



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**  
*National Marine Fisheries Service*  
P.O. Box 21668  
Juneau, AK 99802-1668

September 20, 2023

Jonathan Samuelson  
Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission  
P.O. Box 190  
Bethel, Alaska 99559

Dear Mr. Samuelson,

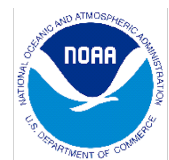
The National Marine Fisheries Service and the North Pacific Fishery Management Council have recently begun preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and implementing regulations (40 C.F.R. § 1501.8), for minimizing non-Chinook salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Fishery Management Plan area. For this project non-Chinook salmon is understood to be primarily chum salmon.

In response to your September 1, 2023 letter, we accept your request for the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (KRITFC) to participate as a cooperating agency on this project due to KRITFC's special expertise with respect to chum salmon in Western Alaska. We understand that special expertise is related to the subsistence use of chum salmon by federally recognized member Tribes and their salmon-dependent communities throughout the Kuskokwim drainage on whose behalf you act for in-river fisheries management.

Congress has set a statutory timeline of two years for completion of EISs. The July 11, 2023 publication in the Federal Register of the Notice of Intent to develop this EIS began the two-year timeframe for this project, which will end with signing of the Record of Decision for this action. This will entail a tight schedule aligned with the Council's process and schedule.

We would like to meet with you to clarify additional details related to the schedule for the project and specific tasks you would agree to undertake as a cooperating agency. We will reach out to schedule a meeting, and we anticipate confirming an agreement with you regarding your role as a cooperating agency no later than the end of October 2023. We also encourage you to review the Council's preliminary review draft analysis on this topic, posted under Agenda Item C4 for their October 2023 meeting at <https://meetings.npfmc.org/Meeting/Details/3003>, and provide comments to the Council on that document.

Our lead contact for this process will be Bridget Mansfield. Please reach out to her at [Bridget.Mansfield@noaa.gov](mailto:Bridget.Mansfield@noaa.gov) if you have any questions or need additional information. We look forward to meeting with you.



Sincerely,

Gretchen Harrington  
Assistant Regional Administrator  
for Sustainable Fisheries

Attachment: CEQ Regulations on Cooperating Agencies (40 C.F.R. § 1501.8)