

# Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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

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

May 27, 2015

Meeting called to order at 10:00am on Wednesday May 27, 2015, adjourned at 12:08pm. Total meeting time was just over 2 hours. Nine voting members were present and a quorum was maintained throughout the meeting.

## AGENDA ITEMS:

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

**Old Business Discussion Topics:**

**New Business Discussion Topics:**

- Working Group seat elections.
- ADF&G outreach: community meeting scheduled in Aniak for 1:00pm Friday 5/29/2015.
- Is there any possibility to allocate Chinook salmon by permit on the Kuskokwim River above Aniak, consistent with USFWS plans below Aniak in 2015.
- Update from USFWS on conditions in the lower Kuskokwim River with respect to subsistence salmon fishing closures.

**People to be Heard:**

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

## WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

1. Approval of the agenda as amended. *Motion passed (Unanimous).*
2. That the marine waters south of the Kuskokwim River mouth from the eastern boundary of Ishkowik River and north of commercial fishing District W4 be closed immediately to subsistence salmon fishing. *Motion passed (Unanimous).*
3. Add David John (Crooked Creek) as the Upriver Elder representative and Tim Zaukar (Crooked Creek) as an alternate to the Member At Large seat on the KRSMWG. *Motion passed (Unanimous).*
4. Adjourned at 12:08pm. *Motion passed (Unanimous).*

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## CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. **ADF&G Management Actions under consideration: Kuskokwim River mouth marine waters:** Aaron Poetter (ADF&G) sought Working Group input on marine water closures south of the refuge boundary mouth to the northern boundary of District W4. He commented that this area was closed in 2014 due to concerns that people from the Kuskokwim River communities could travel to this area to target Chinook salmon. (*See Motion #2*)
2. **Overview of Kuskokwim River Salmon Run Assessment Projects:**
  - **Bethel Test Fish:** Colton Lipka (ADF&G) reported that the Bethel Test Fish (BTF) started on May 25<sup>th</sup> in the afternoon, which was earlier than normal. They caught a total of three Chinook salmon giving a CPUE of 4. ADF&G had a returning BTF crew and the project was operating smoothly. All fish harvested were distributed to community members.
  - **Radio Tagging Project:** ADF&G would be tagging Chinook salmon near the mouth of the Johnson River. The goal was to start tagging on June 1<sup>st</sup>. Telemetry towers were located from Bethel to McGrath.
  - **Weirs:** Neil Lalonde (USFWS) reported that the Kwethluk River weir was in. Zac Liller (ADF&G) reported that the ADF&G crew was in McGrath and Nikolai working on the new weir project located on the Salmon River, Pitka Fork. The weir was expected to be fish tight by June 1<sup>st</sup>. Crews would travel to Aniak on June 1<sup>st</sup> with the goal of having the George, Tatlawiksuk and Salmon River Aniak weirs in by June 15<sup>th</sup>. The Kogrukluk weir target date was June 26<sup>th</sup> and the Telaquana weir target date was July 1<sup>st</sup>.
  - **Aniak Test Fish:** Zac Liller reported that ADF&G was working with the Native Village of Napaimute to create a salmon test fishery near Aniak. Consistent fishing sites would be located and fished both morning and evening. The project goal was to “index the run timing and species abundance near Aniak.”
  - **Subsistence ASL Sampling:** ADF&G was sending out informational packets to Tribal Councils on ASL sampling. ONC and ADF&G would host a training workshop for interested individuals on June 9<sup>th</sup> from 10am-2pm at the Bethel ADF&G office.
  - **Aerial Survey:** N/A
3. **Subsistence Reports:**
  - **ONC In-season Subsistence Report:** Alissa Joseph (ONC) reported ONC had distributed three Chinook salmon to Bethel elders starting on May 25<sup>th</sup>.
4. **Discussion of ADF&G Management consideration and discussion of possible alternatives:** Aaron Poetter had no further management considerations.
5. **Motion for Discussion and Action:** N/A

