

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

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

June 5, 2014

Meeting called to order at 1:30pm on Thursday June 5, adjourned at 5:00pm. Total meeting time was 3.5 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: *None*

New Business Discussion Topics:

1. Requested clarification on federal and state citation policies
2. Report conversations with Kuskokwim Bay coast villages regarding Chinook salmon conservation
3. Bethel Test Fish distribution update
4. Update on fishwheel management within state managed waters [2014].
5. Update on KRSMWG request for a state administered cultural social permit
6. Update on dipnet fisheries, request for early start, and demonstrations
7. Report on smelt study from upriver
8. Appointment of Mary Sattler to an alternate seat of the Working Group
9. Discussion on outreach
10. Update and discussion on protest fishing

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

1. Send future press releases to KSKO radio station in McGrath to better inform the people of that area regarding salmon conservation measures. *Assigned/volunteered-ADF&G and USFWS Staff.*
2. Provide a report on actual numbers of Chinook salmon being released back into the water from the Bethel Test Fishery (BTF) during the next Working Group meeting. *Assigned/volunteered-ADF&G staff*
3. Provide BTF historical comparison graphs within information packets, similar to prior years. The Working Group also requested some descriptive text explaining the effect of restrictions on BTF numbers, to help prevent confusion. *Assigned/volunteered-ADF&G staff*
4. Provide data from radio tagging projects near Tuntutuliak and Kalskag in the next Working Group packet. *Assigned/volunteered-ADF&G staff*
5. Provide relevant by-catch information at the next Working Group meeting. *Requested-ADF&G staff*
6. Conduct a radio talk show during the week of June 9 to discuss fishery issues. *Assigned/volunteered-ADF&G, USFWS staff, and WG members*
7. Development of PSA's to run on Kuskokwim Area radio stations concerning salmon fishing restrictions and Chinook salmon conservation. *Assignment unclear*
8. Provide demonstrations of dipnet use to Tuntutuliak. *Requested - ADF&G staff*
9. Provide an update of law enforcement activities along the Kuskokwim River. *Requested-ADF&G and USFWS Staff*

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WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

1. Approval of the agenda as amended. *Motion passed (Unanimous)*
2. To reaffirm support for the federal government in going forward with their weir projects and support their efforts in trying to partner with the lower villages because of its importance in determining spawning escapement and for future management. *Motion passed (8 yeas, 1 abstention, 0 nays)*
3. Requesting the state and federal fish agents to seek funding to install the Takotna weir this summer. *Motion passed (9 yeas, 0 nays)*
4. For the state to follow the management plan allowing for an elder fishery in those communities in state waters on the Kuskokwim. *Motion passed (8 yeas, 0 nays)*
5. To appoint Mary Sattler to a Lower River subsistence alternate seat and request that she be the 2nd alternate. *Motion passed (7 yeas, 0 nays)*
6. The Working Group strongly urges subsistence fisher men and women to not protest fish in order to save and protect the Kuskokwim King salmon. *Motion passed (7 yeas, 0 nays)*
7. Adjournment. *Motion passed (Unanimous)*

PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:

1. Bev Hoffman (Working Group Chair) requested a moment of silence for Chuck Chaliak.
2. Chris Shelden (ADF&G) introduced Jennifer Peeks as the new KRSMWG Coordinator.
3. Allen Joseph from Bethel requested a short 2-3 day subsistence fishing opener for salmon in the Kuskokwim River with 6-inch mesh drift gillnet gear. Mr. Joseph also suggested opening the dipnet fishery as soon as possible since king salmon would not be targeted.
4. Andrew Brenner from ADF&G Subsistence Division announced a Fish and Wildlife Technician position with ADF&G.
5. Lucy Simeon from Chuathbaluk expressed concern that residents in the upriver villages remained confused on the Chinook salmon management plan and fishing schedule and requested more information. She reported that only a few fish are being caught with the 4-inch mesh gillnet.
6. Randy Turner from Bethel commented that many people were harvesting king salmon with the restricted gear size. Mr. Turner suggested stronger restrictions in order to conserve more king salmon.
7. Dan Gillikin (KNA) summarized activities at KNA. He reported that KNA had distributed management news releases throughout the community to promote awareness. He reported that other KNA activities this season included inseason subsistence surveys and outreach through Megan Leary; and a community fishwheel and net project lead by Brad Gusty. Mr. Gillikin said that KNA has a limited number of legal whitefish gillnets and 6-inch nets they planned to distribute throughout KNA villages. He encouraged the development of more radio announcements and/or GCI cell phone alert messages to inform the public about management actions and restriction.
8. Robert Lekander (ONC Subsistence) suggested additional radio announcements regarding the restrictions to ensure that elders stay informed. He voiced concern that an early dipnet opening would encourage targeting of king salmon. Mr. Lekander suggested waiting to open the dipnet fishery until the majority of king salmon had passed.

CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. Subsistence Reports:

- **Lowest River Reports:** Henry Lupie from Tuntutuliak reported that he observed only fish bones on drying racks to date. He said only a few individuals had harvested fish with 4-inch mesh gill setnets.
- **ONC In-season Subsistence Report:** Iyana Dull (ONC) reported that they surveyed 17 families; 10 of which had actively harvested fish. (*See the June 5 Information Packet for full survey results.*)

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- **Lower River Subsistence:** Mr. Williams sent a report that people in Akiak were using 4-inch mesh set gillnets and were catching around 3-4 smaller king salmon per day. Mr. Williams also reported on hearing that downriver village residents were unable to harvest fish using the restricted gear. Bev Hoffman (Chair) commented that many people had chosen to conserve king salmon by not fishing. She noted that people who had been fishing (with approved gear) were sharing their harvest with others. Ms. Hoffman reported having observed over 30 setnets between Bethel and Napaskiak.
- **KNA In season Subsistence:** Megan Leary (KNA) reported that she surveyed 9 people in Kalskag, 8 people in Aniak, 2 people in Chuathbaluk and a few people between Crooked Creek and Sleetmute. Ms. Leary commented that most people were fishing for more than one family. She reported that many people had drifted with larger nets prior to the closure and harvested a few small male king salmon. Ms. Leary noted that several families reported catching an abundance of Sheefish. She commented that many people do not have 4-inch mesh set gillnets. In addition, she mentioned that one family from Sleetmute had fished with rod and reel and caught 2 Sheefish. She commented that people had expressed frustration with lower river communities for harvesting king salmon and posting their catches on social media.
- **Middle River Subsistence:** Lisa Feyereisen (Middle River Subsistence) from Crow Village reported frustration in Aniak as some people continued to use driftnets in front of town. She reported 4-5 families who were targeting Chinook salmon above Aniak in state waters with illegal gear. Nick Kameroff from Aniak reported he had been fishing for whitefish, Sheefish and pike. He commented that the majority of people were complying with the regulations.
- **Upriver Subsistence Reports**

Mark Leary (Upriver Subsistence) commented that a fishwheel was being built in Napaimute with the help of KNA.

Ray Collins (Western Interior RAC) reported that there was no fishing in the headwaters area, but he had received several calls inquiring about the management regulations.
- 2. **Overview of Kuskokwim River Salmon Run Assessment Projects:**
 - **Bethel Test Fish:** Aaron Poetter (ADF&G) discussed current and historic water conditions. He reported the water temperatures to be within historical range, the water clarity was within historical range and the water level was slightly lower than average. He commented that BTF Crew was returning healthy king salmon back into the river system and that BTF Crew was also working with ONC to distribute fish to elders in Bethel and local communities. (*See Information Packet for details*).
 - **Weirs:** Steve Miller (USFWS) reported that USFWS is prepared to move forward with the USFWS weir projects. Brittany Blain (ADF&G) provided an update on ADF&G Kuskokwim River weir projects. Ms. Blain reported that weir crews have been training in Aniak and that conditions looked good for installations to be on-schedule. .
- 3. **Processor Report:** Henry Mitchell with Coastal Villages Seafoods reported uncertainty of commercial fishing for any salmon species on the Kuskokwim River during the 2014 season, but would work with ADF&G for future planning.
- 4. **Sport Fishing:** John Chythlook (ADF&G) reported that sport fishing for king salmon closed on May 1st, 2014 and would likely remain closed through the 2014 season.
- 5. **Intercept Fishery Report:** Aaron Poetter said there was no new information. Bev Hoffman requested that ADF&G provide relevant information for the next Working Group meeting.
- 6. **Weather Report:** Bev Hoffman reported rain was forecasted.
- 7. **Recommendations:** *None*

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OLD BUSINESS: *None*

NEW BUSINESS:

- 1. Requested clarification on federal and state citation policies:** Brian McCaffrey (USFWS) answered questions related to law enforcement within federally managed waters, from the mouth of the Kuskokwim upriver to Aniak, in 2014.
 - Federal citations would be processed through Fairbanks.
 - Future restrictions could be made if king salmon were being targeted despite closures.
 - If the king salmon harvest appears to be too great, it could delay liberalizing restrictions to 6-inch mesh gillnets.
 - Neither the state troopers nor federal wildlife officers would be confiscating food off of fish racks within the federal boundaries.
 - Federally managed waters would be patrolled by federal officers.
 - Legally caught king salmon could be transported to fish camps for processing, regardless of point of origin.

