

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

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

August 27, 2015

Meeting called to order at 10:00 a.m. on Thursday August 27, 2015 and adjourned at 12:00 p.m. Total meeting time was two hours. Seven full voting members were present and a quorum was established.

AGENDA ITEMS:

People to be Heard:

Continuing Business: Run assessment and management actions.

Old Business Discussion Topics:

- Kuskokwim Subsistence Salmon Panel (KSSP) summary

New Business Discussion Topics:

1. Nov. 4-5 Kuskokwim Chinook Salmon Management Capacity Building Workshop in Aniak- *BSFA*
2. Special Action Request update- *Lisa Feyereisen*
3. Inter-Tribal Fish Commission update- *Mark Leary*
4. LaMont Albertson's letter to ADF&G
5. Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission update-*Bev Hoffman*

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

- To send the Coastal Villages Seafood (CVS) 2015 seasonal report to the Working Group co-chairs once it has been completed. (*Henry Mitchell, Processor*)

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

1. Approve the agenda as amended. *Passed (Unanimous)*
2. Adjourn. *Passed (Unanimous)*

ADF&G MANAGEMENT ACTIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION: Aaron Poetter (ADF&G) reported that the department was nearing the end of the inseason management and was not considering additional commercial opportunities for the 2015 season. He commented that subsistence fishing remained open and unrestricted throughout the drainage. Mr. Poetter reported that there were no further inseason management recommendations.

PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:

- Robert Lekander (ONC) commented that on August 28 a fisher caught over 30 coho salmon during a 20 minute drift. He asked if the department would leave the BTF tote by Brown Slough. Aaron Poetter responded that the fish tote was removed when the BTF season completed on August 24.
- Jen Peeks (ADF&G) reported that she will be on seasonal leave starting September 1 and that Working Group duties would transition back to Chris Shelden (ADF&G). Appropriate contact information would be sent out to Working Group participants.

CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. Overview of Kuskokwim River Salmon Run Assessment Projects:

- **Bethel Test Fish:** Zach Liller (ADF&G) reported that BTF ended on August 24 which was consistent with historical operations. Historically, 99% of the coho salmon run had passed Bethel by August 24. The end of season CPUE for coho salmon at the BTF was 2,736, which was below the long term average for BTF. Mr. Liller reported that interpretation of BTF data had been consistent throughout the 2015 season, indicating that the run timing was later than average and the run strength was slightly below average, but adequate to achieve escapement needs, provide for above average subsistence harvest, and allow limited commercial harvest opportunity. (*For more information on the BTF, please see the August 27 Informational Packet*).

Meeting summaries are prepared and distributed by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) in cooperative agreement with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service Office of Subsistence Management (USF&WS OSM). The department is responsible for summary content. Summaries are not comprehensive or considered meeting minutes, and are designed to provide context on meeting proceedings for the convenience of interested parties/participants. Audio recordings of meetings can be found at: <http://www.ADF&G.alaska.gov/index.cfm?ADF&G=commercialbyareakuskokwim.kswg#/2013>

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- **Weirs:** Zach Liller reported that water levels at all escapement projects had been below average, which could result in coho salmon holding in deeper pools. The Tatlawiksuk weir crew had observed the fourth largest coho salmon escapement on record for this date. On August 26 the George River weir crew had observed the single largest passage on record for that project. Mr. Liller reported that escapement for coho salmon had increased moderately at Kogrukluk weir and that inseason projections indicated that the escapement goal could be achieved under late run timing scenarios. As of August 25, Mr. Liller reported the coho salmon escapement at the Kwethluk weir was the lowest on record for that location and inseason projections indicated that the goal might not be met. He commented that historically when the George and Tatlawiksuk weir escapements were above average Kogrukluk and Kwethluk weirs also achieved above average escapement. *(For more information on weirs, please see the August 27 Informational Packet).*
- 2. **Subsistence Reports:**
 - **Lower River:** Bev Hoffman (Sport Fishing alternate) commented that most people were finishing their subsistence fishing.
 - **Middle River:** Lisa Feyereisen (Middle River Subsistence alternate) commented that she observed a few people still using nets, most of whom were dog mushers. People continued to subsistence harvest with rod and reel. She commented that people were happy with their subsistence results and the majority of people were freezing fish at this time with the exception of those who were replacing dry fish that had been lost due to weather. LaMont Albertson (Sport Fishing) commented that people were fishing with rod and reel.
 - **Upriver:** Barb Carlson (Upriver subsistence alternate) commented that she had observed people rod and reeling.
- 3. **Commercial Catch Report:** Aaron Poetter reported that commercial fishing in the river had completed. The last commercial opportunity on Friday August 21 harvested ~14,000 coho salmon, which was slightly above average for that time in the season. Total coho salmon harvest during the three Kuskokwim River commercial opportunities during the 2015 season was ~64,900. Zach Liller commented that the department's strategy was a conservative approach having the fewest opportunities within the previous 10 years and delaying the first opener until August 10.
- 4. **Processor:** Henry Mitchell (Processor) commented that he felt the department had done an adequate job with management decisions regarding commercial openers and that fishers appeared satisfied. He commented that CVS operated the Kuskokwim River fishery to provide economic opportunity for regional fishers.
- 5. **Sport Fishing:** Bev Hoffman commented that rafters reported coho salmon pooling below the Kwethluk River weir.
- 6. **Discussion of ADF&G Management consideration and possible alternatives:** N/A