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OLD BUSINESS: N/A

## NEW BUSINESS:

1. **ADF&G outreach: community meeting scheduled in Aniak for 1:00pm Friday 5/29/2015:** Aaron Poetter reported ADF&G had been invited to Aniak to discuss numerous fishery topics.
2. **Is there any possibility to allocate Chinook salmon by permit on the Kuskokwim River above Aniak, consistent with USFWS's plans below Aniak in 2015:** Aaron Poetter commented that allocative issues were handled by the BOF and that ADF&G were unable to allocate fishery resources to specific users; i.e. upriver vs. downriver. Mr. Poetter said ADF&G would provide harvest opportunity for Chinook salmon, if appropriate, based on the run strength. He noted that the elder fishery was an option that provided opportunity for a select group to harvest some fish; however ADF&G would not permit this option if the inseason assessments revealed an inadequate Chinook salmon return. Mr. Poetter commented that the state did have the ability to restrict 6" mesh gear length as an option if a Chinook salmon harvest opportunity was determined.  
Barb Carlson (Upriver Subsistence alternate) noted the concerns from upriver communities regarding the allotted 7,000 fish for the USFWS community harvest permit program. She encouraged ADF&G to provide upriver communities, who logistically were unable to participate in the federal community harvest program, some opportunity to "get a taste of king in their own waters." Greg Roczicka (YK Delta RAC) commented that the state could create a community harvest permit through the BOF during the AYK January 2016 meeting to be put in place for next season. Mr. Roczicka also noted that an emergency petition could be requested for a community harvest permit for July 1<sup>st</sup> 2015. Lamont Albertson (Sport Fishing) commented that he would prefer conserving king salmon for escapement if there was poor run strength.
3. **Update from USFWS on conditions in the lower Kuskokwim River with respect to subsistence salmon fishing closures:** Neil Lalonde (USFWS) reported that on May 28<sup>th</sup>, the third Special Action would go into place closing the entire Kuskokwim River and the salmon tributaries within the boundaries of the YDNWR to Chinook salmon fishing. Fishing for non-salmon species would be allowed using 4" setnet gear during weekly 72 hour periods starting at 6am Thursday-6am Sunday from the mouth to the boundary at Aniak. Special Action four would go into effect on June 7<sup>th</sup> completely closing the Kwethluk, Kasigluk, Kisaralik, Tuluksak and Aniak Rivers and their salmon tributaries to all gillnet use due to Chinook salmon stock declines.  
USFWS planned to send out letters to the 32 federally qualified villages that were identified by the 2015 804 analysis by OSM for participation in the community harvest. The harvest would allocate 7,000 Chinook salmon divided among the qualified communities. Harvest dates were scheduled for June 10<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> valid only in the waters of the refuge. Permit holders would be able to use legal salmon gear and 6" mesh gillnets. Mr. Lalonde said that they were asking for representatives from each village to assist in administering the permits. Mr. Lalonde also informed the group that Law Enforcement detail had begun on the river.  
Barb Carlson acknowledged that the permit system seemed organized; however she was concerned that the upriver communities would still be getting less opportunity for harvesting Chinook salmon than lower river residents. Greg Roczicka commented on the regulation changes in 2015 for Chinook conservation. He also said that the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission depended on all the villages along the river coming together. Brian McCaffery (USFWS) said that management authority was limited to the federal waters within the federal conservation unit. This did not include the adjacent waters.

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## **PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:**

Kevin Bartley (AVCP) reported that the Inter-Tribal Fish Commission met with the USFWS and ADF&G to discuss the management plan for the 2015 season. He commented that there was positive discussion and they were able to come up with a collaborative agreement. Mr. Bartley mentioned that although there continued to be conflicts with the two different management plans there was a desire to work together on the issues.

Dave Runfola (ADF&G) reported that the ADF&G Subsistence Division was in consultation with lower river communities to encourage volunteer fishers to report their catch and effort inseason data. Subsistence Division was also considering inseason subsistence sampling work near the Aniak and Kalskag communities.

## **WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:**

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

**Motion 2: The marine waters south of the Kuskokwim River mouth from the eastern boundary of Ishkowik River and north of commercial fishing District W4 be closed immediately to subsistence salmon fishing. Motion passed (Unanimous).**

Bev Hoffman (Chair) was in favor of the motion for increased conservation efforts. Dave Cannon (Middle River Subsistence) commented that by closing the area it would send a message regarding the seriousness of conserving Chinook salmon. Mike Williams Sr. (Lower River Subsistence) expressed concern regarding harvest opportunity for the communities in the lower river. Greg Roczicka (YK Delta RAC) was concerned regarding the additional travel for residents in that particular area. Aaron Poetter clarified that it would close an additional 7 miles of shore line. Mr. Roczicka commented that similar restrictions in 2014 had been in place to reduce the amount of Kuskokwim River residents harvesting in that area but not due to any particular village.

**Motion 3: Add David John (Crooked Creek) as the Upriver Elder representative and Tim Zaukar (Crooked Creek) as an alternate to the Member At Large seat on the KRSMWG. Motion passed (Unanimous).**

**Motion 4: Adjournment. Motion passed (Unanimous).**

## **COMMENTS FROM THE WORKING GROUP**

John Andrew (Downriver Elder alternate) commented that some people in the Kwethluk area were harvesting whitefish in the lakes. The water was too high due to rain for using the 4" nets. He commented that it was difficult catching whitefish. No one had caught salmon at that time.

Greg Roczicka (YK Delta RAC) encouraged the middle and upper river villages to participate with the Inter-Tribal Fish Commission.

Lamont Albertson (Sport Fishing) commented that the USFWS and ADF&G leadership had not supported all subsistence users along the river.

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## WORKING GROUP ATTENDANCE:

<b>MEMBER SEAT:</b>	<b>NAME:</b>
DOWNRIVER ELDER	John Andrew
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	Fritz Charles
WESTERN INTERIOR RAC	Ray Collins
YK DELTA RAC	Greg Roczicka
COMMERCIAL FISHING	<i>Absent</i>
SPORT FISHING	LaMont Albertson
PROCESSOR	<i>Absent</i>
ADF&G	Aaron Poetter
CHAIR	Bev Hoffman

### **Other Participants:**

ADF&G Comm. Fish: Zac Liller, Aaron Tiernan, Chris Shelden, Aaron Poetter, Colton Lipka

Sport Fishing:

Subsistence Division: Andrew Brenner, David Runfola

USFWS: Brian McCaffery, Neil Lalonde

OSM: Don Rivard

Sophie Evan (KYUK)

Lisa Demer (AK Dispatch)

Gerri Sumpter (Sen. Murkowski's Office)

David John (Crooked Creek)

Kevin Bartley

Alissa Joseph (ONC)

Lisa Feyereisen (Middle River Subsistence alternate)

Barbara Carlson (Upriver Subsistence alternate)

## **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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