

# SOUTHEAST ALASKA SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

## Meeting Minutes

Ted Ferry Civic Center  
Ketchikan, Alaska  
October 22–24, 2024

### *Call to Order, Roll Call, and Quorum Establishment:*

The meeting was called to order Tuesday, October 22, 2024, around 8:30 a.m. Council members Donald Hernandez, Frank Wright, Calvin Casipit, Michael Douville, Larry Bemis, James Slater, Harvey Kitka, Cathy Needham, Albert Howard, Ted Sandhofer, Patricia Phillips, John Smith III, and Louie Wagner, Jr. were present in person. With all 13 seated Council members present, the quorum was established.

### *Attendees In Person:*

- U.S. Forest Service (USFS): *Chad VanOrmer, Cathy Tighe, DeAnna Perry, Rob Cross, Jake Musslewhite, Ashley Bolwerk, Kim Ramos, Jon Hyde, Ben Limle, Connor Phillips*
- Office of Subsistence Management (OSM): *Brent Vickers, Ph.D., Jason Roberts, Ph.D., Scott Ayers, Katya Wessels, Kristen Morrow, Orville Lind*
- Ketchikan Indian Community (KIC): *Norm Skan, Charles Edwardson, Keenan Sandersen, Trixie Bennett, Irene Dundas, Naomi Michaelson, Clarence Peele, Jarred Haynes, Jennifer Hanlon, Steve Harford*
- Organized Village of Kasaan (OVK): *Mike Jones, George Nix*
- Organized Village of Kake: *Joel Jackson*
- Hoonah Indian Association (HIA): *Jackson Combs*
- Craig Tribal Association: *Clinton Cook*
- Tsimshian Tribal Association Inc., Ketchikan: *Ahl'lidaaw Gitnack'anseak*
- Alaska Native Brotherhood (ANB): *Richard Jackson, James Llano, Sr.*
- Sealaska Corporation: *Jason Gubatayao*
- Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA): *Glen Chen, Ph.D.*
- Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G): *Tom Schumacher, Emily Doll, Molly Brown*
- Members of the Public: *Frank James, Sr., Clarenc Peck, Jeremy Bynum, Merle Hawkins, Brita Alander, Gianna Willard, Helaira Echohawk, Janalee Gage, Agnes Moran, Steve Ramp, Lewis Hiatt, Tazia Wagner, Devon Calvin, Rodney Dial, Bob Jahnke, Cynthia Llanos, Qiana Fletcher, Michael Robbins, Heather Bauscher, Caleb Lutomski, Kaetlyn Skultka, Oliver Petersen, Peter Vu, Kye Vaughn-Jeske, Laurel Smathers, Naomi Jones, Thomas Smith, Diana Fletcher, Avery Herrman Sakamoto, Anna Laffrey*

***Attendees via Telephone:***

- Office of Secretary of the Interior: ***Joan Mooney, Eric Werwa***
- OSM: ***Crystal (Ciisquq) Leonetti, Sue Detwiler, Robbin La Vine, Lisa Grediagin, George Pappas, Liz Williams, Thomas Plank, Brian Ubelaker, Kevin Foley, Cory Graham, Kendra Holman, Leigh Honig, Lisa Hutchinson, Brooke McDavid, Janel Day***
- USFS: ***Greg Risdahl, Cody Mosley, Adam Grunwald, Lillian Feldpausch, Marci Johnson, Ena Burr, Danielle Macphee, Blake Toney***
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: ***Jill Klein***
- National Park Service (NPS): ***Kim Jochum, Victoria Florey, Amber Cohen, Barbara Cellarius***
- Bureau of Land Management (BLM): ***Chris McKee***
- Douglas Indian Association
- Members of the Public: ***Rhonda Pitka, Noah Meyer, Tessa Wittman, Jack Darrell, Jill Weitz, Kyle Rosendale, Rafael Morel, Bethany Robichaud, Barbara Schneider, Brett Jack, Chandler Long, Forest Haven, Kellie Blair, Kristina Shorey, Matthew Anderstrom, Sasha Anderstrom, Kateri Okitkun, Tony Gallegos, Noah Meyer***

***Introductions:***

**Joan Mooney, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Office of Policy, Management and Budget (PMB), Office of the Secretary of the Interior**, introduced herself and reminded the Council of the transition of OSM to PMB this past July. This move elevating OSM to directly under the Assistant Secretary of the Interior will help ensure that the program gets high level visibility and access to necessary resources to carry out its mission. Ms. Mooney and **Crystal (Ciisquq) Leonetti, Acting Director, OSM**, entertained questions by the Council. **Eric Werwa, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy and Environmental Management, PMB, Office of the Secretary of Interior** also introduced himself and informed that he is calling into many of the Regional Advisory Council meetings this cycle.

