

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, 2018

Meeting called to order at 10:06 a.m. on Thursday June 14, 2018 and adjourned at 1:02 p.m. Meeting time was approximately three hours. Ten full voting members were present and a quorum was established. Alissa Rogers chaired the meeting.

AGENDA ITEMS:

USFWS/KRITFC Update:

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: N/A

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 request that the USFWS and KRITFC in consultation with ADF&G and the KRSMWG representatives develop a plan that is appropriate for salmon harvest opportunities in the Kalskag area. *Passed (Unanimous)*
3. Extend the Working Group meeting beyond 12:00 p.m. *Passed (Unanimous)*
4. For the next Working Group meeting to be scheduled for Wednesday June 20, 2018 beginning at 10:00 a.m. *Passed (Unanimous)*
5. Adjourn at 1:02 p.m. *Passed (Unanimous)*

USFWS/KRITFC UPDATE: Ken Stahlnecker (USFWS) reported that a 12-hour subsistence fishing opening was scheduled for June 16 in federal waters using 6" mesh, or less, gillnets. Mary Peltola (KRITFC Executive Director) commented that the KRITFC decision to announce the June 16 opening on June 7 was to ensure that people were aware of the opening and had time to prepare. She added that the weather forecast and harvest was considered during the discussion. Ben Staton (USFWS) reviewed the harvest estimates from the June 12 subsistence opening. He reported that an estimated ~7,170 total salmon were harvested; ~5,120 were Chinook salmon. Gary Decossas (OSM) summarized the netting effort collected via aerial surveys between June 7 and June 12. Mr. Stahlnecker announced that during the June 12 opener, federal law enforcement (LE) contacted 200 fishers. The primary LE concerns were oversized nets and unmarked buoys; warnings were provided. *(For more information on harvest and netting effort data, please see the June 14 supplemental documents in the Informational Packet.)*

ADF&G MANAGEMENT ACTIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION: Aaron Tiernan (ADF&G Area Management Biologist) reported that, as of June 12, the king salmon harvest permits were in place in Section 4 of the river. On June 12, ADF&G conducted an aerial survey of netting effort in Section 4 within state waters; minimal fishing effort was observed. ADF&G recommended keeping the king salmon harvest permit system in place until June 19 and then providing a 24-hour gillnet opening with 6" mesh gillnets, 25 fathoms in length, and 45 meshes in depth. Mr. Tiernan explained that ADF&G wanted to allow fish to move further upstream prior to the next opening. Mr. Tiernan added that this recommendation was consistent with the ADF&G pre-season strategy. On June 9, ADF&G conducted an aerial survey of netting effort in the Kuskokwim Bay; no nets were observed in the Kuskokwim mouth and six boats were observed near the mouth of the Kanektok

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#2018>

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

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

River. Charles Brazil (ADF&G) reported that several salmon systems across the state of Alaska were restricted, or completely closed, to the harvest of Chinook salmon.

PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:

