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1 EASTERN INTERIOR ALASKA SUBSISTENCE
2 REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

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4 PUBLIC MEETING

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7 VOLUME I

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9 PYKE'S WATERFRONT LODGE
10 Fairbanks, Alaska
11 February 19, 2025
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16 COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

17 Robert C. Wright, Sr., Chair
18 Susan L. Entsminger
19 Linda M. Evans
20 Eva D. Burk
21 Olivia Irwin
22 Andrew W. Bassich
23 Galen D. Gilbert
24 Donald A. Woodruff
25 Gerald K. Alexander

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29 Regional Council Coordinator, Brooke McDavid
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P R O C E E D I N G S

(Fairbanks, Alaska - 2/19/25)

(On record)

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay, thank you. I'm going to call the meeting to order now. 9:05. Good morning, everybody. We're going to ask Linda to do the opening prayer this morning. Thank you, Linda.

(Pause)

MS. EVANS: (Indiscernible) you have provided for us. We ask your blessing upon everyone here and their families, and we ask your blessing upon our elders who have taught us so much. We thank you. And help us to remember the needs of others. In the name of the father, son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

UNIDENTIFIED: Amen.

UNIDENTIFIED: Amen.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Well, we're all standing. I would like to have a moment of silence for the late Bill Glanz. He passed away not too long ago, and he was a big part of this. And it was just -- got me a little bit when Linda asked for a moment of silence, and I could hear the jet fly over. Bill was a -- he loved flying and kind of got me there a little bit. But let's have a moment of silence for Mr. Glanz, please.

(Pause)

Thank you so much.

(Pause)

Okay, we'll go to a roll call now. Please, McDonald [sic].

MR. WOODRUFF: Thank you, Charlie. I'll start at the top. Sue Entsminger.

MS. ENTSMINGER: Here.

MR. WOODRUFF: Dorothy Shockley. Dorothy, are you online?

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(No response)

Linda Evans.

MS. EVANS: Here.

MR. WOODRUFF: Eva Burk.

MS. Burk: Here.

MR. WOODRUFF: Olivia Irwin.

MS. IRWIN: Here.

MR. WOODRUFF: Andrew Bassich.

MR. BASSICH: Here.

MR. WOODRUFF: Charlie Wright.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Here.

MR. WOODRUFF: Galen Gilbert.

MR. Gilbert: Here.

MR WOODRUFF: Don Woodruff is here.

MR WOODRUFF: Gerald Alexander.

MR. Alexander: Here.

MR WOODRUFF: Thank you.

MS. MCDAVID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Before we get started this morning, I just have a few housekeeping announcements. My name is Brooke McDavid, and I am the Council Coordinator for the Eastern Interior Subsistence Regional Advisory Council. And to start out, welcome to our meeting. Welcome to the folks here in the room and online and of course, welcome to all our Council members and staff who help make this a very productive meeting. So, to start out, please remember to sign in each day at the table if you're here in the room. And for those joining us online or on the phone, you can find the meeting materials on the Office of Subsistence Management website. And that's at doi.gov/subsistence. And then there's a tab that says Regions. And you can click on Eastern Interior. And then on Meeting Materials. The most recent copy of the agenda is on the

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1 website and also on the public information table here
2 in the room, it's that pink version. For folks online,
3 please remember to please keep yourself muted. If you're
4 using Teams, you can just use the mute button. And if
5 you're on the phone, you can press star-six to mute and
6 unmute. For Council members, a friendly reminder to
7 please any time you speak to press the button on your
8 microphone because this meeting is being recorded and
9 transcribed. If you don't press the button, then we don't
10 get you recorded, and we want to make sure that we
11 accurately capture the meeting. I also would like to
12 kindly remind you to introduce yourself or say your name
13 when you speak, because the person who will be doing the
14 transcriptions is not the same as our audio-visual
15 person here in the room with us. So, thank you.

16
17 A note about public comments. So,
18 throughout the meeting, there'll be opportunities for
19 public participation. Each day there is a comment period
20 on non-agenda items. And that's in the morning of each
21 day, the first day of the meeting that will be after the
22 introductory Council business and after the Council
23 members give their reports. But tomorrow the comment
24 period for non-agenda items is first thing in the morning
25 after roll call. If you'd like to comment on a specific
26 agenda item, we do have these blue cards, or there's
27 some green ones too, I think, because we ran out of blue
28 paper. But you can just fill one out, put your name on
29 it, write what agenda item you'd like to comment on. And
30 then you can turn that into any staff or pass those up
31 to me, and I'll make sure the Chair is aware that you'd
32 like to comment. And if you're online and would like to
33 comment, you can use the raise hand feature on Teams or
34 if you're on the phone, you can press star-five and that
35 will raise your hand and put you in the line to comment.
36 You can also just say, Mr. Chair, at the appropriate
37 time and wait to be called on by the Chair if the
38 technology isn't working like we'd like. Written
39 comments can also be submitted throughout the meeting.
40 Those could be handed in to me. They can be emailed to
41 me as well. My email address is Brooke, that's Brooke
42 with an E on the end, underscore McDavid, m c d a v i d
43 at ios.doi.gov.

44
45 All right. And the next announcement I
46 wanted to make is that tonight we will be having a
47 special evening session starting at 6:30. We have five
48 members of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council
49 and two of their staff that are flying up to do a special
50 presentation to the Council about the chum salmon

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1 bycatch alternatives that their Council is considering
2 and they're going to give a presentation. It'll be
3 opportunity for the Council to ask questions and make
4 sure that you understand the different alternatives
5 being considered. And then if there's time, there might
6 be a public comment opportunity to the RAC after that.
7 So, we will try to have a hard stop at 8:30. If it goes
8 that long, because the Council will be convening again
9 tomorrow morning.

10
11 Next, I would like to welcome our new
12 members. We have three new members on the Council.
13 They'll be introducing themselves a little bit later and
14 telling us a little bit about themselves during their
15 reports. But we extend a warm welcome, and we're really
16 glad that that you're all here with us. And a friendly
17 reminder just about conduct during the meeting, you
18 know, respect is the name of the game. And as long as
19 everyone's respectful then we should be having a great
20 meeting. And, Mr. Chair, with that, I will turn it back
21 over to you. Thank you.

22
23 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you so much.
24 At this time, we'd like to do welcome and introductions,
25 and we would start with the Council. And I'd like to
26 start with Andy, please.

27
28 MR. BASSICH: Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Chair.
29 My name is Andy Bassich. I live at a place called Calico
30 Bluff, a little bit north of Eagle on the Yukon River.
31 I've been on the Council here for, I don't know, 20, 24
32 years, 23 years, whatever. I also serve as a Yukon River
33 panel member. That's a panel that works on the
34 international treaty for Canadian bound salmon, chinook
35 and fall chum. And I lead the -- Co-Chair -- as a
36 communications committee, Co-Chair on the Alaska side
37 for the Yukon River panel, and I also Chair the Eagle
38 AC. And it's great to see a very full, well-presented
39 Council here. I'm really happy about that. Thank you.

40
41 MS. IRWIN: (In Native) Olivia (In
42 Native) Gretchen Sumpter Irwin. (In Native) James
43 Timothy. EIrwin. Good afternoon, everyone. My English
44 name is Olivia. My Denaakk'e name is Henaayee. You'll
45 hear people refer to me as both so, I'm happy with either
46 reference. I live and am from Nenana, Alaska. I'm Koyukon
47 Athabascan and Iñupiaq, and I serve as the Co-Chair of
48 the Minto/Nenana Fish and Game Advisory Committee to the
49 State. And this is my first time serving on EIRAC so,
50 I'm very excited and thank everyone for welcoming me.

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MS. SHOCKLEY: Good morning. I am Dorothy Shockley, I am Upper Koyukuk and Athabascan from the Yukon River villages of Tanana, Rampart and Stevens Village. I grew up in Manley Hot Springs, currently live in Fairbanks. Yeah. This is my, I think, fourth or fifth meeting. So, thank you.

MR. WOODRUFF: Good morning. I'm Don Woodruff from Eagle, and I'm the Vice Chair of the Eagle AC, and I've been on the RAC for 21 years, and I'm really happy to see we have a full Council. Welcomed the new members. And if any of us can help you get up to speed, don't hesitate to ask questions. Thank you.

Ms. ENTSMINGER Hello, my name is Sue Entsminger. I live near Mentasta Village, about 16 miles east and have been on the RAC for 24 years and over (distortion) a period of time before RAC, I was on the Big Game Commercial Services Board and the Board of Game, and also the Nabesna Road/Tok Cutoff Advisory Committee. And I've been -- I was the Chair for a long time, and I want to let everyone know that I did not reapply. So, I too would like to welcome new members. And thank you for serving.

MS. BURK: Good morning. I'm Eva Dawn Burk. I'm from Nenana and Manley Hot Springs. I think I've been on the RAC for two years. There was a couple of Covid meetings in a hotel room so, it's a little fuzzy. And I -- I'm also on the Nenana Minto Advisory Committee for Fish and Game and then sit as a tribal seat on the advisory panel to the North Pacific Fishery Management Council. So, I've been swimming in a lot of salmon work lately with many others around this table. So, good morning and welcome to our new members.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: My name is Charlie Wright. I grew up between Rampart and Tanana on the Yukon River, hunting and trapping and fishing. I lived a subsistence lifestyle and until up recently, about ten years ago, I started advocating for a way of life because of the dwindling resource. So, now I serve and do as much as I can for the resources and my people. I serve on the EIRAC as the Chair, I've been on here for a few terms now. Not -- this my first term as Chair and I appreciate everybody for their confidence in me. I also, through the Chair, serve on the Denali Subsistence Resource Commission. I Chaired that on the TCC Board, Executive Council. I'm there -- I work in their advocacy

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1 committee on the Yukon River panel. I Co-Chair the
2 traditional knowledge committee there. I'm on YRDFA
3 Board and also the Chair of the Yukon River Inter-Tribal
4 Fish Commission. There's a couple more, but, I'll --
5 I'll leave that alone. Anyway, good morning to you all.
6 Thank you all for being here. Really appreciate the new
7 members. There's some gaps been filled, and I'm really
8 happy to see that you're here to represent your people.
9 They need you more than ever right now. Thank you. With
10 that, I'll move on. Thank you. Go ahead, Gerald.

11
12 MR. ALEXANDER: Good morning. My name is
13 Gerald Alexander. I was born and raised in Fort Yukon.
14 Sat on the Council with the (indiscernible) Council for
15 eight years, sat on the Fish Commission for a few, had
16 the pleasure of working with my buddy here, and I'm also
17 a new member and my first day. And hopefully I can learn
18 a lot more from you guys. Thank you.

19
20 MR. GILBERT: Good morning. My name is
21 Galen Gilbert. My -- I'm the grandson of Trimble and
22 Mary Gilbert. I'm a former chief of Arctic Village for
23 ten years, I believe. And I got bumped down to second
24 recently but, you know, I like to think, you know, that's
25 God's path for me. And I haven't been happier because,
26 you know, I'm really enjoying it. And, you know, I like
27 to fill the seats that -- I look at it as, you know, I
28 want to fill the seats now that you know where we need
29 representation. And I'm just so honored and happy to be
30 here with everybody. And I'm really, really excited to
31 be here representing my people and being here with you
32 all. And yeah, thank you very much.

33
34 MS. EVANS: Hello, my name is Linda
35 Evans. Born in Tanana, raised in Manley Hot Springs and
36 spend the rest of my life in Rampart and now I'm living
37 in North Pole. Go to Rampart in the summertime as much
38 as I can in the fall time. I was really happy to spend
39 the fall there. It was really nice. Just the quietness
40 and everything of village community living is really --
41 rebuilds your spirit and your soul. I'm very concerned
42 about our lack of resources and what we can do to try
43 to rebuild those. I really urge all of us to work
44 together and for the benefit of our communities, our
45 people. I have a real concern for our young--younger
46 generations our younger children that they will be able
47 to have and learn how to use the resources of the land
48 as we were taught. And I welcome the new members. It's
49 really nice to have a full Board and I look forward to
50 learning from them also as they co here with their

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1 expertise, Thank you.

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CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you, Linda.
4 Right now, we can move over to the phone or online. If
5 anybody wants to introduce their self [sic] this
6 morning, please.

7

8 MR. CHEN: Good morning, Mr. Chair and
9 Council members. My name is Glenn Chen. I'm the
10 subsistence branch chief for the Bureau of Indian
11 Affairs.

12

13 MR. RISDAHL: Good morning, Mr. Chair,
14 and members of the Council. My name is Greg Risdahl. I'm
15 the USDA Forest Service subsistence program leader and
16 interagency staff committee member for the Forest
17 Service. I'm happy to be here as well.

18

19 MS. STICKMAN: Good morning, everyone. My
20 name is Angel Stickman. I'm just a person; and concerned
21 about our lands and animals.

22

23 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you.

24

25 MR. THOMAS: Good morning, Mr. Chair,
26 members of the Council. I'm Bruce Thomas CATG natural
27 resources director.

28

29 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Good morning,
30 Bruce.

31

32 MR. LEPPING: Good morning, Mr. Chair and
33 members of the Council. I'm Brian Lepping. I am a fish
34 biologist with Tanana Chiefs Conference.

35

36 MR. STEVENS: Good morning, Mr. Chair and
37 the Council. My name is Curtis Stevens. I am the North
38 Zone patrol captain for refuge law enforcement for the
39 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

40

41 MS. CRAVER: Good morning, Mr. Chair, and
42 members of the Council. This is Amy Craver from Denali
43 National Park calling in.

44

45 MS. YOCHUM: Good morning, Mr. Chair,
46 members of the Council. This is Kim Yochum. I work also
47 at the National Park Service, at the Regional Office
48 Subsistence Program and an interagency staff committee
49 member to the Federal Subsistence Board.

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1 (Simultaneous speech)

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3 MS. COHEN: Oh, hi, Eva. Go ahead.

4

5 (Simultaneous speech)

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7 MS. PATTON: Good morning. Yeah, you
8 go ahead. You go ahead.

9

10 MS. COHEN: Okay, thank you. Good morning
11 to the Council. Mr. Chair, this is Amber Cohen, cultural
12 anthropologist at Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and
13 Preserve.

14

15 MS. PATTON: And good morning, Mr. Chair
16 and Council members, this is Eva Patton, subsistence
17 program manager with the National Park Service and
18 interagency staff committee member. And welcome to all
19 the new Council members. And, great to hear all the
20 familiar voices too. Good morning.

21

22 MR. JOLY: Good morning, everyone. This
23 is Kyle Joly. I'm a wildlife biologist with Yukon-
24 Charley Rivers National Preserve.

25

26 (Distortion)

27

28 MS. OWEN: Good morning, Mr. Chair.
29 Members of the Council, this is Pat Owen. I'm a wildlife
30 biologist at Denali National Park.

31

32 MS. KETRON: Good morning, everyone. This
33 is Caroline Ketron. I'm the anthropologist at the Bureau
34 of Land Management, Glennallen field office.

35

36 MR. SARAFIN: And good morning. This is
37 Dave Sarafin, fisheries biologist at the Wrangell-St.
38 Elias National Park and Preserve.

39

40 MS. CLEAVER: Good morning. This is Marie
41 Cleaver. I'm the refuge information technician at the
42 Koyukuk/Nowitna and Inokko National Wildlife Refuge for
43 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Galena.

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45 (Pause)

46

47 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Anybody else.....

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49 MS. FISHER: Good morning, Mr. Chair and
50 members. Oh, hi, sorry.

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CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Go ahead.

MS. FISHER: Good morning, Mr. Chair, and members of the Council. My name is Brooke Fisher, and I'm a subsistence resource specialist in the fish -- Department of Fish and Game.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you.

(Simultaneous speech)

MR. GRAHAM: Good morning, Mr. Chair.....

MS. PILCHER: Good morning, everyone.

MR. GRAHAM:members of the Council.

(Simultaneous speech)

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: I'm going to be quiet.

MR. GRAHAM: This is.....

MS. PILCHER: (Indiscernible).

MR. GRAHAM: This is Cory Graham. I'm a fisheries biologist with the Office of Subsistence Management.

MS. PILCHER: This is Nissa Pilcher, Council Coordinator with the Office of Subsistence Management.

(Pause)

MRS. STUBY: Good morning, Mr. Chair, members of the Council. Lisa Stuby, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Sportfish.

(Pause)

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Let's not be shy. If anybody else out there wants to introduce yourself, this is the time.

(Pause)

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1 Okay. Hearing none. Do we have a
2 microphone for the audience or you can come up to the
3 Chair and introduce yourselves one at a time? One or the
4 other. But we want you to be on the record so, please
5 come and speak at the microphone.
6

7 MS. CELLARIUS: Mr. Chair, Council
8 members, my name is Barbara Cellarius. I am the
9 subsistence coordinator and cultural anthropologist with
10 Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve. I'm based
11 in Copper Center.
12

13 MR. DOWDLE: Good morning, Mr. Chair,
14 members of the Council. I'm Mark Dowdle with the National
15 Park Service. I have the honor of serving as the
16 superintendent of Yukon-Charley Rivers National
17 Preserve, and I'm also the superintendent of Gates of
18 the Arctic National Park and Preserve. Thank you.
19

20 MS. OKADA: Good morning, Mr. Chair, and
21 members of the Council. My name is Marcy Okada. I'm the
22 subsistence coordinator for Yukon-Charley Rivers
23 National Preserve, and I'm based out of Fairbanks.
24

25 MS. WALSH: Good morning, my name is
26 Misty Walsh, and I am from Tok area. I grew up, up the
27 Steese Highway and I also have property in Eagle and
28 down in the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park. And I'm
29 just here as a guest.
30

31 (Pause)
32

33 MS. LA VINE: Good morning, everyone. My
34 name is Robbin La Vine and I'm the subsistence policy
35 coordinator for OSM, and I believe this is my very first
36 time representing the OSM leadership team for the
37 Eastern Interior, and it's really good to be here. Thank
38 you.
39

40 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you. You all
41 can line up if you want to make things go faster.
42

43 MR. PLANK: Good morning, Mr. Chair.
44 Members of the Council. Tom Plank, Wildlife biologist.
45 Office of Subsistence Management.
46

47 MS. WILLIAMS: Good morning, Mr. Chair,
48 and members of the Council. I'm Liz Williams, cultural
49 anthropologist at the Office of Subsistence Management.
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1 (Pause)

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MS. VENT: Good morning. My name is Jazmyn Vent. I'm Koyukon and Inupiaq from the village of Huslia, and I'm the communications lead for the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission and co-founder of No Ambler Road.

MR. YASKA: Good morning, Mr. Chairman. George Yaska. I'm originally from Huslia and I'm very glad to see my friends and colleagues here. I've first testified in 1985 at the Middle Kuskokwim Fishing Advisory Committee, and then the Boards of Fisheries and Game a couple of years later, and then in 1990 and the Middle Yukon Fishing Advisory Committee. I was at the first meeting in December of 1990, I believe it was at Galena, Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association, where we thought we were going to meet our people downriver from Emmonak and Solomon and go to war. We didn't really know what to expect. We didn't go to war, and started talking together and glad to be here as the Indigenous Knowledge Liaison, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you for being here. Good to see you.

MS. KIRKEY: Good morning. My name is Grace Kirkey. I work for the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association, and I am the community-based monitoring program coordinator. Happy to be here.

UNIDENTIFIED: Good morning.....

(Simultaneous speech)

MS. HERZNER: Hi. Oh, sorry. Oh, sorry. My name is Katie Herzner. I am a tribally enrolled member of the Nome Eskimo Community, and I am a technical assistance specialist for the Inter-Tribal Agriculture Council. Currently, residing in Fairbanks.

MR. HAMMOND: Good morning, Mr. Chair and Council members, I'm Tim Hammond. I'm the manager for the BLM's Eastern Interior field office based out of Fairbanks.

MS. YEMMA: Good morning. I'm Angela Yemma. I'm an assistant field manager working with Tim at the BLM Eastern Interior field office.

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MR. HERRIGES: Good morning. Jim Herriges wildlife biologist, also with the Eastern Interior field office.

MS. MONTGOMERIE: Good morning, everybody. I'm Claire Montgomerie. I also work for the BLM Eastern Interior field office as an ecologist.

MR. MERRILL: Good morning, Mr. Chair. Council members, I'm Clayton Merrill, the subsistence coordinator for Arctic, Kanuti and Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuges.

MR. MARTIN: Good morning. I'm Ross Martin. I'm a PhD student at the Yale School of the Environment. And I'm focused on subsistence politics for my -- for my dissertation. So, welcome to the new members.

MS. CLARK: Good morning.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Good morning. We hear you.

MS. CLARK: Okay. My name is.....

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Go ahead.

MS. CLARK: My name is Theresa Clark. I'm the executive director for the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Good morning, Theresa. Thank you. Go ahead.

MS. HODGDON: Ade'. Good morning, Chair and members of the Council. My name is Deenaalee Hodgdon. I am a member of the Tribe of Anvik on the Lower Yukon River, and the current co-director of the Smokehouse Collective. It's wonderful to be here.

MS. CHASE: Good morning, Council. Nice to see a lot of familiar faces and some new faces. I'm Malinda Chase. My home villages Anvik. I'm here representing Deloy Ges and also the Bering Sea Interior Tribal Commission. I know some of you through work as well. I work at the International Arctic Research Center as a tribal commission -- I mean, tribal liaison in climate issues. But I'm here for my other hats today. So, good morning.

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MS. JALLEN: Good morning. Great to see everybody in person. Deena Jallen with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. The Yukon River summer season fishery manager. Thanks.

MR RUNFOLA: Good morning, David Runfola, summer season assistant fisheries management biologist for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Thank you.

MR. OLSON: Good morning. Matt Olson, Alaska Department of Fish and Game in Fairbanks. I'm currently the acting fall season manager for the Yukon River. Thanks.

MR. RANSBURY: Good morning, everybody. My name is Shane Ransbury. I'm a fishery assessment biologist for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service here in Fairbanks. Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay. Moving down the agenda here. Election of officers.

MS. MCDAVID: This is Brooke, Council Coordinator. Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, every winter meeting, we do our election of officers for the year. And as Coordinator, I will do the election for the Chair. And then once the Chair is confirmed, then the Chair will do the election for Vice Chair and Secretary. So, for nominations for Chair, you don't need to make a motion. I will just ask now if anyone would like to nominate anyone for Chair. I saw Andy's hand up first.

MR. BASSICH: Yeah, Thank you. I'd like to nominate Charlie Wright as our Chair. Thank you.

MS. MCDAVID: Thank you, Andy. Any other nominations?

(No response)

Going once, twice. All right. I will ask for unanimous consent to re-elect Mr. Charlie Wright as Chair.

MR. BASSICH: Aye.

MS. MCDAVID: Any opposed?

(No response)

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Hearing none. Congratulations, Mr. Chair, on your re-election.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you all for your vote of confidence. I appreciate it very much. Okay, we'll move on to -- next election would be Vice Chair. Any nominations for Vice Chair on the floor today? Go ahead, Donald.

MR. WOODRUFF: I nominate Eva Burk for Vice Chair.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Any other nominations on the table?

(No response)

Hearing and seeing none. We'll ask for unanimous consent. Yay or nay.

MR. WOODRUFF: Yay.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you. And, Eva, welcome back again. Okay. Now, on the floor is the Secretary treasurer -- Secretary. Any nominations?

MR. BASSICH: Yeah, I'd like to nominate Don Woodruff.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Any other nominations?

(No response)

Hearing or seeing none. Ask for unanimous consent. All those against? Seeing none. Congratulations. Thank you.

MR. WOODRUFF: Thank you, Council.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Go ahead, Andrew.

MR. ANDREW: Yeah. I just wanted to get a clarifying question here. Don is now our Secretary and Treasurer. I'm wondering how we can address the Treasury aspect of that.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Yeah, okay, we'll work on that. And I'll get back to you at break.

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MR. WOODRUFF: I can -- I can report on our budget.

UNIDENTIFIED: Mr. Chair, just for the record. And so, we don't get in trouble. We do not have a treasurer. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: That's what I am. So, it just naturally came out one of my seats so, my apologies, Secretary. Okay, Moving down the line. Review and adopt agenda.

(Pause)

Go ahead, Andy.

MR. ANDREW: Yeah, I'd like to approve the agenda with the ability for the Chair to make amendments to the agenda as he see fits throughout the meeting.

UNIDENTIFIED: Second.

MR. WOODRUFF: I'll second.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: The question. We'll ask for unanimous consent. All those for signify by saying aye.

IN UNISON: Aye.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Against same sign. Hearing and seeing none. Thank you. Moving down to review and approve previous meeting minutes. Go ahead, Donald.

MR. WOODRUFF: I make a motion that we approve the minutes from the previous meeting. Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED: Second.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay. I'll ask for unanimous vote again. All those in favor, please signify by saying aye.

IN UNISON: Aye.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: All against same sign. Seeing or hearing none. Thank you very much. Go

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1 ahead.

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3 MR. WOOFRUFF Yeah, I just wanted to
4 thank staff for doing a really good job on the minutes.
5 I-- It's a really important part of documenting what we
6 do here and they've always done a good job, but, I--
7 there's a couple of items throughout this -- our letters
8 to the Council and stuff that I really appreciate the
9 detailed work that was done and how well it conveys at
10 least in my view, the words spoken at our previous
11 meeting. So, I just wanted to put the thank you out
12 there. I know a lot of people work hard on that.

13

14 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you so much.
15 We've got to keep saying that because they do a great
16 job and make us look real good. I appreciate it, Thank
17 you. Okay. If there's nothing else anybody else wants
18 to say, we're going to move into reports -- Council
19 member reports. And I think we should start with Andy
20 because we got some new guys on the -- at the table
21 today. And it's really good to see people that's been
22 around for a while do their reports. So, guys that's new
23 can get a good idea of what's going on. So, appreciate
24 you, Andy. Thank you.

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26 MR. BASSICH: Yeah. Thank you. He always
27 starts with the guy with the shortest win, right? Yeah,
28 thank you. I have a number of items, I'll try and be as
29 brief as possible. A lot of that -- topics I'll probably
30 talk about during our meeting. Probably in more detail
31 as they come up. First thing I'd like to talk about,
32 which is the most important thing in my life, is the
33 Yukon River. Yukon River is the artery of life for many
34 of us here in this room and many people up and down the
35 Yukon drainage. I just wanted to report some general
36 conditions from this year. We had a really low water
37 freeze-up this year. Very consistent, jumbled ice from
38 Circle all the way up past Eagle. We've had very little
39 snow this year with a tremendous amount of wind on the
40 river. There's virtually almost no snow on the river at
41 this point in time. And back in the woods, very little
42 snow. The wind has blown a lot of silt onto the ice so,
43 I'm expecting to see a fairly early thaw. I think we'll
44 probably have a fairly early breakup this year as well.
45 I'm hoping that it's not so low that we have jamming
46 conditions. That's the only potential I would see for
47 problems along the Yukon River in our region if there's
48 a jam. But, kind of an interesting year. It's been really
49 difficult traveling crossing rivers. However, you have
50 Been able to travel along the shorelines relatively well

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1 in the back sloughs.

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4 In regards [sic] to moose, I spent a lot
5 of time on dogsleds, probably a little over 1500 miles
6 so far this year and I've seen two moose tracks this
7 whole year, and I'm really concerned about that. I know
8 we live in an area that moose densities are pretty low,
9 but -- and I take that into consideration. But, when I
10 give these observations, they're based on 35 years of
11 spending time out in the bush. And -- I you know, I kind
12 of weigh every year what I'm seeing, what resources are
13 out there and what I might have at my -- as a resource
14 I might be able to utilize for my lifestyle there. So,
15 I'm concerned about moose. I think that previous years
16 of heavy snows, there was a lot of predation by wolves
17 on them. And so, that's a concern of mine.

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In regards to caribou, I have not seen
a single caribou track all winter, and that really
concerns me. If you look at the data from the States
Subsistence Resources Studies in Eagle, you will see
that salmon, both king salmon and fall chum are the
number one food source for the people in my community,
my area and caribou have always been number two. And so,
we will be having a Forty-mile coalition meeting next
week, and I'm really eager to get back on the ball and
try and get some of that herd built back up to a
sustainable level. That really concerns me because
that's food that people in Eagle not a lot of people
hunt Moose because -- just the access of them but our
community really relies on Caribou and it's just not
there.

Briefly, salmon continues to be a really
huge issue for us on the Yukon River in my region. King
salmon has always been very high -- and held in very
high regard and very much necessary for subsistence. But
also, fall chum is super important to the lifestyle.
We're one of the few communities in the Upper Yukon
where dog teams are still a pretty viable and utilize
form of transportation and work for people. Without Chum
Salmon that becomes virtually impossible unless you have
a good paying job now. I've spent a lot of time trying
to mitigate by catching non-salmon species at last
summer and in previous years, and it's -- if you were
to calculate the CPU of that, it would be followed by
many, many zeros. It's poor, very poor, because we don't
have a lot of non-salmon fish up in our area. So, that's
a huge concern of ours. And there's a lot of people at
this table working on salmon issues right now. And I'm

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1 really glad to see we're -- I feel like we're starting
2 to make some inroads but, we got a long way to go.

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4 And there's some systemic changes that
5 need to take place in management, both on the Yukon
6 River and statewide for us to get through this. And then
7 finally, this is a topic that is not talked about a lot.
8 It's not a very sexy topic but, I think it's one that's
9 going to impact Interior people in particular. And
10 that's the avian flu. I've been speaking for the last 2
11 or 3 Council meetings about the lack of birds that I'm
12 seeing in our area. I'm speaking with Skip Ambrose, the
13 peregrine falcon specialist who has 50-year data set on
14 peregrine falcons. Peregrine falcons are one of their
15 lowest numbers they've had since the DDT issues that
16 started their decline back in I believe it was the 70s.
17 It may have been even earlier than that. I think it was
18 the 70s. so, I'm very concerned about that. But what I'm
19 really concerned about is I've been following the South
20 Hemisphere effects of avian flu, and it is now moved
21 into the marine mammals down in Argentina, in the
22 southern waters of Argentina, which is a lot of that is
23 the same latitudes that we have here. It's gotten into
24 the marine mammals. They've having massive die offs of
25 marine mammals. And it's moving potentially into cattle
26 and other species down there. So, this I don't know how
27 much we can do about it but, I think as the migration
28 starts coming north for birds, I think it's really
29 important to have some preliminary testing because a lot
30 of subsistence people rely on waterfowl early in the
31 season and if that crosses over into humans, we got a
32 lot of problems. So, I just want to I'm going to keep
33 talking about this because oftentimes we talk about
34 moose, caribou, bears, the larger mammals, fish. But
35 oftentimes from my experience, it's some of these lesser
36 talked about species that have the greatest impacts to
37 us. And I've talked a lot about the loss of bees up in
38 the northern -- I'm seeing tremendous loss of bees for
39 pollinating and songbirds. And the danger that I see
40 with the birds is that they travel very far and very
41 fast. So, when they have problems, they transmit that
42 very far and very fast, unlike moose or caribou or sheep
43 that tend to be more sedentary in their movements. So,
44 I'm just going to keep talking about that for the next
45 couple of years. And I'm really hoping that all the
46 departments put a little bit of effort into monitoring
47 efforts and communicating that to the people out the
48 rural regions and also to state leadership, because I
49 do believe that we're potentially in for some very
50 devastating impacts to wildlife and possibly humans as

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1 well. That's all I have. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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4 MS. IRWIN: Through the Chair, thank you.
5 This will be my first time doing a Chair report, so I
6 ask for your patience. And as an advocate for our ways
7 of life, I haven't been home a lot this year. I've been
8 in hotel rooms in Anchorage and Fairbanks a lot. So, my
9 observations might be expanded upon by Charlie and Eva
10 and others who roam around Nenana as well. This summer
11 there was continued use of four-inch mesh nets. And folks
12 -- oh, thank you. My name is Olivia Henaayee Irwin for
13 the record, thank you. Thanks, Brooke. There wasn't a
14 lot of -- the effort is limited with four-inch mesh
15 nets. Folks aren't really getting a whole lot out of
16 them. So, that's been a struggle within our community,
17 obviously throughout the Yukon River and most of the
18 drainages were having issues with a lack of chinook and
19 fall chum Salmon for us in the middle Tanana fall chum
20 is really what we've relied on for generations and
21 without that, there's been a lack of continuation of
22 building of fish wheels. There's been a lack of harvest
23 of salmon within our community and it's kind of -- there
24 was a there was a lot of whitefish that were being caught
25 for a period of time and I think that there's still a
26 pretty healthy whitefish population but, the effort is
27 just down in our communities because people are a little
28 bit discouraged, I think, to go out. I've been engaging
29 in a lot of the federal spaces, such as the North Pacific
30 Fisheries Management Council, and there's a lot going
31 on in the ocean but, there's also a lot that we can do
32 in-river. And I'm really worried about our discrete
33 stocks and our tributaries. I have concern about our
34 spawning grounds throughout the Yukon River. In addition
35 to the Doyon Hilcorp mining -- that's -- project that's
36 supposed to be happening. I'm extremely worried about
37 the continued development within the drainage and what
38 that could do to our discrete stocks. As well as what's
39 going on in the ocean, because 4000 fish in one tow
40 could take out a discrete stock.

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43 So, those are some of my concerns.
44 People in our community are still dying and we're still
45 holding Potlach without fish. It's a really difficult
46 thing for our people to navigate but we're still
47 maintaining those cultural practices and trying to find
48 solutions and ways to provide food for our community.
49 We -- I have not seen a lot of moose when traveling down
50 the highway this year. Just from Fairbanks to Nenana,
my personal experience, I haven't been seeing many. And
I haven't been seeing many tracks around my home. There's

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1 continued outside pressure for Moose within our
2 community. There was a road that was developed a couple
3 of years ago from across the Tanana River and there was
4 a land sale that opened up for -- an agricultural land
5 sale and the continued development back there has really
6 been pushing our moose away from our traditional hunting
7 grounds, and it's adding additional pressure from
8 outside hunters. So, I'm concerned about our moose
9 populations, I'm concerned about our salmon, and I'm
10 concerned about our people because our way of life is
11 being stripped away from us. And so, my hope is that
12 through work on this Council and with other Council
13 members, we can start to make some strides towards
14 finding solutions to some of those issues. Thank you,
15 Mr. Chair, I hope that was an okay report.

16
17 MS. SHOCKLEY: Good morning. Dorothy
18 Shockley from Manley, Fairbanks. I was reading my report
19 from last year and it's basically the same. You know,
20 just -- it's sad, it's discouraging to see what's
21 happening in our State with our food source. You know,
22 like I mentioned before, you know, in three generations
23 and 60 years, you know, since the State took over so-
24 called management. You know, I believe, of course, you
25 can't manage fish and game. They have depleted our
26 resources, our way of life, our way of feeding ourselves.
27 In just 60 years and, you know -- and we just keep doing
28 the same thing over and over. They keep doing the same
29 thing over and over. So, you know, it's like, you know,
30 the saying goes, if you keep doing the same thing and
31 expect change, you know, it's a sign of insanity, I
32 think. So, anyway, I, you know, of course continue to
33 be concerned about our inability to feed ourselves. And,
34 you know, the current Western system is not working.
35 And, you know, for us to continue to push for our
36 indigenous knowledge to be included, and for us to work
37 with management or work with our fish and game versus,
38 you know, trying to manage -- well, what they do is
39 manage, you know, us people instead of working with, you
40 know. Our elders have always told us to watch, you know,
41 what the animals are doing, watch what the environment
42 is doing, and it will tell us many things about what we
43 need to do and how we need to work with nature versus,
44 you know, working with science and data. I mean, we have
45 our own science. We have our own data. So, you know, I
46 like I said, I -- I'm sad, I am discouraged. But also,
47 I'm hopeful. You know, I see young people in here that
48 you will continue to carry on and hopefully do more, you
49 know with our traditional knowledge and, you know, it
50 still baffles me by how many organizations there are

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1 within our Native communities but, also with fish and
2 game how many positions there are. But also, you know,
3 how we need to be more -- work more holistically and
4 work together, you know, bring everybody into the room
5 and instead of working in these different silos, you know,
6 we're all trying to do the same thing but we're just
7 doing it in different ways, I suppose. So, you know,
8 having a more holistic system and you know, like I think
9 most people are right now very concerned about our new
10 administration and what's going to happen. You know, in
11 some ways I think maybe it's good but, you know, in
12 other ways it's very concerning. I think in some ways,
13 you know, if we go do away with all these, you know,
14 positions, maybe then we'd have the ability to do our
15 own thing. So, anyway, thank you so much. Appreciate
16 this. Thank you for everyone who's here. Appreciate that
17 as well, thank you.

18
19 MR. WOODRUFF: Thank you, Dorothy, for
20 your heartfelt testimony. In Eagle, we've had a pretty
21 mild winter but, with a lot of heavy winds. We've had
22 four days of 37 knot winds, which scours the river like
23 Andy said. The school kids have a tradition of going out
24 and measuring the ice at this time every winter and they
25 measured it at 50cm this year which comes out to 19.7in,
26 and normally they measure it at close to 48in. So, it
27 just goes to show you how mild the winter we've had. As
28 far as hare populations is up, and the martin population
29 is up and the beaver population is up, and the grouse
30 population is up. Some caribou passed through the
31 village one night. Some mushers saw them, and they
32 counted them as around 100. They crossed the Yukon and
33 went up Eagle Creek and there was zero harvest, because
34 it was at night. And, as far as cultural heritage
35 preservation, I've been talking with the Park Service
36 about place names and cabin preservation for subsistence
37 use cabins, and I think we have made some good progress
38 but, we have a ways to go. Thank you very much.

39
40 MS. MCDAVID: And that was Donald
41 Woodruff for the record.

42
43 MS. ENTSIMGER: Okay, for the record, Sue
44 Entsminger. Yeah, like Eagle. It's been exceptionally
45 warm early this year in our area. Less snow and I'm
46 happy to hear about less snow. I'm really concerned about
47 the sheep in our area and across the State, actually.
48 It's -- the numbers have declined and seems like we have
49 plenty of wolves around because they're coming into our
50 home and my son has caught several by the house. I --

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1 over the years here, 48, living around Mentasta Village,
2 I've had the privilege of learning the culture there and
3 living it with them and appreciate them very much. I
4 think we actually do have a few moose around our area.
5 People are not complaining too much. And the caribou
6 just kind of come through at times. It's very sad to
7 know what happened to the Nelchina Caribou, with a huge
8 decline over a period of four years. And, I just want
9 to say that since I have one more meeting left -- I
10 serve on the Tok Cut-Off/Nabesna Road I was just recently
11 elected as an alternate to that, and I could serve on
12 the Subsistence Resource Commission for the park if this
13 Council would want to appoint me for that. That was
14 another qualification you had to have. I'm also
15 concerned about people and the whole system, everybody
16 working together and respecting each other. I think
17 that's the ticket to have a future for a future
18 generation is respect each other and talk to each other,
19 learn from each other and working together. Thank you.

20
21 MS. BURK: Good morning. Like Olivia
22 said, I've also been in an extreme amount of -- oh,
23 yeah, sorry. This is Eva Burk, For the record. I've been
24 in too many meetings. I don't even know what's going on
25 anymore. I got home to Nenana for a little bit over the
26 new year but not as much as I should be. There's a lot
27 of meetings that have happened. A lot of -- I feel like
28 progress in some of the things that we're trying to
29 change and do. The -- for something that we've been
30 working on The Yukon River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission
31 who I work for, we-- work-- finalized a Gravel-to-Gravel
32 MoU, memorandum of understanding. I had left October's
33 meeting to go work on that. I think one of the key
34 objectives in that memorandum of understanding, which
35 is between several tribal partners and all of the federal
36 agencies along the Yukon River to work together, and the
37 goal is to work across jurisdictional boundaries to
38 restore the health of and relationships between salmon,
39 people and place. And I think that's something to really
40 remember and think about and part of what we did in
41 thinking about, like, what Dorothy's saying about all
42 these different disconnected bodies trying to work on
43 stuff. It's all by design. This is all by design. These
44 systems were set up to divide us, to not have a unified
45 voice when it comes to salmon. I mean, looking at salmon
46 in the Gravel-to-Gravel, I often said we only have a
47 gravel part of the gravel-to-gravel MOU. We don't have
48 National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration or National
49 Marine Fisheries Service at the table. So, therefore the
50 two gravel, the ocean marine part is missing. So, we

1 need to keep working on that. The Federal Subsistence
2 Board should also have a NOAA NMFS seat on it as well,
3 that's something I think is important.

4
5 The Fish Commission made -- put together
6 a regulatory strategy which has been shared with many
7 in this room, and we're happy to continue sharing that.
8 And that is trying to work on protections for our salmon
9 in each and every space. So, within this space, within
10 our Fish and Game Advisory Committees and also at --
11 using the Board of Fisheries process, as well as the
12 North Pacific Fishery Management Council process. That's
13 what I've been really busy on, is working on North
14 Pacific. There are a lot of relationships and
15 engagement. We've met with them in November and in
16 December. We just spent, I think, nine days with them
17 in Anchorage, which I think we were -- it's a hard
18 meeting but, we are getting the things in place. Like,
19 if you look at my report from fall, we were working on
20 a migratory corridor for our salmon in the that would
21 connect what we're doing in Area M, north of Unimak in
22 the Bering Sea Pollock Fishery. And so, we're trying to
23 make a migration corridor through those two big
24 fisheries that impact our chum and chinook salmon. So,
25 that I feel like -- there's a motion we'll hear about
26 that today. I'm also -- sit as an advisory panel and
27 really worked on that motion. So, if people have
28 questions, I'm happy to help and share what I know.

29
30 We also participated in the Yukon River
31 panel meeting in January. I'm still really disappointed
32 that the Yukon River panel wouldn't pick up some of the
33 Fish Commission's regulatory strategies, even though
34 it's well within their purview to do that. And I also
35 am disappointed that we're talking about a chinook
36 salmon rebuilding plan. When I look at the run sizes and
37 I worked for these bodies, I probably would have started
38 this back in 2008. So, I -- when I look back at a lot
39 of history and I read people's testimonies and things
40 that people have been saying for 50 to 100 years, it's
41 really shocking to me that people are surprised
42 sometimes that we're here. I feel like people along the
43 Yukon have been saying this for a long time, that this
44 is exactly where we were going to end up so, I just want
45 to bring attention to that.

46
47 I -- we had heard a proposal for the
48 Ahtna River, the -- or Ahtna River -- the Copper River
49 and the Ahtna Homelands to allow the first pulse of
50 salmon to -- so limit some commercial fishing, to allow

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1 the salmon to go by and reach their spawning grounds and
2 also provide for subsistence use. We actually saw an
3 action taken at Board of Fish. So, I think that's kind
4 of a first. I'm not sure I haven't been here long enough
5 to really say that with confidence but, I'm seeing some
6 nods. So, maybe -- so we're seeing subsistence
7 prioritized. We should have been seeing this a long time
8 ago. Thinking about some of the comments about the
9 migratory birds, very much, the Fish Commission does
10 believe in that, looking at things holistically, and
11 many of our coastal communities on the Fish Commission
12 have really awesome programs like Indigenous Sentinels
13 Network, the Rangers, guardians that are doing community
14 based monitoring and kind of keeping track of all of the
15 things, right? All the migratory birds, freshwater fish,
16 marine mammals, game animals. So, they're really trying
17 to keep a pulse on all of those and do more monitoring
18 in the Bering Sea.

