

EASTERN INTERIOR ALASKA SUBSISTENCE

REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes

Pike's Waterfront Lodge

Fairbanks, Alaska

February 19-20, 2025

Invocation

Council member Linda Evans provided an invocation.

Call to Order, Roll Call, and Quorum Establishment

The meeting was called to order Wednesday, February 19, 2025, at 9:05 am. Council members Sue Entsminger, Andrew Bassich, Donald Woodruff, Dorothy Shockley, Linda Evans, Olivia Henaayee Irwin, Galen Gilbert, Gerald Alexander, Eva Burk, and Chair Robert "Charlie" Wright were present in-person on the first day of the meeting. With ten out of ten seated Council members present, a quorum was established. There are currently no vacant seats on the Council.

Attendees

* Denotes attended virtually

- Office of Subsistence Management (OSM): Brooke McDavid, Robbin La Vine, Liz Williams, Tom Plank, Ciisquq Crystal Leonetti, Orville Lind*, Lisa Grediagin*, Nissa Pilcher*, Cory Graham*
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS): Fisheries and Ecological Services – Keith Herron, Shane Ransbury, Holly Carroll, Carol Mahara*; Science Applications – George Yaska; Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) – Clayton Merrill, Mark Bertram, Jimmy Fox; Koyukuk/Nowitna NWR – Jeremy Havener*, Marie Kleaver*; Regional Office – Jill Klein*; Refuge Law Enforcement – Curtis Stevens*, Cody Smith*
- National Park Service (NPS): Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve (NPP) – Barbara Cellarius, Dave Sarafin*, Amber Cohen*; Gates of the Arctic NPP and Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve (NP) – Mark Dowdle, Marcy Okada, Mat Sorum; Denali NPP – Amy Craver*, Pat Owen; Regional Office – Kim Jochum*, Eva Patton*, Victoria Florey*
- Bureau of Land Management (BLM): Eastern Interior Field Office – Tim Hammond, Angela Yemma, Jim Herriges, Claire Montgomerie; Glenallen Field Office – Caroline Ketro*
- Bureau of Indian Affairs: Glenn Chen*
- U.S. Forest Service – Greg Risdahl*
- North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC): Angel Drobica, John Moller, Brian Ritchie, Bill Tweit, Rudy Tsukada
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA): Sarah Marrinan, Kate Haapala

- Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G): Wildlife Conservation – Mark Nelson, Mark Burch*; Commercial Fisheries – Matt Olson, Deena Jallen, Dave Runfola, Andy Padilla*; Sport Fisheries – Lisa Stuby*; Subsistence – Brooke Fisher
- Tribal and Native Organizations: Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) – Diloola Erickson, Krystal Lapp, Brian Lepping*; Yukon River Intertribal Fish Commission (YRITFC) – Jazmyn Vent; Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments (CATG) – Bruce Thomas; Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council – Teresa Clark; Inter-Tribal Agriculture Council - Katie Herzner; Smokehouse Collective - Deenaalee Hodgdon; Bering Sea - Interior Tribal Commission – Melinda Chase; Gwichyaa Zhee Tribal Government – Mike Peter; Dot Lake Village Council – Chase Shank*
- Non-profits and Other Organizations: Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YR DFA) – Grace Kirkey
- Public: Ross Martin (PhD student, Yale School of the Environment), Misty Walsh, Angel Stickman*, Carrie Stevens*, Christopher Sherry*

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 – Robert “Charlie” Wright, Sr.
- Vice Chair – Evan Burk
- Secretary – Donald Woodruff

Review and Adopt Agenda

- Motion by Member Bassich, seconded by Member Woodruff, to adopt the agenda as presented. *The motion passed on a unanimous vote.*

Review and Approve Previous Meeting Minutes

- Motion by Member Woodruff, seconded by Member Irwin, to approve the Fall 2024 Council meeting minutes. *The motion passed on a unanimous vote.*