- Herman Morgan (Aniak) commented that he had concerns regarding the king salmon harvest permit system. He reported that many people did not want subsistence activities turned into a permit system and chose not to participate in the system. Mr. Morgan commented that people wanted to be able to fish the same times as down river. Mr. Morgan reported that he had observed too many “reds” in the river and found worms in their stomachs. He commented that by conserving king salmon other species were becoming over populated.
- Bev Hoffman (Bethel) commented that it was important to think of future generations and remember there were other species of salmon available for harvest. Ms. Hoffman commented that she continued to be concerned regarding the Chinook salmon escapement, but was happy for the opportunity to fish and get a “taste” of king salmon. Ms. Hoffman requested an update on the 2018 North Pacific Fisheries Management Council (NPFMC) June meeting and their response to the Kuskokwim River model review for the three-river index. Ms. Hoffman commented that she appreciated the management work conducted by the various agencies and requested improved clarity on fishing information for users.
- Elena Sergie (Lower Kalskag) commented that she had not had sulunaq (salted fish) since the fishing restrictions had begun. She asked for clarification on the king salmon harvest permits and commented that Elders had few fish to date. Ms. Sergie commented that there were “too many rules” and asked that restrictions be eliminated. She reported that people had been burglarizing fish camps in her area. Ms. Sergie commented that 4” mesh gillnets were used for harvesting whitefish and she requested the operation of the Kalskag fishwheel in order for more fish to be harvested for community members.
- Ellen Yako (Sleetmute) reported that the Sleetmute fishwheel had not been catching fish to date.
- Rebecca Wilmarth (Red Devil) reported that two king salmon had been caught on June 12. She commented that no one had begun using their king salmon harvest permits in Red Devil.
- Angela Morgan (Aniak) reported that she operated a set gillnet on June 12 and caught five king salmon. She commented that her son drifted with a 6” mesh gillnet for ~nine hours and caught one king salmon, three “jacks,” one chum salmon, and one sheefish.
- Dwayne Hoffman (Kalskag) commented that he was thankful for the fishing opportunity on June 12. He requested that Kalskag representatives serving on fishery management groups provide clearer communication with the public regarding fishing restrictions and openings. Mr. Hoffman commented that high water had been a “factor” during the 2018 fishing season and he had observed an abundance of sheefish in his area.
- Patricia Yaska (Chuathbaluk) reported that she operated a drift gillnet during the June 12 opening and caught ~five “jacks,” one king salmon, sheefish, and whitefish.
- Megan Leary (Aniak) reported that she fished near Napaimute on June 12 using a drift gillnet. In six drifts she reported catching two king salmon, six sheefish and one chum salmon. She commented that there was a high amount of fishing effort made for a small harvest amount. Ms. Leary commented that several people had not agreed with the USFWS announcing the June 16 opening on June 7 before the June 12 estimated harvest was known.
- Walter Morgan (Lower Kalskag) reported that on June 12, the average catch in the Kalskag area was six king salmon, five sheefish, and three chum salmon within 14 drifts. He commented that he did not support

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#2018>

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

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

the June 16 USFWS opener and that more time should be allowed to replenish the river of salmon. He added that he was concerned that the Kalskag area residents would not have successful harvests during the June 16 opener.

- Tim Zaukar (Crooked Creek) reported that on June 12 he made five drifts near his community using a gillnet and caught five sheefish. He commented that he traveled ~eight miles downriver and caught five king salmon and one chum salmon. As of June 14, he reported that he harvested four king salmon and one “dog” salmon using his king salmon harvest permit.
- Robert Lekander (Bethel) reported that people were fishing for “freezer fish” and people were happy with getting a “taste” of fish. Mr. Lekander’s family had processed a few fish for drying.
- Tracy Simeon (Chuathbaluk) suggested that management consider a staggered fishing schedule for the river.

SUBSISTENCE REPORTS:

- **Lowest River:** John Andrew (Downriver Elder alternate) reported that on the morning of June 12 few boats were observed fishing near the “Y.” He reported that he caught eight small Chinook salmon in the first few hours of fishing in the morning; in the afternoon he caught five “jacks” and some sheefish. He commented that the king salmon averaged 14–15 pounds (lb) in size
- **OTNC Subsistence Report:** Janessa Esquible (OTNC) reported that 36 OTNC fish camp interviews were conducted from June 5 to June 12. Avery Hoffman (OTNC) summarized the ASL data collection, fish distribution, and provided a harvest summary. Bill Bechtol (KRITFC) provided a summary of the Community Based Monitoring Program. *(For more information on the OTNC summary, please see the June 14, 2018 Informational Packet.)*
- **Lower River:** Mary Peltola (Lower River Subsistence alternate) commented that her family caught one red salmon near the Gweek River on June 12. At the Bethel boat harbor on June 12, Ms. Peltola observed that fishers harvested an average of zero to four king salmon, with 20 king salmon being the largest amount harvested. She commented that the river appeared “empty” compared to historical years. Alissa Rogers (Lower River Subsistence alternate) reported that on June 12 people fishing from the Kuskokwim River mouth upstream to Akiak were catching 15 to 40 king salmon per boat; many of the king salmon harvested were red in color. She added that people had caught more “red” salmon than normal at this time in the season and a few chum salmon. Ms. Rogers commented that people fishing earlier in the period had been more successful than those who fished later in the day. Fritz Charles (Member At Large) reported that on June 12 he counted a maximum of 20 fishers from the Kialik River to the Kuskokwim River mouth.
- **Middle River:** Mike Savage (Middle River Subsistence) reported that he was fishing for six families and averaged five king salmon per family along with chum salmon and sheefish. Nick Kameroff (KRITFC) reported that he caught 13 king salmon, 3 chum salmon, 1 “red” salmon, and 5 sheefish in 18 drifts using his gillnet. Mr. Kameroff commented that, overall, people reported that harvest was “slow” on June 12. Lisa Feyereisen (Middle River Subsistence alternate) commented that she observed a few set gillnets near the mouth of the Aniak River. Her family caught ~two sheefish.
- **Upriver:** Mark Leary (Upriver Subsistence) reported that he was unable to fish on June 12. He commented that he was pleased to hear fishing reports from young upriver fishers.

