

Rat River Working Group (RRWG) – 2010 Fishing Season Recommendations

Public Meeting

June 7, 2010

Sittichinli Complex – Aklavik, NT

-Meeting called to order at 6:12pm

1. Opening Prayer

2. Introductions

Robert Charlie, Chair, RRWG

Kris Maier, GRRB – Inuvik

Billy Archie, Chair, West Side Working Group (WSWG)

Larry Dow, DFO – Inuvik

Kevin Bill, DFO – Inuvik

Max Kotokak Sr., FJMC Inuvialuit member and WSWG member

James Malone, FJMC – Inuvik

Frank Pokiak, Chair, Inuvialuit Game Council (IGC)

Billy Storr, President, Aklavik Hunters and Trappers Committee (AHTC)

3. Opening remarks by Robert Charlie, Chair, RRWG

4. 2009 harvest & monitoring review

-Kevin Bill presented on a background of the RRWG and the fishing plan. Presentation reviewed ongoing programs for last few years, results of those programs, ongoing progress of those programs.

-Overview of presentation prepared by Kevin:

-Review of goals of the fishing plan

-Estimated harvest of Rat River Charr

-2009 reported harvest of Charr

-Question from Max Kotokak Sr. on getting data from Shingle Point in 2009. Kevin Bill replied that data have not been reported last year, but hope to get the data for 2010.

-Char monitoring program ongoing for 15 years – there is a need for the program to continue.

-Review of objectives – data collected by the monitors (e.g. sex)

-Results of 2009 monitoring – poor fishing reported by the monitors

5. Biological data and 2009 population estimate

-Graph of CPUE by year

- Length of fish – 2008 vs. 2009
- Age of fish - last two years
- Mean length – 42 cm for females in the 90s, 48cm for females at present. Six year old fish in 90s were smaller than they are now. Work by Steve Sandstrom and Lois Harwood have showed fish are feeding longer.
- Question from Billy Archie: any consideration on increasing the mesh size of nets? Kevin Bill replied there could possibly be an increase of the mesh size to 5 inches – something that could be considered in the future.
 - Review of the Rat River DV Assessment – tagging program
 - Field work in September 2009
 - Results: September 24-27, 2009 field work, 462 fish caught and tagged – percentages of spawners outlined.
- Question from Robert Charlie: have data from 2009 been looked at? Kevin Bill replied no, but data were considered at RRWG meeting earlier this year when quotas were being recommended by the RRWG.
- Question from Max Kotokak: are tags colour-coded? Kevin replied yes – fish caught in 2010 will receive blue tags.
 - Estimates based on extrapolation for 2009 will be established in 2010. Estimate is 11.5 thousand fish.
 - In summary: numerous factor to consider (e.g. water conditions). Monitors were catching fewer fish, most of which were silvers. But the majority of fish caught at the fish holes were spawners.

6. Proposed research – 2010

- Planned programs for 2010 were reviewed. Fish taken to Aklavik and Fort McPherson for distribution to residents.
- Safe harvest levels – recommendations were reviewed.
- Voluntary quotas from March 23, 2010 RRWG meeting – quota are significantly less in 2010 than in 2009.
- Billy Archie noted that the Aklavik HTC will be asking the IGC to help start a dialogue with the Inupiat in Alaska. Frank Pokiak suggested bringing up dialogue with Inupiat at the Beluga Whale Commission meeting at the end of July 2010 in Tuktoyaktuk. Make sure Carol Arey know about the plan.
- Billy Archie mentioned that the slide on quota – 600 fish, 10% was too high for 2009. The amount of fish caught last year was 419, so under the quota for last year. Unsure of where the 10% was determined. Kevin Bill noted 10% was used for Arctic Charr in many systems. The advice was that the Dolly Varden was not able to handle that quota, or else the population could have been impacted. The advice was provided by Science in previous years. Robert Charlie noted that the 10% was used in previous years as the safe harvest level.

