

SOUTHCENTRAL ALASKA SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes

The Cordova Center
Cordova, Alaska
March 12, 2025

Invocation:

Faye Ewan provided an invocation.

Call to Order, Roll Call, and Quorum Establishment:

The meeting was called to order Wednesday, March 12, 2025, at 9:08 am. Council Chair Greg Encelewski, and Council members Edward Holsten, Michael Opheim, Diane Selanoff, Dennis Zadra, Kirk Wilson, Faye Ewan, Andrew McLaughlin, Heath Kocan, and Judith Caminer were present in person. Council members Edward GreyBear attended telephonically. Member Hope Roberts and Angela Totemoff were absent and unexcused. The Council has no vacant seats. With eleven out of thirteen seated Council members present, quorum was established.

Attendees:

*Asterisk * identifies if present via teleconference.*

- Bureau of Land Management (BLM): Glennallen Field Office – Caroline Ketron*, Neil Perry*, Alysia Hancock*
- Bureau of Indian Affairs: Alaska Region Branch of Natural Resources – Glenn Chen*, Rosalie Debenham*
- National Park Service (NPS): Regional Office – Eva Patton*, Victoria Florey*; Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve (WRST NPP) – Amber Cohen*, Dave Sarafin*
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS): Southern Alaska Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office – Ken Gates*; Kenai National Wildlife Refuge – Todd Eskelin*
- U.S. Forest Service (USFS): Regional Office – Greg Risdahl*; Chugach National Forest – Andrew Sanders, Andy Morris
- Office of Subsistence Management (OSM): Brian Ubelaker, Nissa Pilcher, Katya Wessels, Hannah Voorhees, Kevin Foley*, Kristen Morrow*, Jason Roberts*. Orville Lind*, Janel Day*
- Other Organizations: Ahtna Inter-Tribal Resource Commission (AITRC) – Sterling Spilinek
Chugach Regional Resources Commission (CRRC) – Christine DeWeese*, Native Village of Eyak (NVE) – Matt Piche
- Public: Margaret Terrence, Noami Jones*

Election of Officers:

There were no changes to Council Officers. The following members were re-elected by unanimous consent with no other nominations made:

- Chair – Greg Encelewski
- Vice Chair – Judy Caminer
- Secretary – Andrew McLaughlin

Review and Adopt Agenda:

Motion by Member Selanoff, seconded by Member Opheim, to adopt the agenda with the following changes.

- Addition of title to **Agenda Item 11**. *Council Member Training*, now reads *Council Member Training; Proposed changes to federal subsistence hunting and trapping regulations*
- Add under **Agenda Item 13**
 - Add *CRRC Report and Ketchikan Nonrural Determination Update*
 - Update *2024 Summary; Cook Inlet Sport Fish Management Areas* to include documentation of supplemental material
 - Remove *National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Gulf of Alaska Chinook Salmon Endangered Species Act Status Review and Listing* as there is no new information since the Fall meeting on the status review report
- Remove **Agenda Item 14..** *Special Action Updates* as there have not been any
- Move **15. Other Business WP24-01** *Statewide sale of brown bear hides* and place it under **12. Action Items**

The motion passed unanimously.

Review and Approve Previous Meeting Minutes:

Motion by Member McLaughlin, seconded by Member Opheim, to approve the fall 2024 meeting minutes as presented.

The motion passed unanimously.

Council Member and Chair Reports:

Andrew [Andy] McLaughlin of Chenega Bay reported he experienced crowding at his remote moose camp for the first time this fall. He noted that for nearly thirty years there has been no one else there and he has always been successful, but neither were true this year. He informed the Council that the other hunters were displaced from areas they used to hunt, but they had the resources to travel large distances to go moose hunting where he does not. Member McLaughlin also reported that wild and hatchery Pink [Salmon] and silver [Coho Salmon] returns were very depressed while the red [Sockeye Salmon] run did better and noted that difficult salmon years are hard on bears especially when it is a bad berry year, which was the case this last fall. Member McLaughlin reported that halibut fishing was the poorest it had ever been, local king salmon [Chinook Salmon] subsistence trawling in Chenega has yet to catch a single salmon although some had caught rockfish. He informed the council that Chenega also saw the warmer

