

BRISTOL BAY SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes

Dena'ina Civic and Convention Center
600 W 7th Avenue, Anchorage, AK 99501
March 7, 2024

Invocation:

Orville Lind provided an invocation.

Call to Order, Roll Call, and Quorum Establishment:

The meeting was called to order Thursday, March 7, 2024, at 8 am. Council members Nanci Morris Lyon, John Rhyshek, William Trefon, Kenneth Nukwak, Dan Dunaway, Norman Anderson, and Richard Wilson were present in person. Member Robert Hill, participate via phone. John Christensen was not present and was excused. With eight out of nine seated Council members present (Council has one vacant seat) the quorum was established.

Attendees:

*Asterisk * identifies if present via teleconference.*

- Bristol Bay Native Association (BBNA): ***Garvin Federenko* and Gayla Hoseth***
- Katmai National Park and Preserve: ***Mark Sturm, and Dave Rico***
- Lake Clark National Park and Preserve: ***Liza Rupp***
- National Park Service (NPS): ***Dillon Patterson***
- Office of Subsistence (OSM): ***Robbin La Vine, Orville Lind, Kendra Holman, Jarred Stone, Leigh Honig, Pippa Kenner, and George Pappas***
- Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G): ***Chance Wilcox***

Review and Adopt Agenda:

Motion by Member Dunaway, seconded by Member Rhyshek, to adopt the agenda as read.

The motion passed on a unanimous vote.

Election of Officer:

Ms. Nanci Morris Lyon was elected the Council's Chair.

Mr. Dan Dunaway was elected the Council's Vice Chair.

Mr. Richard Wilson was elected the Council's Secretary

Review and Approve Previous Meeting Minutes:

Motion by Member Wilson, seconded by Member Dunaway, to approve the fall 2023 meeting minutes as presented.

The motion passed on a unanimous vote.

Council Member and Chair Reports:

Norman Anderson of Naknek reported he received a roadkill moose and was able to share the meat with three families. Ptarmigan and hare population were high and subsequently so was the fox population. The smelt run was bountiful; he shared a hundred pounds of smelt that he harvested in a couple days' time. His younger cousins shared a caribou they had harvested, and he expressed that it was enriching to have young people support the subsistence was of life.

Richard Wilson of Naknek also reported that the ptarmigan population was high and was happy to see the population had rebounded. He reported that during the last few fall hunting trips up the Kvichak River, he observed that most of the bull moose they see were younger and not as many older moose were seen in the area. Over the winter he visited snow holes to harvest smelt and reported as of late February that he had not harvested any. He shared that many of the hunters and trappers had been successful harvesting wolves. Mr. Wilson reported that the Northern Alaska Peninsula (NAP) Caribou Herd had not been migrating as far north as they once had; there weren't any caribou sightings in the northern range. He reported that salmon runs were still a concern and was hopeful for improvement on some of the stocks.

Dan Dunaway of Dillingham reported that the winter weather had been erratic; they experienced big snowfalls, big thaws, rain events, and cold temperatures. The thawing events made travel conditions dangerous on creeks and rivers. Travel conditions hampered trappers from accessing traplines. He reported that wolverine numbers were good, and trappers had been targeting wolves. He reported that the coyote population was growing and had affected the fox populations negatively. He reported that two brown bears had been harvested over the winter; one near Kokwok River area and another near Koliganek. The weather conditions affected the Unit 17A moose hunt. The season was extended to March 15th as a result. He had heard that 60-70 moose had been harvested, when historically the harvest numbers were closer to 100 moose. The Unit 17C fall moose hunting season had also been extended. Mr. Dunaway shared that the New Stuyahok school had obtained a cultural education permit and was able to harvest a moose for educational purposes. He also shared that ammunition in New Stuyahok is terribly expensive when it is available. Folks are going to struggle to afford ammunition in a time when they may have to focus on subsistence harvest more than ever due to the lowered commercial harvest outlook for the Bristol Bay area. He also reported that hare and ptarmigan population were abundant in his area.

