

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

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

July 12, 2017

Meeting called to order at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday July 12, 2017 and adjourned at 12:15 p.m. Meeting time was 2 hours and 15 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:

Continuing Business: Run assessment and management actions.

People to be Heard:

Old Business Discussion Topics: *N/A*

New Business Discussion Topics:

- Special Action Request

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. Recommend to ADF&G the use of 50 fathom gillnets below the Johnson River. *Passed (7 yeas, 1 nay)*
3. Extend the meeting to 12:15 p.m. *Passed (Unanimous)*
4. To schedule the next Working Group meeting for July 26, 2017. *Passed (Unanimous)*
5. Adjourn. *Passed (Unanimous)*

ADF&G MANAGEMENT ACTIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION: Aaron Tiernan (ADF&G acting Area Management Biologist) reported there were no new management actions under consideration as of July 12.

PEOPLE TO BE HEARD: *No members of the public spoke at this time.*

SUBSISTENCE REPORTS:

- **Lowest River:** James Charles (Downriver Elder) reported that he harvested 20 fish within 30 minutes on July 8. He commented that high tidal action in the lower river made fishing difficult when using 25 fathom length gillnets.
- **ONC Subsistence Report:** Avery Hoffman and Janessa Esquible (ONC) summarized the ONC subsistence survey report. *(For more information on the ONC subsistence survey report, please see the July 12 Informational Packet).*
- **Lower River:** Mike Williams Sr. (Lower River Subsistence) reported that the Unit 4 communities recommended that future subsistence salmon fishing be allowed earlier in the season with the use of 6" mesh gillnets and that the 100' bank orientation restriction be changed. Mr. Williams noted that, to date, the majority of people in his area had full fish racks from sockeye and chum salmon and there had been little fishing effort the few days prior to the July 12 meeting. Several people from his area planned to fish for coho salmon. Mary Peltola (Lower River Subsistence alternate) reported that on June 24 her family caught 84 chum and sockeye salmon. In addition, using a 40' length, 5" mesh set gillnet they caught ~100 sockeye salmon within 48 hours that were shared among community members. Ms. Peltola commented that her family made up for the lack of Chinook salmon with sockeye salmon and used fans to help prevent spoilage.

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#2017>

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

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

- **Middle River:** Dave Cannon (Middle River Subsistence) commented that people continued to drift and set gillnets. He reported there had been confusion regarding the requirement to live release Chinook salmon in certain gear types. Lisa Feyereisen (Middle River Subsistence alternate) commented that several people intended to fish for coho salmon; some people were close to meeting their subsistence harvest goals.
- **Upriver:** Barbara Carlson (Upriver Subsistence alternate) reported that people were happy with the abundance of sockeye salmon; the fish wheel continued to catch 2–4 fish per day and there were enough fish to share with people who had been unable to fish for themselves. Ms. Carlson noted that some people remained unaware of the need for Chinook salmon conservation.
- **Headwaters:** Ray Collins (Western Interior RAC) reported that 157 Chinook salmon had been caught in McGrath; at the time of the July 12 meeting all nets had been removed from the water. Mr. Collins commented that a few people may fish for coho salmon. Dan Esai (Headwaters Subsistence) commented that a fisher near Black Water caught ~44 Chinook salmon over two nights and that the chum salmon had arrived. Mr. Esai reported that people had observed large whitefish and sheefish. Zach Liller (ADF&G) reported that several fish were below the Salmon River (Pitka Fork) weir and that people had reported that fishing was productive near Bear Creek and Black Water.

CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. **Overview of Kuskokwim River Salmon Run Assessment Projects:** Zach Liller (ADF&G Research Biologist) provided an overview of the assessment projects. *(For more information on the 2017 inseason projects, please see the July 12 Informational Packet).*
 - **Bethel Test Fish:** As of July 11, the Chinook salmon cumulative CPUE was 322; the BTF indicated that the 2017 run was late. The cumulative CPUE for chum salmon was 5,190; chum salmon were the most abundant species in the river to date. The sockeye salmon cumulative CPUE was 1,874; BTF indicated a strong and late run.
 - **Aniak Test Fish:** As of July 10, the cumulative CPUE's were 6,308 Chinook salmon; 9,240 chum salmon; and 304 sockeye salmon.
 - **Sonar:** As of July 11, the preliminary cumulative point estimates at the sonar project site were ~56,700 Chinook salmon; ~424,400 chum salmon; and ~627,000 sockeye salmon.
 - **Radio Tagging Project:** As of July 11, 535 Chinook salmon had been caught and tagged. The 2017 Chinook salmon swim speeds were similar to the 2016 swim speeds.
 - **Weirs:** Chinook salmon met the lower end of the George River escapement goal. Salmon River (Pitka Fork) weir crew had observed several Chinook salmon staging below the weir. All chum salmon escapements were above the 5 and 10–year averages. Kwethluk River weir was indicating a record escapement for sockeye salmon. *(For more information on the 2017 escapement projects, please see the July 12 Informational Packet).*
 - **Subsistence Division Project:** David Runfola (Subsistence Division, ADF&G) reported that fishing progress in the lower river had shifted closer toward meeting subsistence needs. Middle river reports indicated that many people were half way toward meeting their subsistence needs and continued with harvesting efforts. Subsistence Division held a community meeting in Kasigluk the week of July 2; residents discussed the efforts needed for the tundra communities to fish in the mainstem of the Kuskokwim River. *(For more information on the 2017 Subsistence Division projects, please see the July 12 Informational Packet).*

