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1 WESTERN INTERIOR FEDERAL SUBSISTENCE
2 REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

3
4 PUBLIC MEETING

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6
7 VOLUME II

8
9 PYKE'S WATERFRONT LODGE
10 Fairbanks, Alaska
11 February 26, 2025
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15

16 COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

17 Jack L. Reakoff, Chair
18 Donald V. Honea, Jr.
19 Pollock Simon, Sr.
20 Robert Walker
21 Timothy P. Gervais
22 Darrell M. Vent, Sr.
23 Jenny K. Pelkola
24 Tommy Kriska

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28 Regional Council Coordinator, Nissa Pilcher
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P R O C E E D I N G S

(Fairbank, Alaska - 2/26/2025)

(On record)

CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Yeah. We're going to get seated again, and you're on the phone. Tim Gervais.

MR. GERVAIS: Yeah. Good morning, Jack.

CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Hey. Good morning, Tim. So, we're going to get people back at the table again. So, day two of the Western Tier regional Council meeting. Winter meeting. We had our North Pacific Fisheries Management Council sub meeting last night from 6:30 to just after 8:30. And this Council dialogued with the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council on the various options and various data lacks that they have that they need to address in the analysis for this chum salmon bycatch issue. So, we would like to write a letter to them that -- they will take letters after August 15th. And we would like to promulgate a letter or the outline of the letter. So that's what happened last night. So, who is on the phone this morning besides Tim? Is anybody new on the phone as of yesterday?

(Simultaneous speech)

MR. JOLLY: Hello Jack. Sorry about that. Yeah, this is Kyle Jolly with the Park service.

CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Hey. Good morning, Kyle. Anybody else? Kyle. Okay so, that's -- and so then the standard crowd. So, we're we were going to -- let's see what are we going to do here first. So, we're going to -- we were talking about this North Pacific fisheries issues and we -- there was public here last night. And we said that we would -- if they wanted to talk to the Council about the North Pacific fisheries management options and those -- that issue itself, then we would discuss that. But I don't see anybody here right now that.....

Is anybody online, want to talk about the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council's chum salmon bycatch alternatives and options.

1 MS. PILCHER: This is Nissa. As a
2 reminder, it is star five to raise and raise your hand
3 and star six to unmute yourself. I believe everyone
4 joined muted as well as to mute yourself.

5
6 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, nobody's on the
7 phone that I can determine. And so, then we're also at
8 this time on our agenda, we open the floor for public
9 and tribal comments on non-agenda items. And so, anybody
10 -- did we get any blue cards or, does anybody want to
11 speak to us on. Oh, Ross, come on up. So, if anybody
12 wants to speak, you gotta [sic] drop your blue card
13 here. Good morning.

14
15 MR. MARTIN: Good morning, everyone. Mr.
16 Chair and Council members. For the record, I'm Ross
17 Martin. I'm a PhD student at the Yale School of the
18 Environment. And some of you might remember, in October
19 in Galena, I came and introduced myself and expressed
20 interest in looking through the 30 years of transcripts
21 from this Council to look for trends and just glean
22 whatever information I could in order to better
23 understand subsistence management in Alaska in your
24 region and you know how the process works. And an update.
25 I've gotten all the transcripts from Nissa, and I can
26 now search through 93 to today for any keywords, any
27 context and a whole host of different analytic tools.
28 So, I'm here to inform you of that and then also offer
29 to search through the transcripts for things that may
30 be of interest to the Council to assist with whatever
31 you might need. So, I'm here to be of service and to be
32 useful. And I appreciate you, you working with me and
33 giving me access to the transcripts. So, thank you.

34
35 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Well, your work is
36 very valuable. And you know, we have a long -- this
37 Regional Council has a long history of, like, the salmon
38 issue, identifying that salmon issue. Or back in the
39 late 90s, we had some problems. We also had some problems
40 with chums in the 90s. And then how there's a progression
41 over time of very -- trying to get mesh size reductions
42 for chinook salmon. And there's a long history of
43 fisheries after 1999. That's when we started dealing
44 with fish issues and on to today. And so, there's
45 probably, you know, there was a lot of stuff that was
46 drawn up during those, you know, we had different agency
47 staff that was actually submitting all kinds of
48 documentation about the 1919 crash of salmon and all
49 that kind of stuff. There's a whole bunch of probably
50 data that may not be in -- available for the analysis

1 offhand for our managers and so forth. So that could be,
2 you know, a lot of that salmon stuff could be useful for
3 the Council's use, you know, and documentation for like
4 our comments on this North Pacific Fisheries Management
5 Council some stuff. So, you have a response.

6
7 MR. MARTIN: Yeah. Just one question for
8 you all that I forgot to include. The context of how the
9 search works is I can put in a keyword anything, really.
10 I could put in hatchery pinks, for example, and then it
11 would net me the speaker, the date and every instance
12 of someone in these meetings saying hatchery pinks. So,
13 another thing that would be very helpful to me is
14 keywords that you think would be good to search all
15 these transcripts for that would reveal something
16 important about your work.

17
18 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, yes, I mean,
19 like these -- like the pink, the hatchery fish, we refer
20 to them as hatchery fish, but the prominent --
21 predominant release is pink salmon. And like 750 million
22 pink salmon, 400 and something million chum salmon and
23 then some coho and sockeye and etc. So, you know, as we
24 continue to move forward, this hatchery thing is not
25 going to go away. It's -- as I keep saying, it's the
26 elephant in the room of the demise of the wild stock
27 salmon in Alaska. And so, we're going to need to have -
28 - how long have we been talking about that? I know these
29 some of these Councils -- EIRACs been talking about it
30 for a long time hatchery. Hatchery fish and bycatch is
31 another issue, but that's -- the elephant in the room
32 is this hatchery problem. That's what's causing the size
33 reduction, fecundity of the salmon. Everything is going
34 down predominantly tied to the amount of food available
35 to the salmon on the high seas. And so, we're going to
36 need that kind of stuff in the future. This is not going
37 to go away. There's going to be more proposals before
38 the Board of Fish and the State Board of Fish is in
39 control of this hatchery problem. They're going to have
40 to get their head out of the sand. They got their heads
41 so far down into the sand, you can only see their butts
42 sticking out of the sand. They don't want to think about
43 what this is doing to the overall wild stocks. And the
44 Department of Fish and Game is charged under the state
45 constitution for sustained yield management of
46 replenishable resources. These are indigenous resources.
47 We're talking about hatcheries. There were no such thing
48 as a hatchery when we wrote the state constitution.
49 They're talking about our wild stocks. That's what
50 they're talking about. So, this -- the hatchery

1 discussions are going to be necessary. And I would enjoy
2 it if you would produce, you know, those kinds of
3 discussions that the Councils have had and the history
4 of these discussions for all of these years. So that
5 would be one thing that we're going to probably need
6 with the next probably two years. So, it's what we're
7 going to need. So, it'll be instrumental for EIRAC,
8 Eastern Interior Regional Council and what Yukon Delta
9 also, the Yukon River stocks are in abysmal condition
10 and possibly may not be able to recover because we have
11 virtually no escapement so -- and, two more cycles we're
12 not going to have any fish if we just don't keep -- if
13 we keep under escaping the drainage. So that was that's
14 one thing that you could search out for keywords you
15 probably have, but I would like to see that tabulated
16 by Council as Councils discussions over time and, you
17 know, broken out. Any other comments? Robert.

18
19 MR. WALKER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank
20 you for coming. Good to see you again. I don't think we
21 talked about what -- is any kind of work that you do
22 with the Atlantic salmon in the North Pacific that comes
23 up into the Bering Sea. Is there anything that you do
24 with this?

25
26 MR. MARTIN: Specifically for Atlantic
27 salmon? I haven't searched that yet, but I can. So
28 Atlantic salmon are coming to the Pacific, or they're
29 being farm raised?

30
31 MR. WALKER: If I am correct, Mr.
32 Chairman, we had -- there is a hatchery down in British
33 Columbia, and they do migrate up to this area. In fact,
34 20 years ago, I caught one in my salmon net, and I didn't
35 know what it was. I had to bring it to a biologist, and
36 she stated that was an Atlantic salmon. And she said she
37 gave me a rundown on it, and they go up and they spawn
38 and they go back to the ocean. They're not like regular
39 chinook salmon and chum salmon that die, you know, after
40 they spawn. So, this was kind of threw me for a curve
41 because we never, ever been orientated on another
42 species of salmon. So, I'm kind of curious that I thought
43 maybe you might have did some of that. Thank you.

44
45 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, it's
46 basically, you know, he's researching our Council's
47 transcripts and that can draw out, you know -- there's
48 a lot of discussion and there can be people that are on
49 the Council right now that weren't in those discussions.
50 So that's going to be the important part, preachment of

1 impoundments for -- in Washington state and British
2 Columbia in Atlantic salmon inadvertent release. That's
3 -- they swimming off and they ended up in the Yukon and
4 all over. So, we're going to have to keep moving along.
5 Did you have any comments or questions there, Tim, since
6 you're on the phone, don't want to forget you there.

7
8 MR. GERVAIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair, this
9 is Tim. Yeah, I was -- I would like to be able to get
10 Mr. Martin's contact information. I can get it from Nissa
11 or he could give it to me now, I don't -- I guess I
12 could get it from Nissa, it's the best use of the time,
13 but yeah, I would like to -- beyond catalog and have the
14 search capabilities is -- your research is -- what's the
15 main focus? Is it the accessibility information or are
16 you actually looking at it like a sociological aspect
17 to subsistence management?

18
19 MR. MARTIN: Yeah. Thank you for the
20 question. Council member Gervais. I am a sociologist so,
21 that would be the angle that I take there. But I'm also
22 looking for -- I think it would be a very rich resource
23 to track ecological change over time. Things like fish
24 size and whatnot. Just from people talking back in the
25 transcripts in the 90s about how things were then versus
26 now. But I'm still in the exploratory phase of the data
27 because there's so much of it. There's over 100,000 pages
28 for this RAC alone of transcript data. So, there's a lot
29 there.

30
31 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: I know I talked too
32 much, and they get \$5 -- so, Tim, you know, did you have
33 a specific that you would like to -- for an example or
34 do you just want the contact and move on with this issue?

35
36 MR. GERVAIS: I just wanted the contact,
37 but I know you're talking about fish size. I was just
38 reading earlier this week about king salmon being caught
39 around Nulato, 1869 that are five feet in length and in
40 the same chapter the fellow is talking about, he's
41 traveling Lower Yukon River, and he says, there's so
42 much fish resource down there that the people don't even
43 hunt. They supply their entire year's sustenance with
44 berries and salmon out of the river. So that just shows
45 the kind of salmon resource that existed basically at
46 right around contact time, except for the Russian-
47 American company. All right. Time to move on. Thank you.

48
49 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay. Thank you.

50

1 MR. MARTIN: Thank you.

2

3 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, we would be
4 looking for influences from hatcheries, size reduction
5 and abundance for salmon. And our discussions previously
6 that would be instrumental in our future use. Thank you.
7 So, I got another blue card here from Olivia Irwin. And
8 so -- morning, Olivia.

9

10 MS. IRWIN: Good morning, Mr. Chair and
11 members of the Council. Thank you so much for allowing
12 me to provide public testimony this morning. For the
13 record, my name is Olivia Henaayee Irwin. I am from
14 Nenana, Alaska. My people come from the communities of
15 Allakaket and the Kobuk River Valley, way back when my
16 great grandma was born 30 miles south of Wiseman on the
17 on the riverbank. So, I have family up in your region,
18 Jack. I serve as the Co-Chair of the Minto Nenana Fish
19 and Game Advisory Committee to the State. I just served
20 my first term on the Eastern Interior RAC last week and
21 I'm the policy coordinator for Yukon River Drainage
22 Fisheries Association, who you'll be hearing from later
23 today. But today I'm here to speak on behalf of myself.

24

25 So, I wanted to speak a little bit to
26 last night's engagement session. The Eastern Interior
27 RAC also had a similar engagement session with North
28 Pacific last week. And I was a little bit disappointed
29 in the format of last night's discussion because the way
30 that EIRAC handled it was, we had a cross-table
31 conversation with Council members. Each Council, each
32 EIRAC member was able to address a Council member, ask
33 questions, have a further discussion on not just the
34 alternatives, but things like sustainability. Dorothy
35 Shockley asked each of the Council members to define
36 sustainability for her. We also asked each Council
37 member to identify what they think are the issues facing
38 western -- coastal-western Alaska chum. Out of that, we
39 got some interesting answers. And only one Council
40 member actually mentioned bycatch. So, I say all of this
41 to say that there was a lot of space made at last week's
42 engagement session for cross-Council conversations and
43 testimony. And then there was also -- and I'm sorry,
44 Jack, I did leave like 20 minutes early last night, but
45 there was opportunity for public testimony provided at
46 the EIRAC engagement session, and I'm not familiar with
47 whether or not that was provided here. So, there was a
48 lot of space made by EIRAC for Interior folks to address
49 the Council, which is unique because sitting around this
50 table, the only one that was at the Council meeting was

1 Robert Walker. And so, at EIRAC it was similar, it was
2 -- a space was made so that there could be a lot of
3 conversation about the issue, and people from the
4 Interior could use this as an opportunity to address the
5 Council, because many of our folks can't make it to
6 those meetings in Anchorage. So, I would have loved to
7 see the ability for the Western Interior RAC to have a
8 little bit more engagement. Robert Walker was the only
9 person that was at North Pacific, and he was the only
10 one that was cut off last night, and I felt that that
11 was inappropriate. He's speaking on behalf of a lot of
12 tribal knowledge and information. He was also in
13 attendance of North Pacific, where there were many, many
14 tribal representatives. And so, when he speaks, he's
15 speaking for -- not only our tribes, but also on behalf
16 of Eva Burk, who's our tribal seat on the AP. So -- and
17 she speaks for 229 tribes. And so, it would just -- it
18 behooves me that there's less attention and of detail
19 to allowing indigenous knowledge holders to be able to
20 speak before you.

21
22 I wanted to speak a little bit to the
23 management -- the alternatives that were provided. You
24 guys went really deep into alternative five, and that's
25 the one that a lot of the tribes are looking at. Eva
26 Dawn Burk was part of the original crew that put together
27 that migration corridor idea. So alternative five is
28 something that the tribes, many tribes of Alaska and the
29 Interior want to see. Also, alternative two. Alternative
30 two is the hard backstop. So, what that would allow is
31 if we just adopted alternative five, those fleets could
32 move barely outside of that corridor area and still catch
33 a lot of bycatch. So, the hard cap is a hard backstop.
34 The fleet has been working under a self-imposed
35 management strategy of less than 200,000 bycatch. And
36 they've been doing that pretty well actually. But what's
37 needed to be recognized is that the abundance of western
38 Alaska fall chum is so low. And so, of course there's
39 going to be low numbers of bycatch. But in years of high
40 abundance, this regulatory backstop would be really
41 beneficial. The regulatory backstop alternative two,
42 you're going to get pushback from Western and coastal
43 communities. I just want you to be aware of that. That's
44 a hard one for us to work with our CDQ communities, but
45 there's a lot of CDQ and coastal villages that are
46 looking at alternative five as a really good option.

47
48 I also just wanted to make a note that
49 I really appreciate all of the voices that are sitting
50 here today before us. And I feel as though -- as a Chair

1 myself there should be made a lot of space for other
2 people to be engaging and talking in the conversation
3 and as somebody who sits in a lot of these management
4 spaces and sees how quickly some proposals and some
5 agenda items can go through. Sometimes our people don't
6 -- aren't fully aware of what's happening. This happened
7 at EIRAC. We went through a bunch of black bear proposals
8 really, really quick, and all of a sudden we were like,
9 whoa, what did we just do? So, at analyzing whether
10 aligning state or federal regulations would be
11 beneficial to federally qualified users, you know, is a
12 first step, rather than just assuming that aligning
13 state and federal regulations is what's good. So, I just
14 wanted to come before you and speak to some of those
15 points. I didn't mean to offend anybody. I just wanted
16 to speak to allowing more space for all of the voices.
17 And also knowing where your strengths lie, right. So
18 last night, Robert Walker had a lot of the knowledge of
19 North Pacific. So, knowing where our strengths lie and
20 where -- which Council members to lean on is really
21 important. So, thank you for your time. That's all I
22 have for you. And I'm happy to answer any questions or
23 receive any feedback, Jack.

24
25 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Thank you, Olivia.
26 The meeting was an interaction of the North Pacific
27 Fisheries Management Council membership with this
28 Council. That's what that meeting was last night and I
29 -- and the focus was on the on this document here. And
30 so, we -- I, as a Chair I was trying to focus this
31 Council to address this document because this is the
32 most important thing on this table. Historical use --
33 they've heard it all before. We have to focus on this
34 document and we had to make as many points as we could
35 to point out the data lack that -- and I don't know that
36 you were here for some of the data lacks that they have.
37 The genetics, the genetic work where the salmon actually
38 inhabit in the North Pacific. There was a whole bunch
39 of stuff that we only had two hours to get into. So, we
40 couldn't -- I couldn't take public -- we could not take
41 public comments because we went right to the end,
42 dialoguing with this Council, trying to get it across
43 to them the importance of this document and this option
44 five, these corridors, is the way we're going to do
45 that. The hard cap, I do like the hard cap idea. And so,
46 we're going to write it -- our intention is to write a
47 letter to the North Pacific Fisheries Management
48 Council. They'll open for further correspondence again
49 on the EIS on August 15th. And that's the intention --
50 that's to move this forward. This forward. We did not

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1 have all night. You know, if we would have started into
2 public comment, we'd have been here till midnight and
3 we had had a long day and we had done a lot of stuff
4 during the -- during the daytime. So, I had to explain
5 that I'm sorry if I offended you or Robert or Tommy or,
6 you know, I had to focus this meeting on this document.
7 That's what our objective was. So, I felt that we made
8 some -- I noted that Council members were writing little
9 notes. Things that we had said. They were writing little
10 notes. Did they do that during your meeting?

11
12 MS. IRWIN: Yes, Mr. Chair, they did.
13 They took many notes. And we also started at 9 a.m. that
14 day and went till 10:00 at night because taking public
15 testimony so it did add -- so, it was our energy levels
16 were so low it added a huge evening. But our Chair left
17 -- kept us there so that we could hear public testimony.
18 And then we did end up having conversations about writing
19 a letter. So, EIRAC will also be writing a letter. I
20 believe in support of alternative five. I cannot
21 remember if we agreed on a hard cap or not. Thank you.

22
23 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Is your letter
24 already produced? I did see a letter from EIRAC here.
25 This is January 21. You're going to write a different
26 letter?

27
28 MS. IRWIN: Through the Chair. Yes. I
29 believe Brooke is going to be writing -- oh, you know
30 what? I take that back, I apologize. We may be -- will
31 be referring to the original letter that EIRAC wrote.
32 I'm sorry, Nissa seems like she might know.

33
34 MS. PILCHER: Yeah, this is Nissa Pilcher
35 for the record. I did consult with Brooke and there will
36 be some very minor changes to that letter, but ultimately
37 that -- the content of that letter will be moving forward
38 and to speak more to the 8:30 cutoff. That was the time
39 that we agreed with the Council -- North Pacific Council,
40 before any of the Council meetings started. Your Council
41 did run past that, and we did agree with the North
42 Pacific. If that was to happen, there would be an open
43 conversation, which did not happen last week. Also, the
44 makeup of this Council is slightly different than your
45 Council. And I was concerned about making sure that
46 people had enough time to get rest.

47
48 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, at the
49 completion of the meeting, I went out to the lobby and
50 the north, the Council members -- North Pacific Council

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1 was sitting out there. They were exhausted and I -- my
2 intention was to make the biggest points for our case
3 before that Council and to leave on a happy note. I
4 didn't want to exhaust them to death and I -- and so
5 that's what I -- my tact was on that. My tact was to
6 make the biggest bang for our buck for this document.
7 And I think we made some big -- and with your backing
8 and your letters, and hopefully Y-K Delta can also have
9 an input on that. This is the only way we're going to
10 get the chum and chinook salmon. This is not -- this
11 area in time is actually a beneficial to the chinook
12 salmon. We got chinook coming out of the North Pacific
13 also, moving through this corridor and this would be
14 implemented from June 10th through September 1st. That
15 would pretty much cover the entire chinook run. There's
16 a lot of -- and that's -- and what we requested was that
17 they you know, 85% of the of the bycatch is in that in
18 the savings area. But we want to know how many are adult
19 fish. We want to know that issue. That's there's data
20 lacks that -- and there's -- I hope that you your Council
21 and our Council can have cohesion on the lack and the -
22 - to push the point that they don't have data and they're
23 just shooting in the dark guessing at some of this stuff.
24 They don't know where the salmon go in the North Pacific.
25 They don't know the genetic makeup of where those salmon
26 are in the North Pacific. And they don't -- you know,
27 they want to have openings and option 1.1 here. Yeah.
28 Well, that's -- it's right on top of the passage. It's
29 like we can't have option 1.1 with the corridor idea.
30 So, I -- that we -- and so then I said that we were
31 going to have public comment in the morning. That's why
32 you're here and I was hoping that we would get other
33 public comments. You're making some very pertinent
34 points, and I appreciate your public -- your comments
35 here. So, thank you very much. Any other comments from
36 Council members? Don.

37
38 MR. HONEA: Thank you, Mr. -- well thank
39 you, Mr. Chair. Olivia, I appreciate those comments. We
40 as Board members, we only meet a couple of times a year.
41 Okay. So, you know, and I hear what you're saying. And
42 I don't care whether it's our opinions, gospel truth,
43 whatever, this is the only time that we have to speak
44 on these things. And some of us, we don't -- you know,
45 we're not long winded or anything so, I appreciate --
46 and there's different forums, and I'm not saying that
47 Mr. Chair, that we aren't doing anything right, but we
48 as Council members should be able to express, you know,
49 take as long as we want. Because this is our time to do
50 it. This is our forum. So, I appreciate that. And, you

1 know, not to cause any friction among all on Board. But
2 like I say, we have that right to express that whether
3 it's opinion or not. And I was just wondering, your
4 form, the way you guys did that, did you -- well, we
5 were given these alternatives. It's still kind of stumps
6 me as to how that worked. And did you guys come up with
7 any kind of solution on -- or a happy medium to say,
8 hey, we'll -- or is that later in the year? I appreciate
9 your comment. Thank you.

10

11 MS. IRWIN: Yeah. Through the Chair.
12 Thank you very much, Don, for your comments and your
13 question. So, I will say that when we're speaking to the
14 difference of makeup, also of these different Regional
15 Advisory Councils is that EIRAC is heavily set in folks
16 who have been ingrained in this North Pacific Council
17 process. So, Eva Burk's on there. She's on the AP of the
18 North Pacific. Charlie Wright is on the EIRAC, and he's
19 ingrained in North Pacific. I'm also on EIRAC, Andy
20 Bassich is pretty in the know about it. So, we have a
21 little bit of like historical knowledge on it, because
22 there's a lot of folks who are also going to those
23 meetings. So, I feel like maybe we had -- a couple of
24 our members maybe had a little bit more background
25 information going into that meeting with North Pacific,
26 just -- simply because of our outside activism and
27 fisheries business that we do. So that letter that was
28 originally wrote [sic] -- was wrote [sic], I believe,
29 before my time even on EIRAC. And so, we did have
30 recommendations. And then, like Nissa mentioned, there's
31 going to be some edits to that letter to be sent to
32 North Pacific. We did -- we are looking at alternatives.
33 We looked at alternative five, and I do -- I believe
34 that EIRAC did support a hard cap. But that was -- Don
35 that was all based on us really looking through that
36 EIS. The Environmental Impact Statement, that thick
37 document and then attending trainings from Tanana Chiefs
38 Conference. It takes a lot to understand those
39 alternatives. And it was -- it's kind of a lot for you
40 guys to be expected to, you know, be able to get a letter
41 in right now. But you have to because of the way that
42 our -- that the cycle works, right. You're not going to
43 meet again before August. And so, I would just encourage
44 you, Don, in these times where you're not 100% sure
45 about it, you know, lean on those folks that you know
46 who have good historical knowledge of not only the
47 fisheries, but North Pacific itself, lean on your
48 tribes. They've got a tribal seat, Eva Dawn Burk at the
49 AP. So, she's got the pulse on what's going on and then,
50 you know, after this Council meeting, you continue to

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1 educate yourself and read up on it, because you can give
2 public testimony in December as well, as an individual
3 or for your tribe. I hope I answered your question, Don.

4

5 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Go ahead, Don.

6

7 MR. HONEA: Thank you, Mr. Chair.
8 Exactly. And I appreciate that, and I really appreciate
9 you being here at the -- at this thing here because
10 Western and Eastern, the border is kind of Ruby Tanana.
11 And so, we had light proposals that we helped each other
12 with and you know, and that's -- it's not the first time
13 there's some proposals that are forthcoming. Thank you.

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15 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Did you have a
16 comment there, Tommy?

17

18 MR. KRISKA: A long one, thank you.
19 Anyway, I appreciate you too there Olivia for, you know,
20 just talking about the things that we need to hear. A
21 lot of us are here, a lot of us understand numbers, and
22 a lot of us really don't understand the numbers. But all
23 the situation is the same on either side. So that -- we
24 have to go back to answer to people that don't understand
25 all these numbers here. They don't -- they never seen
26 this. They don't see none of -- any of this, but they
27 want their fish. So, there's two sides of the story. You
28 go back -- we have to go back to our people there and
29 explain what happened. And if you start teaching them,
30 telling them about these numbers, they're not going to
31 understand it. So, when we give it from heart and to
32 talk about some of these things to make -- I'm thinking
33 that there's still Northern Pacific people in this room,
34 I'm not sure. But there's ways to do things and that's
35 why we're all here. We're all here in different ideas,
36 different situations. We're caught in the situation
37 where we don't have anything. And like I said, I've been
38 going through and looking at these books and numbers for
39 the last 35 years, still don't understand it, still don't
40 have anything. The only thing (indiscernible) going down
41 the drain, that's about all. So, I really appreciate you
42 guys and I went to a lot of meetings with you guys, and
43 I'll always be there, but I just want to thank you for
44 stepping up and it's hard to do some things like that
45 but, you know, when you mean something to the people and
46 everything like that, you'll do it through heart and
47 your education. So, thank you.

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49 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, thank you.
50 Tommy. Tim, did you have a comment?

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MR. GERVAIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is Tim Gervais. Olivia, if you remember, can you relay to this Council what Rachel Baker, who is the ADF&G representative for Commissioner Vincent Lang, what was her response to the Eastern Interior member's question on defining sustainability?

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MS. IRWIN: Through the Chair. Great question, Tim. Unfortunately, Rachel Baker was not there last week. So, I do recall, you know, Bill Tweit discussed you know, basically describing maximum sustained yield. You know, describing taking -- the Council really likes to quote themselves as their scientists and staff tell them they can take 2 to 3 million metric tons out of the Bering Sea a year. That's what's technically sustainable. But they only take between like, 1.8 and 2.1 million metric tons. So, to them that's sustainability, right, is not going to the max that their staff says that they can in order to be sustainable. But you know, we have a lot of questions for that. How long are you looking at sustaining the Bering Sea at that rate? Just because somebody says we can take this much; do we need that much? I mean, the pollock industry is being subsidized by \$50 billion right now by USDA, so -- 50 million. I'm sorry. So, we're taking more out of the ocean than we can even sell. And for -- why? Just because a statistician tells you that the ocean is going to survive another ten years at that rate. So those are the -- anyway. Sorry, Tim. That's -- Rachel Baker wasn't there, but that was one of the Council members answers that I recall very clearly.

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CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Thank you for that response, Olivia.

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MR. GERVAIS: I appreciate that. I'd just like to mark, for the record, when Bill Tweit is talking about sustainability and those volumes, he's talking only about the pollock stock. He's not referencing or recognizing the detrimental effect that level of industrial trawling is having on chinook salmon and chum salmon species. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: As well as other bycatch of halibut, crab and other things, and where the gear is on in relation to the bathymetric or the bottom of the ocean. There's a lot of -- there's -- we try to impress on the Council the also -- the aspect of marine

1 cycles. And so, there's marine cycles and looking to
2 NOAA data on the marine cycles, and this hatchery issue,
3 we try to get them to think about the hatchery
4 implications of reducing our overall wild stocks as
5 having a big effect, even on the Pollock Fishery. Their
6 bycatch issue is highlighted because of this, the
7 reduction in of overall wild salmon on the high seas
8 that returned to us. So, I appreciate your speaking to
9 us this morning and we'll be talking to you. One other
10 further question. Can we get your edits for your letter
11 from EIRAC? You can have Brooke can send those over to
12 us. We want to see those, too. This is -- I have your
13 letter. Old letter. I want to see the new edits. Thank
14 you. Brooks Woods on the line. I guess she's on here.
15 You want to speak, Brooks? Star five.

16

17 (Distortion)

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19 MS. WOODS: Hi. Can you hear me okay?

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21 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: I can hear you
22 great. Go ahead.

23

24 MS. WOODS: Great. Thank you so much. Hi.
25 My name is Brooke Woods. I'm from Rampart, Alaska, on
26 the Yukon River. My parents raised me and my siblings
27 year-round at our fish camp, which was just above the
28 village until they built their log cabin which we
29 returned to each year. That time, back home is very
30 important to me and my children, especially as a mother
31 teaching my children their ways of life the same way
32 that my grandparents taught my parents. I am a fishery
33 science student at UAF. Narrowing my -- the completion
34 of my bachelor's degree and I serve on more than ten
35 Boards and committees to ensure that our people are able
36 to hunt, fish and gather and to uplift and honor tribal
37 governance and our inherent rights.

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39 I share the same sentiments as Olivia.
40 I do appreciate that you made space for your body to
41 address the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council,
42 and I do understand the exhaustion. Many tribal citizens
43 along the Yukon are back-to-back to back-to-back on
44 meeting. Every single meeting we must be a part of and
45 we must put public comments on record, and it's very
46 exhausting. Even I feel that we have exhausted all
47 avenues when it comes to reduction of bycatch for both
48 chinook and chum salmon. And really, many of us were
49 able to participate in the EIRAC special engagement. And
50 if WIRAC wasn't going to follow the same model, it should

1 have been explicitly explained prior to that
2 announcement. And really, my words are not for you.
3 They're for the Council, and I don't even know if any
4 Council members are present online or in person. I will
5 say my comments are triggering and emotional and
6 especially for you, Olivia and -- excuse me. I'm a nerd,
7 and I don't listen to local radio music because they
8 play the same ten songs every single day. So, I listened
9 to voice of Denali or NPR. And as I was driving my kids
10 to school I was listening to Voice of Denali and an
11 elder from Nenana, she shared like a wellness hour. Its
12 not an hour, but it's a few minutes and her name is
13 Audrey Sunnyboy. She's from Nenana. She is a traditional
14 healer, and it was just an incredible moment that, you
15 know, I was able to listen to her. She was talking about
16 the health benefits of omega three oil and I'm always
17 looking at different ways to advocate for our people.
18 And I just feel like nothing comes across to our
19 management body at North Pacific Fishery Management
20 Council. But the one thing that she did share was that
21 -- which I did not know, but our military invested \$10
22 million on a three-year study to incorporate omega three
23 fatty acids in fish oil to relieve anxiety and to reduce
24 suicidal thoughts that plagued combat veterans and many
25 of our men and women in serving in the military.

26
27 Scientists from the National Institute
28 of Health have long maintained that diets heavy in omega
29 three, common in salmon, can elevate happiness. Omega
30 three are among the primary fatty acids in the brain.
31 They cannot be synthesized by the body, which means they
32 have to be eaten. So, I just wanted to share that this
33 study is happening, that our government spent \$10
34 million to see if this would improve the wellness of our
35 military that serve our country every single day. And
36 people like Olivia have been sharing their story of, you
37 know, loss of our culture and the impacts to our
38 wellbeing and our health, our mental health, and even
39 for myself as a woman, you know, I would love to take
40 my own moose and like, provide for my family. But I
41 don't take that role away from the men in our life
42 because they do need that role to feel their importance
43 in our community and our family. And I was reviewing
44 Fish and Game's technical publication 481 and the
45 project background. I'll just share really quickly. The
46 social relationships are fundamental part of subsistence
47 economies in the Yukon region and throughout rural
48 Alaska. Family and friends often combine their labor
49 resources to harvest and process subsistence foods, and
50 then further share their harvest with others. When

1 people work together to harvest and process salmon, they
2 form and strengthen social relationships that connect
3 people within and between families. Similarly, when
4 people are shared -- share salmon, these exchanges
5 provide material, emotional support that extends
6 throughout the community and beyond. Similar
7 relationships tied to harvesting, processing, and
8 sharing exist for other subsistence resources. These
9 relationships are intertwined with many other aspects
10 of life, linking subsistence to personal experiences and
11 cultural practices, values, and knowledge that shape a
12 person's sense of identity and community.

13
14 And I'll just end by saying that Audrey
15 Sunnyboy referenced Reverend and Chief Gilbert Tremble,
16 and he said there was no suicide of our people long ago
17 because we were connected to land, water, and we had
18 stewardship practices that allowed for us to sustainably
19 harvest our land animals, our marine mammals and our
20 fish and these are the words that I wanted to share with
21 the North Pacific Council yesterday. And I was not able
22 to, just because of the structure of the special
23 engagement. And I just want to thank you for the time
24 to testify. I also would like to share my written
25 comments to the North Pacific Fisheries Management
26 Council on the alternatives that I support, which is a
27 hard cap and a migratory corridor for our chum salmon.
28 And it also looks at the startling amount of bycatch
29 that correlates with our chum run, as well as the
30 significant loss of subsistence harvest for our people
31 on the Yukon. Again, thank you, Chair and members of
32 WIRAC for letting me testify today.

33
34 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Thank you for your
35 comments, Brooke. And so, you're in favor of a hard cap
36 and with the option and then the alternative to a hard
37 cap range of 100,000 to 550,000. Is that -- you're in
38 favor of, that's basically what EIRAC was discussing.
39 You're stating.....

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41 (Simultaneous speech)

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43 MS. WOODS: we are.....

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45 (Distortion)

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47 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: I'm -- Brooke.

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49 MS. WOODS:negotiating. I'm so
50 sorry. Through the Chair.

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CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Brooke. My question for you is there are two options for corridors. There's option 1 and option 1.1. Option 1 is the viable option. Option 1.1 is not. Which one are you in favor of?

MS. WOODS: I don't have the alternatives or my computer in front of me at this time. I would like to start at the lowest number possible, because we are negotiating with our ways of life, and that negotiation is a very difficult one. So, we need to ask for the lowest cap and start the negotiation there because we're not going to get what we want. I don't think the Council understands the value of chum to our people, especially when there are no kings to harvest. Thank you for the question.

CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, thank you. I - on the overview for alternative five, it says the cap ranges between 5 -- 50,000 to 5 -- 350,000. The option two or alternative two is 100,000 to 550,000. EIRAC was wanting the aspects of the hard cap and two. That's why I want to clarify this issue with what EIRAC is actually going to state in their letter, because that's actually two different things. As far as your comment about the forum, there was no agenda and there was no forum because I did not attend the EIRAC meeting. I was at wolf trapping. And so, when I came to this meeting, I had no idea how we were going to do this. I did want this Council -- our Council, to spend as much time with the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council so that we could actually get points across and there was -- everybody at this table spoke. I didn't, but I tried to keep everybody on track. I didn't want to do public comments because I wanted to have that yesterday at the public comments and then again today. So, we'll take -- we're taking the comments. We're going to write the letter -- the North Pacific Councils has heard a lot of these comments before. I didn't want to exhaust the Council members so that we would have the most effect on that North Pacific fisheries management decision, and to get the most where there's -- as our meeting went on. And on regarding these omega threes, I stated that to the Council that a lot of Alaska Native elders and people have told me that salmon is my comfort food. How many times have you heard that? That's told -- I've heard that so many times. It's amazing and that's because the salmon fat has a omega three oils that has vitamin D, which increases serotonin. So, we did say some of the

1 things that you stated to us. So, we -- I do want the
2 other Council members to ask you questions. If you have
3 any questions. You got questions, Robert? Don? Tim?
4 Tim's on the phone.

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MR. GERVAIS: No.

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8 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: No. Okay. We're
9 good. So, I had -- you posed a lot of different aspects,
10 and I -- that's -- that was a response. There was no
11 format given to these Councils. How EIRAC operated that
12 meeting was -- that was the way they did it. I had no
13 idea how they did it. So do we have any other -- thanks
14 so much, Brooke. Do we have any other -- anybody signed
15 up? Anybody in the room now to speak? You can drop a
16 blue card. Seeing none. Okay, we're good. We're at 10
17 to 10. So, let's see. We're moving on in our agenda
18 here. So, we had our public comments. And so where are
19 we at here, C, 12C.

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We should discuss this drafting a letter thing. Because I would like to look at and incorporate what EIRAC actually was doing. You know, did they set -- did they stay with option five's hard caps, which it says it here. Options one or alternative five. It's -- the cap range is 50,000 to 350,000. I think that's a lot better than option two, which Olivia was referring to. And I don't agree with having -- I want to start with the lowest number I can. And I do feel that option as far as the closure areas, it should be option 1 period, not option 1.1. So, is that clear to the Council the most we're going to get out of this North Pacific Fisheries Management Council is to go for option -- alternative five option one which is the orange area. It has no openings. If you look at option 1.1, it actually has gray areas which are right on the coast right at the south end of the Alaska Peninsula. And that has a lot -- would allow bycatch, right where the vector fish are coming north of the Alaska Peninsula. So, I would like this Council to discuss these options before we start talking about writing these letters. That's the takeaway of our meeting last night. We looked at these options. We discussed these various issues, and we discussed the various data lacks that the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council had. Go ahead, Don. I want Council discussion.

MR. HONEA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess that's why last night I said this is time sensitive. So, if we are -- what you are asking right now is for us to

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1 consider these five alternatives because I was under the
2 impression talking to somebody that this would probably
3 be brought up at our fall meeting, but -- so, you want
4 us to consider one of them, is that correct, one of them
5 at this time?

6
7 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Well, the -- there
8 -- the comment opening opens on August 15th and their
9 staff is in the back there. Is it a 60-day opening or -
10 - 60-day opening and -- but it would be closed. The
11 option would close. But no, we would still be open. When
12 is our meeting? The problem is I don't know. I do not
13 know. And I have grave concerns that these Councils may
14 not meet in person in the fall meeting. That's what I'm
15 concerned about. I want to write a letter at this meeting
16 to have that on the record, because we can pass motions
17 now to write -- have the letter written at this meeting
18 because we're going to -- we have to meet that window.
19 As I said last night to the Council -- the North Pacific
20 Council members, if we don't -- if -- I would rather
21 have the letter and sooner than later because you get
22 right before, right where they're in deliberations, it's
23 gone too far. They're already have made decisions in the
24 back room long before that. We have to get that letter
25 in on August 15th. That's why I want to do that right
26 now. This is the only way we're going to get this bycatch
27 under control. Don.

28
29 MR. HONEA: Okay. Mr. Chair, if I may.
30 Thank you. I guess that's why I posed a question to
31 Olivia. And I didn't know what their response was as to
32 did they take -- what was your decision or something?
33 And other than that, that's fine with me. I mean, if
34 it's time consuming and we have to do it, then we will
35 do it. Thank you.

36
37 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Well, that's it,
38 it's such an important issue. Before this Council, we
39 spent that time last night with the North Pacific
40 Fisheries Management Council. We've -- we basically have
41 to pick the options that's going to be the best for our
42 region, to get the fish back to our region. And so, my
43 understanding is the best option is alternative five.
44 And the best option is option 1, which is the complete
45 closure in time and area. No openings at all inside of
46 that. Basically, the fish are moving through that area.
47 99% of the fish are caught in the B season, and the B
48 season opens on June 10th and ends on November 1st, and
49 85% of the bycatch occurs in this closure area, this
50 orange area. So, this is what we have. This is what we

1 have to ask for. We don't want to ask for anything else.
2 So, we have to be on the record as asking for alternative
3 five and option one. And so that's the basis. Then we
4 can add in a bunch of other stuff about the lack of data
5 where the salmon go, and a bunch of other things like
6 that, but that's the direction that I would like to see
7 the Council go, it says, because it's the best thing for
8 our for our salmon and our people. It's hard to explain
9 it to people back home because they weren't here with
10 us. They didn't have the discussions we had, and they
11 haven't had the public input like we've had here. So, I
12 want this Council to talk about this on the record. So,
13 I'm going to go around the room and I'm going to start
14 with Tommy. What do you think about this, sending this
15 letter? We have to get this letter in. And I'm concerned
16 about the fall meeting. So, we have to get this ladder
17 in at this meeting here.

18
19 MR. KRISKA: Well, Mr. Chair, I
20 understand that we have to do something and I -- of the
21 things that I always like to do is if something is going
22 to be done, we need to do something on it now in order
23 for it to, you know, to actually do something. I guess
24 so, I'm in favor of doing what you just said. I'm in
25 favor of that and I don't want to take up so much of
26 your guy's time so, I'm just going to hand it around the
27 table, and that is okay with me to do it today.

28
29 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: It's -- after
30 listening to that discussion and what the effects are,
31 this is the only viable thing that's actually going to
32 allow reduce the bycatch as much as we can for that time
33 frame. So, Pollock, are you in favor of this option
34 here? Option -- alternative five. Option one, the
35 orange. It'd be on this paper here. It's this orange
36 area. It shows the closure area.

37
38 MR. SIMON: Okay. Mr. Chair, I support
39 that. Okay. (In native)

40
41 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay. And, Jenny,
42 you're on the Yukon fishing. What do you think?

43
44 MS. PELKOLA: First of all, I'd like to
45 thank you, Olivia, for your presentation and your advice
46 and your comments. Thank you. I also think that that's
47 a good option. And like we all -- we're all -- I think
48 we're all on the same -- in the same boat. And to get
49 that sooner than later. Oh, okay. Sooner than later.

50

1 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Sooner than later.
2 (Distortion) or gaining -- where is Don? Oh, he just
3 went out. Okay, Tim, you're on the phone. What -- you're
4 still there, Tim?

5
6 MR. GERVAIS: Yes, Mr. Chair. This is Tim
7 Gervais. So, yes, I'd like to go to -- the WIRAC to
8 draft a letter now and get it in. And if we have
9 additional comment time in our October meeting, it's
10 still in the 60-day period. We can do that. Yeah, I'm -
11 - I support alternative five, but I was -- I didn't
12 enjoy the North Pacific Council's presentation last
13 night. I thought it was, two things. I thought it was
14 confusing and secondly, I thought it was a lot of hubris
15 that they're -- feel like their industry is so important
16 that they can just say, we need to pick, or we need to
17 comment on one of these five options without being open
18 to additional options that weren't generated within the
19 North Pacific Council themselves. So, I have a question
20 for you. And for anybody in the in the WIRAC is can we
21 in our letter, can we put more than one option, like can
22 you have two alternatives that are that both meet -- I
23 mean, I'd like to incentivize the fleet to reduce bycatch
24 at all and I don't want to be limited just by the
25 restrictions of one particular option. So, yes, I'm on
26 board. I'm on board with number five. And I'm just
27 looking at this EIRAC letter right now. It's a little
28 hard for me to -- there's so much correspondence with
29 this thing from -- it's hard for me to look at all the
30 options off my computer.

