

PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND/COPPER RIVER
REGIONAL PLANNING TEAM
April 20, 2016 Regular Meeting
PWSAC Conference Room
APPROVED MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Sheridan called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

2. ROLL CALL:

Present (8): Tommy Sheridan (Chairman), Sam Rabung, Jeremy Botz, Tim Moore, Mike Glasen, Tracey Nuzzi, and (via telephone) Mark Somerville, Dan Bosch.
A quorum was established.

3. MOTION TO APPROVE/AMEND AGENDA:

Motion, Moore; Second Botz to approve the draft agenda of 4/20/16 regular meeting of the Prince William Sound/Copper River Regional Planning Team (RPT).

Additions: Moving item 10 to be placed between item 8 and item 9 and then proceed to the Annual Management Plans (AMP's) after the discussion.

Motion passed unanimously with additions.

4. MOTION TO APPROVE MINUTES:

Motion, Moore; Second Rabung to approve the minutes from 4/13/15 regular meeting of the RPT.

Correction: Page 1 under approve minutes, change 2015 to 2014.

Motion passed by unanimous consent with corrections.

INTRODUCTIONS:

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) Staff: Steve Moffitt, Area Research Biologist for Commercial Fishery, Cordova; Stormy Haight, Assistant Area Biologist for Commercial Fishery, Cordova; Stacy Vega, Otolith Laboratory Supervisor, Cordova; Bert Lewis, Regional Management Coordinator for Anchorage. (via teleconference) Jay Baumer, Assistant Area Manager for Sport Division PWS, Anchorage; Loraine Vercessi, Coordinator for Statewide Private Nonprofit (PNP), Juneau; Ethan Ford, Regional Resource Development Biologist, Homer.

Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation (PWSAC) Staff: General Manager, Dave Reggiani and Executive Secretary, Kate Jager

Other Public Present: Forrest Jenkins, PWS Setnet Association President; Tom Carpenter, Copper River Seafoods; Rick Isaacson, Trident Seafoods Operations Manager; Mike Wells, Valdez Fisheries Development Association, Inc. (VFDA) Executive Director; Teresa Tanner, U.S. Forest Service, Aquatics Program Manager.

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Recorder/Transcriber: Kate Jager

5. PUBLIC COMMENT: None

6. Sam Rabung Presentation: RPT role and responsibilities.

Sheridan asked Sam Rabung to give a presentation on the RPT and the process and guidance for that. With new Team members, including himself, he felt all would benefit from Rabung's experience.

Rabung presented a power point presentation on "*Regional Planning Teams. Their Roll in Alaska's Salmon Fishery Enhancement Program*" and provided a handout of the presentation. This is a basic overview of our guidance and why we are here. The ADF&G Mission Statement: *To protect, maintain, and improve the fish, game, and aquatic plant resources of the state, and manage their use and development in the best interest of the economy and the well-being of the people of the state, consistent with the sustained yield principle.* **Rabung** said it is an all-encompassing mission statement. We are here for fishery enhancement in Alaska. It is important to remember we are not enhancing fish, we are enhancing fisheries. The fisheries economic engine was established in the 1970's because of our depleted salmon fisheries. We still maintain a natural production priority. Everything we do has to be a "first do no harm" approach. There is guidance in statutes, regulations, and policy to protect wild stock and a state constitutional mandate to protect sustained yield. We are unique in the world in that sustained yield is part of our constitution. The fishery enhancement program is stakeholder driven. The users of the resource within each region determine what they feel is needed and what they want. ADF&G works with that to determine what we feel is appropriate given our mandate to protect natural production. The mechanism for this cooperative effort is the RPT. The RPT is made up of Regional Aquaculture Associations (RAA) and ADF&G. The commissioner of ADF&G established salmon fishery enhancement regions statewide, each with an RPT. The commissioner appoints 3 ADF&G voting members and approves 3 RAA voting members. The commissioner may invite ex-officio (non-voting) members from federal, tribal, or other organizations that have a stake in the fisheries of that region. The RPT Chairman is selected at the will of the 6 voting members. The RPT Chairman has specific duties that are spelled out in regulations. The RPT meets annually, or as necessary, in order to fulfill its advisory role to the commissioner of ADF&G on regional salmon fishery enhancement activities. The primary duty is the regional comprehensive salmon plan and that is the only duty that is spelled out in statutes and is the requirement. The rest of the duties are in regulations that consist of reviewing new hatchery permit applications and to provide a recommendation to the commissioner to approve, change, or deny it. The criteria used for this is the comprehensive salmon plan. The RPT will also review the permit alteration requests (PAR's) and review the hatchery annual management plans (AMP's) and make a recommendation to the commissioner. The review of the PAR's and the AMP's are discretionary. All of the salmon planning regions are listed on the ADF&G web site and are available for anyone to review. The RPT guidance in statute is found in **AS 16.10.375**

Regional Salmon Plans. The RPT guidance in regulations is found in 5 AAC 40.300. **Regional planning teams in general and 5 AAC 40.310. Regional planning team composition.** The regulations are a lot more detailed and describe how the RPT is composed and what its duty is. The primary responsibility of the RPT is regional comprehensive salmon planning. The phase III plan for PWS/Copper River was finalized in 1994 and has not been amended or change since. The RPT has oversight of the hatchery permits. The RPT routinely make recommendations on the PAR's to the commissioner. This RPT chooses to review the hatchery AMP's.

