

# Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

1 (800) 315-6338 (MEET) Code: 58756# (KUSKO)  
ADF&G Bethel toll free: 1 (855) 933-2433

## Meeting Summary

**June 11, 2013**

Meeting called to order at 10:10 am and adjourned at 2:00 pm. Ten full voting members were present and a quorum was established.

### **AGENDA ITEMS:**

Continuing Business Discussion Topics:

1. Subsistence Reports
2. Overview of Kuskokwim River Salmon Run Assessment Projects
3. Processor Report
4. Weather Forecast
5. ADF&G Recommendation
6. Motion for Discussion and Action

Old Business Discussion Topics:

1. Discussion of by-laws
2. Member Attendance
3. Member Recruitment
4. Meeting Time Preferences

*Due to the length of the meeting, New Business items were tabled.*

**WORKING GROUP ACTION ITEMS:** none

### **WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:**

1. Approval of the Agenda with an amendment to move Discussion of by-laws to follow Continuing Business. Motion passed unanimously.
2. To accept ADF&G's recommendation to leave the mainstem Kuskokwim River open to unrestricted salmon fishing, and to maintain tributary restrictions in the Aniak, Tuluksak, Kisaralik, Kasigluk, and Kwethluk Rivers; maintain restrictions in Kuskokuak and Old Kuskokuak sloughs. Motion passed unanimously.
3. To continue discussion of Working Group by-laws at a special meeting. Motion passed unanimously.
4. To accept edits to Working Group by-laws that had been discussed in this meeting. Motion passed.
5. To suspend the rules to let Greg Hoffman Jr. present his letter of intent to join the Working Group. Motion passed unanimously.
6. To elect Greg Hoffman Jr. as an Alternate Member to the Commercial Fisher seat. Motion passed.

**PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:** *Working Group members should provide comment at the end of the meeting under "Comments from the Working Group." People to be heard is reserved for non-working Group members speaking on items not included in the Agenda.*

1. Mike Williams (Lower River Subsistence Representative) reported a June 10 community meeting in Napaskiak in which residents discussed and "generally agreed" to ADF&G's preseason Management Plan for Chinook salmon. People there were catching Chinook and felt more optimistic about 2013 season than 2012. Mike later mentioned that people in Napaskiak were concerned that rainbow trout and pike were eating salmon fry and eggs.
2. Casie Stockdale: "At the last working group meeting someone had asked a question of what the other areas were calling for this season, and so after the meeting I looked up all the news releases I could find...all of the areas I looked at were calling for poor or below average runs or runs similar to last year...They mentioned that there is little indication to date in the change of the low Chinook production trend statewide....So while we have been in this meeting, we have been calling it "cautiously optimistic," I just wanted to share some of the stuff I found around the rest of the state and stress the "cautious part of that."
  - Travis Elison- "Looking at Casie's notes, she did say it correctly: 'Cautiously optimistic' is the term we have been using, as opposed to the map which says 'Highly.' ...what we are 'cautiously optimistic' about is having enough fish to meet escapement and subsistence needs. And that's it. We are not cautiously optimistic that it's going to be a big run, above average, or anything. You look at the forecast range of 160,000 to 240,000, so even at the high end of that forecast range (240,000) is still below average run size for the Kuskokwim River. So our forecast is actually quite similar to these other forecasts, as we are forecasting for a below average run, last year was the worst we had on record...we are not forecasting a very large run here. It is still going to be below average, so I just wanted to clarify that."
  - Casie- "Thanks Travis, I think that's a really good clarification, and I think what I was trying to say there was, I'm cautious about expecting more fish than last year. I see that the range is a little bit better but the upper end would be more than twice as much fish as we had last year. That's what I was trying to stress there, but your comments were entirely fair and accurate. Thanks for that clarification."
  - LaMont Albertson (Sport Fish representative) suggested that the Department separate upriver and downriver Kuskokwim River Chinook forecasts in order to be fair to the differences people see in fish abundance between these areas. He expressed concern that large Chinook would eventually become extinct in upriver tributaries due to early fishing effort in the lower river. In response, Travis Elison explained that the state did not have the power to separate forecasts because they are based on Total Escapement and Total Harvest values. Ray Collins (Western Interior RAC representative) was also concerned: "We are hitting the headwaters fish with heavy fishing early in the season..." Ray referenced historical records that indicated that Chinook salmon had historically been observed on the Tonzona River before the Salmon River (Pitka Fork); a situation that no longer occurs.

