

# Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

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

June 28, 2017

Meeting called to order at 10:01 a.m. on Wednesday June 28, 2017 and adjourned at 1:22 p.m. Meeting time was approximately 3 hours and 20 minutes. Ten 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:** *N/A*

**New Business Discussion Topics:**

- Importance of meeting escapement goals

**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. Extend the Working Group meeting to 12:30 p.m. *Passed (Unanimous)*
3. Extend the Working Group meeting to 1:00 p.m. *Passed (Unanimous)*
4. Extend the Working Group meeting to 1:30 p.m. *Passed (Unanimous)*
5. If the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) decides to have an opening in federal waters, than a similar opening be held in state waters. *Passed (Unanimous)*
6. To recommend that there not be any opening in state or federal waters before Tuesday July 4, 2017. *Failed (3 yeas, 6 nays)*
7. To recommend that there not be any opening in state or federal waters before Monday July 3, 2017. *Passed (7 yeas, 2 nays)*
8. Adjourn at 1:22 p.m. *Passed (Unanimous)*

**ADF&G MANAGEMENT ACTIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION:** Aaron Tiernan (ADF&G Assistant Area Management Biologist) reported that ADF&G was not considering additional management actions as of June 28 and would continue monitoring the inseason assessment projects.

**U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE ACTIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION:** Nick Kameroff (KRITFC) reported that, due to the continued weak Chinook salmon run observed at the assessment projects, USFWS/KRITFC would reassess potential management actions on June 30. Ken Stahlnecker (USFWS) commented that managers needed to balance reasonable conservation efforts of Chinook salmon with providing subsistence opportunities.

## **PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:**

- Steven Alexie (Napaskiak) commented that he was concerned regarding the data used for management decisions and suggested that traditional Elder knowledge be incorporated into the decision making process.
- Norman Ayagalria (Bethel) commented that there had been confusion regarding regulatory information and requested clearer communication from USFWS and ADF&G. Mr. Ayagalria commented that using the word “opportunity” in reference to subsistence fishing was disrespectful and he requested that it no longer be used.

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- Tim Andrew (ONC) commented on the importance of Chinook salmon conservation.
- Willie Pitka (Kalskag) requested the definition of “jacks.”
- Lucy Simeon (Chuathbaluk) commented that she was thankful for the fish her family had harvested. Ms. Simeon commented that she was upset regarding rumors suggesting that her family had illegally fished.
- Tim Zaukar (Crooked Creek) commented that people were happy for the June 24 subsistence opening.
- Sam Jackson (Akiak) suggested that traditional knowledge be taken into consideration when determining management actions and that management tools such as designated fishers and rolling openings be implemented.
- Gerald Kameroff (Kalskag) commented that some people had not met their subsistence salmon needs and requested additional openings. He commented that working together was important.
- Nick Zaukar (Chuathbaluk) commented that he was concerned regarding ocean vessels “pumping out” chemicals and fuel into the ocean.
- Eric Morgan (Chuathbaluk) commented that on June 24 he caught 51 sockeye salmon and he requested additional fishing opportunities.
- Darren Deacon (Kalskag) thanked the Working Group, ADF&G and USFWS for providing the June 24 opening and for making good management decisions to save the culture, fish, and people.

