

**Copper River Prince William Sound Salmon Harvest Task Force
Fall 2022 Meeting Minutes
November 1st | 1:00 p.m.
Cordova Center meeting room**

Minutes taken from the meeting audio recording, available at www.cdfu.org/shtf-meeting.

1. Call to Order
 - a. Meeting was called to order at 1:05pm by Chair Dennis Zadra.

2. Roll Call (0:00)

Alaska Department of Fish and Game: Jeremy Botz, Jenny Morella, Matt Olsen, Heather Scannell, Mark Somerville
Cordova District Fishermen United, Gillnet Division: Darin Gilman, Phyllis Shirron
Cordova District Fishermen United, Seine Division: Greg Gabriel
Copper River/Prince William Sound Marketing Association: Bret Bradford
Copper River/Prince William Sound Advisory Committee: John Renner
PWS Set Net Association: Forest Jenkins
Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation: Geoff Clark, Neil Wright
Valdez Fisheries Development Association: Mike Wells
OBI Seafoods: Ben Kirk
Trident Seafoods: Leo Vargas
Copper River Seafoods: *not present*
Silver Bay Seafoods: *not present*
Peter Pan Seafoods: *not present*
Native Village of Eyak: John Whissel

3. Approve Meeting Agenda (3:45)
 - a. No amendments were made to the agenda.

Motion to approve the agenda. Renner/second Kirk. Unanimous. Motion carries.

4. Approve Minutes (5:15)
 - a. No amendments were made to the agenda.

Motion to approve the Spring 2022 Salmon Harvest Task Force meeting minutes. Renner/second Vargas. Unanimous. Motion carries.

5. SHTF Seats - Rotating Processor Seats, Voting and Ex-Officio

- a. The group reviewed the processor seats that would rotate into ex-officio seats for 2023. The group noted the inclusion of 60 North Seafoods and Camtu's Alaska Wild Seafoods.

6. Updates and Reports (7:15)

a. ADF&G 2022 Herring Research Update - Jenny Morella (7:40)

Area Research Biologist Jenny Morella provided a presentation and update about herring research. ADFG primary objectives are to mile-days of milt in PWS using aerial surveys, and to estimate the age composition of PWS spawning herring. 2022 herring. In 2022, 22 aerial surveys were conducted, 69 hours of flight time. The spawning estimate was 32.7 mile-days of milt, the highest level of spawn recorded since 2014 and 57% above the average, but still well below historical levels of 1980's and 1990's. The first aerial survey was March 21 and the first spawn observed was April 1. Spawn area is increased. Kayak Island is periodically surveyed and has 41.1 mile-days of milt, increased from 2021. Samples were taken. Over 3500 fish were sampled for ASL for 7 locations. Mature spawning samples were dominated by 6 year olds. There was a slight increase in average weight at age. Jenny shared the aerial survey data maps available for spring.

b. ADF&G 2022 Upriver Management Summary - Mark Somerville (19:45)

Sportfish Biologist Mark Somerville provided a presentation and update about the upriver Copper. Concerns were stated about the number of sockeye, which may be because the number of fishwheel permits fished. Escapement goals look to be met, with the upper range of chinook goals and mid-range sockeye goals.

-John Renner asked what other species were included in the table. Mr. Somerville listed silver, steelhead, burbot, dollies, but clarified it's mostly silvers.

-Mr. Renner asked whether there is an increase in efficiency. Somerville said yes, but not with the fish wheels because the lower water levels affect the wheel.

-Mr. Renner said he heard him say he achieve broodstock at Gulkana and congratulated him. Somerville clarified that they were within SEG range but did not achieve broodstock at Gulkana, and were in fact quite short.

-Darin Gilman asked whether there is an increase in personal use participation reflecting the elimination of guiding for subsistence in the Glenallen subdistrict. Mr. Somerville shared how he looked at the data from shore and boats, and above and below the bridge, but didn't think it made much of a difference unless it was early on.

-Mr. Gilman asked whether there was a plan for managing to achieve for broodstock goals for Gulkana hatchery. Mr. Somerville said no.

-Phyllis Shirron asked whether the fish caught in fish wheels were supplied more by PU or subsistence. Mr. Somerville clarified that only subsistence wheels are above the bridge in the subsistence fishery.

-Mr. Renner asked how many days the counter indicated increased supplemental permits upriver. Mr. Somerville said no more supplemental permits have been issued in two BoF cycles. Mr. Renner asked for clarification on the range of escapement. Mr. Somerville and Jeremy Botz clarified about inriver goals for chinook and sockeye being within range. Mr. Renner stated concerns that the commercial harvest has gone down, and upriver users not getting their fish.

