

*Submitted by ADF&G at the request of Board Member Kluberton*

**Alaska Board of Fisheries  
Kuskokwim Subsistence Salmon Panel**

January 16, 2015

Panel Meeting Synopsis

Bethel, Alaska

Chair Kluberton opened the meeting at 9:10 a.m., and welcomed everyone, then gave an overview of the background of the formation of the panel, and topics to frame the day's discussions.

Ray Collins gave the invocation.

Panel overview:

- At the Board of Fisheries' October 2014 work session, the board accepted an agenda change request (ACR) that proposed subdividing the Kuskokwim River Chinook salmon amount reasonably necessary for subsistence (ANS), adoption of a Tier II system, or other management measures.
- Recognizing the weight of this request, the board formed the Kuskokwim Subsistence Salmon Panel and appointed three members: Tom Kluberton, Fritz Johnson, and Orville Huntington.
- The ACR is now a proposal focusing on management measures that can be implemented for the 2015 subsistence fishing season (vs allocation). The ACR will be considered by the board at the March 17–20, 2015 statewide shellfish meeting in Anchorage.
- In anticipation of the new proposal, and further proposals related to subsistence fishery management on the Kuskokwim River expected at the Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim (AYK) Finfish board meeting in January 2016, the mission of the panel is to seek public input on how to ensure an equitable distribution of subsistence salmon resources throughout the Kuskokwim River drainage and potential tools for equitable distribution in times of low abundance.
- This meeting is the first of what the panel anticipates to be a series of meetings leading up to the January 2016 AYK in-cycle meeting with several milestones for proposed solutions and board action in between.

The panel then heard agency reports:

- Jim Simon, ADF&G Division of Subsistence, gave "An Ethnographic Overview of Kuskokwim River Chinook Salmon Subsistence Fishery".
  - Household surveys: results of surveys in Kuskokwim River drainage: harvests, uses, patterns, cultural and traditional knowledge.

The panel took a break from agency reports to hear Mary Sattler's testimony.

The panel then resumed agency reports.

- Aaron Tiernan, ADF&G Division of Commercial Fisheries gave “Overview of the Kuskokwim River Chinook Salmon Subsistence Fishery”: maps, total run, escapement, subsistence harvest, speed/timing, management.

The panel heard Grant Fairbanks’ testimony.

The panel broke for lunch from 12:15 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. and came back to focus on potential solutions/tools.

- The following list is in no particular order or ranking: it is numbered only so it is easier to refer to the potential tools.
- Also, the list may not be a complete list: there may be other potential tools/solutions that panel brought forth.

- 1) Division of Commercial Fisheries:
  - a. Looking into holding the pre-season meetings in Bethel.
  - b. Looking into attending village meetings.
  - c. Looking into sonar locations.
- 2) AVCP:
  - a. Working with North Pacific Fishery Management Council to reduce bycatch.
  - b. Will request villages to adopt a moratorium for summer 2015.
  - c. With Tanana Chiefs, planning steering committee meeting in early February for Inter-Tribal Fish Commission for a March or early April meeting.
  - d. AVCP villages developing own management plan in March 2015.
- 3) Time:
  - a. Open with restrictions such as 4-inch only two days of the week to allow harvest of non-salmon species; as setnets (Proposal 271), not drifting.
  - b. Close the fishery:
    - i. In May; May 1.
    - ii. Right after ice goes out; but if fishing is allowed, limit it to 6-inch, 25 fathom length, 45 meshes.
    - iii. Until fish are in the river.
    - iv. From May to June 30.
    - v. From May 15 through June 30.
    - vi. Until after the peak of the run.
    - vii. Before the ice goes out.
  - c. Alternate days of fishing (windows) when gear liberalization (6-inch gillnets) is implemented following a 75% Bethel test fish passage trigger point.
  - d. Rolling closures, either on 4-inch or 6-inch gear.
  - e. After Chinook salmon have passed, open with 6-inch gear for chums, sockeye salmon.
- 4) Gear:
  - a. Nets:
    - i. More shallow depth on 4-inch net: up to 25 or 30 [meshes].
    - ii. Limit depth on 6-inch gear.
    - iii. Prohibit 4-inch mesh in the refuge or along the entire river.
    - iv. Allow drifting with 4-inch mesh.

- v. Eliminate 4-inch mesh: allow only 6-inch mesh on the entire river, 45 meshes, 25 fathoms long (concern that 4-inch mesh is killing Chinook salmon).
  - vi. Allow only 4-inch set nets.
  - vii. Allow only one 4-inch net per household.
  - viii. No nets across or in spawning tributaries.
  - ix. Only allow 4-inch nets in nonsalmon streams.
  - x. Maintain 4-inch or less mesh restrictions in 2015 with up to 2 openings per week, until the Kuskokwim River Subsistence Salmon Working Group and the area manager determines that 75% of the Chinook salmon run has passed the Bethel test fishery.
  - xi. 4-inch or less mesh, fish wheels, beach seines or dip nets only beginning May 15, 2015 (or potential of dip net/beach seine only openings – no retention of Chinook salmon with this gear).
  - xii. 4-inch mesh 29 meshes set nets.
  - xiii. Proposals 271 and 272.
- b. Fishwheels:
- i. Community village fish wheel permit in middle and upper river.
  - ii. Operate fishwheels during times of Chinook salmon closure.
  - iii. Attendance and livebox not necessary until Chinook have passed/not running in the area.
  - iv. Use livebox to use for village distribution at the end of the run (if small harvestable surplus of Chinook salmon available).
- c. No nets, fishwheels, wood cutting or jet boat traffic on spawning grounds.
- i. No nets or fishwheels within one mile of tributary mouth.
- 5) Allow beach seining and dip nets (require release of Chinook salmon).
- a. Extended openings with dip nets to allow fishing during better conditions (tide, timing).
- 6) Other management solutions
- a. Assessment:
    - i. Install weir on Salmon River.
    - ii. Put sonar in the right place: ask local people.
  - b. Delay the coho salmon commercial opening.
  - c. Nested ANS incorporated into inriver goal:
    - i. Divide ANS between different portions of the river: 1) downriver of Bethel; 2) Bethel; 3) upriver of Bethel.
    - ii. Use Bethel Test Fishery to assess the in river goal.
    - iii. Inriver goal would be set by adding ANS onto escapement goal.
    - iv. Harvest above test fishery incorporated into inriver goal.
  - d. Permit system:
    - i. Free (no cost) household permit, allotment (limit) attached to the permit, one Chinook per household; permits available only locally.
    - ii. Personal limits that are the same for everybody.
    - iii. Tier I: Incorporating customary and traditional use criteria and patterns of use (e.g., smokehouse); potential harvest limits and/or length of years included in eligibility score.

