

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Office of Subsistence Management
Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program

Four Sub-Regional Planning Session Meetings
In the AVCP Region

Final Report for Study 01-019
Cooperative Agreement Number 70181-1-J367

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February 2003

Final Report Summary Page

Title: Four Sub-Regional Planning Session Meetings in the AVCP Region

Study Number: 01-019

Cooperative Agreement Number: 70181-1-J367

Investigator: Jennifer C. Hooper, Association of Village Council Presidents, Inc. (AVCP), Natural Resources Department

Geographic Area: Kuskokwim River Drainage and Yukon River Drainage

Information Type: Stock Status and Trends; Subsistence Fishery Harvest; Traditional Ecological Knowledge

Issue(s) Addressed: Historic, current and future salmon stocks and returns; current management concerns; up-river and down-river catch (commercial, Subsistence and sport) concerns (of all fisheries and fish species); actions taken by the managing boards and agencies; current and future research projects and results; other issues of interest.

Study Cost: \$34,764.57

Study Duration: April 1, 2001 – December 31, 2002 (Extended from December 31, 2001 through modification to original agreement)

Key Words: ADF&G, AVCP, Coastal Area, commercial, Lower Kuskokwim Area, Lower Yukon Area, planning, salmon, sport fish, sub-regional, Subsistence

Data Information: *Description* – The information and data collected was all anecdotal and verbal. This was a project funded specifically to collect fisheries information from local people from communities within the AVCP region.

Report Availability: Please contact either the author or Alaska Resources Library and Information Services to obtain a copy of this report.

Citation: N/A

Introduction:

The purpose of these sub-regional meetings were to bring community members who lived in closer geographic areas, within the AVCP Region, and who generally shared the same resources, together, to discuss and share any information they had in regards to their fisheries. We were looking to find out any issues, questions concerns and/or comments they might have had on their fisheries. We were also interested in determining where research topics or issues could be identified and then later developed.

Objectives:

The AVCP Region (56 villages) has four main areas within that share the same concerns and issues. They are: the Lower Yukon, the Coastal Area, the Lower Kuskokwim, and the Central/Upper Kuskokwim. We were looking to bring together people from each area that has similar concerns and issues, along with the managing agencies, to meet and discuss those concerns together, face to face.

Methods:

Four meetings were scheduled in three of the four sub-regional areas mentioned above – the Coastal area, the Lower Kuskokwim area, and the Lower Yukon area. The fourth area, the Central/Upper Kuskokwim area was to be scheduled by the Kuskokwim Native Association (KNA) under a separate grant agreement (was included in our original proposal idea though).

The proposed sites were Tununak (Coastal area), Bethel (Lower Kuskokwim area), Emmonak (Lower Yukon area) and Aniak (Central/Upper Kuskokwim area). The only location which was changed of the three meetings AVCP was responsible for hosting was for the Coastal area. The Tununak Council was contacted initially and they suggested that another village be chosen to host the meeting. Therefore, the village of Toksook Bay was contacted and they happily accepted as the meeting location for the Coastal area.

Each meeting was to include representatives from AVCP, the state and federal agencies, villages within that particular sub-region, and anyone else interested. AVCP coordinate with the different organizations to schedule dates, and took care of the travel/perdiem arrangements for all the villages, and the AVCP staff. The original proposal included monies for state and federal agency representatives to attend all meetings.

For the few agency representatives who did attend or attempted to attend the meetings requiring travel, they opted to use their own means to travel. The one agency representative who did attend the Lower Yukon sub-regional meeting did join the AVCP village representatives on a charter to Emmonak as the decision for him to attend that meeting was made last minute and there was room on the plane.

Results:

The summaries for each of the three sub-regional meetings AVCP was responsible for can be found at the end of this report as follows:

Attachment A - The Coastal Sub-Regional Planning Session Meeting Summary

Attachment B - The Lower Kuskokwim Sub-Regional Planning Session Meeting Summary

Attachment C - The Lower Yukon Sub-Regional Planning Session Meeting Summary

Discussion:

Within each meeting summary described above is all discussion points and topics developed during the course of each meeting.

Conclusions:

It was concluded that there are many issues and concerns that the communities within the AVCP region have regarding their fisheries – all species. Two of the significant issues brought up in each meeting were the extreme importance of Subsistence to the people and the need to use the traditional knowledge the elders hold in managing, studying or regulating the various fisheries.

Recommendations:

The meeting summaries must be reevaluated from time to time to see what sorts of projects or studies have been or could be developed and implemented to try and help answer some of the original points brought up. The communities must also be surveyed at some point in the future, say in five years, to determine whether the same concerns and issues remain or whether new and different ones have developed.

ATTACHMENT A

AVCP Coastal Sub-Regional Planning Session Meeting Summary

(FWS Agreement No: 701811J367)

Date: August 22-23, 2002

Location: Toksook Bay, Alaska

Preparations:

7/30/03: A letter was faxed to the villages in this particular sub-region, as identified by the Natural Resources Department, explaining the grant received by AVCP and the reason for our holding these sub-regional meetings. It expressed our intent in bringing representatives from the different villages together and our interest in hearing about any fisheries issues or concerns the people might have regarding their different fisheries. I indicated that the different agencies, namely ADF&G and USFWS, were invited as well. The date of the meeting had been set for August 20-21, 2002, in the village of Toksook Bay. As with all meetings held in the AVCP region, it was imperative to schedule and determine a date between Subsistence activities, fishing, salmonberry and blackberry picking in this particular instance. We requested that the villages respond with their chosen representative in a timely matter, in order for travel and the various arrangements to be made. (A copy is attached.)

8/7/02: A second letter was faxed to the villages noting the need to move the dates of the meetings forward by a few days. I had forgotten to recall the Alaska Native Fish, Wildlife, Habitat and Environmental Summit that was to be held in Anchorage August 18-21, and knew others as well as myself would be attending. Therefore, I moved the dates for this meeting to August 22-23. I also reminded those villages who still had not sent in the names of their representatives to do so. (A copy is attached.)

8/15/02: I faxed and emailed out a formal announcement, both to the villages participating in this particular sub-regional meeting, as well as the different agency people in Bethel, notifying them of the meeting to be held. It was intended to be passed around or posted in the stores, council offices or post offices of the villages. (A copy of the announcement and email are attached.)

Village Representatives Present:

Scammon Bay (Mike Utteryuk), Hooper Bay (Glen Joe, Sr.), Paimute (Albert Simon), Chevak (Albert Ulroan), Newtok (Margaret Nickerson), Tununak (Peter Pitka), Toksook Bay (Felix Lincoln), Nightmute (Charlie Anthony), Umkumiut (Andrew George), Chefornak (David Jimmy), Kipnuk (Teddy Kugstun), Kwigillingok (David O. David).

*Representatives from both Kongiganak (John P. Andrew) and Mekoryuk (Larson King) had planned to attend the meeting but became ill at the last minute and replacements were unavailable. We hope to include them in one of the other sub-regional planning session meetings we will have. The representative for Newtok was originally slated to be Mark Tom, but his older

brother had passed away the morning he was to be picked up and so Margaret Nickerson filled in at the last minute.

