

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

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

May 16, 2018

Meeting called to order at 10:06 a.m. on Wednesday May 16, 2018 and adjourned at 12:33 p.m. Meeting time was approximately 2 hours and 30 minutes. Eleven full voting members were present and a quorum was established. LaMont Albertson and Alissa Rogers co-chaired the meeting.

AGENDA ITEMS:

2018 ADF&G Management Overview

2018 ADF&G Subsistence King Salmon Permit

People To Be Heard:

Subsistence Reports from Working Group Members:

Old Business Discussion Topics:

- Escapement goal review
- Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) process update
- Regional Planning Team (RPT) update
- Discussion of Working Group by-law review
- April 3-4, 2018 WG motion: To elect LaMont Albertson as the Working Group representative on the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (KRITFC).
- Board of Fisheries update

New Business Discussion Topics:

- Letter of support for the Kuskokwim River Sonar project

WORKING GROUP ACTION ITEMS: *No Action Items at the time of this meeting.*

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

1. Approve the agenda. *Passed (Unanimous)*
2. To extend the Working Group meeting until agenda items are completed. *Passed (Unanimous)*
3. To elect LaMont Albertson as the Working Group representative to the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission. *Passed (10 yeas, 0 nays, 1 abstention)*
4. To submit the drafted letter in support of the Kuskokwim Sonar Project. *Passed (Unanimous)*
5. For the next Working Group meeting to be scheduled for May 30, 2018 at 10:00 a.m. *Passed (7 yeas, 2 nays, 1 abstention)*
6. Adjourn at 12:33 pm. *Passed (Unanimous)*

2018 ADF&G MANAGEMENT OVERVIEW: Aaron Tiernan (ADF&G Area Management Biologist) reported that the 2018 pre-season forecast outlook was estimated for 116,000–150,000 Chinook salmon. Mr. Tiernan reviewed the starting dates for the front end subsistence gillnet closures in the mainstem, noting that there would be one subsistence fishing period per week throughout the closures. Mr. Tiernan announced that the Kwethluk, Kasigluk, Kisaralik, Tuluksak and Aniak rivers would close on May 25, 2018 to gillnet use. All Chinook salmon caught in live-release gear would need to be returned to the water alive beginning on May 25. Mr. Tiernan commented that there had been revisions to the run reconstruction model, which would be discussed later in the meeting. *(Please see Emergency Order #3-S-WR-02-18 for a detailed announcement on subsistence fishing restrictions.)*

Working Group members discussed fishing in non-salmon spawning tributaries.

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2018 ADF&G SUBSISTENCE KING SALMON PERMIT: Dave Runfolo (ADF&G Subsistence Division) reported that the Chinook salmon subsistence harvest permits were available through ADF&G vendors. Permits could go into effect after June 11, 2018 by ADF&G Emergency Order. Mr. Runfolo encouraged Working Group members to share information about the permit system with their communities to ensure its success. Mr. Runfolo reported that, to date, there was no permit harvest interest from Anchorage area residents.

PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:

- Rebecca Wilmarth (Red Devil) commented that she was willing to distribute fishing permits in the communities of Red Devil and Georgetown.
- Dan Gillikin (NVN) complimented ADF&G staff for conducting “such a rigorous process and review” of the run reconstruction model; he thanked ADF&G and the other agencies involved in the review. Mr. Gillikin reported on the projects that the Native Village of Napaimute would be operating, or collaborating on, during the 2018 season. These projects included the Aniak Test Fishery, Salmon River weir, George River internship, Fisheries Resource Information Technician program, and in-season subsistence fishing surveys. He commented that NVN was recruiting for technician positions.

SUBSISTENCE REPORTS:

- **Lowest River:** James Charles (Downriver Elder) commented that Tuntutuliak residents had started to fish in the lakes for whitefish. To date, no one was fishing for salmon.
- **Lower River:** Bob Aloysius (YK Delta RAC) reported that people were catching whitefish and sheefish on the Kwethluk River; no one was drifting on the main Kuskokwim River in that area. James Nicori (KRITFC alternate) reported that people were fishing for whitefish in the back lakes and streams near Kwethluk. He added that the river water was high with small wooded debris. Mike Williams Sr. (Lower River Subsistence) reported that residents were fishing for whitefish and sheefish to dry and half dry. Greg Hoffman Jr. (Commercial Fishing alternate) commented that people were preparing for the fishing season. LaMont Albertson (Sport Fishing) provided an update on the KRITFC Community Harvest Program.
- **Middle River:** Lisa Feyereisen (Middle River Subsistence alternate) commented that break-up went well in her area and that people were fishing for sheefish and whitefish.
- **Upriver:** Mark Leary (Upriver Subsistence) reported he had traveled round trip from Bethel to Aniak and observed people performing spring activities. He commented that he observed a few setnets in the river and large amounts of debris. Mr. Leary reported that a few people were drifting for sheefish in Kalskag. Barb Carlson (Upriver Subsistence alternate) reported that, to date, no one was using gillnets and the debris content was high in the river.
- **Headwaters:** Dan Esai (Headwaters Subsistence) reported that he caught 10–15 Bering cisco within four hours of setting a gillnet. He added that there was a lot of driftwood in the river. Ray Collins (Western Interior RAC) reported that no one had been setting gillnets in his area to date.

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OLD BUSINESS:

- **Escapement goal review:** Nick Smith (ADF&G) provided an overview of the salmon escapement goal review; this review occurs on a three year cycle by a team of biologists and biometricians. Mr. Smith reviewed the changes to the chum, sockeye, and coho salmon escapement goals. Mr. Smith summarized the Chinook salmon escapement goal changes in the Kuskokwim Bay and in the Kuskokwim River and its tributaries. He commented that the Holitna River aerial survey goal would be discontinued due to other available data sources. Mr. Smith commented that the Chinook salmon run reconstruction model had gone through revisions and the updates were complete. He summarized the review process and the changes to the model. Mr. Smith noted that the preliminary findings did not show a significant change in the drainage-wide escapement goal. *(For more information on the escapement goal review and the run reconstruction model, please see the May 16, 2018 Informational Packet).*
- **Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) process update:** Barb Carlson reported that the FACA process had halted and she did not anticipate that it would proceed.
- **Regional Planning Team (RPT) update:** Barb Carlson summarized the RPT meeting that occurred on May 9–10, 2018, funded by BSFA. She reported that the RPT would be assessing production goals for all Kuskokwim River drainage salmon species and options for achieving the desired goals. Ms. Carlson commented that the RPT would be facilitating further outreach throughout 2018.
- **Discussion of Working Group by-law review:** Jen Peeks (ADF&G) commented that it had been several years since the Working Group by-laws had been reviewed and updated. Barb Carlson suggested the formation of a Working Group sub-committee made up of interested Working Group members who would be willing to review the by-laws with ADF&G staff and present suggestions to the full Working Group at a later meeting.
- **April 3–4, 2018 Working Group Motion: To elect LaMont Albertson as the Working Group representative on the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (KRITFC):** Jen Peeks reported that during the April 3–4, 2018 Working Group meeting there had been an error in the voting process when electing a Working Group representative to the KRITFC, making the outcome invalid. Ms. Peeks suggested that the Working Group consider re-addressing this issue in order for it to be an official action. *(Please see Motion 3 on page 4).*
- **Board of Fisheries update:** Jen Peeks reviewed the Board of Fisheries process for the January 2019 Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim regional meeting.

NEW BUSINESS:

- **Letter of support for the Kuskokwim Sonar project:** Nick Smith reported that ADF&G had submitted a proposal to the Office of Subsistence Management (OSM) to seek additional funding to extend the Kuskokwim River sonar project operation into the 2019 coho salmon season; however, to date, funding through OSM was not secured. Mr. Smith commented that ADF&G was pursuing other funding through AKSSF (Alaska Sustainable Salmon Fund) and requested Working Group support for this funding request. *(Please see Motion 4 on page 4).*

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WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

1. **Approve the agenda. Passed (Unanimous)**
2. **To extend the Working Group meeting until agenda items are completed. Passed (Unanimous)**
3. **To elect LaMont Albertson as the Working Group representative on the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission. Passed (10 yeas, 0 nays, 1 abstention)**

Lisa Feyereisen commented that she was concerned that the KRITFC meeting process was not “transparent.” She commented that meeting minutes were not available for public review and she was concerned that the Working Group representative would not be allowed to actively participate in the decision making process. Ms. Feyereisen added that she did not agree with the State of Alaska’s involvement with the KRITFC process. Mary Peltola (Lower River Subsistence alternate) commented that the KRITFC meetings were tribal consultation and did not have the same standards of participation as general public meetings. Ms. Peltola added that KRITFC intended to create “summary minutes” during the 2018 season and that the Working Group representative would come into the “caucuses” with the KRITFC inseason managers.

