

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

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

June 8, 2020

Six full voting members were present, and a quorum was not established. A work session was called to order at 6:00 p.m. on Monday June 8, 2020 and adjourned at 8:04 p.m. The work session time was approximately 2 hours and 4 minutes. LaMont Albertson chaired the work session.

AGENDA ITEMS

A. USFWS/KRITFC UPDATE:

B. ADF&G MANAGEMENT ACTIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION:

C. PEOPLE TO BE HEARD: *Non-Working Group Members*

D. CONTINUING BUSINESS:

- Subsistence Reports: Lowest River, ONC Inseason Subsistence Report, Lower River, Middle River, Upper River, Headwaters
- Overview of Kuskokwim River salmon run assessment:
 - Test Fisheries (Bethel and Aniak):
 - Sonar/Weirs/Aerial Surveys/Other:
 - Subsistence Division Project Update:
 - NVN Report:
 - Discussion of ADF&G Management considerations and discussion of possible alternatives (recommendations from the Working Group):
 - Motion for Discussion and Action:

E. OLD BUSINESS:

F. NEW BUSINESS:

WORKING GROUP ACTION ITEMS:

- For ADF&G to compile a list of Working Group members that have had unexcused absences of 2 or more consecutive meetings and include this information in the June 15 Working Group packet for discussion (*ADF&G*)

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS: *A quorum was not established; this was a work session and there were no motions*

- A. **KRITFC/ USFWS UPDATE:** Gary Decossas (USFWS) gave a brief overview of the harvest estimates from the June 3rd opening. Mr. Decossas reported that 82 set nets were fished and two drift nets were observed. He reported that an estimated 180 Chinook salmon were harvested. Mr. Decossas continued and gave a brief overview of the harvest estimates from the June 6th opening. Mr. Decossas reported that 113 set nets and 5 drift nets were observed. He reported that an estimated 507 chinook salmon were harvested. No set nets were observed below the Johnson River. Aaron Moses (USFWS) announced that on June 12, June 15, and June 18 subsistence fishing with 6” mesh or less drift gillnets would be allowed for 12 hours in federal waters.
- B. **ADF&G MANAGEMENT ACTIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION:** Nick Smith (ADF&G, Area Management Biologist) reported that Section 4 of the Kuskokwim River, from the refuge boundary at Aniak upstream from the Holitna River mouth is scheduled to close to subsistence fishing on June 9; Section 5, the Holitna River mouth upstream to the headwaters, is scheduled to close to subsistence fishing June 11. Mr.

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Smith announced following the early season closure, ADF&G recommends opening Section 4 and Section 5 to the use of 6” or less mesh gill nets, 25 fathoms in length, and 45 meshes in depth until further notice. Mr. Smith added that ADF&G recommends maintaining the closed waters’ box in front of Aniak to protect Aniak River bound Chinook salmon. He continued that ADF&G recommends opening Sections 1-3 on June 12 and June 15 to the use of 6” or less mesh gill nets, 25 fathoms in length, and 45 meshes in depth to be allowed for 12 hour periods to mirror the first two USFWS openers and to ensure a law enforcement presence. Mr. Smith explained that a similar opener on June 18 could occur based on run strength and guidance from the Working Group during the June 15 meeting. John Chythlook (ADF&G, Area Sportfish Management Biologist) reported that the sportfishing closure set to expire on June 12 will be extended until further notice. *(For more information please see the June 8 Informational Packet, Pages 5-9)*

C. PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:

- Evan Waska (Bethel) commented that people have concerns over the ongoing fishing restrictions and combat fishing is causing difficulty when fishing is open. Mr. Waska was concerned with king salmon being taken by high-seas fisheries.

D. CONTINUING BUSINESS:

• SUBSISTENCE REPORTS:

- **ONC Subsistence Report:** Janessa Esquible (ONC) provided an overview of the ONC inseason harvest monitoring project. *(For more information on the ONC subsistence survey report, please see the June 8, 2020 Informational Packet, Pages 3-4)*
- **Lower River:** Mike Williams (Lower River Subsistence) reported people are getting fatigued by the extreme fishing restrictions of the last 5 years.
- **Middle River:** Lisa Feyereisen (Middle River Subsistence alternate) reported 1 Chinook salmon was caught before June 1 below Crow Village. Ms. Feyereisen also commented that 4 set nets were observed between Crow Village and Aniak.
- **Upriver:** Amanda Hoeldt (NVN) reported she observed several Chinook salmon caught by set net in the Napaimute area. Ms. Hoeldt commented that no one has been seen using a drift net.