Other Agencies/Organizations Present:

USFWS Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Regional Advisory Council Coordinator (Alex Nick), AVCP Staff (Jennifer Hooper and Ida Aloysius), Toksook Bay Community/Council Members.

*I had a request at the last minute from Mike Coffing of the ADF&G Division of Subsistence for a ticket on ERA to attend. We left a TR for him to use but he wasn't able to make it to the meeting. The other agencies we work with had been notified and invited to the meeting, as well as being informed that we did have funds for travel for two people from both the ADF&G and USFWS, but the timing of the meeting wasn't conducive for most to attend. I informed Alex Nick of this, that we had funds to pay for his travel to Toksook Bay, but he had already made his arrangements internally.

Travel and Accommodations:

The upper coastal village representatives (Scammon Bay, Hooper Bay, Paimute, Chevak and Newtok) were transported to Toksook Bay on a charter with Yukon Aviation. The lower coastal village representatives (Umkumiut, Nightmute, Chefornak, Kipnuk and Kwigillingok) were transported to Toksook Bay on a charter with Hageland Aviation. The two AVCP staff, as well as the representative from Tununak flew on ERA Aviation to Toksook Bay.

I had previously made arrangements with the principal at the high school for lodging for up to 20 people, as I didn't know how many would be attending in addition to our village representatives and who would in fact need a place to stay. It ended up that the majority of our representatives had family or friends to stay with and no other agency people attended, so there were only four of us who lodged at the school –Ida Aloysius, Albert Simon, Glen Joe, Sr. and myself. The high school has a flat rate charge of \$40 per person and so I submitted a check request upon my return to the office for \$160 to be paid to the Nelson Island Schools. The school also offered meals (breakfast and lunch) to any people who needed it.

Meeting Summary:

The meeting had originally been scheduled to begin at 1pm on Thursday. When Ida and I met with the Tribal Council office, they informed us that Toksook Bay conducts their bingo time during the day and that we might not get much participation from the community and the elders if we were to keep the meeting start time at 1pm. They suggested that we might want to start the meeting in the evening, so as to maximize local participation. We agreed and decided to start the meeting that evening at 7pm. We went to the hall and put up notices of the time change and talked with people who did show up at 1pm and explained that the meeting time had been changed and why. A few people questioned the reason for the change but understood our desire to get as many people participating as possible.

The meeting began that evening at 7pm, with 27 people attending and signing in on our participant sign-in list (a copy is attached). As with most meetings we had people come and go throughout the evening. I started the meeting with an introduction of myself and my staffer, as well as the purpose of the meeting and what we hoped to come away with. I explained that AVCP had received monies to hold what we called sub-regional meetings throughout the AVCP region. Our purpose for bringing village representatives together as sub-regions was to collect information and to hear directly from community members who lived in those closer geographic areas and who generally shared the same resources, with regard to any fisheries issues, questions, concerns and/or comments they might have on any of their fisheries. We also were interested in determining where research topics or issues could be identified and later developed.

The group consisted of many elders who had a little trouble grasping the concept of the meeting and exactly what I was expecting to learn or hear from them. Until it was translated to them in their Yup'ik language, it took time to re-explain our being there and what we were looking to accomplish. One representative was leery to share any information because he wasn't sure what we would do with it and the fact that he didn't want to eventually become more restricted in his Subsistence activities and way of life through the ADF&G or USFWS, because of any information he might share or discuss. I asserted that it was not my intention nor AVCP's, in collecting any information, to end up causing the people of the region to experience more restrictions in their Subsistence way of life. We were there to listen to any issues or concerns they had, which would in turn determine what would need to be done to try to answer those particular issues or concerns. We wanted to be able to ultimately have answers and results to questions they might have regarding discolored fish, sores or marks on the fish, smaller sizes of fish, or whatever they might bring up.

The meeting recessed at 9:45pm for the night and resumed at 9am on Friday the 23rd. We had 19 people sign our sign-in sheet the second day (a copy is attached). The charters were scheduled to begin picking up the representatives at 4pm on Friday so we adjourned at 3pm, to give time for people to collect their gear.

Issues/Concerns/Questions Shared:

Beavers – The main discussion point was there are too many beavers around. The population problem needs to be solved. One representative noted that the regulations need to be changed if any hamper the people's ability to catch the beavers or destroy their dams or lodges. He mentioned that his father had told him that one way to catch beavers was to use a gillnet. People were obvious to the fact that the beaver dams and lodges hamper the fish's ability to swim up a particular stream. This in turn relates to fewer fish getting up a river or stream, which obviously can lead to a decrease in the returning populations later when they are aged enough to spawn, which is exactly what the people at the meeting reported observing – a decrease in fish populations.

One representative noted that whitefish and lush fish are no longer caught in his area because of all the beaver dams in the river. They used to herd the whitefish up the rivers to catch them. One person shared what his elders used to say of reindeer herds trampling fishing grounds and

that now we have beaver problems, which are much greater. Another person stated that by not allowing the removal of dams, they (the regulators) are preventing the return of salmon. He stated that because the beavers dam up the rivers the fish can't pass through them and so return to the ocean, which is another reason why the fish are declining. He asked that we use this information in any of our testimonies to the Alaska Board of Fisheries. He also stated that he would like the language that states you can't remove or damage a beaver dam to be taken out of the regulations.

One representative affirmed that something needed to be done about the wildlife regulations and was looking to AVCP for help. He wanted to see regulations that would allow dams and lodges to be destroyed. He mentioned that there are usually three beaver dams that lead up to a main lodge and was concerned about the effects of beaver fever to humans. Another person added that he wanted to know why the people and their way of life aren't protected while the beaver is – “we're not protected from poisonous beaver fever.” He added that the elders used to say that if there are too many beavers there will be no more fish. Another person from the audience noted that during a Y-K Delta Federal Regional Advisory Committee meeting two years ago the discussion came up about beavers and they wanted to see something done about the beaver problem.

One member from the audience stated that beavers tend to move when they run out of feed – they move to fresh bushes. He also stated that they do have a tendency to give up rebuilding a removed dam if it's done enough times. At one time, he had destroyed a particular lodge several times and the beaver finally refused to rebuild a fourth time and moved on to some other location.

Several representatives asked whether it was federal or state regulations that do not allow the removal of beaver dams and lodges. The YK RAC coordinator explained that it was state hunting and trapping regulations. One representative responded that the group needed to develop a regulation that will work toward a decrease in the beaver populations. One member added that whenever they go out hunting they shoot as many beavers as they see. They keep the pelts of the adults and bring the young ones home. One representative mentioned a meeting in the 1970's where Katie John was pleading with Ted Stevens to help her region, which was experiencing a decline in beaver populations, while the populations in the coastal regions were increasing. He restated that the beavers damming up the rivers and sloughs were the main reason why the salmon aren't returning. He mentioned that beavers were good for up-river people but not for coastal people. He also stated that it would be good for someone like AVCP to meet with all the elders of the region to record what their regulations are (what they live by). There is great need for the younger generations to get with the elders to learn their laws and regulations, so we can abide by them.