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#2018>

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

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

- **Headwaters:** Dan Esai (Headwaters Subsistence) commented that people had been catching king salmon using setnets between Nikolai and McGrath near Blackwater. Ray Collins (Western Interior RAC) commented that there were no local reports of king salmon being caught.

CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. **Overview of Kuskokwim River Salmon Run Assessment Projects:** Aaron Tiernan provided an overview of the ADF&G assessment projects. He reported that, to date, the water temperature was above the historical average, water clarity was below average, and water level was higher than average. (*For more information on the 2018 inseason assessment projects, please see the June14 Informational Packet*).
- **Bethel Test Fish:** Aaron Tiernan reported that, as of June 13, the cumulative CPUE was 91 for Chinook salmon, 73 for chum salmon, and 6 for sockeye salmon. Mr. Tiernan commented that the Chinook salmon CPUE was slightly above the 10-year average as of June 13. To date, it continued to be early in the run timing for all salmon species.
- **Aniak Test Fish:** Dan Gillikin (NVN) reported that, to date, the Chinook salmon cumulative CPUE was 12.
- **Sonar:** Mr. Tiernan reported that as of June 10 an estimated ~4,200 king salmon, ~440 chum salmon, and ~1,700 sockeye salmon had passed the sonar site. Mr. Tiernan commented that the sonar passage estimates may fluctuate from day to day. He reminded members that the sonar project operated a wider range of mesh sizes as compared to the BTF and the smaller mesh sizes used at the sonar site had been catching the majority of the sockeye salmon.
- **Subsistence Division Project Update:** Dave Runfola (ADF&G Subsistence Division) reported that Subsistence Division staff had collected harvest data from Kasigluk for the USFWS harvest estimates and were consulting with other communities to conduct additional creel surveys. Mr. Runfola reported that, in collaboration with NVN, creel surveys were collected from Kalskag and Aniak fishers. On June 12, Subsistence Division conducted netting effort surveys in the middle river.
- **NVN Update:** Dan Gillikin reported that the Salmon River weir was scheduled to begin operations on July 1 and the George River internship project had received funding.
2. **Sport Fishing:** LaMont Albertson (Sport Fishing) reported that people had been successful fishing for northern pike and people had been fly fishing for sheefish. Mr. Albertson commented that some people had fished for char and grayling on the Aniak River and in the Kuskokwim River “creeks.”
3. **Intercept Fishery Report:** Aaron Tiernan reported that the NPFMC approved the revised three-river index model.

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

1. **Approve the agenda as amended. Passed (Unanimous)**
2. **To request that the USFWS and KRITFC, in consultation with ADF&G and the KRSMWG representatives, develop a plan that is appropriate for salmon harvest opportunities in the Kalskag area. Passed (Unanimous)**

Members discussed concerns regarding the fishing challenges near Kalskag. The Working Group discussed with USFWS staff possible solutions to minimize these challenges. Mark Leary commented that the current fishing schedule resulted in Aniak and Kalskag residents having to fish on runs that had been heavily fished upon in the lower river. Some Working Group members suggested that managers lift the restrictions from the Kalskag and upstream areas.