**c. ADF&G 2022 Gillnet Management Summary - Jeremy Botz
(39:00)**

Jeremy Botz gave an overview of the 2022 season by district, with 454 drift and 26 set gillnet active permits in the fishery.

-Mr. Renner asked whether there was a sportfish biologist at the meeting. No.

-Mr. Gilman asked whether coho escapement goals were achieved for the Copper delta and Bering River. Mr. Botz said it's still ongoing and it's close for the Copper but the Bering looks below the objective.

-Mr. Gilman asked for clarification on the fishery in Esther subdistrict closures. Mr. Botz said recommendations from PWSAC to keep Esther subdistrict had them keep closed from the start of the season, but later in July opened for a couple of cleanups to reach objectives. Mr. Gilman asked whether the district would have been liberalized for sockeye escapement to

Coghill lake if the recommendations were not made by PWSAC. Mr. Botz said more chum would have harvested and Esther built out without the PWSAC concerns.

-Mr. Renner commented that the previous speaker for ADFG said he doesn't manage for broodstock, but that this biologist is able to manage for broodstock, and noticed the inconsistencies.

-Mr. Gilman asked whether there was an Eschamy lake update. Mr. Botz said it was within range but didn't have the exact number on hand, he thought close to 20. Mr. Gilman asked whether there was funding on hand for the weir. Mr. Botz said they are looking for funding but it isn't secured.

-Ms. Shirron asked whether he and the sport biologist collaborate on what is being harvested in river on the Copper. Mr. Botz answered yes, they communicate regularly in the season, and he provides updates on trends. Ms. Shirron asked whether information is also provided to Mr. Botz by the sport biologist to help. Mr. Botz said some is anecdotal because of the lack of in season data, but as much data as is available is shared.

d. ADF&G 2022 Seine Management Summary - Heather Scannell (1:00:30)

Heather Scannell gave an overview of the 2022 season, with 206 active permits, 22 dual permits in operations.

-Mr. Renner asked if the marker program is ongoing. Ms. Scannell shared yes they are open and willing for that, but would like industry support with a boat.

-Greg Gabriel thanked Heather for a good job this season, with wild stocks and strong VFDA run. He's happy to hear that chum escapement was met.

e. VFDA Report - Mike Wells (1:07:15)

Mike Wells gave a report on the VFDA season.

-Mr. Gilman asked whether VFDA had solutions for sea lion predation. Mr. Wells shared that they have had to take measures for keeping them out of the raceways, like electric fencing.

f. PWSAC Report - Geoff Clark (1:15:40)

Geoff Clark gave a report on the PWSAC season, and capital investments.

-Mr. Renner asked about whether sea lion predation was a major problem. Mr. Clark said it wasn't the problem that it's been because of the seal fence. It doesn't work 100% but it helps the massive numbers down that were seen before. Mr. Renner asked whether SERVS will pay for buoy cones. Mr. Clark said he had reopened the conversation.

-Mr. Gilman asked to be walked through how coho broodstock goal wasn't met when there was a run. Mr. Clark agreed it was strange. Pink egg take finished on the 12th, and the brood pond was cleaned. The commercial fishery was closed on the 14th, and the brood pond was opened to let fish in. The numbers dropped off then although all were grabbed that were available.

7. New Business (1:32:00)

a. Gillnet Issues and Recommendations (1:32:15)

- i. **Recommendation from CDFU Gillnet Division: for CDFU to facilitate formation of a Cost Recovery Committee to present to the PWSAC and CDFU Board of Directors in spring 2023.**

Darin Gilman spoke to this. A cost recovery meeting was held last week and formed recommendations to bring to PWSAC. The committee is waiting for them to have their meeting, then bring back their ideas to discuss what's viable. Discussions included an enhancement tax and eliminating cost recovery. He asked the processors to comment on grounds prices versus cost recovery bid prices. Leo Vargas commented that it would take more research.

- ii. **Recommendation from CDFU Gillnet Division: for changes to the Gulkana Hatchery Annual Management Plan**

In 2019 more commercial fish were put into the AMP for Gulkana Hatchery for broodstock, but broodstock goals haven't been achieved since 2015. He recommends lowering the broodstock collection goal to 20,000 because the gillnet fleet has already taken the burden of conservation upriver. This is a reallocation of 45,000 fish, especially since as stated previously Mark Somerville can't manage for broodstock goals.

Mr. Renner added that this was a spring SHTF recommendation, for Copper management manage to achieve broodstock goals at Gulkana hatchery OR remove the additional 40,000 in the inriver number instead of reallocating fish upriver.

iii. **Recommendation from CDFU Gillnet Division: for Copper River Coho Sportfish management to have parity with Commercial and Subsistence.**

Mr. Gilman referred back to Mr. Botz's comment that the coho fishery was the lowest harvest in 30 years, and that sportfish didn't take precautions to help meet goals while subsistence was even restricted. Mr. Botz clarified subsistence opportunities. Mr. Gilman cited wanting burden to be equaled across all users.