31
32 So, there's aspects of alternative four
33 that are useful, and my personal option is that they
34 need to -- the B season doesn't need to be fishing from
35 June through October. They're welcome to fish in
36 November and December. But if they have the highest
37 incidence of chum interception in June, July and August,
38 and then they have the highest incidence of chinook
39 interception in September and October, then that to me,
40 that says that they shouldn't be fishing out there during
41 that time. They're already allowed to basically fish
42 January through May and then if they're fishing in
43 November and December, that's seven months. That's like
44 -- that's already like too much time to have boats of
45 that horsepower with that size net fishing in the ocean.
46 The ocean has proven -- the ocean ecosystem has proven
47 it cannot handle this level of industrial trawling.
48 We've already seen as a planet -- we've already seen the
49 North Atlantic cod fishery destroyed by industrial
50 trawling. We've already seen the wild Atlantic salmon

1 stock in the North Atlantic destroyed by industrial
2 trawling. We've already seen our western Alaska chinook
3 salmon stocks destroyed by industrial trawling. And we
4 need to take more drastic action and get this level of
5 trawling reduced. I would like to see it eliminated
6 overall. But in the spirit of compromise, I would say
7 allow -- our letter should say that they can fish their
8 A season and they can fish November and December, and
9 that they shouldn't be out there fishing June through
10 October for the sake of salmon conservation. Thank you,
11 Mr. Chair.

12
13 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, thanks for
14 those comments, Tim. I would prefer that to be a complete
15 closure of the B season in the savings area. You know,
16 alternative five savings area and you made a lot of
17 valid points. You know, the bycatch of chinook, the
18 bycatch of chum salmon. They can fish it for seven
19 additional months in the A season. But, you know, the
20 rebuttal was Council member Ann, I forgot her last name
21 was she was like, well, the fish dispersed, you know,
22 they get harder to catch. It's like, well, I thought I
23 was skeptical of that response because it's all prime
24 habitat and the flow of the Pacific through those passes
25 and the nutrient load that's actually moving through
26 there. It's actually the reason that there's quite a bit
27 of harvest there for pollock is that because of the
28 nutrient flow, that's what those fish are actually
29 eating. This is the nutrient flow of the phytoplankton,
30 zooplankton. So, I would -- but I don't -- I would like
31 to endorse option five. I think that incentive, we can
32 make a addendums to that. But they're going to want an
33 alternative five. They're going to want one alternative.
34 And then we have to stay hard and fast on the option
35 one. And then we can add addendums to that letter that
36 we should, you know, that they should look to incentivize
37 avoiding bycatch of fish, that, you know, they need to
38 have an enumeration of what state of maturity the bycatch
39 is and if they do allow-- if fishing is north of there,
40 if they are they catching adult chum salmon, the bycatch.

41
42 We need to know how many adult salmon
43 are passing through there in the June through September
44 time frame. That's what we need to know. You know,
45 immature salmon, you know, out of Asia, that's not going
46 to help us out. We're looking to get the AYK stocks
47 back, so we can add to this letter. But we have to --
48 we're going to have to pick an alternative. And we're
49 going to have to -- I don't feel that the hard cap of
50 50,000 to 350,000 chum salmon is a not -- that's a doable

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1 hard cap. And what do you think about that hard cap? Now
2 that range, cap range.

3

4 MR. GERVAIS: Which -- what proposal
5 number is that?

6

7 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: That's alternative
8 five. It's in cap range. In alternative five it's 50,000
9 to 350,000, all across the board. That's option one.
10 Option 1.1 and option two. I'm skeptical.

11

12 MR. GERVAIS: I would rather have the cap
13 be 100,000 than what 300 is the -- is what they're
14 publishing?

15

16 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: 50,000 to 350,000.

17

18 MR. KRISKA: Mr. Chair.

19

20 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Go ahead.

21

22 MR. KRISKA: This is Tom.

23

24 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Tommy is going to
25 speak. Go ahead, Tom.

26

27 MR. KRISKA: I like to see, you know,
28 100,000 would be nice, but then to set the cap at
29 200,000, I mean, you know to at least kind of below the
30 -- right in the middle, but I think we need to say
31 something. That's what I would agree with.

32

33 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Yeah, well, we
34 could suggest, you know, we -- alternative five option
35 one with the with the hard cap discussion, and you would
36 like to just go to a cap limit, 200,000 limit.

37

38 MR. KRISKA: Yes. 100,000 would be nice.
39 But at 200 in the in the letter. Thank you.

40

41 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: What do you think
42 about a 200,000 cap. Tim, in that discussion?

43

44 MR. GERVAIS: I think the letter should
45 say 100,000 because they're going to negotiate it up or
46 they're going to average it up with other people. So, I
47 mean, we have to look at it from the point of view that
48 our comments are going in and they're going to look at
49 it and analyze it. If we start off at 200,000, then
50 they'll bump it to 300,000. If we start -- if we -- if

1 our letter says 100,000, then they'll bump it to 200,000.
2 And then that's a better final version than the 300,000
3 version. So, it's -- I mean it's negotiating issue and
4 I feel we should we should stick to -- we should present
5 ourselves justifiably with a low hard cap. And they're
6 going to adjust it from there. But I respect other
7 people's opinion on the Council and what they want to -
8 - what they feel is the best way to do it. I am probably
9 one of the -- even though I've been in this Council for
10 15 years, I'm probably one of the least experienced
11 meeting attenders.

12
13 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, Tommy is going
14 to speak again. Go ahead, Tommy.

15
16 MR. KRISKA: I would agree with Tim on
17 his numbers and just what he said.

18
19 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, Tommy's
20 actually in agreement with you. And so, the 100,000 --
21 I'm reluctant to this range. The 50 -- I'm reluctant of
22 ranges because it has to do with, you know, the viability
23 of the stocks. And so, I feel that 100,000 is a good
24 hard cap. It's a solid hard cap. The in-season projection
25 for that particular run strength is -- there's a
26 projection. And so that, you know, there's -- we're
27 looking at forecasts for bleak runs for several years
28 in advance of us right now. So, you know, they have to
29 get serious about this. They can't -- 350,000, that's
30 that could be the entire fall chum run. That could be
31 like major amounts of our stocks being decimated. Go
32 ahead, Don.

33
34 MR. HONEA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. For the
35 sake of time, my position is to -- alternative five with
36 the least amount of bycatch that we could do. Thank you.

37
38 MR. GERVAIS: Mr. Chair. I had a comment
39 on abundance, please.

40
41 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Oh. Go ahead.

42
43 MR. GERVAIS: Yeah. So, we can support
44 this five with -- in our opinion a, you know, one of the
45 lower range bycatch numbers, 100,000 or whatever the
46 number comes out. But they need -- it also needs to be
47 tied -- they need incentive to reduce bycatch at all
48 times. And I don't see in any of these alternatives
49 where they're looking at, at run strength in the rivers
50 forecast sonar counts at Eagle or Pilot Station, like.

1 Yeah, what -- it's like they're saying, oh, we don't --
2 we're hardly bycatching any chinook right now. It's
3 like, yeah, you're not -- overall historically you're
4 bycatch for chinook is low. But that's because there's
5 hardly any chinook left to catch your bycatch. So, they
6 -- I would -- in an addendum to selecting one of those
7 alternatives we need to stress that the numbers should
8 be tied to in-river abundance and escapement success in
9 you know, recent history.

10

11 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Right. I mean, it's
12 the whole management should be revolving around the
13 projected forecast. And those forecasts are using a
14 whole bunch of data from Washington State University
15 and, and so forth. So those forecasts come out relatively
16 close and when we're looking at forecasts that are
17 showing run strengths that are not going to meet
18 escapement needs, let alone subsistence needs or human
19 use, that should be a -- implementing severe
20 restrictions on the A season. And in -- for these -- in
21 this savings area. That's the forecasts are integral
22 part of how severe, how cautious this North Pacific
23 Fisheries Management is going to be for utilizing these
24 savings areas. If the biomass is going to come back
25 really high, then you know they're going to be
26 overwhelmed with bycatch because there's so much fish.
27 So, abundance is a huge part. And so, I -- that's -- in
28 the addendums the abundance should be looked at closely.
29 And the maturation or the adult fish have to be accounted
30 for in the cap. They have to understand what the impacts
31 to the spawning escapements are. So, any other addendum
32 items that we would -- the other data lack is they have
33 no idea where these fish go in the North Pacific and
34 they're coming back through the north, the Alaska
35 Peninsula, south Alaska Peninsula, Shumagin Islands.
36 That's there -- they're not far west. They're right keyed
37 right into the -- and into the -- and so they come
38 through basically referred to as False Pass in the South
39 Alaska Peninsula. And then some stocks are moving
40 towards the Nushagak. That's why it goes along the North
41 Pacific -- North Peninsula. So, these stocks start to
42 turn towards the west. They're starting to go towards
43 Yukon and Kuskokwim Bay and the Nushagak. That's where
44 the majority of those fish are going to want to go to.
45 So, I think that we have to talk about -- they need
46 genetic work about using Area M's passage genetic work,
47 what they're catching, the genetic work that they're
48 catching. And they also need to request genetic work to
49 be done for chum salmon and chinook salmon in the North
50 Pacific, and Gulf of Alaska. That's -- those are - these,

1 a lot of these fish are going out into the Pacific Ocean.
2 That's when they're -- that's where they're encountering
3 all that hatchery pink salmon competition on the high
4 seas. Because the north -- the Pacific current goes north
5 and the hatchery fish move up into the north Gulf of
6 Alaska, below the Alaska Peninsula and the Aleutians.
7 So, we need to add -- they want -- you know, I want to
8 see that they tell them that they have data lacks, and
9 they need to start requesting this data. They can't be
10 shooting in the dark. Get by guess and by golly, has
11 gotta stop. So, what other data lacks have that we need
12 to include in this letter to -- so they have -- this
13 gives us more reinforcement for this -- for these
14 alternative five and option one. Any other data lacks
15 that you know of?

16
17 MR. GERVAIS: Well, they need.....

18
19 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: (Distortion)
20 Council.

21
22 MR. GERVAIS: Jack. This is Tim. I --
23 talk about the data lacks. So, I was addressing the
24 issue of you -- we remember -- you probably remember
25 about two years ago, Dr. Stram with NFMS was saying that
26 they're taking, like somewhere between 1 and 2 months
27 to get the genetic data. That's ridiculous. And that was
28 two years ago. I mean, they're Bristol Bay SRI, they're
29 -- they've got genetic testing set up on the table.
30 They're catcher boats. Their catcher boats are only like
31 60 to 70ft long, like their small, way smaller vessels
32 than pretty much basically all the catcher boats in the
33 pollock industry. So, for NFMS to sit here and tell us
34 that it takes whatever it was 4 to 8 weeks to get genetic
35 information back, that's why, way below the bar on best
36 available science and I don't know. I don't know why --
37 if they're really that bad at their job or they're trying
38 to like, there's definitely an issue with the pollock
39 industry and with the fisheries -- Department of Alaska,
40 Department of Fish and Game that they don't want all the
41 chum genetic information out there. They don't want to
42 talk about it. They don't want it to be public knowledge.
43 They don't want it to be public discussion and if they're
44 going to what I call redline, the fish harvest in the
45 Bering Sea with trying to meet maximum sustainable
46 yield, we need to draw on all the data points, needs to
47 be put into whatever they can do now with the AI and the
48 machine learning, and they should be able to draw up or
49 compute through with their historical algorithm that
50 they develop and get a way improved model of what the

1 salmon are migrating and living in the Bering Sea. And
2 they could use that to reduce bycatch, which has to
3 happen. The by-catch situation has to be changed. We
4 can't have -- if we have status quo with bycatch, the
5 chum are going to be extinct, just like our chinook
6 fishery is not viable right now.

7
8 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: That's an
9 important aspect of our comments, on the biological
10 needs. This -- it's unconscionable that they're delayed
11 that long. That's halfway through the season. You know,
12 the summer season is over. You know, they're just
13 starting to get information about their -- they need to
14 have real time. And they should demand -- that should
15 be part of alternative five is that the hard caps are
16 tied to real time genetic analysis within 24 hours of
17 capture so that they know what stocks are being impacted.
18 This is the most important part of this bycatch issue
19 is, where these stocks are actually going. And so, you're
20 right we need to put that as a -- that's a data lack.
21 They have no idea what -- you know. They -- there's no
22 way they can manage this hard caps. If they'd have no
23 idea what the genetic makeup is, they're going to look
24 at it as it's all, you know, could be -- it could be
25 Asian stocks. They have no idea. But if they got hard
26 data that shows that they're catching predominantly AYK
27 stocks inside of it -- near or inside of that savings
28 area, that will have a lot more weight. So that should
29 be included in the letter that the North Pacific
30 Fisheries Management Council should demand that there's
31 real time genetic data, and they should also interact
32 with the Department of Fish and Game so that that the
33 South Alaska Peninsula, Shumigan Islands, Area M also
34 gets genetic data off of chum salmon so that we know
35 what stocks are actually being impacted by -- that gives
36 you a forecast of what's going to move into the Bering
37 Sea. The South Alaskan fishery is actually a forecast
38 of what's going to move into that -- the savings area.

39
40 So that's an important aspect of this
41 letter. And so, any other comments on that issue from
42 the Council members about the genetic -- real time
43 genetics? That's important. Do you think so Council
44 members?

45
46 And so, we've pointed out some of the
47 data lacks that they have, you know, where these fish
48 actually go in the North Pacific and their impacts from
49 hatchery fish and other -- there are a whole bunch of
50 data lacks that they don't have, and they need to start

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1 thinking about it. They're the North Pacific Fisheries
2 Management Council, they need to start thinking about
3 these broader issues and the impact to the trawl fishery
4 is directly related to the salmon issue. And so those
5 would be the other addendum items that I can think of
6 that should be included in this letter. Can you -- is
7 any Council member think of other added additives to
8 this letter?

9

(Simultaneous speech)

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CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay, go ahead
there Tim.

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MR. GERVAIS: They need to have the run
forecast for the rivers. The preseason forecast and be
looking at the sonar counts in-season. Like if Pilot
Station says, man, we didn't get any summer chum or
we're not -- this fall chum runs not showing up. That
needs to affect the management of the pollock B season.

22

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CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Yeah, that's an
important issue, is the preseason forecast and end
season performance of the of the chum run. So that's an
addition to this. And other additives to -- about their
data -- lack of data?

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MS. PELKOLA: Jack.

CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Go ahead, Jenny.

MS. PELKOLA: Mr. Chair, I don't know if
this will fit in anywhere, but I haven't heard anything
about monitoring and I don't know, you know, if that's
just something to bring up, but just to throw it out
there.

CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Say that again. I
didn't quite follow.

MS. PELKOLA: Monitoring you know, are
they -- the boats being monitored or the fleets or
wherever they fish with.

CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Right. Yeah. They
have observers on board and then they have -- oh so the
question -- state the question again for the record.

MS. PELKOLA: Okay. Monitoring, you know,
do they have any way of monitoring their catch or

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1 something like that. I don't know, I just threw that out
2 there.

3
4 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: They have
5 observers on Board and then they -- and if they have
6 bycatch, they're supposed to separate that out of the
7 catch to be enumerated. That's where they're coming up
8 with these statistical numbers. So -- but the genetic,
9 you know, when these fish are delivered or the -- caught,
10 they need to do the genetic work immediately, and they
11 have to get this immediate genetic work. And that's what
12 we're talking about. And so, we -- there are observers
13 and there's, you know, this is all done -- it's supposed
14 to be all documented and so forth.

15
16 (Simultaneous speech)

17
18 MR. GERVAIS: Mr. Chair I have a comment
19 on the observer situation is, they need to -- there's a
20 data gap there. There's a credibility gap there. Just
21 six days ago, Alaska Public Radio published a story about
22 observers and this is all fisheries, it's not just BSAI
23 trawl. This is longliners and everybody else. But just
24 look at some of these numbers. It says among the fishery
25 report of harassment made by observers from 2016 to 2022,
26 18% reported sexual assault, 57% reported assault, 37%
27 reported intimidation, coercion and hostile work
28 environment. So that represents there -- is that that's
29 unsafe, unreliable source of information. I mean, I'm
30 going to say this again. 37% of observers in this NOAA
31 study reported intimidation, coercion and hostile work
32 environment. So, if over one third of all the people
33 that are responsible for documenting bycatch are
34 intimidated or feel they have a hostile work
35 environment, then that shows that there's not [sic]
36 accurate data on the bycatch and that -- this is a NOAA
37 report. This is not just some kind of fringe journalism
38 thing. So that's a lack of data. Is that -- yeah. They
39 got 100% observer cover. But the observers are harassed,
40 coerced, intimidated. They don't have to work if it's
41 blown over 30 knots. There's not -- 100% observer
42 coverage in North Pacific Council's definition of
43 observer coverage doesn't mean that they're observing
44 100% of what's brought on to the trawl boats so that,
45 that should be stated to and they should -- I don't know
46 what it's going to take. It's not my area of expertise,
47 but electronic coverage or something too. They at least
48 need to put in a whatever you call it, an allowance for
49 their bycatch numbers not being correct.

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1 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: There and other
2 management moose and so forth. There's fudge factors
3 that are calculated for undocumented take. So, we have
4 -- and North Pacific Fisheries Management staff here.
5 There - these -- were -- our question before us is, is
6 there a calculation of the reduction in observer time
7 on deck due to weather or intimidation? So, if you could
8 come up to the mic there, Kate, I would appreciate that.
9

10 MS. HAAPALA: Thanks. This is Kate
11 Haapala with Council staff, North Pacific Fishery
12 Management Council staff. Just for the record. So, is
13 there a reduction in time for when observers aren't
14 available? I don't believe so. So that program is
15 monitored and run by the Fishery Monitoring Division
16 with Alaska Fisheries Science Center. But to speak to
17 Tim's comments and questions a little bit there. And I
18 think Jenny as well, the way that observer coverage and
19 monitoring works, at least within the Pollock Fishery
20 and the Bering Sea, is that there's 1 or 2 observers
21 that are deployed on every trip for catcher processors
22 and motherships, and there's also cameras that are
23 placed in the factory. So, when a cod end is dumped and
24 it's moving its way into the factory on the vessel,
25 there are cameras stationed to ensure that crew are not
26 touching the fish, and then salmon are sorted. So,
27 there's the census count and then for catcher vessels
28 in 2025, 100% of those vessels are carrying electronic
29 monitoring equipment for compliance. And then there's 1
30 or 2 observers who are at the shoreside processing
31 facilities. And that's where the census count occurs for
32 catcher vessel deliveries and where sampling occurs as
33 well. But there's not an adjustment factor in terms of
34 how many trips are not monitored because of weather,
35 because they are. It's not observers who are on the deck
36 and being displaced. It's a different system than that.
37 So, I hope that answers your question.
38

39 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, the electronic
40 monitoring and actually enumeration in the processing
41 plant is one of the main areas where observers and the
42 electronic and the sorting is where they mainly get the
43 bycatch. And so, what is the -- you always have a
44 confidence in incidents. What is there -- is there --
45 is there -- are -- they have a high confidence in that?
46 They're enumerating all the bycatch or have you seen
47 confidence in for the incidents that are actually --
48 have a wider range, or do they utilize that as far as
49 their confidence in what they're getting? Their data
50 that they're receiving.

1

2 MS. HAAPALA: Thanks, Mr. Chair, for the
3 question. So, I don't think I've ever seen in our
4 observer annual reports, credible or confidence
5 intervals for the accuracy of monitoring in that regard.
6 I'm certainly happy to chase that down and see if it is
7 available. But at least as I understand it in my work
8 on the observer committees, that is their protocol and
9 approach, and they're held to it. So, there's also a
10 debriefing process at the end of the trip where observers
11 have contact with the fisheries monitoring division. And
12 I think there's a lot of accountability there. So, I
13 guess I can't speak to -- with precision in terms of how
14 large those error bars are. But I can see if that
15 information exists for you.

16

17 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: You know, we -- Tim
18 has brought this issue up before, and so there's -- you
19 know, in the north -- in the south, Alaska Peninsula
20 referred to as Area M, the Alaska Department of Fish and
21 Game, they're -- they don't want Chum bycatch in that --
22 -- in their sockeye fishery. So, they caught 12 vessels,
23 was it? In 2023 throwing chums overboard. They Alaska
24 fish and wildlife protection. So, if the observers are
25 not on deck and they dump, you know, catcher vessels are
26 dumping, that's under observation with the with the
27 video technology?

28

29 MS. HAAPALA: Sure. So, through the Chair
30 -- or Mr. Chair, but I take your question to mean if is
31 there accountability basically that salmon or other
32 species, including pollock catch are not being dumped
33 and then are not being accounted for. And yeah, there
34 is accountability for that. So just working through the
35 different sectors, motherships and CPs, they have their
36 cod and come up onto the deck and then they're dumped
37 right into the factory. So, there's no handling of the
38 fish. And then similarly for CVs the vessels are designed
39 differently. So, the way that the fish gets dumped or
40 sorted into the tanks, but that occurs right away,
41 there's no touching or handling of fish by the crew.
42 (Distortion) And then (distortion) electronic monitoring
43 systems on board. Those are set up for compliance and
44 that video footage is reviewed. And then there's also a
45 third-party audit as well.

46

47 So, if observers were to report or see
48 something, for instance, on a mothership or a catcher
49 processor, that crew were doing something that they
50 should not have done. They report that to the OLE, Office

1 of Law Enforcement. So, there's multiple checks and
2 balances within that system. If that answers your
3 question.

4
5 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: That answers a lot
6 of our questions. I appreciate that very much. So, I --
7 so you -- so I -- it's -- there's quite a few checks and
8 balances in the observer system. And so, I don't know
9 that we need to go to that as part of our comment, Tim.
10 So, I feel that the -- that our letter, the addendums
11 that we have here in this letter -- the letter for
12 selection of alternative five with option one point as,
13 and with a hard cap range of -- or hard cap period, not
14 range of 100,000. That should be the crutch of our letter
15 and then we'll in real time genetic sampling preseason
16 forecasts and in-season forecast -- in-season analysis
17 of chum salmon in system and where the chum salmon is
18 actually inhabit the North Pacific and the impacts to
19 of hatchery salmon on chum salmon and other wild stocks
20 and the effects on bycatch and sustainability of the
21 fishery. Those would be the addendums and so does that
22 -- is there any -- does that kind of the base -- that's
23 the basis of this letter that's laid out. What we're
24 going to write, is that where we're going with this, Tim
25 and other Council members?

26
27 So, I think that covers (distortion).
28 So at this time, I just rubbed that into the record. The
29 Chair will entertain a motion to write that letter. Have
30 that letter ready to go and on August 15th submit it to
31 the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council under the
32 EIS analysis for their various options, alternatives and
33 options. So, do we have a motion to transmit that letter?

34
35 MS. PELKOLA: I move that we transfer.

36
37 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Vote by Jenny.

38
39 MR. HONEA: Second.

40
41 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Second by Don.
42 Further discussion?

43
44 (No response)

45
46 Questions called those in favor of that
47 letter to be written and transmitted, signify by saying
48 aye.

49
50 IN UNISON: Aye.

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2

CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Opposed, same sign. So that was a very -- it took time, but it was a very important issue of this meeting. Nissa.

5

6

MS. PILCHER: I also wanted to let you guys know that the Eastern Interior Regional Advisory Council did establish a working group to go over this in more -- I think you guys should draft that letter. It will be drafted, and it will be submitted. But over the summer, I believe the Eastern Interior will be engaging in a working group to go over any more information that comes up with the intention of potentially revising their letter. And you guys could, too, as well, during your fall meeting. So that a revised letter, if you choose to do that, could be then submitted or a new joint letter could be created to be approved at your guy's fall meeting to go to that final action. That should be in December of 2025. So, if you did want to take time to nominate a couple members to attend that working group it would probably be teleconference. It would not be in person. I have a feeling. But that is an option as well, if you'd like.

24

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CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, they've already selected their members?

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MS. PILCHER: Yes, I believe they did at their last meeting, and I don't -- I am not personally sure who exactly is on that.

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CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay. So, there's -- EIRACs going to have a work group. I would like Council members that are fishers on the Yukon to -- would you -- Robert, Tommy, people who fish on the Yukon. I would like you to be involved with EIRAC's work group, if you can. And so can you -- would -- well, they have two members. Was it two? Olivia took off. She went outside for a second.

40

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44

MS. PILCHER: This is Nissa, for the record. I'm not exactly sure how many people are on it. My guess would be it would be under quorum if nothing, so.

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CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Right go ahead, Don.

MR. HONEA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As I recall, maybe a few years back, we did have appointed

1 members that were willing to serve on fish. Like a fish
2 -- like you're describing here. So, are those still
3 valid? Are they, I mean...?
4

5 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: The makeup of the
6 Council keeps changing all the time so, I don't even
7 know who that was anymore. You know, that was a long
8 time ago. So, we want to select members that -- from our
9 Council that would interact with this work group of
10 EIRAC. And is it going to be Y-K Delta? Are they going
11 to try and get Y-K Delta in there?
12

13 MS. PILCHER: That I do not know as well.
14 They have not met yet. They're not due to meet till next
15 week. So, I'm not going to say no, but maybe.
16

17 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, we'll select
18 two members to participate with EIRAC. And so, I would
19 like members -- Council members, if you can, if you'll
20 volunteer to interact with the EIRAC work group on this
21 bycatch issue, that's what the thing is about. So, Don.
22

23 MR. HONEA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yeah.
24 I believe every one of us sitting here, we either go to
25 fish camp or we fish from our home. So, I'm not promoting
26 myself or anything, but I wish some of you guys, Tom or
27 Robert, want to serve on that. I support that 100%.
28

29 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Well, the work
30 group members should be able to select a date that's
31 workable for them. It's not in bird season and
32 springtime. It's before the salmon show up, before
33 anybody's fishing. You know, there's got to be a slack
34 time when EIRACs going to be in the same boat. So, I
35 think the work group members should be able to select
36 dates that are workable for these. It's basically a
37 teleconference or something. So, go ahead, Jenny.
38

39 Speaker12: Oh. I think that's a good
40 selection of Robert and Tommy if they're willing to do
41 it. And you know, I'm sure they will.
42

43 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Tommy.
44

45 MR. KRISKA: Yeah, I'll do it. I deal a
46 lot with Charlie and all of them anyway. And so does
47 Robert and Don.
48
49
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1 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Right. I'm not sure
2 who they selected, but you'll be working with somebody
3 from EIRAC. So. Okay. And so do we need to take a vote
4 on that?

5
6 MS. PILCHER: Let's do that. Just to be
7 perfectly clear.

8
9 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Chair will
10 entertain a motion to select Tommy and Robert to be our
11 representative at the work group with Eastern Interior
12 or possibly other regional Councils on the bycatch issue
13 in the Bering Sea.

14
15 MR. HONEA: Mr. Chair, that's my motion.

16
17 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Motion by Don.

18
19 MS. PELKOLA: I'll second.

20
21 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Seconded by Jenny.
22 Question all those in favor of the motion signify by
23 saying aye.

24
25 IN UNISON: Aye.

26
27 Opposed, same sign.

28
29 (No response)

30
31 So, the motion passed. Thank you very
32 much. Appreciate your -- the willingness to address
33 those issues with EIRAC. And then.....

34
35 MR. GERVAIS: Mr. Chair.

36
37 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Go ahead, Tim.

38
39 MR. GERVAIS: Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Chair.
40 Mr. Chair, do you or Nissa have any information on what
41 Yukon Delta RAC is -- what action they're taking on this
42 draft EIS?

43
44 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: They haven't met
45 yet. And as of Monday, there's been a -- okay so, Nissa
46 has got an update on the -- what I know so go ahead,
47 Nissa.

48
49 MS. PILCHER: Hi Tim, this is Nissa, for
50 the record. Yeah. They have not met yet. We had concerns

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1 about their ability to meet. But it does sound like that
2 Has been resolved. So, they should be meeting next week,
3 and we'll know more then.

4
5 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So then, you know,
6 we would like them to know that we're adjoining to the
7 Eastern Interior on this sub workgroup idea of EIRACs.
8 So that'll happen. And who's their coordinator again?
9 Oh, Brooke. Okay.

10
11 MR. KRISKA: Mr. Chair.

12
13 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So go ahead, Tommy.

14
15 MR. KRISKA: We have Olivia in the room
16 again.

17
18 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: We're talking
19 about your subgroup, work group for this bycatch issue
20 that you selected two members. And who are those members?
21 How many members did you get?

22
23 MS. IRWIN: Through the Chair, Member --
24 Chair Jack. I'm sorry, I don't know. I don't know what
25 you're referring to. Of the two members of the -- from
26 the working group, I don't recall.

27
28 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Nissa, you want to
29 just...?

30
31 MS. PILCHER: I also don't know, and I
32 haven't.....

33
34 MS. MCDAVID: Mr. Chair.

35
36 MS. PILCHER: Thank you. That's Brooke
37 McDavid.

38
39 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay, Brooke.
40 That's who we're looking for.

41
42 MS. MCDAVID: Hi, Mr. Chair and Council
43 members. So, the EIRAC takes a little bit different
44 approach to their working groups. They vote to have them,
45 and then they understand that people's availability
46 might vary at different times during the year. And so,
47 they didn't nominate specific individuals. Although they
48 will probably have about three people participate in
49 that.

50

1 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Oh so, it's an open
2 call. Well, we selected members so, we've already passed
3 the motion. So, okay. But we want to participate. And
4 you know, they will -- probably would like, most likely
5 select for dates that are not going to be in conflict
6 with other harvest seasons like bird season and
7 finishing up, trapping whatever. You know, there's
8 people will pretty much do the same kind of stuff at
9 certain times of the year.....

10

11 MS. MCDAVID: Mr. Chair,

12

13 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, we've covered
14 this -- go ahead, Brooke.

15

16 MS. MCDAVID: Yeah. Their intention is
17 to try to meet after the fine -- or the DEIS is published
18 on chum salmon bycatch so they can review how -- review
19 the analysis for the updated alternative five and then,
20 you know, potentially revise any position statements on
21 the alternatives as needed at that time. And then they
22 could vote on that action at the fall meeting. They were
23 also hoping that this working group could potentially
24 maybe look at some of the AYK and Area M Board of Fish
25 proposals to submit joint comments on those as well.

26

27 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: And that would be
28 in late August then? After the 15th of when the comment
29 opens -- period the window opens for the comment on the
30 on the EIS.

31

32 MS. MCDAVID: Yes. As long as that -- I
33 mean that's a tentative timeframe for that publication.
34 But if things are on track, Yeah some time in that,
35 after that period.

36

37 (Simultaneous speech)

38

39 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF:and nobody's
40 going to want to go, that's going to be a problem. So,
41 I'm trying to find out this window when this is actually
42 going to happen. So mid to late August. Not too late in
43 August. So, okay. Understood. I think that work group
44 is a good idea. So okay, we've covered this issue. So,
45 we're going to take a little break here for about what
46 is it? It's a quarter to 11:00. So, we'll come back at
47 11:00. And we've got a whole bunch of stuff to accomplish
48 today. So, we've got it's -- around that. Yeah. Yeah.
49 So, we're going to take a 15-minute break. We'll be back
50 on record at 11. And we got a lot of stuff to go over.

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(Off record)

(On record)

CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: We're going to come back on record if we got -- let's see if we got everybody in the room. I see Robert back there. Yeah. There's Pollock and Don. Now Don is here. Are you there? Are you there Tim? On the phone?

MR. GERVAIS: Yes, I am, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay, we're back at 11:00. We're going to re -- come back to order again. And so now we're at 12C, Nissa. So and so you're going to give us a charter review, page 17, in our book here.

MS. PILCHER: Hello, everyone. Nissa Pilcher, for the record. Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the Council. The Council's current charter can be found on page 17, in your meeting book. That's the one that's got that black comb binding on it. So, all ten Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils were chartered under the Federal Advisory Committee Act, also known as FACA. Under the act, each Council charter needs to be renewed every two years, so approximately a year before it is renewed, each Council can have a discussion to see if there's anything you want to change. Most of the language in the charter is still required by FACA, and that is required language that cannot be changed. Still, there can be requests to make minor modifications as long as there's detailed justification for it. Also, if the Council is good with the charter as is and requests no changes, then the Council can just simply vote to forward the charter to the Board. So, either way, it is an action item. So, some of the things the Council can request changes on is the name of your Council, number of seats on your Council, the number of frequency of meetings and adding additional language on desired geographic membership balance. Just for reference, you guys do have that language in there on the desired geographical membership balance. And you guys did just get a youth seat, which I will have an update for later on in this meeting. So that is all. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay, so the Council review (distortion) is the charter. At this time, I don't see any problems with our charter. You know, in general, it's -- there is some aspects that

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1 were previously had some problems with, but right now
2 this charter's been working for many years so I don't
3 see any reason to change it. But if Council members have
4 any problems with it. I know, a motion to adopt the
5 charter. Yes. Go ahead.

6

7

UNIDENTIFIED: Mr. Chair.

8

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MR. GERVAIS: Hang on one, Mr. Chair.

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11

CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay, Tim.

12

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14

MR. GERVAIS: Our number five, agency for
federal officers receiving committee's advice. What does
that mean, concurrence of the Secretary of Agriculture?

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MS. PILCHER: I'm going to have to
quickly look at it, but my -- without seeing it in front
of me. Since the -- this program is made up of the U.S.
Forest Service that is under that so that is why that
language is in there. But you said number five.

21

22

23

MR. GERVAIS: Yes, yes. It says.

24

25

MS. PILCHER: Yes. Yes.

26

27

(Simultaneous speech)

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MR. GERVAIS: (Indiscernible)
Subsistence Board Chair and then Secretary of Interior,
with concurrence of Secretary of Agriculture.

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MS. PILCHER: Yes and that is because
under the Secretary of the interior, we have Fish and
Wildlife Service, National Park Service, BIA, BLM and
then under the Secretary of Agriculture is the Forest
Service.

38

39

MR. GERVIAS: Okay.

40

41

(Simultaneous speech)

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MS. PILCHER: The Western Interior just
doesn't have the Forest service.

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MR. GERVAIS: I'm trying to make a bridge
with what's going on that we have some influence with
Secretary of Commerce. Is there any way we can move
along that path with this document?

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1 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: No, this program
2 works regarding the land status. The whole ANILCA
3 statute revolves around Alaska National Interest Lands
4 Conservation Act, and it revolves around the federal
5 public lands subsistence priority. So, the Department
6 of Agriculture is in charge of the Forest Service lands.
7 The Interior Department is in charge of all other lands,
8 Bureau Land Management, National Park Service, U.S. Fish
9 and Wildlife, Department of Commerce is not part of the
10 program. And so, I don't really want to go there. And
11 we would have a really hard time, even -- that would be
12 getting into something that would actually not be
13 beneficial to the Council. That would be -- I would not
14 really want to go there. That's that gets into.

15
16 (Simultaneous speech)

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18 MR. GERVAIS: Alright. And that's it for
19 now.

20
21 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Did you have a
22 comment, Nissa?

23
24 MS. PILCHER: This is Nissa. Thank you,
25 Mr. Chair. I did want to note that there are some bridges
26 that you -- this Council did request to be made through
27 your annual report, which you guys will review later on.
28 So, the Council is attempting to do that just in a
29 different fashion.

30
31 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Yeah, I don't --
32 and so again I -- this charter has been working its --
33 we -- you know our Council meets twice a year. Our
34 Council says -- the charter says we meet once -- it can
35 meet 1 to 2 times. But this Council has been very active
36 and needs to meet twice a year. So, I will state that
37 for the record for -- as regarding our charter here --
38 that we do need to meet twice a year. And it's within
39 the parameters of this charter though. So, any other
40 comments? So, Robert.....

41
42 (Simultaneous speech)

43
44 MR. GERVAIS: Yeah, I have a question.

45
46 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay.

47
48 MR. GERVAIS: Does that -- Nissa does
49 that -- in, under number seven, is that that \$178,000,
50 is that sufficient? I don't know what it costs to run

1 this Council.

2

3 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: He's questioning
4 the amounts under number seven, the 178,000. Is this
5 antiquated now do we actually -- is this sufficient to
6 run this Council?

7

8 MS. PILCHER: I -- this is Nissa, for the
9 record I believe that might be outside of my pay grade.
10 I don't know.

11

12 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, OSM staff in
13 the room, and the question is the estimated annual cost
14 under our charter is 178,000. Is that -- and Tim's
15 question, is it sufficient to support this Council with
16 1.15 federal staff years? There's this antiquated, is
17 this charter antiquated?

18

19 DR. VICKERS: This is Brent Vickers. I'm
20 sorry, I don't have the -- I don't have an answer for
21 that right now. I can get back to you on that question.
22 I'll ask someone online and get back to you as soon as
23 I can.

24

25 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So that's, you
26 know, Tim's questioning if that's sufficient, but with
27 the budget crisis we're in right now, I don't really
28 want to go for asking more for more money either. I
29 wouldn't want to go there.

30

31 DR. VICKERS: So, and is the question the
32 staff time?

33

34 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: No. It's the amount
35 necessary to support this Council of 178,000.

36

37 DR. VICKERS: Okay. And, that includes
38 the travel and everything?

39

40 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Right, and you
41 know, the travel, the Council's functions are estimated
42 to be 1708 -- including all direct and indirect expenses,
43 and of 1.5 federal staff years.

44

45 DR. VICKERS: Yeah.

46

47 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: That's what the
48 charter says. And so, if you could just email somebody
49 that knows that.

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1 DR. VICKERS: Is that out of date?

2

3 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay. I -- it's --
4 I don't know that we want to change anything. It's just
5 the Council question.

6

7 DR. VICKERS: Yeah. It's a great
8 question. And yeah. I'll get back to you.

9

10 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: They'll get back to
11 us on that. Is that okay, Tim?

12

13 MR. GERVAIS: Yes. And it's -- as I
14 reread that bullet point that just -- it's more of a
15 statement of the estimation. It's not a hard cap on the
16 budget, but I just realized in operating my family and
17 my business things from three-year -- budgets from three
18 years ago are irrelevant today.

19

20 (Pause)

21

22 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: You know this --
23 I'm sure this has been updated since 1993. But, you
24 know, we have - we -- the staff in the room doesn't know
25 the answer to that one, but -- so it's -- but they're
26 under a mandate to support the Council. So, they would
27 be adjusting it for inflation probably periodically or
28 something. So other questions on the charter. Why don't
29 we move to a motion. Other questions there, Tim?

30

31 MS. PELKOLA: I have one.

32

33 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay. Here, Jenny.

34

35 MS. PELKOLA: I was just looking at
36 number 12. It says a youth -- young leader member. You
37 know, we don't even have that.

38

39 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Nissa.

40

41 MS. PILCHER: Yeah, this is Nissa through
42 the Chair. Thanks, member Pelkola. Yeah. We are still -
43 - we did advertise during this last call for proposals.
44 You'll get an update towards the end of the meeting to
45 solicit applications for that, the young leader seat.
46 So, I can update you guys there. It was new as of, I
47 believe, a year -- last time you guys went over your
48 charter. And it's just taken a bit for us to figure out
49 how that can operate within our system. But we did
50 advertise for seats.

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CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Yeah. We again, you know, this, you know, we've made adjustment to that portion of this charter. But right now, this charter is pretty much working for us. I don't think we need to change anything. So, I would -- any other final questions?

(No response)

So, Robert, you're going to make a motion to adopt the charter?

MR. WALKER: Yes, Mr. Chair. Thank you. I'll make -- I'll move to accept the charter. A charter for the Eastern Interior RAC.

CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Thank you. You have a second? Seconded by Pollock. Any further discussion?

(No response)

Hearing none. Those in favor of the of the motion signify by saying aye.

IN UNISON: Aye.

Opposed, same sign.

MR. GERVAIS: Aye.

CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: That's affirmative for Tim.

MR. WALKER: Jack, I have one more question.

CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Oh, go ahead.

MR. WALKER: Thank you, Mr.Chair. Are we going to update this from 93 to 2025? Is there any chance we have to do that?

CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: State the question again.

MR. WALKER: You know this is 2025. Are we going to upgrade it or update it to -- from 93 since it hasn't been changed?

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CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Oh, no. It's been changed since then. You know, there's been some additions. Our last time we reviewed; we entered this number 12 here. So, if we had something to do, this was the time to do it. But we're adopting the charter as is. Next time. But when does it roll around again? It comes up in two years.

MS. PILCHER: I believe it's every two years and it is signed on the very back, the last page on page four. Oh, sorry. Nissa Pilcher for the record. by the former secretary Deb Haaland on January 17th, 2024, so.

CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, we made updated language in the April of 2023 meeting, and then the Secretary of Interior signed off on those updates on January 17th so that, you know, about eight months later, whatever. So, in two years, we'll review it again.

MR. WALKER: Okay. It's due in two years with our new Interior Secretary to sign off on it then too, right?

CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Yeah.

MR. WALKER: Okay. Thank you. Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: That was number C. Number D is a review and approve FY2024 Annual Report. And that's on page 21 of our in our meeting packet here. Nissa.

MS. PILCHER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Nissa Pilcher, for the record. The Council's draft, you already said that it can -- actually, so that is what is found in the meeting book is kind of the parameters of the annual report. The annual report itself is found in the manila envelope should be near the front. It is a staple document, and it has draft across the front of it and it has your name at the top. It's addressed to Anthony Christianson. Who's the Chair of the Federal Subsistence Board. So, your annual report ensures the Board is aware of issues, concerns and current events that impact your subsistence way of life. With your report and recommendations, the Board can make informed decisions on regulatory and policy actions. At your last meeting in October, the Council identified six different

1 topics that your Council wanted to include in your annual
2 report where you requested action in some form, as well
3 as two that you requested, or you wanted to include that
4 was provided to the Board for informational purposes.
5 So, the six where you requested action is: One,
6 Subsistence users continue to bear the brunt of salmon
7 conservation in the Yukon and Kuskokwim drainages. Two,
8 continued concern with the lack of data on regional non-
9 salmon populations. Three, creation of a Yukon and
10 Kuskokwim Fish Commission. Four, creation of a
11 memorandum of understanding between the Department of
12 Commerce, the Department of Interior and the Department
13 of Agriculture concerning commercial fishing. And that
14 is what I just referenced during member Gervais' earlier
15 question. In regards to attempting to build a bridge.
16 And once again, the Department of Agriculture is
17 included because of the Forest Service in this program.
18 The next topic was Western bound salmon genetic
19 information collection and availability and the last was
20 concerned with transporters operating in the Anoka
21 Wildlife Refuge. And the two topics that you included
22 for informational purposes is continued efforts to
23 finalize the Council Sheep Management Strategy
24 Guidelines, which you guys did put information on the
25 record yesterday to make additional comments to that
26 section. So those changes will be reflected once you
27 guys take action on any edits and adopting this one at
28 the end of my discussion. And then the last one is the
29 liberalization of Central Arctic Caribou harvest limit
30 implications to federally qualified subsistence users.
31 So, at your fall meeting, I mentioned I would draft the
32 report and bring it before the Council at this meeting
33 for your review. Please make any edits or include
34 additional information on these topics. But please
35 remember, we can't add any new topics. But please review
36 and offer any edits or changes to what are in front of
37 you right now. Thank you.