Moore asked if he correctly understood that the RPT's roll is to make recommendations to the commissioner. The commissioner can choose to take that recommendation or not and make the final decision.

Rabung said that is correct and a good point because oftentimes there are misconceptions about what RPT authority is and what it can do.

7. AGENCY REPORTS:

Sheridan said Teresa Tanner with the U.S. Forest Service has agreed to provide an update to the RPT on issues that the U.S. Forest Service are involved with. Hatchery production is the primary enhancement tool in Prince William Sound (PWS) however issues of relevance to habitat protection, enhancement and wild stock rehabilitation are also of relevance to the RPT.

Tanner said she had a couple of items that would be relevant to the RPT. The first is the Forest Service fish passes. The Forest Service has eight steep fish passes throughout the PWS that were constructed in the 1970s and 1980s. Those passes are located in Boswell Bay, Rocky Bay, Control Bay, Cannon Pass, Derickson Bay, Red Creek, Solf Lake, and Otter Creek. Those are some of the enhancement projects that are ongoing and continue to be maintained towards enhancement. The second item is the Elodea control that has been contemplated for the Forest Service. There has been a big push statewide from habitat. Elodea is invasive and has possible implications on our salmon marine areas. It was decided to go through National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) this year and start a trial treatment using fluridone in a couple of the ponds located off the river outside of Cordova. Water chemistry, aquatic invertebrates and both native and invasive plant communities were looked at last year and they will continue to be monitored and those assessments will be done in conjunction with the trial treatment using the fluridone this year. There are two things to determine, 1) what are the effects of Elodea on the aquatic ecosystem? 2) try to assess what are the effects of treating Elodea on those aquatic ecosystems. On the fish side, the concern is if you treat these systems, how that changes the plant communities. If we start changing plant communities we start changing the inverts. There will be an impact on food webs at that point. What does that do to zooplankton for sockeye? What does that do to the buds for the coho? Those are the things being looked at. The work will be starting small this year with those ponds that are non-salmon bearing systems and next year look at doing either Wooded Creek or Wrong

Way Creek with one being treatment and one control, those both have rearing coho. The Forest Service is working with United States Geological Survey and Park Service and will be doing a similar type pre-assessment pre-treatment out on the Martin River this year on sockeyes. There are coho on Wooded Creek and Wrong Way Creek and sockeye out on Martin River. Unfortunately, peer review literature isn't there to support if it is good or if it is bad to treat. It will be super expensive on the Copper River Delta so before we start throwing a lot of money and chemicals in there, we want to make sure that we are not going to have a negative or adverse impact on the fishery in our area. This is ongoing, last fall there was a public meeting to start talking about this and there will be a follow up town hall meeting sometime in October or November. This will leave enough time for to go through the data from our last sampling effort and be able to present rough findings at that point. This will be the first year using Fluridone, starting in late June or early July. The interest is more in watching what happens with these food webs. Is it changing not only the prey that is available but the quality of the prey that is available for these fish? **Tanner** asked if there were any questions or insights please contact her. The report will be both in public presentations and agency reports.

Haught asked what locations were slated for treatment this year?

Tanner said this year it is specifically the two Cannery Ponds areas. All of this is mapped. There are two ponds that are connected and we will put a barrier in there. The upper pond has less elodia than the lower pond. We will use the upper pond as our control and the lower pond as treatment. We did a pre-assessment last year and we need to maintain something for this year between control and treatment. There is a slough that we are going to try to treat. We need to figure out the hydraulics as well in maintaining the potency of the treatment.

8. OLD BUSINESS:

Update by Valdez Fisheries Development Association (VFDA) on increased permitted capacity for pink salmon and status of hatchery improvements for utilizing the capacity. (Mike Wells)

Wells said last year he had briefed the RPT on the VFDA's plans with our two large construction projects to refurbish and replace the water distribution to the hatchery. Phase I was completed last summer successfully with a new 42" water main laid and additional piping put in for the high-pressure side which performed as it was designed. Now the 50 HP electric motor can be taken out of the system saving us thousands of dollars per year. This year will begin phase II of the construction project that includes increasing our high-pressure penstock supply to the hatchery. Last year the entire high-pressure steel pipe was buried and this year the connections to the penstock at the Solomon Gulch hydro plant will be complete. There will be new valves with plumbing checks on that end. Further down on the hatchery site a new pressure reducing valve station will be put in to handle that increased flow. This will give us approximately 8,000 gallons a minute between the incubation building and the long-term rearing building. We will be able to maintain the facility if there should be a catastrophic failure of a turbine or

something of that nature. The incubation plumbing and distribution in the incubation building will be replaced in anticipation of the implementation of the PAR. It will increase from approximately 1,800 gallons a minute pumps to 2,000 gallons a minute pumps and tie into the new high-pressure line as well. During last year's project an old 24-inch steel water main was found. It was so badly damaged from corrosion that in certain sections the only thing holding it together was the pack of the soil. The Board approved the quick removal of that pipe. The 100 foot of 24-inch steel distribution line will be yarded out and replace it with PVC. We started turning dirt on the second big project last Monday. We have \$3.6 million invested in this project. The primary goal is to set that facility on a good solid footing for the next 50 years. We are confident that the work being done will accomplish that. In anticipation of the first 20 million eggs increase the extension of the head boxes, placement of the incubators, and all that work entails will be complete. The AMP will show adjustments to accommodate for those additional eggs. To increase that production all of our Fish Transport Permits (FTP) have been approved.

