

NORTH SLOPE SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes

Dr. Tom Albert Conference Hall
Iḷisaġvik College
Utqiagvik, Alaska
August 19 – 20, 2024

Invocation:

Billy Adams provided an invocation.

Call to Order, Roll Call, and Quorum Establishment:

The meeting was called to order on Monday, August 19, 2024, at 9:15 a.m. Council members Wanda Kippi, Quincy Adams, Peter Williams, and Chair Brower Frantz were present in person at the meeting. Council members Steve Oomittuk and Esther Hugo were present via teleconference. Member Martha Itta was not present and excused. With six of the seven seated Council members present (Council has three vacant seats), quorum was established.

Attendees:

*Asterisk * identifies if present via teleconference.*

- Inupiat Circumpolar Council, Alaska (ICC): Marie Green*
- Inupiat Community of the Arctic Slope (ICAS): Sheldon Adams, Alfred Ningeok, Jaysun Rexford.
- North Slope Borough Department of Wildlife Management: Brian Person, Todd Sformo, Billy Adams, Lucy Leavitt, Jared Nayakik
- North Slope Borough Planning: Qinugan Roddy, Chastity Olemaun
- Office of Subsistence Management (OSM): Kristen Morrow, Karen Hyer, Katerina Wessels, Gisela Chapa, Kendra Holman*, Corey Graham*, Lisa Grediagin*, Jason Roberts*
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS): Earnest Nageak, Clayton Merrill*, Jill Klein*
- National Park Service (NPS): Kim Jochum*, Eva Patton*, Marcy Okada*, Kyle Joly*,
- Bureau of Land Management (BLM): Chris McKee*
- Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA): Glenn Chen*
- Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G): Carmen Daggett, Helen Cold*, Marianna Mallory*
- San Diego State University: Jacqui Vogel

Review and Adopt Agenda:

- Motion by Member Adams, seconded by Member Kippi, to adopt the agenda as presented.

The motion **passed** unanimously.

Review and Approve Previous Meeting Minutes:

- Motion by Member Kippi, seconded by Member Adams, to approve the following meeting minutes as presented:
 - March 5-6, 2024, Joint-Council Meeting Minutes
 - March 7, 2024, Quadrilateral Winter 2024 Meeting Minutes on WP24-28/29
 - March 8, 2024, Council Winter 2024 Meeting Minutes

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

Council Member and Chair Reports:

Esther Hugo of Anaktuvuk Pass, shared details about the bad summer this year. She reported daily strong southerly winds, rain, and two days of snowfall in July. Member Hugo expressed this was the first time in her lifetime she had witnessed the persistent southerly winds. Furthermore, the bad weather delayed *aqpiks* (salmonberries), and Member Hugo did not harvest many because they weren't ripe. Cranberries and blackberries seemed to be on schedule. She also added that her family harvested two *tuttu* (caribou) and gave some of the harvest with an elder and it felt good to share. Likewise, Member Hugo shared she had sheep this season after her grandson gave some of his harvest to her family in July. At the conclusion of Member Hugo's report, she conveyed that the people of Anaktuvuk Pass were gearing up for fall caribou harvests, requested current caribou location maps from the North Slope Borough, and were denied the information. Member Hugo expressed her disagreement with the decision and how detrimental it was to community.

Brian Person, Wildlife Biologist with the North Slope Borough, who was present at the meeting, stated that under an agreement with the State and the Bureau of Land Management, the North Slope Borough is not allowed to share those maps for 30-days after caribou locations have been documented. Mr. Person stated he provided week-old oral descriptions of where the caribou were spotted. He further communicated that over the last five to 20 years caribou haven't migrated through Anaktuvuk Pass until September or October; bulls are in rut during this time and are not ideal for harvest.

Quincy Adams of Utqiagvik reported a very bountiful summer for many. Many families harvested bearded seal, and he saw a lot of people making *paniqtaq* (dried meat) and *misigaaq* (seal oil) for their families. Member Adams also commended the subsistence hunters from the Inupiat Community of the Arctic Slope (ICAS) for providing for elders, widows, and others who do not have the ability to harvest for themselves. Likewise, Member Adams expressed walrus season was successful. He further shared that several boats "stocked up" on walrus in anticipation for the winter. *Tuttu* seemed abundant and were observed around Echo Bay; people were expected to go camping to harvest fish and *tuttu* for the fall season soon. Spring whaling was also good with the community landing twelve whales in the season. He stated there was a big community feast to celebrate the whaling season's success. He also stated he had

seen more fish nets out in the water than he remembered growing up. A lot of people had been catching humpies (Pink Salmon) and Arctic Char.