winter that was prevalent in a great portion of the state but that perhaps the deer population will benefit but expressed concern that salmon streams will be too low for spawning. Member McLaughlin reported that he believes there has been an unprecedented clam die off in Southwest Prince William Sound (PWS) for multiple species, and expressed deep concern with the effects commercial trawling is having on PWS. He expressed the need for additional research on trawling, and concern that regulatory decisions are becoming more political and not practical, with a trend for enacting blanket management practices that don't benefit resources or subsistence users. He stated that fisheries managers need to learn from other failed fisheries in other parts of the country, and the patchwork of different jurisdictions make it difficult to affect real change for subsistence users.

Diane Selanoff of Valdez echoed Member McLaughlin's report on a mild winter, and shared a recent observation at Tatitlek, where she saw seals and sea lions are congregating like they do when herring are moving in to spawn but it was too early for that behavior and noted that this change means something. Member Selanoff reported that in late October there had been a run of silvers [Coho Salmon] into a Mineral Creek, a glacier river near Valdez which is a half mile away from the closest silver [Coho Salmon] rearing stream. She informed the Council that people in the community harvested some, and shared the observation that the fish weren't gravid, and they would have been unable to spawn in that drainage, as it was poor habitat. Member Selanoff informed the Council that Tatitlek is currently celebrating an event called the Peksulineq Festival - Peksulineq means egg, or 'the beginning', signifying the resumption of subsistence, and that everyone is excited to go out and start harvesting again, beginning with snails and chitons.

Judith [Judy] Caminer of Anchorage requested a moment of silence for long time solicitor Ken Lord, who had recently passed. At the conclusion of the silence, she extended her thanks for the USFS and NVE for hosting the Council and providing logistical support. Member Caminer expressed concern over federal workers that had been lost during the last round of layoffs that help support this program, but that she was pleased that Chair Encelewski was to remain the Chair to help the Council navigate upcoming challenges. She reported on the recent activity of the Federal Subsistence Board's (Board) ruling on the Nonrural Determination Proposal NDP25-01, which was a request to change of status of the Ketchikan Area to rural for subsistence purposes. She explained that this is a big change for the program, and it is sure to be contested in some way. Member Caminer finalized her report by noting that Anchorage also had a very mild winter which was great for the moose but will create concern over fire danger this summer.

Michael Opheim of Seldovia reported that Seldovia had a horrible winter with no snow, but a lot of rain and wind. He noted that everything is currently budding early so he will be going out and harvesting devils club buds when he returns home from this meeting. Member Opheim reported that while he has seen a lot of rabbit tracks this winter, he did not see many coyote or wolf tracks and only just saw a set of moose tracks before this meeting and stated that with the low snow the animals didn't need to come near town. He added that there was a report of a black bear sow with a cub in town in the last day, so the bears are starting to move. He reported that the fishing had been terrible and subsistence needs were not met in his community and gave a brief update on some Seldovia Fish and Game Advisory Committee activity

and some state regulatory proposals that may be submitted in the next few cycles concerning the Kenai Peninsula.

Heath Kocan of Cordova reported that Cordova also had a very mild winter, with not much snow even in the mountains. He also reported a lackluster silver [Coho Salmon] year, where the salmon came in hard like they normally do but then petered out much faster than they should have. He also informed the Council that the tanner crab fishing has been very hit or miss, king [Chinook Salmon] fishing has been poor, and an annual spring fishing trip he takes in the spring netted far fewer fish than typical, the ones that were caught were smaller than normal, but noted that black cod catches had increased. Member Kocan reported that there has also been significantly less halibut near Cordova, which was worrisome and it would be nice to know what is going on with them.

Edward [Ed] Holsten of Cooper Landing reported that few silvers [Coho Salmon] made it up the Kenai, even the Middle River last fall, and that like many years previous that king [Chinook Salmon] fishing had been closed, but that the two Sockeye [Salmon] runs were both good although late, which he speculated could be due to the high lake and river waters in that drainage last year. He reported that his area had also had a very mild winter with basically no snow, and he is also concerned with the ability of salmon to get to their natal streams as Kenai Lake is already much lower than typical for this time of year. Member Holsten reported that the mild winter was probably good for the moose, the roadkill numbers were down significantly since they didn't need to come to lower elevations during the winter, but there are a lot more coyotes near town than typical, the rabbit population is down, and he expects the lynx population to follow that trend soon.