**Chad VanOrmer, Regional Forester, USDA-Forest Service Alaska Region, and Federal Subsistence Board member**, expressed appreciation for the opportunity to attend in person and listen to testimony and the Council's discussions firsthand. He also informed the Council about the timing of steps within the Tongass Forest Plan Revision process and expressed his intent to ensure that the Council has a voice in the plan revision process, regardless of the timing of formal public comment periods.

***Review and Adopt Agenda:***

Motion by Member Needham, seconded by Member Sandhofer, to adopt the agenda as a guide. The Alaska Board of Fisheries agenda item was moved up to action items and time-certain items were noted. The motion **passed** on a unanimous vote.

***Review and Approve Previous Meeting Minutes:***

Motion by Member Needham, seconded by Member Casipit, to approve both the March 5–6, 2024 All Council joint meeting and the March 8, 2024 Southeast Council meeting minutes as written.

The motion **passed** on a unanimous vote.

***Council Members and Chair Reports:***

***Larry Bemis of Yakutat*** reported that Yakutat just finished its moose hunt. Temperatures cooled later in the season, so it seemed that the moose hadn't come out of the mountains as early as usual. He expressed concerns over the lack of an aerial moose survey because it has been about five years since there has been an accurate count of the herd and the strength of this moose stock. Salmon fishing started off slow for Sockeye Salmon and King Salmon. The Sockeye Salmon return was slow in arriving but then came at a good rate. Halibut harvest has increased over last year. There is an increase in the amount and size of the cruise tour ships arriving. The Community is concerned about the amount of pollution being left in the bays that they are visiting and the possible impacts to the overall area, including the possible increase of risk of a disaster. Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) is being used in the area, and this will provide a good look at the salmon streams in the area. There is concern about flooding risk to Yakutat if the Hubbard Glacier, which is traveling, closes off.

***Frank Wright, Jr. of Hoonah*** shared his observations and thoughts on the importance of recycling and noted that we should encourage people in our communities to take care. There are no steelheads in Spud Creek anymore. He noticed the lack of jumping salmon in the water around Pitt Island. Crabbing was challenging this year, and there is serious concern when no one is catching Dungeness crab. This year there was a community development quota (CDQ) for Hoonah, and this helped out some fishermen. Prices for Black Cod were down, and he contacted a congressional person about how the Russians were importing seafoods, which caused prices to go down. Halibut prices were alright. He participated with the Tribe in government-to-government consultations with the Forest Service about the concern for forest fires based on the beetle kill of so many trees in recent years. They are seeking a plan and training to be prepared for potential wildfires. He reported the need for adequate rescue services by relaying some of the experiences of others who required them. He noted the amount of foot traffic seen from his house, as there were 240 tourist ships in Hoonah this season.

***Calvin Casipit of Gustavus*** reported that the moose season went well. Even though the season was warm, and moose acted abnormally, the quota was reached. Those that knew how to catch Halibut were able to get their Halibut this season. Some people had challenges getting their Coho Salmon this year. He mentioned that there were many visitors to his community this summer, and he observed a large number of people in town for the Fourth of July parade.

***Michael Douville of Craig*** reported concerns about the unregulated in-season management for King Salmon and how it doesn't exist for sport charters. This is having an impact on quotas and resulting in no second opening for harvest. Another concern is a pending proposal to expand the Herring pound area, which is very dangerous. He cautioned that the depression of harvests experienced in Hoonah and Prince William Sound were from similar actions. He would like to see Indigenous and local knowledge taken more seriously, especially as it pertains to considering the biology around higher wolf populations and declining deer populations. He suggested Federal involvement to check the information relied upon for resource management.

**James Slater of Pelican** reported that a self-charter lodge has added to the harvest pressure that the community has experienced over the last decade. The harbor is crowded and there are concerns about impacts on local rockfish populations. He noted the limitations of the ferry service, particularly with getting cargo in/out of the community. Local fish processors have been growing in Pelican and it has had a positive impact on the community. Early reports from deer hunting show it is slow, but probably normal without the weather. A few large families have moved to Pelican, keeping the population of students up, so that is a stable thing for the community.

