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## Federal Subsistence Board News Release



Forest Service

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### **Federal Subsistence Board discusses special actions regarding Kuskokwim and Yukon Rivers**

During its work session held on Thursday, April 16, 2015 the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) discussed fisheries special actions it received on the Kuskokwim and Yukon rivers. The special actions requested the Board to assume management of all salmon stocks as necessary to ensure conservation, important cultural practices and subsistence uses of Chinook Salmon stocks; limit 2015 Chinook Salmon fisheries to Federally qualified subsistence users; and implement an allocation strategy consistent with Section 804 of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) among the Native villages, communities and Federally qualified subsistence users in the Kuskokwim and Yukon drainages. Several requested implementation of an interim Tribal co-management system for the 2015 season.

For the Kuskokwim River, the Board unanimously voted (7-0) to defer action on all the Kuskokwim River special action requests (FSA15-02/03/05/07/08) until such time, during the season, the Chair determines it to be necessary for Federal involvement. The Board stated that the Federal in-season manager already has the delegated authority to address many of the proponents' concerns, and there is a need for cooperative management with the State. If issues arise during the season that necessitate the actions requested by the proponents, such as limiting the pool of Federally qualified subsistence users or to implement an allocation strategy for Chinook Salmon, the Chair will call a meeting for subsequent action.

For the Yukon River, the Board initially addressed Fisheries Special Actions 15-01. The Board considered the closure aspect of the special action unnecessary as the in-season manager already has the authority to open and close Federal public waters of the Yukon River drainage to the harvest of salmon by non-Federally qualified users. Additionally, the Board determined that given the complexity of the Yukon River fisheries management, including the health of multiple Chinook Salmon stocks, the size of the area, and the patchwork of jurisdictions, it would be difficult to equitably provide opportunity for the harvest of Chinook Salmon. The Board voted unanimously (7-0) to take no action on the remaining Fisheries Special Actions (FSA 15-01/04/06/09/10 and FSA 14-07/08 (deferred)) based on their decision for FSA 15-01.

The Board members were impressed with the overwhelming numbers of the public who offered testimony on these issues. Many members of the public offered heart-felt testimonies that were welcomed by the Board which was one of the factors helping place the complex issues at the forefront of the decision making process. The key theme that was heard repeatedly throughout the work session was, “We have the ability to work together.” The Board stated that the petitioners and agencies alike clearly expressed their concerns and interests in being able to continue working with the State and Federal governments, Tribes, Native villages and communities to ensure the continued viability of subsistence resources. Members of the Board and petitioners also made several sincere remarks of gratitude and appreciation for the high-level of State representation at the Board’s work session.

The Board agreed that they will continue to closely monitor the situation on the Kuskokwim and Yukon rivers and if conditions change, the Board will quickly take action to ensure that a priority for subsistence users is provided and protected.

Due to time constraints, the Board unanimously deferred action on RFR14-01 until the July 28-29 Federal Subsistence Board work session.

The Board unanimously approved a draft letter to Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture addressing the concerns raised by Kootznoowoo Inc. and their petition to exert Federal extraterritorial jurisdiction in Southeast Alaska.

Additional information on the Federal Subsistence Management Program may be found on the web at [www.doi.gov/subsistence/index.cfm](http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/index.cfm) or by visiting [www.facebook.com/subsistencealaska](http://www.facebook.com/subsistencealaska).

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