Council Member and Chair Reports

Andy Bassich of Eagle stated that the Yukon River is the artery of life for much of Interior Alaska, providing subsistence food and a route for travel. He noted there was very low water at freeze-up in Eagle this year and there was consistent jumble ice downriver to Circle. There was little snow throughout the winter and high winds blew a lot of silt onto the river ice. This combination made it difficult for travel during the winter and he feels it will likely lead to an early break up. Member Bassich is concerned about moose numbers because he traveled over 1500 miles by dog team this winter and only saw two sets of moose tracks. The previous few years of heavy snow may have led to high moose mortality. He is also concerned about caribou, which historically have been the second most relied on subsistence food in

Eagle after salmon. He has not seen any caribou this winter. Member Bassich looks forward to the upcoming Fortymile Caribou Harvest Management Coalition meeting to discuss efforts to rebuild the herd. He reported that record low Chinook and fall Chum salmon returns and the complete closure of these fisheries in the upper river continues to create extreme hardships for rural residents. He acknowledged all the Council members at the table who are putting in huge efforts to address salmon issues across the various regulatory arenas. Member Bassich stated that systemic changes in management need to take place, both on the Yukon River and statewide, for us to get through this. He also noted his concerns about the spread avian influenza and declining songbird populations.

Olivia Henaayee Irwin of Nenana/Fairbanks expressed her excitement to join the Council as a new member and shared about her experiences in a variety of other regulatory arenas like the NPFMC and Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF). She reported that the lack of Chinook and fall Chum salmon on the Yukon and Tanana rivers has been extremely detrimental to local people who traditionally rely on that resource. Some Nenana residents are trying to harvest more whitefish to make up for the lack of salmon, but whitefish will never be able to replace salmon. People seem to be increasingly discouraged to go out and fish as the salmon closures continue year after year. Holding potlatches without fish is a really difficult thing for people to navigate but they still maintaining those cultural practices and trying to find solutions and ways to provide food for their community. Member Irwin is particularly concerned about discrete salmon stocks in Yukon River tributaries and maintaining their genetics. She described that a single trawl tow in a marine commercial fishery has the potential to wipe some of the smaller stocks out. In the Nenana area, there has been increased moose hunting pressure as a result of the recently built road across the Tanana River. Moose are being pushed further from traditional hunting grounds, and it is becoming more difficult for local residents to meet their needs for moose on top of the lack of fish.

Dorothy Shockley of Manley Hot Springs/Fairbanks shared that she is discouraged about the status of subsistence food across the state. She noted that the government has depleted our resources, our way of life, and our way of feeding ourselves. Populations of fish and game continue to decline and still the system does not change. She feels that the current western management system is not working and needs to return to a system based on indigenous resource stewardship. Everyone needs to take a more holistic approach to resource management instead of working in silos.

Donald Woodruff of Eagle reported that the winter in Eagle was pretty mild but there were a lot of heavy winds, as described by Member Bassich. The school kids measure the river ice each year; normally it is around 48 inches but this winter it was only about 20 inches. Member Woodruff noted that marten, beaver, and grouse populations are up. Only one group of about 100 caribou have migrated past this winter, but it was during the night and therefore, no harvest occurred. Member Woodruff has been working with Yukon-Charley NP on some cultural heritage projects, including place name identification and cabin preservation for subsistence uses. He reported good progress, but still a ways to go.

Sue Entsminger of Mentasta Pass reported that similar to Eagle, it was a warm winter in her area and there was a lot less snow than in recent years. She remains concerned about sheep populations locally and throughout the state but hopes the lighter snow year will help them begin to bounce back. Wolf

numbers are increasing, and they have recently caught more near their home than usual. Member Entsminger said that moose numbers seem to be decent, and she hasn't really heard any complaints about not being able to meet subsistence needs. She is very sad to see how low the Nelchina Caribou Herd numbers have gotten in such a short period. Member Entsminger shared that this will be her last year on the Council; after over 20 years she decided not to apply for another term. She is interested in remaining on the Wrangell-St. Elias National Preserve Subsistence Resource Commission and staying involved in the sheep management coalition if it takes off. Member Entsminger noted that in order to manage our resources for future generations to continue to have the same opportunities, everyone must work together and respect each other.

