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## **April 29, 2022**

On Friday, April 29, 2022, the meeting was called to order at 9:05 a.m., recessed for lunch at 12:05 p.m., and reconvened at approximately 1:05 p.m. The meeting adjourned at 3:50 p.m. Meeting time was approximately 5 hours and 45 minutes. A quorum was established with eight full voting members in attendance. Two members did not return after lunch, but another member joined, re-establishing quorum with 7 members. Alissa Rogers chaired the meeting.

## **PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:**

- Dan Esai: Gave report about Ice Conditions at the headwaters of the Kuskokwim. Conditions were posted on the Bethel Search and Rescue website 4/28/2022. Ice is out in Nicholai. The North Fork Ice is moving and can create muds in McGrath. If North Fork and Holitna ice moves at the same time, it could cause flooding. The weather has been good. The ice melted fast but drained well. The water level is slowly rising. There is still a lot of snow that has to be melted up in the mountains and hills upriver of Aniak; so be prepared. Dan will post on the Bethel Search and Rescue website when the North Fork Ice has moved out. *Audio for this update begins at 22:50 Meeting Audio 04/29/22 Part 1*
- Denny Thomas, Crooked Creek: When water is a little high, the ice doesn't stick as much. There is a lot of snow left out there. If the ice isn't starting to break up, melting snow can cause a problem with flooding on warmer days. Audio for this update begins at 25:30 Meeting Audio 04/29/22 Part 1
- Downriver Elder, James Charles: Ice looks solid on west side of the Kuskokwim River. People are seal hunting now. Eek is open in front of old airport, but downriver people are still snow machining. There is some gillnet fishing where the river is open. James Charles included some specifics. *Audio for this update begins at 26:15 Meeting Audio 04/29/22 Part 1*

# **AGENDA ITEMS AND SUMMARY INFORMATION:**

## A. Bering Sea Juvenile Salmon Report (Ben Gray, ADF&G)

- Please see the Information Packet pages 3-17.
- Audio for this update begins at 34:00 Meeting Audio 04/29/22 Part 1.
- Mr. Gray gives a report regarding projects in the Bering Sea to assess decline of salmon.
- There is some discussion with Working Group members regarding the presentation and funding for studies and questions about the decline of the salmon and what could be causing it. Concerns about ocean warming and interception of salmon by the False Pass and Area M fishing industry are also discussed. Potential projects designed to address these concerns and answer some of these questions were touched upon, as well as funding for these projects. *Audio of this discussion can be found at* 45:35-1:28:45 Meeting Audio 04/29/22 Part 1.

# B. 2021 Season Recap / Presentations

- Subsistence Section Project Overview (Chris McDevitt, ADF&G)
  - $\circ$  Audio for this update begins at 1:41:00 Meeting Audio 04/29/22 Part 1.
  - Local and traditional knowledge projects:
    - Subsistence and Use in the lower Kuskokwim River
      - Napakiak, Kasigluk, and Nunapitchuk: 2022
      - Eek and Tuntutuliak: 2023

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- Ecological and traditional knowledge of salmon natural indicators in the Upper Kuskokwim River
  - Takotna, Nicholai, and McGrath 1:43:20 Meeting Audio 04/29/22 Part 1
- Audio for Questions and comments on this topic begin at 1:44:20 Meeting Audio 04/29/22 - Part 1.
- Alissa Rogers questioned what information would be gathered and how it could be used. 1:44:20 - Meeting Audio – 04/29/22 - Part 1
- Boyd Blihovde asks if information will be or has been collected on non-spawning tributaries. *Meeting Audio 04/29/22 Part 1- 1:45:45*
- Robert Hoffman voices concerns that weirs may be causing build up at the mouths of the tributaries, making it harder for salmon to reach spawning grounds. 1:50:15 -Meeting Audio – 04/29/22 - Part 1

# • Assessment projects review (Weirs, Aerial, ASL) (Sean Larson, ADF&G)

- O Please see the Information Packet pages 20-27.
- O Audio for this update begins at 1.56.40 Meeting Audio 04/29/22 Part 1.
- O Mr. Larson discusses 2021 escapement numbers collected at the weirs. 1:58:55 Meeting Audio 04/29/22 Part 1
- O Age and sex composition discussion. 2:01:40 Meeting Audio 04/29/22 Part 1
- O Working group members discuss their concerns over the absence of older fish. Questions and comments are discussed about mesh size and other possible contributing factors to the younger return. 2:03:55 Meeting Audio 04/29/22 Part 1