38
39 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, you took notes
40 of our edits on section seven on the -- and so do you
41 have those there? We were discussing that yesterday and
42 Nissa was -- this number seven here. We just were going
43 to ask a few additional questions. And you know what --
44 how this is going to be proceeding with this sheep
45 management strategy guidelines paper. And Nissa is
46 looking at her -- in her computer at she's taking notes
47 on what our discussion. So, we're.....

48
49 MS. PILCHER: I will say that at times
50 my notes are better than other times. So, I can't be

1 sure. I -- sometimes I just say please refer to the
2 transcripts if the conversation gets going a little too
3 much and that might have happened here.

4

5 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay. So
6 basically, we were discussing -- requesting there's no
7 category listed with OSM. And we're discussing this with
8 Brent here and on this, you know, there's no category
9 for this or requesting that the OSM develop a -- because
10 we can review and make management strategies. Did you
11 find something else there?

12

13 MS. PILCHER: Yeah. It looks like I
14 pretty much just put what you just said. There's a glitch
15 in the system. But that it was a long conversation and
16 I missed the important parts. But you did say that there
17 was a glitch in the system that that wouldn't allow.....

18

19 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: A submittal of a
20 proposal or submit this as part of the record for our
21 sheep management. And so, then Brian came up with the
22 options of, you know, how this could be utilized by OSM
23 for review. And we talked about that one and so -- and
24 we feel that they should work with the other land
25 managing agencies that have dall sheep within our
26 region. National Park Service, Bureau of Land
27 Management, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife. That was the
28 discussion. So that would be the additional language.
29 And so, option one of the OSM Brian Ubelaker's discussion
30 is what we were -- had kind of gone with the work group
31 aspect, as I have no confidence in that. So that would
32 be the additions to this section seven here. So, any
33 comments on our annual report other than that from the
34 Council? And this is where we need a -- we're going to
35 make a motion to adopt this. And we're going to transmit
36 this to the Federal Subsistence Board.

37

38 MR. GERVAIS: What page on the
39 supplemental booklet that was on?

40

41 (Simultaneous speech)

42

43 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Page six, where I
44 was discussing number seven, informing the Board of the
45 continued efforts to finalize the Council's sheep
46 management strategy guidelines because of the -- the
47 management strategy discussed the problem with turnover
48 with staff and the need for understanding the ecology
49 and etc. etc. whatever the management paper is stating.
50 And then we're -- to finalize this, we're -- we want to

1 comment that we want this to be used in an analysis by
2 the -- by the Office of Subsistence Management and in
3 conjunction with the land management agencies. So, if
4 proposals come up within our region for dall sheep, it
5 would be part of the analysis process. And so.

6

7 MR. WALKER: I'm ready to make the
8 motion.

9

10 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So. Understood?
11 Okay. Got that Tim?

12

13 MR. GERVAIS: Yes.

14

15 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay.

16

17 MR. GERVAIS: I'm ready to vote.

18

19 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay. Robert's
20 wanting to make a motion. Go ahead, Robert.

21

22 MR. WALKER: Yes, Mr. Chair, I'll move.

23

24 MR. HONEA: I second.

25

26 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Moved and
27 seconded. Oh, I have Don as a second but. So. And any
28 further discussion?

29

30 (No response)

31

32 Questions called those in favor of the
33 Western Interior Regional Advisory Council annual report
34 with the various topics of concern to the Council and
35 the edits discussed on the record. Those in favor of the
36 annual motion or annual report and motion signify by
37 saying aye.

38

39 IN UNISON: Aye.

40

41 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Opposed, same sign.

42

43 (No response)

44

45 So, Nissa.

46

47 MS. PILCHER: So just to clarify, the
48 motion was to include the additional language with the
49 sheep stuff, which will be included. I just wanted that
50 on the record. Thanks.

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CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So that covered that topic. So now we're on Alaska Board of Game statewide proposals. And we covered those yesterday, the proposals of concern to the Council and call for the Alaska Board of Game proposals and supplemental materials. There's -- I don't have anything for that. Nissa.

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MS. PILCHER: Through the Chair. This is Nissa Pilcher. I'm going to double check. I believe that was left on here just to -- because it's a standard thing, but I don't believe it is -- I'm going to look before I say that actually. I'm not sure it's in your area, but I could be wrong.

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CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: The call for proposal that I saw was for other parts of Alaska that didn't affect our region, and Glenn is affirmative to that one. So, I don't have anything for the -- for those other regions. So, call for fisheries proposals and that's the State Alaska Board of Fish on page 31, through 33 in our book here. Where's that at?

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MS. PILCHER: And Mr. Chair, I do believe that that is both a AYK and the Chignik finfish, which is Area M. And just for your guys' reminder, this Council did request to submit a proposal to the Chignik Board of Fish meeting in regards to aggregate net length of the same fishery. It was first requested as an ACR, which was submitted this last fall, which was rejected, and your direction to me was to then submit it as a proposal if it was rejected. So that will be done unless there's a motion made to not do that.

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CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, the proposal that we promulgated and submitted as an ACR was rejected. So, we still wanted to get that proposal. And the proposal is still a viable proposal. So, I think that unless the Council's opposed, that was your -- quite a bit of your language, Tim. We should just continue on and submit it as a proposal in this -- during this proposal, during -- we're in this proposal window through April 10th, 2025. Is that okay Tim and the Council members?

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MR. GERVAIS: Mr. Chair, this is Tim Gervais, and yeah, I think we should do it on an in-cycle proposal, but we have to -- there's one sentence we need to modify. Because of -- it referred to the

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1 average chum catch per over the last five years. And we
2 had one more season of fishing in between the ACR and
3 today. So, we need to update that number. But it
4 shouldn't change the nature of the proposal very much.
5 It would just -- it's more housekeeping to have the
6 proposal reflect accurate numbers.

7

8 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Our fishery staff
9 can obtain that figure.

10

11 MR. GERVAIS: Here I got it. I got it
12 right here. So, it says.....

13

14 (Pause)

15

16 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, Tim's looking
17 up the number to finalize that sort of fish proposal for
18 South Alaska Peninsula.

19

20 (Simultaneous speech)

21

22 Go ahead, Tim.

23

24 MR. GERVAIS: The second sentence says,
25 the South Unimak Island, Shumagin Islands June fishery
26 has averaged 677,232 chums per season over the last five
27 years, the highest five year average in decades. So, we
28 need to just add the 2025 season to that number so that
29 the issue is stated correctly. And then the rest of the
30 proposal stays the same.

31

32 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, would you read
33 the -- read that in as the supplementary again? You
34 know, you would recalculate the average or what was the
35 last years?

36

37 MR. GERVAIS: Yeah. So, the proposal that
38 we submitted during the ACR process use a five-year
39 average from 2019 to 2023 and now, we're going to submit
40 it again with this similar language. We just need to
41 average the chum harvest in the Unimak -- South Unimak
42 and Shumagin Islands, June fishery from 2020 to 2024.
43 Let me see, 24. Yeah, that's a five-year period. So, we
44 just need to update the average chum per season.

45

46 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay. And so, we
47 would -- that would recalculate the average. And if we
48 don't have that average, our -- will rely on our fishery
49 staff to produce that average for that five-year time
50 frame to 2020 through 2024, which would be the five

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1 seasons.

2

3 MR. GERVAIS: Yeah, or they could change
4 the language and say from -- give the exact years from
5 2019 to 2023. Either way.

6

7 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Well, we have to
8 make a pick. So, you want to put.....

9

10 (Simultaneous speech)

11

12 MR. GERVAIS: I just used them. Just
13 research whatever the five-year average was -- the most
14 recent five-year average and adjust the number. It
15 shouldn't.....

16

17 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Right.

18

19 MR. GERVIAS: It shouldn't change the
20 proposal very much. It just provides accuracy to the
21 Board of Fish.

22

23 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Right. So, the
24 update -- the last season's bycatch of chum salmon
25 through 2024, it'd be 2020 through 2024.

26

27 (Simultaneous speech)

28

29

30 MR. GERVAIS: Not bycatch, just their
31 harvest.

32

33 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Harvest. Harvest.
34 Okay. I considered bycatch, but it's harvest. So that's
35 clear for the record. And so, we have amended language.
36 So, we're going to have a motion to submit this proposal.
37 Has it been assigned to -- it will be assigned.

38

39 MR. GERVAIS: I have one other
40 correction. One other question I think is appropriate.

41

42 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay.

43

44 MR. GERVIAS: The second paragraph is
45 short. I'll just read it. Current regulations allow the
46 aggregate length of person and lead in Area M to be up
47 to 400 fathoms in length. This is 60% longer than what's
48 allowed in Kodiak and lower Cook Inlet, and a whopping
49 78% longer than allowed in Chignik and Prince William
50 Sound. Longer sayings equal more fish per set. I would

1 like to just scratch the word whopping. I think it's
2 unnecessary and bad grammar.

3
4 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay, Nissa said
5 she'd already edited that whopping out so it's not in
6 her version so.

7
8 MR. GERVAIS: Okay.

9
10 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: I concur with that.
11 So, any final additions to this proposal, Council
12 members? So that -- we're good now, Tim?

13
14 MR. GERVAIS: Yes.

15
16 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay. Chair will
17 entertain a motion to submit this proposal to the.....

18
19 MR. WALKER: I'll make a motion.

20
21 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF:State Board
22 of Fish with the amended language discussed on the record
23 here. Motion to adopt by Robert.

24
25 MR. SIMON: I second.

26
27 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Seconded by
28 Pollock. Further discussion? Questions called, those in
29 favor of the proposal, as amended, to be transmitted to
30 the State Board of Fish. Signify by saying aye.

31
32 IN UNISON: Aye.

33
34 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Opposed, same
35 sign.

36
37 (No response)

38
39 Any other Board of Fish proposals for -
40 - this includes AYK. I don't have any.

41
42 MR. GERVAIS: Mr. Chair, this is Tim.

43
44 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Go ahead, Tim.

45
46 MR. GERVAIS: I don't have a written
47 proposal on this, but I want to get the Council's opinion
48 if the WIRAC should submit a proposal requesting that
49 the Alaska Department of Fish and Game conducts a
50 statistically representative sample of the genetics of

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1 the chum salmon that are harvested in that fishery to
2 help us further understand the nature of the stock
3 composition of that fishery.

4

5 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: You're requesting
6 a larger sample size of genetic testing for chum salmon?

7

8 MR. GERVAIS: Well, I'm requesting, like,
9 an annual report of the genetic composition of the chum
10 salmon that are caught in Area M commercial salmon
11 fishery. Like we -- we're getting numbers -- we get
12 numbers on what they catch. But we're not getting the
13 genetic information on where those fish are headed to.
14 And that -- this -- what this proposal I'm getting at
15 is getting to the point where, in my opinion, Alaska
16 Department of Fish and Game is reluctant to provide the
17 public with the genetic information of what fish is being
18 caught in what fisheries. And we're in a situation now
19 where we're having trouble meeting our chum escapement
20 goals. And we believe that as -- the significant amount
21 of the fish that are caught in Area M potentially are
22 bound for Kuskokwim and Yukon Rivers, and so, the
23 proposal would address this gap in information by
24 getting an annual report on the genetic makeup of that
25 harvested chum.

26

27 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, we have Deena
28 Jallen in the back of the room. I'd like to have her
29 come up to the mic. And so, we -- so were understanding
30 what Tim's wanting here. And you would probably highly
31 benefit from those apportionments taken in the South
32 Alaska Peninsula Shumagin Islands, Area M fishery.
33 Deena.

34

35 MS. JALLEN: Yeah, it certainly would be
36 useful to see an estimate of the genetic information.
37 In terms of an actual specific proposal so, Board of
38 Fish proposals are due April 10th. I think for specific
39 wording, I might recommend that Tim contact Matt Keys,
40 who's the area biologist for Area M, and can maybe help
41 point him to a specific regulation or point in reg that
42 might help address that. I'm not, quite sure how you
43 would word it to fit in with the regulations that we
44 have, but Matt Keys may be a good source to help guide
45 any wording.

46

47 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay. And so, we
48 can -- so, Tim, you could -- we could request that the
49 specifics of how the proposal is keyed in submitted. And
50 Matt Keys' his name? Matt Keys and so the OSM staff, our

1 fisheries staff can contact for the specifics of how
2 this proposal -- where this proposal is going to be
3 submitted. But the premise is that there's a complete
4 genetic void in that, and it's going to be that
5 information is actually going to be instrumental in our
6 North Pacific fisheries bycatch. It'll be -- if they had
7 that genetic in real time, we could actually have
8 somewhat of a forecast of what's moving through and what
9 the impacts of the trawl fishery would be on those
10 genetic stocks. And the main stock of concern or crisis
11 concern is chum and chinook in the Yukon River system.
12 So, I feel that's a viable proposal. Don. Thank you,
13 Deena.

14
15 MR. HONEA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Well
16 actually, I have a -- I think this is really a thought-
17 provoking action by us too. And thank you for Tim for
18 bringing that up. Deena, I was wondering if like in the
19 past or something. I mean, we were always told they were
20 not destined for the Yukon or the Kuskokwim, the chum
21 salmon in the Area M. So how did they know that they
22 weren't destined? Did they ever do any genetic testing
23 or something as proposed by Tim or this Council? Thank
24 you.

25
26 MS. JALLEN: Yes. I will preface this by
27 saying I am not an expert on the genetics that they have
28 been taking from Area M, or either now or in the past.
29 The chum that do go through, I've seen some of the
30 presentations where they've taken genetics from the
31 chum, going through Area M and trying to break it down
32 by where those chum are from. And so, a lot of chum are
33 from like Asian origin hatcheries and then chum or maybe
34 from different parts of Alaska. The -- one of the groups
35 that are able to tease out through genetics is western
36 Alaska. And unfortunately, that does lump together Yukon
37 and Kuskokwim stocks. And so, it's hard to say
38 specifically how many of those chum are bound back for
39 the Yukon. I don't understand all the genetic science
40 as to why they can't get a finer stock group from that
41 fishery, and I would certainly encourage folks to talk
42 more with other staff, either the Area M meeting or with
43 Matt Keys, who can maybe kind of drill down more into
44 the specifics as to why you can't tease out Yukon Fish
45 from that group.

46
47 MR. HONEA: Okay. Thank you for that
48 response, because I've always thought there was a, you
49 know, a whole slew of different things. I'm trying to
50 narrow it down. And this is drastic to me, to all of us

1 to not have that chum. So, you know, I'm trying to, you
2 know, I'm trying to figure out, hey and I'm glad that
3 we're concentrating, doing a little study on Area M
4 fisheries and, yeah. Because you know we can't keep --
5 to me -- blaming it on, unless we know the numbers that
6 are taken and I've just been told that they haven't ever
7 had any, oh -- what do you call it? Incidental catch
8 numbers of chums. I mean, we -- they've always did that
9 with kings or chinook, but not chum. So, I think any
10 major, Mr. Chair, that that we could do toward trying
11 to find out. And so, I would support that. Thank you.
12

13 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: I think it's a
14 viable proposal. The statements that the Department has
15 stated regarding Area M don't line up with what this
16 bycatch report is showing. Within the savings area,
17 which is just north of the Area M fishery that's 99% of
18 the bycatch occurs just north of Area M and 85% of that
19 is AYK stocks. So, all of this, all of the -- almost all
20 the bycatch is north of Area M is going -- heading
21 towards the Yukon River and AYK stocks. And so very --
22 15% might be Asiatic stocks, but it's not a majority.
23 If it's the majority of the fish that are caught in the
24 bycatch in the Bering Sea that are just north of the
25 Alaska Peninsula are going to the AYK stocks. So, we
26 need an updated genetic profile. I took genetic samples
27 on the Yukon -- Upper Koyukuk River. There's a genetic
28 profile of our stocks in Alaska, and we need to update
29 that and this is a very viable proposal. It would be
30 instrumental for the in-season managers, for AYK to be
31 able to have this genetic information. So how this --
32 that's the premise of the proposal. Did you want to just
33 state briefly for the record, Tim, the -- what you're
34 asking for from the Board of fish and will be in contact
35 with the in-season manager from Area M about how that's
36 going to get plugged in as a proposal. Do you want to
37 state for the record, if we're going to have assistance
38 from our able OSM fisheries people to help us write this
39 proposal, but we need the premise on the record. Go
40 ahead, Tim.
41

42 MR. GERVAIS: Okay. Before I get into
43 that statement, I want to bring up a second issue that
44 this Council has encountered where we were talking about
45 trying to protect king salmon coming into the Kuskokwim.
46 And there's been years -- recent years where the
47 Department of Fish and Game has opened up commercial
48 king salmon fishing around Kwinhagak, which is on the
49 southern edge of Kuskokwim Bay, and the Kuskokwim area
50 manager specifically stated to the WIRAC that having

1 that king salmon fishery open did not affect the king
2 salmon entering the king -- the Kuskokwim River and I
3 disagreed with his analysis and statement that there was
4 no interception of Kuskokwim fish by having that
5 Kuskokwim Bay commercial fishery. And so, does the --
6 do the other Council members want to get involved with
7 expanding the scope of the proposal to include genetics
8 in that Kuskokwim Bay management area also? Because
9 that's not chum salmon that's -- that was a king salmon
10 issue. But I think, I think you all remember the
11 conversation. It was just 2 or 3 years ago.

12
13 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Right. I think that
14 that would convolute the proposal. I would rather stay
15 on track with the genetic composition of the chum that
16 are moving -- that are harvested in the Area M and having
17 a genetic report and hopefully within real time for the
18 in-season managers of AYK so that they have forth --
19 have a knowledge of what -- it would give them an induce
20 of what they're actually looking at, the apportionment
21 and the volumes could indicate what -- it would give
22 them an idea of what's moving through predominantly. We
23 have lots of chum going into Nushagak, but we have
24 nothing again, for the Yukon. This would give the in-
25 season managers of Alaska, state managers and other
26 districts the ability to anticipate. So, this is going
27 to help out our in-season managers. It's going to give
28 us a genetic profile of what's actually moving through
29 that and into the Bering Sea for the North Pacific
30 Fisheries Management Council. This has a phenomenal
31 amount of benefits. So that should be part of the
32 proposal. But I think it should stay on track with the
33 chum salmon right now. We can talk about the genetic
34 sampling for chinook and in a different proposal, but I
35 think we should stay on track with that. So, is that
36 okay, Tim?

37
38 MR. GERVAIS: Yeah. That's fine. If
39 nobody has any other comments, then I'll try to put this
40 together, summarize the language of the proposal.

41
42 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, if you could...

43
44 MR. GERVAIS: So, if anybody wants to say
45 anything?

46
47 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Any other
48 discussion before you can make the -- describe the
49 language for the motion and then we'll discuss it once
50 it's on the table. Okay.

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MR. GERVAIS: Okay, under this proposed regulation would require the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to make a statistically relevant sampling in-season of the quantity and genetic makeup of chum salmon caught in the Area M fishery and make that information available to in-season managers for affected stocks and the public.

CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So that's the language. And so, the -- and then the Office of Subsistence Management will assist in the -- contacting the in-season manager in Area M to submit this proposal in the proper manner to the State Board of Fish. So that's the premise of the proposal. So, do we have a motion?

(Simultaneous speech)

MR. GERVAIS: I had a question on what you just said, Jack. Are you saying that the Area M salmon manager is going to draft this proposal?

CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: No, no.

MR. GERVIAS: Or we are?

CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: I'm stating just like -- I forgot the guy's name again. Matt Keys, in-season manager, can be in conference with our staff to assist in where to submit this. Under what -- You got to put in the in the ACR or what are those, those numbers? Nissa

MS. PILCHER: 5 AC, into the codified.

CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Into the codified regulations. Just the assistance of where to plug it into. That's what I was stating. So, is that clear? Okay. Tim? Any additions?

MR. GERVAIS: Yeah, that's appropriate. And please, please, everyone discuss changes to the language if I'm not stating it clearly or completely.

CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Well, that's the premise of the proposal. We can clean it up and throw out whopping or anything that's inappropriate. So the Chair will entertain a motion to adopt that premise of this proposal to the Board of Fish for genetic sampling

1 and for the -- of chum salmon that are taken in and
2 harvested in the Area M commercial fishery to be -- to
3 get a genetic profile of the stocks that are affected
4 in AYK and the information transmitted to the in-season
5 manager's in the AYK and the public. So, there's...

6

7 MR. WALKER: I'll move, Mr. Chair,

8

9 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Moved by Robert.

10

11 MR. SIMON: Second.

12

13 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Seconded by
14 Pollock. Any further discussion? Questions called by
15 Robert. Those in favor of the proposal signify by saying
16 aye. Aye.

17

18 IN UNISON: Aye.

19

20 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: And it's -- we got
21 about five minutes. We can talk about the chinook salmon
22 Kwinhagak fishery issue. I think there's a -- we don't
23 have -- yeah. Go ahead, Deena.

24

25 MS. JALLEN: So, David Runfola was the
26 previous Kuskokwim River assistant manager, and he just
27 gave me some -- a little bit of a very brief background
28 on that fishery. The fishery hasn't operated for chinook
29 salmon since 2019.

30

31 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Right.

32

33 MS. JALLEN: And just a very brief
34 description I got from Dave is that the fishery was a -
35 - it was an in-river, kind of like towards the mouth of
36 the rivers in that area where they had the commercial
37 fishery. So, I don't know if there's ever genetic
38 samples, but there's a pretty good chance if you're
39 commercial fishing on a stock in a river, that those
40 fish are from that river. But that fishery hasn't
41 operated since 2019.

42

43 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: 2019. Okay so,
44 that's somewhat of a mute subject now, Tim, at this
45 time. Any other Board of Fish proposals for AYK? This
46 is our opportunity. We're in our window through April
47 10th. I don't have any. Do you have any more, Tim?

48

49 MR. GERVAIS: Not at this time.

50

1 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, we can
2 individually also submit if something comes up, which
3 occasionally happens. So, I think that covers the Board
4 of Fish proposals. And so, we're going to go to lunch
5 because it's like 5 to 12. And then we're going to be
6 back at 1:15 because we have tons of reports to go
7 through. So, we got to we got to set our future meeting
8 dates and some other stuff first. Then we're going to
9 go into various reports. And there's a lot of the public
10 that wants to talk to our Council and YRDFA and
11 everything. So, we need to be back promptly. And so,
12 Nissa.

13
14 MS. PILCHER: So, I was just -- this is
15 Nissa, for the record. I was just thinking, if you do
16 the -- we're all tired so, I totally understand wanting
17 to break. The only action items you guys have left are
18 those meeting dates. But those can go fast. But they can
19 also.....

20
21 (Simultaneous speech)

22
23 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Do them in five
24 minutes, yeah.

25
26 MS. PILCHER: They also not go fast so,
27 I don't.....

28
29 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So. Okay, we'll
30 finish those, the meeting dates off. That's on page 35
31 of the book. Let's see here. Oh, here's our calendars.
32 So, we selected in the -- on page 35. WIRAC has selected
33 Fairbanks as an alternative to Huslia -- alternative is
34 Huslia and October 7th and 8th. And so, question for the
35 Council -- oh go ahead, Nissa.

36
37 MS. PILCHER: I'm sorry, Mr. Chair. I
38 would like to note that you guys were supposed to meet
39 in McGrath this time. And you guys were very
40 understanding and moved it to Fairbanks for that
41 interaction with the North Pacific Fisheries Council
42 meeting. So, if you'd want, you could request McGrath
43 at the fall meeting, maybe with the alternate of
44 Fairbanks. Just because that is an expensive meeting and
45 I'm not sure about funding, and then maybe move the
46 alternative Huslia to the next Fairbanks meeting. Maybe.

47
48 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay.

49
50 MR. HONEA: Mr. Chair.

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CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Yes, go ahead Don.

MR. HONEA: Yeah, I believe McGrath we haven't met there for some years and I think because of lack of representation from that area, I think it would be a good idea if we could do that if money allowances and stuff like that. So, I would really prefer McGrath. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay. That's a good suggestion. Thank you, Don. Other Council member's feelings on McGrath? Mcgrath is good, I see affirmatives. So, I - Tim, McGrath okay?

MR. GERVAIS: Yes, it is.

CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay. And then alternate would be Huslia. Is that okay, also Council members?

MR. GERVAIS: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Jenny.

MS. PELKOLA: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: 7th and 8th, October 7th and 8th and McGrath as a primary, Huslia as a secondary. And the Council is affirmative to that. And so, I don't think we vote on these, Nissa. Oh, we do. So, we're -- so we'll finalize this this fall meeting. So, the Chair will entertain a motion to have our -- set our next meeting for October 7th and 8th in McGrath as the primary Huslia as a secondary motion.

MR. HONEA: Mr. Chair, I make that motion.

CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Motion by Don.

MS. PELOKA: Ill second.

CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Seconded by Jenny. Further discussion, questions called. All those in favor of those meeting dates in place in McGrath, October 7th and 8. Signify by saying aye.

IN UNISON: Aye.

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1 So, then the next. Oh, geez. We got
2 Winter meeting, is 2026. It's just an open calendar here
3 and nobody has selected dates. EIRAC selected when?

4
5 MS. PILCHER: So, I'm trying to put it
6 up. It's really small. It's really small. So, Bristol
7 Bay is the -- the window opens on February 16th. Bristol
8 Bay chose the February 17th and February 18th, and
9 Eastern Interior chose a three day meeting. March 3rd,
10 4th and 5th. Other than that, the calendar is open up
11 until March 31st when the window closes.

12
13 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: That's March 7th,
14 8 and 9. I got on my book here. it's more clear. This
15 is EIRAC? Is that the right calendar? So, it would be
16 this week.

17
18 MR. GERVAIS: My preference would be
19 middle to late February or end of March.

20
21 MS. PILCHER: Yeah, the calendar that I
22 have and the calendar that you guys have do not line up
23 and I'm not sure which one is correct.

24
25 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, we're getting
26 a little bit of blowback off of the calendars here. So,
27 I'm going to look down here in my.....

28
29 (Pause)

30
31 I'm not sure. All right. Is Brooke on
32 the phone?

33
34 MS. PILCHER: This is Nissa, through the
35 Chair. I don't believe so. So, let's go with the calendar
36 that is projected on the screen right there. That's the
37 most up to date calendar. I'm not quite sure what's
38 going on with the dates on the one in your book. So,
39 ignore the one in your book and let's go with that one.
40 Let me see.

41
42 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, you're stating
43 your preferences in February, Tim. Say that again. We're
44 talking on the sidebar. Go ahead.

45
46 MR. GERVAIS: Mid-to-late February or the
47 very end of March.

48
49 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, very end of
50 March is go a lot of spring carnivals and stuff. And,

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1 Pollock -- Pollock is going to talk.

2

3 MR. SIMON: Yeah, I would support about
4 the same time around February for Fairbanks and
5 sometimes January is pretty cold here. Like last month,
6 it was 50 below. I couldn't get out of the village.

7

8 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, the window is
9 -- is we can have a late February meeting, and so, like,
10 it's hard to see that down there. I can't read the blurry
11 numbers that well.

12

13 MS. PILCHER: If you give me a chance, I
14 can try to download it. And then.....

15

16 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: But I - but -- the
17 other -- Tim has two windows late February, which could
18 possibly be, theoretically be around the February --
19 week of the 25th and then the late, late March. Late
20 March is when there's one of those spring carnivals? And
21 what is -- where do we get conflicts with other community
22 things that are going on in March? Do we get into
23 community conflicts in late March? Always.

24

25 MR. HONEA: Mr. Chair, I would prefer
26 actually right now at the time that we're doing right
27 now because if you look at it in March, anywhere from
28 the ninth on, it's coming earlier for TCC convention and
29 that takes up darn near two weeks. So, and if we're
30 looking at late March, we're looking at spring carnivals
31 and stuff like that. So, I would prefer like anywhere
32 late February, like right now.

33

34 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, you're -- you
35 would be -- I'm looking at my calendar on my phone here.
36 You would prefer a meeting just like we have. The dates
37 would be Tuesday the 24th and Wednesday the 20 -- Tuesday
38 the 24th and -- it's -- yeah. So, it's here. But we --
39 we're trying to -- we don't want to overlap with EIRAC,
40 really. If we could you know, they're meeting the next
41 week. Theoretically they're meeting the next week. Can
42 you see that on your screen there, Nissa?

43

44 MS. PILCHER: Yeah sure. I'm just trying
45 to make the calendar a little bigger. So, it's clearer
46 over there.

47

48 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, they're
49 meeting what the 28th and 21st? And they got a three day
50 meeting going on. So, they -- they're the 28th, the first

1 and the second. Is that what they got? We could actually
2 meet concurrent with them couldn't we, OSM? And can we
3 meet simultaneously with them? Can we meet -- I would --
4 - I wouldn't mind having a half a day overlap meeting
5 with them.

6

7 Right. So, if we could -- would that be
8 okay to overlap with Eastern Interior Regional Council,
9 then we could -- what's that?

10

11 MS. PILCHER: They're meeting in Tok. So,
12 they're actually meeting the 3rd.....

13

14 (Simultaneous speech)

15

16 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Oh, they're in Tok.

17

18 MS. PILCHER: March 3rd, 4th and 5th. In
19 Tok.

20

21 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Oh. Okay. That's
22 that's -- I think they're -- I just thought that they
23 were always meeting together. So, -- but we're not going
24 to be on Fairbanks anyway. We could set it in Fairbanks
25 this meeting. We're going to be in McGrath in the fall.
26 We could be in Fairbanks, but if they're going to be in
27 town, we're not going to have to worry about that. You'll
28 have enough staff to support both Councils on the same
29 week. So, February 24-25 would be good. Or February 28th.
30 And the 1st of March. Which do you prefer, Don? 24th and
31 25, in Fairbanks or where at? Fairbanks, 24 and 25 in
32 Fairbanks? Tim, is that okay?

33

34 MR. GERVAIS: Yeah, that works really
35 good.

36

37 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay. So, we'll
38 pencil that one in, and.....

39

40 MR. WALKER: Mr. Chair, do we have to
41 stay at the Pike's or we have to have any other options
42 with contracts with any other hotels?

43

44 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Nissa.

45

46 MS. PILCHER: I generally go by the
47 cheapest, and this one is generally the cheapest.
48 Government, you know, everything. It's got to be the
49 most less expensive.

50

1 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: I think the Council
2 members would prefer to be in the hotel.

3
4 MS. PILCHER: I can do my best then.

5
6 MR. WALKER: Mr. Chair, and Nisaa. You
7 know, I'm -- we're staying in cabins, and the floors are
8 so cold. The beds are, like, four feet off the floor. I
9 mean; to get on there, we almost have to have a ladder.
10 No disrespect, but it is a little cold in there.

11
12 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, not in the
13 annex. Council members in the hotel. But here would be
14 good.

15
16 MS. PILCHER: I can work on that. Thank
17 you.

18
19 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So that's -- that
20 would be the preference of the Council. And so, then
21 they also want a meeting for the fall 26 meeting also.
22 So, fall 26. That's a -- so this is what? Fall '25.
23 Okay.

24
25 MS. PILCHER: Fall 2027.

26
27 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: '27. Yeah.

28
29 MS. PILCHER: Yep. So, it is on the
30 Board.

31
32 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, Fall 27. So,
33 it's got -- I don't -- we're hunting moose and all the
34 way through the 1st of October. And so, the first two
35 weeks of October. Excellent. Because it's not that cold
36 yet. And so, we could go October 6th and 7th. And where
37 else? We could go back to Galena or what? What do Council
38 members want? Where would they like to meet in the fall
39 of 2027, which is a year -- a year and a half out? Tommy,
40 what do you think about Galena?

41
42 MR. KRISKA: Wherever, it's good for
43 everybody else. No matter to me.

44
45 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Don? Oh, Robert,
46 what's good for you?

47
48 MR. WALKER: We did meet in Galena last
49 fall. I thought it was good too, to hear from the other
50 tribes that were concerned about, you know, Native

1 allotment and stuff like that where people were
2 trespassing. And this made a very impression on me
3 because we have the same ramifications down in our area.
4 So, I would go just about every place, but we never,
5 ever gone like, Ruby or someplace. We've been to
6 Allakaket. I've been there. Hughes. We never -- I've
7 never been to Hughes for 50 years. I don't know, you
8 know, if they still have caribou yet or do they have any
9 concerns about their waters and fish and their mammals?
10 You know, it's a curiosity.

11
12 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Hughes is a really
13 small community and has really a hard time dealing
14 with.....

15
16 Right. We have -- we've met in Ruby in
17 fall, and you get fogged in. The villages that got run
18 around like Anvik and Nulato and those villages where
19 they got, you know, runaways up on the hill. You get
20 socked in there. And we had a meeting in Ruby in 2007
21 or something like that, and Court Recorder was stuck
22 there for two days. I don't think Tonya would enjoy
23 that. So, I would prefer to have a meeting, maybe -- we
24 met at Holy Cross before. Holy Cross. Yeah.

25
26 MR. WALKER: I kind of find it a little
27 -- a little hostile because it's a new generation, and
28 they have so many -- when they call me up, it's like,
29 how come we don't do nothing about what's going on? I
30 said, we can't. We're not a enforcement agency. We're a
31 regional area Council that take recommendations and but
32 still, I mean, they feel like, well, the AC Board does
33 a lot of criticism -- have a lot of criticism too, from
34 the area too. And the bison program is there and, you
35 know, like, why is it trespassing? I said, that's not
36 our concern. So, I -- I don't want to through gas on a
37 fire on this one there.

38
39 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: That's okay.

40
41 MR. WALKER: You know, maybe Grayling
42 maybe we take a look at Grayling. I'm not too sure.

43
44 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: I -- we've never
45 met in Grayling. We've never met in Kaltag. So, Don.

46
47 MR. HONEA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think
48 this is a good conversation. We have to take into
49 consideration housing. Stuff like that. And actually,
50 when we were in, Holy Cross, they had an old tribal

1 building or something that the housing was good. The
2 meeting places was good. I think before I mean, I really
3 not in a place to make a snap decisions maybe. I think
4 that it stopped to consider. I don't know about Anvik,
5 you know, housing and meeting places and stuff, and I
6 always like -- that's why I always mention McGrath
7 because the housing was -- we -- there was a hotel or a
8 B&B. Right across the street was their tribal place. It
9 was convenient. And I, you know, before we make decisions
10 on where we should go and stuff, I think we're going to
11 have to maybe check up on the villages and, you know,
12 they -- we met in Ruby before, and it was kind of a, you
13 know, right in the hall. We weren't -- it wasn't really
14 convenient. So, I think the -- you know some of the
15 things that we have to take into consideration. Thank
16 you, Mr. Chair.

17
18 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Thank you for this.
19 I appreciate your discussion. We could explore Kaltag
20 or Grayling. Look at those. And our fallback could be
21 Galena. If those are -- if they don't have -- can't
22 accommodate the Council Grayling or Kaltag we could have
23 a fall or secondary or second choice could be Galena.
24 How would that be, Robert, and is that good, Pollock?

25
26 MR. SIMON: Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Chair.
27 I don't want to change anything but we haven't met in
28 Aniak and Holy Cross for a long time. We did have some
29 good members from Holy Cross and Carl Marten from Aniak.
30 But you don't have any representative from that area.
31 Maybe the meeting down there somebody would get
32 interested. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

33
34 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: That's true. We
35 have not met in Aniak for a long time. We have a heck
36 of a time trying to get anybody interested being on this
37 Council. And it may behoove the Council to actually meet
38 in Aniak and Aniak kind of a big place. And that's, you
39 know, they have accommodations there. We know that. The
40 only problem we had at Aniak was they were meeting in
41 the gym, and the echo look was just like too much inside
42 that gym. So, we explored, we looked at an Aniak meeting
43 in April of 2023, but we got weathered out and there was
44 things happened. And so, that meeting fell through, and
45 we had to default over to Anchorage. But we could go to
46 Aniak. If you want to, -- if you want to talk about
47 Aniak, go think seriously about Aniak. We're getting a
48 huge information blank because we don't have anybody on
49 the Kuskokwim. We haven't had Carol Morgan or anybody
50 from down there in a long, long time. So, we could try

1 for Aniak again. Aniak got a big airport. It's got
2 commercial service flights in there so that could be --
3 that's actually a good idea Pollock, I appreciate that.
4 And so, what would the Council think about Aniak?

5
6 MR. WALKER: Yes, I think so. I mean, we
7 haven't been there in over 20 years so, because it was
8 when I was on the Board before I left 15 years ago. So,
9 it was like 2 or 3 years before that and.....

10
11 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: It was a while
12 back. We're talking about 21E.

13
14 MR. WALKER: Yeah.

15
16 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Customary
17 traditions traditionally use boundaries for moose and
18 stuff. So yes, I think Aniak is probably a good choice.
19 Aniak a primary.....

20
21 MR. HONEA: Mr. Chair.

22
23 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF:with the --
24 yes. Go ahead, Don.

25
26 MR. HONEA: Oh yeah, I'm glad that we
27 kind of selected Aniak because maybe we can coax somebody
28 or encourage somebody to be on the Board from that area.
29 I mean -- oh, I forgot. Dennis. Dennis Thomas from
30 Crooked Creek maybe or something, but unexpectedly
31 passed away, and he was a great Board member. And I
32 think we should be reaching out. We can if we meet in
33 Aniak. Thank you.

34
35 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay, and so Aniak
36 is a primary. How about October 6th and 7? Is that good
37 to the Council? Jenny? Aniak 6 and 7, for 2027. And so,
38 do we have to have a secondary, Nissa?

39
40 MS. PILCHER: The secondary will probably
41 just default to Fairbanks because I'll have to ask for
42 approval for it. And just as a reminder, these are action
43 items. We can take them up as one motion though, for
44 sure.

45
46 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay. So, Tim.....

47
48 (Simultaneous speech)

49
50

00068

1 MR. GERVAIS: Don't you mean February
2 26th?

3
4 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Now or.

5
6 MR. GERVAIS: October 6th and 7.

7
8 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Oh, correct. My --
9 fall meeting, 2027. Aniak October 6th and 7.

10
11 MR. GERVAIS: Yeah, that's all right. I
12 -- oh, I thought...

13
14 (Simultaneous speech)

15
16 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: I -- excuse me.

17
18 MR. GERVAIS: I thought we were talking
19 about the year 2026.

20
21 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: I'm wrong. You're
22 right, 2026. 2026, fall time. And October 6th and 7th.
23 Is that good for you, Tim?

24
25 MR. GERVAIS: Yeah. That's the best date
26 for me in the fall.

27
28 MR. WALKER: Mr. Chairman, we select part
29 of Winter '26?

30
31 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Winter '26 was
32 February 24th and 25, Fairbanks. And then fall back for
33 Aniak will be Fairbanks. Nissa. And so, those are all
34 agreeable to the Council? And you have to have a motion
35 to adopt all this? Okay. So, we have our fall meeting
36 of this year, 2025 planned out for McGrath in October
37 7th and 8 in Huslia -- our correction, in McGrath and
38 then Huslia as a secondary. The spring meeting of 2026
39 Winter meeting is February 24th and 25. Fairbanks is a
40 primary and then fall meeting of 2026 is Aniak 6 and 7
41 and Fairbanks as a fallback.

42
43 MR. HONEA: That would be my motion.

44
45 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay. Motion on the
46 table.

47
48 MS. PELKOLA: Second.

49
50 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Seconded by Jenny.

1 8Those in favor of those meeting dates and places signify
2 by saying aye.

3

4 IN UNISON: Aye.

5

6 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Opposed, same
7 sign.

8

9 (No response)

10

11 We're going to lunch break. It's quarter
12 after 12 so it'd be 1:30. Back here at 1:30 to start
13 into to a lot of other agenda items that we have here,
14 which would be reports. And so there will be a time
15 limit of 15 minutes. So, 1:30 back here going off record
16 now.

17

18 (Off record)

19

20 (On record)

21

22 MS. PILCHER: Just to check on mine. It
23 is 1:38. We are still waiting for a couple members to
24 come back, but we will be resuming here very shortly.
25 Thank you.

26

27 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Most of the Council
28 has gotten here, so we're going to start with Kuskokwim
29 River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission presentation first.
30 And are they in the room? Okay. Come on up. And Diloola
31 wants to go after you. So, introduce yourself on the
32 record and go ahead.

33

34 MR. LEON: Thank you. For the record, my
35 name is Justin Leon. I'm the research director for the
36 Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission. And I'd
37 just like to say, Mr. Chair, members of the Council,
38 appreciate the opportunity to speak today. I'm not
39 normally the person in this seat, but again, appreciate
40 the opportunity to give an update on what we've got
41 going on. So, I'll start off by saying, for those of you
42 I know it sounds like we may have some newer people to
43 the Council, just briefly, what we're about. At the Fish
44 Commission on the Kusko is we represent 33 federally
45 recognized tribes on the Kuskokwim. I know for the
46 purposes of the Western Interior RAC, that's not the
47 entire river, but it is a large portion of it. And so,
48 we try to give a voice to all of those tribes, do our
49 best in working with sustaining salmon fisheries and
50 traditional ways of life, using traditional and

1 indigenous knowledge and the best available western
2 science. As part of this, I just want to go into a little
3 bit of how we're structured before I go into some of the
4 work that I'd like to update you all on that we've done
5 in the last calendar year.

6
7 First is in terms of across the river,
8 those 33 tribes have commissioners that have a seat at
9 the table that lead the work that that we're tasked with
10 doing as staff. Out of those 33 tribes were broken up
11 into seven units. You can see on the first page if you
12 have the printout of our RAC report, the specific people,
13 the villages that they're coming from. But, just
14 important to know that we're broken up into seven
15 different units. Further, we're broken down -- with that
16 we have five in-season managers. We do manage
17 collaboratively alongside the U.S. Fish and Wildlife
18 Service, through the Yukon Delta National Wildlife
19 Refuge and the lower portion of the Kuskokwim River.
20 Again, that's in-season subsistence salmon management,
21 and you can see the list there as well of the five
22 current in-season managers that we have, including the
23 ways that it's broken up along the river in terms of
24 trying to get equal representation for different
25 portions of the river. And then also wanted to mention
26 that we have two elder advisors that also sit in on a
27 lot of the management, co-management that's done in the
28 Kuskokwim River.