Eva Burk of Nenana/Fairbanks reported that her ability to participate in traditional subsistence activities in her home community of Nenana has been limited because she attends so many resource management meetings. She helped finalize the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission's (YRITFC) memorandum of understanding for partnership with federal agencies in the Gravel-to-Gravel Initiative that aims to improve collaboration across jurisdictional boundaries. Member Burk noted that management systems were set up like they are on purpose, to divide and keep everyone disconnected. Even for the Gravel-to-Gravel Initiative, she noted that the National Marine Fisheries Service is missing from the table, so it is not truly gravel-to-gravel as intended. Through her role on the NPFMC's Advisory Panel, she has been working with others to develop a protected migration corridor for Chinook and Chum salmon between Area M and the Bering Sea pollock fishery. Member Burk noted that the Yukon River Panel is working on a Chinook Salmon rebuilding plan, but that it should have been started two decades ago. She was happy to see that the Copper River Chinook Salmon proposal the Council supported was passed by the BOF and hopes that it helps more salmon reach the upper river for subsistence use and spawning. Member Burk shared her concerns about some of the new Administration's plans to try to align federal and state programs; she feels the continuation of the federal subsistence program and the rural priority is very important. She ended her report by saying that everyone needs to continue to be vigilant and protect resources because these might be the last stocks that help keep things afloat in changing times.

Gerald Alexander of Fort Yukon reported that the weather was highly variable in Fort Yukon this winter. It rained during the winter, and it really messed with the snow conditions. Member Alexander noted that there seem to be increasing numbers of beaver in the Yukon Flats, and he is concerned about their impacts on the ecosystem. He also noted that lakes are drying up. He shared concerns about avian influenza because migratory birds are such an important subsistence resource for his community in the spring. Member Alexander is worried that resource populations are going to keep declining and things are going to get more difficult rather than easier. He said the rabbit numbers are up and moose seem to be doing okay, but that there are more wolves coming into town and killing dogs. Member Alexander mentioned the possibility of reintroducing wood bison to the Yukon Flats. This was his first Council meeting, and he is looking forward to learning more about issues across the region.

Galen Gilbert of Arctic Village expressed how happy he was to be appointed to the Council and to be at his first meeting. He reported that people in Arctic Village live a subsistence way of life and that his father and grandfather trained him from a young age how to hunt, fish, and trap and travel the land. Daily

life depends on the weather and paying attention to the environment and animals. Member Gilbert said they had cold weather in December, but that January was the warmest he has ever experienced. There was less snow, but still enough to haul wood and hunt. The warm temperatures concerned him because the cold is important for maintaining permafrost and it may also affect animals. It also impacts the river ice and the safety of river travel; warmer weather results in earlier and increased overflow. The period they can ice fish for grayling has decreased over time. Member Gilbert said the caribou stuck around Arctic Village this winter and everyone has been meeting their subsistence needs, but there have been a lot of wolves around because of the caribou. Member Gilbert has not seen a crane in Arctic Village in 15 years, which is concerning. His grandfather has noted seeing less songbirds and porcupines that were once plentiful are now rare. Member Gilbert said part of his everyday life as a hunter and woodsman is going to elders like his grandfather and listening and learning from them. If he has a concern or question he asks the elders because chances are they've seen it or experienced it or have some other knowledge to share. Member Gilbert ended his report by mentioning how important it is for his community to maintain the closure to non-federally qualified users for Red Sheep Creek.

Linda Evans of Rampart/North Pole reported that she spent the fall in Rampart and even though things are very different than when she was growing up, life there is still refreshing. However, it is difficult. She really worries about people who live in rural villages year-round because prices continue to increase, there is no store, hardly any jobs, and the traditional foods that people have always relied on just continue to decrease. Member Rampart wants to see culture and traditions passed on to future generations. She is heartened to see some new younger members on the Council who are fighting for that. She reiterated what other Council members also noted, about the importance of everyone working together to protect resources and the subsistence way of life.