OLD BUSINESS:

- **Kuskokwim Subsistence Salmon Panel (KSSP) overview:** Mark Leary provided a summary of the KSSP meeting in Bethel on August 24-25. He reported on the BOF Kuskokwim River proposals and ideas that were discussed by the panel.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. **Nov. 4-5 Kuskokwim Chinook Salmon Management Capacity Building Workshop in Aniak:** Art Nelson and Joe Spaeder provided an overview of the November capacity building workshop to be held in Aniak. Some funding would be provided for Working Group participation, the amount would be determined at a later date. A follow-up meeting would be scheduled for spring 2016 in Bethel. *(For more information on the workshop, please see the August 27 Informational Packet)*
2. **Special Action Request update:** Ms. Feyereisen informed the Working Group of the federal Special Action Request she submitted as an individual subsistence user. She commented that the documents were not being made public at present time.
3. **Inter-Tribal Fish Commission update:** Mark Leary reported that the ITFC's primary focus at present time was on the Department of Interior's Kuskokwim demonstration project. He commented that the

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project would be run through a subcommittee of the RACs. The next ITFC meeting was scheduled for Friday September 4, 2015.

4. **LaMont Albertson's letter to ADF&G:** LaMont Albertson summarized the email he sent to Aaron Poetter (ADF&G) addressing his concerns regarding the 2015 silver salmon run.
5. **Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission update:** Bev Hoffman reported on the PSMFC meetings held in Anchorage. She commented that information regarding the Kuskokwim commercial disaster relief funding would be made available at the PSMFC website.

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

Motion 1: To approve the agenda as amended. Passed (Unanimous)

Motion 2: Adjourn. Passed (Unanimous)

COMMENTS FROM THE WORKING GROUP:

- Bev Hoffman (Sport Fishing) suggested that the department consider extending the Bethel Test Fish season in future years when the coho salmon run appeared late or weak.
- LaMont Albertson (Sport Fishing) asked for information regarding the coho salmon run reconstruction process and drainage wide escapement goals. Zach Liller replied that the coho salmon run reconstruction had been finalized and was available on line at the ADF&G website. He commented that the area ADF&G staff was interested in moving toward drainage wide escapement goals for all species; however it would take time to establish these goals. Mr. Liller reported that ADF&G had held an escapement goal meeting several months prior and that Working Group members had attended.

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WORKING GROUP ATTENDANCE:

MEMBER SEAT:	NAME:
DOWNRIVER ELDER	John Andrew
UPRIVER ELDER	<i>Absent</i>
LOWER RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mary Sattler
MIDDLE RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Lisa Feyereisen
UPRIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mark Leary
HEADWATERS SUBSISTENCE	<i>Absent</i>
MEMBER AT LARGE	Barbara Carlson
WESTERN INTERIOR RAC	<i>Absent</i>
YK DELTA RAC	<i>Absent</i>
COMMERCIAL FISHING	<i>Absent</i>
SPORT FISHING	LaMont Albertson
PROCESSOR	Henry Mitchell
ADF&G	Aaron Poetter
CHAIR	Bev Hoffman

Other Participants:

ADF&G Comm. Fish: Aaron Poetter, Zach Liller, Dan Bergstrom, Jen Peeks

Sport Fishing: John Chythlook, Tom Taube

Subsistence Division: Hiroko Ikuta

USFWS: Neil Lalonde, David Phillips

OSM: Pippa Kenner, George Pappas

Alissa Joseph (ONC)

Geri Sumpter (Sen. Murkowski's office)

Robert Lekander (ONC)

Fritz Charles (Member at Large)

Joe Spaeder (BSFA)

Art Nelson (BSFA)

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**), Law Enforcement (**LE**), Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (**ITFC**)

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