7. Recommendations from March 23, 2010 meeting

The meeting continued with the review of recommendations from the March 2010 RRWG meeting.

- **Institute a voluntary quota of 600.**
 - **75 for each char monitor (225 total) under a scientific licence.**

- **375 for local harvesters, 175 for the Tetlit RRC, and 100 each for the Ehdiitat RRC and Aklavik HTC.**
- Hire a harvest monitor at in Ft. McPherson, Aklavik, and Shingle Point.
- Release large males (where possible).
- Tag up to 300 fish at Fish Creek in July 2010.
 - 100 fish will have adipose fin clipped for genetic analysis.
 - 10 char to be dead sampled (fish provided to community).
 - 200 Arctic Grayling to be dead sampled.
- Fall Recapture of fish tagged in 2009 and July 2010 at fish hole using seine nets.
- Tag up to 300 more to provide a 2010 estimate (recaptured in fall 2011).
- Tagging in the fall will depend on the number tagged in July.

-Billy Archie suggested that the Big Fish River should be checked out at the end of July to see if fish are present in the river year round? Kevin Bill noted that he will speak with Colin Gallagher and Steve Sandstrom and see if checking the Big Fish River at the end of July could be possible.

8. Community feedback on recommendations

-Robert Charlie suggested that Colin and Kim Howland should travel to the local communities and report on the progress of the tagging of fish.

-Kevin Bill: the plan is to have monitors in communities – one monitor from the HTC and one monitor from the RRC.

9. Request RRC/HTC letter to RRWG – re: recommendations

-What happens next? A letter from the HTC and RRC is to be forwarded to the RRWG with their comments and recommendations on the results from the RRWG meeting. Letters/comments submitted to DFO by July 1, 2010 – the earlier to submit all comments, the better.

-End of review of presentation.

10. Questions?

-Billy Archie commented on warm weather in spring (May 2010) – deep water observed, and then the water froze up. How will the monitoring of fish be conducted successfully? Kevin Bill replied that there is no concrete answer on how monitoring will be done, but it's something to keep in mind for later in 2010.

-Max Kotokak Sr. noted that satellite imagery being circulated by Steve Solomon shows flooding in the Delta. Kevin Bill noted that work is being done right now to monitor the flooding.

-Frank Pokiak asked that when tagging the fish, what is the purpose of tagging the fish? Kevin Bill replied that tagging done whenever possible. Tagging of fish is used to gather population estimates, and also to see the areas where the tagged fish are being caught.

- Robert Charlie noted that the DIDSON camera work is to be conducted in 2010. Good results were achieved from the DIDSON camera work in 2009.
- Question from Max Kotokak Sr.: 1,000 herring were tagged? Frank Pokiak replied yes.
- Question from Billy Storr: in which areas were the fish being caught? Kevin Bill replied that the tagged fish were caught at Big Fish River, but some tagged fish had been caught at Shingle Point.
- It was noted that in 2007, 440 fish were tagged, 13 of those tagged fish were caught two years later.
- Kevin Bill noted that all estimates are basically guesses. There were concerns on 300 in summer and 300 catches in fall during the RRWG meeting in March 2010.
- Billy Storr noted that the level of confidence is small on the graph. Kevin Bill replied that that's related to more fish caught than more fish tagged.
- Question from Billy Archie: is science is happy with the Pedersen estimates? Kevin Bill replied that the technique has been used for the entire time.
- Question from Billy Storr: # of fish that do and don't spawn – any reason for migration? Kevin Bill replied that the spawners are the silvers – they migrate to the ocean to eat to increase their weight. Billy Storr asked why do the fish go back up? It was noted that the reason for going back up is to overwinter. The fish cannot go back up during the winter.
- Robert Charlie reviewed the list of recommendations during tonight's meeting. Now aiming to get the letters from RRCs and HTC by the end of June 2010.
- Closing Prayer.

11. Adjourn

- Meeting adjourned at 7:20pm.