# Chinook salmon total run and drainage wide escapement estimate (Sean Larson, ADF&G)

- O Please see the Information Packet pages 28-29.
- o Audio for this update begins at 2:19:25 Meeting Audio 04/29/22 Part 1
- Mr. Larson discusses the results from the run reconstruction of Chinook salmon since 1976 to the present. There are some questions immediately after Mr. Larson's presentation regarding decreasing average of Chinook salmon runs and how management decisions may have affected escapement and averages.
- O Total Run based on Run Reconstruction model vs. Sonar discussion and how those methods could be used in the future. 2:30:25 Meeting Audio -0.4/29/22 Part 1
- O Working group participants and members discuss how run reconstruction numbers effect bycatch decisions by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) and the role of the Board of Fisheries plays. Members voice concern that the restriction of subsistence users could be allowing more bycatch and worry that bycatch is not reflected in the numbers. 2:32:50 Meeting Audio 04/29/22 Part 1

## • 2022 Chinook Salmon Forecast (Sean Larson, ADF&G)

- O Please see the Information Packet page 30
- O Audio for the forecast begins at 2:45:15 Meeting Audio 04/29/22 Part 1
- O Chinook salmon pre-season forecast is estimated between 99,000-161,000
- O Summary Report Card Please see the Information Packet page 32
  - Escapement Goals; Ages; Total Run size, escapement, and harvest; and Forecast Range

# C. 2022 Fishery Management:

- 2022 Assessment projects Please see the Information Packet page 31-35
  - o Audio for this summary begins at 2:46:50 Meeting Audio 04/29/22 Part 1
  - o Mr. Larson gives a brief summary of projects that will be operating during the 2022 season.

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Alissa Rogers questions the number of projects that will be happening and how that compares to previous years. There is then some discussion between members and participants about the role that the agencies play in these projects and management decisions. 2:48:30 - Meeting Audio – 04/29/22 - Part 1

#### o ADF&G

 Bethel Test Fishery, Mainstem Sonar, Bethel Subsistence surveys, Bethel Subsistence ASL surveys, George River Weir, Kogrukluk River Weir, Salmon (Pitka) Fork Weir, and aerial surveys

# NVN (Native Village of Napaimute)

- Dan Gillikin gives a brief summary of projects that NVN will be involved in over the summer.
- Audio can be found at 08:55 Meeting Audio 04/29/22 Part 2
- Aniak Test Fishery update
- NVN will be assisting US Fish and Wildlife Service at the Salmon River Weir conducting harvest surveys of whitefish in the Aniak River in project headed by Frank Harris.
- Questions were addressed about operation and participation by internships and/or youth and educational groups by Mr. Gillikin. 10:00 Meeting Audio 04/29/22 Part

#### USFWS

- Boyd Blihovde gives an update on the Kwethluk River Weir project.
- Audio can be found at 13:30 Meeting Audio -04/29/22 Part 2
  - Kwethluk River Weir installation should be finished early April and will be staffed through May with 4-5 people.
- USFWS will be working with KRITFC on smolt project to collect information on out migrating king salmon.
- There is a brief discussion about past projects and projects that USFWS would be interested in partnering in. 15:45 Meeting Audio -04/29/22 Part 2
- Aerial surveys 24:00 Meeting Audio 04/29/22 Part 2

#### KRITFC

- Kevin Whitworth gives a brief update on Intertribal Fish Commission projects
  - Kwethluk Weir and smolt trap; referenced by Mr. Blihovde.
  - Lower River Subsistence ASL
  - Community-based monitoring project to make harvest estimations after each opener.
  - Takotna River weir; operational from July 1 August 10.
- Audio for this update can be found at 19:25 Meeting Audio 04/29/22 Part 2
- Alissa asks about youth participation and there is a brief discussion on recruitment for those projects. 21:20 Meeting Audio 04/29/22 Part 2

#### o ONC

- Please see the Information Packet page 18-19
- Audio for this update can be found at 25:00 Meeting Audio 04/29/22 Part 2
- Gisella Chapa introduces herself as the new Natural Resources Director for ONC
- Mainstem Sonar, Bethel Subsistence Surveys, and Bethel Subsistence ASL
  - Public that has concerns over fish camps visits should call the ONC office.
  - Incentives offered to fisherman for ASL participation.
  - Chinook salmon otolith collection.
  - Fish distribution of fish caught at the Bethel Test Fishery.
  - Other projects: Science and Culture Camp, Indigenizing Salmon Management (ISM).
  - Proposals and emergency petitions submitted to the Board of Fisheries.
- There is a brief segment discussing deadlines for youth interested in ONC programs. 28:40 Meeting Audio 04/29/22 Part 2

