

**SOUTHCENTRAL ALASKA SUBSISTENCE
REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL
Meeting Minutes**

Dena'ina Civic and Convention Center
Anchorage, AK
March 8, 2024

Invocation:

Richard (Greg) Encelewski provided an invocation.

Call to Order, Roll Call, and Quorum Establishment:

The meeting was called to order Friday, March 8, 2024, at 8:11 am. Council members Ed Holsten, Michael Opheim, Diane Selanoff, Dennis Zadra, Andrew McLaughlin, Hope Roberts, Heath Kocan, Judy Caminer, and Chair Greg Encelewski were present in person. Council member Angela Totemoff was not present and was excused. Quorum was established with nine out of ten seated Council members present (the Council has three vacant seats).

Attendees:

* Denotes attended telephonically

- Bureau of Land Management (BLM): Regional Office – Chris McKee; Glennallen Field Office – Caroline Ketron
- National Park Service (NPS): Regional Office –Victoria Florey; Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve (WRST) – Amber Cohen, Dave Sarafin; Denali National Park and Preserve – Amy Craver
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Southern Alaska Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office – Ken Gates
- U.S. Forest Service (USFS): Regional Office – Greg Risdahl; Chugach National Forest – Dr. Andrew Sanders, Tim Lorenzini*, Heather Thamm*, Ruth D'Amico*
- Office of Subsistence Management (OSM): Scott Ayers, Kevin Foley, Nissa Pilcher
- Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G): Subsistence Division – Jackie Keating
- Southeast Alaska Regional Advisory Council: Cathy Needham, Calvin Casipit
- Other Organizations: Native Village of Eyak (NVE) – Matt Piche; Ahtna InterTribal Resource Commission (AITRC) – Karen Linnell, Sterling Spilinek; Salmon State – Melanie Brown

Review and Adopt Agenda:

Motion by Member Opheim, seconded by Member Selanoff, to adopt the agenda as read, with clarification on agenda item *'Follow up on Joint Councils Action Items'* to include discussing Joint

Council Correspondence and the Proposed Rule from the Department of the Interior as discussed by the Joint Councils.

The motion passed on a unanimous vote.

Election of Officer:

Greg Encelewski was re-elected the Council's Chair.

Judy Caminer was elected the Council's Vice Chair.

Andrew McLaughlin was elected the Council's Secretary.

Review and Approve Previous Meeting Minutes:

Motion by Member Ophiem, seconded by Member Holsten, to approve the Fall 2023 meeting minutes as presented.

The motion passed on a unanimous vote.

Council Member and Chair Reports:

Judy Caminer of Anchorage conveyed her honor of being voted into the office of vice chair and relayed that she has been participating in Federal Subsistence Board (Board) meetings and the ongoing Ketchikan rural/nonrural determination process and public meetings so as to be able to better understand the process when the Southcentral region gets these requests.

Ed Holsten of Cooper Landing reported that it was a tough winter and there was a lot of snow and ice, that this pushed the moose into low country. He conveyed that despite the snow, there is still a lot of hare and lynx around. Member Holsten finalized his report by relaying his appreciation for the 2024 All-Council Meeting (ACM) but would have enjoyed having it be a day or so longer.

Michael Opheim of Seldovia reported that it had been an interesting year for weather, with lots of rain and wind. He noted that it was a poor berry year, and the salmon run was not great, but people did get food. Member Opheim reported that in Seldovia bears have been taken in town, which created issues, but it was nice to see such big bears taken as it had been a while since bears of that size were seen. He noted that some goats had been taken during the recent hunt and that there were more issues with moose being on the roadways again this winter even though it didn't seem like there was that much snow up high but perhaps the wet weather made a crust. Member Opheim finalized his report by noting that swans have started to overwinter in Seldovia, it started with only two originally but counted twenty this winter, and that it is fun to see them.

Heath Kocan of Cordova reported that Cordova had bad weather this winter, with cycles of snow that turned into rain and ice, but that he was fortunate and spent a good amount of time on the water. He commented that there had been a lot of kings (Chinook Salmon) in the sound until mid-February, and that

the larger salmon caught were all hatchery fish; the two largest that he caught were from Vancouver Island. Member Kocan reported that subsistence tanner crab pots have been yielding some crab, but not much but have been catching a lot of small dungies (Dungeness crab), which he has heard speculation that this is due to sea otters taking all of the larger ones, and that it would be nice to find a balance between the sea otter population so that people can get some crab too.