29
30 With that, I wanted to speak to the
31 staff that we have. We've had a bit of growth in the
32 last calendar year. Currently, what that's amounted to
33 is seven full time staff. I myself am one again. I'm the
34 research director. I got elevated from a fisheries
35 biologist position. You can see Kevin Whitworth who's
36 been referenced. I know in the past he's held a seat on
37 this Council. He's our executive director. Then we've
38 got other fisheries biologists, technicians. There's
39 Vicente, who usually would be in this seat instead of
40 myself as our policy and programs director. And then
41 we've got a communications coordinator. And in addition,
42 it wouldn't be right if I didn't mention that we're
43 grateful for all the other support we get from
44 contractors who provide us with biometrical review
45 stats, math, finance managers, and then other science
46 and policy support.

47
48 Now, getting to the meat of it in terms
49 of our organization, we kind of have three main
50 components. There's the in-season management, which I

1 already kind of started talking to, and I'll go into
2 more in a minute. We also have advocacy and outreach,
3 which is part of what I'm doing right now. And I'll
4 speak a little bit more to that and then finish it up
5 with what I kind of head up, which is, as the research
6 director, the monitoring research type projects. And so,
7 I'll start off with the salmon management again, that's
8 done collaboratively with the Refuge specifically being
9 the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge, again, focuses
10 on stuff in the Refuge, the lower half of the river. But
11 what happens on the lower half of the river affects the
12 -- and impacts the entire river. So, with that, we've
13 been managing cooperatively for the -- going on the 10th
14 year now as a part of this. Again, it's like is the
15 mission of the Fish Commission. This includes
16 incorporating traditional knowledge, local observations
17 and the best available western science. I already
18 mentioned the five different tribal in-season managers
19 that we have. There's the refuge manager on the other
20 end for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and we're
21 guided by in-season, like a management harvest strategy
22 that's reviewed each year by both parties. We meet
23 preseason and then in-season, we meet weekly just about.
24 And then post-season, we evaluate kind of how we did on
25 a number of different ways. But the ultimate goal is to
26 be able to keep providing subsistence opportunities and
27 thankfully, especially realizing other parts across the
28 State that aren't as fortunate. We've been able to
29 continue to do that. And so, we've been very thankful
30 to not only be able to continue to offer opportunities,
31 but then also be able to hit some of these western
32 science targets, things like escapement goals and other
33 things of that nature.

34
35 I think where we're at right now,
36 currently, is we've been meeting all off season with our
37 partners at the refuge. And we're just now starting to
38 game plan preseason wise for the upcoming season. And
39 I'll acknowledge the elephant in the room that
40 everything on the federal landscape, as you all are
41 aware, is just basically nuts right now. And so, trying
42 to figure out how that's going to work, realizing there's
43 probably going to be some pivoting or not. Regardless,
44 we're continuing to move forward the same way we always
45 have until we officially know different. So that's where
46 that stands. But it's been a good working relationship.
47 I think moving on, looking at advocacy and outreach,
48 there are a couple of things that you'll see. I'm on the
49 second page and the third page here, but essentially,
50 as it comes to -- let me make sure I'm on the right

1 spot. Yeah. As it comes to advocacy and outreach, a
2 portion of that has been hit up really well by our
3 partners and friends at TCC. Krystal Lapp has done a
4 great job talking about our efforts with the Fish
5 Commission as it pertains to the North Pacific Fisheries
6 Management Council process, and trying to limit Chum and
7 salmon bycatch overall in Pollock Fisheries in the in
8 the Bering Sea as it pertains to western Alaska chum. I
9 think if you guys have questions specifically to the
10 Fish Commission's efforts in this arena, while I do think
11 it's been already touched on sufficiently by others, be
12 happy to try to answer any questions. I also know that
13 there have been special sessions held where Council
14 members were actually present as well. So again, I don't
15 feel like I need to go too much into that. But I will
16 say that in addition to what's been mentioned we also
17 take part in, along with others, this gravel to gravel
18 keystone initiative from the federal government,
19 basically trying to look at what's already been
20 mentioned, this gravel to gravel approach, caring about
21 salmon in this case from when they're late in the gravel
22 is eggs to when the adults come back to lay their own
23 eggs in that same gravel. So, with that, there's been
24 an MOU, there's been good efforts, and Therese has been
25 really great at leading with the voice of the people on
26 our efforts on that end. And then I guess the last thing
27 I'll mention, which is what was talked about right before
28 we broke or I apologize, maybe even the day before, but
29 just another thing on the docket is, and a lot of
30 people's minds is a stateside Area M Board of Fish
31 proposals April deadline. That's something that you all
32 are already aware of.

33
34 So, moving forward and kind of ending
35 things is kind of what I lead with, ir I guess head up
36 would be the research and monitoring projects of which
37 we have several. Again, acknowledging the fact that
38 things are in a big state of flux going into this next
39 season. But what we've traditionally done and did in the
40 last calendar year is here in front of you. So, I'm at
41 the bottom of the third page now. And what you can see
42 is we've got stationary camera systems that we're
43 looking at. This is building off of work that we've been
44 doing with Washington State University that is looking
45 at drones. We've been flying extensively or started
46 extensive flying of drones. For instance, we have the
47 Kwethluk River. We flew 60 miles worth of drones,
48 captured over 60,000 images processing for habitat
49 quality along with fish counts. And based on that work,
50 we're looking at, essentially, for those of you who may

1 be familiar, a system where it doesn't need a lot of
2 oversight functions almost like a counting tower where
3 you stand or sit from on high, look down based on some
4 contrast with some kind of a flash panel, basically a
5 canvas laid on the bottom, and I see some heads nodding.
6 So that's good. And count fish that way. Maybe less
7 intrusive, hopefully to the fish coming upstream to
8 spawn. That's been a good relationship there. I think -
9 - also, we've been looking at water temperature
10 monitoring across the system -- across the Kuskokwim.
11 And in that area, a lot of the work has already been
12 done by -- being done by tribes up and down the river.
13 So, we've been trying to figure out where we can best
14 help supplement, get data in the same place, help with
15 not only our efforts within the Kuskokwim, but the larger
16 effort of the State. And then really there's this idea
17 of environmental eNDA basically taking water samples to
18 look at based on DNA that's shed off the fish in the
19 water, trying to come up with presence absence based on
20 that, the water samples and promising results have shown
21 that we can detect different species, we can see pulses
22 of fish coming through, and we're currently trying to
23 work on both identifying those pulses down to actual
24 numbers, but then also empowering the community, seeing
25 -- now that we can see these at certain spots where
26 they're being collected, how close can we get to
27 communities, hopefully still register those signatures
28 so that it makes more sense to hopefully involve local
29 people. It's just for the better of the entireness of
30 the -- of the success of that project.

31
32 I think I'll end up with, you know, we
33 have a couple of monitoring projects you see listed
34 there. I think the first is looking at juvenile
35 outmigration work, trying to correlate that back,
36 essentially the little ones going out. Does that have a
37 relationship with the big ones coming back to spawn?
38 That's something that people are definitely getting more
39 involved, interested in, especially with this gravel to
40 gravel approach, which I already touched on. We're
41 currently slated to go -- ready to go on that project.
42 And that relates to the weir project, which I don't want
43 to overstep. We partner with that. The weir project on
44 the same river with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service,
45 the village, in this case, the organized Village of
46 Kwethluk. And I know that they've got some reports coming
47 up, especially the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. I
48 think there are some people on the line. So, I might
49 hold questions on that project just out of respect for
50 them. They're the leads. But then the Takotna River, we

1 run solely by tribal members ourselves at the Fish
2 Commission. We do all the work up of that data, whether
3 it's counts, filling in holes where there aren't counts
4 or we aren't sure about, with all certainty what the
5 counts are on those particular days or the season. And
6 you know, in a nutshell, that's what we've got going on
7 and had going on in the last year. I do want to mention
8 before I go to some upcoming events for us, something
9 that I know has touched base on. I want to preface this
10 with -- I'm not a geneticist, not even close. But I do
11 talk to some geneticists as everybody's wondering and
12 wanting to know who's catching who's fish. And so in
13 case it wasn't covered, but I think it probably was at
14 the special session last night, there are some ongoing
15 efforts from a group known as BBSRI. I don't know if
16 there's some head nods or if that was talked about, but
17 okay. But they yeah, they -- I can connect people with
18 them because I know they're working on some in-season
19 type genetics work. And then us, at the Fish Commission
20 on the Kuskokwim and then on the Yukon are looking together
21 again, acknowledging that there's a lot of federal
22 uncertainty right now. And they're one of our partners
23 in this looking at basically being able to tell with
24 more certainty that -- who's, who's fish. So, you've got
25 BBSRI that's looking at, okay, based on the -- how well
26 we can tell who's fish or who's fish right now. So,
27 like, you know, western Alaska is all one stock. They're
28 looking at the feasibility of doing that in-season. And
29 then what we're doing at the Fish Commissions so, both
30 fish commissions is trying to partner and look at, say
31 how can we tell it more than just western Alaska stocks.
32 That hasn't gotten off the ground yet? Things are in
33 place. There's a lot of craziness with the feds right
34 now on that end in terms of, you know, even the
35 geneticists. But essentially the idea is that when
36 you're looking at genetics, there are a certain number
37 of places in the gene map where they normally see
38 differences between species. And so based on that, when
39 they say, right now, we can only tell western Alaska
40 stocks, that's because they've only looked at a certain
41 number of places because it would be crazy time, money,
42 everything to look at the whole genome, the whole genetic
43 map. But what we're hoping to do as a part of this
44 collaborative effort with the state, the feds, us, the
45 fish commissions is, all right, the last thing we have
46 left right now is let's map the whole thing. If there's
47 anything there, hopefully we'll see it. And if not, well,
48 we'll cross that bridge when we get there. So, I did
49 want to mention that because it seems like it may come
50 into play with other conversations that you all are

1 having.

2

3 But with that, I will switch to events
4 coming up. The Council meeting, I'm pretty sure that's
5 already been mentioned, but the next ones end of March
6 into the beginning of April. At the same time, we'll
7 have our annual meeting going on with the Fish
8 Commission. The April deadline with the Board of Fish.
9 There is a North Pacific marine resources education
10 program with a free workshop into April, beginning of
11 May. And then I guess the next steps for us is everybody
12 knows probably is, you know, we've got break up
13 happening. Arrival of fish. We're going to start
14 hopefully business as usual managing, running projects,
15 all those good things. So, with that I think.....

16

17 (Simultaneous speech)

18

19 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay.

20

21 MR. LEON: I'm done. Appreciate it.

22

23 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Thanks so much,
24 Justin. Council members questions on his presentation?
25 Darrell. And let the record reflect, Darrell just
26 arrived about ten minutes ago. Welcome, Darrell. Go
27 ahead.

28

29 MR. VENT: Yes. I, you know, I'm
30 interested in hearing, you know, you're studying all
31 this now. I know in the upper end of that Kusko River,
32 you got that mine going on there. Are you guys monitoring
33 the waters coming out of there, or is there any
34 indication that, you know, you're having more particles
35 coming through the area because of, you know, what's
36 happening there, plus global warming? Is there any, you
37 know, are you guys studying any of those -- check the
38 water temperature. You know, I'm just curious about
39 that.

40

41 MR. LEON: Through the Chair. Darrell,
42 that's a great question. So as part of our water
43 temperature monitoring efforts, we have been talking to
44 all parties, there is a watershed coalition that started
45 meeting maybe a year ago that's composed of the middle
46 and upper Kuskokwim. It's just getting off the ground.
47 And one of the groups that shows up is, is Donlin --
48 Donlin Mine. There's been a lot of concern in general
49 with the things that you're mentioning, and I think those
50 are good thoughts. I know that as part of their work,

1 some of that is being done already. I can't speak to
2 specifics for them, but I know it is being monitored.
3 They've been open to sharing data, and part of this
4 watershed coalition that's trying to get off the ground
5 and running is looking at efforts specifically like
6 water temperature, water quality, not just there but,
7 across the region and so hope to have more information
8 about that to share at a later date.

9
10 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay. Thank you.
11 Anybody else? Tim, on the phone there? I don't want to
12 forget Tim.

13
14 MR. GERVAIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.
15 Thanks for your presentation, Justin. Really sounds like
16 you guys are doing a lot of interesting things. It's
17 really good to see that you guys are being really
18 proactive and making things happen with trying to
19 understand the fish ecology and improve the fishery
20 results for the river. To start off with, I'm going to
21 say that the Kuskokwim River is woefully
22 underrepresented on this Council and we as a Council,
23 the YRAC would appreciate it if the Inter-Tribal Fish
24 Commission could potentially encourage some membership
25 participation from some people that you would have
26 contact with on the Kuskokwim River that could be on our
27 Council. And the last thing I have is, can you comment
28 how much of a concern the gillnet fishery is off of
29 Kwinhagak, is that is that an issue for stocks coming
30 into the Kuskokwim River, or what you know of it -- is
31 it prosecuted in a way that it's just dealing with local
32 stocks around Kwinhagak?

33
34 MR. LEON: Through the Chair. Tim,
35 appreciate the questions. To answer the first one, I
36 really appreciate what you're speaking to as far as
37 representation, whether it's been fish or sheep or the
38 stuff that I've been listening in on, I have heard that
39 it would be really good to have representation from areas
40 -- like, I know Kevin is from McGrath have representation
41 up that way. I've heard it voiced a couple of times, and
42 it's definitely something I'm planning on taking back
43 to our staff. We meet weekly, and I'm sure people -- one
44 of the things that I'll be reporting on is my involvement
45 in things this week. So yeah, happy to take that back
46 to folks and see what people feel like is the best path
47 moving forward. But it'll definitely get moved up. So,
48 thank you for that. In terms of the State's fishery at
49 the mouth, which I know we talked about or was talked
50 about by others right before the break. You know, just

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1 being fair to the other side, I'm not familiar with that
2 fishery. I haven't looked up data. I think to a certain
3 extent, you know, I know it was mentioned they have to
4 pass through the mouth to get into the river. I don't
5 know the specifics of that fishery just being completely
6 honest. And I'm not prepared to really to give an opinion
7 for the Fish Commission at this time.

8

9 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay.

10

11 MR. LEON: Yeah.

12

13 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Thank you. And
14 Darrell, final question. We got a lot of presentations
15 before us.

16

17 MR. VENT: Yeah. I just wanted to comment
18 on your studies. You talked about drones. I think up in
19 the Koyukuk River, we're trying to figure out ways to
20 to help study fish, too. You know, it needs to be -- and
21 when you talk about putting that white pad on the bottom,
22 I just need more information on that. I think that would
23 be really helpful to actually see from those drones down
24 into the water, because we're having so much problem
25 with the silt and everything nowadays, it's not easy to
26 see. And that would give us some more information on
27 maybe not what type of fish but knowing that there will
28 be more fish coming up that river or coming out from
29 those areas, because we have a lot of areas that have -
30 - tributaries up in the Koyukuk River where we don't
31 know what kind of fish are coming out from those yet.
32 So hopefully you'll get, you know, could you explain
33 more about that drone?

34

35 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: We'll have we'll
36 have presentations from YRDFA on the -- on the Yukon
37 River side. So, this is Kuskokwim. So, we'll have other
38 opportunities.....

39

40 MR. VENT: Yeah. I was just in the YRDFA
41 meeting yesterday. I just wanted them to hear that
42 information. They were talking about it.

43

44 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: We can talk to
45 YRDFA about that. They're doing this drone stuff. And,
46 you have cameras with white bottom plates on the river.
47 And those cameras are recording the fish as they pass
48 by. So, they're doing two different kinds of projects.
49 Correct?

50

1 MR. LEON: Yeah. So, there's a variety
2 of different projects, and I know we've got a lot to
3 talk about. I'm happy to talk about it, sounds like in
4 the interest of time, talk about it at a break or
5 something if you'd like. But yes, there are a number of
6 different.

7
8 MR. VENT: Yeah, he was talking about
9 YR DFA and they weren't explaining about, you know, the
10 drones and the pads on the bottom. I just wanted them
11 to get more of that information. That's why I mentioned
12 that.

13
14 MR. LEON: Sure. If you want me to speak
15 to it now, I'm happy to, but.....

16
17 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Well, we have a lot
18 of presentations and so we can -- when we have YR DFA up
19 here, we can talk about having the same kind of projects.
20 Their -- your projects are excellent. No, I'm not -- I
21 -- Kuskokwim River Inter Tribal Fish Commission is doing
22 an excellent job. I really super happy with the with all
23 the DNA stuff in the water samples, all these warm --
24 the temperatures, stuff that we've said at meetings.
25 You're implementing those, you're doing a great job, but
26 we don't need to talk to them about drones. We need to
27 talk about YR DFA, about the drones.

28
29 MR. VENT: Yeah. Just because, you know,
30 we're trying to do the monitoring of the water quality.
31 It's if this mining comes into play, we're really going
32 to be concerned about this.

33
34 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Sounds like you got
35 baseline water samples and temperature. And especially
36 you're probably sampling fairly heavily water samples
37 near the Donlin area. You're in conjunction working with
38 them on this water samples contaminant levels. My
39 understanding of what you said.

40
41 MR. LEON: Mr. Chair, that's -- we're in
42 talks with them and figuring out what each other has,
43 in addition to the efforts that we're doing on our own,
44 which just in other parts of the Kuskokwim.

45
46 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Right. So, okay. We
47 need -- we need to keep moving here. Thanks so much,
48 Justin. Do a great job down there. You're -- my
49 compliments to your director who was on our Council for
50 a while. So, we're under -- let me go back to TCC -- is

1 going to come up next. So there she is. Introduce
2 yourself on the record.

3
4 MS. ERICKSON: Okay. For the record,
5 Diloolo Erickson with Tanana Chiefs Conference tribal
6 resource stewardship department. I think Krystal gave
7 you guys a pretty comprehensive overview of our
8 cooperating agency work with NOAA NMFS, and I'm sure you
9 can appreciate how much work that was and understand
10 that that's been the bulk of what we've done since I've
11 seen you guys since last fall. There is just a couple
12 other big events that I just wanted to update the Council
13 on. So back in October, TCC signed a DOI self-government
14 agreement. It was the first of its kind, and it was a
15 multi-agency agreement. So, it included U.S. Fish and
16 Wildlife Services, National Park Services, Bureau of
17 Land Management and USGS. And we were able to sign one
18 scope of work under that self-government agreement. So,
19 we'll be moving forward with that. And the intent was
20 to have that self-government agreement in place to
21 bolster our consultation and communication and
22 partnership over lands and resources with our federal
23 partners. And so that was really exciting, and we're
24 excited to move forward with them and see how that plays
25 out. We also signed on to the Gravel to Gravel Initiative
26 MOU with a lot of other partners, like the Kuskokwim
27 saying, and will be engaging with that partnership group
28 over the next few years. Right now, there is an Interior
29 Watershed Restoration Summit happening up at Birch Creek
30 and my staff is up there, and that group is intended to
31 kind of cover all the different agencies and different
32 tribal and NGO groups that are working on the Interior
33 watersheds so, the Yukon watershed.

34
35 And so, we're engaging pretty heavily
36 there also. And then the AMBCC, the Alaska Migratory
37 Bird Co-Management Council, we're continuing to engage
38 there. And we'll be having our TCC regional meeting March
39 5th. And then the statewide meeting will be April 7th
40 through the 10th. And then our fisheries program is just
41 wrapping up their studies from 2024. I think we just got
42 our samples back from the lab. So, my biologists are
43 going over that right now, and then they're also
44 preparing for our 2025 field season. And the only study
45 we're going to be operating this year is the Mid River
46 Sonar feasibility study. And we'll be wrapping that up
47 and they'll be testing, I think two sites, one near Ruby
48 that they had identified are -- just below Ruby, above
49 Galena. And then they'll be looking at the site near the
50 Tozitna right below Tanana, again, and I think my

1 biologists are online if you guys have questions about
2 that. And then just so this Council is aware, we received
3 a letter from the Eastern Interior Council around a dall
4 sheep management coalition and wanting to form one of
5 that or form that and have TCC engage. And we responded
6 with a number of other federal agencies that -- we wanted
7 a little more clarification from that RAC on what they
8 mean by a coalition. And if they wanted it to be just
9 on the Eastern Interior side or like span both Eastern
10 and Western. And I think they were wanting to model it
11 after the Fortymile Caribou Management Coalition. So,
12 and I don't know if you guys got a letter on that too.

13
14 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: We have not
15 received any communiqué from the Eastern Interior about
16 that. We have a sheep management strategy paper which
17 you've received a copy of?

18
19
20 MS. ERICKSON: I think so. I've received
21 a lot of things.

22
23 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Nissa can send you
24 that again. Yeah. And we're moving that forward -- in
25 the Federal Subsistence Board process through our annual
26 report about utilizing it as a template of management
27 for dall sheep within our region. We're just staying
28 regional. Last year we tried to work with other Regional
29 Councils that didn't work out. So that -- we've not got
30 a [sic] communiqué from about this coalition thing. Not
31 at all. So, we're moving forward. We're way out in front
32 of the pack on the sheep stuff. So, continue.

33
34 MS. ERICKSON: And that was it. That was
35 all through the Chair.

36
37 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Oh.

38
39 UNIDENTIFIED: Who's this through the
40 Chair. This is (indiscernible). Having problems with
41 phone [sic], but I'm just -- my IERAC is pending yet
42 paperwork. But I'm sitting here listening in. I'm from
43 Nikolai. Thanks.

44
45 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Thanks. Okay,
46 that's good to hear you on the phone. Appreciate your
47 presence. And identifying yourself. So, any questions
48 for us? Go ahead there. Don.

49
50

1 MR. HONEA: Thank you, Mr. Chair.
2 Diloolala, I know you're wrapped up in in quite a few
3 projects, but I just wanted to emphasize that, hey,
4 anything coming out whether it's the bird committee or
5 something that, you know, that you notify our Tribal
6 Councils. And I'm sure you do, because a lot of times,
7 I can't get up here, I missed a couple of fisheries
8 meetings, but it'd be nice if we could have that by way
9 of Zoom or something. But I'm thankful for, you know,
10 you guys reaching out to us and, you know, we need help
11 in some areas. Thank you.
12

13 MR. ERICKSON: Yeah. So, I do give a
14 subregional report twice a year. So, at the subregion,
15 the Council leadership will hear what we're up to. And
16 then we've gotten some requests from a few tribes to
17 start giving a reports every once in a while at their
18 Council meetings. And we're ramping up our efforts as
19 best we can with our small staff to do village outreach.
20 And we're shooting for six outreach trips this year, and
21 we've done one already. We went out to Galena last year
22 or last month, sorry.
23

24 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Other Council
25 comments? My question is your pilot project for sonar
26 on the Yukon, is it North Bank or South Bank orientation
27 or both banks for -- because Yukon River stocks will
28 start to align. So, my question about your -- is that
29 part of your project?
30

31 MR. ERICKSON: I think Brian Leppin is
32 online and I'm going to kick that over to him if he is.
33

34 MR. LEPPIN: Yeah, I'm online Diloolala.
35 This is Brian Lepping with TCC, for the record. We are
36 looking at both banks. And it kind of just depends where
37 the sonar is going to go. We are looking at a spot near
38 the Tozitna River, and we took some genetic samples and
39 still looking them over this past -- this past field
40 season to kind of indicate the -- how these fish are
41 oriented to the bank. But the site down the -- well, I
42 call it the alternative site. The alternative site,
43 which is down below Ruby, above Galena, there I don't
44 think we would be looking into bank orientation as much,
45 but we would be putting seminars on both banks.
46

47 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: That's an
48 important part of this project is the left -- left bank,
49 right bank orientation. That's been in customary and
50 traditional knowledge forever. So, appreciate that. And

1 my other question for you is have you abandoned Henshaw
2 Creek now weir, or could you move more to this
3 videography type system of enumeration of stocks moving
4 through the Henshaw drainage with the camera just just
5 running. Go ahead.

6
7 MS. ERICKSON: So, I think Nicole is
8 online, but my understanding is we have not gotten the
9 funding from OSM for Henshaw or Gisasa. That's why
10 we're.....

11
12 (Simultaneous speech)

13
14 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Oh, I see.

15
16 MS. ERICKSON:not operating. Yeah.

17
18 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: I see. So, that --
19 with the advancements that Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal
20 is using with the videography methodology, it could be
21 much cheaper to run it. Just have a huge data bank to
22 back up all that -- all those video. So other questions
23 for Diloolala? Doing excellent work, Diloolala. Appreciate
24 it a lot. Thank you so much.

25
26 MS. ERICKSON: Thank you.

27
28 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Glenn Stout
29 messaged me that they're using -- starting a pilot
30 project that they can actually estimate moose abundance
31 using -- it's a genetic markers. How does that work,
32 Glenn? Let me get this. So, you would take relationship
33 of various moose samples and then you can estimate
34 abundance, possibly apply this to fisheries. Go ahead.
35 I just wanted just a real brief about how.

36
37 MR. STOUT: Yeah. So, that paper I sent
38 you was from a paper published in 2009 by Mark
39 Bravington. He's a geneticist fish biologist managing
40 tuna in a commercial fisheries off Australia. And they
41 developed what's called a CKMR. It's the close kin mark
42 recapture project, where they use genetics to estimate
43 abundance of a fish population. And -- so, we started a
44 pilot study using the hunter killed moose teeth that we
45 gathered there at the check station to see if we can do
46 the same thing in moose. And one of the requirements are
47 that you need the age of the individual animal associated
48 with the genetic sample. And so that's why we gathered
49 teeth, is to get the sample. But anyway, it may have
50 application in a fishery here in Alaska.

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CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Appreciate that. I hadn't heard of that methodology but I'm going to read this article. Thank you very much. So, we're moving on to -- let's see. Under D Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association. Yeah, I got all that out of the way. All right. Selena, introduce yourself on the record.

MS. ALSTROM: Okay, so I guess I'm I have a new name.

CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Excuse me for butchering your name. Serena. I should know that.

MS. ALSTROM: Well, good afternoon, Council. Thanks for having me. My -- for the record, my name is Serena Alstrom, and I'm the executive director of the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association. And I'll be giving you [sic] report.

I'll start with our Harvest Survey Program in 2024. The survey program was founded by the National Park -- funded by the National Park Service and began in 2002. We have ten communities along the Yukon River with locally hired surveyors. Starting in June, running through the last week of August, surveyors interviewed local households about their experience fishing that week. Households are kept anonymous and the same survey questions are asked every week. Interviews are sent to us at the beginning of the week. The data is collected and then analyzed and put into a report that is sent out to partners and management agencies. This year we launched a digital app for surveyors to use. As for the 2025 season, we have applied for two sources of funding and are waiting to hear back. If no additional funding comes through, we will scale back the program and run it as a skeleton operation.

Moving on to the Yukon River In-season Teleconference Program, we currently do not have funding for the 2025 in-season teleconference season. We will be pursuing funds to continue and revamp the program to be more forward moving with the teleconference calls if funding is available.

Yukon River Watershed Ecosystem Action Plan. In 2003, YRDFA established -- in 2003, established with funding from the Gravel to Gravel Initiative, a steering committee was developed and their purpose is to create a public -- publicly accessible story map tool,

1 a resource that prioritizes assessing threats to salmon
2 habitat and identifying the highest priority restoration
3 actions. This tool will be open to all and be fostering
4 a sense of community and shared responsibility for the
5 Yukon watershed. With the overall commitment to assist
6 YRDFA in creating a Yukon River Ecosystem Action Plan.
7 During July and August of 2024, your environmental
8 specialist James Van Lanen and field technician Matthew
9 Lohrstorfer, conducted field data collection for your
10 Watershed Ecosystem Action Plan. Data collection, this
11 -- that season consisted of water quality sampling and
12 culvert surveys in the middle Yukon River and Tanana
13 River watersheds, using the U.S. Fish and Wildlife
14 Service's GIS database. Matthew and James collected a
15 total of 64 culvert surveys and 50 water quality samples.
16 Field work locations this season consisted of the area
17 surrounding Nulato and Road System, accessible areas
18 around Minto, Manley Hot Springs, Eureka and the Tofty-
19 Tanana Road. The field crew identified multiple
20 additional culverts of potential -- of potential concern
21 for Yukon salmon fish passage, which was not previously
22 listed in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service database.
23 Culvert survey data was entered into the U.S. Fish and
24 Wildlife Service Fish Barrier and Hunter app, and water
25 quality data was entered into a new survey123 app
26 designed by YRDFA's contractor Michael Baker and
27 associates.

28
29 This data collection will continue in
30 2025. Field work locations were finalized yesterday
31 during our steering committee meeting, and we will be
32 focusing on three areas along the Yukon River watershed.
33 And we can have those -- that list to you and made
34 available. I'm sorry I didn't bring my notes.

35
36 The Yukon River Clearinghouse Project.
37 This project is to identify gaps, data gaps along the
38 Yukon and act as a clearinghouse for social and
39 ecological changes along the Yukon River using both
40 physical, biological data and traditional ecological
41 knowledge. We have hired a TEK technician, Jadon
42 Nashoanak, and he will be conducting TEK interviews to
43 learn about the -- to learn about and generate a
44 historical timeline of observed data, changes that may
45 affect salmon on the Yukon River. Additionally, we have
46 a physical, biological science technician who this
47 season is the field -- or, I'm sorry, where he helped
48 along with the WEEP project, and they collected the water
49 quality samples this last season. Engaging fishers in
50 chinook salmon research on the Yukon River. The project

1 -- this project is funded by the North Pacific Research
2 Board. It began in January of 2023, and ends February
3 of 2026. We are partnering with the communities of
4 Alakanuk and Emmonak to conduct interviews about the
5 health of chinook salmon as they enter the river. We are
6 gathering this information to help inform our companion-
7 led project with Doctor Katie Howard and Vanessa von
8 Biela, which is seeking to understand the drivers of
9 chinook salmon decline and theorize that one driver is
10 their diet in the Bering Sea, which is strongly, strongly
11 related to their health when they enter the river.

12
13 We have completed our interviews in both
14 Emmonak and Alakanuk and provided summaries of the
15 results to the participants in tribal Councils. We plan
16 to travel to Alakanuk and Emmonak in March to hold
17 community meetings and gather feedback from the
18 communities. We also are working with the communities
19 of Saint Mary's and Huslia to monitor water temperature
20 and develop community action plans about heat related
21 events that causes salmon die-off.

22
23 I'm going to stop there and give you
24 some dates to keep in mind. Your first Board meeting is
25 going to be held in Fairbanks here at Pyke's, April 22nd
26 and 23rd. And this year is our 35th anniversary so,
27 we'll be having a celebration, April 23rd here at Pyke's.
28 Invitations will get sent out. And your first pre-season
29 meeting will also be here in Fairbanks at Pyke's, April
30 24th and 25th. We extend that invitation to the Western
31 Interior RAC Board members. We are having a few people
32 resign this year, so it's going to be sad to see them
33 go, but we want to celebrate the success of YR DFA. Thank
34 you.

35
36 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Thank you. Any
37 questions for Serena? Darrell.

38
39 MR. VENT: Yeah. Just to comment on the
40 three areas she was talking about. We had a big
41 discussion on this, and we're trying to monitor areas
42 that are being disturbed by exploration. So up around
43 the Birch Creek area, there's a barge that's currently
44 abandoned in the river. And we wanted to make sure that
45 you know -- anything around that area we want to make
46 sure we check the quality, because they're going to do
47 a lot of exploration around there. And I was concerned
48 about our area on the Koyukuk River so, I mentioned, you
49 know, the tributaries coming up on the, you know, the
50 Jim River, South Fork in those areas, just to monitor

1 in case anything, you know, starts happening. Because
2 when that fish died off around, you know, the
3 (indiscernible), beginning Huslia and Hughes, it could
4 have been from runoff from the mining, associated with
5 the heat and the temperature of the water, which made
6 it warm up -- way too warm for our -- so, we didn't have
7 any information on that. So, we wanted to make sure that
8 we, you know, provide our people with the right
9 information 'cause [sic] there was no information given
10 to us. So, we had to, you know, try to assume what could
11 have caused this. We weren't too sure, but we know there
12 was a lot of turbidity coming out from that Hog River,
13 because that river was called Clear Creek, and it's not
14 clear no more. So, you know, it's just something that
15 we're trying to associate what could be the problems.
16 And we're trying to figure out the problem right now.
17 And then also on the Saint Mary's area, Marshall, Pilot
18 Point and one more area, they wanted to check the
19 qualities of these, these streams going along the --
20 along there areas. And they were concerned about those.
21 Thank you.

22
23 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Thank you,
24 Darrell. My question -- you're referring to the salmon
25 chinook condition at Emmonak and the Lower Yukon. Where
26 are those samples coming from? How is that in the test
27 fishery or where do these fish come from for chinook?
28 How are you getting these fish, obtaining these samples?
29

30 MS. ALSTROM: Thank you for that
31 question. Through the Chair. We're not actually
32 collecting any samples in the lower river. It was our
33 TEK technicians were conducting interviews and making a
34 timeline of historical observations.
35

36 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: I see. Conditions
37 over time and stellar as documenting how the lipid or
38 the fat content declined. So, that's -- that was the
39 answer to my question. Thank you very much. Any other
40 questions for Serena? Don.
41

42 MR. HONEA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, you
43 gave some dates here, YRDFA meeting April 25th. Is that
44 -- am I is that correct?
45

46 MS. ALSTROM: YRDFA Board meeting is here
47 in Fairbanks, April 22nd and 23rd. And the 35th
48 anniversary celebration will be here in Pyke's on
49 Wednesday night, April 23rd.
50

1 MR. HONEA: Okay. I, for one, appreciate
2 your report there. I realize it's a little early to be
3 looking at numbers. So, if I was to go on to the YRDFA
4 website, and I could -- is that is that when you come
5 out maybe in April with your projected, other than
6 checking with Holly Carroll you know, projected numbers?
7

8 MS. ALSTROM: We work together with ADF&G
9 and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Yukon area managers, and we
10 coordinate our annual pre-season meeting after the Yukon
11 River panel, when they do have their outlook ready so
12 that we could present it to the participants that are
13 coming in from the communities.
14

15 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay. Any other
16 questions? Tommy.
17

18 MR. KRISKA: Yep. I have a few little
19 questions. Anyway, I was kind of stuck between two
20 meetings not knowing that -- while I was looking at the
21 dates, like, I don't know, 2 or 3 weeks ago, then I was
22 thinking, this or that -- your meeting was in March. And
23 then I looked at the dates and, I said, oh, they're both
24 on the same dates. But I didn't realize that they were
25 in the same month. So, I was supposed to be at their
26 meeting yesterday, and I was kind of, you know -- so I
27 just hope in the future that we make sure that this
28 don't happen, because I really like to be at that meeting
29 too. I mean, you know, I'm on that Board, I'm on this
30 Board, I'm on, I don't know, 3 or 4 different Boards,
31 but it's kind of frustrating to get here and then, like
32 can't really do anything about it, but sit where maybe
33 some of the decisions were being made. And then, you
34 know that you guys had Darrell, so you were fine. Thank
35 you.
36

37 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Thanks, Tommy. And
38 final questions. Darrell.
39

40 MR. VENT: Just to clarify, you know, I'm
41 sorry I wasn't able to attend this meeting too but, you
42 know, like, it's unfortunate things happen like this.
43 And when they start talking about, you know, mining and
44 stuff, that's kind of like my interest right now for,
45 you know, trying to get the funding for something like
46 this. And they're really working hard on that. And I was
47 appreciating that. Doesn't mean that, you know, you guys
48 are working hard. I know you I appreciate you guys
49 working here and doing what you got to do. But we were
50 really doing a study up on -- it's called gravel to

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1 gravel. So, you know, we're looking at the tiny fish
2 when they start coming out to the mouth. And you know,
3 what's preventing them to become, you know, a population
4 of fish coming back in. So, you know, I knew that was
5 important. And Tom knew this meeting was important. So,
6 we had to split. You know, I appreciate, you know, his
7 hard work over here. And I hope you guys, you know,
8 excuse my mishap because we got meetings in both places,
9 and I had to make a choice. Thank you.

10

11 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Now, there's just
12 a lot of meetings, and it's really hard to come up with
13 a meeting date and not overlap some kind of a meeting
14 somewhere.

15

16 MS. ALSTROM: If I may.

17

18 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Go ahead, Serena.

19

20 MS. ALSTROM: Yes, we did take this
21 meeting into consideration when we're planning. I
22 thought this meeting was actually starting today and
23 going on till Thursday. So, we were wanting our steering
24 committee meeting to fall on a Tuesday. And so that the
25 Board members here could attend both meetings at the
26 same time. And sometimes it just doesn't work out. But,
27 we do try to keep other meetings in consideration dates
28 and everything when we schedule.

29

30 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Thank you.
31 Appreciate that consideration. So, thank you very much,
32 Serena. Oh, Robert.

33

34 MR. WALKER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I
35 would like to thank you, Serena, for all the work that
36 you have done for the Yukon, because I know you really
37 monitoring and you really take care of -- on your job
38 what it's supposed to be for. So, I would commend you
39 very much, you and your crew. Thank you again, Serena.

40

41 MS. ALSTROM: You're welcome. Thank you,
42 guys.

43

44 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Yeah. Again, I
45 commend YRDFA and all the various projects over the many,
46 many years. I'm a little concerned about the lack of
47 funding for the conference call. That's going to be an
48 issue this summer. And those -- those conference calls
49 are used by the in-season managers extensively to get a
50 sort of a hand on the pulse of what's what the public

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1 is thinking. So, I'm concerned about that myself. So,
2 thank you very much. And so we're going to continue on.
3 So, we got moving into Alaska Department of Fish and
4 Game. We got Yukon River Coho Salmon Telemetry Project,
5 Andy.

6

7 MS. PILCHER: Andy is online and he does
8 have a PowerPoint. So, we do need to quickly do a couple
9 rearranging things.

10

11 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay. So, you can
12 do that. And then -- so we're going to -- we're going
13 to momentarily start the PowerPoint projector up. And
14 are you you're there, Andy, online?

15

16 MR. PADILLA: Yes, I am. Can you hear me
17 okay?

18

19

20 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Hear you. Great.
21 Loud and clear. Five by five.

22

23 MR. PADILLA: Great. Thank you.

24

25 (Pause)

26

27 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: You got a
28 projection and let's get darkening. So, your first page
29 is up, Andy. Yukon River Coho Salmon Radio Telemetry
30 Project.

31

32 MR. PADILLA: Okay. All right. And as an
33 introduction, my name is Andy Padilla, and I am the
34 assistant research fish biologist for the fall season -
35 - fall season with the Alaska Department of Fish and
36 Game Division of Commercial Fisheries based out of
37 Fairbanks. I'm here presenting on the 2022 Radio
38 Telemetry Project conducted on Yukon River coho salmon.
39 This project marked the first time coho salmon were radio
40 tagged in the Yukon River and served as a feasibility
41 study. Previously, ADF&G has cooperated with other
42 agencies to conduct radio telemetry studies on chinook,
43 summer chum, and some components of the fall chum salmon
44 within the Yukon River drainage. Funding for this
45 cooperative project was provided by the Office of
46 Subsistence Management, ADF&G, Yukon Delta Fisheries
47 Development Association, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, and the
48 Yukon River Salmon Research and Management Fund. Next
49 slide please.

50

1 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Continue. Project
2 objectives.

3
4 MR. PADILA: This -- okay. Thank you.
5 This study was developed to address the limited
6 knowledge about coho salmon within the Yukon drainage.
7 Baseline information, we need it to be collected to
8 assist in effective fishery management. Coho salmon are
9 harvested across important fisheries, as we're talking
10 about here, including subsistence, commercial, personal
11 use and sport fishes, fisheries within the Yukon River
12 drainage. As the last major salmon species to migrate
13 up the Yukon River in the fall, studying their migration
14 is -- can be particularly challenging due to the onset
15 of winter. The project objectives included mapping the
16 distribution of tagged coho salmon, calculating
17 proportional contributions to five drainage groups,
18 determining the mean migration speed between river
19 sections, and analyzing run timing through lower river
20 for each drainage group. Additionally, the project aimed
21 to identify migration routes and spawning areas, which
22 assisted with the nomination to the Anadromous Waters
23 Catalog and pinpoint areas to enhance future genetic
24 baseline. First, I'll cover some of the field work
25 conducted as part of the project, followed by
26 preliminary results -- excuse me, they're not
27 preliminary anymore -- that address these objectives.
28 Next slide, please.

29
30 (Pause)

31
32 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: That slide -- there
33 it is. Go ahead.

34
35 MR. PADILLA: Okay. This map highlights
36 the five drainage groups represented by colored
37 polygons, which were chosen to define coho salmon
38 drainage groups for the study. The groups were selected
39 based on available tower locations and limited coho
40 salmon data from the Anadromous Waters Catalog, as well
41 as areas documented in the 90s for subsistence -- were
42 subsistence users also helped us define where coho
43 salmon were known. The map also shows the locations of
44 11 remote tracking stations or towers established for
45 the project. And for the towers were positioned along
46 the main Yukon River, while six were placed on the
47 tributaries. The white area in the lower Yukon
48 downstream from the first tower is not included in the
49 drainage groups. We know that coho salmon are present
50 in the Yukon River and other systems in the lower Yukon,

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1 below the tagging site however, the tagging site was
2 chosen based on river morphology. A single channel.
3 Logistics with the community of Russian Mission and its
4 position above any potential commercial fishing district
5 or harvest, which did not occur during our tracking, but
6 in the event that it did. Next slide please.

7

8

CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay.

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MR. PADILLA: In 2021, the towers sites were cleared as they had not been visited since 2020 -- excuse me 2015 during the previous summer Chum salmon tagging project. In 2022, just before tagging began the towers were visited to upload tag frequencies, which are essential for detecting individual fish as they pass the towers. The initial phase of the project involved dedicating a couple of days of fishing with snag nets to -- at potential sites, and training staff on tagging procedures. Tagging officially started on August 15th and continued daily until September 5th. Following the release of the tagged fish, fish were tracked via the stationary tracking towers and aerial surveys. Next slide please.

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CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay.

MR. PADILLA: This chart represents or compares the number of coho salmon tags deployed shown in the black line to the coho salmon daily estimates provided by the sonar operated near Pilot Station, which is shown in the colored bars, and that is for 2022. The data on the on the bottom axis is lag to Russian Mission, which is 90 river miles upstream of the sonar site. To kind of show you a comparison of run timing, the tags deployed occurred during the bulk of the run and covered both of the large pulses. And as you can see with the overlap between the bars and the lines. And a total of 349 tags were deployed. Next slide please.

39

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CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Go ahead.

MR. PADILLA: This map or this map displays the final tracked locations of coho salmon throughout the drainage. Additional tributaries were surveyed with no tag detections. A total of 67 tagged Coho Salmon traveled to previously undocumented areas, and this resulted in 19 additions to the Anadromous Waters Catalog and provided documentation for 37 additional water bodies. Next slide please.

