

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

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

June 26, 2014

Meeting called to order at 1:30pm on Thursday June 26, adjourned at 4:00pm. Total meeting time was 2.5 hours. Nine voting members were present and a quorum was maintained throughout the meeting.

AGENDA ITEMS:

People to be heard

Continuing Business: Run assessment and management actions

Old Business Discussion Topics: N/A

New Business Discussion Topics:

1. Update on 2014 Chinook salmon returns statewide.
2. Update on Friday 20 June and Tuesday 24 June 2014 6-inch mesh subsistence openers.
3. Discussion of subsistence rod and reel fishing in the upper river.

WORKING GROUP ACTION ITEMS: *these items were not called "action items" at the time of meeting; however work was assigned or volunteered.*

- Request for the ADF&G management to consider opening the Kuskokwim River subsistence dipnet fishery to 24 hours, 7 days a week. (6/30/14, See News Release #13)
- Request for ADF&G to provide an explanation of how BTF CPUE is being used by managers as a Chinook salmon run assessment tool in 2014; a year in which historical comparisons are difficult due to harvest restriction. (ADF&G)
- Request that ADF&G produce announcements on KYUK and KSKO radio regarding the Chinook salmon tagging program and lottery opportunities. (ADF&G)

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

1. Approval of the agenda as amended. *Motion passed (unanimously).*
2. Adjournment. *Motion passed (unanimous).*

PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:

1. Tim Andrew (AVCP) commented that communities in the lower river were feeling increasingly satisfied after harvesting chum and sockeye salmon during the 24 June opener. He thanked the managers and the Working Group members for their efforts.
2. Jeff Sanders suggested that managers open dipnetting in the Kuskokwim River to 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to allow people an increased opportunity to fish with this gear. He said that this would also provide opportunity to practice the technique, which could be of benefit in future years.
3. Myron Naneng with AVCP thanked the communities along the Kuskokwim River for not resorting to violence during the Chinook salmon fishing restrictions. He provided a verbal update on the effort towards creating an Inter-Tribal Fish Commission. Mr. Naneng said they have already met with USFWS and would like to invite ADF&G to consider joining the Inter-Tribal Fish Commission.
4. Brian McCaffrey with USFWS announced that the official Refuge Manager for the Yukon Delta Wildlife Refuge, Neil Lalonde, would be starting on Monday 30 June 2014 and taking over the in-season manager responsibilities. Mr. McCaffrey thanked everyone for their support over the last few months including ADF&G, AVCP, ONC, KNA and the Working Group members.
5. Bev Hoffman read an anonymous email from Unalakleet: This person discussed the complexity of the Chinook salmon issue and the need to look at all the contributing factors.
6. Ken Harper commented that people may contact ADF&G if they find diseased fish for further investigation.

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CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. Subsistence Reports:

- **Lowest River Reports:** James Charles (Downriver Elder) thanked the managers for allowing a subsistence opener while there were still chum and sockeye salmon in the river. He observed that the fish racks were becoming full of fish. He said that the king salmon appeared to be tapering down in the lower river. Mr. Charles said there were very few people who still needed more fish for subsistence purposes.

Charlie Brown (Commercial Fisher) said that during the 20 June opener there were several boats that went fishing. He reported that during the 24 June opener only 4-5 boats went out fishing. Mr. Brown commented that during the 24 June opener he fished with a 4-inch mesh gillnet and caught ~ 30 fish. He observed that fish racks were getting full.

- **ONC In-season Subsistence Report:** Alissa Joseph (ONC) reported that ONC had surveyed 29 families total, 22 families were fishing. (*See the June 26 Informational Packet for full survey results.*)
- **Lower River Subsistence:** Mike Williams (Middle River Subsistence) reported that 75% of families in Akiachak, Akiak and Tuluksak had not met their subsistence needs. He said that there were still several 4-inch mesh setnets in the river providing limited harvest. Mr. Williams commented that during the 24 June opener, he fished for 4 hours and caught 40 chum, 5 sockeye and 4 king salmon. He said that families were still worried that they may not meet their harvest goals for the 2014 season. Mr. Williams reported that his family had 50% fewer fish than last year.

Mary Sattler (Middle River Subsistence alternate) reported that during the 20 June opener she caught 30 fish. During the 24 June opener she reported catching ~ 50 fish total: 44 chum, a few sockeyes, and 1 king salmon. She reported observing full racks and smokehouses along Steamboat Slough.

Greg Roczicka (Lower River Subsistence alternate) relayed that one person he had talked to had harvested 69 chum and sockeye salmon along with whitefish in 4 days of fishing using a 4-inch mesh setnet. He said that some people were anxious about the appearance of flies and their effect on drying fish.

Greg Hoffman Jr. (Commercial Fisher alternate) reported that his family had harvested 15 chum salmon and 10 sockeye salmon before they had boat problems and were forced to quit.