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- ADF&G Management Presentation & Discussion On Specific Management Actions For 2022 (Nick Smith, ADF&G)
  - Please see the Information Packet page 36-42.
  - $\circ$  Audio for this presentation begins at 30:00 Meeting Audio 04/29/22 Part 2.
  - o Mr. Smith gives a brief explanation of how management decisions are made, what is considered, in-season management strategies that can be used, and who is involved.
  - Mr. Smith makes recommendations that can be found on page 40 of the Information Packet.
  - o Date to begin early season closure
    - Set gillnet fishing periods during early season closure
  - Use of live release gear (fish wheels, dip nets, beach seines, and hook and line)
  - o Tributary Management
    - Salmon Tributaries (Eek, Kwethluk, Kisaralik, Kasigluk, Tuluksak, and Aniak Rivers)
    - Non-Salmon Tributaries (i.e., Gweek, Tunt, Johnson Rivers)
  - Mr. Smith addresses some questions about commercial and sport fishing 37:30 Meeting Audio 04/29/22 - Part 2
  - Sport Fishing (John Chythlook, ADF&G)
    - There is a brief discussion on sport fishing in the Kuskokwim beginning at 38:30 Meeting Audio 04/29/22 Part 2
  - Lamont Albertson asks for someone to address chum salmon. Audio for this discussion can be found at 40:25 - Meeting Audio – 04/29/22 – Part 2
  - O Dan Gillikin (NVN) asks the group for feedback about size limits. A short discussion follows about gear types and other regulations regarding king salmon.
- Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge (Boyd Blihovde, USFWS)
  - $\circ$  Audio for this update begins at 54:25 Meeting Audio 04/29/22 Part 2.
  - o Mr. Blihovde gives a summary of post-season surveys and interviews held over the off-season. He mentioned common themes of frustrations with restrictions, confusing regulations, and having to sacrifice unfairly, and that the low returns of salmon has been happening for so long. There seemed to be an understanding of the low numbers and why regulations and restraint is needed as a general consensus. The Wildlife Refuge will continue to have these conversations with stakeholders over the 2022 season. Mr. Blihovde suggests similar management actions to that which were taken last year. He tentatively suggests front-end closure dates of June 1<sup>st</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> and mentions local partners are suggesting June 1<sup>st</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> for setnet opportunities.
- Discussion of Working Group Decisions and motions made regarding front-end management start with roll call at 1:04:00 Meeting Audio 04/29/22 Part 2

## D. WORKING GROUP BUSINESS:

- Election of Co-Chairs
  - o Elections were tabled by the Working Group until the next meeting. Please see motion 11.
- Working Group In-Season Meeting Schedule
  - Members voted to meet on Wednesdays at 10:00 a.m. weekly during the 2022 season. Please see motion 12.
- Nominate WG representative to serve at KRITFC in-season meetings
  - o Elections were tabled by the Working Group until the next meeting. Please see motion 13.

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## E. COMMENTS FROM WORKING GROUP MEMBERS:

- John Andrew, Downriver elder, makes a comment regarding difficulty of fishing caused be high water early in the season, recommends closing all tributaries at the same time whether spawning or non-spawning, and makes recommendations for setnet openings. *Audio for these comments can be found at* 45:50 Meeting Audio 04/29/22 Part 2
- Lamont Albertson makes a comment that the group needs to retrain on Robert's Rules of order, preferably in person in the fall. 2:37:50 Meeting Audio 04/29/22 Part 2

The meeting was adjourned at 3:50 p.m. by the chair.

# **WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:**

- 1. **Motion 1:** Approve the agenda as written. *Passed (Unanimous)* 
  - a. Discussion on this motion begins at 21:05 Meeting Audio 04/29/22 Part 1. The motion was made by Barbara Carlson and seconded by LaMont Albertson.
- 2. Motion 2: For 2022 Front-end closures to start on June 11<sup>th</sup>. Failed (2 yes, 5 no)
  - a. Discussion on this motion begins at 1:08:25 Meeting Audio 04/29/22 Part 2. The motion was made by John Andrew and seconded by LaMont Albertson.
- **3. Motion 3:** For 2022 Front-end and rolling closures in sections 1, 2, and 3 to start June 1st. *Failed (5 yes, 2 no)* 
  - a. Discussion on this motion begins at 1:19:30 Meeting Audio 04/29/22 Part 2. The motion was made by Kevin Whitworth and seconded by Dan Esai.
- **4. Motion 4:** To reconsider 2022 Front-end and rolling closures in sections 1, 2, and 3 to start June 1<sup>st</sup>. *Passed (6 yes, 1 no)* 
  - a. Discussion on this motion begins at 1:24:00 Meeting Audio 04/29/22 Part 2. The motion was made by Barbara Carlson and seconded by Kevin Whitworth.
- **5. Motion 5:** 2022 Front-end and rolling closures in sections 4 and 5 to start June 9th. *Passed (6 yes, 1 no)* 
  - a. Discussion on this motion begins at 1:30:35– Meeting Audio 04/29/22 Part 2. The motion was made by Dan Esai and seconded by Lamont Albertson.
- **6. Motion 6:** To have 2022 Front-end 6 inch Set net fishing periods on June 1<sup>st</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> between 6:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. *Passed (6 yes, 1 no)* 
  - a. Discussion on this motion begins at 1:35:30 Meeting Audio 04/29/22 Part 2. The motion was made by Barbara Carlson and was seconded by Dan Esai.
- 7. **Motion 7:** Close non-spawning tributaries to gillnets from their confluence with the Kuskokwim River upstream 100 yards. *Failed (5 yes, 1 no, 1 abstention)* 
  - a. Discussion on this motion begins at 1:40:30– Meeting Audio 04/29/22 Part 2. The motion was made by Barbara Carlson and seconded by Dan Esai.
  - b. There is a discussion immediately after voting on this motion about the abstention made and the merits of opening or closing non-spawning tributaries as well as issues with enforcement in previous years. Audio can be referenced between timestamp markers 1:49:45-2:06:55 Meeting Audio 04/29/22 Part 2.