1 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay.

2

3 MR. PADILLA: This donut chart
4 illustrates.

5

6 (Simultaneous speech)

7

8 MR. GERVAIS: I had a question. You said
9 the final location. They were like caught in nets or
10 they just stopped moving?

11

12 MR. PADILLA: Oh, thanks for the
13 question. I didn't catch who this was.

14

15 (Simultaneous speech)

16

17 MR. GERVAIS: This is Tim Gervais.

18

19 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: That's Tim

20

Gervais.

21

22 MR. PADILLA: Okay. Yeah. Hi, Tim. Thank
23 you. The answer to that would be that that was the final
24 time that they were detected by either a stationary
25 tracking station or through aerial surveys. So, the fish
26 were not handled or physically captured at their last
27 known location. If that if that answers your question.

28

29 MR. GERVAIS: Yeah. Thank you.

30

31 MR. PADILLA: You're welcome. To get back
32 to this slide, the donut chart illustrates observed
33 percentages of coho salmon that migrated within the
34 regions of the prior map, based on data from towers and
35 aerial survey tracking flights. Describing clockwise,
36 coho salmon primarily migrated to the Tanana River, 53%
37 as shown in the rightmost section, the yellow section
38 there. While this while a significant portion occupied
39 the Lower Yukon group, 34% which is the largest left
40 segment, and the lower left, which in this group includes
41 the Anvik River and one fish that went into the Innoko
42 River.

43

44 The Koyukuk River drainage accounted for
45 7% in the dark blue segment, and the middle Yukon
46 accounted for 6%, the green slash teal segment at around
47 12:00 and included a fish found in the Yuki River
48 headwaters, the middle Yukon. The upper river -- Yukon
49 River area above the confluence of the Tanana,
50 represented the fifth drainage group and only had one
Coho Salmon consisting of less than 1%, and it's not

1 shown in this just for clarity's sake. Next slide please.

2

3 This chart describes lengths of coho
4 that were tagged to give a little bit of perspective on
5 what was sampled. The bottom axis of the chart are the
6 lengths in millimeters, and the left axis is the number
7 of males and females tagged yellow being female, and
8 blue -- dark blue being male. The catch is influenced
9 by net selectivity and fishing location. We fish close
10 to the shore due to coho salmon behavior and to reduce
11 or reduce chum salmon capture. Female coho salmon are
12 usually slightly larger than males, and you can kind of
13 see that here. In 2022, the male coho salmon were notably
14 smaller than the females, and with an average of 525mm
15 for males and 535mm for females, which is consistent
16 with other test fishery projects in the lower Yukon River
17 in that year. Our project avoided tagging some of the
18 smaller coho as we prioritize the best fit to the fish
19 size available. Next slide please.

20

21 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay.

22

23 MR. PADILLA: Migration speed was
24 calculated based on the date and time of the release to
25 each of the tower locations. This box plot chart is
26 based on fish that were tracked between successive
27 towers in kilometers per day. So, if you're looking on
28 the left that would be the lower river. And as we go to
29 the right of the chart, that's more upriver into the
30 drainage. The vertical lines represent minimum, and
31 maximums and the shaded areas represent your 25 and 75%
32 quartile intervals. Horizontal lines within the boxes,
33 right in the middle of each of them is the median speed,
34 and points outside of those are indicated as outliers.
35 After the initial tagging, the average travel speed
36 slowed, likely due to the tagging event once they resume
37 the migration. The average main stem migration speed was
38 33km per day. Migration speed slowed down as coho salmon
39 approached spawning areas, as shown by the Anvik River
40 in the in the blue box there where fish were only
41 traveling 22 miles per day. So, it makes sense they get
42 slowed down as they get closer to their spawning
43 locations. Fish within the Tanana River drainage also
44 showed some slowing over successive stations in that
45 drainage, as shown by the dark -- the blue arrow in
46 those three towers on the right hand side. Fish within
47 -- however, these towers were not located on spawning
48 streams, but were on the main stem of the Tanana-
49 Kantishna but, there is a trend going upriver. They are
50 slowing down. If you could to the next slide, please.

1
2 The chart here shows date fish were
3 tagged relative to where they ended up. So, starting on
4 the top we have the lowest section of the river. And
5 then near the bottom we have the uppermost part of the
6 river, the Upper Yukon that we were -- our drainage
7 groups. The date is along the bottom of the bottom
8 access, and the final location is noted in the gray box
9 on the right of each chart, and the colors on the chart
10 do correspond to the presentation maps and other charts.
11 And I'll read them, I'm not sure if you can see them
12 there, but the top most would be below Paimiut and that
13 is below our tagging, or just within our tagging site
14 area Lower Yukon, middle -- the third one down is the
15 Koyukuk River, the middle Yukon-Tanana River and Upper
16 Yukon had the one fish. There was no real migration
17 pattern by drainage group. All drainage groups were
18 present throughout the tagging period, with the
19 exception of the one fish that we had in the upper river.
20 And you can't really come up with anything for a trend
21 for one. So next slide please.

22
23 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay.

24
25 MR. PADILLA: All right. Based on
26 tracking coho salmon in the study, several areas were
27 identified as needing additional genetic baseline
28 coverage. And these areas were determined by comparing
29 our study results with existing lab samples and the areas
30 in the blue there are listed by Regional Advisory Council
31 regions. So, you guys are smack dab in the middle here.
32 And I'll read some of those sites that we thought could
33 use additional genetic baseline, and those would be
34 within the Yukon River tributaries, the Yukon River,
35 Thompson Creek, Roto River, Kaltag River, Yuki, and
36 within the Yukon drainage, Yukon River -- excuse me,
37 Koyukuk River drainage, the Gisasa, Tok and Clear Creek.
38 And on the lower left there we are hoping that if you
39 know of any other location -- coho salmon spawning
40 locations and accessible congregations, that you would
41 share this information. Typically we need a sample size
42 of about 200 fish to get a good genetic baseline. And
43 Liz Lee -- Elizabeth Lee's -- our fishery geneticist,
44 and her contact is in the lower left there. Next slide.

45
46 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Go ahead.

47
48 (Pause)

49
50

1 MS. PILCHER: If anyone is still out
2 there we seem like we're having technical difficulties.
3 We're going to pause the meeting and then restart
4 everything, so just hold tight.

5
6 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Are you still can
7 here? Are you still there, Tim? I think I dropped
8 everybody.

9
10 (Pause)

11
12 We should take a break while this is all
13 messing up. So, let's take a ten-minute break. It's going
14 to take a bit to get them to call back in. So, if you
15 want to -- okay.

16
17 (Off records)

18
19 (On record)

20
21 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, the phone is
22 back up if -- so let's see here. We're going to restart
23 the presentation. I have Jenny that stepped out. Tommy
24 stepped out. Darrell stepped out. But we don't have a
25 lot of time. So, Darrell -- come -- So, we're going to
26 continue the presentation. Can you project it back up.
27 We need to get it back on the Screen. And so, most of
28 the Council is here. You're there. Tim, you can hear me
29 now. Tim Gervais.

30
31 MR. GERVAIS: Yes.

32
33 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay. And Roger
34 that.

35
36 MR. GERVAIS: Andy, I believe Andy is
37 still online, and I think all the online people were
38 online. We just lost the connection to the meeting room
39 in Fairbanks.

40
41 MR. PADILLA: Yes. And.....

42
43 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Nissa is going to
44 put the projection back.

45
46 MR. PADILLA: This is my more or less my
47 last slide. So I'll go through.....

48
49 (Simultaneous speech)

1 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, okay.

2

3 MR. PADILLA:it quickly. And I
4 appreciate your patience with me.

5

6 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: And the slide is
7 up. Continue on, Andy.

8

9 MR. PADILLA: All right. As we discussed
10 in the previous slide the genetic baseline slide, the
11 tracking fish is spawning areas within the Yukon
12 drainage identified key sites to improve the genetic
13 baseline for coho. We have already started proposing or
14 generating proposals to collect additional baseline
15 samples from these locations. This project marked the
16 first time coho salmon were radio tagged in the river,
17 and served as a feasibility study since it was just one
18 year. To better account for natural variability, we
19 would recommend similar studies over three years, and
20 we would urge folks to prioritize funding for coho salmon
21 research alongside chinook and chum salmon as coho are
22 also crucial to the ecosystem. The observations from
23 this project would be strengthened by additional years
24 of tracking, which would build documentation to increase
25 the nominations to the Anadromous Waters Catalog, the
26 AWC. Confirming coho salmon in the same areas for future
27 studies, will help list more in the AWC and provide
28 greater habitat protections for these areas. And since
29 we -- the landing zones and tower maintenance
30 established during this project actually assisted in the
31 current chinook salmon telemetry study, which saved
32 costs, and these resources are ready to support future
33 coho or salmon telemetry studies. Next slide. And just
34 a quick shout out to all the folks that made this happen.
35 We'd like to again show everyone, I think if you have
36 the next slide.

37

38 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Slide is up, go
39 ahead.

40

41 MR. PADILLA: If not -- yes. Just --
42 okay. If you have any questions or have any. I'll stay
43 online here. If not, you can contact myself or Bonnie
44 Borba after as well. Thank you for your time.

45

46 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Thank you. The main
47 question I have is when you're deploying the tagging,
48 you're seeking adult fish. Did you take a fitness
49 inventory, the condition of the fish to use the
50 (indiscernible) or some way of just roundness of during

1 tagging -- as far as fat content, it's concerning that
2 only one of the sample size went north into the Upper
3 Yukon, because there used to be -- I used to fish at the
4 bridge, and there was quite a few coho late in the
5 season, not just one. There was some -- quite a bit of
6 coho, people had them hanging on the on the rack. There
7 was a lot of cohos on the rack, so I'm concerned that
8 they're not actually mating destination. Did you take a
9 sample of that?

10

11 MR. PADILLA: So, we didn't take fitness
12 in a measured sense. We did take a take comment or notes
13 on each individual fish if they -- their color. So, we
14 did have color, whether there were, you know, silver,
15 bright, red or somewhere in between. And most of the
16 fish that we tagged were bright or just turning a little
17 hued. And we also took notes. If you go to slide five,
18 you'll also see that we only covered -- what we were
19 trying to cover, which was about 80% of the run. The
20 bulk of the run is -- was what we covered. But that
21 doesn't mean that some of those fish that move further
22 up in the river, as was brought up at the Eastern
23 Interior RAC, it's possible that those early fish may
24 have been moving in earlier and were moving up towards
25 the bridge, and we know that fish go into the Porcupine
26 because folks harvest them and they've done their own
27 interior Canadian telemetry study. So, you know, this
28 is a one-year study. We did have one additional tower
29 that was opportunistically put up, up to Porcupine, and
30 that showed nothing, which kind of supported our one
31 fish going up there. But yes, you know, there's room for
32 additional years because we only tried -- due to budget
33 constraints with the funding source, we could only tag
34 for so many days and put out so many tags. So, we had
35 to kind of get the bulk of the run.....

36

37 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay.

38

39 MR. PADILLA:which is what we did.

40

41 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Appreciate that
42 response. Darrell, final -- coming up on the final
43 question. Go ahead, Darrell.

44

45 MR. VENT: Yeah, just so concerning what
46 Jack was talking about. Now, you know, we're talking
47 about North Bank, South Bank. And I was wondering maybe
48 the fish that you were taking was that that was on the
49 South Bank or the North Bank? There was there maybe
50 there was fish that was going up in the Yukon on a

1 different side. Just so one thing to think about there,
2 and also this doesn't tell us, you know, a whole lot.
3 It just tells us that there's fish going up there. And
4 that dates and times, and I'm hearing that fish are
5 coming in later now. So maybe there's some kind of
6 deterrence out there in the ocean that's having the fish
7 come in a little -- at a later time. Those are just the
8 two things I need -- I was trying to get some questions
9 on.

10

11 MR. PADILLA: Okay. Yeah. Thanks, Darryl.
12 We -- let's see. We tagged on the left or -- excuse me,
13 the right bank, mostly. Which would be fit, you know,
14 but further down, there's -- we haven't found any
15 evidence of bank orientation that low in the river. But
16 traditional knowledge in the Kaltag, Nulato, Koyukuk
17 area kind of -- that's the area where those Kuskokwim
18 fish are kind of splitting off onto the North bank or
19 right bank, if you will. So, I think that the way that
20 we sampled was or caught those fish was just fine. The
21 second part you asked about. Let me see. Kind of --
22 could you repeat the second part for me?

23

24 MR. VENT: Yeah. Just checking. You know,
25 you're just doing the basis on the study with the fish
26 in the time of the month. I was just talking about some
27 fish are coming in later in the month.

28

29 MR. PADILLA: Yes, yes. So, yes. Thank
30 you for that. We did as you kind of see on that slide
31 there, Pilot Station only stays open for so long. They
32 typically close during this -- these like the 6th of
33 September. So, there's areas where we're not counting
34 fish after Pilot is out. So those cohos are the ones --
35 are the latest fish in general. And you know, Pilot,
36 it's been known that Pilot does not capture the entire
37 run of coho like it does for king, summer chum and fall
38 chum -- coho and fall chum. So yes, the -- there is that
39 and yes, this was a feasibility study. So, it's kind of
40 just making, you know, where are the coho going? You
41 know, and then this will help build future studies
42 essentially. Where can we focus our efforts now that we
43 know where, you know, these fish are going? For the most
44 part.

45

46 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: I think this is a
47 very worthwhile project. It was -- it is a pilot project,
48 and I do appreciate the starting to focus on coho,
49 because coho has not been doing so well, just like the
50 other Yukon River stocks. But that's -- we got some shut

1 down, technically. I need to move on in this agenda. I
2 appreciate your presentation. And so, we're going to
3 move on. And thank you very much, Andy, for that work.
4 And I hope that it continues. So, we're going to go to
5 Subsistence Division Brooke Fisher. And state your name
6 for the record when you make presentation. Go ahead.

7
8 MS. FISHER: So, thank you, Mr. Chair and
9 Council members. Good afternoon. My name is Brooke
10 Fisher, and this is my colleague Tim Bembenic. And we
11 are Subsistence resource specialist with the Department
12 of Fish and Game Subsistence Division. I'm one of the
13 people responsible for research along the Yukon and its
14 tributaries. And Tim is the lead researcher in the
15 Kuskokwim region. We're here to give a brief report on
16 some of the work we are currently doing in your region.
17 Next slide please.

18
19 The first project I would like to talk
20 about is the Yukon Comprehensive Harvest Surveys. An
21 increase in the Pacific Salmon Treaty Implementation
22 Fund has helped the division survey communities in the
23 Yukon River drainage that have never been surveyed
24 before, or where data are no longer representative in
25 2022. We surveyed Hooper Bay and Chevak, and in 2023 we
26 surveyed Huslia and Koyukuk, and these technical papers
27 for these communities have been published. In spring
28 2024, we surveyed Kotlik and Alakanuk and are in the
29 process of analyzing data and writing the technical
30 report now. Next slide please. In late 2024, we received
31 funding from the NOAA 2020 and 2021 Chum Salmon Disaster
32 Fund to continue our comprehensive harvest survey effort
33 in communities along the main-stem Yukon River. Data
34 gathered from the next three years will serve to update
35 the division's 2015 paper on the socioeconomic effects
36 of declining salmon. We have received approval from Ruby
37 and Holy Cross to survey this spring. We have also
38 identified Saint Mary's and Rampart as potential
39 partners for our for surveys in 2026. Next slide please.

40
41 This next project is a joint project
42 with the Tanana Chiefs Conference to better understand
43 non salmon harvests and use patterns with specific focus
44 on humpback whitefish. This project is funded by OSM and
45 combines biological data from spawning Humpback
46 whitefish populations gathered by TCC biologists, and
47 harvest and use data gathered by the division of
48 Subsistence and Allakaket and Alatna. Harvest and use
49 patterns of all non-salmon species were documented using
50 harvest and use surveys and traditional ecological

1 knowledge interviews with nine knowledgeable locals of
2 different ages and genders with a history of fishing for
3 non-salmon. Two researchers from the Subsistence
4 Division also completed a participant observation
5 excursion with a local fisherman to learn about
6 traditional harvest methods of whitefish and other non-
7 salmon. We are currently analyzing data and writing this
8 report. Next slide please.
9

10 In 2023, the division received Pittman-
11 Robertson funds to investigate the ceremonial harvest
12 and use of big game populations throughout the state.
13 The purpose of this five-year project is to compile
14 existing data for the ceremonial harvest of game
15 populations statewide, in order to assess data quality
16 and gaps, and gather qualitative data regarding potlatch
17 practices. The synthesis of these two data sets will
18 inform the development of a robust educational and
19 outreach program to improve ceremonial harvest,
20 utilization, and report compliance. We have interviewed
21 all area biologists and other relevant staff, and we
22 will be traveling to Kaltag at the end of March to
23 participate in and observe the annual Stick Dance
24 Celebration. In the coming months, the division will
25 finish compiling available harvest data from area
26 biologists throughout the State and identify any
27 additional communities or areas for additional
28 fieldwork. Next slide please.
29

30 The final project I would like to talk
31 about is on customary trade and barter in the lower and
32 middle Yukon River. This report was published in
33 September 2024 and is a follow up to our previous study
34 on customary trade, barter and salmon declines in upper
35 -- in the Upper Yukon, published in 2017. The purpose
36 of the study was to document and understand patterns of
37 resource exchange in the Yukon River drainage, and
38 describe the role that salmon declines have played in
39 customary trade and barter. We surveyed Galena and
40 Kaltag in 2021 and 2022, and Mountain Village and Nunam
41 Iqua in 2023. We found that barter and customary trade
42 occurred on a small, both in terms of the number of
43 total transactions and the total amounts of resources
44 and goods exchanged -- a small scale, excuse me. And the
45 frequency of participation varied, too. Some households
46 have established barter trade relationships that they
47 utilize on a seasonal basis, while others participate
48 opportunistically. Next slide please.
49

1 This concludes my review of the Yukon
2 River projects. I'm going to turn it over to Tim on the
3 Kuskokwim now.

4
5 MR. BEMBENIC: Thank you, Brooke. Hello,
6 Mr. Chair and Council members appreciate the opportunity
7 to speak today with you. For the record, my name is Tim
8 Bembenic, and I'm a fish and game Subsistence resource
9 specialist in the Kuskokwim River region of western
10 Alaska. And I'm based out of here in Fairbanks office.
11 I have a few slides that discuss some ongoing projects
12 in your region, but mostly it's the upper Kuskokwim. So,
13 our first project here is Natural Indicators of salmon
14 in the Upper Kuskokwim River region. This project is
15 funded by the Office of Subsistence Management, and the
16 project goals that are listed in the investigation plan
17 are to review historical abundance, distribution and
18 health of salmon populations. To document the natural
19 indicators of Salmon run abundance and health and to
20 document, incorporate local and traditional ecological
21 knowledge or TEK of salmon into management practices in
22 the communities of McGrath, Takotna and Nikolai.
23 Fieldwork for this project began in the spring of 2022,
24 and to date all the 13 ethnographic interviews have been
25 completed, transcribed, and analyzed for themes about
26 salmon harvesting in the area. We are now in the report
27 writing phase of this project with a deadline of
28 September 2025. We're looking forward to presenting our
29 findings at a public data review meeting and each of the
30 study communities. And it's at that time we'll ask
31 residents to review all of our data for accuracy. A copy
32 of the transcribed interviews will be returned to each
33 of the interviewed respondents at that time as well. Next
34 slide please.

35
36 The second project is a big one. It's a
37 Kuskokwim Management Area Post-season Subsistence Salmon
38 Harvest Survey Project, or as we lovingly refer to it,
39 as the KPSS. This is an annual study that's funded by
40 the Office of Subsistence management, and the department
41 has been collecting subsistence salmon harvest
42 information from Kuskokwim area families since 1960. For
43 over the past two decades, the department has partnered
44 with ONC to conduct surveys among Bethel area
45 households. We typically survey about 28 communities
46 throughout the Kuskokwim drainage, including South
47 Kuskokwim Bay and Goodnews Bay areas. This past field
48 season, in the fall of 2024, we were fortunate we got
49 out to 28 Kuskokwim area communities after receiving
50 approval from each community's tribal Council and where

1 we conducted door to door in-person surveys. Our
2 sampling design for the 2024 season was similar to 2023,
3 and we completed 1,468 in-person surveys. Follow-up --
4 phone surveys were conducted if households could not be
5 contacted in person, and we completed 15 surveys from
6 12 communities just with phone follow ups. To gather
7 Fish and Game Subsistence staff and ONC, we also
8 surveyed Bethel households, and we achieved a 25% sample
9 of that community and completed 486 surveys. Next slide
10 please.

11
12 This slide shows a draft table. So, this
13 is a preliminary estimate of harvest estimates of
14 chinook, chum, sockeye, coho and pink salmon harvest by
15 community, by district or regional level, and the
16 drainage. On the left hand side, you'll see a list of
17 each community as well as a district total line. The
18 four districts are the Lower River, Middle River, Upper
19 River, and South Kuskokwim Bay. At the top, all five
20 salmon species are listed, as well as a total of all
21 species combined, which is on the right hand -- far
22 right-hand side there. The community is located inside
23 of the first red box, are the communities within the
24 region and represent the Middle River and the Upper River
25 River districts respectively. The second highlighted box
26 shows the Kuskokwim area total harvest of each species,
27 as well as a total of all fish harvested at the lower
28 right-hand side. Please note again that these are --
29 this is an estimate draft. They're not finalized, so
30 they may change slightly. This table and the remaining
31 finalized tables and figures are generated annually and
32 are made accessible to the public in a technical report,
33 which is available on the Fish and Game website. Thank
34 you. I appreciate your time and dedication to the public
35 process and thank all the residents of the Kuskokwim
36 River communities for your help with this project. I'd
37 be happy to field some questions at this time.

38
39 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Thank you, Tim and
40 Brooke, about those various projects. I'm happy to see
41 these household surveys being accomplished because it's
42 enumerates, you know, the -- meeting subsistence needs
43 and so forth. Council member comments or, Darrell.

44
45 MR. VENT: So, I remember we talked
46 about, you know, something that like, you know, what do
47 we have on our plate every year in the Native communities
48 for subsistence use? Did we ever go back and, you know,
49 review what's not on the plate? I mean, you know, what
50 we have to use as an alternative because we don't like

1 -- we don't have salmon, we don't have caribou or
2 anything like that. I forgot what you call that. You
3 said it was a subsistence or base, baseline or something.
4 I forgot what that was, but I know what we're eating now
5 is not nearly as much subsistence food as before. So,
6 when they were talking about this survey, as I was
7 saying, wait a minute, now, you know, this is -- we're
8 using alternative food because we don't have the regular
9 food anymore, something like that, in that order.

10

11 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: If -- the Kuskokwim
12 has had fishing and the Yukon has had very little
13 fishing, Kuskokwim has had quite a bit of sockeye harvest
14 to supplement the lack of chums and so forth. So, we're
15 we're on the, on the Yukon River system, Koukuk River
16 system. It's going to be a little bit different picture
17 than what you're having at Huslia, where you don't have
18 salmon at all, hardly. And you're supplementing more
19 with moose and black bears are down. So, there's -- but
20 they're not taking into account domestic foods or store
21 bought food. This has to do with wild harvest of fish,
22 salmon at specific communities and specific use levels.
23 And then the overall harvest for the Kuskokwim River. I
24 -- that's what that -- the objective of this -- of that
25 was. So, I appreciate the other projects that you're
26 also doing the surveys on whitefish and other -- the
27 upper Kuskokwim in the McGrath, Nikolai, Takotna
28 fisheries. So, they -- other questions by the Council?

29

30 (No response)

31

32 No other questions. Thank you so much.
33 Appreciate it. Thank you for your presentations. We're
34 going to go to 26A. Carmen Daggett's going to give us a
35 -- maybe just a written report only. And what -- where
36 is that found, Nissa.

37

38 MS. PILCHER: Carmen, are you online?

39

40 MS. DAGGETT: Yes, ma'am. Can you hear
41 me?

42

43 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: We can hear you
44 fine, Carmen. And.....

45

46 MS. DAGGETTE: Good.

47

48 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, we're looking
49 -- there's a handout also. Nissa is.....

50

1 MS. PILCHER: It's in supplemental
2 material starting on page 57.

3
4 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: 57 in the meeting
5 book. Okay.

6
7 MS. DAGGETT: Thanks for that
8 Orientation, that's helpful. Through the Chair to the
9 RAC. This is Carmen Daggett with Alaska Department of
10 Fish and Game. I'm a wildlife biologist for Game
11 Management Unit 26. A because you have such an extensive
12 agenda here, I just wanted to provide this information
13 as you know, if people wanted to refer to it, I don't
14 think it's necessary to delve into this too much. And
15 you're welcome to review it and see if you have any
16 specific questions. I did want to mention that we are
17 going to be putting a lot of effort into doing a large-
18 scale muskox survey in Game Management Unit 26A and in
19 Unit 23 this spring. And so that's what we're going to
20 be focusing a lot of our efforts on. So, if you have any
21 questions regarding that feel free to ask but, I just
22 wanted to provide this information sheet to you and, and
23 be available for any questions, if anybody has any,
24 regarding the Teshekpuk Caribou Herd or moose or muskox
25 or whatever for this region.

26
27 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, my question
28 would be for Teshekpuk. We got Caribou that showed up
29 near Wiseman, and we'd had Teshekpuk there a few years
30 back, or -- do we have Teshekpuk Caribou in our adjacent
31 area to the South Slope of the Brooks Range -- North
32 Fork of the Koyukuk and, near Wiseman?

33
34 MS. DAGGETT: Good question.

35
36 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Telemetry. So.....

37
38 MS. DAGGETT: Yeah.

39
40 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: If it's not -- if
41 it's not.....

42
43 (Simultaneous speech)

44
45 MS. DAGGETT: Stand by for a second. I'm
46 looking it up.

47
48 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So and -- so --
49 yeah, okay. And so that was just a, you know but I do
50 see that the that the calf sizes the recruitment looks

1 like they're fairly decent sized. You take a short
2 yearling weights in the when you're doing any kind of
3 collaring of caribou in spring?

4
5 MS. DAGGETT: We do our collaring during
6 the summer and yes, we do do that. Our short yearling
7 recruit -- our calf weights have been rather low,
8 actually, particularly this last summer. There were some
9 of the lowest we had on record, this last summer. So do
10 you have any follow ups to that or...?

11
12 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: No, I'm just, you
13 know, just -- I want to know what kind of, you know,
14 there's strong cohorts and weak cohorts. And so, you
15 know, I'm interested in weights of recruitments showing
16 their fecundity. So, you can anticipate whether they're
17 going to produce at 3 or 4 -- if not if they're weak
18 cohorts, they end up calving at 4. So that's what that
19 all means. So I -- that's -- that would be basically my
20 question. You had a response to that telemetry on
21 Teshekpuk? There was a lot of caribou that went through
22 Anaktuvuk Pass. And they went south of the community.
23 And then all of a sudden a whole bunch of -- or several
24 Caribou showed up in our area and we'd had Teshekpuk
25 Caribou there a few years back. That's why I was asking
26 that question. But if it's not at the -- at your
27 fingertips, don't worry about it.

28
29 MS. DAGGETT: So, you'll have to forgive
30 my geography just a little bit here. So, you know, just
31 looking at the map briefly looks like there's some
32 Teshekpuk Caribou kind of between the John and the North
33 Fork of the Koyukuk. And -- so there's a mix of Teshekpuk
34 and Central Arctic animals kind of in your neck of the
35 woods that way, kind of. But I'd say like larger mix of,
36 of Central Arctic animals that are kind of your way
37 right now more than anything.

38
39 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay. That's what
40 I kind of wanted to know. When they show up, I like to
41 keep track of which herds are using which areas. It's
42 kind of important. And you know, Western Arctic parsed
43 out from Teshekpuk and Central Arctic, which don't have
44 the same status management wise so.....

45
46 MS. DAGGETT: Yeah.

47
48 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, thank you very
49 much for that.

50

1 MS. DAGGETT: I would say you're west --
2 almost no western Arctic animals in your area at all.
3 Maybe 1 -- 1 or 2 collars at most. But for the most
4 part, you're looking at in your region a mix of Teshekpuk
5 and Central Arctic right now.

6
7 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay. So, any other
8 any questions on Carmen's? You have any additional input
9 there, Carmen?

10
11 MS. DAGGETT: Not really. I figured I
12 would just keep it short and sweet and simple since you
13 guys have a lot to talk about yet, and I -- the
14 information, the short and skinny of it all is right in
15 front of you there. So, you know, I just thought I'd
16 target specific questions and not waste your time too
17 much.

18
19 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, that's my
20 my questions. Any Council questions? Darryl.

21
22 MR. VENT: I'm curious about, you know,
23 this -- you're talking about the size of the Caribou.
24 You know, these males are pretty important when it comes
25 to female males that lead the caribou or migration. I
26 was just curious how far are they migrating, and is that
27 the normal migration pattern that you usually have just
28 down to, you know, certain areas then they go back? As
29 before, you know, like the Central Arctic Herd, that
30 used to go away, probably down to the Bethel area a long
31 time ago when I.....

32
33 (Simultaneous speech)

34
35 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: That was Western
36 Arctic was doing -- going down there to the Lower Yukon.
37 Teshekpuk, it comes into the Brooks Range, it can go
38 west, but it comes a lot of times it'll come into the
39 central Brooks Range, and they'll sort of mix a little
40 bit with this -- with the Central Arctic Herd. Central
41 Arctic herd has been, you know, they've gotten trained
42 to go west and then down, and come into the into the
43 gates of the Arctic Park. And so that's what they've
44 been kind of doing the last two years. And so, Mark's
45 going to come up and talk to us about them pretty soon
46 here. But Carmen is in charge of Teshekpuk predominantly
47 and Western Arctic Herd, so that's what we'd like to get
48 apprised of. But we had a rainy summer with lots of rain
49 and lots of bad weather. That's good for the caribou.
50 The caribou spread out. They don't aggregate. You don't

1 get a survey. So, the rule of thumb is, and I told Jim
2 Dau this before, if you got a -- if you can't get a
3 survey, the caribou won't aggregate. That means the
4 caribou are doing really good. If you got it -- you get
5 a real good survey. They're all compressed together with
6 hot summer. That's a bad sign. And that -- and Jim Dau
7 documented in 1994 and 1998 that when they had hot
8 summers, their calf weights were abysmal and their --
9 in the condition and the adults when they swam the Kobuk
10 River were really skinny. So, summer temperatures have
11 a giant effect on caribou populations and fecundity,
12 long range fecundity.

13
14 MR. VENT: Yeah. I was just curious
15 because, you know, when you're talking about Central
16 Arctic Herd, they used to come into the Huslia area.
17 They never had -- have since, you know, late 70s, but
18 also this Western Arctic, they've been showing up here
19 at the shelter cabin in -- above Huslia. So, we're glad
20 we're getting a little bit of caribou there.

21
22 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Yeah, there's --
23 there was a lot of caribou that crossed the Kobuk this
24 year. So, you should be seeing some of those. So, thank
25 you so much, Carmen. We're going to have Mark Nelson
26 come up now and good luck with all those kids Carmen.

27
28 MS. DAGGETT: (Indiscernible) Thank you,
29 I appreciate it.

30
31 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, introduce
32 yourself on the record there. Mark and Jordan.

33
34 MR. NELSON: Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Chair,
35 members of the Council. With me today is Jordan
36 Pruzenski. She's my assistant, and my name is Mark
37 Nelson. I'm the Northeast Alaska area biologist for Fish
38 and Game, for all wildlife stuff. Today I was asked to
39 just give a quick Central Arctic Caribou Herd update and
40 you guys just talked about them a little bit, but yeah,
41 just to kind of go back in time a hair. In the 1970s,
42 when we first discovered this herd, there were around
43 5000 of them. They mostly stayed just on the North Slope
44 kind of in that lake Prudhoe Bay-Kuparuk country. Over
45 the last 30, 40 years since then, that herd has
46 essentially grown and grown pretty steadily all the way
47 to about 2015, 2016, they got all the way up to about
48 70,000. And then there was a sharp decline down to
49 20,000. Since then, this herd has been growing again.
50 All indications look actually pretty good. Parturition

1 rates are good, meaning they're having calves every
2 year, a pretty high proportion, like in the mid 80s or
3 low 90s. Our three-year-old partition rate, which is
4 what you were talking about earlier, has also been pretty
5 good. Last year it was 85%, which is the long-term
6 average, which is pretty good for a three year old
7 partition rate.

8
9 Our last photo census was in 2022. And
10 like I said, it had kind of been growing since about
11 2016 there. The last photo census count was right around
12 35,000. And the way everything looks, pretty sure that's
13 grown since then. We will try to get a photo census this
14 year. That's a very high priority. And so hopefully we
15 get another number for you for next year. Last fall we
16 were able to get a composition count. We do those during
17 the rut when all the bulls and cows and everybody's
18 mixed together. And everything looked pretty good there.
19 There were 42 bulls per 100 cows. Of those bulls, 15 of
20 those were large bulls per 100 cows. And then the calves
21 were 45 calves per hundred cows, which is also pretty
22 good. So, seems to be a lot of bulls in the herd and a
23 lot of calves to keep those recruitment up.

24
25 Two years ago, I was seeing that this
26 population was growing again, and in an effort to keep
27 this herd from kind of getting really big and declining
28 the Board of Game -- we asked the Board of Game to
29 increase the bag limits, and they did. So, right now in
30 most of 26B where the bulk of these caribou are
31 harvested, it's five caribou for any resident hunter,
32 and it went from one bull to two bulls for non-residents.
33 So, this is the first year, we're right in the middle
34 of it. So, we don't even have a full year's data yet.
35 But this is the first year that we've been monitoring
36 pretty closely our harvests there. As of, you know, like
37 I said, these are very rough numbers, but as of a week
38 ago, we had about 870 non-residents hunting, and we had
39 800 residents. There were 940 caribou about taken and
40 only 140 of those were cows. And in order to have any
41 effect on slowing the growth of this herd, I'd actually
42 like to see that number of cows probably double. And so
43 that season is still ongoing. It goes through April. So,
44 we're fully expecting to take probably quite a few cows
45 during April. They're usually a little -- they're easier
46 to see. They have antlers. People hunt them. You know,
47 they're the Caribou. You just kind of end up getting
48 more of in April. So yeah. Are there any questions?
49 That's kind of a rough and dirty there.

1 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Did you have an
2 increase in non-resident harvest with the increase of
3 bag limit to two? From that you have -- you had 870 non-
4 resident hunters.

5
6 MR. NELOS: Yeah. So, the average before
7 that was right around 500 non-resident hunters. And this
8 year it was 800. So, there were more non-resident
9 hunters. However, only about 500 of those non-resident
10 hunters were actually successful and actually took a
11 caribou.

12
13 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So that -- then
14 what -- that was an increase in harvest. Did you have
15 any non-resident hunters take two caribou?

16
17 MR. NELSON: There were a few, because
18 the season hasn't ended, we haven't looked at it that
19 close yet. The non-resident season has, but we'll wait
20 until everything's done. All the harvest tickets are in
21 before we really pull all that together. Certainly, some
22 did. We talked to some people up there that did, but
23 most of them didn't.

24
25 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: I was referring to
26 the non-resident additional participation with two
27 bulls. So that's the kind of stuff I like to hear. You
28 know, I was, you know, my concern about that. We can't
29 take too many cows. The thing is that hunters will
30 invariably take the largest cow. That's -- they will.
31 And so, I learned to hunt caribou from the Nunamiut.
32 When the cow caribou get past fully skeletally mature,
33 just like a bull, they get to five years of age. Then
34 they start to -- their antlers start to curve out. Those
35 are the highly fecundate cows. Those are the cows that
36 are 5 to 10, they're bulletproof against predation.
37 Those are our best caribou. If we start taking too many
38 of these large -- and so, you're getting -- are you
39 taking any samples off these cows like jaws or anything
40 like that? So, I do feel that, you know, too much large
41 fecundate cow harvest can have a deleterious effect on,
42 on the population. So, I -- I'm really happy you bring
43 me these -- bring this Council these numbers. This is
44 the kind of stuff we need to know. I'm not super
45 concerned. I do see that the caribou responded to the -
46 - to a lot of their -- as you saw, they tried to come
47 to the road in August twice. And so, they basically was
48 two pulses and they get repelled. So then -- now they
49 sort of avoided the road for a while. And so, you
50 probably saw that in the telemetry. They got to where

1 they didn't really want to go over there. And they kind
2 of went in other directions to get -- avoid that. So, I
3 do think that there's going to be a lot of dog teams
4 that are going to go up there. That's the only
5 opportunity they have. That's the hunters in Alaska,
6 skiing out or dog teams or whatever. And there's dog
7 team transporters and stuff. And so, that's going to
8 happen also. So, this number -- this cow number is going
9 to go up. But right now, I'm not -- I'm okay. I'm good
10 right now. So, thank you very much. Any questions from
11 the Council? Those were my comments. Pollock.

12
13 MR. SIMON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I sat
14 on a caribou working group for years, and we have annual
15 meeting in Anchorage and people just -- non-members come
16 in to talk about the large parts of (indiscernible)
17 around the coast and somewhere around Kaktovik area,
18 taking a lot of caribous, and lots of grizzly bears
19 sightings. They take a caribou also. So, I was mentioning
20 that if the agency Fish in the State would put down some
21 wolves, take some fish (indiscernible) some caribou.
22 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

23
24 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Thank you,
25 Pollock. Any other -- Darrell.

26
27 MR. VENT: Yeah. When we're talking about
28 caribou population and the numbers, say it could support
29 hunting, they're giving us numbers, but they're not
30 giving us a population estimate of what's going on out
31 there. The thing that I'm concerned about is that, you
32 know, you talk about the Central Arctic Caribou Herd, I
33 mean, back in the 70s, there was a lot of caribou that
34 used to go through. And once that, you know, once we got
35 hit, then we're, you know, I'm from the Caribou clan,
36 so I know about caribou. But, you know, I was told about
37 this and my great grandpa, Edwin Simon, he told me about
38 this, and he said there's going to be a decline in there.
39 And so, sure enough, it happened. Now we really rely on
40 caribou for, you know, one of our staple foods. A lot
41 of our people are living on these store bought food, and
42 it's not aiding us in the way that we like because we're
43 having a higher cancer rate and everything like that
44 that's happening when we don't have all the food on the
45 plate. So, it's concerning to me when you start talking
46 about, you know, outside hunters coming in and start
47 taking these big bulls. What concerned me on that is
48 that the migration, they don't come to our areas when
49 that happens. We noticed that when one year we had to
50 go over to Shungnak, (indiscernible), Shungnak and

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1 Ambler just to catch caribou because they were shooting
2 too many of those big, big bulls. They don't want to
3 talk about that, but I will talk about it, because that's
4 what I brought up in the Northwest Arctic Caribou Herd.
5 It's concerning. I don't want, you know, I don't want
6 to overrule you on anything, but I just want to let you
7 know what my concerns are with the caribou.

8
9 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, the numbers
10 are, you know, Mark just gave us the numbers. The herd
11 was 35,000 on its last census. He estimates with the
12 amount of calves they had and then the harvest reduction
13 and floating it, that actually could possibly, possibly
14 be a little greater. They have moved into the mountains
15 and the -- because the wolves they beat the moose up
16 pretty bad. As soon as we had caribou show up, the two
17 packs of wolves that had been going to the Porcupine
18 Herd they started looking -- as soon as they found out
19 they were caribou to the west, they'd zoned on those
20 caribou, and the wolves we caught so far have got --
21 even yearlings have fat on them. We're flushing fat off
22 the top of back of yearling. So that's caribou fat is
23 what that actually is. So, we've got to -- more in the
24 snow is deep. So, the caribou are more restricted than
25 they were last year. So, we're going to have a little
26 more predation factor. But the main take home is there's
27 15 large bulls per 100 cows. And reindeer herders when
28 they when they're breeding rein -- I've talked to real
29 reindeer herders over in Scandinavia. It's 15 cows per
30 one large bull, five years old and older. That's the
31 ratio that they breed at. So, we got -- it's that --
32 gives you in a wild population.....

33
34 (Simultaneous speech)

35
36 MR. VENT: Let me stop you there. You're
37 saying 35,000 caribou. I mean, back in the day, you
38 know, 300 to 400,000. That was, you know, pretty much a
39 real thing there. But now we're talking, you know, such
40 a small amount. How do you manage that and say, okay,
41 this is the threshold that we're going to take this many
42 caribou out there and it's going to survive.

43
44 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: There's four
45 caribou herds. There's Western Arctic Caribou Herd,
46 Teshekpuk, Central Arctic and Porcupine Caribou Herd.
47 We're talking about Central Arctic herd and the harvest
48 rates for that particular herd. And so, the majority of
49 the caribou that are going to get killed in Unit 26B,
50 is going to be central Arctic. Yeah. There might be some

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1 other minor harvests of Porcupine and Teshekpuk. And
2 occasionally we've had Western come over there. So right
3 now I.....

4

5 MR. VENT: Jack.

6

7 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Go ahead.

8

9 MR. VENT: I would like to have the
10 gentleman and the lady here explain that. I mean, you're
11 the Chairman of the Board here, and I think they have a
12 job to do, and I'd like to hear it from them because
13 they're the ones that are managing. They're the one
14 that's working with the herds. You may proceed. Thank
15 you.

16

17 MR. NELSON: Thank you for that. Through
18 to the Chair. So, the caribou you would have seen back
19 in the day in the Huslia country, and all that country
20 are actually Western Arctic. They ballooned all the way
21 up to about 500,000. And so that -- those are the --
22 they used to move all over the country. And now that
23 they're -- they're down to around 150,000 and so that
24 range is really shrunk. And those are the caribou you're
25 not seeing now. The Central Arctic herd, as far as -- I
26 don't think they've ever gone that far south. Like I
27 said, they started around 5,000. They never even went
28 to the mountains when there were only 5,000. They
29 wintered on the North Slope up there and then have slowly
30 kind of expanded and expanded their range to the south
31 into the mountains. They rarely go much south of like,
32 Coldfoot. Rarely, rarely get all the way over to Bettles.
33 So that that's the group we're talking about, the ones
34 that stay in that country.

35

36 MR. VENT: So, what's the group of
37 caribou that used to come along the pipeline, there? Is
38 that the one that in the late 70s they opened up hunting
39 on? Is that the same group? Was that the western Arctic?