• OVERVIEW OF KUSKOKWIM RIVER SALMON RUN ASSESSMENT

- Sean Larson (ADF&G, Kuskokwim Research Biologist) gave a brief report of the Kuskokwim River Salmon Assessment Update. He remarked that the Bethel Test Fishery and Aniak Test Fishery had been operating since June 1 and that Bethel Sonar began making estimates for fish passage on June 5. Mr. Larson stated that it was still too early in the Chinook salmon run to make any broad conclusions. As of June 8, weir crews have made it to Aniak and will be in the process of installing the weirs and setting up camps over the next few days. Mr. Larson expects to have more information to share with the group at the June 15 meeting *(For more information please see the June 8 Informational Packet, Pages 5-9)*
- David Runfola (ADF&G Subsistence Division): Mr. Runfola (ADF&G) told the Working Group that he did not have much to report due to the AKSSF project being delayed until 2021.

• DISCUSSION OF ADF&G MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS AND DISCUSSION OF POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVES (RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE WORKING GROUP):

There was some dialogue between LaMont Albertson (Sportfish), Lisa Feyereisen (Middle River Subsistence) and Nick Smith (ADF&G) regarding the state opening up drift opportunities within the YDNWR during a Federal Special Action. Mr. Albertson questioned whether the state could do this under a Special Action and if the Working Group had been apprised of this prior to this meeting. Ms. Feyereisen

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remarked that the Working Group and ADF&G had been presented with this strategy during the May 5 and 6 meeting and had voted to support it. Mr. Smith explained that by ADF&G announcing openers concurrent to the USFWS, it would allow for law enforcement to have a presence during these openers. Ray Born (USFWS Acting Refuge Manager) concurred with Mr. Smith's reasoning.

OLD BUSINESS:

- Dave Cannon (Aniak), who authored Resolution 01-20 (*See May 5 and 6 Informational Packet*), has incorporated the edits suggested by the Working Group during the preseason meeting and the resolution is currently being sent out for signatures.

NEW BUSINESS:

- **The election of new Working Group members:** Members of the Working Group expressed concerns over vacant chairs within the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group. It was decided that letters would be sent out and new nominations will be made for the seats that are declared vacant.
- **Discuss time change of working group meeting:** A discussion was had to move the time of the Working Group meetings to mornings. The request was respectfully declined because the majority of Working Group members voted to adopt the current meeting time of Mondays, 6:00-8:00 pm during the May 5 and 6 meeting.

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS: *A quorum was not established; this was a work session and there were no motions*

COMMENTS FROM THE WORKING GROUP: *No additional comments were provided from the Working Group members.*

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WORKING GROUP ATTENDANCE:

MEMBER SEAT:	NAME:
DOWNRIVER ELDER	James Charles
UPRIVER ELDER	Absent
LOWER RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mike Williams Sr.
MIDDLE RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Lisa Feyereisen
UPRIVER SUBSISTENCE	Absent
HEADWATERS SUBSISTENCE	Absent
MEMBER AT LARGE	Fritz Charles
WESTERN INTERIOR RAC	<i>Vacant</i>
YK DELTA RAC	Bob Aloysius
COMMERCIAL FISHING	Absent
SPORT FISHING	LaMont Albertson
PROCESSOR	<i>Vacant</i>
KRITFC	Absent
ADF&G	Nick Smith
CHAIR	LaMont Albertson

Other Participants:		
<u>ADF&G Comm. Fish:</u> Ben Gray, Sean Larson, Zach Liller, Bobette Dickerson, Lily Reichard.		
<u>Sport Fish:</u> John Chythlook		
<u>Subsistence Division:</u> Dave Runfola		
<u>USFWS:</u> Aaron Webber, Aaron Moses, Gary Decossas, Ray Born		
<u>OSM:</u>		
Janessa Esquible (ONC)	Amanda Hoeldt (NVM)	<u>Media:</u> Anna Rose MacArthur (KYUK)
Danielle Lowery (ONC)	Kaite Holt (NVM)	
Arles Andrew (ONC)	Mackenzie Smith (NVM)	
Bill Bechtol (KRITFC)	Brianna Shere (NVM)	
Eva Patton (RAC)		
		<u>WG Alternates:</u> Mary Peltola (Lower River Sub. Alt.)

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**), University of Alaska Fairbanks (**UAF**)

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