



**Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission
Weekly River-Wide Teleconference
Tuesday, July 12, 2022 | 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 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: 13

Summary Notes:

- This is the last weekly teleconference of 2022.
- Fishing is slowing down. People have caught a good number of sockeye this year, and, though still very poor, the king and chum salmon runs appear better than 2021.
- The Kwethluk River weir, Takotna River weir, and other Kuskokwim drainage weirs are operational for the season.
- This Thursday will be the last KYUK Fish Talk of the season.
- KRITFC is hiring a full-time Finance and Grants Manager.
- Almost time for berry picking!

Full Notes:

Welcome

- **Paul Cleveland – Quinhagak:** Looking at the FAA cameras. Looks really smoky in the headwaters.
 - **Kevin Whitworth – KRITFC:** It was terrible in McGrath last night, and we closed the windows to keep the smoke out, which was really hard because it was 80 degrees out too. Now we're getting a southwest wind to bring up the nice clean Bethel air.

- **Kevin Whitworth – KRITFC:** Good morning, welcome to our call. This will likely be our last call of the season. About 95% of the Chinook salmon run is passed Bethel Test Fish, and within the next 5 days, 90% of the chum run will have passed Bethel. Sockeye are also getting close to complete. Based on participation in this call and these numbers, this will probably be our last call.

Fishing Updates, Harvest Estimates, & Next Fishing Opportunities

- **Kevin Whitworth – KRITFC:** There was a drift gillnet opportunity on 07/09 from 6am–6pm and a set net opportunity on 07/10 from 6am–10pm. Can anyone share what they caught or observed?
- **Paul Cleveland – Quinhagak:** Looking out my window, it's high tide right now, and there's not a single boat out there today. I think that means most people are finished fishing for kings and reds in the Bay. Some are waiting for silvers.
- **Kevin Whitworth – KRITFC:** How have people been doing for chum salmon in the Bay?
- **Paul Cleveland – Quinhagak:** There's pretty few. I haven't heard of much down there. I haven't been on the river lately, just been staying home this time.
- **Kevin Whitworth – KRITFC:** Thank you, Paul. And just so everyone knows, the Kuskokwim Bay is under a different management. They're opened 6 days a week and closed on Sundays for subsistence.
 - **Paul Cleveland – Quinhagak:** That's right. The last Sunday closure was supposed to be on 07/10, but I haven't heard otherwise.
- **Kevin Whitworth – KRITFC:** There's another opportunity coming up on Saturday, 07/16. It's a set gillnet opportunity from 6am–10pm on the main stem Kuskokwim from the mouth to the Kalskag bluffs. For Federally qualified subsistence users only. Above the Kalskag bluffs, it's open 24/7 for drift and set gillnets. I think that's the only opportunity on the table at this time.
 - **Boyd Blihovde – YDNWR:** Unless you count the fishing in Aniak Box and the alternative gear types, that's the next opener.
- **Terese Schomogyi – KRITFC:** There will be a harvest estimate produced from the 07/09 drift opportunity. Effort was really low, according to reports from KRITFC village harvest monitors. It was also slow around the Bethel boat harbor. People were mostly catching sockeye, but still some kings and chums. Bill Bechtol and I will be producing that estimate soon, and it'll be the last one of the season. We're not monitoring the harvests from the 07/10 or 07/16 set net opportunities.
- **Boyd Blihovde – YDNWR:** Aaron flew the boat counts for us on 07/09. Maybe he can relay what he saw.
- **Aaron Moses – YDNWR:** I did 2 flights. I counted about 79-85 boats on the morning flight, the majority between Napaskiak and Tuluksak. There wasn't much effort between Akiak and Akiachak, but a bigger bump by Tuluksak. The second flight was about the same. There wasn't much effort in the whole 12 hours. Even during the flights you could tell people were going home, they were done pretty quickly.
- **Kevin Whitworth – KRITFC:** This is a good sign that effort is down. There are a lot of sockeye in the river right now, and Chinook are making their way into their spawning grounds. Seems like people are mostly done fishing for sockeye, Chinook, and chums, and are waiting for coho. I've heard even in the middle and upper river people are waiting for silvers, and they're starting to run around the river to pick berries. There's a shift in harvests and subsistence seasons right now.
- **Adolph Lupie – Tuntutuliak:** Tuntutuliak households have mostly met their fish for the winter. There were a few that went out on 07/09. They caught mostly chums, few reds. In the past, this is the month we used to fish for chums, when we had lots of dogs. Now we fish for them for the people allergic to coho salmon to keep them healthy. This month, it's only when we want fresh fish. We'll get one fish for