## CONTINUING BUSINESS:

### 1. Subsistence Reports

- Lower River Reports:

James Charles (Downriver Elder Representative) of Tuntatuliak said that he had caught over 20 Chinook so far this season. He had also caught 5 sockeye and a couple of chum. James said that kings seemed to be running despite cold water and snow on the ground, and people seemed happy with their catches so far. He reported smelt had been in the Johnson River a week earlier.

Henry Lupie (Member at Large) estimated that about two-thirds of Tuntutuliak families had started fishing the week before and that the rest would be fishing this week. Community members were also collecting eggs and wild greens.

In Eek, Charlie Brown (Commercial Fisher Representative) reported that average salmon catches were 7-10 salmon per tide of mixed species.

Bev Hoffman (Sport Fish alternate) said that fishing in Bethel was better than that time last year. One to two drifts caught about 7 fish with large mesh gillnets. Bev was concerned about false rumors that the fishery was closed.

Mike Williams (Lower River Subsistence) said that fishing was “way better than last year” in Akiak and Akiachak. The first Chinook had been caught a week earlier. Mike said that some large-mesh setnets were currently catching about 3-5 kings/day, and most people had not started fishing. Mike also commented that at least 50% of community members had run short of dry fish last winter.

- ONC Inseason Subsistence Report: *See the June 11 Information Packet for full survey results.*

Alissa Joseph (ONC surveyor) commented that the total number of setnets and driftnets in the Bethel area seemed to have doubled during the survey period. She said that some fishermen wanted to travel to the mouth of the Kuskokwim to fish because Chinook were much larger there (700-850 mm). Alissa also reported that nets had been stolen from a few Bethel fish camps.

- Middle River Reports:

Bob Aloysius (YK Delta RAC Representative) reported one chum caught in Kalskag on June 6. He said that people were trying to catch sheefish while waiting for salmon. He said that his set net, which was marked according to regulation, had been stolen.

Gerald Simeon (Middle River Subsistence Representative) reported that people in Aniak were planning to travel to Kalskag to fish for smelts. He said that setnets could be used in Aniak because the water level and debris load had dropped.

- KNA Inseason Subsistence Reports:

Dan Gillikin (KNA) reported that the first Chinook had been caught in Aniak on June 10 with a setnet. People were fishing for sheefish and preparing fish camps while waiting for salmon to arrive. Dan reported that KNA was working with ONC and ADF&G to modify inseason subsistence survey forms in order to collect more

quantifiable data to inform managers. Dan planned to recruit fishermen to participate in the survey project this year.

- **Upper River Subsistence Reports:**

In Napaimute, Mark Leary (Upriver Subsistence Representative) said that one family was using a setnet but had not caught salmon. Mark said he was encouraged by the good catches downriver.

Barbara Carlson (Upriver Subsistence alternate) reported that the water level was dropping fast in Sleetmute. People were saving their money for salmon fishing instead of catching sheefish.

- **Headwaters Report:**

Ray Collins (Western Interior RAC Representative) said that no one was fishing in McGrath yet.

## **2. Overview of Kuskokwim River salmon run assessment projects:**

- **Bethel Test Fishery:** Colton Lipka (ADF&G) stated that the Bethel Test Fishery (BTF) project began on June 1<sup>st</sup> as planned. The crew was operating under standard procedures of drifting one hour after high tide and using the same nets, net rotation, and fishing stations as in past years.

The NOAA river gauge at Crooked Creek showed the water level as above average but dropping. At the Bethel Test Fish site, water clarity continued to be low and water temperature was normal for this time of year.

