

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

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

July 30, 2014

Meeting called to order at 1:30pm on Wednesday July 30, adjourned at 5:30pm. Total meeting time was 4 hours. Seven voting members were present.

AGENDA ITEMS:

People to be heard

Continuing Business: Run assessment and management actions

Old Business Discussion Topics:

1. Presentation of BSFA proposed project: Capacity building workshops to support sustainable management of declined Kuskokwim Chinook salmon - Joe Spaeder, BSFA staff.
2. Continued discussion of a Tier II permit system and other fishery management options for the Kuskokwim River.
3. Discussion of request for federal takeover of fisheries on the Kuskokwim River.
4. Request to meet with the State's Attorney General to address the inequitable allocation of salmon resources for subsistence users on the Kuskokwim River.
5. Consideration of a teleconferenced meeting in Kalskag, Aniak or a subsistence fisher's smoke house for an upcoming KRSMWG meeting.
6. Discussion of locating subsistence users downriver who would be willing to share their subsistence catch with upriver fishers who do not meet their needs.

New Business Discussion Topics:

1. Discussion on Kuskokwim Drainage exchange program.
2. 2014 Middle and Upper Kuskokwim River Subsistence Creel Survey.
3. Discussion on changing the KRSMWG meeting times.

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

1. Request to include the letter submitted to the Governor's office in the next Working Group Informational Packet. (*LaMont Albertson*)

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

1. Approval of the agenda as amended. *Motion passed (Unanimously).*
2. To have a Working Group Co-Chair draft a simple, good letter of support regarding the capacity building workshops to be submitted along with the BSFA grant proposal. *Motion passed (Unanimously)*
3. To support the effort to develop a Kuskokwim Drainage Exchange Program for both young people and adults. *Motion passed (Unanimously)*
4. Adjournment. *Motion passed (Unanimously).*

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PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:

1. Norman Ayagalria from Bethel, a commercial fisherman and personal user of salmon, informed people that dipnets work and that it was a matter of learning an effective dipnetting schedule. He said that the time frame from 9:00am-9:00pm did not always provide the best dipnetting opportunities because it often missed the tides. Mr. Ayagalria commented that the best time for dipnetting was when the tide was at its lowest and turning. He suggested that if ADF&G had allowed a longer dipnetting opportunity there would have been more success and he recommended a 3-4 day opportunity for dipnetting in the future.
2. Angie Morgan from Aniak said that on July 28th she put in her setnet from 12:00noon to 6:00pm and caught 1 coho salmon, 3 chum salmon and 1 humpy. She reported that another fisher had been out and had not caught many fish.
3. Walter Morgan from Lower Kalskag said that people made several drifts on the evening of July 29th and did not catch many fish. He reported that he was waiting for an increase in coho salmon.
4. Nastasia Levi from Lower Kalskag said that Evelyn Thomas in Crooked Creek reported that she needed to harvest coho salmon because they did not have enough food in that area. Ms. Levi reported that Ms. Thomas did not want a commercial fishing opener. Ms. Levi reported that the community of Kalskag was not seeing an increase in fish. Many people were still waiting for silver salmon in order to start cutting. She reminded the Working Group that the lower river communities were able to harvest fish before the upper river villages had access to them. She was frustrated because some households did not have enough chum or sockeye salmon put away due to the low fish numbers.
5. Elena Sergie, an Elder from Lower Kalskag, said that her grandson went drifting but did not catch any coho salmon. She wondered when Kalskag would start seeing coho salmon.
6. Paul Paul from Kongiganak said he wondered if it was too early for the upper river to be getting coho salmon. He said that, near the mouth of the Kuskokwim River, there were a lot of fish.
7. Patrick Pavilla from Tuntutuliak reported that his community had been catching more coho salmon and his nephew in Kwethluk reported catching over 80 silver salmon. He said the fish should be nearing Kalskag soon because they traditionally run faster than the other salmon species. He suggested that if ADF&G had a commercial opener, it should be limited to the lower end of the fishing district to allow more fish to pass upriver. He said that most people in his area had completed their subsistence catch.
8. Adolph Lupie from his Tuntutuliak fishcamp said that the silver salmon were swimming. He reported that several hours prior to the meeting, fishers had gone out and caught 71 coho salmon and 4 chum salmon in less than an hour. He said the silvers were small and passing through the nets. He reported that, on July 29th, someone had gone out with a small net and caught 2 fish in less than 5 minutes. Mr. Pavilla suggested that upper river communities consider the size of their nets when fishing for coho salmon. He supported commercial openings. He said the issues between upper and lower river regarding commercial fishing needed to be resolved and that ADF&G should find out the number of active fishers on the river. Mr. Lupie suggested having separate Working Groups for upriver and downriver communities.
9. Alice Kameroff in Lower Kalskag said she hadn't put away any coho salmon to date. She requested that ADF&G not open a commercial salmon fishery until the coho salmon reached the middle river.
10. Mike Savage from Lower Kalskag reminded the listeners that the upriver villages did not have tides and had few places to drift. He said people in the middle river had to take turns drifting in the same areas. He commented that when the water was clear, it was difficult to catch fish. He suggested that during the early season, there should be longer subsistence openings in the upper portion of the river compared to down river.
11. Carlie Beebe from Eek suggested that there be a commercial opener in the lower river. He said they usually would catch fish coming out of the south water.
12. Nick Kameroff from Aniak urged ADF&G to not have a commercial opening to allow the middle and upper river more opportunity to harvest coho salmon and other species.