19
20 I think it is really something that I
21 was reading about before -- this fall is the Project
22 2025. I think it's really important to go straight to
23 the things in that document that talk about subsistence,
24 because there's a real lack of understanding, I think
25 two things that I saw were make all of the federal and
26 state regulations the same, get them in alignment.
27 There's reasons why federal regulations really are
28 trying to work for rural subsistence priority. And it's
29 really important as we hear everybody talking about
30 declining resources, I think there's a real
31 misunderstanding that we can continue to manage fish and
32 game in the same old way, and that our model -- the
33 models that have been used by scientists to set harvest
34 rates, fish openings, like those things are all not
35 working anymore, and so it's really time to be
36 conservative and to listen to local people and really
37 bring indigenous knowledge into this process. And really
38 somebody at this meeting mentioned that we should try
39 to limit out-of-State permits. I'm happy to support
40 something like that, if that's something that we want
41 to look into. I think we should do that but, also really
42 acknowledging that we want to do things differently on
43 federal lands, because the way things have been -- being
44 done on state lands is leading to a lot of lack of
45 resources. And so, I really think that we need to
46 continue to be vigilant and protect resources, because
47 these might be the last stocks that help keep things
48 afloat in these changing times. And then, thinking about
49 just environmental things that I've seen at home and
50 here, last night there was three moose in my yard, a mom

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1 and two calves. So, that's a good sign. But also, there's
2 been rain on snow throughout January. Really, really
3 warm temperatures. That's the second time we've seen
4 that in four years. So, I'm still concerned on impacts
5 that that might have on calves for caribou and moose.

6
7 So, just keeping a pulse on that -- when
8 we're at our land down in Nenana, we saw a bunch of
9 willow grouse or yeah, pintails. Charlie's more the
10 expert on what kind than I am but, there was a lot and
11 so that was good to see. I put in my notes last time
12 that the ocean was cooler, that maybe that's good for
13 our fish but, in my work -- on sitting on the advisory
14 panel to the North Pacific, they give us a Bering Sea
15 ecosystem status report every December. It's on the
16 meeting archives on the North Pacific Council website,
17 if folks are interested in that. They said that they had
18 a high number of fall juvenile chum in their surveys
19 but, there was the lowest number of juvenile chinook in
20 those surveys. So, something to kind of think about as
21 we're going into that season, and that the ocean was
22 actually more warm than one might have thought because
23 of the storms and the mixing of water, it was bringing
24 cold water from the bottom of the ocean to the sea
25 surface and making those temperatures look cooler. So
26 actually, the ocean is probably warmer than we realize,
27 and we should just really think about how that is going
28 to affect salmon in the future. So, yeah, that's quite
29 a bit but, that's what I always do. So, thank you.

30
31 MR. ALEXANDER: Yeah, my name is Gerald
32 Alexander. I'm from Fort Yukon. And our temperature has
33 been up and down, I mean, we've hit 56 this winter. Our
34 snow level is extremely high and like Don said, the
35 rabbits are up, and -- but with the rain and everything
36 else that came along with it kind of demolished that
37 that good hope, you know. And other than that, I'm -- I
38 was reading through this and I was concerned -- reading
39 some concerns on I forget your name already, Eva. Anyway,
40 on your Forty-mile Caribou Herd, I would like more on
41 that. And the beaver population in Fort Yukon is -- in
42 our area is -- I mean, as I fly back and forth from Fort
43 Yukon to Fairbanks, I notice there's a lot of beaver
44 houses in the flats. I mean, all over, I mean, you could
45 count 4 or 5 beaver houses on one lake. I mean, all our
46 lakes are drying up. And it brings me to thinking that
47 you know, these beavers are damming everything up, and
48 pretty soon we know it, we'll just have one tributary
49 and we'll be drinking out of it. And it's, you know,
50 beaver waste and all that good stuff that come along

1 with it. And, you know, there's avian flu, it's in the
2 news and it's become a concern because Andy is right,
3 we do count on our birds in the spring and it's come to
4 a point where things are dwindling down and it's going
5 to get harder. It's not going to get easier. It's going
6 to get harder. One day we're going to be lighting candles
7 and, you know, no more gas. I mean, you could sit here
8 all day and watch these vehicles go back and forth, back
9 and forth. And pretty soon, you know, one day your kids
10 will be sitting out there and be a dog team going by.
11 But, you know, that's me thinking.

12
13 Anyway, I listened to my elders, I
14 listened to the elders, elders. And, you know, some of
15 them -- they may think -- take it as a joke but, actually
16 they're talking to you like, you know, you're -- watch
17 out for this, you know, this is going to happen. And
18 sure enough, you know, things are dwindling down and
19 there's a lot of concerns out there. And hopefully we
20 could all come to -- I mean, we ain't [sic] going to
21 change it. It's got to change itself. So just -- we're
22 just here to help it along. And, there was a few things
23 I wanted to try to introduce to our community, was the
24 wood bison. I mean, our moose population is good but,
25 you know, with the wolves coming around into town and
26 the dog population went down. But anyhow, I'd like to
27 thank you and this is my first meeting, and maybe things
28 will get better. Thank you.

29
30 MR. GILBERT: Galen Gilbert, Arctic
31 Village report. Thank you, Gerald. Thank you, Chair. So,
32 you know, this is my first report as well. Being, you
33 know, from Arctic Village, I am also for subsistence way
34 of life. I was born in Fairbanks but, I lived, you know,
35 all my life in Arctic Village. You know, my father and
36 grandfather really pushed me for a way of life since I
37 was a young boy, you know, they brought me out on the
38 land everywhere. And just a really quick story. You know,
39 I'm going places now in Arctic Village where I think I
40 haven't been but, once I get there, I'm saying in my
41 head, I've been here before. And you know, my -- when
42 you're a young boy, you don't remember but, you know,
43 but it comes back to you when -- you know, you're oh,
44 my grandfather brought me here. And it's -- that's a
45 really, really interesting topic I like to bring up real
46 quick because I really -- I love that because, you know,
47 that that's how they -- that's how much they took me
48 out. That's how much, you know, where they brought me
49 and how far and all that. But so, I'm going to give my
50 report on, you know, my point of view because I'm very

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1 -- I don't want to say interested, but, everyday life
2 in Arctic Village for me is, you know, waking up,
3 checking the weather, you know, and one of the main wood
4 haulers and hunters, I keep track of the climate change
5 and the animals. I love doing that naturally. So, climate
6 change, this year has been really warm in Arctic Village.
7 It's -- I got to say for my 37 years on this Earth, I've
8 never seen a weather -- winter like this in Arctic
9 Village, because January is our coldest month. It was
10 above -- the weather was like above eight, something
11 like that all month. I couldn't believe it. And also,
12 December, I got to say, we probably saw 4 to 8 weeks of
13 cold weather and when I mean cold, that's 40 to 50 below.
14 It didn't get above 50, I noticed. So -- and with our
15 snow we got -- we had more snow last year because I
16 believe that -- because we had colder temps last year.
17 And you know, with the warm weather this year, I think
18 that's why we got less -- we have less snow. But we --
19 it's nothing scary because it's enough snow to, you know,
20 haul wood, travel to hunt and all that. And I just wanted
21 to say that on part of the snow and the climate change.
22 But this year has been very, very warm and it's just
23 shockingly warm. And that makes me very concerned for
24 our climate because, you know, our climate needs cold
25 weather to -- for the permafrost. And, you know, and
26 also it affects the animals.

27
28 And as for the caribou, we're surrounded
29 -- our village is surrounded with caribou right now. And
30 they're just -- they're sticking around. This is -- since
31 November, I believe. Yeah, they just hung around Arctic
32 Village. And we believe that is because of Wolves. You
33 know, when I'm getting wood or hunting, there's a lot
34 of kill sites for caribou. So, we believe the caribou
35 are just staying by Arctic Village because -- due to
36 wolves -- the population wolves.

37
38 And birds, you know, from my point of
39 view, like Andy said, the singing birds and all that,
40 you know, my grandfather, Trimble, always gives me
41 updates on birds because, you know, that's one thing he
42 really looked forward to before spring came here was
43 birds. And he's seeing a lack of birds in Arctic Village
44 as well, which makes him very concerned because it's
45 getting quieter. That's how he put it, of the bird
46 singing. And from my point of view, you know, I'm seeing
47 the singing birds as well but, my is -- when I was
48 younger we had a lot of cranes, and right now I do not
49 see one single crane in Arctic Village anymore. Probably
50 -- that's probably 15 to -- probably 15 years now, yeah,

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1 we haven't seen a single crane.

2

3

4 And another concern of mine is the --
5 really quick due to climate change, ice fishing on our
6 river. You know, what's very concerning to me is --
7 concerning to me is that when we ice fish for grayling
8 on the river for grayling. When I was younger, you know,
9 we had this long period of time to ice fish, you know,
10 I mean, talking about just pulling them out. But now,
11 with climate change, you know, I'm noticing the rivers
12 overflowing faster than usual, and we're not even able
13 to ice fish. You know, we try to do earlier but, you
14 know, there's no fish. And then by the time they come,
15 you know, that's when overflows rising and that's when
16 it's -- you can't ice fish no more because it gets so
17 deep and you know, it's too dangerous. And another animal
18 that's really concerning to me is porcupine. My
19 grandfather, Trimble, said when he was a young man, you
20 know, I got to say probably 20, he -- when he went out
21 and got a load of wood or hunted, he said he used to see
22 probably 4 to 6 porcupines. And I have to say, just in
23 early -- early February, I finally saw my first porcupine
24 in Arctic Village, a live one. You know, I've seen
25 harvest ones before but, 37 years I never seen a
26 porcupine. So, you know, that's got to mean something.
27 So, there's a big decline in porcupines in Arctic Village
28 right now. You know, stuff like this I like to go and
29 talk to -- like Gerald Alexander said, you know he goes
30 to the elders, so do I. It's part of everyday life in
31 Arctic, you know, as a hunter/woodsman, you know, if
32 you're concerned or something, you know, you ask them,
33 you know, they're there with all that knowledge to answer
34 your questions. They seen it, they experienced it. So,
35 I like to do that as well. You know that our elders are
36 a big part of our way of life today in the villages. And
37 I just -- I'm -- I think we're very fortunate for our
38 elders.

38

39

40 And lastly, on this report, I'd just
41 like to bring up the Red Sheep Creek management. You
42 know, the population of the sheep and concentrating on
43 keeping it closed for you know, my community and my
44 people. And again, I'm very honored to be here. It's
45 just -- this is very -- I'm very excited for this. And
46 I'm really, really -- I really want to learn more. And
47 you know, I already want to go back to my village after
48 this and ask my people questions about what we're talking
49 about here. And, you know, I'll tell them, I'll bring
50 it to the table, and we'll get that squared away and
mahsi' choo. Thank you.

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CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay. All you,

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Linda.

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MS. EVANS: Oh. This is Linda Evans. Rampart. North Pole now. Like I said, I spent the fall in Rampart, and it was very, very nice fall. Of course, there's no fish and you know, no birds, things like that. But just to be home in the quiet of the community was really nice. I hear a lot of talk about wolves, and I'm not sure what's going on there but, it seems like wolves are taking over communities, and that's very concerning. They're hungry too. And that means that there's not enough animals -- resources out there for them to survive. I think it used to be a long time ago, you'd rarely see a wolf. You know, I was raised up in a traditional way and went trapping and hunting with my father and my mother with dog teams, you know and seemed like we never had a shortage of animals or fish. Always plenty of fish, plenty of this so, you know, we're not -- our resources are not being managed. And we're -- we have to work together. All the entities need to be at the table talking about these things and seeing how we can rebuild and preserve our resources that mean so much to us. You know, I think a lot about the people in the villages. You know, how hard it is for them. It -- there's no store, you know, they have to buy heating fuel. They have to buy electricity. You know, there's no running water. They have to haul water, you know. In order to do all those things, they have to have Snowmachine or something to haul water or four-wheeler. You know, things are getting hard for people. And that really bothers me. On top of the fact that they don't have their foods that they need to sustain themselves. And there's also the loss of our culture, our way of life, you know, our kids are not learning it. You know, how to cut fish, how to preserve, you know, we -- berries, I mean, you can't find berries at home. We used to pick berries and make jams and stuff like that to put away for the winter. You know, it's tough. And I just, I really have a big concern for people who live in the villages. You know, our traditions, how people used to -- if they get a moose, everybody in the village get a piece. You know, those kinds of things are not happening anymore. So, you know, and I'm happy to have new members here, you know, younger generation who will move forward with these ideas. And, you know, they have knowledge, they have ways to get information that they want and are able to come to the table with ideas to help us solve some of these issues. I just would like to thank

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1 everybody for being here. And, you know, it's really
2 good to sit and hear what you have to say. Thank you.

3

4 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you, Linda.
5 Okay, my turn. I thank you all for being here today.
6 People around the table here have said what I wanted to
7 say but, I'll echo it anyway. I talked about songbirds
8 and a half hour before daylight in the morning, the
9 songbirds start to sing, and they start to do that
10 because the leaves need to open up and greet the sun in
11 the new day. At night they curl up and they get cold.
12 So, that songbird is important to our way of life.
13 Without plants, and the birds, and the bees and the
14 flies, we're going to have a rough go. I just want to
15 start with that. We have no more fishing opportunities
16 on the Yukon River in most of our tributaries in the
17 Interior. It's a sad thing. We're down to a four-inch
18 mesh. I always tell people that you can fish some
19 whitefish in the springtime and the little round
20 whitefish you need to have a 2.7in mesh to catch those
21 three little smaller whitefish. They swim right through
22 to four-inch. That's just something for people to listen
23 to and plan for this spring. We're all connected through
24 salmon, and I heard we all need to work together in
25 unity. And that's what we've been spreading all over in
26 all the rooms and meetings that we go to. We can't do
27 nothing [sic] as one entity anymore, and we have to all
28 work together to do the best we can for the future. In
29 my area, martin and grouse are up. Still not a lot of
30 rabbits but, the marten were running around trying to
31 eat all the fat off my moose this fall. The first time
32 I think in my life I've seen that many running around
33 in town. I don't know if it was a small bunch. I haven't
34 got there this winter to set any traps but, I sure did
35 see a lot in September. The climate uncertainties is
36 [sic] something else. We've all been watching our
37 weather, Quinhagak ice went out this winter, about a
38 month ago. Started flowing. It was 50 something degrees
39 here in Fairbanks. The river had open holes and started
40 opening up. Lakes were full of water. It's really hard
41 on the moose and the caribou. So, I keep saying that we
42 have to add uncertainties to our management strategies.
43 Uncertainties being rain and snow -- warm weather events
44 that cause havoc on the moose and caribou. They're young
45 -- when it's warm in the day and cold at night, the
46 young get hypothermia and they die. So, it's really hard
47 on the system. Caribou can't get to their food. Sheep
48 also, even to slipping off the mountain. It's a terrible
49 thing to have to adjust to. It's affecting so many
50 different things. Just about 30 years ago, I could travel

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1 from Rampart to Tanana on a snow machine like 10 or 12
2 years old. They would let us take off ahead of the
3 parents. They just let us go and see how far we can make
4 it. But I could stop every 10 to 15 miles and warm up
5 and have tea or have food in the evening with families
6 that lived along the river. About every 10 to 15 miles
7 you'd see light. There were still enough resources out
8 there for people to live that way. And it's sad to see
9 it going away.

10
11 When I ride the river with my boat now,
12 I see the tip of a smokehouse sticking out behind the
13 brush. Maybe a stovepipe from these beautiful camps that
14 used to be there. And when you rode by in the evening,
15 in the summertime, we always traveled in the evening
16 because there's less waves. People are done working. We
17 could stop and visit family. You smelled the smoke on
18 the river from the smoke houses and see it. It's sad to
19 see and know that a whole culture is going away. Our
20 salmon culture on the Yukon is just about done. Our
21 salmon -- our king salmon are just about extinct. I
22 could almost say that they are now, and we're going to
23 have a real hard time if we're successful to get them
24 back. So, I just want to say again that we all need to
25 work together. We all need to pack some of this on our
26 shoulders. They have it all piled on us right now on the
27 river, and there's other entities in the room and people
28 are listening that, you know, we all need to work
29 together on this problem. And I believe that's the only
30 way that we're going to be successful. With that, I'll
31 end my report and say thank you all and thank you to the
32 new members for being here. And thank you to the public
33 and everybody online for being here today. Thank you
34 very much.

35
36 (Pause)

37
38 We're going to take a 15-minute break.
39 I should say five. So, it'll be 15 but, no longer than
40 15. Thank you.

41
42 MCDAVID: And when we come back, we will
43 begin the public comment period for non-agenda items.
44 So, please fill out a card if you'd like to provide a
45 comment. If you're here in the room and if you're online,
46 you can press star-five on your phone or use the raise
47 hand feature on Teams. Thanks.

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49 (Off record)

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1 (On record)

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(On record)

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay, since everybody is in their seats, we're going to get started. Thank you. We're going to start public comments now. And we're going to go online to phone number that ends in 2126 first.

MS. STICKMAN: Hello.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Go ahead.

MS. STICKAMN: Okay. So, hi, everyone. My name is Angel Stickman. I already introduced myself earlier. I'm from the Native Village of Shungnak. But I currently live in Fairbanks. I only represent myself here. So, like I said before, I'm just a normal person wanting to, you know, protect lands. And I care about our animals and, you know, our fish. And yeah, I think this is my first meeting to this Council. So, I'm coming here to ask you guys -- to urge you guys to send an updated letter to the Secretary as soon as possible so that he doesn't make the mistake of opening up 28 million acres of land, also known as the D1 lands to mining and drilling oil. So, there was a massive support in 2023 and 2024 to keep these protections across the D1 lands. There was support from over half of all federally recognized tribes in Alaska, regional Alaska, Native corporations, hundreds of businesses, 145,000 people from across the country supported this -- support this. There were also 19 public hearings that were held across Alaska, and no one favored opening these lands. The East Interior sent in a joint letter in April 2024, with their support to keep D1 lands protected. There were many other Councils that want to keep this -- these protections in place. We then all celebrated when the D1 lands were protected in August of last year. But unfortunately, you know, as we all know, in January we know about this new administration, and this new administration recommended overturning these protections. And if you don't already know, food sources all across Alaska where we -- I was hearing, you know, everyone talk and it's well known that food sources all across Alaska are declining due to climate change and other factors like trawl to fish, you know. And we need to do what we can to protect these animals and fish. So, protecting these lands is essential because many people, you know, as we -- as you guys talked about, many people in Alaska rely on wild foods for nourishment. According to the U.S. Department of Interior, there is no other

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1 place in the United States with a heavy reliance on wild
2 foods. The State's rural residents harvest about 18,000
3 tons of wild food annually, and an average of 295lb per
4 person. So, yeah, you know, I -- I'm sure we all know
5 and see the importance of keeping these lands protected
6 from mining and drilling, because these -- because
7 mining and drilling also exacerbates the climate change.
8 Resource extraction, such as drilling and mining and
9 burning oil, coal and gas, also known as fossil fuels,
10 account for 75% of the global greenhouse gas emissions
11 released, which caused -- which causes the planet to
12 warm. And then we talked -- I was hearing you guys talk,
13 you know, before about caribou. So, some numbers about
14 caribou. So, caribou herds are declining across the
15 Circumpolar North. Caribou herds and Canada have crashed
16 from 60 to 99%. The seven largest of Alaska's 31 caribou
17 herds have declined from over 900,000 to 525,000, the
18 lowest number since 1986.

19
20 Yeah. You know, as we know, global
21 warming is really impacting a lot of areas and places
22 and animals and fish in Alaska. We also see sea levels
23 rising. Flooding is more frequent. In June 2020
24 (distortion - indiscernible) cities across five
25 continents broke 1400 heat records. Many people were
26 dying from the extreme heat. From 2000 to 2020 there
27 were 2.5 more acres of land burned in Alaska than in the
28 past 20 years. Three of the four highest acreage fire
29 years have occurred since 2000. And by 2050, the burned
30 area is projected to increase by 24 to 169% in Alaska.
31 You know so, like you mentioned before we all have to
32 work together to combat this climate crisis and plan
33 ahead for the issues we're going to face. And, you know,
34 opening up these lands, what does this current
35 administration wants to do is like, not okay, and we
36 have to work together and you know, try to keep these
37 lands protected. And, you know, we don't want any more
38 oil drilling or mining that will exacerbate climate
39 change because it's already bad as it is. You know, I'd
40 like to thank you guys for this meeting and allowing me
41 to speak and hearing what I have to say.

42
43 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you so much.
44 Now we're going to go to our blue cards, and we'll start
45 with Malinda Chase.

46
47 (Pause)

48
49 MS. CHASE: Good morning again, Council.
50 I'm Malinda Chase, for the record, and I'm actually --

1 was here to speak on the same issue on D1. So, Angel
2 Stickman made that very easy. I think I won't get into
3 all the details that she that she covered because I had
4 some of the same points. Really, I just want to stress
5 that, you know, 28 million acres is one third of Alaska
6 that we're looking at those protections being lifted.
7 It's immensely critical that we just keep forwarding
8 that we need our lands protected. And if this Council
9 can definitely -- you sent a previous letter in the past
10 saying that those lands need to be -- that retention
11 needs to be -- the protection needs to be retained. And
12 to -- I would ask the same thing that Angel had asked
13 that you send another letter. I think this new Secretary
14 and this administration -- we just need to keep, you
15 know, supporting our land and supporting our way of life
16 and supporting our waters with so much change that's
17 happening. I mentioned earlier that I'm here with my
18 hat, in terms of being with the Village Corporation.
19 We're not a big village corporation we just operate at
20 the local level. Pretty much with store and gas sales,
21 and we employ a small number of people. Our population
22 is small but, with the decline in fishing and the decline
23 in hunting there's less sales for gas, right? So, impacts
24 on local economy -- hugely impacts our local economy in
25 terms of being able to provide that for the community.
26 And I think the other thing to really state is the Bering
27 Sea Resource Management Plan that came out of BLM, that
28 plan was passed during the last day of that
29 administration's former term, and it has no protective
30 status. The only protective status -- it has no areas
31 of critical environmental concern. All of those were
32 lifted in that resource management plan. So, the only
33 protection we have are the D1 protections and that covers
34 62 villages. Up the Anvik River is the most BLM lands
35 in that whole region and of course, that is the largest
36 chum salmon running -- producing river in western
37 Alaska. And so, you know, speaking on behalf of the
38 corporation and then also for the Bering Sea Interior
39 Tribal Commission, we really would like to see that we
40 really forward collectively, not just here, but
41 hopefully other RACs send that message up the line that
42 we need to retain those D1's. So, dogedinh. Thank you.

43
44 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you so much
45 for that. Next blue card is Deenaalee. Oh, oh, Okay. We
46 have a question. Go ahead.

47
48 MS. IRWIN: Thank you, Miss Chase, for
49 your testimony. Oh, this is Olivia Irwin, for the record.
50 Thank you, miss Chase, for your testimony. You mentioned

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1 that the Anvik River is one of the largest chum salmon
2 habitats in Alaska. Is that correct? Could you tell us
3 a little bit about what resources you've turned to, or
4 your community has turned to rely on since the decline
5 of fall chum?

6
7 MS. CHASE: Well, wow -- definitely local
8 white and sheefish. But when I was -- I know last fall
9 when I was walking down to the bank where we just had
10 two local guys that were harvesting and providing that
11 to the extent that they could for the community. And,
12 of course, you know, wondering about the impact of that.
13 We do have moose population but, the number of hunters
14 that are coming in are just, you know, like in so many
15 other places, it's just out of hand. In terms of the
16 number of moose that are coming out of our area. I think,
17 you know, when I traveled into Anvik and I was leaving
18 also, you know, landing in Holy Cross, I think I counted
19 like 15 racks on one vehicle. Right. So, it's alarming
20 in terms of what's coming out of there. And of course,
21 the moose population is moving more to the coast, as
22 probably all of you know, with the impacts. But I think
23 we have to be definitely looking at -- I mean, you heard
24 it here, what's happening with our moose population.

25
26 I have one more thing to share on that.
27 I have a good friend that I hear from on a regular basis
28 from Shageluk who raise -- has been raising dogs and
29 recently because he couldn't harvest enough whitefish
30 or, you know, four-inch nets were not working. But
31 couldn't harvest enough local fish in the tributaries
32 there. Had to get rid of nine dogs, right. And it was
33 just really -- that was a really difficult thing, you
34 know, for somebody who's a who's a dog person and so I
35 just, I think about, you know, again, like our way of
36 life and I know what does it mean? He was -- he also,
37 in the same conversation, talked about, you know, the
38 struggle because of the lack of snow. Now they have snow
39 in the area but, the lack of the snow really struggling
40 out to go out and get wood, right. Having a hard time
41 harvesting wood from local wood yard. So, you know, we
42 know with climate issues that we are having compounding
43 effects. Those are accelerating. And that's every single
44 season and oftentimes every day. So, thank you.

45
46 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Go ahead Andy.

47
48 MR. BASSICH: Yeah, very briefly. Thank
49 you for your comments on the dog mushing. That's a big
50 part of my life. And I think I've talked a lot about

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1 that to this Council and other venues because that's an
2 integral part of the culture that's slowly been going
3 away. It's one of those parts of the culture that slips
4 away so slowly that you don't realize it until it's
5 gone. And I think it's a critical identity to Alaska.
6 And I'm glad you brought that up, because I think it's
7 something that's missed, it's overlooked, and it's a
8 very important part of who we are, subsistence livers.
9 And I wanted to also ask you, in your region -- are the
10 beavers beginning to appear in your region as well? And
11 I'm just wondering -- the reason I ask that is they are
12 moving north and they are going to start impacting the
13 habitat and they will be impacting salmon habitat. And
14 so, as we start thinking about rebuilding -- trying to
15 rebuild chinook and chum salmon stocks. That's going to
16 be something we may have to contend with on certain
17 tributaries. So, I'm just curious if you could give us
18 some insights. If there's been much local observation -
19 - is there much change going on there or are you seeing
20 that or...?

21
22 MS. CHASE: Unfortunately, I cannot
23 answer that question. You know, I have not. I am planning
24 to hopefully go home for Iditarod because of the route
25 this year. And you know, I would -- what I know from my
26 work life is, you know, those numbers are definitely
27 increasing. In terms of where they're increasing, of
28 course they are going north, but, because we're seeing
29 the borealization of the Arctic, right. So, they are
30 moving north -- in our areas we've traditionally always
31 had quite a bit of beaver. And I would imagine that
32 might be the case there. The you know, speaking to the
33 snow and the rain on snow. And again, I'll just say that
34 I -- you know, I'll take the liberty because my work
35 life informs what I do but, on the vice versa, my roles
36 and my home village inform my work life. And, you know,
37 this snow we have in Fairbanks this year, it's beautiful
38 snow and snow that Anchorage used to get, right. So, I
39 ask a colleague, I said, you know, I have this little
40 theory. Is this rain and snow that you're seeing in
41 Southwest Alaska and South-central Alaska, the lack of
42 snow. I said I'm wondering if the weather band has moved
43 up. You know that now we're shifted, right. Yeah, that's
44 the case. We might have variability from year to year,
45 you know. So, when I look at the snow, right when I look
46 at the snow, and everybody who enjoys dog mushing or
47 skiing or whatever you enjoy every time you can -- you
48 enjoy it. You enjoy it while it's here, right. Because
49 it may shift again. And that's what we're looking like
50 in our lifetime.

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CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you very much.
Did you have a question for her or do you just want to
comment?

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MS. MCDAVID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And
this comment is for both our public commenters that just
talked about the D1 lands and for the Council. For your
information, at the Federal Subsistence Board meeting
two weeks ago, the Board did vote to go ahead and resend
those D1 letters to the new administration because that
issue also was brought up during public comment at that
meeting. They'll also be forwarding on the salmon
letters that came from the RACs, too. Thank you.

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MR. BASSICH: Yeah. Thank you. I think
this is a really important topic, and I'm just wondering
if maybe for future meetings, if we could get a little
bit more of a presentation from OSM or Federal
Subsistence Board on: A. what authorities they might
have and what influence they might be able to have on
the D2 lands issues. You know, sending letters is good
but I guess I don't understand enough about that level
of how the process works, and maybe to be educated a
little bit more on how we can be as effective as

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1 possible. And that would be really helpful to me. Thank
2 you.

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4 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you, Andy.
5 Okay. No more questions. Moving forward to the next blue
6 card. Deenaalee Hodgdon.

7

8 MS. HODGSON: Ade'. Good morning. I refer
9 back to my introduction in the beginning. My name is
10 Deenaalee Hodgdon -- Chase Hodgdon. My family is from
11 the Lower Yukon River and on my paternal side I'm from
12 the community of South Naknek in Bristol Bay. I grew up
13 here on Lower Tanana Diné lands in Fairbanks, Alaska and
14 currently live on Chogiung lands in Dillingham, Alaska.
15 I'm here today as an Anvik tribal member and the smoke
16 -- speak on behalf of the Smokehouse Collective to
17 elevate maintaining protections for the ANCSA D1 land
18 withdrawals. As Angel and my mom, Malinda Chase just
19 mentioned, it is imperative that we maintain the
20 protections of 28 million acres of these lands spanning
21 across traditional territories of many indigenous
22 peoples of Alaska. The opening of these lands is a threat
23 multiplier, a term that likes to be tossed around in
24 Washington, D.C. when speaking about the climate --
25 climatic changes that we're experiencing. If these lands
26 are opened, we know that roads will go in and mines will
27 follow. We know that more hunting will happen, most
28 likely by outside sport hunters and fishermen, which
29 will only increase the threat to our food sovereignty
30 and food security in Alaska. As my mother also mentioned,
31 50% of the minerals are slated to come out of Alaska for
32 the developments of green technology and as well as
33 current and contemporary technologies being used by the
34 development of AI and just for a little bit of background
35 context with the development of AI one chat -- one search
36 into a Google AI or into chat -- what is it? Chat? Gpt?
37 GPT, yeah, takes one water bottle. So, the equivalent
38 of what is at each one of your tables. We're drinking
39 water at this table.

40

41 Since Angel and my mom so thoroughly
42 discussed the D1's, I just want to bring a reflection.
43 I just returned from Guatemala last night, and I was on
44 the indigenous homelands of the Maya people. In the
45 1990s, there was a large genocide of the Mayan
46 population, and it largely -- backed by the United States
47 government. If we look at the wars that are happening
48 across the world right now, it is largely to continue
49 to maintain the Empire of the United States. We --many
50 of us in this room are the indigenous people of these

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1 lands. We are currently sitting on top of 50% of the
2 critical minerals that the United States would like to
3 harvest. So, if you think about the D1 lands and what
4 they protect over, you know, a little bit under 50% of
5 Alaska's natural resources, we're at a critical time for
6 these protections. While I was in Maya lands, I was at
7 a place called Lake Atitlán, which is a lake that was
8 formed by three volcanoes 800,000 years ago. And the
9 Maya people there, many of the women still dress in
10 their traditional clothing and live a subsistence
11 lifestyle as well. However, their lands are covered in
12 trash. Trash made by the plastics industry. We traveled
13 another 200 miles to the coast, and there was not a
14 single piece of land that did not have plastic on it.
15 The lake -- Lake Atitlán, a sacred lake of those
16 mountains. We couldn't swim in it. The water was pure
17 blue but, we could not swim in that lake because of the
18 amount of sewage that is going into it. It is one of the
19 main tourist areas of that country. Alaska is also one
20 of our main tourist areas of this nation, and they cannot
21 drink from that water. And there's algae blooms that are
22 happening. And so, what happens when we have an increase
23 of roads, when we have an increase of extraction is that
24 we do not know -- we no longer have clean waters. And
25 we know that our salmon, our caribou, our birds, who are
26 already so reliant on having clean waters are already
27 on decline. So, what happens when those roads go in and
28 these lands are opened up? So, I'm encouraging that we
29 send fresh letters. And also, thank you so much, Andrew,
30 for pointing out and bringing into question is that the
31 best method of reaching out to the current lawmakers? I
32 think moving in and seeing what are the ways that we can
33 elevate our voice using multiple strategies is going to
34 be important. So, I encourage this RAC to send a new
35 letter supporting maintaining the withdrawal status of
36 the ANCSA D1 lands. And thank you for your time. Qu yana,
37 (In Native).

38
39 MS. BURK: Thank you. This is Eva for the
40 record. Thank you for your testimony. And then also
41 thinking about what Andy asked about and then thinking
42 about all your -- you and your mom and Angel's work in
43 the D1's, and I think there was some resources put out
44 there before. Do you have any like, links or anything
45 that you could email us for more information?

46
47 MS. HODGSON: Yeah, I believe the Bering
48 Sea Western Interior Resource Commission would be an
49 excellent place to reach out to. There's over 38 tribes?
50 Yeah, 38 tribes that are part of that commission. And

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1 so, reaching out to their leadership will definitely
2 help to bring you more information. Yeah (In Native).
3 Any more questions?

4

5 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: If there's no more.
6 Thank you so much for your testimony today. Next blue
7 card is Carrie Stevens.

8

9 (Pause)

10

11 MS. STEVENS: Good morning, everyone.
12 Thank you to the Chair and all the Council members. I
13 was listening online this morning, and I just can't say
14 how happy I am for the new members and it's really good
15 to see Galen, and Gerald and Henaayee here and to have
16 some young voices on the Council. I feel that in this
17 last year this Council in particular has really led in
18 many spaces in a very grateful -- for the voices of the
19 Chair and Vice Chair and taking it into a lot of spaces.
20 So, (In Native) to its really tireless and thankless
21 work and all of you and your commitment is just really
22 appreciated. I really appreciate that. Don and Andrew
23 have been sitting here since forever so, I really do
24 appreciate that. Yeah, and oh, where is Sue? I just saw
25 her car. Oh, she.....

26

27 (Simultaneous speech)

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29 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: To let everybody
30 know I should have done it already. That she's not
31 feeling well so, she's listening from her room.

32

33 MS. STEVENS: Oh, okay. And, Sue. Hi,
34 Sue. But I digress. My name is Carrie Stevens. I'm here
35 just representing myself. As many of you know, my family
36 is Dinyee Hutanne from Stevens Village, and I lived for
37 many years in the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge
38 and adjacent to the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge so,
39 the work of the Council is very near and dear to my
40 heart. I just want to share some observations from our
41 side of the country, and I just have a few comments and
42 if I can comment on Wildlife Closure Review 2622, I
43 would appreciate that. If you take it up after lunch, I
44 won't be here. So, I'd like to add comments to that
45 agenda item if that's okay. Is that okay? So, I just
46 wanted to first echo the comments of many of you this
47 morning of what we're seeing in our area, in the area
48 between the Yukon River bridge up to about, oh, I'd say
49 about 26 miles below Beaver but, really up to about
50 Beaver. And I'm just looking at Dorothy because she's

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1 very familiar with this area as well. But the wolves --
2 the reports from my husband that the packs really cleaned
3 up. They really had their heyday and there was a wolf
4 kill right in front of camp. But the tracks are
5 everywhere. And with this -- weather conditions for us,
6 that's the first thing we think of when you get that
7 little ice layer on the snow. Those wolves, they have
8 so much less of a chance. Those wolves are just really
9 going to get them. So, that kind of weighs heavy on us.
10 And also, the big animal as well. This imbalance has
11 been noted many times in the Yukon Flats. And that is a
12 continued issue. The issue that we hear from our family,
13 but, also really across the State, is that the burden -
14 - well, it's not a burden to the people of the land.
15 That's what they do, they keep balance. But when they
16 work hard to keep that balance, it's everybody else who
17 profits. And I just want to put that on the record that
18 our indigenous stewards, all of our people out on the
19 land, you know, they're the ones keeping the balance of
20 these populations and then the areas open up, or if
21 there's any extra other people come to take it. So,
22 that's always a big consideration for us is the wolves
23 and the predator prey balance there in the Yukon Flats.
24 You all mentioned the weather -- with the weather as
25 well. I just want to note that travel and access is very
26 hard. There's a lot of overflow right now on trails
27 because of the weather conditions. And we're really
28 concerned about access during the migratory bird season.
29 That has been very challenging due to climate change for
30 multiple years to have access when the birds come that
31 the conditions, you know, allow you to get out there,
32 either break up or freeze up. You know, that's a problem
33 for us in the wetlands there, in the flats.

34
35 I just wanted to again reiterate
36 regarding the loss of salmon and those impacts that we
37 are seeing not only to our family but, to the ecosystem.
38 We used to have several nesting eagles by camp, we don't.
39 My husband actually gets very excited to see an eagle,
40 like a little kid because we don't really see them. Of
41 course, a lot of the birds especially the gulls, you
42 know, they really rely on that as well. So, a real
43 ecosystem pressure out there. And in that note, I just
44 want to say that and in response to some of the questions
45 here. What we're doing is we're eating a lot of
46 whitefish. We're-- my family, we're eating a lot of pike
47 in particular. And it was funny my son, he is our main
48 fisherman on-- for pike, and someone was asking him how
49 he learned to cut wide bones and old traditional
50 knowledge. And, you know, did his father teach him? And

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1 he said, no, YouTube thought that was hilarious. But
2 anyway, we're eating a lot of whitefish, and I just have
3 to say, a really big mahsi' choo to Galen, Gilbert and
4 his people of (indiscernible) Arctic Village. My son is
5 able to participate with them and we're eating a lot of
6 dry meat. We're trading for a lot of dry meat. And I
7 think that this impact to sharing and trading networks
8 -- oh, gosh there used to be so many anthropological
9 studies about our sharing and trading networks all the
10 way into Canada, and it's really impacting those trading
11 networks. We have no dry fish. You know, we have nothing
12 to share. And so, we're eating a lot of dry meat, a lot
13 of caribou and moose of course, and whitefish. So, the
14 main points I want to make just regarding some actions
15 here also we're very much watching the development of
16 Hilcorp on Doyon lands very close and adjacent to Birch
17 Creek. We did push -- I testified here earlier about the
18 compatibility determination with the Yukon Flats
19 National Wildlife Refuge on oil and gas. In the Refuge
20 that was not complete and I understand that that is a
21 very politicized issue, and I just want to acknowledge
22 that the Refuge may or may not be able to move forward
23 with this at that time. So, what we need to do is do
24 that work ourselves and not put that on the Refuge. As
25 far as really making sure that I would love to see the
26 EIRAC. I know you did come out with a letter on the
27 compatibility determination (In Native) for that, and
28 if you can continue to really lean on this issue -- they
29 did -- Hilcorp did apply for a water permit to take
30 300,000 gallons out of the Birch Creek and adjacent lakes
31 daily. Daily. They forgot to mention that in our meeting
32 that it was daily. They acted like it was in total. I
33 worked with Winston James, the former chief of Birch
34 Creek, for many years and over 20 years ago. He was very
35 worried about the water quantity in his area. And so,
36 it's quite alarming and we're really worried about those
37 impacts. So, they are moving forward with two test drill
38 sites. And so, I just really ask this Council, you know,
39 that is as far as I'm aware, there's the Kenai. But this
40 is the only oil and gas development on refuge lands
41 inside of a refuge in the State. And that's right smack
42 dab in the middle of your area as the EIRAC and I just
43 really appreciate any continued attention and positions
44 you take on that. You know, if anything happens there,
45 we're all in big trouble. And what we are more concerned
46 about, as well as the impacts of, you know, they're
47 traveling in these corridors. They want to bring the
48 drills by barge from the bridge up. But if the water is
49 too low, they're going to fly them in in helicopter
50 patterns from town over to Birch Creek.

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3 It was made very clear to Doyon and to
4 Hilcorp that there is drastic concern by local people
5 of outside hunters who could be Hilcorp employees who
6 are gaining knowledge of this area from their employment
7 in this development. Because we saw a vast increase of
8 outside hunters in 25D West this past season, as I noted
9 the 25D remainder. It was unbelievable what we
10 witnessed. I have no idea what's going on but, with
11 that, if it's okay, I'll switch to some comments on
12 Wildlife Closure Review 2622. And I really appreciate
13 this Council always keeping this closure and I never
14 take that for granted. We don't-- So, I always want to
15 put it on public record. And I appreciate OSM'S
16 evaluation and position to keep the closure in place for
17 25D West. We fully support that for the reasons of-- we
18 are seeing increased outside hunters. I don't know if
19 it's on the Tier 2 permit system or otherwise. We are
20 seeing a much greater reliance on moose. Salmon made up
21 the vast majority of people's diets. That is gone. I
22 just want to mention that that is not in the analysis
23 and that should be included in the analysis. There is a
24 much greater reliance on moose with no salmon. And so,
25 I wanted to note that as well as -- I always bring up
26 (indiscernible) report it's not in the habitat section
27 that she did studies that the Yukon Flats will never
28 support a large moose population unless there is a
29 drastic change in our willows. Our willows cannot
30 support a large moose population so, I just think that
31 report should also always be included in the analysis.
32 But I really do appreciate that.

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Otherwise, I want to throw out there the
idea that with some of the proposals that came before
you in the last wildlife cycle regarding 25D that were
contentious, exploring the idea, and I apologize, I have
not talked to the tribes of Gwichyaa Zhee, Chalkyitsik
or Circle but, perhaps 25D remainder also needs a federal
closure. They are seeing increased pressure as well.
Just something for you all to consider that only the
people of that area can hunt moose in their area on the
Refuge but, I just really stand in support of the 25D
West closure. I wish we didn't have to come up every two
years but, that's okay and I really appreciate all of
your time and it's so good to see you. (In Native).

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CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Any questions for
Carie? Go ahead.

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1 MS. IRWIN: Through the Chair. This is
2 Olivia Irwin. Thank you, Carrie, very much for your
3 testimony. I appreciate you always bringing the
4 perspective of the 5D -- the district and bringing the
5 perspective of our people who live at the at the end of
6 the line in the Yukon River in Alaska. We have been in
7 conversations -- some brief conversations yesterday
8 about state level management and proposals that would
9 activate intensive management and predator control in
10 some of those areas in the east portions of those
11 districts, like 25D included. Do you know that that if
12 that's something that residents of Yukon Flats or maybe
13 you could just speak to Stevens Village would be
14 interested in or in support of?

15
16 MS. STEVENS: You know -- which reminds
17 me, I would also say that predator-prey relationship is
18 also not in the OSM analysis. There is a ton of data on
19 particularly bear populations of the area. I don't know
20 how much we have on wolves but that might be nice to
21 include to your point, Henaayee. I hate to speak for
22 others. What I can say is that the Yukon Flats moose
23 management or excuse me, Yukon Flats Cooperative Moose
24 Management Plan that we have had in place for just about
25 ever, when we used to have a lot of moose meetings, we
26 used to have derbies in the Yukon Flats and for skulls
27 -- size of skulls for the big animal. And I think that
28 anything that can help to supplement the cost of gas,
29 trappers and hunters really Appreciate because that gas,
30 you know, it's the limiting factor of people being able
31 to get out. So, I think if it is managed and conducted
32 by local people, then I would support that myself.

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34 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you. Any more
35 questions for Carrie?