40

41 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: No. The caribou --
42 they opened hunting on the Dalton Highway. They closed
43 hunting in 1974. It was closed during construction of
44 the pipeline. In 1982, the Board of Game opened archery
45 hunting in the Dalton Highway Corridor and that which
46 is five miles on each side. But caribou are small enough
47 to where they people were going out from the road and
48 harvesting caribou without -- within 5 -- up to 5 miles
49 from the road. That's the Central Arctic Caribou Herd
50 is by the road. There might be other caribou from other

1 herds there, but the majority of the time, and since the
2 road has been constructed, has been predominantly
3 Central Arctic Caribou Herd. I know a lot about this
4 herd. I live with this herd. I know where they go. And
5 that's -- I live with these caribou. I know who, that's
6 why I want to know where's Teshekpuk? Where's -- I know
7 where Porcupine is at. I need to know where Teshekpuk
8 is. I need to know where Central is. I know Western is
9 not anywhere close to us, and they're not going to come
10 to us. The bigger the herd, the more they migrate. The
11 Central Arctic never moved off the North Slope until
12 1991. That's the first time I seen them ever try to
13 cross the road. And they didn't know there was a road
14 there. When they came and followed the pass, the head
15 of the Atigun River -- they came down into the head of
16 the Dietrich River, they didn't know there was a road
17 there. They deterred and went east. They went over to
18 the Chandler. I know a lot about this caribou. I've
19 watched this herd for decades since I was a little kid.
20 But we need to move on. And so, we don't want to get --
21 we don't want to convolute what we're doing here. We're
22 looking at how this herd is doing. That's what we needed
23 to know. And that was the point of the discussion. So,
24 we can't mix apples and oranges. The manager for Western
25 is not the same for Central, etc., etc. So, thank you
26 very much. I appreciate your participation in our
27 meeting.

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MR. NELSON: Thank you.

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MR. HERRON: Good afternoon, Council for
the -- for those of you that don't know me, my name is
Keith Herron. I'm the assistant fishery manager on the
Yukon River and the tribal liaison for Yukon River
fisheries. I'm originally from Bethel, Alaska, but grew
up in a few communities around the State. And Shane.

MR. RANSBURY: And I'm Shane Ransbury. I
work as the fishery assessment biologist for U.S. Fish
and Wildlife Service and live here in Fairbanks.

1 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Both working with
2 Holly, then? Okay.

3
4 MR. HERRON: Holly Carroll is our boss.

5
6 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay.

7
8 MR. HERRON: Yeah. We're going to talk
9 to you today about three main things. I'll go over the
10 2025 management. Shane's going to cover the research we
11 have going on. And then we'll go into a letter that was
12 originally from the Eastern Interior RAC. But we sent
13 our response to all the Yukon River RAC because it's
14 relevant to all of us regarding fisheries management.
15 So, I'm sure you're all eager to know however, we don't
16 have official forecasts. I do think we can prepare for
17 the 2025 season. I think fishing opportunity is going
18 to be similar to 2024, meaning there's going to be a lot
19 of closures. We expect complete closures for chinook
20 salmon. The summer chum, there's likely going to be
21 selective fishing on summer chum in areas where summer
22 chum are present, but we need to avoid the incidental
23 harvest of our kings and fall Chum and also the fall
24 chum we probably should expect a closures as well as
25 coho. I believe we should manage that a little bit
26 differently and we could discuss that, but we should
27 probably close coho as well at the beginning and see the
28 abundance before we have any opportunity on that. But
29 we can discuss that. And the chum, I want to let you
30 know we are seeing the parent years of the first really
31 low chum run. The five year olds are going to be from
32 2020, and the four year olds are going to be from 2021.
33 So, the returns from the parent years in this season
34 were poor. So, we probably need to be a little bit more
35 cautious and be prepared for a low abundance of chum
36 salmon. And we've heard growing concern about four-inch
37 and the incidental harvest of our low run salmon. So,
38 we need to think about how that is managed. And that's
39 a discussion we'll have later when we talk about the
40 letter that was written back to you. And then for tribal
41 consultations, I believe, and I've heard many of you in
42 this room, and I've seen many of you at meetings, and I
43 believe in a management system that's rooted in the
44 people, and we all come to decisions together. So, I
45 look forward to having tribal consultations with the
46 Yukon River tribal governments upon request, and then
47 also working more with the Yukon Fish Commission to come
48 to decisions together. So those are the things in the
49 work. But, just wanted to let you know where that is at.
50 And I'll turn it over to Shane for our research updates.

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CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay. Thank you.
Appreciate that.

MR. RANSBURY: And again, for the record, my name is Shane Ransbury. So, for the coming season, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will be removing the Andraefsky Weir Camp, but Teedriinjik Sonar will operate like normal for fall chum. The ichthyophonous project finished fieldwork last year and we will be sharing project results in fall 2025. And then new research projects for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 2025 include testing a trace elements approach as a means to differentiate chum salmon from the Coastal Western Alaska Reporting Group, which currently lumps all ocean caught chum from Norton Sound, Yukon summer stock and Kuskokwim. The Trace Elements Project is in collaboration with the University of Calgary and Sitka Sound Science Center. Alaska Department of Fish and Game's genetics lab is going to do a big study around the same time where they will attempt to completely genotype chum salmon. So hopefully one or both of these methods will work for differentiating the Coastal Western Alaska Reporting Group. And we will have a method to find out exactly how many chum salmon caught in the ocean were heading for the Yukon. We also have a Yukon Delta Environmental Conditions study in collaboration with YDFDA and NMFS, which will hopefully help us to better understand how juvenile and adult salmon are using the Delta. It should also allow us to improve the juvenile outmigration study that the YDFDA and NMFS conduct every year. The new environmental study will include monitoring buoys that will also output data to a public mobile app developed by the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission and Alaska Ocean Observing System. Folks trying to go subsistence fishing or hunting will be able to pull up real time wind and wave information on their cell phones for the mouths of the Yukon, without having to spend the gas to go out there just to find that the weather is bad. Because a lot of people right now are mainly using the windy app, which is a model. The buoy placement is still to be determined as we apply for permits, but we have four buoys, and they will be in some combination of north mouth, middle mouth and south mouth and the ocean. We also have a sonar feasibility project for the main stem Koyukuk, which will start us down the path of determining whether a single project could assess all chinook and chum salmon returning to the Koyukuk.

1 For 2025, no fish would be touched. We
2 are just investigating Lower Koyukuk bathymetry,
3 potential camp locations, and how close fish swim to the
4 banks and surface. We began outreach for this project
5 last fall and in the coming months, we are meeting with
6 TCC and Gana-A'Yoo Corporation again about the project.
7 And I'm also working on getting some information about
8 the project distributed to the communities of Huslia,
9 Galena and Koyukuk. The feasibility project will take
10 more than one year, and we want to make sure there's a
11 lot of community input into the future stages of the
12 project so that we have time to consider traditional
13 knowledge, and any concern folks may have. We also want
14 time to identify local partners because we want to staff
15 a main stem Koyukuk Sonar locally. We currently do not
16 have funding for this project after 2025, so we'd also
17 need to put out for soft funding, but we do have some
18 ideas for that.

19
20 Next, we have a request for funding out
21 to investigate bank orientation of chinook salmon near
22 the Tanana River confluence, in collaboration with Brian
23 McKenna and Charlie Wright. We know from traditional
24 knowledge and other sources that chinook bank orient
25 toward the South Bank when approaching the Tanana. So,
26 we want to get a number on how strong this orientation
27 is. If nearly all of the Tanana bound fish are South
28 Bank and all of the other fish are on North Bank, it
29 might make a future sonar counting mainstem Yukon or a
30 sonar counting mainstem Tanana fish easier to operate.
31 This study would look at the site near the town of
32 confluence that TCC identified in their ongoing mainstem
33 sonar feasibility project. And then finally, we're also
34 collaborating with UAF on a remote sensing fall chum
35 habitat study to hopefully make it easier to notice when
36 spawning habitat deteriorates. This will focus on
37 monitoring wintertime upwelling and will involve a
38 combination of aerial flights and satellite imagery,
39 which is nice because satellite imagery in some places
40 goes back decades. So, we can look back in time. And
41 then did you want to -- So, and that that concludes my
42 update. And then if Keith wants to speak to the letter.

43
44 MR. HERRON: We'll pause there before
45 getting into the letter just to let you guys maybe have
46 questions on what we shared so far.

47
48 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Council questions?
49 Oh, Tommy. Go ahead.

50

1 MR. KRISKA: Oh, yeah. The sonar you're
2 thinking about around the Middle Yukon, is that -- on
3 those sites that you guys pick, I was just looking at a
4 deal here, and like, right below Tanana, that's one of
5 the places?
6

7 MR. RANSBURY: Shane Ransbury. Yeah. It's
8 -- so, I'm not doing that project that's through TCC,
9 but one of their sites is right below the Tanana
10 confluence, and another one is right below Ruby.
11

12 MR. KRISKA: Okay, okay.
13

14 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: The Koyukuk
15 Analysis, that's in between Koyukuk and Huslia, or in
16 that area or you were talking about.....
17

18 (Simultaneous speech)
19 Go ahead.
20

21 MR. RANSBURY: Sorry. So, that would be
22 -- I would ideally I'd put it as close to Koyukuk as
23 possible. So, I want to look at the space between Koyukuk
24 and the Gisasa River mouth. And I kind of want to study
25 three different areas. One is, is the area between
26 Koyukuk and Nikolai Slough. And then one is the area
27 between Nikolai Slough and the start of refuge land. And
28 then one is sort of refuge land up through Gisasa. So,
29 Gisasa is the first main spawning or major spawning area
30 for chum salmon so, we want to be downstream of that.
31 Nikolai Slough fish could be potentially swimming around
32 a sonar that's right next to Koyukuk through Nikolai
33 Slough. I think that's unlikely but, you know, I just
34 want to have like 2 or 3 candidate sites at the end of
35 the year and then discuss with folks further about
36 whether it makes sense and things like that. And work
37 on partnerships with folks, so.
38

39 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Yeah, I'm happy to
40 hear about a sonar project on the Koyukuk River, because
41 not a lot is, you know, there's a coho spawning areas
42 in the Koyukuk that that I could enumerate, but that
43 doesn't do any good since there's hardly any fish going
44 in there right now. But these sonars will show, you
45 know, passage up the Koyukuk River, there's stocks that
46 go into the Alatna, there's some stocks in the South
47 Fork. There's a whole bunch of stocks of chum salmon
48 that go to other drainages. But right now, you want to
49 be low in the drainage to get any of them that's moving
50 up there. We got to know what's coming out of the

1 Koyukuk. The smolt outmigration is a big question in my
2 mind. You know, how much -- how is the success rate of
3 some of these systems like Gisasa, and some of the
4 systems, you know, they emit small tracks in, they can
5 enumerate, you know, smolt outmigration. So, they're
6 getting some at the Yukon mouth, but we don't know what's
7 actually going on. Are some of these destinations like
8 up in the Tanana are actually -- are they actually
9 producing, are they getting smolt out migrations? Those
10 are questions in my mind about the salmon issue. But
11 these sonars is a [sic] viable method of finding out
12 what the escapements are. If they're getting into the
13 rivers and actually getting -- what's our volumes and
14 so forth. So, other questions of the Council, are you
15 still on there, Tim? I'm not hearing you. Tim Gervais.

16
17 MR. GERVAIS: Yes, I'm getting all this.
18 Thank you.

19
20 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay. So, I don't
21 have any more questions or comments. So, you have one
22 more thing. Go ahead there, Keith.

23
24 MR. HERRON: Yeah. This is Keith Herron
25 for the record. So, we just had one more thing. We got
26 a letter from the Eastern Interior RAC about some
27 management and their recommendations. And we just wanted
28 to bring it to your Council's consideration also because
29 we're all a part of the same river And I know we all
30 want to work together. So, the concern, the major concern
31 comes from -- in the summer chum fishing in the lower
32 river. We've had like an additional ten days of fishing
33 into the fall season on summer Chum because the fall
34 chum have been coming in later. So, the majority of the
35 fish, when the fishing has occurred, it has been summer
36 chum, but there is a small amount of fall chum present
37 and that's even farther into the summer season. There's
38 fall chum coming in early with some of the summer chum.
39 So, do we think, or does your Council think it's
40 reasonable to consider, like just stopping fishing on
41 like the historical date of turning into fall season,
42 like July 16th or something like that? So, we protect
43 more the fall chum and be conservative. But that would
44 limit some of the fishing on the summer chum because
45 those are there -- in most recent years. Those have been
46 abundant at that time. So do we want to on the side of
47 caution and protect all those summer -- fall chum
48 remembering that there's fall chum going farther into
49 the summer season, but the bulk are coming in early
50 August, the last couple seasons. And we have protected

1 the most of the fall chum, but just bring it to the
2 attention that we want to try reduce it, but also want
3 to try to give that opportunity when it allows for some
4 fishing. But the main concern was that we were a little
5 too close for comfort, and we could have been impacting
6 a lot of fall chum. So that's the kind of some of the
7 background. But that's the first question is like, what
8 are your guys' thoughts on like, reducing -- closing
9 some of the window on the summer chum and erring on the
10 side of caution to protect the important fall chum?

11
12 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: I have a comment,
13 but I want the Council to comment first. So, you have a
14 comment, Darrell?

15
16 MR. VENT: Yeah. You know, I'm up on the
17 Koyukuk River and we were talking about, you know, up
18 there around the Yukon Flats, which is Eastern Interior.
19 I don't really have comment on their area because, you
20 know, I'm not associated. I mean, I'm, you know, I'm on
21 the Board with them, but I don't have any information
22 from them right now as of now. But it would be concerning
23 to find out why the fall chum are really coming in with
24 the summer chum. I mean, there's -- there must be a
25 reason. Usually. they're separate.

26
27 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: They sort of
28 overlap. My concern is that the performance of the
29 Canadians and the upper river drainage is so poor for
30 fall chum that additional opportunity overlapping with
31 the summer chum is -- cannot be supported biologically.
32 So, we need to -- I would be strongly in favor, and we
33 have a IERAC member back here shaking her head. I'm
34 strongly would be cautious of even getting close to the
35 to the traditional date, because I used to fish for fall
36 chums down at the Lower Yukon bridge, and they -- they're
37 the first fish up. They're going to go way, way up.
38 Those things are so fat at the Yukon River bridge in the
39 first part of August. Those are -- they had to have
40 started out way before the traditional date. So, some
41 of those upriver stocks are actually starting out --
42 they could be mixed in at such low levels you wouldn't
43 recognize them. But when you're talking about one chum
44 salmon of the telemetry getting up into the upper
45 drainage, that's a red light on the panel. That thing's
46 glaring at you. I would be very cautious. I would even
47 trim back any kind of summer harvest -- summer season
48 chum harvest that's good -- would impact the upriver
49 stocks at all. So that's something to talk about at your
50 YRDFA for meetings and so forth. That's just my input

000120

1 on that. You asked the Council, the Western Council.
2 That's my input on that. I don't -- the rest of the
3 Council members can make theirs. So, go ahead. Darrell.

4
5 MR. VENT: Yeah. I just -- thank you for
6 that comment there. That just reminded me, I got a Fish
7 Commission meeting coming up with TCC, and hopefully
8 I'll bring that up in there and ask some questions on
9 that maybe by then we'll, you know, should be able to
10 comment on that. Thank you.

11
12 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Nissa, you got a
13 comment?

14
15 MS. PILCHER: I do. This is Nissa Pilcher
16 for the record. The letter that Shane referred to is in
17 your manila folder. It's a three pager. It's got the DOI
18 symbol and the Fish and Wildlife Service symbol. It's
19 addressed to Mr. Wright. If you guys wanted to pull it
20 out and look through it, if you can't find it, I've got
21 extras. Thanks.

22
23 MR. HERRON: And, yeah, we just wanted
24 to give you the information right now because we know
25 many meetings are coming up, so you don't have to give
26 feedback now. There'll be plenty of opportunity to
27 express your thoughts. I do have one more thing. When
28 you're ready.

29
30 MR. GERVAIS: Mr. Chair, this is Tim.

31
32
33 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Oh, go ahead Tim.
34 One more. Tim, go ahead.

35
36 MR. GERVAIS: Yeah. I support the more
37 conservative management approach and that the fall chum
38 go by the with less harvest opportunity.

39
40 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, you, you got
41 telemetry on those chums and their, you know, their rate
42 of progression up the drainage. If you got -- you should
43 be talking to Stan Zuray about that fall chum arrival.
44 They know a lot about that fall chum run because they
45 fished it commercially. It's traditional -- they're a
46 little bit slow getting up through the rapids, but they
47 traditionally get above the Tanana River in late July,
48 early August is when they're -- very early August.
49 They're at the Yukon River bridge. There's -- could --
50 good numbers starting to arrive at the Yukon River bridge

1 in the very first few days of August, traditionally. So,
2 you can calculate when that was actually going through
3 the lower river now with your telemetry work, and you
4 can refine that even further. But I would be very
5 cautious about this. The upper river stocks have had
6 abysmal performance. So that's that issue. So, you're
7 going to continue on with your other subject.

8
9 MR. HERRON: The next subject is
10 regarding the more concern about the use of four-inch
11 in the incidental harvest of salmon. We recognize that's
12 important in these times of low salmon abundance, and
13 many people do avoid missing salmon and only take say,
14 whitefish or pike. But we have heard more and growing
15 concern about being more restrictive. So last season we
16 were the most restrictive with the four-inch. We closed
17 it for a two-week period in the main stem to protect the
18 chinook run, the king run, and then in the fall season
19 we reduced it to weekends only. Do we think we want to
20 do it farther? Do we want to do like a three-week, four-
21 week, weekend all season? This is a complete, open
22 discussion. What like -- what are people's
23 recommendations to handle four-inch gear? Do they want
24 it to see it still used or do they want to remove it?
25 And we can manage the four-inch gear. We can offer it
26 in time, area and place so we can restrict, use or allow
27 it. So, there's no really need to, I guess, write a
28 proposal saying we can't be allowed, us as managers can
29 take that gear away as what I could understand it, so I
30 could be wrong, but I believe we could restrict it as
31 much as we as managers want, and we would just need
32 public input or feedback from the fish commissions, the
33 YRDFAs on what people would like to see with that gear
34 and the use of that gear.

35
36 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, I have a
37 comment, but I would like the Council to comment on that
38 four-inch mesh use in the main stem. Any Council
39 comments? My -- I fished two different gear types when
40 I fished at the bridge. I fished a four-inch gear type,
41 and I fished a five-inch in front of that, so I
42 separated, I caught fall for chums from me to Darrell
43 from the beach. They run right on the beach in four-inch
44 mesh and they just wind up in the gear. They just ball
45 up in the net like the pikes. They just roll all up. So,
46 four-inch mesh does not preclude catching -- they're
47 getting pretty (indiscernible) up by then. They tangle
48 up in the gear real easy, four-inch mesh. And the
49 Kuskokwim River drainage, we -- WIRAC, we deal with both
50 drainages and the Kuskokwim River they don't let four-

1 inch gear be in the river. They pull it into the -- you
2 have to be -- you cannot be over 300ft or 100, 150 yards
3 or some distance inside a side sloughs that don't have
4 any -- you know, the salmon are -- they might rest at
5 the mouth as they come into that -- it's where the
6 brackish waters mixing or the (indiscernible) water, and
7 then they continue on. So, in the Kuskokwim, they've
8 already figured this out. They've already figured out
9 that four-inch mesh on the main stem is going to catch
10 way too much of the fish. So just look at the Kuskokwim
11 River and the Inter-Tribal Fish Commission cannot talk
12 about that issue. That's how they avoided this four-inch
13 mesh problem of taking too many chums in the main stem.
14 So that's something to talk about at the Inter-Tribal
15 Fish Commissions. Any comments on that?

16

17 (No comments)

18

19 No, I think that -- that's -- complete
20 your presentation. Thank you so much. I appreciate all
21 of your presentation and all the projects that you got
22 going on. I think they're very worthwhile. Didn't you
23 used to work for Fish and Game, Shane or...?

24

25 MR. RANSBURY: Yeah. Previously, I was
26 the fall season assistant manager under Christy Gleason.
27 So, I switched over last January to work for Holly. But
28 I'd also worked for Holly earlier, too.....

29

30 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay.

31

32 MR. RANSBURY:when I first moved
33 up here.

34

35 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: I think you checked
36 my permit or something.

37

38 MR. RANSBURY Yeah, sure.

39

40 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, okay, we're
41 going to continue on. And so, we got that out of the
42 way. We're on Kuskokwim River broad whitefish study,
43 Frank Harris. And that's a PowerPoint.

44

45 MR. HARRIS: Yeah. Good afternoon. Can
46 you hear me?

47

48 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: We can hear you
49 great. Go right ahead.

50

1 (Simultaneous speech)

2

3 MR. HARRIS: (Indiscernible) Good
4 afternoon.

5

6 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Nissa is going to
7 bring up your PowerPoint. So, go right ahead, introduce
8 yourself for the record.

9

10 MR. HARRIS: All right. For the record,
11 my name is Frank Harris, and I'm a fish biologist for
12 the Southern Alaska Fish and Wildlife Field office. And
13 I'm stationed in Soldotna, Alaska. I'm going to tell you
14 a little bit about the project here and some of the
15 preliminary data we have collected for the Kuskokwim
16 River Whitefish Subsistence Harvest and Spawning
17 Abundance Project. This project was funded by OSM, and
18 the project partners are ONC, Native Village of
19 Napaimute and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Next
20 slide please.

21

22 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, we have the
23 first slide up. And the second one is there. Okay. Go
24 right ahead.

25

26 MR. HARRIS: There we go. All right. I'm
27 going to give you a little bit of history on the work
28 we've done on whitefish in the drainage just kind of set
29 the ground -- groundwork for this project that we're
30 doing now. Our project, our office has been working with
31 whitefish in the Kuskokwim River since 2001. It started
32 with local users observing a decrease in size and numbers
33 of broad whitefish and Whitefish Lake. So, we started
34 with a weir there, and we moved on to radio telemetry
35 to see where these fish were spawning. After locating
36 the spawning areas for broads, humpbacks and
37 (indiscernible) ciscoes, we started concentrating on
38 spawning ground surveys. We did a sample. We did sample
39 the spawning humpback whitefish on the Swift and Holitna
40 Rivers in 2006 and most recently broad whitefish above
41 McGrath in 2014 and 2015. I'm going to give a little
42 history or life history for broad whitefish, just so
43 people are familiar with them. Broad whitefish are
44 broadcast spawners, meaning they lay their eggs in mass
45 in the water column. These eggs drift downstream and
46 stick to the bottom where they incubate. Once these eggs
47 hatch, the juveniles drift downstream looking for
48 suitable habitat. Typically, they'll end up way down
49 river. In the Kuskokwim it'll be usually down below
50 Bethel. And a significant proportion of these broad

1 whitefish on the Kuskokwim will have a signature of
2 rearing in brackish water near the mouth or in the bay.
3 These fish will feed and grow in the lower areas until
4 they become mature and embark on a spawning migration
5 back up the river.

6
7 After spawning, the adults will drop
8 back down to overwintering areas. In these -- in the
9 spring, they will seek productive areas to feed, such
10 as shallow lakes. They show fidelity to the feeding
11 locations, meaning they'll go back to the same areas
12 multiple years in a row. Spawning migration timing has
13 shown to be variable. Some leave early, as early as mid-
14 June and start heading upriver. Some of the fish that
15 we've tagged below Bethel and Ungalik River and (In
16 Native) lake area have left in mid-June. They'll venture
17 up-river, spawn in late October and early November,
18 right around freeze up.

19
20 It's important to remember that broad
21 whitefish are assumed to be skip year spawners, but there
22 are a few that will be spawning every year, usually
23 males. Next slide please.

24
25 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay. Go ahead.

26
27 MR. HARRIS: The Whitefish Lake Weir. We
28 operated from 2001 to 2003. We estimated about 670 broad
29 whitefish using the lake. In 2002 and 2003, the -- we
30 weren't able to estimate populations of humpbacks and
31 (indiscernible) ciscoes due to -- we were unsure of
32 proper mark identification during times of high passage.
33 The lake waters mercury and most of the passage occurred
34 at night. But as you can see, there was large numbers
35 of the other species. Next slide please.

36
37 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay.

38
39 MR. HARRIS: I'll just start talking
40 about the next one until it pops up. Broad whitefish
41 radio telemetry. We did that from 2008 or -- 2004 to
42 2008. And they were tagged at Whitefish Lake the first
43 few years. And then we started tagging in lakes below
44 Bethel and attempt to get migration timing, spawning
45 location, overwintering location, feeding areas. The
46 telemetry's first study found two suspected spawning
47 locations, with this primary area being located above
48 McGrath, as you can see that circled in the map here.
49 The second location being below Swift River by
50 (indiscernible) Landing. This is on the Kuskokwim River,

1 but it's below the Swift River. This location didn't
2 have near the number of tagged fish, and we haven't gone
3 in there and confirmed it. There are likely many other
4 areas that they spawn. They've been documented by
5 (indiscernible), etc. in the 70s. We have not been in
6 there to check a lot of those areas, but these are the
7 two areas we were able to find with our radio telemetry.
8 Unfortunately, we had two years of poor-quality tags,
9 and we did not get as much data from that project as we
10 would have hoped. But these are the two main areas. So
11 next slide please.

12
13 2014 and '15 we went in and sampled
14 these population of spawning broad whitefish fish there
15 near McGrath to get population demographics. They
16 sampled over 1200 broad whitefish, mid age was 8.5 years
17 old, and there was no significant difference between
18 lengths that were very close to the same. So, we used -
19 - during this project, we also used electrofishing to
20 sample the broad whitefish fish above McGrath. It's very
21 similar to the technique we're using in this project.
22 And that leads us to -- next slide please. This project.
23 This is all built up to trying to figure out how many
24 we have here. So, the objectives of this study are to
25 estimate subsistence harvest rates, estimate population
26 demographics and abundance, and identify areas of
27 harvest in the Kuskokwim River. And again, you can see
28 that on the map on the lower right that shows the
29 sampling area for this project. Next slide please.

30
31 So, project design. The study design is
32 a mark recapture study to estimate the population size.
33 Since it's suspected that broad whitefish maybe skip
34 years spawners or spawn every other year so, it was
35 designed as a four year study to ensure that the whole
36 population is being sampled twice. We're using a boat
37 mounted electrofishing unit to shock the fish so that
38 the crew can net them from the bow of the boat. The
39 voltage with the electrofishing is constantly adjusted
40 for conductivity and depth, and we constantly monitor
41 the condition of the fish as they're shocked and we
42 adjust the output appropriately. The fish then receive
43 a Floy tag behind their dorsal fin, with a unique tag
44 number and a 1-800 number to call. You can see one being
45 tagged in the upper left picture there. We also take
46 length, weight, sex and clip the first fin ray on the
47 left pectoral side. That's a secondary marker, and we
48 can also use that to age the fish.

49
50

1 The fin rays are processed in a lab in
2 the winter. You can see a picture of the processed fin
3 ray, lower center. That's what they look like. It's
4 actually better to use on a long-lived fish, like a
5 whitefish than a scale. And otoliths might be a little
6 more accurate, but you have to kill the fish for that.
7 So, this is the best we can do for sampling fish, keeping
8 them alive. And typically, we sample from around mid to
9 late August. It was close to ice up as we can, which is
10 generally mid-October. Next slide please.

11
12 So, a little bit on how electrofishing
13 works. I've heard some people ask some questions,
14 including some ex-fish biologists. So, I want to make
15 sure that everybody understands how it works and that
16 it is a safe, effective means to sample fish. It is used
17 -- it uses electric -- electricity to immobilize them.
18 It's common sampling method in fisheries. And it's been
19 used safely and successfully on whitefish in Alaska, in
20 the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers. It uses a generator, a
21 special electrofishing box, anodes, which are positive.
22 They're on long poles off the bow of the boat. Cathodes
23 are the negative. They're usually just wires dangling
24 from the bow of the boat, and they create this field in
25 the water. The positive anode stimulates the fish's
26 nervous system so that it actually swims towards the
27 anode. The operators can then catch them and net them.
28 The control box is used to dial in the amount and type
29 of current needed to immobilize the fish without harming
30 them. There's a lot of adjustments you can make with
31 this unit. And we typically have a setting that we go
32 to and just adjust it from there. It's been proven to
33 be safe or shown to be safe. The larger the fish, the
34 harder it will get hit by an electrical field. So that's
35 important to know as a sampler. Larger fish just tend
36 to get hit harder.

37
38 And so how did the fish react to
39 electrofishing? And this is fishes response to DC. This
40 is what we use. We use actually pulsed DC. DC is
41 considered the safest waveform to use. At first when
42 they feel it, it's bright, you know, on the outer edges,
43 and they'll just swim away. We get a little bit closer
44 to them, electrotaxis happens, and it's basically
45 involuntary muscle contraction that causes the fish to
46 swim towards the anode. The next stage is narcosis, which
47 is a state of electrically induced immobility with slack
48 muscles. So basically, they're just kind of laying on
49 their side or maybe belly up. That's kind of the easiest
50 time to net them in the Kuskokwim because it's so murky,

1 you don't have a lot of ability to see them unless
2 they're up there. After that, the pseudo force swimming,
3 they're belly up, they'll kind of swim towards you. And
4 then tetany is when they're immobile with rigid muscles.
5 So that's kind of the stages there. Next slide please.

6
7 So, the question pops up quite often,
8 you know, is it electrofishing safe? The answer is
9 electrofishing can be a safe and efficient capture
10 method. I think I'm needing two slides ahead here. I
11 just looked over where you're at there. Next slide,
12 please. But it temporarily stuns fish and allows them
13 to be captured. You can see the lower left. There's a
14 picture of a bunch of looks, of what looks like bluegills
15 and sunfish at the surface and their narcosis, that stage
16 where you can just easily net them. They'll come back,
17 we take them out of the electrical field and they'll
18 come right back. Kocovsky et al. in 1997 found that
19 abundances of three trout species remained stable or
20 increased over an eight-year period of electrofishing
21 sampling. So, trout species are one of the easier species
22 to harm using electric fish. So, if you can electro fish
23 trout safely that's usually a good sign that it's a safe
24 method. Next slide please.

25
26 So, we're going to get into -- finally
27 get into preliminary results here. Our sample size goal
28 was to try to catch at least 600 fish per year. That was
29 in the beginning of the 2014-2015 and that includes now,
30 but the more, the better. Most years we've met that
31 goal. 2023 was an exception, and that was due to a sudden
32 end of field season on September 30th. It was due to a
33 potential government shutdown. We probably would have
34 met the goal had we been able to operate longer. I'd
35 like to point out the 2024 CPUE was three times higher
36 than previous years. We're not really sure why we were
37 so successful in 2024, but it could be a couple of
38 things. There could be a large cohort of fish that spawn
39 every third year. We've been looking at some of the data
40 on the Kuskokwim River Sonar and looking at that, they
41 had large numbers of broad whitefish counted the sonar
42 in 2021 and 2024. Unfortunately, we didn't start this
43 project until 2022. So, we don't have data from 2021,
44 but we did have a large increase in catches in 2024. So,
45 you know, we'd like to actually put in for more funding
46 to run this for two more years, to try to check and see
47 if there is potentially a third -- a three year spawning
48 cycle for some of these fish. The other possibility is
49 that the crew has become more efficient. We've had repeat
50 crew members for the last couple of years, so they're

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1 definitely probably getting a little more efficient.
2 Next slide please.

3
4 So, these graphs here that are going to
5 pop up here in a second.

6
7 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Go ahead.

8
9 MR. HARRIS: They show the catch rate
10 versus water temperature. There we go. And since the
11 broad whitefish typically spawn right before freeze up,
12 it makes sense that the CPUE increases the closer we get
13 to the spawning period. So basically, later we sample,
14 the higher our CPUE is. More fish are moving into the
15 area to spawn. Two of the three years had their highest
16 peak just before the crew stopped fishing for the season.
17 The 2022 year is an outlier because the crew at the end
18 of September, they went up into Big River in late
19 September and found a large number of broad whitefish
20 holding up the Big River wasn't initially in our
21 surrounding -- our original sampling area, but it shows
22 some interesting data. We tried this again in 2024, and
23 we did not find nearly as many fish in the Big River as
24 we did in 2022. Talking with Lisa Stuby, with ADF&G, she
25 had mentioned that they didn't really see any or very
26 many broad whitefish sampling at their sheefish sonar,
27 which was just a few bends up from where we were sampling
28 in the Big River. So, we're not sure what they were
29 doing there. But, you know, some interesting
30 information. Next slide please.

31
32 As you will soon see, the preliminary
33 ages of the broad whitefish, the lower left graph there.
34 There's no significant difference between the original
35 years 2014, 2015 and, 2022 and 2023. Although these fish
36 are a little bit younger. This isn't currently alarming,
37 but it's something to keep our eye on. So far with 2024,
38 we're not done aging all those samples. We're getting
39 there. It's looking like the ages from 2024 are going
40 to be similar to 2023 and 2022. And we're not sure why
41 or what might be going on there if they're actually
42 getting younger or if we have different ages. And we've
43 been working on this project. So, we're going to do some
44 more looking into that this summer. We're going to go
45 back and re-age some of the 2014-2015 and see if we come
46 up with a different number than what the other agers had
47 come up with. The fish also seem to be growing faster,
48 as can be seen on the plot on the right. Now, this can
49 indicate good feeding conditions over time. Could
50 indicate errors in aging by biasing the fish younger,

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1 we're not 100% sure. But again we're going to be looking
2 into that here this year. Next slide please.

3
4 So (indiscernible) lakes. So
5 (indiscernible) lakes, doesn't appear to be any
6 significant difference between years. That includes the
7 original years that we sampled up near McGrath. However,
8 the fish sampled from the project recently
9 (indiscernible) do tend to be a little longer on average
10 than the previous project, and it tends to agree with
11 previous slide where they're a little longer at age than
12 in 2014 and 2015. The same can be said about weights.
13 No difference between years, but these fish seem to be
14 a little bit heavier. Next slide please.

15
16 And this is this kind of summary of the
17 results here. It's the last slide. So far, we've tagged
18 2000 broad whitefish in three years. In the upper right,
19 you can see our preliminary estimates of the spawning
20 population up there from each year. Half of those sampled
21 fish were caught in 2024. We've had 66 recaptures during
22 our sampling. However, we've only had two tags from
23 subsistence harvest reported from the lower river. We
24 were hoping and expected to have more reported than that,
25 and have had it in the past. So, we encourage people to
26 report finding these tags and report and call into the
27 phone number on these tags. The data is important to us
28 to help us calculate harvest and to help narrow our
29 confidence bounds on our population estimates.
30 Basically, it makes our estimates more accurate. So, if
31 you find one, please report them to us. There's a monthly
32 drawing for gas card and a yearly grand prize for a gas
33 card administered by ONC. We will need a tag number and
34 we hope to get the date location officials harvested.
35 The last little bit I'd like to say is the current
36 population estimates and demographics, broad whitefish
37 population and Kuskokwim River according to this
38 spawning group appear to be doing good. We don't see any
39 huge red flags, and it looks like the current management
40 is working good. More importantly we're gathering
41 baseline information on a species that is very -- has
42 very little work done in the drainage. And this
43 information is important in the future as climate
44 changes or development occurs within the drainage. So,
45 thank you. And I'd be happy to take any questions you
46 may have.

47
48 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Thank you. That's
49 an interesting project. And I'm glad to see that the
50 broad whitefish are actually -- it's interesting that

1 they may be, you know, getting better recruitments, but
2 the numbers were going up, which is encouraging, and
3 size and weight. So that's an encouraging project. I
4 really appreciate that. And we asked these questions
5 several years ago. More than 20 years ago, we asked
6 questions about the whitefish on the Kuskokwim River and
7 productivity and so forth. So, these are answering a lot
8 of these questions. Any questions from the Council on
9 this presentation? Tim? Don't you want to pass you up
10 there, Tim.

11
12 MR. GERVAIS: I don't have any questions,
13 but I appreciate the study and I appreciate the analysis.

14
15 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Yes, that's a great
16 projects. Thanks so much, Frank. So, we're going to move
17 on.....

18
19 MR. HARRIS: Thank you.

20
21 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Oh, go ahead. One
22 final comment, Frank.

23
24 MR. HARRIS: Oh, I just said thank you.

25
26 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay. All right.
27 Kanuti Refuge. So, we're clicking away here. We have
28 quite a few more presentations. So, go ahead, Kanuti.
29 Clayton, state your name for the record.

30
31 MR. MERRILL: This is Clayton Merrill
32 subsistence coordinator for Arctic, Kanuti and Yukon
33 Flats National Wildlife Refuges. Kanuti doesn't have too
34 much to update you on since the October meeting, and we
35 provided a one-page handout. We do still have a couple
36 of Kanuti's biologists in the room if there are any
37 questions on that handout.

38
39 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: We discussed that
40 at our fall meeting. Does the Council members that
41 weren't present at the fall meeting have any questions
42 on Kanuti? It's in our hand -- it's in our pocket.

43
44 MS. PILCHER: It's in the manila folder.
45 It's got a picture of a sapsucker on the front. Small,
46 well, medium sized bird.

47
48 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: All right. Yeah.
49 It's -- I've looked at it. It's -- I thought it was an
50 excellent document. So, I -- any questions, any other

1 presentation at all?

2

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(No response)

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I have questions about the complex issue. And so that was where it was in the forefront back in 2023 about this complex issue. Is there any word for the for this Council on the on the complex issue?

MR. MERRILL: Not at my level. The only thing I know currently is everything is on pause as we wait out the budget.

CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay. Okay. So, I think that we've gotten your data or your report, and it was an excellent report and some of the information was very interesting. Thank you.

MR. MERRILL: I do have a very brief update from Arctic.....

(Simultaneous speech)

CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay. Sure.

MR. MERRILL:National Wildlife Refuge.....

(Simultaneous speech)

CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: That'd be great.

MR. MERRILL:on the status of some of their collared moose. So, in 2022, Arctic National Wildlife Refuge originally collared 24 cow moose. 16 of those are still collared. From 2022 to '24, adult survival was 94% and first-year calf survival was 28%. The average cow-calving rate over the past three years was 79%, with a twinning rate of 37%, and there will, budget providing, there will be flights to check the 16 moose for calving in late May or early June.

CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay. Did you have a handout for EIRAC on the -- for the Arctic Refuge? Last year there was a handout that I saw that there was some of your sheep work that you were doing. This Council is also interested in this, and I'll state it for the record. This Council is interested in the Refuge re-establishing this composition survey that was done from

1 1986 to 2012 for dall sheep in the Antigon Gorge. And
2 so, I talked to your refuge manager about that. But I
3 wanted to be on the record here that they're working on
4 developing, re-developing that and re-establishing that.
5 And my main, main concern is that it maintains the
6 continuity by the survey being done in June, mid-June,
7 not July, because the sheep move away from where they
8 were previously surveyed. So, there's a long data set.
9 We would -- I would -- this Council has discussed that
10 at previous meetings, and so I wanted the record to
11 reflect that we're still in conference on that. And
12 hopefully that survey is initiated this year. That's
13 what we're hoping for. But with the budget restraints
14 but Clayton's willing to walk the walk the survey. So,
15 he's got good boots. He does take a spotting scope. Take
16 Aaron with you. Take Aaron. She's an excellent sheep
17 spotter. So, you take Aaron with you. You guys go for a
18 walk. You'll find we need to know what the compositions
19 are down there.

20

21 MR. MERRILL: Right. We're still -- it's
22 still very early in the year. We're still figuring out
23 the plan for sheep surveys if they're going to happen
24 at all. I definitely have an update for you by the fall
25 meeting.

26

27 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Walking the survey
28 is a cheap survey that doesn't want a tank of fuel up
29 to Coldfoot and up there and back to Fairbanks. That's
30 a cheap run. So just take a few powerbars and you'll be
31 good. So, we just need to get some composition data
32 there. So, thank you very much Clayton.

33

34 MR. MERRILL: Thank you.

35

36 CHAIRMAN REAKOFF: Appreciate your work.
37 So that was Kanuti and so Koyukuk, Nowitna Refuge. Is
38 that Jeremy on the phone or who's going to do that one?
39 Koyukuk, Nowitna, Innoko.

40

41 MR. HAVENER: Hey, hey. Good afternoon.
42 Can you hear me?

43

44 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: I can hear you.
45 Good. Now go ahead.

46

47 MR. VAVENER: All right. So, yeah, my
48 name is Jeremy Havener. I'm the refuge subsistence
49 coordinator for Koyukuk, Nowitna and Innoko National
50 Wildlife Refuge. I'm calling from Galena, and I

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1 apologize for not being there. Right now, travel is a
2 little bit uncertain at this time. And so, I'll be
3 presenting here on Teams. Before I jump into my updates,
4 there's a couple things. One, I want to make sure
5 everybody got our moose survey report and then two, I
6 wanted to follow up on a -- our last fall meeting. I
7 know Council Member Walker had a request for some
8 information on the Innoko River and just wanted to update
9 that we were not able to locate the report on movements
10 of moose within the Innoko River. Probably Game
11 Management Unit 21E but we did find the raw data for
12 that. And we also located a ADF&G report from 2017 that's
13 got data on movements and distribution on Game
14 Management 21E. So, I guess my plan is I'll try to email
15 that probably to the tribal email that I have. So that
16 way that document gets delivered. But I just wanted to
17 start with that so, I don't forget as I go through our
18 updates. And did you -- did everybody get the moose
19 survey report?

20

21 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: We got the -- we
22 got the handout now. Yes, we got it. So, looking at
23 that.

24

25 MR. HAVENER: Excellent.

26

27 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Continue on.

28

29 MR. HAVENER: Okay. So, for time's sake
30 I'll try to move through this stuff pretty fast. But I
31 always like to start off with staffing. With our office,
32 we're Koyukuk, Nowitna, Innoko River complex and
33 currently we have eight full time employees and four
34 part time employees. Eight of these full-time employees
35 and two of the part-time are in Galena. We have one park
36 ranger that's a part time position in McGrath and a part
37 time refuge information technician in Anvik. And
38 currently we're going through a transition period. We
39 do not have a refuge manager -- a deputy refuge manager
40 in Galena currently. And so, we're kind of waiting for
41 further guidance to get those positions filled. Right
42 now our refuge supervisor, Boyd Blihovde is filling in
43 for us out of out of Anchorage.

44

45 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: And so he's.....

46

47 (Simultaneous speech)

48

49 MR. HAVENER: Outreach. Oh, go ahead.

50 Sorry.

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CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Boyd is actually acting as your refuge manager, interim?

MR. HAVENER: That is correct.

CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Continue.