9. Information and Discussion Items:

a) Discussion on Gulkana production level (white paper update).

Sheridan said there was significant discussion on the Gulkana Hatchery (GH) and white paper at last year's RPT meeting as evidenced in the 2015 meeting minutes, it was a lengthy discussion. At last year's meeting the department indicated they would come back to the table in 2016 with a more thorough evaluation and now have a more updated table. It was suggested more information could be provided on two complete brood years as was requested for the early 2000s relative to the strontium marking program. The department suggested this discussion item be included on our agenda today.

Botz said he would defer to Steve Moffitt on this issue.

Moffitt handed out an updated Table 1, titled "Gulkana Hatchery contributions by fishery element, 1977–2015," and a document that was formally discussed at the 2013 meeting with historical background. Moffitt noted he had been the main author on the 2013 document and had updated the tables. In 2013 the document was reviewed by the regional staff and has not been updated since then. GH Basic Management Plan (BMP) specified, for example: "*The goal of the Gulkana facility is to provide an annual average return of 300,000 adult sockeye salmon without jeopardizing delta and upriver wild stock escapements.*" Section 2.3 of the BMP also says that the most recent 5 years will be used to evaluate the production in relation to the goal specified in the BMP. Note that the BMP which was signed in 2000 indicates that returns from the strontium marked fish would be used to reevaluate the program goal. It specifies "*After two complete brood years have returned that have had successful otolith marks applied as fry the Gulkana Hatchery production will be reevaluated using the information obtained from the new marking method.*" It was originally going to be reevaluated in 2006. Given the large mortality event from the original marking in 2000 which lead to reduced returns in 2003 and 2004, it sites that they did not get sufficient brood stock which lead to reduced returns in 2008

and 2009. The Department and RPT did not do the reevaluation in 2006. The Department looked at it in 20013 and the two main questions still remain: 1) where are we in relation to the BMP production goal on average? And, 2), is there any evidence that we are jeopardizing the Delta and/or upriver wild stock escapement?

Table 1 includes the department's estimates of the production by fishery element from the beginning of the program with returns from 1977 through 2015. The second column from the right shows the estimate of the total Hatchery Contribution. Page 2 of Table 1 shows the averages of the contribution by fishery element. The top table shows the 5-year average. The most recent total production 5-year average is 413,621. When we did the original examination for the 2013 RPT meeting it was 340,000. With 5 years of amazing production it has significantly increased. This has been the longest time period of above average production for both wild and hatchery in the 100 years of data for the Copper River. It should be noted that the 2015 run was much smaller. On page 1, Table 1, total production was down to 219,562 versus the previous 5 years that were at or above 400,000.

On page 3, Table 2 documented our estimations of the production from the strontium chloride marking by year. There are some comments on the issue that affected the productivity and survival for specific years. Our first sampling of strontium chloride occurred in 2004 but the first returns were in 2003 with 4-year olds.

Page 4, Figure 1 shows GH estimated total run and GH run as a proportion of total wild and hatchery runs from 1977–2015. The plot of the Gulkana run and bars represent the portion of total run for both wild and hatchery. 1999 was the largest Gulkana run estimated so far and represented 42% of production for wild and hatchery. The 20-year average proportion of the total on the far right of the graph only represents the years with strontium estimates at 15%. It was one of the planning assumptions in the original BMP. The department wanted it to be at 300,000 originally with approximately 15% of the total production in the years that they used.

On page 5, Figure 2 it shows the GH estimated annual harvest rates from 1977–2015. The same information in this graph is also in Figure 3.

On page 6, Figure 3, it shows the GH estimated total run and annual harvest rates from 1977–2015. Here we have the plots of the GH total run by year along with the line indicating the BMP program goal of 300,000 for a reference. The labeled lines are the estimated exploitation rates of the GH return. The yellow line on the graph shows the maximum exploitation rate from a paper by department staff. They evaluated 40 different sockeye stocks for the estimated optimum exploitation for the maximum sustained yield.

Rabung asked Moffitt if the estimated exploitations were on the Gulkana and the 70% were on the Copper River then the 70% would be the wild run for the Copper River and the exploitation rate that was applied there was for the Gulkana production.

Moffitt said yes. The Gulkana production co-occurs in the river with the existing upriver wild stocks that have similar timing as the Delta stocks. If there is a similar exploitation rate on those co-occurring stocks then that is definitely going to reduce your yield to a level below maximum sustained yield. The other thing to note is the department is not managing for exploitation rates; they are managing for escapement goals. That is a benchmark you can compare but it doesn't really tell you whether you are reducing production. In relation to escapement goals we have an upper Copper River escapement goal. We have been above the minimum and maximum for some years. The only time we fell below was in 2000.