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37 (No response)

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39 I want to I wanted to say a little
40 something about my own. Go ahead, Carie, I'm not going
41 to question you. I just wanted to say a comment on my
42 report earlier, off of Linda's report, she talked about
43 the wolves coming into the villages and the reason why
44 I talked about being able to travel when I was a young
45 -- young man from Rampart to Tanana, there would be a
46 home, people living along the river every 10 to 15 miles
47 because there was still good natural resources. And
48 those people that lived out there on the land all the
49 time, they took care of the predator problem. When I was
50 a kid, there was no predator problem at all in my

1 community because the people were living on the ground.
2 That's not happening no more. There's no more fish.
3 There's not enough game to live off of. So, people are
4 not living out there no more. So, things have changed,
5 and it changed drastically with the predator. So, people
6 need to start doing their best for predator control when
7 they're on the land. And when it comes to dog feed,
8 people are having to try to keep a few dogs. We need to
9 help with the beaver population in order to help our
10 fish migrate in and out of lake systems. So, I think
11 that people should concentrate and really know where
12 your salmon habitat is, your whitefish habitats. Get out
13 there and learn them and look and bring the kids culture
14 camp activities and start working on your systems.
15 Nobody's going to go do it for you. So, I just wanted
16 to state that we need to do better as humans, as
17 ourselves personally and do the best we can. And with
18 that, we're moving on to Second Chief Mike Peter of Fort
19 Yukon.

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21 MR. PETER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My name
22 is Michael Peter, Gwichyaa Zhee Gwich'in Tribal
23 Government Second Chief. I'm just here to speak a little
24 bit on our moose numbers also. We haven't had a moose
25 count within three years. An aerial survey. And that's
26 kind of it's not only something of interest to myself
27 but also the people. It seems like we're having to
28 compete more now with non-resident hunters. And more or
29 less, we're dealing with 8 to \$9 of gas in compared to
30 5 -- to 4 to \$5 from Fred Myers. And then we're dealing
31 with bigger and bigger inboards, I think. Circle is also
32 dealing with the same situation but, I think without the
33 moose numbers and the aerial surveys that haven't been
34 done for at least two, maybe three years at the most.
35 So, I think -- and not only that, I think other areas
36 of concern also that maybe it should be closed to non-
37 residents and residents only. Like I said, because it
38 seems like we are competing and we noticed that there's
39 people coming up from the bridge with big -- bigger
40 boats and they travel. There's like two big boats and
41 there's four small ones, and they're down at the lower
42 mouth of the Birch hunting around there. They I don't
43 know if they're on anybody's allotment or not but,
44 somebody from Beaver came up and they said that there's
45 a big camp down there. There's two big boats, two big
46 inboards, and then there's four small boats with about
47 ten people at the camp. And then somebody stopped by
48 there and they said they had -- they seen about 3 or 4
49 moose hanging.

50

1 But I do think some areas that are of
2 consideration -- of concern, not only for myself but,
3 for our people that do depend on moose, like you said
4 there you know, the fish numbers are low. And also,
5 another thing we have to take into consideration, too,
6 is -- I reiterate what Carrie was saying about Hilcorp.
7 You know, I mean, how are they getting this water permit
8 -- permitting system without dealing with or having to
9 go to the local people? But I think with your support
10 and then other people's support on that, because what's
11 going to happen is after these people come in, they're
12 going to be bringing their families, and they're more
13 and more people and more people are going to be coming
14 in because they'll know the lay of the land in the area.
15 And also, to I'm just -- to mention something that I was
16 never really brought up. There's a clean water act that
17 was brought up from mining that was done in the mid or
18 early 80s by Susan Baylon James, and it was brought to
19 the BLM to where that The Clean Water Act was put into
20 place from mining from the central area that was running
21 into the Birch Creek River. So -- and then Hilcorp going
22 around doing what they're going to be doing. I think
23 that that should be taken into consideration for that.
24 And also too, there's an active resolution by the TCC
25 region, the full Board of Directors, that we -- there
26 is an approval for a clean water -- our rights as tribes
27 to clean water and what's in the -- and whatever else
28 is in the water, like the fish. An the water itself, for
29 clean water -- keeping it cleaned. And also, to that if
30 anything does happen, anything major from Hilcorp and
31 you know, they don't have a good record, it's not going
32 to affect us. It's going to hit Beaver, Stevens, Rampart,
33 Tanana, it's going to hit everybody all along the Yukon
34 River. You know, it's bad enough we got no fish, now
35 they're going to ruin our water system. And it's just
36 you know, we're getting hit from all sides. So, I'm just
37 here to -- maybe take into consideration of, you know,
38 25D and the 25D remainder of, you know, maybe closure
39 for non-residents and residents only because like I
40 said, you know, it seems like we're having -- it's like
41 the second year now, it seems like we're having to
42 compete more with outsiders. And like I mentioned to the
43 price of gas, you know it's -- it doesn't get any better.
44 Also, too -- now our electricity is higher, too. So, and
45 our oil prices. So, but-- I'd just like to hope hopefully
46 the board will take that into consideration.
47 (Indiscernible).

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49 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you, Chief.
50 And any questions? Go ahead, Henaayee.

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MS. IRWIN: Thank you, through the Chair. This is Olivia Henaayee Irwin for the record. Thank you, Chief Peters, so much for joining us today and making the trip. I was just curious, do residents of your community or the surrounding communities drink the water from Birch Creek, that's in question.

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MR. PETER: No. Well, I haven't been on the Birch Creek in a while because. Because the north side is subsistence but, the south side is a Tier 2 so, it's closed. You got, you got to put in for a special permit but, I know that yeah, I -- it's that's kind of a question for the people of Birch Creek, I think, you know, but, I know they have a water system there. Safe water. But, hunting there before I drank it, you know, you have to boil it. But I think that you want to get good clean water, you go up on the Porcupine River north of Fort Yukon. You can get a cup and drink it right out of the river and the Black River also. And that's going to be another area of concern too, later on or even now for mineral extraction from the upper Draanjik, the black River. So, that's something to be looking out for on the radar, too. Just to give you guys a heads up.

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CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Go ahead.

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MR. BASSICH: Thank you. I want to thank you for your testimony. Obviously, you have a great deal of knowledge and spent a lot of time on the land. I want to also thank Carrie for her as I didn't comment on it. I think one of the topics that you're bringing up really resonates with me, and that's water. And water is life on this planet, and water is life to all -- everything that we depend on, including ourselves. And that is the foundation of life on this planet, and that is the foundation of our existence. And to hear disturbing actions being considered again, like you said, that are impacting people who are just trying to live a fairly simple life out on the land is really disturbing to me but, I just really want to highlight those comments because it just goes right over people's head. But for people who live out on the land, that's the first thing you think about whenever you travel. Where am I going to get water? That's the very first thing. When you set up a camp, you don't set up a camp in some swampy little dump hole, right? You find good water and you camp out. I just wanted to put that on the record because it's just overlooked over and over and over again. And it is the essential to life. And then the second thing is what

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1 it produces, and that's salmon and moose and caribou for
2 us that live out there. So, thank you for your
3 testimonies. Those were really, really well done. Thank
4 you.

5
6 MR. PETER: Thank you for your comments,
7 Andy. Also, too, I'd like to recognize my son. He's here
8 too. He's his name is Michael. And he's, you know,
9 hopefully we need to get more younger people out there,
10 you know. They're not banging down our doors, but, we
11 need to start reaching out to them more, you know,
12 because, like, you know, like we're not going to be here
13 and to be doing this for the rest of our life, you know.
14 And -- but, he is right. The water is life. And the
15 protection of our watershed is our main concern. That's
16 -- it's really a big concern to me. I mean, because
17 that's what sustains us and also too, you know, with
18 them drilling right in the middle of a refuge. You know,
19 this is my own comment. You know, why doesn't Fish and
20 Wildlife follow their mission statement to protect and
21 preserve and conserve? You know, I don't see why. You
22 know, what's so hard about that? I mean, you know, they
23 were doing a good job before but, now it seems like with
24 everything going on, the cutbacks. And we're hardly
25 seeing any enforcement up there either. You know so,
26 that's just another thing I'd like to mention. Thank
27 you.

28
29 UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you, through Chair,
30 and thank you for coming to testify today, Chief. I
31 wanted to just get a better handle. You said when the
32 people. Were coming in on big boats and there was that
33 camp. Where exactly was that again?

34
35 MR. PETER: Down in the lower mouth of
36 the Birch. And there's some there's some allotment
37 owners around there too, that have allotments. And I
38 think sometime last year, somebody posted some pictures
39 on Facebook that there was a barge with a bunch of
40 equipment there that was stuck in the middle of the
41 river. And I think it's still there. And also too, just
42 a comment on the moose, what's going on with the wolves
43 and moose. Somebody from Beaver, I think it was I don't
44 want to say his name but, he posted pictures too that
45 there was two moose in front of Beaver Village and
46 there's four moose four wolves following them. So,
47 they're staying closer to the village to get protection
48 from just the people, you know, from the noise, from the
49 village, you know, and then wolves are smart, they're
50 aware of the human behavior and also, when humans are

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1 out there on the land.

2

3 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: I got a question for
4 you, with your testimony. I really commend you for coming
5 here and testifying in front of us today. We don't see
6 enough of that in public comment. We don't see enough
7 tribes or tribal corporations coming here to speak up
8 for their people. So, I'm really, really happy to see
9 you here today. And I have a question on your testimony.
10 Would you -- you're asked, do you want to ask us to put
11 in a request for you to get a better moose count Or
12 would you like to see us work on a proposal to add you
13 to that?

14

15 MR. PETER: I think probably a little bit
16 of both. You know, I think -- so we can get a better
17 handle on what numbers we do have out there. Yeah. And
18 then so, if the numbers are low that I think it should
19 be closed to non-resident.

20

21 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay. I just wanted
22 to make sure I understood what your ask was here today.
23 So, we can go forward in the way that you would like to
24 see.

25

26 MR. PETER: Yes, yes, definitely. Like I
27 said, because we're competing with bigger -- how would
28 you say it? A bigger piece of the pie than the small one
29 we got out there in the village. You know, there's maybe
30 there's just yearly, you know, seasonal work, you know,
31 not year-round, you know. And then the gas prices also
32 too, you know, that's you know, it was like about a year
33 and a half, almost two years ago, it was \$10. Now it's
34 like 8 -- 8.28, you know. And you think that's that? I
35 mean, that's still kind of high, you know, for our area,
36 you know. But, also too I'm thinking that, you know, I'm
37 not only testifying for my people but, I mean, for our
38 younger generations to come. What are they going to be
39 hunting? You know, and another thing too, you know, to
40 maybe implant buffalo, you know, reintroduce them, you
41 know, we're thinking about that too. So, and you know,
42 and like, you know, a big thing it's coming up is
43 especially its food security. And right now, our food
44 security is threatened.

45

46 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Very true. I really
47 appreciate your testimony today. Thank you for being
48 here. And if you got anything else you want to talk
49 about, I'm always open to talk more at lunch.

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1 Come on up, Carrie.

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MR. STEVENS: I meant to mention thank you through the Chair very briefly, that there is a statewide proposal put in. I have not researched it yet to change the boundaries of 25, and I don't know if that's on your guy's radar. Thank you, I apologize, I meant to mention that when Henaayee brought up the State. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you, Carrie noted. So, my area also was -- finally got a count last year and it was deemed low density. So, we wanted to try to extend that also. So, I think we will be adding that to the proposal going forward. Thank you so much for that testimony. I think that's about -- oh, no. We had one more here. Christopher Sherry, are you online still?

(No response)

MS. MCDAVID: Christopher, this is Brooke. You probably need to press star six to unmute.

(Pause)

It looks like you're unmuted on our end if you want to go ahead and introduce yourself. Thanks.

(Pause)

Christopher. This is Brooke. If you can hear me, I'm just letting you know we cannot hear you in the room. It does look like your mic is open on our end.

(Pause)

MR. CHRISTOPHER QARGI: One ending in one nine. Five, six. How about now?

MS. MCDAVID: We got you now. Thank you.

MR. SHERRY: Okay. Good morning, everybody. Christopher Sherry from Minto checking in. Yeah. I just wanted to comment about the wood bison and reintroduction. Follow up from my previous comment at your last meeting. I'm hoping that the Fish and Wildlife Service presentation can shed some light on what the draft plan that came to them -- I'm hoping in the site

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1 specific management plan held by the State last year.
2 It was the hopes and intentions of the planning team to
3 include a positive CNT finding for wood bison from the
4 State. And if you (distortion) and if you go way back
5 to 2010, there's out of you know, 380 letters to
6 individuals, they got 20 -- 21 comments. We need a
7 positive CNT finding. And that's what I'm commenting to
8 you guys about.

9

10 (Pause)

11

12 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay, Thank you. Is
13 that it?

14

15 CHRISTOPHER: Yeah. Unless you guys got
16 any more questions?

17

18 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Yeah, we do have a
19 question. Thank you. Hold on a second.

20

21 MS. IRWIN: Thank you. Chris, for the
22 record, this is Olivia Irwin. The Council has before
23 them some Board of Game statewide proposals that we have
24 potential to comment on. And one of them is from the
25 Minto/Nenana Fish and Game Advisory Committee to add
26 wood bison to the list of animals to be taken for
27 cultural purposes. The purpose of this proposal being
28 put in is sometimes the process of having a positive CNT
29 finding can take some time. And so, the intention is
30 hopefully that if this were to pass, there would be
31 opportunity for cultural purposes for the use of wood
32 bison. Is that something that you feel you and the
33 community, the residents of Minto would support?

34

35 MR. SHEERY: I personally support the
36 Advisory Committee proposal for that. It's my
37 understanding that that proposal doesn't take into
38 account the historical aspect and historical use of wood
39 bison. And I understand that normal CNT findings can
40 take generations. And this is a rather unusual type of
41 request for federal and state agencies to recognize the
42 historical importance of this release. And so that's
43 just my comments on that.

44

45 MS. IRWIN: Great. Thank you, Chris.

46

47 MS. MCDAVID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This
48 is Brooke. I just wanted to add that one of the things
49 we ask Fish and Wildlife to present to or when they
50 present, probably tomorrow, about the wood bison, is to

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1 explain if CNT could be established on the federal side
2 and what that would look like. So, we will be hearing
3 more from them about that. Thank you.

4
5 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Any more questions?
6 Not seeing any. Thank you so much for calling in,
7 Christopher. Appreciate you.

8
9 MR. SHERRY: Yeah. Thank you, Charlie.

10
11 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: I'm not hearing or
12 seeing any more calls for public comment. We're going
13 to move on the agenda. Oh, I guess it's 12:00. You got
14 a 15-minute break. I lied, one hour for lunch. Thank
15 you.

16
17 MS. MCDAVID: Let's try to be back at
18 one. Thank you.

19
20 (Off record)

21
22 (On record)

23
24 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Next thing on the
25 agenda is the Council member training. Just so people
26 know, if you don't have an agenda in front of you.

27
28 UNIDENTIFIED: Oh, good afternoon, Mr.
29 Chair, and members of the Council. So, we are currently
30 in the Wildlife Open Call for Proposals, which ends April
31 4th. So, for the 2025 Winter Council Training, I'm going
32 to briefly cover proposing changes to federal
33 subsistence hunting and trapping regulations. Next
34 slide.

35
36 MS. MCDAVID: And Council members, this
37 is Brooke. This is found -- there's a copy of the
38 presentation on tab number one in your meeting binders,
39 and it's also on the screen.

40
41 UNIDENTIFIED: So, there are two main
42 ways to change Federal Subsistence Regulations. One is
43 via Special Action Request or through proposals. The key
44 difference between the two is special actions are for
45 temporary short-term changes and could be submitted at
46 any point, whereas a proposal changes codified
47 regulations and can only be submitted during the open
48 periods and since we are currently in the open period,
49 I'm kind of going to walk through the proposal submittal
50 process. Next slide.

1

2 If the Council would like to submit a
3 proposal, all we need is for one of you to make a motion
4 and have a vote to submit the proposal on record, and
5 OSM staff will draft it up to submit and this can happen
6 at any time during this meeting. Any member of the public
7 can submit a proposal via mail to our office, hand it
8 to me or any OSM staff during this meeting or submit it
9 through the regulations.gov website. Next slide. When
10 submitted by the public, please make sure to include who
11 is submitting the proposal, including your contact
12 information, what regulations you want to change, in
13 which unit, what are you -- what you want the regulation
14 to say, and why you want to change it, and any supporting
15 information to help the Board evaluate it. Next slide.

16

17 Sometimes proposals are invalidated,
18 but it will be because they pertain to things that are
19 outside the Board's jurisdiction. Examples are halibut,
20 marine mammals, migratory birds, or non-Federal lands.
21 Next slide. For reference, the subsistence regulations
22 can be changed through regulatory proposals are found
23 in the Code of Federal Regulations, subpart C and D.
24 Next slide. Which covers a wide variety of regulations
25 from general, such as sealing requirements and
26 definitions, to more specific regulations like harvest
27 limit seasons -- harvest limits, seasons, permit
28 requirements, and customary traditional use
29 determinations, and next slide. Thank you. Please
30 remember that we are currently in the open period for
31 proposals, and they need to be submitted by April 4th.
32 And I kind of kept this short and sweet to leave lots
33 of room for questions. So, if anybody has any questions
34 or would like to have, see examples of past proposals
35 or regulation changes, let me know.

36

37 MS. MCDAVID: And Council members there
38 are some additional slides in the -- at the end of the
39 presentation that do have -- in your book, that have
40 examples. So that's kind of a reference for you, as
41 you're thinking about proposal ideas.

42

43 MS. SHOCKLEY: Mr. Chair, can I ask a
44 question? Thank you, appreciate this. How long have you
45 been with your department?

46

47 UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you. Through the
48 Chair, I've been with OSM since 2021 so, I think --
49 yeah, third or fourth year. I lost count how many
50 but.....

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MS. SHOCKLEY: Okay, and if I could follow up, just how many proposals -- and I'm not sure if we're gonna [sic] cover this later on but, the whole process, once someone submits a proposal, and what happens after that?

UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you for that, through the Chair. So basically, what happens is you'll submit the proposal, it'll go through the validation process, which, you know, make sure it's within the jurisdiction of the Board. And then that gets sent to the analysis, where we go through, and we write the analysis for it. And then it'll go through several different variations of other people looking at it to make sure that we got everything worded right, we didn't leave it out. We send it out to the field managers, and we let them review it and give us back any feedback that they would have. And like I said, there's several steps of edits and stuff where multiple people on -- locally and higher up, take a look at it, and then we'll bring it back to the RAC, and we will let you all decide, you know, y'all make your decision on whether you'll support it or reject it or what have you. And then it'll go through more revisions and checks and anything that y'all may want to add to it and then it'll go to the Board, and the Board makes a decision at that point.

MS. MCDAVID: And Mr. Chair, this is Brooke. Dorothy, I also wanna [sic] add that there is a public comment period for all the proposals. So, that will happen after April 4th, when it closes, the ones that are valid will get published online, people can submit comments. There will also be opportunities for tribal consultation. Those are offered at various times throughout the year and right before -- again, right before the Federal Subsistence Board meets so, there's opportunity once a proposal is submitted for public comment, tribal comment, comments from other agencies. And then it comes back to you in the fall, to hear all that and make your recommendation to the Board. Thanks.

MS. SHOCKLEY: Thank you, I just wanted to point out to others, you know, including myself, how this process works and how long it takes. You know, we proposed -- the EIRAC Board proposed a small change in a proposal two years ago, and it still hasn't -- I mean, we're still in the process of changing that. So, just wanted to make that as a point of how this process works or doesn't work, thank you.

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CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Any more questions?

(No response)

Hearing none, thank you.

(Pause)

Okay, number 12 on the agenda. Action items Deferred Wildlife Proposal WP24-01 statewide sale of brown bear hides and Pippa Kenner, OSM cultural anthropologist.

MS. MCDAVID: Pippa, this is Brooke. We wanted to check and see if you're available online.

(No response)

I'm not seeing Pippa online. Liz, do you wanna [sic] let the Council know what maybe their options would be to...?

MS. WILLIAMS: Good afternoon, Mr. Chair and members of the Council. I'm Liz Williams, I'm a cultural anthropologist with the Office of Subsistence Management, and there are several anthropologists, and we do different analyses about different topics. And this one was actually written by another anthropologist who can't be here today. And member Shockley, I wonder if this is the proposal you're referring to. I sympathize, empathize, but we will move forward, and I'll talk about why as we go. So, this is in which book, Brooke? Okay, so this is WP24-01, 24 tells the story that member Shockley brought up, and it is a proposal for rural people, federally-qualified subsistence users, to be able to sell the raw untanned or tanned hide or cape from a legally harvested brown bear, and that's adding a species to an existing regulation that includes being able to sell the hides of caribou, deer, elk, goat, moose, muskox, and sheep harvested under federal subsistence regulations and this is really important because that means that the meat is salvaged. And that's a big concern because in the past, in Alaska, there have been market hunters who've profited from the sale of wildlife, meat and hides, and there was some waste. So, the person who proposed this is from McGrath -- McCarthy, pardon me, and your Council did go over this during the previous wildlife cycle. And we have some new members on the Council so, if you have questions for me, please

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1 let me know. But the proponent made this proposal because
2 as you have all discussed already today, the cost of
3 subsistence lifestyle has gone up, and people are
4 harvesting a lot more bears than they used to for food.
5 And this proponent saw this as a way to offset some of
6 the costs of harvesting fish and wildlife for his family
7 and community. So, this Council supported it at the
8 Arctic Village meeting, and you asked for an addition
9 of black bear hide as well. The Board asked that they
10 keep -- you keep these two proposals separate. So, asking
11 for brown bear hide sales is not off the table, it's
12 just gonna probably need to be another proposal, which
13 I guess is timely because we're in the proposal cycle.
14 So, one of the issues that affects the sale of bear
15 hides in Alaska is the Convention on International Trade
16 in Endangered Species, and we refer to it in Government
17 World as CITES so, you might have heard of that before.
18 And that's another way to prevent market hunting. There
19 are huge markets in other parts of the world for parts
20 of animals that are used for medicines and, you know,
21 just all sorts of things. So, this treaty was put in
22 place to protect wildlife, fish, bird, resources from
23 these types of exploitation. So, this proposal would
24 require people to get a CITES permit but CITES only
25 applies to the international sale and so, the Board
26 looked at this at their April 2024 meeting, and they
27 wondered, do people have to go through the CITES thing?
28 The State administers CITES permits through -- for the
29 Fish and Wildlife Service, it would raise the amount of
30 administrative burden they had, and they're
31 understaffed, they didn't -- they can't, according to
32 the transcript, they said they were not able to do it.
33 So, the Board asked OSM staff to look for another
34 solution. So, the Board deferred it, and it's coming
35 back. In February, just a couple of weeks ago, the Board
36 looked at this again, and they looked at an addendum
37 done by the staff member to figure out an internal to
38 OSM Federal permit that doesn't involve CITES and people
39 would be able to possibly do this but not sell the hide
40 internationally. And so, they would still have to get
41 it sealed by the State, but they would be able to have
42 this ability to sell the hide in the United States. Does
43 that make sense so far? So, the Board said that sounds
44 good, but we're gonna defer it cause we wanna [sic] see
45 what the Councils think. So, what we're asking you is
46 what do you think about that proposal and member Shockley
47 and the rest of the Council, this is a slow process, but
48 sometimes it's so publicly driven that the Board and
49 others don't wanna [sic] make a decision without sending
50 it back to you, and that's not an excuse, it's just the

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1 process. But I think it is important for you to know
2 that you might not be able to sell a brown bear hide
3 internationally under this proposed sort of compromise.

4
5 So, there -- a couple of things that we
6 look at, bears taken in defense of life and property
7 can't sell the hide and any bear hides that have been
8 harvested before this is approved by the Board are not
9 available. It's not legal to sell them because it wasn't
10 legal when you harvested it. So, every Council looks at
11 bears differently, and some Councils said nothing, we
12 don't want to sell any bear hides, others have different
13 opinions. The proponent was from a resident zoned
14 community in a national park and so, this is a way for
15 people that harvest under federal subsistence
16 regulations to harvest two brown bears, even if the bear
17 is taken -- no, to do the sale, even in a unit, there's
18 a one bear limit, sorry. So, another concern, and I hope
19 I'm not confusing you too much, is that some units have
20 two bear limits, some units have one, and initially we
21 were only gonna be able to do it maybe in two bear units,
22 but you can do it in either one. So, I'm gonna read what
23 the National Park Service Board member said about -- it
24 requires that the edible meat be salvaged, and it's not
25 expected to cause an increased harvest or conservation
26 concern but, will allow subsistence harvest -- or
27 hunters to benefit from the sale of a hide under
28 customary trade provisions. So, it is a request to allow
29 a federally qualified subsistence user to sell a brown
30 bear hide taken under federal subsistence regulations
31 even if the bear is taken in an area with a one bear
32 unit, and the purpose of this proposal in specific
33 response to the proponent is to allow the sale of a hide
34 harvested on national park or national monument lands
35 where ADF&G regulations allowing for the sale of a brown
36 bear hide are not in effect. So, that's why this
37 proponent wanted this, because it wasn't available in
38 his area.

39
40 So, what we were asking you right now
41 is what do you think of this? There's a lot of details,
42 there's been no prototype for the type of permit that
43 OSM would distribute to people, but that's what we have
44 been asked to put back to you. And there are a couple
45 of things that are just underlying things to protect
46 brown bears. The purchase of the hide must be for
47 personal use and not be resold. The seal number from the
48 State must be included in any advertisement of sale,
49 cause [sic] it allows law enforcement to identify that
50 a brown bear advertised for sale on the internet is from

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1 a legally harvested brown bear. OSM modifications allow
2 a hide to be sold with or without claws attached and
3 will allow a subsistence user who removes a claw to
4 incorporate it into a handicraft which is already in the
5 regulations, and then to sell the hide. It also removes
6 from federal regulations the requirements in some areas
7 of Alaska that at the time of sealing the ADF&G
8 authorized sealing official must remove and retain the
9 skin of the head and the front claws of the bear hide.
10 So -- and the real justification to -- or the thing that
11 makes people comfortable is that edible meat salvage
12 requirements are going to protect -- be protecting brown
13 bears from overharvest. So, it complies with CITES in
14 that people are not selling these hides illegally. So
15 that's the end of my presentation. If you have any
16 questions, I'll try to ask them, and if I don't know the
17 answer, I invite anybody in this room to come and help
18 me.

19

20 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Any questions?

21

22 MR. BASSICH: Yeah, I'm just wondering,
23 is there any, is there -- would there be any tracking
24 of the number of bears once this is -- if this is
25 implemented, the number of bears harvested and then the
26 amount of hides that are sold as a tracking mechanism
27 to see if this increases harvest of brown bear over
28 time.

29

30 MS. WILLIAMS: That's not stated in here,
31 but that's an element of almost everything the
32 government does. So, between the State sealing number
33 and the OSM permit, I believe they would all be
34 enumerated and tallied. But that's something that the
35 Council can recommend. I mean, when we're talking about
36 the processes that we do, all these drafts we do, they
37 are drafts until they go before the Board. So, anybody
38 here that has thoughts, opinions, corrections,
39 additions, complaints, this is part of the public
40 process.

41

42 MR. BASSICH: Yeah, I'd like to follow
43 up on that as well. I guess from my perspective ideally,
44 I would love to see this in place, and in particular for
45 people who lived in more remote areas. My biggest concern
46 is areas with easily access possibly from larger
47 population bases. That's a concern that I have. The one
48 concern that I have dealt with over the years is that
49 when you live remote, it's a lot more difficult to get
50 a hide or head sealed. That's a problem that I run into

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1 even though I'm not really remote. So, I guess the
2 question I would have is, what's -- what would stop a
3 person from, say, tanning their own hide in a home
4 tannery system and then selling it, but not having it
5 sealed? So, this is requiring it for it to be sealed.
6 So, that's one obstacle for someone who lives remote.
7 And it's -- the intent of this initially was to allow
8 for the sale of an item that a normal federally qualified
9 subsistence user would take and so, it's basically a
10 value-added product to the meat. And so, I do have
11 conservation concerns, and I also have the logistical
12 concerns of the sealing requirements, and I think that's
13 important to have that. But I just wanted to point out
14 that that could be very difficult for people living more
15 remotely and quite frankly, the people that I would
16 envision seeing harvesting grizzly bears due to issues
17 on their home site are more remote people. It's not
18 going to happen as much in communities. But the more
19 remote you live, the greater the chance that becomes a
20 problem. So, I'm just trying to identify who this
21 benefits, which is, I think, everyone, but also some of
22 the stumbling blocks for those people that do live more
23 remotely, so. For what it's worth, I want to point that
24 out, but I am in support of this. Thank you.

25

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Go ahead, Donald.

26

27
28 MR. WOODRUFF: I'd like to point out that
29 in Eagle we have two people that seal fur and hides for
30 Fish and Game. My wife is one of them and so I have no
31 difficulty getting bear hides sealed, and anybody is
32 welcome in our area to come to our house and get their
33 bears sealed, as long as they're not full of worms. We
34 do have to take an eyetooth sample, which is sometimes
35 a little bit difficult to take out of the jaw. And when
36 there's a permit available from OSM, I want two, I want
37 two samples, two permits.

38

39 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Any other
40 questions? Go ahead, Eva.

41

42 MS. BURK: Thank you, this is Eva. Do you
43 know, like, how many permits are issued roughly? Like
44 per unit or, you know, what I'm getting at, and then how
45 many of those permits are actually, like, filled,
46 harvested? It'd be good to know how much harvest and
47 what's the pattern of that harvest over the years.

48

49 MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you, member Burk. I
50 will look through the analysis real quick. There may not

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1 be because this is a Customary Trade Proposal and not a
2 Wildlife Proposal, and so -- go ahead, Barbara, thank
3 you.

4
5 MS. CELLARIUS: Mr. Chair. For the
6 record, it's Barbara Cellarius from Wrangell-St. Elias
7 and Liz told me I should come up to the table if I could
8 help her. There are -- sometimes reporting requirements
9 under federal subsistence regulations involve sealing,
10 sometimes there's a federal registration permit,
11 sometimes there's both. I can speak to Units 11, 12 and
12 13, that's the area where the proponent lives. And, you
13 know, we could look at the regulation booklet, but
14 certainly in our area, what you have to do if you harvest
15 a brown bear is get it sealed. There is not a requirement
16 that you get a permit ahead of time. I know that there
17 are some units, I know, like in Unit five, for people
18 who live in Yakutat, we do -- there is a federal
19 subsistence permit for brown bear, but in other parts of
20
21 of the State, it's just a sealing requirement.

22
23 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Any more questions?
24 Okay, go ahead, Donald.

25
26 MR. WOODRUFF: Because this is a federal
27 subsistence harvest, I think that the conservation
28 concern would be very limited. It's not like a general
29 hunt.

30
31 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you for
32 clarifying that, thank you very much. Any more
33 questions? Go ahead, Olivia.

34
35 MS. IRWIN: For the record, this is
36 Olivia Henaayee Irwin. Yeah, Liz, I would just like to
37 echo Andy's comments and some of Eva's too is, I've been
38 hearing both at federal and state level, people's
39 concerns about the big animals and us knowing the counts.
40 It's obvious from some of our community members
41 observations that there are high numbers in certain
42 areas, but then there's certain areas in the State where
43 we have really no idea how many big animals we're really
44 taking out of these populations. So, if this -- if we
45 could track this using OSMS new permit system, I think
46 that would just add one more layer of benefit for the -
47 - for a conservation concern to be able to track it. So,
48 if something like that was established, I think it would
49 just be good to have that additional data. Thank you.

50

1 MR. BASSICH: One more clarifying
2 question. At the time of sales, would the sealing tags
3 still be required to be on the hide? Because my guess
4 is, of course, even more remotely on top of the topics
5 I'm bringing up, some of those people might want to try
6 and tan a hide prior to sale themselves, but I'm not
7 sure what their legal requirements are for trying to
8 seal an already tanned hide. You know, you have spoilage
9 issues, people who live really remotely, a lot of people
10 don't have a freezer so, and many of these people might
11 end up living 50 miles away from a system. So, I'm just
12 trying to point out some of the pitfalls that may come
13 down the line on this for addressing those that live
14 much more remote. And the other thing I want to point
15 out is that really, when you look at the State of Alaska,
16 outside of large population bases, pretty much everybody
17 is federally qualified in one way, manner or another.
18 You know, if you live in Fairbanks, you're not, there
19 are certain other areas, but there's actually quite a
20 large group of people within the State that are federally
21 qualified. So, simply saying that it's restricted to
22 federally qualified and thinking that doesn't
23 incorporate a fairly large population might be
24 understating the potential for overharvest. So, just
25 wanted to get that on the record. Thank you.

26
27 MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you, member Bassich,
28 I appreciate that. And there are different regulations
29 throughout the State on limits, but of how and where a
30 bear is sealed. So -- but I do think with the increasing
31 dependence on furbearers, including bears for food,
32 tracking their populations and keeping track of how many
33 there are, as far as we can tell, is very important.

34
35 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Any more questions?

36
37 MS. SHOCKLEY: Thank you, Liz. Appreciate
38 this. Through the Chair. I was in Juneau for eight years,
39 and I still have trouble with the through Chair thing.
40 But you know, when we -- I haven't read through this
41 whole thing, but when we originally were looking at this
42 you know, it was more, I think, you know, in addition
43 to, you know, like a subsistence lifestyle, like you
44 know, you would kill the bear, tan it, and maybe make
45 something or just sell it as is. And so, you know, with
46 all of these other additions in the past couple of years,
47 you know -- it's just, you know -- to me -- I mean, I
48 guess it's like if some -- if Galen would just sell --
49 you know, kill a bear and tan it and maybe trade it with
50 me and I decide to make something out of it, you know,

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1 I mean, that whole process of, you know, tracking it, I
2 mean, you know, just adds, I think to -- I think just a
3 simple process. And so, you know, to me, the more simple
4 it could be, then, you know, it would be -- and you
5 know, I am concerned too, you know, with some of the
6 people that think this could be, you know, become
7 something that, you know, people are out doing, you know,
8 as far as, you know, making money or whatever their
9 ambition is to do this. But, you know, out in rural
10 Alaska, you know, I think the only time that a person
11 would, you know, kill a brown bear is if, you know,
12 they're stalking the camp or, you know, a threat. So,
13 you know, it's not something that we do on a regular
14 basis. So, yeah -- I mean -- but, you know, the outside
15 world doesn't see things like we do. Just, yeah, I mean,
16 it's just mindboggling, blows my mind sometimes about
17 how regulated things are. You know, there's regulations
18 upon regulations to where, you know, you're going
19 through several pieces of, you know, a book or something
20 to figure out, you know, what we can do or what we can't
21 do. But I just want to say thank you and you know, the
22 more simple we can make things, the better.

23
24 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you so much,
25 Dorothy. I think that in conservation minded, keeping
26 sealing would keep track of the numbers and not -- so
27 there wouldn't be overharvest. I think that would be the
28 main thing that we'd have to worry about and that's what
29 I would worry about. And that's why I would say that
30 sealing is important. So, we don't get that problem to
31 happen, we need to know what's going on and how to keep
32 track of those numbers. Okay. Moving on here. Do we have
33 any agency comments? Anyone have another comment? Okay,
34 go ahead.

35
36 MS. BURK: Thank you, through the Chair.
37 This is Eva, for the record. I guess I answered my own
38 question. So, on page 33 of the handout is Fish and
39 Games comments, and it talks about the times when
40 harvested brown bears was increased slightly in 2016,
41 when the sale of brown bear hides were permitted from
42 intensive management areas. So, I'm just putting that
43 on the record that sometimes these actions can result
44 in an increase in harvest. But also, that the mention
45 of taking the -- making sure that a permit, when you
46 seal it, was it safe -- first obtain a permit available
47 at the time of sealing from a Fish and Game sealing
48 officer. And also, to only allow the sales in areas
49 where the Federal harvest limit is two bears every
50 regulatory year. So, that was helpful for me to see that

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1 in writing, and then also just put those comments on the
2 record for others to hear today.

3

4 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you, Eva.
5 Anybody else? Go ahead.

6

7 MR. WOODRUFF: The -- this is Don, for
8 the record. The harvest of brown bears and the salvage
9 of meat is a requirement of this process and there is
10 very few people who eat brown bear. And so, I wanna
11 [sic] point out that the people that are put off a little
12 bit by the flavor of brown bear, if the fat is removed
13 from the brown bear flesh, that is where the off taste
14 comes from. And this is -- I've done some research on
15 this, and brown bears harvested on the coast that eat
16 salmon on a regular basis have a real strong flavor, and
17 that flavor is concentrated in the fat. Thank you.

18

19 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you for that
20 information, it's very interesting. Okay, any more
21 questions or comments?

22

23 (No response)

24

25 Sure? Okay. Agency comments, any
26 comments from ADF&G?

27

28 (No response)

29

30 Any comments from federal agencies?

31

32 (Simultaneous speech)

33

34 MR. BURCH: Hello yeah this is -- this
35 is Mark Burch. I'm ready to give some comments for the
36 Department of Fish and Game if that'll work.

37

38 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay, go ahead. You
39 have the floor.

40

41 MR. BURCH: Thank you. For the record,
42 my name is Mark Burch. I'm an assistant director with
43 the Division of Wildlife Conservation, and we are
44 keeping our same position as we've had from the
45 beginning. So, I'm just gonna essentially say the same
46 thing that you have in writing on your analysis, and
47 that is that the Alaska Department of Fish and Game
48 supports the proposal if it is modified to only allow
49 the sale of brown bear hides with claws attached in
50 areas where the federal harvest limit is two bears every

1 regulatory year, and after first obtaining a permit
2 available at the time of sealing from the Department of
3 Fish and Game Sealing Officer. The State allows the sale
4 of brown bear hides in certain units where the bag limit
5 is two brown bears per regulatory year. There is a
6 harvest limit of two or more brown bear per regulatory
7 year for 2022 and 23, and that includes six Units: 16,
8 17, 19A, 19D as in Delta, 19E as in Echo, 20E as in
9 Echo, 21, 22A, 22B Bravo, 22D Delta, 22E Echo, Unit 23,
10 24B Bravo, 25D Delta, and 26A. The Alaska Board of Game
11 recently added Unit 18, as well. The -- is now -- has a
12 bag limit of two brown bears. I think that that's
13 basically the highlights you've heard. Our concern is
14 the administrative burden. If we need to issue the permit
15 in all the units across the State in addition to these.
16 And part of that is that the sealers themselves don't
17 issue that permit regularly, if at all. So that would
18 be a new thing that we would need to present to them and
19 train them on. And it's of course, you know, it's hard
20 to keep a skill if you never use it and that's the kind
21 of situation that we would be in and not never, but you
22 need to be prepared for it. It would just be, as we've
23 said, an additional administrative burden that we're not
24 prepared to take on at this time. Thank you. I'm
25 available for any comments or questions.

26
27 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: This is Charlie
28 Wright. I have a question on -- near the handout that
29 we got. Seems like there might be a little conservation
30 concern that the -- there was the brown bear count went
31 up for a long time, and in the last ten years it's been
32 trending down. What are your comments on that? Any
33 conservation concerns in your mind? Thank you.

34
35 MR. BURCH: Mr. Chair. No, I don't think
36 we can say there's a concern. We did consider that, and
37 some areas are more likely to be an issue than others.
38 Obviously, there are some places that are -- that have
39 relatively higher demand for brown bear harvest, such
40 as Southeast and Kodiak Island or Kodiak in general. And
41 from that perspective, we looked into it, but we just -
42 - we can't say that it would be a big problem and
43 especially with the restrictions that we have on harvest
44 already, for instance, on sows and sows with cubs and
45 that kind of thing. So, we don't really expect an issue,
46 but we don't know because we haven't been doing it on
47 the State side. There have been relatively few people,
48 though, even in those, all those areas I just listed
49 that have actually requested the permit. So, that's an
50 indication too. That's one of the reasons why we don't

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1 have quite so much concern about it, is that even where
2 it's allowed, not that many people have taken advantage
3 of that opportunity to get those permits issued and then
4 later sell or even immediately sell the hide.

5

6 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you very much.
7 Any other questions? Go ahead, Henaayee.

8

9 MS. IRWIN: Olivia Henaayee Irwin for the
10 record. Just to my council, because I wasn't here
11 whenever you guys put this proposal in. Is there a reason
12 that we decided to go with a Statewide regulation, rather
13 than one that's region specific to Region 9? Just the
14 region that we look at or is that just -- that's just
15 the normal -- is that just the normal process of doing
16 statewide regulations, Brooke?

17

18 MS. MCDAVID: Through the Chair, this is
19 Brooke. Olivia, this proposal wasn't put in by our
20 Council. It was put in by, -- Liz mentioned a person
21 from McCarthy, and they -- whether intentionally or
22 unintentionally, it turned into a statewide proposal and
23 came before all the Councils. So, all the Councils are
24 weighing in. It's not specific to your region only.

25

26 MS. SHOCKLEY: So, I'm a little confused
27 now. So, with this proposal a person who wants to sell
28 a brown bear hide has to have a permit or just a seal,
29 or both?

30

31 MS. WILLIAMS: Okay, okay. Thank you, Mr.
32 Chair. This is Liz Williams, and thank you, member
33 Shockley. You have to have both, so -- but we're not
34 adding something, we're switching something so, instead
35 of a CITES permit -- so, always you would have to have
36 two. And so, because the CITES permit is for
37 international and because it's an administrative burden
38 that would go onto the State from the federal government,
39 cause the Fish and Wildlife Service has them do it. It's
40 my understanding of the situation; you would still need
41 to have both. And the sealing is to sort of, I think --
42 and the State of Alaska can please come up and tell me,
43 but I think that's one way of knowing bears are harvested
44 and then the other one is for sale. So, people that are
45 harvesting for sport or personal use under state regs
46 get their sealed, subsistence harvesters do too, so that
47 there is a database, I think I don't know, somewhere.
48 But -- and then instead of a CITES permit because it's
49 another administrative burden, it's a compromise that
50 you can still sell your bear hides but in the U.S. only,

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1 not international because that's what CITES works on.
2 Pardon?

3

4 MS. SHOCKLEY: I'm sorry, with the
5 permit, correct?

6

7 MS. WILLIAMS: Two.

8

9 MS. SCHOCKLEY: Okay.

10

11 MS. WILLIAMS: Does that make sense?

12

13 (Simultaneous speech)

14

15 I wish we had mocked up examples, but
16 we don't want to be pre-decisional because we'll have
17 to make a permit with regulations on it. But I am taking
18 down the suggestions that you have.

19

20 MS. SHOCKLEY: Okay, so if I were to get
21 bear hide from Galen and I -- oh, sorry. What would I
22 need to do?

23

24 MS. WILLIAMS: If you bought the hide
25 from Galen, you -- he would have to have the permit, I
26 believe, and I may not be correct. He would have to have
27 the permit to sell it to you, he would have to have the
28 sealing records. If I were you, I would get a copy of
29 both, and I really don't know, but -- and bear
30 handicrafts are already legal.

31

32 MR. GILBERT: I have a comment. Question,
33 I mean. So, this is kind of reflecting off Joey's
34 question. So, you know, as you all know, I'm new to this
35 Board, but you know, fall time after the caribou pass,
36 you know, we -- in Arctic Village, we have trouble with
37 bears coming into town and you know it -- you know, we
38 have to put them down because they wander into the
39 village. And I hope I'm not getting in trouble or
40 anything, but I don't know anything about selling or
41 sealing or anything like that. But what can I do to say,
42 wow, this fall we got 4 or 5 bears walk into town, we
43 have to put them down. What do I do then?