Solutions to the Beaver Problem

1. Change the regulations.
2. Remove beaver dams and lodges – secure funding for people to remove them (open creeks and sloughs for fish to return to spawn). One representative mentioned that even though the dams have been removed from a stream, the fish still don't return – they hurt

from a beaver just living there. Another mentioned that beavers hurt the vegetation as well – the trees don't grow where beavers were.

3. Look into the possibility of the FWS to transport beavers to original locations (i.e. Katie John note above).

One person commented on the need to know why you want to change regulations – a great reason is for the conservation of all our resources. You also need a strong voice. Another representative responded that the 56 villages of AVCP are strong and this issue could be brought up at the AVCP Convention to work at changing the regulations.

The YK RAC coordinator explained the process for submitting proposals to the Federal Subsistence Board:

1. Proponent submits proposal
2. Staff analysis written (8 factors)
3. Staff review proposal for accuracy
4. Proposal finalized
5. Comment period
6. Regional Council recommendations
7. Federal Subsistence Board action

Contaminants – So many people are now dying from cancer, even younger generations. The representative from Paimute informed the group that the villages of Hooper Bay, Paimute, Chevak and Scammon Bay are working in conjunction with the World Wildlife Fund to conduct sample testing on some of the foods they eat and also of the mud in the area. They are concerned because of the old military site on Cape Romanzoff. One representative added that blackfish eat from the mud and that people might ingest contaminants from that, which would eventually lead to causing cancer. Another representative added that he questions the health of the halibut and blackfish and is concerned about contamination. He also added his concerns about the health of the seals – when people eat the seals they later complain of stomach aches.

The representative from Paimute acknowledged that Hooper Bay has learned through their studies that any contaminants released into the system, whether it be land, air or water, always seem to move and cycle north. Another representative also noted that contaminants from other countries (i.e. South America and the current in the Pacific Ocean which carries materials up to Alaska) need to be looked at and measured and stopped.

Other Issues:

- Sport fishing and the catch and release method used – causes the fish to get sick. One representative noted that this issue may not pertain directly with coastal villages and is more distinct in areas like Quinhagak and in the Kuskokwim.
- Bycatch of salmon and halibut – purse seining and international fisheries (i.e. Japanese). One representative shared his concern about purse seining and intercept fisheries. One member of the public shared his knowledge of bycatch statistics and work done by the

North Pacific Fisheries Management Council to slowly decrease the numbers of Chinook salmon allowed taken as bycatch. He stressed that the Yukon-Kuskokwim-Coastal people need to get together to submit proposals demanding the allowed bycatch numbers for many species be decreased.

- The concept of permits and the fact that our way of life does not require permits and we should not have to pay for them.
- The switch from 8" mesh to 5 ½" mesh in king nets helped cause the decline in Chinook salmon – more exposure of flesh to mesh and therefore hurt them more.
- The Federal government claims land without the approval from the local Native people – the FWS did not ask which land they could choose for the wildlife service areas.
- Trash in the waters – how do they really affect the fish?
- Observations in fish: bigger gills, “ugly” livers, different tastes, worms on the skin (from the ocean and global warming were two possibilities given).
- Hazardous waste and materials dumped into the waters (i.e. acid batteries, waste oil, and various other contaminants). The representative from Hooper Bay told the group that the Hooper Bay Traditional Council collects old batteries and oil and disposes of them properly for the village.
- One member from the Toksook Bay community raised concern of a grant proposal by the YKHC-OEH to study contaminants in bottom fish last year– they say they don't know where that money went to (\$5,000 with a resolution from the Toksook Bay Traditional Council).
- Mercury deposits – YKHC study on mercury in freshwater fish a few years ago. One person mentioned to look into studies in the 1970's by YKHC regarding mercury and the concern over breast cancer.
- A resident from Toksook Bay mentioned that there is an old bomb buried somewhere in Nelson Island and wonders what sort of hazard it will pose to the people when it eventually dissolves. He stated that there is someone from Tununak who had found it before and they should be talked to before they are gone.

Issues by Fishery:

Salmon

- People have noticed sores and cuts on the salmon
- One person mentioned finding bloody puss in the flesh of kings after opening them up. Another stated he'd heard some biologist referring to temperature as causing some changes and I stated the situation on the Yukon with *Ichthyophonus* in the kings.
- Why did the reds come in strong in 2001 and poor in 2002, and vice versa for the chum?
- Have seen deformities in the tails of the fish – from disease or nets?
- Some scar wounds on the skin seem to heal and some don't
- Human health concerns regarding consumption of diseased or sick fish
- More concern about batteries being dumped and the acid seeping into the waters the fish reside in – also contamination from waste oil being disposed of improperly and oil drips (not just from individual homes but those from other organizations such as local school districts and agency offices) from stove oil tanks (it was requested that AVCP Environmental Department look into proper disposal of batteries and waste oil in the

villages – and to check with YKHC) – does any of this translate to the eventual increase of cancer in the people? It was also pointed out that there needs to be an education program developed and instituted in the villages to teach the youth on proper disposal techniques.

- One person mentioned that the Toksook River is an important salmon spawning river.

Herring

- no major problems or concerns regarding the herring and their populations
- It was brought up that the seaweed in the Nelson Island area may not be growing back due to the inexperience or knowledge of people improperly harvesting herring eggs off the kelp, and that an education of those younger people is needed.
- It was noted that people don't typically harvest the first run of herring, as they are very rich and are hard to dry properly.
- A question was raised regarding the Hooper Bay contaminants study that is going on and whether they have sampled herring or the eggs. The Paimute representative responded that it is their intent to study the herring and their eggs, but do not do so presently.

Halibut

- Concern was raised about the unknown levels of mercury in halibut – pregnant women are discouraged from eating halibut because of that.
- People in Tununak have begun to notice deformities in the halibut caught there – deformed or missing tails and defects in the head area.
- Discoloration of the gills and the meat seems to look “crushed” or “pushed in.”
- One representative mentioned that agencies should be directed to do any studies on halibut because most of the meat is transported out and eaten by other people (by comparison, little is harvested for local consumption).
- The question of the \$5,000 YKHC-OEH grant was brought up again, as halibut was supposed to be one of the species sampled and studied. What happened to it?
- It was reminded and asked that people always report any deformities or abnormalities.

Pike

- Discoloration of the lungs and liver in fish caught during the springtime and summer.
- The fish caught seem to be slimier in the spring and summer as well.

Tomcod

- The Hooper Bay study came up once again and whether they studied tomcod or not. The Paimute representative stated that they have been and it was identified that the tomcod liver has a high level of some cancer causing agent. It was also mentioned that the benzene level, which is found in stove oil, had been determined to be high, and that one of the causes may be from diesel barge use.
- Contaminants from human waste and the honey bucket system still used in many villages was brought up as well as the unknowing of any health hazards because of that.

Lush/Burbot

- Discoloration in the liver

Smelt

- Discoloration in the liver

Whitefish

- Sores on the outside skin are more prevalent.
- Discolored skin under the scales

Eels

- Discoloration of the liver

Blackfish

- The fish seem to be very lean.
- People have seen a gradual decline overall in the populations of freshwater fish – the rivers don't feed the fish the same.
- One representative mentioned that the top soil used to be very moist and is now dry.