On page 7, Figure 4 is the Copper River Delta aerial escapement indices, sustainable escapement goal bounds, and long-term average goals from 1977–2015. Currently the range is from 55,000 to 130,000, but in our escapement report we specified that over the long term we wanted to meet the 184,500 number. We have only met that for 2 of the 13 years. Since then the escapement goal has been in effect. There are several things that can affect that, you can have different observer efficiencies, weather that affects your ability to fly surveys, or you could have additional harvest effort because of higher production at Gulkana that make it so you can't quite achieve those. We do know that we are within our sustainable escapement goal for every year. Another piece of data that indicates it might be having an effect, but we don't know for sure.

Moffitt said lastly, in 2013 Region II staff had recommendations for the RPT in relation to Gulkana production. The first recommendation was to delay considering changes to Gulkana production until we had at least three additional run estimates. We have them now. The other recommendations were to examine existing brood stock and watershed escapement data, and documentation for additional information to evaluate the annual harvest rates of GH hatchery and wild fish at similar times. The annual reports were gone through to make sure our information matched the PWSAC's Gulkana annual reports on the number of broodstock and watershed escapement. That allowed us to reevaluate the harvest rates and those are what has been updated in these tables. Another recommendation was to examine other methods to evaluate the harvest rate on upper river wild sockeye with similar timing. We have not been able to evaluate another method currently so that recommendation has not been addressed at this point. The final recommendation was to conduct additional work to evaluate the source of unmarked fish in Crosswind Lake. Some additional work was done. GH Manager Gary Martinek did some work around the lake trying to see if there were other spawning areas that were being used by fish that were not found before but none have been found as of now. There is still a fairly high proportion of unmarked fish in Crosswind Lake. At this point we still cannot recommend any changes to production levels based on the information we have.

Rabung said he would like to point out this document was passed out in 2013 and it was discussed it as high up as the Commissioner's level. It states that the department recommends this. It should be clarified to say that department regional staff recommends this, not the department.

b) Discussion of concerns regarding sockeye salmon harvest during the AFK chum salmon fishery.

Sheridan said this subject was something that was discussed throughout the winter. Many of use in this room were part of those discussions. There were a good amount of sockeye salmon that were harvested in the Armin F. Koernig Hatchery (AFK) Terminal Harvest Area (THA) and Special Harvest Area (SHA) during the AFK chum salmon purse seine fishery last year. We discussed this at the PWSAC fall and spring Board of Director's meeting and at several of the winter PWSAC committee meetings. The department, early on, looked at the harvest that took place last year and relate it to trends seen in the past as well as management strategies implemented in the past. Had there been any changes in the past that impacted sockeye harvest which is of concern to a large group of fishers in the Sound? What was found was that there were efforts to manipulate time and area in the past to mitigate sockeye salmon harvest. There were certain approaches that were taken. For a variety of reasons, they weren't found to have a significant effect on mitigating for sockeye harvest. Since that time an approach has been implemented where we managed that fishery consistently from 2011 through 2015 so far as time and area are concerned. A significant amount of resources were invested in sampling those fish so that they could be accounted for in the allocation plan. There really weren't any concerns raised during that time period about the level of harvest, although this past year there was a significant increase. There has been a significant amount of discussion with fishery participants and the department has received a lot of feedback on the harvest that took place last year. From 2008 through 2010 there was an average of 61,000 sockeye harvested during the AFK chum salmon fishery. From 2011 through 2014 with a consistent management approach used in 2015, there was an average of 42,000 sockeye harvested during the AFK chum salmon fishery. This increased considerable in 2015 with 104,000 sockeye harvested during the AFK chum salmon fishery. The department sampled that intensively and 95% of those fish were Main Bay Hatchery (MBH) fish and 5,000 were wild. The department looked at this in terms of how that harvest compared to the totality of the return to MBH. In 2015 a similar percentage of the MBH run was harvested at AFK; it is just that it was a much larger run. Another significant change for 2015 was that daily sockeye salmon harvests at AFK exceeded chum salmon harvest 15 times. The department was not managing daily fishing periods; these are extended duration fishing periods. There were 60-hour periods from Monday through Wednesday and 84-hour periods from Thursday through Sunday. Looking at the fish ticket data, there were 15 days where sockeye salmon harvest exceeded chum salmon harvest. That had not happened before and so that was a change. This was talked about a lot and the department did receive a lot of feedback from stakeholders. Our intent was to listen to what folks had to say and to engage with the stakeholders and see if folks could provide some input on what should be done differently. Sheridan said the strategy he had floated was similar to the strategy that takes place elsewhere. In Sitka Sound there was a hatchery terminal fishery in Deep Inlet that is a remote release site for chum salmon. In the 1990s as returns to that site increased over time there was a traditional purse seine fishery that occurred in Sitka Sound. Chum salmon harvests were increasing over time to the point in certain areas chum salmon harvest were beating pink salmon harvest. This did not happen

