Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

1 (888) 788-0099 or Zoom.us 816 6267 8969
Code: 849016
ADF&G Bethel toll free: 1 (855) 933-2433

Meeting Agenda

Date: November 4, 2026 Time:10 am Place: **Bethel, AK**

Time Called to Order: Chair:

ROLL CALL TO ESTABLISH QUORUM:

Downriver Elder:
Lower River Subsistence:
Middle River Subsistence:
Upriver Elder:
Upper River Subsistence:
Headwaters Subsistence:
Sport Fisher:

QUORUM MET? Yes / No

Commercial Fisher:
Member at Large:
2nd Member at Large:
Western Interior RAC:
Y-K Delta RAC:
KRITFC:
ADF&G:

INTRODUCTIONS: *ADF&G, USFWS, KRITFC, ONC, NVN, AVCP, media, government representatives, public, others.*

INVOCATION:

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: *the agenda may be amended at this time.*

PEOPLE TO BE HEARD: *Non-Working Group Members*

CONTINUING BUSINESS:

A. Subsistence Reports: Lowest River, Lower River, Middle River, Upper River, Headwaters

B. Kuskokwim River Season Summaries:

1. ADF&G: Sonar, aerial surveys, weirs, telemetry season summary - Sam Decker
2. USFWS: Season Summary- Spencer Reardon
3. NVN: ATF, Salmon Weir, smolt outmigration, George River internship– Dan
4. ONC: Bethel Harvest - Paul Larson or Jacob Wade
5. KRITFC: CBHM, other projects - Justin Leon
6. ADF&G: Division of Subsistence project update. - Tim Bembenic

C. Marine Bycatch/Harvest Report – Terese Vicente/KRITFC

OLD BUSINESS:

H. AG Decision on Area M Regulations- Draft letter supporting BOF decision- Kevin Whitworth
I. Service award examples – Sam Decker

COMMENTS FROM WORKING GROUP MEMBERS:

NEXT MEETING: call of the Co-chairs/Spring Meeting -May? **Time:**_____ **Place**:_Bethel/online___

Report to the KRSMWG | Fall Meeting 2026

Lower Kuskokwim Harvest Estimates

Based on information gathered through the Community-Based Harvest Monitoring Program, it is estimated that at **least 79,000 salmon** have been harvested by Federally Qualified Subsistence Users between Tuluksak and Eek during the announced opportunities:

- **22,800 Chinook salmon** (drainage-wide Amounts Necessary for Subsistence [ANS] range: 67,200-109,800)
- **29,100 chum salmon** (ANS range: 41,200-116,400)
- **27,400 sockeye salmon** (ANS range: 32,00-58,700)
- Note: No coho salmon harvest estimates exist due to the ending of harvest interviews prior to the state and federal closures of the coho salmon subsistence fishery. However, because of prolonged closures, it is highly unlikely that coho salmon ANS (range: 27,400-57,600) will be met in 2026.

Note: These in-season harvest estimates do not include salmon harvests from non-spawning tributaries (e.g. Kialik, Johnson, or Gweek Rivers); from areas downriver of Eek or upriver of Tuluksak; or using selective gear (e.g. dipnets), which were open for fishing outside of announced opportunities.

Salmon Research, Monitoring, and Knowledge Documentation Projects

- The use of **stationary camera systems** to count salmon spawners was first piloted in 2025 at the Salmon-Aniak River weir, with a goal of identifying requirements for recording salmon spawner passage in the Kuskokwim River basin. In 2026, the system was enhanced with improved battery capacity to record spawner passage, and expanded to the Takotna River system, while continuing at the Salmon-Aniak River. Unfortunately, high water levels and logistical limitations prevented installation on the Takotna River. The project was installed and operated on the Salmon-Aniak River, but high waters caused it to be preemptively taken down. Planning for the 2027 season is ongoing. We thank the Native Village of Napaimute and the respective crews at the Takotna River weir and Salmon-Aniak River weir for supporting us as we continued to test this system. Funding for this project is provided by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim Sustainable Salmon Initiative (AYK SSI).
- The **Community-Based Harvest Monitoring (CBHM) program** hires local Tribal citizens to collect post-harvest data from local subsistence fishermen, which is used by salmon managers for their decision-making. In 2026, KRITFC employed 17 harvest monitors in 8 lower Kuskokwim villages for this program, and they collectively submitted 667 interviews