Andy McLaughlin of Chenega Bay reported that winter came early to Prince William Sound, and there is still three to four feet of snow, even at sea level, which was hard for the deer population and deer harvest is way down in the community, which indicates an issue. He noted that community members have been saying there are less clams in the beds, and he has noticed what looks like evidence of sea otters digging them up at high tide. Member McLaughlin noted that three families in the area that used to take a lot of sea otters have all moved so there are more otters around then there had been. He finalized his report by expressing concern over increasing hatchery production and the effects it has on marine resources.

Dennis Zadra of Cordova echoed what Member Kocan reported in reference to the winter weather in Cordova and added that there was a lot of early snow, a lot of ice, and a false spring just occurring. He noted that the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is opening comments on changing the definitions found in the national standards and that this Council may be interested in providing a comment.. Member Zadra reported that he will be preparing for the Alaska Board of Fisheries Copper River/Prince William Sound meeting, which will be held in Cordova in December.

Diane Selanoff of Valdez conveyed her appreciation for the ACM, but that she needed more time to be able to listen and absorb everything. She reported that there was a trawler docked in Valdez this winter that made concerns. She has heard that the trawlers' effect on the marine system seem even more real, and now she is even more concerned over food security issues. Member Selanoff also noted that Valdez also got a lot of snow over the winter, the pass was closed four different times due to snow load, and the moose ended up taking to the roads to get around. She reported to the Council that she had attended the ACM Fisheries Co-Management session a day before and drew a lot of comparison to the conversations during that session, which seemed to be primarily Bristol Bay centered, to the Copper River. She noted that there needs to be better communication between the people that depend on the salmon in the upriver and downriver and hopefully this improves. Salmon runs have been so low that she has been purchasing salmon from the cannery to put up for the past two years, and that Valdez only have one opener a week in order to go out and get subsistence fish.

Hope Roberts of Valdez recalled that on the first day of the ACM, Chair Christianson said that there isn't enough aunties and uncles to teach hunters, but we do have a lot of hunters and there are plenty out there to help with any sea otter issues; we need to teach those that can actually hunt marine mammals how to do so. She commented that we need to come together and work together to harvest animals within the bounds of the current laws to help with food insecurity issues.

Chair Encelewski of Ninilchik referenced his earlier report given at the ACM, and also reported that during the Federal moose hunt, Ninilchik was able to take seven moose, which was a great help to the

community, and the State moose hunt was pretty good as well. He reported that red salmon (Sockeye Salmon) fishing on the Kenai was phenomenal this year, that Ninilchik is one of the only tribes in the Cook Inlet area that has the ability to put out a subsistence net and this net provides for the rural residents of Ninilchik. Chair Encelewski expressed his appreciation for this ability, but then countered that there was zero king (Chinook Salmon) opportunity, that there aren't many left and those that left are small hatchery fish. He noted that he has had to buy kings (Chinook Salmon) from Southeast trawlers, and he expressed his concern over the current hatchery system and how the ecosystem can continue to support these additional fish. Chair Encelewski commented on his work on the local Fish and Game Advisory Committee, and his work with eight Cook Inlet Tribes working together to participate in the NOAA meetings concerning the Economic Exclusion Zone in the Cook Inlet with the intention to change some regulations and have a subsistence fishery in this area.

Action Items:

Review and approve FY2023 Annual Report

Nissa Pilcher, OSM Council Coordinator, presented the Council's draft FY2023 Annual Report. Motion by Member Selanoff, seconded by Member Opheim, to approve the FY2023 Annual Report as presented.

The motion passed on a unanimous vote.

Call for Federal Fish and Shellfish Regulatory Proposals

Development of Regulatory Fish and Shellfish Proposals

Pippa Kenner, OSM Cultural Anthropologist, introduced the future call for Federal Fish and Shellfish Proposals to the Council. The Council did not vote to submit any regulatory proposals at this time but did express an interest in having OSM review the Cook Inlet Federal fishing regulations to ensure that they are providing a meaningful subsistence preference, and if there are some areas that are not to bring it to the Council's attention during the next fisheries regulatory cycle.

