

## **Matanuska Valley Fish and Game Advisory Committee Minutes of November 20, 2013**

### **Meeting was called to order at 7:05pm**

**Members Present:** Jehnifer Ehmann (Chair), Dan Montgomery (arrived 9:15), Mel Grove (arrived 7:15), Andy Couch (arrived 8:30), Steve Bartelli, Eric Beckman, Mike Buirge, Stephen Darilek, Gerrit Dykstra, Tony Jones, Israel Payton, Max Sager, David Young.

**Members Absent or Excused:** Bill Folsom (Excused), Jeff Tuttle (Excused), Keith Westfall (Excused), Dane Crowley (Absent).

### **Pledge of Allegiance**

**Guest and Department Staff Present:** Captain Burke Waldron, AST; Terry Nininger; Neil DeWitt; Rick Merizon, ADFG; Todd Rinaldi, ADFG; Sam Ivey, ADFG.

**Persons to be heard:** None

**Approval of Minutes from previous meeting:**  
10/30/13 meeting minutes approved unanimously.

**Motion to accept agenda:** Agenda approved unanimously.

### **Discussion of Targeted Moose Hunt AM415:**

Captain Waldron discussed Trespass Regulations. Todd Rinaldi discussed targeted moose hunt specifics.

### **Discussion of Upland Bird Youth Hunting Opportunities:**

Rick Merizon from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game provided AC with overview of an idea for youth upland bird hunting opportunities in the Matsu. Rick would like to work with AC to develop proposal for next BOG meeting. AC unanimously agreed to add topic to future agenda and discuss the opportunity for a proposal.

(Meeting Break - Called back to order 8:37 Andy Couch began taking minutes for remainder of meeting)

### **Upper Cook Inlet Board of Fisheries Proposal Comments**

**Proposal 309** --- asks for development and adoption of an optimal escapement goal for Big River and Kustatan River coho salmon. One person expressed concern over what the cost of managing for a goal would be. A different position is that these are important sport fisheries that should be actively managed. Sam Ivey with ADF&G mentioned that the fisheries have grown, but there is concern as to are the runs strong enough to sustain current exploitation levels. Sam mentioned that Kustatan seems to be more stable, but that Big River Lakes not so much. Department does not currently do any monitoring in the area. Sam mentioned a first priority for him would be establishing some type of monitoring on Big River Lakes. Eric asked how much impact the commercial fishery has on these coho salmon. Sam's answer for ADF&G was that he did not know how much these fish were being harvested commercially, and that to his knowledge ADF&G had never done any work in that particular area as to what the

## **Matanuska Valley Fish and Game Advisory Committee Minutes of November 20, 2013**

commercial exploitation might be. Since commercial effort goes up and down with sockeye abundances in July, harvest of coho likes goes up and down with the commercial effort. According to Sam Ivey on years with very large coho harvests or very low harvests throughout Upper Cook Inlet may be a better indicator than Little Susitna River coho numbers. Without numbers how do we know if we are either under exploiting or over exploiting? According to ADF&G either one could be happening -- but regulations have been set at what was thought to be a conservative level covering a broad area the last time they were adjusted.

Motion passed 9-0-3.

**Proposal 310** Would eliminate 4 days per week of sport salmon fishing on Little Susitna River. Little Susitna River provides the only 7 day per week king salmon sport fishery for wild king salmon in Knik Arm and has also supported one of the largest sport fisheries for silver salmon in the state. Motion opposed 0-12-0.

Motion to take no action on **Proposals 311 and 312** -- which call for salmon stocking in the Little Susitna River, but both do not propose any change in regulation(s).

Motion to take no action passed 12-0-0.

**Proposal 313** -- This is the Matanuska Valley Advisory Committee's own proposal requesting establishment of a sockeye salmon escapement goal for the Little Susitna River. Without a goal the Little Susitna River sockeye salmon run has decreased from thousands of fish per year to annual escapements measured in the low hundreds. ADF&G now has a weir in place on the lower river that counts all species of salmon inseason which could be used to manage Little Susitna River sockeye salmon on an annual basis. passed 12-0-0.

**Proposal 314** would only allow sport sockeye salmon harvest after ADF&G could project an escapement of 2500 sockeye salmon past ADF&G's Little Susinta River weir.

Steve Bartelli amended the proposal to: Little Susitna River sockeye salmon harvest be reduced by all user groups in proportion to their harvest to allow for an escapement of 2500 sockeye salmon per year. Amendment passed 12-0-0. Amended motion passed 12-0-0.

**Proposal 315** is another of Matanuska Valley Advisory Committee's own proposals that requests establishment of a Little Susitna River chum salmon goal. The Little Susitna River chum salmon run is of significant size and important to both commercial and sport fisheries, ADF&G has several complete years of chum salmon counts through Little Susinta River weir, and additional years of partial counts upon which a chum salmon goal could be based. There are several chum salmon goals in lower Cook Inlet, but only one chum goal in Upper Cook Inlet, and there are currently no chum salmon goals located in the Northern District where most Upper Cook Inlet chum salmon spawn. ADF&G already operates a weir on the loer Littler Susitna River that could be used to manage this important Northern District chum salmon stock. passed 12-0-0.

**Proposal 316** would require use of 4-stroke motors on Little Susinta River and limit the number of outboards per day. Members were concerned with the cost of switching over to 4-stroke motors, and also with the provision that would limit the number of outboard motors on the river

## Matanuska Valley Fish and Game Advisory Committee Minutes of November 20, 2013

per day. Powerboats operating on the lower Little Susitna River have been gradually switching over to 4-stroke or new cleaner burning two stroke technology for years. Motion opposed 0-12-0.