Wanda Kippi of Atqasuk reported that the spring was fine and geese hunting was good. In the summer they had some hot days, but the town was soaking wet with all the rain they had. Member Kippi reported people saw *amaġuq* (wolf) tracks a mile upriver around *Tikigluk* near Atqasuk. She also shared fishermen had put nets and were catching some *aanaakliqs* (Broad Whitefish) and *pikuktuuq* (Humpback Whitefish), a few Pink Salmon, and she got the one pike that was harvested. Caribou were seen throughout the area; Member Kippi saw some in July, and her grandson saw some in early August around their camping grounds. She expressed it was good to see but that caribou would begin moving going farther and farther away at the start of fall hunts. Winter freeze-up was slow last year; it took so long for the river to freeze that Member Kippi did not go *niksikusq* (fishing). Member Kippi also reported there were some people picking salmonberries by the time of the meeting but the ones she saw around town were still closed. She also reported not seeing many blueberries since the *nauyags* (gulls) beat her to them. Furthermore, she reported there was an *aklaq* (bear) seen around two to five miles west of Atqasuk.

Steve Oomittuk of Point Hope reported they had wet weather and did not have much of a summer. There were a lot of murre, and people caught caribou. He also explained that people in Point Hope were trying to make sense of the new harvest regulations on caribou in Unit 23 and felt it was unfair that subsistence users were the ones with a harvest limit instead of the out-of-state and non-resident hunters. People were still interested in knowing how many out-of-state and non-resident hunters had hunted for caribou within that Unit. Member Oomittuk stated the importance of caribou for people in the region, not only as part of their main diet, but to keep people warm and provide clothing. Member Oomittuk also reported the wet summer was hard on people – the rain and southerly winds made it difficult for people to get around. Arctic Char were seen but the waters were too rough to harvest, and people were discontent about competition for the few available muskox with non-resident and out-of-state hunters. He further emphasized the hardships the people from the North Slope region face regarding food security and that the ADF&G should be cognizant about the needs of the people that live within the North Slope region.

Chair Frantz also weighed in at the time of Member Oomittuk's report and shared his belief that it is completely backwards to allow non-local hunters to fly from Unit 23 into 26A to take caribou during a time when subsistence harvesters are being limited.

Peter Williams of Anaktuvuk Pass was delayed due to bad weather and did not provide a report.

Chair Brower Frantz of Utqiagvik added to Member Adam's report; he stated that beluga were plentiful in the summer and that he had not heard many reports on the harvest of muskox or moose to date. He shared that Pink Salmon were plentiful, but many fish were heavily infested with tapeworms. Arctic Char were seen and there was a good number of whitefish; Chair Frantz had not seen nor heard reports of mold issues on whitefish. Caribou, whaling, bearded seal, and walrus were all great and he had seen many people out collecting *qunuliqs* (Mountain or Arctic Sorrel). Chair Frantz also shared that ducks were

being harvested and eiders were flying through. Chair Frantz mentioned he had not heard reports of bears and suspected the large number of caribou around the Ikpikpuk River moved the bears out.

Public Testimony:

Steve Oomittuk, representing the Native Village of Point Hope, stated how difficult it is for Tribal members to understand the different jurisdictional boundaries and authorities over subsistence resources. He also expressed the need for the Council to address subsistence issues on the take of all animals, whether it is on the ocean or land, and further emphasized how people don't understand why the Council does not have more jurisdiction on subsistence resources like polar bear, belugas, walrus, among others.

Lucy Leavitt works with the North Slope Borough Wildlife Department and is a subsistence hunter. She requested an increase in muskox hunting opportunities in Unit 26A. Hunting for caribou or moose requires travelling long distances, can be very expensive, or require a lot of effort for minimal success, whereas more muskoxen have been observed in the area but opportunities to harvest them are very limited.