Colton updated the BTF Cumulative CPUE for Chinook salmon: increasing from 2 on June 8<sup>th</sup>, to 4 on June 9<sup>th</sup>, and 6 on June 10<sup>th</sup>. Travis Elison (ADF&G) explained that it was too early in the season to be certain about Chinook run timing, but commented that the run seemed about a week late.

- **Weirs:** Brittany Blain (ADF&G) and Steve Miller (USFWS) reported that weir installation was in progress.

### **3. Processor Report:** Stuart Currie (Processor Representative) with Kuskokwim Seafoods stated that his company would not be operating for sockeye and chum season because the market was poor and it would not be profitable. He was not sure if he will operate for Coho season.

### **4. Sport Fish Report:** John Chythlook (ADF&G Kuskokwim Area Sport Fish Manager) said that some guides and sport fishers were preparing to fish for non-salmon species.

### **5. Weather:** For marine weather, the trend of variable wind was holding. The forecast for the weekend was weather moving in with winds 10 mph from the east and temperatures of 40-60 degrees Fahrenheit. The forecast for the Middle Kuskokwim was 10 mph winds with a chance of rain this weekend and temperatures of 40-50 degrees Fahrenheit. The Upper Kuskokwim had a similar report.

### **6. Recommendation:** Department recommended maintaining the status quo with respect to salmon fishing restrictions: to leave the mainstem Kuskokwim River open to unrestricted salmon fishing, and to maintain tributary restrictions in the Aniak, Tuluksak, Kisaralik, Kasigluk, and Kwethluk Rivers; maintain restrictions in Kuskokuak and Old Kuskokuak sloughs.

- Travis Elison commented that he was encouraged by subsistence reports. Based off the first Chinook caught in BTF (June 8), he expected the run to be at the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile around June 20-21. The Department planned to assess the run at that point to decide if any conservation actions are warranted. The Department remained cautiously optimistic. He suggested a Working Group meeting June 19 to look at another week of data.
- Questions/Comments: Bob Aloysius suggested that the Department restrict all salmon fishing to 6-inch or smaller mesh nets because he was concerned about the beginning of the Chinook run reaching upper river. James Charles, Henry Lupie, and Mike Williams noted that many people had voluntarily switched to smaller mesh gear in their areas. Ray Collins said he was pleased to hear about the voluntary switch, noting that more people will be meeting their subsistence needs with smaller fish and saving the large ones. Bev Hoffman encouraged the Working Group to continue to talk about conservation for sustainability.

Many members were concerned about false rumors that the fishery was currently closed. Stuart Currie suggested that if people thought there was going to be a closure they would panic and fish too hard. Fritz Charles offered to make an announcement on all the KYUK and VHF radio channels. Henry Lupie commented that since restrictions were unlikely early in the season, he did not feel rushed to go fishing. Mike Williams agreed but noted that there was some concern among people from Napaskiak.

Fritz Charles commented that he was surprised that kings were being caught downriver even though smelts had not yet arrived. He said that he had been told: "Fish don't have calendar dates, and they have their own sense of knowledge..."

LaMont Albertson said that he would support the motion even though he strongly believes that the Department needs to separately account for the needs of upriver and downriver. LaMont suggested that ADF&G close subsistence fishing at the beginning of the Chinook run because upriver users are never as successful as the downriver users. In response to LaMont, Mike Williams said that he would like to see each village governments implement their own conservation measures, noting that not all communities were growing.

## **OLD BUSINESS:**

### **1. Discussion of By-laws Revisions** *(See edits to by-laws, May 10 Info Packet).*

As Working Group Coordinator, Chris Shelden (ADF&G) asked whether members had reviewed proposed edits to the by-laws that had been presented at the May 10 meeting. Few members said that they had looked at these edits. The Working Group reviewed the points as follows:

- **To replace the Area M report with an Intercept Fishery report** *(Rules of Conduct; VII; 6.).*

Supporting statements: Ray Collins supported a place for an Intercept Fishery report, accepting that if there were no new information to present; this report would be skipped in the meeting. Casie Stockdale agreed and said that these

reports were readily available on the internet. Fritz Charles suggested adding "Optional" to this agenda item.

