

Copper River Prince William Sound Salmon Harvest Task Force  
Spring 2021 Meeting Minutes  
May 11, 2021

**1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Dennis Zadra at 1:05 pm

**2. Roll Call**

Alaska Department of Fish and Game: Mark Somerville, Bert Lewis, Tracey Hansen, Klaus Wuttig, Heather Scannell, Jeremy Botz, Lorraine Vercessi, Matt Nemeth

Cordova District Fishermen United: James Honkola (CDFU Gillnet), Ken Jones (CDFU Seine)

Prince William Sound Setnetters Association: Forest Jenkins

Copper River/Prince William Sound Marketing Association: Dennis Zadra

Copper River/Prince William Sound Advisory Committee: John Renner

PWSAC: Geoff Clark, Steve Hilton

VFDA: Mike Wells

OBI Seafoods: Ben Kirk

Copper River Seafoods: Brandon Blake

Trident Seafoods: Leo Vargas

Silver Bay Seafoods: not present

Peter Pan Seafoods: Colby Boulton, Gayle Janzow

Native Village of Eyak: not present

**3. Public Comment**

Thane Miller commented regarding the need to prioritize broodstock for continued success for the fishery and hatchery programs, and concerns in 2020 about shortfall at Cannery Creek.

**4. Approve Meeting Agenda**

Motion to approve meeting agenda, Renner/ second Wells. *Motion carries unanimously.*

**5. Approve Minutes**

*Minutes tabled until Fall meeting.*

**6. Updates/Reports**

**a. 2021 Gillnet Outlook - Jeremy Botz**

Jeremy Botz gave a report about gillnet fisheries, referencing the need for the fishery to begin with a conservative management strategy based on the last several seasons. The 2021 season will begin May 17, 2021. The Copper River District will be managed through short duration openers using expanded inside closures, and fleet harvest will be used as a management tool until run strength is established and consistent. Prince William Sound Districts will be managed conservatively with time and area dependent on fishing effort and harvest occurring in district waters. Expansion of time and area will be dependent on escapement data.

John Renner asked for clarification about assessing the fishery after 2 periods, rather than 3 periods for and expressed concerns for not having an initial 3rd period, as this is critical timing and normally when the run ramps up. Botz clarified that in the event that if early harvest data and sonar passage indicated a run comparable to 2018 or 2020, that additional restrictions will be needed if we see a more extreme [low] run entry.

Botz answered questions from Ken Jones regarding utilizing the fleet as a run strength indicator for Gulkana versus the 2018 Test Fishery, clarifying that the department does use the the fleet as a tool for fishery data.

**b. 2021 Upriver Outlook - Mark Somerville**

Mark Somerville reported on 2020 run entry and harvest in upriver fisheries including information on historical subsistence harvest, long term run cycles, and length at age for Copper River Chinook from 1976-2020. Somerville anticipates managing the fishery similarly to 2020, particularly until sonar data is established, may need to take additional management measures in the personal use fishery. Sport harvest is a big part of the economy and community upriver, and would like to see some opportunity for harvest remain even if some conservation measures are needed. May still maintain a small sport fishery as we go through the season.

Somerville answered questions about enforcement and reporting upriver fisheries and clarified that new for 2021, participants in the subsistence fishery must report their harvest online, and that personal use fisheries are now utilities the Failure-to-Report list for individuals who do not report each year. Currently about 80-82% harvest reporting, but in 2020 was close to 90%.

Somerville answered questions about the department authority to manage for ensuring Gulkana broodstock, clarifying that the department cannot manage specifically to hatchery production, but that actions in 2020 for overall escapement, provided opportunity for broodstock passage.

**c. 2021 Seine Outlook - Heather Scannell**

Heather Scannell introduced herself as the new Area Management Biologist for seine fisheries. Scannell gave a brief report which referenced the ADFG Outlook for the 2021 Season, with some anticipated changes, including additional area in Port Chalmers. Scannell detailed plans for aerial surveys throughout the summer, and intent to collaborate and communicate regularly with VFDA and PWSAC, and relayed concerns about the potential for impacts from 2019 drought. Scannell plans to be officially in Cordova the following week.