**Albert Howard of Angoon** reported that the salmon fisheries were pretty good overall, compared to recent years. This may be because of the lack of commercial fishing effort in the area due to the salmon market. His traditional ecological knowledge tells him that because there is no commercial fishing, the salmon are making it back to the streams. Bear populations seem to be up as they are more visible, and this may be why deer are being observed within Angoon city limits. He personally harvested a lot of deer on Baranof Island. Efforts are made to catch Coho Salmon and crab before the commercial impact is felt. There were a lot of berries this year. Locals are having a hard time harvesting King Salmon. He is concerned about regulation changes without the input from the community. Attention should be paid to the efforts being made to change ANILCA because they will have an impact on Southeast Alaska.

**Patty Phillips of Pelican**, has been the mayor of Pelican for 13 years and has been a Pelican resident of for more than 50 years. She is on the water almost every day and brings local and Indigenous knowledge to the table. The Pacific Salmon Treaty negatively impacted the local year-round rural residents as an extended season for charter salmon harvest was in place and the local commercial fisher fleet had to shut down. Trawl season was reduced — local participants (federally qualified rural residents of Alaska) had to stay tied up to the dock while seasonal charter fleets kept going with their non-resident clients. There was a diminished catch rate on the north end of Cross Sound due to colder Gulf waters caused by rapidly melting glaciers. Fish stayed offshore until they moved into spawn in September. She experienced non-residents up Lisianski River that told her to move out of their way because they wanted to catch a fish. Price of gas is \$5.15 a gallon so residents are spending a lot of money to get out in the field. They experienced a two-foot berm of Capelin rolled up dead on the beach over by Elfin Cove. There were two dead whales washed up on the beach and the necropsies found that collisions with cruise ships were likely the causes of mortality. She observed warmer than normal temperatures and torrential rains this year. It was a good berry year and they are seeing a return of abalone. Migratory birds are less abundant. She shared her recent fish harvesting competition experiences, noting that when charter boats are snagging fish and you come into area after that, there are no fish left to catch. She appreciates that recent interviews of the community by ADF&G Subsistence Division were culturally respectful, and she really appreciated the care they displayed in conducting that subsistence survey.

**Louie Wagner, Jr. of Metlakatla** reported that surveys suggest that Pink Salmon escapement is developing well. Heavy rain throughout the escapement season has fluctuated salmon's access to local creeks. Sockeye Salmon escapement is still being monitored and the surveys have shown promising results. The European Green Crab on Annette Island is being monitored and trapped to protect and

conserve native species that are historically important for subsistence and cultural harvest. This species of crab does not originate in Annette Island; they are distributed from the ballast water from ships.

***Ted Sandhofer of Petersburg*** reflected that it has been a good year for subsistence harvesting. The moose harvest was well over 100 animals and that population, as well as deer, are good. Halibut stocks seem to be down, forcing harvesters to go further out to get them and the sizes are down. Chinook Salmon fishing was very limited. Sockeye Salmon harvesting on the Stikine was average and Coho Salmon were somewhat scarce. Efforts were made to increase broodstock back at the Crystal Lake Hatchery and the smolt goes all over Southeast Alaska for all user groups. There is a concern with the sea otter population growth in central Southeast. Berry crops were good. The nonrural determination proposal for Ketchikan has been discussed a lot around the community. Restoration enhancement projects on stream courses are not only helping ecosystem health, but also fish populations and jobs for the communities. He recognized the central Southeast Tribes for their work on trails and infrastructure in the area. This enhances the quality of life in those communities, and they are doing an outstanding job.

***Harvey Kitka of Sitka*** reported concerns about the North Pacific Trawl Fishery, stating that there is an unlimited amount of Herring that can be caught as bycatch. This is frustrating to local people who commercial fish. There was a great Sockeye Salmon return to one of the local systems and it would be a great time to study the habitat and find out why some streams are failing and others are successful. Due to the warm ocean, salmon did not come into subsistence area waters until later, when the temperature drops they do not stay in lower parts of the river for very long. Bear populations have increased with bear/people/pets contact more common and this concerns the community. Abalone shells in Sitka Sound have gotten soft and no one knows the cause. There is an ongoing concern with the Herring population. They have seen some increase in the Herring population on the southern shores of Sitka Sound. Sitka Tribe Sea Mammal Commission has managed the sea otter within the area for quite a while and now they are starting to see abalone, gumboots, cockles, and clams returning.

***John Smith, III. of Juneau*** reported that deer season is pretty productive so far. He has observed an increase in the number of black bears and cubs being seen around locally, as well as an increase in their overall body size. He hears that salmon numbers are about the same as last year, but the poundage is smaller this year.