Trout

- No comments

Needlefish

- They are very thick in numbers in the Scammon Bay area.
- One representative stated that they are the “doctors for our stomachs.”

Devilfish

- No comments

Prepared by Jennifer Hooper, AVCP Natural Resources Director
8/30/02

ATTACHMENT B

AVCP Lower Kuskokwim Sub-Regional Planning Session Meeting Summary

(FWS Agreement No: 701811J367)

Date: October 29-30, 2002

Location: Bethel, Alaska

Preparations:

9/17/02: A letter was faxed to the villages in this particular sub-region, as identified by the Natural Resources Department, explaining the grant received by AVCP and the reason for our holding these sub-regional meetings. It expressed our intent in bringing representatives from the different villages together and our interest in hearing about any fisheries issues or concerns the people might have regarding their different fisheries. It was indicated that the different agencies, namely ADF&G and USFWS, were invited as well. The date of the meeting had been set for October 29-30, 2002, in Bethel. As with all meetings held in the AVCP region, it was imperative to schedule and determine a date between Subsistence activities. We requested that the villages respond with their chosen representative in a timely matter, in order for travel and the various arrangements to be made. (A copy is attached.)

10/4/02: A second letter was faxed to the villages reminding them to submit their representative's name. (A copy is attached.)

10/4/02: I faxed and emailed out a formal announcement, both to the villages participating in this particular sub-regional meeting, as well as the different agency people in Bethel, notifying them of the meeting to be held. It was intended to be passed around or posted in the stores, council offices or post offices of the villages. (A copy of the announcement is attached.)

Village Representatives Present:

Quinhagak (Annie Roach), Eek (Wm. Charlie Brown), Tuntutuliak (Henry Lupie), Kasigluk (John Nicholas), Atmauthluak (Nelson Nicholai), Kwethluk (Oscar Larson), Nicholas Paul (Napakiak).

*Representatives from both Platinum (John Bright) and Nunapitchuk (Zechariah Chaliak, Sr.) had planned to attend the meeting but had last minute circumstances come up and replacements were unavailable. The representative for Napakiak was originally to be Fritz Willie, but was unable to attend and so Nicholas Paul filled in at the last minute.

Other Agencies/Organizations Present:

AVCP Staff (Jennifer Hooper, Bob Angaiak and Allen Joseph), USFWS – YDNWR Biologist (Tim Roettiger), ONC Natural Resource Director (Greg Roczicka), ADF&G SF Biologist (Bob Lafferty), OSM Biologist (Tom Kron).

Travel and Accommodations:

About half of the villages with representatives present at the meeting were close enough in proximity to Bethel that they were able to take scheduled flights on various carriers. Hageland Aviation and Grant Aviation were the carriers used to bring them in. The four villages of Quinhagak, Platinum, Eek and Tuntutuliak are fairly close together geographically and so a charter was set up to bring in those representatives and then to take them back home after the meeting. (The representative from Platinum did not make it and then on the return, the weather in Tuntutuliak was down and so Henry had to stay an additional night in Bethel and then returned home with Grant Aviation the following day.)

Lodging was reserved at the Pacifica Guest House. The representatives were given per diem for their meals and the lodging was put on a single purchase order.

Meeting Summary:

The meeting began at 9am on Tuesday the 29th. There were the seven representatives present, as well as a handful of people from the state and federal agencies and other organizations, who all signed in on our participant sign-in list (a copy is attached). Contrary to what I had hoped, we didn't have many people come and go throughout the meeting. It was my hope and thought, that having the meeting in Bethel, we might have more local people show up. I had even put an ad regarding the meeting in one of the local newspapers the week prior to the meeting (a copy is attached).

I started the meeting with an introduction of myself, as well as the purpose of the meeting and what we hoped to come away with. I explained that AVCP had received monies to hold what we called sub-regional meetings throughout the AVCP region. Our purpose for bringing village representatives together as sub-regions was to collect information and to hear directly from community members who lived in those closer geographic areas and who generally shared the same resources, with regard to any fisheries issues, questions, concerns and/or comments they might have on any of their fisheries. We also were interested in determining where research topics or issues could be identified and later developed.

Contrary to the Coastal sub-regional meeting's group composition, which consisted of many elders, the majority of the Lower Kuskokwim sub-regional meeting's representatives were not elders but of the generation after, and were much better able to grasp the concept of the meeting and exactly what I was expecting to learn or hear from them. I asserted that we were there to listen to any issues or concerns they had, which would in turn determine what would need to be done to try to answer those particular issues or concerns. I stated that we wanted to be able to ultimately have answers and results to questions they might have regarding discolored fish, sores or marks on the fish, smaller sizes of fish, or whatever they might bring up.

The meeting recessed at about 5 pm for the night and resumed at 9am on Wednesday the 30th. We had 8 people sign our sign-in sheet the second day (a copy is attached). The return flights were scheduled to begin departing at 3pm that day and so we adjourned around noon to give time

for people to collect their gear and get to the airport. We could have continued for a couple more hours but we were able to conclude our discussions by noon.

The morning of the second day Tom Kron from the Office of Subsistence Management arrived and provided a presentation on the history of the Federal involvement in fisheries management. Below are some highlights from that presentation.

- 1978 State Subsistence Act – rural priority in times of shortage.
- 1989 McDowell vs. State of Alaska – rural Subsistence priority was deemed unconstitutional.
- The Federal Subsistence Board cycle is that fisheries issues and proposals are reviewed in December and wildlife issues in May.
- State-Federal Cooperation: Memorandums of Understanding and Protocols.
- The extended jurisdictional clause can be determined and approved only by the Secretary of the Interior.

Issues/Concerns/Questions Shared:

Before specific issues were brought up, one representative noted that there were not any elders present and that they should be at every meeting so their ideas and solutions could be listened to. I reported that none of the villages had identified any elders to be their representatives, but that it is important to have them present. Another representative mentioned that the ADF&G doesn't take traditional knowledge into consideration and that it does need to be used.

Beavers – One of the main discussion points, as was also determined in the Coastal sub-regional meeting, was there are too many beavers around. The population problem needs to be solved. There were discussions about pollutants from the beavers and the effects on people, the area and the fish. Representatives were also concerned about the effects of dams on the fish and their populations and abilities to migrate. They were especially concerned on the effects on the whitefish populations. It was brought up that beaver dams may be beneficial to silver salmon in offering protection while they are still in freshwater systems, and that the water levels created by the beaver dams were important.

One of the attendees noted the relationship between beavers and predatory fish and raised the question of whether they favor the fish. He also stated that, as being from the coast, there are no natural predators on beavers there. With the increase in the populations, they have nothing to keep their numbers in check naturally. One of the representatives also stated that he had seen beavers swimming in the ocean and that he had never seen that before. He noted that the elders have told him that if there ever was going to be a famine happen that the land animals would move towards the ocean. He had also seen beaver dams blocking sloughs and that whitefish were trapped behind them.

