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**Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission**

**Weekly River-Wide Teleconference**

**Tuesday, June 7, 2022 | 10am AKDT**

**Join by computer:** [https://zoom.us/j/5694903415](https://zoom.us/j/5694903415?fbclid=IwAR0Qra4bTh8OTX_3lixFS8P8p6lemmr02aDSsbCna7JxDqzX1CWofFaNxTk)

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

**Meeting ID:** 569 490 3415

**About:**

Every week of the salmon season, the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (KRITFC) hosts a river-wide teleconference for fishermen along the Kuskokwim River to call in and discuss fishing regulations, closures and openers, fish camp updates, Indigenous Knowledge, and management action. This call is held toll-free on Zoom and open to the public. In 2022, it will be held Tuesdays at 10am starting May 24 until the end of the season.

**People on this call:** 8

**Summary Notes:**

* The fishing opportunity on 06/12/22 had more effort and harvest than the 06/12/21 opportunity, with an estimated 4,700 king salmon, 60 chum salmon, and 360 sockeye salmon harvested.
* Medium to big-sized king salmon are coming in the river from the coast.
* Yukon Delta NWR and KRITFC will be meeting late this week to discuss current in-season data, including harvest estimates from the 06/16 drift opportunity, and decide on future opportunities. Managers should keep in mind the tides and monitoring chum salmon.
* If federal law enforcement officers are not respectful to you or anyone you know, let Yukon Delta NWR know.
* The next fishing opportunity is 06/16, 6am to 6pm, drift or set gillnets with 6” mesh.

**Community / Fishing Updates**

* **Steven Alexie – Napaskiak:** Lots of people fishing on 06/12. Usually fish hard, but didn’t prepare myself gas-wise. Did 3 long drifts and 1 short one. Usually wait for the tides to come in. Pretty sure Adolph Lupie has mentioned before that from Napaskiak on down, we rely on the tides to bring the fish in. The gas station didn’t open. Caught 2 kings, some people caught up to 15. Compared to prior years, I usually fish until after high tide, and catch about 15-20 kings. No chums this year. If I’m not mistaken, four years ago we had a hot summer, and lots of these chums died and floated down the river. I think these tide charts are pre-made. If I can make a recommendation, look at the tide charts before planning openers.
* **Paige Petersen ­– AVCP:** Didn’t fish, been focusing on the fire in St. Mary’s. Over 100,00 acres or so now.
  + **LaMont Albertson – Aniak, KRITFC:** Fires have pretty much destroyed berry picking areas upriver near Aniak, according to the people up there.
  + **Boyd Blihovde – Yukon Delta NWR:** Looked at the website, and the East Fork fire, near St. Mary’s, is 108,000 acres. The Apoon Pass fire, north of Mountain Village, is over 10,000 acres. There’s another fire north of Nyac mine and is concerning people there.
* **Kevin Whitworth – KRITFC:** Mr. Alexie, can you elaborate on the timing of the openers with the tides?
  + **Steven Alexie – Napaskiak:** We catch well with the incoming tides until it’s flat. Then it slows down, but you still catch.
* **Steven Alexie – Napaskiak:** Was hoping someone from the State was on this call, I didn’t like how they flexed their muscles that they’re not happy with the openings down here. For them to say that they have so much knowledge and we should see chums by now. From my experience, the chums are on the way. I don’t know how much there will be, but they usually peak around July 4. We’ll know how much then. I heard the State has call-ins every Wednesday, so I plan to call in then. We’ve come a long way with federal government and KRITFC management. I used to be disappointed that we had to wait a long time before we opened, and a few days seems a long time when you’re waiting for word to come in.
  + **Terese Schomogyi – KRITFC:** Quyana for that feedback. I’ll make an effort to explicitly invite Nick Smith from ADF&G to these calls. You mentioned the State’s Working Group meeting, which is every Wednesday of the season. KRITFC and USFWS are always at those meetings and it’s a good chance to hear fishing updates. Dial 1-800-315-6338 and enter 56756#. Spread the word about these weekly teleconferences, too.

