

Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission
Weekly River-Wide Teleconference
Monday, July 12, 2021 | 10am AKDT

Join by computer: <https://zoom.us/j/5694903415>

Join toll-free by phone: 833-548-0282

Meeting ID: 569 490 3415

About:

Every Monday of king salmon season, the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (KRITFC) and Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge (YDNWR) co-host a river-wide teleconference for fishermen along the Kuskokwim River to call in and discuss fishing regulations, closures and openers, fish camp updates, Traditional Knowledge, and management action. This call is held toll-free on Zoom and open to the public. In 2021, it will be held Mondays at 10am from May 17 to July 12.

Hosts on this call:

Mary Peltola, Executive Director of KRITFC

Boyd Blihovde, Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge Manager

People on this call: 8

Summary:

- Fishermen are catching chums in the lower river tributaries, some at 2:1 chum:sockeye ratios.
- AVCP, YDNWR, and other organizations are working with Yukon agencies and communities to deliver fish from Bristol Bay to Yukon families. Deliveries should hopefully happen in around a month, logistics pending.
- Federal management has continued into July due to Chinook and possibly chum salmon concerns. There is a drift opportunity on Friday, July 16, and set net opportunities on July 17 and 18 in Federal waters of the Kuskokwim.
- Berry picking season is just around the corner!

Full Notes:

- **Mary Peltola – KRITFC:** Good morning everyone. It seems like a lot of staff on the call, but we like to hold these even when there aren't a lot of stakeholders so we can have some public comment. It's a good way to share information, ask questions, and get feedback. I got a text yesterday from Tim Andrew saying that folks who are fishing at the lower mouth tributaries, like by the Pailleq slough, are reporting catching chums. I don't know in what quantity, but they're reporting harvest of some late-arriving chums. I set a net on Saturday evening and checked it yesterday around 7pm, and it had 25 reds. It's a short net, but it did really well.
- **Boyd Blihovde – USFWS/YDNWR:** That's good, glad to hear that!
- **Barbara Johnson – Native Village of Georgetown:** I know that some people went out but I haven't heard back reports. I know people are planning on going next week also. There are a quite a few

Georgetown Tribal members living in Bethel, and they've been going out and fishing. I haven't heard anything bad or good from them.

- **Mary Peltola – KRITFC:** Jennifer, have you heard anything about sending a tender here on Friday?
- **Jennifer Hooper – AVCP:** Vivian Korthius has been waiting to hear back. I was on a call this morning with multiple Yukon River agencies and organizations. It sounds like, at this point, they are looking to the Bristol Bay area for large quantities of fish that will be distributed at some point between lower and upper river. Kwik'pak in Emmonak and another person has a processing business up in Fairbanks. The timeline with the logistics means they're not planning on sending tenders down to the area. They're going to be frozen, barged to Anchorage, and they're looking to get discounted rates on freight space to Emmo and Anchorage. We need to look at ways to get fish from those hubs to the community. Realistically, we're looking at probably a month out.
- **Mary Peltola – KRITFC:** And looking at it, it did seem like an almost insurmountable logistical hurdle to do something from the Kuskokwim because we don't have the infrastructure for flash freezing or processing. This makes a lot of sense. I am glad there was a willingness to help out. Thank you, Boyd, for being open-minded to let that happen. Good morning, Adolph, are you catching chums down near the Pailleq?
- **Adolph Lupie – Tuntutuliak:** I have no idea on what's happening across the river, but around here, they're catching chums in a 2:1 ratio. 2 chums to every red. Some of them getting colored, maybe the ones that swim in early.
- **Mary Peltola – KRITFC:** I caught one on Friday, and it already had some purple stripes.
- **Adolph Lupie – Tuntutuliak:** And a long nose! But they're still fishing around here for reds and chums to hang.
- **Jennifer Hooper – AVCP:** Mary, I wanted to add, there's been some interest on the Kuskokwim already to fish for the Yukon. Tim Andrew specifically has already fished for communities on the Yukon. The Lion's Club has a big freezer van that was donated a couple years ago by the SeaShare program. He was given permission to store fish in there until there's a way to transport them. ADF&G out of Emmonak was able to share their test fishery catches with a lot of lower Yukon communities, but have not been able to get anything to the coast in Hooper Bay/Scammon Bay/Chevak area or above Saint Mary's. I was going to send you a message, Boyd, wanting to follow up on Refuge planes being able to transport a small amount of fish. I had a request to get a point of contact for the Refuge for anyone who's gone fishing. I also wanted to give our family's fishing report. Friday was the first time we were able to go out fishing. We went out for 1.5 hours or so, just 3 drifts, and got a lot of reds, 32, and 3 kings and 3 chums. They did really well in just a short amount of time, just out by Joe Pete's.
- **Boyd Blihovde – USFWS/YDNWR:** We hope to have a Beaver on floats here later this week. If the weather cooperates, that would be useful to flying slightly more gear and weight. As you said, Jennifer, it's not going to provide that many people with fish – but at least it's something. We've cooperated with folks before on things that are not specifically Refuge missions. I don't think there would be trouble making these kind of flights. We just need to coordinate more on the condition of the fish.
- **Mary Peltola – KRITFC:** Who should the point of contact be?
- **Boyd Blihovde – USFWS/YDNWR:** Robert Sundown would be the best contact as we get closer. I'll let him know we've tentatively agreed to do this, so when you contact him, he'll know it's coming. We've mentioned it, it's just a matter of timing. Maybe after this Friday, or earlier if there are fish available.