Council Training:

Kristen Morrow, OSM Anthropology Pathways Intern, provided the Council training on Delegation of Authority.

Briefing on Proposed Changes to Wildlife Delegation of Authority Letters

Kendra Holman, OSM Wildlife Biologist, provided an overview of proposed changes to existing wildlife Delegation of Authority Letters. The proposed changes would move some wildlife delegated authorities into unit-specific regulations rather than Delegation of Authority Letters. This briefing was intended to serve as an introduction to the topic and additional opportunities will be provided to the Council to review and comment on these proposed changes.

Action Items:

Fisheries Proposals and Closure Reviews

Karen Hyer, OSM Fisheries Biologist, provided an overview of cross-over regional proposals and closure reviews to the Council.

Crossover Proposals and Closure Reviews

FP25-16 – Kanuti River and Bonanza Creek Gear Types and Harvest Limits

- Motion by Member Adams, seconded by Member Kippi, to take no action and defer to the home region. The Council expressed minimal use from subsistence users in the region and considered it best to allow the home region to make recommendations.

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

FP25-17 – Delta River Add Rod and Reel with Limits Matching State

- Motion by Member Williams, seconded by Member Hugo, to take no action and defer to the home region. The Council expressed minimal use from subsistence users in the region and considered it best to allow the home region to make recommendations.

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

FCR23-05 (deferred) – Delta River All Fish (50 CFR 100.27(e)(3)(x))

- Motion by Member Adams, seconded by Member Kippi, to take no action and defer to the home region. The Council expressed minimal use from subsistence users in the region and considered it best to allow the home region to make recommendations.

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

FCR25-02 – Nome Creek Arctic Grayling (50 CFR 100.27(e)(3)(xi))

- Motion by Member Hugo, seconded by Member Adams, to take no action and defer to the home region. The Council expressed minimal use from subsistence users in the region and considered it best to allow the home region to make recommendations.

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

2026 Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program (FRMP) Priority Information Needs (PINs) Development

Ms. Karen Hyer and Ms. Kristen Morrow presented the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program Priority Information Needs (PINs) to the Council.

- Motion by Member Adams, seconded by Member Williams, to adopt the PINs for the North Slope region as follows:
 - Using Traditional Ecological Knowledge and/or harvest monitoring, document new fish species and changes in abundance, and size, timing, and distribution of existing fish species.
 - Using Traditional Ecological Knowledge and/or harvest monitoring to document the impacts of new or expanding species on other fish that are important to subsistence in the North Slope region.
 - Document the effects of climate change including late freeze up on subsistence fishing access, harvest, and preservation, and the impact of these changes on community-wide harvest levels and food security on the North Slope. Research could investigate adaptations for continuing community-wide harvest levels where traditional preservation methods are impacted.
 - Baseline fish habitat and water quality monitoring (especially temperature, dissolved oxygen, and silt) on the rivers and tributaries important to subsistence fishing for communities of the North Slope region. Investigators are encouraged to include overwintering areas.

- Distribution, abundance, and stocks of broad whitefish on the Sagavanirktok, Ikpikpuk, Meade, Inaru, Tupaagruk Rivers, and other rivers important to subsistence.
- Seasonal movement and overwintering habitat of whitefish on the Colville Delta.
- Document population structure of abundance and health of Lake Trout and grayling in Peters, Schrader, Chandler, Shainin, and other Lakes.
- Health and abundance of Arctic Grayling populations in Anaktuvuk Pass area and Point Hope.
- Evaluate changes in water levels, discoloration and mineral deposits, water temperature, and reduced oxygen in major river systems associated with subsistence fishery resources in the North Slope region, and how these changes will affect fish vital for subsistence.
- Document and investigate the possible causes of mold, disease, and discoloration on Broad Whitefish and other subsistence species in the Colville River in the vicinity of Nuiqsut. Compare environmental conditions in the Colville River – including temperature – with those in the Ikpikpuk River, where whitefish are healthy, and mold has not been observed to date. Investigators are encouraged to draw on both stocks status and trends and Traditional Ecological Knowledge research methods.

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

Dall Sheep Management Strategy Guidelines

Gisela Chapa, OSM Council Coordinator, provided information on the Dall Sheep Management Strategy Guidelines. These guidelines were drafted by the Western Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council and presented to this Council to consider drafting similar guidelines for sheep harvest and management within the North Slope region. The Council opted to defer any action and revisit this topic at a later time.