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13. Robert Otto from Kongiganak said that he used to moose hunt upriver at the end of August and catch a lot of fish with rod and reel. He said he wanted the department to consider a commercial opener in the lower river.
14. Lisa Feyereisen from Crow Village spoke on behalf of the Central Kuskokwim Advisory Committee. She reported that subsistence needs had not been met in the middle river. She wondered why the lower river continued to fish if their subsistence needs had been met. Ms. Feyereisen said that when the middle and upper river subsistence needs were met they would be more supportive of commercial openings. She hoped that downriver communities would respect the middle river's need to meet their subsistence goals.
15. Rob Enoch from Tuntutuliak said that the river in his area was very wide. He wondered if the length of the nets used in the middle river were too long. He said that people in Red Devil reported having a good sockeye salmon run.
16. Dan Ausdahl from Kalskag said that no one was catching silver salmon in that area. He suggested there be no commercial fishing before the silver salmon reached Kalskag. He commented that he would start fishing the week of August 4th. Mr. Ausdahl said there were more snags and fewer places to fish in the middle and upper river.
17. Theodore Brown spoke in support of a commercial opener in the lower river. He said the lower river was ~5 miles wide from the east to west bank and there were several areas for the fish to escape. Mr. Brown commented that they were lucky to fill half a tote during 4-6 hours of commercial fishing. He pointed out that during moose season, the lower river subsistence hunters had to go upriver to meet their needs. He suggested that the upper river villages come to the lower river to meet their subsistence fishing needs.
18. Father Martin Nicolai from Kwethluk commented on the KNA report which stated that one subsistence user needed 5,000 fish to meet their harvest needs. He said that 5,000 fish was too many unless he had a dog team or was fishing for several families. He commented that he utilized the entire fish including head, backbone and tail.
19. Dan Ausdahl, Jr. from Kalskag said that people in the middle river had been fishing to try to meet their needs, however most were still unmet and would need to fish for silver salmon. He commented that the middle river was not catching the same amount of fish that they usually caught at this point in previous seasons. He was against having commercial openings, due to people in the middle river not meeting their subsistence needs. He mentioned that historically, there had not been commercial fishing on the Kuskokwim River.

CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. Subsistence Reports:

- **Lowest River Reports:** Charlie Brown (Commercial Fisher) said that most of the people in the lower river were finished harvesting salmon for subsistence needs. He said that one of the local commercial fishers reported that there was a good run of silver salmon and they generally travel faster than other salmon species.
James Charles (Downriver Elder) commented, via LaMont Albertson, that people from his area were getting a few silver salmon for saluunaq, jarring and to freeze. He said that most people were doing well in meeting their subsistence needs.
- **ONC In-season Subsistence Report:** The ONC inseason subsistence fieldwork had been completed for the 2014 season.
- **Lower River Subsistence:** Greg Roczicka (Lower River Subsistence alternate) said that people were divided between having commercial openers and holding off at least through the first week of August. He said that on average people were catching 30-40 fish within a few drifts. He commented that there was a need for sufficient numbers of fish to pass through due to the increased subsistence needs. Mr. Roczicka pointed out that the average peak for coho salmon was usually between the 8-10th of August and suggested that commercial openings be suspended through the first week of August to let the first half of the run pass.

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Mike Williams (Lower River Subsistence) commented that there were a lot of concerns all summer during the 2014 season and many people did not meet their subsistence needs. He said that people had been careful to reduce spoilage caused by flies. Mr. Williams said there were plenty of sockeye and chum salmon that passed by. One fisher had reported to him that they caught 45 chum and 47 silver salmon in 10 minutes below Akiak. Mr. Williams said the ratio was about 1:1 for chum and silver salmon. He reported that many people were going out to gather ~20 silver salmon per household to jar or salt.

- **KNA Inseason Subsistence:** Dan Gillikin (KNA) reported on the KNA inseason subsistence report (*See the July 30 Informational Packet for full survey results*)

- **Middle River Subsistence:** Dave Cannon (Middle River Subsistence) reported that one fisher caught 2 coho and 9 chum salmon on July 29th in 2 drifts, and that the same person had a setnet out and caught 12 sockeye salmon overnight. Mr. Cannon said that only a few people were drifting and catching a few chum and coho salmon.

Lisa Feyereisen (Middle River Subsistence alternate) said that there had been a frost on July 25th. She noted that there had been several bear sightings in the area, possibly due to the high water flushing the dead chum salmon into the main river. She commented that people in the middle river were skilled fishers and had a good understanding of runtiming.

- **Upriver Subsistence:** Carl Morgan (Western Interior RAC) said that he had been fishing since May 2014 near his fishcamp and only caught 10 king and 27 sockeye salmon total. He reported having no fresh fish in his freezer and had been waiting for the silver salmon to arrive. He commented that he was an experienced fisher. He said the 2014 season was the worst fishing season he had observed.

Barb Carlson (Upriver Subsistence) reported that she had her setnet in the water periodically. She commented that most people were using setnets due to the lack of fish in the river and cost of gas. Ms. Carlson said that there were mostly chum, a few red and an occasional silver salmon. She commented that chum salmon on the north river were good quality and many people were waiting for the silver salmon run. She said very few people had met their subsistence needs.

- **Headwaters Subsistence**

Dan Esai (Headwaters Subsistence) reported that people were harvesting some chum salmon and Bering cisco. He commented that people were waiting for coho salmon.

2. Overview of Kuskokwim River Salmon Run Assessment Projects:

- **Bethel Test Fish:** Colton Lipka (ADF&G) reported that the water temperature was below but near average, water clarity was average, and the water level was average. Mr. Lipka reviewed the daily CPUE's for the BTF. He said that the 8-inch mesh gear was removed from the boat on July 15, 2014. (*For more information on the BTF, please see the July 30 Informational Packet*)
- **Radio Tagging Project:** Kevin Schaberg (ADF&G) reported that the mark-recapture projects had concluded for the 2014 season. A summary would be provided following the 2014 season.
- **Weirs:** Brittany Blain (ADF&G) reported on the USFWS and ADF&G weir projects. Lew Coggins (USFWS) reported on Kwethluk and Tuluksak estimates on projected escapement each day through time. Ms. Blain provided full historical data for several of the weir projects per Working Group member request. (*For more information on weirs, please see the July 30 Informational Packet*)
- **Aerial Survey:** Aaron Poetter (ADF&G) reported that the Chinook salmon aerial surveys in the middle and upper portion of the river had concluded. He reported on the results and said that the aerial survey escapement goals for Chinook salmon had been met. Mr. Poetter would provide the information for the next Working Group meeting packet. He reported that helicopter surveys were on-going. Brian McCaffery (USFWS) reported that USFWS conducted an aerial survey for the Takotna River.