***Cathy Needham of Juneau*** shared that it has been her honor and privilege to represent subsistence users in this region for the past 15 years. It was a hard decision for her to leave the Council and she will miss the vision and working with people. She expressed the difficulty of working within the bureaucracy to accomplish matters and that it would have been nice to have more support from the Federal Subsistence Management Program (Program) to find tools and ways to accomplish things when the Council was struggling to find available solutions to problems. Her advice on how best to integrate subsistence into the [Tongass National] Forest Plan is to talk to the members of the Council (5 of whom have served for 20+ years each), review transcripts and public records for traditional, documented knowledge. This, along with recorded testimony of various community members, is a huge body of knowledge to use. She would like to see staff find ways to work within their agencies to come up with funding to have another

subcommittee to offer knowledge into the Forest Plan [Revision]. She reflected that in prior years, the Council was allowed to form a true FACA subcommittee to work through problems with land managers and local people.

*Donald Hernandez of Point Baker* expressed appreciation for Member Needham's contributions to the Council and agreed with her comments about the importance of Council member comments and public testimonies in the Council meetings. He echoed the comments of Petersburg and Craig council members regarding their local observations, and then gave his Chair's report:

He attended the April Federal Subsistence Board (Board) meeting where the Board made its final decision on recommendations on wildlife proposals. He was surprised that the Board unanimously supported the controversial Unit 4 deer proposals. He believes this was a result of all the hard work that the Council has done in recent years on those proposals, as well as the Council's position statement on meaningful priority. He believes the Board considered that a lot of competition can be concentrated in areas that are very important to subsistence users, and this can affect their ability to continue subsistence uses. And, that the Council made significant efforts in identifying those specific areas and times that are most important for subsistence harvest, while minimizing impacts to non-federally qualified hunters. He urged council members to inform their communities of the importance of participating in surveys so that good information can be gathered, hopefully validating the Council's work on these proposals.

### ***Training:***

#### **Delegation of Authority**

Kristen Morrow, Anthropologist Pathways Intern, presented a broad overview of Delegation of Authority and the Council's role in Delegated Authority. Ms. Morrow and Robert Cross, Tongass National Forest Subsistence Program Manager, fielded questions from the Council.

#### **Briefing on proposed changes to Wildlife Delegation of Authority Letters**

Mr. Cross provided a brief overview on OSM's proposal to administratively move the authority of routine existing Delegation of Authority letters back into wildlife unit specific regulations. Mr. Cross and Lisa Grediagin, OSM Supervisory Wildlife Biologist, fielded questions from the Council.

### ***Action Items:***

#### **Southeast Alaska Federal Subsistence Fisheries Report:**

Jake Musslewhite, Tongass North Zone Subsistence biologist, USFS, presented a status overview of the monitored fisheries throughout Southeast Alaska and answered questions from the Council.

#### **Regional Fisheries Proposals and Closure Review:**

***FP25-01: Set harvest regulations for subsistence salmon fishing on the Taku River***

Motion by Member Needham, seconded by Member Casipit to adopt FP25-01. Amended Motion by Member Casipit, seconded by Member Sandhofer, to **support with OSM modification**, (modification is to modify area of mainstream upstream so that lower boundary of the fishery would be the Taku River Lodge).

The Council recognizes that there is a conservation concern for Chinook Salmon throughout all Southeast Alaska, but that setting these regulations in place with a specific Chinook Salmon season allows the Federal in-season manager the ability to easily close the fishery if needed. There is a harvestable surplus of Sockeye and Coho salmon in this system for subsistence users. In addition, there is evidence that there would be low harvest given the distance from most rural communities. The proposal is likely to be advantageous to subsistence users and is going to be low impact to other fisheries. The Council noted that delineating the lower end boundary at the Taku River Lodge makes sense given that the same marker is used in the State of Alaska personal use fishery, and this location roughly matches the lower end of the federal waters boundary, so there is no harvest opportunity lost by using this location.

The amended motion **passed** on a unanimous vote.

***FP25-02: Close Federal public waters of the Unuk River to the harvest of Eulachon except by federally qualified subsistence users.***

Motion by Member Casipit, seconded by Member Slater to support FP25-02. Amended Motion by Member Needham, seconded by Member Casipit, to **support with OSM modification**, (modification is closing Federal public waters in District 1, not just Unuk River).

The Council recognizes that this is a long-standing conservation issue, and the proposed action is justified by substantial information. The proposal puts into regulation in-management actions that have been happening every year through special action, and the proposed regulations would implement conservation actions while providing a subsistence harvest opportunity. The modification to include all of District 1 is justified given the lack of site fidelity of these fish and the need to conserve stock genetics.

The motion **passed** on a unanimous vote.