Charlie Wright (Chair) of Tanana/Rampart began his report by reminding everyone how important each small piece plays in the overall working of the ecosystem, from the songbirds to the flies to the plants. He said it is important to pay attention to those little things because they can give you indicators of larger patterns or change. Chair Wright is saddened that subsistence salmon fishing in the upper Yukon River and tributaries is gone. He noted that we're all connected through salmon and that we have to keep spreading the message that we have to all work together to do the best we can for the future. Chair Wright, like Member Woodruff, also noted that marten, grouse, and rabbit number are up. He reported that climate uncertainties are ever increasing: rain in winter and ice flowing out on the coast, open sections of river and weak ice. The warming trend impacts travel, and it creates difficult conditions for moose, caribou, and sheep. Additionally, he said that declines in resource availability have caused people to leave rural villages and move to town. He recalled how many cabins and lights he'd see along the river traveling around as a young man. Now it's dark in the winter. Chair Wright continues to attend as many meetings as he can to advocate for the subsistence way of life and protecting resources for future generations. He tries to get out on the land when he can between all his obligations.

Public and Tribal Comment on Non-Agenda Items

Day 1:

- Angel Stickman of Shungnak urged Council to send another letter to the new Secretary of the Interior about the importance of maintaining D-1 land protections.
- Melinda Chase with Deloy Ges Incorporated and the Bering Sea Interior Tribal Commission also spoke in support of retaining ANCSA D-1 withdrawals and sending a letter to the Secretary. She also spoke about how the inability to fish for salmon is negatively impacting communities and pushing people away from traditions like dog mushing.
- Deenaalee Chase Hodgdon with the Smokehouse Collective described the importance of D-1 lands for subsistence and also encouraged the Council to send correspondence on the topic.
- Carrie Stevens of Fairbanks shared observations about predator prey-balance in the Yukon Flats, difficult river travel conditions, impacts of the loss of salmon, and concerns about oil and gas exploration in the Yukon Flats. She also supported maintaining Wildlife Closure Review WCR26-22 and suggested the Council consider a closure in Unit 25D remainder.
- Mike Peter, Gwichyaa Zhee Gwich'in Tribal Government Second Chief, commented on the increasing number of non-local moose hunters in Unit 25D and supported further discussion of a closure to non-resident hunters in Unit 25D remainder. He also expressed concerns about Hilcorp oil and gas exploration in the Yukon Flats.
- Christopher Sherry of Minto commented about wood bison reintroduction and the importance of pursuing positive customary and traditional use determinations for them because of their historical use.

Day 2:

- Ross Martin, PhD student with the Yale School of the Environment updated the Council on his research, which focuses on subsistence politics and has included developing a searchable Council meeting transcript database for the Eastern and Western Interior regions.
- Janet Woods of Rampart described environmental changes she has observed in the Rampart and Manley Hot Springs areas and the negative impacts to well-being caused by the salmon crisis. She expressed concerns about increasing numbers of hunters along the river and the need for better maps that show Native allotments and regional and village corporation lands.
- Bruce Thomas with CATG commented in support of WCR26-22 and said that CATG would likely support a closure in the remainder of Unit 25D as well due to increased hunting pressure by non-locals.
- Chance Shank commented on behalf of the Dot Lake Village Council in support of maintaining ANCSA D-1 land protections and encouraged the Council to send a letter to the new Administration on this topic.
- Randy Mayo of Stevens Village shared his concerns about the potential rollback of ANCSA D-1 land protections as well as the possible transfer of the Haul Road (Dalton Highway) corridor from BLM to State of Alaska. He shared background on how Stevens Village developed their

Traditional Comprehensive Land Use Plan and how it has helped them protect their lands over time.

Council Member Training on Federal Proposals to Change Subsistence Regulations

Tom Plank, OSM Wildlife Biologist, gave a presentation to the Council about the Federal proposal process that included how to submit proposals and examples of types of proposals that can be submitted.

Action Items

Deferred Wildlife Proposal WP24-01 – Statewide sale of brown bear hides

Liz Williams, OSM Cultural Anthropologist, presented the revised analysis and OSM updated recommendation to the Council.

Motion by Member Bassich, seconded by Member Irwin, to support WP24-01 with the revised OSM modification. *The motion passed on a vote of 7-2 with one abstaining.*

The Council noted that allowing the sale of brown bear hides would not result in conservation concerns because it would only apply to federally qualified subsistence users and the salvage of meat would remain a requirement. Brown bears are not widely targeted for subsistence food, but due to increasing food security issues from declines in other more widely targeted species, their importance for subsistence is likely to continue to increase. Allowing the sale of brown bear hides would help federally qualified subsistence users obtain some additional value-added benefits from their subsistence harvests. However, the Council noted the importance of tracking brown bear harvests and hide sales, particularly in more easily accessible units to ensure no negative impacts. They also noted the need to prioritize bear population surveys since there are significant data gaps in many areas. Lastly, the Council thought this proposal would be best dealt with on a region-by-region basis, rather than statewide.