44

45 MS. WILLIAMS: Those bears.....

46

47 MR. GILBERT: Hi Mark.

48

49 MR. NELSON: Through the Chair. For the
50 record, my name is Mark Nelson. I'm with Fish and Game

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1 in Fairbanks here. Hi, Galen, we were up in Arctic
2 Village yesterday talking to each other. I think that
3 there's two things here, right. There's sealing and
4 there's a permit. And for those of you who haven't been
5 through the sealing process, it might be helpful for me
6 just to quickly explain that. So, when you bring in a
7 bear to get sealed, you're supposed to bring it in, the
8 hide has to be unthawed so we can unravel it and check
9 it out. The skull needs to be unthawed -- or not frozen
10 as well, because we'll open it up and pull a tooth like
11 Don was describing. Once we do that, we take a plastic
12 tag, we cut a little hole in the hide, and we usually
13 use the zygomatic arch or that little bone that kind of
14 sticks out below the eye of the skull, and we snap that
15 tag in there as a permanent tag or a seal. That is the
16 sealing process. Through that process, we take some
17 information from the hunter, hunting license, date,
18 birth, all that kind of stuff. Just so we have a record
19 of who took that bear. Once that happens, that
20 immediately goes into our Fish and Game's harvest
21 database. That's the only way we know most of the time
22 how many bears are taken in any unit anywhere in the
23 State. There's other things like drawing permits and
24 stuff that might come into play, but really, it's that
25 sealing that's critical for us to get that harvest
26 information. The permit to seal it is a -- it's a small
27 piece of paper. It's about this big, it's got -- it's
28 got two sides and on that we just write down the hunters'
29 information and then we give them that permit and with
30 that permit, then they can have the ability to sell the
31 bear. There are two very kind of separate things. So,
32 Galen, what you just brought up is a pretty common issue
33 that folks have when you're in somewhere like Arctic
34 Village that's really hard for -- if you don't have a
35 sealer there. There's two ways to go about that, one is
36 to become a sealer for the State, or to find somebody
37 in the community who wants to. You get paid a very tiny
38 amount of money for doing it, but it's something, right.
39 If you are interested in that, let me know. I can get
40 you in touch with the folks that kind of do that, and
41 we can get you set up as a sealer. The other thing that
42 I've done quite a bit is somebody will call me from a
43 community like that and I'll do it over the phone once
44 in a while if I need to see the skull, they'll send it
45 on, you know, Wrights or something like that. I'll pull
46 the tooth, I'll do whatever I need, I'll send it back
47 on (indiscernible) or some company or whatever and we'll
48 get it done, we'll get it sealed. And then you can take
49 that and tan it or sell it or, you know, do whatever you
50 want at that point. But again, I'm willing to go the

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1 extra effort to do that kind of stuff because that is
2 the only way we get that harvest information.

3

4 MR. GILBERT: Thank you, Mark.

5

6 MR. NELSON: Yeah.

7

8 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you very much
9 for that. Any more questions?

10

11 MS. ENTSMINGER: Mr. Chair I have a
12 question. Yeah, this is Sue, I have a question.

13

14 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay. Go ahead, Sue.

15

16 MS. ENTSMINGER: Yeah. Okay, thank you.
17 It sounds a little complicated to me, and I want to get
18 it straight in my mind. So, under this proposal -- or
19 what Liz has introduced is that there would be a -- the
20 bear would be sealed, and then it would be another --
21 would it be another sealing thing that you would put in
22 the bear, that you would know that it was not able to
23 be sold internationally?

24

25 MS. WILLIAMS: Through the Chair, this
26 is Liz Williams. We haven't gotten to that point yet. I
27 think it's more a chain of custody piece of paper just
28 so that the buyer is assured, and the seller is
29 protected, that they're not selling something that
30 wasn't harvested as a subsistence animal under federal
31 regulations. Does that help at all?

32

33 MS. ENTSMINGER: Wasn't harvested as a
34 subsistence animal?

35

36 MS. WILLIAMS: Yes, the new proposed OSM
37 permit for sale is so that a buyer will know that it was
38 harvested legally for sale as a subsistence animal. So,
39 under federal subsistence regulations only.

40

41 (Simultaneous speech)

42

43 Pardon?

44

45 MS. ENTSMINGER: And that's just a piece
46 of paper that you're saying?

47

48 MS. WILLIAMS: We have not gotten to that
49 point yet, but that, I think, is what is proposed. I've
50 never seen a CITES permit, but I believe it is attached

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1 with a tag and Mark may be able to come back again. But
2 -- and just keep in mind that this is not an additional
3 thing, it's an instead of. So, the Board is trying to
4 make this work without a CITES permit in the intent of
5 not just stopping the regulation proposal altogether.

6
7 MS. ENTSMINGER: You know, for me, I like
8 to keep it simple, and if Mark could hear me and I don't
9 know if this is a question, but it's a suggestion. I
10 believe there should be cooperation between the state
11 and the federal, and there just be one -- what sealing
12 agents are out sealing bears that there be one bear
13 saying that this bear can't be sold internationally. And
14 the State could provide that to their sealing people to
15 make it simple. Is that possible?

16
17 MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you, Sue. This is
18 Liz. I don't know, the State already has an
19 administrative burden with doing Federal CITES permits
20 and we have already been having two permits already.
21 That's something for the higher-level people to decide
22 upon or negotiate once we find out if the Councils want
23 this.

24
25 MS. ENTSMINGER: Okay, thank you. That
26 would be my suggestion.

27
28 MR. BURCH: Well, this is Mark Burch. I
29 might chime in if that's okay.

30
31 MS. ENTSMINGER: Yeah.

32
33 MR. BURCH: Again, I'm Mark Burch,
34 Assistant Director with the Division of Wildlife
35 Conservation. If the Proposal was to allow sale of hides
36 only from bears that were harvested, and where the limit
37 is two, there would be no extra burden at all for the
38 State. It would just be having consistent regulations
39 for both the state and the federal side. Where the
40 additional work would come in is if we had to do that
41 in every unit across the State. And you can -- some of
42 those units will have department employees, sealing
43 hides, and some of them are -- have other people
44 throughout the community that wouldn't normally have
45 anything to do with this, with selling or providing a
46 permit to sell and that's where the extra administrative
47 burden comes in. And our administration has been asked
48 and we said no, we weren't willing to take that
49 responsibility on for the federal program. So, it's
50 going to fall to the federal program to either issue the

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1 permits themselves or only offer that opportunity to
2 sell hides from bears that were harvested in a unit
3 where their limit is currently two. I hope that helps
4 clarify where the Department stands on the
5 administrative burden. Thank you.
6

7 MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you very much, Mark.
8 And that's a point that I did not emphasize very well.
9 If you look at the back of the analysis, there's Appendix
10 II, and there are -- a table that shows you the
11 difference between the original proposal and what it is
12 now. And so -- and what Mark said is -- the point is
13 that not -- that under state regs this would maybe be
14 legal only in an area with a two brown bear harvest
15 limit, whereas under this federal proposal, it would be
16 a one or two bear harvest limit. And Robbin LaVine has
17 something to say, and we also have the actual analyst
18 Pippa Kenner on the phone.
19

20 MS. LA VINE: Thank you, Mr. Chair,
21 members of the Board, this is Robbin. Actually, Liz
22 covered most of my comments really well because we have
23 been talking about the State's support of the -- the
24 proposal as originally written, and that is they support
25 the -- this regulatory change, if it remains for a two-
26 bear units only. This modified proposal would be
27 inclusive of both two bear harvest units and one bear
28 harvest unit so, we do want to note that. I also just
29 want to note that we're coming -- bringing this proposal
30 back to you, the Board is bringing this proposal back
31 to you because they want you to note some of the changes
32 between the first time you saw it and now. And so, they
33 want a second recommendation on the addendum and the new
34 OSM proposed recommendations. So, you can see the
35 difference between those two in the tables on the back,
36 and you can also look in the executive summary on page
37 two or -- yeah, of the handout. You can see the OSM
38 conclusion as of February 2025, that's what we'll be
39 getting your recommendations on. And then finally, just
40 to Sue, as far as the permit goes, what OSM has been
41 recommending is a customary trade permit to sell the
42 hide with or without claws attached of a brown bear
43 legally harvested under federal subsistence regulations,
44 providing the hide is purchased within the United States
45 for personal use and not to be resold. These customary
46 trade sales must be immediately recorded on a customary
47 trade permit, and must be returned within the time frame
48 specified on the permit. The hide must be sealed, the
49 seal must remain on the hide, and the seal number must
50 be included with any advertisement of sale and, I don't

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1 think that has changed in regards to the sealing process.
2 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

3

4 MR. ALEXANDER: My name is Gerald
5 Alexander. You know, all this bear talk is -- you get
6 you're relating to bear, bear, bear. But is this a male
7 or female?

8

9 MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you, Mr. Chair and
10 Mr. Alexander, it's not specified.

11

12 MR. ALEXANDER: That's the question I
13 have. I mean, where I'm from, you know, we're raised to
14 only take the male species and, well, you know, to keep
15 the cycle going. But, you know, that's what I was
16 referring to. Thank you.

17

18 MR. WOODRUFF: Thank you. This is Don,
19 for the record. This is for bears, male bears and female
20 bears unaccompanied by cubs. So, if you see a female
21 bear taking fish off your fish rack, you can harvest it.
22 If you see a female bear with a cub harvesting fish off
23 your fish rack, you cannot shoot it, and any male bear
24 is fair game.

25

26 (Pause)

27

28 MS. BURK: I was just really getting into
29 the State - or wait, yeah State Regs. Apparently, you
30 can -- this is Eva for the record. You can take black
31 bear cubs and sows accompanied by cubs may be taken by
32 resident hunters year-round in Unit 25D. Yeah, I know,
33 but I'm just saying like it -- like when he's talking
34 about bears and stuff, it does differ for different
35 areas. And also, there is like, subsistence permitting
36 system -- resident hunting by subsistence registration
37 permit for brown grizzly bears. It looks like there is
38 a State permit system for that too, so. That's on page
39 25 of the State Hunting Regs. If people want to look at
40 it.

41

42 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay. Any more
43 questions? Moving on. Oh, go ahead please.

44

45 MS. WILLIAMS: Oh, pardon me. This is Liz
46 Williams, OSM. As I noted before, the original analyst
47 is on the line. If there's any more clarifying questions
48 you'd like to ask her, please.

49

50

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1 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Yeah, I think we're
2 going to move along. Okay, that was ADF&G. Now we're at
3 federal agencies, any comments?

4
5 (No comment)

6
7 Okay, moving on. Tribal entities,
8 Native/tribal village or other?

9
10 (No response)

11
12 Hearing none. Advisory Group comments,
13 other Regional Councils?

14
15 (No response)

16
17 Fish and Game Advisory Committees?

18
19 (No response)

20
21 Subsistence Resource Commissions?

22
23 (No response)

24
25 Summary of written public comments. Oh,
26 okay. I can't see past my glasses.

27
28 MS. CELLARIUS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. For
29 the record, it's Barbara Cellarius with Wrangell-St.
30 Elias National Park and Preserve. And just for the new
31 members, I provide staff support to the Wrangell-St.
32 Elias National Park Subsistence Resource Commission,
33 which is a Federal Advisory Committee that was
34 established under Section 808 of ANILCA. It's -- it
35 operates in ways similar to the RACs, but it is specific
36 to a national park. And the Wrangell-St. Elias
37 Subsistence Resource Commission has not yet met this
38 winter, but I thought that I would, for the new members,
39 share with you the recommendation that they had when
40 this originally came before them in last fall, actually,
41 it was the fall of 2023. The Wrangell-St. Elias National
42 Park Subsistence Resource (distortion). The Wrangell-
43 St. Elias National Park Subsistence Resource Commission,
44 unanimously supported WP24-01 as written, and as written
45 it was a statewide proposal, regardless of what the
46 harvest limit was. They heard something that was a little
47 bit confusing about that. The proposal didn't reference
48 what a harvest limit was, that came -- I believe that
49 became an issue with the State comments. If there is a
50 need to limit the geographic scope, they support the

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1 proposal for Units 11, 12 and 13, which are the units
2 that overlap with the Park, or some of the units that
3 overlap with the Park. They specifically opposed the OSM
4 staff recommendation to limit the authorization to areas
5 with a two-bear harvest limit. Given the requirement to
6 salvage hides, hunters would be able to sell them, for
7 example, the hides could be used for sewing and
8 handicrafts. And that's the SRC comments again from the
9 fall of 2023.

10
11 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you so much.
12 Questions?

13
14 (No response)

15
16 Thank you. Okay, there is no written
17 public comments, this is brand new. How about public
18 testimony?

19
20 (No response)

21
22 Regional Council recommendations. Are
23 ours -- oh, go ahead, Andy. I'm sorry.

24
25 MR. BASSICH: Yeah. No, I'm ready to make
26 a motion if you're ready for it. I do have one clarifying
27 question for you, Liz. In the OSMs conclusion it says
28 two bear every regulatory year. But I heard you say
29 earlier, one year -- one bear for every regulatory year.
30 So, I'm getting some conflicting information before I
31 make my motion. Is it one or two, the recommendation?

32
33 MS. WILLIAMS: Depends on the unit. You
34 can do it in one or the other. But let's clarify with
35 Pippa, if she's on the phone.

36
37 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Pippa can you hear
38 us?

39
40 MS. KENNER: Yeah. Yes, now I can. Thank
41 you very much. Could you please repeat the question? I
42 was interrupted, I'm sorry.

43
44 MS. MCDAVID: Pippa, we're looking for
45 clarification on if sale would be -- of brown bear,
46 hides would be allowed on only one -- in one bear limit
47 units, or only in two bear and above unit. Thanks.

48
49 MS. KENNER: Okay, so there's the --
50 thank you. So, there's the proposal as submitted and

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1 then there's the OSM -- shoot just a minute, please. My
2 computer says it's going to shut down, I have no idea
3 why. Okay, so what it has.....

4
5 MR. BASSICH: So, maybe to help you out
6 -- this is member Bassich. On your OSM conclusion you
7 have a modification, but about two sentences down, it
8 says two bear every regulatory year. But there was
9 testimony given to us from OSM staff saying that it also
10 would include one bear regulatory area. So that's the
11 item I'm trying to clear up before the motion.

12
13 MS. KENNER: Thank you so much, Andy.
14 This is Pippa Kenner for the record, through the Chair.
15 The analysis addendum begins on page 18 and at the end
16 of that addendum is a new OSM revised conclusion. And
17 that is to allow the sale of the hide of a brown bear
18 that's harvested in a one or two harvest limit per year
19 area.

20
21 MR. BASSICH: Thank you very much, that
22 clarifies it. Mr. Chairman, move for a motion.

23
24 MS. KENNER: You're welcome.

25
26 MR. BASSICH: Member Bassich here. I'd
27 like to make a motion that we support WP24-01 with the
28 OSM conclusion and modification. And to be clear that
29 it would be allowed for either a one or two regulatory
30 year harvest, Mr. Chair.

31
32 MS. IRWIN: Olivia Irwin, seconds.

33
34 MR. BASSICH: And then speaking to the
35 motion, we've already had quite a bit of discussion, a
36 little bit out of order, but it was really good
37 discussion on this. I feel that there probably will be
38 no conservation concern citing the fact that this is for
39 federally qualified users of the areas. I don't think,
40 to my knowledge, that any of the areas are -- have
41 conservation concerns right now for brown bear or
42 grizzly. Under point two is this recommendation that
43 supports subsistence use, and biological, and
44 traditional and ecological knowledge. I think this is a
45 really important asset for subsistence users in remote
46 areas in particular, to get value added benefits from
47 legally harvested game that they would use for their
48 subsistence activities, for meat, for human consumption
49 so I think this is very beneficial to subsistence
50 activities. And hearing a lot of testimony throughout

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1 this day, we've also heard a lot of concerns for food
2 security. So, I think the harvest of grizzly bear is
3 gonna be an important part of subsistence activities
4 moving forward. It will be beneficial to subsistence and
5 under, will the recommendation unnecessarily restrict
6 other users? No, it will not, because there are State
7 regulations and non-federally qualified regulations that
8 allow the harvest of brown bear or grizzly bear. So,
9 that's my justification, Mr. Co-Chair. Thank you.

10
11 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you, Andy. Can
12 you restate the final motion for the record, please?
13

14 MR. BASSICH: Yes, Mr. Chair. The motion
15 is that the Eastern Interior Regional Advisory Council
16 support WP24-01 as modified by the OSM conclusion, which
17 would include harvest and sale of those hides in units
18 where you are allowed two bears or one bear in a
19 regulatory year. Mr. Co-Chair.

20
21 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you, Andy. At
22 this time, I'd ask for unanimous consent for -- on this
23 vote. All those in favor signify by saying aye.

24
25 (Silent agreement)

26
27 Okay, discussion. There's something to
28 say. Okay, please do.

29
30 MS. BURK: Through the Chair. That was
31 an entirely, I won't say inappropriate question. I
32 always have something to say. This is Eva, for the
33 record. I'm a little iffy on the one bear part. I'm
34 gonna have to say, for once, I might agree with the
35 State of Alaska Fish and Game to only do the two -- to
36 limit this to the areas where two brown bears -- there's
37 a bag limit for two brown bears. It says that that's
38 part of how they address the conservation concern. So,
39 I'm -- and I did, for the record, want to note that the
40 Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta opposed this proposal. And so, I'm
41 trying to balance that conservation concern with -- and
42 also like this sounds like they'll have to be a OSM
43 permit made a process, right. And so, that seems like
44 an extra additional step, and it's like, is it more
45 simple to actually follow what the Fish and Game has put
46 forth as a recommendation? And I -- I'm not an expert
47 in any of this so, I'm really looking for other people's
48 input on this one. But, just want to say there might be
49 a little bit more conservation concern, and that the way
50 to address that would be to match State. So, I'd be

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1 curious to see what other people thought. Thank you.

2

3 MS. SHOCKLEY: Thank you, through the
4 Chair. I -- Eva, which groups oppose this and why?

5

6 MS. BURK: Thank you, through the Chair,
7 this is Eva. The Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Subsistence
8 Regional Advisor Council opposed it. It's on page 30 of
9 the handout. Basically -- because there is a concern for
10 an increase in harvest rates to an unsustainable level
11 if the sale of hides was allowed. It's difficult to
12 obtain accurate population estimates from brown bears,
13 and they have a slow reproductive rate. This issue might
14 best be dealt with on a region-by-region basis rather
15 than a statewide basis, because different areas have
16 different brown bear population sizes and cultural
17 values related to their harvest and use. And so those --
18 -- for those reasons, I'm also like questioning what's
19 the appropriate measure and also trying to think about
20 people who are needing to harvest brown bears, who are
21 needing to make a little extra cash to make their
22 subsistence life possible. So, just thinking about how
23 to balance that.

24

25 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Go ahead, Olivia.

26

27 MS. IRWIN: Through the Chair. Thanks,
28 Charlie. Olivia Henaayee Irwin here. Yeah, Eva, I'm glad
29 that you just read that report back, because that was --
30 -- that's my biggest concern right now is that we're
31 making a decision for statewide when I have really no
32 idea what's going on with brown -- big animals in other
33 parts of the State right now. You know, I don't know
34 what that population and, you know, there's areas where
35 there's federally qualified users that are -- you know,
36 I'm just -- I'm wondering whether or not this is gonna
37 increase the take because some of the comments and the
38 questions that we've been hearing. I guess my -- the one
39 benefit to this is I actually really like the idea of
40 the sealing and the tracking. Because right now there's
41 very -- you know, this reminds me of the proposal to
42 make registration hunt in 20B instead of a general hunt,
43 because then we can get track of -- we can get permits
44 and count the permits, because there's very little
45 knowledge of what our actual populations of big animals
46 are out there on the land right now. And it might sound
47 backwards, but allowing this, allowing the selling of
48 the big animal hide and requiring the seal could give
49 us actually better data about what's going on out there.
50 So, for those reasons, I'm also still kind of up in the

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1 air. I also haven't personally heard a lot of testimony
2 or folks that are looking for this opportunity, so I
3 would welcome any -- anybody in the room or anybody
4 around the table right now who knows that they or
5 somebody that they know would personally benefit from
6 this. That's all I have for now. Thank you.

7

8

MS. ENTSMINGER: Yeah, Charlie, Sue.

9

10

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CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Go ahead, Sue, then
Andy, then Don. Did you have your hand up?

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CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you. Go ahead,
Andy.

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MR. BASSICH: Yeah, thank you I
appreciate -- I really appreciate those comments. You
know, I was thinking about that and what I've seen happen
over the many years that I've been on this Council and
also involved with ACs, is that oftentimes when a
regulation comes in like this, then a lot of areas and
units will put in to go from a one bear limit to a two-
bear limit. And maybe that's okay, because I would guess
that would force an analysis before it would maybe be
recommendation -- recommended by either the federal or
the state program. So, I do have conservation concerns
with this, and I guess like many of the other members
here, I think the most important thing is to try and
have some kind of tracking to see if it's increased. The
only other point that I would like to ask is if we were
to change the motion and have it as a recommendation for

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1 units within our jurisdiction or within the area that
2 the Eastern RAC has recommendation authority to do. That
3 might be something to look at, that each region within
4 the State could make their own decisions rather than
5 making it a statewide proposal. So, I guess I would need
6 a little direction from OSM, but I would be willing to,
7 with the approval of the second, to modify my motion.
8 Mr. Chair.

9

10 MS. KENNER: Mr. Chair, this is Pippa
11 Kenner, online.

12

13 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Go ahead, Pippa.

14

15 MS. KENNER: Hi, yeah. So Customary Trade
16 Regulations are generally created on a region-by-region
17 basis. So, what we're interested in is what you want for
18 your region. So, if the Y-K Delta after they review this
19 revised proposal, the revised conclusion, decide that
20 they still are not supporting a proposal to sell brown
21 bear hides, then the regulation will not be effective
22 in their area. So, you can vote it up or down and we are
23 only interpreting it as you talking about your region.
24 Thank you for bringing this up, it's a really good point.
25 Thank you.

26

27 UNIDENTIFIED: Am I still on?

28

29 (Simultaneous speech)

30

31 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Very helpful in the
32 beginning.

33

34 MR. BASSICH: Yeah, so I guess coming
35 back to our Council members. You know, if we vote no,
36 not to accept this, then basically we would probably
37 need to readdress it again on a more specific topic, and
38 that's what I'm maybe suggesting. So, if you would like
39 I would -- I could change my motion and then we don't -
40 - we could save that step. I'm just looking at a way to
41 -- and now I look to Brooke, maybe for guidance.

42

43 MS. MCDAVID: Yeah. You could withdraw
44 your motion with the concurrence of the second and then
45 make a new motion.

46

47 (Simultaneous speech)

48

49 MR. BASSICH: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I
50 would like to withdraw my motion.

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CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay.

MR. WOODRUFF: This is Don. I got a comment on the discussion aspect of this proposal, and I thought I heard that there was no conservation concern by testimony from Fish and Game. So, for our region, that is a consideration, and since Pippa said that this vote is only for our region, it's not statewide, then I think that we can let the motion stand as it is. Thank you.

MS. MCDAVID: It's our job to make your intent clear, and it sounds like your intent is to only for -- that this motion applies to the Eastern Interior Region only. So, let the record reflect that.

MS. SHOCKLEY: Okay, this is Dorothy. Thank you. So, in the process, if -- regardless of whether we vote for this or not, would there -- will there be another opportunity for public comments?

MS. KENNER: This is Pippa Kenner, through the Chair.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Go ahead, Pippa.

MS. KENNER: Hi, you guys. Sorry I couldn't be there. Yeah, so this is Pippa and through the Chair. So, we have gone through the opportunities for public comment, this being the final step. I'm gonna back up a little bit. The Board will be taking this up after all the Councils have made recommendations, probably at their work session in July, and there will be an opportunity for the public to testify at that meeting. Thank you.

MR. WOODRUFF: Thank you, Pippa, that was my question, thank you.

MS. BURK: I did hear -- this is Eva for the record. I did hear Fish and Game's comments and their written comments, that I want to make sure that we're addressing. And it's my understanding that the -- this person who put this in this specifically interested in this proposal being allowed for Units 11, 12 and 13. Is that correct, Liz?

MS. WILLIAMS: Yes, but also, I believe it's the whole Eastern Interior. I wondered about that,

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1
2 Pippa. If there were units specified.

3
4 MS. KENNER: There -- okay. Thank you for
5 the question. This is Pippa, for the record, through the
6 Chair. Yes, there will be units specified in the
7 regulation, and for instance, if you voted this up it
8 would be -- it would include the units in your area, in
9 your region.

10
11 MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

12
13 (Simultaneous speech)

14
15 MS. KENNER: Oh, I'm sorry, go ahead.

16
17 MS. WILLIAMS: Oh, go ahead, go ahead.

18
19 MS. KENNER: I was thinking with what you
20 were asking.....

21
22 (Simultaneous speech)

23
24 MS. CELLARIUS: Mr. Chair, Council
25 members.....

26
27 (Pause)

28
29 So, this is Barbara Cellarius, and I did
30 provide technical assistance to the proponent in writing
31 the proposal. That's something we do as federal agency
32 staff and the way the proposal was written, it applied
33 statewide. The area that the proponent was most
34 concerned about was Units 11, 12 and 13 that came out
35 in the SRC comment. Unit 12 is in the Eastern Interior
36 Region. Units 11 and 13 are in the South-Central Region.

37
38 UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you.....

39
40 (Simultaneous speech)

41
42 MS. KENNER: Thank you, Barbara. That
43 was Pippa.

44
45 MS. ENTSMINGER: Well, that complicates
46 it.

47
48 MS. ENTSMINGER: I heard that.

49
50

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1 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: We can hear you,
2 Sue. Is that Sue? We can hear you.

3
4 MS. ENTSMINGER: Oh, okay.

5
6 MS. MCDAVID: Sue, I think you have a
7 open mic. We know it's complicated in the system.

8
9 MS. KENNER: Well this is Pippa.....

10
11 (Simultaneous speech)

12
13 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Go ahead, Pippa.

14
15 MS. KENNER: This is Pippa Kenner with
16 OSM again. Yeah, I understand now where people are trying
17 to understand this, and I just want to let you know that
18 in most of the Eastern Interior Region, the harvest limit
19 for brown bear is two brown bears per regulatory year.
20 So, if you have questions about conservation and what
21 the State is doing, the State does allow the sale of a
22 hide taken from a brown bear in most of your region,
23 because there is a two brown bear harvest limit per
24 regulatory year. I thought that might be helpful. I am
25 not advocating, I just thought that might help.

26
27 MS. ENTSMINGER: Mr. Chair.

28
29 MR. WOODRUFF: Call for question.

30
31 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: We're going to have
32 to limit them comments. Okay. Sue, did you say something?

33
34 MS. ENTSMINGER: Yeah, I did. I really
35 would like to include 11 and 13, so that's why I said
36 this is complicated. Because of the -- representing the
37 people and the SRC and Pippa just said two bear limit,
38 but that's the State regulations. The Federal
39 regulations, they're not all two bear limits yet, cause
40 [sic] we were gonna put some proposals in to change
41 that.

42
43 MS. KENNER: Well, I think that -- this
44 is Pippa again, great question. This is Pippa Kenner
45 with OSM. I think most of our regulations say you need
46 a state permit. Oh, I see what you're saying, Sue. I'm
47 gonna back up and take that comment back. What -- I
48 guess what I was saying is that I was addressing the
49 conservation issue about whether there was a
50 conservation issue in the Eastern Interior Region was

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1 selling the hide of a brown bear. And when I looked, the
2 state regulations are two brown bears per year, which
3 indicates that conservation issue is minimal. Thank you.

4

5 MS. ENTSMINGER: Yeah. All I was pointing
6 out is that it wouldn't come under the federal
7 regulations because we don't have a two-bear limit in
8 Unit 12, for instance.

9

10 MS. KENNER: Yeah, I just got another
11 question, Mr. Chair, may I add to this? I got a question
12 online. The Board has stated that with issues of
13 customary trade, it will look at the regulation on a
14 region-by-region basis, because the situation in each
15 of the regions is so different. You can understand that
16 if in the beginning, most of these customary trade
17 proposals were about salmon and those issues were not
18 statewide, and Councils have told the Board they think
19 customary trade regulations should be adopted on a
20 region-by-region basis, and it probably will with this
21 regulation also. Thank you.

22

23 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you. I think
24 the question's been called. Yeah, question's been
25 called.

26

27 MR. BASSICH: Restate the motion?

28

29 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Please.

30

31 MR. BASSICH: Thank you. Thank you, Mr.
32 Chair. For the record, Andy Bassich restating the motion
33 and for further clarification, our motion is in regards
34 to the areas that Eastern Interior RAC has
35 recommendations for. So, the motion was that the Eastern
36 Interior RAC support WP24-01 with the OSM
37 recommendations and modifications, which would include
38 two bears and one bear in a regulatory season.

39

40 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you very much.
41 And we'll go to a roll call vote, please. Needs a new
42 list probably. Okay, thank you, Don.

43

44 MR. WOODRUFF: Sue, we're doing a roll
45 call vote and you're first.

46

47 MS. ENTSMINGER: Yeah, shame on you
48 (distortion) first. Yeah. Could you come to me last? I
49 wanna think about this. I'm not sure where I want to be.

50

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1 MR. WOODRUFF: Okay we'll come back to
2 you.

3
4 MR. WOODRUFF: Gerald Alexander.

5
6 MS. ENTSMINGER: Thank you.

7
8 MR. WOODRUFF: How do you vote?

9
10 (Pause)

11
12 Do you support this proposal? Thank you.

13
14 MR. ALEXANDER: This is Gerald Alexander,
15 yes, I do.

16
17 MR. WOODRUFF: Don Woodruff supports this
18 proposal. Galen Gilbert, do you support this proposal?

19
20 MR. GILBERT: Yes.

21
22 MR. WOODRUFF: Robert Wright, do you
23 support this proposal?

24
25 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Yes.

26
27 MR. WOODRUFF: Andrew Bassich, do you
28 support this proposal?

29
30 MR. BASSICH: Yes.

31
32 MR. WOODRUFF: Olivia Irwin, do you
33 support this proposal?

34
35 MS. IRWIN: Yes.

36
37 MR. WOODRUFF: Eva Burk, do you support
38 this proposal?

39
40 MS. BURK: No.

41
42 MR. WOODRUFF: Thank you. Linda Evans,
43 do you support this proposal?

44
45 MS. EVANS: Yes.

46
47 MR. WOODRUFF: Thank you. Dorothy
48 Shockley, do you support this proposal?

49
50 (No response)

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You can. You can abstain.

MS. SHOCKLEY: Yeah, I'll abstain.

(Pause)

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: You can change your vote to no, and don't have to explain.

MS. SHOCKLEY: Okay. No.

MR. WOODRUFF: Thank you. Sue Entsminger, do you support this proposal?

MS. ENTSMINGER: I abstain.

MR. WOODRUFF: Okay, thank you. Do you have a reason why you're going to abstain?

MS. ENTSMINGER: Because I don't think we understand it fully, and I really like the idea of the federal government and the state government making it easy on the user.

MR. WOODRUFF: Thank you. That concludes the roll call.

MS. MCDAVID: Mr. Chair, this is Brooke. The motion passes seven to two, with one abstention.

(Pause)

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay, moving on. Action items. B, Wildlife Closure Review. Liz Williams.

MS. WILLIAMS: Good afternoon, Mr. Chair and members of the Council. I'm here to tell you about a closure review, and we are in the proposal submission period. And right now, we're also gonna talk about another process in OSM and certain hunts -- harvests openings are sometimes closed to different groups of people. In this case it's a specific area, and it's only federally qualified subsistence users in a specific area. So, this is Wildlife Closure Review WCR26-22. I wonder if everybody needs a break. They all left.

MS. MCDAVID: Oh, I think you can continue, Liz. But I did want to -- this is Brooke, point Council members to page 21 of your meeting books.

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1 That's your small bound meeting book. That's where the
2 closure review analysis starts, thanks.

3
4 MS. WILLIAMS: Thanks, Brooke. And I'm
5 trying to give a little bit of orientation to the new
6 Council members. So, last year, there was a proposal to
7 change a customary and traditional use determination.
8 If you look at your map, it's in Unit 25D West and this
9 area has been closed to everybody except residents of
10 that Unit and members of the community -- including the
11 members of the communities of Beaver, Stevens Village
12 and Birch Creek. So, at least since the 80s, and the
13 habitat for moose in this area is terrible, there's very
14 few moose. And so, we went through this last regulatory
15 cycle, and this Council ultimately decided to have both
16 proposals withdrawn, there were two. But it was very
17 controversial and very painful for everybody involved.
18 Now, why do we have to bring it up again? Every four
19 years we review anything that's closed, and this is in
20 order to make sure we don't forget about things that are
21 closed and just leave them closed forever. So, you'll
22 be hearing more about this Unit as we progress into
23 proposal creation. So, basically the closure policy of
24 the Board says that we always have to review them. So,
25 I tried to get this pulled off the agenda because we
26 went through so much of it last year, but it got
27 withdrawn before the Federal Subsistence Board saw it.
28 So, we had to look at the closure, and OSM supports
29 maintaining the closure because of the long-term history
30 of this customary and traditional use determination, as
31 well as the fact that the moose numbers are not good.
32 And we can close things for two reasons, continuation
33 of subsistence uses and conservation of the species, and
34 both of those reasons are in play with this closure. So,
35 the OSM preliminary conclusion is to maintain this
36 closure. If you -- there's a table on page 31 that had
37 to be corrected so, we're submitting the corrected table
38 to you as a different sheet. This is a draft still, so
39 we will fix this in the next version, but 2013 calf-cow
40 ratio data was omitted from this table. So, that's the
41 conclusion of this presentation and again, the OSM
42 conclusion is to maintain the status quo, continue the
43 closure.

44
45 MR. PLANK: And this is Tom Plank
46 wildlife biologist OSM, for a - to follow up on that to-
47 correction, it is 2023 data that was removed from that
48 graph and the reason why it was removed from the graph
49 is because it reflects a spring survey, and which that
50 shows a calf to adult moose, because bulls are not

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1 discernible from cows in the spring, and the graph itself
2 was actually fall counts.

3

4 MS. MCDAVID: With Charlie's permission,
5 go ahead, Don.

6

7 MR. WOODRUFF: This is Don. Could you,
8 if you have it, give me the moose per square mile?

9

10 (Pause)

11

12 MR. PLANK: Bear with me just a second
13 here, Don. I gotta find it.

14

15 (Pause)

16

17 MR. BERTRAM: Mr. Chair. Mark Bertram.
18 I'm the wildlife biologist with Yukon Flats Refuge. Just
19 to pitch in, those numbers you asked for, Don. The latest
20 survey in 2018, 0.49 moose per square mile. 0.49 moose
21 per square mile. That was the fall survey from 2018 and
22 then the most recent survey in the winter was 2023. In
23 the winter, after a lot of the fall and early winter
24 animals have been removed, and that number is 0.3 moose
25 per square mile. 0.3. That's the winter estimate, and
26 the fall estimate was 0.49.

27

28 MR. WOODRUFF: Thank you. That's very
29 low, but it's higher than where we live. Thank you.

30

31 MR. BERTRAM: You're welcome.

32

33 (Pause)

34

35 MS. MCDAVID: I guess I will jump in to
36 help clarify the process. So, the Council doesn't need
37 to take action on this closure review at this meeting.
38 This is presented to you kind of as an overview and a
39 courtesy in case there was any proposal that you might
40 want to submit related to this. If you want to keep the
41 closure in place you will get to vote on that at your
42 fall meeting. So, this is an opportunity if you do want
43 to put in any proposals specific to this closure. But
44 if you continue to support it, you'll do that at your
45 fall meeting.

46

47 MS. IRWIN: Mr. Chair.

48

49 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you for
50 raising your hand.

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MS. IRWIN: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Olivia Irwin, for the record. I would -- since we're not taking action on this item right now, I would just like to build, record and refer back to Mike Peter's testimony and suggest that we put forward a proposal to close 25D remainder to federally qualified users within that area.

MS. MCDAVID: Thank you, Olivia. We will be -- we can refer back to that comment when we move on to the call for proposals, which will be next. So, if the Council is ready to move on to the call for proposals, we could do that.

MR. PLANK: Hello again, Mr. Chair and members of the Council. For the record, my name is Tom Plank, and I am the wildlife biologist with the Office of Subsistence Management, and I'm also accompanied by my colleague Liz Williams who is an anthropologist with OSM. And as Brooke mentioned, and as I said earlier in the meeting, now is the call for the wildlife proposals and the Council's opportunity to submit proposals to change federal subsistence wildlife harvest regulations. And Brooke has handed out an informational flyer on how to submit a proposal to change federal subsistence regulations and as was mentioned during the training, Councils must make a motion and vote to submit a proposal. And also, the opportunity for Councils to submit proposals is available during the entire meeting and if a Council member thinks of a proposal later or in response to another agenda item, they are welcome to suggest submitting a proposal then. And of course, anyone can submit a proposal as an individual before the end of the submission window, which is April 4th. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm happy to answer any questions about your proposal process, and we'll stand by as the Council discuss it.

MR. BASSICH: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm member Bassich. Yeah, I would like to make a proposal. This proposal is in reflect to the sale of handicrafts of black bear. So, if Council members want to go to page 18 in their federal book there. On the end of the very first page, under sale of handicraft, that's where I want to add some units. So, my proposal would be that the Eastern Interior RAC add the addition of Units 20E, 25A and 25B to that section there. And I believe the section is defined as section 20 -- 242-25 (J6I). That's the motion, Mr. Chair and then I can speak to it if there's a second. Thank you.

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MS. IRWIN: Olivia Irwin, I'll second.

MR. BASSICH: Thank you, Mr. Chair. With permission I'll support this. So, you know, we've talked a lot in the past many, many years over sale of handicrafts on various types of animals. And when this was brought up and put into regulation, we had actually requested this. I don't think we went through the formal process, but again, like the previous discussion on brown bear, more and more subsistence harvesters are turning towards black bear where it's culturally appropriate for their subsistence meat. And I think that the addition of -- in these Units of subsistence users to be able to make products -- value added products from black bear hides, claws, skulls, whatever would be very beneficial to what I call the bush economics. And what I mean by that is, when you live out in the bush, there are two functions, one, do things as efficiently as you can, and number two, do things as economically feasible as you can. And so, any economic gain through their normal subsistence activity is very beneficial to people living a subsistence lifestyle. That's it, Mr. Co-Chair or Chair, sorry.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you, Andy.
Anymore?

(No response)

MS. MCDAVID: You asking for any more proposals? Okay, originally there's a motion on the floor to submit this proposal. And so, first you all should vote as a RAC if you would like to submit this proposal, and then we'll move through each proposal you'd like to submit and vote on each one. So, if the RAC wants to discuss Andy's proposal now and then vote on it, that would be the next step, thanks.

MR. BASSICH: I guess maybe I should go through the handy dandy to support it. I kind of did it very informally, but is there a conservation concern? No, black bears are quite prevalent throughout our region, right now there's no conservation concern for them. Is this recommendation supported by subsistence evidence, such as biological or traditional, ecological knowledge? Yes, it is. I mean, people who live out in the bush have utilized black bears for thousands and thousands of years for both food and clothing. Will this recommendation be beneficial or detrimental to

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1 subsistence needs and users? It will certainly be
2 beneficial due to my comments regarding additional
3 economics, as well as continued cultural practices such
4 as fur sewing and making products from subsistence
5 harvest. That's a very important cultural aspect that's
6 being lost. And will this recommendation unnecessarily
7 restrict other users? And it certainly will not. Thank
8 you, Mr. Chair.

9

10 MS. IRWIN: Olivia Irwin, for the record.

11

12 (Simultaneous speech)

13

14 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Who are you?

15

16 MS. ENTSMINGER: Oh, this is Sue. I have
17 a quick question.

18

19 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Go ahead, Sue.

20

21 MS. ENTSMINGER: Yeah. Regarding him
22 going through that whole process, I don't think we need
23 to do that at this situation we just need to agree or
24 disagree to put this proposal forward from this Council.
25 Am I correct, Brooke?

26

27 MS. MCDAVID: Sue, you're correct. We
28 don't need -- we don't go through like the presentation
29 procedures, but it is good to provide a little bit of
30 justification with your proposal so that -- I think
31 that's all Andy was trying to do.

32

33 MS. ENTSMINGER: Okay, I'm sorry. Yeah.
34 I just want to say that I'm in favor of that proposal.

35

36 MS. IRWIN: Olivia Irwin for the record.
37 I also -- I'm in support of moving forward with putting
38 this proposal forward. I agree with Andy, it would expand
39 on existing opportunities. There's already units -- this
40 isn't a new regulation that's already written in. And
41 it would allow for units that already surround for
42 example Unit 12 allows it. So, adding Unit 20E would
43 provide that opportunity in that same region. And I'm -
44 - I also agree and would go off of your points, Andy,
45 of the continuation of cultural practices and economic
46 opportunity. And if you're putting forward this motion
47 as somebody from that region, I trust that you understand
48 the -- you know, have a good idea of the amount of black
49 bear out there and whether or not this would be a
50 conservation concern. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Any other discussion?

MR. BASSICH It's only a conservation concern if I run out of ammunition.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Go ahead, Eva.

MS. BURK: I'll support this motion too. But I think, just in thinking about the last motion and thinking about a lot of different comments about having to rely on other resources more because we don't have salmon, we sometimes tend to forget that the things that we want to rely on more are in some way affected by the lack of salmon too. And to just keep that in the back of our minds as we liberalize this or liberalize this, or promote the sale of things like just keep that in the back of your mind that what does it look like 20, 30, 40 years from now when all these different roads and developments exist in Alaska and what habitat exists for the animals and the things that are changing to them. We know the impacts on us are great. I suspect the impacts on the ecosystem is great as well, and that we don't have a really great understanding of that. But we hear it when we're talking about birds, other species of freshwater fish, I think we even told ourselves to be careful with the chum when we started relying on that more heavily when we didn't have chinook. So, just keep all of these things in mind as these types of proposals keep making their way towards this body. I just wanted to put that on the record. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you so much for that. Anybody else?

MS. IRWIN: Call the question.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Did I hear somebody else say something again? Okay. Question's been called. Can you -- you want -- do you need to restate the motion again just for the record, please.

MR. BASSICH: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, the motion is that Units 25E, 25A and 25B be added to section 242.25 J6I, and this is in regards to the use and sale of handicrafts for black bears to be added to the already existing regulation. Thank you.

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1 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay. We're gonna
2 ask for unanimous consent on this vote. All those in
3 favor signify by saying aye.

4
5 IN UNISON: Aye.

6
7 All those against same sign.

8
9 (No response)

10
11 Hearing or seeing none, motion passes,
12 thank you. We're gonna take a five-minute break. Five
13 minutes.

14
15 (Off record)

16
17 (On record)

18
19 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay. You're done
20 with your ice cream. Get back to work. Go ahead, Don.

21
22 MS. MCDAVID: So just to clarify, the
23 Council is on agenda item, which is the call for Federal
24 Proposals. So, the floor is open to discussion of any
25 proposals that the Council is interested in submitting.

26
27 MS. IRWIN: This is Olivia Henaayee Irwin
28 through the Chair. Thanks, Charlie. I would like to make
29 a motion to close moose hunting on federal public lands
30 in 25D, remainder to non-federally qualified users. And
31 with a second, I'll speak to it.

32
33 MR. BASSICH: Mr. Chair, I'll second that
34 motion. This is member Bassich.