dinner or supper. Salmon berries are getting ready. We'll be picking those this month until they're really ripe and burst out. I saw the Takotna weir on Facebook, and I'm glad they finished it and are starting to count on it.

- **Kevin Whitworth – KRITFC:** Adolph mentioned July being a chum salmon month. That's the same up in McGrath, some people even slow down fishing up here because there's too many chum salmon. That's except the folks with dog teams who want chums. As of 07/10, about 40,000 chum salmon have passed the sonar. This is better than last year, when 10,000 chum salmon passed the sonar at this point. Sockeye salmon on 07/10, we're looking at 513,000 past the sonar; last year, it was about the same. Sockeye are doing really well on the Kuskokwim. For Chinook salmon, about 122,000 past the sonar; last year, it was about 85,000.
- **Emmitt Nicori – YDNWR:** On 07/09, I went out for a few drifts and I got 2 kings and 60 reds, with very few chum. Lot of folks in Napakiak have met their harvest goal for the year for reds.

In-Season Project Updates, Weekly Teleconference & KYUK Fish Talk

- **Boyd Blihovde – YDNWR:** Frank Harris with USFWS sent out an update about the Kwethluk River weir. They're getting good king passage, it's about 4,000 kings passed the weir now. We hope it'll keep going up for the next few weeks at least. That's good news.
- **Kevin Whitworth – KRITFC:** The Takotna River weir is operational. We're a little behind, about the same as last year when we were flooded out in July. This year, we got installed on 07/09, and our goal was 07/01. We overcame a lot of hurdles. Anyways, we are operational now. We got new rails built, a new jackhammer and boat motor. The techs have been doing lots of maintenance there. We are having to rebuild. Sounds like Kwethluk is operational. There are others in the Kusko drainage, I haven't seen an update for those. Usually it comes out really soon. Terese also mentioned that the harvest estimate project that KRITFC, ONC, and USFWS have worked on all summer is wrapping up. 07/09 will be our last harvest estimate.
- **Kevin Whitworth – KRITFC:** We're going to have Fish Talk on KYUK this Thursday at 2pm, hosted by Sam Berlin. This is a great show, please call in. KRITFC and USFWS are there, and sometimes ADF&G. It sounds like this might be the last one of the season.
- **Boyd Blihovde – YDNWR:** Heard it's shifting to Berry Talk soon. Chris spoke with Sam yesterday.
- **Chris:** I talked with Sam and this will be the last one. He called me yesterday and said it's up to us if we'd like to have another one, but I told him it'd be nice to have a last one to close out the season.
- **Adolph Lupie – Tuntutuliak:** The drone project update, last time I heard it'll be soon but I don't know how soon it'll be. Also, I finally found out about the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, that they have 15 members: 11 voting and 4 non-voting members. State of Washington and State of Alaska governors appoint the voting members. That's what I found out a couple days ago.
- **Kevin Whitworth – KRITFC:** The drone project is a research project that KRITFC has been doing to see if we can supplement weir counts, trying to figure out another way to monitor streams. They do this in Kodiak and other parts of the State, and we wanted to see if we could do it on the Kuskokwim. Emmitt Nicori and Joe Spaeder tried this a few years ago and did count some Chinook salmon. Right now, we don't have the funding to do this, so it's not something we're pursuing this year. One project we are doing is kind of in-line with drone projects. Right now, we are looking to deploy samplers that collect water on the Kwethluk and Takotna and send them to a lab. They process these samples and see what fish DNA is in the water, and they can count how many fish are in the system. This might be another way to monitor our salmon, through eDNA. We are doing it at the Kwethluk River weir and Takotna River weir this year. Next year, we will have money in place to do this again, along with the George

River run by ADF&G. As far as NPFMC and its makeup, you're right, Adolph. Washington, Oregon, and Alaska governors appoint people.