Wildlife Closure Review WCR26-22 – Closure to moose hunting in Unit 25D west except by 25D west residents

Ms. Williams presented the draft analysis to the Council. This was an informational item presented in case the Council wanted to submit a related proposal.

Call for Federal Wildlife Proposals

Mr. Plank announced the call for proposals to change Federal hunting and trapping regulations for the 2026-2028 regulatory years. The Council voted to submit nine proposals.

1. Add Units 20E, 25A, and 25B to the list of areas where handicrafts that incorporate any non-edible parts of black bear can be sold.

Motion by Member Bassich, seconded by Member Irwin, to submit the proposal as stated. *The motion passed on a unanimous vote.*

The Council noted that this proposal would create additional opportunities for federally qualified subsistence users to utilize non-edible parts of subsistence harvested black bear and allow them to sell value added products (handicrafts) on a small scale. Black bears have been incorporated into handicrafts for thousands of years, and this will help cultural traditions to continue to be passed on. There are no conservation concerns for black bear in these units.

2. *Extend the current (2024 and 2025 season) closure of sheep hunting by all users in portions of Units 25C and 20E through the 2026 and 2027 hunting seasons*

Motion by Member Woodruff, seconded by Member Bassich, to submit the proposal as stated. *The motion passed on a 9-1 vote.*

The Council noted that this closure, enacted by Wildlife Special Action WSA24-01, should continue to apply to sheep hunting on Federal public lands in Yukon-Charley Rivers NP and on Bureau of Land Management lands in the North Peak Mountain area within the Glacier Mountain Controlled Use Area. The Federal Subsistence Board (Board) approved the closure due to significant declines to the sheep population and extreme conservation concerns. The intent of the original closure was to give time for sheep populations to rebuild. Not enough time has passed for this to occur and; therefore, the Council wants to extend the closure for another two years. It is the hope of the Council that during this closure extension, the population will show signs of recovery. The Council also noted that surveys will be necessary to monitor the population status before the next regulatory cycle.

3. *Close moose hunting in Unit 25D remainder to non-federally qualified users*

Motion by Member Irwin, seconded by Member Bassich, to submit the proposal as stated. *The motion passed on a unanimous vote.*

The Council noted that the moose density in this area is very sparse, and there are conservation concerns for moose. No aerial surveys for moose have been done in Unit 25D remainder since 2015. There are also concerns about the ability of federally qualified subsistence users to meet their needs for moose due to the low numbers and competition with non-federally qualified users. The Council wants to ensure that the moose population can remain at a sustainable level for harvest by federally qualified subsistence users. The closure in neighboring Unit 25D west has been working well for local residents, and the Council feels replicating this in Unit 25D remainder would also help residents of that portion of the unit to be more likely to meet their subsistence needs.

4. *Recognize the customary and traditional (C&T) uses of wood bison in Units 12, 20, and 25 by the residents of Units 12, 20 and 25*

Motion by Member Irwin, seconded by Member Bassich, to submit the proposal as stated. *The motion passed on a unanimous vote.*

The Council noted that wood bison were traditionally hunted for subsistence by Alaska Native peoples for thousands of years. Their use was interrupted only because of their unfortunate extirpation from Alaska, not because of a change in patterns of use. Evidence of their traditional use exists in oral histories and the

archeological record. Wood bison are currently being reintroduced to the Eastern Interior region and are listed as an experimental population under the Endangered Species Act. Although no hunting can be allowed until they are delisted, the Council believes their customary and traditional use nevertheless should be recognized. The reintroduction of wood bison provides a chance for cultural practices and use of wood bison to be revitalized in the future.

5. Increase the harvest limit for brown bear in Unit 11 to two bears

Motion by Member Entsminger, seconded by Member Bassich, to submit the proposal as stated. *The motion passed on a unanimous vote.*

The Council noted that this would provide additional opportunity for federally qualified subsistence users and that there are no conservation concerns for brown bear in this unit.