overnight; it was something they worked on over a long period of time. The approach they took was to monitor harvests in certain areas then if and when chum salmon pounds harvested exceeded pink salmon pounds harvested that would trigger a threshold for taking management action. In this case in the AFK fishery, when monitoring the harvest, the extended duration periods are somewhat problematic in that in an 84-hour period, the fishing period ends on Sunday. The announcement comes out on Monday and some time has passed so you are reacting to data that is several days old. Sheridan said if we wanted to monitor the harvest in that fishery then go to daily fishing periods for 12 or 14 hours and at least give you an idea as to what is taking place. It could very well inform subsequent management action. It is possible that we do that this year and the sockeye don't come into the area and are not harvested in the numbers that would be a concern to folks. It is unknown until it is looked at that more frequently. There were some questions over the winter about the legality of the fishery itself. That has been addressed by the Director of Commercial Fisheries Division, Scott Kelley who provided a response for the maker of that question. The department's interpretation was that that fishery is legal. Going forward there will be others who will be implementing a management strategy. Sheridan said through his involvement with this process as the department's Ex-Officio PWSAC Board member and as the fishery manager engaging with stakeholders that is as good an update as he could provide.

Rabung said Sheridan had mentioned the percentage of the sockeye harvest. What is the long-term percent in that chum fishery of the MBH sockeye?

Sheridan replied it varies. Since 2006, 3 years have been at or above what was seen in 2015. In 2008 and 2009 approximately 6.7% of the MBH run was harvested and in 2015 it was 6.4%. In 2011 and 2014 it was much lower than that. This was a big year for MBH sockeye. Fish movement patterns are what they are and there were fish caught there.

Rabung commented on the legality of the fishery. The response did not just come from Director Kelley alone, the Department of Law reviewed it and provided a response.

Sheridan said throughout the process we went through a similar process that was elevated to the Director's level through a letter to stakeholders. Through his Ex-Officio position with PWSAC and his role with the department he did reach out to the Department of Law staff earlier in this past offseason. He said he was given similar input and was able to share that with the stakeholders. Some of the folks wanted something in writing. This had been discussed at some point that we should insert wording into the AFK AMP. Sheridan said he did not find it was necessary. Director Kelley had said in Southeast Alaska their process was something that didn't just happen overnight. It was something that was worked on for several years and then they did put wording into the AMP. It is very loose wording. When we do review the AFK AMP for 2016 there is no such wording.

Glaser asked in practical application did he hear it was Sheridan's intent to be responsive if you see similar spikes that were seen in 2015 and that they will proactively react to managing that fishery.

Sheridan said going forward he would not be the manager doing that. The discussions have been fairly consistent and going to daily periods in and of itself is taking action and is reducing time. One idea, should sockeye salmon harvest exceed chum salmon harvest it may result in management action with time and area restrictions. One approach he had floated with folks, with no negative feedback, would be to go to two 36-hour periods a week. That is an option and would provide for windows for fish to pass through the area. When some area restrictions were implemented in the past, the department staff visited the fishery. Those of you who fish in the fishery know this, restricting area to the SHA will not eliminate harvest altogether. Those fish will still come all the way in. When that was attempted in the past, his interpretation was that it was not a significant affect. The direction taken in discussing this in this past offseason was to look at more significant time considerations to allow for windows. Those are all on the table. It has been discussed in the offseason; it will be discussed at the pre-season meeting, and up to and including the beginning of the season. Sheridan said, for his part, it was an intentionally slow and deliberative process to try to understand the stakeholders' concerns and to really hope for and develop some compromises and input on what we should do.

Tom Carpenter asked if it is this committee's responsibility to consider putting in some loosely worded language into the direction the management team would follow in regards to this or is it somebody else? The reason he asked is that we can have this conversation now and we could all agree that maybe something should happen. Turnover happens and people move on. He felt for the best interests for everybody in the long run it might be a good idea to have some of this loosely worded language in there. He was curious if this committee was the ones who would do that, if not, who?

Sheridan said that could happen today when we are discussing the AFK AMP. It would be at the discretion of the RPT. The AMPs are generated and collaboratively worked on between hatchery operators and the department at various stages. These documents have been developed over many years and have at times removed wording that was no longer appropriate or inserted wording that was appropriate. During our New Business section we could very well add language in there. Right now there is no such language in the AFK AMP. The role of the RPT would be to approve that AMP and recommend approval of the AMP to the Commissioner as amended.

Moore said at our PWSAC March Board of Director's meeting we passed a motion to look at these projects. We evaluated the projects and now we are looking at possible alternatives in the future. At the PWSAC Finance Committee meetings and then the Board of Director's meeting, we agreed to go through our allocation and made some monetary shifts in our financial plan. We have done this before over the years. That addressed the monetary function of our allocated stocks.

Nuzzi said she wanted to clarify the department's view of this. In managing that fishery, is it species specific for chums or is it as long as you don't see a problem with wild interception. What is the department's view of how they will come up with their time and area this next year?