to inform managers, accounting for 57% of all in-season harvest surveys in 2026. Quyana to our 2026 harvest monitor team: Carl Napoka Jr. (Tuluksak), Andrew Liskey (Tuluksak) Carol Hoagland (Akiak), Crystal Lake (Akiak), Vendella Snyder (Akiachak), Opriann Lomack (Akiachak), Alfred Epchook (Kwethluk), Elizabeth Phillip (Kwethluk), Fred Chaney (Napaskiak), Cameron Jacob (Napaskiak), Marie Anvil-McCarr (Napaskiak), Peter Nelson (Napakiak), Verlaine Chris (Tuntutuliak), Alice Jimmie (Tuntutuliak), Katya John (Tuntutuliak), Haylie Gregory (Eek), and George Hoffman (Eek). We also thank our partners at Orutsaramiut Native Council and USFWS for collecting harvest and net/boat count data to inform our in-season harvest estimations. This project is funded by AYK SSI.

- **The water temperature monitoring project** continued this year, with the installation of 12 temperature loggers across 7 sites on the mainstem Kuskokwim around Bethel and on the Kwethluk, Kasigluk, Kisaralik, and Takotna Rivers between May and September. Retrieval of these loggers was challenged in 2026 due to extremely high waters; loggers and data were recovered from 4 sites; we extend gratitude to Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge staff for assisting us in the recovery of loggers this October. We will attempt recovery of the remaining loggers in 2027. Additionally, KRITFC partnered with the University of Alaska-Fairbanks (UAF) to deploy another 10 loggers from the mainstem Kuskokwim River near Tuluksak down to Kuskokwim Bay. Funding for this project is provided by USGS.
- The **Takotna River weir** is the only long-term headwaters stock assessment program, and its data are used to help calculate the annual Chinook salmon run reconstruction. The 2026 season was the tenth season KRITFC has collaborated on this project, and the fifth of full Tribal ownership and operation through KRITFC. In 2026, KRITFC hired the following technicians to install and operate the weir: Robert Perkins (crew lead), Manuel Martinez, Junior Martinez, Larry Fox, Josiah Martinez, and Richie Wachter. Thank you to this crew and the Takotna Tribal Council for their continued support of this project. Although the weir was successfully installed, high waters prevented the counting and estimation of returning salmon spawners. This project is funded by AYK SSI.
- The **Knowledge of Kuskokwim Salmon & People project** was created in 2024 to document Kuskokwim residents' knowledge of and observations of changes to salmon ecology, relationships with salmon, and recommendations for improving salmon management. In September 2026, KRITFC and our project partners, Ocean Conservancy and the Tamamta Program, distributed copies of the "Kuskokwim River Atlas of Salmon, People, and Place," one of the products documenting and visualizing knowledge shared in this work. Our team is aiming to publish an online StoryMap collection this fall with additional knowledge shared. Find these and more details at www.kuskosalmon.org/knowledge. This project was funded by the Lenfest Ocean Program, KRITFC, Ocean Conservancy, and the Tamamta Program.

In addition to these projects, KRITFC partners with the Organized Village of Kwethluk and USFWS to operate the **Kwethluk River weir.** However, sustained high water levels prevented installation and operation in 2026. Planning for 2027 is underway.

Keep in touch with KRITFC:

www.kuskosalmon.org | Facebook: @KuskoSalmon | Instagram: @kuskosalmon
Office: 907-545-7388 | Fax: 907-771-9738
Quyana, Dogidinh, Chin'an, Tsen'anh, Thank You!

Marine Bycatch/Harvest Update
November 2, 2026

Bering Sea Salmon Bycatch

2026 Bycatch: As of October 29, 2026, there has been a reported bycatch of **18,406 Chinook salmon** and **155,983 chum salmon** from Bering Sea groundfish fisheries.

- The vast majority of these salmon were removed by pollock trawl fisheries: 15,813 Chinook salmon (86% of all bycatch) and 150,411 chum salmon (96% of all bycatch).
- Find Bering Sea Chinook salmon bycatch numbers at https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/akro/chinook_salmon_mortality2026.html.
- Find Bering Sea chum salmon bycatch numbers at https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/akro/chum_salmon_mortality2026.html.

Genetic compositions: Not all of these fish are from or would have returned to the Kuskokwim or Western Alaska, but Western Alaska salmon are bycaught in significant numbers.