Ken Jones expressed gratitude for Scannell's transition into the position, and asked about test fisheries for assessing run composition and entry into the Sound, versus using the fleet as the assessment tool. Scannell responded regarding the fleet efficiency and concerns for too much harvest.

Scannell answered questions about announcement consistency and the timing of the shift from 14 hour openers to 12 hour openers due to daylight changes, responding that announcement timing and consistency may depend on data from otolith contributions, aerial surveys, and information received from processors, but that it was a possibility to keep a consistent schedule for announcements pending that information.

**d. VFDA Update - Mike Wells**

Mike Wells reported on the 2021 pre-season outlook for VFDA, as well as the 2020 fry release. For brood year 2019, VFDA saw increases in zooplankton abundance during the fry release, and that humpback predation has been less impacted than in prior years. Information from fry releases and returns includes a 7.99% marine survival rate over the last 10 odd years. Predicting 8700 coho return, based on 4.72% marine survival rate. In 2021, VFDA anticipates 408,000 pink salmon are needed for broodstock.

**e. PWSAC Update - Geoff Clark**

Geoff Clark reported on PWSAC review of brood numbers this past winter, found there was a large difference between fecundity and female percentage between even and odd years. Sea lion predation increases seen at WNH, CCH, AFK, so the number of broodstock needed overall was increased due to sea lion predation.

2021 Outmigration: PWSAC also saw slightly later zooplankton blooms and colder temps. Incubation went smoothly overall. Held pinks about a week longer, utilized a new system for deterring whale predation during fry release. Final release numbers will be available at the end of June. Chum salmon cost recovery anticipated to begin June 1, with pink salmon cost recovery beginning on July 20. Market conditions have improved since budget projections were compiled. Clark also reported on capital projects and infrastructure repairs PWSAC is completing.

**7. New Business:**

**a. Gillnet Issues**

James Honkola stated that the Gillnet Division has no formal recommendations for Spring 2021, and that his questions were asked and answered during reports and updates.

**b. Seine Issues**

Motion for a recommendation from the Salmon Harvest Task Force that the Department adopt a consistent announcement timing of 2:00, Jones/ second Renner. *Motion carries unanimously.*

Motion for a recommendation from the Salmon Harvest Task Force that Prince William Sound fisheries be conducted using a consistent fishery schedule for the seine fishery, Jones/ second Renner. *Motion carries unanimously.*

Motion that the Salmon Harvest Task Force recommend to the Department to work with and establish a set date for the 6 am to 8 am transition. Jones/ second Renner. *Tabled until Fall meeting.*

Motion to recommend that the Department evaluate the feasibility of using subdistricts in Port Valdez Area and that the SHTF begins the long process to bring these to Board of Fish. Jones/ second Renner. *Motion carries unanimously.*

Motion that the Salmon Harvest Task Force recommend the Department utilize the fleet as their test fishery, and use pulse openers to gauge run entry, composition, and strength. Jones/ second Renner. *Motion carries unanimously.*

8. Closing Comments - Task Force and Public Comment

Sara Parker commented on concerns about upriver harvest reporting and that timely reporting for all user groups is needed.

9. Determine next meeting date - October or November, *staff to determine.*

10. Motion to adjourn, Renner/ second Honkola. *Meeting adjourned 4:19 p.m.*

**2021 Spring SHTF Roll Call List**

Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
Cordova District Fishermen United - Gillnet Division  
Cordova District Fishermen United - Seine Division  
Copper River & Prince William Sound Marketing Association  
Copper River & Prince William Sound AC  
Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation  
Valdez Fisheries Development Association  
OBI Seafoods (formerly Icicle and Ocean Beauty)  
Trident Seafoods  
Copper River Seafoods  
Silver Bay Seafoods  
Peter Pan Seafoods  
Native Village of Eyak