Dennis Zadra of Cordova also echoed observations of a mild winter, and noted that Cordova had a lot of ice, and two distinct wind events – one in the fall and one around Christmas that were both very significant. He reported on results from the State of Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF) meeting that was held in Cordova this past December; there were some reductions to commercial fishing times in PWS but Cordova gained a Dungeness fishery that he can participate in since it is during the new commercial fishing closure. Member Zadra reported that he had caught good haul of tanner crab in his pots this weekend so that makes him optimistic about that species. He also noted that he was looking forward to having the Council view the subsistence dip net fishery location on the Copper River that they were instrumental in creating, but the road was impassible due to drifting snow near the end of the road. Member Zadra noted that the forecast of reds [Sockeye Salmon] just came out and looked promising, and that he had some concerns about shrimp numbers but that he thought the commercial shrimp fishery is well managed.

Kirk Wilson of Tolsona reported the caribou population near him is very depressed, and activities by nonlocal users of all-terrain vehicles (ATV) are tearing up the lichen that the caribou will need to recover, especially in the Alphabet Hills and behind Eureka. He noted that there is also too much pressure on the moose in the Copper Basin, there isn't enough for subsistence users, and predator numbers are starting to reflect the lack of available food. Member Wilson expressed concern over decreasing salmon size in Copper River, *he's* recently had a hard time meeting his subsistence needs with his fishwheel between

low salmon numbers as well as high water levels. He expressed concern for the increase of participation in the Chitina personal use fishery on the Copper River, as well as the permit holders using advanced technology that allows them to take fish faster with less effort. He spoke to his positive experience with limited enhancement of salmon runs and the benefits to subsistence users by the approval of a wildlife special action that he had previously submitted that closed some lands in Unit 13 to non-federally qualified subsistence users and he would like to expand this closure area.

Faye Ewan of Kluti-Kaah reported that she was born and raised in the Copper Basin and knows it and the surrounding lands well, and that she is concerned over the declining populations of moose, caribou and salmon while development of the area continues. She also expressed concern that lichen in caribou calving grounds is being damaged by ATVs, moose roadkill numbers are high, and the salmon quality is now poor in the mid-Copper River, bycatch that is discarded by ocean trawlers with seemingly no consequences, and that the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council is not listening to the people. She informed the Council that many users of the Chitina Personal Use fishery do not respect the fish while the law enforcement officers do nothing, and that nonlocal moose hunters do not take animals respectfully either. She believes the legal consequences for wanton waste should be stricter and applied the same for all users, there should be higher qualifications to become a federally qualified subsistence user, as well as for receiving a hunting or fishing license. She informed the Council that her family was heavily involved in the creation of ANILCA but now the young people in her community don't know what fish tastes like or how to process it because there hasn't been enough salmon to go around so the fish that is caught is reserved for elders.

Edward GreyBear of Kluti-Kaah reported that he had also observed a large increase of hunters in the Copper Basin since his youth. He noted that there was not one time that he did not go into the woods where he didn't see at least one other hunting group this fall during his frequent trips with youth hunters. Member GreyBear reported that while he was unsuccessful this year, he did observe nonlocal hunters that were successful not take organs and other parts that would have been utilized by Ahtna people and he got the opportunity to use it as a teaching moment for some hunters and was able harvest and personally use their previously discarded organ meat.

Richard [Greg] Encelewski of Ninilchik reported that the heavily reduced availability of fish and wildlife that many members are commenting is a statewide issue. He went on to report that in Ninilchik there has not been any opportunity for wild kings [Chinook Salmon] for a while, and last year the silvers [Coho Salmon] didn't return. He noted that the Ninilchik Tribe had to buy commercially caught kings and silvers [Chinook and Coho Salmon] from Southeast Alaska for food this year. He informed the Council about his involvement with the creation of the Tikahtnu Intertribal Fish Commission, which is comprised of Chickaloon Native Village, Native Village of Eklutna, Kenaitze Indian Tribe, Knik Tribe, Ninilchik Village Tribe, Salamatof Tribe, and Seldovia Tribe to assist tribal members get fish for their subsistence needs. Chair Encelewski noted that his tribe is fortunate that they still have abundant reds [Sockeye Salmon], but that they are becoming so small that some people use humpy [Pink Salmon] gear to take them and expressed concern over hatcheries releasing too many salmon into the oceans from all over the Pacific. He reported that the [razor] clam population on the east side of Cook Inlet have still not