One of the agency people mentioned previous work he had done in another state regarding the removal of beaver dams. He said that it was hard work and the dams had to be continuously

removed and that it was very expensive. An attendee questioned the removal of the dams versus the removal of the beavers themselves – lethally. Another attendee stated that we had to use common sense and that we don't know what the balance is between the beavers and the resources.

The same attendee noted the need to come up with an economic strategy on the uses for beavers. A question was raised as to whether anyone knew what the beaver population was before the European trading market. One representative replied that they were used mostly for clothing, then for trading purposes. One person mentioned that he felt the beavers appear in cycles – maybe from the Kilbuck Mountains or Togiak area. He also stated that one idea for using beavers would be for dog food for all the dog mushing teams in the area. One of the older representatives present stated the following regarding beavers:

- he knows about the beavers and the cycles
- he's talked to ADF&G before about the issue
- it's ok to have meat for dog mushing
- he sees beaver dams around every corner
- fish make it through in the spring but can't go through in the fall

One representative mentioned the idea of having a factory for beaver meat production into dog food. Another added the need for a collection point where dog mushers could buy the meat.

Another representative stated that the elders remind us to respect the animals and he'd feel guilty if he killed one for no reason. He then asked if it was illegal to sell pelts year round. He had mixed feelings that there were no limits. The same person later stated that elders say that where beavers are, grass doesn't grow, the trees are cut permanently and don't grow back naturally, and that we are never to drink the water from the pond areas created by and behind beaver dams.

One agency attendee stated that local people need to communicate with the Fish & Game Advisory Committees and the Board of Fish on how they feel about an issue or resource. He went on to explain the proposal and Board process and that April 10, 2003 is the proposal deadline for submission to the Board of Fish. He went on to state that a good proposal idea might be to do a limnology study on beaver ponds in reference to fish productivity and general water chemistry.

Sport Fishing – The representative from Quinhagak stated that there is a lot of sport fishing activity in the rivers at and near Quinhagak. She mentioned that there are creeks that used to have a lot of certain kinds of fish that don't have them now. She also stated that the community feels that the sport fishermen “shoo” away the fish when they spend so much time in one area and that the issue of trampling in spawning areas is a big concern.

Another representative stated that catch and release hurts the fish as we would hurt from a splinter or something. One person mentioned that one elder from his community had caught a pike with a homemade rod and released it into a pond, and that he found it “belly up” the next day.

One representative asked whether anyone knew if the Kenai River was stocked. The ADF&G Sport Fish representative responded that it was the ADF&G's policy not to stock streams with wild stocks and mentions that the Kasilof River, next to the Kenai River, is stocked with trout. The same representative then asked whether the State has done anything about the great number of users on the Kenai. The ADF&G representative replied that the State is conducting a strategic plan to determine whether there are too many boats, guides and fishermen. He went on to state that the local people have been displaced by all the other users coming in and believes that within the next five years we will see a change in how sport fisheries are managed.

The representative from Quinhagak mentioned that when sport fishing really started to develop the local people would catch fish without jaws when they would be fishing in the bay. She stated that it brought to mind the phrase, "out of sight, out of mind." The ADF&G SF representative went on to discuss catch and release mortality and delayed mortality and that the extent of mortality on a fish depends on the type of gear used to catch the fish. He stated that the Board of Fish has tried to minimize mortality of fish in only allowing single hooks when using a rod and reel. He also stated that he is aware of and understands the conflict between the Yup'ik culture and the Western culture, in terms of catch and release and mortality. He wasn't sure how to help settle the issue and suggested that the people continue to communicate with the Board of Fish.

The representative from Eek mentioned that he used to be a test fish technician and that they would sometimes release fish from the nets and that he compared it to the catch and release from hooks technique used by sports fishermen. He said that once the fish bleeds from the gills you have to keep the fish. The representative also mentioned he knew that fish used to be tagged in Quinhagak. He said before releasing any fish, you should study them – tag them to get more information on what happens with the fish and to find out where they go.

The ADF&G representative noted that the ADF&G has done studies on the catch and release of fish with different variables in the Kenai – looking at different numbers of hooks and whether they were baited or not. He had a copy of the study for people to look at.

One representative stated that you had to respect everything living outside of you for the future. Another person mentioned that elders would like for the young people from the different communities to observe tagging and other projects.

One representative stated it seemed that most villages don't have the money and staff for natural resource issues and wondered if AVCP could help those villages with the money for getting staff in the offices. One agency representative mentioned AVCP's newly hired biologist and that he should be attending these types of meetings.

The same village representative went on to state that people outside the area or even natives who've grown up in urban areas don't understand Subsistence or what it means. He also stated that even though he doesn't have sports fishing in his area there is still a lot of resentment towards sports fishing because of the Subsistence restrictions and the limitations put on those fishermen. He stated that he and his community would like to see a closure of sports fishing the same as it is for Subsistence fishing. The representative continued to say that the natives have always gone along with the regulations presented to them, even as they slowly take away our

Subsistence rights. He noted that in the 1960's the Washington Indians had their fishing rights taken away. They set their nets anyway and were taken to jail, while another group would come in and continue to set their nets.

Habitat Issues – One meeting attendee raised a pressing habitat issue in the Holitna area (upper Kuskokwim) in that the State's Department of Natural Resources issues land-use permits to people irregardless of the effects of their activities on the spawning grounds. He stated that everyone should write a letter to the DNR Commissioner. He also noted that the land further up the Kuskokwim is mostly under State jurisdiction.

Another attendee stated that so many boats go up river now and questions the effects they may have. He then asked whether or not all streams were designated as having or being salmon producers. He also noted the moose hunting season and the effects all the traffic has on the waters. One of the agency attendees noted that we need to look at our practices as well as other variables to blame for any problems. He stated that we can go further now and have much more mobility that before.

Contaminants –

Salmon:

One representative mentioned the glowing fish seen on the Yukon River the year before and what sort of effects it might have. Several people explained that it was a sort of bioluminescent bacteria that was found in the fish, and not some sort of chemical or contaminant. The representative continued that he had never heard of it, as well as the people in the lower region of the river. One representative said that he had seen it before in pike that were left in a bucket. Another attendee said that he had seen it before on the coast, in herring after cleaning them.

Other Issues:

The issue of the Donlin mine came up and all the possible issues with related contaminants. One representative said it was important for people to start collecting baseline data for that particular area so if problems do arise in the future, we would have something to compare the situation to. We would have the "before" snapshot to use to compare the "after" effects to. Another attendee then posed the question of what would happen to all of the by-products of the coal-fired plant proposed for the Donlin mine.

AVCP's Vice President of Operations attended part of the meeting and raised several points during the contaminants discussions. He mentioned not only contaminants in our back yards – batteries, oil cans, etc. – but also those spread worldwide coming from regions all over the world. He mentioned the fact that there are so many forums out there that deal with issues like contaminants and that it is up to each community to address the issue of contaminants and to develop environmentally friendly ordinances. He stressed that people need to keep repeating their concerns and issues until someone finally listens. He then pointed out one group that

AVCP is a partner in and works with on many issues relating to fish is the AYK Coalition – a group with members from the Arctic, Yukon and Kuskokwim regions, as well as having members from many of the different state and federal agencies.