3. **Commercial Catch Report:** N/A

4. **Processor Report:** N/A

5. **Sport Fishing Report:** N/A

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6. **Intercept Fishery Report:** Henry Mitchell (Processor) reported that the chum salmon by-catch in the Bering Sea Pollock Fishery (B season) was not high, the squid by-catch concern had minimized and halibut by-catch was reduced from those reported ~2-3 weeks ago.
7. **Weather Report:** Colton Lipka (ADF&G) reported that the upper, middle and lower river forecast was to remain clear through a portion of July 31st; the weekend forecast called for overcast skies and rain.
8. **Recommendations:** Aaron Poetter (ADF&G) reported no commercial salmon openers were scheduled. He said that ADF&G would continue to monitor coho salmon through the BTF and receive reports from subsistence fishers from both upper and lower sections of the river. ADF&G would assess the data on a daily basis.
9. **Motion for Discussion and Action:** The Working Group chose not to make a motion regarding the recommendation.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. **Presentation of BSFA proposed project: Capacity building workshops to support sustainable management of declined Kuskokwim Chinook Salmon - Joe Spaeder, BSFA staff.**
Mr. Spaeder presented on a proposal to explore funding for capacity building workshops to address the decline in the Kuskokwim River Chinook salmon. These workshops would bring together various stakeholders. The Working Group made a motion to support the proposed project. *(See Motion #2 below)*
2. **Continued discussion of a Tier II permit system and other fishery management options for the Kuskokwim River. TABLED**
John Linderman (ADF&G) commented that he, along with Jim Fall (ADF&G) and Lisa Olson (ADF&G), met with Mike Reardon over teleconference regarding developing the original letter submitted by Grant Fairbanks into an ACR. Mr. Reardon has volunteered to assist Grant Fairbanks on continuing to develop a proposal to explore permit options for Kuskokwim River subsistence salmon users.
3. **Discussion of request for federal takeover of fisheries on the Kuskokwim River. TABLED**
Neil Lalonde (USFWS) reported that the Federal Subsistence Board (FSB) met on July 30, 2014. He read a portion of the press release provided by OSM. Jennifer Yuhus (ADF&G) reported that OSM continued to work on the analysis regarding this request. When completed, the analysis will be used by the FSB to discuss and assess the possibility of taking any action. Mike Williams (Lower River Subsistence) commented on the lateness in season for such requests and the need to do advance planning, however he commended those who submitted the letters.
4. **Request to meet with the State's Attorney General to address the inequitable allocation of salmon resources for subsistence users on the Kuskokwim River.**
LaMont Albertson (Sport Fishing) reported that he had drafted and sent a letter to Ben Mohr from the Governor's office. Mr. Albertson said he would provide a copy of the letter to be included in the next Informational Packet.
5. **Consideration of a teleconferenced meeting in Kalskag, Aniak or a subsistence fisher's smoke house for an upcoming KRSMWG meeting.**
LaMont Albertson said that many of the Working Group meetings were conducted in the interest of Bethel and the lower river communities. He commented that holding meetings in the middle or upper portion of the river may provide insight into some of the challenges experienced by people in those areas. Mary Sattler (Lower River Subsistence alternate) said that Working Group members were compassionate toward the needs of middle and upper river. Working Group members discussed that holding a Working Group meeting outside of Bethel would be financially impractical. Working Group members commented on the importance of having ADF&G present in their communities.
6. **Discussion of locating subsistence users downriver who would be willing to share their subsistence catch with upriver fishers who do not meet their needs.**
LaMont Albertson discussed the need for upriver and downriver to increase communication due to misunderstandings among users along the Kuskokwim River.

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NEW BUSINESS:

1. Discussion on Kuskokwim Drainage exchange program.

Jennifer Yuhas (ADF&G) provided a formalized offer of assistance if the Working Group chose to pursue developing an exchange program (*For more information, please see the July 30 Informational Packet*).

