

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

July 15, 2026

Meeting called to order at 10:03 a.m. on Wednesday, August 12, 2026 and adjourned at 12:44 p.m. Meeting time was approximately **57 minutes**. **Three** full voting members were present and a quorum was established. Fritz Charles chaired the meeting.

AGENDA ITEMS:

PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:

CONTINUING BUSINESS:

A. SUBSISTENCE REPORTS

B. OVERVIEW OF PROJECTS

- a. ADF&G**
- b. USFWS**
- c. NVN**
- d. ONC**
- e. KRITFC**

C. MARINE FISHERY REPORT

D. YUKON DELTA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE FISHERY MANAGEMENT UPDATE

E. ADF&G MANAGEMENT UPDATES

OLD BUSINESS:

F. ELECTIONS

G. DISCUSSION OF ATTORNEY GENERAL DECISION ON AREA M REGULATIONS

NEW BUSINESS:

H. ONC LETTER OF SUPPORT

WORKING GROUP ACTION ITEMS:

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

- I. Approve the agenda.**

PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:

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Evan Waska provided a comment on the current management actions, and his concern for people to be able to put away salmon for the winter. Mr. Waska voiced his concerns about no test fishers, trawlers, and fishers in False Pass. *Audio for this update begins 10:53 – Meeting Audio – 8/12/26*

Sam Berlin provided a comment on coho salmon movement patterns and his thoughts on the current management actions. Mr. Berlin voiced concerns about fishing in False Pass effective the Kuskokwim salmon runs, and called to close fisheries across the state rather than specific areas. *Audio for this update begins 17:36 – Meeting Audio – 8/12/26*

Laurie O'Brien provided a comment on the acting Attorney General decision, as well as lack of access to fish impacting the health of subsistence users. Mrs. O'Brien voiced concerns about the current management actions and their impacts on subsistence users. *Audio for this update begins 22:56 – Meeting Audio – 8/12/26*

Kevin Whitworth spoke as a non-working group member, and provided an update on the fishery in McGrath. Mr. Whitworth commented on the limitations to whitefish fishing with the active coho salmon closure. *Audio for this update begins 27:31 – Meeting Audio – 8/12/26*

Sam Decker, Area Management Biologist, provided information to the working group that Sections 4 and 5 (including McGrath) are currently open and there are no restrictions to fishing.

Allen Simeon voiced his concerns about access to coho salmon and effective communication during times of closures. *Audio for this update begins 38:05 – Meeting Audio – 8/12/26*

CONTINUING BUSINESS:

A. Subsistence Reports

1. Lowest River:
2. Lower River: Mary Nikolai from Kwethluk spoke about not being able to harvest coho salmon affecting their preparations for winter. James Nicori reported some fishing in Kwethluk and higher catch proportions when fishing in the shallows. Dr. Mike Williams, Sr commented on the water levels in Akiak and the local need to fish before winter. *Audio for this update begins 52:40 – Meeting Audio – 8/12/26.*
3. Middle River:

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4. Upper River: Bryanna Sherer with Native Village of Napaimiut gave a subsistence report. Mrs. Sherer commented on high water and slow catches. *Audio for this update begins 1:11:22 – Meeting Audio – 8/12/26*
5. Headwaters: Dan Esai provided a subsistence report. Mr. Esai reported high water and turbid conditions. He reported the need for coho salmon harvest. *Audio for this update begins 1:12:49 – Meeting Audio – 8/12/26*

B. Overview of Kuskokwim River Salmon run assessment Projects:

1. ADF&G: Sean Larson provided an update on ADF&G assessment projects: weirs, sonar, and telemetry. Mr. Larson commented on run timing of coho salmon and how it compares to past years' runs. Kay Stewart provided an update for the Kuskokwim River sonar and how the recent storms have affected counts and fishing. *Audio for this update begins at 1:18:22 - Meeting Audio – 8/12/26*
2. USFWS: Spencer Rearden provided an update for USFWS assessment projects. Mr. Rearden reported that Nate Akers is conducting chum salmon sampling and they are continuing with their eDNA sampling. *Audio for this update begins 1:27:28 - Meeting Audio – 8/12/26*
3. NVN: Bryanna Sherer provided an update for NVN projects, specifically the Salmon River weir. Mrs. Sherer reported high water and low fish counts, and that the weir was pulled early due to difficulties being fish tight. *Audio for this update begins 1:27:28 – Meeting Audio – 8/12/26*
4. ONC: Avery Hoffman gave the update for ONC. Mr. Hoffman reported from the harvest surveys on August 7th with average catches and effort, as well as whether subsistence users met their needs or not. Mr. Hoffman stated that all ONC projects were completed as of August 7th. Evan Waska commented that with limited funding, local fishermen should operate as test fishers. *Audio for this update begins 1:07:18 – Meeting Audio – 8/12/26*
5. KRITEFC: Justin Leon stated that all projects have completed the season. Mr. Leon commented on project difficulties. *Audio for this update begins at 1:30:13 - Meeting Audio – 8/12/26*

