

Eastern Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

c/o Office of Subsistence Management
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In Reply Refer To:
OSM.A24125

January 21 2025

Doug Vincent-Lang, Commissioner
Alaska Department of Fish and Game
333 Raspberry Road
Anchorage, Alaska 99518

Dear Commissioner Vincent-Lang,

I write to you on behalf of the Eastern Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council) to request that funding be prioritized for continued genetic stock identification research in the Alaska Peninsula/Aleutian Islands commercial salmon fisheries to monitor the proportion of harvest coming from Coastal-Western Alaska (CWAK) stocks over time.

The Council represents subsistence harvesters of fish and wildlife resources on Federal public lands and waters in Eastern Interior Alaska Region. It was established by the authority in Title VIII of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) and is chartered under the Federal Advisory Committee Act. Section 805 of ANILCA and the Council's charter establishes the Council's authority to initiate, review, and evaluate proposals for regulations, policies, management plans, and other matters related to subsistence uses of fish and wildlife within the region. The Council also reviews resource management actions occurring outside their regions that may impact subsistence resources critical to communities served by the Council. The Council provides a forum for the expression of opinions and recommendations regarding any matter related to the subsistence uses of fish and wildlife within the region.

The Council held a public meeting on October 8-10, 2024, in Fairbanks. Among the items discussed at the meeting were the continued hardships that subsistence users are experiencing due to on-going low returns of Yukon River salmon. As you know, what is happening to our salmon is complex and multi-faceted with many contributing factors originating in the marine environment. We appreciate the Department's recent efforts to collect Chum Salmon genetics in the Alaska Peninsula as well as the plans to collect Chinook Salmon genetics in the near future. The Council encourages you and your staff to continue to prioritize this type of research because it is a critical component in understanding the overall puzzle of what is affecting CWAK salmon. We hope that genetic stock identification can continue to be refined to identify more discrete stocks and expanded in scope to include samples from more fisheries and from all species of salmon.

Of particular concern to our Council is increasing the understanding of the Yukon River fall Chum Salmon lifecycle in the Bering Sea and factors contributing to their low returns. Residents of the upper Yukon River drainage have historically relied on Chinook and fall Chum Salmon for subsistence. With record low returns and closures for both of these stocks, the people of the upper river are experiencing extreme hardship. Little is known about why fall Chum Salmon are doing so poorly, especially considering that summer Chum Salmon returns have somewhat improved. We hope that this information gap can be prioritized.

The Council would greatly appreciate any updates the Department may be able to provide us regarding genetic stock identification results and plans for future research, either in writing or via a presentation at one of our upcoming biannual meetings.

The Council thanks you for considering our request for on-going genetic stock identification research. If you have any questions or would like to follow up, please contact me through our Subsistence Council Coordinator, Brooke McDavid, at (907) 891-9181 or brooke_mcdavid@ios.doi.gov.

Sincerely,



Robert "Charlie" Wright, Sr.
Chair

cc: Federal Subsistence Board
Eastern Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Office of Subsistence Management
Interagency Staff Committee
Benjamin Mulligan, Deputy Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
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