

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

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

August 9, 2016

Meeting called to order at 12:00 p.m. on Tuesday August 9, 2016 and adjourned at 2:00 p.m. Meeting time was 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.

Old Business Discussion Topics:

- Follow-up on funding and resources for genetic testing in Area M– *John Linderman*
- LaMont Albertson's draft letter to Joe Spaeder and Art Nelson

New Business Discussion Topics:

- Working Group Processor participation

WORKING GROUP ACTION ITEMS:

- To draft a letter to the Working Group Processor and Alternate, recognizing a general lack of participation in 2016 and to enquire whether those individuals/organizations wish to continue to participate in the Working Group process. (*ADF&G, WG co-chairs*)

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

1. Approve the agenda as amended. *Passed (Unanimous)*
2. That there be a formal analysis of the management strategy used during the 2016 Chinook salmon season and that the KRITFC request the same analysis. *Passed (9 yeas, 0 nays)*
3. To adjourn. *Passed (Unanimous)*

ADF&G MANAGEMENT ACTIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION: Aaron Poetter (ADF&G Area Management Biologist) reported that ADF&G had no management actions under consideration.

PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:

- Dan Gillikin (NVN) commented that the 2016 management strategy achieved what was anticipated however he recommended that it be further reviewed prior to implementation in 2017.

SUBSISTENCE REPORTS:

- **Lowest River:** Charlie Brown (Commercial Fishing) commented that people in his area were not actively subsistence fishing for silver salmon. James Charles (Downriver Elder) commented that he fished on August 5 and caught nine coho, two sockeye and one pink salmon.
- **Lower River:** Mary Sattler (Lower River Subsistence) reported that people had observed an abundance of bright silver salmon. Bev Hoffman (Sport Fishing) commented that people were harvesting for freezer fish and jarring; a few people were hanging strips or hanging a day/smoking a day. Greg Roczicka (YK Delta RAC) commented that many people were rod and reel fishing for silver salmon and people continued to process salmon. He reported that ONC had been delivering BTF fish to Bethel agencies.
- **Middle River:** Lisa Feyereisen (Middle River Subsistence) reported that the Crooked Creek fish wheel was running full time and several fishcamps were processing fish. She commented that Aniak had ~3 people actively smoking fish while others were waiting an additional week to target silver salmon.
- **Upriver:** Barbara Carlson (Upriver Subsistence alternate) commented that the silver salmon numbers had increased during the last several days; people were fishing primarily with hook and line. Some people were smoking but the majority were canning or freezing their harvest. Ms. Carlson reported that she had

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been catching one king salmon every day in the fish wheel and large numbers of pink salmon were observed. She commented that people were happy with the fishing season.

- **Headwaters:** Dan Esai (Headwaters Subsistence) reported that people continued to fish for red, chum and coho salmon and that a greater number of Sheefish had been observed during 2016 than in previous years. He commented that people had been able to harvest what they needed.

CONTINUING BUSINESS:

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

- **Bethel Test Fish:** Aaron Poetter reported that water temperature was near average, water clarity was below average, and the water level was above average; all were within the historical range. He commented that Chinook, chum and sockeye salmon runs were nearing completion at the BTF site while the coho salmon run was building and slightly below average. (*For more information on the BTF, please see the August 9 Informational Packet*).
 - **Weirs:** Mr. Poetter reported that Chinook salmon passage at the George and Kwethluk river weirs were below the escapement goals. Nick Smith (ADF&G) commented that several weirs had experienced periods of inoperable conditions throughout the season due to high water. Ray Born (USFWS) commented that the Kwethluk River weir experienced high water throughout the 2016 season and, to date had been fish tight for 15 days. (*For more information on the weir projects, please see the August 9 Informational Packet*).
 - **Radio Tagging Project:** Nick Smith (ADF&G) reported that during the 2016 season the lower river tagging project operated from May 26–July 24, deploying 1,509 dorsally attached spaghetti tags and 621 radio tags to Chinook salmon. Tagged fish continued to be tracked throughout the Kuskokwim drainage.
 - **Sonar:** Mr. Smith reported that the sonar feasibility project in the lower river had operated from June 10–July 25 during the 2016 season; research staff continued to evaluate the data to determine its viability in the Kuskokwim River.
 - **Aerial Surveys:** Aaron Tiernan (ADF&G) reported that Chinook salmon aerial surveys were completed on all scheduled streams with the exception of the Salmon River (Aniak) due to weather and time constraints. Aerial survey goals for Chinook salmon were met on the Kisaralik, Holitna and Salmon (Pitka Fork) rivers; goals were not met on the Aniak, Gagarayah and the Cheeneetnuk rivers.
2. **Commercial:** A commercial period was held on July 29 for catcher-seller permit holders. Due to the State's confidentiality requirements, harvest numbers could not be released to the public.
 3. **Sport Fishing:** Mr. Albertson reported that people were beginning to catch coho salmon with rod and reel in the Aniak area. Ms. Hoffman commented that her business had picked up eight groups of rafters who reported good trout fishing and large numbers of Chinook salmon; chum salmon numbers appeared low.
 4. **Intercept Fishery Report:**
 5. **Discussion of ADF&G Management Consideration and Discussion of Possible Alternatives:** (*See Motion 2*)