35
36 MS. IRWIN: I'll repeat the motion, Don.
37 The motion is to close moose hunting on Federal public
38 lands in 25D, remainder to non-federally qualified
39 users. So, this is being brought before us -- the
40 proposal that we just went over was for 25D West and
41 there's been concern about the moose population in 25D
42 remainder. I wanted to put forward this motion to address
43 some of those concerns and ensure that the population
44 is able to remain at a good, sustainable level for local
45 harvest. I think that it seems as though this closure
46 in 25D West has been working well for local residents,
47 and I want to see that work for them, the remainder of
48 25D residents as well. I just got some information from
49 Mark, there's been no survey done in 25D remainder since
50 2015. So, that's a concern of mine. We don't really have

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1 any good idea in the last ten years of how many moose
2 are really moving around in that area. We've heard of
3 heavy predation in this area as well and so, I think
4 that closing it to just federally qualified users will
5 provide the most opportunity for subsistence while
6 limiting outside pressures on the population.

7

8 MS. BURK: Thank you. Through the Chair,
9 this is Eva. Did you -- do you know the count?

10

11 MS. IRWIN: In 2015 the count was 1000.
12 The moose per square mile was 0.34. The bull to cow
13 ratio was 35 to -- 35 bulls to 100 cows and calves were
14 100 calves to 100 calves -- 80, sorry, excuse me, 80
15 calves to 100 cows. Thank you.

16

17 MR. BASSICH: Yeah. In support of this,
18 I also want to point out that the previous proposal for
19 the closure in 25D, a lot of the controversy or a lot
20 of the conflict that became of that was people from the
21 25D remainder area wanting C&T determinations for going
22 and hunting down in what ended up being closed. And so,
23 that was basically kind of pitting federally qualified
24 users against each other due to low rates of moose in
25 one area, forcing people to want to go hunt in other
26 areas. So, I'm just saying that because it supports the
27 low moose population densities and supports trying to
28 restrict that area to federally-qualified users. That
29 would have C&T determination in that region. Thank you.

30

31 MR. PLANK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't
32 mean to interject on this, but if you look on page 129
33 of your regulations and you'll see that for Unit 25D
34 remainder, the folks that have customary traditional use
35 for that area are residents of remainder of Unit 25. So,
36 currently in the regulations, it looks like only the
37 people who reside in that can hunt in there. So, closing
38 it to anybody that's not federally qualified -- let me
39 get my brain.

40

41 MS. WILLIAMS: Yeah. The way I'm reading
42 the customary and traditional use determination is --
43 and it's on page 129, is that Unit 25D remainder, the
44 people who have customary and traditional use
45 determination are residents of the remainder of Unit 25
46 -- Oh, I get it. So that's all the Unit, I'm sorry.
47 We're working more than we should.

48

49 MS. IRWIN: Through the Chair. So, Liz
50 and Tom, my motion is sound? Okay, thank you.

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MR. WOODRUFF: Liz, did you say it was all of Unit 25? And that includes, like, Chalkyitsik and the folks up that way?

MS. WILLIAMS: So, Unit 25D remainder. The residents of the remainder of Unit 25 have customary and traditional use determination, and I may defer to the Refuge people, but to me it looks like Chalkyitsik, Fort Yukon, definitely are in there.

MS. MCDAVID: And Circle.

MR. WOODRUFF: Thank you.

MS. WILLIAMS: Yes.

(Pause)

MR. BASSICH: Thank you, Mr. Chair. If there's no further discussion from Council members, I'd call question on the motion.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Please reinstate.

MS. IRWIN: This is Olivia Irwin, for the record. The motion is to close moose hunting on Federal public lands in 25D remainder to non-federally qualified users, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay, we'll ask for a unanimous vote. Anybody against signify by saying aye.

(No response)

Motion passes. Thank you.

MS. MCDAVID: And, Mr. Chair, for the record, I'd just like to point out that you know, this proposal would go forward for public comment and communities in there -- in the Yukon Flats could provide comments about whether or not they think additional communities should be added, etcetera and you will be able to hear that feedback at your fall meeting when you take action on this. So, if we can -- at OSM, make sure to do outreach with those communities so that they're aware of this proposal and will be able to weigh in. Thanks.

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1 MS. WILLIAMS: I'd just like to add that
2 there's also the opportunity for tribal consultation at
3 any time by contacting our tribal liaison, Orville Lind,
4 and we'll get you his contact info if you don't have it.

5
6 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you. He did
7 extend that to me also to pass on that, anybody he said
8 he'd be more than happy, and he enjoys them. Thank you
9 for that. Okay, any more proposals? Go ahead, Donald.

10
11 MR. WOODRUFF: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
12 This is Don Woodruff, for the record. I have a motion
13 for a proposal to raise the bag limit for brown bears
14 from one to two in Unit 12. For federally qualified
15 subsistence users, of course.

16
17 MS. IRWIN: Second. Olivia Irwin, for the
18 record.

19
20 UNIDENTIFIED: I'd like to speak to that.
21 Being from Unit 12, it just seems very important to have
22 a regulation on the books that's not more restrictive
23 for subsistence, as whenever the State has a two-bear
24 limit.

25
26 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Go ahead.

27
28 MS. BURK: Thank you through the Chair,
29 this is Eva. Were you also thinking about 11 and 13 too
30 or just 12?

31
32 MR. WOODRUFF: I'm sorry. We were --
33 yesterday at our working group, it was suggested that
34 we do one game Unit at a time so that if the Federal
35 Subsistence Board decides not to support a proposal, it
36 doesn't cut down all the Units. So, we're gonna do that
37 slowly and diligently.

38
39 (Pause)

40
41 MR. BASSICH: Mr. Chair, if there's no
42 further discussion on this motion, I'd like to call the
43 question on.

44
45 MCDAVID: Okay, I'll restate the motion.
46 This was from Don, a proposal suggestion to raise the
47 bag limit for brown bear in Unit 12 from one bear to two
48 bears.

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1 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: I will ask for
2 unanimous consent if we're and anybody -- if anybody
3 objects to this proposal, please speak now.

4
5 (No response)

6
7 Hearing or seeing none, passes. Anything
8 more, any more proposals? Okay, Donald, let's do it
9 again.

10
11 MR. WOODRUFF: Thank you, Charlie. This
12 is Don for the record. I would like to make a motion for
13 proposal to raise the bag limit from one to two brown
14 bears in Unit 25B.

15
16 UNIDENTIFIED: I second.

17
18 MS. MCDAVID: For -- just a suggestion,
19 you could reference your -- in comments on the last
20 proposal if you wanted to help save time. Unless there's
21 of course, a different consideration for this Unit.

22
23 MR. WOODRUFF: Yes, this is for more
24 opportunity for subsistence harvest, and we don't have
25 fish, we don't have any fish. So, this is what we're
26 eating. Thank you.

27
28 MR. BASSICH: Mr. Chair just to support
29 that, I live on them, basically on the boundary of that.
30 And over the past four years, I've been seeing a
31 tremendous increase in grizzly bear activity and grizzly
32 bear tracks. So, I don't think there's any kind of
33 conservation concern in 25B and also recognizing is
34 probably one of the least inhabited -- permanently
35 inhabited units in our region. So, just to support that,
36 and if there's no further discussion, I'd call question.

37
38 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Any more
39 discussion? If not, we'll go to the vote and ask for a
40 unanimous consent. Anybody against, please signify by
41 saying aye.

42
43 (No response)

44
45 Hearing or seeing none, passes. Thank
46 you. Okay, anymore? Okay, Donald.

47
48 MR. WOODRUFF: Thank you, Charlie. This
49 is Don, for the record. I would like to make a motion
50 for a proposal to increase the bag limit from one to two

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1 in brown bears in Unit 20E for more subsistence
2 opportunity for federally qualified hunters.

3

4 MR. BASSICH: I'll second that. Member
5 Bassich.

6

7 (Pause)

8

9 And I guess maybe to support the
10 previous motion that it's just to provide for greater
11 opportunity in that area. And I'll reference my comments
12 on the previous motion, that there is no conservation
13 concern for grizzly bear in 20E at this point in time.
14 Thank you, Mr. Chair. If there's no further questions
15 or comments or discussion, I call for question.

16

17 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you. Any more
18 comments?

19

20 (No comment)

21

22 Seeing none, I'll again ask for
23 unanimous consent. Anybody against, please signify by
24 saying aye at this time.

25

26 (No response)

27

28 Hearing or seeing none, passes. Thank
29 you. Go ahead, Sue.

30

31 MS. ENTSMINGER: Don and I are sharing.
32 I'm gonna do a -- make a motion to do a two brown bear
33 limit in Unit 11. And I'm gonna -- I'll speak to it.

34

35 MR. BASSICH: I'll second. Member
36 Bassich.

37

38 MS. ENTSMINGER: Yeah, and speaking to
39 it, the gentleman that put that proposal in, that we
40 discussed earlier that was his concern and that he really
41 wanted to be able to sell it. So, it's meeting some of
42 the needs of the people locally in, I'm sorry, in
43 McCarthy.

44

45 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Go ahead, Andy.

46

47 MR. BASSICH: Yeah. If there's any -- if
48 there's no further discussion on this topic, I call
49 question. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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1 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Any more
2 discussion?

3
4 (No comment)

5
6 Hearing or seeing none. I'll ask for
7 unanimous consent. All against, signify by saying aye.

8
9 (No Response)

10
11 Hearing or seeing none, passes. Thank
12 you. Go ahead, Andy.

13
14 MR. BASSICH: Yeah. I just like to say
15 that was the fastest four proposals I've ever seen in
16 my 23 years of sitting at this table. So, thank you very
17 much.

18
19 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Go ahead, Donald.

20
21 MR. WOODRUFF: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
22 This is Don, for the record. I would like to increase
23 the bag limit for brown bears from one to two, in Unit
24 13 for more subsistence opportunities since we have no
25 fish to eat. Thank you.

26
27 MS. IRWIN: This is Olivia Irwin, second.

28
29 MS. BURK: Thank you. Through the Chair.
30 I'm just gonna repeat what I said a few moments ago
31 before the break, that I was expecting an increase in a
32 couple units, and now we've increased quite a few Units.
33 And my concern is, and maybe it's a question for staff
34 is, what is the reason that these areas had one brown
35 bear limit? And is -- does anybody know that? Like why
36 were these areas given one brown bear limits and other
37 areas were given two? Is there a biological reasoning
38 behind that? And I know we'll see some of this in the
39 analysis as it comes forward, but I was just wondering
40 if you knew that.

41
42 UNIDENTIFIED: Through the Chair. So,
43 some of these regulations may just be old regulations
44 that were carried over without doing any analysis, I
45 can't specifically speak to each unit, but there are
46 various different reasons why it would be one currently
47 in our regulations. Some of them, they are -- have
48 recently changed it to in state regulations. So, there
49 are a lot of different variations. So, without you know,
50 spit balling it's kinda [sic] hard to say exactly why.

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CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Go ahead, Sue.

MS. ENTSMINGER: Yeah, I just want to add to that. That's definitely a carryover from the State when they took over. And I also want to point out in Unit 13, there's very little federal land and it's probably not gonna affect a lot.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: go ahead, Andy.

MR. BASSICH: Yeah, thank you. Member Bassich. I want to thank you for that, Eva, because one of the reasons why I'm looking forward to seeing some of this is for the analysis. It kind of forces the issue for that analysis to take place, and it will give us a data set point for -- at this point in time as well, based on where it was the last time it was done, which may have been in some of these areas 10 or 15 years ago. So, I think that's just another way to get another data point on where populations are right now and it doesn't mean that it's gonna pass, but it does force the analysis. So, I do appreciate your conservation concern. I have the same concerns even though I'm in support of these at this point in time.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Go ahead.

MS. BURK: Thank you. Through the Chair. And then this is another question for staff cause [sic] I was trying to look through the other analysis, but I'm pretty spread out now. Is looking at the -- like what the predator-prey relationships are these bears, in this area eating? Cause [sic] it's my understanding that different bears in different areas, they're all gonna have different diets, right? And it'd be nice to have some of that included in the analysis as well, if possible. Thank you.

MS. WILLIAMS: Just for some of the new Council members, when we analyze a proposal, we go back to state regs and old federal regs to kind of do a genealogy of how we got to where we are today. So, we'll have that old reason, and we'll check to see if it's still viable -- still relevant.

UNIDENTIFIED: I'll call for question.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Any more discussion?

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(No response)

Hearing or seeing none, I'll ask for unanimous consent. All against, signify by saying aye.

(No response)

Hearing or seeing none, passes. Thank you. Go ahead.

MS. IRWIN: This is Olivia Henaayee Irwin, for the record. I would like to make a motion to add wood bison to CFR subpart C242.24 customary and traditional use determinations and with a second all speak to it.

MR. BASSICH: Member Bassich. Second.

MS. IRWIN: Thanks, Andy. Through the Chair, this is Olivia Irwin, for the record. This is something that the Minto-Nenana Fish and Game Advisory Committee has been looking at, and other communities along areas where wood bison has been introduced have been concerned about the fact that the State put these wood bison in saying that it was for food security, when there's really no guarantee that our local people, whose traditional lands they're roaming on, are gonna have any opportunity to harvest from them. For the State to go through a C&T determination takes a long time. Once that C&T determination is established, then there needs to be an ANS, an Amount Necessary for a Subsistence established, and the herd has to be big enough to harvest for subsistence. I believe that putting forth this C&T determination for wood bison could be a good first step. It could establish a federal regulation and put wood bison on that list and further allow, hopefully people who are interested in pushing the State to do that will have a platform and a regulation already established. In addition, right now these wood bison are in the Minto Flats Moose Management Area. There's also conversations about wood bison being added to the Yukon Flats area. And I would like for this to -- I would like our relatives in the Yukon Flats to not have to go through the entire process of C&T determinations, and -- they'll still have to go through that, but that maybe we can establish a pipeline for our relatives who maybe get wood bison introduced to already have established pipeline for these regulations to be put into place. So again, this is to hopefully establish the ability for

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1 local individuals to subsist from these animals that are
2 being reintroduced. Thank you. Yeah, Brooke.

3

4 MS. MCDAVID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank
5 you, Olivia. Just a clarification for the record. Where
6 would you like this to apply? Thank you.

7

8 MS. IRWIN: Thank you for the
9 clarification, Brooke. Through the Chair, this is Olivia
10 Irwin. Units within Region 9.

11

12 (Pause)

13

14 (Indiscernible) for clarification,
15 Units within Region 9, within EIRACs authority. Units
16 within our authority, our jurisdiction. Sorry.

17

18 (Pause)

19

20 MS. LA VINE: Mr. Chair, this is Robbin
21 La Vine, Subsistence Policy Coordinator. And questions
22 around wood bison and the Federal Subsistence Management
23 Program's authority to address wood bison have come up
24 before, and I'd like to read to you the guidance provided
25 us [sic] by the solicitor at that time. Gosh, almost two
26 years ago, now. But the relevant language of section
27 8154 says nothing in Title VIII shall be construed as
28 modifying or repealing the provision of any federal law
29 governing the conservation or protection of Fish and
30 Wildlife Service -- or Fish and Wildlife. The ESA, the
31 Endangered Species Act and the MMPA are expressly listed
32 in that section as two federal laws not impacted by
33 Title VIII. That is why the Federal Subsistence Program
34 has no authority over regulations concerning the take
35 of polar bears, walrus, sea otters or wood bison. And
36 Brooke, you may have more to add.

37

38 MS. MCDAVID: Yes. And Robbin, I just
39 forwarded you another email that we got from the
40 solicitor recently and my understanding is that the
41 Council or the Board could make a C&T determination.
42 There could be no hunts established though, that would
43 be something way in the future if it -- if wood bison
44 were removed from the endangered species list or the
45 experimental status. So, this wouldn't allow any hunting
46 to occur. The Board doesn't have any jurisdiction over
47 that now because it's an endangered species. So, it would
48 only be listed as C&T and other -- much other changes
49 would have to happen in order for that to result in
50 hunts in the future. So, just putting that on record.

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1

2 MS. IWRIN: Thank you. Yeah, through
3 the Chair. Thank you, Brooke. Thank you for that
4 clarification. Just to be really blunt and clear and
5 clarify my intent of this is not imagining that within
6 the next three years, we're gonna be able to harvest
7 wood bison on federal lands. I just want to -- I want
8 to build the regulatory record that we as sovereign,
9 indigenous and local people of Alaska want the
10 opportunity, and to harvest these animals once an
11 opportunity presents itself and want the acknowledgement
12 that there is oral tradition and history that has been
13 presented through ADF&G that has established a long
14 lasting and long-term relationship between indigenous
15 peoples of Alaska and wood bison that's been severed
16 from them going extinct within Alaska and now being
17 reintroduced. So, thank you.

18

19 MR. BASSICH: Mr. Chair. Member Bassich,
20 if there's no further discussion, I call question.

21

22 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Seeing or hearing no
23 more -- no further discussion. Oh, go ahead, sir. Go
24 ahead, Donald.

25

26 MR. WOODRUFF: Is this proposal for
27 harvest or is this for...?

28

29 MS. IRWIN: Olivia Irwin just for C&T
30 determination.

31

32 MR. WOODRUFF: Oh.

33

34 MS. IRWIN: This is just to determine
35 that there's customary and traditional use.

36

37 MR. WOODRUFF: Thank you, for the
38 clarification.

39

40 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Any more
41 discussion?

42

43 (No response)

44

45 Hearing or seeing none. We'll ask for
46 unanimous consent again and all against please, signify
47 by saying aye. If you're against -- if you're for it,
48 signify by saying aye.

49

50 IN UNISON: Aye.

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CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: All is -- all
against same sign.

(No response)

Okay, going forward. Thank you. Any more
proposals? Go ahead, Donald. One more, Donald.

MR. WOODRUFF: Thank you, Charlie. This
is Don for the record. I would like a motion for a
proposal to extend the sheep closure in 20E and 25C and
North Peak on BLM lands, and the 20E and 25C is on Yukon-
Charley lands and the Glacier Mountain controlled use
area, for the years 26 and 27, to be reviewed in two
years, instead of the customary four-year review and the
reason for this proposal is to extend the closure until
we can establish that the sheep population is
recovering. So, then think about perhaps some harvest
on this population. I'd like to read to you what the
Board.....

MR. BASSICH: Mr. Chair, can we get a
second?

MS. IRWIN: Olivia Irwin.

(Simultaneous speech)

MR. BASSICH: I'll second that. Thank
you. I just wanted to make sure we have that on the
record.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay, thank you.

MR. WOODRUFF: And I'd like to read to
you what the Board said. The Board recognized the extreme
population concern in Yukon-Charley and Glacier Mountain
Control Use Areas sheep populations. The populations
have experienced substantial declines in recent years.
And in Yukon-Charley, the most recent surveys conducted
reported 75% decline on Glacier Mountain. The sheep
population has significantly declined to 14 sheep in
2023, with low lamb production and no legal rams observed
in the past two years. Any additional mortality could
extend the duration of recovery and put localized
populations at risk. Thank you.

MS. ENTSMINGER: Yeah, I have
reservations about permanent closures like that because

000104

1 a lot of times it never gets open again. Even when you
2 get good data to do it. So, I would be more comfortable
3 with the way they did it before, myself. That's me
4 speaking.

5

6 MR. WOODRUFF: Sue, this proposal is for
7 two years. Okay and it's to be reviewed at that time.
8 Thank you.

9

10 MS. ENTSMINGER: I deeply understand what
11 you're trying to do, and I appreciate it. But I sometimes
12 don't have the faith that it's gonna be taken up as it
13 should be. As I've seen in the past. It's my only
14 reservation, thank you.

15

16 MS. IRWIN: Olivia Henaayee Irwin, for
17 the record. I'll lean on some of the conversations that
18 we had yesterday in our working group session. With the
19 -- it sounds like from all of the biologists and folks
20 that we talked to, that our sheep throughout the -- our
21 region are doing really, really poorly. And the recent
22 weather events, the rain and melting is creating harsher
23 conditions for them. I don't know exactly what the
24 population looks like in this area, there's other people
25 in the room who have a better idea than me. But for the
26 fact that it's only going to 2026 and 2027, I'm inclined
27 to support that, Don.

28

29 MS. ENTSMINGER: I call for the question.
30 Unless anybody else have anything to say?

31

32 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Any other
33 discussion?

34

35 (No response)

36

37 Okay, I'll ask for unanimous consent.

38

39 (Pause)

40

41 Okay, I think we'll just do a roll call
42 vote on this. Thank you.

43

44 MR. WOODRUFF: Thank you, Charlie. I'll
45 start at the bottom of the list. Gerald Alexander, do
46 you support this proposal?

47

48 MR. ALEXANDER: Yes.

49

50

000105

1 MR. WOODRUFF: Thank you. Don Woodruff
2 supports this proposal. Galen Gilbert, do you support
3 this proposal?

4
5 MR. GILBERT: Yes.

6
7 MR. WOODRUFF: Thank you. Charlie Wright,
8 do you support this proposal?

9
10 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Yes.

11
12 MR. WOODRUFF: Andrew Bassich, do you
13 support this proposal?

14
15 MR. BASSICH: Yes.

16
17 MR. WOODRUFF: Olivia Irwin, do you
18 support this proposal?

19
20 MS. IRWIN: Yes.

21
22 MR. WOODRUFF: Eva Burk, do you support
23 this proposal?

24
25 MS. BURK: Yes, yes.

26
27 MR. WOODRUFF: Linda Evans, do you
28 support this proposal?

29
30 MS. EVANS: Yes.

31
32 MR. WOODRUFF: Thank you. Dorothy
33 Shockley, do you support this proposal?

34
35 MS. SHOCKLEY: Yes.

36
37 MR. WOODRUFF: Sue Entsminger, do you
38 support this proposal?

39
40 MS. ENTSMINGER: No, for the reasons I
41 stated, thank you.

42
43 MR. WOODRUFF: Thank you.

44
45 MS: MCDAVID: Mr. Chair, the motion to
46 submit this proposal passes nine to one.

47
48 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you so much.

49
50 (Pause)

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Any more proposals?

(No response)

Okay, thank you very much. I think at this time we're going to let Krystal come up and do her report for TCC and EIS.

(Pause)

When you are ready, you have the floor.

(Pause)

MS. LAPP: Good afternoon, everyone. I'm Krystal Lapp. I'm the natural resource policy analyst for Tanana Chiefs Conference and Tribal Stewardship Department. Today I'm gonna be discussing the ongoing Environmental Impact Statement process for the Chum Salmon Bycatch Management, EIS, highlighting the rol of Tribal cooperating agencies which are Tanana Chiefs Conference the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission. This presentation is intended as an overview of the contributions made to the cooperating agencies from Tanana Chiefs, the Kusko Fish Commission, to the Chum Salmon Bycatch Management EIS process. It is not meant to provide detailed technical explanations or advocate for specific policy alternatives. Our role as cooperating agencies is to ensure that traditional knowledge, local knowledge, scientific data, and the lived experiences of our tribes and communities are accurately represented in the Environmental Impact Statement. While we will highlight the impacts of salmon declines in key areas of concern, the final policy decisions will be made through the formal regulatory process with input from multiple stakeholders. Next slide.

As cooperating agencies in the Environmental Impact Statement, TCC and KRITFC have provided the traditional knowledge, scientific data and the lived experiences.....

MS. MCDAVID: Sorry, Kristal. We went offline for a second. Okay, I think we're good, thanks.

MS. LAPP: Uh-oh.

000107

1 MS. MCDAVID: I can just pause you a
2 second.

3
4 MS. LAPP: I'll pause.

5
6 (Pause)

7
8 MS. MCDAVID: Okay, I think we are good.
9 Thanks.

10
11 MS. LAPP: And we're back live. Fairbanks
12 internet at its finest. And while I'm not gonna read
13 over all of these slides, I do have print outs up at the
14 front and I can also provide those electronically to
15 you. So, this slide, we've contributed to the key
16 sections of the draft EIS. We focus -- we're focusing
17 on the environmental, cultural and economic impacts of
18 salmon declines. As you can see from the slide, we --
19 TCC became a cooperating agency in May of 2024 and the
20 Kuskokwim Fish Commission became a cooperating agency in
21 October 2023. We did so by providing a request that was
22 granted, and they granted that we are special expertise
23 regarding the life cycle including freshwater in marine
24 stages, management and subsistence use on the Kuskokwim
25 and Yukon River chum salmon. And their environment,
26 economic and social importance to the Kuskokwim and
27 Yukon regions. Our special expertise local knowledge,
28 traditional knowledge, western scientific data and
29 experiences as -- are we offline again? Okay.

30
31 (Pause)

32
33 So, western scientific data and
34 experience as salmon management agencies on the
35 Kuskokwim and Yukon. The expertise also includes
36 traditional knowledge and western science expertise on
37 the Bering Sea ecosystem including impacts of salmon
38 bycatch to the Kuskokwim and Yukon ecosystems,
39 communities and economies, and that is directly from our
40 memorandum of understanding. So, next slide.

41
42 (Pause)

43
44 Alright so, slide 3 and 4 are kind of
45 combine but, I'll go through those. So, this slide
46 highlights the direct contributions made by TCC and
47 KRITFC as cooperating agencies. Our focus has been on
48 incorporating traditional knowledge, historical data and
49 scientific analysis to ensure that the lived experience
50 of the people of the Yukon and Kuskokwim communities are

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1 reflected in the decision-making process. These
2 contributions cover critical areas such as the cultural,
3 economic and health impacts of salmon declines. The rol
4 of chum salmon in subsistence economies and the
5 accumulative effects of environmental changes in bycatch
6 policies. Next slide.

7
8 So, this slide just covers everything
9 in the preliminary draft EIS that was published December
10 20th of 2024. This are all of the portions that TCC and
11 KRITFC provided information or data to. And so, next
12 slide. In February 2025, the North Pacific Fisheries
13 Management Council, also known as NPFMC, discussed new
14 bycatch management measures and we saw strong tribal
15 advocacy output, with over 100 people testifying on
16 their need for stronger protections to the Council. The
17 Council passed a motion and has now revised some of the
18 alternatives for chum salmon bycatch management and we
19 have opportunities ahead -- excuse me, ahead, to
20 continue shaping this policy. And the next slide,
21 please.

22
23 (Pause)

24
25 As this chum salmon bycatch management
26 process progresses forward, there are several critical
27 steps that lie ahead. The North Pacific Fishery
28 Management Council, National Marine Fisheries Service
29 and cooperating agencies will continue refining the
30 analysis -- the analyst for the draft Environmental
31 Impact Statement, which will be published (distortion)
32 the Federal Register. Once released, there will be
33 opportunities for public comment, and we strongly
34 encourage tribal representatives and community members
35 to actively participate and make their voices heard.
36 Additionally, we want to highlight that NMFS remains
37 open to requests for tribal consultation, which ensures
38 the indigenous perspectives are fully considered in the
39 final decision-making process and the Council is
40 expected to take final action in December 2025. So, for
41 the next phase -- the next phases include finalizing the
42 draft EIS. That is anticipated to be published by August
43 15th of 2025. And so, I just wanted to give a quick
44 highlight, which is not on here. By August 2025, we
45 anticipate that NMFS will have the EIS published in the
46 Federal Register. There will be a 60-day comment period.
47 December 2025 it's anticipated that final action will
48 be taken by the North Pacific Fishery Management
49 Council. November 2026 would be the anticipated issuance
50 of final EIS. December 2026 is anticipated for the

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1 issuance of Record of Decision. And approximately six
2 months after the Record of Decision is made and posted,
3 new regulations are implemented from the Record of
4 Decision. Please keep in mind that this timeline is per
5 NEPA guidelines and may not be for sure.

6
7 And I want to give a little bit of
8 information that I got from NMFS that they wanted me to
9 pass on to you guys. So, the Council has directed staff
10 as well as cooperating agencies to aim for publishing
11 the DIS -- DEIS and moving toward final action as soon
12 as possible. Once it's published, there will be a public
13 comment period, and depending on the scope of those
14 comments, Council could potentially take final action
15 by December 2025. That said, December 2025 is the
16 earliest possible date for final action. After that,
17 NMFS will need to develop the rules to implement the
18 management measure and the timeline for that will depend
19 on factors like complexity of the measures the Council
20 recommends. So, basically, going forward, the next steps
21 is [sic] we move into condensing and narrowing down our
22 scope, publishing of the final EIS. And as you can see
23 on this slide, there is [sic] the five alternatives. I
24 just wanted to put those up there so that you guys are
25 aware, but at this time, I won't be going into the
26 nuances of each one. There is that special engagement
27 that will be happening at 6:30.

28
29 MR. WOODRUFF: Thank you for your
30 presentation. I guess this comment goes to all
31 presenters. These types slideshows that are on light
32 blue on black and it's fairly unreadable on the screen
33 and it's very helpful that you passed out a handout so
34 that we can follow along. But for someone who's 75 years
35 old, high contrast presentation, slide presentations are
36 much more beneficial for us. And are you aware of our
37 Councils letter to the North Pacific Management Council
38 on the different alternatives?

39
40 MS. LAPP: Through the Chair. Yes, I am
41 Donald.

42
43 MR. WOODRUFF: Thank you.

44
45 MS. LAPP: And thank you for that
46 feedback, I will bring that back to our other cooperating
47 agency as well.

48
49 MR. WOODRUFF: It's very good on print,
50 but on the slideshow, it's pretty unreadable. Thank you.

000110

1

2 MS. IRWIN: This is Olivia Irwin, for the
3 record. Hi, Krystal. I just wanna make a comment and
4 thank you and everybody at TCC's TRS Department that has
5 been working tirelessly on this effort as cooperating
6 agents and I also wanna give that shout out to the
7 Kuskokwim Intertribal Fish Commission. I'm really
8 grateful to hear that these two organizations were able
9 to be cooperating agents and just wanna say for the
10 record, that I really hope that that continues in the
11 future because you guys provided invaluable feedback.
12 So, thank you for all your hard work.

13

14 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Go ahead.

15

16 MS. SHOCKLEY: Hi, Krystal. We've not met
17 but -- so, I'm curious as to where you come from and
18 your background, yeah.

19

20 MS. LAPP: Oh, yeah, sorry. I'm super
21 ADHD today. I've been -- I cannot tell you how many
22 topic and phone calls and meetings, so the basic stuff
23 is slipping my brain. So, yes, my name is Krystal Lapp,
24 and I come from the Pacific Northwest. I grew up on the
25 Nisqually and Umpqua Reservation, as well as Portland,
26 Oregon until 2001. I met my husband, who is from Haines,
27 and we moved up to Central in Circle. We lived there
28 until about 2008, moved into town. But we've been -- my
29 husband's a gold miner, (indiscernible) gold miner and
30 so, my children have lived all across the TCC region,
31 as well as parts of Canada, and parts of the Pacific
32 Northwest and the Upper Dakotas. So, he does
33 environmental remediation for mines that didn't do so
34 well. That's what sparked my passion for sustainability
35 and natural resource management, is going out there on
36 the ground with him, as I kind of raised our children.
37 So, my career has just kinda [sic] naturally went from
38 wanting to provide my children with a sense of
39 responsibility and I've just built it from there. Before
40 working with TCC, I worked tribe side as a contractor,
41 primarily for renewable energy projects. So, right now
42 I live 30 miles north on Roofy Dome off the grid and
43 hoping to continue my work in natural resource
44 management especially as we move forward in some pretty
45 trying times. Thank you, Dorothy, for asking that
46 question.

47

48 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: I want to comment
49 myself and thank you for all your hard work. And we
50 understand about how many meetings we've been going

000111

1 through lately, and you've been at every one I've been
2 at so, we're all a little discombobulated. I couldn't
3 even say that word to you. So, we appreciate your
4 willingness to come here today and thank you so much for
5 your presentation. Go ahead, Andy.

6

7 MR. BASSICH: Yeah. Thank you for your
8 presentation. I have a question, might lead to a comment,
9 but I wondered I you could give me your definition of
10 sustainability.

11

12 MS. LAPP: That's a fun one, actually got
13 a similar question at the North Pacific on the Council
14 about wellbeing. So, sustainability for me personally
15 means that we are doing good by our environment, and
16 we're doing good by our people and by our animals. And
17 what that looks like is when we talk a lot about an
18 indigenous stewardship and that reciprocal relationship.
19 And so, when it came up to Alaska and realized that the
20 urban life of the Pacific Northwest was detrimental to
21 up here, I had to make a complete change. I had to think
22 about every product I bought, every animal I harvested.
23 And so, when I'm talking about sustainability, I'm
24 talking about -- when I am out doing what I'm doing in
25 whatever capacity, am I leaving large footprint? And my
26 goal is to always say no, except for I did print all the
27 copies of this presentation. So, I apologize to the
28 trees, but that is my idea of sustainability, and I know
29 it is -- it can be very different per person and per
30 region, but that is my idea. I should go into a space,
31 and leave it better than when I came there.

32

33 MR. BASSICH: Thank you for that. That's
34 exactly what I was looking for and the reason I asked
35 that question, I'm gonna be asking that question for
36 probably until I die, because I think one of the biggest
37 communication problems and one of the biggest problems
38 that is happening, that we don't even realize is
39 happening is that we all have very different definitions
40 of sustainability depending on where you live, how you
41 live what, what you're involved in. And I think that's
42 a question and a topic that we need to begin to discuss
43 more as we move into trying to bring our lives as
44 subsistence users into the lives of people that have
45 never lived that way, have no concept of living that
46 way. It's not saying that our definition is correct, but
47 we need to understand the difference between what their
48 definition of sustainability is and ours, so that when
49 we're communicating in these spaces, we understand what
50 that is. So, I really appreciate you very clearly

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1 demonstrated what yours is and I think that's something
2 that I'm gonna remind agency people and anybody involved
3 in these processes as we move forward bringing different
4 groups together to make sure that we -- when that word
5 is used, that we define those words and it's okay for
6 them to be different, it's just most important that
7 they're understood. So, thank you for that.

8
9 MS. LAPP: Thank you, Andrew. And I just
10 want to say that you jogged my memor, my grandpa has now
11 passed away, he's been gone 20 years now, but this will
12 forever be ingrained in my head because I always went
13 hunting and fishing with him, and he always told me, if
14 we're gonna borrow something, we leave it in better
15 condition. So, that's always stuck with me and that
16 includes subsistence use. And so, for me, that
17 definition of sustainability when it comes to
18 subsistence is, we don't take more than what we need,
19 and we leave the area in better condition than what we
20 found it. So, thank you for jogging my memory, Andrew.

21
22 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Any more questions
23 or comments? Go ahead, Dorothy.

24
25 MS. SHOCKLEY: One more question. In
26 regards to the North Pacific Fishery Management Council
27 meeting, unfortunately, I wasn't able to go. But I guess
28 your overall reading, I suppose if that's -- maybe how
29 I put it, of the Council and their willingness to put a
30 cap on the bycatch.

31
32 MS. LAPP: Yeah. I don't know if I have
33 an answer for the willingness to put a cap on the
34 bycatch. I think maybe during a special engagement, that
35 might be a good question to pose to them. I did want to
36 highlight that in the times that I've been at the North
37 Pacific meetings between 2021 and 2025, now, my first
38 meeting in 2021 was quite contentious, and I think it
39 was hard for us to communicate. I do want to add that
40 while we may not always agree on everything, I think the
41 lines of communication between the tribes and the people
42 sitting on the SSC, the AP and the Council has opened
43 quite a bit. I think we're now realizing that we speak
44 different languages, we understand different things, and
45 we may not understand how we all operate, but the
46 willingness to start understanding each other is now on
47 the table. And so, I like to give credit where credit
48 is due, and I will definitely give credit in that manner.
49 Again, it's a baby step forward, it's not perfect, but
50 it's a bay step forward and I'm gonna take any kind of

000113

1 small win I can take right now.

2

3 MS. BURK: Thank you. I just wanted to
4 add something, Dorothy. Like the willingness, because
5 that's the final action that we'll be getting to in
6 December. And I think, you know, being part of that
7 process and listening to what folks are talking about
8 tonight is going to be really important. But also, we
9 learned at the Council through testimony from industry
10 that they have been operating under a self-imposed cap
11 of 200,000. So, I feel like that is a step and it should
12 probably in regulation to make it official. But the way
13 that we do that is gonna look different with which
14 alternative or alternatives are combined, cause we can
15 combine them too. They don't just have to stand alone.
16 So, I just wanted to add that. Thank you.

17

18 MR. WOODRUFF: So, Eva does that include
19 saving areas?

20

21 MS. BURK: The alternative five would be
22 like a savings area and it -- originally there was like
23 two different areas that were separate of each other,
24 but now the Council is an -- shaped alternative five.
25 So, those separate areas are now combined and then
26 looking at a cap for that time area that would be
27 essentially a corridor, a migration corridor.

28

29 MR. WOODRUFF: So, the migration corridor
30 is a conservation corridor, you were speaking of?

31

32 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Any more questions,
33 comments for this lady here? Hearing none. Go ahead.

34

35 MS. MCDAVID: This isn't a question or
36 comment for Krystal, but I just did want to remind
37 everyone in the room and online, especially folks that
38 weren't here this morning that this evening at 6:30 we
39 have some members of the North Pacific Fishery
40 Management Council and some staff from NOAA that will
41 be joining us to engage with the Council on the chum
42 bycatch alternatives being considered. It will be an
43 opportunity for the Council to learn a lot more,
44 especially if you weren't able to attend or engage in
45 that North Pacific Fishery Management Council meeting
46 that just recently happened. And you'll be able to ask
47 questions and can learn more at that time and the public
48 is welcome to attend that this evening. And it'll be
49 online too, if you're not here in the room.

50

000114

1 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you so much.

2

3

(Pause)

4

5

Next on the agenda is Council Charter
6 Review. Coordinator.

7

8

MS. MCDAVID: Yes, just one second, Mr.
9 Chair. Let me switch gears here.

10

11

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay.

12

13

(Pause)

14

15

16

MS. MCDAVID: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair.
For the record, this is Brooke McDavid, Council
17 Coordinator. So, for this agenda item, every two years,
18 the Council is asked to review your charter, and you are
19 chartered under the Federal Advisory Committee Act or
20 FACA and that's probably more than you wanted to know,
21 but I do encourage you to look at your charter. It starts
22 on page 41 of your meeting book, the small bound meeting
23 book. So, all of the RACs in Alaska have a very similar
24 charter. The first couple of pages -- the first two
25 pages and the sections basically describe your duties
26 and responsibilities that were spelled out in ANILCA,
27 and you know, some of the roles of like, support staff,
28 that's me, as your designated federal officer and things
29 like how often you'll meet, etcetera. The parts that
30 you're asked to review begin with section 12 on page 43.
31 That's about your membership and designation and this
32 describes, you know, the makeup of the Council and how
33 long terms will be, et. You -- when you reviewed this
34 the last time in 2023, you asked to add a young leader
35 seat, a non-voting young leader seat to the membership
36 of your Council, and that was approved. You do not have
37 that person yet because they just finally got to send
38 out the -- or start the application period. So, this
39 coming year someone should be appointed to fill that
40 seat starting next year. So, if there are other changes
41 or additions you'd like to see, this would be the time
42 to make a motion. Otherwise, you could just -- we could
43 entertain a motion to reapprove your charter, and then
44 it'll be good for another two years.

45

46

MS. IRWIN: Through the Chair, Olivia
47 Henaayee Irwin. I will make a motion to approve of our
48 charter.

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MR. WOODRUFF: I'll second.

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MS. IRWIN: Call the question.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you. There's no other discussion. I'd like to ask for unanimous consent. All for signify by saying aye.

IN UNISON: Aye.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Against same sign.

(No response)

Hearing or seeing none, passes. Thank you. And we'll be moving on to review and approve FY2024 Annual Report. Thank you, Coordinator.

MS. MCDAVID: Thank you again, Mr. Chair. I will turn your attention to tab two in your binders. This is your draft annual report. That is a result of the conversations you had at your fall meeting last year, fall 2024. You did carry over many topics from your previous annual report, and you also wrote many letters regarding these topics to the various agencies. I actually think you have the record for the most correspondence sent after one RAC meeting, thank you for that. But I did want to let you know that -- so, because of that, for some of these, you know, you've written very extensively in depth in the past and you've sent a lot of letters. So, for this draft instead of, you know, making an extremely large document, I tried to condense some of that and just refer to those other documents that you sent. So, right now would be the time for you to make any changes, edits that you might like to see to this draft. And then you would make a motion to approve.

And again, if you weren't here when we started talking, it's your draft, annual report, is on tab two of your supplemental materials binder.

(Pause)

And I will say at this meeting you're not able to add additional topics for FY2024 Annual Report, which is what this is. But at your fall meeting, you will be coming up with your FY2025 Annual Report topics. So, that would be the time to add any new topics. But you can make edits to the ones that are already in here. Don.

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MR. WOODRUFF: Thank you, Brooke. Item seven, halfway through the dialogue it says, we have formed a small working group for this effort and plan to meet prior to our October 25 meeting. When the final draft our recommended management strategies is completed, we will submit a copy to the Board" I support that completely, thank you.

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MR. IRWIN: Olivia Irwin, for the record. I'll make a motion to approve of the FY2024 Annual Report.

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MR. WOODRUFF: Second.

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CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Any more discussion?

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MR. BASSICH: I just want to reiterate my opening comments that I really appreciate the efforts that went into pulling all of these together. Also, maybe a little preemptive, but I know there were quite a few letters that went out from the RAC to various federal agencies, and I reviewed all of those, and I was very impressed with the accuracy. And, you know, in years past, we sometimes had some issues with maybe the letters not being written to -- with our perspective and I felt that all the letters reflected very well what our discussions were in our meetings. So, I want to thank you, Brooke, for doing that. And any other persons [sic] that were involved through OSM staff. I just want that on the record. But this is really complete and I -- in regards to us holding the record, I guess that's maybe an indicator that we got a lot of problems in this area, and there's a lot of issues that we need to solve, and people are struggling out here. And you know, when people are struggling, you back them to the wall, they have two chances, they can either just fall down and die or they can fight back, and I think we're fighting back. And there's a lot of resolve and it's reflected in the multitude of topics. It's not one or two; it's a multitude of topics that are impacting us. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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MS. MCDAVID: Mr. Chair, I did want to respond to Andy and just say thank you very much and it really helps when -- because you all do build a really good record during the meeting. And, you know, whenever I, you know, might ask for a little more discussion or justification, it's not cause [sic] I'm, you know,

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1 trying to be pushy. It's cause I want to be able to, you
2 know, on the back end, be able to accurately reflect
3 what you're getting at. So, thanks.

4

5 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Go ahead.

6

7 MS. BURK: Through the Chair, this is
8 Eva. I thought we mentioned something about the
9 compatibility determination, is that something that we
10 want to be in this annual report specifically, for the
11 Hilcorp oil and gas exploration in the Yukon Flats?

12

13 MS. MCDAVID: Thank you, Eva. It wasn't
14 a topic that you put in your annual report. It was
15 correspondence that you sent both to Doyon and to the
16 Yukon Flats Refuge. As I mentioned, we wouldn't be able
17 to add it to this report, but if you wanted to flag
18 that, to add to this year's report, I could make a note.
19 And, you know, come the fall meeting, remind you that
20 that was something that you were interested in including
21 in this year's report.

22

23 MS. BURK: Okay, for the record, I would
24 like that to be included in this year's report and update
25 and continued support for having a compatibility
26 determination completed for the Hilcorp Oil and gas
27 exploration and development in the Yukon Flats. Thank
28 you.

29

30 MS. IRWIN: Member Olivia Irwin, for the
31 record. I just want to say that I'm in support of that
32 too, Eva. I would really like to see that in our annual
33 report.

34

35 MS. MCDAVID: Thank you, I've made a note
36 of that and when we discuss FY25 report this fall, we'll
37 bring it up.

38

39 MS. BURK: Okay, thank you. This is Eva,
40 again. Also in that vein, thinking about the D1 lands,
41 multiple testifiers this morning, plus our own
42 understanding of this issue to probably include that
43 also in this year's report. Thank you.