- On average, about **50% of all Chinook salmon bycatch** is from Western Alaska rivers. In 2024 and 2025, Kuskokwim and Bristol Bay stocks specifically contributed the majority of the Chinook salmon bycatch, at 48.7% (3,920 fish) and 63.7% (12,619 fish) of all Chinook salmon bycatch, respectively.
- On average, **about 20% of all chum salmon bycatch** is from Western Alaska rivers. Recent genetic analyses estimate that 13.1% (4,205 fish) of 2024 chum bycatch and 4.4% (6,764 fish) of 2025 bycatch were of Western Alaska/upper Yukon origin.
- **Since 2011, according to genetics reports, we estimate that over 132,000 Chinook salmon and almost 622,000 chum salmon caught as bycatch were from Western Alaska rivers.**
- Very few Western Alaska Chinook salmon are caught as bycatch in the Gulf of Alaska. There are no genetics studies of Gulf of Alaska chum salmon bycatch, but Western Alaska chum spend part of their marine life history in the Gulf of Alaska.

2026 genetics: Genetics analyses from 2026 are not available. However, the Bristol Bay Science and Research Institute (BBSRI) conducts in-season genetic sampling of chum salmon bycatch from the inshore catcher-vessel pollock trawl fleet.

- In 2026, an estimated **15.7% (13,778 fish)** of the 2026 inshore pollock trawl chum bycatch were from Western Alaska/upper Yukon origin.
- Find BBSRI's reports at https://www.bbsri.org/inseason-data.

Bycatch management: The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) manages salmon bycatch in its directed fisheries, including Bering Sea pollock trawl fisheries.

- Because of low Chinook salmon abundance in the Unalakleet, Yukon, and Kuskokwim rivers in 2026, **the 2027 Chinook bycatch cap for the Bering Sea pollock trawl fisheries will be 45,000 fish.**
- There is currently no cap on chum salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock trawl fishery. **The new chum salmon bycatch regulations and limits recommended by the NPFMC in February 2026 are not yet in effect.** The National Marine Fisheries Service anticipates the Final EIS for this action will be available by the end of 2026, and the Record of Decision may be issued by May 2027. Details are available at https://www.noaa.gov/general-counsel/NEPA/environmental-impact-statement-and-regulatory-impact-review-proposed-amendment-to-fishery-management.

Area M Salmon Fishery

Area M 2026 harvests: Salmon harvested by Area M are sold for profit. Reported harvests are not counted fish-by-fish, but calculated based on weights of harvests on fish tickets.

- **By June 30, 2026,** Area M commercial fisheries reported harvests of 1,200 kings, 486,000 chum, 1.9 million sockeye, 1.3 million pinks, and 500 coho.
- **By the end of August 2026,** Area M commercial fisheries reported harvests of 4,500 kings, 762,000 chum, 2.08 million sockeye, 3.5 million pinks, and 72,700 coho.

Genetic compositions: Recent genetic analyses indicate that about 20% of Chinook salmon harvests (2022-2024) and 28% of June chum salmon harvests (2022-2025) are from Western Alaska stocks.

- A genetics analysis published in October 2026 by ADF&G reports that **33.5% (53,051 fish) of June 2025 chum salmon harvests** were from Western Alaska. Read the report at https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/FedAidPDFs/FDS26-28.pdf.
- **Since 2011, according to these genetics averages, we estimate that almost 48,000 Chinook salmon and over 2.04 million chum salmon harvested in Area M were from Western Alaska rivers.**

Area M regulations updates: The 2026-2028 Management Plan adopted by the Board of Fisheries (BOF) in February 2026 included approval of proposals that reduced seine and gillnet fishing time in June by 27%, combined across gear.

- However, in May 2026, the Acting Attorney General issued an unprecedented disapproval of five BOF proposals, including the June fishing time reductions as well as reductions to seine and gillnet gear size. These disapprovals meant the Area M June 2026 salmon fishery operated under its 2023-2025 Management Plan.

- On October 29, during its Work Session, the BOF approved adding 5 Agenda Change Requests (ACRs), which asked the BOF to reconsider these Area M proposals, to a new Special Meeting in its 2026-2027 meeting cycle. At the time of writing this update, the dates of this Special Meeting have not yet been decided/announced.

For more information, reach out to Terese Vicente at the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (KRITFC): 907-545-7388 (office), 907-545-5022 (cell), or terese@kritfc.org

Service Recognition awards

Option 1:



Option 2:

