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NORTHWEST ARTIC SUBSISTENCE
REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

PUBLIC MEETING

VOLUME II

NORTHEST ARTIC HERITAGE CENTER
Kotzebue, Alaska
January 8, 2026

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

Thomas Baker, Chair
Verne Cleveland, Sr.
Clyde Ramoth, Jr.
Tristen Pattee
Karmen Monigold
Michael Kramer

Regional Council Coordinator, Nissa Pilcher

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P R O C E E D I N G S

(Kotzebue, Alaska - 1/08/25)

(On record)

CHAIRPERSON BAKER Alright, good morning, everyone. This is Chair Thomas Baker you are listening to the Northwest Arctic Subsistence Regional Advisory Council meeting. Today is January 8th. Going to do a brief roll call just to see who we have present. Verne Cleveland.

MR. CLEVELAND: Here.

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Clyde Ramoth.

MR. RAMOTH: Here.

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Tristen Pattee.

MR. PATTEE: Here.

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Karmen Monigold.

MS. MONIGOLD: Here.

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Mike Kramer. Mike should be joining us. And then we have several members who are excused for today. Elmer Armstrong, Jr., will not be joining us and Wilbur Howarth is unable to attend. And we will go ahead and get started as we have five members to have a quorum. So again, welcome everyone. We'll do a brief introduction. So once again, when I call up your organization, if one person can come to the microphone, say who is here in the room, we'll go ahead and start. Are there anyone -- is there anyone representing any tribal organizations or ANCSA Corporations in the room?

(No response)

Is there anyone representing a tribal organization or ANCSA Corporation on the phone?

(No response)

In the room, OSM?

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1 MS. WESSELS: Good morning, Mr. Chair,
2 Members of the Council. For OSM here in the room, Katya
3 Wessels, Nissa Pilcher, Tom Plank and Grace Cochon.
4 Thank you.

5
6 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you. And on the
7 phone, anyone with the office of Subsistence Management.

8
9 MR. LIND: Good morning, everyone. Mr.
10 Chair and Council members, Orville Lind, Native Liaison
11 for OSM.

12
13 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: And.....

14
15 (Simultaneous speech)

16
17 MR. FOLEY: Good morning, Chairman Baker.
18 Members of the Council, this is Kevin Foley, Fisheries
19 Biologist with OSM calling in from Anchorage. Thank you.

20
21 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: And in the room,
22 anyone with the Fish and Wildlife Service?

23
24 MR. WIESE: (In Native). Good morning.
25 Wil Wiese, Selawik National Wildlife Refuge Manager, and
26 I'm the only Fish and Wildlife employee in the room this
27 morning, although we'll be joined later by Bill Carter,
28 Fisheries Biologist and Brittany Sweeney, our Deputy
29 Manager.

30
31 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Will.
32 Anyone with the Fish and Wildlife Service online?

33
34 MR. HANDER: Yes. Good morning, Chairman
35 Baker and Council. This is Ray Hander, Fairbanks with
36 the Fish and Wildlife Service Northern Alaska Field
37 Office. Thank you.

38
39 MS. SWEENEY: Good morning, Mr. Chair.
40 This is Brittany Sweeney with Selawik Refuge. I'm
41 listening on the phone. Thank you.

42
43 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you. Anyone
44 with the National Park Service in the room?

45
46 MS. CARLSON: Good morning, Mr. Chair,
47 members of the Council. My name is Annie Carlson with
48 the Western Arctic National Parklands, headquartered
49 here in Kotzebue. And joining me in the room is Jeanette
50 Koelsch, Superintendent of Bering Land Bridge National

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1 Preserve and Acting Superintendent of the Western Arctic
2 Parklands.

3

4 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you. Anyone
5 with National Park Service on the call?

6

7 MS. JOCHUM: Good morning, Mr. Chair,
8 members of the Council, this is Kim Jochum. I'm with the
9 Regional Subsistence Program at the Regional Office.

10

11 MS. CREEK: (In Native). This is Emily
12 Creek, Subsistence Coordinator for Western Arctic
13 National Parklands.

14

15 MS. PATTON: Good morning. This is Eva
16 Patton, Subsistence Program Manager with the National
17 Park Service Regional Office in Anchorage. Good morning.

18

19 MR. JOLY: Good morning, everyone. This
20 is Kyle Joly, I'm a caribou biologist with the National
21 Park Service.

22

23 MS. OKADA: Good morning. This is Marcy
24 Okada. This is Coordinator for Gates of the Arctic
25 National Park.

26

27 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you. Anyone
28 with the Forest Service on the phone?

29

30 MR. RISDAHL: Yeah. Good morning, Mr.
31 Chairman and members of the Council. This is Greg
32 Risdahl, U.S. Forest Service Subsistence Program Lead
33 and Interagency Staff Committee Member. Thank you very
34 much.

35

36 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you. Alaska
37 Department of Fish and Game in the room.

38

39 MR. CLARK: Hello, this is Kevin Clark,
40 Alaska Department of Fish and Game. I'm the area manager.

41

42 MR. HANSEN: And in the room for Fish and
43 Game, this is Alex Hansen, Western Arctic Caribou
44 Biologist. And joining me is Christie Osburn, the Area
45 Biologist.

46

47 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you. Anyone
48 else with Fish and Game on the phone?

49

50 MR. HENSLEE: This is Luke Henslee.....

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(Simultaneous speech)

MS. HENSLEE: Good morning. This is.....

MR. HENSEE:I'm the Assistant Area Management Biologist for Fish and Game based in Nome.

MS. HENSLEE: Good morning. This is Sarah Henslee, the Area Wildlife Biologist based out of Nome. Good morning.

MS. COLD: Good morning. This is Helen Cold.....

(Simultaneous speech)

MS. CARSON: Good morning.....

MS. COLD:Subsistence Resource Specialist with ADF&G Division of Subsistence and Fairbanks. Good morning.

MS. CARSON: Good morning. This is Alicia Carson, Assistant Area Wildlife Biologist based out of Nome.

MS. MALLORY: Good morning. This is Marianna Mallory, Subsistence Resource Specialist and I'm based in Fairbanks.

MS. LAWTON: Good morning. This is Deb Lawton, education and outreach for Region 5 and I'm based in Kotzebue.

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: And do we have anyone else from any state or federal agencies in the room or on the phone?

(No response)

Do we have any other RAC members from other Regional Advisory Councils in the room?

MR. BARGER: Good morning, Mr. Chair. Leonard Barger from the North Slope Borough RAC, from Point Hope.

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Good morning. Thank you. Any other RAC members from Other Regional Advisory

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1 Councils on the call.

2

3 (No response)

4

5 And any members of the public in the
6 room?

7

8 MS. PETROWSKI: Good morning. My name is
9 Lori Petrowski. I work for the Native American Fish and
10 Wildlife Society.

11

12 MS. LUBY: Good morning. My name is
13 Caitlin Luby with the University of Alaska Fairbanks.
14 And joining me is Dr. Todd Brinkman.

15

16 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you. And do we
17 have any members of the public on the phone?

18

19 MR. ANDERSON: Good morning. This is
20 Matthew Anderstrom from the Alaska Native Brotherhood
21 Grand Camp.

22

23 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you. So, with
24 that, we will move into our next item, which this morning
25 will be Council Member Report. Member Pattee, since you
26 weren't here yesterday, would you like to give your
27 Council member report at this time? Also, for the record,
28 Vice Chair Kramer is in the room.

29

30 MR. PATTEE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes.
31 I'll provide my report now. For the record, my name is
32 Tristen Pattee, I'm from Ambler. I'd like to share some
33 subsistence observations from our community. This fall
34 caribou arrived in early October. This was the first
35 time in several years that they showed up before the
36 river froze, which led to a lot of boat traffic near
37 Onion Portage, which is usually normal to see, to have
38 that much traffic during the caribou migration. The
39 caribou came in on the same day as a storm. So, the
40 river conditions were very rough. Even with the
41 dangerous water, many people still went out because the
42 opportunity was there to get their caribou. Thankfully,
43 many community members were able to get their caribou.
44 Fishing conditions were mixed. Sheefish harvest was
45 good. But salmon was not as strong, mainly due to the
46 highwater levels that we noticed that made fishing
47 difficult and affected the runs from what we observed.

48

49 Right now, we are seeing increased wolf
50 activity very close to the community. Just this morning,

1 a wolf had to be shot at when he was trying to get into
2 someone's fish storage area for food for their dogs was
3 kept. Over the past few days, there have been other
4 incidents where wolves have come very close to attacking
5 dogs. It's very concerning for the community right now
6 for kids walking to school and back home and just
7 wandering around the community. So, it's very concerning
8 right now. But yeah, from what we are observing, it
9 appears that they may be targeting dogs as a food source.
10 It seems like the wolves may be struggling to find food
11 and we're concerned this could be related to the decline
12 in the caribou herd. The situation is becoming a safety
13 concern for people and animals in the community. Those
14 are my observations from Ambler. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

15

16 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you for that
17 Tristen. At this time, Annie Carlson, do we have any
18 housekeeping notes for those in the room?

19

20 MS. CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes,
21 we do. As we talked about yesterday afternoon, the
22 restrooms in the building are out of order. The drains
23 for the building, the pipes are not -- are frozen. So,
24 don't put a bunch of water down the drains or flush
25 toilets. So, our backup plan is that we have two housing
26 units nearby that I can escort you to, or at the break,
27 we can all meet in the parking lot and sort of take a
28 trip over there. And there's three different restrooms
29 that people can use. So, bring your jackets. We'll walk
30 less than about a half a block over there. At the break
31 and at lunch. That's the plan. Any questions?

32

33 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you for that,
34 Annie. So, at this time, before we move into Wildlife
35 Closure Review 26-18. Nissa, can you please explain the
36 order of presentations this morning? We have to move
37 some things around due to scheduling. So, Nissa, you
38 have the floor.

39

40 MS. PILCHER: Good morning, everyone. So,
41 after the testimony on non-agenda items, if there's any,
42 we'll start off with the closure review WCR26-18, which
43 is on Baird Mountain sheep. After that before we get to
44 the next closure review, we'll have a presentation by
45 National Park Service employee Kyle Joly on caribou. And
46 then we will launch -- we will launch into the review
47 of WCR26-45, which is the Noatak caribou closure review.
48 That should be led by OSM Anthropologist Hannah
49 Voorhees, who may have a scheduling conflict. She is
50 planning on being back. If she is not back online, we

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1 may want to push that closure review down the agenda
2 until she does get back, but the expectation is that
3 Kyle will be the only addition at this point.

4
5 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you for that,
6 Nissa. So, at this time, we will have an opportunity for
7 public and tribal comments on non-agenda items, which
8 is available each day. Do we have anyone in the room who
9 is hoping to make a public or tribal comment on non-
10 agenda items? Nissa.

11
12 MS. PILCHER: This is again, Nissa
13 Pilcher. For the record, just for anyone calling in,
14 remember, it is star six to mute and unmute, as well as
15 star five to raise your hand if you are on the phone.
16 Thank you.

17
18 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Nissa. And
19 just a reminder we're going to give two minutes to each
20 person if there are comments. So, at this time, is there
21 anyone on the phone who had a public or tribal comment
22 on non-agenda items? So, it appears we have a hand raised
23 in the call.

24
25 MS. PILCHER: This is Nissa, Matt
26 Anderstrom. You are currently -- looks like you're now
27 currently unmuted. I'll leave it up to the Chair to call
28 on you.

29
30 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: I didn't quite catch
31 the name, but it sounded like Matt.

32
33 MS. PILCHER: Matt Anderstrom.

34
35 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Anderstrom.

36
37 MR. ANDERSTROM: Matt Anderstrom, yes.

38
39 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: If you could.....

40
41 (Simultaneous speech)

42
43 MR. ANDERSTROM: I'm Matt Anderstrom, I
44 am the vice president -- Second Vice President of Alaska
45 Native Brotherhood Grand Camp and I have a letter with
46 which I would like to read, which I will also submit in
47 writing. Chair and members of the Regional Advisory
48 Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit this
49 comment on behalf of the Alaska Native Brotherhood Grand
50 Camp, I write from the standpoint of our elected

1 leadership to address the proposed changes put forward
2 by Safari Club International and the subsequent Federal
3 Subsistence Management Program programmatic review that
4 closely mirrors those proposals. My name is Matthew
5 Anderstrom, I serve as the Second Vice President of the
6 Alaska Native Brotherhood Grand Camp. I offer these
7 comments on behalf of our organization and the rural
8 residents of Northwest Alaska who depend on federal
9 subsistence protections, food security, cultural
10 continuity, and survival. The Alaska Native Brotherhood
11 was founded in 1912. It's the oldest Alaska Native civil
12 rights organization in the world. For more than a
13 century, ANB has advocated for Native rights, land
14 protections, cultural survival, and self-determination.
15 Our grand camp represents local camps across the state,
16 many of which are located in remote, roadless regions
17 where subsistence is not a lifestyle choice but a
18 necessity. ANB has been instrumental in advancing Alaska
19 Native voices in policy spaces that directly affect our
20 people, including land management, education, civil
21 rights and subsistence protections.

22
23 The Safari Club International petition
24 frames Federal Subsistence Management under Title VIII
25 of ANILCA as unnecessary federal overreach. From the
26 perspective of rural Alaska and Alaska Native
27 communities, this framing ignores both history and legal
28 reality that led to federal management in the first
29 place. ANILCA exists because the state of Alaska failed
30 and continues to fail to provide meaningful rural
31 subsistence priority as required by federal law. Federal
32 Subsistence Management was not imposed arbitrarily. It
33 was implemented to protect Alaska Native and rural
34 residents from displacement caused by expanding road
35 systems, aircraft access, guided hunting pressure and
36 increasing competition from non-local users with vastly
37 greater financial and logistical capacity. The current
38 FSMP programmatic review raises serious concern because
39 many of the focus areas: Regional Advisory Council
40 membership criteria, the role of RACs, special actions,
41 State deference and federal/state regulatory
42 duplication, closely track the same objectives outlined
43 in the SCI petition. To rural residents this feels less
44 like neutral review and more like a pathway to weakening
45 the very mechanisms that ensure our voices are heard.

46
47 For communities of Northwest Alaska,
48 Regional account -- Regional Advisory Councils are often
49 the only formal avenue through which local and
50 traditional knowledge enters the federal decision-making

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1 process. Weakening RAC authority, altering membership
2 criteria or diminishing their role would effectively
3 silence the people ANILCA was designed to protect.
4 Claims that RACs are rubber stamps or examples of federal
5 stacking disregard the lived experiences of the Council
6 members.

7

8 (Simultaneous speech)

9

10 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Mr. Anderstrom, your
11 two minutes up, I'm going to allow you to wrap up.

12

13 MR. ANDERSTROM: In closing from the
14 perspective of Alaska Native Grand Camp, ANILCA is not
15 broken. It is functioning as intended, prioritizing
16 subsistence, elevating local voices and protecting rural
17 ways of life when other systems have failed to do so.
18 We urge the Regional Advisory Committee and the
19 Secretaries conducting the programmatic review to reject
20 efforts that weaken federal subsistence authority,
21 defend the role and integrity of RAC, preserve emergency
22 and special action flexibility and uphold the rural
23 subsistence priority mandated under ANILCA. Thank you
24 for your time.

25

26 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you for that,
27 Mr. Anderstrom. Is there anyone else on the call that
28 was hoping to make it public or tribal comment on non-
29 agenda items?

30

31 MS. PILCHER: This is Mr. Pilcher for the
32 record. Matt, do you have the information on how to get
33 that letter submitted to OSM and/or me?

34

35 MR ANDERSTROM: I do not. If you can
36 enter it in the chat, I can submit it that way.

37

38 MS. PILCHER: Will do. Thank you.

39

40 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you for that
41 one last call for any public or tribal comments on non-
42 agenda items.

43

44 (No comments)

45

46 Hearing none. We will go ahead and get
47 into Wildlife Closure Review 26-18. Looks like Mr. Plank
48 will be coming up to lead us with that one.

49

50 (Pause)

1

2

3 MR. PLANK: Thank you, Mr. Chair, members
4 of the Council. For the record, my name is Tom Plank,
5 Wildlife Biologist, with the Office of Subsistence
6 Management. And I'm here to -- I'm going to give you a
7 brief summary of the closure review WCR26-18 and this
8 is a closure to sheep hunting by non-federally qualified
9 users in the Baird Mountains of Unit 23, south of Rabbit
10 Creek, Kayak Creek and Noatak River and west of the
11 Cutler and Redstone rivers. And this starts on page 87
12 of your book. There have been many changes to the sheep
13 hunt over the years. However, the original closure that
14 we are reviewing this cycle was put in place in 1999.
15 No sheep harvest has occurred in the Baird Mountains
16 under federal or state regulations since 2014, when the
17 seasons were closed due to conservation concerns.
18 Between 2011 and 2019, the sheep population estimates
19 range from 174 to 643 sheep. The highest was in 2011,
20 and the lowest estimate occurred in 2019, but the
21 preliminary numbers indicate that population showed a
22 slight increase from the 2019 survey. The official
23 survey results will be.....

23

24

(Phone ringing)

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The map I have up on the slides here just kind of makes it easier to see what we're talking about. The Baird Mountains are the ones with the green outline south of the DeLong Mountains. So, the Baird Mountain sheep population is still very low and cannot withstand any harvest. The state sheep hunt in Unit 23 has been closed since 2014. If a harvestable surplus does become available and a season is announced, the WEAR Superintendent has authority to close federal lands

1 and non-federally qualified users if necessary, and so
2 -- so that federally qualified subsistence users will
3 be assured a limited but meaningful hunting opportunity
4 and subsistence priority. Now kind of a step back
5 reminder from yesterday when we talked about WP26-01.
6 The WEAR Superintendent may lose their authority to
7 close federal public lands in Unit 23 to non-subsistence
8 uses of sheep if WP26-01 is adopted but OSM maintains
9 that closing the -- retaining his closure in regulations
10 is unnecessary since the state hunt has been closed since
11 2014. If a state hunt does open in the future, the Board
12 could administratively delegate temporary authority to
13 close federal public lands to non-federally qualified
14 users to the WEAR Superintendent. If necessary, a
15 temporary or emergency special action could also be
16 submitted. So, therefore, the -- currently the OSM
17 preliminary conclusion is to rescind the closure because
18 rescinding the closure would have no impact on the sheep
19 population or subsistence users, but would reduce the
20 regulatory and administrative burdens associated with
21 closure. Thank you, Mr. Chair, members of the Council.
22 I'd be happy to answer any questions.

23
24 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Mr. Plank.
25 Do we have any questions from members of the Council at
26 this time? Mike.

27
28 MR. KRAMER: Yeah. I know I'm a long-time
29 sheep hunter and we hunted them a lot in the past.
30 They're very vital, you know, subsistence resource to
31 some of the people who do harvest them. I -- that's why
32 I've always, constantly tried to keep tabs on, you know,
33 their census. When was the last census done? If you have
34 anything on there and when will be the next? You know,
35 since they're already in the critical state, then
36 there's no reason why these censuses can't be done every
37 year. That way there's less office time and more in the
38 air time.

39
40 I know that bulls.....

41
42 (Simultaneous speech)

43
44 MS. CARLSON: Through the Chair, this is
45 Annie Carlson with the Park Service. To answer your
46 question, member Kramer. Both the Park Service and the
47 State have been doing surveys, and both agencies
48 conducted a survey last year. Christie here too with
49 ADF&G and she can speak more to their efforts to survey
50 this population.

1

2

MS. OSBURN: Yeah, for the record Christie Osburn with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and to Member Kramer, through the Chair. So, typically the fish and game -- Department of Fish and Game will survey the DeLong Mountains. The proposal that's or the closure that's being discussed right now is in the Baird's in the survey of the Baird's is typically conducted by NPS.

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MR. KRAMER: Cause [sic] I think both ranges should be closed until further notice. I know the only place that is open is in the Gates of the Arctic. Those are for people from Ambler, Shungnak and Kobuk. And I know I worked with Alex in them, and they made it to where the harvest tickets were available. I had to do a lot of searching and a lot of researching where people from Ambler, Shungnak and Kobuk and when they happen to come into Kotzebue and have a hunting license and get -- go get a sheep. I just hope that, you know, that on these harvest tickets and all the other information that is with them that is very clearly pointed out where they can hunt and they can't hunt. Can't be making a, you know, Mister -- you know, our Fish and Wildlife officer or Park Service rangers, you know, making us criminals because we're not sure of where we're supposed to hunt these animals. So, I know it's a very, very small area, but whether there's sheep in that area, it's unknown. I mean, do you guys have any data that there's -- I know that Marcy Okada will be giving her presentation here shortly but we'll listen in on that one and I'll ask that question to her. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Mike. Any other questions from the Council at this time? Clyde.

MR. RAMOTH: For the record Clyde Ramoth. What time of the year do you guys do surveys? Because we got a lot of mountains, a lot of hills, Ambler area, Noatak area. I'm not sure what type of migration patterns they have or anything of that nature being from the flatlands. I've yet to taste sheep. I wouldn't mind trying a steak or a bowl of soup, but just curious about the migration and census data collection. Thank you.

MS. OSBURN: For the record, Christie Osburn again with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and to Member Ramoth, through the Chair. With Fish and Game and I believe Park Service does the same as well. We'll conduct our surveys in July. We've got the best

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1 visibility. We're looking for a white sheep on a dark
2 background and we can also get a group compositions then.
3 So, typically lambs are hitting the ground in May. So,
4 by June and July, we're able to see how many lambs are
5 still alive at that point.

6

7 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you for that.
8 Any other questions before we move into the process? Mr.
9 Plank.

10

11 MR. PLANK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Tom
12 Plank, OSM. I'm just going to give you a heads up, Annie
13 is printing out some flyers that they got from their
14 last survey and she's about to bring that in for us for
15 a little more information.

16

17 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you for that,
18 Mr. Plank. At this time, I'm going to go ahead and ask,
19 were there any public comments received during the open
20 comment period?

21

22 MR. PLANK: Through the Chair. Tom Plank,
23 OSM. And there are no public comments submitted during
24 the open period.

25

26 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you. Mike.

27

28 MR. KRAMER: Yeah. My question is, is,
29 you know, if we go ahead and squish this and chuck it
30 in the trash can, you know, some people are going to
31 look and go, oh look, state lands are closed. But look,
32 there's nothing that says anything on federal lands.
33 Maybe sheep hunting is open on federal lands. There
34 better be something that that Fish and Game book that
35 says that federal lands are closed, due to Fish and Game
36 closure. That'd be something clear in there, because
37 somebody from Lower 48, go, they have nothing in there
38 Fish and Game book. Maybe federal lands are open. Let's
39 go check it out. So, we need to make sure it's very,
40 very clear before we rescind this that it's in that book
41 cause, I don't want non-residents coming up here to go
42 think they can come up here and go get sheep, because
43 it's not in the book.

44

45 MR. PLANK: Through Chair, Tom Plank,
46 OSM. Thank you, member Kramer for that comment. So, as
47 far as the regulations it will still maintain as may be
48 announced. The delegation of authority that the Park
49 Service has would still be in place. The only part of
50 that that may throw a damper in that is whether or not

1 they have delegation to close the non-federally
2 qualified users, because if 26-01 is adopted, then
3 they'll lose that. But again, you have the option for
4 special actions and what have you to give that back to
5 them if that needs to be. So in regulations, it will
6 still say may be announced. So, that means they still
7 have to get with the Park Service to see if there's a
8 season announced or not.

9
10 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Mike.

11
12 MR. KRAMER: Yeah, problem with that, you
13 know, with the special action is it takes a long time
14 for that process to go through. I'm trying to get
15 something in emergency one I don't know what the timeline
16 is on that. You know, we might as well just go ahead and
17 keep it closed and have it on there. I don't want nothing
18 [sic] to come back and haunt us. You know, because I've
19 asked Fish and -- Park Service a long time ago, before
20 this was closed. Many, many times, every meeting, they
21 need to get out there and do sheep surveys. People are
22 telling me they're not seeing many sheep. And all of a
23 sudden, the National Park Service went out and or whoever
24 did went out and they said, oh my God, there's no more
25 sheep. We got to close the season right now. But they
26 said there was still a subsistence -- how do you say it?
27 A harvest limit. A good harvest limit, still available,
28 but no, it's about conserving our subsistence resources
29 for the future. But it's got to be it's got to stay
30 closed until we think it's good enough.

31
32 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Mike. Any
33 other questions or discussion? And it looks like Annie
34 is coming back in with the printout, with the numbers.
35 While she's handing that out, Mr. Orville Lind, did we
36 have any tribal or ANCSA corporation consultations to
37 report?

38
39 MR. LIND: Good morning, Mr. Chair,
40 Council members. Orville Lind, Native Liaison for OSM.
41 During the consultation sessions, we did not have any
42 questions or comments. Good morning. Thank you.

43
44 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Good morning. Thank
45 you. And do we have any agency and tribal comments at
46 this time?

47
48 MR. JOLY: Mr. Chair, this is Kyle Joly
49 with the Park Service.

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1 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Please go ahead,
2 Kyle.

3
4 MR. JOLY: Thank you. I just wanted to
5 answer Mr. Kramer's question. My understanding is that
6 the last time that the entire Gates of the Arctic were
7 surveyed by the National Park Service for sheep was 2015,
8 and we've been unable to census the entire park since
9 that due to logistical and financial constraints.

10
11 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Kyle. Do
12 we have any advisory group comments from other RACS,
13 Fish and Game Advisory Councils or Subsistence Resource
14 Commissions?

15 MR. PLANK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Tom
16 Plank, OSM. North Slope Regional Advisory Council did
17 take this up. They recommended to retain the status quo.
18 The Council stated that closure is necessary for the
19 conservation of the sheep population. Additionally, the
20 Council stated that rescinding the closure could reduce
21 hunting opportunities for federally qualified
22 subsistence users and promote competition for harvest
23 with non-federally qualified subsistence users.

24
25 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Mr. Plank.
26 Were there any other written public comments?

27
28 MS. PILCHER: This is Nissa Pilcher for
29 the record. There were no other written comments
30 received.

31
32 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Nissa. At
33 this time, is there any public testimony?

34
35 (No response)

36
37 Hearing none. Just to be clear on the
38 process, since it's a little different from the Wildlife
39 Proposals, if we all can look to the screen. Mr. Plank,
40 can you explain what a motion would look like based on
41 our options?

42
43 MR. PLANK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Tom
44 Plank, OSM. So essentially, four groups of options, you
45 can make a motion to retain the status quo. You can make
46 a motion to rescind the closure. Then you can also make
47 a motion to modify the closure. And then, of course, you
48 have the option to defer decision and take no action.
49 But.....

50

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1 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Mr. Plank.
2 So, before we make a motion, I'd just like to state for
3 the record, this is Chair Thomas Baker. I believe it'd
4 be in the best interest of the of the region of the
5 animals to retain the status quo. As Mike has noted, it
6 would take some time to put in a special action. We all
7 want to protect the resources. So, if there's anyone who
8 would like to make a motion, I'll entertain that at this
9 time.

10
11 MS. SCHAEFFER: I just want to let people
12 know I'm here online.

13
14 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Would anyone like to
15 make a motion?

16
17 MR. KRAMER: I make a motion to retain
18 the status quo.

19
20 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you. Motion
21 made by member Kramer to retain the status quo. Is there
22 a second?

23
24 MR. PATTEE: I second that motion.

25
26 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Seconded by Tristen
27 Pattee. Any discussion for our justification? I believe,
28 as I've stated it would be -- our justification would
29 be to protect the subsistence resource and make sure
30 that we're not slowing down the process if there is some
31 competition over the resource. Is there any further
32 discussion?

33
34 MR. RAMOTH: (Indiscernible). So, I'll
35 call for question.

36
37 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Question has been
38 called for so again to restate the final motion. The
39 motion was made by member Kramer and seconded by member
40 Pattee to retain the status quo. Nissa, can I please get
41 a roll call vote?

42
43 MS. PILCHER: Absolutely. Member
44 Monigold?

45
46 MS. MONIGOLD: Yes.

47
48 MS. PILCHER: Pattee?

49
50 MR. PATTEE: Yes.

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MR. KRAMER: Yes.

MS. PILCHER: Sorry. Member Kramer and he voted in the affirmative. Member Ramoth.

MR. RAMOTH: Yes.

MS. PILCHER: Member Cleveland.

MR. CLEVELAND: Yes.

MS. PILCHER: Chair Baker.

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Yes.

MS. PILCHER: So, with six yays and zero nays, motion carries to retain the status quo.

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you. So, with that, we will move into our presentation from Kyle Joly. Kyle, if you're ready, the floor is yours.

MR. JOLY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is Kyle Joly, I'm a caribou biologist with the National Park Service. Just want to thank Matt Cameron, who works with me in the Park Service for this report as well. And then also Alex Hansen, who's in the room with Fish and Game. We collaborate closely on our caribou monitoring efforts. Next slide please. So, I just want to give you a brief highlight of what happened at the Western Arctic Herd working group last month. Vern's there and Alex is there, so I'll keep it short. The big-ticket item was that Alex was able to do a new census and the herd is down to 121,000 caribou. This is about a 10% decline per year for the last six years and it's part of an ongoing 20-year decline. The group passed a resolution that they will suggest that the Federal Subsistence Board and the Board of Game move to 4 caribou limit one of which could be a cow. They also wanted to pass a resolution that no non-resident permits would be given out by the state and GMU 23, and they also talked about revising the Western Arctic Herd Management Plan and create a lower threshold where no harvest would occur. I would also let people know that just recently the state released new information on the Porcupine Herd, which is over on the east side of the state, Northeast corner. That herd is down to 143,000 caribou. It's about a third of the herd has been lost since the last census in 2017. And the Central Arctic Herd, which is over kind of in the oil

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1 fields, they're down to about 27,000. And that's down
2 from a high of 35,000 just three years ago. As far as I
3 know, I don't think a census was collected for the
4 Teshekpuk Herd. Next slide please.

5
6 So, people -- and this is my
7 presentation that I give to the Western Arctic Herd
8 Working Group. People always want to know where the
9 caribou are or were. And so, these are the general
10 movements of the herd in the fall so, like October-ish
11 [sic]. So, there was four main groups, one up by
12 Wainwright, which is pretty common to have some animals
13 up there. One small group kind of headed towards
14 Anaktuvuk. As Member Pattee mentioned, we had kind of a
15 normal movement of animal through Onion Portage. And
16 that was good to hear that people were able to harvest.
17 It was late. And I'll mention that later on in my talk.
18 And then we had really the main thrust of the herd was
19 over on the west side over by the Red Dog Road, Kivalina,
20 Noatak area. The majority of collars migrated through
21 that area and right now about half of them made it across
22 the road and half -- or above the road north of the road
23 the ones that made it south road. They're in the Kiana,
24 Noorvik area right now. And so those villages are
25 probably doing very well harvesting at the moment. I see
26 a hand up. Should I wait for that Chairman Baker, or do
27 you want to save that to the end?

28
29 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: I'm not able to see
30 whose hand is up. So, Karmen Monigold, is that you with
31 your hand up?

32
33 MS. MONIGOLD: Sorry. That was for
34 earlier.

35
36 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: All right.

37
38 MR. JOLY: No problem. I'll continue. Mr.
39 Chairman, if you don't mind.

40
41 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Yes, please. Go
42 ahead, Kyle.

43
44 MR. JOLY: Okay. Next slide please. So,
45 our reporting period is -- yep, slide four, is September
46 2024 through August 2025 in conjunction with Alex and
47 Fish and Game, we were able to deploy 34 GPS collars.
48 We've had to switch to all netting operations since Onion
49 Portage has become less used and less reliable for us.
50 All those deployments were in March and April of last

1 spring. In the fall, 82% of the collars used Noatak
2 National Preserve, that was the highest of any park in
3 Kobuk Valley, only 43% of the collars made it through
4 Kobuk Valley, which is about half as last year. And
5 Kobuk Valley has become very variable in its use. For
6 the winter, for the seventh year in a row, we didn't
7 have any collars make it out to Bering Land Bridge out
8 on the Seward Peninsula. We had 9% overwinter and Noatak,
9 which is about average but something that was unusual,
10 Noatak was the highest use of any park for the winter,
11 and that's never happened before, since we started
12 monitoring with GPS collars back in 2009. We track how
13 far a caribou moves in a year and the average this year
14 was over 2300 miles that's about average. It's a little
15 more than we saw last year. Likely because we had some
16 animals travel a little further south than we've seen
17 in the last couple of years.

18
19 Next slide please. So, what this use is
20 the orange areas are areas of high use, and the dark
21 orange are the heaviest use for this year. And you can
22 see the heaviest use was in the Selawik Hills and
23 Northern Nulato Hills and the Purcell Mountains. A lot
24 of that is weighted by a lot of winter use. And the
25 areas up north are calving in summer use up north but a
26 real, real concentration of animals in those northern
27 hills just south of Selawik. Next slide please. So, this
28 slide is a depiction of where the animals crossed during
29 their fall migration, where they crossed the Noatak
30 River. So, the bigger bars are higher percentage of
31 animals. The top part is what the animals did in 2024.
32 It's a very unusual distribution. We haven't really seen
33 one quite like this before. So, the 36% that came through
34 that orange segment. So, kind of the grand canyon of the
35 Noatak River and Cutler and that kind of area, that was
36 more than double the previous high that we've seen for
37 that area. And between that, the light blue and the
38 purple areas so the mid portion of the Noatak River we
39 had 93% of the collars come through. So, very centralized
40 distribution of animals migrating through the central
41 part of the Noatak National Preserve during the fall of
42 2024. Below that is kind of the average that you've
43 seen. And you can see that it's quite a bit different
44 distribution. There's more happening to the west and
45 also kind of skewed to the east as well in that in that
46 green area kind of where the Noatak River crosses into
47 Gates of the Arctic National Park. Next slide please.

48
49 So, what we're looking at here is the
50 percent of animals crossing the Kobuk River during fall.

1 And so, in the early years of our GPS monitoring we had
2 82% of the animals cross the Kobuk River each year. And
3 that, we thought, was fairly normal. There was always
4 animals staying up north for the winter. There's a little
5 bit of variation, but you know, generally pretty high
6 numbers of animals crossing the Kobuk River. In more
7 recent years, from 2016 on we've only had 46 so --
8 percent, so less than half of the collars are migrating
9 across the Kobuk River. In 2024, we had 74% which is
10 higher than we've seen during the more recent years.
11 It's also the first time 2023, 2024 that we've had more
12 than 70% of the collars migrate across the Kobuk River
13 two years in a row. That hasn't happened in a decade.
14 So that's good to see, more animals crossing the Kobuk
15 River in recent years. Next slide please.

16
17 So, this is looking at the timing,
18 before we where looking at what percentage of animals
19 cross the Kobuk. And this is looking at the timing of
20 the crossing. And so, in the early years of monitoring
21 October 6th was the average and this -- in more recent
22 years, from 2017 on, it's more than three weeks later,
23 October 27th and in 2024, it was October 29th, was the
24 average that the animals were coming across the Kobuk.
25 And that's the fourth latest that we've reported. And
26 so, while there was a good percentage of animals coming
27 across, they were late. But it was good to hear from
28 member Pattee that the river was still open. When caribou
29 were crossing and they were able to access some. Next
30 slide please.

31
32 So, this slide is the same as the last
33 slide. But rather than looking at just the blue bars
34 which were average, we look at when the first animal
35 crossed. And so, what we've seen here is really a
36 dramatic change on when the first animal has come across
37 the Kobuk River. In the first years of our monitoring,
38 we thought it fairly normal, we had animals coming across
39 the Kobuk River in August and the average was September
40 8th. I'm going to keep talking just for time's sake but
41 hopefully the slides will come back up. In more recent
42 years, it's -- the timing of the first animal crossing
43 is October 8th. So more than a month later and in this
44 year, October of 2024, it wasn't until October 23rd that
45 the first animal crossed. And that's the second latest
46 ever. If anyone can see the slides in the room, I'll
47 switch to slide number ten, which is a slide of when the
48 animals migrate in the spring. And it's looking at when
49 they cross the Selawik River on their northward
50 migration. And in 2025 it was May 6th with, with just

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1 about average. We don't really see any prevalent
2 trends.....

3

4 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Kyle, just one
5 second. Would this be in our book? So, this is just
6 electronic. Okay. Please continue.

7

8 MR. JOLY: Sorry about that. Yeah, I was
9 on vacation and I was just able to get it to OSM this
10 morning. So hopefully they'll get it to you and you'll
11 get it up. But the last slide is just the timing of
12 spring migration, the northward migration. And there
13 really isn't a trend. Nothing too exciting. This year
14 was May 6th. So, 2025, which was just about average. And
15 my thinking on this is that the -- we only have data for
16 females, so they all want to get to the calving grounds,
17 and so, there's that strong impetus to go. And so that
18 may be why we're not seeing much of a trend with the
19 spring migration. In my last slide is just asking if
20 anyone has any questions. It's a picture from a caribou
21 collar. We are able to -- two years get caribou collars
22 out that have cameras. And so, they take videos, and
23 we've been working with a bunch of collaborators to
24 figure out what caribou are eating during the summer.
25 We have a good idea of what they're eating during the
26 winter, which is primarily lichens, but we haven't
27 really studied what they eat in summer. And so, we've
28 just finished up scoring or rating those videos and we
29 hope to have results maybe by the end of this year with
30 what caribou are eating. So, that's the end of my report.
31 I'll be happy to take any questions.

32

33 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Kyle. Any
34 questions? Mike.

35

36 MR. KRAMER: Yeah. My curiosity was what
37 was the whole point of this presentation, is that to
38 prove that caribou did not migrate through the Ambler
39 Mining District or...? Because, you know, I mean, I've
40 been here for 20 years, I never had any of my people
41 sell us out. You know, right now, our caribou herd is
42 in critical condition. Moose are going, our sheep people
43 are going, they want to put more pressure on our
44 subsistence resources, all for money? Bad enough Red Dog
45 is moving ten miles east. I heard they had to fly a
46 bunch of people out of there because there were such
47 high levels of SO₂. And people had to leave Red Dog
48 because of those conditions. What kind of conditions are
49 being subjected to our subsistence resources out there?
50 That's my curiosity. Why isn't NANA and Teck here? That's

1 ridiculous. You know, this is our people. This is our
2 subsistence resources we're talking about here. And
3 they're up there not giving a crap about it and
4 contaminating our animals and our people. Let alone
5 that, I have a video. You know, they always speak so
6 strongly about not crossing the road. I mean, not going
7 through caribou and they're crossing the road. I have a
8 video and a Facebook post with them driving right through
9 or herd. It is wrong. My faith in NANA and Teck just
10 went right out the front door when I saw that. And what
11 they're doing now? Yeah. I'm sorry. You know, to me, my
12 -- our subsistence resources mean more to me and the
13 people, than mining minerals and money. Thank you.

14

15 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Clyde. Did you have
16 something?

17

18 MR. RAMOTH: Yeah. Thank you, Mike. I've
19 always had concern too about the Ambler Mining District,
20 the road, the 52-mile AIDEA Road to the mine site from
21 the Port Road. So, when we talk about the mineral
22 resources and the impacts of our caribou, which is
23 dwindling and the surveys that are done -- thank you, I
24 know Verne and others from different agencies are here
25 today. We're going to talk about caribou for a long
26 time, I think, and we all know that. But to see the
27 regulation changes and even talk about harvesting the
28 cows. I had a piece of beef steak that I shared with my
29 two kids and it lasted four days, actually, with some
30 seal oil. But the tutu, the caribou, we know it's the
31 definitely -- the population really going down the road
32 subjected -- proposed roads. The -- what are you talking
33 about, the contamination going on Red Dog. Teshekpuk
34 herd. Are we hearing more from, like, the North Slope,
35 are the possibly mixing in with other herds is probably
36 my curiosity/question. I might have read something some
37 time ago, but there's probably some updates out there.

38

39 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Kyle, are you able
40 to answer the question about whether the Western Arctic
41 and the Teshekpuk Herds commingle? I know we've
42 discussed this a little bit in the past, but can you
43 tackle that, please?

44

45 MR. JOLY: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
46 This is Kyle Joly, for the record. Yeah, we did a study
47 on that a few years ago, and I'll try and get it to OSM
48 again and throw it in the chat when I get a minute. But
49 yeah, we looked at the four big Arctic herds, so the
50 Western Arctic, the Teshekpuk, Central Arctic and

1 Porcupine, and they run west to east in that order, And
2 there is some level of interchange. It's fairly small.
3 And it tends to be from the smaller herds to the bigger
4 herds. And the bigger herds are the Western Arctic in
5 the Porcupine, and the smaller herds are the Teshekpuk,
6 Central Arctic. So, it does occur. It does typically
7 occur at lower levels, but not during census time,
8 usually. And so, usually the censuses are the most
9 accurate depiction of any caribou herds really in the
10 world. And just want to congratulate Fish and Game for
11 being able to pull off three of those censuses this
12 year.

13
14 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Any other questions
15 for Kyle at this time? Tristen.

16
17 MR. PATTEE: Through the Chair, I want
18 to thank Mike for his comments. This is Tristen Pattee
19 for the record. I work at Red Dog Mine for the
20 environmental department. And Teck, they go through a
21 lot of effort in order to minimize any impact that they
22 have on the migration of the caribou and which means we
23 stop all traffic. Yes, there has been situations where
24 what Mike said, he said there's a video going through.
25 We can't control everyone's actions. Sometimes they'll
26 do things that we -- that are against what our policy
27 is. If that happens, we make sure we document it. And
28 depending on the severity of their actions, it could
29 lead up to termination. So, that's the risk that the
30 employee is going to take. And then we take it very
31 seriously and make sure that action is taken, if anything
32 like that happens.

33
34 With the SO₂ you know, I'm flying Red
35 Dog today, and so and I've been there in SO₂, there --
36 there's a lot of science that they're putting in there
37 to be able to let everybody know the levels of danger
38 and when we need to evacuate and how we need to proceed
39 and what actions we need to go forward to make sure
40 everybody's safe at the site. The people that have been
41 flown out, they are people that, you know, have gone
42 through medical screenings to -- if they have more of a
43 some underlying condition, then we want to make sure
44 that they have the option to leave. And so that's what's
45 been going at Red Dog. But they are taking it very, very
46 seriously. And you know, Teck put out a statement which
47 is on (indiscernible). And so, you can look at that. But
48 yes, right now there's a lot of things happening in
49 order to mitigate any danger they are to the employees
50 at Red Dog. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Tristen.
Any other questions?

MS. SCHAEFFER: I have a comment too, if anybody know [sic] I'm here.

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: This is just for the Council at this time. So, anyone else from the Council with any questions for Kyle?

MS. SCHAEFFER: Okay. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Karmen, are you still with us? Do you have any questions?

MS. MONIGOLD: I'm still here. This is Karmen Monigold. I just want to thank both Mike and Tristan for their comments and also for Clyde. I wish I was there to see the slides, but as you guys know, I'm home sick. I do worry about the trajectory of our caribou herd. And you know, we did try to pass the 4 caribou a year, this last state season for the Board of Game, it didn't go through. And we went on science because the numbers were so low. We're already in a critical state, so we should be looking at critical management. The only comment I want to say to anybody listening is you know, during this time of year, usually the only ones with antlers are the pregnant females. So, please don't shoot those ones. And that's all I've got. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Karmen. And I was told that Carmen Daggett with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game has a comment. Carmen Daggett, are you on the line?

MS. DAGGETT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Can you hear me? Okay.

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Yes, we can. You have the floor.

MS. DAGGETT: All right. Thank you. I just -- you guys asked some questions about the Teshekpuk Caribou Herd. In particular, I heard Clyde asking, and I -- first of all wanted to let you guys know that I was listening in on this meeting, but also to kind of give you a heads up about, you know, Mr. Joly mentioned that there were only three caribou photo censuses that were done on the North Slope. So, we were unable to do the

1 Teshekpuk Caribou Herd photo census this summer, even
2 though we tried to we actually did take some photographs,
3 but there were some large groups that were missing. So,
4 we had some concerns about the quality of that survey
5 and therefore decided that it was not good enough to
6 actually put our hat on, so.

7
8 That being said during that survey, we
9 did look at collar distribution. And we kind of have an
10 idea of that through GPS collars. And it did not appear
11 that we had any mixing really occurring during the photo
12 census, for the Teshekpuk Herd anyways. So, I think that
13 that should generally sum up. So, we're basically still
14 operating under the assumption that we had a previous
15 minimum count in 2022 of around 55,000 animals with an
16 estimate of population estimate of around 61,000. So
17 that's what we're managing on right now because we don't
18 have a better number from this last census. And I'd be
19 happy to field any questions about the Teshekpuk Caribou
20 Herd if people have further questions. But that's a
21 general summary of our understanding right now.

22
23 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you for that,
24 Carmen Daggett. Clyde, did you have something?

25
26 MR. RAMOTH: Yeah. Thank you, Carmen
27 Daggett and Karmen Monigold for your comment too. (In
28 Native). So overall, our caribou numbers are low. I would
29 like to see from all the agencies to where we could get
30 more monies [sic] for more surveys done. We got elder
31 here from -- I'm sure he consults with the Red Dog issues
32 here from Noatak, Mr. Ricky Ashby. But I'm just curious
33 if we could just funnel monies from state, feds,
34 whatever, get more surveys done, because we're not even
35 talking about the reindeer stuff with Tom Gray,
36 from Nome. I don't know if he still has a herd, but I
37 remember some years ago we talked about that. One time
38 I was asked to -- and they sent me with -- about five
39 of us we went to Bethel and testified on a no-fly zone
40 for Noatak area. So, these caribou I know there's like
41 -- predator. I'm glad we discussed the wolf issues
42 yesterday. And of course, the bear during the fall time
43 and springtime. So, predator control is definitely
44 showing impact, all the possible, I mean, all the
45 contamination from Red Dog and possibly the Ambler
46 Mining Road, those kind of issues are heavy discussions.
47 But overall, I would love to see more surveys done from
48 both federal and state. Thank you.

1 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Clyde.
2 Questions, discussion from the Council at this time?
3 Tristen.

4
5 MR. PATTEE: Through the Chair, Tristen
6 Pattee. I just have three questions for Kyle's -- during
7 Kyle's presentation. The first is there was a threshold
8 for no harvest on -- do you -- what is -- does anybody
9 know the threshold, or do you know the threshold, Kyle?
10 Second one, I heard 27,000 population for what I herd
11 was that? And last you said 34 collars deployed but is
12 that total that are out there right now, or was that
13 just 34 collars recently deployed?

14
15 MR. JOLY: Through the Chair, this is
16 Kyle Joly with the National Park Service. Thank you,
17 Member Pattee, for those questions. So, the threshold
18 that the working group was talking about was 100,000
19 caribou. That has not been finalized. We would need to
20 change the plan for that, but that is the number that
21 was being discussed at the working group meeting. The
22 27,000 caribou, that's the Central Arctic Gerd. And so
23 that's two herds to the east of the Western Arctic Herd.
24 That's the one that's [sic] spends a lot of time in the
25 oil fields of Northcentral Alaska. And yes, the 34
26 collars are just the new colors that we've deployed last
27 spring. We try and deploy a bunch of collars every spring
28 now and the goal is to have about 100 or so female
29 collars in the herd. Usually, we get a little bit above
30 that in the spring and then animals die through natural
31 causes, and we end up with less than that just before
32 we start doing captures again. So, my recollection off
33 the top of my head, and maybe Alex has a better number
34 off the top of his, but I think we're up around 98 active
35 collars in the Western Arctic Herd right now, just on
36 the females.

37
38 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Alex Hansen.

39
40 MR. HANSEN: Through the Chair this Alex
41 Hansen, Alaska Department Fish Game here in Kotzebue.
42 So, a couple of points of clarification. Yeah, we're
43 high 90s for current caller sample size right now. As
44 Kyle mentioned, we try to have a sample of 100 collars
45 going into the census. That is how we plan that so that
46 we have that many to look at when we're actually counting
47 the animals. One point of clarification is the, kind of
48 the, we'll just call it a safety net, if you will, that
49 that number was actually 75,000 that was presented at
50 the working group. So, when they go through 75,000, all

1 hunting will cease. And it will resume once it comes up
2 above 100,000 in an increasing fashion. So that's kind
3 of written into the plan. So, if we see that the
4 population is growing, doing well, then hunting can
5 resume after it crosses 100,000 again. But the current
6 writing of that was, it'll seize it, or they called it
7 a moratorium at 75,000.

8
9 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you for that,
10 Alex. Tristen, did you have something?
11

12 MR. PATTEE: Through the Chair. And is
13 that just for the state land, or is -- are we going to
14 have to make some motions and actions to be able to
15 match that with the federal as well?
16

17 MR. HANSEN: Well, that kind of the
18 intent when we had the discussion is they would present
19 that to the FSB and to the Board of Game. So, that would
20 include basically the range of the Western Arctic Herd.
21 And so, we can consider the range of the Western Arctic
22 Herd about a quarter of the state, 144,000mi². So that
23 would be Southwest, at least portion of 26A, Unit 23 and
24 Unit 22, plus portions of 21 and 24. And the intent of
25 that was it would just automatically trigger that. So,
26 let's say we do a census two years from now and it's
27 74,000. Then the intent would just be to shut down
28 hunting completely without having to go through the
29 process of another regulatory cycle, or Board of Game
30 or WSA or anything, it just happens. And so that --
31 that's kind of the goal. We'll see how it plays out in
32 the regulations both in state and federal side. But
33 that's what the goal was.
34

35 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you for that,
36 Alex. Mike, did you have your hand?
37

38
39 MR. KRAMER: I know that we have law
40 enforcement here. I noticed earlier this year that there
41 was a video that popped up out of Barrow, I believe. I
42 don't know if it was spoken at North Slope meeting, but
43 there was a family that ran into a bunch of caribou cows
44 and calves that were all killed, had their hindquarters,
45 their rear ends removed. Some of them weren't even
46 touched, weren't even gutted because they weren't fat.
47 I hope that those people got busted because that's not
48 good, you know, and especially that's most likely the
49 Teshekpuk Herd. Right Alex, in that area?
50

1 MR. HANSEN: Yes, that's correct. That'd
2 be the Teshekpuk, most likely.

3
4 MR. KRAMER: Yeah. So, I hope something
5 was done about that.

6
7 MR. CANTINE: Thank you. Trooper Cantine
8 through the Chair to Member Kramer. I appreciate you
9 bringing that up. So, I did handle that call initially,
10 came in as a Unit 23 is why I took the call. Pretty
11 early on, we determined it was out of Barrow. I talked
12 with Ms. Daggett out of Barrow. And we referred it back
13 over to our Fairbanks Office. They had a little bit more
14 just logistically. But as it stands right now, the
15 Wildlife Troopers don't have anybody posted on the North
16 Slope. That's a kind of a cordial detente agreement on
17 both sides between the North Slope and the state of
18 Alaska. We have finite resources North Slope really
19 prefers -- there's not a Wildlife Trooper on the North
20 Slope. Going forward, that's something that can be
21 addressed. We had some significant cases on the North
22 Slope, just like we have everywhere else. All it takes
23 is 1 or 2 folks to do something pretty egregious. Right
24 now, the North Slope is kind of an in-house deal. The
25 state of Alaska does not do a whole lot of wildlife
26 management up there unless we get a complaint like this.
27 And so going forward, that would be a thing to bring up
28 especially to work in partnership. I've reached out a
29 little bit to some folks in Point Hope. They're kind of
30 a hybrid North Slope but still sort of hubbing out of
31 Kotzebue, working with their Game Department to try and
32 do some cooperative work. But at the end of the day, we
33 have very minimal enforcement on the North Slope, and
34 it'll probably take a grassroots push to change that.
35 Thank you.

36
37 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Steve.
38 Clyde, did you have something?

39
40 MR. RAMOTH: Yeah, just a general comment
41 then question, I think, thank you for that comment. And,
42 and Mike's concern too. We got Leonard Barger here from
43 North Slope. But is that something we could push with
44 the Department of -- the Commissioner James C., to get
45 the wildlife trooper whatever up in North Slope? Because
46 we got oil fields, we get migration issues, we get the
47 lichen issues, we get Red Dog to talk about, you know.
48 I'm curious because this is really sensitive with the
49 numbers. Is that something like the tribes could write
50 resolutions, letters to the state to get funding, to get

1 someone up in the North Slope. Any thoughts?

2

3 MR. CANTINE: Thank you, sir. Trooper
4 Cantine through the Chair to Member Ramoth. Potentially,
5 yes, that would be the appropriate channel, would be to
6 refer to the Department of Public Safety leadership. The
7 Wildlife troopers are a division there. And if you really
8 wanted a successful push, I think the other appropriate
9 channel would be to talk with North Slope leadership and
10 say, hey, here's some concerns, how can we do this?
11 Because if -- on a small scale, we've all seen here the
12 local pushback to outside folks coming in saying, here's
13 how it's going to be. What I think is changing is this
14 sort of model right here where it's local, saying, hey,
15 here's a perceived problem, what are we going to do
16 about it? How are we going to take ownership? And part
17 of that, unfortunately, is there's a heavy there's
18 somebody with a badge that deals with the 5% that don't
19 want to be part of the solution, right. That's just an
20 unfortunate fact of human existence at this point.
21 That's why I have a job I wish I didn't but if you want
22 really meaningful results, I think you're going to have
23 to do this from the top and bottom, not just top down.
24 So, you'd have to reach out to the North Slope, I think,
25 and have the conversation with them and say, hey, we see
26 this as a potential problem. What's the solution from
27 your eyes? And I think you'll get better results than
28 just going to the Commissioner and saying, hey, let's
29 push this top down. Thank you.

30

31 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Any other questions,
32 comments from the Council?

33

34 MS. MONIGOLD: Through the Chair, this
35 is Karmen.

36

37 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Karmen, you have the
38 floor.

39

40 MS. MONIGOLD: Thank you. I just wanted
41 to point out that with the number of 121,000, we're
42 losing about 15,000 a year, if that's correct, the last
43 two years from the last count. That puts us at just over
44 three years, we will be in the no hunting zone at 75,000
45 if we continue to lose 15,000 a year. That's something
46 scary to think about. Three years, just over three years,
47 we could be in a no hunting caribou zone, if we do not
48 take action to protect our caribou herd. And maybe
49 somebody from the Department of Fish and Game or Park
50 Service can correct me if I'm wrong, but I'm pretty sure

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1 that's what we've done is lost about 15,000 a year. And
2 if it continues at that trend, just over three years,
3 we will no longer be able to hunt caribou. Thank you.

4

5 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you for that,
6 Karmen. Mike, did you have something?

7

8 (No response)

9

10 Alex Hansen.

11

12 MR. HANSEN: Yeah. This is Alex Hansen.
13 Just -- yes, you're correct, Karmen. You're looking at
14 three years, if we continue on this downward cycle, we'll
15 be below 75,000 roughly. So, that's a heavy thing to
16 think about. Karmen, you in the AC and the RAC members
17 have been instrumental in, you know, pushing our
18 regulation changes. We saw the biggest regulation
19 changes in 40 years at our last Board of Game and FSB.
20 It's my opinion that we need to push a little harder.
21 If we talk about cow harvest, that is the biggest thing
22 that we can change and the biggest determining factor.
23 And with Mr. Cantine here at the table, I would suggest
24 that, you know, we think about how enforceable the one
25 cow bag limit is. I think often it's easy for us to
26 think that we just get one cow or we have that, you
27 know, as a fallback, in case if we accidentally harvest
28 a cow, then we can deal with that. But, you know, it's
29 pretty hard to enforce when people can get multiple cows
30 and just bring them home and only mark down one. And I
31 think Mr. Cantine can speak to that to see if that's an
32 issue but that's something that I'm highly concerned
33 about. When I look at collar counts and I get callers
34 turned in. This is kind of some rough numbers back of
35 the napkin stuff but, in the last five years, our average
36 cow harvest just based on collars, is about 4,000 cows
37 for this herd. And our current estimate of what we should
38 be harvesting for this herd in cows is 0. So, if we run
39 those numbers out really far and I can walk you through
40 the math later but, you know, effectively in those five
41 years we've taken 200,000 caribou out of the population
42 based on what they could produce. And so, I think this
43 is where we just need to stop and say, if we want to
44 destroy this herd, we can keep hunting cows. We want to
45 save it, we need to stop. We need to stop now. And I
46 would leave that with you to think about and take back
47 to your communities, because, you know, effectively, the
48 people within this range of this herd can save or destroy
49 this population by their actions. And I think we need
50 to be very cognizant of that. Thank you.

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CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Mike.

MR. KRAMER: Yeah. So earlier when we talked -- Karmen was saying that within the next few years, we probably won't be able to harvest caribou. I know that with the Federal Subsistence Board and the rules and the things that we follow under ANILCA that once the subsistence resource hits a critical population to where subsistence users are questionable about even able to being able to harvest these resources anymore. The people out there, you need to follow the regulations. Quit self-incriminating yourself by putting yourself so blessed on Facebook. You're making the rest of us look bad, who follow the rules and regulations. This is set forth to preserve our herd, our livelihood. Look how much groceries you got in your stores, very little. We depend on these caribou. You know, we want to be able to hunt them for many, many years. So, with ANILCA, one: guides and transporters are eliminated. That's going to happen today. Fish and Game is going to get on it today. We should push a proposal for Board of Game to shut it down effective immediately, because the next two years, we'll just turn it 30,000 more? Yeah, state's liable, Board of Games' liable. Second one: land enhancement. Two: predator control. This is on the federal side so, you know, feds means all feds. If you're feds and you say we can't do predator control, then you should change your thing to Alaska Department of Fish and Wildlife or whatever it may be and not on the feds side, because we're here to protect these animals. We're here to protect our culture, our subsistence resources for our kids, our grandkids. I got grandkids, I want to teach them to go out and hunt caribou. Two years from now, my kids won't even be able to squeeze off a 22 round. I want these caribou to be around for a long time. So, we, the people of Northwest Arctic need to start taking action. All of us start protecting our caribou. Do you guys want caribou? Well, better quit going out there and smacking cows. See, that's the problem. Where we went back -- where we went bad many years ago. It wasn't on us and it was on, you know, the fact that the population, the censuses were still somewhat stable. You know, we used to go up to Kobuk, September, man I used to come home 16-20 cow -- bulls, you know, nice fat ones. We -- sometimes we didn't even have to go past Kiana, but we used to always come home with bull. Now all of a sudden, you know, there's no more bulls going through anywhere. During the prime hunting time of September, no bulls are being harvested and the guys in transporters are taking

1 minimal and so when they finally come bum rushing through
2 here, at the Kotzebue, Noorvik, Kiana, we start whacking
3 a lot of cows. That's where we went wrong. That's one
4 of the reasons why this population has taken a nosedive.
5 So, as of today, I wouldn't be surprised that it becomes
6 four bulls and that's it. I'm sorry. I hate to say that,
7 but man, it's time to conserve. You see our shelves at
8 the store? They're getting empty. I wonder what they
9 look like out in the villages. So many people out there
10 in the villages. Please go to your store. Post pictures
11 inside your store of the emptiness. Post it on Facebook.
12 Hey, look, this is what we have to deal with. This is
13 why we depend on caribou moose, some muskox, sheep are
14 out of the question, you know. Either we're going to
15 become reindeer herders again, you know. We're going to
16 have to do something because so many people depend on
17 the caribou. We're the caribou people. A lot of people
18 have questions regarding caribou, they come to me and
19 I'm like, I'm not a biologist, dude. I might have 20
20 years of service of, you know, being on Councils, but
21 it's time to start taking the next step into protecting
22 everything, all of us as subsistence users. You know,
23 with these resources. Thank you.

24
25 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you for that,
26 Mike. Any final questions or comments? Tristen.

27
28 MR. PATTEE: Through the Chair, Tristen
29 Pattee. The -- so if we do get into that, the threshold,
30 is there going to be enforcement to be able to monitor
31 the that whole -- the whole shutdown of the hunting?
32 Because obviously now we have a, you know, very small
33 bag limit. But, you know, I've seen firsthand people
34 going home with 20 caribou throughout, you know, a few
35 days. Of course, there's nobody out there. So, I mean,
36 if we do get to that 75,000, is there going to be actual
37 presence of law enforcement to be able to monitor this?
38 And you know, because they're not getting in trouble.
39 You know, there just, oh nothing's going to happen. And
40 then, of course, with the cows, I think people have the
41 mindset of saying, okay, one won't hurt the herd, two
42 won't hurt the herd. But you have that multiple -- with
43 multiple hunters, you know, and then it all builds up
44 and adds up to a lot of cows that are being taken. So
45 yeah.

46
47 MR. CANTINE: Thank you, sir. Trooper
48 Cantine through the Chair to Member Pattee. So as an
49 example, right now, I would look at the Mulchatna. The
50 short answer is yes, there would be increased patrol.

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1 What we do for the Mulchatna Herd down by Dillingham,
2 which is in the toilet. It's about 12,000, I think,
3 plus/minus.

4

5 MR. HANSEN: Was, yeah, it's up to 16,000
6 now, but was down to 12,000.

7

8 MR. CANTINE: So, it's a 33% increase.
9 And part of that is predator control. Part of that is I
10 think heavier enforcement. But we bring multiple
11 troopers in from out of region. Nobody really wants that
12 up here. And I'll be the first to admit, like, I'm one
13 dude in an area that's 10% larger than the state of
14 Indiana. So, there's going to be a lot of things I miss.
15 Part of moving the needle on that, and this is a hard
16 thing to say because we're a community culture up here.
17 This is not a me, it's a we culture, and I get that. But
18 part of the being the we here is, when you see the one
19 dude that brings back 10, 20 caribou, he's over the
20 limit, he's got more cows than he should, right? I'll
21 go out there. I've walked and driven a four-wheeler
22 around Ambler. I've flown out there to patrol. But timing
23 is a booger, right. I've got to get there when that guy
24 is harvesting. And sometimes I get lucky. Sometimes
25 somebody gives me a leg up and I can go and have a
26 conversation with somebody because I know already,
27 right. And so, part of that, I think the first
28 conversation is you go and talk to your friends, say,
29 hey, man, I don't think this is going to be a good fit
30 for where we need to go, right. But the next step and
31 what we've seen in other communities where the resource
32 is much more tight is we have community members that are
33 saying, no, that's not okay and one of us gets a phone
34 call and then we can go deal with it. And I would say
35 in the few years I've been here in Kotzebue, I'm coming
36 up on six years, so I'm still kind of the new kid on the
37 block, I've seen the needle move in Kotzebue from "what
38 license?" "what RC9072?" Generally, people have that
39 piece of paper. Whether or not they use it right is
40 another matter, but we've moved the needle a little bit
41 to more likely than not around Kotzebue. I'm going to
42 see a license and an RC90-72 in your pocket when I stop
43 and talk to you. Upriver Kobuk, not so much, right. And
44 that that's a logistical thing. It is what it is. But
45 the more local hunters get this positive, affirming
46 pressure from their peers of this is what we need to do
47 to have caribou tomorrow and 20 years from now, the
48 better we're going to see that needle move and the better
49 we're going to see this resource be preserved. So, from
50 an enforcement standpoint, like I deal with people, the

1 best enforcement is your neighbor that says that's not
2 okay, right. I'm kind of the last resort when I have to
3 roll up and say, that's not okay and I actually catch
4 you doing it. I don't know if that answers your question,
5 sir.

6
7 MR. PATTEE: Through the Chair, Tristen
8 Pattee. Thank you for that. I'm wondering if it would
9 be something to think about to, you know, focus more on
10 areas that caribou do show up. I mean, I live in Ambler,
11 they show up every year, depends on the timing but every
12 year they show up. So, I mean, isn't that something you
13 could just focus on? Because we almost know they're going
14 to show up in the Onion Portage and Ambler area because
15 they do. You know, every -- I've gotten a caribou every
16 year but I don't see enforcement there once we got this
17 -- that we lowered the bag limit. I didn't see
18 enforcement there. And that's when I saw, you know,
19 people getting 20, 30, caribou went up with a, you know,
20 you know, 4 caribou bag limit. And yeah, it's very
21 concerning seeing people. And of course I mentioned it,
22 you know, but there are people that post on Facebook,
23 can we use Facebook as evidence? I think once people
24 start you know, basically getting in trouble for their
25 actions, posting on Facebook, I mean, there's -- it's
26 right there, you know, it's a cow, multiple. I mean, I
27 mean, is it maybe there's something we just we anonymous
28 -- anonymously sent to you guys or something. It's just
29 -- I think until they until they know it's serious and
30 people are getting trouble, that they're not going to
31 stop. Yeah, we can talk to them all day but what they
32 have in their mind is, oh, that's our food, we don't
33 care. We're going to go do it, you know. So, I mean,
34 maybe it would be best to have someone there a block of
35 time because we know they're showing up in October, you
36 know, end of September through October now. And so maybe
37 we could have the presence of law enforcement there
38 throughout a certain time period. Just a thought.
39 Thanks.

40
41 MR. CANTINE: Yes, sir. Thank you. And,
42 Trooper Cantine, through the Chair to Member Pettee. I
43 would agree about every other year for the past going
44 on six seasons now, I've run boat patrols up the Kobuk
45 and apparently, I'm bad at timing, that -- I have not
46 timed it such that the caribou are there. I've talked
47 to a number of people but like a for example, this year
48 I took a boat from Kotzebue up to Shungnak and back,
49 spent three days on the river, talked to about 20 boats,
50 right. It's a big area. And there's the density of

1 resource users is not what you'd see in Bethel per se.
2 So, like 20 boats in three days is pretty good for up
3 here, unless you're looking at like Onion Portage, here
4 we go. So yes, timing is key. And I'm still working on
5 cracking that nut, getting it better. I've gotten some
6 logistics up here. I've got new equipment that is better
7 suited to patrolling upriver. I specifically wrote that
8 into my request. So, I've got a different boat that
9 works better upriver than what I had previously. But I
10 would not be opposed to having somebody come up, what
11 we call TDY, temporary duty, and spending a week, two
12 weeks, three weeks bouncing between Ambler, Shungnak,
13 Kobuk during that season. So, we can sidebar later if
14 you want to talk about that. I've written several program
15 proposals, some of which have gone through to bring in
16 extra people and some of which just haven't because we
17 have finite resources. So, I'll keep asking. I've gotten
18 yeses on some of those in the past. I'd like to see
19 yeses on more. I've already preloaded my chain of command
20 on if we go to four animals, no cows, no hunting at all,
21 this is what I'm going to be asking for in an increased
22 patrol presence. So, it's on the radar. It's already
23 prepped. It's just a matter of actually executing.

24
25 MR. PATTEE: Thank you for that. Yeah, I
26 think you probably need to request more than a boat
27 because we got lucky this year -- or the last year
28 because they finally showed up before the river froze.
29 And it was a very small time frame, then we have to
30 continue on with ATVs. So, I think ATVs or side by side
31 or whatever you need to be able to patrol those areas
32 is what you need, because that's where they're coming
33 from. The multiple caribou cows being taken is on ATVs.
34 And then sometimes it's where it's snowing. Because I
35 was -- I even used snow machine a couple years ago. So,
36 the -- and then yeah, just focusing on that area where
37 we know the caribou are going to go first is going to
38 be Ambler area. Shungnak and Kobuk that they'll get them
39 later on. But focus right there. And that's where you're
40 going to see a lot of the action taken -- being taking
41 place. But yeah, ATVs I think is going to be something
42 that you'd need in the Ambler area, so.

43
44 MR. CANTINE: Thank you sir, I appreciate
45 that.

46
47 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Mike, did you have
48 something?

49
50

1 MR. KRAMER: You know, I just wanted to
2 point out to the people, our people out there, man, it's
3 getting critical. I'm serious. Some people might think
4 I'm too serious but I've been right so far. My estimation
5 was at 121,000 animals. This was before the county even
6 came out. They state, 30,000 in two more years. No more
7 caribou hunting, no more meat in the freezers. Poachers
8 being busted, taken away. Snow machine, guns, hunting
9 rights, nothing. Either we're going to start following
10 the law and be able to provide food for our families,
11 or you're going to start losing a lot of stuff, including
12 your subsistence resources. Two years. That's all we got
13 [sic]. Two years before we hit that threshold. If we're
14 at 15,000 a year and man, it's going to come down and
15 it's going to come down hard. Right now, it's at 15 a
16 year in one cow. By the end of this meeting, I'd like
17 to find out what was the proposed amount by the Western
18 Arctic Caribou Herd. I believe, on our Fish and Game
19 Kotzebue Sound Advisory Council, I believe we looked at
20 4 a year and maybe or -- I think it was 5 year and no
21 cows, if I recall.

22
23 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Alex.

24
25 MR. HANSEN: Yeah, if I may, through the
26 Chair, Alex Hansen. Yeah, so the proposal at the Western
27 Arctic Herd working group was 4 total animals and they
28 retained the cow and I was on record at that meeting
29 suggesting that I will not support the cow for biological
30 reasons. So, my recommendation would be 4 total animals,
31 all bulls, as you recommended earlier, Mike.

32
33 CHAIRMAN BAKER: Mike.

34
35 MR. KRAMER: Yeah, I think with that 1
36 cow, why don't we put the closing date January 1st?

37
38 MR. HANSEN: That's another good point.
39 This didn't gain much traction at the working group, but
40 another point of discussion that we need to talk about
41 is, you know, oftentimes we see, you know, a lot of the
42 talking points in the fall are when the caribou arrived,
43 the bulls are in rut, so people say they're forced to
44 shoot cows, right. So, what we really need to talk about
45 is also a season change. And, you know, what we see is
46 winter harvest, you know, fall harvest is where we see
47 a lot of that cow harvest. So, my recommendation, you
48 know, I haven't finished this out entirely but this may
49 be something that I take to the Board of Game, is we
50 need to talk about shortening the winter season. And

1 that might be, you know, that fall season ends the end
2 of September or maybe it's the 15th of October, and then
3 it doesn't reopen again until April 1st. And so those
4 are some thoughts there. If we just take that middle
5 season out, the winter season, you know, it still allows
6 opportunity for all communities potentially depending
7 on how the caribou move. But then it also removes that
8 feeling or that pressure that we need to harvest
9 something right now in the fall and most often ends up
10 being cows. So that's kind of where I'm going with my
11 recommendations, so feel free to work those out for
12 yourselves.

13
14 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Clyde did you have
15 your hand?

16
17 MR. RAMOTH: Yeah. Clyde Ramoth for the
18 record, through the Chair. I know when we talk about
19 enforcement and stuff, we got the NANA trespass officers
20 during the fall season and they do some patrol, but not
21 really all areas. When we talk about predator control
22 with the bears and the wolves, I know through social
23 media I saw caribou up in Noorvik streets last year, I
24 believe. And when they came up -- when they get to the
25 village because they run away from the wolves, then we
26 got the warmer temperatures. My late dad used to always
27 tell us, tell me to follow regulations, of course, Mike's
28 really adamant about that. And when we propose to make
29 changes because of warmer temperatures, late seasons,
30 the predator issues, like for us we have to wait till
31 Noatak, the folks hunt their caribou. We had guys from
32 Selawik that went up to Noatak Rivers to hunt in
33 (indiscernible) last fall. Then we got Labor Day from
34 Kotzebue, the Upper Kobuk or Lower Kobuk villages, hunt
35 the Kiana area. Then like for me, waiting at (In Native),
36 right across from my dad's camp, or even up near (In
37 Native) Fish River. We have to wait patiently and educate
38 our young and older hunters to wait till the bulls pass.
39 Those kind of educational stuff -- I would like to see
40 more enforcement going on, I mean, if not more
41 educational stuff. Posters from Fish and Wildlife, from
42 Fish and Game. Educating our people through social
43 media. Posters, for that matter, make a big difference
44 because there's a (In Native) video that was done decades
45 ago and I wouldn't mind seeing a part two, but conserving
46 and making sure we follow our traditional ways of letting
47 the bull pass. I mean, honoring the young one, the calf
48 and the mom, the cow. Let us study more about the lichen
49 because of warmer temperatures. Lichen takes, what, 20
50 years to grow, but they eat twigs and other stuff.

1 There's a lot of factors, and I could go on, on and on.
2 But I think educating our people more is something
3 critical. Now with these numbers. Thank you.

4
5 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Clyde.
6 Verne.

7
8 MR. CLEVELAND: Yeah. On the Western
9 Arctic Caribou Herd, we talked about his 4 bulls, 1 cow.
10 But that 1 cow I mean, we don't hunt rutted caribou.
11 (Indiscernible) we don't get no rutted caribou. None of
12 us do. You all you all know that if you're a hunter,
13 what else do you get? You go for the female that -- and
14 I -- and I'm correct. But -- and we have to do it, I
15 mean, we wouldn't put food on the table. We have to. Not
16 the rutted caribou, no way, no, I'm not going to get
17 rutted caribou, not me. But if we have to do it, we have
18 to cut the female off. We gotta [sic] cut the female
19 hunt off to get our caribou back up. And that that'd be
20 the only way we can do it.

21
22 And there's another thing we need from
23 our villages, from -- to Northwest and every village is
24 we need a harvest count. We don't know how many people,
25 how many caribou people are getting. What account or
26 anything. How do we know it's the predators? How do we
27 know that? If we don't get no count from nobody [sic]
28 on harvest count, where are we going from here? If we
29 don't get it next year and the caribou is down to 75,000
30 next year, everything is going to come to a standstill.
31 I'm pretty sure it will be. Remembering back in 1975,
32 '74 maybe, I was there when the caribou were very low
33 and boy, we sure got a lot of harassment from the law
34 enforcement, lots. Cause [sic] I was a young hunter at
35 that time, and I always played stupid with the state
36 troopers and stuff, but you know, I had to feed -- I had
37 put food on the table that was my goal.

38
39 Now that we got the in a critical
40 situation like this, like right now, like back in the
41 70s. And we got all kinds of communication devices. I
42 mean, back in 70, there is nothing. No computers, no
43 cell phones, nothing. Today you got everything. You just
44 push the button and you can see where we're at, you
45 know. People, if they don't listen, I mean, they can't
46 get hunting license and do their harvest out. How do we
47 know we got the caribou are being taken by predators or
48 by people? We need to harvest count, please. Thank you
49 very much.
50

1 CHAIRPERSON: Thank you, Verne. Mike.

2
3 MR. KRAMER: Yeah. You know, I spoke to
4 a friend of mine a few years ago during that Board of
5 Game, and he said that he, you know, witnessed up there
6 on the calving grounds that, you know, bugs and whatever
7 it may be would startle these big batches of caribou and
8 they'd swim across the river and they'd keep going over
9 one hill, two hills, and they're out of sight after
10 that. But there would be about 30 to 40 fawns left
11 behind, no mamas. Lots of bears, lots of wolves and
12 wolverines picking off all these lone calves. Just
13 picking them off, they're having fun they're killing
14 multiple ones, while they could. One guy's -- that guy
15 said, man, I saw a bear had three calves in its mouth
16 running. Caribou calves. Four hours later, only two of
17 those cows came back. Bad mamas. Very bad mamas. It's
18 partially due on them also. But there's a lot of other
19 things that are bothering them too. You know, warmer
20 climate, thawing permafrost. I hear their food is good,
21 doing well. They haven't eaten themselves out of house
22 and home. So, we need to start looking at the big picture
23 and start conserving for our future.

24
25 And like Verne said, you guys said what?
26 4 bulls and 1 cow or erase the cow. We may end up having
27 to go to that. We still gotta. We got a meeting coming
28 up 24th and 25th. By that time, I want to see that the
29 Fish and Game, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Board
30 of Game is shutting down non-resident hunters, no more
31 guides, no more transporters. You know and we, as our
32 people start taking our limits and it's too we're going
33 to have nothing. No caribou, no (In Native), no caribou
34 soup, no caribou roast, no caribou meat, rice and gravy,
35 you know. And not only that, the moose are going to get
36 hit. Holy crud. Those are already on a nosedive. What's
37 next, our sea mammals? Yeah, it's getting critical. We
38 need to start opening our eyes. Not only as this region
39 as our people, it's part of our culture, to care for our
40 resources. The people don't give a toot about them, then
41 they should get busted. Everything taken away. Not even
42 be able to look at caribou through binoculars. You know,
43 because we follow the law, I do. As a matter of fact,
44 my hunting license and everything is taped to my ski
45 pants. Where my ski pants go my harvest ticket go, so.
46 And there's a (indiscernible) in there too. Thank you.

47
48 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Mike. Any
49 final questions or comments for Kyle Joly's
50 presentation? Clyde, final comment.

1

2

MR. RAMOTH: Real quick, I know when we talk about the harvest numbers in responding to surveys or your ticket, whether it's moose or caribou, is there numbers from the Game, from the state or any other, how much percentage of our people that do get their license report annually, is -- do we see increase in numbers? Is it something we could educate more through social media posters? Encouragement? The reasons why those are critical. Thank you.

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MR. HANSEN: Yes, Through the Chair to Member Ramoth. This is Alex Hansen, Fish and Game. So, yes, as you know, Cantine spoke about moving that needle slowly. Right people are starting to recognize that, especially around Kotzebue. We're starting to see slow creeping increase. But you know, we don't see what we need to see. And as Member Cleveland pointed out, you know, we need to get those harvest numbers into us so that we can understand what's going on out there. If we want to point all the blame on non-residents or we want to point the blame on predators, we need to understand how we contribute to this whole system. And I would -- going off memory, for 2024, for the last harvest season, the RC907 harvest was in the ballpark of 680 or something. So, we know that that harvest is very much more than that, right. I estimate that we collect about 10% of the total harvest. So that harvest, historically, you know, within this herd has been about 12,000 animals. We don't think it's that high right now. As I pointed out earlier, based on and this is a kind of a back of the napkin kind of loose stuff. But based on my collar harvest, we're killing 4,000 cows a year on average. And as I pointed out, we should be killing 0, if we want to sustain this herd. So, any information we can provide through the permit and the more people we can educate on that, the better. So, whether it's through social media, we're often putting stuff out on Facebook. We put it out. Other ways as well, radio, print, trying to get people engaged in that to pick up their permit. It's easier here in Kotzebue where we have a base. You know, we've talked about the challenges. Tristen pointed out the challenges upriver and other communities where we don't have a presence and we're trying to figure that out. I will point out that our folks in subsistence are working on a new program to estimate harvest better. And so, they'll be going around to communities starting this month actually, to try to understand better ways to get a harvest in the communities. But currently, you know, what we have is RC907 and that's what we need to use.

1 And, you know, part of their survey or their study will
2 be including issuance of 907s and helping people
3 understand how that process works and how to get those
4 permits. So partly it's educational, as you pointed out.

5

6

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Clyde.

7

8 MR. RAMOTH: Yeah, thanks again. Just to
9 follow up, because educating our people, the younger
10 hunters, whether he or she goes out hunting, like with
11 a boat or snowmachine, we want to encourage them to
12 report that 20 caribou they caught. Maybe they're
13 hunting for 5 families, maybe for 10 families, for that
14 matter. For elders, for a lot of us that get free gas.
15 I mean, those harvest reports I know we're all concerned
16 about, please be honest with your numbers, because Mr.
17 Next Door might not have the resources or the
18 transportation to go out but provides gas, oil, shells,
19 whatever, food, for the hunters. So, reporting these
20 higher numbers or lower numbers are critical. And I say
21 that just part of an educational system to pass on.

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CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Clyde. Any
final comments? Steve.

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MR. CANTINE: Thank you, through the
Chair, Trooper Cantine. One other thing, Member Ramoth,
that I try to encourage people on to avoid unnecessarily
being penalized. If you're trying to work for the
community, we have two paths to success, one on the
state side, one on the federal side. So, if you have an
elder next door that needs meat, can't go out, hunt and
you have a young stud that wants to go out and whack
some extra caribou before him, we have what's called the
proxy hunt. It's a little extra paperwork, but our folks
at Fish and Game are happy to work people through that.
So, if -- I'm going to use hypothetical Billy here,
Billy wants to go hunt for Tommy. Billy needs to get his
license and his permit. Tommy needs to get a license and
permit. And if Tommy's an elder, right, he qualifies for
that lifetime resident card, that's free and the permit
is free. And then they have to get one more piece of
paper. It's a proxy hunt form, and it says that Billy's
hunting for Tommy. So, if Billy goes out in the field,
he needs to have his license, his permit, Tommy's license
and permit and that proxy form, it says he's going to
hunt for Tommy. And then when he goes, he can shoot his,
say, 5 caribou and Tommy's 5 caribou. Bring him back,
he has to give them to Tommy. And then he reports that,
so that Fish and Game has good numbers on that. That's

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1 a little bit more work and the requirements are more
2 stringent. You have to be disabled or over what is it,
3 60, Alex? 65?

4

5 MR. HANSEN: 65.

6

7 MR. CANTINE: Thank you. So -- to qualify
8 as the recipient of a proxy hunter. On the federal side,
9 and the Park Service would be the people to talk to
10 about this, you have what's called the Federally
11 Designated Hunter system. So, if Billy wants to go hunt
12 for Tommy on federal land, Tommy could be 12, Tommy
13 could be 82, Tommy could be 40. It doesn't matter.
14 There's no requirement other than that initial piece of
15 paper that you've done ahead of time that makes you the
16 designated hunter. And so, you can go collect Tommy's
17 bag limit for Tommy on federal land. And that's the only
18 difference. It's a much simpler system. You just have
19 to do it on federal land. But both of those are paths
20 of success to keep us safe. And then when I roll up and
21 I talk to Billy, instead of him getting a ticket for
22 being 5 over limit, even though he really intended to
23 give those 5 caribou to Tommy, he can say, hey, here's
24 all my paperwork, I'm hunting for Tommy and we're good
25 to go. No harm, no foul, no citation.

26

27 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Had a question,
28 Verne?

29

30 MR. CLEVELAND: Yeah, just a comment or
31 something, I guess. What about those AR-15? I mean, some
32 things are, I mean, if you're a bad shot, you shouldn't
33 own an AR-15. I mean, you just gonna miss and shoot
34 other little animals besides what you're targeting to
35 shoot. We'd banned those AR-15, I mean, man, they, guys
36 are just rattle, (gun noises), you know. And we tried
37 to bring it up not to use high weapons on the river, but
38 some, I mean, you ever see those AR-15? I mean, its
39 massive rifle, but -- with semiautomatic and you're
40 shooting at -- with a whole bunch of ammo you're going
41 to shoot anything. So, them rifles ought to be banned,
42 too. Thank you.

43

44 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Mike.

45

46 MR. KRAMER: Yeah, I own many AR-15, now
47 they got suppressors. It's not the gun. It's the people.
48 The person behind the gun pulling the trigger, a gun
49 can't go out there and shoot 15 caribou by itself. It's
50 gotta be an idiot behind it, right? Don't blame the gun.

1 Freedom of arms. Part of our constitutional right. I've
2 had good success with AR-15. Especially when it comes
3 down to wolves. You know, they work great, but the AR-
4 15 shouldn't be blamed for the idiot behind the gun.
5 Thank you.

6

7

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Tristen.

8

9 MR. PATTEE: Just one question on the
10 proxy. So, to do that, like you mentioned, the person
11 you're hunting for, they need a license and then they
12 also need that -- the, of course, the permits and then
13 the proxy. How many people can you do that for, is there
14 a limit? Or can you go throughout the community that --
15 all these elders? Because like I mentioned before,
16 there's people getting a whole bunch of caribou, but it
17 is to go help other people, but they're not doing the
18 paperwork. How many? Is there a limit to that?

19

20 MR. CANTINE: Thank you. Through the
21 Chair, Trooper Cantine. I'm going to -- nod over to Alex
22 here to correct me if I'm wrong. I don't believe there's
23 a top end limit. If memory serves as a limit of how many
24 you can carry in the field at one time, but legitimately,
25 you're not going to shoot 30 caribou and put them all
26 in one sled. You're going to have to go out. So, that's
27 somewhat self-limiting but I don't believe we have a top
28 end limit for proxy.

29

30 MR. HANSEN: Christie would probably
31 clarify, but I believe you can only hunt for one person
32 at a time. Is that correct? Yeah. Okay. That's our
33 understanding. So, if you wanted to go out and hunt for
34 Tommy, you'd have to come back and do the paperwork for
35 Bob. I guess, we'll say. At least under the state
36 regulation. So, you can't go out and shoot multiple bag
37 limits. You could shoot yours and the hunter you're
38 hunting for.

39

40 MR. PATTEE: And then that's it. And just
41 once, or can you do -- go hunt, go out there, hunt for
42 that person, bring it back, grab the next person's
43 license or -- and proxy and then go out. Go out and hunt
44 again for that person, the different person.

45

46 MR. HANSEN: Yes, you could do that.

47

48 MR. PATTEE: Okay. That was that was my
49 question. Thank you.

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1 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Final questions,
2 comments, before we move on?

3
4 DR. VOORHEES: Mr. Chair, this is Hannah
5 Voorhees.

6
7 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Yes Hannah, go ahead.

8
9 DR. VOORHEES: Thank you. I just -- I
10 know that question was phrased about the proxy hunt on
11 the state side specifically but I just wanted to let you
12 know that on the federal side in the using the Designated
13 Hunter Program, you can hunt for a federally qualified
14 subsistence user, you can hunt for any number of other
15 federally qualified users, but you can have no more than
16 2 harvest limits in possession at any time. And I think
17 it was mentioned but unlike the state proxy, there's
18 really no burden of proof that the recipient can't hunt.
19 But both the hunter and the recipient do need a license.
20 I just wanted to chime in with that. Thanks.

21
22 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Hannah. At
23 this time, it looks like we have a member of the public
24 that wanted to make a comment. So, Steve and Alex, you
25 can return to your seats. And if someone wants to get
26 Willie, he can just come up.

27
28 (Pause)

29
30 Mr. Towksjhea, if you could say your
31 name, you'll have two minutes for your comment. I can,
32 -- will.....

33
34 (Simultaneous speech)

35
36 MR. TOWKSJHEA: You hear? My name is
37 Willie Towksjhea. I'm here in Kotzebue. When I was a
38 young man, I used to go hunting and fish with my dad.
39 We used to go to Kobuk Lake and get a lot of fish,
40 sheefish. And we used to go -- use dog team to go hunt.
41 Nowadays there are too many snow boats go fast and fast.
42 They cleared our favorite spots. What I'm trying to say
43 is I used to -- my dad and I used to live on fish,
44 caribou and mostly caribou, now they are gone. What I'm
45 trying to advise you to ask for help many times over to
46 other people, they never listens [sic]. My comment today
47 is more important, is that the National Geographic is
48 advertising Alaska for hunting and fishing, and fishing,
49 and caribou. National geographic is bringing people from
50 states and they say a lot of caribou here, put your

1 building in here. Lot of fish over here, put your
2 building in here. They let them build their own houses.
3 National Geographic are -- make advertising that Alaska
4 is big hunting area. We are losing our -- lost land and
5 land throughout the generations, because our -- I watch
6 TV and our National Geographics make lots of money. And
7 they advertise where to go hunt, where to put their
8 cabins and where to go fish. There's nobody stopping
9 them. They're making more money than you and I. I want
10 some answers. I tried to find out how could we stop them
11 from bringing more people up here to hunt and fish. All
12 they do is you could see them up here in September,
13 October, they come up to Alaska and they get their
14 reindeer. Reindeer, caribou horn. And they leave the
15 meat behind. That's not progress. There's a lot of people
16 in Alaska like that sit around with the big guns and
17 they march down the road, go look for -- hunting. I am
18 very, very hurt because our generation -- our
19 generation's kids will not have no more place to go hunt
20 and fish. Because of National Geographic advertising
21 throughout the world. We need to stop that somehow. I
22 know I'm not very educated, but I know what's going
23 wrong. I need some answers. I look all over, talk to
24 people, but nobody listens. If I could have my answers
25 today, I'll be happy.

26
27 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Mr.
28 Towksjhea. We're working on the problems, and we're
29 trying to figure out what we can do to protect the
30 caribou and make sure that our people can still hunt.
31 So, we're working on it. I can't give you an answer. I
32 don't think anybody can give you an answer right now.
33 But the biggest thing is keeping to our pathways and
34 making sure that we're teaching our younger hunters
35 where to go and when to do it responsibly. So that's why
36 we're here. And so, I really appreciate you coming to
37 make your comment. We are working on it. We share your
38 concerns. So, thank you again.

39
40 MR. TOWKSJHEA: There's a lot of people
41 right now (indiscernible) airplanes come down and fly
42 down and go in snowboats and go hunt. Get caribou and
43 go back home. But that's not that -- that's not Eskimo
44 life. These are people coming from states. They could
45 afford it. I don't know what's going on but I know what
46 they're doing. They're making more money than you and
47 I. We're -- they're gonna get an overpopulated Alaska,
48 take all our meat and caribou and fish. We need some
49 answers. We need to stop this National Geographic to
50 advertise Alaska not to hunt no more. This is awful. I

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1 know I'm not educated very well but I know what's wrong.
2 We got too many people coming from states to come up
3 here and hunt.

4

5 CHAIRMAN BAKER: Clyde.

6

7 MR. RAMOTH: Mr. Towksjhea.

8

9 MR. TOWKSJHEA: Yeah.

10

11 MR. RAMOTH: You're very educated, very
12 traditional ways. So we listen to that kind of stuff.
13 Traditional ecological knowledge, what we need to learn,
14 we could share, give our advice to the State Board,
15 Federal Board. These kind of advertising or what you see
16 on TV, I know we're talking about outside hunters in our
17 Unit 23 up here, those kind of discussions are here
18 today, especially for our caribou. So, we're trying to
19 make positive changes just for our residents only, so
20 people like us could continue eating and enjoying tutu
21 and moose hopefully someday again. Thank you.

22

23 MS. SCHAEFFER: I don't know if you are
24 doing comments, but I've been muted so much I'm back on.
25 I put that on Facebook that this is the number to call
26 and to be expecting new mutation. I don't know if you're
27 on for comments right back. I just came back off of a
28 mute again.

29

30 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: I'm sorry, what is
31 your name?

32

33 MS. SCHAEFFER: Margaret Schaeffer.

34

35 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Margaret Schaeffer,
36 if you'd like to make a public comment, you can have two
37 minutes.

38

39 MS. SCHAEFFER: Yes. My husband deceased,
40 he was a truck driver at Red Dog for many years. Within
41 two years, we lost five hunters, caribou hunters,
42 household caribou hunters, who worked at Red Dog
43 although almost all the way up until they passed away.
44 Within two years, their supervisor also passed away, and
45 their truck driver mechanic passed away too and most of
46 this is due to lung contamination. I'm wondering and my
47 husband told me that, he knows the road, the Port Road
48 and the mine is disturbing the caribou route. He's --
49 he was a truck driver for how many -- over 20 years
50 there. And he passed away last year. But I would -- I

1 just wanted to pass this on for him and for the families
2 who are losing their hunters due to -- now I'm wondering
3 if the caribou are being contaminated too. Their bodies
4 must be in come -- they don't fall dead right there, but
5 they do die within a couple of years. So, I just want
6 to put that on and hopefully I'm not muted again. I'm
7 still listening. Also, the caribou are having a more
8 difficult time during this weather change because of
9 water. It's very difficult for them to cross through
10 water. It takes a lot of energy, especially if there's
11 springtime ice. So, we're going to need small animals
12 and sheep to hunt for, if the caribou are slowed down.
13 That's about it. Thank you.

14
15 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Ms.
16 Schaefer. The time is now 11:03. I'm going to suggest
17 we take a 17-minute break and come back at 11:20. So we
18 will be taking a break until 11:20.

19
20 (Off record)

21
22 (On record)

23
24 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Alright. It is now
25 11:21. If everybody wants to get back to their seats,
26 we'll get back started. All right. Thank you everyone.
27 It is now 11:21. We're going to get back started with
28 the review of Wildlife Closure 26-45. Hannah Voorhees,
29 are you on the line?

30
31 DR. VOORHEES: I am Mr. Chair. Good
32 afternoon, members of the Council. This is Hannah
33 Voorhees, I'm an Anthropologist with the Office of
34 Subsistence Management and I'll be presenting Wildlife
35 Closure Review 26-45, which begins on page 107 of your
36 meeting materials. I introduced this closure review to
37 you at your last meeting and now we are asking you to
38 make a recommendation. Oh, there are some slides that
39 go with this presentation. Are you able to see those in
40 the room?

41
42 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: We are not able to
43 see them yet, but we're getting them connected.

44
45 DR. VOORHEES: Okay, thank you. I'll keep
46 going. If you do get the slides up, we're on slide two.
47 Wildlife Closure Review 26-45 is a standard review of a
48 federal subsistence wildlife closure to the harvest of
49 caribou by non-federally qualified users on federal
50 public lands, within just a portion of Unit 23 remainder

1 and this is a year-round closure. I'll give you a
2 description of the area covered by this closure. It's
3 located along the Noatak River from the western boundary
4 of Noatak National Preserve, upstream to the confluence
5 with the Cutler River, within the northern and southern
6 boundaries of the Eli and Agashashok River drainages,
7 respectively and within the Squirrel River drainage. And
8 the rest of my presentation, I'll refer to this as Unit
9 23 Noatak corridor.

10
11 And I just want to take a minute to
12 explain that this is a different closure than the one
13 that applies to all of Unit 23. That is a closure to
14 caribou hunting by non-federally qualified users from
15 August 1st to October 31st each year and in all of Unit
16 23 and that one was implemented in 2024. So, we are not
17 reviewing that newer, larger closure right now. We're
18 only reviewing the smaller year-round, Unit 23 Noatak
19 corridor closure. Which -- when you can see the slides,
20 it's shown on a map and it's also in your meeting
21 materials.

22
23 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: So, we do have the
24 slides on the screen in the room now.

25
26 DR. VOORHEES: Oh, okay. Great. So
27 hopefully you're on the map slide. Oh.....

28
29 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Yes.

30
31 DR. VOORHEES: Yeap. Thank you. Okay,
32 this closure was first put into place in 2017 as a
33 special action which was submitted by this Council. And
34 then in 2018, in codified regulation. The last time it
35 was reviewed was in 2022, when it was maintained. At
36 that time, the Board stated that the closure was
37 originally enacted for the continuation of subsistence
38 uses of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd and that the
39 underlying factor leading to this closure user conflict
40 was still a concern and that was consistent with this
41 Council's recommendation as well. Since you have already
42 received a biological update on the Western Arctic
43 Caribou Herd, I won't repeat that information here but
44 keep it in mind. In terms of harvest, according to
45 subsistence surveys conducted since 1988 by Division of
46 Subsistence, communities with a recent documented
47 history of harvesting caribou in this closure area
48 include Noatak, Kotzebue, Kiana and Noorvik. The Council
49 has given -- this Council has given substantial
50 testimony on the record about the impacts of non-

1 federally qualified users and aircraft on caribou and
2 local hunters ability to continue subsistence, and this
3 was the rationale for this closure. Next slide please.
4

5 Since implementation of this closure
6 into, excuse me, 2017 members of the Northwest Arctic
7 Council have repeatedly testified about its positive
8 impacts, particularly for Noatak residents. And I just
9 want to note that it's important to keep giving feedback
10 on the record about how this closure is working. Specific
11 information about the last couple of years would be very
12 welcome. During the last review of this closure in 2022,
13 the Northwest Arctic Council voted to maintain the
14 status quo, to continue to reduce previously significant
15 user conflict in this area. And because the targeted
16 closure provides a needed priority for subsistence users
17 to put food on the table. The OSM preliminary conclusion
18 is to retain the status quo. The current closure is
19 still necessary to continue subsistence uses of the
20 Western Arctic Caribou Herd for federally qualified
21 subsistence users.
22

23 Since the closure has been enacted, user
24 conflicts within the closure area have been reduced and
25 the hunt experiences and harvest success of federally
26 qualified subsistence users have improved. While a
27 different unit-wide closure to caribou hunting by non-
28 federally qualified users from August 1st to October
29 31st was implemented in 2024, this does not provide a
30 reason to remove the smaller Noatak closure. The Noatak
31 corridor closure reviewed here is year-round, whereas
32 the unit-wide closure is limited to the fall. And I will
33 note that the rationale that the Board gave for the
34 closures was slightly different for the smaller closure,
35 the rationale was firmly focused on continuation of
36 subsistence uses, where -- whereas the larger closure
37 was also influenced by overall population trends.
38 Furthermore, while the unit-wide closure contains a
39 stipulation that it will not be in effect if the herd
40 exceeds 200,000. The Noatak corridor closure does not
41 have this condition attached. If the Noatak corridor
42 closure were to be rescinded and the herd in turn exceeds
43 200,000, federal public lands throughout Unit 23 would
44 then become open to non-federally qualified users. This
45 would result in more user conflicts and interfere with
46 caribou harvest by federally qualified subsistence
47 users.
48

49 Thank you, that concludes my
50 presentation. I'm available to answer any questions. And

00051

1 again, if you have any feedback on how this closure is
2 working for communities that hunt in this area, that
3 would be great to get on the record.

4

5 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Hannah. Do
6 we have any questions from members of the Council? Clyde.

7

8 MR. RAMOTH: Thank you, through the
9 Chair. I'm just curious about the Noatak people in like
10 the Subsistence Committee working at Red Dog, have they
11 give their [sic] input on these type of discussions prior
12 to this recommendation? Thank you.

13

14 DR. VOORHEES: Not that I'm aware. No,
15 we haven't had feedback from that specific group.

16

17 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Verne.

18

19 MR. CLEVELAND: Yes so, who does the --
20 where do they report their Kivalina and Noatak
21 Subsistence Committee for Red Dog? Who and where do they
22 report to? Because we don't hear them here. Thank you.

23

24 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Does anyone in the
25 room or on the phone able to answer that question? Mr.
26 Ashby, if you could say your name and put yourself on
27 record.

28

29 MR. RAMOTH: Okay. Clyde Ramoth again,
30 my question Ricky was, did the Noatak and Kivalina people
31 especially Noatak, have the people that are making
32 recommendations for proposal changes. And I know it's
33 important but do they consult with Noatak people elders,
34 the tribe, prior to any kind of regulation changes? That
35 was my question.

36

37 MR. ASHBY: The question coming from the
38 village or from the Red Dog.

39

40 MR. RAMOTH: So, not the Red Dog one
41 first, this is just regulations in general. Do they
42 consult with Noatak prior to?

43

44 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: So, this closure for
45 the Noatak River corridor, it was proposed by this
46 Council years ago. And during that process they would
47 have done tribal consultations, ANCSA consultations and
48 people from the community would have been able to make
49 comments. Hannah, are you able to tell us if originally
50 there were any comments or what that process looked like

1 for the standard closure process?

2

3 DR. VOORHEES: I'm not able, I don't know
4 of specific tribal consultation comments that might have
5 come out of that early process, but from my knowledge
6 of the regulatory history of this, I know that Noatak
7 did support it originally. And we continue to have
8 opportunities for tribal consultation since, you know,
9 clearly, we don't have a Council member from Noatak
10 Noatak. But we do also look to the Council to let us
11 know if that community would have any concerns.

12

13 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Yes, Clyde.

14

15 MR. RAMOTH: Yeah. Just to follow up
16 that, Clyde Ramoth again from Selawik. I asked that
17 question because there's changes now. Is there more
18 sightings of more floatplanes, sport hunters, the
19 Cabela's folks every fall. Are we seeing higher numbers
20 in the Noatak drainage? That's probably my biggest
21 question there.

22

23 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Trooper Cantine.

24

25 MR. CANTINE: Thank you. Through the
26 Chair, Trooper Cantine to member Ramoth. So, the six
27 hunting seasons that I've been here, the -- this corridor
28 has been very heavily patrolled. The -- I think we've
29 had in my six seasons, one incidence of a citation being
30 -- one violation that's been identified for somebody
31 hunting in the closed corridor. That's something that
32 both I and the Park Service, when they have law
33 enforcement patrols out paid attention to. It's been a
34 non-issue the last couple of years with the broad federal
35 closures. But I still poke through and make sure just
36 kind of spot check it. And it's been a non-issue.

37

38 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: And then Member
39 Cleveland's question is and maybe, Mr. Ashby, you could
40 help answer this. Who does the Subsistence Committee for
41 Red Dog for the Kivalina, Noatak, Red Dog area. Who do
42 they report to? Is that the question?

43

44 MR. ASHBY: On that question, just to --
45 my name is Wilfred Ricky Ashby. I used to be on this
46 Council, 80s, some time ago when these -- this stuff
47 started. The reason it started was the guys have big
48 bullets, and they go right through the islands when
49 they're on the other side of the river. And so that's
50 why we ask for this and just make a recommendation.

1 That's how it started for us. And then on the other part
2 of it, they report to the village on general meeting on
3 December. That's when they report always been [sic] and
4 they just, are -- they know the representative, so they
5 just always ask them how things are going. I never --
6 I've been in Council how many times? And I never see
7 like a quarterly report from them. I myself, I don't
8 know if other Councilmen have seen that like a quarterly
9 report card. I know they go meetings over there maybe
10 every two times a year or something but I never see no
11 written report from them.

12

13 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Mike.

14

15 MR. KRAMER: I know the past couple years
16 -- this is Council Member Kramer. There's -- past how
17 many years there's been a lot of, you know, there's some
18 confusion and I've even tried to look it up and I could
19 never get a straight answer from anybody. You know, we
20 have that controlled use area. There were some hunters
21 down there waiting for caribou and a airplane flew over
22 at about 5000ft. What's the ceiling level on that? For
23 flying across that? You know, this guy was 5000ft. I
24 mean, I don't think that's really going to bother
25 anybody, but you know, that's pretty high for a Super
26 Cup man, my ears would be stressing big time. But I just
27 wanted to find out what the ceiling is, because a lot
28 of times when we get that Everett Air Service, they're
29 flying right across the water at Kotzebue, flying right
30 over the top of Igichuk Mountains. I mean, right over
31 the top. Their wheels could touch the top surface of
32 these mountains. I don't know why they're flying like
33 that. You know it -- maybe we need to just set you guys
34 up with F16s and take care of business. You know, because
35 it's getting ridiculous. I mean, I -- we jumped, man, I
36 mean, I never had my heart beat -- skip a beat that
37 quick when the one of those big aircrafts right over the
38 top. I think we could feel the wind from the props when
39 it flew over us.

40

41 You know, that's pretty ridiculous, man.
42 I thought we were trying to, you know, keep that place
43 nice and peaceful and you know, a fuel delivery service
44 could fly right over the top of the ground and not get
45 busted for it. I think it's time to not allow them to
46 come up here anymore, if they're going to keep doing
47 that kind of stuff because we're trying to conserve our
48 herd. Maybe that's one of the reasons why we don't have
49 any caribou up here. I was just talking to Leonard. We
50 used to go up here before (indiscernible) and get our

1 fill of caribou after (indiscernible) it used to be (In
2 Native), (indiscernible) creek. Start going farther and
3 farther up, (indiscernible), (In Native), farther up.
4 They keep going farther and farther up to Noatak River
5 to get caribou. So, Red Dog is having a big impact and
6 I know they lie about it. You know, I got a video where
7 caribou were crossing. It had to be a medical emergency
8 or else, yeah, that's not good. You know, I'm tired of
9 being lied to right in our face and it's getting
10 ridiculous, you know. Red Dog, Teck, NANA, it's time,
11 you know, they start thinking of our subsistence
12 resources and the people.

13
14 So, with that, you know, there was a lot
15 of, you know, a guy flying through there and he was
16 flying home and he, you know, was probably about five
17 miles back flying along the mountains because he wanted
18 to take the long way around. And he was flying at least
19 4- or 5000ft over the edge of the mountains at the border
20 line of the five miles. And he knows where the five-mile
21 radius is, and he's flying out there, flying home with
22 his family because he had to go the long way from the
23 Cutler. All the way around, all the way around, back
24 home, over by the (In Native), just to go home with his
25 family and some char. But, you know, his curiosity was
26 like, can I fly over the controlled area and what's the
27 ceiling? That was a question I had.

28
29 MR. CANTINE: Thank you, through the
30 Chair, Trooper Cantine to Member Kramer. So, the -- this
31 is a mix of state regulation and FAA regulations. So,
32 from a state regulation the closure and federally, but
33 for like Park Service regs, the closure is for
34 transporting hunters their gear or their meat within
35 that five mile corridor. So, north of the river or south
36 of the river for five miles, you cannot land or take off
37 again to do anything hunting related. So, a hunter could
38 get dropped off by a raft above the closed quarter.
39 Shoot their animal above the close quarter. Float all
40 the way through, stop at Noatak or come all the way down
41 to Kotzebue. That's fine, but they can't be dropped off
42 or picked up by airplane in that closed corridor.

43
44 From a FAA standpoint, what is required
45 of pilots just generically if you're over a populated
46 area, so, you fly over Kotzebue unless you're landing
47 or taking off or conducting what we call low level
48 operations, which requires a waiver from the FAA. It's
49 a minimum of 1000ft above the nearest -- like, the
50 highest obstacle within a 2000-foot radius, right. So

1 over Kotzebue, essentially, I have to fly 1400 feet with
2 those towers. Unless I'm landing or taking off, then
3 those are no longer in play. Over a sparsely populated
4 area, it's 500ft straight line from the nearest person,
5 structure or vehicle. That's not 500ft above the ground.
6 So, I could be 2 feet above the ground, but 500ft
7 horizontally from Billy in a boat, and that's within the
8 FAA requirement. I know in the past I've had
9 conversations just as a friendly conversation, it's not
10 a regulatory conversation with some helicopter operators
11 to let them know that I've received complaints from
12 locals. They weren't doing anything outside of that.
13 They were legal. But it was just a heads up. This is an
14 area that's being frequented. That's a conversation you
15 could have with Everett's, I know for them they fly low
16 because their engines are de-rated to maintain longevity
17 with those old 1940s era engines, so they're not going
18 to climb any higher than they have to, otherwise, the
19 price of fuel and Noatak goes up. But you could have
20 that conversation with Everett and say, hey, this is a
21 concern. Do you think you could work with us? That would
22 be an avenue to pursue. Thank you.

23

24 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Tristen.

25

26 MR. PATTEE: Through the Chair, Tristen
27 Pattee. I just want to us -- see if I can answer Verne's
28 question about the reports from the Red Dog Subsistence
29 Committee. I just messaged the manager of public
30 relations at Red Dog. And the -- there -- when they --
31 when the Subsistence Committee meets. It is an internal
32 report that goes to NANA and Teck. And so it's not it's
33 not available public, but you could probably request it
34 through NANA. But there is a community observer report
35 which we have from Noatak and Kivalina that does a
36 monthly report and it has a lot of subsistence stuff
37 because there are boots on the ground, back and forth
38 on the road, the new road, all that stuff. And they have
39 they have daily reports that is all consolidated into a
40 monthly report. And so, that's -- and that goes to Noatak
41 and Kivalina leadership. So, maybe it's if you want to
42 know more information on what they're seeing on the
43 ground, you could reach out to them.

44

45 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you for that,
46 Tristen. Can you hit your button, please. Clyde.

47

48 MR. RAMOTH: Great question Verne I --
49 I'm glad that you looked into it. For the record Clyde
50 Ramoth, Selawik. Tristen, because communication is key.

1 And when we talk about the caribou issues and the sheep
2 and hearing Mike, his frustration over the years, now
3 with this -- these contaminations, I think, in all
4 fairness, the consultation should go to all the tribes.
5 It's my recommendation. How can we -- I mean, rather not
6 just to NANA and to Teck or to Noatak and Kivalina, were
7 all affected, right? Because of the migration route, how
8 they -- the especially the caribou, how they harvest and
9 they could be eating that contaminated lichen up in an
10 Red Dog hills. I've seen it. I've seen a moose that
11 barely survived that one, used to be called a pond,
12 tailings pond but it's more like a tailings lake now.
13 And there's not one living specimen, back in the 90s
14 it's what I heard from an environmental tech. But is
15 there anyways that we can get reports to each tribe, and
16 how could we process that in a immediate way? Can we do
17 it through a letter or something you could pass on to
18 your boss there Tristen? Because I would love to read
19 reports of how -- what kind of studies are being done
20 with the water, the latest contamination, the caribou
21 migration and making sure they follow the rules about
22 parking their trucks and stuff. Having safety standards
23 as far as the dust control and the other water sample
24 issues. But that -- that's something I think all the
25 tribes should be getting. Thank you.

26
27 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Tristen.

28
29 MR. PATTEE: Yeah. So, I can bring that
30 to them today. I'll be flying there today, and I'll talk
31 to the manager of the public relations. But there is --
32 we do have one of our employees in the environmental
33 department that does extensive studies, Johanna Salatas,
34 and it's just an invite, and she'll have a great
35 presentation on all the things that we're doing and
36 collaborate with the people that we're collaborating
37 with. And so, for the next meeting, we could probably
38 invite her and then she'll be able to present everything
39 that's being done on the caribou stuff. So that'd be
40 something that we could do for the next meeting in March.

41
42 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Mike.

43
44 MR. KRAMER: Yeah. Has there been any
45 contamination studies anywhere on the Red Dog Road? You
46 know, is SO₂, people being affected by that. I wonder how
47 many dead animals we got out there, you know. And then
48 they said that this tailing pond is at its highest. That
49 there's a bunch of iron ore, you know, that released off
50 gassing this stuff. And they want to continue mining up

1 there and use Red Dog. Where are they going to put all
2 this stuff? They're gonna contaminate the rest of our
3 country. Thanks to Red Dog, Kotzebue labeled as one of
4 the most contaminated communities in the world -- in the
5 United States, cause of Red Dog. Teck target us. We're
6 the biggest community, so we gotta take their
7 backlashing. You know, that's why I wanted Red Dog
8 shutdown. And for people to quit being sick, you know,
9 because they're giving them this -- allowing them work
10 in these situations. And our animals. I worked there
11 before. I've seen caribou under those hills. I've seen
12 caribou on those roads. East winds blowing a lot of that
13 dust out of those trucks under the tundra. I want to see
14 contamination studies on everything. Last I heard that
15 they did a flyover over the Wulik and Kivalina River,
16 no trout. Gone. I want to see how they can figure that
17 out. By our next meeting, I expect to find out, we don't,
18 we're holding -- they're liable, you know, Teck and NANA.
19 They're liable. A lot of people depend on those
20 resources. Nice big Arctic char, fish, whitefish. They
21 live right by the river. They depend on that river.
22 That's all I have for right now.

23

24 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Verne.

25

26 MR. CLEVELAND: Not only that, not only
27 Red Dog. We got Ambler Metal Subsistence committee too,
28 which needs to do a report because I saw some names that
29 were on the subsistence committee and some of them don't
30 even live in that area. I mean, they never hunted in
31 that area before. So, with that -- with -- we gotta
32 [sic] get going on Ambler Metal. I mean, even if it
33 happen, we'll be ahead of what we're trying to do here.
34 If they give us a report, Red Dog and now Ambler Metal,
35 to give us a report here or to someone that what's going
36 on up in Red Dog like to know [sic]. Thank you.

37

38 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you for that.
39 Verne. In the interest of time, we're going to focus
40 back in on Wildlife Closure Review 26-45. If there are
41 no further questions relating to this wildlife closure
42 review, I'd like to ask Hannah if there are any public
43 comments received during the open comment period.

44

45 DR. VOORHEES: Thank you, Mr. Chair.
46 There were no written public comments.

47

48 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you. Mr. Lind,
49 were there any tribal or ANCSA corporation consultations
50 to report?

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MR. LIND: Good morning, Mr. Chair and Council members. Orville Lind, Native Liaison. During the consultation session. There were no comments or questions. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you. At this time, are there any agency and tribal comments?

(No comment)

Any advisory group comments from other RACs, Fish and Game Advisory Councils or Subsistence Resource Commissions.

DR. VOORHEES: Mr. Chair, this is Hannah Voorhees with OSM, for the record. The North Slope Regional Advisory Council recommended retaining the status quo. They said that the closure has a positive effect on subsistence and prevents non-federally qualified users from reducing the population of caribou or interfering with subsistence. The Western Interior Regional Advisory Council could have taken this up but chose not to. And the Seward Peninsula Regional Advisory Council has not met yet.

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Hannah. Were there any other written public comments received?

MS. PILCHER: This is Nissa Pilcher for the record. There were no other written comments received after that original comment deadline. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you. At this time, is there any public testimony for this Wildlife Closure Review?

MS. SCHAEFFER: Yes. If you could accept mine. Margaret Schaeffer.

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Ms. Schaeffer, you'll have two minutes for your testimony.

MS. SCHAEFFER: Yes. We used to share everything between Barrow area and our region. We would share everything about the animals and the weather that we know. But then, since oil and mining showed up, they want us -- our mouths to be zipped, closed. So, it's got to open up again. And dogs will probably be needed to

1 hunt moose. Dog teams might be coming back due to less
2 ice and more water. So, we gotta look ahead of time and
3 and to slow things down. We can't accept mining, it's
4 gonna [sic] destroy us. Mining, I don't know how oil,
5 how -- I know if they drill all over the darn place,
6 there's lots of contamination. You just -- all we think
7 about, it's going to be real clean and they're going to
8 shove that pipe down the -- down there. No, it's just -
9 - and it's going to be clean. No, there's lots of
10 contamination related to oil drilling and mining, both.
11 And those Natives, they got to get back together and
12 start sharing what they know. Thank you. Thank you very
13 much. All of you. Thank you.

14
15 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Ms.
16 Schaeffer. Is there any other public testimony at this
17 time? If you want to come to the mic, Mr. Ashby and say
18 your name for the record, please. You'll have two
19 minutes.

20
21 MR. ASHBY: Wilfred Ashby, I ask you to
22 put something on map over here. I wanted to share
23 something.

24
25 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Which map was that
26 again? The control use.....

27
28 (Simultaneous speech)

29
30 MR. ASHBY: From the Noatak River area
31 and a Howard Pass that area.

32
33 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Will this one work?

34
35 MR. ASHBY: Okay. Can I go over here? Oh,
36 okay.

37
38 (Pause)

39
40 Sorry for your time, sir. That Howard
41 Pass area, there's Etivluk River going to the Colville.
42 And over there there's a lake. And right down there by
43 the flat there's two humps, they're hills, almost
44 mountain you would see it for that area. But those are
45 called (In Native). Reason being, the fawns that are --
46 they come in April, those ones right around that area,
47 that's where the main herds used to have their young
48 ones. And that's where the real -- they can be real
49 close for any kind, like I hear crows and stuff like
50 that, the young ones, those ones are in danger. They

1 always have to watch them. So that place, that's where
2 the Eskimos long time ago used to not bother the animals
3 because they're too young right there. And not try to
4 let the females be away from their young ones. (In
5 Native), it's plural, that area. It would be good if
6 they can -- oh, yeah -- if they can be able to -- around
7 that area. I can't even see that the rivers on there.
8 But it's right there. Right by the Etivluk, Colville,
9 tight in that area. Yeah. So, that's the area they need
10 to check into because that's where all our herds pass
11 by. And they (indiscernible) up there and then come down,
12 south to us.

13
14 That's real important. And if you look
15 at it, if you see from the air, there's the lakes on top
16 of the mountains. Sometimes they pass through there.
17 They used to take them there or down there in the bottom
18 on the Howard Pass there's lake (In Native). This is
19 where our Noatak people used to live. And so that area
20 -- they know this area even prior to that, when tuttu
21 pack was around, even the Gwich'in people used to come
22 and be in the upper part of the Noatak area. They called
23 (In Native). But lately when the caribou moved, they
24 moved over to Arctic Village area, and our people went
25 into Canada. So, that's how they migrate. And then in
26 1928, sometime, my grandma's younger sister and her
27 husband, that (In Native). They went up there and bring
28 their reindeer from (In Native).

29
30 But anyway, during that time, they never
31 talk about the caribou tried to take away the reindeer,
32 cause there was not much caribou that time. So, they
33 bring them up over there and they stay just across the
34 river from Fort McPherson because the (indiscernible)
35 3000. And they had to let the young ones get bigger to
36 populate. But that's how they survived even though when
37 things get hard, they never really try to regulate the
38 people as long as they keep on feeding. But only one
39 that I know that they had regulations was the bear.
40 Because everybody eat bear at that time, too. And that
41 was the only one that I really here in our village, they
42 used to just let them get one bear a year when they do
43 that. That was the only regulation I hear in our people
44 in Noatak.

45
46 But the caribou, when they travel, they
47 just move with the caribou. A lot of villages up there.
48 The (In Native) is major area right there, (In Native),
49 (In Native) and on the other side are on the (In Native)
50 River. There's another, Kayak Lake where they used to

1 stay. And these are places where the caribou used to be.
2 Main spots where they used to be -- where there's lichen
3 and stuff for them. And plus running water. So, my thing
4 would be for you guys to try check, try check that area
5 in the springtime. Let them check it where they fawn and
6 see what's really getting the young ones. Because when
7 the young ones never make it, the population never grow
8 too much. So that the root of the -- where the caribou
9 always get big and large or where they shrink. But the
10 old people always say when too many caribou, they always
11 get sick from the (indiscernible) when they eat, and
12 sometimes we have big fall. I think in '49, my dad said
13 someplace around there they had a big fall. And then
14 while I was young, they had one, too in '70 someplace,
15 '73-'74 someplace around there. And that was kind of the
16 last one that we had in the fall of the caribou. But in
17 every 15 to 30 years, when the planet turned a little
18 bit and the sunshine hit straight to our area, we always
19 have rain in December or January or February. And when
20 that happened in three consecutive years, that it had
21 happened like 5 or 6 years ago, the caribou was gradually
22 can keep up with the wolves. But they always pick up
23 again like 15, 30 years. And we was right at the peak
24 for a long time. They say maybe 200,000 in our herd. For
25 a long time it was that way. And it finally fall again.
26 And that's almost 40 years, maybe. We had bunch of
27 caribou. But they always grow by theirselves. But they
28 just -- be cautious. We can't gamble that it will be the
29 same because 1980, I had salmon that float up with the
30 eggs in them yet so our ecosystem is changing, maybe.
31 Something's going on that making a difference in our
32 animals but our -- we got to train our young people to
33 kind of be careful when they hunt. Just get enough, not
34 just play around. Yeah. Thanks.

35
36 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ashby,
37 we appreciate your input. At this time, we can entertain
38 a motion, again, are we able to quickly put the options
39 on? We can make a motion to retain status quo, rescind
40 the closure, and modify the closure. Defer decision on
41 the closure. Take no action. Clyde.

42
43 MR. RAMOTH: For the record, Clyde
44 Ramoth, Selawik. I'd like to make a motion to
45 approve/adopt Wildlife Closure Review 26-45, retaining
46 the status quo.

47
48 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: So motion made by
49 Clyde to retain the status quo. Is there a second?

50

1 MR. CLEVELAND: Second.

2

3 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Seconded by Verne.
4 For discussion and justification, I believe there's been
5 a lot of discussion and a lot of good history shown on
6 how this closure is directly impacting the resources we
7 have as hunters and making sure that we're protecting
8 our subsistence resources and preventing user conflicts
9 so that in the event that this closure is rescinded, we
10 could potentially have non-local hunters going and
11 hunting in this corridor, which would not be good for -
12 - as we've seen, the status of the herd as far as it
13 comes to user conflict. Is there any further discussion?
14 Justification?

15

16 (No response)

17

18 Hearing none.

19

20 MS. MONIGOLD: This is Karmen, Chair.

21

22 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Karmen, please go
23 ahead.

24

25 MS. MONIGOLD: I just wanted to say thank
26 you to Mrs. Schaeffer and Mr. Ashby for their -- calling
27 in and commenting. Thank you.

28

29 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you for that,
30 Karmen.

31

32 MS. SCHAEFFER: You're welcome. (In
33 Native).

34

35 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: So at this time, I'm
36 going to restate the final motion. The motion was made
37 by Clyde Ramoth to retain the status quo on Wildlife
38 Closure Review 26-45. Seconded by Verne Cleveland. Can
39 I please get a roll call vote?

40

41 MS. PILCHER: Absolutely, Chairman.
42 Member Monigold?

43

44 MS. MONIGOLD: Yes.

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46 MS. PILCHER: Member Kramer.

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48 MR. KRAMER: Yes.

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50 MS. PILCHER: Member Ramoth.

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MR. RAMOTH: Yes.

MS. PILCHER: Member Cleveland.

MR. CLEVELAND: Yes.

MS. PILCHER: Chairman Baker.

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Yes.

MS. PILCHER: So, with a vote of five yays, zero nays, the motion carries. I would like to note that Member Pattee just left about a minute and a half ago to catch a flight so we are down to five members but that is still quorum. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you for that, Nissa. The time is now 12:01. I'm going to recommend we take a lunch break until 1:20. So we'll be on lunch till 1:20. Thank you everyone.

(Off record)

(On record)

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: All right. Thank you everyone. It is now 1:28. This is Chairman Thomas Baker with the Northwest Arctic Regional Advisory Council. We're going to go ahead and get started with our next wildlife proposal, which is going to be Wildlife Proposal 26-53, starts on page 147 in our books. But before we get into that, we do have some housekeeping from the Park Service.

MS. CARLSON: Through the Chair, this is Annie Carlson with the Park Service. The restrooms are operational again, and you can put things down the drain if you need to. Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you for that. Mr. Plank, when you're ready, the floor is yours.

MR. PLANK: Well, anything I say at this point [sic] be anticlimactic, Chair. Thank you, Mr. Chair, members of the Council. For the record, my name is Tom Plank, Wildlife Biologist, Office of Subsistence Management, and I will be presenting a summary of Wildlife Proposal WP 26-53 regarding caribou and Unit 22. And this starts on page 161 of your books. This

1 proposal is submitted by ADF&G and it requests changing
2 caribou seasons in portions of Unit 22B West and 22D
3 Pilgrim, to a year-round, may-be-announced season. This
4 would combine current split seasons into a single July
5 1st to June 30th may-be-announced season. The proponent
6 states that these changes are necessary because reindeer
7 herding has been renewed in the area, and changing the
8 year-round open season to a may-be-announced season
9 would prevent accidental reindeer harvest. This change
10 would also align federal and state regulations without
11 affecting subsistence opportunity, as the Western Arctic
12 Caribou Herd have not been documented in this area since
13 2015. Past federal and state actions have adjusted
14 caribou seasons in Units 22B West and 22D Pilgrim, mainly
15 to protect reindeer herds. In 2006, seasons were
16 shortened and changed to may-be-announced to safeguard
17 reindeer. Under current federal regulations, these Units
18 have split seasons of October 1st to April 30th, and May
19 1st to September 30th. While surrounding Units already
20 have year-round, may-be-announced seasons, state
21 regulations also manage caribou hunting in these areas
22 as may-be-announced seasons, but ADF&G closed them by
23 emergency order in 2024 and 2025 because no collared
24 caribou have been documented there since 2015. I
25 won't.....

26
27 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Mr. Plank. This --
28 just real quick: we did have a typo on the agenda, so
29 this proposal is on page 145 in the book. So, they're
30 flipped, this one and the next one, they're on the wrong
31 pages. It's the next one that he'll be talking about.
32 Mr. Plank, the floor is yours. So, we're starting from
33 page 145.

34
35 MR. PLANK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I
36 apologize for that, Council. Again, record, Tom Plank,
37 OSM. Since we've already heard an in-depth analysis and
38 information about the Western Arctic Caribou Herd, I
39 won't get into that again unless you all have more
40 questions on that. So, for this proposal, one
41 alternative considered was to give federal in-season
42 managers authority to define smaller harvest areas. This
43 would allow for opportunity if caribou moved through the
44 area. This was not pursued because little -- too little
45 is known about remnant caribou populations on Seward
46 Peninsula. Another option would be to defer this
47 proposal until the state changes its codified
48 regulations. This would keep federal regulations from
49 being more restrictive, and it would allow for more
50 discussion with stakeholder groups.

1

2 If adopted, this proposal would shift
3 Units 22B West and 22D Pilgrim to a year-round, may-be-
4 announced season. This would reduce chance of
5 accidentally harvesting reindeer and align and simplify
6 federal and state regulations. Subsistence opportunities
7 would technically decrease in these areas, but in
8 practice caribou haven't been present in these areas for
9 years. Other Units of 22 have a year-round season and
10 will remain unchanged following the harvest opportunity
11 -- allowing for harvest opportunity. If this proposal
12 is not adopted, no changes in federal opportunities will
13 occur, but harvest in this area has not occurred since
14 2021, and federally qualified subsistence users would
15 have to exercise caution harvesting caribou in the area
16 to ensure no reindeer are mistakenly harvest. So, OSM's
17 preliminary conclusion is to be neutral on Proposal
18 WP26-53, this proposal balances conservation and
19 subsistence priorities for federally qualified users.
20 While it slightly decreases subsistence opportunity,
21 caribou are absent from the area, so effects should be
22 minimal. The main benefit would be preventing accidental
23 reindeer harvest. Thank you, Mr. Chair, members of the
24 Council. I'd be happy to answer any questions.

25

26 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Mr. Plank.
27 Do we have any questions at this time from the Council?

28

29 (No response)

30

31 Just a quick check. Karmen Monigold,
32 were you able to join us?

33

34 MS. MONIGOLD: Yes. I had to
35 (distortion). Thank you.

36

37 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: All right. Thank you,
38 Karmen. Mike, did you have something?

39

40 MR. KRAMER: Yeah. With that, I mean, is
41 there any reindeer herds left? Last time I knew that
42 there was a guy in Shishmaref and maybe (In Native) near
43 Nome, I'm not really too sure, because I know that
44 Karmen's and all the other ones, the Sheldons', and all
45 those other reindeer herders in the Buckland area are
46 all gone. I'm just wondering, is there even any reindeer
47 left anymore out here?

48

49 MR. PLANK: Through Chair, Tom Plank,
50 OSM. Member Kramer, from my understanding, as one of the

1 Council members that I think is Tom Gray, if I remember
2 correctly, he has started -- restarted doing his
3 reindeer herd up that area. So, there is that. I'm not
4 sure about any others, but that's one particular one I
5 know of.

6

7

CHAIRMAN BAKER: Clyde.

8

9

10 MR. RAMOTH: Through the Chair, Member
11 Kramer. I recall, I mentioned Tom Gray because, when we
12 had some discussions years ago about that, and he had a
13 big concern, he's based out of Nome. I don't know if
14 he's -- how big his herd is, but he had concerns about
15 caribou mixing up with his herd and whether they share
16 the same feeding grounds, it's always a question.

16

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CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Mike.

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MR. CLEVELAND: Yes, I think that's what
it was. Yeah.

MR. KRAMER: Okay, yeah. You know, 75,000
to consider the herd. You know, once it hits that we
won't be able to harvest caribou anymore. We need to
start looking at other avenues. I know that the moose
are going to get hammered. Muskox are going to get
hammered. You know, we're already having issues with
moose here on the peninsula and up in the lower areas
where there's rivers. Because the past, how many years?
So many people not being able to harvest moose in
September and, you know, within the month of September,

1 nobody's hunting bulls, you know. And here are just a
2 few months ago, two months ago, we had a bunch of caribou
3 come through. But the ice was thin, you know, ice was
4 very thin. It was not favorable to go over there and get
5 caribou so, a lot of people didn't go out and get any
6 because of that, you know, climate change and
7 everything. Yeah, it's changing. We didn't get any
8 caribou. Just a few people back here, got a few. Maybe
9 those were stragglers or something, but I'm not too sure.
10 Thank you.

11
12 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you. So,
13 Rosalie, with the BIA and then Nikki with the National
14 Park Service have their hands up. Rosalie, are you
15 available?

16
17 MS. DEBENHAM: Hello, thank you. Can you
18 hear me? This is Rosalie Debenham with the Bureau of
19 Indian Affairs.

20
21 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Yes, we can hear you.

22
23 MS. DEBENHAM: Oh, great. So, I just
24 wanted to answer through the Chair, just some
25 information about the reindeer populations, the Seward
26 Peninsula and the surrounding area. Current estimates
27 are about -- Alaska-wide, there's about 23, a little
28 over 23,000 reindeer. And then on -- in the Seward
29 Peninsula area I believe there's around 16,000,
30 depending. And they're scattered throughout different
31 ranges. You're correct in saying that Tom Gray has
32 recently acquired a number of reindeer to repopulate his
33 range, and there are a couple of other herders as well
34 that have recently acquired new reindeer.

35
36 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you for that.
37 And then, Nikki, did you have something to add or was
38 it something separate?

39
40 MS. BRAEM: No, it speaks to this issue.
41 Hi, for the record, I'm Nikki Braem, and I work here in
42 Nome at Bering Land Bridge National Preserve. So, there
43 are three agencies on the Seward Peninsula that issue
44 grazing permits for reindeer: Bering Land Bridge and
45 Park Service issues for four herds that are along the
46 Northern Seward Peninsula. Of those ranges, the one that
47 is active -- actively hurting deer would be the (In
48 Native) herd. That grazing range is over by Wales. I
49 believe it extends over to the north, but basically it's
50 over on the very western edge of the peninsula. None of

1 the other three that we issue permits to -- and we're
2 still issuing the permits, are actively hurting deer.
3 And if some of the other agencies that issue permits
4 would want to come on and speak to other ranges, that
5 would be fine.

6
7 You know, anecdotally, I'm aware of some
8 activity on the Western, you know, over by Brevig, some
9 herding. And of course, there's Tom Gray, down near White
10 Mountain in Unit 22B. And I would let -- refer to any
11 biologist who wanted to discuss or describe Rangifer --
12 the situation involving Rangifer on the Seward
13 Peninsula. But there is also one herder out of Nome, the
14 Davis herd. I don't know how many deer Ms. Shealy has
15 at the moment, and if she's able to round up, that's not
16 an area that we permit so, again, I would defer to others
17 who know more about that.

18
19 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you. Clyde, did
20 you have your hand up?