Dissenting Statements: *None*.

- **To add Review of Minutes to the meeting agenda** (*Rules of Conduct; IV*).

Supporting statements: Casie Stockdale supported this position to ensure that members had an opportunity to correct the record if necessary. Stuart Currie and Fritz Charles suggested adding Review of Minutes to the agenda as "Optional" in order to address comments or errors on past summaries.

Dissenting Statements: *None*.

- **Whether to keep consensus voting for fisheries issues and allow majority voting for non-fisheries issues** (*Rules of conduct: consensus voting Pg. 2; Article III; section 3*).

Chris Shelden explained that there was some interest among members in making all voting majority based. He explained that consensus voting showed a much clearer form of agreement than a simple majority. If a majority vote were adopted, a quorum of 7 might see a motion passed with as few as 4 votes, less than a third of the total Working Group membership.

Supporting statements: Mike Williams, Stuart Currie, Bev Hoffman, Ray Collins, Fritz Charles agreed that consensus voting was preferable for fisheries issues. Mark Leary agreed, asking whether the Working Group had originally adopted consensus voting because it has been used traditionally. Mike Williams confirmed that consensus voting was consistent with traditional practices. Chris Shelden suggested that a larger problem might be encouraging enough members to attend each meeting to ensure that consensus votes truly reflected the majority opinion.

Dissenting Statements: *None*.

- **To clarify if ADF&G can vote on non-management decisions** (*Rules of conduct: consensus voting Pg. 2; Article III, section 3; and Article V, section 16.*).

The Working Group has been allowing the ADF&G member to vote on non-management decisions; however, the by-laws currently prohibit this. The Working Group sought to define whether this practice should be formally allowed or prohibited in the by-laws.

Supporting statements: Stuart Currie, Casie Stockdale, and Bob Aloysius supported ADF&G having limited voting rights. Henry and Bob suggested that the department have such rights because the Department is part of the Working Group. Casie agreed that there were instances in which a quorum had not been reached and it had been convenient to have the department vote to add members or when putting together conservation messages for the public.

Dissenting Statements: LaMont: "I don't think that the Department should vote on any issue that comes before this group."

- **To allow the Working Group to remove chronically absent members** (*Article III; Section 6; A and B*).

Supporting statements: Henry Lupie and Fritz Charles suggested that a member should be removed if he/she attends fewer than 2 or 3 meetings in a season. Mike Williams agreed and commented, "If [members] aren't committed to being a voice for the fish, they should gracefully excuse themselves." Stuart Currie and Ray Collins suggested members to have an opportunity to appeal their removal and they also felt that current wording in the by-laws regarding removal of delinquent members could suffice going forward.

Dissenting Statements: *None*.

- **To remove the section that states that an elder member may appoint another elder to represent them if necessary** (*Article III, section 2*).

Supporting statements: The group agreed to remove this section because it has never been used. Fritz Charles added that he would like to review a person's knowledge and work habits before accepting them as a Working Group member.

Dissenting Statements: *None*.

- **To add that the Working Group may appoint a meeting Chair in the absence of all Co-chairs** (*Article IV., section 3*).

Supporting statements: *General support*.

Dissenting Statements: *None*.

- **Clarify where the annual spring meeting will take place and to what purpose** (*Article II, section 2*).

Supporting statements: Bev Hoffman, Ray Collins, Henry Lupie supported that the spring meeting be held in Anchorage because of the information they receive at the Interagency Meetings prior to the Working Group meeting. Ray Collins also pointed out that upriver residents have difficulty reaching Bethel, and that Bethel residents have much more opportunity to attend meetings than other members and stakeholders.

Travis Ellison, Ray Collins, and LaMont Albertson agreed that the purpose of the annual meeting should be discussion of administrative details that take up valuable time inseason, to prevent cluttering the meeting agenda with too many items. Travis suggested having a separate preseason meeting in May that would take place in Bethel with the specific purpose of discussing preseason management strategies. Stuart Currie agreed and requested teleconference money for such a meeting. Henry Lupie agreed and reminded the Working Group Coordinator not to schedule the annual Anchorage meeting the week of Easter.

Dissenting Statements: *None*.

## 2. Member Meeting Attendance

- A motion was made suggesting that a letter and copies of the new by-laws be sent to delinquent members to explain that alternates are required to attend meetings. The motion was not seconded and died on the floor.

- The group agreed that it was important that any member removals be conducted cordially and not be personal in any way.

### **3. Member Recruitment**

- Bev Hoffman included a draft letter of recruitment for a Downriver Elder alternate member in the June 11 Information Packet similar to one sent for the Upriver Elder seat. Recruitment of a Commercial Fishing alternate was successful with the addition of Greg Hoffman, Jr., to the Working Group.

4. Bev Hoffman clarified that a number of recruitment letters for the Upriver Elders had been distributed but had received no response.

### **5. Meeting Time Preferences**

- Stuart Currie, Bob Aloysius, and Bev Hoffman favored the current 10:00 am meeting time. Stuart commented that morning meetings allow enough time for a commercial fishing period the next day and Bev said that there seemed to be less participation in the evenings. LaMont Albertson and Henry Lupie stated a preference for evening meetings.
- Regarding the length of meetings, James Charles, Charlie Brown, Henry Lupie, and Stuart Currie agreed that meetings were becoming too long, needed to be shortened to 1-2 hours, and should only address fisheries issues (Continuing Business) inseason.

**NEW BUSINESS:** *Due to the length of the meeting, New Business items were tabled.*

### **WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:**

**MOTION 1:** Approval of the Agenda with an amendment to move Discussion of by-laws to follow Continuing Business. Motion passed unanimously (8 yeas, 0 nays).

**MOTION 2:** To accept ADF&G's recommendation to leave the mainstem Kuskokwim River open to unrestricted salmon fishing, and to maintain tributary restrictions in the Aniak, Tuluksak, Kisaralik, Kasigluk, and Kwethluk Rivers; maintain restrictions in Kuskokuak and Old Kuskokuak sloughs. Motion passed unanimously (10 yeas, 0 nays).

### **COMMENTS FOR MOTION 2:**

*Please see Questions/Comments under the ADF&G Recommendation in Continuing Business.*

**MOTION 3:** To continue discussion of Working Group By-laws at a special meeting. Motion passed unanimously (10 yeas, 0 nays).

### **COMMENTS FOR MOTION 3:**

Supporting statements: Bob Aloysius and LaMont Albertson supported the motion because they wanted more discussion on the by-laws.

Dissenting statements: Stuart Currie reminded the group that they had been discussing by-laws edits for over an hour and a half and he wanted to vote on the edits while discussion was fresh in his mind. Chris Shelden reiterated Stuart's point with respect to covering the same ground again in a future meeting. *LaMont Albertson pointed out that Chris' comments were inappropriate because there was a motion on the floor to be voted on. Chris apologized, saying "I stand corrected."*



**MOTION 4: To accept edits to Working Group By-laws discussed during this meeting. Motion passed (8 yeas, 2 nays).**

Chris Shelden said he would make amendments as discussed, which would take effect in 30 days (July 10).

**COMMENTS FOR MOTION 4:**

Supporting statements: After discussions of each item, Bev Hoffman said that she had initiated editing the by-laws and now she felt that it was a good working document to adopt. She said, "We started this process a long, long time ago and people have had the by-laws in front of them for a month. We have discussed modifications for over an hour. It would save time even at a special meeting to accept these today." Stuart Currie pointed out that there were no objections in discussions today, and this motion was to adopt only the items discussed. Casie Stockdale stated that she was finished discussing the points she was concerned about.

Dissenting statements: LaMont Albertson disagreed, saying, "We have not had these documents in a format or forum like this where we could discuss them, and a teleconference like this is not a convenient way to discuss them. By-laws are important but it seems like we want to gloss over and vote on them. I don't think we have been deliberate in our consideration of these by-laws." Bob Aloysius agreed with LaMont because he thought that, "There were still loose ends."

**MOTION 5: To suspend the rules to let Greg Hoffman, Jr., present his letter of intent to join the Working Group at this point of the agenda. Motion passed unanimously (10 yeas, 0 nays).**

**MOTION 6: To elect Greg Hoffman, Jr., as an alternate member to the Commercial Fisherman seat. Motion passed (9 yeas, 0 nays, 1 abstention).**

**COMMENTS FOR MOTION 6:**

Bev Hoffman asked Greg Hoffman, Jr., if he was willing to put forth the commitment and volunteer the hours required of Working Group members, to which Greg replied yes.

**GENERAL COMMENTS FROM WORKING GROUP MEMBERS:**

LaMont Albertson thanked the Chair and the Department.

Bev Hoffman thanked the Chair and encouraged everyone to get the word out that, "We need to take less kings and concentrate on other species."

Charlie Brown reiterated that he wanted summer meetings to be shorter.

Bob Aloysius said that everyone should, "Encourage all the fishers to limit themselves to 6-inch gear so that all the ladies can go upriver and spawn."

Henry Lupie explained that he could only attend 3 meetings in 2012 but he had James Charles give a report for him.

Gerald Simeon thanked the Chair.

Casie Stockdale thanked everyone and the Chair. She reminded everyone of the KYUK talk show in Yupik on Thursday, June 12.

**WORKING GROUP ATTENDANCE:**

<b>MEMBER SEAT:</b>	<b>NAME:</b>
DOWNRIVER ELDER	James Charles
UPRIVER ELDER	<i>Vacant</i>
LOWER RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mike Williams / Casie Stockdale
MIDDLE RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Gerald Simeon
UPRIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mark Leary
HEADWATERS SUBSISTENCE	<i>Absent</i>
MEMBER AT LARGE	Henry Lupie
WESTERN INTERIOR RAC	Ray Collins
YK DELTA RAC	Bob Aloysius
COMMERCIAL FISHING	Charlie Brown
SPORT FISHING	LaMont Albertson
PROCESSOR	Stuart Currie
ADF&G	Travis Elison
CHAIR	Fritz Charles

<b>Other Participants:</b>	
<p><u>ADF&amp;G Comm. Fish:</u> Dan Bergstrom, Chris Shelden, Brittany Blain, Kevin Schaberg, Jennifer Yuhas, Jan Conitz, Colton Lipka, Aaron Tiernan, Alice Bailey</p> <p><u>Sport Fish:</u> John Chythlook</p> <p><u>Subsistence Division:</u> Hiroko Ikuta, Steve Runfola,</p>	
<p><u>USFWS:</u> Steve Miller, Ken Actin, Stuart Cogswell, Robert Sundown, and Gene Peltola Jr.</p> <p><u>OSM:</u> Don Rivard, Pippa Kenner</p>	
<p>Greg Hoffman, Sr. Greg Hoffman, Jr. Doug Molyneaux Roberta Chavez (ONC) Alissa Joseph (ONC) Dan Gillikin (KNA)</p>	<p>Steve Kesler (US Forest Service) Beverly Hoffman (Alternate Sport Fishing member) Barbara Carlson (Alternate Upriver Subsistence member) Gerri Sumpter (Senator Murkowski's office) Angela Denning Barnes (KYUK radio)</p>

**GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS:**

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (**ADF&G**), Orutsararmiut Native Council (**ONC**), Kuskokwim Native Association (**KNA**), Association of Village Council Presidents (**AVCP**), 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** or **Working Group, WG**), Sustainable Escapement Goal (**SEG**), Biological Escapement Goal (**BEG**), Management Objective (**MO**), Amounts Reasonably Necessary for Subsistence (**ANS**), Emergency Order (**EO**)