- **Jennifer Hooper – AVCP:** YRDFA shares the same concern I have because the numbers here on the Kuskokwim aren't great either. But for people who have a few fish put away, it'll maybe help somebody.
- **Adolph Lupie – Tuntutuliak:** I was wondering if you could contact our Coastal Village Regional Fund. They're in Anchorage and they're one of the CDQs. I wonder if they could help out somehow on ice or freight. I have no idea if they have that kind of ability to help out.
- **Jennifer Hooper – AVCP:** CVRF has not been in any discussions I've had. I don't have regular communication with them or their staff. I don't know who to start with.
- **Mary Peltola – KRITFC:** I'm in the same boat, but that is a good idea, Adolph. Jennifer, I can call around and see if they're willing to help.
- **Jennifer Hooper – AVCP:** Last year when we were doing disaster requests, someone from CVRF did reach out and offer help. I can dig through my emails and see who that was and reach out to them.
- **Boyd Blihovde – USFWS/YDNWR:** I can give an update on where we are in the fishery. I've heard now that the ratios are starting to go back down for reds; the main pulse may have passed by Bethel, but there still are many reds in the river. Hopefully now chum will start to increase – it sounds like they are – and that's great news. It would be an interesting year for them to be this late, but late is better than never. I'm glad to hear people are catching chum down near the mouth of the river. We have Federal closures still occurring mainly for Chinook salmon that are still in the river, but partly for chum as well. There's an opener coming up on Friday again, and set net opportunities over the weekend. Unfortunately, there was an error on our Facebook page where we had Friday, July 12 listed, and people were confused because that's a wrong date. We corrected it and reposted, so hopefully that corrected it and nobody's out fishing at the wrong time. Lastly, there's been suggestions to encourage more dip netting especially for reds when the river is closed. We're hoping to do an instructional video to show folks how dipnetting can be successful. We're hoping that this week we can have some good discussions for more management and where we are in the Chinook salmon run. I'm glad to see more fish up near the Aniak Test Fishery. There's just below 2,000 fish caught up there in their total CPUE, so the numbers are getting up.
- **Mary Peltola – KRITFC:** After the opportunities this upcoming weekend – July 16, 17 and 18 – do you foresee going forward with this schedule or opening the river up?
- **Boyd Blihovde – USFWS/YDNWR:** I'm curious as to what the rest of the In-Season Managers will think. We've been talking about it at the Refuge, about where the chum run passage will be. Obviously Chinook is what we're really protecting right now, but moving to whether we want to specifically protect chum. I would like to hear back from KRITFC In-Season Managers what they think of the concern for chum, whether they are coming in, and whether we can believe the historical run average. I'm hoping to have good discussions with you all this week to get to a good answer on that.
- **Mary Peltola – KRITFC:** Thank you, Boyd. I just wasn't sure what you were thinking so far.
- **Adolph Lupie – Tuntutuliak:** Looks like this week we will be fishing down here at the mouth of the river. We'll be targeting more on picking salmonberries this week and next week. We won't be fishing that much.
- **Mary Peltola – KRITFC:** That is an excellent reminder that most people are switching gears to berry picking. How are the salmonberries down there right now?

- **Adolph Lupie – Tuntutuliak:** My brother went up to check them last week and they were still hard. They're not opened yet. There's not lots but you could fill a gallon in a day or so, if you've got good berry pickers.
- **Mary Peltola – KRITFC:** Maybe this sunshine will help them open and soften up.
- **Adolph Lupie – Tuntutuliak:** We were worried they might die of cold weather. Thank you for reminding me of this blessed good weather, quyana!
- **Mary Peltola – KRITFC:** Thanks everyone for calling in today. We will continue to hold these every Monday as long as there's Federal management.