4. **To submit the drafted letter in support of the Kuskokwim Sonar Project. Passed (Unanimous)**
Working Group members discussed their support for the Kuskokwim Sonar Project to operate through coho salmon season in 2019. They approved the drafted letter of support.
5. **For the next Working Group meeting to be scheduled for May 30, 2018 at 10:00 am. Passed (7 yeas, 2 nays, 1 abstention)**

A few Working Group members noted they were unable to attend a May 30, 2018 meeting due to trainings and had suggested a May 23, 2018 meeting. During the April 3–4, 2018 meeting a motion had passed unanimously by the Working Group to begin regular inseason Working Group meetings on May 30.

6. **Adjourn at 12:33 pm. Passed (Unanimous)**

COMMENTS FROM THE WORKING GROUP:

- Mary Peltola commented that a person in Scammon Bay had caught a chum salmon.
- James Charles reported that he had spoken with a Quinhagak resident who wanted the 2018 king salmon fishing regulations to be similar to previous seasons. Mr. Charles commented that Tuntutuliak residents often fished in the Quinhagak area for king salmon.
- Mark Leary commented that the federal managers had management options that were allocative in nature to allow king salmon harvest in the lower river during times of conservation. Mr. Leary explained that the state permit system allowed ADF&G to provide some harvest opportunity in times of conservation for the middle and upper portions of the river. Mark Leary encouraged people from upriver to testify before the Federal Subsistence Board during their May 16, 2018 meeting regarding conservation efforts and concerns.
- Mike Williams Sr. commented that the federal harvest program was a community based program. Mr. Williams added that he had supported the needs of the whole river in 2015 when the federal program was implemented.
- Ray Collins commented that management may become more complicated with multiple management systems and advisory groups in place. Mr. Collins commented that he was “happy” that hook and line was a legal subsistence gear type that could be used under the king salmon permit system. This gear type was used in the headwaters region in order to live release larger females.
- Bob Aloysius recommended that people use barbless hooks when fishing with hook and line.

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- Dan Esai commented that many people used barbless hooks for fishing in the headwaters. He added that younger people were “learning to be conservative” and were releasing the big males and females.
- LaMont Albertson thanked ADF&G, BSFA, USFWS, ONC, the media, and other groups in their support of the 2018 fishery season efforts. He thanked Alissa Rogers for chairing the May 16 Working Group meeting.
- Alissa Rogers thanked participants for attending the Working Group meeting and for working cooperatively together in the management of the Kuskokwim River fishery. She encouraged younger people to attend the meetings in the future.

WORKING GROUP ATTENDANCE:

| MEMBER SEAT: | NAME: |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| DOWNRIVER ELDER | James Charles |
| UPRIVER ELDER | <i>Vacant</i> |
| LOWER RIVER SUBSISTENCE | Mike Williams Sr./ Mary Peltola |
| 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 | Bob Aloysius |
| COMMERCIAL FISHING | Greg Hoffman Jr. |
| SPORT FISHING | LaMont Albertson |
| PROCESSOR | <i>Vacant</i> |
| KRITFC | Nick Kameroff |
| ADF&G | Aaron Tiernan |
| CHAIR | LaMont Albertson/ Alissa Rogers |

Other Participants:

ADF&G Comm. Fish: Aaron Tiernan, Colton Lipka, Nick Smith, Zach Liller, Keith Oster, Jen Peeks
Sport Fishing: John Chythlook
Subsistence Division: Dave Runfola
Commissioner’s Office: Jill Klein

USFWS: Lew Coggins, Ben Staton
OSM: Frank Harris

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| Janessa Esquible (ONC) Mary Mathias (ONC) Jim Simon (Independent Consultant/ BSFA) Janelle Carl (ONC/ USFWS) Orie Reich (BSFA) Gerry Sumpter (Sen. Murkowski’s office) | Dan Gillikin (NVN) Jennifer Hooper (AVCP) Bill Bechtol (KRITFC) Meredith Witte (GTC) Rebecca Wilmarth (KRITFC) Kevin Whitworth (MTNT) | <u>WG Alternates:</u> Mary Peltola, (Lower River Sub.) James Nicori, (KRITFC) <u>Media:</u> Anna Rose MacArthur (KYUK) |
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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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