**Proposal 317** would greatly reduce the amount of time anglers could fish from a boat or a power boat each week on the Little Susitna River. One part of the proposal requests no fishing from a powerboat on every weekend for a total of 62 hours straight. Another suggestion in the proposal would close fishing from a motorized boat every other day with Sundays always being closed. People would suffer as a large portion of people fishing Little Susitna River do so from powerboats, and access is difficult to reach many miles of river open to salmon fishing without use of a boat Motion opposed 0-12-0.

**Proposal 318** would open the Fish Creek personal use fishery starting July 10, unless the escapement is projected to be less than 50,000 fish. Fish Creek was a stocked fishery and is no longer a stocked fishery. The Fish Creek sockeye salmon goal was not attained in either 2012 or 2013, but no conservative actions based on low Fish Creek escapements were made in the commercial fisheries while the personal use fishery was never opened. The question was asked if stocking might be started again. ADF&G answer was that Cook Inlet Aquaculture was not getting a good return from their stocking program on this system, so that is why the stocking program went away ---- it is hard to say if anything will come back either from the state or some other entity. Based on the fact that both the state and Cook Inlet Aquaculture quit sockeye salmon stocking programs in this system it does not seem likely some other entity will resume stocking anytime soon. Motion failed 2-6-4.

**Proposal 319** Would reduce hours in the Jim Creek sport fishery, along with reduction in area where fishing would be allowed. Use would be closed both in the early morning and late evening times where most people with jobs are working during the week. Committee would like to see some sharing of the Conservation burden amongst users --- it is disappointing that ADF&G only made a proposal to restrict one user group -- which is a very allocative approach to addressing the issue. Jim Creek sport fishery has grown to be a larger fishery than even the Little Susitna River coho fishery since 2006 ( with down turns in the Little Susitna River), but commercial coho harvests have also been liberalized through regulation changes starting in 2002. Andy Couch amended the motion to keep the sport fishery open from 6 am to 10 p.m. with corresponding percentage restriction to the commercial drift and set net coho harvests as well.

If needed an additional sport fishery step down could be taken in the future by starting the hours restriction a week or two earlier in the season than suggested in this proposal. Mel Groves mentioned that the sport harvest has doubled over time -- but that the Board should set an allocation amongst users considering what is necessary for escapement and sustained yield. The McRoberts Creek / Jim Creek coho salmon spawning escapement was not attained in 2010, 2011, and 2012. Part of the reason for rising effort on Jim Creek is the current restrictions on many other sport fisheries in the Mat-Su Valley. Multiple people on the Advisory Committee mentioned that if the hours were restricted as much as proposed it would greatly reduce their own and other people's fishing opportunity. Amendment passed 10-3-0. Amended Proposal passed 10-3-0. Members of the committee voting opposed felt strongly opposed to reducing Mat-Su Valley sport fisheries when silver salmon sport fisheries have already been

## **Matanuska Valley Fish and Game Advisory Committee Minutes of November 20, 2013**

reduced to not much open (especially in the Knik Arm unit) --- and ADF&G does not even address the commercial side with a reduction proposal.

**Proposal 320** --- Motion to take no action -- based on Committee preference for amended proposal 319. This proposal lists the same hour restrictions as previous proposal, but without the spawning area restriction. No action passed 13-0-0.

**Proposal 321** is another Matanuska Valley Advisory Committee proposal calling for a king salmon escapement goal for Moose Creek. ADF&G has a record of doing post season king salmon escapement counts on Moose Creek for over 30 years. The Chickaloon Tribe has been attempting to rebuild the king salmon run on Moose Creek through both habitat enhancement and moist air incubation of king salmon eggs replanted back into suitable habitat on Moose Creek. The public and Department and board need a benchmark on how to judge the health of Moose Creek king salmon. Passed 13 -0-0.

**Proposal 322** is a housekeeping proposals that would open an area on Eklutna Tailrace where sport anglers could fish for hatchery produced king and silver salmon. ADF&G has been opening this area by emergency order -- but it would be more clear to the public and require less work by ADF&G if the area was simply listed as open to fishing in regulation. Passed 13-0-0.

**Proposal 323** Would create a one-day, youth only, king salmon fishery on a portion of the Eklutna Tailrace. As identified in the proposal we hope this should provide a more positive opportunity to introduce young sport anglers to fishing, while still providing area for all anglers to fish on the Eklutna Tailrace at the same time. Motion passed unanimously 13-0-0.

**Proposal 376** --- to be considered at next Mat - Valley Advisory Committee meeting.

December 4th --- ADF&G will be providing an end of the season Mat-Su Valley fishery summer at the public safety building in Wasilla.

Dan Montgomery has been appointed by Jehnifier to represent the AC at the Board of Game meeting considering community harvest hunt changes.

Lower Cook Inlet --- Israel Payton, Mel Grove, and Steve Bartelli were appointed to represent the AC at this meeting.

Hearing about brown bear at US Fish and Wildlife Service in Anchorage tomorrow night at 6 - 9 p.m. Dan Montgomery requested that someone from the AC attend, but no members seem to be able to schedule time to attend.

Meeting Adjourned.

Minutes recorded by: Steve Bartelli (through 8:30 p.m.) and Andy Couch (8:37 until adjournment).

--

"If people concentrated on the really important things in life, there'd be a shortage of fishing poles." -Me & Doug Larson