Robert Hill of Naknek thanked John Christensen's generosity for sharing a couple of caribou with Kokhanok community. He reported that the tribe had obtained a cultural education permit and were able to harvest a moose mid-February and reported good involvement from the community.

Billy Trefon of Nondalton reported that only two moose had been harvested all year due to the high snow fall the area had received. He reported that the early, heavy snowfall had prevented the creeks from freezing sufficiently so when there was a thaw it created travel hazards. During the fall moose season, the area had received nearly three feet of snow before the temperature dropped. The snow conditions caused the moose to not move as much because the amount of snow and cold temperatures created a crust that can cut their calves while walking. This also made the moose susceptible to wolf predation. He reported that the deep snow was beneficial for the hare population. Salmon were abundant and everybody was able to harvest the fish that they needed. He reported that the Kijik Corporation and the National Park Service were working on covenant to protect the Chulitna River Basin for subsistence.

Kenneth Nukwak of Manokotak reported that the Togiak Fish and Game Advisory Council would like to open a caribou hunt in the Cape Peirce area. It was reported that the population in the Cape Peirce area was over 500 animals and traditional knowledge indicated that this group of caribou does not migrate out of the area. He shared that he would like to see the hunting license requirement change because three years ago a young hunter had ptarmigan he harvested confiscated because he did not have a hunting license. He also requested that Federal agents stay further away from active caribou hunters. He reported that the bright colors the agents wear spook the herd and he believes they don't need to be that closely monitored and feels it's bordering on harassing the hunter. He shared that being 20 miles west of Dillingham allows for frequent monitoring from agents. He believes if the agents are looking inside houses or sheds to check on harvested game they are operating outside of their jurisdiction. Mr. Nukwak also shared that the Manokotak City Council, Tribal Council, and Native Corporation are requesting that a separate State Advisory Committee for the Manokotak area be created because they believe they are not being listened to. He reported aircraft that were transporting sport fisherman during the month of August and September were flying too low over their hunting grounds affecting the moose hunt. He also reported that trash bags were falling out of airplanes and would like to see conversations had with guides to remind clients to be respectful of the land and have reminders posted in airports. Mr. Nukwak shared that he does not believe that ANILCA Title VIII is being followed in full and encouraged more subsistence users to participate in the regulatory processes and share traditional subsistence harvesting practices so the regulations will better fit the subsistence needs of villages.

John Rhyshek of King Salmon reported the ptarmigan population was the best that it had been in the 15 years that he had been living in the Bristol Bay area. Snowshoe hare populations were also noted to be on the rise. Mr. Rhyshek also shared that the fall season for waterfowl was outstanding. The moose population was doing well. He was cautiously optimistic about the growth of the NAP Caribou Herd. He observed that they migrate north in small groups of 10 - 15 animals. When this happens usually hunters are eagerly awaiting the migration and harvest the small groups of caribou. He would like to see the boundary that was in place in 2016 when the hunt opened put back. He reported the Chinook Salmon were non-existent; he didn't even attempt to fish. He actively fished for Coho Salmon and had a spotty season; some days were good, some were not. Sockeye Salmon passed the escapement goal with over 54 million in the bay. There wasn't much interest in harvesting Sockeye Salmon since the price was only 50 cents a pound. He shared that he thinks the trophy trout fishery has been fished too aggressively. Over the years he has seen an increase in boats, so much that it is hard to find a spot to fish that isn't near

someone. Bear numbers continued to be healthy. A lot of wolves had been harvested due to good snow conditions.

Nanci Morris Lyon of King Salmon reported that ptarmigan, hare, and coyote were plentiful. She observed that the bears were out longer than normal. She attributed the later denning due to the high population and increased competition for food resources; the bears were trying to get as much food as they could before the end of the season. Ms. Morris Lyon applauded the village of Kokhanok for obtaining the cultural education permit to harvest a moose. She stated it was a phenomenal opportunity for the youth to be introduced to subsistence ways.