2. 2014 Middle and Upper Kuskokwim River Subsistence Creel Survey.

Kevin Schaberg (ADF&G) explained that a creel survey is one in which people actively fishing are visited and asked about their catch. He said that the idea of such a survey in 2014 was recently developed as a result of concerns expressed by middle and upper river residents regarding the meeting of subsistence needs in 2014. The survey was intended to provide a more comprehensive means by which these residents could add their voice to the Working Group process. Working Group members suggested including the headwaters communities in the survey, and that interviews should incorporate information regarding smokehouses and freezers. Working Group members also recommended spending time within the communities in addition to visiting fish camps. (*For more information on the creel survey, please see the July 30 Informational Packet*).

3. Discussion on changing the KRSMWG meeting times. Tabled

4. Discussion of current escapement goals. Tabled

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

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

Motion 2: To have a Working Group Co-Chair draft a simple good letter of support regarding the capacity building workshops to be submitted along with the BSFA grant proposal. Motion passed (Unanimously)

Motion 3: To support the effort to develop a Kuskokwim Drainage Exchange Program for both young people and adults. Motion passed (Unanimously)

Motion 5: Adjournment. Motion passed (Unanimously).

COMMENTS FROM THE WORKING GROUP

Charlie Brown (Commercial Fishing) suggested that the commercial fishing opener decision be made by the department.

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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WORKING GROUP ATTENDANCE:

MEMBER SEAT:	NAME:
DOWNRIVER ELDER	<i>Absent</i>
UPRIVER ELDER	<i>Vacant</i>
LOWER RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mike Williams
MIDDLE RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Dave Cannon
UPRIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mark Leary
HEADWATERS SUBSISTENCE	Dan Esai
MEMBER AT LARGE	<i>Absent</i>
WESTERN INTERIOR RAC	Carl Morgan
YK DELTA RAC	<i>Absent</i>
COMMERCIAL FISHING	Charlie Brown
SPORT FISHING	LaMont Albertson
PROCESSOR	Henry Mitchel
ADF&G	Aaron Poetter
CHAIR	LaMont Albertson

Other Participants:

ADF&G Comm. Fish: Aaron Poetter, Brittany Blain, Chris Shelden, Kevin Schaberg, John Linderman, Jen Peeks

Sport Fishing: John Chythlook

Subsistence Division: Dave Runfola, Lisa Olson, Andrew Brenner

USFWS: Brian McCaffrey, Steve Miller, Lew Coggins, Neil Lalonde

OSM: Don Rivard, Pippa Kenner

Dan Gillikin (KNA)	Greg Roczicka (Lower River Subsistence alternate)
Megan Leary (KNA)	Mary Sattler (Lower River Subsistence alternate)
Rebecca Frye (KNA)	Lisa Feyereisen (Middle River Subsistence alternate)
Bill Bechtol (AVCP)	Nick Kameroff (Middle River Subsistence alternate)
Joe Spaeder (BSFA)	Barb Carlson (Upriver Subsistence alternate)
Doug Molyneaux (Unaffiliated)	Greg Hoffman Jr. (Commercial Fishing)
Norman Ayagalria (Bethel)	Ben Matheson (KYUK Radio)
Jeff Sanders (Bethel)	Gerri Sumpster (Sen. Murkowski's Office)
Robert Lekander (Bethel)	Elena Sergie (Lower Kalskag)
Rob Enoch (Tuntutuliak)	Walter Morgan (Lower Kalskag)
Patrick Pavilla (Tuntutuliak)	Mike Savage (Lower Kalskag)
Nick David (Tuntutuliak)	Nastasia Jackie Levi (Lower Kalskag)
Adolph Lupie (Tuntutuliak)	Alice Kameroff (Lower Kalskag)
Paul Paul (Kongiganak)	Dan Ausdahl Jr. (Kalskag)
Robert Otto (Kongiganak)	Dan Ausdahl (Kalskag)
Carlie Beebe (Eek)	Tracy Simeon (Chuathbaluk)
Father Martin Nicolai (Kwethluk)	Theadore Brown
	Peter Green
	Molly Hills

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