Bev Hoffman (Sport Fishing) reported that her family had harvested 47 chum, 12 king and 3 sockeye salmon as well as 3 whitefish, split between 4 families. She reported that some people had full drying racks prior to the 6-inch mesh openers.

Fritz Charles (Member at large) reported having gone down river during the 24 June opener and counted 30-40 boats between the Johnson River and Fowler Island. He said he caught ~ 100 chum, 8-9 sockeye and 15 king salmon. He commented that people in the lower river were happy for the opportunity to harvest chum and sockeye salmon. He observed that some of the chum salmon had cysts and could not use the meat.

- **KNA In season Subsistence:** Megan Leary (KNA) reported that people were excited about the 27 June opener. She said that people were still using the 4-inch mesh gillnets. (*See the June 26 Informational Packet for full survey results.*)

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- **Middle River Subsistence:**

Lisa Feyereisen (Middle River Subsistence alternate) reported that Lower Kalskag had harvested salmon using their social and cultural permit, and that permit fishermen had reported that most of the Chinook salmon had passed through their area.

Dave Cannon (Middle River Subsistence alternate) relayed a report from one person whom had observed “a fair amount” of fish in the river. One family commented that they hadn’t started fishing and were frustrated that some people continued to fish illegally.

Bob Aloysius (YK Delta RAC) reported that people were planning to fish during the 27 June opener.

- **Upriver Subsistence**

Mark Leary (Upriver Subsistence) noted that many king salmon had traveled up the river. He reported having success with his 4-inch mesh gillnet and had released ~60 king salmon. Mr. Leary said that the fishwheel had run for a few days before it broke. He said they were working to get it fixed.

- **Headwaters Subsistence**

Dan Esai (Headwaters Subsistence) reported one family fishing with a whitefish net. He commented that a few king salmon were being caught. He said that some people were afraid to go fishing because of nets being confiscated. Mr. Esai reported that people would like to use rod and reel for subsistence fishing and they hoped the Salmon River would be open by 4 July.

2. **Overview of Kuskokwim River Salmon Run Assessment Projects:**

- **Bethel Test Fish:** Colton Lipka (ADF&G) reported that the water temperature remained within the historical average range, water clarity was above average, and the water level was now above average. Mr. Lipka reviewed the daily CPUEs for the BTF. *(For more information on the BTF, please see the June 26 Informational Packet)*

Kevin Schaberg (ADF&G) reported that the CPUE from the BTF indicated that more Chinook salmon were passing Bethel than in previous years (2008-present). He said that ~ 80% of the run had passed through Bethel to date.

- **Weirs:** Brittany Blain (ADF&G) reported that the ADF&G weir projects had been installed on schedule, and that fish counts were just starting. Ken Harper with USFWS reported that the Kwethluk weir had been installed and fish tight as of 25 June 2014. Mr. Harper said that the Tuluksak weir would be installed within the following days. He said that USFWS had not been able to partner with Tuluksak, but local workers, with experience at these projects, had been hired by USFWS this year. *(For more information on weirs, please see the June 26 Informational Packet)*
 - **Radio Tagging Project:** Kevin Schaberg (ADF&G) reported on the tagging projects near Tuntutuliak and Kalskag; and associated radio telemetry flights. Mr. Schaberg discussed some early results of this research *(For more information on the tagging projects, please see the June 26 Informational Packet and the June 26 meeting audio recording).*
- ### 3. **Intercept Fishery Report:** Aaron Poetter (ADF&G) reported no new information.
- ### 4. **Weather Report:** Colton Lipka reported on the weather for the lower, middle and upper river.
- ### 5. **Recommendations:**
- Aaron Poetter (ADF&G) announced moving toward management of the directed chum and sockeye salmon fisheries. Management would be looking to extend opportunities of subsequent openers in other areas of the river. Mr. Poetter said that ADF&G was also considering a rod and reel opportunity in Section #5 as a historical method of subsistence use in the beginning of July 2014.

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- Brian McCaffrey reported that USFWS would soon be transitioning management authority from federal to state managers in waters currently affected by USFWS Special Actions. He said that Special Action #1 will remain in effect until further notice.

OLD BUSINESS: N/A

NEW BUSINESS:

1. **Update on 2014 Chinook salmon returns statewide:** Kevin Schaberg (ADF&G) reported that statewide there had been no reports of serious abundance concerns. He noted some commercial and subsistence fishery restrictions within the state. Gerald Maschmann (USFWS) reported on the Yukon River salmon returns.
2. **Report on 24 June subsistence opener:** Brian McCaffrey (USFWS) reported that during the 20 June opener federal agents had counted 198 boats below the Johnson River. Mr. McCaffrey said that an estimated ~700 Chinook salmon had been harvested. During the 24 June opener, USFWS had counted 266 boats from the Johnson River to Tuluksak and estimated ~150 boats from the Johnson River to the mouth of the Kuskokwim River. Federal managers estimated that fewer than 2,000 Chinook salmon had been harvested during the 24 June opener.
3. **Discussion of subsistence rod and reel fishing in the upper river:** Aaron Poetter reported a possible rod and reel fishery in the upper river sometime in the beginning of July 2014.

