



Federal Subsistence Board

Office of Subsistence Management
1011 East Tudor Road, MS 121
Anchorage, Alaska 99503 – 6199



In Reply Refer To:
OSM.A25009

Nancy Morris Lyon, Chair
Bristol Bay Subsistence
Regional Advisory Council
c/o Office of Subsistence Management
1101 East Tudor Road, MS 121
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6199

Dear Chair Lyon:

This letter responds to the Bristol Bay Subsistence Regional Advisory Council's (Council) Fiscal Year 2024 Annual Report. The Federal Subsistence Board (Board) appreciates your effort in developing the Annual Report. Annual Reports allow the Board to become aware of issues outside of the regulatory process that affect subsistence users in your region. We value this opportunity to review the issues concerning your region.

1. Program Needs

The Council respectfully requests that the Board advocate for increased funding to the Office of Subsistence Management (OSM) to enhance its outreach efforts to the communities within the Bristol Bay Region. The Council has concerns regarding the limited public and Tribal participation at Council meetings, which impacts the effectiveness and inclusivity of discussions and decision-making processes. The Council recognizes that there are numerous important issues, concerns, and reports from the region that would provide valuable insights for both the Council and Federal agencies. These issues often go unaddressed due to a lack of participation and awareness.

Many residents and stakeholders in the region are unaware of the Council and the Federal Subsistence Management Program (Program) and are not fully informed about how their voices can influence the decisions that directly affect their lives. This gap in understanding and engagement limits opportunities for communities to have a say in the management of subsistence resources that are so critical to their way of life. The Council believes that addressing this issue through targeted outreach and education is essential to ensuring that all relevant voices are heard and that decisions are made with a full understanding of community needs and concerns.

Considering this, the Council would like to see OSM be given more resources and support to engage directly with Tribes, village corporations, and other residents in the region. These efforts would include informing these groups about the Program, explaining how the Program works, and providing guidance on how they can participate in the Council's processes. The Council believes that increasing engagement with these communities will not only help improve participation at Council meetings but also foster more meaningful collaboration between the Council, Federal agencies, and the local stakeholders who are most impacted by subsistence management policies.

Response:

Outreach is a shared responsibility between the Board members, Board member agencies, Council members, and the staff at OSM and is essential to the success of the Program.

We would also like additional resources for outreach and engagement with Tribes, village corporations, and other residents of rural Alaska. One of the goals of OSM's move to the Interior Office of the Secretary was to provide additional resources. While OSM's move has already provided some efficiencies, such as more direct line of communication with the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture on issues of concern to the Councils, the items around budget adjustments have not yet come to pass. OSM worked on a FY2026 budget planning exercise in the fall of 2024; however, a reassessment of government priorities may change the budget outlook.

For now, OSM is working on outreach in two ways. First, the outreach coordinator position at OSM has been vacant since May 2024 and is a priority to fill. Second, OSM has continued to receive feedback from Council members and the public on types of outreach needed to guide plans once OSM is able to fill the outreach coordinator position. More information on this will be shared with the Councils as it is known.

Other Annual Report Topics for Information Purposes Only

The Board thanks the Council for sharing information in your FY-2024 Annual Report on other issues significant to your region and subsistence users, (2) ongoing concerns regarding salmon populations throughout the region and the Council's support for North Pacific Fishery Management Council's Outreach and Engagement Plan focused specifically on Chum Salmon bycatch and recognition of these efforts importance; (3a) concern for Chignik drainage Sockeye Salmon and State management changes of this population; (3b) request for solicitor's opinion to be included in staff analyses to ensure compliance with Title VIII of ANILCA; (3c) request to the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture to expedite Council appointment process; and (3d) requests for Council members time and expertise compensation to offset the high cost of living in rural Alaska.

We appreciate and value the traditional knowledge, observations, and expertise you share. With this information, we are better prepared to make informed decisions.

In closing, we want to thank you and your Council for your continued involvement in the Federal Subsistence Management Program and the work you do on behalf of federally qualified subsistence users. We appreciate your efforts and are confident that federally qualified subsistence users of the Bristol Bay Region are well represented through your work.

Sincerely,

Anthony Christianson
Chair

cc: Bristol Bay Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Federal Subsistence Board
Office of Subsistence Management
Interagency Staff Committee
Benjamin Mulligan, Deputy Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Mark Burch, Assistant Director, Division of Wildlife Conservation, Alaska Department of
Fish and Game
Administrative Record