Action Items:

Review and approve FY2023 Annual Report

- Motion by Member Wilson, seconded by Member Rhyshek, to adopt the Fiscal Year 2023 Annual Report.

The motion passed on a unanimous vote.

Call for Federal Fish and Shellfish Regulatory Proposals

Jarred Stone, OSM Fisheries Biologist, informed the Council about the upcoming Federal fish and shellfish call for proposals for the 2025 – 2027 regulatory years. The Council was not interested in developing or submitting proposals at the time.

Selection of volunteers for Development of FRMP Priority Information Needs

Member Dunaway and Member Nukwak volunteered to serve on the working group to develop Priority Information Needs for the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program for the Bristol Bay region.

Regional Advisory Council appointment for Lake Clark Subsistence Resource Commission

- Motion by Member Wilson, seconded by Member Anderson, to appoint Mr. Timothy Anelon and Mr. Thomas Hedlund to the Lake Clark Subsistence Resource Commission.

The motion passed on a unanimous vote.

Proposed Rule – Federal Subsistence Board Membership

The Council provided the following comments regarding the joint proposed rule on Subsistence Management for the Public Lands in Alaska: Federal Subsistence Board (Board) Membership:

- The Council supports adding three public members to the Board. The Council believes the additional public members will ensure ANILCA is correctly followed.
- The Council supports having Federally recognized Tribal governments nominate or recommend public members for the Board, and further supports that nominations need not be members of Tribes.
- The Council wants all regions to be adequately represented by public members on the Board.
- The Council wants to ensure that all Federally recognized Tribes in Alaska are adequately informed of the process if it should pass.
- The Council has concerns regarding the proposed ratification period of 10 calendar days for temporary special action requests. Special action requests often require immediate action due to conservation concerns. The Council wants to confirm that responses from the Secretaries will not have to wait 10 days for ratification in situations that are needed to protect subsistence resources.

Future Meeting Dates

The Council confirmed their Fall 2024 meeting dates and location: October 29 – 30, in Dillingham.

The Council selected their Winter 2025 meeting date and location: February 18 – 19, in Naknek.

The Council selected their Fall 2025 meeting date and location: October 29- 30, in Dillingham.

Public and Tribal Comments on Non-Agenda Items:

George Anderson, President of Chignik Intertribal Coalition, provided an update to the Council on the State Board of Fisheries (BOF) meeting. At the BOF meeting, there was an attempt to combine the early and late-run Sockeye Salmon in Chignik Lake escapement goal into one. Public testimony provided by stakeholders against this decision resulted in the BOF opting for optimum escapement goals for both early and late-runs instead of combining the escapement into one. Both the early and late-runs offer historically traditional uses on subsistence and commercial uses. The action by ADF&G was predicated on juvenile abundance within Chignik Lake and identifying a population bottleneck but was unable to substantiate this claim. Mr. Anderson proposed that a comparative ecological evaluation of the lakes was needed, including the rearing habitats of Sockeye Salmon that inhabit both Black and Chignik lakes, to understand the dynamics of the salmon. Mr. Anderson additionally reported that in 2023, Chinook Salmon were designated a stock of management concern due to low escapement numbers. Sockeye Salmon harvest had been restricted to preserve the Chinook Salmon. He suggested that an evaluation of harvesting practices of Sockeye Salmon be conducted to look at ways to reduce the incidental catch of Chinook Salmon. Mr. Anderson also brought to the Council's attention that not all Chum Salmon on the east side of Bristol Bay have escapement goals and is seeking ways to have this enumerated. This was a concern to him as Chum Salmon are of cultural significance and provide for subsistence and commercial uses and the preservation of Chum Salmon is important. He reported that under the Chinook Avoidance Program, stakeholders are looking into ways to reduce the catch of Chinook Salmon by evaluating bathymetries in the area along with traditional knowledge of harvest areas in order to avoid those areas and reduce the incidental catch. Additionally, Mr. Anderson stressed the importance of starting the

discussion among fleets on how to conserve and protect Chinook Salmon. A discussion amongst users needs to be had on the possibility of shallowing purse seine nets in the Chignik Management Area to further reduce the catch of Chum and Chinook Salmon.