Lewis said he was going to raise his hand as we closed this discussion because he could hear some uncertainty about Sheridan's presenting this now and recognizing that he is moving on and will not be the manager. The manager is the point of contact and these are all department actions. We anticipate a seamless transition and nothing is going to change in the management strategy as a whole from Sheridan's position. The AFK chum salmon fishery is a targeted enhanced chum fishery in a very specific area of the Southwestern District. There is an occasional incidental harvest of other fish destined for districts other than the Southwestern District or that hatchery. As Sheridan has described we have developed a plan to take action in response to the discussions we have been having about the sockeye harvest. That will be implemented even without Sheridan being there. The absolute details of the time and area are still in play. We will react in season to the fishery as always. Going to daily 12 or 14-hour periods sometime around June 20th, which is when we expect the sockeye to start traveling through the area, monitoring that harvest and reacting when we see the numbers of fish other than the targeted AFK chum showing up in the harvest, will trigger some kind of management action.

Off the record 11:14 a.m.

On the record 11:34 a.m.

10. NEW BUSINESS:

Sheridan said this is the part of the meeting where we will discuss various AMPs. It has been organized in such a way that the first AMPs were returned without any track changes and there for may require less discussion.

Solomon Gulch Hatchery PAR (Action)

Motion, Rabung; Second, Botz to recommend approval to the Commissioner of the 2016 Annual Management Plan for Solomon Gulch Hatchery.

Discussion:

Sheridan said there were minor changes to this AMP. Through the editing process both the department and VFDA accepted those changes. There were some changes because of the PAR allowing some increase in the number of fish required for brood and some additional wording inserted.

Wells said essentially the AMP is the same as last years. There are no substantive changes other than the increases in permit capacity to provide for the PAR. The total egg take of green egg goal for pinks is 250 million and the additional brood stock that is required.

Motion passed with unanimous consent.

Gulkana Hatchery I and II AMP (Action)

Motion, Rabung; Second, Botz to recommend approval to the Commissioner of the Gulkana Hatchery I and II 2016 AMP.

Discussion:

Sheridan said there were some minor changes made to this AMP. Through the editing process both the department and PWSAC accepted the changes.

Motion passed with unanimous consent.

Armin F. Koernig Hatchery AMP (Action)

Motion, Moore: Second, Glasen to recommend approval to the Commissioner of the Armin F. Koernig Hatchery 2016 AMP.

Discussion:

Sheridan said there were some minor track changes remaining. The outstanding track changes are common to both the AFK and WNH. They are found on page 5 of 3.2 Special Harvest Area and page 8 under 3.5 Special Management strategies of the AMPs. There is an insertion of words *and subsistence* on both pages.

Nuzzi asked for clarification on what subsistence fishing was available in that area.

Sheridan said there are subsistence users in the area. They qualify for a permit that is specific to Chenega and the surrounding waters.

Botz added there are the Copper River Commercial Fishing District, General PWS, Chenega, and then the Tatitlek permits.

Reggiani said he had no concerns with this AMP. This was his insertion. Commercial was inserted and he wanted to clarify that subsistence is always tied to that. The only outstanding question he had for the department is that sometimes we have subsistence openers on the flats but we do not in the PWS. He asked if there would ever be a future consideration of that or not?

Botz replied that has been considered. If we were anticipating an extended closure and stakeholders didn't feel they were having adequate opportunity we would consider additional fishing time outside of the commercial fishery.

Sheridan said for procedure we will continue on with the discussion for potential insertion of additional wording regarding the AFK chum salmon fishery. There were questions during our discussion session and a recommendation that we have some

wording on hand for consideration. He had the draft version and the current wording will be discussed at the pre-season meeting tonight. The process is still fluid and we will be soliciting input from users on what we would do at AFK, so far as management is concerned. He also had a copy of Northern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association (NSRAA's) AMP. This fishery and their approach were brought to his attention by Director Kelley after describing our situation. Kelley felt there were strong similarities. Folks within the department have looked at this and talked about it and this has been discussed at committee meetings informally as well. There was some wording on the third printout that is highlighted from the 2001 to the 2003 AFK AMPs (handout 1). They are fodder for discussion if we were to insert additional language into the AFK AMP and what it could look like. The first page is really specific to the issue we have been discussing. It was intentionally vague but is not set in stone. Our outlook process is such that we have our pre-season meeting and engage with stakeholders for fine tuning. This is just an added opportunity for that. He assumed the outlook would be distributed as a news release next week.

Rabung asked whether any RPT member thought it was worthwhile to insert a sentence or two under Special Management Strategies for chum salmon at AFK.

Sheridan said that was correct. He would defer to everyone involved as to where and what to include but that is probably the correct location and something that was considered.

Nuzzi said she would be comfortable not adding language right now. This would be just a tool for management and would not give any real direction than what has already been discussed. If it is nothing that you truly feel you need than maybe it is not necessary. Is it necessary for staff?

Sheridan said if we could insert wording that would address everything that we do the documents would become quite large. The most important things to this group as a whole are included in this document. It changes over time depending upon the programs and the issues that folks have. This issue has been brought to our attention, very loud and very clear. We have looked at it very closely and have developed an approach that thus far has received some support and no strong opposition.

Nuzzi said she was cautious to change it. If it is decided to change the program in general then we will be back to make changes to the AMP potentially in the next few years.