6. Increase the harvest limit for brown bear in Unit 12 to two bears

Motion by Member Woodruff, seconded by Member Irwin, to submit the proposal as stated. *The motion passed on a unanimous vote.*

The Council noted this would provide additional opportunity for federally qualified subsistence users. In Unit 12, State hunting regulations already allow two bears for resident hunters. There are no conservation concerns for brown bear in this unit.

7. Increase the harvest limit for brown bear in Unit 13 to two bears

Motion by Member Woodruff, seconded by Member Irwin, to submit the proposal as stated. *The motion passed on a unanimous vote.*

The Council noted that this would provide additional opportunity for federally qualified subsistence users. There are no conservation concerns for brown bear in this unit and not much federal land. The brown bear limit in Unit 13 was recently changed to two bears under State regulations.

8. Increase the harvest limit for brown bear in Unit 20E to two bears

Motion by Member Woodruff, seconded by Member Bassich, to submit the proposal as stated. *The motion passed on a unanimous vote.*

The Council noted that this would provide additional opportunity for federally qualified subsistence users. In Unit 20E, State hunting regulations already allow two bears for all hunters. There are no conservation concerns for brown bear in this unit.

Note: After the meeting during the proposal validation process, OSM noted that residents of Unit 20E do not have C&T for brown bear in Unit 20E. Staff reached out to Council members and the Chair who verified that it was the Council's intent to increase subsistence opportunity for residents in Unit 20E through this proposal and that they thought that residents already had a C&T determination. The

proposal was then modified to also request the recognition of customary and traditional use of brown bear in Unit 20E by residents of Unit 20E.

9. Increase the harvest limit for brown bear in Unit 25B to two bears

Motion by Member Woodruff, seconded by Member Entsminger, to submit the proposal as stated. *The motion passed on a unanimous vote.*

The Council noted that this would provide additional opportunity for federally qualified subsistence users. There are no conservation concerns for brown bear in Unit 25B, and it is one of the least inhabited areas of the state.

Council Charter Review

Brooke McDavid, Council Coordinator, provided an overview of the Council charter for review and renewal. Motion by Member Irwin, seconded by Member Woodruff, to adopt the charter with no changes. *The motion passed on a unanimous vote.*

Annual Report

Ms. McDavid presented the draft FY-2024 Annual Report to the Council, which included 16 topics, six of which included requests of the Board and ten were information items. Motion by Member Irwin, seconded by Member Woodruff, to approve and submit the FY-2024 Annual Report. *The motion passed on a unanimous vote.*

Alaska Board of Game Statewide Meeting Proposal Comments

The Council voted to submit comments on eleven Statewide BOG proposals.

Proposal 88 - Add wood bison to the list of game species allowed to be taken for cultural purposes under a permit issued by the Department of Fish and Game

Motion by Member Irwin, seconded by Member Bassich, to support Proposal 51. *The motion passed on a 9-1 vote.*

The Council noted that Alaska Natives customarily and traditionally harvested and used wood bison for subsistence prior to their expiration. This is documented through oral history and the archeological record. In the future, when a harvestable surplus of wood bison becomes available, the ability to harvest them for cultural purposes must be allowed due to their historical use for subsistence. The cultural harvest of wood bison was severed only because of their extirpation. The reintroduction of wood bison provides a chance for cultural practices and use of wood bison to be revitalized. Allowing wood bison to occasionally be harvested for potlatches and other cultural events will enable the traditions of their harvest and use to be passed on.

Proposal 89 – Require nonresident moose hunters to attend a hunter orientation course and be accompanied by a registered guide or resident family member within the second degree of kindred

Motion by Member Irwin, seconded by Member Woodruff, to support Proposal 89. *The motion passed on a unanimous vote.*

The Council agreed that these should be requirements statewide for nonresident moose hunters. The Council's hope is that this would increase awareness of proper firearm selection and meat care and reduce waste of meat.

Proposal 92 - Require sheep hunters to complete an online education course

Motion by Member Irwin, seconded by Member Bassich, to support Proposal 92 with a modification to only apply to first time sheep hunters. *The motion passed on a unanimous vote.*

The Council noted that this will help increase awareness of how to properly identify legal sheep in the field. Because it is online, it will not be a significant burden to hunters.