Aaron Poetter (ADF&G) clarified that the marine waters of Kuskokwim Bay were currently closed to subsistence salmon fishing between a point just east of Ishkowik River, to the northern boundary of district W-4, and out from shore three miles into the Bering Sea. He also said maps had been provided in the ADF&G News Release #4.

- 2. Report on conversations with Kuskokwim Bay coast villages regarding Chinook conservation:** Aaron Poetter (ADF&G) reported on the state meeting with Goodnews Bay and Quinhagak regarding the 2014 salmon management. He said that ADF&G solicited suggestions from those villages. He reported that Quinhagak suggested only Sunday closures for subsistence fishing, which was administered by ADF&G. Mr. Poetter commented that ADF&G intends to continue monitoring subsistence harvest and escapement through the weir projects.
- 3. Test Fish Distribution update:** Alissa Joseph (ONC) reported that the ONC Subsistence Survey Crew had distributed BTF to the Senior Center, Lulu Herron Apartments, and various elders in Bethel. She said they also provided fish to USFWS to distribute to the surrounding villages. Brian McCaffrey (USFWS) reported distributing a total of 32 king salmon to 5 villages: 2 to Akiak, 6 to Tuluksak, 12 to Napaskiak, 6 to Akiachak and 6 to Kwethluk, as well as several Sheefish, whitefish and chum salmon.
- 4. Update on fishwheel management in state managed waters:** Aaron Poetter (ADF&G) reported that the state intends to allow fishwheels with live boxes for the harvest of sockeye and chum salmon when those species become greater than Chinook salmon for the 2014 season. He commented that exact dates were dependent on in season assessments and based on travel speeds.
- 5. Update on KRSMWG request for a state administered cultural social permit:** Aaron Poetter (ADF&G) reported that the cultural and social permits would not be allowed this season; noting that permits would have to be initiated through the Board of Fish (BOF) process. He further commented that the use of an educational permit does not fit the qualifications of the cultural permit.

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Brian McCaffrey (USFWS) reported on the federal cultural and social permits, saying that USFWS issued 8 permits to villages that identified their community representatives and designated fishermen, 12 were in progress, approximately 6 villages had said they would not take advantage of the permit and 2-3 villages had not provided feedback. Mr. McCaffrey said that 2/3 of the 32 qualified villages would most likely participate.

- 6. Update on dipnet fisheries, request for early start and demonstration:** Aaron Poetter (ADF&G) commented that dipnet example videos had been shared on the ADF&G website. Mr. Poetter reported that ADF&G would like to see an abundance of other salmon species in the river before opening up dipnetting in order to limit exposure of Chinook salmon. He remarked that the date will be determined using BTF ratios.
- 7. Report on the smelt study from upriver:** Dave Cannon reported that this study had documented the migration and spawn timing of smelt reaching the Kalskag area. Details can be found on the Napaimute website www.napaimute.org.
- 8. Mary Sattler's appointment:** Bev Hoffman reported that Mary Sattler had requested an appointment to the Working Group as an alternate. Ms. Hoffman suggested the Lower River Subsistence alternate seat. Bev Hoffman provided Chris Shelden with Ms. Sattler's letter of request. *See the June 17 informational packet pg.19.*
- 9. Outreach:** Bev Hoffman encouraged the state and federal governments to continue posting their news releases in the local papers and to use the KSKO radio station. Ms. Hoffman requested a KYUK radio talk show with Aaron Poetter (ADF&G), Brian McCaffrey (USFWS) and a Working Group member as soon as possible. She also suggested that people read the Delta Discovery article by Peter Twitchell on Chinook salmon conservation.
Doug Molyneaux informed the Working Group that he had been invited to speak at the Yupiit Nation meeting regarding weirs and test fisheries.
- 10. Discussion of Protest Fishery:** Bev Hoffman shared her concern regarding possible protest fishing. She commented on the responsibility of everyone to bring awareness to and talk with Kuskokwim River communities. Henry Lupie commented on frustration with the current dual management system. Mr. Lupie stressed that he would appreciate a co-management system.

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

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

Amendments included the addition of the following points to that agenda:

- Appointment of Mary Sattler to the Working Group as a Lower River Subsistence alternate
- Discussion on outreach
- Discussion on protest fishing

Motion 2: To reaffirm support for the federal government in going forward with their weir projects and to support their efforts in trying to partner with the lower river villages because of their importance in determining spawning escapement and for future management. Motion passed (8

yeas, 1 abstention, 0 nays): During the assessment project section, Steve Miller (USFWS) reported on a recent meeting with Tuluksak, Kwethluk, Akiak and Akiachak regarding collaboration with the Tuluksak

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and Kwethluk weir projects. Mr. Miller reported that issues had not been resolved regarding the partnership with those villages. Motion 2 was developed following discussion on this point.