One attendee noted that a list should be developed of the various groups working on these issues, which would be very helpful in determining how to coordinate for our region. AVCP's Vice President also mentioned an upcoming meeting in Bethel, put on by AVCP's Environmental Planner, to discuss the possibility of starting a Kuskokwim River Watershed. It would most likely be modeled after the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed, which has been pretty successful in getting the entire river together to work on various issues, with contaminants being a large component. One representative added that programs need to be developed to carefully dispose of old batteries and mentions that the Coast Guard has requirements for fuel tank farms.

Other Issues:

One representative brought up the subject of sonars and asked what the sensitivity was of sonars for fish counting. He mentioned the high powered sonars that the military uses and the effects they have on marine mammals. Several people commented and ultimately stated that the frequency and mechanics of fish counting sonars were very different and much lower in intensity than those used by the military.

Issues by Fishery:

Salmon

- Levels of By-catch of salmon out in the ocean.
- Illegal fishing in high seas areas – One attendee mentioned that illegal fishermen/boats are getting smarter and utilize decoys (take an old ship that is useless and ready to sink and send it out for the Coast Guard to chase, while the illegal fishermen move in and quickly fish in the prohibited waters). Another person added that each nation has a 200 mile EEZ and that a “donut hole” exists where no nation has jurisdiction and is open to anyone. It was also mentioned that Russia and the U.S. are the only two nations trying to stop illegal fishing.
- Levels of trampling by people in spawning areas.
- Ichthyophonous hoferi – I explained the issue on the Yukon River, the prevalence throughout the water system and the basic characteristics, including that it is commonly found in fish species and has been documented to be present in Kuskokwim River fish as well.
- Salmon returning to the Kwethluk River with deformed tails and some with spots (the people were told by someone that they were farmed salmon).
- Fish returning back in the 70's and 80's that were basically skeletons still swimming.
- Salmon seem to be pretty healthy in the lower Kuskokwim River area.
- Fish caught during the 2002 season seemed to be a little smaller – some fish would go through the net and so had to use smaller mesh.

- People keeping their nets in the water too long = rotting fish. One representative asked that people remind each other to put their gear away after each use so there would be fish for everyone the next year. The representative from Atmauthluak stated that they've created a Natural Resource ordinance to limit the number of set nets in the water and that they check known spots every weekend to see if any nets are left in the water without the owners checking them.
- Don't see the normal cycles of pink salmon in the Quinhagak area nor the Kuskokwim River anymore.
- People catch even the small pink in their large mesh nets.
- No one has noticed any "fall chum" entering the river – they quit fishing before any might be seen. The attendees were polled because people in the upper reaches of the river have mentioned before that there used to be a fall run of chum but don't see them anymore.
- Have seen scars and spots on the right side of silver salmon – always in the same spot.
- Have seen marks of some type on the silvers.
- Have seen silvers with a "gray" eye – infection?

Herring

- No major problems or concerns regarding the herring and their populations. Not too many of the representatives fished for herring or knew much about their populations.

Halibut

- As with the herring, few of the representatives fished for halibut and so not much was discussed. The representatives from near the coastal area hadn't noticed any changes in the fish or their populations.

Pike

- The fish were smaller last spring.
- There seem to be more people and more of the younger generations fishing nowadays, especially on weekends.
- The representatives felt the pike stayed in the area year round, ate blackfish, spawned in the lakes and that the juveniles come out from the lakes in the spring with the high water.

Blackfish

- Elders are complaining about the beaver dams and their effects on the blackfish – there are less numbers of fish caught.
- Everyone felt they spawn in vegetation and that they come out in the fall time.

Sheefish

- People fish with rod and reel before they migrate up river.

- Their populations seem to be thriving.
- They migrate down river in May.
- Are caught mainly in the fall time.
- They are rarely seen in the Quinhagak area.

Whitefish

- The numbers have been going down the past few years.
- Atmauthluak requires that people attach red buoys with their names on their set nets.
- The question was raised whether the State or Federal agencies required people to put their names on their nets that are set under the ice. The concern regarding people leaving their nets out and fish rotting was raised once again. It was stated that it should be a year-round requirement for set nets and their owners.
- Before regulations came about, if someone chronically abused and/or wasted a resource, an elder or council member from that community would talk to them.
- Don't want to see the State or Feds begin to regulate whitefish.
- It was suggested that people should talk with the school kids to teach them while they are still young.

Trout

- 3 kinds: Rainbow, Dolly Varden, Arctic Char
- The numbers of Dolly Varden and Arctic Char are down and they are hard to find.
- The sizes of Rainbows are getting smaller.
- People have seen fish with the eyes popped out – from fish hooks most likely.

Grayling

- No comments and/or major changes identified.

Smelt

- Populations and condition of fish seem to be ok.

Lush/Burbot

- Populations and condition of fish seem to be ok.

Devilfish

- No comments and/or major changes identified.

Needlefish

- Populations and condition of fish seem to be ok.

Tomcod

- Populations and condition of fish seem to be ok. They are found near the mouth of the Kuskokwim River and so are not as impacted as much as the other species from the different variables.

Flounder

- No comments and/or major changes identified.
- Also see needle less fish – younger stage of needlefish? When you are dipping for them you can get one of one kind and the next dip will be nothing but the other kind.

Other Species:

Small crabs - No comments and/or major changes identified.

Additional Information:

- The Kwethluk Weir and the Tuluksak Weir both saw some tagged fish show up during the 2002 season.
- Elder knowledge is equivalent and even more great and significant than the knowledge of the Western biologists.
- During discussions as to why the coastal river systems have not experienced the types of reduced runs as in the main Kuskokwim River and tributaries, one attendee stated that they had once heard that the Kanektok River would always have fish, even in times of famine.
- The elders say we should not talk about our resources too much or they will go down in numbers.

Suggestions:

- Have elders present and for them to share the information and knowledge they have.
- More education of the youth in school and for them to learn our ways and traditions.
- Any new Federal and State employees to the area need to be made aware and oriented on our culture and traditions.
- Have all the sub-regional representatives meet together.
- We must support each other and work together.

Prepared by Jennifer Hooper, AVCP Natural Resources Director - 2/6/03

ATTACHMENT C

AVCP Lower Yukon Sub-Regional Planning Session Meeting Summary

(FWS Agreement No: 701811J367)

Date: November 12-13, 2002

Location: Emmonak, Alaska

Preparations:

10/14/02: A letter was faxed to the villages in this particular sub-region, as identified by the Natural Resources Department, explaining the grant received by AVCP and the reason for our holding these sub-regional meetings. It expressed our intent in bringing representatives from the different villages together and our interest in hearing about any fisheries issues or concerns the people might have regarding their different fisheries. It was indicated that the different agencies, namely ADF&G and USFWS, were invited as well. The date of the meeting had been set for November 12-13, 2002, in Emmonak. As with all meetings held in the AVCP region, it was imperative to schedule and determine a date between Subsistence activities. We requested that the villages respond with their chosen representative in a timely matter, in order for travel and the various arrangements to be made. (A copy is attached.)