**Recent Fishing Opportunity Updates**

* **Boyd Blihovde – Yukon Delta NWR:** USFWS flew twice on the 06/12 opportunity, one at 10:15am and another at 3:00pm, to count boats. There were a lot of boats out at the morning, probably taking advantage of the incoming tide. Heard about a lot of snags because the water was low in the morning. We counted 344 drift nets and 14 set nets. It was really busy. Our observations showed that people around midday stopped fishing, though there were 289 drift nets and 19 set nets in the afternoon. Busy time compared to last year. To go over the numbers, KRITFC, ONC, and USFWS worked on a harvest estimate. There were an estimated 5,120 total salmon, 4,700 Chinook salmon, 60 chum salmon, and 360 sockeye salmon harvested in the lower river. Thanks to the community-based harvest monitors in the villages who got us to that number. That’s a little over 1,000 more Chinook salmon this year compared to last, though there was more effort this year than last. We are looking at this year as similar to last year, maybe a little bit better. Seems like many folks went downriver, close to the Johnson, with significant harvest there.
* *Next fishing opportunity is 06/16, 6am to 6pm, drift or set gillnets with 6” mesh.*
* **Terese Schomogyi – KRITFC:** The harvest estimate for the 06/08 set net opportunity. There were an estimate 140 total salmon, 120 Chinook salmon, and 20 sockeye salmon. There were no chum salmon reports.
  + **Boyd Blihovde – Yukon Delta NWR:** USFWS is hoping the set net harvests weren’t as high because of high water and not because the run timing is off. Our set net numbers were lower than 2021, but the drift net openers had higher harvests with lower water levels. Hope that people will be able to take advantage of the tides on 06/16, like Mr. Alexie said.

**Federal Management Actions**

* **Steven Alexie – Napaskiak:** What’s the management plan if the numbers continue to come in good? If it’s better than the forecast, are there going to be more subsistence opportunities?
* **Boyd Blihovde – Yukon Delta NWR:** We are meeting today with KRITFC In-Season Managers, and we will be watching the 06/16 opener closely. I hope that we can meet again on Friday so we can discuss this very thing. I hope we can safely announce another opener and still protect fish to get to their spawning grounds.
* **Steven Alexie – Napaskiak:** I think looking at the 06/16 opening, and then letting fish swim up from 06/18 to 06/25, then possibly opening sometime from 06/26 through 07/02 would be good. That date would be a good indicator if the chum are coming in strong, and by then, the majority of the kings would have passed the high concentrated area from Tuluksak on down. Lower river, people are fishing for 4-6 families, but the farther upriver, the smaller the families and lower the catches. Please pass that on.
* **Kevin Whitworth – KRITFC:** Good question, Mr. Alexie. Just to add to Boyd, our in-season management meeting this Friday will be important. We will be compiling all the in-season data from openers, Bethel Test Fish, Bethel sonar, local observations. It’s still too early to know what the run is doing, and the forecast doesn’t really get updated until 06/20. You mentioned between 06/26 and 07/02, and that’s a good time period to have an idea of Chinook salmon. Chum will be more challenging. We hope to provide an opportunity with advance notice so people can get ready. That’s the balance.

**More Fishing Updates (06/12)**

* **Emmitt Nicori – Napakiak, Yukon Delta NWR:** Fishing went well for a lot of people. I stopped fishing after the tide came in.
* **Christopher Tulik – Yukon Delta NWR:** Left from Bethel before 6am and made our first set below Napakiak. We drifted about an hour and picked up before the Johnson. There weren’t many boats in the morning. We moved below the Johnson, and there were a few more boats drifting along the sandbars and banks. I guess they were using shallow nets. We moved closer to the bank and snagged, our net ripped pretty bad. We managed to pull it off, head back around 9am, mended it, and went back. There were more boats between Napaskiak and Bethel. My son fished later and returned with 3 fish.
* **Paul Cleveland – Quinhagak:** One of my cousins went out yesterday, and he had about 20 fish in the boat. That’s pretty good for about 4 hours of setting. They’re picking up in the Bay. He caught a chum but it was medium-sized.
* **LaMont Albertson – Aniak, KRITFC:** Upriver, fishing is slow, and they are not catching like we are up here.
* **Kevin Whitworth – KRITFC:** Got a text from my friend in Tunt, and he said there are medium and big-sized kings near Kwig and Kong, in the North Bay area.
* **Boyd Blihovde – Yukon Delta NWR:** My family went out with our short net, just for something for our kids to do. The wind picked up in the afternoon and blew our net around. I didn’t see many people bringing in fish in the late afternoon. Important for people to pay attention to the tides.

**USFWS Updates**

* **Boyd Blihovde – Yukon Delta NWR:** Our law enforcement officers say people are doing well complying with the regulations. We think LE is being professional and cordial, but if we hear anything, we try to correct that. We appreciate anyone giving us feedback. We heard about some changes we want to make to our maps, and we are trying to work with the State to be as clear and concise on our information as possible. I want to complement KRITFC for doing a good job on getting information out on Facebook. That’s very helpful to people to go and get the information.

**Closing**

* **Steven Alexie – Napaskiak:** Kevin, you mentioned you were looking for a pre-hung net? There are bales of nets in Napakiak, if you can hang your own net.
  + **Kevin Whitworth – KRITFC:** Thanks for that info! Appreciate it.
* **Terese Schomogyi – KRITFC:** Wrap it up for today. Looking forward to your fishing updates next week.