## **SUBSISTENCE REPORTS:**

- **Lowest River:** James Charles (Downriver Elder) reported that ~75% of the fishers in Tuntutuliak fished during the June 24 opener and were satisfied with their harvest. He added that some people had been able to harvest fish from the non-salmon spawning tributaries during the 2017 season. John Andrew (Downriver Elder alternate) commented that people caught primarily chum and sockeye salmon during the June 24 opener. Mr. Andrew was concerned that the opening had been too long and included too much of the river at one time; he requested another opening before the end of June. Additionally, he commented on his concerns regarding the “high seas” fisheries. Charlie Brown (Commercial Fishing) reported that people did well while fishing on June 24 and were thankful for the opportunity. Mr. Brown commented that some people had not met their harvest needs and wanted an additional opportunity before the good drying weather passed.
- **ONC Subsistence Report:** Danielle Lowery (ONC) and Janessa Esquible (ONC) provided a summary of the ONC subsistence survey report. (*For more information on the ONC report, please see the June 28 Informational Packet*).
- **Lower River:** Mike Williams Sr. (Lower River Subsistence) thanked USFWS, KRITFC, ADF&G, and the Working Group for making “wise decisions” during the 2017 Chinook salmon season. Mr. Williams reported that people fished between four and six hours during the June 24 opening and many families needed more fish to meet their needs. He added that some people had traveled to non-restricted areas to fish. Mary Peltola (Lower River Subsistence alternate) commented that her family was happy with their 2017 salmon harvest and that the processing adaptations her family used helped minimize spoilage. Alissa Rogers (Lower River Subsistence alternate) commented that some people were considering fishing in non-restricted areas.
- **Middle River:** Dave Cannon (Middle River Subsistence) reported that during the June 24 opening people caught chum, sockeye and Chinook salmon. Lisa Feyereisen (Middle River Subsistence alternate) commented that a lack of law enforcement was observed in the middle river during the June 24 opening and that the majority of people reported being satisfied with their harvest. Nick Kameroff (KRITFC)

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commented that he harvested fewer fish than other fishers and he observed “combat fishing” in the middle river. He noted that fishcamps had appeared active.

- **Upriver:** Mark Leary (Middle River Subsistence) reported that during nine hours of fishing he harvested a total of 82 fish; boats on average harvested 10–20 Chinook salmon. Barbara Carlson (Upriver Subsistence alternate and Member at Large alternate) reported that people were challenged with “snags” in her area of the river and caught only a few fish. She commented that, as of June 28, other salmon species were more abundant than Chinook salmon. The fishwheel was in operation.
- **Headwaters:** Ray Collins (Western Interior RAC) reported that seven people had used nets near McGrath and the total Chinook salmon harvested in McGrath to date was ~60. Mr. Collins commented that the first chum salmon had arrived and people intended to harvest coho salmon.
- **USFWS Subsistence Harvest Estimates:** Ben Staton (USFWS) reported that 272 unique fisher interviews were conducted between Tuntutuliak and Akiak during the June 24 opening. An estimated ~33,500 salmon were harvested; ~4,500 were Chinook salmon. The majority of fish harvested were chum salmon. *(For more information on the June 24 subsistence harvest estimates, please see the June 28 Informational Packet).*

## CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. **Overview of Kuskokwim River Salmon Run Assessment Projects:** Zach Liller (ADF&G Research Biologist) provided an overview of the inseason assessment projects. *(For more information on the 2017 inseason assessment projects, please see the June 28 Informational Packet).*
  - **Bethel Test Fishery:** The largest daily catch per unit effort (CPUE) in 2017 for all species to date occurred on June 27. As of June 27 the cumulative CPUE was 197 for Chinook salmon; 1,316 for chum salmon; and 458 for sockeye salmon. Chum salmon were the most abundant species being caught to date at the BTF.
  - **Aniak Test Fishery:** Chinook salmon remained the predominate species being caught at the ATF to date.
  - **Sonar:** As of June 27 the point estimates at the sonar site were ~28,806 Chinook salmon; ~ 75,457 chum salmon; and ~71,567 sockeye salmon.
  - **Radio Tagging Project:** Chinook salmon continued to be caught at the lower river tagging site.
  - **Subsistence Division project update:** David Runfola (ADF&G) reported that the Subsistence Division was working with middle river fishers to collect subsistence harvest information. *(For the lower river information, please see the June 28 Informational Packet).*
2. **Discussion of ADF&G Management Consideration and Discussion of Possible Alternatives:** *(See Motions 5–7 on page 4).*

## NEW BUSINESS DISCUSSION TOPICS:

- **Importance of meeting the escapement goal:** Working Group members discussed with ADF&G staff the importance of meeting the 2017 escapement goals. Zach Liller (ADF&G) reported that salmon tend to be resilient to a single year of low escapement, but challenges could occur if runs were consistently above or below the escapement goals. Mr. Liller reviewed the historical Chinook salmon escapements dating back to 2010 and noted that, since 2010, conservation efforts had occurred in order to increase overall Chinook salmon escapement. Some Working Group members commented that many Kuskokwim residents were unaware of the conservation concerns for Chinook salmon. Working Group members debated the appropriate level of conservation efforts needed during the 2017 inseason; some suggested that more conservation was needed while others recommended balancing subsistence fishing needs.