10/28/02: A second letter was faxed to the villages reminding them to submit their representative's name. (A copy is attached.)

11/5/02: I faxed and emailed out a formal announcement, both to the villages participating in this particular sub-regional meeting, as well as the different agency people, notifying them of the meeting to be held. It was intended to be passed around or posted in the stores, council offices or post offices of the villages. (A copy of the announcement is attached.)

Travel and Accommodations:

The representative from Kotlik was close enough that he was able to fly in on scheduled flights with Grant Aviation. The remaining four representatives were quite spread out distance-wise and so a charter was set up to pick them up and then to return them home after the meeting had concluded.

Four of the five representatives had friends or relatives they preferred to stay with in Emmonak. The one remaining representative lodged at the City Hotel, as did myself.

Village Representatives Present:

Kotlik (Peter Elachik), Mountain Village (Mike Moses), St. Mary's (Moses Paukan), Pilot Station (Andrew Makaily, Jr.), Russian Mission (Nick Polty) Emmonak (Ted Hamilton).

Note: There had been a representative identified for Alakanuk, but didn't show up to the meeting. I confirmed through Grant Aviation, his reserved airline that he had not been picked up in Alakanuk that day.

Other Agencies/Organizations Present:

AVCP Staff (Jennifer Hooper), OSM Biologist (Tom Kron).

Meeting Summary:

The meeting began at 1pm on Tuesday the 12th. There were the five representatives present, as well as a couple of people from the community and one representative from the Federal Office of Subsistence Management (a copy of the sign-up sheet is attached).

I started the meeting with an introduction of myself, as well as the purpose of the meeting and what we hoped to come away with. I explained that AVCP had received monies to hold what we called sub-regional meetings throughout the AVCP region. Our purpose for bringing village representatives together as sub-regions was to collect information and to hear directly from community members who lived in those closer geographic areas and who generally shared the same resources, with regard to any fisheries issues, questions, concerns and/or comments they might have on any of their fisheries. We also were interested in determining where research topics or issues could be identified and later developed.

As with the Lower Kuskokwim sub-regional meeting's group composition, the representatives present were not elders but of the generation after, and were better able to grasp the concept of the meeting and exactly what I was expecting to learn or hear from them. I asserted that we were there to listen to any issues or concerns they had, which would in turn determine what would need to be done to try to answer those particular issues or concerns. I stated that we wanted to be able to ultimately have answers and results to questions they might have regarding discolored fish, sores or marks on the fish, smaller sizes of fish, or whatever they might bring up.

The meeting recessed at about 5 pm for the night and resumed at 9am on Wednesday the 13th. The return flights were scheduled to begin departing at 4pm that day. We were able to conclude our discussions by noon and so adjourned in time for people to collect their gear and get to the airport.

The afternoon of the first day, Tom Kron, the OSM representative went through the same presentation he had presented at the Lower Kuskokwim Sub-Regional meeting in Bethel regarding the history of the State and Federal involvement in fisheries. He also mentioned that the Federal Subsistence Board was meeting in December to discuss fisheries proposals, including the one AVCP had submitted regarding fishing with a rod and reel schedules.

One representative asked about sports fishermen wanting to obtain seats and getting more involved on the different committees. Tom clarified that the representative was talking about

what was going to happen with the memberships of the Regional Advisory Councils (RAC's). He explained the nation-wide Advisory Committee Act. He then explained that the RAC's membership was going to be comprised of 70% Subsistence users and a 30% split between commercial and sports users. He then quantified that the members selected have to reside in the area covered by that particular RAC – members of the YK Delta RAC had to be from the YK Delta.

Also on the afternoon of the first day, the representative from Emmonak, Ted Hamilton, discussed work he had been involved in that previous summer and fall. Ted explained that he had worked with the USGS in collecting smolts during the summer and had worked with YR DFA and NMFS on a trawler conducting high seas testing in the Bering Sea that fall. They were focused on catching juvenile salmon. He noted that they had seen the same fish out in the Bering Sea as were leaving the river during the summer's USGS study. Ted went on to stating that they had caught a total of 720 juvenile salmon – 679 chum, 53 chinook, 22 pink and 7 sockeye – with a net 42' deep and 180' wide. He said that they had caught mostly herring and capelin during their trawls and that they had caught three chinook released from Canada (had clipped adipose fins and wired noses). Ted said the study was sponsored by NOAA and NMFS, with Ed Farley of NMFS being the head researcher and that Ed would be at the 2003 YR DFA annual meeting in Kotlik to present more information.

Issues/Concerns/Questions Shared:

Before specific issues were brought up, one attendee made some comments he felt regarding the work of AVCP and our involvement in fisheries. He made the following statements.

- AVCP needs to be more involved.
- Since the early 70's the problems have been the same.
- AVCP needs to help agencies recognize that commercial fishing is closely intertwined to Subsistence.
- AVCP has not had a high enough profile in supporting the people and their way of life.
- A special meeting should be held by AVCP on this issue.
- AVCP has been too quiet.

The same attendee then made the following statements regarding fisheries on the Lower Yukon River:

- People now have to use their Permanent Fund Dividends to Subsistence hunt now because they don't have the money.
- The protection of the federal government is too one-sided.

Subsistence Fishing and Restrictions

The following statements were made regarding this issue:

- The Subsistence regulating restrictions aren't saving fish.
- People are not used to restrictions.
- We should be left alone and allowed to fish until around June 25 or so.
- Restricted people tend to catch more than they need rather than if they were self-regulated.
- The Lower Yukon is always the first place attacked.
- We are over regulated – our hands and feet are tied.
- The regional use and need for “ANS” needs to be reviewed for “them” versus “us.” (“Them” being the upper river people and “us” referring to the lower river people.)
- The Federal Subsistence Board should support us internationally.

The same attendee who made comments regarding AVCP initially then stated that AVCP needs to be continuous in their support and that we (AVCP) have to save our people and our region first and that we need to become more responsible and work with the Lower Yukon region more.

- AVCP needs to support YRDFA, the YRP the FSB, etc.

Sports Fishing

The group was very concerned that sports fishermen were allowed to fish when Subsistence fishing was closed. One representative mentioned a sport fish study on mortality from the ADF&G SF Fairbanks office and a proposal to OSM. One attendee asked why the ADF&G was using limited Subsistence money to look at sport fishing issues. The agency representative mentioned that the Board of Fish was going to meet in March, 2003, to reconsider the Subsistence schedules for the Yukon and the Kuskokwim. He also mentioned that the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council met in the Federal Subsistence Board's office last week and presented new information to the RAC's there.

Enforcement

One representative stated that enforcement officers had come out the previous year and decided they would “run the show” and do things their way with no questions. He said that the officers took nets – one from an elder who had lost a period's worth of fish and had to set four more nets the next time to make up for it. (A “period” refers to the Subsistence schedule and that only shortened periods of time are allowable and open to fishing.) He then stated that the officers had camped on corporation land and native allotments and when notified of it, they had moved off quickly so they wouldn't have to pay any money. The officers needed to have more respect for the people.

