr. Liller reported that all State weirs were currently being installed and were not yet operational.
  - Radio Tagging Project: Mr. Liller reported that on June 13, the tagging project caught 58 Chinook salmon, the largest amount to date. During the June 12 opener ~10% of the tags were returned by fishers.
  - Subsistence Division: David Runfola (ADF&G) reported on the subsistence feasibility study. To date there were 13 volunteers reporting their fishing information for the study. On average, he reported that the fishers caught five king salmon in four hours. Mr. Runfola commented that a few fishers had not fished due to low catch numbers.
2. **Discussion of ADF&G Management Consideration and Discussion of Possible Alternatives:** (*See Motion 2*). Working Group members discussed the KRITFC recommendation to USFWS for a 24 hour subsistence opener. Some members were concerned about allowing 50 fathom nets for the entire federal waters. Ms. Feyereisen requested that USFWS provide additional opportunity for the Kalskag communities due to the limited amount of fish in that area.

**OLD BUSINESS:** N/A

**NEW BUSINESS:** N/A

## **WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:**

1. **Approve the agenda as amended. Passed (Unanimous)**
2. **To extend the Working Group meeting until 2:30 p.m. Passed (Unanimous)**
3. **For the remainder of the State water from the mouth of the Holitna to the refuge boundary near Aniak to be open 24/7 by Thursday 16 June for 6" mesh or less, 25 fathoms or less gillnets. Passed (8 yeas, 0 nays, 1 abstain)**

Working group members discussed a potential subsistence opener in the upper river while considering the need to continue to conserve Chinook salmon. Some Working Group members commented that the motion would provide fish to the middle and upriver communities that had not previously been fished on. Some members commented on the limited fishing pressure in the middle and upriver when compared to the lower river.
4. **To adjourn. Passed (Unanimous).**

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

- Lisa Feyereisen commented that there were concerns regarding a yellow LE plane and suggested that LE improve their communication with local residents while doing inspections.

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## WORKING GROUP ATTENDANCE:

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

## Other Participants:

ADF&G Comm. Fish: Aaron Tiernan, Colton Lipka, Jen Peeks, Jan Conitz, John Linderman, Jordan Head, Zach Liller, Chris Shelden, Nick Smith

Sport Fishing: John Chythlook

Subsistence Division: David Runfola, Lisa Olson

Commissioner's Office:

USFWS: Ray Born, Lew Coggins, Gary Decossas, Ben Statton, Aaron Moses

OSM: Pippa Kenner, Karl Lindberg

David Dorris (Upper Kalskag)	Janessa Esquible (ONC)	<u>Media:</u> Adrian Wagner (KYUK)
Walter Morgan (Lower Kalskag)	Alissa Joseph (ONC)	
Dan Gillikin (Napaimute)	Bill Bechtol (KRITFC)	<u>WG Alternates:</u> Greg Roczicka Mary Sattler Nick Kameroff Bev Hoffman
Janet Hoffman (Aniak)	Megan Leary (Aniak)	
Kevin Bartley	Angela Morgan (Aniak)	
Randy Turner	Tim Zaukar (Crooked Creek)	
Will Voinot-Baron	Janet Hoffman (Aniak)	
Mike Savage (Lower Kalskag)	Heather Houston (Aniak)	
Randy Turner	Paula Schieffer	

## 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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