- iv. Tier II.
  - 1. Need framework devised and ready for implementation; need drop dead number on when to implement.
- v. Further exploration of community harvest permit potential, especially in relation to fish wheels and distribution from live boxes.
  - e. No commercial sale in districts 4 and 5.
  - f. Further investigation/pursuit of potential enhancement projects.
- 7) Outreach/Communications:
  - a. Increase education, like with the moose moratorium.
  - b. Hold meetings with state and federal, agencies, fish commissions.
  - c. Managers living in the area year round.
  - d. Make sure test fish continue to be distributed equitably (through ONC).
- 8) Water quality, crowding:
  - a. Monitor hovercraft emissions.
  - b. Work with Alaska Department of Natural Resources where jet boats operate.

Chair Kluberton asked board members Johnson and Huntington for ideas of a board-generated proposal to generate at the March 2015 board meeting.

- Member Huntington is interested in working on fish wheel proposals for the long term, if he is still on the board. He is working on a proposal for the Yukon fishwheels, to help them not catch Chinook salmon. For the short term, he wants to stop the abuse of the 4-inch mesh, and allow them to be used only when there is no Chinook salmon. We have to conserve Chinook salmon for future generations.
- Member Johnson is interested in time and area closures, windows for escapement, and interested in options for the choke point areas. He thinks we could use the tools (windows and dip nets) that we have before writing a lot more regulations. He is also interested in community outreach, especially the elder exchange idea. The department needs to make a commitment to windows of escapement.

Chair Kluberton also explained a general timeframe for future panel activities:

- After the board's March 2015 meeting, the panel members should individually build a list of longer-term ideas over summer 2015.
- Potential for board members for pre-season meeting, tentatively scheduled for March 25-27, 2015 in Bethel.
- Potential for board members to make trips to Kuskokwim River villages over the summer.
- Panel to reconvene in fall begin to look at ideas to write into board-generated proposals at the October worksession for the regular cycle Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim meeting in January 2016.

Chair Kluberton also echoed Member Huntington's earlier advice of not relying on the board or the panel to solve the problems, and encouraged people to put in their own proposals.

Chair Kluberton asked if the panel was OK with several ideas:

- Using 4-inch nets only as set nets, and that the time they are used be limited. Majority of panel members were in agreement (Robert Aloysius disagreed, stating 4-inch mesh should not be used at all).
- Allowing fish wheels to operate when Chinook salmon retention is closed to subsistence as long as they are attended and all Chinook salmon are returned to the river. There were no objections.
- Considering the following items for the agenda for a potential fall meeting: a nested ANS, an inriver goal, some sort of permit and household limit, and a Tier II framework. There were no objections.
- Send ideas of summer visit times and locations to be emailed to Glenn Haight. There were no objections.
- If state management is going off the rails, file an emergency petition.

Adjourned at 4:30.

### **Meeting Attendance**

#### **Panel Members**

Robert Aloysius, At Large  
 Timothy Andrew, AVCP  
 Barbara Carlson, Stony-Holitna AC  
 James Charles, Lower Kuskokwim AC  
 Ray Collins, McGrath AC and Western Interior RAC  
 Grant Fairbanks, At Large  
 Dan Gillikin, Kuskokwim Native Association  
 Bev Hoffman, At Large  
 Nick Kameroff, Central Kuskokwim AC  
 Mark Leary, Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group  
 Robert Lekander, Bethel AC  
 Myron Naneng, AVCP  
 Art Nelson, Bering Sea Fishermen's Association  
 Greg Roczicka, ONC  
 Mary Sattler, At Large, Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

#### **Board of Fisheries**

Tom Kluberton, Panel Chair, (Vice Chair Board of Fisheries)  
 Orville Huntington, Board of Fisheries  
 Fritz Johnson, Board of Fisheries

#### **ADF&G Staff**

Lisa Olson, Division of Subsistence  
 Jim Simon, Division of Subsistence  
 Hiroko Ikuta, Division of Subsistence  
 Forrest Bowers, Division of Commercial Fisheries  
 Dan Bergstrom, Division of Commercial Fisheries  
 Aaron Tiernan, Division of Commercial Fisheries  
 Jennifer Yuhas, Division of Commercial Fisheries

Tom Taube, Division of Sport Fish  
John Chythlook, Division of Sport Fish  
Glenn Haight, Boards Support  
Holly Carroll, Boards Support