

# Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

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

July 25, 2018

Meeting called to order at 10:05 a.m. on Wednesday July 25, 2018 and adjourned at 12:18 p.m. Meeting time was approximately two hours and fifteen minutes. Nine full voting members were present and a quorum was established. Alissa Rogers chaired the meeting.

## **AGENDA ITEMS:**

**USFWS/KRITFC Update:**

**Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) Management Actions Under Consideration:**

**People to be Heard:**

**Continuing Business:** Run assessment and management actions.

**Old Business Discussion Topics:** N/A

**New Business Discussion Topics:** N/A

**WORKING GROUP ACTION ITEMS:** *No Action Items at the time of this meeting.*

## **WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:**

1. Approve the agenda. *Passed (Unanimous)*
2. To support the Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game (ADF&G) recommendation to rescind the management restrictions in the mainstem of the Kuskokwim River while keeping the tributary restrictions in place. *Passed (Unanimous)*
3. Request for the ADF&G and the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to discuss who will control the management regulations from the Doestock Creek tributary down to the mouth of the Aniak River and to consider reasonable regulations/ restrictions for management of the non-salmon spawning tributaries in that area. *Passed (8 yeas, 0 nays, 1 Abstain)*
4. When looking at future inseason monitoring projects, the Working Group requests that the ADF&G and USFWS consider conducting creel surveys in the upper portions of the Kuskokwim River. *Passed (Unanimous)*
5. To extend the conclusion of the Working Group meeting to 12:15 p.m. *Passed (Unanimous)*
6. For the next Working Group meeting to be scheduled for Wednesday August 1, 2018 beginning at 10:00 a.m. *Passed (Unanimous)*
7. To adjourn [12:18 p.m.]. *Passed Unanimous*

**USFWS/KRITFC UPDATE:** *There were no updates provided at the time of the meeting.*

**ADF&G MANAGEMENT ACTIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION:** Colton Lipka (ADF&G Assistant Area Management Biologist) announced that ADF&G recommended “relaxing” the mainstem restrictions on the subsistence fishery; restrictions would remain in place for the Kwethluk, Kasigluk, Kisaralik, Tuluksak, and Aniak rivers. Mr. Lipka noted that this change would prohibit the use of dipnets. Aerial survey goals had been achieved in the Pitka Fork, Cheeneetuk, Gagarayah, and Holitna river drainages; the Salmon River (Aniak) had unofficially been achieved as of July 25. Aerial surveys in the upper portions of the Kuskokwim River were in progress at the time of the meeting. Mr. Lipka reported that the Chinook salmon run was ~99% passed Bethel to date based on historical run timing.

## **PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:**

- Albert Kawagley (Bethel) commented that he was glad his relatives were able to process fish and that people were able to harvest fish for the winter.
- Robert Lekander (Bethel) asked ADF&G staff to explain how weirs operate in high water.

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- Mary Nanuwak (Bethel) commented that the fisheries had “problems” since she was a child and, in her culture, people share what they have. Ms. Nanuwak commented that people in public office often did not listen to the needs of Native Alaskans. Ms. Nanuwak requested clarification on the 2018 BTF CPUE data and suggested that the sonar project operate during the entire salmon season. She asked how global warming and chemical contaminants have affected the fish and food chain and commented that she had heard reports across the state of fish and wildlife “floating” and washing ashore.
- Jim Simon (BSFA, KRITFC) commented that the KRITFC expected to have additional engagement with stakeholders in the future.