Stanley Pete from the Yukon Delta region spoke of the hardships his region has experienced due to the lack of salmon. Smokehouses and fish camps are no longer operational, and family gatherings do not happen as often, now only at funerals. He was thankful for the Chinook Salmon the Bristol Bay area had sent. Mr. Pete requested support from the Council to change how the Federal government and the State of Alaska manage the Yukon River fishery. The Council discussed with Mr. Pete how bartering used to be a way to supplement food sources that communities may be lacking and then they would share what resources they bartered. The Council observed that the tradition of bartering and trading appears to be diminishing.

Gayla Hoseth, First Chief of Curyung Tribal Council, Director of Natural resources for Bristol Bay Native Association (BBNA), and member of the Secretary of Interior's Tribal Advisory Committee, reported to the Council that BBNA conducted a subsistence sharing network and harvested nearly 5,000 pounds of subsistence caught salmon. Whole fish were sent to communities in the Yukon Delta region that have been impacted by lost subsistence fishing opportunities due to closures. Ms. Hoseth also spoke about the importance of the barter system and how to revitalize it. She suggested organizing an Alaska trade that could be held at the Alaska Federation of Native's annual gathering. Ms. Hoseth was in support of the additional seats on the Federal Subsistence Board that were proposed by the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture. She felt it would ensure that ANILCA will be followed to protect traditional subsistence practices. She updated the Council on the Alaska Migratory Bird Co-Management Council (AMBCC) status. AMBCC was working on securing direct line-item funding and working on a 638 compacting contracting agreement.

Melanie Brown from Salmon State thanked the Council for their support letter protecting Bureau of Land Management ANCSA 17(d)(1) lands. She also updated the Council on three National Standard Guidelines that are under review. Standards 4, 8, and 9 which pertain to allocation, communities, and bycatch, could potentially be a way to change how the Amendment 80 fleet operates in the Bering Sea and in the Gulf of Alaska. This could give salmon species that are suffering a chance to possibly rebound. The draft National Standard Guidelines will be available for review and comment in April of 2024.

Other Business:

Joint Council Correspondence:

The Council discussed and made decisions on the following:

- Motion by Member Rhyshek, seconded by Member Wilson, to support the Joint Council's letter regarding addressing bycatch concerns.

The motion passed on a unanimous vote.

- Motion made by Member Wilson, seconded by Member Trefon, to not support joining the Joint Council letter regarding the concern over the status of caribou statewide. The Council felt there needed to be more discussion between the ten Regional Advisory Councils.

The motion passed on a unanimous vote.

- Motion by Member Dunaway, seconded by Member Rhyshek, to support the Joint Council's letter regarding the request for fair compensation for Council members time while in the meetings.

The motion passed on a unanimous vote.

Charter Review:

Leigh Honig, OSM Council Coordinator, provided an update on the 2023 Bristol Bay Subsistence Regional Advisory Council charter changes.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:10 pm on March 7, 2024.

Prepared Minutes /s/ Signature on file

Leigh Honig, DFO
USFWS Office of Subsistence Management

certified by the Chair 5/31/2024 via email

Nanci Morris Lyon, Chair
Bristol Bay Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

This version of the meeting minutes was certified by the Chair on May 31, 2024. The Bristol Bay Subsistence Regional Advisory Council approved this version at its fall 2024 meeting in Dillingham on October 19, 2024.

A more detailed report of this meeting, copies of the transcripts, and meeting handouts are available upon request. Call Council Coordinator Leigh Honig at 1-800-478-1456 or 907-891-9053, email leigh_honig@fws.gov.