Mr. Renner cited PWSCRAC extreme concerns with coho sport management on especially the western Copper River delta. They believe fall closures is a result of sportfish management during the 2019 drought, recognizing 2022 coho sport restrictions but not closures.

b. Seine Issues and Recommendations (1:39:00)

i. **Recommendation from CDFU Seine Division: to clearly mark and open the Orca Inlet subdistrict according to the supporting map.**

Greg Gabriel spoke that the fleet wants more time and area, and to work with the department on this.

Heather Scannell responded that the map was provided from input with CDFU and herself, and that she's open to this but that the SHTF would put up the markers. This was talked about at Board of Fish but it was agreed not to be regulations, instead put to the SHTF. The area is closed due under regulatory closed waters, there is now a defined Orca Inlet subdistrict area that could potentially be opened in times of surplus.

- ii. **Recommendation from CDFU Seine Division: for ADF&G staff to continue to work each spring with volunteers to place stream markers and map and verify GPS coordinates.**
- iii. **Recommendation from CDFU Seine Division: to keep SHAs closed until cost recovery has been mostly achieved.**

Mr. Renner said he'd like to see them not only closed, but closed to all activity.

Motion to accept all recommendations from CDFU Gillnet and Seine Divisions. Gilman /second Renner. Yes: OBI, Trident, NVE, CRPWSMA, CRPWSAC, PWS Set Net Association, CDFU Seine, CDFU Gillnet, PWSCRAC, Abstention: VFDA and PWSAC. Motion carries.

c. Other Issues and Recommendations (1:51:45)

- i. **Recommendation from Native Village of Eyak: application of the separate subsistence limit for pinks and chums being applied as separate area in regs.**

John Whissel remarked that there were changes to PWS subsistence fisheries following the last BoF.

Jeremy Botz commented that he reviewed the changes and that one household can hold permits in Copper Bering and PWS. One can request the additional fish on either permit, but it's still an overall household limit of pink or chum.

8. Public Comment (1:55:30)

- a. Rob Maxwell - PWSAC cost recovery needs improvement.
- b. Chris Bourgeois - If there is an increase in seine efficiency like Heather Scannell mentioned, why not recommended a length restriction until cost recovery is achieved?
- c. Danny Carpenter - Gillnet fleet supports conservative management when fish are coming in, but when we hit escapement we want to catch back up. -Seine has larger areas with Montague and Chalmers, but is intercepting WNH chums.

-Cost recovery isn't working at Main Bay; hopes we can find solutions through these committees.

-If we're not fishing or surveying coho, we don't have enough information to manage the fishery; hopes we can do better going forward.

- d. Chris Bourgeois - 2022 in-season report on sockeye is skewed because it counts inside fisheries from 10 years past, offsetting delta hours. It sounds like we fish twice as much to catch 46% less fish; the report numbers could be adjusted and rephrased.

9. Salmon Harvest Task Force Remarks (2:03:40)

- a. OBI, Ben Kirk - expressed thanks to SHTF
- b. Trident, Leo Vargas - expressed thanks to SHTF
- c. CRPWSMA, Bret Bradford - is involved in both cost recovery committees and excited to get started with new solutions.
- d. ADFG, Jeremy Botz - appreciates recommendations of the SHTF and will get back to others on public comment.
- e. CRPWSAC, John Renner - coho season was a disaster, the worst season he's ever seen. The AC made 4 recommendations to SHTF in spring but only 25% have been met. Sportfish needs to come on board to manage together with commercial in times of shortage. Applauded meeting BEG on the Copper.
- f. NVE, John Whissel - expressed thanks to ADFG. Recommended looking more at how to manage coho, knowing different access and use realities across the region.
- g. CDFU Gillnet, Darin Gilman - expressed thanks to all and is looking forward to the recommendations becoming solutions.
- h. CDFU Seine, Greg Gabriel - expressed thanks to ADFG and hatcheries for their great summaries. Celebrated the bright spots and thanked all for working toward solutions.
- i. ADFG, Mark Somerville - expressed thanks to all.
- j. ADFG, Heather Scannel - expressed thanks to all and apologized for not being able to be there in person.
- k. PWSAC, Geoff Clark - expressed thanks all and is looking forward to winter work.
- l. VFDA, Mike Wells - expressed thanks to all for the good process of the SHTF, is glad it has been resurrected as it's beneficial for all stakeholders and hatcheries. Gave thanks to ADFG for getting VFDA run in this summer.

10. Determine next meeting date (2:11:00)

- a. April 19, to coincide with RPT

Motion to adjourn at 3:19pm. Renner/second Bradford. Unanimous. Motion carries.