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#2017>

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

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

- 2. Discussion of ADF&G Management Consideration and Discussion of Possible Alternatives:** Mike Williams Sr. discussed the varied management strategies for addressing Chinook salmon conservation and subsistence needs. James Charles commented that, below the Johnson River, harvesting salmon using 25 fathom gillnets was difficult due to the tidal influence and width of that portion of the river. (*See Motion 2*).

NEW BUSINESS:

- **Special Action Request (SAR):** Dave Cannon explained that the purpose of the SAR was to help the 2017 Chinook salmon run meet escapement goals and to support subsistence fishers who needed additional coho salmon due to the Chinook salmon restrictions. Frank Harris (OSM) reported that the SAR would be discussed during the July 17, 2017 Federal Subsistence Board meeting. (*Please see the July 12 Informational Packet for more information*).

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

- 1. Approve the agenda as amended. Passed (Unanimous)**
- 2. Recommend to ADF&G the use of 50 fathom gillnets below the Johnson River. Passed (7 yeas, 1 nay)**
James Charles commented that for the lower river communities, operating a 25 fathom gillnet was difficult due to the width and tidal action of the lower river. He added that people from those communities traveled long distances to fishing sites. Aaron Tiernan reported that the assessment projects indicated a decline in the Chinook salmon run while chum and sockeye salmon remained abundant and, at this point in the season, there would not be a “meaningful impact” on Chinook salmon by allowing 50 fathom gillnets below the Johnson River. Some Working Group members responded that any additional harvest of Chinook salmon could have an impact.
- 3. Extend the meeting to 12:15 p.m. Passed (Unanimous)**
- 4. To schedule the next Working Group meeting for July 26, 2017. Passed (Unanimous)**
- 5. Adjourn at 12:59 p.m. Passed (Unanimous)**

COMMENTS FROM THE WORKING GROUP:

- Dave Cannon reported that he was officially resigning from the Working Group as the Middle River Subsistence seat representative.
- Mary Peltola thanked Dave Cannon for his service on the Working Group.
- Lisa Feyereisen thanked Dave Cannon for his service. She asked people to think about Greg Roczicka’s wisdom and other perspectives concerning natural resource management.
- Ray Collins commented that he was concerned about the Chinook salmon that were below the Salmon River (Pitka Fork) weir.

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#2017>

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

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

WORKING GROUP ATTENDANCE:

MEMBER SEAT:	NAME:
DOWNRIVER ELDER	John Andrew
UPRIVER ELDER	Vacant
LOWER RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mike Williams Sr.
MIDDLE RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Dave Cannon
UPRIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mark Leary
HEADWATERS SUBSISTENCE	Absent
MEMBER AT LARGE	Charles Guest
WESTERN INTERIOR RAC	Ray Collins
YK DELTA RAC	Bob Aloysius
COMMERCIAL FISHING	Charlie Brown
SPORT FISHING	LaMont Albertson
PROCESSOR	Vacant
KRITFC	Nick Kameroff
ADF&G	Aaron Tiernan
CHAIR	LaMont Albertson

Other Participants:

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

Sport Fishing: John Chythlook, Tim Viavant

Subsistence Division: Lisa Olson, Dave Runfola

USFWS: Ken Stahlnecker, Lew Coggins, Ben Staton

OSM: Frank Harris, Christine Bremmer, Eva Patton

Jim Simon (BSFA, KRITFC)

Ben Anderson Agimuk (KRITFC)

Janessa Esquible (ONC)

Tim Andrew (ONC)

Avery Hoffman (ONC)

Norman Ayagalria (Bethel)

Orie Reich (Bethel)

George Guy (Kwethluk)

Chariton Epchook (Kwethluk)

Danielle Epchook (Kwethluk)

Father Martin Nicolai (Kwethluk)

Dan Gillikin (NVN)

Media:

WG Alternates:

Greg Hoffman Jr.

Lisa Feyereisen

Barbara Carlson

Mary Peltola

Alissa Rogers

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**).

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#2017>