44

45 MS. MCDAVID: I've added it to the list,
46 thank you. And you all are welcome later in the meeting,
47 or really any time to make another motion to send a
48 letter about those D1 lands, again, if you want to.

49

50 MS. IRWIN: Call the question.

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MS. MCDAVID: Okay. The motion on the floor is to support -- or submit the annual report as written.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay, I'll ask for unanimous consent. All.....

MS. SHOCKLEY: I have a question.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Oh, Okay.

MS. SHOCKLEY: Well, you know, one of the first things that I read, I guess, when I became a member of this Council, was the report and it kind of confused me as to what we were doing, you know. And so, the word report is like, you know, we're reporting. But in an essence -- I think essentially, we're requesting, right? Yeah, I mean, you know, instead of just a report, we're asking for action. And so, to me, I don't know, the report -- word report is more -- I don't think it has a -- I don't know if it's the verb I'm looking for, but instead of, you know, just it being a report, it'd be more of requests as well. Can we add that? I know there's regulations and all that good stuff, but.....

MS. MCDAVID: Thank you, Mr. Chair or through the Chair. And thank you, Dorothy, for those comments and the questions. So, the words annual report actually come from ANILCA and so, that's why -- that's what it's called. That's what it's called, the Annual Report. We have been given some guidance by the Board to be clear about which items we are asking for action on or requesting action on, and ultimately, those need to be actions that the Board actually has jurisdiction to do something about. And that's why we ended up writing so many letters last time, is cause a lot of the things you all want to see happen aren't actually within the Board's jurisdiction itself. It might be within individual agencies jurisdictions and so, that's why you sent so many letters. So, it is a little bit narrow in scope because it does focus on that. But there's also - - you'll see like starting with item seven, there's a little line in here that says the following are, you know, informational purposes for the Board. So, our requests are kind of in the first topics and then we're also saying, you know, hey, we're -- these are concerns we want you to be aware of. We recognize you might not have, you know, jurisdiction directly to act on them, but they're important to subsistence and we want you to

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1 be familiar with our concerns and issues. So, Robbin
2 might want to add something else. Thanks.

3

4 MS. LA VINE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.
5 Through the Chair, I -- this is Robbin, Subsistence
6 Policy Coordinator with OSM. I'm also the Chair of the
7 Interagency Staff Committee and this is a group of people
8 from all the various different agencies or federal
9 employees that have been hired to support the Board
10 members and keep them aware of the issues. And so, this
11 group will also go through all of the reports by the
12 Councils and then they are presented to the Board. I
13 would say that the Board members really appreciate your
14 reports. This is something that is within ANILCA and
15 regulation, it is part of your requirement and why you
16 are hired to do the work you do. You're here to provide
17 the Board with information so they can make informed
18 decisions on these proposed regulations within their
19 scope of authority, which is fish and wildlife on Federal
20 public lands and waters. But everything else, all of the
21 other issues and concerns surrounding your subsistence
22 way of life is also important to forward to the Board,
23 because that also informs potentially the implications
24 of their actions, right. So, they may know that because
25 of the avian bird flu, people are looking for different
26 kinds of springtime activities. They may turn to a
27 particular fish opportunities, they're gonna look to you
28 for what's going on in your region. So, truly the Board
29 is -- or the reports as designed by Title VIII and in
30 regulation is a way to make sure that the Board is
31 informed of what's going on in your region. And so, that
32 they really, truly know what's going on when they take
33 action on your proposals to change regulation. Thank
34 you, Mr. Chair.

35

36 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Any more comments?

37

38 MS. IRWIN: Questions been called.

39

40 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay. Asking for
41 unanimous consent. All those against please signify by
42 saying aye. Oh, yeah.

43

44 MS. MCDAVID: Andy, you just said nice
45 things about the annual report, and now you're opposing
46 it. Turn up your hearing aid, please.

47

48 MR. BASSICH: I'd like to blame it on my
49 hearing aids, but I'm sorry, I can't.

50

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1 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: I've done a switch
2 on you.

3
4 MR. BASSICH: A sleepy moment, thank you.

5
6 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: All those for
7 against, please signify by saying aye. I said for
8 against. Asking for unanimous consent. Anyone opposed,
9 please signify by saying aye.

10
11 (No response)

12
13 Thank you, passes.

14
15 (Pause)

16
17 Gonna [sic] -- we're gonna [sic] move
18 down to the -- confirm future meeting dates at this
19 time, if that's okay with you all.

20
21 MS. MCDAVID: Well, I guess for the
22 Council, they're thinking that the statewide Board of
23 Game comments might take a little bit of time and might
24 be good to do fresh in the morning and does that sound
25 reasonable to everyone? Okay. So, let's jump ahead to
26 the future meeting dates and if you turn to the calendar
27 on page 59 of your meeting book, your little meeting
28 book. You have already selected dates for your fall 2025
29 meeting, and you selected October 8th, 9th and 10th and
30 your location that you selected was Tok. And so, that
31 would be for this coming fall. And so, that would be the
32 meeting where you will review the analyses for the
33 proposals for this region, the wildlife proposals, and
34 submit your recommendations to the Board. So, I guess
35 what I'm looking for is confirmation that you'd like to
36 keep those dates and in that location for the fall
37 meeting.

38
39 MR. WOODRUFF: I think that those dates
40 are pretty fine. Thank you.

41
42 MS. MCDAVID: All right. I'm seeing a
43 unanimous consent to keep those dates. The next meeting
44 will be -- if you turn the page to page 60, is winter
45 2026. This will be the start of a fisheries regulatory
46 year. So, in winter 2026, you'll be developing fishery
47 proposals to potentially submit to the Federal
48 Subsistence Board.

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1 MR. BASSICH: Yeah, I guess from my
2 perspective, that the dates we're meeting right now work
3 really well. So, if we could just -- in a year from now
4 meet again, that would work fairly well. I know as we
5 get more into March, the calendar really fills up fast
6 with a lot of other different organizations and plus,
7 that's the best time of year to be out in the bush. So,
8 I don't want to be sitting here in March. No offense.
9 And I got a second from Artic Village.

10
11 MS. MCDAVID: So, Andy, if we met the
12 exact same days, it would put you on a Friday. But if
13 we did February 18th and 19th, which would be Wednesday
14 -- oh, sorry Wednesday and Thursday, that would give you
15 and Don travel day on.

16
17 MR. BASSICH: Yeah, I didn't, I'm sorry
18 I meant the same day of the week. So, even a Tuesday,
19 Wednesday or Thursday, any combination of those would
20 be really, really ideal. Thank you.

21
22 MS. BURK: Unfortunately, Andy, that's
23 when the Board of Fish starts for Area M, Alaska
24 Peninsula on February and this is why I have made a two-
25 year regulatory strategy calendar, so.....

26
27 MR. BASSICH: And we can't do any
28 earlier?

29
30 MS. BURK: We could either meet -- I
31 don't know how many of you've ever been to that meeting,
32 but if you want to meet after that, you're a brave soul.
33 So, I would recommend before, if possible, or maybe look
34 at the first week of March.

35
36 UNIDENTIFIED: We can't do it before
37 February 17th.

38
39 MS. BURK: Okay. So, I would look --
40 window opens, okay, thank you for that.

41
42 UNIDENTIFIED: I'm a regulation
43 specialist Charlie, don't test me.

44
45 MS. BURK: Yeah. So, the Board of Fish
46 is slated for February 18th through the 24th. So, then
47 that would give us -- probably wouldn't wanna meet
48 February 25th or 26. The next week after that would be
49 the March, Tuesday would be a 3rd.

50

000122

1 MS. MCDAVID: I'm gonna -- this calendar
2 looks like it might have some dates wrong. It's --
3 there's a couple 24 and 25. I pulled this from our files
4 so, sorry guys. Let's see.

5
6 (Pause)

7
8 Okay, so you said Board of Fish would
9 end on Tuesday the 24th. Oh, I'm looking -- no wonder
10 I'm look -- okay, sorry I'm on 2025, I gotta move to
11 2026. Okay, 2026. Okay. So, the following Monday, I know
12 on here it says it's the 27th, but it's -- actually
13 March starts this weekend. Yeah, don't look at the
14 calendar in your book, guys. I'm really sorry about that.
15 Would you want to meet the week after Area M ends or is
16 that -- that's gonna put you at the very beginning of
17 March and I know.....

18
19 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: We got convention
20 going on in -- so, the first part of it would be really
21 -- would be all right for me, like the first week, 7th
22 and 8th or something.

23
24 MR. BASSICH: I'll defer, I'm fine. Like,
25 I can make my time work a lot more than those of you who
26 are heavily engaged. So, you know, I'll just suck it up
27 and show up.

28
29 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you.

30
31 MS. MCDAVID: So, how does March 3rd and
32 4th, sound? That's a -- don't look at the calendar in
33 your book again, that's a Tuesday and a Wednesday.

34
35 MS. IRWIN: Aye.

36
37 MS. BURK: Brooke, do you know if that
38 is the same time as the Western Interior RAC meeting
39 dates for that time?

40
41 MS. MCDAVID: No, the WIRAC has not yet
42 chosen their dates for 2026, they meet next week. So,
43 you'll have your dates set when they meet.

44
45 (Pause)

46
47 And you will get to review these again
48 at your fall meeting to make your final confirmation.
49 It's harder to move things around at that time because
50 all the RACs have set their dates, but -- so, March 3rd

000123

1 and 4th is Tuesday and Wednesday. Travel dates on Monday
2 and Thursday. Oh, good, thank you, Dorothy, for helping
3 me do my job. We do need to set a location for that, and
4 your hub communities are Fairbanks, Fort Yukon and Tok,
5 I believe.

6
7 That is a consideration, is the ability
8 for a community to host us. So, you could even choose,
9 you know, Fairbanks tentatively and then if you wanted
10 to explore another option. If you want to meet in a non-
11 hub community, you do have to request permission from
12 OSM, and it depends on the budget and availability of
13 resources. I will say that since you're meeting in Tok
14 in the fall, it's like logistically more simple to not
15 do back-to-back meetings out of Fairbanks. It's kind of
16 alternating is helpful at least. So, just putting that
17 out there. Okay. All right. So, winter 2026, March 3rd
18 and 4th in Fairbanks and then I'm gonna to have to nix
19 the alternate location of the Bellagio. But never stop
20 dreaming, Gerald, never stop dreaming. For fall 2026
21 there -- it's an open window starting on September 4th
22 and that will be the meeting where you'll be voting on
23 fisheries -- federal fisheries proposals. So, we would
24 need dates and location for the fall -- fall '26.

25
26 MR. ALEXANDER: I could talk to the
27 school district and see. I mean, if you guys don't mind,
28 the (indiscernible) you know, they got room and board
29 there, but I'll have to talk with superintendent. But I
30 think she skipped town so, you know, there's a lot of
31 altercations going on up there, and people don't need
32 to hear it. But anyway, I will do my best, and I will
33 get back to Brooke and we'll see what happens.

34
35 MS. MCDAVID: If you're interested, you
36 could always say Fort Yukon or Fairbanks. And at the --
37 at a future meeting, you know, if Gerald's been able to
38 talk with the community as the time gets closer, you
39 could confirm a location.

40
41 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: That sounds really
42 good to me.

43
44 MR. ALEXANDER: Oh, excuse me. Right now,
45 they're having alternate school for children, I mean a
46 high school. They're bringing other kids from other
47 communities into Fort Yukon for alternate schools so,
48 courses. So, you know, it's kind of booked too. But
49 whenever we can, I'll do what I can to accommodate this
50 lovely Board and the people around you.

1

2 MS. IRWIN: Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair. Olivia
3 Irwin, for the record. I would like to suggest October
4 7 and 8. At least in my area, I don't want to be out. I
5 don't wanna be in here in September. I don't know where
6 other people's -- what other people's dates for moose
7 hunting cutoff is but the second week in October is
8 usually AFN and Elders and Youth Conference in
9 Anchorage, which might bring a lot of folks away. So,
10 for me, that happy medium would be like the first week
11 in October. But if other people have different hunting
12 dates, please feel free to put it on the record.

13

14 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Gerald might still
15 be hunting; he has an extension till the 10th. It's up
16 to you, sir.

17

18 MR. ALEXANDER: It only took me 35
19 minutes to get my (indiscernible) this fall -- last fall.

20

21 MR. BASSICH: Yeah, I concur with Olivia.
22 I think for me personally, we never know what our ice
23 up is like every year and later we get into October, it
24 makes it really difficult for me to get out sometimes.
25 So, that first week of October, we've kind of
26 traditionally been trying to shoot for that, to
27 accommodate for that. And in the past, it was, you know,
28 between Virgil and Sue out hunting, that was a lot of
29 times where we pushed back a little bit. But anyway,
30 early in October really works well. Best chance of snow
31 on the road for those that have to travel in from outside
32 too.

33

34 MS. MCDAVID: Okay, so.....

35

36 MS. SHOCKLEY: How about October 6 and
37 7?

38

39 MS. MCDAVID: We have two suggestions on
40 the floor, the 6th and the 7th or the 7th and the 8th.
41 Typically, you guys have three-day meetings in the fall
42 when it's a wildlife cycle because there's usually a lot
43 like, more wildlife proposals than fisheries proposals
44 for federal to go over. So, this would be -- this fall
45 '26 would be a fisheries meeting. So, probably shoot for
46 two days. Unless you guys, you know, had a real
47 compelling reason to do -- like if for some reason we
48 had a lot of more proposals than we would expect, we
49 could maybe revisit re-visit that, but.....

50

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1 MR. BASSICH: Well, I think if we have a
2 lot of fishery proposals, I'm just gonna have Don do
3 them, because whenever Don does them, we just shoot right
4 through them, so. I think we'll be okay. I'm fine with
5 two days.

6
7 MS. MCDAVID: So, 6th and 7th, which is
8 a Tuesday and Wednesday or 7th and 8th, which is the
9 Wednesday and Thursday?

10
11 MS. IRWIN: Neither one makes a
12 difference for me, Brooke. This is Olivia Irwin, to the
13 record. I just suggested 7 to 8 because this meeting is
14 Wednesday and Thursday.

15
16 MR. GILBERT: This is Galen. I like to,
17 you know, after the weekend, travel Monday and then, you
18 know, meeting like, this one. I like that.

19
20 MS. MCDAVID: So, I'm hearing a
21 preference for October 6th and 7th in Fort Yukon or
22 Fairbanks, does that sound okay to everyone?

23
24 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Sounds good.

25
26 MS. MCDAVID: All right.

27
28 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: We'll talk about it
29 again. So then.....

30
31 MS. MCDAVID: Yep, yep. All right, thank
32 you all. That's all for me. Back to you, Mr. Chair.

33
34 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Well, it's up to me
35 like, I say we recess for the day. Til 6:30 and we'll
36 all be back in the room. That'll give everybody a little
37 time to move around, get a little bite to eat or
38 whatever. Thank you.

39
40 (Pause)

41
42 MS. MCDAVID: For folks online. We'll be
43 back at 6:30 this evening with the North Pacific Fishery
44 Management Council for an outreach and engagement
45 session.

46
47 (Off record)

48
49 (On record)

50

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1 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Calling meeting
2 back to order, please. One minute, 30 seconds.

3
4 (Pause)

5
6 Thank you all for being here this
7 evening. I really like to thank the North Pacific Council
8 for being here. Really appreciate your time. Oh, that's
9 better, thank you. Yes. We're going to try to make sure
10 everybody gets a chance to talk. So, we'll kind of ask
11 people to keep their comments and testimony to about
12 five minutes, give or take. So, everybody has a chance,
13 and we're gonna kinda be directing our questions to the
14 RAC, and there'll be questions answered and stuff. But
15 that's kind of the way this process works tonight and
16 there will be questions after. So, with that, I think
17 they have a presentation, or we'll do introductions
18 first, excuse me, I'm sorry. I'm just trying to go right
19 back into the meeting again. Okay. So, we're gonna go
20 with the sun and we're gonna start over there. Thank
21 you.

22
23 MS. MARTIN: Hi, thank you, Mr. Chair and
24 members of the RAC. I'm Sarah Marrinan, I'm Council staff
25 for NPFMC. I'm based out of Anchorage, worked there for
26 about 11 years now in Anchorage and really appreciate
27 being here tonight.

28
29 MS. HAAPALA: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair.
30 So, Hi, everyone. Kate Haapala. I'm also a Council staff,
31 and sorry, you'll hear Sarah, and I try to get that
32 right several times tonight with the RACs and in Council
33 and North Pacific Fishery Management Council and all of
34 the different acronyms and trying not to stumble over
35 it. But I'm the lead analyst for the Bering Sea Chum
36 Salmon Bycatch Action, and I'm also based in Anchorage
37 with my family, and I've been there for five and a half
38 years. And we're glad to be here with you guys. And
39 thanks for inviting us into the space.

40
41 MR. BASSICH: Good evening. Andy Bassich,
42 I live in -- near Eagle on the Yukon River, a place
43 called Calico Bluff. I have been on the RAC for 23 years
44 or whatever. I also serve on the Yukon River Panel, as
45 one of the panel members. I Chair the communications
46 committee with the Yukon River Panel as the Alaska Chair
47 -- Co-Chair. I also work as the AC Chair in Eagle, Alaska
48 and my perspectives are all about subsistence living.
49 So, I have no commercial interests in anything. I've
50 been living out in the bush remotely for about 30 years,

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1 and it's my passion in life, and I'm just trying to make
2 sure the resources are there for the next generation.
3 So, thank you for coming and welcome to a balmy
4 Fairbanks.

5
6 MS. IRWIN: (In Native) Olivia (In
7 Native). Good evening, everyone. My English name is
8 Olivia. My Denaakk'e name is Henaayee. I am Koyukon
9 Athabascan and Inupiaq from Nenana, Alaska. I work as
10 the policy coordinator for the Yukon River Fisheries
11 Drainage Association. I am the Co-Chair of the Minto
12 Nenana Fish and Game Advisory Committee, and this is my
13 first time serving on the RAC. So, I'm very excited and
14 it's very good to see all of you. I feel like I'm
15 testifying right now because I was here last week. This
16 was the exact same setup. Good to see you guys.

17
18 MS. SHOCKLEY: Good evening. So happy
19 you're here. My name is Dorothy Shockley. I grew up in
20 Manley Hot Springs. My family comes from the Yukon River
21 villages of Tanana, Rampart and Stevens Village. I'm
22 very passionate about our ability to feed ourselves like
23 we've done for thousands of years. Unfortunately, with
24 so-called management you know, our ability to feed
25 ourselves is no longer -- we can no longer do that and,
26 you know, it's only been three generations. My
27 grandparents were able to feed themselves and then my
28 parents, because of regulations at times, weren't able
29 to and now I'm not able to, and neither are my children
30 or grandchildren. So, thank you. I appreciate being
31 here.

32
33 MR. WOODRUFF: I'm Don Woodruff, from
34 Eagle. I've been on the RAC for 21 years. I'm a
35 subsistence fisherman for 40 years on the Yukon, and in
36 these 20 years on the RAC, we started out talking about
37 how the chinook were declining, and I luckily got a
38 chance to go to Nome and testify to the North Pacific
39 Management Council in 2007 and we're still talking about
40 this. So, it's kind of disheartening. Thank you.

41
42 MS. EVANS: Linda Evans. I'm from Rampart
43 also, but my family comes from Tanana and was raised up
44 in Manley Hot Springs. Rampart is my home now, when I'm
45 able to be there. I have a great sense of concern for
46 our lack of resources, and how we can improve that by
47 working together and collaborating with one another and
48 I really appreciate your taking the time to be here and
49 talk to us. Thank you.

50

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1 MS. BURK: Good evening. Happy you guys
2 all made it up here, I'm Eva Burk. You guys -- all you
3 guys mostly know that, right. I'm a Cice Chair of the
4 RAC, the Eastern Interior RAC and then also your tribal
5 seat on the Advisory Panel. And I won't get into all the
6 -- you know, all the things that I feel about the bycatch
7 and the history and things that Dorothy and Linda are
8 mentioning tonight, I think is important to think about
9 the history. Thanks, Don, for reminding us that we're
10 still talking about this. I think all those things are
11 really important to think about and take home as messages
12 that you'll probably hear from others in the public
13 today. So, I really appreciate you all making time and
14 traveling here, and I'm glad that you're gonna go to
15 some other Yukon River RAC meetings. I think that's
16 really important. So, welcome.

17
18 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Good evening, I'm
19 Charlie Wright. I grew up on the Yukon between Rampart
20 and Tanana. Living subsistence lifestyle, trapping,
21 hunting and fishing. Raised a family off the river. Was
22 raised off the river. So, now I give back to the river
23 and I work as hard as I can to try to keep sustainable
24 salmon runs in there. So, I'm really happy you guys took
25 time to be here today. It's real important to all of us
26 here and to be able to talk to you and it's -- thank you
27 so much for being here. I am the Chair here of the
28 Eastern Interior RAC, and I am on multiple other Boards
29 and commissions. But this is the hat I got on today, and
30 I'm really happy to have you here and I appreciate it.
31 Thank you.

32
33 MS. MCDAVID: Good evening, everyone, and
34 thanks for being here. I'm Brooke McDavid. I'm the
35 Coordinator for the Eastern Interior RAC and also the
36 Y-K Delta RAC. So, I'll be seeing some of you in Bethel
37 as well. So, thanks again.

38
39 MR. ALEXANDER: Good evening. My name is
40 Gerald Alexander. I'm from Fort Yukon. I was born and
41 raised there for all my life. I'm a subsistence hunter
42 and trapper. Was a dog musher but things went through.
43 But all in all, I'm happy to be here. It's my -- I think
44 about ten hours I've been on this Board. Thank you.

45
46 MR. RITCHIE: My name is Brian Ritchie.
47 I was born and raised in Homer. I was appointed to the
48 Council this summer, I think. My first meeting was in
49 October, so I'm relatively new to it, but learning fast.
50 Yeah, and I have a halibut fishing boat out of Homer,

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1 and thank you for having us here, it means a lot. It's
2 a cool experience.

3
4 MR. TWEIT: Good evening and thank you
5 very much for the opportunity to have this discussion.
6 I'm Bill Tweit. I'm another one of the Council members.
7 I represent the State of Washington on the Council, and
8 I've been there for two decades now. Before that, I was
9 a salmon biologist for about three decades, both on small
10 river and Southern Puget Sound, Southern Salish Sea, as
11 well as on the Columbia River. So, I sort of got some
12 small river and some big river experience in me, but I
13 learned how to speak groundfish a couple decades ago,
14 and I just kind of slowly moved into the groundfish
15 world more. But salmon still reaches up and grabs me
16 pretty regularly, even now. Yeah, it's been a long road,
17 but my experience in the south too, is it's a long road.
18 And many of the issues that we're still talking about
19 around the table are issues that we've been addressing.
20 Some of them we're making progress on, others we're not.
21 It's a hard world trying to keep salmon going, just
22 about anywhere and it's really hard to watch the --
23 what's happening to the people who are so dependent on
24 salmon. I've told people that -- but particularly this
25 crisis in western Alaska out of my long tenure, this is
26 the hardest thing I've ever had to do; is addressing,
27 helping address this. It's a really knotty challenge and
28 the pain runs really deep that's caused by the decline.
29 So, I appreciate the chance to be here and talk about
30 it.

31
32 MS. DROBNICA: Thank you. Thank you for
33 the invitation to be here. Greatly appreciate it and
34 it's an amazing day to fly into Fairbanks. My name is
35 Angel Drobica. I've been on the Council for three years.
36 Before that, I was an AP for seven years. I'm currently
37 the Chair and have the great honor of being Chair and
38 really striving and focused on making our forum
39 inclusive and accessible to fisheries participants. And
40 have had the pleasure to work with many of you in the
41 room on various issues and really look forward to the
42 conversation this evening. Thank you very much.

43
44 MR. TSUKADA: Yes, sir. Thank you very
45 much for the invitation. We certainly appreciate it. My
46 name is Rudy Tsukada. I grew up in Kenai, Alaska, went
47 K through 12 there. I'm currently the chief operating
48 officer for Coastal Villages Region Fund, one of the six
49 community development quota groups. And, I look forward
50 to having our discussion. Thank you.

1

2 MR. MOLLER: Yeah. Thank you for the
3 invite. My name is John Moller. I am originally from
4 Unalaska and currently live in Juneau. I've been there
5 for over 25 years. I too am a new Council member. I was
6 appointed this summer, and my first meeting was in
7 October. However, I've been involved in the North
8 Pacific Process -- Fisheries Management Council process
9 for over 25 years, including six years on the Advisory
10 Panel, way back in the day. I, too, grew up in the
11 village, a subsistence family and most of you -- many
12 of you I met in a previous role I had in the governor's
13 office as a rural affairs adviser. And so, I met many
14 of you, either in your villages, on the banks of the
15 river. Actually, I met Dorothy the first time she was a
16 legislative aide for a senator in Juneau. But it's so
17 good to be here. This is a extremely heartfelt
18 discussion. But what I really want to mention, because
19 I've talked to a few people about this, about having
20 been involved in this process for 25 plus years. It is
21 so nice to see the level of participation that we are
22 now getting from rural Alaska, and it is bar none, the
23 -- is heightened to a new, to a level that I've never
24 experienced. And so, as I mentioned at the Tanana Chiefs
25 Conference last fall, you know, this is a welcoming you
26 know, event that's happening and many of you are
27 participating in it. You are having your youth come and
28 testify to us at the North Pacific Council, and it is
29 all good stuff. I think we all have things to learn from
30 your testimony, from what you're going through, and it's
31 our job to take that into account as we you know, work
32 through this process and one of the more encouraging
33 comments I heard today was -- on a couple of occasions
34 was, you know, we have to work together to solve this
35 problem that we're dealing with. It's unfortunate that
36 some of these discussions are going on for as long as
37 they have. But I am grateful to be here tonight. And as
38 another step in working together to try to find some
39 solutions. So, thanks for having me.

40

41 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you all for
42 being here. Okay, what's next? Yeah. The floor is yours.
43 Thank you.

44

45 MS. HAAPALA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So
46 again, Kate Haapala with Council staff, and we have a
47 presentation prepared for you all, and it's gonna walk
48 through -- go to the next slide. So.....

49

50

000131

1 MS. BURK: Kate, do you have any more
2 copies for the audience or...?

3
4 MS. MCDAVID: There are copies -- sorry,
5 this is Brooke, on the table for the audience. There's
6 a couple bigger, larger text format copies, and then
7 there's a few smaller format copies, too, for those with
8 good eyes.

9
10 (Pause)

11
12 MS. HAAPALA: Okay. Mr. Chair, if I may.
13 So, the presentation is just gonna walk through a little
14 bit about the North Pacific Fishery Management Council
15 and its process, as well as the current action focused
16 on minimizing chum salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea
17 Pollock Fishery. And we'll spend some time talking
18 through the alternatives, as well as some of the changes
19 that the Council made in February to that range of
20 alternatives. And then we do have extra slides within
21 the deck, and then there's some that I'm going to move
22 through pretty quickly and they're intended to be a
23 resource for you all so that after we have left and this
24 time together tonight is over, you still have figures,
25 tables and information available to you all. So, next
26 slide please.

27
28 So, the North Pacific Fishery Management
29 Council and the National Marine Fisheries Service or
30 NMFS, jointly manage U.S. fisheries in federal waters
31 of Alaska, and Federal waters are those that are 3 to
32 200 nautical miles from shore. In terms of process and
33 relationships, the Council is not a federal agency. The
34 Council makes management recommendations to the National
35 Marine Fisheries Service and the U.S. Secretary of
36 Commerce and its NMFS responsibility to write, approve,
37 and implement and enforce those regulations. Next slide,
38 please.

39
40 The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery
41 Conservation and Management Act, or the MSA, is the
42 primary law governing federal fisheries management. The
43 MSA also established eight regional Fishery management
44 Councils, including the North Pacific Council, the
45 nation's 200 nautical mile Exclusive Economic Zone, as
46 well as the national standards. The national standards
47 are principles that must be followed in any fishery
48 management plan, and there are ten different national
49 standards. The Council and NMFS must consider all of
50 them, and they include various things listed here on the

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1 slide, such as preventing overfishing while achieving
2 on a continuing basis the optimum yield from each
3 fishery, minimizing bycatch to the extent practicable,
4 providing for the sustained participation and minimizing
5 adverse impacts on fishing communities, among other
6 principles. Next slide, please.

7
8 This is a picture of the different
9 regions that fall within the Council's jurisdiction. So,
10 it's the Arctic, the Bering Sea, Aleutian Islands and
11 the Gulf of Alaska. There's no federal commercial
12 fisheries in U.S. waters in the Arctic. However, the
13 Council primarily manages groundfish so, pacific cod,
14 pollock, flatfish, sablefish, among others, as well as
15 the bycatch -- managing bycatch within these groundfish
16 fisheries. Next slide, please. In terms of composition,
17 the Council has 15 members, 11 of those members have
18 voting rights, and of these 11 voting seats, 7 are
19 appointed by the Governors of either Alaska or
20 Washington and the other four voting seats are held by
21 various agency officials. The 4 non-voting seats are
22 held by different agency representatives as well as the
23 U.S. Coast Guard. So, one point that I think is important
24 to mention to everyone tonight is that we have two staff
25 members and five Council members, so we don't have a
26 quorum here. So, we just want to be clear that this is
27 not an official meeting of the North Pacific Fishery
28 Management Council. It's an official meeting of your
29 Eastern Interior RAC. And so, what you could expect is
30 that in addition to the conversation that happens
31 tonight, staff will be taking notes and creating a full
32 formal outreach report to bring back to the entire North
33 Pacific Fishery Management Council. The Council is
34 scheduled to have in-person outreach and engagement with
35 the Eastern Interior, the Western Interior, as well as
36 the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta RACs. Next slide.

37
38 The Council typically has five meetings
39 each year that run eight days in length. Three of those
40 meetings are usually in Anchorage, one in an Alaska
41 fishing community and then another in either Portland
42 or Seattle. All Council meetings and all of the Council's
43 advisory body meetings are open to the public. Public
44 testimony can be provided in written format in advance
45 of each meeting and Council meetings are now hybrid as
46 well, so you can provide public testimony in person or
47 remotely. And our administrative staff have also worked
48 hard to figure out how to broadcast our meetings over
49 YouTube. So, there is a low bandwidth option as well.
50 Next slide, please. I'm gonna be transitioning now into

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1 the portion of the presentation focused on salmon
2 bycatch management. So, the current program in the
3 Bering Sea-Aleutian Islands area is focused on the
4 Pollock Fishery, because this fishery is the one that
5 encounters the majority of salmon caught as bycatch and
6 this slide is simply providing for you a reference for
7 this trend, on the left is a comparison of the annual
8 chinook bycatch mortality attributed to the Pollock
9 Fishery compared to all other groundfish fisheries in
10 the BSAI region, and on the right is the same information
11 but focused on chum salmon bycatch. Next slide, please.
12

13
14 This figure here is showing you the
15 historical bycatch trends for chinook and chum salmon
16 in the Pollock Fishery from 1991 to 2024. The bycatch
17 patterns in the Pollock Fishery do differ by sector and
18 by season so, the Pollock Fishery operates in two
19 different fishing seasons with fixed regulatory
20 schedules. There's the Winter A season and the Summer B
21 season. Chinook salmon are encountered in both seasons,
22 but chum salmon are really only encountered during the
23 B season or the summer months. There's four different
24 sectors that participate in the Fishery, the offshore
25 catcher processors, motherships, shoreside catcher
26 vessels, and the CDQ sector. Shoreside catcher vessels
27 deliver their catch into shore-based processors in
28 different communities such as Unalaska, Sand Point,
29 Akutan and King Cove. Next slide, please.

30
31 This slide provides the distribution of
32 the 2024 Pollock Fishery by season. So, you have the CV
33 footprint or the catcher vessel footprint on the left,
34 and the catcher processor footprint that's shown on the
35 right. Each year of fishing is a little bit different,
36 but this represents a fairly normal distribution in
37 terms of where the Fishery operates and the different
38 colors represent densities of pollock catch, so, where
39 you see the darker colors, the oranges and the red are
40 indicating for you higher catch amounts. Next slide,
41 please. Salmon that are caught as bycatch, by law are
42 counted by certified observers that are on board vessels
43 or at shoreside processing facilities and the salmon
44 that are caught as bycatch cannot be retained or sold.
45 The Pollock Fishery operates under full coverage, which
46 means that every trip and every haul is monitored, every
47 salmon is counted, and it's identified at the species
48 level. Observers are also collecting biological samples
49 as well. Next slide, please.

50

1 Sorry, this one is gonna be hard on the
2 eyes. So, the impetus for this current action really
3 came and started in October 2021. At that time, the
4 Council received public testimony and input from tribal
5 representatives and subsistence fishers related to the
6 chinook and chum salmon run crashes in that year which
7 also coincided with a high bycatch yeah and the Council
8 made several requests for information on bycatch trends,
9 impact rates in response to public testimony, at that
10 meeting. And in June 2022, the Council received the
11 requested information and reports. It also requested
12 that the pollock industry take immediate action for the
13 upcoming B season. So, the B season is the fishing season
14 in the summer months when the pollock fishery encounters
15 chum salmon as bycatch. The Council also initiated the
16 Salmon Bycatch Committee. That Salmon Bycatch Committee
17 made recommendations to the Council for a purpose and
18 need statement for the current action that's being
19 considered, as well as a set of alternatives and since
20 that time, the Council has reviewed three different
21 iterations of the analysis, most recently at its
22 February 2025 meeting earlier this month. Next slide,
23 please.

24
25 So, the purpose of the proposed
26 regulatory changes that the Council is considering right
27 now are to -- is to reduce chum salmon bycatch to the
28 extent practicable in the Bering Sea Pollock Fishery,
29 but especially western Alaska chum salmon bycatch. So,
30 since 2011, Western Alaska chum salmon bycatch has
31 accounted for an average of 19% of the total bycatch,
32 and the Council is considering the proposed management
33 changes in light of the recent and ongoing declines in
34 western Alaska chum salmon abundance and the critical
35 importance of chum salmon to Western and Interior Alaska
36 communities and ecosystems. Next slide, please.

37
38 The chum salmon that are caught as
39 bycatch in the Pollock Fishery originate from countries
40 all across the North Pacific Rim. But when we refer to
41 Western Alaska chum salmon bycatch, the figure on the
42 left provides a reference point for what we mean within
43 the Council's decision-making process. So, there's two
44 different regional genetic stock composition reporting
45 groups, the Coastal Western Alaska Reporting Group,
46 which is shown in yellow. So, the distribution of those
47 populations, as well as the Upper Middle Yukon Reporting
48 Group shown in the distribution of the blue populations
49 and dots on the figure on the left. The Upper Middle
50 Yukon reporting group aligns with the Yukon fall chum

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1 salmon run, whereas the Coastal Western Alaska
2 population or the reporting group includes the Yukon
3 summer chum run, as well as populations from Kotzebue
4 Sound down to Bristol Bay. Each year, the genetic
5 composition of the bycatch is a little bit different.
6 On the right-hand side of the slide, here is a pie chart
7 that shows the 2024 bycatch. In 2024, just over 32,000
8 chum salmon were caught, and about 13%, or 4,200 of
9 those were of Western Alaska origin. Next slide, please.

10
11 MS. BURK: On your previous slide --
12 thank you, through the Chair. This is Eva. On your
13 previous slide, it's hard to see the colors. Is the 28%,
14 the green one, is that Eastern Gulf of Alaska Pacific
15 Northwest?

16
17 MS. HAAPALA: That's correct.

18
19 MS. BURK: Okay, thank you.

20
21 MS. HAAPALA: So, I'm not gonna walk
22 through these numbers on the table. It's really just
23 provided for you as a reference point. But it's showing
24 for you the annual total chum salmon bycatch compared
25 to the estimated number, as well as the estimated
26 proportion for each of the reporting groups, as well as
27 the Western Alaska Combined Reporting Group. So, Coastal
28 Western Alaska, Upper Middle Yukon, Western Alaska
29 combined. Next slide, please. As I mentioned before, the
30 Council is making recommendations to the National Marine
31 Fisheries Service. NMFS is the lead agency for the chum
32 salmon bycatch action and there's three cooperating
33 agencies providing special expertise to the analysis.
34 Those are ADF&G, the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish
35 Commission and the Tanana Chiefs Conference of course,
36 in line with the presentation you received earlier
37 today. Next slide.

38
39 So, this slide depicts the current range
40 of alternatives that are being considered. The Council
41 is required by law to consider a no action alternative,
42 which is alternative one and it would retain the existing
43 chum salmon bycatch regulations for -- in the Bering Sea
44 Pollock Fishery. The Council is considering four
45 different action alternatives, which are different ways
46 to modify these bycatch regulations, and they largely
47 include bycatch caps that would close all or part of the
48 Bering Sea to fishing if met. All of the proposed
49 regulatory changes would only apply during that B season
50 fishery in the summer months, because that is the season

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1 when the Pollock Fishery encounters the vast majority
2 of chum salmon as bycatch. Next slide, please.

3
4 Alternative one, as I said, would retain
5 the existing bycatch regulations, which includes two
6 primary components. One is a rolling hotspot program or
7 rolling hotspot system for chum salmon avoidance, and
8 the other is the chum salmon savings area. So, the
9 hotspot program identifies areas on the pollock fishing
10 grounds where chum salmon encounters are high, and these
11 areas are closed for 3 to 7 days typically, and vessels
12 are required to move elsewhere. The program is managed
13 by a third-party entity, and the figure on the top left-
14 hand corner of the slide is a composite showing a map
15 of all of the different hotspot closures for the entire
16 fleet from 2017 to 2023. The Chum Salmon Savings Area
17 is shown in pink on the bottom left-hand corner of this
18 slide. And this is a time area closure triggered by a
19 bycatch cap. The savings area continues to exist in
20 regulations, but it really functions as a backstop
21 measure, should vessels choose not to participate in the
22 rolling hotspot program, but this has never happened.
23 Next slide. In the Council process, there have been
24 different methods developed for estimating adult
25 equivalents in the bycatch for specific genetic
26 reporting groups and this is really because not all
27 salmon that are caught as bycatch are Western Alaska
28 fish, not all Western Alaska fish that are caught as
29 bycatch are adults. And so, some would also die or face
30 natural mortality in the ocean. And these are really
31 just a way for the analysts to have different
32 methodologies for estimating the number of adult chum
33 salmon that are caught as bycatch. Next slide, please.

34
35 And we do that, and we use the estimates
36 of adult equivalents to determine bycatch removals in
37 the Pollock Fishery as a percent of total run size. So,
38 we look at the number of adult fish that are removed due
39 to bycatch in a year and we're dividing that by the
40 associated run size, as well as those adult equivalent
41 fish as if they had returned to their natal systems and
42 in order to do that, we need to have a sense of the
43 total run size or in aggregate run size for a regional
44 reporting group. We do have that for the Yukon fall chum
45 salmon run, but we don't have that for the Coastal
46 Western Alaska Reporting Group. So, next slide. So, this
47 slide is really just a reference point that speaks to
48 the estimated impact that bycatch in the Pollock Fishery
49 has had on the Yukon fall chum salmon run based on that
50 analysis. The top panel is showing you the Yukon fall

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1 chum run reconstruction based off of the run
2 reconstruction from ADF&G and the bottom panel is
3 showing the estimated impact rate of bycatch on that
4 fall chum salmon run. And we can see that the impact is
5 fluctuating annually from 2011 to 2022, averaging around
6 1% of the run size. But when abundance is lower, the
7 impact of bycatch is higher, and we see that in 2021.
8 Next slide, please.

9
10 Alternative two would modify the
11 existing bycatch regulations by including an overall
12 hard cap during the B season fishery. If that cap is
13 met, fishing must immediately stop, and all bycatch chum
14 salmon would count towards that limit. The range of cap
15 amounts being considered is 100,000 to 550,000 chum
16 salmon, and there are four different options being
17 considered on how to divide that cap among the four
18 sectors and those approaches for dividing the cap are
19 based on bycatch history or the sector's pollock
20 allocation.

21
22 Alternative three is similar to
23 alternative two in that it includes a hard cap, but the
24 hard cap is also associated with abundance indices, and
25 here the hard cap under alternative three can turn on
26 and off based on returns to the areas. So, here the
27 policy choice for the Council is really whether the cap
28 would be in effect at times of low abundance or not when
29 we're comparing it to alternative two. There are two
30 options for abundance indices that are being considered,
31 but only one could ultimately be selected for use. Option
32 one is the Three-area index, and option two is the Yukon
33 Area Index. The impact analysis that was presented to
34 the Council in February showed that a cap would have
35 been in effect in 3 or 6 years under option one, and in
36 3 or 5 years under option two when we looked
37 retrospectively from 2011 to 2023.

38
39 Alternative four would add six
40 provisions to existing regulations for the Salmon
41 Bycatch Incentive Plan Agreements, or the IPAs. The
42 incentive plans are civil legal contracts among certain
43 members of the pollock industry. Federal regulations
44 hold specific goals for salmon bycatch avoidance, that
45 the contract must design measures to respond to, or to
46 be responsive to those regulations. The incentive plans
47 are approved by NMFS and the Council receives annual
48 reports on performance as an accountability measure. The
49 proposed changes would require the incentive plans to
50 use genetic data more rigorously, evaluating catch and

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1 bycatch data to inform closures that rolling hot spot
2 closures that is more frequently, to ensure that
3 encounters are not increasing on the fishing grounds
4 without vessels responding to that increase by moving.
5 As well as closing larger areas under that hotspot
6 program when encounters are high. The incentive plans
7 have been voluntarily amended in recent years to include
8 measures that largely respond to the six provisions that
9 would be added.

10
11 So, this slide is speaking to
12 alternative five as it was written and analyzed prior
13 to the February Council meeting earlier this month. This
14 alternative includes three different in-season corridors
15 or time area closures. The corridor would close when a
16 bycatch cap was met, and the cap ranges are unique to
17 each corridor, and they're shown in the top right-hand
18 corner of each corresponding figure. The location and
19 the timing of the closure window are based on historical
20 genetic information, which indicates Western Alaska chum
21 salmon make up a higher percentage of the total bycatch
22 closer to the Alaska Peninsula from June to mid-August.

23
24 So, this slide reflects some of the
25 changes that the Council made to alternative five in
26 February. So, alternative five still includes the
27 concept of in-season corridors, and three different
28 options are being considered. The table on the left-
29 hand side of the slide shows the closure window, the cap
30 range that triggers the closure, a description of how
31 the closure would work, as well as the managing entity
32 for each option. The area, the cap, the apportionment
33 and the closure window would be set in regulation and
34 the main things to call attention to today are that,
35 compared to what was considered previously and shown in
36 the prior slide, the corridor area is larger, and the
37 cap range is correspondingly increased. Depending on the
38 option, though the actual area that would close if the
39 bycatch cap was met is different. So, on the right-hand
40 side, option one is shown in orange, and if that corridor
41 cap is met, the entire area would close from that date.
42 So, if it's June 20th until September 1st. Option 1.1
43 is shown on the far-right hand side of the slide in blue
44 and gray. So, here NMFS would be managing the corridor
45 closure similar to option one, but rather than all areas
46 closing, 75% of the corridor would close. So, the blue
47 squares that you see represent the area within the
48 corridor that would close and the gray squares that you
49 see represent areas inside that would remain open to
50 fishing within that corridor window. Under either option

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1 one or option 1.1, fishing may continue outside of the
2 area. So, these changes reflect the impact analysis that
3 was presented in February that showed the former in-
4 season corridors, which again the boundaries of which
5 are available for you on slide 25, had the risk of moving
6 the fleet into areas with higher chum and Western Alaska
7 chum salmon bycatch. And so, this approach is also
8 allowing for some areas to remain open inside up, that
9 is option 1.1 which is intended to provide some
10 flexibility for smaller vessels based on some safety
11 considerations. That being said, staff have not had a
12 chance to analyze these alternatives and options. So,
13 it's a little too early to tell what will come next. But
14 that covers the major change to that alternative coming
15 out of the Council's February meeting so, next slide.