Salmon Bycatch & Intercept Update

- **Kevin Whitworth – KRITFC:** As of 07/08, Bering Sea bycatch was about 5,500 [Chinook salmon](#) and about 4,700 [chum salmon](#). That fishery is just getting going. [Area M intercept](#) numbers as of 07/10: 579,000 chum salmon have been caught in the June South Peninsula fishery. Last year, almost 2 million chum were caught in that fishery.
- **Boyd Blihovde – YDNWR:** Speaking of Area M and bycatch issue, there was a [good story aired by KYUK](#). It had a lot of quotes from KRITFC, and Fritz Charles. It was a pretty long story and I thought it was insightful. It quoted Doug Vincent-Lang about how their estimates on capture rates have been off in the past, and they were surprised by the catch last year. It had a good summary of the issue.
- **Kevin Whitworth – KRITFC:** I'm looking at it on their website now. Thank you, Boyd.
- **Christopher Tulik – YDNWR:** I had a question last week about the monitors in the Bering Sea. I thank Terese for doing quick research on that. It gave me some answers to the question I had about the fish that were being recorded, but it didn't say to which specific river the fish that are bycaught on the Bering Sea. They take the genetic data of all the fish that are bycaught. It does mention that the fish that return to Western Alaska rivers, but it didn't mention specific rivers. It's a huge sea out there, and we have huge river systems. People had these questions in mind.

KRITFC Updates

- **Kevin Whitworth – KRITFC:** KRITFC is hiring a Finance and Grants M0anager. We're open to hire somebody in Anchorage or Bethel, though we're not specific on the location. It's a full-time position and we really need somebody. If you know someone who is good with finance and would be good for us, let us know. We also have a Jesuit Volunteer starting with us in August. His name is Andrew, and he's got a background in biology and GIS. He'll be starting at a good time to learn during the winter and then help us next summer during the project season. Terese will be shifting from her position as a Jesuit Volunteer and starting full-time with KRITFC in the next couple weeks.

Closing

- **Kevin Whitworth – KRITFC:** Berries are coming soon. Terese was saying there's already some blue ones in Bethel. I'm a little concerned since it's been such a dry summer.
- **Adolph Lupie – Tuntutuliak:** I have a research paper that I use. It's from ADF&G Division of Subsistence, published in October 2013. It's Technical Paper No. 382, socioeconomic patterns and salmon use in subsistence fisheries, historical trends in 5 Kuskokwim communities in the 2012 season. I use that, it's from Tuntutuliak, Kwethluk, Kalskag, Sleetmute, and Nikolai. They interviewed those communities in the summertime. I use that once in a great while. Most people interviewed are gone, but they tell stories about the history up to 2012.
- **Kevin Whitworth – KRITFC:** Thank you, Adolph. If you want more updated papers and research, reach out to Terese or me. We can help you get those.
- **Paul Cleveland – Quinhagak:** You said this is our last call-in for the year?
 - **Kevin Whitworth – KRITFC:** I think so, since we're close to the end of the season. It'll be our next one til next year. We'll post on our Facebook to let people know.

- **Kevin Whitworth – KRITFC:** Thank you everyone, this is a great call for us. We're grateful to have the YDNWR Manager and staff online, and having all of you online, too. We appreciate you all.
- **Adolph Lupie – Tuntutuliak:** Since it's the last call, I'd like to thank USFWS and ADFG getting me more understanding about the conservation, and you Kevin and other people listening along the Kuskokwim that speak out on Yuk-to-Yuk talk show from my own village. I got a little bit of knowledge and understanding. People here in the village, most of them know about conservation now. People who move to fish camp are happy because the salmon are a little bit better this year, like you mentioned. We're done just in time before the flies lay maggots in our dry fish. Good morning, and bye-bye!
- **Kevin Whitworth – KRITFC:** See you at Berry Talk soon!