Proposals 95 & 96 – Repeal the age criteria for the definition of full-curl horn ram

Motion by Member Irwin, seconded by Member Woodruff, to support Proposals 95 and 96. *The motion passed on a unanimous vote.*

The Council noted that it is very difficult to age a sheep by counting annuli and especially in the field at a distance. This proposal would focus harvest on only full curl rams, which is important due to the current low sheep numbers. It would also reduce the harvest of sub-legal rams.

Proposals 97 & 98 - Lengthen the time period hunters are restricted from using aircraft for hunting sheep

Motion by Member Irwin, seconded by Member Woodruff, to support Proposals 97 and 98. *The motion passed on a unanimous vote.*

The Council noted that aircraft should not be used for spotting sheep at any time, including during youth hunts. The Council agreed with the proponents that these proposals would reduce pressure on sheep during a time when they are experiencing conservation concerns.

Proposal 99 - Shorten the time period hunters are restricted from using aircraft for hunting sheep, and modify the use of aircraft restrictions

Motion by Member Woodruff, seconded by Member Irwin, to support Proposal 99. *The proposal failed on a unanimous vote.*

The Council opposed the proposal because sheep are facing a conservation concern and use of aircraft to hunt them should not be liberalized at this time.

Proposal 100 – Limit nonresident sheep hunting opportunity statewide so that nonresidents do not harvest more than 35 percent of total sheep harvest from any game management subunit

Motion by Member Irwin, seconded by Member Woodruff, to support Proposal 100. *The motion failed on a unanimous vote.*

The Council opposed this proposal because they felt it is too complicated to be dealt with in this manner. Every region and sheep population faces different issues, and the one size fits all approach of this proposal is not appropriate. Instead, the Council advocates for using regional sheep working groups or coalitions to bring stakeholders together and discuss proposal ideas on a region-by-region basis. The Council has sent out an invitation to Advisory Committees in the Eastern Interior region to form a sheep management coalition to discuss such topics together.

Proposal 101 - Add sheep to the list of species identified as important for providing high levels of human consumptive use

Motion by Member Irwin, seconded by Member Woodruff, to support Proposal 101. *The motion passed on a unanimous vote.*

The Council noted that this proposal is very important because sheep are not currently listed as a species eligible for intensive management. Sheep populations are in decline and tools for helping them recover are limited without the passing of this proposal. Intensive management is a prerequisite for any predator control efforts.

Proposal 123 - Allow remuneration to be provided to proxy hunters

Motion by Member Irwin, seconded by Member Entsminger, to support Proposal 123. *The motion failed on a unanimous vote.*

The Council opposed the proposal because strong feelings that people should not be paid to go hunting or paid to give their permit to someone else. The proxy hunting system exists to help people get the food they need that they would otherwise be unable to obtain on their own. This system is based on the values of helping others and it should not be monetized or turned into a market hunting system. Additionally, the Council notes that the proponent wrongly states that remuneration is allowed in the Federal designated hunter permit system. It is not.

Call for Alaska Board of Fisheries Proposals

Ms. McDavid notified the Council of the call for BOF Proposals for the Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim and Alaska Peninsula regions open through April 10. Gale Vick, Chair of the Fairbanks Fish and Game Advisory Committee Fisheries Sub-committee, briefed the Council about efforts to coordinate amongst Advisory Committees across the region to submit proposals. The Council did not take action to submit any proposals, but they did vote to establish a working group to review proposals before their fall meeting.

Future Meeting Dates

- The Council confirmed its fall 2025 meeting dates as October 8–10 in Tok.
- The Council selected its winter 2026 meeting dates as March 3-4 in Fairbanks.
- The Council selected its fall 2026 meeting dates as October 6-8 in Fort Yukon.

The Council is still waiting to hear back on their request to add Tanana to the list of approved hub communities for the region.

Outreach and Engagement Session on Chum Salmon Bycatch Management in the Bering Sea with North Pacific Fishery Management Council Members and Staff

A special outreach and engagement session was held in the evening of the first meeting day with the goal to increase awareness of Chum Salmon bycatch management measures being considered by the NPFMC and to facilitate dialogue between members of the NPFMC and the Council. The session began with a presentation by NPFMC supporting staff from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and was followed by a roundtable discussion between Council members and the visiting guests.