C. **Marine Fishery Report**: Terese Vicente provided an update on the marine fishery and bycatch numbers. *Audio for this update begins 1:33:10 - Meeting Update – 8/12/26*

D. **YDNWR Management Update**: Spencer Rearden provided an update for the refuge. Mr. Rearden stated that the data supports a conservative approach to coho salmon management and addressed the emergency special action effective 5:00 p.m. August 12th. *Audio for this update begins at 1:36:45 - Meeting Audio – 8/12/26*

E. **Discussion of ADF&G Management considerations and discussion of possible alternatives**: Sam Decker discussed recent state management actions and asked the Working Group for comments on proposed management actions. Member Williams

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moved to postpone any decision to next week's meeting. *Audio for this update begins at 1:40:19 - Meeting Audio -8/12/26*

OLD BUSINESS:

F. Elections – Charles Guest

Elections were moved before Subsistence Reports in the agenda through a motion from Member Hoffman. Charles Guest was elected to the Commercial Fishing seat.

G. AG Decision on Area M regulations *Audio for this update begins at 2:20:02 – Meeting Audio – 8/12/26*

NEW BUSINESS:

H. ONC Letter of Support *Audio for this update begins 2:29:54 – Meeting Audio – 8/12/26*

Meeting was adjourned at 12:44 p.m.

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

- 1. Approve the agenda. *Passed (Unanimous)***
- 2. Elect Charles Guest. *Passed (Unanimous)***
- 3. Postpone state management action to next meeting. *Passed (Unanimous)***
- 4. Draft a letter supporting the Board of Fisheries actions affecting Area M. *Passed (Unanimous)***
- 5. Sign Letter of Support for ONC. *Passed (Unanimous)***
- 6. Adjourn**

COMMENTS FROM THE WORKING GROUP:

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WORKING GROUP ATTENDANCE:

MEMBER SEAT:	NAME:
DOWNRIVER ELDER	Absent
UPRIVER ELDER	Allen Simeon
LOWER RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Dr. Mike Williams, Sr
MIDDLE RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Absent
UPRIVER SUBSISTENCE	Absent
HEADWATERS SUBSISTENCE	Daniel Esai
MEMBER AT LARGE	Fritz Charles
2 nd MEMBER AT LARGE	Avery Hoffman
WESTERN INTERIOR RAC	<i>Vacant</i>
YK DELTA RAC	Absent
COMMERCIAL FISHING	Absent
SPORT FISHING	<i>Vacant</i>
PROCESSOR	<i>Vacant</i>
KRITFC	James Nicori
ADF&G	Sam Decker
CHAIR	Fritz Charles

Other Participants:		
ADF&G Comm Fish: Sean Larson, Madison Hardwig, Aaron Tiernan, Iris Fletcher, Kay Stewart, Zach Liller		
Sport Fish: John Chythlook		
Subsistence: Tim Bembenic, Jane Litvin		
USFWS: Spencer Rearden, Aaron Moses, Bryan Daniels		
OSM: Brooke McDavid		
NVN: Bryanna Shere	ONC: Avery Hoffman	Media:
KRITFC: Terese Vicente, Justin Leon, Daniel Auerbach, Andrew Magel, Kevin Whitworth	AVCP: Gabe Canfield, Jennifer Hooper	
	Government: Maridon Boario (rep for Senator Hoffman)	WG Alternates:

GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS:

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G, **department, State**), Orutsaramiut Traditional Native Council (OTNC), 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), Law Enforcement (LE), Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (KRITFC), Native Village of Napaimute (NVN), Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation (YKHC), Alaska State Troopers (AST), University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF)

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