

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

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

August 15, 2018

Meeting called to order at 10:03 a.m. on Wednesday August 15, 2018 and adjourned at 12:18 p.m. Meeting time was approximately 2 hours and 15 minutes. Seven 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:

- Discussion of the FACA group and future collaborative efforts.

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 support the ADF&G management recommendation to allow gillnet use on the salmon spawning tributaries, excluding in the mainstem of the Aniak River. *Passed (Unanimous)*
3. To extend the Working Group meeting for an additional 15 minutes [until 12:15 p.m.]. *Passed (Unanimous)*
4. To recommend, in the form of a letter, to the federal government in Anchorage that they use the usual hiring process for the position of the Office of Subsistence Management (OSM) Assistant Regional Director (ARD). *Failed (2 yeas, 3 nays, 1 abstention)*
5. For the next Working Group meeting to be scheduled for Wednesday August 22, 2018 beginning at 10:00 a.m. *Passed (Unanimous)*
6. To adjourn [12:18 p.m.]. *Passed (Unanimous)*

USFWS/KRITFC UPDATE: Mary Peltola (KRITFC Executive Director) commented that the KRITFC had not met since the federal restrictions were rescinded; the KRITFC Executive Council was scheduled to meet August 28–29, 2018.

ADF&G MANAGEMENT ACTIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION: Aaron Tiernan (ADF&G Area Management Biologist) reported that the 2018 Kuskokwim River Chinook salmon escapement goals had been achieved and the majority of the Chinook salmon spawning was complete at this time in the season. Mr. Tiernan reported that ADF&G recommended rescinding the tributary gillnet closures that had been in place during the 2018 Chinook salmon season. Mr. Tiernan commented that, to date, the coho salmon numbers were low at the BTF compared to historical data.

PEOPLE TO BE HEARD: N/A

SUBSISTENCE REPORTS:

- **Lowest River:** James Charles (Downriver Elder) reported that he fished the week of August 5 and caught seven coho salmon. William “Charlie” Brown (Commercial Fishing) commented that he caught nine coho salmon and one red salmon recently.
- **Lower River:** Alissa Rogers (Lower River Subsistence alternate) commented that her family fished for eight hours on August 11 and caught “a few fish.”

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- **Middle River:** Lisa Feyereisen (Middle River Subsistence alternate) reported that people had been fishing with rod and reel in the Aniak area; 40–50 silver salmon had been caught in the local fish wheel. Recent high water had made it difficult for people to fish with gillnets. LaMont Albertson (Sport Fishing) reported that prior to the high water people were catching silver salmon in the lower Aniak River with rod and reel.
- **Upriver:** Barb Carlson (Upriver Subsistence alternate) reported that during the week of August 5 the fish wheel near Sleetmute had continued to catch “red” salmon and whitefish. Ms. Carlson commented that her neighbor set a gillnet for 24 hours and caught 1 silver salmon and 12 sockeye and chum salmon combined.
- **Headwaters:** Ray Collins (Western Interior RAC) commented that people were waiting for coho salmon. Dan Esai (Headwaters Subsistence) commented that as of August 14, the fish wheel had been catching chum salmon, Bering cisco, and humpback whitefish.

CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. **Overview of Kuskokwim River Salmon Run Assessment Projects:** Nick Smith (ADF&G Research Biologist) provided an overview of the ADF&G assessment projects. Mr. Smith reported that, to date, the water temperature was near the historical average, water clarity was slightly below the historical average; and the water level was above the historical average. *(For more information on the 2018 inseason assessment projects, please see the August 15 Informational Packet).*
 - **Bethel Test Fish:** As of July 13, the cumulative CPUE for coho salmon was 663; based on average run timing ~75% of the run had passed the Bethel area. Chum, sockeye and Chinook salmon continued to be caught at the BTF in low numbers.
 - **Weirs:** Chinook salmon escapement goals had been achieved at the Kogrukluk River and George River weirs. The chum salmon escapement goal was met at the Kogrukluk River weir; the chum salmon run size appeared average to above average. Sockeye salmon escapement exceeded the upper end of the goal at the Kogrukluk River weir. The Salmon River (Pitka Fork) and Takotna River weir projects completed operations on August 10; the Salmon River (Aniak) weir completed operations on August 14. The Telaquana River weir was scheduled to complete operations on August 15.
 - **Subsistence Division:** Dave Runfola (ADF&G) reported that people in Kalskag and Chuathbaluk continued to fish for coho salmon at the time of the meeting. Mr. Runfola summarized the regulations for customary trade and bartering of subsistence caught fish.
2. **Commercial Catch Report:** Aaron Tiernan reported that, to date, the total harvest from the 2018 registered Kuskokwim River catcher-seller was less than 200 fish.
 3. **Sport Fish:** LaMont Albertson (Sport Fish) commented that people were catching pike using rod and reel.
 4. **Discussion of ADF&G Management Consideration and Discussion of Possible Alternatives:** Working Group members expressed concern regarding the low coho salmon numbers at the BTF site to date and discussed inseason and historical coho salmon data with ADF&G staff. Some members commented that with the 2018 early season fishing restrictions they were hesitant to further restrict harvest of coho salmon.

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

1. **Approve the agenda as amended. Passed (Unanimous)**
2. **To support the ADF&G management recommendation to allow gillnet use on the salmon spawning tributaries, excluding in the mainstem of the Aniak River. Passed (Unanimous)**

Some of the Working Group members from the middle river expressed concerns regarding the removal of the 2018 gillnet restrictions on the Aniak mainstem due to “user conflicts.” They commented that allowing the use of gillnets would increase “friction” among users.

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3. To extend the Working Group meeting for an additional 15 minutes [until 12:15 p.m.]. Passed (Unanimous)
4. To recommend in the form of a letter to the federal government in Anchorage that they use the usual hiring process for the position of the Office of Subsistence Management (OSM) Assistant Regional Director (ARD). Failed (2 yeas, 3 nays, 1 abstention)

LaMont Albertson commented that the vacant ARD position played an important role in the Kuskokwim region and he expressed concern that there could be a “political move” that may negatively affect the region. Mr. Albertson commented that it was important to hire people that have knowledge of the region and its cultures. Some Working Group members commented that this recommendation was “outside the purview” of the Working Group and did not support the motion.
5. For the next Working Group meeting to be scheduled for Wednesday August 22, 2018 beginning at 10:00 a.m. Passed (Unanimous)
6. To adjourn [12:18 p.m.]. Passed (Unanimous)

COMMENTS FROM THE WORKING GROUP: *There were no additional Working Group comments during the August 15 meeting.*

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WORKING GROUP ATTENDANCE:

MEMBER SEAT:	NAME:
DOWNRIVER ELDER	James Charles
UPRIVER ELDER	Absent
LOWER RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mary Peltola
MIDDLE RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Lisa Feyereisen
UPRIVER SUBSISTENCE	Barbara Carlson
HEADWATERS SUBSISTENCE	Absent
MEMBER AT LARGE	Absent
WESTERN INTERIOR RAC	Ray Collins
YK DELTA RAC	Absent
COMMERCIAL FISHING	William "Charlie" Brown
SPORT FISHING	LaMont Albertson
PROCESSOR	<i>Vacant</i>
KRITFC	Absent
ADF&G	Aaron Tiernan
CHAIR	Alissa Rogers

Other Participants:		
ADF&G Comm. Fish: Colton Lipka, Nick Smith, Chuck Brazil, Zach Liller, Jen Peeks		
USFWS: Ken Stahlnecker, Aaron Webber, David Phillips		
OSM: Christine Bremmer, Gary Decossas		
Bill Bechtol (KRITFC) Rebecca Wilmarth (Red Devil)	Albert Kawagley (Bethel) Sarah Mutter (AVCP)	Kevin Whitworth (KRITFC) Jim Simon (BSFA, KRITFC)

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, 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**)

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