***F25-03: Closure to the harvest of herring and herring roe to all but federally qualified subsistence users in the waters under Federal subsistence fisheries jurisdiction in the Makhnati Island area.***

Motion by Member Howard, seconded by Member Kitka, to **maintain status quo**.

Herring spawn are culturally important to the people of Sitka and Southeast Alaska. Herring and herring spawn are also important to the overall health of the ocean ecosystem in Sitka Sound. The Makhnati Island area has been closed to the harvest of herring and herring spawn by all but federally qualified subsistence users since 2015, due to ongoing conservation concerns and the need to continue subsistence uses of herring spawn. This area remains an important refuge for herring and herring spawn harvesters, where rural residents can safely harvest in locations close to home. It is one of the places in Sitka Sound

where spawn from both Southern and Western herring stocks can be found. In the last year or so, people have noticed some increases in the amount of herring spawn found in traditional harvest locations, but it is still going to take time and conservative management for the Sitka Sound herring stocks to fully rebuild themselves again. Commercial harvesting activity is a primary factor impacting herring populations and subsistence harvesting in Sitka Sound. A continuation of this closure is justified due to continued concerns about herring populations and the need to continue subsistence uses of herring spawn. The motion **passed** on a unanimous vote.

***NDP25-01: Request to rescind the nonrural status of Ketchikan Area***

OSM provided an overview of the non-rural determination proposal. Brent Vickers, Ph.D., Anthropology Division Supervisor, Jason Roberts, Ph.D., Anthropologist, and Kristen Morrow, Anthropology Pathways Intern, then presented key points from the analysis.

Motion by Member Needham, seconded by Member Douville to **support** NDP25-01 to rescind non-rural designation for Ketchikan.

The Council emphasized that they did not want Tribes pitted against Tribes, and they voiced support for Ketchikan Indian Community's request that Tribal citizens have a subsistence priority in their traditional lands and waters. However, many of the Council members who opposed the proposal noted that they did not believe that supporting rural status for the entire Ketchikan Area was the best way to address the issues being experienced by the Ketchikan Indian Community. These Council members also explained that Ketchikan possessed a degree of economic development, employment opportunities, social services, and access to commercial goods that made it unlike nearby rural communities. Some Council members also noted that Ketchikan was characterized by traits they considered non-rural, including a relatively high population density, substantial traffic, a large cruise tourism and charter fishing industry, and large, expensive housing developments for seasonal residents.

Some Council members described other characteristics they associate with rural communities, including the presence of Native communities which rely on traditional subsistence practices, being isolated, having limited road access, declining or limited economic opportunities, high poverty rates, reliance on barges for access to goods and materials, and vulnerable supply chains. In identifying these traits of rural areas, some Council members stated that Ketchikan was similar to rural hub communities like Kodiak and Sitka and should be compared to these larger rural communities, rather than the ones on Prince of Wales Island. One Council member voiced that the rural status of a community should be determined based on use of the land and traditions, rather than economic factors.

Throughout their discussion, competition for resources and impacts on resources in rural areas were the main reason provided for opposing rural status for Ketchikan residents. The Council expressed concern that the tools currently available in the Federal Subsistence Management Program (Program) to address resource competition and conservation concerns (i.e., harvest limit reductions, changes to harvest seasons, closures to non-federally qualified users, and Section 804 user prioritizations) would be slow and



ineffective approaches to ensuring that residents of nearby, small communities would not be negatively impacted if all residents of Ketchikan were to become federally qualified subsistence users.

The motion **failed** on a split vote, four to nine.

In Council discussions, it was noted that Title VIII of ANILCA does not provide a definition of “rural” and that the concept has evolved within the Program over time. The Council stated that more specific definitions or criteria of rural would better facilitate nonrural determination processes and Council decisions in the future. In their decision, the Council passed a motion to send a letter to the Board requesting that “rural” be redefined for the purposes of the Program to include all members of federally recognized Tribes occupying their ancestral lands.

Motion by Member Slater, seconded by Mr. Sandhofer, to draft a letter that defines a new classification of rural resident in Alaska, comprising of Native residents occupying ancestral land. The Chair will deliver that statement at the upcoming Board meeting in February, 2025.

The motion **passed** on a unanimous vote.

### **2026 Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program and Priority Information Needs (PINs) Development:**

Mr. Cross and Scott Ayers, Fisheries Division Supervisor, OSM, presented the Council’s ongoing list of potential priority information needs to guide the discussion of Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program future projects. The Council heard public testimony and Mr. Cross and Mr. Ayers fielded questions.