Motion 3: Requesting the state and federal fish agents to seek funding to install the Takotna weir this summer. *Motion passed (9 yeas, 0 nays):* Several members spoke to the value of having an assessment project in the headwaters portion of the Kuskokwim River. Some commented on the lack of data and others the inadequacy of aerial surveys. It was suggested that agencies seek funding from local native corporations. It was also suggested that by expressing concern in the Working Group forum, state and federal officials would hear and possibly respond.

Motion 4: For the state to follow the management plan allowing for an elder fishery in those communities in state waters on the Kuskokwim. *Motion passed (8 yeas, 0 nays):* Working Group members expressed frustration with the differences between state and federal management, particularly with respect to the issuance of permits for the taking of king salmon for cultural and traditional sustenance. They noted that opportunity would be provided in federally managed waters for any qualifying Kuskokwim community that applied and that these permits would be impractical for communities too distant from those waters to travel to fish in them. Members and participants cited the 2013 Kuskokwim River Salmon Management plan which held a new and, thus far, unused provision to allow for an elders' fishery that could be used in times of salmon conservation in order to provide limited opportunity.

Motion 5: To appoint Mary Sattler to a Lower River subsistence alternate seat and request that she be the 2nd alternate. *Motion passed (7 yeas, 0 nays).* –see New Business #8 above.

Motion 6: The Working Group strongly urges subsistence fishermen and -women to not protest fish in order to save and protect the Kuskokwim King salmon. *Motion passed (7 yeas, 0 nays):* The Working Group noted that in recent public forums, community members had expressed their discontent with management choices and had openly discussed the possibility of protest fisheries. Working Group members expressed concern about the effect this would have on the conservation of Chinook salmon, and the potential for well-meaning individuals to be cited and penalized in a misguided attempt to protect their interested.

Motion 7: Adjournment. *Motion passed (Unanimous)*

COMMENTS FROM THE WORKING GROUP:

Henry Lupie said that he desired an opportunity to go subsistence fishing. He commented that people from his community have not been able to catch fish in the lower river with 4-inch mesh set gillnets. He encouraged managers to open subsistence fishing for 4 hours. He reported that some of the village members were emotional regarding the decreased fishing. He also suggested that the weirs be “V” shaped.

Mark Leary said that he appreciated Randy Turner's comments. He also expressed appreciation for KNA's community fishwheel project.

LaMont Albertson thanked Bev Hoffman for chairing the meeting and thanked state and federal managers for providing good conversations regarding management.

Dan Esai also appreciated Randy Turner's comments.

Casie Stockdale thanked everyone for their hard work and Bev Hoffman for chairing the meeting.

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WORKING GROUP ATTENDANCE:

MEMBER SEAT:	NAME:
DOWNRIVER ELDER	James Charles
UPRIVER ELDER	<i>Absent</i>
LOWER RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Casie Stockdale
MIDDLE RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Lisa Feyereisen
UPRIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mark Leary
HEADWATERS SUBSISTENCE	Dan Esai
MEMBER AT LARGE	Henry Lupie
WESTERN INTERIOR RAC	Ray Collins
YK DELTA RAC	<i>Absent</i>
COMMERCIAL FISHING	Greg Hoffman, Jr.
SPORT FISHING	LaMont Albertson
PROCESSOR	Henry Mitchell
ADF&G	Aaron Poetter
CHAIR	Bev Hoffman

Other Participants:

ADF&G Comm. Fish: Aaron Tiernan, Brittany Blain, Chris Shelden, , Kevin Schaberg, Jen Peeks, Dave Runfola

Sport Fish: John Chythlook, Tom Taube

Subsistence Division: Pippa Kenner, Andrew Brenner, Hiroko Ikuta

ADF&G Liaison Team:

USFWS: Brian McCaffery, Ken Harper, Steve Miller, Robert Sundown, Matt Hillman

OSM: Don Rivard, George Pappas, David Jenkins,

Dan Gillikin (KNA)	Barbara Carlson (Upper River Subsistence alternate)
Rebecca Frye (KNA)	Fritz Charles (Member at Large)
Megan Leary (KNA)	Barbara Carlson (Upriver Subsistence alternate)
Roberta Chavez (ONC)	Dave Cannon (Middle River Subsistence alternate)
Iyana Dull (ONC)	Nick Kameroff (Middle River Subsistence alternate)
Alissa Joseph (ONC)	Gerry Sumpter (Senator Murkowski's office)
Robert Lekander (ONC)	Kate Schaberg (NVGT)
Bill Bechtol (AVCP)	Nathan Underwood (Aniak)
Allen Joseph	Ben Matheson (KYUK Radio)
Doug Molyneaux (Unaffiliated)	Zachariah Bryan (Tundra Drums)
	Lucy Simeon (Chuathbaluk)

GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS:

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (**ADF&G**), Orutsararmiut 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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