Annual Report

Board FY-2023 Annual Report Replies

Ms. Chapa provided a summary of the draft Federal Subsistence Board (Board) replies to the Council's FY-2023 Annual Report. The Board met on August 7, 2024, and had in-depth discussions on the Annual Report Reply but the Board did not have an opportunity to finalize the reply in time for the Council meeting.¹

Identify Topics for FY 2024 Annual Report

- Motion by Member Adams, seconded by Member Williams, to approve the following items be included in the FY-2024 Annual Report to the Board.
 1. Funding for muskox monitoring within the North Slope region.

¹ A final version of the Board's Annual Report Reply was forwarded to the Council on September 13th, 2024.

2. Funding to study the effects of fly-in and guided hunters on caribou migration in the North Slope region.
3. Establishing a caribou commission within the North Slope region.
4. Funding to monitor wanton waste of caribou by out-of-state and non-local hunters.

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

Future Meeting Dates

The Council moved their winter 2025 meeting dates from February 24 – 25 to February 27 - 28, in Utqiagvik.

The Council confirmed their fall 2025 meeting date and location: September 16-17, in Utqiagvik.

Agency Reports:

- ICAS Subsistence Hunter Program Information, presented by Jaysun Rexford.
- 2024 ADF&G Unit 26A Update, presented by Carmen Daggett, Wildlife Biologist.
- 2024 ADF&G Changes in Caribou Hunting Regulations in Units 23 and 26 A, presented by Carmen Daggett, Wildlife Biologist.
- Northern Alaska USFWS Field Office Update presented by Earnest Nageak, Alaska Native Affairs Specialist.
- Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge Staff Introduction by Clayton Merrill, Subsistence Coordinator.
- NPS Amended Alaska Sport Hunting and Trapping Regulations, Final Rule, presented by Kim Jochum, Subsistence Program Analyst.
- Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve Update presented by Marcy Okada, Subsistence Coordinator.
- OSM Fall 2024 Update, presented by Katerina Wessels, Supervisory Program Analyst.

Other Business:

Partners for Fisheries Monitoring Program

Ms. Hyer informed the Council of the upcoming competitive funding opportunity through the Partners for Fisheries Monitoring Program.

805(c) Report:

Ms. Chapa provided a summary of the 805(c) Report outlining Board action on wildlife proposals and closure reviews impacting residents of the North Slope region.

Council Application Open Season:

Ms. Chapa advised the Council that the window to apply for a seat on the Council is not yet open. There will be three vacancies to fill on the Council as those terms expire December 2nd, 2025. Council members with expiring seats will be informed when this window opens, and outreach will be done across the region at that time. The Council recommended shortening the nominations and appointment timeline to keep applicants engaged. The Council also recommended doing outreach through the North Slope Borough's Fish and Game Management Committee to improve representation from other Villages in the North Slope region.

Council Correspondence:

Ms. Chapa provided an update on the following correspondence sent on behalf of the Council since the winter 2024 meeting in Anchorage.

- Joint Council Letter to the Board Regarding Concerns Over Bycatch.
- Joint Council Letter to the Board Regarding Council Member Compensation.
- Joint Council Letter to the Board to Address Issues in Council Correspondence.
- Joint Council Letter to the Board Regarding Caribou Concerns Statewide.
- Joint Council Letter to the Board Regarding Concerns on the Western Arctic Caribou Herd.

Declining Balance Cards:

Ms. Chapa provided information to the Council about proposed changes to the way OSM processes payment for invitational travel for Council members. The Council supported the use of declining balance cards stating it will streamline the process.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:37am on August 20, 2024.

Signature on file

Gisela Chapa, DFO
DOI Office of Subsistence Management

Signature on file

Brower Frantz, Chair
North Slope Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

These meeting minutes were formally considered and approved by the North Slope Subsistence Regional Advisory Council at its winter meeting, February 28, 2025.

A more detailed report of this meeting, copies of the transcripts, and meeting handouts are available upon request. Call Gisela Chapa at 1-800-478-1456 or 907-310-6129, or email gisela_chapa@ios.doi.gov.