Motion by Member Casipit, seconded by Member Slater, to approve the PINs list. Amended motion by Member Casipit, seconded by Member Needham, to add Redoubt to the Sockeye Salmon escapement bullet.

The motion **passed** on a unanimous vote.

Amended motion by Member Slater, seconded by Member Phillips, to add Lisianski River to the reliable estimates of salmon populations and harvests in the sport and subsistence fisheries at Kah Sheets and Alex Creek bullet.

The motion **passed** on a unanimous vote.

Amended motion by Member Phillips, seconded by Member Casipit, to add the use of DNA to determine the contribution of Sockeye Salmon to mixed stock fisheries.

The motion **passed** on a unanimous vote.

The final approved PINs list is as follows (changes noted in bold):

- Reliable estimates of Sockeye Salmon escapement and in-season harvest and estimates of stream discharge in the following systems: Kanalku, Klawock, Hetta, Falls, Sarkar, Kook, Neva, Karta, Hatchery, Eek, Kah Sheets, Klag, Gut, Kutlaku, Salmon Bay, Sitkoh, Hoktaheen, Alecks Creek, Lake Eva, Lake Leo, and **Redoubt Lake**
- Reliable estimates of salmon escapement and in-season harvest of subsistence salmon systems

- Escapement indices or population estimates for Eulachon at the Unuk River and Yakutat Forelands
- Population assessment for Eulachon for northern Southeast Alaska
- Traditional ecological knowledge of how each community distributes harvest between Sockeye Salmon systems available to them
- Reliable estimates of salmon populations and harvests in the sport and subsistence fisheries at Kah Sheets and Alecks Creek, **Lisianski River**
- Ethnographic study of the Yakutat subsistence salmon fishery
- Reliable estimates of subsistence Sockeye Salmon harvest in the Klawock River drainage
- Develop escapement goals for Sockeye Salmon systems with long term escapement data sets
- Incorporate the use of Indigenous co-management to develop escapement goals for Sockeye Salmon systems with long term escapement data sets
- Assessment of Makhnati Island herring stock
- Update community household fish harvest surveys
- **Use of DNA to determine the contribution of Sockeye Salmon in the mixed stock fishery in Southeast Alaska**

#### **Identify Issues for FY2024 Annual Report:**

Council Coordinator DeAnna Perry provided a quick overview of the previous year's Annual Report items and the Council discussed what items they'd like to see in the FY2024 Annual Report.

Motion by Member Caspit, seconded by Member Sandhofer, to approve the following list of items to potentially be included in the final FY2024 Annual Report to the Board:

- Concerns for scheduling conflicts between Federal, State, and local land/resource management organizations that prevent full participation by the public
- Tongass National Forest Plan Revision — rolling topic of interest and the Council's desire to provide significant input during the public opportunities to engage in this process
- Request a better definition of 'rural community' or better guidelines for Councils to identify rural characteristics during the nonrural determination proposal process
- Request that staff incorporate additional emphasis knowledge in the status reports of Southeast fish and wildlife given to the Board for informational purposes, to include distinctions between subsistence and non-subsistence uses/harvests
- Advise of the need for an accurate count of moose in the Yakutat area
- Request details of Unit 4 Deer monitoring, based on the Board's decision on recent Unit 4 Deer proposals (Angoon, Pelican, Hoonah)
- Reiterate the request for funding for staff/resources

#### **Future Meeting Dates:**

The Council confirmed its previously selected winter 2025 meeting dates/location: March 18–20, 2024, in Sitka.

The Council selected its fall 2025 meeting dates/location: October 21–23, 2025, in Wrangell, if approved.

## Alaska Board of Fisheries Proposals

The Council expressed interest in providing comments on the Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF) proposals for the Southeast and Yakutat Finfish and Shellfish cycle.

Motion by member Needham, seconded by Member Howard, to form a working group to develop Council recommendations for potential BOF proposals. Members to include Mr. Casipit, Mr. Smith, Mr. Bemis, Mr. Howard, and Mr. Kitka.

The motion **passed** on a unanimous vote.

Motion by Member Needham, seconded by Member Casipit, to develop a work group for BOF proposal recommendations from the Council on unguided fishermen proposals. Members included: Ms. Phillips, Mr. Bemis, and Mr. Wright.

The motion **passed** on a unanimous vote.

All workgroups were given the ability to review any state BOF proposal that the Council may wish to comment upon, while doing other business, and all motions included a request for staff assistance and student participation at their leisure.