16
17 So, we have just a couple of slides that
18 speak to some high-level points within the analysis that
19 we wanted to bring forward. So, one, is that a hard cap
20 if in place under alternative two and three, it would
21 place an upper limit on the total number of chum salmon
22 that would be able to be caught as bycatch, but there
23 is some uncertainty in whether or not a hard cap would
24 reduce Western Alaska chum salmon bycatch, and this is
25 due to the fact that the majority of bycatch is not
26 composed of Western Alaska fish, and the proportion of
27 Western Alaska fish in the total bycatch varies each
28 year. And so, that's what this figure here is showing
29 you. So, on the black bars are showing you the total
30 chum salmon bycatch in each year. The blue bar is showing
31 you the estimated number of Western Alaska chum salmon
32 caught as bycatch in each year and then plotted over the
33 top is the estimated proportion.

34
35 Yes. You're reading that correct.

36
37 (Pause)

38
39 So, there's other factors that create
40 uncertainty in whether or not a hard cap would reduce
41 Western Alaska chum salmon in the total bycatch and this
42 is also because of the incentive structure that's
43 created by a hard cap. So, a hard cap carries with it
44 the penalty of closing the B season or closing the
45 fishery early and in doing so, that consequence, the
46 analysis suggests that fishermen would go to areas with
47 the lowest rates or the lowest encounters, which may or
48 may not be areas with the lowest Western Alaska chum
49 salmon. Next slide, please.

50

1 If reductions in Western Alaska chum
2 salmon bycatch occur as a result of any of the
3 alternatives, and those changes increase the number of
4 Western Alaska chum salmon returning to their natal
5 systems there could be much broader benefits, and we
6 worked with the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish
7 Commission and TCC to characterize these throughout the
8 analysis, and I believe Krystal highlighted those for
9 you in her presentation as well. So, thank you for that.
10 However, the analysis has also captured some of the
11 intervening variables, which add another layer of
12 uncertainty in whether those benefits would be realized.
13 Next slide, please. And then a final consideration that
14 was raised in the analysis is that the timing of chum
15 in Western Alaska chum salmon encounters compared to
16 chinook salmon encounters in the Pollock Fishery are
17 different during the B season. So, chum salmon are more
18 prevalent in June to mid-August, whereas chinook salmon
19 are encountered in higher numbers and at a higher rate
20 in October, and that's what's illustrated in the figure
21 here for you. To avoid the consequence of meeting a
22 bycatch cap, fishermen would be expected to change their
23 behavior, and we have some of those known potential
24 strategies listed on the right-hand side of the slide.
25 Because chinook salmon bycatch increases in October, the
26 alternatives and options that have a risk of pollock
27 fishermen changing their fishing behavior in a way that
28 moves pollock catch or diverts pollock catch to later
29 weeks in the B season, which is represented in that blue
30 plotted line on the figure to the later aspects, has a
31 risk of increasing chinook salmon bycatch in the pollock
32 fishery. So, that's a tradeoff that was raised in the
33 analysis for the Council's consideration.

34
35 The Council is also legally required to
36 balance the cost and benefits of a proposed action that
37 would implement these regulatory changes, and the
38 analysis used different methods to evaluate the
39 potential adverse impacts and costs on the pollock
40 industry and communities, and some of that scope is
41 captured here. And again, it's a reference for you. Next
42 slide. This slide provides an overview of other changes
43 that the Council made to the proposed alternatives in
44 February. I'm not planning to walk through these bullets
45 with great detail, but the full motion is available for
46 you on the E agenda for the Council meeting. We provided
47 a link to that here at the top of the presentation. Of
48 course, we have Council members and staff who are happy
49 to answer questions as well. Next slide. And then just
50 wrapping up, this is the tentative timeline for moving

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1 this action forward. So, the Council recommended the
2 analyst revise the document based on the changes and
3 input provided in February, and for NMFS to publish the
4 revised document as the draft Environmental Impact
5 Statement. So, right now, that document is tentatively
6 being planned for publication in mid-August. There would
7 then be a 60-day public comment period, and this is the
8 next or first opportunity for written input. The August
9 publication date reflects the time that is needed to
10 accommodate a final action recommendation being made to
11 -- by the Council in December 2025. Next slide.
12

13 And then here's just some other ways for
14 you to get connected if you're interested in doing so.
15 There -- if you want to learn more about the issue
16 specifically or the Council process you can always reach
17 out to Sarah and myself. That is what Council staff are
18 there for, is to always help the public get connected
19 and to answer questions and we had our emails -- email
20 addresses at the start of the presentation on that
21 opening slide. So, that's all that I had for you guys.
22

23 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you very much
24 for that presentation. We'll give everybody a chance to
25 turn around and face this way.
26

27 (Pause)
28

29 So, this is gonna be a chance for the
30 RAC to ask some questions first. We'll go around the
31 table first and then we'll see if we have time left for
32 public comment after that. We just have a couple, so I
33 think it'll be just fine.
34

35 Yeah. If people want to sign up for
36 public testimony, there's blue cards over there and you
37 can bring them up to Brooke or I. So yeah, go right
38 ahead, Donald.
39

40 MR. WOODRUFF: Thank you, Charlie. For
41 the record this is Don Woodruff. This is the fourth
42 season with no salmon harvest on the Upper River and
43 last summer was the worst year ever for salmon escapement
44 to the spawning grounds, and I'm just wondering, what
45 are we gonna do to improve these conditions? Thank you.
46

47 MS. HAAPALA: Thank you for the very
48 tough question, Mr. Woodruff. We are very seriously
49 looking at ways to further minimize Western Alaska chum
50 interactions in the Pollock Fishery right now through

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1 this action and we completely understand the
2 frustrations and the crisis occurring upriver and in
3 other communities. Kate mentioned at the beginning of
4 the presentation that the first year of subsistence
5 restrictions, the Council gave clear and firm direction
6 to the industry to do everything it could while we were
7 investigating regulatory options. And over the last four
8 years, while there are many different factors involved
9 in how much chum the Pollock Fishery catches, including
10 abundance. There's been a 95% reduction in bycatch over
11 that time. We do also know that there are many other
12 factors impacting salmon right now, including ecosystem
13 conditions that we have very little control of. But we
14 are still very committed to minimizing the impact that
15 our fisheries are having. Even if the potential benefits
16 are limited, until we see ecosystem conditions improve.
17 So, I just want you to know we are taking this very
18 seriously. Industry is taking this very seriously and
19 implementing -- have been implementing -- or have
20 implemented new measures in their cooperative agreements
21 to really -- they're communicating a lot more
22 frequently, moving away from high interactions of chum.
23 We're really honing in on this action on the main -- the
24 purpose and need and the real intent is that Western
25 Alaska component, because one of the big challenges is
26 a huge influx of hatchery fish coming from Russia and
27 Asia as well. And that's what makes this actual -- this
28 action quite unique from other bycatch programs that we
29 have in the North Pacific and in something that we're
30 really -- we've looked at in the past and we're
31 revisiting because of the severity of the situation
32 right now. But I can tell you, we're listening and
33 treating the situation very seriously. So, thank you for
34 the question.

35

36 MR. WOODRUFF: Thank you for responding
37 to that question. And when I testified in 2007, they
38 were just experimenting with salmon excluders. Can you
39 tell me what kind of progress they've made on that?

40

41 UNIDENTIFIED: Yes, at this point, all
42 the fleet uses salmon excluders. And they're required
43 to partly through law, but mostly through their co-op
44 agreements. They're continuing to experiment with ways
45 to improve those excluders. They're not perfect by a
46 long shot, but they definitely work and under some
47 conditions, they work better. So, the skippers are still
48 trying to learn what they can do with the excluders to
49 make them work better. They're also continuing to
50 experiment with cameras to actually watch the behavior

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1 of the individual fish, to see if they can use that to
2 help tune the excluders better, as well. So, they'll
3 continue to develop the technology, and they'll continue
4 to use them as one of their -- sort of their best tools,
5 cause the best way to avoid bycatch is to not even have
6 it come up in the net.

7
8 MR. WOODRUFF: In 2007, we saw a video
9 of the salmon excluders working, and I was just wondering
10 what the progress has been. Thank you for answering that
11 question.

12
13 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay, Dorothy. If
14 you guys are done.

15
16 MS. SHOCKLEY: Thank you. I have two or
17 three questions, but I think they're all connected. So,
18 you could tell me when the winter and summer seasons are
19 for pollock. And it looks like historically, you can see
20 when most of the bycatch is happening, right. So, is
21 there any chance that you can close the pollock season
22 during those high peak times of bycatch?

23
24 MS. HAAPALA: Okay, sorry. I'll answer
25 your first question, and I think maybe, I can speak to
26 the second, but I think Council members might have more
27 to add there. So, the winter season -- the A season
28 opens on January 20th, and it has a regulatory closure
29 of June 10th. But it's common for the pollock fleet to
30 be done in April. They move on to other fisheries and
31 other opportunities, but also just yeah, a pattern of
32 trying to avoid chinook salmon as well during the A
33 season. And then during the B season, the fishery opens
34 on June 10th, and it has a regulatory closure of November
35 1st. But it's common for fishing to wrap up before
36 October. There are regulations for the incentive plans
37 that have specific provisions for chinook encounters to
38 not increase in October compared to earlier months. And
39 so, that's part of the chinook program that the Council
40 has. So, there's the fixed regulatory schedule, but when
41 fishing actually occurs is somewhat different from those
42 exact dates, if that's helpful. And then I think your
43 second question was, you can see when bycatch is
44 happening in those peaks as an option to close the
45 fishery during that window. To some extent, I think
46 that's what alternatives two, three and five are looking
47 at in terms of hard caps in season corridors, but also
48 the way the rolling hotspot program is designed to work
49 is that it's based off of fleet wide encounters as well
50 as vessel level encounter rates. So, the number of chum

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1 or the number of chinook caught per metric ton of
2 pollock, and those areas where encounters are high are
3 closed in season on a rolling basis. So, there are some
4 aspects of that that are working. But I guess if you're
5 asking for whether or not there would be a -- like a
6 week pause as a regulatory option, that's not something
7 that's being considered. But I'll see if Council members
8 want to. Oh, go ahead.

9

10 UNIDENTIFIED: There's a couple of other
11 issues that we're balancing there. The A and the B season
12 were originally created to provide some level of
13 protection for Steller's sea lions, when they were
14 listed under the endangered species list throughout
15 Alaska. And wanting -- the scientists who were concerned
16 with rebuilding Steller's sea lions thought that it
17 would be useful to sort of spread out the harvest of
18 pollock further. It used to really concentrate in the
19 winter months. That's when the pollock have all the roe
20 and they have a lot of value then. And so, the A and the
21 B season are still part of law based on the Endangered
22 Species Act. So, we can't just entirely move out of the
23 B season, for instance. Plus, we know that chinook rates
24 can really spike sometimes during the A season so, we
25 have to be careful then too. But that's one of the other
26 factors. Another one is just simply volume. That's a lot
27 of pollock to harvest and particularly for the shore
28 communities that have processors that's -- it's got to
29 come through in a somewhat even flow. In an average
30 year, it's around 1.2 million metric tons, about half
31 of which comes on shore and has to go through the shore
32 plants. And so, you can't just choose a narrow window
33 of time when there's almost no salmon. Plus, these things
34 change some every year, too. The -- last year's window
35 may not be entirely this year's window. So, the programs
36 that we've adopted so far are -- use both the historical
37 data for timing and for genetics, but they're also --
38 they're responsive to this year's data, you know, this
39 week's data in terms of timing because it does vary
40 between years. The most -- one of the most exciting
41 things that we heard about at this meeting, in terms of
42 real time data, is not -- in the future, will hopefully
43 have real time data on which of those chum are Western
44 Alaska chum. There's a promise now that within a week
45 or so of harvests occurring, we'll know what proportion
46 of those chum were from Western Alaska versus what
47 proportion were from elsewhere. And that's how we can --
48 - we're hopeful in the future we'll be able to use the
49 real time information in terms of numbers of chum, but
50 also who's chum to really shape the areas to avoid and

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1 the areas to concentrate on for pollock fishing. So, I
2 hope that sort of gave you a little bit of a sense of
3 maybe where this can go to, as well as what we're
4 currently able to make use of.

5
6 MS. SHOCKLEY: Well, I definitely
7 appreciate that. If I can follow up, please. As you
8 know, in Alaska, on the Yukon specifically, and other
9 tributaries -- or other rivers as well. You know, we
10 get, you know -- the numbers -- we get the numbers of
11 the fish coming into the river and depending on how many
12 of those are, you know, we -- it depends on whether we
13 can fish or not. So, you know, it's -- to me, it just,
14 is not fair that, you know, we can't fish and we haven't
15 been able to fish when you have fleets out there, you
16 know, fishing 24/7 pretty much and, you know, all the
17 months of the year. And, you know, it's -- if somehow
18 you can make a provision where we can feed ourselves,
19 that would be so appreciated. I mean, even if it's just,
20 you know, one week or one day, you know. I mean, that
21 would really benefit the people in the rivers and I just
22 really would hope that you take that to heart as you're
23 making these decisions. So, thank you so much.

24
25 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Go ahead, Andy.

26
27 MR. BASSICH: Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Chair.
28 I have a number of questions. So, I guess the first
29 question I have is do you have figures or numbers on the
30 total bycatch in tons of all species? And I don't need
31 it right now, but I would really like to kinda have an
32 idea of what the total bycatch in the pollock fleet is,
33 both inshore and offshore for the year, in metric tons.
34 I think that -- what I'm getting at is, there's
35 tremendous impacts on the biomass being removed from the
36 Bering Sea through bycatch. If we're gonna try and manage
37 our marine fisheries, we have to have an understanding
38 of those impacts not just on salmon, but on all species.
39 And so, I think it's really important to have that. I
40 think that's a really important factor, if you wanna do
41 eco based management. I think that's a responsible way
42 to weigh the pluses and minuses of the practices of the
43 trawl fleets out there, because I'm quite sure it's quite
44 high. That's a lot of biomass being removed that affects
45 food webs, is what I'm getting at. But I would -- if you
46 could get that to our Council coordinator, that'd be
47 really helpful to me. The other thing I wanted to ask
48 was, which -- on the very first page, you say, prevent
49 overfishing while achieving on a continued basis the
50 optimal yield of each fisheries. Could you define what

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1 optimal yield is? Cause, I think that would be something
2 that your optimal is different from my optimal. And I
3 think that's a really important thing, if we're gonna
4 have these discussions, it's really important that we
5 understand what you mean by some of the words you use.
6 Another one that I'd like to bring up is sustainable. I
7 hear a lot of advertising and a lot of claims of
8 maintaining of sustainable fisheries. So, it's really
9 important to understand what you consider to be a
10 sustainable fishery and what many of us on the river
11 consider to be a sustainable fisheries. We're gonna have
12 different definitions, I'm not saying that one is right
13 or wrong or better than the other, but I think for having
14 this discussion, those are really important to define
15 those terms. Those two terms are gonna be really
16 important as we move forward. So, we have a clear
17 understanding of what is meant by those words. So, maybe
18 think about that. If someone wants to answer that
19 question, that'd be great right now. Just to give me a
20 sense of what you mean by that, as we get into these
21 discussions a little further.

22
23 UNIDENTIFIED: I was hoping to actually
24 start with your first question. A couple of years ago
25 Council staff actually published a paper in one of the
26 major North American journals about the Council's
27 fisheries and included a historical overview of both
28 directed catch, but it was really focused mostly on
29 bycatch. And so, we can certainly get you a copy of
30 that. I can tell you right now that the Pollock Fishery,
31 our biggest bycatch issue really is salmon. It's -- it
32 is the -- that fishery is around 99% directed catch and
33 under 1% bycatch. There's very little going overboard
34 in the Pollock Fishery in particular. Some of the other
35 groundfish fisheries have higher ratios of bycatch to
36 directed catch. But the Pollock Fishery is notable,
37 actually globally for the very low rate of bycatch
38 overall. And you also sort of -- and this will kind of
39 begin to answer both your questions. In the Bering Sea
40 in particular, every year our Science and Statistics
41 Committee reviews the surveys and reviews the stock
42 assessment authors work on updating the status of
43 pollock and generally tell us that anywhere in the
44 neighborhood of 2 million to 3 plus million metric tons
45 of pollock could be harvested under our overall sort of
46 framework for how groundfish are managed sustainably,
47 our definition and that -- but optimum yield is -- that's
48 not the number that we actually use and that's because
49 Bering Sea overall yield of groundfish is capped every
50 year at 2 million metric tons. And if you add up all the

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1 groundfish species that contribute to that, we could
2 harvest in many years, 3.5 million metric tons. So, we're
3 fishing at a much lower overall rate in the Bering Sea
4 than on paper, just looking at single species
5 management. And that's ecosystem-based management from
6 our perspective, that's how we view ecosystem-based
7 management, is leaving enough fish in the Bering Sea
8 each year, so that all the functions of the ecosystem
9 are proceeding without major disruption. People in
10 harvest are part of the ecosystem, but they don't
11 necessarily need to be the dominant part, even. So,
12 optimum yield, we view, as something different than
13 maximum sustained yield, the MSY. It's the MSY numbers
14 that when you add them all together you can get over 3
15 million most years. Whereas our optimum yield is the 2
16 million metric ton number. So, there's a real difference
17 in terms of how we're viewing optimum yield than in many
18 other parts of the world. Our Council really -- we
19 continue to work more and more towards an ecosystem-
20 based approach to how we manage our fisheries. I don't
21 want to claim that we're there, or that we're skilled
22 at it even, but we do have some of the best groundfish
23 fishery science in the world advising us. But even more
24 importantly, we have some of the best ecosystem modelers
25 in the world advising us as well, on what this incredibly
26 productive ecosystem can do and what we should be doing
27 as managers of it.

28
29 We do have bycatch, and in all of our
30 fisheries, I'm not aware of a single fishery anywhere
31 in the world that doesn't have some level. But we
32 continue to do what we can across all the groundfish
33 fisheries to continue to minimize the bycatch that
34 occurs and then make sort of best use of bycatch that
35 does occur. It's something we could talk about for quite
36 a while. As you can probably tell, I've probably left
37 more loose ends dangling for you than not, but I just
38 wanted to sort of push back some on this idea that it's
39 because it's a big fishery, it's necessarily having a
40 really deleterious impact on the environment, because
41 the -- our best information is that we are fitting into
42 -- we're fitting these large scale fisheries into a
43 highly productive marine ecosystem.

44
45 MR. BASSICH: Yeah. Thank you, I
46 appreciate that. I would probably argue that we have
47 different perspectives on that and that's fine. That's
48 why we're at the table here. I would like to state that
49 I think one of the things that is often very misleading
50 is given your figures and percentages, it's oftentimes

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1 very misleading when you talk about the percent of salmon
2 bycatches 2% or 5% but when you factor that out to sheer
3 numbers, that's pretty tough for a lot of people that
4 aren't fishing to swallow that when sometimes your
5 bycatch -- total bycatch of salmon species is greater
6 than the entire Yukon River run both of chinook and fall
7 chum. So, you know, that's putting it in perspective
8 (distortion) and then the other thing that I would be a
9 little bit concerned about is the claim that the Bering
10 Sea is so productive. It's very productive for pollock,
11 but right now it's not very productive for chinook salmon
12 and other species that we live on. So, that's why we're
13 at the table as well. It's a difference of definitions
14 of what's productive. It's beneficial for you, but it's
15 not beneficial for us. And that's what we're trying to
16 find some kind of a compromise with here. So, I
17 appreciate those comments. So, that really helps, I
18 think, to kinda understand each other as we move forward.
19 The other thing I wanted to mention could you clarify,
20 I spent a lot of time testifying before you when the
21 salmon excluders were being developed. It was my
22 understanding at the time they were developed to
23 basically help chinook salmon escape. Correct? And that
24 the impacts of fall chum or summer chum in them, they're
25 not quite as capable of escaping those excluders, is
26 that correct? Because they don't swim as fast as chinook
27 salmon? Cause I remember that there was a lot of talk
28 about the speed of the tow, how effective they were, and
29 that chum salmon oftentimes had a very difficult time
30 taking advantage of excluders, because they don't swim
31 as fast as chinook salmon. Is that correct? I'm just
32 trying to remember my time before you, many years ago.

33
34 UNIDENTIFIED: Yeah. If I may. I believe
35 generally speaking, you are correct that the excluders
36 were initially designed for chinook and that the chinook
37 salmon, even though they are smaller at time of catch,
38 typically are stronger swimmers and we see them --
39 typically I spent quite a few hours looking at live
40 camera feeds and the chinooks are -- when you watch
41 them, they don't even know they're caught. You know,
42 they're just kind of hanging out and they could easily
43 swim out. The chums are a little bit slower, but the
44 bigger problem with the chums is they tend to school up
45 a little larger. And so, once again, to me, it's
46 incredible as a sports fisherman that we can take these
47 large tows and hit zero, one or two chinooks. You know,
48 you would think that if you saw one, you would see
49 hundreds. But that's not the case with chinooks. Also,
50 because of some of the concerns that you have, there is

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1 currently some ongoing research on active excluders
2 where there will be fish coming in, live cameras,
3 potentially with the assistance of AI, that you could
4 trigger a mechanism so that when you see large numbers
5 of salmon coming through the -- or any salmon, frankly,
6 coming through the excluders that you could potentially
7 activate a flap that would direct the fish out of the
8 cod end and therefore, that would be a little bit more
9 effective. I think that's being currently tested, but
10 it is not a widespread use yet.

11
12 MR. BASSICH: And that would be for --
13 that would benefit chum salmon, is that correct?
14

15 UNIDENTIFIED: We believe that that would
16 much better benefit chum salmon, because A, the chum
17 salmon are more distinguishable in a live camera feed
18 tow because, they appear in larger numbers and
19 obviously, if they don't ever enter the cod end, they
20 don't get caught. So yes, the -- it doesn't force the
21 salmon to go forward. You know, as you're towing, the
22 excluder will do its job if it's active.

23
24 MR. BASSICH: Okay, yeah. I just wanted
25 to clarify that currently though that chum salmon don't
26 really take advantage of those salmon excluders right
27 now to the extent that chinook salmon do.....

28
29 UNIDENTIFIED: Your last sentence is
30 correct.

31
32 MR. BASSICH: I appreciate that thank
33 you. I would highly encourage that development. That
34 would go a long way to maybe help solve the problem. I
35 did have one more question, Mr. Chair. I'm wondering,
36 and this might be more of a question for you. I'm
37 wondering how hard caps and -- I'm gonna use a wrong
38 term, quotas have changed over time, as chinook salmon
39 and chum salmon have been found to be reduced returning
40 to their natal streams in Western Alaska. So, over time,
41 there were times back in the early 2000 when you
42 developed hard caps or other methods to shut down or
43 remove a fisheries when chinook salmon, which was the
44 original concern we had, were being caught. How has that
45 changed over time to reduce those numbers? Because
46 chinook salmon are less abundant so, therefore the
47 impacts of catching chinook are much greater to natal
48 streams now and then the same question for summer chum
49 and fall chum Western Alaskan. And in particular for my
50 region, I'm really concerned about -- and it was brought

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1 up, Canadian fall chum which are distinguishable by
2 genetics. So, you can very clearly define those in the
3 catch. Those numbers were, as Don said, down to 16,000
4 fish crossing the border at Eagle, which is where we do
5 our enumerations for trans boundary treaties and our
6 normal goals for that particular site are between 87 and
7 116,000 chum salmon, we had 16,000 make it this year
8 with no fishing, no directed fishing at all on the Yukon
9 River. So, those are extirpation level returns and we're
10 very, very concerned about that. The other thing that I
11 just wanted to mention to you, so you're aware of that,
12 the reason why fall chum are so important, A, it's the
13 only food for the people up in the upper Yukon where I
14 live. But number two the marine derived nutrients that
15 fall chum, the usually great, very strong fall chum runs
16 brought up into the spawning streams greatly benefited
17 the chinook salmon spawning streams as well. And so,
18 those aren't being brought back up to those spawning
19 streams, which is really going to impact our abilities
20 to rebuild both species. So, it's not just fall chum
21 that's gonna be affected by those. It's also gonna impact
22 our ability to rebuild our chinook salmon, because those
23 streams will not have those marine nutrients which are
24 so vital to the spawning success in those streams. So,
25 that's more informational. But I wanted to have that for
26 you, for the context, how important that is. If we're
27 gonna try and rebuild any of our stocks in the Upper
28 Yukon. Thank you for your time and your answers.

29

30 UNIDENTIFIED: I have a question. Andy,
31 did I hear you correctly that the geneticists can
32 distinguish the Canadian fall chum from the U.S. fall
33 chum?

34

35 MR. BASSICH: Yes, the Canadian fall chum
36 have a very distinct genetic marker compared to Western
37 Alaska -- all other Western Alaska chum salmon. So, they
38 have a very distinct marker that they've been able to
39 identify those for 20 years or more, I believe.

40

41 UNIDENTIFIED: Cause [sic] you saw our
42 maps, and just all the blue dots and they're from both
43 sides of the border, all get called upper Yukon, so.

44

45 MR. BASSICH: Upper Yukon but the
46 Canadian stocks in particular are very easy to identify.
47 I don't know so much about the ones that maybe move up
48 into the Shungnak or I guess it's Kobuk River -- Koyukuk
49 River. But I do know the Canadian stocks are -- they've
50 been able to identify those for many, many years,

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1 decades, actually. So, it's very easy to determine what
2 that is. I think you saw -- I saw those in the pie chart
3 that you had. They're very small percentages and they
4 always have been relatively small percentages in your
5 catch. But then again, it's also hard to determine what
6 the actual enumeration of those catches were, because
7 it's such a small percentage of your total bycatch of
8 salmon, if I'm clear on that. So anyway, it's a concern.
9 It's a huge concern for us if we're gonna be successful
10 rebuilding.

11
12 MS. HAAPALA: Sorry if I just -- quickly.
13 I think you're right. So, this -- these are the.....

14
15 MR. BASSICH: Yeah.

16
17 MS. HAAPALA: populations. The
18 issue is that for the geneticists, we just don't have
19 the statistical power to break these out. So, these --
20 Yeah, the Canadian origin fall chum are included within
21 those populations. There's just no statistical power to
22 break them out within the bycatch reporting group, but
23 you're right.

24
25 MR. BASSICH: Thank you, I appreciate
26 that. I was kind of aware of that, I was looking at
27 that. But mainly what I wanted to bring to your attention
28 is that the marine derived nutrients, that's so well
29 known that that is so important for salmon successful
30 spawning. And just to give you some anecdotal, I know
31 when they were starting to try and rebuild and
32 reintroduce salmon runs in the Columbia River, people
33 actually backpacked salmon remains, salmon marine
34 derived nutrients, flesh. Many miles up into the head
35 streams and physically put them into those rivers to try
36 and revive those rivers, that's how important it was.
37 That's how scientists realized how important that is.
38 That's why I wanted to bring that to your attention,
39 cause [sic] it is super important to us, and I'm really
40 concerned that we haven't fished those in for years. The
41 numbers keep dropping, and we're at the absolute lowest
42 we've ever had in history. That's super concerning. I
43 know it's a very small percentage of your -- but if
44 we're gonna work collaboratively, if we're gonna try and
45 work in eco based management, I think the bottom line
46 is everybody's gonna have to take a little bit less.
47 This optimum fisheries or maximum sustained yield with
48 climate change and the new paradigm, we're coming into
49 all of Alaska marine waters and (indiscernible) waters,
50 there are too many unknowns. We have to be much more

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1 precautionary in our management moving forward, and that
2 means everyone's gonna have to take a step back, take a
3 little bit less, try and protect those resources so that
4 none of them are extirpated in my view. Thank you.
5 Appreciate it, Mr. Chair.

6
7 MS. IRWIN: I have a question, but I
8 wanna start off by actually addressing the public right
9 now. For those of you who have been afforded the
10 opportunity of not spending the last nine days in
11 Anchorage at these North Pacific meetings I just want
12 to acknowledge how jarring this information is to take
13 in and how significant these numbers are to you and our
14 people of this region. We hear that these numbers, this
15 1%, these 4,205 chinooks -- or sorry, excuse me, fall
16 chum is not statistically significant and I want to tell
17 you that we know that it is. And we have people up here
18 that are fighting to ensure that these Council members
19 and the staff and the researchers who are working on
20 this know that it's a statistical significance to us and
21 it's an impact on our ways of life. So, I just wanted
22 to acknowledge that this is really difficult information
23 to take in at first glance. And I've been a part of this
24 process now for two years, and I'm about to ask a
25 question that I probably should have on first day. So,
26 I just want to acknowledge that for our public.

27
28 With that, I did want to make a comment.
29 Rudy, thank you for going deeper into the active
30 excluders. I didn't know about a lot of that technology
31 so, that was really good to hear. And with that, in
32 addition to that, I just -- it made me think about -- I
33 think this technology is incredible for the point that
34 we're at, we need it. But how far are we gonna go in
35 creating new technologies and new ways to continue to
36 work against what Mother Nature is telling us. Which is
37 that there's not enough fish in the ocean. Our runs
38 cannot sustain this, our ecosystem, our ocean cannot
39 sustain this level of fishing and so, for us to continue
40 to develop new technologies and new solutions and
41 strategies, it's -- we have to in order to keep up with
42 where we're at right now. Because, at the end of the
43 day, we can't close those fisheries tomorrow. But while
44 we are creating these new technologies, I really want
45 us to consider how far are we gonna go before we realize
46 that the ocean just can't handle it anymore. And so,
47 that's just something that's on my heart and mind. So,
48 I just wanted to say that comment for people to think
49 about. But my question is similar to Andy's asking about
50 some of these definitions. I'm interested in the

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1 definition of to the extent practicable, under the
2 purpose of the proposed action, reduced chum salmon
3 bycatch to the extent practicable. And I think that's
4 an MSA standards too, if I recall correctly. Yeah,
5 Thanks, Brian, for the head nod. Yeah, minimize bycatch
6 to the extent practicable. Is that something that's
7 defined in regulation or is that something that's
8 dependent on the body at the time to interpret for
9 themselves?

10

11 MR. TWEIT: It's not well defined in
12 regulation, partly because again, these are meant to
13 cover all of the nation's fisheries and federal waters
14 and what's practicable in one area isn't in another. So,
15 it really is one of the hardest things that we're handed
16 to try to address, and we address it partly through a
17 knowledge that that can change over time. Where we start
18 on addressing what is practicable and 10 or 15 or 20
19 years ago is not where we are now in terms of continuing
20 to find different ways of incentivizing or encouraging
21 industry to develop new techniques. But some of the
22 biggest things that we've done is the -- sort of the
23 major change that we made in groundfish fisheries and
24 that we're still making in some of them, and that is by
25 changing the basic mode of fishing from the mode where
26 everybody is essentially competing against everybody
27 else all the time to bring in as much as they can in
28 their boat to instead where everybody has their own
29 percentage. And then we tell them that what we expect
30 them to do is slow down, fish more carefully, fish more
31 thoughtfully, communicate with each other about where
32 the cleanest fishing is. Avoid the areas where fishing
33 is less clean, where we continue to find ways to
34 essentially incentivize them and that is an ever-
35 shifting goalpost, really, but it's shifting in one
36 direction. We don't ever allow fisheries to get dirtier,
37 i.e. higher bycatch rates. Instead, we continue to
38 emphasize finding ways that they can continue to fish
39 efficiently, economically, lower carbon footprint, etc.
40 but also, reducing bycatch. That's the balancing act
41 we're handed. I think every single one of us, as an
42 individual Council member, probably draws the line
43 differently, but that's again the beauty of having to
44 get to hopefully 11 votes, but at least 6 on any given
45 issue is that balancing those different perspectives.
46 But that doesn't mean we ever feel like we're done.

47

48 MR. MOLLER: If I could, Mr. Chair, to
49 add to what Bill said and to your point about the ocean's
50 ability to sustain given salmon resources or other

1 resources, there's some strong feelings and Bill alluded
2 to this earlier. We are capped at 2 million metric tons
3 total removal from North Pacific fisheries and that's
4 what we have the authority to manage, right. But the
5 scientists are suggesting we can take out a lot more
6 pollock than we currently do. One because of the cap,
7 but two because of the self-imposed conservative
8 approach that the Council takes in its management
9 regime, and this is not a Council position or anything.
10 This is John Moller position along with, you know, folks
11 that have been involved in this industry for a long time
12 that are suggesting we're not taking out enough pollock
13 in the ocean. Because they are predatory fish and they're
14 feeding on smaller fish, including themselves. So, you
15 know so, there's that assertion out there too and I just
16 wanted to kind of, you know touch on that ever so
17 briefly. There's really a lack of science in terms of
18 what that may mean. But we do know the scientists are
19 telling us that we could take up to, what was it, 2.4
20 million metric tons and still be biologically sound
21 removal. So, that -- I wanna mention that just because
22 it is such a delicate balancing act here relative to
23 what we're doing and there's factors that we're not in
24 control of. So, I wanted to mention that on top of Bill's
25 comments.

26
27 MS. IRWIN: Yeah, just to respond really
28 quick is thank you. Thanks, John. I also just want to
29 mention that you have multiple indigenous scientists
30 that have been coming to your table to testify to sitting
31 right here that have also told you that we're taking too
32 much out of the ocean. So, that acknowledgement of
33 balancing the indigenous knowledge with the Western
34 science, it extends beyond the in-river system, because
35 our people understand the salmon life cycle and
36 understand that it goes -- they go into the ocean. So,
37 just with that balancing of what is, to the extent
38 practicable, continue to balance those -- that
39 indigenous knowledge with the traditional Western
40 science.

41
42 MS. MOLLER: Most appreciate that comment
43 because I think it was very well received in terms of
44 all of the traditional and indigenous knowledge that was
45 passed on to the Council. Including, you know, some of
46 the habitat issues that were brought up from folks from
47 around the State and environmental issues and stuff like
48 that. And so, it certainly didn't fall on deaf ears with
49 me. So, thank you.
50

1 MS. BURK: Thank you. Through the Chair.
2 This is just a comment because I get a little like irked
3 when people talk about -- we should be taking more
4 pollock out or we could be harvesting more pollock. But
5 we don't -- we really don't have a lot of understanding
6 of the food web in the Bering Sea and it's my
7 understanding that a lot of different fish, including
8 salmon, do feed on tiny pollock. And so, that's my
9 question is, is there a good report showing all of the
10 different species that rely on pollock? At what stage
11 of their life? At what time of the year? It would be
12 really nice to have that. Because I think my indigenous
13 knowledge brain wants to think, if there's this huge
14 biomass of one species in the ocean, it's probably
15 because there's a lot of other species that are relying
16 on that large biomass. So, I would like to know what
17 reports that you all have that can paint us a better
18 picture of what's happening in the food web. And I just
19 want to point out, for people in this room, the pollock
20 are not doing that well either. I was looking at reports
21 about them being skinnier and smaller. Their condition
22 is not as good, it's declining. I believe I saw something
23 about pollock having ichthyophonous. Even age three
24 pollocks still having ichthyophonous. So, I think it's
25 really important to know that salmon and other species
26 -- pollock is also seeming to experience some issues
27 too. So, I'm just wanting to see if you guys have more
28 information on the food web and specifically like I
29 mentioned, like what species is eating pollock? At what
30 stage of their life, at what time of the year? Like how
31 much are other species in the Bering Sea -- and we're
32 not just talking about fish or marine mammals, seabirds
33 as well. There are other things out there. So, I'd be
34 curious to know more about that.

35
36 MR. MOLLER: Before Bill answers your
37 question, I want to make sure I respond, and by no means
38 did I make my comments to irk you or upset anybody
39 relative to it. But my point here is, is that we have
40 an ecosystem out here that we don't fully understand.
41 And, you know, the information that I passed on comes
42 from folks that have been involved in the Fishery for
43 many, many, many decades. But there's also some, you
44 know -- if I could use local knowledge as an example
45 from a Southeast Alaska perspective, we have a wall of
46 pollock in the Chatham Strait, for example. That is 30
47 fathoms deep and 30 miles long, of which locals that are
48 salmon fishermen down there and subsistence users are
49 claiming that the salmon are not -- it's not about --
50 and again, this is somewhat anecdotal. There's no

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1 scientific data behind it, but it's local knowledge that
2 I'm giving little -- that I'm repeating, if you will.
3 That the salmon fry are not even getting to the ocean.
4 So, it wasn't an ocean survival and this is of course,
5 you know, but I'm -- my point is that there's an
6 ecosystem here that we probably don't fully understand,
7 but I wanted to share other perspectives that I've heard
8 as well.

9
10 MR. TWEIT: And I'll add a little bit in
11 terms of the question about the knowledge of the food
12 web. When we wrote our Bering Sea Fishery Ecosystem Plan
13 fairly recently, some of the basic material in there,
14 in the plan itself, summarize a huge amount of the
15 scientific information on the food web and they actually
16 ran -- there is a scientific model of -- it's a fairly
17 simplified model, but it is a model of the food web in
18 the Bering Sea that is run by the Alaska Fisheries
19 Science Center. It's -- I think the acronym is something
20 like Seattle or something, but it's spelled with a C
21 instead of an S and the -- that was built to answer in
22 a modeling perspective, a lot of those questions you're
23 asking. And it's built off of the years of diet studies
24 and everything. Every year, the labs at the Alaska
25 Fisheries Science Center get stomach contents from a lot
26 of the fish that are sampled by the observers at sea to
27 look at what they're eating each year, to look what the
28 growing fish are eating as well. So, we have a
29 conceptual-level understanding of how these things are
30 fitting together and some sense of how it varies between
31 different years. The, you know, the good cold-water
32 years in the Bering Sea versus the warmer water years.
33 And then I asked the -- at the last meeting, just on the
34 side, I asked the director of the Alaska Fisheries
35 Science Center how well they have salmon integrated into
36 that model now. Cause initially it was mostly groundfish
37 model. But he told me that they're really working at
38 integrating salmon in now, and they may be able to answer
39 some questions. You know, there's questions coming at
40 us now about, well, what's the effect gonna be if the
41 amount of Asian hatchery chum doubles over the next few
42 years as the Russian government's threatening to do? And
43 he said that they can probably start to look at that
44 using the models now and what the impacts would be on
45 the food web. So, it's -- their capabilities have really
46 improved at that. They are still models, but I would
47 start by taking a look at the Bering Sea FEP and just
48 some of the basic reference chapters in there. And then
49 after that, definitely picking up the phone and talking
50 to some of the Alaska Fisheries Science Center folks

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1 they're happy to talk about, they like to talk about
2 that kind of thing, and they're more knowledgeable than
3 I am.

4
5 MR. MOLLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank
6 you, Bill. Just, to put in a plug for any fish nerds out
7 there that there is also the Gulf of Alaska and Bering
8 Sea, Aleutian Islands ESRs that are published, I think,
9 in December every year and those are a much-distilled
10 version of an ecosystem status report. But there's a lot
11 of really, really good and useful information in there
12 that is presented in a way that people can actually
13 understand, I think. Yeah. So, just putting in a plug
14 out there for that, if anyone's interested.

15
16 MR. BASSICH: Thank you. I appreciate
17 your comment, John. I think from my perspective, the
18 very fact that we don't fully understand these at times
19 of these paradigm shifts that I believe we're having in
20 the marine environment, and on terrestrial lands and
21 streams within Alaska shouts out let's be cautious and
22 that's, I think, one of the things we're asking, like
23 what we've done in the past hasn't been working for us
24 now. It's proving that it's not and so, we need to
25 rethink many of our management strategies, things that
26 worked in the past are not gonna work into the future,
27 that's obvious and we're running short on time. So,
28 that's the encouragement I have and I -- we have the
29 same problem. We don't fully understand everything
30 that's happening in our river system with climate change
31 and everything too. But we do know that there's a lot
32 of evidence of different species moving now up into the
33 Bering Sea, some of the species from the Bering Sea are
34 moving north. That's gonna change the whole web moving
35 forward. So, you know, caution until we begin to get
36 some kind of a glimmer of what's happening. I wanted to
37 get back to the question I asked earlier. I actually
38 ranted on and on and on, and the question was never
39 asked. And that was the question about how has the caps
40 changed as -- over time for chinook and chum salmon, as
41 those stocks have declined? Cause I don't know that I've
42 ever seen any numbers dropping because chinook numbers
43 have dropped or fall chum or summer chum have dropped.
44 And so, that has a greater impact on those stocks right
45 now. So, maybe if you could answer that. That if you
46 have that information, that'd be helpful. Thank you.

47
48 MS. HAAPALA: Mr. Chair. I can answer
49 that question for you. That's right. So -- and we have
50 some slides that are extra within the presentation that

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1 might be a helpful reference too. But the chinook program
2 was modified in 2017 with the three-area index. So, the
3 chinook salmon hard caps decrease at times of low Western
4 Alaska chinook salmon abundance and what's defined as
5 low abundance within this process is 250,000 chinook
6 salmon returning to the Nushagak, Unalakleet and Yukon
7 Rivers. So, it's the -- that's the Three-river Index. I
8 don't believe the Kuskokwim is included within that, but
9 the overall hard cap goes from 60,000 to 45,000, and
10 then that performance threshold from 47,591 fish to
11 33,318 fish. And then the last slide that we provided
12 as an extra for you, has the impact rate of chinook
13 salmon bycatch. So, if you were wanting to measure the
14 impact of chinook salmon removals on the Upper Yukon and
15 then the coastal Western Alaska, which is the coastal
16 Western Alaska, plus the Middle Yukon reporting group.
17 So, it's a little bit more granularity than what we have
18 for chum salmon, but the average would be 0.52% for the
19 Upper Yukon 2.02 for the coastal, Western and Middle
20 Yukon reporting group combined. But then there isn't a
21 similar abundance-based cap for chum salmon bycatch
22 management, but that it is represented in alternative
23 three of the current action.

24

25 MR. BASSICH: Okay, thank you.

26

27 MR. MOLLER: Thank you. Just to
28 acknowledge briefly what you were mentioning about being
29 precautionary and I think that -- I just feel obligated
30 to mention that in the process that the North Pacific
31 uses, there is a buffer for scientific uncertainty in
32 the total allowable, in setting the total allowable
33 catch and in the allowable biological catch. So, there
34 is a buffer for scientific uncertainty and for things
35 that we don't know. I think that a large part of the
36 problem, and again, I'm assuming, I'm speaking for
37 myself right now. But a large part of the problem is we,
38 you know, you might not know what you don't know and
39 we're quickly losing the ability to monitor the changes
40 as they're occurring, and the changes are happening
41 faster than they've ever happened before. And that's a
42 big part of the problem that we're having right now. I
43 just wanted to speak to that.

44

45 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: I have my own
46 question, if I may. Council members have all had a good
47 chance, and we're gonna go into public testimony after
48 my question. Thank you. So, my question is to Mr. Tweit,
49 as a biologist. Gonna be a tough one. At the last fall,
50 16,000 king salmon -- I mean chum salmon made it over

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1 the border. At what number do we holler endangered
2 species? As a biologist, how would you answer that? Well,
3 that's what I want to hear.