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- **8. Motion 8:** To reconsider the previous motion and close non-spawning tributaries to gillnets from their confluence with the Kuskokwim River upstream 100 yards. *Passed (6 yes, 1 no)* 
  - a. Discussion on this motion begins at 2:06:55 Meeting Audio 04/29/22 Part 2. The motion was made by Barbara Carlson and was seconded by Kevin Whitworth.
- **9. Motion 9:** To allow use of selective gear types (beach seines, fish wheels, rod and reel, dipnets) in the mainstem and spawning tributaries with the condition of release of Chinook salmon. *Passed (7 yes, 0 no)* 
  - a. Discussion on this motion begins at 2:09:55 Meeting Audio 04/29/22 Part 2. The motion was made by Barbara Carlson and was seconded by Lamont Albertson.
- **10. Motion 10:** For the Working Group to request ADF&G to not announce setnet and driftnet opportunities on federal waters at any time during the 2022 fishing season the US Fish and Wildlife Service is managing the resource, during Federal Special Action. *Passed (6 yes, 1 no)* 
  - a. Discussion on this motion begins at 2:14:35 Meeting Audio 04/29/22 Part 2. The motion was made by Lamont Albertson and was seconded by Kevin Whitworth.
- **11. Motion 11:** To table the election of Co-chairs for the Working Group until more voting members are present. *Passed (Unanimous)* 
  - a. Discussion on this motion begins at 2:33:10 Meeting Audio 04/29/22 Part 2. The motion was made by John Andrew and was seconded by Kevin Whitworth.
- **12. Motion 12:** To schedule 2022 in-season Working Group meetings weekly on Wednesdays starting at 10:00 a.m. *Passed (Unanimous)* 
  - a. Discussion on this motion begins at 2:34:55 Meeting Audio 04/29/22 Part 2. The motion was made by Dan Esai and was seconded by Kevin Whitworth.
- **13. Motion 13:** To table choosing a Working Group representative to serve at Kuskokwim River Intertribal Fish Commission in-season meetings. *Passed (Unanimous)* 
  - a. Discussion on this motion begins at 2:36:40 Meeting Audio 04/29/22 Part 2. The motion was made by Dan Esai and was seconded by Kevin Whitworth.

### **WORKING GROUP ATTENDANCE:**

MEMBER SEAT:	NAME:
DOWNRIVER ELDER	James Charles
UPRIVER ELDER	Allen Simeon
LOWER RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Alissa Rogers
MIDDLE RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Absent
UPRIVER SUBSISTENCE	Barbara Carlson
HEADWATERS SUBSISTENCE	Daniel Esai
MEMBER AT LARGE SEAT 1	Absent
MEMBER AT LARGE SEAT 2	Absent
WESTERN INTERIOR RAC	Kevin Whitworth
YK DELTA RAC	John Andrew
COMMERCIAL FISHING	Charlie Brown
SPORT FISHING	LaMont Albertson
ADF&G	Nick Smith
CHAIR	LaMont Albertson/ Barbara Carlson/ Fritz Charles/ Alissa
	Rogers

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ADF&G Comm. Fish: Nick Smith, Ross Renick, Chuck Brazil, Sean Larson, Bobette Dickerson, Ben Gray, Katherine Sport Fish Division: John Chythlook Subsistence Division: Chris McDevitt, Lisa Olsen, Cassidy Somerville Commissioner's Office: John Linderman and Ben Mulligan USFWS: Boyd Blihovde, Aaron Moses, Keira Neil OSM: Kevin Foley, Pippa Kenner NVN: Dan Gillikin ONC: Janessa Esquible, Gisela Chapa AVCP: Jennifer Hooper KRITFC: Jim Simon UAF: WIRAC: Kevin Whitworth YK Delta RAC: Robert Hoffman WG Alternates: (not already listed above) John Andrew (Downriver Elder) Crooked Creek Traditional Council: Denny Thomas

### **GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS:**

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), Orutsararmiut Native Council (ONC), 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), ADF&G Subsistence Division (SD), 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),