Ashley Bolwerk, Acting Tongass South Zone Subsistence biologist, USFS, presented an overview and a draft document journalizing the joint working groups efforts. Ms. Bolwerk and workgroup members offered insight on the proposed positions for several BOF proposals and discussed with the full Council. Motion by Member Slater, seconded by Member Howard, to approve the Board of Fish proposal comments made by the Southeast Council BOF working group. This written comment letter will show the Council's positions on 23 proposals<sup>1</sup> as follows: 104 – support; 118 – support; 135 – support; 136 – support; 137 – support; 143 – support; 144 – support; 145 – support; 146 – support; 147 – support; 148 – support; 178 – oppose; 190 – support; 203 – oppose; 206 – support; 207 – oppose; 208 – oppose; 209 – support; 210 – oppose; 222 – support; 250 – oppose; 258 – oppose; 259 – oppose.

The motion **passed** on a unanimous vote.

Motion by Member Sandhofer, seconded by Member Phillips to appoint Member Casipit (volunteer), to attend the BOF meeting and advocate on behalf of the Council.

The motion **passed** on a unanimous vote.

Motion by Member Casipit, seconded by Member Sandhofer, to request necessary funding from OSM to send Member Casipit to the BOF 2025 meeting in Ketchikan.

The motion **passed** on a unanimous vote.

Motion by Member Sandhofer, seconded by Member Phillips, to appoint Member Casipit (volunteer), to attend the next Sitka Advisory Committee (AC) meeting (10/30) via Zoom meeting to represent the Council and explain/answer questions about the Council's subsistence use King Salmon state proposal.

The motion **passed** on a unanimous vote.

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<sup>1</sup> Board of Fisheries Proposals for Southeast and Yakutat Finfish and Shellfish cycle can be read in their entirety at: [https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/regulations/regprocess/fisheriesboard/pdfs/2024-2025/proposals/se\\_all.pdf](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/regulations/regprocess/fisheriesboard/pdfs/2024-2025/proposals/se_all.pdf)

Motion by Member Phillips, seconded by Member Sandhofer, to appoint Member Hernandez (volunteer), to virtually attend the BOF working session (10/29–30), to express the Council’s support for the inclusion of the Sitka AC’s unguided charter proposal to the proposal list for this spring’s BOF meeting. The motion **passed** on a unanimous vote.

Motion by Member Slater, seconded by Member Casipit, to prepare a letter on the unguided fishermen issue (previously outlined by the BOF working group) to have in hand for the upcoming BOF meeting and other meetings deemed as necessary. The motion **passed** on a unanimous vote.

***Other Business:***

**Tongass National Forest Plan Revision**

Motion by Member Needham, seconded by Member Casipit, to form a working group for discussing the Tongass Forest Plan revision. Members included Ms. Needham, Mr. Slater, Mr. Sandhofer, and Mr. Hernandez.

Cathy Tighe, Ketchikan-Misty Fjords District Ranger, USFS, provided process information on the plan revision and the Council received a brief overview of the working group’s thoughts by Member Needham. The Council is interested in providing formal comments in the future on this issue but since there is no comment period currently open, the Council took no further action at this meeting. The notes from the working group that were captured by staff will be reviewed in future for Council action.

**National Park Service (NPS) — Amended Alaska Sport Hunting and Trapping Regulations Final Rule:**

Dillon Patterson, Subsistence Program, NPS, provided a short update on this Rule which became effective August 2, 2024. The amendment addresses bear baiting and clarifies how a firearm can be used in conjunction with trapping for the harvest of furbearers on National Preserves in Alaska.

**Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve Report:**

Amber Cohen, Cultural Anthropologist, and Barbara Cellarius, Cultural Anthropologist/Subsistence Coordinator, provided a written report and verbal updates on interpretation/education, Sit’ Tlein Research (Malaspina Glacier), Coastal Ethnographic and Cultural Landscape Project, documenting Eyak and Yakutat Tlingit cultural legacies, Coastal Wolf and other wildlife surveys along Malaspina Forelands, and also listed a few of the ongoing/planned projects in the Yakutat area.

**Office of Subsistence Management (OSM) Report:**

Mr. Ayers provided an agency report which included the move of OSM to the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Policy, Management and Budget, the publication of wildlife regulations, and the upcoming addition of three new public members to the Board. He also provided an update on deferred wildlife proposal 24-01 (sale of brown bear hides) as well as personnel updates.

### **Partners for Fisheries Monitoring Program:**

Mr. Ayers informed the Council that a call for proposals will be coming out before the Council's winter meeting, seeking applications for the Partners for Fisheries Monitoring Program. This happens every two years and it is up to four years' worth of funding.

