

To: Kuskokwim Subsistence Salmon Panel  
Panel Members

January 14, 2015

From: Kuskokwim Native Association (KNA)  
Director of Fisheries

Subject: Community Harvest Trends for Kuskokwim Chinook

Dear Panel Members:

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Board of Fish has tasked this group with developing possible solutions (both long and short term) to address the equitability of Chinook salmon harvest on the Kuskokwim River. Inherent in that task is the acknowledgement that a problem exists, i.e. that Chinook harvest patterns have changed, and become inequitable for some communities on the Kuskokwim River. To assist with your determination I present this simple analysis of Chinook salmon harvest reported to ADF&G between 1990 and 2011.

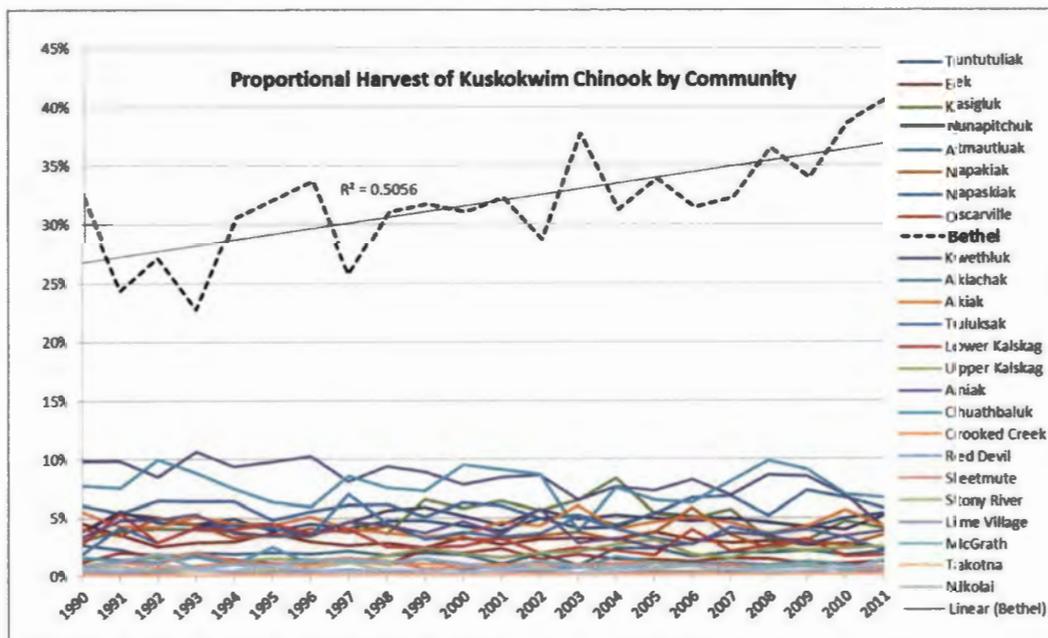


Figure 1. Community harvest trends of Chinook salmon as a proportion (percent) of the total Chinook harvest for the Kuskokwim River.

Growing population trends in Bethel are clearly impacting fishing opportunities for smaller villages; particularly those further up river and will continue to do so as the population continues to increase. If future allocation is based even in part on a per capita basis (either through a Tier II or other permit system) Bethel's allocation will continue to increase (as its population does) at the expense of the smaller villages. If the current trend continues Bethel alone could account for more than half of the total Chinook harvest on the Kuskokwim in less than a decade, figure 1.

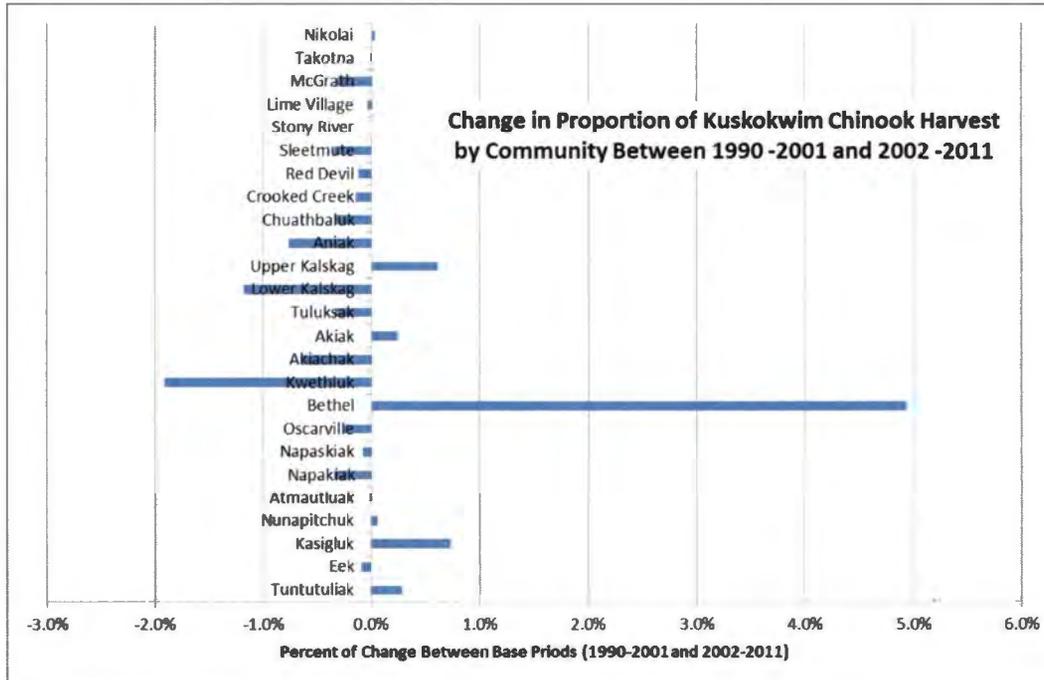


Figure 2. Decadal changes in community harvest of Chinook salmon as a proportion (percent) of the total Chinook harvest for the Kuskokwim River.

The rate of change in the proportion of harvest between Bethel and other communities appears to be approximately 5% per decade, figure 2. This analysis does not include the most recent years when restrictions were in place, which in all likelihood compounded the problem. Furthermore, it has been proposed that the new escapement goal of 65,000 – 120,000 Chinook will further contribute to the problem by reducing densities of fish in the mid and upper river, relative to historic levels. In addition to this surveyed data I have heard numerous reports from local fishers that for decades Chinook abundance (and consequently harvest opportunity) in the mid and upper river for has been declining, long before this recent period of low abundance.

KNA is a regional non-profit native organization created to serve 12 villages along the middle and upper Kuskokwim River, and is a cooperator with ADF&G Commercial Fisheries Division on several salmon monitoring projects.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration, sincerely:

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