One attendee asked whether anyone knew whether the same enforcement style was being used further up the river. A few people replied that yes, they thought so. One representative then asked why the Fish and Wildlife Protection Officers were checking people after commercial fishing was over. He stated that they would write down everyone's name while checking for permits and crew member licenses and what boats they were on. One representative felt that the

Alaska State Troopers discriminated against Natives. People have complained about harassment, both during in commercial-related and Subsistence-related occasions.

Other Issues

- Mesh size changes: from day to day and week to week – We don't like having to change and we use the right mesh to catch certain species of fish. Two years ago with the summer chum numbers down, mesh size was restricted to not target chums.
- Ichthyophonus hoferi - It was reported that Ichthyophonus doesn't seem to be as frequent as in year's past and that Dr. Kocan, the head researcher on the Yukon, was still collecting samples from the lower river at Emmonak. One representative asked whether other fish species could get infected by eating an infected fish. He was told that studies elsewhere indicated that it could happen but that type of study hadn't been conducted on the Yukon.
- Glowing fish – One representative thought it to be due to such a rainy weather season and people able to dry their fish for only a few days and then putting in smokehouses.
- Average temperatures in Alaska have risen about one degree per decade.
- In the 40's and 50's, when the trapping season opened on November 10, it was always frozen and cold – you would never worry about the ice conditions.
- The blubber of seals caught in September is usually 3 ½ to 4 inches thick – recently it has been 1/3 to ½ less than that.
- What are the high seas trawlers doing to our ecosystem? – The NPFMC, through the YR DFA proposal a couple of years ago, has instituted a reduction in chinook bycatch allowed – from 41,000 to 29,000 over four years. That program is half way through.
- Question regarding Canada's projects on habitat restoration – any reports out yet?

Issues by Fishery:

Salmon

- Have seen more numbers of jacks at Emmonak – wouldn't notice them in a normal year.
- More jacks usually means there will be a strong run the next year or two.
- 1981 was a very good year – everyone did well.
- Saw smaller chinook in the Russian Mission area.
- Saw bigger chinook in Districts Y-3 and Y-4.
- The fish have three mouths they can enter the Yukon.
- Elders say that if you have mostly North winds during the winter you will have smaller chinook show up the next year.
- What would cause the insides of a fish to develop before the outside?
- Have seen marks on the skin – like blisters.
- Escapement goals for chinook – Why can't we commercial fish before the total escapement goes by? With the restrictions in place, fish swim by and go towards escapements.

- Managers don't know for sure in June what will get to the spawning grounds in late July.
- Many of the first kings into the river are heading for Canada.
- Each village along the river likes the first runs and goes after them – We have the restrictions during these poor runs so all Subsistence needs can be met up and down the river.
- Can fisheries projects start earlier? - Projects can't begin until the ice goes out and all the debris flows out.
- In noticing the productivity of the ocean going down in recent years – North winds would keep currents and the ocean stirred up and nutrients moving around and therefore, more, smaller fish would survive and return to the rivers.
- What about fall chums and coho – will there be a coho commercial fishery in the future? There is a coho plan from YRDFA and the Board of Fish. Is there a market for chum? – The prices are so low. Up river people utilize fall chum more – need to be very careful during such low runs.
- Would any of the elders around know if we've had bad years/famines before or whether this is a one-time thing? There were low returns in 1920.
- Scammon Bay and Hooper Bay ladies talked about shortages in the 50's – the fish didn't come to shore. They were breastfeeding their children and lost their milk without the nutrition.
- One elder said they've seen Ichthyophonus before.
- We need to create a domestic market for our fish. – ship out free samples for chefs and people to cook with; advertise – A good place to bring up issues like this is at the YRDFA annual meeting coming up in Kotlik.
- It took 15 years for us to gain recognition for our quality.
- The first freezer ship came in 1961 – before that people salted and canned their fish.

Herring

- Will try for them next summer.
- Looked into the idea of putting a kelp bed out of the mouth to get eggs – to help not be so dependent on salmon commercial fishing.
- Some questions on the legality of a floating kelp bed.
- Look to Norton Sound's effort through the Board of Fish for ideas.
- Herring spawn anywhere – even on ice.

Sheefish

- Numbers are lower than before – since the beavers came.
- Their size has decreased.
- They lay eggs at Rampart/Rapids and then come back down.
- They seem to follow other fish.
- They appear at the mouth in the fall time to around December or January and then slack off until springtime.
- Don't have them from January to April in Kotlik – they come after break up.
- Usually catch them in February and March at Pilot Station and St. Mary's.

- They seem to be getting skinny and the meat is mushy.
- We never get the big ones anymore.
- Need to do mercury level testing again.

Whitefish

Broad:

- Caught some full of bugs- like worms - in the gills.
- Caught some deformed with no vertebrae for a tail.
- Seen some with the stomachs stuck to the inside walls.
- Less in numbers.

Cisco:

- Less in numbers.
- Not as fat and oily.
- See more deformities.

Pike

Lower River:

- Have seen some with yellow skin.
- See more with bugs/worms in the liver (same as seen in broad whitefish).
- Are smaller in size.
- Seem to be more in number but smaller in size.

Upper River:

- Some with yellow skin.
- See more worms.
- Don't catch big ones anymore.
- Catch them year round.

Tomcod

- Most are gone from Emmonak Slough to another area.
- No real changes in Kotlik area.
- Seem to be pretty healthy.

Blackfish

- Beaver dam problems.
- They are harder to get.
- They seem to be smaller.
- They are food for other fish.
- Their reduced numbers may be linked to size changes in other fish.
- The fish from different areas have different tastes.

Burbot

- Fewer in numbers.
- Are smaller and skinny.
- The liver texture is different on occasion.

Needlefish

- Little or no harvest.

Grayling

- Are not targeted.

Trout

- Have to go further up streams to get them.
- Caught a couple during a commercial period.

Halibut

- Will try for them next summer.

Other Species:

Shrimp

- Find them about 2" long and are good eating.
- Will try to catch more next summer.

Beavers

- Observed a "stink" smell (Sulfur Dioxide) in a lake system where the only input for water was blocked by a beaver dam – decaying plant matter and lack of oxygen. The needlefish died off but the blackfish survived (lungs). We broke the dam and one week later the lake system was recovering.
- One representative wondered if there had ever been beavers on the coast before.
- 20 years ago there were no beavers on the coast.
- How can a bounty be set up?
- Need to look at times when pelts are in their prime or meat tastes best.
- AVCP should look into bounties.
- Beavers help the moose populations – they eat all the old willows, which allow small growth to start. Moose like the smaller growth.
- The beaver houses provide habitat for muskrat and mink. Creeks that usually don't freeze are freezing over and the minks have to move on.

- Vegetation on the other side of dams are smaller – can't naturally regulate the amount of water going by.

Suggestions:

- Locals with the time and experience should be hired to be set netters on fish projects.
- Using large boats and motors with small driftnets is very inefficient – they pull on the nets too much. We used to use 18' Lunds with a 15hp motor and it was good.
- ADF&G needs to find better sites for their test fisheries and not just use the same sites year after year.

Prepared by Jennifer Hooper, AVCP Natural Resources Director - 2/9/03

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