MR. HAVENER: So, outreach education. Just a real quick update on that. I want to start with -- we have two park rangers, one in Galena and one in McGrath. And I always like to just bring something that they, you know, do an update on stuff that they're working on throughout the year. And I'll start with McGrath and down there, Kelly, she's working currently with the National Archery in the schools program, and that's taking place currently. And we're going into the schools and kids are, you know, signing up and participating in that. And it's, you know, it's perceived well with the community. And, you know, that's something where, you know, kids are learning archery safety. They're learning how to shoot bows and just kind of, you know, something to look forward to recreationally. But it also is something that they can take further. And it's also a competition. I know there's a State tournament, and we usually try to get folks to participate in that. So that's in McGrath. And then in Galena, Karen Bedonie, our park ranger, she is currently working on Fresh Eyes on Ice, and that's kind of a citizen science program where we work with the school here and take kids out and measure ice thickness and different variables with ice and snow. And, you know, we're also taking pictures and it's stuff that the kids get to, you know, hands on science you know, working with the data, entering data. But it also, it's a great thing for the communities out here. I know a lot of people look for it on Facebook and different things to see how the ice conditions are. So, it's, you know, again, citizen science project that we we're happy we're participating in.

Biological update. So, I'll jump into that. And this is going to be for a moose survey report. And you know, this thing it's a long document. And I'm going to do my best to try to summarize things. So, with our moose trend count survey, we flew those November 18th through the 30th this year or in 2024. And you know, we were a little late getting started. The weather wasn't cooperating. We weren't getting the snow that we needed. But we finally got it and spent a couple of

1 weeks working on that. And with this -- with these
2 counts, we use four (indiscernible). And we are looking
3 at four trend count areas on the Koyukuk, and that's
4 Huslia Flats, Treat Island, Dulbi River and the Koyukuk
5 mouth. We're looking at one trend count area on the
6 Innoko, and that's from the lower Dishna to the Grouche
7 Creek. We have three trend count areas on Kaiyuh Flats
8 for the northern unit of Innoko, and that's Pilot
9 Mountain, Squirrel Creek, Kaiyuh Slough, and we flew two
10 trend count areas on the Novi and that includes the
11 Nowitna-Sulatna confluence and the Nowitna mouth. And I
12 want to say on here that we do work cooperatively with
13 Alaska Department of Fish and Game and they -- this year
14 they flew the three day Slough trend count area and the
15 Deep Creek trend count area on the Nowitna.

16
17 Summary. This year we saw good calf
18 production indicating healthy adult cows are breeding
19 in all trend count areas. So, throughout all three
20 refuges production was up. And you know, with this
21 hopefully we'll see improved recruitment if we have good
22 calf survival this winter. We also saw, you know, lower
23 recruitment of yearling bulls throughout all ten count
24 areas. And you know, that's due partially to the low
25 production that we saw in 2023. We also saw reduced
26 adult bull and cow numbers in all trend count areas as
27 well. On the Novi specifically, I know that's come up.
28 In the past we've had some meetings -- tribal
29 consultation meetings and you know, there's been some
30 concerns, but we, we do see that as a low density, stable
31 population currently. And we do have plans to conduct a
32 geospatial population estimate this fall. We tried this
33 year, but due to the weather not cooperating where we
34 weren't getting snow. And then we did and we were seeing
35 a bunch of icing and, you know, not favorable conditions
36 for flying. We just weren't able to fit it into the to
37 the schedule with the time frame we need to do it. So
38 those are the updates on the Novi.

39
40 Concerns that we have on the Innoko.
41 This year we flew it and we counted a total of 19 bulls.
42 So, we have some concerns with the total number of bull
43 moose down there, you know, in conjunction with -- it
44 leads to the lower bull-cow ratios we're seeing. So, in
45 2011 we started surveying that area. And that's, you
46 know, it's I think -- it's roughly about 350 miles up
47 the Innoko River where we're surveying. And in 2011, we
48 were seeing bull-cow ratios of 83 to 100 85 to 100. And
49 now they are at 27 bulls to 100 cows. And so, we have
50 some concerns there. And, you know, we've also seen --

1 in 2020, we saw we had zero calves counted. And in 2023,
2 we also had poor production. And then of course this
3 last year the poor recruitment so, we are concerned about
4 that population and some of the hunting pressure that's
5 going on the Innoko. But overall, refuge biologists are
6 recommending a conservative harvest strategy for all the
7 areas I spoke about with an exception of the northern
8 unit of Innoko or the Kaiyuh Flats area. In that area,
9 we feel the numbers are strong enough to support
10 additional harvest. And there will be a state
11 registration moose hunt taking place on March 1st under
12 the RM-831 permit.

13
14 Jumping into some subsistence updates.
15 The Novi Check Station operated this year from September
16 3rd through October 1st. And this year we -- our hunt
17 numbers went back up. We had 116 hunters checking in and
18 39 moose harvested with a 34% harvest success from all
19 hunters checking in and checking out on the Check
20 Station. Last year, I believe we had 94 hunters and
21 around 28 moose harvested so, things bumped up a little
22 bit and we were happy to happy to see that.

23
24 Federal Moose Hunt 21-01, which is on
25 the Nowitna Refuge and Game Management Unit 21B, that
26 takes place from September 26th through October 1st. We
27 issued 11 permits this year. Eight of those permits were
28 hunted and four bull moose were harvested. On the Innoko,
29 in Game Management Unit 21E for Federal Moose Hunt 21-
30 04 and 21-05 and that runs from February 15th through
31 March 15th, we didn't issue any permits out this --
32 might have been last year. And that's due to the creation
33 of the new registration permit through Alaska, you know,
34 State of Alaska. And that's RM 837. And I did pull some
35 numbers from Fish and Game. And, you know, those permit
36 numbers and the harvest numbers are pretty similar to
37 what we were seeing when the federal hunt was the only
38 option. And this last year, so would have been February
39 through March of 2024, there are 14 permits issued. 11
40 people hunted four bulls and four cows were harvested
41 through that hunt.

42
43 And then the last thing I wanted to
44 touch on was the winter moose hunt decision. And so here
45 at Koyukuk, Nowitna and Innoko, the refuge manager has
46 a delegation of authority letter to make a decision on
47 a winter moose hunt and Game Management Units 24D within
48 the controlled use area, 21D within the control --
49 Koyukuk controlled use area, remainder and then the
50 south bank of the Yukon and also in 21 B on the Novi.

1 Currently we're in that process. We've already begun
2 tribal consultation meetings. We've sent out
3 information, and our (indiscernible) here in Galena has
4 been working on that. And then we'll be meeting with
5 some stakeholders and come out with a decision here
6 pretty soon on that winter moose hunt decision. And then
7 last -- one thing I forgot to mention from the biological
8 update was I talked to our pilot biologist, Brad Scotton,
9 and, and he kind of gave me a quick update on the snow
10 marker surveys we're doing. We're actually flying them
11 today and tomorrow for this year. But he just wanted me
12 to mention that, you know, we've seen some pretty severe
13 winters with snow the last three years. And then this
14 year things were looking really good up until about mid-
15 January. And we have kind of jumped into that territory
16 of potential severe winter. You know, I know some of
17 those areas we were reading up to 40in of snow already,
18 and so we'll be keeping an eye on that and hopefully,
19 you know, with the with the production we saw this this
20 last year, we'll have good survivability and recruitment
21 into next year. But aside from that, that's all I had
22 for my update. And I think I'll just stop and open it
23 up for questions.

24
25 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, Council member
26 comments. Don.

27
28 MR. HONEA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Jeremy.
29 Yeah, I guess with the population estimate count, I mean
30 you know, it's been a number of years since that
31 and, you know, I'm not placing any blame on there, but
32 I am concerned about the wolf packs between Tanana and
33 Ruby, and ultimately it ends across from Bible camp to
34 mouth of Novi, that area. And, okay so, I'm just looking
35 at the Nowitna Wildlife Refuge, page eight. On the
36 bottom, the recommendation was no additional hunting
37 opportunities in Nowitna 21B be can be supported at this
38 time. So, is there possibility of eliminating any
39 certain hunts because we don't ever have a winter hunt.
40 We don't need a winter hunt. But I'm just, you know,
41 concerned about the numbers. And even though you said
42 29 was taken the previous year and 40 this year. That
43 sounds pretty healthy, but I'm -- I was just wondering
44 about the no hunting, what does that mean? I mean, does
45 that mean? No additional hunting. So, you know, like I
46 mentioned, it's out of the question to even have a winter
47 hunt. I appreciate your response. Thank you, Jeremy. Mr.
48 Chair.

49
50

1 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Thank you, Don. So,
2 we.....

3
4 MR. HAVENER: Yeah. Council member,
5 Honea. Through the Chair.

6
7 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Go ahead.

8
9 MR. HAVENER: Yeah. So that's a great
10 question. And, you know I think with what we're looking
11 at is, you know, we are looking at additional hunting
12 that would include cow harvest and of course, you know,
13 in the data there, you can see that we have -- we are
14 seeing a reduction in adult bulls, adult cows. And just
15 at this time, we don't feel that it's there's, you know,
16 we can't support opportunity for additional hunting,
17 which would be this winter hunt that we're making a
18 decision on right now. With that being said, I do know
19 one thing with the draw permits in that area, and I
20 think it was two years ago, I know, on that lower
21 corridor, which would be, I think DM Draw Moose 805,
22 806. Those -- there were 20 available, I think it was
23 17 for residents and three for non-residents. And those
24 were cut down to I think ten total. And so, they did
25 make some changes there. And just wanted to make sure
26 to comment on that. So, I hope -- I think -- I hope that
27 answers your question.

28
29 MR. HONOEA: Yes, it does. And appreciate
30 your -- appreciate your response. Thank you.

31
32 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Any other
33 questions? Darrell.

34
35 MR. VENT: Yeah. I've been looking
36 through your graphs here, and I was wondering, you know,
37 we have big wolf pack down around the Dulbi River area
38 and might be something that -- considering that, you
39 know, we had a big drop here, not a big drop but, you
40 know, the total amount of moose in those population areas
41 that went down, went down some from whether it's the
42 bulls or the cows. I'm suggesting that, you know, we
43 keep an eye on those wolf packs and try to help with the
44 predation problems that we're having in those areas.
45 It's.....

46
47 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Talk across the
48 table there.

49
50

1 MR. VENT: No, it's also -- it's these
2 big animals are coming down from the mountains now, and
3 we're really starting to see more pressure on our moose
4 calves. So, it's concerning, you know, not only in the
5 Dulbi River, it's the Huslia River, but the one thing
6 that you know, we noticed is that a bigger pack is down
7 in the Dulbi River area with the with the wolves.

8
9 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Yeah. So, my
10 comment would be these, these yearling recruitments
11 throughout most of the area are inadequate to support
12 any kind of winter hunt. The Kaiyuh hunt can proceed.
13 But there is no -- there's no resource for additional
14 harvest opportunity for winter hunt out in this -- in
15 our Western Interior Region and the Koyukuk. I'm super
16 concerned about the Innoko and I -- we -- Kevin Whitworth
17 said that Willow Air was flying tons of people over to
18 the Innoko, and there was a lot of harvest and a lot of
19 rotten meat was coming back into McGrath. That was a big
20 discussion point last, last fall. I'm concerned about
21 this bull-cow ratio going down from 51 down to 27 with
22 only 19 bulls sighted. And so, we had a lot of harvests.
23 This survey was done after your fall hunt. Correct, for
24 2024, Jeremy?

25
26 MR. HAVENER: Yeah.: Mr. Chair. Sorry.
27 It's kind of breaking up a little bit, but I think you
28 asked if our survey was done after the season.

29
30 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Right.

31
32 MR. HAVENER: And, yeah, that's correct.

33
34 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, post hunt, we
35 have only 19 bulls spot found and only 27 bulls per
36 hunter cow when it was 51 bulls per hunter cow. And so,
37 this this harvest has gotten -- that -- any time you see
38 this kind of bull cow ratios fall off like that that's
39 harvest. I mean, they don't just drop dead. So, I'm
40 concerned about this population and the Innoko. And so,
41 that's pretty concerning. Can you -- as we said in the
42 -- in the fall meeting, we would be -- we would like to
43 -- the refuge system to restrict the transporter access
44 to stay within this, basically within the ability of
45 these populations to sustain that. That's this has gone
46 beyond what's sustainable. So, they might run out of
47 moose and quit, but then our populations are going to
48 continue to fall with only one yearling bull per 100
49 cow. That's like -- that's abysmal. Yeah, they had some
50 deep snow down there. But that's not all of it. So, I'm

1 really concerned about this Innoko. And we're going to
2 be talking about this further at our fall meeting. So,
3 I would like to Koyukuk, Nowitna, Innoko Refuge to
4 discuss this issue further with our Council. We're going
5 to be in McGrath. And so that's closer to the issue as
6 is so we can get further input from the people in
7 McGrath. So, I appreciate this report. I do not feel
8 that there's any additional harvest opportunity except
9 for the Kaiyuh so, you don't even have to call me,
10 Jeremy.

11
12 MR. HAVENER: Mr. Chair, thank you very
13 much and I appreciate your time.

14
15 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, thank you
16 there. And so, we have a lot of reports to go. We have
17 Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge. That's Aaron
18 Moses. Are you still there, Aaron?

19
20 MR. MOSES: Hey, Jack, can you hear me?

21
22 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: You're loud and
23 clear. Go ahead.

24
25 MR. MOSES: Yeah, I'll keep this brief.
26 The only updates that we have from the last fall meeting
27 is that we had two fall moose hunt and a fairly new
28 winter moose hunt. The fall moose hunt was in the Unit
29 19A, is a federal moose hunt since there's a Tier 2. We
30 gave out about roughly 100 permits and our quota was 20
31 moose, bull moose and we exceeded the quota by one. We
32 harvested 21 moose, so we're pretty happy with that.
33 But, our winter hunt -- this are really bad weather. We
34 -- this was the first year we allowed any moose to be
35 harvested in the Zone two of the Kuskokwim Mountains.
36 We just had horrible weather, and we were bound by season
37 dates. And so right when the snowmachine was getting
38 good, the season closed. We gave out 140 permits with a
39 quota of 70. I'm still in preliminary, everybody still
40 reporting back, but right now, I only have a harvest of
41 about 8 moose. So, we're going to be looking in the
42 future to put in a proposal to extend harvest dates for
43 that winter moose hunt, and so that people will be more
44 successful in harvesting moose. And that's pretty much
45 all I got for you this.....

46
47 (Simultaneous speech)

48
49 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay. Appreciate
50 that. Appreciate that, Aaron. Yeah. This climate change

1 thing is getting, you know, it's either -- it's wonky.
2 You either get too much snow or no snow. And so, it's
3 just -- especially in the southern part of this region.
4 So, you can work with the Council on -- if you submit
5 that proposal now it's a call for proposal. We can review
6 that proposal at the fall meeting. So, we're on a call
7 for wildlife proposal. So, I'd encourage the Yukon Delta
8 to submit that proposal for extending those season
9 dates. Thank you. And so, Togiak. Nissa, so you got a
10 comment?

11
12 MS. PILCHER: Yeah. My comments just --
13 the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge update is included
14 in your book on page 39. It is just a handout. It is
15 included. So, you guys can review the Mulchatna update.
16

17 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay. Appreciate
18 that. So, Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve
19 update, supplemental materials. That's in the yellow
20 packet here somewhere. Oh, Marcy and Matt, state your
21 names for the record, please.
22

23 MS. OKADA: Marcy Okada Subsistence,
24 coordinator for Gates of the Arctic National Park and
25 Preserve. And I'd like to.....
26

27 (Simultaneous speech)
28

29 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Pull into the mic
30 a little more.
31

32 MS. OKADA: I'd like to refer you to your
33 supplemental meeting packet, which I think is a manila
34 folder.
35

36 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Page 65, in the
37 packet. The big -- so go ahead. Continue.
38

39 MS. OKADA: So, I think most of you know
40 that Gates of the Arctic falls within the northern
41 portion of the Western Interior Region. We have a
42 Subsistence Resource Commission, of which Jack is the
43 Vice Chair. And at this time, I'd like to request from
44 the RAC if they would reappoint Pollock Simon, Sr. from
45 Allakaket to our SRC.
46

47 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Yeah. That's a good
48 point. We need to -- this Regional Council makes an
49 appointment to the Gates of the Arctic Subsistence
50 Resource Commission. The request is that it's basically

1 Pollock has been on that commission since day one. And
2 so, we have to recommend him for reappointment. So, the
3 Chair will entertain a motion to continue Pollock seat
4 on the Gates of the Arctic Subsistence Resource
5 Commission. So, I need a motion and a second.

6
7 Motion by Darrell, seconded by Don.
8 Pollock is a valuable member of the Subsistence Resource
9 Commission. So I appreciate that motion. And so those
10 in favor of Pollock's continued seat with a Gates of the
11 Arctic Subsistence Resource Commission signify by saying
12 aye.

13
14 IN UNISON: Aye.

15
16 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Opposed, same
17 sign.

18
19 MR. GERVAIS: Aye.

20
21 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: That's an
22 affirmative, I understand that. I go too fast. So,
23 continue with your presentation, Marcy.

24
25 MS. OKADA: Thank you, Council members.
26 And so, we had a Commission meeting in November of last
27 year in Fairbanks, and we had multiple presentations.
28 Two of which were by the Wildlife Conservation Society
29 on a carnivore local knowledge project, and also a
30 presentation on the Brooks Range fish research projects
31 that are occurring. We had a presentation by the National
32 Park Service and U.S. Geological Survey on the resting
33 rivers phenomenon that's occurring. And we also had a
34 presentation by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game
35 on Dall Sheep Ecology and Health Assessment Project.
36 Similar to what's being presented to this Regional
37 Advisory Council, we also shared information with the
38 with the SRC. And our next meeting is scheduled for mid-
39 April in the upper Kobuk River community of Ambler. And
40 we're going to continue our discussion on dall sheep
41 management and then also hear local concerns from that
42 area. So that was my brief, brief update. And then I'm
43 going to hand the mic to Matt Cameron, our wildlife
44 biologist who's going to give a Western Arctic Caribou
45 Herd or Western Arctic Caribou Herd update.

46
47 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay. Go ahead,
48 Matt.

49
50

1 MR. CAMERON: Thank you. Marcy. Council
2 members, nice to see you all. My name is Matt Cameron,
3 wildlife biologist with the Park Service. I guess I'll,
4 in the interest of time, I'll ask you. Do you want the
5 long version or the short version?

6
7 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Short and sweet is
8 good.

9
10 MR. CAMERON: Okay. So do you want --
11 Nissa, do you think it would be -- should we skip the
12 PowerPoint or...?

13
14 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: We need to skip the
15 PowerPoint. We've covered the Western Arctic. We
16 basically need to know if you got a composition survey
17 or they did a composition survey in the fall. Basically
18 update on biological information and where the herd may
19 be near Huslia or whatever. So basically, what's
20 happened since work group -- caribou work group
21 presentations and so forth.

22
23 MR. CAMERON: So we don't really have any
24 updates since the working group presentation. The
25 Department of Fish and Game did not get a census last
26 year, so the most recent census was in 2023, 152,000,
27 continued decline. The working group met in December and
28 vote in -- kept things at the same management level in
29 the last year. We've seen the harvest restrictions put
30 in place, new bag limits 15 a year, one of which may be
31 a cow, and we are waiting to see how that goes. I
32 understand that our colleagues are working to -- we'll
33 try to get a census this year.

34
35 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: But I missed the
36 data presentation at the workgroup. Did they get a
37 composition survey in the you know, they fly out comp
38 survey, you know, bull-cow ratios, calf-ratios?

39
40 MR. CAMERON: I don't know, off the top
41 of my head, Jack. So, I will I'll follow up with you on
42 that.

43
44 (Simultaneous speech)

45
46 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, if you can
47 bring that to the gates of the Arctic meeting.

48
49 MR. CAMERON: You bet.

1 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Any other.?
2

3 MR. CAMERON: In your packet, the next
4 page that you have. We have two scientific articles that
5 we put out. And so, we're -- we've been really trying
6 to understand the drivers behind the this big change in
7 movement. We've -- in the last five, six years, we're
8 seeing less animals going as far south as they used to.
9 And so, we worked with colleagues at university and our
10 state colleagues, and we looking at what influences
11 where they're going in the winter. And we have a summary
12 there on the, on the handout. It was a -- it was --
13 we're really excited about this paper, but there was
14 kind of a lot to it. We saw that survival of adult
15 females has been, in fact -- has gotten lower in recent
16 years and that we documented that shift in the winter
17 range. But interestingly, we saw that it's linked that
18 when survival in the southern part of the range was poor
19 in one year less caribou returned the next year. And so,
20 we link that to memory, and you know, keeping their
21 responding to range conditions. We're still -- what
22 exactly those range conditions are is something we're
23 actively working on an in paper and papers and research
24 that are underway right now. Hope to report back on that
25 more at next meetings. The next page was another paper
26 we did with Bob White of the University of Alaska
27 Fairbanks. We asked -- we see animals that stay in the
28 North all winter long, and we see animals that migrated
29 across the Brooks Range and spent the winter in the
30 south. And we asked, are they doing -- are they doing
31 different things? We saw that animals that go all the
32 way south encounter more lichens, which speaks to why
33 they migrate. There's more food down there. But we saw
34 that the ones that stay in the north, they have lower
35 movement rates all winter long. They seem to hunker down
36 and conserve energy while they're up there. And the ones
37 go all the way south there, they're moving more
38 throughout the winter, and we linked that to -- they're
39 spending more time moving around looking for more
40 lichens and thus encountering more lichens. So -- and
41 then the third one is a short, brief, Kyle was part of
42 the NOAA technical report giving an update on migratory
43 Tundra Caribou status. And there's some bullets there.
44 And do you want to -- that brings us to the 2024 sheep
45 summary. Hand it off to Marci.

46
47 MS. OKADA: So we provided data on the
48 2024 sheep survey that was done last year. And I think
49 we'll just follow up at our SRC meeting.
50

1 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: And we can cover
2 that. What Brad Wendling, and the staff presented at our
3 November meeting, that the ewe-lamb ratios had increased
4 to 40-41, I think it was 41 lambs per hundred ewes in
5 the Park and like 40 lambs to the east, so both
6 subpopulations were starting to turn up. You can see
7 that in the southeast Gates that the overall population
8 is turning. That's the recruitment of the 35, I think
9 it was 35 lambs per hundred ewes last year is recruiting.
10 And then we're also getting additional lamb. We're
11 losing sheep. I talked to Mark back there and he says
12 that when they flew, they had two of the collared sheep
13 were in snow slides. We had -- we have to remember we
14 had 51in of snow in January and it was slab snows,
15 multiple snows, and there were snow slides and two of
16 the sheep were -- collared sheep were buried in snow.
17 Right this minute. They're buried under snow slides. One
18 of the mortalities was a ewe sheep that maybe fell off
19 a cliff. We do lose sheep, and that's just inherent to
20 lose sheep. So, one of the sheep that was collared last
21 April died of a pulmonary pneumonia. It had a lung
22 pulmonary pneumonia, and it died with pus in its lungs.
23 And it was necropsy by the Department of Fish and Game.
24 But the overall population is starting to turn. We had
25 a rainy summer. Rainy summers are advantageous for sheep
26 because they extend their period of feeding on flowers
27 longer. So, we'll talk about this further with the Gates
28 of the Arctic Subsistence Resource Commission, which is
29 also dialoguing extensively with the Department of Fish
30 and Game on their sheep survey. So, they're kind of a -
31 - they're overlapping the two the surveys in the Park
32 and out of the Park. So, any questions for the Department
33 of Fish and Game or correction, yot Department of Fish
34 and Game, the National Park Service. You got one there,
35 Darrell?

36
37 MR. VENT: Yeah. You know, it was at that
38 Northwest Arctic Caribou working group there. And it was
39 concerning, you know the hunting that was going on there,
40 the hunting pressures deterring the animal, you know,
41 making them detour around the usual migration patterns.
42 And a lot of it had to do with the hunting pressures
43 that was going on, and we were wondering why we weren't
44 last, I think it was last 2 or 3 years that we haven't
45 had that caribou coming to our shelter cabin area. And
46 after they limited, you know, the hunting pressure up
47 around the (In Native) and Buckland area, they started
48 kind of migrating a little more. I mean, we're starting
49 to see them again, but we don't know if they're in good
50 -- they're not in really good condition. They're kind

1 of like, you know, no -- not a lot of fat or it's just
2 really bare minimum. And we're worried that, you know,
3 maybe there's too much stress on the animal. And the
4 animals are -- the big bulls are not really there no
5 more. I mean, you know, the ones that help with the
6 migration along with the cows, with the big bulls are
7 the concern that I was having. I said, we got to try to
8 protect that age in them because if we don't keep that
9 age in there, it's hard for them to go where they usually
10 go. They're the leaders, you know. And once you take out
11 the leaders, it pretty well hinders how much migration
12 they could do. And we're noticing that, you know, in
13 that caribou, and we're kind of concerned about that.
14 And you know, the numbers are not there anymore. Thank
15 you.

16
17 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Thank you,
18 Darrell. And so I appreciate your participation in the
19 Western Arctic Caribou Herd work group, and hopefully
20 we can continue with that. So, any other questions from
21 for the Park Service? Pollock.

22
23 MR. SIMON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just
24 talking about caribou with -- our elders told us that
25 caribou are kind of sensitive animals and if mistreated
26 in one area, they don't come back to the same area. Like
27 when -- 1974 there was putting in that oil pipeline,
28 they were pushing the Haul Road north, they said it was
29 going to be for industrial use only, but pretty soon the
30 route was turned over to the State and peoples come up
31 with the route. And some hunters and maybe the shoot
32 from the road and that -- the caribou kind of move, come
33 down more to the rest west so they can shift around. And
34 the light going up and down the Haul Road bothered them.
35 So, I would say that in the (indiscernible) road
36 development will impact the caribou movements. And it
37 is quite true. And before that, in 1974, the caribou
38 used to come down to John River and they cross this
39 Koyukuk River to south towards the (indiscernible)
40 mountain and (indiscernible) area. This lot of
41 (indiscernible) on there and they spent the winter
42 during around this time to come out to the big lake and
43 in good shape. But now they are afraid because the
44 traffic on the road. The development kind of pushed them
45 off into certain areas where it's like over and across
46 the (indiscernible). He said there were some kids who
47 died there years ago. So, I would say that any kind of
48 road development will impact caribou movement. Thank
49 you, Mr. Chair.
50

1 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Thank you,
2 Pollock. So, you know, you're doing a memory study for
3 caribou. And they remember where they get -- they have
4 adversity. That's what they remember. They remember deep
5 snow. They don't want to come down into the Koyukuk
6 Valley because again, there's deep snow and hard snow.
7 They can't dig that stuff. They also remember being the
8 -- (indiscernible) road up north when they have these
9 larger bag limits. There's lots of participation. So,
10 this year, again, the caribou tried to come to the road
11 in early, like around the 10th of -- eighth to the 10th
12 of August and again later on August -- 3rd week in
13 August. Twice they came and the mass of hunters. There
14 was lots of hunters. They go out, they run out on the
15 tundra and they basically start disturbing the lead cows
16 and they deflect it back. Then they got -- it got to be
17 a drought for hunters up there. The only hunters that
18 were actually killing caribou were getting flown out.
19 So the caribou started avoiding the roads. So, they went
20 way out, came up the Akillik River to the to the west
21 of the road, and now they're over there in the Park.
22 That's where they -- that's how they learned to go around
23 where they're getting adversity. So that road thing is
24 actually a truth. I mean, it's just what happens to them
25 and that memory stays in them. And so that happened in
26 2010. There was lots of cow harvest. And the Caribou
27 learned to go away from the road, and they stayed away
28 from the road and they got to where they if they even
29 after the cow season was closed, the cows would just run
30 across the road. And so, they learned -- they've been -
31 - now they've had two generations of this road avoidance
32 thing. And it's like it's interesting to see how they -
33 - long they can remember that. They actually remember
34 it for quite some time because calves that are following
35 the lead cows, which are usually five year old and older
36 cows learned to avoid the road. So, this memory project
37 is actually a good thing, and it should incorporate
38 memories of adversity with road, you know, where people
39 are hunting them off the road because they're just they
40 can go anywhere if they don't have to go across the
41 road. They won't do it. So that was the National Park
42 Service. I appreciate those comments and look forward
43 to our hopefully our meeting is going to be over in
44 Ambler. So, any final questions? I think we're good.
45 Thanks so much. Appreciate that. Thank you.

46
47 MR. CAMERON: Council members.

48
49 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: And so, Gates of
50 the Arctic has a lot of good projects going on. And I'm

1 super happy with Matt as one of the biologists. There's
2 two Matts. Both those guys are excellent. So now we're
3 going to go to Central Yukon field office. Erin. So --
4 and Erin is or -- going to introduce yourself on the
5 record.

6
7 MS. JULIANUS: Yeah. Thank you, Mr.
8 Chair. And members of the Council. For the record, my
9 name is Erin Julianus, wildlife biologist for the BLM
10 Central Yukon Field Office. I'm based in Fairbanks.
11 Yeah. It's good to see everybody again. I miss the Galena
12 meeting last year. So, yeah, grateful to be here in
13 person. My report is going to be pretty short. I feel
14 like we're always at the very end of the meeting, so
15 thanks for sticking with it. Our Central Yukon Office
16 report, I think is on page -- starts on page 67 of the
17 supplemental materials.

18
19 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay.

20
21 MS. JULIANUS And I'm definitely not
22 going to go through it all. I think this was the longest
23 report I've ever submitted. It's like seven pages long.
24 So certainly, if you have any questions on it, I can
25 answer them or attempt to answer them. But the way we
26 split this up, you know, of course, we have a really
27 interdisciplinary team. So, it's split up in sections
28 kind of based on the our different disciplines. So as
29 Jeff said, just wanted to kind of reiterate this as
30 Geoff Betersdorf said yesterday, as of right now, we do
31 have a new resource management plan for the Central Yukon
32 area. And as of right now, it's still our marching orders
33 for management of BLM land on the 13 million acres in
34 Interior Alaska. I do foresee a lot of changes. I'm not
35 sure exactly what those changes are going to look like
36 on the horizon for our office and Alaska just in general.
37 But I do encourage you, I know Geoff did yesterday to
38 read that executive order that was signed by the
39 president on the first day of the administration, so.

40
41 Let's see our permitting workload, of
42 course, continues. And that's kind of summarized
43 throughout the report. BLM did lose nine probationary
44 staff statewide, and two of those staff were in our
45 field office. They were actually permitting staff. So
46 that's going to make, you know, completing the
47 permitting workload, you know, challenging. It's always
48 there for us. So, it's going to be a challenging this
49 summer after those losses. I did include in this report
50 the post-use report summary for our special recreation

1 permit holders, specifically our, our hunting guides.
2 That's on page 71 and 72 of the supplemental materials.
3 And yeah, we have seven commercial hunting guides. Four
4 operate in or around the Dalton Highway corridor. They
5 are required to submit post-use reports at the end of
6 the calendar year. And I think we've received all, but
7 I think all but one of the reports. So, you can review
8 that there. Mr. Chair, I know you asked for that at the
9 last meeting.

10
11 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, I see the
12 species that the guides are allowed to take. I don't see
13 dall sheep on there, or is it dall sheep is -- which
14 guides have sheep permits?

15
16 MS. JULIANUS: Because of the closure,
17 there's none authorized.

18
19 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: You've retracted
20 them as a as suggested? Okay. Thank you.

21
22 MS. JULIANUS: Yeah. And it is good -- I
23 will say it is good to hear kind of the, the plans to,
24 you know, recommend sunseting that that closure because
25 that will help us kind of plan for our programmatic
26 environmental assessment in the future. So, thank you.

27
28 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, we have high
29 hopes for the Board of Game process of eliminating the
30 age count and (indiscernible) count. But at this time I
31 don't feel that we should continue on with the closure
32 because of the -- I wanted to see an increase in the
33 population. That's what I was looking for. And so now
34 we see we're starting to see that not that we're out of
35 the woods, but at least we're getting some recruitment
36 into the population. So, we got something coming up
37 behind us. And a lot of these recruitments look like the
38 moose numbers. We got really hardly any, you know, we
39 had hardly any two year olds. We have hardly any three
40 year olds. We have had really poor recruitments before
41 2023 in the Park and 2024. Those are the cohorts we
42 have. East 23 had nine lambs per 100 ewes. That's bleak.
43 That's bad. So -- but this year it's turning. So, I feel
44 more comfortable about letting that sunset. I do want
45 to dialogue with the BLM in the future. But there's the
46 guide selection process, you know, the State Board of
47 Game or correction the state legislatures initiated the
48 the Guide Selection process for guide use areas, which
49 will have further help the the numbers of guides
50 overlapping so that will help in the future. But this

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1 Council wants to be involved with the allocation of dall
2 sheep on the BLM lands, wherever those may be.

3

4 MS. JULIANUS: And our plan is still to
5 do a programmatic environmental assessment of all of our
6 guides in the central Brooks Range for that, so.

7

8 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay.

9

10 MS. JULIANUS: Yeah.

11

12 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: I appreciate this,
13 this big report. I'll read all this stuff.

14

15 MS. JULIANUS: It's a lot.

16

17 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, any questions
18 for Aaron on the BLM report? Go ahead there, Darrell.

19

20 MR. VENT: I noticed you mention on one
21 of the pages there, I think it's page 70. It talks about
22 placer mining on there. You said that there's a one
23 operation being processed in the Middle Fork -- Koyukuk
24 River and the other ones are Slate Creek, Gold Creek,
25 Chapman Creek. Has there been an increase in operations
26 of mining?

27

28 MS. JULIANUS: It seems like it's been
29 fairly consistent in the last couple of years. This is
30 typical, you know, to have 19 active mining operations
31 in our field office. So, yeah, I wouldn't say that it's
32 increased. You know, there's mining going on up Slate
33 Creek, Gold Creek. So, yeah.

34

35 MR. VENT: Okay. thank you.

36

37 MS. JULIANUS: Yep.

38

39 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: This is where I
40 live. There's these small mining operations. They've
41 been there most of the -- at real -- I mean, there's 19
42 permits, but some people, like, dig some dirt for, like,
43 a few hours, and that's it for the year. There's -- but
44 there's just these basically small mining operations.
45 They're not real high impact. There was a much higher
46 impact as far as impact as far as extent. But now we're
47 some of those mines were -- those are growing back in
48 willows. So, some of the habitat that moose are actually
49 using in this deep snow is up in Noland Creek. There's
50 a whole bunch of moose where those willows are growing

1 back where Silverado worked up there. So, placer mining
2 is not always bad. It's if the placer mining is
3 associated to salmon strips, that's where it gets touchy
4 issue. We don't have -- these mines have no effect on
5 any salmon. These are tributary streams of the main
6 Middle Fork, and there's very few salmon in the upper
7 Middle Fork anyways.

8
9 MR. VENT: Oh, I noticed that up in the
10 (indiscernible) there, mine was on state land. Now it's
11 going into federal lands.

12
13 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So that covers the
14 BLM presentation. Oh, go ahead Erin.

15
16 MS. JULIANUS: Maybe one more thing if
17 you'll permit me. Is there time? Okay. The only other
18 thing I did want to mention, I don't need comments on
19 it now, but on page 74, 74 through 70 -- the page
20 numbers, 77-78. We are -- I think I mentioned this at
21 the last meeting or it's only been brought up before.
22 We are going to install -- we plan to install some
23 interpretive signs at the Yukon River boat launch on the
24 Dalton Highway this summer. So, we -- the first page,
25 there is just a general letter from our office soliciting
26 input on the draft documents that we've or the draft
27 signs that we've come up with. So, the first one just
28 talks about, you know, kind of the importance of the
29 river itself. The second one is, you know, meant to
30 really kind of encourage responsible land use and
31 responsible, you know, ethic on the river. And then the
32 last sign is going to be -- it's going to be a big map.
33 It's going to be like a two foot by six foot map. And
34 it's going to be from Beaver -- go from Beaver downstream
35 to Tanana. So, we're looking for -- we're trying to cast
36 a wide net with getting input on these draft materials.
37 They're definitely not finalized. And, yeah, I think
38 that we, you know, our intention, I know the trespass
39 stuff is a really big issue. It was hard when we were
40 coming up with the draft you know, signs or the draft
41 language to kind of strike a balance between being
42 really, like, you don't want to be kind of preachy about
43 it, but you are trying to call attention to you know,
44 things like trespass. So, if you guys if -- yeah, if the
45 Council would look at these materials and provide input,
46 we'd be really grateful.

47
48 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, you
49 delineate on the mapping the native lands. Basically,
50 the native allotments, there's many native allotments

1 around the bridge. And those would -- is it fine enough
2 detail to where the maybe even a blow up associated to
3 the Yukon River because there's people that launch and
4 then they come back. They don't go that far. Some go a
5 long ways away. So is it going to have enough fine detail
6 to show the native allotments were, you know, the mouth
7 of sloughs and, you know, certain specific, not
8 allotments. Is it going to have that?
9

10 MS. JULIANUS: Yeah. I mean, it's not --
11 it's kind of a -- you can -- I can see the, you know,
12 the individual allotments on, on river bends here. But
13 it was hard to come up like, do you have the scale kind
14 of in really tight and then you miss a lot of, you know,
15 do you go big or do you focus it in more? So, this is
16 kind of what we came up with as a good compromise.
17

18 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Oh, I see the
19 mapping.
20

21 MS. JULIANUS: Oh, yeah.
22

23 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: I missed the
24 mapping.
25

26 MS. JULIANUS: Yeah. Sorry. It's split
27 into two. It's going to be one map, but it's split into
28 two different sections. So that would be a really
29 valuable input. Is -- if this is an appropriate scale
30 or not? I originally was thinking I was like, well, it's
31 got to go down to Galena, but then you just lose so much
32 detail that yeah.
33

34 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, this is
35 important for here. They would capture quite a bit of
36 the use -- so, I think this is fine enough detail.
37 There's some, you know, this is -- a lot of this is corp
38 land but there's allotments -- I know there's allotments
39 on the south bank over here by the bridge. And so, I
40 think putting those little yellow allotments on along
41 the bank there in specific places would be beneficial
42 for, the general public. They don't know where this stuff
43 is. And so, I really I think this is a great idea.
44

45 MS. JULIANUS: I think it'll be good.
46

47 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: That'll be
48 excellent. Thank you. Any other questions or comments?
49 Thank you so much, Erin.
50

1 MS. JULIANUS: Yeah, thank you.

2

3 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: We'll see you up
4 there when you do your field work. So, we're -- we pass
5 through Central Yukon Office of Subsistence Management
6 Program overview update. And so, we're going to do
7 Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program update Liz. Is it?
8 Oh, it says -- that's -- I'm looking Fisheries Resource
9 Monitoring Program update. Oh, okay. Just go in whatever
10 order you got.

11

12 MR. VICKERS: Okay. I'll give you the OSM
13 report.

14

15 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay. That'd be
16 great.

17

18 MR. VICKERS: Okay. Mr. Chair, members
19 of the Council, on behalf of OSM, this is Brent Vickers
20 from OSM, for the record, and I want to thank you for
21 your service and exceptional work that you do on behalf
22 of your communities and user groups. We value your
23 expertise and volunteer -- volunteering or volunteer
24 contribution of your knowledge, experience and time in
25 the regulatory process. All right, the OSM
26 administrative move. As many of you know, Congress
27 administratively moved OSM from the U.S. Fish and
28 Wildlife Service directly to the Office of Assistant
29 Secretary, Policy, Management and Budget. This became
30 effective July 15th, 2024. This move was many effort --
31 one of many efforts of the Department of Interior has
32 made to strengthen the Federal Subsistence management
33 program and to ensure that federally qualified
34 subsistence users and Alaska Native people have an
35 opportunity for meaningful engagement in our public
36 process implementing federal subsistence priority. This
37 January, President Trump returned to the White House and
38 with him, a new team of political appointees. Doug Burgum
39 was sworn in as the Secretary of Interior. Shortly after
40 that, Charlie Dankert was appointed Senior Advisor to
41 the Secretary. Exercising the delegated authority of the
42 Assistant Secretary for the Office of Policy, Management
43 and Budget, which is our new office. OSM has been getting
44 Charlie up to speed with the Federal Subsistence
45 Management Program and its importance to rural Alaskans.
46 Meanwhile, it's been business as usual at OSM. In
47 addition to working with new appointees, we continue to
48 work with many of the same people within the Office of
49 Secretary in Washington, D.C., who helped us with their
50 transition. In February, we welcomed new public Board

1 members Raymond Oney of Alakanuk, Benjamin Payenna of
2 Nome and Frank Woods of Dillingham, and completed
3 another successful Board meeting. We hope to have the
4 updated federal regulations for subsistence fishing
5 published in the final rule soon. The proposed rule for
6 2026 Wildlife Regulations cycle published on February
7 7th, and we are accepting proposals through April 4th.
8 Thank you for submitting some proposals this meeting.
9

10 OSM staff updates. In December 2024. OSM
11 officially welcomed our new director, Cissquq Crystal
12 Leonetti. She had been acting in that role for over six
13 months until she was formally hired. Previously, Ciisquq
14 was Alaska Native affairs specialist at U.S. Fish and
15 Wildlife Service. Among regular OSM director
16 responsibilities, she continues to lead OSM through its
17 administrative move and has done a tremendously
18 wonderful job. Since last fall's Council meetings.
19 Several OSM staff have been acting in different roles
20 to help through the transition to the Office secretary,
21 starting a few weeks ago, in February, Chris McKee came
22 over to OSM from BLM to act as a deputy director for
23 four months. Chris is the subsistence coordinator at BLM
24 and a member of the Interagency Staff Committee or ISC.
25 Chris previously worked at OSM as Wildlife Division
26 Supervisor until 2020, and before that he was an OSM
27 wildlife biologist. So welcome back, Chris. With Chris
28 stepping in to help, other OSM staff such as myself have
29 been able to return to their permanent OSM positions.
30

31 All right. Real ID for travel to Council
32 meetings. This is now the final reminder to our Council
33 members of the change and requirements for U.S.
34 travelers who must be Real ID and compliant to Board
35 domestic flights and access certain federal facilities.
36 Beginning May 7th, 2025, every air traveler will need
37 to present Real ID compliant identification to fly
38 within the U.S., even when you fly on small, commercial
39 bush carriers. For our program, you will need to have
40 the Real ID in time for your travel for your fall 2025
41 Council meeting. You can find more information on Real
42 ID requirements on the State of Alaska Division of Motor
43 Vehicles website.
44

45 Correspondence. Councils received a
46 handful of responses earlier this year from the
47 Secretaries, based on issues raised during the
48 individual Council meetings and the All Council meeting
49 this past winter. OSM has also integrated a
50 correspondence review, standing agenda item in the

1 Federal Subsistence Board meeting and to keep them
2 appraised of all ongoing and completed correspondence
3 to and from Councils. We are aware of concerns that have
4 been raised on timely responses and are continuing to
5 work on ways to help expedite and move things forward.
6

7 Our litigation updates. The litigation
8 update was provided at the -- to the Councils during the
9 fall 2024 Council meeting cycle. Since then, in the Kake
10 Emergency Hunt Matter, briefing has been completed for
11 the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, and a three judge
12 appeals panel heard oral argument on February 7th. We
13 expect a decision sometime this summer. And in Kuskokwim
14 matter, U.S. versus ADF&G. The District Court found in
15 favor of the U.S. on all claims and enjoined the State
16 from taking any further actions and violating Title VIII
17 on the Kuskokwim River. The State has appealed in a
18 briefing before the Court of Appeals is now complete.
19 Oral argument is scheduled for April 11th. That
20 completes -- concludes my updates. Are there any
21 questions?
22

23 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay, that sounds
24 good. And so, Chris McKee is on for four months. Is --
25 can he extend if they don't or is he going to go back
26 to BLM and you'll have to come up with another deputy?
27

28 MR. VICKERS: That would be a matter we
29 could update you with in the fall. Yeah.
30

31 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay. So yeah,
32 nobody knows what's going on. So I mean, that's -- it's
33 impossible to know what's going to happen. So, I guess
34 that's a good update. Thank you very much. And so, we're
35 going to go to miscellaneous updates and that
36 miscellaneous updates, Nissa, did you have something?
37 It says coordinator.
38

39 Oh, we're still here. Okay. Go ahead.
40 Liz. I'm getting confused on my -- I'm looking at the
41 wrong piece. Go ahead.
42

43 MS. WILLIAMS: Good evening, Mr. Chair,
44 members of the Council. This is Liz Williams,
45 anthropologist at OSM. The Board meeting update I want
46 to give you is one that will show you you're making a
47 difference. The proposal you submitted, FP25-16, was
48 adopted by the Board, and that was the one that requested
49 modification of regulations in Bonanza Creek and a
50 portion of the Kanuti River drainages. So, you do make

1 a difference. As far as the Partners for Fisheries
2 Monitoring Program and the Fisheries Resources
3 Monitoring Program, normally this time of year, those
4 two notice of funding opportunity would be published on
5 our website. But they're not yet, we're still under a
6 continuing resolution, and we don't know when we will
7 have those up. But as soon as they do, we will let Nissa
8 know and email all of you, and you can share it with the
9 organizations that you work with. That's the end of my
10 presentation. Thanks.

