

AVCP

ASSOCIATION OF VILLAGE COUNCIL PRESIDENTS
P.O. BOX 219 • BETHEL, ALASKA 99559 • PHONE 543-3521

RCIS

48TH ANNUAL CONVENTION
BETHEL, ALASKA OCTOBER 3-5, 2012

RESOLUTION 12-10-05

TITLE: Calling for a delay to changes to Kuskokwim Escapement Goals

WHEREAS The Association of Village Council Presidents, Inc. (AVCP) is the recognized tribal organization and non-profit Alaska Native regional corporation for its fifty-six member indigenous Native villages within Western Alaska and supports the endeavors of its member villages; and

WHEREAS AVCP fully supports its member villages in all aspects of their self-determination, health and well-being; and

WHEREAS, Healthy and abundant Chinook salmon stocks of the Kuskokwim Rivers are essential to the cultural, nutritional and economic well-being and way of life of the tribal villages and peoples who live in these drainages; and

WHEREAS, The Chinook Salmon subsistence fishery on the Kuskokwim is the largest in the world, making allocative issues of obvious important on this river; and

WHEREAS, The traditional knowledge and wisdom of the Elders, passed down through their ancestors over countless generations, is invaluable for understanding the salmon, their habitat and best management practices for restoring Chinook runs to their historical numbers; and

WHEREAS, The Kuskokwim River has experienced a number of years of disastrously low runs of Chinook salmon over the past decade, including the 2012 run which was unable provide for necessary escapement levels and to provide subsistence users with the opportunity to harvest even the minimum "amounts necessary for subsistence" as established by the Alaska Board of Fish;

WHEREAS, On September 13, 2012, the Acting U.S. Secretary of Commerce Rebecca Blank declared a fisheries disaster for the Kuskokwim River Chinook salmon in response to extremely low salmon returns in 2012; and

WHEREAS, Despite disastrously low runs, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) has proposed a major change to salmon management on the river by recommending to the Alaska Board of Fish the establishment of a new

Kuskokwim River drainage wide escapement goal of 65,000 to 120,000 Chinook salmon for adoption in the 2013 season.

WHEREAS, The drainage wide escapement goal recommended by the ADF&G is far lower than the average historic Chinook escapement on the Kuskokwim; and

WHEREAS, ADF&G has recommended significantly lowering tributary goals in the Kwethluk, Kogrukuk, and George Rivers, and eliminating the escapement goal on the Tuluksak River; and

WHEREAS, The basic information upon which these recommendations are based - including the data analysis, data and model - have not been made publically available.

The recommendation to lower the escapement goal on the Kwethluk River and to eliminate the goal on the Tuluksak River are decisions that may have long term effects on the stocks of those tributaries and the Alaska Native people who live in those communities; and

WHEREAS, AVCP fully recognizes the importance of reviewing escapement goals and undertaking new of new data analysis such as the Kuskokwim run reconstruction.

WHEREAS, AVCP expects that a set of standards be followed when considering changes to escapement goals that may have long-term effects on the conservation and rebuilding of future Kuskokwim Chinook runs; and

WHEREAS, These standards include adequate time for review of the analysis and data by the public and independent experts, for the data and model to be repeatable, that the a full uncertainty analysis of the Department's model results should be undertaken prior to making major changes to escapement goals, that there be a level of transparency in the information and decision making process, that there be adequate time for Alaska Native Tribes who live on the river and depend on the resource to be informed and involved the decision making process; and

WHEREAS, AVCP finds a number of factors ignored in the current recommendation by the ADF&G to the Alaska Board of Fish including factors in the Bering Seas such as bycatch, other factors related to industrialized fishing, and climatic effects and changes in ocean conditions; and

WHEREAS, The recommendation ignores other factors that affect salmon at different stage of their lifecycle; and

WHEREAS, The recommendation ignores overall ecosystem health and benefits of natural cycles of salmon and abundance; and

WHEREAS, The recommendation does not ensure maintaining genetic diversity throughout the river drainages, weak stock protection, or address the quality of escapement; and

WHEREAS, The recommendation potentially greatly reduces the abundance of fish upriver of Bethel to the point there fisherman may need to greatly increase their effort, time, and the cost of catching the same amount of food then they are traditionally used to; and

WHEREAS, The ADF&G has not developed or released a management plan to outline how in-season management decisions would be made following these recommended escapement goal changes or how to address allocation issues; and

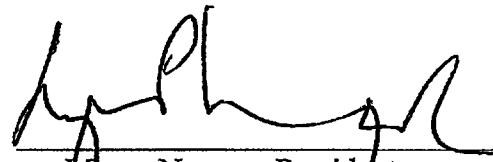
WHEREAS, The tribal leaders convened at the AVCP Convention, and the AVCP Executive Board of Directors, wish to ensure the healthy and abundant Chinook and other salmon stocks are available for that future generations so that they may continue the fishing way of life that has sustained the Kuskokwim Tribes since time immemorial; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT: that the Association of Village Council Presidents requests that the Alaska Board of Fish delay making any changes to existing Kuskokwim escapement goals to allow adequate time for 1) independent review of the data, model, and analysis 2) for Tribes who depend on the Kuskokwim Chinook stocks to be adequately informed and involved in the decision making process, and 3) a Kuskokwim River Chinook Salmon Management Plan be developed with stakeholders.

ADOPTED by the Association of Village Council Presidents during its forty-eighth annual convention held at Bethel, Alaska, this 4th day of October, 2012 with a duly constituted quorum of delegates.

CERTIFIED:


Raymond Watson, Chairman


Myron Naneng, President