Selection of Working Groups Participants for Development of Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program (FRMP) Priority Information Needs

Ms. Kenner requested volunteers from the Council to participate in the development of FRMP Priority Information Needs for the region. Member McLaughlin, Roberts, and Chair Encelewski volunteered to serve on the working group to develop Priority Information Needs for the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program for the Southcentral Region.

Future Meeting Dates

Fall 2024 meeting dates and location confirmed for October 11-12, 2024, in Anchorage

Winter 2025 meeting date and location selected for March 12-13, 2025, in Cordova

Fall 2025 meeting date and location selected for October 14-15, 2025, in Anchorage

Public and Tribal Comments on Non-Agenda Items:

Karen Linnell, Executive Director for AITRC, spoke of ongoing concerns with the repeated years of high snow fall, the population crash of the Nelchina Caribou Herd, the drop in moose harvest in the Copper Basin, and the importance and reliance on Copper River salmon, which is also in a decline. She encouraged the Council to help them take care of the land and the resources and expressed concern over current management practices.

Melanie Brown, representing Salmon State, informed the Council of an upcoming opportunity to comment on a current review of the National Standards Guidelines in the Magnuson-Stevens Act that pertains to allocation, bycatch, and the definition of communities.

Other Business:

Follow up on Joint Council Action Items:

Correspondence

Ms. Pilcher presented information on several pieces of correspondence that were discussed at the ACM Joint Session. Motion by Member Opheim, seconded by Member Holsten, to be added as cosigners on Joint Council correspondence on the Council member time compensation and Council correspondence concerns.

The motion passed on a unanimous vote.

The Council requested to review the other letters that came out of the Joint Councils session that they did not choose to sign on to at this time at their Fall meeting.

Department of Interior Proposed Rule

The Council discussed information presented during the ACM on a proposed rule by the Department of the Interior to change the current structure of the Board. Motion by Member McLaughlin, seconded by Member Opheim, to transmit comments and support on a Proposed Rule to add three public members nominated or recommend by Tribes to the Board.

The motion passed on a unanimous vote.

Council Correspondence Update:

Ms. Pilcher presented recent Council Correspondence.

Delegation of Authority:

Ms. Pilcher presented a draft letter to the Council on their concerns over a Delegation of Authority Letter (DAL) in Unit 6 concerning deer and moose, along with other concerns over DALs, for transmission to the Board. Motion by Member McLaughlin, seconded by Member Opheim, to finalize this letter as written.

The motion passed on a unanimous vote.

The Council requested that they resume reviewing DAL in the Southcentral Region beginning at their fall meeting..

Current Charter Change Review:

Ms. Pilcher updated the Council on recent Charter changes, including the addition of a nonvoting youth seat. She further noted that the Councils would be hearing more about this at their next meeting.

Development of State Regulatory Proposals:

The Council was made aware of the current call for state regulatory proposals for the 2024-2025 season.

Reports:

- *BLM Glennallen Field Office Update* presented by Caroline Ketron, Subsistence Coordinator
- *Native Village of Eyak 2023 Copper River Chinook Salmon Run Update* presented by Matt Piche, Fisheries Biologist
- *USFWS Upper Cook Inlet Federal Fisheries Update* presented by Ken Gates, In-Season Fisheries Manager
- *NPS WRST Fisheries Report* presented by Dave Sarafin, Fisheries Biologist
- *NPS WRST Subsistence and Anthropology Report* presented by Amber Cohen, Cultural Anthropologist
- *USFS Chugach National Forest Updated Report* presented by Dr. Andrew Sanders, Subsistence Program Manager

Closing Comments:

- Members that spoke unanimously stated that the ACM was very appreciated, but the next one should be longer to allow for more cross regional conversations and connections.
- Chair Encelewski noted that that while there are currently opportunities for subsistence harvesting, the resources are stretched and people are starting to not have enough, and everyone needs to begin to pay greater attention to what is going on.

The meeting was adjourned at noon on Friday, March 8, 2024.

Nissa Pilcher, DFO
USFWS Office of Subsistence Management

Certified by the chair on 6/3/2024

Richard (Greg) Encelewski, Chair
Southcentral Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

These minutes will be formally considered by the Southcentral Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council at its October 11 – 12, 2024 meeting in Anchorage, and any corrections or notations will be incorporated in the minutes at that meeting.

A more detailed report of this meeting, copies of the transcripts, and meeting handouts are available upon request. Call Nissa Pilcher at 1-800-478-1456 or 907-891-9054, email nissa_pilcher@fws.gov.