recovered enough to harvest them, he must travel to the west side to gather them. Chair Encelewski reported that Ninilchik has worked very hard to increase the moose population through concentrated predator harvest, and this year both he and his son were able to both take a moose. Chair Encelewski also outlined the purpose of the Council and what the council member reports are intended to contain for the benefit of the newer members and noted that working within dual management is difficult. He also thanked Member Caminer for attending the last Board meeting in his stead and noted that he expected the Board membership would be changing due to the change in administration.

Public and Tribal Comment on Non-Agenda items

Matt Piche of Cordova thanked the Council's support of the Federal subsistence dip net fishery that was recently opened as his family and friends participate in it. He noted that while participants normally only catch one to two fish an hour, that the fishery is a valuable resource for his family because they lack a skiff or other way to harvest salmon in the ocean.

Council Training; Proposed Changes to Federal Subsistence Hunting and Trapping Regulations

Hannah Voorhees, OSM Cultural Anthropologist, presented information on the process and timeline of how to submit proposed changes to Federal subsistence hunting and trapping regulations.

Action Items

Call for Federal Wildlife Proposals

Brian Ubelaker, OSM Wildlife Biologist, informed the Council that the Board is accepting proposals to change Federal regulations for the subsistence harvest of wildlife on Federal public lands and waters for the 2026-2028 regulatory years.

Development of Regulatory Wildlife Proposals

Motion by Member GreyBear, seconded by Member Opheim, to submit a proposal to extend moose season in Units 11 and 13 to close on Sep 30.

The motion passed unanimously.

This proposal would extend the moose season to compensate for changes in climate and allow for more additional harvest opportunity and provide a subsistence priority.

Motion by Member Caminer, seconded by Member Opheim, to submit a proposal to change the brown bear harvest limit from one bear to two bears in Unit 13.

The motion passed unanimously.

The Alaska Board of Game recently adopted Proposal 57 to increase the brown bear harvest limit in Unit 13 under State regulations. This proposal would keep Federal and State regulations aligned,

provide additional subsistence harvest opportunity, and prevent Federal regulations from being more restrictive than State regulations.

Motion by Member McLaughlin, seconded by Member Opheim, to submit a proposal to change the possession limit and season dates for beaver hunting in Unit 6.

The motion passed unanimously.

This proposal would increase the possession limit of beaver in Unit 6 and extend the season to a year-round season. Subsistence practices are opportunistic in nature, and this change would allow for opportunistic beaver harvest under a hunting license. It also enables users to target larger beavers, rather than the indiscriminate harvest that occurs with trapping.

Motion by Member McLaughlin, seconded by Member Opheim, to submit a proposal to recognize the customary and traditional uses of brown bear in Unit 6 by the residents of Chenega and Tatitlek, and establish brown bear hunt in Unit 6 with a harvest limit of one bear by Federal registration permit and a season of Aug. 1-Jun. 30.

The motion passed unanimously.

This proposal would recognize the traditional use of brown bears by specific rural residents of Prince William Sound. Time honored subsistence practices of brown bear harvest date far back. Most of Prince William Sound consists of Federal public lands, many of which contain robust brown bear populations that can withstand limited Federal harvest and provide for subsistence opportunity.

WP24-01 Statewide Sale of Brown Bear Hides

Hannah Voorhees presented the revised analysis and OSM recommendation to the Council. Motion by Member McLaughlin, seconded by Member Opheim, to support WP24-01 with the revised OSM modification.

The motion passed with a vote of 8 in favor and 3 in opposition.

The Council supported WP24-01 as modified by modified by OSM in February of 2025. Allowing the sale of brown bear hides is beneficial to subsistence users and is already allowed in some areas of Alaska. The sale of hides is likely to occur at a low level because of low demand. The Council would also like to bring to the attention of the Federal Subsistence Board that some areas of the region have cultural sensitivities to the harvest and use of brown bears and their parts.