### **805(c) Report:**

Coordinator Perry provided a summary of the 805(c) Report, a document which provides details to each Regional Advisory Council on the Board's actions with respect to that region's specific proposals.

### **Council application/nomination open season:**

Katya Wessels, Acting Deputy Director, OSM, advised that the window to apply for a seat on Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils will officially open in January, 2025 and will be open from 4–6 weeks.

### **Correspondence:**

Coordinator Perry provided a summary of the correspondence that the Council voted to send at its last winter meeting. Some of these letters/issues have been elevated to the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior.

### **Declining Balance Card:**

Ms. Wessels informed the Council of the possibility of moving from physical checks to a declining balance card to pay for members' travel expenses. Ms. Wessels fielded questions and comments from the Council.

### **Service Award**

Ms. Wessels presented a service award to Member Wright. He has served on the Council for over 20 years. The program and users in the Southeast Region appreciate his service.

### **Farewell**

Chairman Hernandez recognized Vice-Chair Needham for her 15 years of service on the Council and her invaluable contributions as a member and as Vice-Chair. This was Ms. Needham's last Council meeting, and several members recognized her for her input, helpful attitude, and guidance. She will be missed.

### **Public Testimony (for complete testimony, please review transcripts for Oct. 22, 23, and 24<sup>2</sup>)**

- Kyle Rosendale: comments on FP25-03; addition of Redoubt to the PINs list
- Steve Ramp: BOF proposals; requests to Council (noted above)

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.doi.gov/subsistence/library/transcripts/1-southeast-alaska>

- Keenan Sanderson: European Green Crab – research paper being drafted on this subject by Academic Ocean Science Team – Ketchikan; Scheduling conflicts between Federal/State meetings limiting public engagement; BOF proposal (re: King Salmon Management Plan)
- Heather Bauscher: importance of engagement for the Tongass National Forest Plan Revision process; introduction for students of UAS Policies and Procedures Practicum Class
  - Students testifying on the importance of subsistence in their lives and community: Naomi Jones, Thomas Smith, Qiana Fletcher, Kaetlyn Skultka, Kye Vaughn-Jeske, Oliver Petersen, Caleb Lutomski
- George Nix: concern with the definition of the word ‘subsistence’ — strive not survive
- Douglas Indian Association: written concerns about declining salmon runs on the Taku River
- Nonrural Determination Proposal (Ketchikan) — NDP25-01
  - Clinton Cook, President, Craig Tribal Association
  - Norm Skan, President, Ketchikan Indian Community
  - Mike Jones, President, Organized Village of Kasaan
  - Joel Jackson, President, Organized Village of Kake
  - Ahl’lidaaw Gitnack’anseak, President, Tsimshian Tribal Association Inc., Ketchikan
  - Charles Edwardson, Ketchikan Indian Community (KIC) Treasurer
  - Franklin H. James, Sr., individually
  - Rodney Dial, Mayor, Ketchikan Gateway Borough
  - Jeremy Bynam, Ketchikan Gateway Borough Assembly Member, speaking individually
  - Michael Robbins, Superintendent of Schools, Ketchikan Gateway Borough, individually
  - Trixie Bennett, Tribal Health Administrator, KIC, speaking individually
  - Naomi Michaelson, KIC Tribal Member
  - Richard Jackson, Grand President Emeritus, Alaska Native Brotherhood, individually
  - James Llano, Sr., Ketchikan Camp 14, Alaska Native Brotherhood, individually
  - Janalee Gage, individually
  - Merle Hawkins, Ketchikan, individually
  - Clarence Peele, KIC, speaking individually
  - Jarred Haynes, Ketchikan, individually
  - Jennifer Hanlon, Cultural Resources Director, Ketchikan Indian Community, individually
  - Steve Hartford, in-house counsel for KIC, speaking for KIC
  - Thomas Smith, Mount Edgecumbe High School student
  - Lewis Hiatt, Prince of Wales, speaking individually
  - Oliver Petersen, Petersburg High School student
  - Brita Alander, Ketchikan, individually

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DeAnna Perry, Designated Federal Officer  
 USDA – United States Forest Service

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Don Hernandez, Chair  
Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

**This version of the meeting minutes was certified as accurate by the Chair on December 12, 2025. The Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council will review this version at its winter 2025 meeting on March 18, 2025.**

A more detailed report of this meeting, copies of the transcript, and meeting handouts are available upon request. Call Office of Subsistence Management at 1-800-478-1456 or Council Coordinator, DeAnna Perry at 907-209-7817 or, email [deanna.perry@usda.gov](mailto:deanna.perry@usda.gov).