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

Motion 1: To approve the agenda as amended. Motion passed (unanimous):

Motion 5: Adjournment. *Motion passed (unanimous).*

COMMENTS FROM THE WORKING GROUP

Greg Roczicka reported concerns from people regarding the amount of whitefish harvested during the 2014 season. He said there was also concern about the use of jet boats near the spawning grounds. Mr. Roczicka thanked ONC, USFWS and ADF&G for their help in the distribution of the BTF caught salmon. He said that ONC would continue to distribute fish through the weekend and transfer the tote back to Brown Slough on Monday 30 June.

James Charles requested that Law Enforcement check nets from the ends rather than the middle section to prevent dropouts.

Bob Aloysius pointed out that the Working Group had discussed using 25 fathom nets instead of 50 fathom nets and was concerned about the larger net size. He commented that he felt low returns of Chinook salmon correlated with a high 2007 by-catch of Chinook salmon in the Pollock fishery. He also suggested there was a need for people to learn how to limit their harvest of Chinook salmon, and discussed historical limits to king salmon fishing. Mr. Aloysius suggested that people should not target king salmon directly.

Mike Williams encouraged management to work with the villages and tribal governments to gather fish counts for improved assessment.

Mary Sattler appreciated Greg Roczicka and Bob Aloysius' reminders to tend to the drying fish.

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Lisa Feyereisen reported that people were wondering why 6-inch mesh gillnet openings in the middle river couldn't remain open since there were so few fishers in that area. She commented that there was also concern that, due to the openers in the lower river, chum salmon may not reach the middle river. Ms. Feyereisen also said that people were excited to use their smoke houses in the middle river.

Dave Cannon reported that he planned to try dipnetting within the next few days.

Mark Leary thanked KYUK radio for their fisheries announcements.

Bev Hoffman appreciated ONC's distribution of fish this 2014 season. She encouraged people to report their harvest on the ADF&G subsistence calendars so management can better assess the number of king salmon and whitefish harvested.

LaMont Albertson thanked Bob Aloysius and James Charles for sharing their traditional knowledge on historical fishing methods along the Kuskokwim River. Mr. Albertson was concerned about the sport fish catch numbers and said that people in Aniak have historically used rod and reel for subsistence harvesting.

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WORKING GROUP ATTENDANCE:

MEMBER SEAT:	NAME:
DOWNRIVER ELDER	James Charles
UPRIVER ELDER	<i>Absent</i>
LOWER RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mike Williams
MIDDLE RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Dave Cannon
UPRIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mark Leary
HEADWATERS SUBSISTENCE	Dan Esai
MEMBER AT LARGE	Fritz Charles
WESTERN INTERIOR RAC	<i>Absent</i>
YK DELTA RAC	Bob Aloysius
COMMERCIAL FISHING	Charlie Brown
SPORT FISHING	LaMont Albertson
PROCESSOR	<i>Absent</i>
ADF&G	Aaron Poetter
CHAIR	Bev Hoffman

Other Participants:

ADF&G Comm. Fish: Brittany Blain, Chris Shelden, Kevin Schaberg, Colton Lipka, John Linderman, Zach Liller, Amy Brodersen, Katie Froning, Jen Peeks

Sport Fishing: John Chythlook, Tom Taube

Subsistence Division: Dave Runfola, Oden Miller, Hiroko Ikuta

USFWS: Brian McCaffrey, Ken Harper, Steve Miller, Lew Coggins

OSM: Don Rivard, George Pappas, Pippa Kenner, Trent Liebich

Megan Leary (KNA)
Rebecca Frye (KNA)
Roberta Chavez (ONC)
Iyana Dull (ONC)
Alissa Joseph (ONC)
Tim Andrew (AVCP)
Bill Bechtol (AVCP)
Myron Naneng (AVCP)
Kate Schaberg (NVGT)
Buddy Kutch (NVGT)

Mary Sattler (Lower River Subsistence alternate)
Greg Hoffman Jr. (Commercial Fishing alternate)
Greg Roczicka (Lower River Subsistence alternate)
Lisa Feyereisen (Middle River Subsistence alternate)
Ben Matheson (KYUK Radio)
Lisa Demer (ADN)
Bob Hallinen (ADN)
Gerri Sumpster (Senator Murkowski)
Doug Molyneaux (Unaffiliated)
Nathan Underwood (Aniak)
Jeff Sanders (Bethel)

GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS:

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (**ADF&G**), Orutsarmiut Native Council (**ONC**), Kuskokwim Native Association (**KNA**), 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**)

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