Council Charter Review

Nissa Pilcher, Council Coordinator, provided an overview of the Council Charter for review and renewal. Motion by Member Opheim, seconded by Member Wilson, to adopt the charter with no changes.

The motion passed unanimously.

Review and Approve FY24 Annual Report

Nissa Pilcher presented the draft FY2024 Annual Report to the Council with included six topics, two of which included request of the Board and four were informational items. Motion by Member Opheim, seconded by member McLaughlin, to add additional language on the Councils concern over commercial trawling operations have on ocean resources under **Topic 5. Ongoing effects of changing environmental conditions impacting this region in relation to ocean resources**, which is an informational topic, and the Council approved this change.

The motion passed unanimously.

Call for Alaska Board of Game Proposals

The Council reviewed the Call for Proposals for the State of Alaska Board of Game for the 2025-2026 Regulatory Year but took no action on this agenda item.

Alaska Board of Game Statewide Meeting Proposal Comments

The Council voted to submit a comment on one Statewide Alaska Board of Game proposal.

Proposal 121 – Divide Unit 15C into two subunits.

Motion by Member Selanoff, seconded by Member Opheim, to support Proposals 95 & 96.

The motion failed unanimously.

The Council does not believe that the creation of the additional subunit is currently necessary and does not believe that there is widespread support for this change among the users. The Council acknowledges that different habitat types exist in Unit 15C but believes the current regulations already take this into consideration. Additionally, the passage of this proposal would misalign State and Federal boundaries for the Unit 15, which would lead to increased regulatory complexity and possible confusion among users.

Call for Alaska Board of Fisheries Proposals

The Council reviewed the Call for Proposals for the BOF for the 2025-2026 Regulatory Year but took no action on this agenda item.

Future Meeting Dates

The Council confirmed its fall 2025 meeting dates and location as October 14 – 15 in Anchorage.

The Council selected its winter 2026 meeting dates and location as March 17 – 18, and it's fall 2026 meeting dates as October 14 – 15, both to held in Anchorage.

Reports

The Council received updates on the following topics:

- AITRC Report presented by Sterling Spilinek

- NVE Tribal Government Partners for Fisheries Monitoring Program Update presented by Matt Piche
- CRRC Report presented by Michael Opheim
- FWS Kenai National Wildlife Refuge Subsistence Hunting Harvest Report presented by Todd Eskelin
- USFS Chugach National Forest Agency Report presented by Andrew Saunders
- NPS
 - WRST NPP Subsistence and Anthropology Report presented by Amber Cohen
 - WRST NPP Fisheries Report presented by David Sarafin
 - WRST NPP Wildlife Report presented by Amber Cohen
- BLM Glennallen Field Office Agency Report presented by Caroline Ketron
- OSM
 - Update on the Federal Subsistence Board Fisheries Regulatory Meeting presented by Hannah Voorhees
 - Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program update presented by Hannah Voorhees
 - Partners for Fisheries Monitoring Program update presented by Hannah Voorhees
 - Ketchikan Nonrural Determination update presented by Brent Vickers, Anthropology Division Supervisor
 - Program Overview update presented by Katya Wessels, Council Coordination Division Supervisor

Other Business

The Council received briefings on the following topics:

- Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program
- Partners for Fisheries Monitoring Program
- Federal Subsistence Board 2025 Regulatory Meeting
- Council Correspondence
- Non-voting Young Leader Seat
- Updated per diem guidelines for Council member travel

Closing Comments

Members thanked staff, the public, and other Council members for the highly productive meeting.

Adjournment

The Council adjourned Wednesday, March 12, 2025, at 6:33 pm.

Office of Subsistence Management

Minutes were Chair certified for accuracy on 6/5/2025

Richard [Greg] Encelewski, Chair
Southcentral Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

These minutes will be formally considered by the Southcentral Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council at its October 2025 meeting in Anchorage, and any corrections or notations will be incorporated in the minutes at that meeting.

For a more detailed report of this meeting, copies of the transcript and meeting handouts are available upon request. Call Nissa Pilcher at 1-800-478-1456 or (907)891-9054 or email nissa_pilcher@ios.doi.gov.