11
12 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay. Thanks so
13 much, Liz. So, Don had one question here. Don.

14
15 MR. HONEA: Yeah, I had a quick question.
16 And so -- I just learned something new at this -- all
17 our proposals, whether it's Eastern or Western, have to
18 go be submitted to OSM, and then you guys draft them up.
19 I mean, what's the protocol? Thank you.

20
21 MS. WILLIAMS: So, there's a lengthy
22 review process to make sure that everything is correct
23 and that we've consulted with all the parties that are
24 affected. So, when you submit a proposal, first of all,
25 our leadership team validates it to just make sure it's
26 within our jurisdiction. Then I am an analyst and some
27 of the other people are analysts, we do lots and lots
28 of research. State history, federal history, biology and
29 fisheries history and we write that up. Then people like
30 our bosses inside of our office, Brent and those types
31 of people, leadership, go through it to make sure we
32 have done everything correctly. And then the next
33 there's like five other reviews. So, people out in the
34 field, like all the people that gave you reviews, gave
35 you reports, they look at it because they're on the
36 ground working and they know the reality. I'm sitting
37 in an office in Anchorage, I talk to them. Then members
38 of each of the federal agencies that are on the Federal
39 Subsistence Board, such as Chris McKee, they're called
40 the Interagency Staff Committee. They review it, then
41 the next review is you, because you're the people that
42 live out there. You really know what's going on. So,
43 after that, we will revise it again. Based on your
44 comments and all the comments we got from those other
45 review processes, and then we bring it back to you --
46 at the Interagency Staff Committee, sorry. Just to make
47 sure we didn't write anything that's illegal
48 accidentally. And then it goes to the Federal
49 Subsistence Board. So, it takes a long time, but we got
50 to make sure we have covered as much as possible. We may

1 have tribal consultations in there, that people just ask
2 for, and we do them on request. But it's a very, very
3 thorough review. Now, as you can see, we still don't
4 always come up with all the answers.

5
6 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, there's one
7 additional thing that's -- that gets before the Federal
8 Subsistence Board. Then -- the Chair of the Chair or the
9 Council's Vice Chair attends the Federal Subsistence
10 Board meeting and advocates for the proposal. So, we're
11 also at the table with the Federal Subsistence Board if
12 it's important issues, we're right there to shepherd
13 this through to make sure that the Board -- dialogue
14 with the Federal Subsistence Board. So that's the
15 process, the final process of the.....

16
17 (Simultaneous speech)

18
19 MR. HONEA: So, I -- yeah. So, it goes
20 back and forth and revision of the language or whatever.
21 It goes back to us for approval. I mean, this is a
22 really, you know, didn't know what the protocol was. And
23 thank you.

24
25 MS. WILLIAMS: Yes. And I would just add,
26 we have a chart that shows all that. And if that would
27 be helpful, we can send it out to you and the Council
28 if you would like. Because sometimes I can see something
29 better in a picture than I can in a lot of words. So,
30 thanks.

31
32 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: That was actually
33 a really good question and a very good response, because
34 if you're not in the leadership of these Councils, you
35 don't know what really happens after that. And it wasn't
36 until Ron Sam was like, you're going down to Anchorage
37 and you're going to go deal with proposals. He was -- I
38 was basically instructed by as a Vice Chair, as a
39 secretary, then a Vice Chair, and finally Ron Sam
40 schooled me to be a Chair of this Council. I was working
41 as a working before the Federal Subsistence Board for
42 three years before actually was the Chair of this
43 Council. So, there's a training process. Just like a lot
44 of you elders and chiefs have gone through a training
45 process. They pick you out and they're going to train
46 you to do this. That's what you're going to do.

47
48 MR. HONEA: I've actually sat on this
49 Council for a number of years, Robert and maybe Pollock
50 and Jenny has been here longer than I have been, but we

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1 were never really explained that. And so, it's -- so I
2 appreciate that.

3

4 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Good question,
5 Don. Excellent. Now go ahead, Robert.

6

7 MR. WALKER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have
8 one question.

9

10 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Go ahead, Robert.

11

12 MR. WALKER: How has it -- I was -- I
13 kind of like watched the news like every night, see
14 what's going on with all these cuts and all everything.
15 I see the Forest Service took a cut too. How about Alaska
16 Fire Service, has it taken a cut too?

17

18 MR. VICKERS: I don't know the answer to
19 that. This is Brent Vickers from OSM. If we had someone
20 on the phone or someone who was more in touch with
21 firefighting fighter services, however that's done.
22 That'd be great, but I don't -- things are moving very
23 quickly. I'll just put that in. It's hard until we like,
24 hear. We don't know firsthand.

25

26 MR. WALKER: Okay. Thank you.

27

28 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Stuff that happens
29 one day gets changed the next day. When we arrived here,
30 OSM couldn't spend money. Now they can. So, I mean, this
31 stuff is -- in the days we've been here, it's things
32 have changed. It's just a continuously -- it's a moving
33 map and we don't know what's going to happen in front
34 of us. And I still have concerns about having a fall
35 meeting. I don't know what's going to happen. That's why
36 I was pushing this Council to do various things so that
37 we get it on the record here in case they don't let us
38 have a meeting. That's what I was -- that's what I'm
39 really still -- still very concerned about. So, we've
40 covered those issues. Thank you very much, Liz. I
41 appreciate that. And so, we're miscellaneous updates.
42 Go ahead, Nisa.

43

44 MS. PILCHER: All right, everyone, this
45 is Nissa Pilcher, the Council Coordinator. So, the first
46 thing that I have is Council Correspondence. In your
47 supplemental meeting packet, there is an addendum for
48 some folks for the supplemental material. It looks
49 similar to the big packet, but it says volume two on it.
50 It's the printer didn't actually print when I sent them

1 to on half of them, and I didn't realize it until they
2 were already in the mail. This just contains
3 correspondence that you guys have received. It would
4 contain also correspondence you have drafted. You did
5 direct me to draft two letters at your fall meeting,
6 neither of which have happened. There's a very short
7 time between the fall meeting and the winter meeting,
8 and I had some personal issues pop up that kept me away
9 from the office. On top of -- I'm getting ready for this
10 meeting, so my apologies. Those will be drafted, one was
11 to Seashare and one was to the Department of Public
12 Safety. Those will be drafted this summer. They weren't
13 timely. I mean, they do need to be sent, but there was
14 no deadline for them, so they are still -- they're not
15 going to be ignored. The documents you've got here is
16 first, there's an Office of the Secretary response to
17 your Council about concerns with fisheries management,
18 one on Council compensation and one with concerns with
19 correspondence replies. I also included a letter that
20 Holly Carroll forwarded to me. And lots of other folks
21 from Charlie Campbell who lives in Tanana on an open
22 letter to fishermen, managers, scientists and others on
23 the Yukon River taking responsibility for the salmon
24 crash. I thought it was really interesting. I wanted to
25 make sure you guys had an opportunity to read it, if
26 you'd like it. So that includes the Council
27 Correspondence updates. I do want to ask two questions
28 at this time. One is an easy one. If the Council would
29 like to entertain the idea of sending a thank you letter
30 to Geof Beyersdorf, you guys have sent condolence
31 letters before, and I really wouldn't mind putting
32 together a happy letter. If that would be something you
33 guys would like me to do.

34
35 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: We're -- the
36 question before the Council is -- Geoff Beyersdorf has
37 worked with this Council for years, 25 years or a long
38 time. And so, we should send a thank you letter to him
39 as he moves on in his life. And so that's something that
40 this Council can do. And so, the Chair will entertain a
41 motion to transmit a letter.....

42
43 (Simultaneous speech)

44
45 MR. WALKER: I'll make that motion, Jack.
46 So, you know, and perfectly.

47
48 MS. PELKOLA: Second.
49

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1 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Moved by Robert.
2 Seconded by Jenny. Further discussion?

3
4 MR. KRISKA: Just as a conversation
5 piece, I. I really liked the idea that he spoke to
6 individual. All of us. Hey, I was at your camp or you
7 did this for me. I remember the first time I was on an
8 Novi, stuff like that. So, I think, are you is this
9 going to be like a letter that we all sign something?

10
11 MR. PILCHER: As long as I can find him
12 after he retires and I do have some, I'll get to it. But
13 I do have some follow up things that I'll be calling you
14 about later. And when I call you guys, I can ask if you
15 have any personal stories you wanted me to include in
16 that letter.

17
18 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: That'd be great.
19 That'd be great. Well, that was that was a good
20 suggestion, Nissa. I appreciate that. So, we're going
21 to vote on that. Those in favor of transmitting that
22 letter signify by saying aye.

23
24 IN UNISON: Aye.

25
26 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Opposed?

27
28 (No response)

29
30 Thank you. Go ahead, Nissa.

31
32 MS. PILCHER: Okay. And then the next
33 question I have about correspondence is since the D1
34 lands is back on the table, you guys do have
35 correspondence that you have written about that if there
36 is an opportunity during an open comment period, would
37 you guys like me to resend those letters at that time?

38
39 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: I feel that we
40 should resubmit that because we have a completely
41 different landscape of leadership. And so, we could
42 resubmit it with the emphasis that lifting those would
43 basically allow them to be conveyed to the State, and
44 we lose subsistence priority on those D1 lands. That
45 would be the Bering Sea Western Interior and the 51-50.
46 So I want the record to reflect that this Council is
47 concerned about the loss of subsistence use on those
48 very important lands. That's to be the main thing of
49 that letter. Basically, the letter with what the effects
50 would be so that the current Secretary of Interior can

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1 understand what the Council's -- when we counsel the
2 Secretary's Office. So that would be we got us have our
3 say. So, thank you. Is that okay with the Council
4 transmit that letter with those additions? So, the
5 Council's affirmative. Do we have to vote? Affirmative
6 to that to read -- because we voted that in already. So
7 just retransmit that with that addition. Go ahead,
8 Nissa.

9 MS. PILCHER: All right. And then I can
10 move on to the next item, which is the young leader
11 seat, which Jenny did ask about earlier. So just to let
12 you guys know, the Board advertised the open period for
13 the Non-voting Youth Young Leader membership, and it
14 recently closed on February 16th. Staff will start
15 reviewing if we haven't already. I've been here, so I
16 don't know. Letters of interest and applicants, and
17 those applicants will be evaluated this summer, and
18 we'll hopefully have an announcement before the next
19 meeting, hopefully the next fall meeting. I have not
20 been told yet if Western Interior did receive any
21 applicants or not, because it was it was region specific.
22 So, we'll see. We'll see how it happens. We'll see how
23 it goes. And then the next item.

24
25 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Yes. Is -- well, I
26 just want to comment on the young leader thing. I would
27 hope that there was some schools and so forth that would
28 put forward names, forth names to for this young leader
29 position to be seated at our meeting. And so leading to
30 training moving forward. So, continue, Nissa.

31
32 MS. PELKOKA: Oh, I have one thing. Is
33 there an age limit or...?

34
35 MS. PILCHER: Yes, the age limit is 18
36 to 25. Just because we couldn't have minors traveling
37 without -- yeah, that we weren't sure that was going to
38 work. So that's the age range. And that is at the time
39 of appointment. So theoretically a 17-year-old could
40 apply if they were interested, if they were going to be
41 18 during their first meeting.

42
43 MR. VENT: Yeah. I just wanted to ask a
44 question about where was this advertised to? Was this
45 advertised to the tribes or to the schools or to the,
46 the TCC, or where was this, for our area Eastern
47 Interior, Kuskokwim?

48
49 MS. PILCHER: My understanding is it --
50 so, it went out on our listserv. It was on Facebook. It

1 went out to radio stations around the State. My hope is
2 that the next time I can compile a list of schools,
3 emails or contacts to send it out to. It kind of went
4 down the -- it went from kind of stagnant to moving
5 really quickly. And the application period was -- it
6 wasn't six months like it normally is because we don't
7 normally get much applicants, at least for the regular
8 seats till the very end. So, my hope is moving forward.
9 I can advertise it better, especially if we don't get
10 many applicants for Western Interior.

11
12 MR. VENT: I, you know, I make a
13 suggestion probably, I did (indiscernible) area school,
14 what Yukon=Koyukon school district and also in the
15 Kuskokwim area. So those are the areas that, you know,
16 we're representing.

17
18 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Yeah. That's a
19 great idea. Thank you. Any other comments on that? So,
20 continue.

21
22 MS. PILCHER: All right. And the last
23 thing I wanted to mention is declining balance cards.
24 So, in Galena, we talked about shifting how you guys get
25 per diem into another way. And at that time, I was under
26 the impression that they were just attempting to figure
27 out if Council members were interested. It sounds more
28 like DOI doesn't have the same abilities to do things
29 that way, like Fish and Wildlife Service had. So, we
30 actually do have to switch to a different way of issuing
31 you guys per diem. There's two options. There's a stipend
32 card. So, it's like a debit card or a direct to -- and
33 then some Council members, none that I've heard on this
34 Council were interested in not getting any advance and
35 just getting it all direct deposited after the meeting
36 ended. What I will be doing is I will be calling you
37 guys individually after this meeting ends, and I'll be
38 going over what those two things mean and finding out
39 what you guys would prefer moving forward, because I
40 don't want to bog the meeting down more with that right
41 now. But we can do it individually at a later point in
42 time, shortly.

43
44 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: That'll work out.
45 And so that's the end of the meeting. We're down to
46 Council members closing comments. And it's been a long
47 meeting. And so -- well Tommy's been here the longest.
48 He he's tired. He needs to rest. So, he's going to get
49 this closing comments first.

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(Pause)

MR. KRISKA: I kind of came here unprepared a little bit, but I really enjoyed this meeting. I had two different meetings to start with, and they didn't know which one to go to, but then Darrell pulled one on me. He told me to come over here because then he'll go over there for the day, and then -- but then it wouldn't have had a quorum either way. So, I decided, well, you guys brought me here so, that's what I did. But anyway, there's a lot of the things that are happening, I don't know what we're ever going to do about our fish. I mean, we we're trying, we're doing things, but still, it's kind of hard to go back and still don't have answers for the last 35 years, I guess. Really, it is it down, going down, and down, and down and never, never even came up on all kind of wissues [sic] -- and wissues [sic] of issues, I guess I don't know. But anyway, the moose in our area, I commend, I mean, you know, compliment the boys that in our area where we really try hard. I mean, the boys are out there. They're out there now when I go back, we're out there now, look like we got to hit the three days (indiscernible) area. Which we do. We make trails up there last week so, hopefully they do something about that. Around where we're at, there's -- we have to pretty much look for the wolves and those things are they got pretty smart. They're down to like 6 or 7 wolves per pack. They're not 16, 20 packs. So, it takes a lot of work, a lot of gas, a lot of time. And Galena boys are -- they're really getting into it, too. Kaltag boys -- we all phone each other's always on the phones and watching these areas. And that's one of the reasons that the moose count in those areas are really up there. When the bears -- the same thing, we -- between me and Gilbert and a lot of those boys were -- we get the -- people will talk right away and we make sure that things happen within those areas because to keep the moose population up, I see that in the around the Koyuku area, the moose ratio, the bull count is down. But that's okay. There's a lot of cows there. The reason that it's down is -- it's that area is a good area for people from even Nulato, Kaltag and some of those Galena they would go to that Andrew Paul Slough area and they said, there's a lot of moose in there. And even the count is down right now. Those, you know, what happens during mating season. I don't think if it was you, you wouldn't be staying in one place there. They're going to travel and that's what happens some years. It's like the count was down and all of a sudden in the Andrew Paul Slough area

1 that fall, there was record trophy moose that were shot
2 by those young kids. Two of them shot 75-inchers, and
3 they weren't even down there. They came off the
4 mountains. They all of a sudden just came off the
5 mountains and went down into that area. And there was a
6 lot of bulls when the count was down that spring.

7
8 So, I wouldn't worry about that. But
9 keep the wolves and the predators out of Resulted there.
10 And there is a lot of cows, a lot of calves, And good
11 counts. Good things, I guess. And Anyway, I could talk
12 all day like you -- But Yeah, I hopefully from here on
13 out our meetings don't overlap Another meeting. I'm
14 trying to keep an eye on them. So don't wind up in this
15 situation because I sit on the Yukon Drainage Fishery
16 Association as well. The Fish Commission, the -- what
17 the heck else. That other meeting that was going on
18 today? Darrell. The steering committee and the Yukon
19 Advisory. So, a lot of things. And it takes a lot of
20 time, but I want to watch the overlap in here so that
21 we can attend. So anyway, with that, I don't want to
22 talk too long. I know you guys are tired, and I really
23 appreciate all of you guys. And we have to -- when you
24 go home, make sure you pull -- we should all -- each --
25 one of us pull one young guy out. There's some young
26 guys there that are, well are good potential to this
27 this kind of stuff here. They want to know there -- they
28 go out there and hunt with us and stuff. And those are
29 the guys that get the ones that live it and the ones
30 that are doing it. So, they're in the in your towns
31 there's people. So. thank you.

32
33 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Thank you, Tommy.
34 And we're always really appreciate your presence here.
35 You got a lot of knowledge in the field. You got the
36 real time field experience and we're real -- and we
37 really appreciate what you do for the for the country
38 going out there and spending all that time. I, you know,
39 this this wolf stuff is a lot of work and people aren't
40 into that. But you got to do it. You got to it's got to
41 happen. So, I appreciate. So, Pollock.

42
43 MR. SIMON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As
44 Tommy is talking about preserving the moose,
45 (indiscernible) talk about fish. We want to keep working
46 together with the different agencies and everybody
47 involved. Over the years, I learned that working
48 together is the key. When we never had king salmon for
49 a few years. And then the (indiscernible) chum salmon
50 crash. So -- well, in the past, there were some lean

1 years. There wasn't a lot of fish all the time. Like
2 back home (indiscernible) talk about some lean years
3 1940 there was no fish. In Allakaket (indiscernible)
4 talk about there was no fish. So, he took the
5 (indiscernible) net and he made another guy sing in front
6 of the camp. They caught one (indiscernible). So, what
7 we used to do is put some fish and put some plants to
8 keep the dog's life in summertime. But by 1945 they said
9 the salmon came back. It improved. And in 1950, I was
10 ten years old. I stayed in Camp Fish (indiscernible)
11 with my mother, and by that time there was lots of fish.
12 There was lots king salmon, enough, even my mother was
13 cutting about 80 a day, so that's good. Then the State
14 and the fish took over management. And today there is
15 no more salmon. But we do know it's not one person's
16 fault, so we don't have to point fingers at anybody.
17 We're all in the same boat. We all have to work together
18 to bring the wild stock back. There's a talk of putting
19 hatches into this river, and they can release a million
20 fish, every fish after a year. But that may not be the
21 answer either, because the (indiscernible) fish out to
22 the village, but it doesn't taste the same.
23 (Indiscernible) I had a talk to him one time, and a lot
24 of this fish was dumped by my dock for it, so the fish
25 were pulled from the river is good for us maybe because
26 we're used to it. Well, I'm glad, I'm here. I'm glad to
27 see all of you like, I like to see Jenny and Jack running
28 the meetings, I guess right now, Don and Tommy Kriska
29 young, young people on the boat. There were some comments
30 yesterday about -- public comments some guys said, need
31 to see some young people up here. I believe that too,
32 because Jenny and I, and Robert wouldn't be around
33 forever. It's time that we get some young people
34 involved. So, I will come back again, in the meeting.
35 Thank you.

36
37 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Thank you,
38 Pollock. You're always have encouraging words and enjoy
39 your stories about when the salmon started to come back,
40 when you started to see fish again after a decline. So,
41 thank you for those stories. Appreciate that. Jenny.

42
43 MS. PELKOKA: I just want to thank
44 everyone, the Board members that made it. It looks good
45 to see all the seats almost filled up. And Tim has been
46 on the line ever since we started, and I don't think I
47 would have been able to do that but, thank you, Tim. I
48 don't know if this was brought up before, but working
49 lunch. Have we ever had a working lunch, or can we do
50 it? I know, seems like lunch time comes. And will I fall

1 asleep after from my good lunch, but it seems like. I
2 don't know if we ever tried it, but working lunch and
3 it'll speed up things. Our minds, my mind anyway, will
4 be clearer to go on with -- or we could order our lunch
5 here and just all stay in one place instead of running
6 all over the town. I don't know. That's just my thing.
7 I'm -- I went to a boarding school, and you had to be
8 on time all the time. You couldn't be a minute late or
9 so, you know, I'm used to that. And when somebody is
10 late or it bothers me in a way but it's just me. And I
11 just want to thank everyone for staying here. And I
12 really enjoyed this session with North Pacific people,
13 even though I think, I hope they got the message, but
14 it's going to take a while. But I don't like to say
15 nothing is going to happen. You know, I don't like to
16 say that because you never know. Things change so fast
17 that, don't give up. I mean, it sounds like you're giving
18 up when you say nothing will change. And I heard that
19 before, I -- when I was attending that training for
20 North Pacific and someone said, no, nothing will change.
21 It was so negative that it brings you down. And I think
22 we need to stay positive. We're on the same boat. We're
23 trying to get our fish back. We'll try. I'll try until
24 my last breath. And I think, and I'm sure now these
25 meetings are getting a little harder for me because I
26 do have something going on with my heart. And it does
27 take a lot out of me. But I'm sure this is going to be
28 my last term, and I don't want anybody to talk me into
29 you know, trying it again. I know we have young people
30 out there that can do it, but I would like to see
31 representatives from the Aniak area, all over. Not --
32 now we have Huslia, we have Koyukuk, Galena. We're all
33 close. And which is good, but we need to think about our
34 friends living in Aniak and McGrath in that area that
35 don't have any representatives on this Board. So, we
36 need to keep that in mind. And, you know, make sure we
37 get them on the Board somehow. And I thank -- thankful
38 that Robert got back on from that area because many of
39 us don't know what's going on in in that area, and we
40 learn from them. You know, I learned what's going on
41 around in his area. And when Carl Morgan was on, we
42 always knew what was going on in that area. And Dennis,
43 he kept us informed about I forgot where he was from
44 Shageluk or something like this.

45

46 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Around Red Devil.

47

48 MS. PELKOLA: Oh, Red Devil. Yeah. But
49 he kept us informed of what was going on around there.
50 And it, you know, we all worked together and, you know,

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1 I just think we should look at that and make sure we
2 have someone from that area. I just want to thank
3 everyone for being here. It's always good to get -- to
4 go with the guys. But again, I'll push for women because
5 women have -- men are just to me are just go, go, go,
6 go, go but a woman can calm a man down, calm things
7 down. And I think, you know, just these two women on the
8 Board so they can hang around with each other. But
9 anyway, that's just. I just want to thank you again. And
10 I don't want to get too long winded. Thank you.

11
12 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: You and Eleanora.
13 Eleanor Yatlin used to be on here. So, Tim has been
14 sitting on the phone. We're going to go to Tim now, your
15 closing comment, Tim.

16
17 MR. GERVAIS: Thank you. Mr. Chair, this
18 is Tim Gervais. I'd like to thank community of Fairbanks
19 for hosting our meeting. The Council members for all
20 their participation, the staff members, the public
21 comments and North Pacific Council for showing up and
22 participating. So now, as we're in these hard times on
23 our fish resources, and high prices for fuel and
24 ancillary food supply, it makes things harder for
25 people. But probably overall, it'll improve our
26 subsistence economy, make it stronger, get more hunting
27 and working on ways to utilize the local resources, not
28 be as involved in the in a commercial economy of -- over
29 the course of the winter, we lost a lot of political
30 power with Deb Holland and Mary Peltola not being in
31 their leadership positions. I appreciated both those
32 women doing what they did and really, really standing
33 up for rural residents and for fishing.

34
35 (Pause)

36
37 A role model. So, we can get some other
38 women from these Kuskokwim or Koyukuk or Yukon River to
39 participate in our Council. I think we need to Really
40 pay attention to what's going on. And kind of in a going
41 to enter into a protection phase where there's going to
42 be more emphasis on road development and mine
43 development, petroleum development. And we have to
44 always remember that there's very few, very few spots
45 left in this country and in the world in general that
46 are undeveloped and have these small village structures
47 where you can actually do hunting and fishing and have
48 it be a meaningful component of how you're supporting
49 your family and your neighbors. So, it's pretty rare
50 what's going on here and keeping Ambler Road out. Yukon

1 River highway out, I think, goes a long way into
2 preserving that the unbroken stretches of wild country
3 and protect access to subsistence resources. I encourage
4 the Council members to continue to be active, not get
5 beat up. Yeah. It is -- it is difficult when we were
6 talking with North Pacific Management Council and seeing
7 about fishing stuff, development of the trawl fleet
8 during the 1990s. And then the real fishery crashes that
9 started occurring around 1998, 1999. And then you get -
10 - we do with our interaction with North Pacific Council.
11 And it seems like these people are unaware or don't
12 care, or just consider these populations on the rivers
13 kind of a nuisance to their economic agenda got to
14 realize that it doesn't matter who we are or what we
15 are, we're all -- we have the same the same rights to
16 to live the way we want to live. And we shouldn't let
17 strong corporate forces or strong political forces
18 unjustly take things away from ourselves, our
19 communities and our future generations. I didn't feel
20 very well, the start of the meeting yesterday because I
21 was upset about not being able to travel up. But
22 listening to your comments and working through our
23 agenda made me feel better. All of you have a lot of
24 experience in these, not just the Board matters, but in
25 the actual activities of subsistence. And it's real
26 treasure chest. And I highly, highly respect and highly
27 appreciate all your guys' contribution. And I wish
28 everybody have a nice trip home.

29
30 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Thank you, Tim.
31 Appreciate your diligence on the phone. That's a hard
32 spot to be in. And you toughed it out to the end and I
33 appreciate that. So, Robert, do you want to have a
34 closing comment?

35
36 MR. WALKER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
37 Thank our staff. Thank our coordinator. Thank all the
38 people that came and testified to us, because this is a
39 new era, what we're stepping into, I think there's
40 probably going to be a light at the end of the tunnel.
41 The way our Coordinators do talk about -- it's nice to
42 see everybody here. You know, it's always a good time
43 for us to visit and get on top of things that we missed
44 out in the whole year. But to have our agenda taken care
45 of, I mean, which is okay, but I got a point that was
46 brought to my attention and some of the ladies here who
47 were at the North Pacific Fishery Management Council
48 last night talking to them as we talked yesterday, they
49 were kind of surprised on how you handled that, Jack.
50 They said Pollock was only given four minutes and he was

1 cut off. Robert Walker was only given seven minutes, and
2 he was cut off. Tim Gervais was given 18 minutes to
3 speak. And I thought about this, and I said, you know,
4 Pollock is one of our elders, and he should not be
5 interrupted when he's speaking because he has a
6 knowledge that you and I don't have because he's already
7 been there and done that. And I really think that, you
8 know, elder person, no matter who they are at that
9 matter, should be given that right to speak, because
10 something that they say we pick up and we learn to even
11 though I'm 75 years old, I'm still learning from other
12 people too. So, this from now on, everybody's going to
13 have to be treated equally if we're going to have to
14 speak at any kind of a presentation from North Pacific
15 Fishery to BLM, Forest Service or whatever, we should
16 be all given two minutes, three minutes to speak. Nobody
17 should have a privilege because of who we are. And I,
18 you know, I thought on this a long time, Jack. You know,
19 when I give presentations back home, everybody is
20 treated the same when we have our tribal Council meetings
21 and people speak and I address them, that you have four
22 minutes to make your whatever you want to say and that's
23 it. You know, I mean, nobody else can give you their
24 four minutes. So, from now on, Jack, I'm -- I really
25 think that maybe you should have a staff meeting. You
26 and Nissan sit down and talk with whoever else and come
27 to a conclusion here, because I don't think this is very
28 fair. And this should be a learning lesson. I'm not
29 condoning you. I'm not telling you how to run this. But
30 everybody, we all are equal here. And that's how it
31 should be. And for the rest of the thing, I am glad to
32 be here. I learned some things yesterday and today. This
33 listening to how people bring it. I'm not really
34 surprised about how our government has changed. Maybe
35 our way of life from now on, if it's going to be
36 federally recognized tribes or how we're going to do
37 this. So, I'd like to stop here and pass it to Don.
38 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

39
40 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, I will comment
41 back. I -- you started talking about riverboats going
42 over the top of spawning grounds and things that -- the
43 issue was the was the bycatch. And I was trying to keep
44 the meeting on track. If we don't stay on track with the
45 task before us the meeting just -- we only we had two
46 hours with that Council, so we had to stay on track. If
47 somebody talked about the issue, then I let them talk.
48 But if they got off track, I had to I -- didn't want to
49 see this -- that whole discussion just go off track.
50 There was only a certain amount of time to get all of

1 that -- those comments that we developed to put into our
2 letter, and I'm sorry that I had to cut out. I didn't
3 want to do that. I don't like to do that. If I had time,
4 I will let people talk off track. But that was not good
5 -- with that two-hour window. I felt I was in this time
6 frame to do that, so.....

7
8 MR. WALKER: I'm not going to argue with
9 you, Jack. I mean, you could have said, okay, Walker,
10 you got two minutes or Pollock you got two more minutes
11 because we got to move on. I mean, there's a way of
12 doing things without having to have a lengthy discussion
13 after this is over, because we all understand that.
14 Sometimes we do, we're tired in the evening. It's after
15 5:00.

16
17 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Right.

18
19 MR. WALKER: You have to understand that.
20 Yeah. So anyway, anyway, just leave it at that, Jack.
21 You just figure that out.

22
23 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Right.

24
25 MR. WALKER: Thank you much.

26
27 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: So, this was. That
28 was a special situation. I do feel that our meeting is
29 too short, IERAC gets three days. We get two. We're
30 always forcing right to the end of the meeting. I think
31 a two and a half day meeting may be necessary for this
32 Council, because we're always forcing -- oh, look, we're
33 an overrun right now. So, I do feel that the -- if you
34 run this meeting and you're trying to get all of this
35 stuff done in this amount of time, we're pushing too
36 hard. That's why this -- some of this has to happen.
37 That's just the way this -- that's the kind of thing
38 that we are up against. So, I think that we do need to
39 think about a two and a half day meeting. As Council
40 members, would they be willing to do a two and a half
41 day meeting, travel on the on the third day out? We have
42 had that in in past meetings. My apology to the Council
43 members that I had to cut short. But I was trying to
44 stay on task and trying to get the most out of this out
45 of the North Pacific -- they're going to make a huge
46 decision about how our salmon are affected. So, my
47 apology about that I feel bad. I felt really bad about
48 it. But when I -- I don't like to do that. That's not
49 my thing. But we have to stay on task for that -- Those
50 were those are special guests and all that VIPs, so to

1 speak. So I -- Don your turn to talk. And you can -- I'm
2 apologetic about what I happened on that meeting last
3 night, but that's -- go ahead, Don.

4
5 MR. HONEA: Yeah, I guess maybe I was
6 kind of edging toward that same thing when I mentioned
7 last night that we should get equal time or whatever,
8 but I could understand what Robert is saying here. First
9 off, I mean, it's been a bad couple of days. I lost my
10 vehicle. And so, I'm so, I'm kind of, you know, having
11 to run to DMV and stuff like that and leaving the meeting
12 for a little while. But other than that, I enjoy being
13 back on here. I guess I'm going to have to check with
14 Nissa because I just got back on. And do I file again
15 for -- okay. Okay. Other than that, I -- you know Jenny,
16 bring up some good points. I really enjoyed it when
17 Eleanor was on there because they bring right down from
18 grassroots. They say, hey, you know, fish camp and you
19 know, and so I agree with her. If there was an open
20 seat, I mean, you know, let's encourage let's go out
21 there and encourage Aniak, Mcgrath, Red Devil,
22 Georgetown, who -- Crooked Creek whoever's in -- we
23 should be promoting somehow participation. I don't like
24 just coming to these meetings, and they're not being
25 heard. So maybe we should be promoting that kind of
26 stuff. And I really enjoy Eastern Interior, YRDFA.
27 Serena, all the people that came here that we don't
28 normally see. I'm still confused. I, you know, on the
29 on the fish. I don't know what the projections are. I
30 can't go back and say, hey, I learned this or anything,
31 but, you know, some of the stuff that you could be on
32 here 20 years and not know the process, what I was
33 referring to today with OSM, it's kind of interesting.
34 And, you know, to me, no question is dumb if you don't
35 know it. Hey, that's cool. So, looking forward to McGrath
36 or wherever we go next. And I hear you guys. I hear each
37 of your concerns. Let's take it to heart. Let's work on
38 those. Not just, you know, say, well, this is why I did
39 it this way. Thank you.

40
41 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Go ahead, Darrell.

42
43 MR. VENT: Okay, I was waiting my turn.
44 All right. So, you know, I'm still, you know, learning
45 a lot of the processes that I've been going through, a
46 different kind of Board meetings. I've been on different
47 Boards, and a lot of the intent from all these Boards
48 that I see is that everybody cares about our foods and
49 resources. We want to protect that food resource. And I
50 was back home talking to my uncle, and we were talking

1 and he was saying, man, you know, back in the 70s and
2 80s, our people was eating 80% native food. I said,
3 yeah, I know, uncle said, I look at this potlatch now,
4 over 60% of the food is a processed food. It's not, you
5 know, it's not coming from our native people. He said,
6 I'm really concerned. I said, man, I'm losing a lot of
7 my friends. I said, yeah, I hear you. This cancer is
8 really bad. It's because they're switching their food
9 diets because of no more, you know, not no more [sic],
10 but because of the less native food that we eat. The
11 native food is a really important to a lot of the
12 villages all over. So, we're -- I'm in there, you know,
13 to try to help get that native food back on the table.
14 That's what they want me to, you know they want me here
15 for. So, I'm trying. You know, we're all trying. That's
16 our main intent. Our people always wanted that food. So,
17 when we start talking about North Pacific, I started
18 learning the structure of this North Pacific. There's
19 an Advisory Board and there's a Main Board. We are in
20 the process of getting on the Advisory Board. But as you
21 know, advisory to the State, advisory to, you know, the
22 federal government. We -- we've been having a hard time.
23 And what consists of this Main Board is mostly money.
24 These are the ones that operate in the ocean. And we've
25 been arguing about food putting on the table from the
26 river. And we have not been able to do that. That's
27 because these ocean people, they're allowed to fish.
28 We're not allowed to fish. That's a problem. I see that.
29 You know that's not the right intent. When it came down
30 to the federal government, when they said we're
31 preference, whereas the State is saying subsistence
32 preference. Those are two different things. You know,
33 it takes, you know, a lot of time, a lot of my time just
34 to try to figure out where are we going with this
35 process. I'm worried that, you know, not enough studies
36 being done out in the ocean as to why our fish is not
37 coming back into the river. They're saying, oh, yeah,
38 we're doing all these studies. But I see a lot of the
39 studies are mostly in-river, whereas what is being
40 happening out in the ocean? I'm starting to hear fish
41 are coming back late. Fish are showing up in different
42 areas. And we're you know, we're always wondering, you
43 know, it's like our caribou, they migrate in certain
44 areas and they stay in those areas, but they get
45 diverted. They're all over the place. Well, these fish
46 are starting to go all over the place. Maybe it's a
47 sign, I don't know. Maybe it's something, you know,
48 learning. Maybe there's something that we have to do
49 because they're coming back late. Caribou were doing --
50 they were coming in there late. And, you know, just for

1 a certain amount of time, they're back out of there.
2 But, you know, that's just from observing and, you know,
3 trying to understand the people talking about it over
4 in the Kobuk, Shungnak and Ambler area say, yeah, there's
5 that one year it was like that. And then they slowed the
6 hunting down up there, and the pattern seemed like it's
7 they're coming back into normal, normal use again. Well,
8 the fish, you know, there's nothing to say about that.
9 There's nothing there. We're trying to make them come
10 back, but not with the amount of fish and the size of
11 the fish with the strain. There's nothing there that
12 really could work right now. If you do, it'd be another
13 20, 30 years before you can even see something put on
14 the plate.

15
16 So, you know, when it comes to this
17 North Pacific in this State, you know, advisory on the
18 Fish and Game. It's hard to work with them right now.
19 We've been trying for how many years? Same thing with
20 State Board of Game. How many years we've been trying
21 to work with them? But it's not in our favor when we
22 look at it. It's more about either hunting or commercial
23 fishing or, you know, something in their favor. So, you
24 know, I, you know, I get I get confused, you know, I
25 mean, I get, you know, kind of tired, you know, just
26 arguing, arguing, arguing. It's, not in our favor.
27 That's what I'm, you know, trying to say. And it just
28 makes you stressed out. And our people are, you know,
29 looking up to you and saying, hey, you know, we want to
30 eat. You know, kids want to grow up and learn how to
31 fish. It's not happening. They can't -- they don't have
32 no fish camps. There's nothing there for them more. I
33 wanted them to, you know, grow up and see something like
34 I saw when I was growing up but that's not happening.

35
36 And it's just concerning, you know, and
37 I sometimes I just, you know, go off on, you know, I
38 got, I, you know, I get a bug in me and I say, okay, I'm
39 going to argue about this. So, I'm sorry about that. You
40 know, that happens sometimes, Jack. Because I, I think
41 about, you know, what that process was because we lost
42 that food resource, you know, and that really hurt when
43 we lost a lot of those food resources. And her grandpa's
44 arguing about, man, you got to protect this. You got to
45 learn their language. And it was kind of like, you know,
46 being put in a fight, but you're putting in the fight
47 too late and trying to figure out the process. That's
48 the thing, you know. So, I'm, I'm learning. I thank you
49 guys, you know, for letting me sit here with you guys
50 and tell you my story. But, you know, once I explain

1 more, I think, you know, people will understand, like
2 in the Northwest Arctic Caribou Herd I started
3 explaining to him what this process means. How come you
4 guys are being confused and they're being misled
5 sometimes, but hey, we all learn the hard way sometime
6 and I appreciate the time to talk. Thank you.

7
8 CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Thanks, Darrell.
9 Yeah. We didn't get your Council member comment at the
10 beginning of the meeting, so it's good that you got some
11 of this stuff onto the record. So, my closing comment,
12 I appreciate the staff that was here, our support. I'm
13 concerned about the OSM process. I'm concerned about the
14 budgeting. I'm concerned about having a meeting next,
15 next fall. I'm really concerned about that. I think that
16 this lense -- this political landscape could be a fairly
17 detrimental to the to our process. And so, I'm encouraged
18 that some of the, you know, the Yukon River Intertribal
19 Fish Commission, Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish
20 Commission. There's going to be -- they're going to pick
21 up some of the load of this Council. If we start to if
22 they start to restrict these Councils, that's going to
23 be the fallback. So, I value every last member on this
24 Council, every -- and we need younger people on this
25 Council. And so there, you know Darrell was down in
26 Galena. He was talking before this Council. I says, do
27 you want to be on the Council? I says, put your name in.
28 When was that? A long time ago. That was back when Sydney
29 was still around. That was 12 years ago or something
30 like that.

31
32 Right. The big animal issue. So, but we
33 really need to get -- if you have people in your, in
34 your communities, but we need to get down there to Aniak.
35 We need to get the publications down in the Aniak and
36 the intertribal -- Kuskokwim River Inter Tribal Fish
37 Commission should really step forward with names for
38 this Council. That should be a priority of the Kuskokwim
39 Inter-Tribal Fish Commission is to set -- to get
40 membership submitting their applications for this
41 Council. Because we have -- we can't wait till the next
42 time we get down there. The -- Pollock. go ahead.

43
44 MR. POLLOCK: Another comment I want to
45 make just like, it's 6:30 now. 5:00 is an hour and a
46 half past already. And these reporters in the -- they
47 should highlight the reports or each agency should have
48 time limits because I think this is 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.. 5
49 p.m. is now an hour and half ago. It was starting to get
50 hot. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay. So, I'll shut up, and I -- we did a lot of stuff at this meeting. A lot of it had to be done. And I think that we had a productive meeting. It was a real productive meeting. And I think that we accomplished a lot of things. And so, the Chair will entertain a motion to adjourn the meeting.

MR. VENT: This is Darrell. I make a motion to adjourn.

CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Motion to adjourn, Darrell.

MR. KRISKA: Second.

CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Seconded by Tommy. Those in favor of adjournment signify by saying aye.

IN UNISON: Aye.

CHAIRPERSON REAKOFF: Okay. Tim. Got you. All right. Okay, Tim. So, thanks for hanging on to that phone. And we'll see you hopefully at the next meeting. Mcgrath.

(Off record)

(END OF PROCEEDINGS)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Rafael Morel, for Lighthouse Integrated Services Corp, do hereby certify:

THAT the foregoing pages numbered 1 through 175 contain a full, true and correct Transcript of the WESTERN INTERIOR FEDERAL SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING, VOLUME II recorded on the 26th day of February;

THAT the transcript is a true and correct transcript requested to be transcribed and thereafter transcribed by under my direction and reduced to print to the best of our knowledge and ability;

THAT I am not an employee, attorney, or party interested in any way in this action.

DATED at Isabela, Puerto Rico this 13th day of March 2025.

Rafael Morel
Chief Project Manager