## **SUBSISTENCE REPORTS:**

- **Lowest River:** James Charles (Downriver Elder) reported that many people were berry picking and waiting for the coho salmon to arrive.
- **ONC Subsistence Report:** Avery Hoffman (ONC) provided a final summary of the 2018 ONC subsistence harvest surveys. *(For more information on the ONC summary, please see the July 25, 2018 Informational Packet.)*
- **Lower River:** Alissa Rogers (Lower River Subsistence alternate) commented that her family was waiting to fish for coho salmon.
- **Middle River:** Lisa Feyereisen (Middle River Subsistence alternate) reported she had not observed anyone using driftnets during the week prior to this meeting; a few people were using rod and reel. She commented that many people were waiting for the coho salmon to continue their fishing. LaMont Albertson (Sport Fishing) commented that he had heard reports that silver salmon had been caught.
- **Upriver:** Mishka Andreanoff (Upriver Elder) reported that a few people had been dipnetting and were catching “reds.” Barb Carlson (Upriver Subsistence alternate) reported that the Sleetmute fish wheel ceased operation on July 21; people had harvested what they needed for “red” salmon. To date, people were waiting for silver salmon.
- **Headwaters:** Dan Esai (Headwaters Subsistence) commented that Stony River residents reported that 2018 had been a productive fishing season. He commented that Stony River had operated their fish wheel to meet their harvest needs and a few people were waiting for “reds” to jar. Mr. Esai reported that the Nikolai community was considering operating their fish wheel to harvest Bering cisco and whitefish. Ray Collins (Western Interior RAC) commented that two people had used gillnets and caught 40 king salmon each, which they shared with the community. The fish wheel continued to catch king salmon and it caught three “reds,” which Mr. Collins commented was “unusual.” Mr. Collins reported that several people expected to harvest silver salmon.

## **CONTINUING BUSINESS:**

1. **Overview of Kuskokwim River Salmon Run Assessment Projects:** Nick Smith (ADF&G Research Biologist) provided an overview of the ADF&G assessment projects. He reported that, to date, the water temperature was at the historical average, water clarity was below average, and water level was average. *(For more information on the 2018 inseason assessment projects, please see the July 25 Informational Packet).*
- **Bethel Test Fish:** Mr. Smith reported that the cumulative CPUE for coho salmon as of July 23 was 5. Mr. Smith commented that ~2–9% of the coho salmon run was expected to pass Bethel over the next five days. As of July 23, the cumulative CPUE was 649 for Chinook salmon; 7,451 for chum salmon; and 1,989 for sockeye salmon.

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- Sonar: Mr. Smith reported that the sonar project was scheduled to complete its annual assessment on July 26, 2018.
- Weirs: Mr. Smith provided an overview of the escapement projects. Chinook salmon was tracking near the 5 and 10-year averages. As of July 23, the George River weir had been operating for the full season and escapement was near the upper end of the escapement goal range. The Salmon River (Pitka Fork) weir had passed 4,602 Chinook salmon as of July 23 and had been operational the entire season to date. Several weir projects had been challenged during the 2018 season due to high water. Mr. Smith reported that chum salmon escapement was above average at all escapement projects and the escapement goal had been achieved at the Kogruklu River weir. To date, sockeye salmon escapement was tracking above the historical average.
- Subsistence Division Project Update: Dave Runfola (ADF&G Subsistence Division) reported on the creel surveys that were conducted in the middle Kuskokwim River. Mr. Runfola provided a correction to *Table 1* of the Subsistence Division summary in the July 25 Informational Packet: the *average total catch goal* for Sleetmute was 78 and the *minimum total goal* was 30. (For more information on the Subsistence Division projects, please see the July 25 Informational Packet).
- 2. **Processor Report**: Colton Lipka reported that, to date, one catcher-seller was registered for the Kuskokwim area.
- 3. **Sport Fishing**: LaMont Albertson (Sport Fishing) reported that sport fishers in the Aniak River did not appear to be aware of the sport fishing regulations and had been catching king salmon. Mr. Albertson was concerned that fishing guides did not understand the regulations. He commented that sport fishers were satisfied with the fishing. Jen Peeks (ADF&G) reported that John Chythlook (ADF&G Sport Fish) had attempted to contact Trooper Simeon in Aniak regarding Mr. Albertson's concerns.
- 4. **Discussion of ADF&G Management Consideration and Discussion of Possible Alternatives**: (See *Motions 2–3 on page 3*).

## WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

1. Approve the agenda. Passed (Unanimous)
2. To support the Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game (ADF&G) recommendation to rescind the management restrictions in the main stem of the Kuskokwim River while keeping the tributary restrictions in place. Passed (Unanimous)
3. Request for the ADF&G and the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to discuss who will control the management regulations from the Doestock Creek tributary down to the mouth of the Aniak River and to consider reasonable regulations/ restrictions for management of the non-salmon spawning tributaries in that area. Passed (8 yeas, 0 nays, 1 Abstain)

LaMont Albertson commented that the non-salmon spawning tributaries of the Aniak River were historically utilized to harvest non-salmon species with gillnets. Mr. Albertson commented that management restrictions often adversely impacted people and their historical subsistence practices. Mr. Albertson suggested that ADF&G and USFWS develop regulations for the Aniak River tributaries that both agencies could implement. Barbara Carlson commented that the motion supported harvest of non-salmon species and could reduce the amount of pike, limiting their predation abilities. James Charles abstained from voting due to not fully understanding the intent of the motion.

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- 4. When looking at future inseason monitoring projects, the Working Group requests that the ADF&G and USFWS consider conducting creel surveys in the upper portions of the Kuskokwim River. Passed (Unanimous)**  
Working Group members discussed the importance of obtaining upriver inseason surveys so that they can be used as a management tool when making management decisions.
- 5. To extend the conclusion of the Working Group meeting to 12:15 p.m. Passed (Unanimous)**
- 6. For the next Working Group meeting to be scheduled for Wednesday August 1, 2018 beginning at 10:00 a.m. Passed (Unanimous)**
- 7. To adjourn [12:18 p.m.]. Passed (Unanimous)**

## **COMMENTS FROM THE WORKING GROUP:**

- Alissa Rogers commented that she appreciated Working Group participation.
- Lisa Feyereisen commented that she supported having Working Group meetings in the middle and upper river and that people in the middle river were interested in “face time” with fishery biologists and researchers.
- Dan Esai commented that he supported having a Working Group meeting in Aniak.

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## WORKING GROUP ATTENDANCE:

<b>MEMBER SEAT:</b>	<b>NAME:</b>
DOWNRIVER ELDER	James Charles
UPRIVER ELDER	Mishka Andreanoff
LOWER RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Alissa Rogers
MIDDLE RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Lisa Feyereisen
UPRIVER SUBSISTENCE	Barbara Carlson
HEADWATERS SUBSISTENCE	Daniel Esai
MEMBER AT LARGE	<i>Absent</i>
WESTERN INTERIOR RAC	Ray Collins
YK DELTA RAC	<i>Absent</i>
COMMERCIAL FISHING	Greg Hoffman Jr.
SPORT FISHING	LaMont Albertson
PROCESSOR	<i>Vacant</i>
KRITFC	<i>Absent</i>
ADF&G	Colton Lipka
CHAIR	Alissa Rogers

## **Other Participants:**

ADF&G Comm. Fish: Nick Smith, Bobette Dickerson, Jen Peeks  
Subsistence Division: Dave Runfola

USFWS: David Phillips  
OSM: Gary Decossas

Jim Simon (BSFA, KRITFC)	Jonathan Samuelson (GTC)	Albert Kawagley (Bethel)
Brittany Rutherford (KRITFC)	Meredith Witte (GTC)	Mary Nanuwak (Bethel)
Robert Lekander (OTNC, KRITFC)	Kevin Whitworth (MTNT)	<u>Media:</u>
Avery Hoffman (OTNC)	Rebecca Wilmarth (Red Devil)	Anna Rose MacArthur (KYUK)
Bill Bechtol (KRITFC)	Jennifer Hooper (AVCP)	

## **GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS:**

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (**ADF&G, department, State**), Orutsararmiut Traditional Native Council (**OTNC**), 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**), Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (**KRITFC**), Native Village of Napaimute (**NVN**), Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation (**YKHC**), Alaska State Troopers (**AST**)

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