The Council heard public comments about Chum Salmon bycatch from Angel Stickman, Virgil Umphenour, Jazmyn Vent, Michael Peter, Carrie Stevens, and Janet Woods.

The following morning, the Council continued their discussion on Chum Salmon bycatch management.

- Motion by Member Irwin, seconded by Member Bassich, to write a letter to the NPFMC to be submitted during the to-be-announced open comment period for the draft environmental impact statement on Chum Salmon bycatch management. *The motion passed on a unanimous vote.*

Agency and Organization Reports:

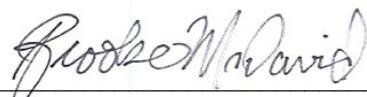
- *Chum Salmon Bycatch DEIS Presentation* by Krystal Lapp, TCC Natural Resource Policy Analyst
- *Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association Update* by Grace Kirkey, Community-based Monitoring Program Coordinator
- *TCC Tribal Resource Stewardship Division Update* by Diloola Erickson, Director
- *Northeast Alaska Wildlife Update* by Mark Nelson, ADF&G Northeast Alaska Area Biologist
- *Wood Bison Reintroduction Overview* by Carol Mahara, Biologist, USFWS Fish and Wildlife Biologist
- *Yukon River Coho Salmon Radio Telemetry Project Overview* by Andy Padilla, ADF&G Fisheries Biologist
- *ADF&G Subsistence Division Overview* by Brooke Fischer, Subsistence Resource Specialist
- *USFWS Yukon Area Federal Salmon Management Update* by Keith Herron and Shane Ransbury, Biologists and Assistant Federal In-Season Managers; and Holly Carroll, Federal In-Season Manager
- *Yukon River Boat Launch Signage Project Overview* by Stephen Taylor, BLM Central Interior Field Office Outdoor Recreation Planner

- *BLM Eastern Interior Field Office Report* by Jim Herriges, Wildlife Biologist
- *Nowitna National Wildlife Refuge Moose Update* by Jeremy Havener, Subsistence Coordinator
- *Denali National Park Report* by Patricia Owen, Wildlife Biologist
- *Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve Report* by Marcy Okada, Subsistence Coordinator, and Mat Sorum, Wildlife Biologist
- *Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve Updates* by Barbara Cellarius, Cultural Anthropologist, and Dave Sarafin, Fisheries Biologist
- *Office of Subsistence Management Update* by Robin La Vine, OSM Policy Coordinator, and Ciisquq Crystal Leonetti, OSM Director

Other Business

The Council received briefings on the following topics:

- Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program
- Partners for Fisheries Monitoring Program
- Summary of Board regulatory actions
- Hunter Ethics Education and Outreach Initiative Working Group
 - a. Motion by Member Bassich, seconded by Member Irwin, to request funding between \$2000-\$5000 from OSM to develop and print hunter ethics outreach materials. *The motion passed on a unanimous vote.*
- Dall Sheep Management Working Group
 - a. Motion by Member Bassich, seconded by Member Irwin, to send a response letter to BLM with more details about the Council's vision for an Eastern Interior Dall Sheep Management Coalition. *The motion passed on a unanimous vote.*
- Council Correspondence
 - a. Motion by Member Evans, seconded by Member Burk, to send a letter to the Board requesting them to elevate the need to protect ANCSA D-1 lands for subsistence to the Secretary of the Interior. *The motion passed on a unanimous vote.*
- Non-voting Young Leader Seat
- Declining Balance Cards



Brooke McDavid, Designated Federal Officer
U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Subsistence Management



Robert "Charlie" Wright, Sr., Chair
Eastern Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

These minutes were certified by the Chair for accuracy on 5/9/2025 and were formally considered by the Eastern Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council at its December 2025 meeting in Fairbanks.

A more detailed report of this meeting, copies of the transcript and meeting handouts are available upon request. Call Brooke McDavid, Council Coordinator, at 1-800-478-1456 or 907-891-9181, or email brooke_mcdavid@ios.doi.gov.