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1. Approve the agenda as amended. Passed (Unanimous)
2. Extend the Working Group meeting to 12:30 p.m. Passed (Unanimous)
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4. Extend the Working Group meeting to 1:30 p.m. Passed (Unanimous)
5. If the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) decides to have an opening in federal waters, than a similar opening be held in state waters. Passed (Unanimous)

Some Working Group members were concerned regarding additional openings due to the weak Chinook salmon run observed at the assessment projects. Other members commented that due to the low harvest pressure from residents on state managed waters they should have the same fishing opportunity as communities in the lower river.

6. To recommend that there not be any opening in state or federal waters before Tuesday July 4, 2017. Failed (3 yeas, 6 nays)

A few members recommended delaying additional fishing openings until after July 4, 2017 to conserve more Chinook salmon and to coincide with the forecasted dry weather in the lower river. A few members disagreed on the July 4 date due to the Independence Day holiday and others did not support setting a hard date.

7. To recommend that there not be any opening in state or federal waters before Monday July 3, 2017. Passed (7 yeas, 2 nays)

The majority of members supported continuing Chinook salmon conservation until June 3.

8. Adjourn at 1:22 p.m. Passed (Unanimous)

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## WORKING GROUP ATTENDANCE:

<b>MEMBER SEAT:</b>	<b>NAME:</b>
DOWNRIVER ELDER	James Charles
UPRIVER ELDER	<i>Vacant</i>
LOWER RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mike Williams
MIDDLE RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Dave Cannon
UPRIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mark Leary
HEADWATERS SUBSISTENCE	Absent
MEMBER AT LARGE	Fritz Charles*/ Barbara Carlson
WESTERN INTERIOR RAC	Ray Collins
YK DELTA RAC	Bob Aloysius
COMMERCIAL FISHING	Charlie Brown
SPORT FISHING	LaMont Albertson
PROCESSOR	<i>Vacant</i>
KRITFC	Nick Kameroff
ADF&G	Aaron Tiernan
CHAIR	LaMont Albertson

*\*Fritz Charles was excused at 10:55a.m.*

### **Other Participants:**

ADF&G Comm. Fish: Aaron Poetter, Aaron Tiernan, Zach Liller, John Linderman, Chuck Brazil, Nick Smith, Josh Clark, Jordan Head, Jen Peeks

Sport Fishing:

Subsistence Division: Lisa Olsen, Anna Godduhn

Commissioner's Office: Jill Klein

USFWS: Ken Stahlnecker, Lew Coggins, Ben Staton, Ken Harper

OSM: Frank Harris, Pippa Kenner, Gary Decossas

Jennifer Hooper (AVCP)	Tim Zaukar (Crooked Creek)	<u>Media:</u> Anna Rose MacArthur (KYUK)
Janessa Esquible (ONC)	Gerald Kameroff (Kalskag)	
Tim Andrew (ONC)	Teresa Simeon-Hunter (Chuathbaluk)	<u>WG Alternates:</u> Lisa Feyereisen Alissa Rogers Mary Peltola John Andrew Greg Hoffman Jr.
Dannielle Lowery (ONC)	Mike Williams Jr. (Akiak)	
Janelle Carl (ONC)	Lucy Simeon (Chuathbaluk)	
Ray Watson (ONC)	Norman Ayagalria (Bethel)	
Bill Bechtol (KRITFC)	Albert Kawagley (Bethel)	
Jim Simon (BSFA, KRITFC)	Nick Zaukar (Chuathbaluk)	
Ben Anderson Agimuk (KRITFC)	Christine Sakar-John (Crooked Creek)	
Sam Jackson (Akiak)	Maridon Boario (Sen. Hoffman's Office)	

### **GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS:**

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (**ADF&G, department, State**), Orutsarmiut 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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