Rabung said it is intended to be redrafted annually. As a department member he would defer to the fleet on this one.

Glaser said what he felt he had heard from the department was that concerned individuals have the attention of the department. The department intends to be sensitive towards the issue and he would trust the department to do that. We don't need to take action with the assurances that we have received from the department.

Moore said he appreciated Nuzzi and Glasen's comments and he would concur. The department, with clear cut direction, will help the stakeholders and the users understand a similar situation as last year with the sockeye interception will not occur in the same way. This language is helpful in that it identifies the problem but yet it has to be well thought out. We could be complicating our AMPs in a number of other areas where we have allocated fish that show up in unintended people's nets. It is something that needs to be looked at but he felt very comfortable that the fleet managers could handle the issues as they arise.

Sheridan said we have a motion on the table to recommend approval for the 2016 AFK Hatchery AMP as presented to the RPT with the accepted insertions for *and subsistence* on pages 5 and 8.

Motion passed with unanimous consent.

Wally Noerenberg Hatchery AMP (Action)

Motion, Nuzzi; Second, Rabung to recommend approval to the Commissioner of the Wally Noerenberg Hatchery 2016 AMP.

Discussion:

Sheridan said there were minimal changes in the wording for this AMP. On page 8, under 3.2 Special Harvest Area the words *and subsistence* was inserted, similar to the AFK AMP.

Motion passed with unanimous consent.

Cannery Creek Hatchery AMP (Action)

Motion, Botz; Second Nuzzi to recommend approval to the Commissioner of the Cannery Creek Hatchery 2016 AMP.

Discussion:

Sheridan said Cannery Creek Hatchery (CCH) and Main Bay Hatchery (MBH) AMPs have similar insertions and track changes. On page 5 under 3.2 Special Harvest Area, the sentence reads, "The THA is normally closed to commercial and subsistence fishing and provides a buffer between the hatchery SHA and open waters of the Cannery Creek Sub district."

Rabung added it was a great clarification.

Sheridan said there was a motion on the table to approve the 2016 CCH AMP as presented to the RPT.

Motion passed with unanimous consent.

Main Bay Hatchery AMP (Action)

Motion, Nuzzi; Second, Rabung to recommend approval to the Commissioner of the Main Bay Hatchery 2016 AMP.

Discussion:

Sheridan said this has a similar wording insertion on page 5 under 3.2 Special Harvest Area the sentence reads, “The THA is normally closed to commercial and subsistence fishing and provides a buffer between the hatchery SHA and open waters of the Main Bay Sub district.”

Moore said on the following paragraph following the insertion it reads “Harvest of salmon in the SHA by sport anglers and personal use fishermen to be managed by the ADF&G Division of Sport Fish...” Over the course of the winter the aquaculture corporations around the state attempted to go to the Board of Fisheries to possibly limit sport fishing in their SHAs and get some closures. It was unsuccessful. He would say there is continuing difficulty occurring in the ever-growing sport fishery impeding the ability for the hatchery to accomplish its cost recovery needs. We have been using a seiner at Main Bay. The seiner has been very consistent and has been doing cost recovery for number of years when needed. The seiner’s comments were that things had really changed this year and things had gotten really difficult for him to have the ability to make a set because of sport fish interference. From PWSAC’s view the RPT should be aware of the problem looking towards the future.

Rabung said this discussion item came up at the Cook Inlet RPT meeting last week in regard to Resurrection Bay. The ADF&G Sport Fish Management Coordinator, Matt Miller, reminded everybody that there is a regulation prohibiting interference with commercial fisheries that could be applied in those cases. That is a tool that could be used in a worst-case scenario. The Troopers could cite people for interfering with the seining. One of the other discussion items was for example: at MBH the staff could go out in the skiff and let all the anglers there know that sets are going to be made. It would give them warning and an opportunity to move out of the way. Communication is the key. That does not mean they will cooperate but you have to try.

Bosch said it would not hurt to have a face to face with the Whittier Boat Owners Association. They are the ones that go in there the most. A PWSAC representative could have a meeting with them and explain the situation.

Moore said that the seiner that is conducting those cost recovery operations is a very diplomatic, positive attitude individual. That is exactly what he does. He not only helps them to untangle their props out of the brood net but then he moves on to make room and get permission from them to make his set. He is doing that presently. It is a little overwhelming at times because the number of people is increasing.

Botz asked how the subsistence fishery in Cook Inlet was managed in the SHA. Is it tied to the commercial fishery like it is here?

Bosch replied that is a non-subsistence area.

Rabung had a point of clarification; the Board of Fisheries already addressed subsistence on hatchery production. There is no customary traditional use so they can't get a subsistence determination for a hatchery. Personal use is the closest they can get to that.

Botz said there is no salmon personal use fishery on the books for this area mentioned in the regulations. That might be something to strike from the AMP because it is not really accurately reflecting what is going on there. The three allowable fisheries are the sport fishery, commercial, and then subsistence. There is no personal use salmon fishery in salt water in PWS. That language is not accurate in the sentence that reads "Harvest of salmon in the SHA by sport anglers and personal use fishermen is managed by the Sport Fish Division..." The wording that references personal use should be removed.