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OLD BUSINESS:

- **Follow-up on funding and resources for genetic testing in Area M:** John Linderman (ADF&G) reported that the Chinook Salmon Research Initiative (CSRI) included research projects state-wide and the genetic testing project included the entire Western region. Due to the State's budget issues the third installment for the Chinook salmon genetic project had not been approved. Samples collected from 2014 continued to be analyzed at the gene conservation lab and the final report was expected to be released in January 2017.
- **LaMont Albertson's draft letter to Joe Spaeder and Art Nelson:** Mr. Albertson reported that he verbally requested from Mr. Spaeder and Mr. Nelson that a discussion of the Working Group structure be included on the next Capacity Building workshop agenda.

NEW BUSINESS:

- **Working Group Processor participation:** *(See Action Items)*

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

1. **Approve the agenda as amended. Passed (Unanimous)**
2. **That there be a formal analysis of the management strategy used during the 2016 Chinook salmon season and that the KRITFC request the same analysis. Passed (9 yeas, 0 nays)**

Several Working Group members commented on their concerns regarding low Chinook salmon passage at some of the escapement projects despite conservation efforts and requested a formal review of the 2016 management strategy by the management agencies prior to the 2017 season.
3. **To adjourn. Passed (Unanimous)**

COMMENTS FROM THE WORKING GROUP:

- Charlie Brown commented that people in his area had been asking about commercial harvest opportunities for coho salmon. Bev Hoffman responded that a commercial opener was unlikely due to lack of processor interest.
- LaMont Albertson thanked Ben Staton for his graduate work with USFWS during the 2016 season and offered to draft a letter of appreciation.
- Lisa Feyereisen commented that Dave Cannon (Aniak) had produced a slide show of the recent high school internship on the George River.
- Bev Hoffman commented on the importance of the KRITFC staying informed of the current fisheries data in order to continue being part of the management process.
- James Charles commented that he would appreciate continued attendance by the processor representatives on the Working Group at meetings regardless of commercial fishing openings.
- Aaron Poetter announced that Governor Bill Walker declared August 10 as Alaska Wild Salmon Day.

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WORKING GROUP ATTENDANCE:

MEMBER SEAT:	NAME:
DOWNRIVER ELDER	James Charles
UPRIVER ELDER	<i>Absent</i>
LOWER RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mary Sattler
MIDDLE RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Lisa Feyereisen
UPRIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mark Leary
HEADWATERS SUBSISTENCE	Daniel Esai
MEMBER AT LARGE	Barbara Carlson
WESTERN INTERIOR RAC	Ray Collins
YK DELTA RAC	Greg Roczicka
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: Aaron Tiernan, Jen Peeks, Nick Smith, Chris Shelden, John Linderman, Jan Conitz

Sport Fishing: John Chythlook

Subsistence Division: Lisa Olson

Commissioner's Office:

USFWS: Ray Born, Ken Harper, David Phillips

OSM: Karl Lindberg, Pippa Kenner, Eva Patton

Paula Schiefer
Dan Gillikin (NVN)

WG Alternates:

Media:

Lisa Demer (ADN)
Anna Rose MacArthur (KYUK)

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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