3. **Extend the Working Group meeting beyond 12:00 p.m. Passed (Unanimous)**

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#2018>

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

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

- 4. For the next Working Group meeting to be scheduled for Wednesday June 20, 2018 beginning at 10:00 a.m. Passed (Unanimous)**
- 5. Adjourn at 1:02 p.m. Passed (Unanimous)**

COMMENTS FROM THE WORKING GROUP:

- Mary Peltola commented that fishery management decisions were not made by one individual. She added that the KRITFC worked to balance the need for people to fish and the need for salmon to meet escapement.
- Mike Savage commented that it was difficult to fish in the Kalskag area and that he would like the king salmon harvest permits to extend to Lower Kalskag.
- Mark Leary thanked Mary Peltola for reminding the group that the Chinook salmon returns continued to be “shaky.”
- Dan Esai commented that it was good for people to have the opportunity to observe fish camps located in the headwaters. He commented that he was hopeful “things” would get better during the 2018 season.
- Fritz Charles encouraged the public to attend management meetings and voice their opinions. Mr. Charles recommended that the Working Group attempt to keep the two hour meeting time limit that was set by the Working Group in previous years.
- LaMont Albertson encouraged sport fishers to catch northern pike and sheefish.
- Nick Kameroff encouraged people who had fishing concerns to contact the KRITFC commissioners.
- Aaron Tiernan thanked participants for attending the meeting.
- Alissa Rogers reminded the Working Group that the Kuskokwim River remained under Chinook salmon conservation and that the whole state was suffering from declines. She requested that users respect others on the river.
- Ray Collins reminded the Working Group that the early season closures helped to protect king salmon bound for the headwaters. He commented that if fishing were allowed in the early season, it would negatively affect the numbers of fish making it to the headwaters spawning grounds.

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#2018>

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	Absent
UPRIVER ELDER	Mishka Andreanoff
LOWER RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mary Peltola
MIDDLE RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mike Savage
UPRIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mark Leary
HEADWATERS SUBSISTENCE	Daniel Esai
MEMBER AT LARGE	Fritz Charles
WESTERN INTERIOR RAC	Ray Collins
YK DELTA RAC	Bob Aloysius (<i>Excused 10:45 a.m.</i>)
COMMERCIAL FISHING	Greg Hoffman Jr.
SPORT FISHING	LaMont Albertson
PROCESSOR	<i>Vacant</i>
KRITFC	Nick Kameroff
ADF&G	Aaron Tiernan
CHAIR	Alissa Rogers

Other Participants:

ADF&G Comm. Fish: Nick Smith, Colton Lipka, Charles Brazil, Zach Liller, Keegan Birchfield, Jen Peeks

Sport Fishing: John Chythlook

Subsistence Division: Dave Runfola, Anna Godduhn, Caroline Brown

USFWS: Ken Stahlnecker, Ben Staton, Ronnie Sanchez, Lew Coggins,

OSM: Gary Decossas, Eva Patton, Christine Bremmer

Alexander Nicori (KRITFC)	Jonathan Samuelson (GTC)	Tim Zaukar (Crooked Creek)
Jim Simon (BSFA, TCC, KRITFC)	Meredith Witte (GTC)	Walter Morgan (Lower Kalskag)
Brittany Rutherford (KRITFC)	Kevin Whitworth (MTNT)	Elena Sergie (Lower Kalskag)
Robert Lekander (OTNC, KRITFC)	Rebecca Wilmarth (Red Devil)	Dwayne Hoffman (Kalskag)
Mary Mathias (OTNC)	Ellen Yako (Sleetmute)	Marcie Simeon (Aniak)
Janessa Esquible (OTNC)	Audrey Leary (Napaimute)	Herman Morgan (Aniak)
Elijah Lindley (OTNC)	Megan Leary (Kuskokwim Corporation)	Angela Morgan (Aniak)
Avery Hoffman (OTNC)	Tracy Simeon (Chuathbaluk)	<u>WG Alternates:</u>
Van Kapsner (OTNC)	Patricia Yaska (Chuathbaluk)	Darren Deacon (Middle River Subsistence alt.)
Orie Reich (BSFA)	Anna Michael (Chuathbaluk)	<u>Media:</u>
Sarah Mutter (AVCP)	Josephine Peterson (Chuathbaluk)	Anna Rose MacArthur (KYUK)
Dan Gillikin (NVN)	Denise Peterson (Chuathbaluk)	Petra Harpak (KYUK)
Eddy Hoeldt (NVN)	Beverly Hoffman (Bethel)	

GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS:

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G, **department**, **State**), Orutsararmiut Traditional Native Council (OTNC), 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), Native Village of Napaimute (NVN), Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation (YKHC), Alaska State Troopers (AST)

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#2018>