4
5 MR. TWEIT: So, as a biologist, I don't
6 think I'd want to use the term endangered species because
7 that's that political definition. But I would clearly
8 use conservation concerns and there's no doubt that at
9 those levels you're definitely in the zone of
10 conservation concerns. And the trend in recent years for
11 chum has been, you know, usually we expect them to kind
12 of hit a low point and then bounce back up. And
13 certainly, we're at the point now where if we don't
14 start to see the bounce back, then we've broken out of
15 that trend and that's where the conservation concern
16 becomes even more.

17
18 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: I appreciate that.
19 I think we're getting really close. It's really hard. I
20 think even the numbers that chinook are at, it's gonna
21 be a miracle if we get to see them back in good numbers
22 in my lifetime. So, I really appreciate that -- you
23 saying that and answering that question. And I'd like
24 to give the public a chance to speak with the time that
25 we're allowed this evening and in the number of
26 testifiers I have that at this time, I'd like to start
27 that process. And our first testifier will be Angel
28 Stickman. She's still here? Yeah.

29
30 Yeah. If we do five minutes with the
31 amount of this right now, we're gonna run over our time.
32 So, be mindful, if you can. Yes. Turn on that microphone
33 in front of you, please. Hit the button in front of you.

34
35 MS. STICKMAN: Great. Okay. Okay. Yeah,
36 so, hi, my name is Angel Stickman. I'm from the Native
37 Village of Shungnak, but I live here in Fairbanks. I'm
38 first of all, just a person who is here because I care
39 about people. I don't represent anyone and I'm also a
40 graduate student in indigenous people's law. So, my
41 children are from the Yukon, and many families haven't
42 been able to fish in the Yukon for many years and when
43 I first learned about how much fish were being bycaught
44 by trawlers, honestly, I was disgusted and I still am
45 disgusted. According to Ocean, trawlers bycaught more
46 than 300,000 chum salmon each year on average. On
47 average, trawlers bycaught a documented 141 million
48 pounds of marine life each year. This bycatch includes
49 king salmon, chum salmon, halibut, herring, squid, crab,
50 whales and more. If you guys don't already know that.

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1 It is evident that trawlers waste millions of pounds of
2 fish. They also scrape the bottom of the ocean floors,
3 ripping up seafloor habitats and crushing bottom
4 dwelling species. I don't understand how trawlers still
5 exist, you know, it's been years. Even though salmon in
6 the Yukon were already stressed and all of Alaska's wild
7 food are declining, they still choose to fish this way
8 and waste this fish, the salmon and other fish. I don't
9 understand that. The time -- yeah so, the fact that
10 trawlers bycatch thousands of salmon each year proves
11 that there is still salmon and they just aren't getting
12 to the Yukon River. These big corporations don't care
13 about people. They are literally messing with people's
14 source of nutrition and health, and I don't see -- do
15 you guys get that? I don't understand why you guys don't
16 get that. I'm sorry for my frustration. You know, how
17 else am I supposed to feel? Wild foods are essential in
18 Alaska. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture,
19 98% of rural villages and 65% of the entirety of Alaska,
20 hunt or gather wild foods, and this includes fish.
21 According to the U.S. Department of the Interior, there
22 is no other place in the United States with a heavy
23 reliance on wild foods. The State's rural residents
24 harvest about 18,000 tons of wild food annually, an
25 average of 295 pounds per person. Indigenous people have
26 relied on the salmon for thousands of years. Salmon isn't
27 just a source of food, but it's a way of life.

28
29 It's essential for ecosystems to thrive
30 and there has to be zero bycatch of salmon -- of chum
31 salmon by all trawlers. I know there's the -- you know,
32 these meetings been going on for years and with salmon
33 being the topic, but I don't understand. Why isn't trawl
34 stopped already? Like, I just don't understand that. Is
35 there any more human decency? Is there anymore, you know,
36 I just don't get it. Is there any more sense of human
37 decency by these big corporations, by people who make
38 these decisions? I personally wouldn't be able to sleep
39 at night if I made decisions that negatively impacted
40 other people's health and cause [sic] food insecurity
41 among children and families. Yeah, like I said before,
42 excuse my tone. I'm just like, really frustrated. I don't
43 get it, like, it's been years, you know. I don't
44 understand, like, you know, these salmon were already
45 stressed and these trawlers -- and also Alaska's you
46 know, wild food are just declining, and the trawlers
47 think it's okay to just keep doing this, you know, when
48 these families and these children need this food. Like
49 I just don't understand. Like, sorry. Yeah, so I don't
50 agree with any of the alternatives. It has to be a zero

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1 bycatch. Yeah.

2

3 So, I called this morning. I don't know
4 how much time left I have, but I called this morning,
5 and I also talked about D1 lands. And, you know, so, I
6 just want to (indiscernible) you know, am speaking, I'd
7 like to tell you guys a little bit about climate change.
8 So, right now, caribou herds are declining across the,
9 you know, across North America. In Canada, they've
10 crashed from 60 to 99%. The seven largest of Alaska's
11 31 caribou herds have declined for more -- from over
12 900,000 to 525,000, the lowest number since 1986. The
13 planet's rapid warming has not only impacted caribou,
14 but other primary food sources, such as fish and marine
15 animals and yet trawls still is fishing this way. I
16 don't get it; make it make sense. In June 2024, cities
17 across five continents broke 1,400 heat records. Where
18 many people were dying and collapsing. From 2000 to 2020,
19 there were 2.5 more acres of land burned in Alaska than
20 in the past 20 years. Three of the four highest Anchorage
21 fire years have occurred since 2000. By 2050, the burned
22 area is projected to increase by 24 to 169% in Alaska.
23 You know, I just don't understand, and trawlers are still
24 doing what they're doing and it has to stop.

25

26 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Next is Lisa, and I
27 can't read the last name, I'm sorry. Okay. Okay. Next
28 on the list is Virgil Umphenour.

29

30 MR. UMPHENOUR: Could you put the pie
31 chart up, please? My name is Virgil Umphenour, I served
32 three terms on the Board of Fish, I served on this thing
33 for 17 years. I'm on the Fairbanks Fish and Game Advisory
34 Committee, and I'm the longest-term member of the
35 Pacific Salmon Commission, which is a treaty between the
36 U.S. and Canada. I'm on the Yukon River panel; I'm one
37 of the people that negotiated the treaty. In 1995 they
38 were doing the baseline and so, one of the baseline
39 things was to find out what all these fish were, the way
40 they were doing it, where they're getting caught. And
41 so, they did a bycatch -- examined the bycatch and the
42 Bering Sea trawl fishery and it was Dick Wilmont at
43 NOAA, the lab -- the Alaska Science Center that did it.
44 And what he found was that he found that there was a
45 bunch of hatchery fish out there. So, my question to the
46 Council members is this. We supposedly, in this pie chart
47 up there, it says where all these fish come from, it
48 says Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, etc., and then it
49 has over here 28% in the green is south -- is Eastern
50 Gulf of Alaska. And so, my question is, what Dick Wilmont

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1 found was he had to do the -- to cut the heads off to
2 do this and look at the otoliths is how many of the fish
3 are hatchery fish? Southeast Alaska has hardly any wild
4 fish left, and neither does Prince William Sound.
5 They've replaced them all with worthless damn hatchery
6 fish. And so, my question is, how do they determine
7 where these fish are coming from, just straight
8 genetics? Are they gonna check for otoliths? Which means
9 they have to cut the head off. So, that's the first
10 question. Okay, when you look at this it has the gray
11 says it's Upper and Middle Yukon, part of the Upper
12 Yukon is right there about 50 yards away. I know a lot
13 about the genetics cause I really pay attention to us,
14 and this is for 2024 for your pie chart. And so, in 2024
15 the Upper Yukon or the fall chum run, we have a sonar
16 at mile 126 on the Yukon. They counted two -- just a
17 hair under 200,000 fish. The long-term average passive
18 sonar is right at a million fish for fall chums and the
19 Middle Yukon summer chum, which runs up this river, they
20 are genetically different from the Coastal Western
21 Alaska summer chum, which is the lower Yukon summer chum
22 is part of that group. But these are different, they're
23 closer to a fall chum so, they're distinct. It's five,
24 5000 or 5%. Now, what I said was the number of fall
25 chums that came -- cause [sic] there were no fishing on
26 them, period, downriver was 200,000. Okay, on the summer
27 chums on the Chena River and the Salcha River, which is
28 40 more miles up the Tanana River from Fairbanks where
29 the Salcha River comes in. Those two rivers have been
30 monitored longer than any other rivers in the whole Yukon
31 River drainage, Canada or Alaska and when they count the
32 fish there, they do it two ways; did some sonar, and
33 they also do it with the counting towers. And so, this
34 year, what went up this river was zero fishing
35 commercially on them when they used to harvest average,
36 probably at least a half a million summer chums. But
37 most of those caught in the lower Yukon, but all the way
38 up to Fairbanks people would fish for summer chums and
39 no fishing this year except a little bit with a dip net.
40 They say they caught 32,000 this last year, subsistence
41 in the lower Yukon with the dip net. It had 9% of the
42 long-term average for the date they quit counting them,
43 which is in August, 9% of the long-term average. The
44 Salcha, which was 40 miles up the river, got 4% of the
45 long-term average for that date. We're getting close to
46 being threatened for endangered species, I would think.
47 Now I'll switch to the chinook real quick. And the
48 chinook, we've been getting for the last five years or
49 so, we've been getting about 20% of the long-term average
50 and that's -- and those two rivers, this one and the

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1 Salcha are the two largest producers of chinook salmon
2 in the whole Yukon River drainage and you've got to
3 remember that these chinook salmon even spawn in British
4 Columbia that go up the Yukon River. They go over 2,000
5 miles to get there. Anyway, and so, when I look at this
6 pie chart and I see that 5% of those fish when the runs
7 that went up to Upper Yukon, and the Tanana River of
8 summer chum salmon were some of the lowest -- the fall
9 was the second lowest on record since they've been
10 counting them. The summer transfer here, that's the
11 lowest on the Chena and the Salcha since they've been
12 counting fish. And so, for it to show at 5%, that means
13 to me, what it means is it means that they really do
14 nail the fish headed for the Upper Yukon. And it's super
15 important to find out how many of those in the green are
16 actually Southeast and Prince William Sound hatchery
17 chum salmon. I would really like to know that. And I
18 gonna talk about bycatch. I talked -- some of you people
19 probably know.....

20
21 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Finishing comment,
22 sir.

23
24 MR. UMPHENOUR: Pardon?

25
26 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Finishing comment,
27 please.

28
29 MR. UMPHENOUR: Yeah, and I don't --
30 anyway. Okay. I have a meat and fish processing plant
31 here in Fairbanks and so, Tanana Chiefs - being no one
32 can fish in the Tanana Chiefs region, haven't for five
33 years. It's five years, no subsistence fishing. What
34 they've been doing is buying fish -- excuse me -- buying
35 fish from different places and we got fish from SeaShare.
36 And so, I'm gonna talk about the SeaShare fish. The
37 Coast Guard flies them from Kodiak to Fairbanks and last
38 -- in 2023, the Coast Guard flew fish up. I distributed
39 2,900 pounds of chinook salmon, in the round. These --
40 all these fish came in in the round and they were frozen,
41 they really looked nice. And so, we distributed 2,900
42 pounds to elders. I boxed them up and then Tanana Chiefs
43 distributes them. But with those they came to my plant
44 and got most of them or part of them. If they're going
45 to the villages, I take them and deliver them to the
46 airport, to whichever carrier is gonna do it. I do all
47 that cause I have the freezer space to do all this kind
48 of stuff. Anyway, and so, I got word people really upset
49 with these chinook salmon. They said they're no good.
50 And so, what I did, is I told the lady at Tanana Chiefs

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1 that I deal with, I wanna fillet some of these fish and
2 see what they look like. So, I'm gonna show you guys the
3 pictures of them. I took a video and here's the video.
4 You can pass it up and down and I'll talk while you --
5 while looking at it. So, I know Duncan Fields really
6 well and some of you probably know Duncan Fields from
7 Kodiak. He served, I don't know how many times on the
8 Council, but several times. Anyway, so I talked to
9 Duncan, and in fact, I talked to him today. I talked to
10 him two or three days ago, cause [sic] he had an issue
11 he wanted to ask me about, cause [sic] when I was on the
12 Board of Fish, which I served three terms on, Duncan and
13 I worked together on doing some management plans, and
14 one of them was the Tanner Crab Fishery around Kodiak
15 and -- on -- in southeast, we wrote that plan. In 2023
16 it was the largest crab fishery in the State. Anyway,
17 so, I sent Duncan that thing, and I told him about this,
18 and he said, well, you know, they just changed the people
19 running SeaShare and now it's a lady that used to work
20 for ASMI. And he said, I've been there when they -- the
21 shoreside, you know, when they bring the fish in from
22 the trawlers to get processed. And he said, what I've
23 seen them doing is taking those chinook salmon and they
24 just set them aside in their tote. They don't ice them;
25 they don't do nothing to them. And when you look at
26 these pictures, you can see they don't do nothing to
27 them except maybe tromp on them or something to get them
28 bruised like that. But all of them they got fed to dogs
29 is what happened to them. Because there's a number of
30 people that, from the villages and around Fairbanks that
31 still have dog teams, not many though.....

32

(Simultaneous speech)

33

34
35 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: You are at 15
36 minutes, and you're only supposed to have 5. So, we let
37 you go 10 minutes over.

38

39 MR. UMPHENOUR: Okay, okay. But anyway,
40 I wanted to give you some food for thought, and I really
41 would like you to get back to the RAC on whether they're
42 gonna -- whether they are going to start doing an
43 analysis, especially of the Prince William Sound
44 Southeast fish, because I can tell them apart
45 genetically, but they can't tell whether they're
46 hatchery or not unless they check for the otoliths.
47 That's what they have to do. Thank you.

48

49 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you, Virgil.
50 Jazmyn Vent, you're next.

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1

2

3 MS. VENT: Good evening. I almost forgot,
4 I put a comment card up. Nice to see you all again. I'm
5 not going to repeat everything I said last week because
6 you already heard me. (In Native). My name is Jazmyn
7 Vent, I'm Koyukon and Inupiaq from the village of Huslia.
8 My mom's family comes from Ambler, I grew up in Huslia.
9 I was raised by my aunties and my uncles and my great
10 grandma. Grew up going to fish camp living off the land,
11 the waters. I am the indigenous communications lead for
12 the Yukon River Inter Tribal Fish Commission. I'm a
13 business owner, and I am a co-founder of No Ambler Road.
14 About a year and a half ago, I finished my research
15 doing -- exploring the relationship between State of
16 Alaska fisheries management and Alaska Native
17 communities through the lens of the Yukon Kuskokwim
18 salmon collapse. Where I really aim to get the
19 perspective of the people from the Yukon-Kuskokwim River
20 areas perspectives on how State of Alaska fisheries
21 management has impacted not only our fisheries, but our
22 culture, our way of life, and the future of the health
23 and well-being of our communities. And within that, the
24 results were very drastic. Some of them being 99% of
25 participants think that the state of Alaska ignores the
26 Alaska Native people and their knowledge and lived
27 experiences to prioritize income that comes from
28 commercial fishing in Alaska regarding the management
29 decisions in these river areas. And 97% agreed that these
30 closures pose a direct threat to food security, 93% think
31 that Alaska Native voices and concerns are overlooked
32 and marginalized regarding the river area's salmon
33 collapse.

33

34

35 There's a lot more, but I don't wanna
36 go into detail and I don't want to take up too much
37 time. But I will say you know, last week was my first
38 time -- it was a week and a half ago now, sitting through
39 all eight days of the meeting and it is really different
40 being in this space now, and it's much more comfortable,
41 but also like looking at the presentation, still
42 questioning where all this data is coming from and how
43 much traditional ecological knowledge is being
44 incorporated into this information. Not only that, but
45 also just curious you know, not asking any direct
46 questions, but just food for thought, thinking about how
47 this data is collected, who's collecting it, but also
48 who's paying those people to get that data. Yeah, it's
49 -- you know, I'm trying here, we're trying to build a
50 relationship with you all and I think that like I
51 mentioned last week, right now, there's a very ample

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1 opportunity for us to start really working together and
2 building more of a cooperative relationship to address
3 this challenge. And within that, you all are gonna have
4 to make sacrifices. And I think that's very evident at
5 this time. You know, like Bill mentioned, this is one
6 of the hardest things he's had to do in his job. This
7 is probably the hardest thing I've ever had to do in my
8 entire life, is watch these impacts on our communities
9 and even as we speak here tonight our freezers are empty,
10 we don't have fish and there's trawlers right now in the
11 Bering Sea, dragging nets the size of football fields.
12 So, you know, I -- again, I just urge you to make
13 management decisions that help us. You know, like Angel
14 you mentioned earlier, you all are listening, but that's
15 -- we're asking you to listen, but we're also asking you
16 to do everything you can to address this issue, and
17 that's not taking place yet. So, I just hope moving
18 forward, we could continue building that relationship
19 and working together to not only offset this challenge
20 but contribute to a healthier future and well-being of
21 Alaska Native communities in this river areas. Thank
22 you.

23
24 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Michael Peter.

25
26 (Pause)

27
28 MR. PETER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good
29 afternoon. Just sitting here listening and you guys are
30 the decision makers and then I had a choice too, to go
31 down to testify last month with Charlie, or this month
32 with the others. I kinda didn't want to, because I
33 testified last few years in a row, and I heard somebody
34 say, we're not speaking on deaf ears, but it sure felt
35 like that when I did give testimony and also too, an
36 elder was cut off, which is very, that's not in our
37 tradition. You know, when our elder speaks, you know to
38 listen and also too, I think we need to incorporate
39 traditional knowledge to a lot of this besides Western
40 science. And on that too, that note there's a lot of
41 young people in our villages that are hurting and
42 suffering because we can't take them to fish camp like
43 I was raised in fish camp. To teach them how to take,
44 you know, and preserve what we get and smoke our fish
45 and take it and cut it, and then -- when I was growing
46 up, one boat fished for five houses, you know, and then
47 I think that you know -- and Andy made a good point too,
48 you know, about how back in the day, they used to carry
49 some of the old -- the dead fish and then put them in
50 the spawning grounds to where they didn't need to have

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1 the nutrients to produce more in the spawning grounds.
2 And also, another thing that I bring to you is that now
3 we have another threat on the horizon, and that's
4 development in Yukon Flats. And we're already seeing
5 hardly any moose numbers cause the Fish and Wildlife
6 can't do an aerial survey for the last three years and
7 now we're having to compete with outsiders also. And
8 Hilcorp is trying to develop in the Yukon River on the
9 lower mouth of the Birch and they're gonna need 300,000
10 gallons of water each day. And where is that water gonna
11 go back into? It's gonna go back into the water system
12 or the lakes or seeps back into the aquifer. And since
13 you guys are the decision makers, I think that we
14 sacrifice enough, I think that we need to get something
15 back and get our tradition back and help our people
16 heal. Especially our younger people, they're lost now.
17 Just because we can't fish, can't take them out and
18 teach them, you know, what we were taught. And then,
19 since you guys are the decision makers, I put it on you
20 to help bring that back and you said, work together,
21 well, this is the time. This is a start. And we've been
22 doing this for the last five years, you said. I mean it,
23 and then it seems like we're just going around in
24 circles. It's like a dog chasing his tail. But other
25 than that, I think that you know -- I know John here
26 brought up a good point too also that. Yeah, we do, you
27 guys are here, and then we are speaking, and we are
28 hurting and I'd like you to come to the villages, maybe
29 during the summer and, you know, maybe see two or three
30 boats and the only time they go -- those boats go out
31 on the river, they go up to the Porcupine River. They
32 don't go out to fish, they're out there swimming or, you
33 know, having a picnic because the heat, it gets so hot
34 up there. We get a little better of both extremes, we
35 get cold weather and hot weather. You know, and I'd like
36 you to, you know, travel, you know, check out the
37 villages along the Yukon River because people are
38 hurting. Thank you.

39

40 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Carrie Stevens,
41 come on down.

42

43 MS. STEVENS: It's good to see you all
44 again. I know you miss me for at least a couple days.
45 You know all kidding aside, for the record, I'm Carrie
46 Stevens, and I was at the Council so, I have to tease
47 them. My family is from the Upper Yukon. My husband is
48 Dinyee Tsaht'ana and this is my nephew, he's 26, and his
49 name is Ben Stevens, I made him sit with me. And he grew
50 up in camp, and he was gonna go for a fisheries degree

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1 at UAF, and considering the plight of his people, he
2 changed to social work. That's what this young man right
3 here is doing. He's 26 and a third of his life, he has
4 not been able to fish a third of his life, we have not
5 met the amount necessary for subsistence on the Yukon,
6 a third of this young man's life. When he was little, I
7 told you the story last time, he wore fish fins to
8 protect him, and there's nothing to protect him now.
9 That's what these young people are facing. He's gonna
10 get mad at me later, I'm sure, for doing this. But this
11 kid grew up in camp. It's who he is, it's running through
12 his blood, and he doesn't know how to participate in
13 these systems and he's brilliant. But this is beyond
14 him. It doesn't make sense. So, I really appreciate you
15 all coming to Fairbanks. As Virgil said, this is one of
16 the great spawning areas of salmon in this State and I
17 just wanted to, if I can, point out just a little bit
18 of the narrative. This time I'm speaking for myself
19 wholeheartedly. I had to behave at the Council because
20 I was representing the Council of Athabascan Tribal
21 Governments. So, it's a little concerning the narrative
22 that's being told in the slides and I think that even
23 this evening there's been a lot of false information.
24 Slides 15, 21 and 27 and this full analysis of chum that
25 you are catching and the origins as we heard from Virgil,
26 it's written as fact in these reports. We all know
27 fisheries science, it is enumeration by extrapolation,
28 by testing a small percentage of the catch. Yet your
29 margin of error is not listed on a single slide. There
30 is no peer evaluated science anywhere, and that's a huge
31 conundrum. So, if you look at slides 15, 21 and 27, you
32 go way back, way before you were ever genetic testing.
33 I mean what -- how is that even used as factual
34 information? I have facts of ANS data sets, by the way,
35 John, the ANS for chum by the State of Alaska on the
36 Yukon is 300,000 for summer and fall combined. And so,
37 that hasn't been met for chinook in 73% of the last 22
38 years, fall chum for 78% of the last 22 years. And this
39 man's life -- this is his life we're trading and that
40 we're enumerating in numbers. Also, there's a couple
41 other false narratives I wanna point out, and I'll try
42 to be quick. Slide 29, this choice of making people or
43 fishermen choose over bycatch of chum or pushing into
44 chinook is ridiculous, it's insulting. We're sorry
45 you're getting pushed in a corner, that isn't our problem
46 and the fact that we're saying that there's no other
47 bycatch issues in the Bering Sea and salmon is the only
48 problem. I looked it up right before I got up here. In
49 the first three months of 2024, it was 1 million pounds
50 of halibut. I mean, they sued you over halibut. How can

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1 you not say that's not a serious issue for you, right.
2 It's in the paper. So, that's a serious issue. 1.3
3 million pounds of herring were caught as bycatch in the
4 first three months of 2024. 10,000 chinook, which is
5 10,000 more than the entire Yukon has caught in the last
6 4 to 5 years. That's 10,000% more fish for a statistical
7 significance ratio there and at that time, 937 chum
8 because it was the winter season. The other false
9 narrative I just really wanna point out here is that
10 there are many economic, academic papers of which I am
11 neither, that globally, trawling only exists everywhere
12 because it's subsidized by the nation state in which it
13 is co-located. You take Ghana, you take Norway, it's
14 subsidized by the nation State. So, the economics of it
15 are a false premise. We have not said in this room that
16 you are catching more pollock today than you ever have.
17 The TAC is at its highest and you can't sell it. So,
18 you're getting -- you just got \$50 million a couple of
19 weeks ago. There's a lot of other food sources inner
20 city kids could be eating, which is weaponized against
21 the poor -- actually had a AP member asked me if Benji's
22 life was more important than an inner city youth. Do you
23 want Benji to answer that? I don't think he thinks that.
24 That's what's -- these false narratives have to stop you
25 guys. I just really want to point out that regarding the
26 hatchery fish, I asked this of the AP, I didn't ask it
27 of you because I was behaving, that you guys use your
28 privilege, use your money. The people of the Yukon are
29 fighting in every arena for their lives, for the fish.
30 I just got a text about the Caribou. My son is home
31 learning how to make whitefish nets. Literally, that's
32 what he's doing. He's in class whitefish net making right
33 now. Because there's no salmon and so, my nephew came.
34 And I think that, you know, I just looked up CBRF, in
35 2016, your net worth was 300 million. Can you use 5
36 million to a million of that to lobby about hatchery
37 fish? So, that we don't have to? I really need you guys
38 to use your privilege. And I think those -- I just really
39 wanted to set straight some of the things that were put
40 on the record today.

41

42 The last thing I'll say is that, you
43 know, when I'm driving to work I hear about the
44 unprecedented death of murre. All of you must know about
45 the murre, I would imagine being on the Council.
46 Unprecedented. Then I hear a story about sea state. The
47 science that you're using is operating in a system as
48 if the ecosystem was stable, it's not. It's insane, we
49 all know this. I mean, the murre just dropped dead,
50 they starved. All of it, I mean, it's crazy if you think

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1 about it, you'll cry. So, you can't use basic science.
2 And thank you, Chair, for your -- allowing me to speak.
3 I appreciate it. I appreciate you all, always listening.
4 Thank you for taking the time.

5

6 MR. WOODRUFF: Good job, Carrie. Thank
7 you.

8

9 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Next is Janet Woods.
10 Janet will be our last testifier this evening.

11

12 MS. WOODS: Thank you, again. I
13 appreciate it. I appreciate being able to speak again
14 cause [sic] I wasn't able to kind of finish my testimony.
15 But anyway, my name is Janet Woods. I grew up in Manley,
16 I raised -- my dad was from Rampart, my mother from
17 Tanana, and I raised my kids in Rampart. And sitting
18 here listening to everybody, it just hit me that a whole
19 generation of our kids are not going to know what it's
20 like to fish or to have the traditional knowledge of
21 fishing, because there's no fish. We're not able to fish,
22 but I was just thinking, a whole generation of our kids.
23 Yet many of you that sit on this Board here have fishing
24 boats and are able to fish, are able to teach your
25 children and your grandchildren, but we're not able to.
26 And I keep thinking of all that bycatch that is wasted,
27 how many families on the Yukon it could have fed? How
28 many of the families? And all we wanna do is just eat
29 fish. And, you know when we fish, many families use just
30 one eddy and that goes for me, too. But not only that
31 is, we saved fish for which we call church fish and that
32 was to, you know, if the church had a -- here in
33 Fairbanks had something they could use, we -- they could
34 use that fish. But not only that, but Denali Center,
35 we'd save some for Denali cause [sic] they used to have
36 traditional gathering for the people that lived there
37 and so, we would save fish for that, too.

38

39 And the last thing I wanted to say was
40 you know, where we are, Rampart is pretty much in the
41 middle of the Yukon River, and it's not like the coast,
42 coastal areas. So, we don't get a lot of the species,
43 we don't get -- all we have really is in summertime is
44 the salmon in the spring time some fish. But Charlie
45 said, you know, you gotta use the three-inch and a lot
46 of people just have the four-inch mesh so they're not
47 able to catch, you know, the whitefish. But for us,
48 really, it's just the salmon that we can get in this --
49 where we live in the summer time in the fall time chum
50 salmon. But again, very little, but you know, everything

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1 is just getting wiped out. So, it's like, you guys gotta
2 really make a hard decision here, you know. Ever since
3 I started fishing, we had to stop to let some go by. You
4 know, we were closed down three, four days, and then we
5 start again. Why can't that happen out in the ocean? You
6 know, just stop and let some fish go by. But that hasn't
7 happened either, you know. So, but anyway, thank you
8 very much. I just wanted to add that. So, thank you very
9 much. I appreciate it.

10
11 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you very much
12 for your testimony. Okay, well that ends testimony for
13 the evening and we sure appreciate you guys being here
14 to listen to us and our people's concerns. It means the
15 world to us and our people that you come and listen. I
16 really appreciate your time this evening and thank you
17 for being here.

18
19 MS. SHOCKLEY: Can I ask one quick
20 question of each? Given.....

21
22 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Go right ahead on
23 the record, okay. Turn the mic on.

24
25 MS. SHOCKLEY: Okay, sorry. Dorothy.
26 Given the ecosystem and all of the fisheries and
27 everything else that you guys look at, data, everything.
28 I'd like to ask each one of you. What do you -- why do
29 you think this salmon on the Yukon, chinook and chum are
30 at their lowest?

31
32 UNIDENTIFIED: Let's start down there,
33 John.

34
35 MR. MOLLER: Thank you for the question,
36 Dorothy. I mean, I think that that's an extremely
37 difficult question, right. I mean, and this is the point
38 I was trying to make earlier and just about got in
39 trouble with, you know, that we got so many factors out
40 there that we have some unknowns and, you know. And this
41 body here with the Council have, has bookends in terms
42 of, you know, how we can -- how we are directed to
43 analyze and make our decisions as Council members,
44 right. I mean, it's a directive. So, it gets very
45 complicated. None of us up here for a moment think that
46 we have all the answers because we don't, and it is a
47 moving target. And, I mean, we have all kinds of factors
48 that was brought up in public testimony and I think
49 where we're at here is an opportunity for us to continue
50 to learn from the public testimony, such as yourself and

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1 others that came in front of the Council. And somehow,
2 we gotta balance that with the other information that
3 we have and make the best decision we can. But there's
4 -- if I had an answer for you, I probably wouldn't be
5 sitting here trying to figure it out. But nonetheless,
6 I think we're all committed to working with all the
7 stakeholders in terms of trying to find a solution. But
8 I don't claim to have the answer to that, I think it's
9 multifaceted. I think it has to do with some, you know,
10 very complex stuff that I don't understand that is in
11 front of us. So, but I do appreciate the question. I
12 think it's a fair question, but I don't have an answer
13 for it.

14

15 MR. TSUKADA: Wow, okay. I think, you
16 know, from -- I do mostly research on the Western science
17 side of things. And those things would not only point
18 to climate change both in river and the oceanic
19 conditions the first year survival rates of chum salmon
20 and marine environments seems to be very critical. Some
21 of the most recent data seems to show an uptick there.
22 I would say that between climate change, another issue
23 that I am trying to focus on is something that Mr.
24 Umphenour focused on, that's the hatchery production. I
25 am 58 years old I can kind of sort of remember the good
26 times in Kenai. In other places of fishing and you know
27 one of the things that we didn't have 58, 60 years ago,
28 was any hatchery fish in the Bering Sea. Whereas now
29 days I think the numbers are in the tens of billions
30 that are released every year. And so, that certainly
31 seems to go on side very well with some of the health
32 and other factors that we see here. Now do we -- this
33 body here we don't control the -- necessarily the
34 hatchery productions nor do we have a full control of
35 climate change. So, you know, we are looking at every
36 bit of impact. I only have numbers for the company that
37 I have the data for, but it is a serious balancing act,
38 20 of my board of directors live, must live in the
39 communities on the Kuskokwim River and they balance that
40 out with our pollock harvest and last year it was an
41 exceptionally low chum pollock -- chum bycatch here but
42 I think we caught something on the order of 119.
43 Genetically speaking, two of those were from the Yukon,
44 two were from one of the 82 coastal Western Alaska rivers
45 and so. Even our Board says they're in struggles because
46 they realize that every fish is important and so, you
47 know, those four fish balance out the \$300 million in
48 assets that we're able to provide to 20 of the poorest
49 communities. I think that's one that other folks may
50 have a different opinion on, but short in the answer I

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1 would say climate change and hatchery production are the
2 two things that I'm looking at.

3
4 UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you. Thank you for
5 the question. I acknowledge that a lot of Western science
6 has really, I think, informed our assessments of what's
7 causing salmon declines as Mr. Tsukada just referenced,
8 we've got a lot of ecosystem drivers, both on the marine
9 and freshwater habitat side of things. We've got
10 potential carrying capacity issues and we do know that
11 bycatch does have an impact and that's why we're trying
12 to minimize that impact on salmon right now. I think the
13 traditional knowledge and indigenous knowledge that
14 we're getting in our process has informed very specific
15 amendments. It's why we're looking at this issue again
16 for a second time. It's to informed very specific
17 amendments through our process. One very striking thing
18 to me from this last meeting, and it's very obvious to
19 you, I know that but we have very different knowledge
20 bases, both Western and traditional, assessing the level
21 of impact very differently, and therefore the level of
22 benefit we're gonna get from various alternatives very
23 differently. And it's something that we're gonna have
24 to reconcile as a Council and it's gonna be a very
25 challenging to do that. And I'm, you know, I'm fearful
26 that no one's gonna walk away happy with the ultimate
27 solution. But we are again, just very focused on doing
28 everything that we can to minimize bycatch and do what
29 is within our control right now to do. So, thank you for
30 the question.

31
32 MR. TWEIT: It's such a great question.
33 Except I don't like to be reminded of it because I've
34 been really particular with chinook, I've been asking
35 that question for a long time. It seems like the things
36 that I took for granted in the first half of my career
37 have all been -- many of them have been turned upside
38 down. The idea that there being no more fishing for
39 Kenai chinook, you know, I mean and chinook are really
40 in poor shape from the Yukon to the Sacramento. But one
41 of the few rivers that's doing a little better than
42 almost all of us is the Columbia with all those dams.
43 What the heck? So, it's -- there's so many mysteries to
44 me and thinking about the question you asked, but there
45 are a couple of things that sort of jump out at me. We
46 know not only are chinook in trouble, but they've also
47 gotten smaller from the Kenai to the Sacramento, a lot
48 smaller. That has to play a role in that. I don't know
49 why they have, the only thing I do here is that where
50 people have actually studied the young fish for many

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1 years, most places they're reporting that young fish,
2 when they get to the estuaries and begin to enter the
3 marine life history, they're in worse shape than they
4 used to be. That's gotta of fit in, but I don't know
5 how. So, there's -- for me, there's a lot of mysteries
6 there. Chum, I really wonder about carrying capacity in
7 the Bering Sea for salmon. There's just no doubt that
8 the numbers of Asian hatchery pink, Asian hatchery chum
9 are just astronomical. Have to have an ecosystem level
10 impact. We don't have clear indications of exactly how
11 that works. But I think there are people who are working
12 on that. The first crews in the winter, things like that
13 maybe will help us understand better. But cause chum
14 aren't in trouble everywhere. The same way that chinook
15 are. So, it's something pretty different there and feels
16 like that's more Bering Sea specific, but all that is
17 just my own sort of vaguely informed speculation,
18 really. But there's no doubt that the world that I
19 thought I knew is not the world that we're seeing now.
20 Who would've thought we'd be talking about chinook on
21 the edges of persisting and then Bristol Bay sockeye
22 coming in these immense numbers, that would've been
23 unthinkable 10, 20 years ago. It's a topsy turvy world,
24 that's for sure.

25

26 UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you.

27

28 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Glad you went last?

29

30 UNIDENTIFIED: No, not really not. I have
31 some serious regrets. Thanks for rubbing that in. Yeah,
32 that's a great question. Yeah, I mean, I'm a fisherman.
33 I'm a Western trained scientist, I have a master's in
34 fisheries science, and so, I will tell you straight up,
35 I will not pretend to know. I mean, we hear climate
36 change is a big, you know, big impact, and just seeing
37 what happens with other species, I think that's
38 possible. But in my mind, you know, I'm a pragmatist.
39 So, I think about what can I do, what levers can I pull,
40 what dials can I turn. And I think, yeah, the job in
41 front of us right now is weighing the different
42 currencies or values of the fish that we're managing or
43 that our fisheries have impacts on. And I think that
44 maybe a painful truth, I'm speaking for myself. A painful
45 truth that we're coming to right now is that the scales
46 we've used to weigh those values and currencies in the
47 past might have been broken and yeah, it's time to fix
48 that. So, I think that's the only levers we can pull,
49 whether that has an impact to bring back chum or not, I
50 don't know. But in the meantime, it can have positive

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1 effects on people being involved in this process, so --
2 well, in the process that we're part of. So, thank you
3 for the question.

4
5 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: I'd like to say one
6 thing about the young chinooks in -- that are leaving
7 the Yukon. I witnessed them, and after the 19 heat stress
8 year, they went back into the Big Minook Creek, my
9 hometown of Rampart and there hasn't been king salmon
10 there for 100 years because of mining, used water cannons
11 to wash off the overburden and it killed the fish off.
12 But anyway, there a witness going in 19 bank to bank
13 jumping on each other. And I think that the short
14 circuited because of the heat stress that they were in,
15 when they hit the cold water of that creek in the river.
16 But, anyway, the next year, in September, I witnessed
17 them. They were very strong. The old spawning ground is
18 in really good shape now, and they were successful, and
19 the rearing ground is visible from 100 feet upside of
20 the mountains, almost straight up. The road is cut into
21 the side of the hill, and they opened up the spring
22 that's feeding the rearing ground down here. So, they
23 swam straight uphill and there in the puddle going across
24 the road. They were swimming up to try to get into that
25 spring up, coming out of the ground, just a little hole
26 and they were really strong and powerful to go uphill.
27 I just want you guys to know that they're not weak in-
28 river and that next spring before they went into the
29 Yukon, on their second year that we witnessed them in
30 the creek, still, while we were trapping beaver, you can
31 lay down on your stomach and there's about eight feet
32 of water and you can look down there, and it was just
33 full of them. And they're really fast darting around in
34 there. So, I just wanted to let you guys know that my
35 area, anyway, that the fish are the baby kings and
36 chinook, they're living really healthy. Just wanted you
37 to hear that. Thank you.

38
39 MS. BURK: Thanks, and Dorothy, if you
40 ever want to know why the salmon are declining, we should
41 really talk cause it's going to take a long time to
42 explain. But I really think -- and I'm not being smart,
43 but maybe I am. The short answer to me is manifest
44 destiny and capitalism, honestly. And I think that
45 something that we've seen that, on every part of the
46 Earth where people have come and done some type of
47 resource development on the end of it, the -- you know,
48 indigenous people who live there, always disenfranchised
49 from the process, and usually the wealth that is created
50 from those lands is usually taken and moved elsewhere

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1 and not kept on those lands. So, I think it's really
2 important to consider that as part of the issue. But I
3 would also -- in us giving hope, because I always have
4 to have hope too, is that, you know, we're all having
5 these meetings and we're all hoping we can do what we
6 can do. But the only thing that we need to do is to give
7 salmon a chance. Our people have learned from fish and
8 animals and wildlife for a very long time, they're the
9 first teachers and these animals and these fish, they're
10 all having their own meetings about how they're going
11 to adapt, how they're gonna swim up different creeks
12 that they've been mapping out since they were tiny little
13 beings, since they were tiny little fry. They've been
14 mapping out all the areas around them. So, they're all
15 out there having meetings about how they're going to
16 survive, where they can go, what are the conditions that
17 they need to make it. It's our job to give them a chance
18 and I think that's what we've said loud and clear in all
19 of these meetings is we're all working together to give
20 the salmon the best chance that they can. So, just wanted
21 to kind of say that for the night, thank you.

22
23 MS. SHOCKLEY: Well, I appreciate that.
24 And, you know, I know as far as indigenous people, you
25 know, we have our thoughts and our answers, and we can
26 see, you know, globally what's happening. But I thought
27 it was really important to hear from you who are making
28 decisions for us, for our lives, to share what you think
29 or what you -- yeah, just your answers, and I appreciate
30 that. Thank you.

31
32 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: We're gonna come to
33 a point where you all going to be sitting here with
34 these people by yourself. I just want you to know that.
35 Go ahead.

36
37 MS. EVANS: Linda Evans from Rampart. I
38 was sitting here thinking about what you said, listening
39 to other people's testimony and stuff. And at one point
40 when they started cutting the -- we couldn't fish in the
41 Yukon River anymore and then they had limited openings,
42 you know, you could just fish for one night or two
43 nights, and then you had to pull your net. I figured
44 that I -- if I could get ten chinook salmon that, that'd
45 be enough for me and my family, you know, because I'd
46 leave three whole ones, to put in the freezer. You know,
47 to save for church, like Jan said, cover dish when we
48 have covered dish in the community. And then one for my
49 family, and then I take the other three and jar them,
50 you know, smoke them, jar them. I think it's three,

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1 maybe four to get like three or four cases of jarred
2 fish that would put us through the winter and to give
3 away to people. You know, and then we could take the
4 rest of them and cut them and smoke them and dry them.
5 You know for - to make dry fish, make strips and the
6 belly parts, we would cut off the belly part and salt
7 them and put them in a barrel and salt them, to preserve
8 for the winter. You know, a long time ago our people
9 didn't have freezers, you know. Nobody had freezers
10 anyway. So, you know so, they had to figure out ways to
11 preserve fish and salting in barrel was one of the ways,
12 you know. So, ten fish, I figured I could live off of
13 ten fish, you know and if you think of the number of
14 fish all along the Yukon River, I think it was a little
15 over 3,000, 4,000 that the people caught, actually
16 caught. That's all we're talking about for the whole
17 Yukon River. You know, we're talking about 4,000 fish
18 for subsistence, that's not very much. You're telling
19 me you're getting 200 million pounds of salmon? You know
20 that kinda boggles my mind. I'm trying to have salmon,
21 preserve salmon for my grandchildren. You know, it's
22 something that we have to work together on. We have to
23 figure out how to save our fish and our other resources
24 that we have. It's just -- it's that simple. Thank you.
25

26 MR. IRWIN: Okay a closing comment for
27 me. Bill, the reason why the Columbia River is doing so
28 well is the same reason why the Kusko is the only
29 interior river that's doing okay. It's because of co-
30 management with tribes. And, Angel, thank you for having
31 the courage to say bycatch in your answer. You're the
32 only one who did and I really, really appreciate that.
33 That took courage in sitting in your position. So, thank
34 you.
35

36 MR. BASSICH: Have one quick closing
37 comment. First of all, thank you for coming here. I
38 really appreciate your time. I think it's really
39 important for us to build this collaboration and number
40 two, one thing we didn't talk about tonight that's very
41 much on many of our minds is Gravel-to-Gravel
42 Management. And we are working really hard to try and
43 establish that. But you are a key integral part of that.
44 So, please keep that in mind and help us to achieve
45 Gravel-to-Gravel Management wherever we possibly can,
46 because a large part of that life cycle that we're trying
47 to work through good management practices is in your
48 domain. So, that's what I'm asking from this meeting
49 here, from you, help us. As Eva said, help the fish and
50 help us to achieve Gravel-to-Gravel and I honestly

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1 believe that if we can change the dynamics of how we
2 manage fisheries within the State of Alaska, all people
3 can have salmon in the future and that should be the
4 goal. We may not all have the same amount we have right
5 now, but all people should be able to share in that
6 resource. So, thank you.

7

8 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Meeting is recessed
9 till morning.

10

11 (Off record)

12

13 (END OF PROCEEDINGS)

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I, Rafael Morel, for Lighthouse Integrated Services Corp, do hereby certify:

THAT the foregoing pages numbered 1 through 178 contain a full, true and correct Transcript of the EASTERN INTERIOR ALASKA SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING, VOLUME I recorded on the 19th 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 10th day of March 2025.

Rafael Morel
Chief Project Manager