Sheridan said that was an insertion by Sports Fish Division staff.

Bosch said he agreed that the words *personal use* should be removed. The only personal use he was aware of was for shell fish.

Sheridan said his understanding was that the amendment would read "Harvest of salmon in the SHA by sport anglers is managed by the ADF&G Division of Sport Fish in accordance with regulations..."

Nuzzi asked if that would extend to all of the other AMPs that wording appeared in as well.

Rabung said that is in there erroneously. It is not necessary to go back and revote on each of the AMPs. A separate motion to remove that language from the AMPs formally or informally would be enough. The language should not be removed from Gulkana's AMP.

Sheridan said he was okay doing it informally. He asked for any further discussion on the MBH AMP. Sheridan recommended approval of the 2016 MBH AMP as amended and presented to the RPT.

Motion passed with unanimous consent.

11. RPT Chairmanship:

Sheridan said the next item on the agenda is the RPT Chairmanship. He had resigned his position with ADF&G effective April 29, 2016. It is appropriate to discuss how this change would impact the RPT Chairmanship. He will still be involved with the PWS

fisheries and his family will still live in Cordova. He will be working within the industry and seeking to maintain as many of his former ties as possible. That would include service to PWSAC in whatever way is appropriate and involvement with the statewide hatchery wild interaction study, as well as his graduate program. With that change in his position it should be up to the RPT to decide how you would want to move forward with the chairmanship. Rabung has described RPTs elsewhere where this comes up at every meeting to ensure that they have the correct chair moving forward.

Motion, Moore; Second, Bosch to nominate Tommy Sheridan as the Chairman of the RPT.

Discussion:

Bosch said Sheridan was doing a good job.

Nuzzi asked if the nomination was just for a year.

Rabung said the RPT can bring it up at every meeting if we want. It can be added to the agenda anytime. There is no prerequisite to be a chairman. The RPT can select anybody.

Motion passed by unanimous consent.

a) Discussion of adding potential Ex-Officio Positions (USFS, VFDA).

Sheridan said this was actually something he had discussed with folks. Procedurally, his understanding is that it is at the discretion of the chairman to appoint ex-officio members.

Rabung read “the team has ex-officio members as considered necessary by the individual RPT.”

Sheridan said in the past there have been various ex-officio members of the Prince William Sound/Copper River Regional Planning Team. Those members have included VFDA and the USFS. VFDA has always been present at the meetings and the USFS was represented by former Chairman Tim Joyce. He asked the two representatives if there was any interest in serving as an ex-officio.

Tanner with the USFS said she was interested.

Wells said he would be happy to serve as the VFDA ex-officio.

Botz said along those lines it would be good to solicit interest for a subsistence ex-officio.

Motion, Rabung; Second, Nuzzi to recommend to the Commissioner that there be ex-officio seat established on the Prince William Sound/Copper River Regional Planning Team for the U.S. Forest Service and the Valdez Fisheries Development Association, Inc.

Botz said he would like to amend the motion to also include soliciting a subsistence seat. We have time to fill and ex-officio seat on the RPT.

Rabung said he was not opposed to that at all but we should identify and bring that person or whoever is representing that organization to the next RPT meeting and make that motion at the time. We could direct the chairman to seek an appropriate organization or individual to fulfill that roll and invite them to the next RPT meeting.

Sheridan said he would be happy to do that. How would the RPT like him to keep them informed on the progress?

Rabung said if Sheridan could identify people who are interested then you include them on the mailing list. These are open public meetings. They are designed to be public. We are trying to solicit public input and represent the user groups of the region. An ex-officio is typically an entity and they will fill it with whoever they need to and we wouldn't need to do this again if the individual they send retires or moves on.

Nuzzi said she would be in favor of leaving the motion as worded previously. They are going to be a nonvoting member and they could still have the participation and the same influence. Until that person is identified she would be comfortable with the USFS and the VFDA.

Rabung said for the process, if this motion passes, there is a letter to the Commissioner who will grant or approve this. We always need the Commissioner's approval.

Sheridan said he would be happy to do that. We will be successful in finding folks who are interested in participating. They would be in attendance at the next meeting and then we can go through this very same process to officially recognize them as an ex-officio.

Rabung clarified it would not be in effect until the Commissioner approved it.

Botz said he would be comfortable with that as long as we are moving forward in soliciting interest. It is a representation he had not seen after being on the RPT for a number of years. If we were more actively looking in that direction and folks new that there was interest in their participation there are a number of issues that they could speak to in this process.

Sheridan said the motion on the table is to recommend approval to the Commissioner for ex-officio seats on the Prince William Sound/Copper River Regional Planning Team for the U.S. Forest Service and the Valdez Fisheries Development Association, Inc.

Motion passed with unanimous consent.

12. NEXT MEETING DATE: Wednesday April 19, 2017

Sheridan said for timing it would be good to have this meeting around the pre-season meeting.

13. ADJORNMENT:

Motion, Bosch; Second, Nuzzi to adjournment. Hearing no objections the Chairman gavelled the meeting closed at 12:25 p.m.