21
22 MR. RAMOTH: Thank you. So, reindeer
23 herders -- reindeer herding for us nowadays, is a --
24 well for me anyway and in our area people, what is the
25 process? And you said, acquire reindeer again like Tom
26 Gray'. Do we need to, like, fill out our permitting
27 process and or would NANA regional start again like, in
28 the 70s? What's the process to start, like a tribe or a
29 village or a family wants to start a small herd? Is it
30 a long process? Those kind of questions are probably
31 gonna arise in meetings in the future.

32
33 MS. BRAEM: Mr. Chair, do you want me to
34 answer that question? This is Nikki.

35
36 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Yes.

37
38 MS. BRAEM: Or somebody else would like
39 to field that one?

40
41 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Yes, please, Nikki,
42 if you're able.

43
44 MS. BRAEM: Rosalie actually might be a
45 better person, I can only speak on behalf of NPS and how
46 we handle that, but.....

47
48 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Who wants to answer?

49
50 (Simultaneous speech)

1

2 MS. DEBENHAM: Sure, thank you. I could
3 answer part of it, if you like, Mr. Chair. This is
4 Rosalie Debenham, with the Bureau of Indian Affairs. So,
5 for Alaska reindeer, they can only be owned by tribes
6 and Alaska Natives. Alaska Natives and tribes can
7 acquire reindeer through other owners of Alaska
8 reindeer. That's not -- that would be a matter between
9 them to work out how to acquire those and how much it
10 would cost and if any reindeer herders were willing to
11 sell their reindeer. And then, of course, there is a --
12 reindeer herders would have to go through a permitting
13 process to acquire the permits to graze their reindeer,
14 which I think Nikki might be able to speak better to,
15 but at the moment, most of the ranges in -- on the Seward
16 Peninsula and have active permits are in the process of
17 renewing their permits. I hope that's helpful. Thank
18 you.

19

20 MS. BRAEM: Yeah.

21

22 (Simultaneous speech)

23

24 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Yes.

25

26 MS. BRAEM: Mr. Chair, this is Nikki
27 Braem from the record. So right now, the, you know, I
28 can't speak to how you get reindeer, that's not my
29 expertise. But at least on the Seward Peninsula right
30 now, the state of Alaska, the Bureau of Land Management
31 and the National Park Service are operating under a
32 memorandum of agreement, and we're each responsible for
33 issuing permits for established grazing ranges. And, you
34 know, there's a map, there's ranges have existed for a
35 very long time. You know, many of them aren't active.
36 But I think that's probably changing. I can't speak for
37 the Reindeer Herders Association and what their plans
38 are and what they're doing right now. But -- so, the
39 National Park Service issues grazing permits for our
40 lands -- for certain ranges, and we do it under a special
41 use permit because like, in the Lower 48 there's grazing
42 of, you know, other livestock because reindeer are a
43 domesticated animal, they're not a wild animal. So, we
44 do it under a special use permit, which, even if you're
45 not having deer on the range, the herders who have kept
46 applying and, you know, sort of renewing their grazing
47 permits, we keep on issuing them grazing permit if they,
48 if they want one, whether they have deer or not. So
49 again, of the four that we issue, only one has -- really
50 has reindeer right now. So, I'm not sure how that would

1 work up there for the NANA region. Okay, you have
2 different -- again, you're going to have some of the
3 same agencies and I don't know, you know, about
4 establishing ranges, that that would be something that's
5 a little more complicated than this for us down here
6 where, you know, this hasn't completely gone away. The
7 reindeer herding industry hasn't completely gone away
8 after the caribou came through, so. Getting the deer is
9 one thing, but then you're going to have to deal with
10 the -- getting the grazing permits from whatever land
11 owners, land managers exist in that area.

12

13 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you. Mike, do
14 you have something?

15

16 MR. KRAMER: Yeah. Back in the day, when
17 I was young you know, we used to take part. You know,
18 my dad had a Super Cub, we'd get down there to Riley Rec
19 and they'd have helicopters and, you know, a bunch of
20 guys on horses, and they'd bring all these reindeer into
21 these corrals, and we'd dehorn them and castrate them,
22 and, you know, and they would, you know, capture a couple
23 for, you know, the -- for food right there at the Riley
24 Rec, feed us. We had everything, man. We had a, you
25 know, there's tables everywhere, non-stop with food and
26 everything. There was ladies in tents cooking, you know,
27 fresh reindeer meat, soup and everything. You know, that
28 was fun, when we were growing up, to partake in this
29 kind of a thing. But, you know, you know, a lot of things
30 were brought up to NANA. You know, they just -- they do
31 not want to invest in their people. I'm sorry to say
32 that, but you know, somebody's gotta invest in the
33 people, and it's gotta be us that needs to take that
34 step. Us as shareholders, us as NANA regional. You know,
35 Northwest Arctic Borough, we all need to step up and
36 take part in this. When our caribou are gone, we can't
37 hunt them in two years, that's if that population hits
38 that threshold, 75,000, no more caribou. Moose are gone,
39 going. We're going to become reindeer herders again. I
40 miss those days. And, you know, we used to go back here.
41 They used to have a camp right back here. Boy Scouts
42 cabin. We used to jump on horses and get them all saddled
43 up, and we'd go out and watch reindeer. We'd have rifles
44 because we were allowed to shoot anything that
45 threatened the reindeer. (Indiscernible), they come
46 close, we'd drop them. Just leave'em. We didn't touch
47 them. We didn't have to touch them. Come bears? Yeah,
48 we shot them all to -- come under some kind of a farming
49 practice to protect your, you know, your livestock and
50 there's a bunch of things set forth like that where you

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1 can protect your livestock and do whatever necessary to,
2 you know, retain your herd, protect your herd. So, I
3 think it needs to become us as a region that needs to
4 pull together, you know, and work together to -- because
5 in a couple of years, you know, there's going to be no
6 more freezers filled with caribou meat if they close
7 them. So, we either need to take action now or forever
8 hold our piece. Thank you.

9
10 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you. We're
11 going to move into the analysis and public comments.
12 Were any public comments received during the open
13 comment period for Wildlife Proposal 26-53?

14
15 MR. PLANK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Tom
16 Plank, OSM. There are no written comments provided
17 during the open period time. Thank you.

18
19 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Mr. Plank.
20 Mr. Lind, were there any tribal or ANCSA Corporation
21 consultations to report?

22
23 MR. LIND: Thank you, Mr. Chair, Orville
24 Lind, Native Liaison for OSM. There were none. Thank
25 you.

26
27 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you. Are there
28 any agency or tribal comments at this time?

29
30 (No comments)

31
32 Any advisory group comments?

33
34 MS. PILCHER: None at this time. Nissa
35 Pilcher, for the record.

36
37 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you. Were there
38 any other written public comments?

39
40 MS. PILCHER: There were none received
41 after the written public comment deadline. Nissa Pilcher
42 again, for the record.

43
44 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you. At this
45 time, is there any public testimony for this proposal?

46
47 MS. SCHAEFFER: Margaret Schaeffer.

48
49 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Ms. Schaeffer, you
50 will have two minutes for your testimony.

1

2

MS. SCHAEFFER: Yes. Since we're talking about reindeer, that's an alternative, we've had that before, but then they were grazed only in a certain area in our region. I'm wondering where else could they be grazed? It seems like they're being grazed in an open area rather than in a forest area where we're at. And Kivalina area also has open areas seem like, over that way, I'm not sure. But I think we need to try to find waters that are not contaminated. Like the Salmon River in the Kobuk Valley National Park is -- does not have fish and ducks like it used to, there's no more animals and fish in that. It's orange color now and it's dead. So, we need to -- if we could try to find areas that are not contaminated, especially the fresh water areas. If we could try to pinpoint now where in your area is open and is good for grazing reindeer. I know they did a good job in -- the reindeer herders, I think that was near Buckland. That was good for the region, to have that reindeer. But we'd rather have, you know, reindeer is going to be costly. Caribou is not costly. Other than just driving up and getting gas and getting caribou and whatever else we need to get, we rely on one type of transportation and that's not expensive. But then reindeer, you're going to have to take care of them. You're going to have to protect them, and you're going to have to find where you're going to buy them, maybe from Norwegians, I don't know. But then those areas near the mines and upper Kobuk and.....

30

31

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Ms. Schaeffer.

32

33

(simultaneous speech)

34

35

MS. SCHAEFFER: Yes.

36

37

38

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Ms. Schaeffer, your two minutes are up. I'll give you a brief wrap up.

39

40

41

42

43

MS. SCHAEFFER: Okay. Yeah. I just want to say that our region is small. And for herds, for reindeer herding, we need to find spaces. Thank you. Thank you.

44

45

46

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CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you for your testimony, Ms. Schaefer. Is there any other public testimony at this time?

48

49

(No response)

50

1 Hearing none, we are at the portion
2 where we can make a motion. I am of the mind to defer
3 this to the Seward Peninsula RAC, since it has to do
4 with the Seward Peninsula area. But if someone would
5 like to make a motion for this -- Katya, Since this is
6 a wildlife proposal, are we able to make a motion to
7 defer or what would the...?

8
9 MS. PILCHER: Yeah, this is Nissa
10 Pilcher, for the record. Yes. You guys could make a
11 motion to defer and defer to the home region.

12
13 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you. I just
14 wanted to clarify that just because we're doing the
15 wildlife closure reviews, which have different motions
16 versus proposals, at this time, would anyone like to
17 make a motion? Clyde.

18
19 MR. RAMOTH: I've been on a roll for
20 making motions. I'll make a motion to defer Wildlife
21 Proposal 26-53 to Unit 22 for their Seward Peninsula
22 RAC, yeah.

23
24 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Motion made by Clyde
25 to defer Wildlife Proposal 26-53 to the Seward Peninsula
26 RAC. Is there a second?

27
28 MR. KRAMER: Second.

29
30 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Seconded by Mike. Any
31 discussion for justification? Clyde.

32
33 MR. RAMOTH: Since it's concerning their
34 unit that would be my justification, without much of our
35 knowledge in this area.

36
37 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Clyde. Any
38 further discussion? I believe this out of respect for
39 the other Regional Advisory Council, and their knowledge
40 for the area would be good justification to defer this
41 one until we can get some input and see what they feel.
42 So, the motion was made by Clyde to defer action on
43 Wildlife Proposal 26-53 to the Seward Peninsula RAC.
44 Ceconded by Mike. Can I please get a roll call vote?

45
46 MS. PILCHER: You sure can. Nissa
47 Pilcher, for the record. Member Monigold.

48
49 MS. MONIGOLD: Yes.

50

1 MS. PILCHER: Member Kramer

2

3 MR. KRAMER: Yes.

4

5 MS. PILCHER: Member Ramoth.

6

7 MR. RAMOTH: Yes.

8

9 MS. PILCHER: Member Cleveland.

10

11 MR. CLEVELAND: Yes.

12

13 MS. PILCHER: Chair Baker.

14

15 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Yes.

16

17 MS. PILCHER: So, with five yays and zero
18 nays, the motion carries to defer to the home region.

19

20 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Nissa.
21 We'll move on to Wildlife Proposal 26-64, which is on
22 page 161. Tom, you have the floor.

23

24 MR. PLANK: Thank you, Mr. Chair, members
25 of the Council. Again, for the record, Tom Plank,
26 Wildlife Biologist, Office of Subsistence Management and
27 I will be presenting the summary of Wildlife Proposal
28 WP26-64 regarding muskox in Unit 22. As the Chair stated,
29 this one's actually 161. This proposal was submitted by
30 the Seward Peninsula Subsistence Regional Advisory
31 Council, and a request extending the federal muskox
32 season on the Seward Penn -- Peninsula from March 15th
33 to March 31st in Units 22 and 23 Southwest. The proponent
34 explains that March weather and snow conditions make
35 travel safer and more predictable than earlier in the
36 season, especially for local hunters using snow
37 machines. Extending the season would improve harvest
38 opportunities without biological concern, and since
39 calving occurs later in spring, the intent is to provide
40 rural subsistence users with more flexibility, better
41 safety, and increased efficiency when pursuing muskox
42 to meet subsistence needs. Next slide.

43

44 So, most of the history of the muskox
45 hunting in Unit 22 has been managed primarily through
46 limited registration permits and quota systems, federal
47 regulations have consistently been aligned with state
48 regulations to maintain consistency and prevent
49 overharvest. Most regulatory actions include
50 establishing limited registration permits and quota

1 announcements, aligning federal season dates with state
2 hunts for simplicity. Setting the March 15th closing
3 date to balance hunter access with protection of muskox
4 during sensitive spring periods, and making adjustments
5 when necessary to clarify season dates or harvest limits
6 while ensuring conservation goals are met. Overall,
7 regulatory actions have steadily emphasized alignment
8 with state rules, controlled harvest through permits and
9 quotas, and protection of the population during critical
10 times of the year. Muskox populations in Unit 22 are
11 currently stable and healthy. Survey data indicates that
12 overall numbers are meeting or exceeding management
13 objectives, and the herds are showing good distribution
14 across their available range. Bull to cow ratios remain
15 strong, which tells us that there are ample mature bulls
16 available for harvest while still maintaining herd
17 productivity. From a biological standpoint, there are
18 no current conservation concerns.

19
20 On the harvest side reported, take has
21 remained within established quotas. Most of the harvest
22 is being carried out by local, federally qualified
23 subsistence users through the registration permit system
24 and is consistent with the management goals. Levels of
25 participation remain steady and there is no evidence
26 that harvest is negatively affecting the population.
27 Taken together with these conditions show that the
28 muskox population is healthy, harvest is well regulated
29 and sustainable, and opportunities for subsistence users
30 are being met without risk to the long-term stability
31 of the herds. The proposal would extend the federal
32 muskox season by 15 days, giving subsistence users more
33 opportunity and flexibility to avoid poor weather and
34 unsafe travel conditions. No biological concern is
35 expected since the muskox population is already
36 carefully managed through quotas and permits. Pregnant
37 cows should not be impacted as calving occurs later in
38 spring. While late March hunts could add some stress to
39 muskox groups, the overall low harvest pressure makes
40 this effect minimal. A drawback is adding regulatory
41 complexion -- complexity since the federal and state
42 closing dates would no longer align, requiring hunters
43 to be mindful of land status. However, hunters already
44 navigate similar land status differences under other
45 hunts. Therefore, the OSM's preliminary conclusion is
46 to support this proposal. Adopting this proposal would
47 provide increased harvest opportunity and safer
48 conditions for federally qualified users without raising
49 conservation concerns. Extending into late March
50 maintained meat and qiviut quality while improving

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1 flexibility for subsistence hunters. Thank you, Mr.
2 Chair, members of the Council. I'll be happy to answer
3 any questions.

4
5 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Tom. Mike,
6 do you have any questions?

7
8 MR. KRAMER: Council Member Kramer. When
9 was the last census done in that area, and how many have
10 been harvested within the last several years since this
11 proposal has been in there?

12
13 MR. PLANK: Through Chair, thank you, Mr.
14 Kramer, for that question. Give me just a second to look
15 it up for you. I believe -- Member Clyde says, page 173
16 and 175.

17
18 MR. KRAMER: It appears that they're
19 doing very well. I make a motion to support this, support
20 it to encourage the safety of travelers and hunters
21 within this game management use area.

22
23 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Mike.
24 We'll keep that as the motion, we just need to go through
25 the comment period process. Any other questions before
26 we move through that?

27
28 (No response)

29
30 Hearing none. Were there any public
31 comments received during the open comment period?

32
33 MR. PLANK: Tom Plank, OSM. There are no
34 comments submitted during the open period. Thank you.

35
36 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Mr. Plank.
37 Mr. Lind, were there any tribal or ANCSA Corporation
38 consultations to report?

39
40 MR. LIND: Orville Lind, Native Liaison,
41 OSM. No, Mr. Chair, there were not.

42
43 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lind.
44 Are there any agency or tribal comments at this time?

45
46 (No comment)

47
48 Any advisory group comments at this
49 time?

50

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1 MR. PLANK: Tom Plank, OSM. Western
2 Interior did not take this up at their meeting, and
3 Seward Pen does not meet until the week of the 20th of
4 this month. So, no other Councils have bid in on this
5 yet.

6
7 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Mr. Plank.
8 Have we received any other written public comments?

9
10 MS. PILCHER: Nissa Pilcher for the
11 record. No, not at this time, sir.

12
13 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you. Do we have
14 any public testimony at this time?

15
16 MS. SCHAEFFER: This is Margaret
17 Schaeffer. What was the testimony regards to?

18
19 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Ms. Schaefer, if
20 you'd like to provide public testimony on this proposal,
21 it's extending the muskox season in Units 22 and 23 for
22 a specific hunt by about two weeks.

23
24 MS. SCHAEFFER: I'm not familiar with
25 that, so I don't have a comment. Just as long as they're
26 -- they expand as many food source, large animal food
27 source as we can and muskox is one of them. Thank you.

28
29 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you for your
30 testimony, Ms. Schaeffer. Is there any other public
31 testimony at this time?

32
33 MR. LEE: Yes. Mr. Chair, this is Raymond
34 Lee, Jr., Buckland.

35
36 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Mr. Lee, please. You
37 have the floor. You'll have two minutes for your
38 testimony.

39
40 MR. LEE: Yes. I'm just wondering if --
41 we're in unit 21, can we go hunt on Unit 23 also? That's
42 my comment. Thank you.

43
44 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Mr. Lee, you said
45 you're in Buckland, correct?

46
47 MR. LEE: Yes, sir.

48
49 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: So, Buckland is in
50 Unit 23, so yes, you can hunt in Unit 23.

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MR. LEE: Yes, it's Unit 23.

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Yes, I hope that answers your question. You are able to hunt there.

MR. LEE: Okay. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you. Is there any other public testimony at this time?

(No response)

Hearing none. Member Kramer made a motion to support Wildlife Proposal 26-64. Is there a second?

MR. CLEVELAND: Second.

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Seconded by Vern Cleveland. Any further discussion or justification? Member Kramer noted that this is supporting our subsistence resources. Is there any other discussion or justification? Mike.

MR. KRAMER: Just so that people can get out there safely and be able to harvest these animals, you know, I know last year there was a permitting area that ten permits were giving, and there was absolutely no muskox in the area, period. You know, at the time I was like, that's a waste of -- what a waste of a permit. You're giving, handing out, you know, these people put in for this permit and then they are granted this permit. There ain't even no muskox on there, you know? You're gonna give them a permit, give them a permit where there's muskox, where they can harvest these animals. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Mike. Any further discussion or justification at this time?

(No response)

Seeing none. The final motion, I'll restate it, is to support Wildlife Proposal 26-64. Can I please get a roll call vote?

MS. PILCHER: You sure can. Nissa Pilcher from OSM. Member Monigold.

1 MS. MONIGOLD: Yes.

2

3 MS. PILCHER: Member Kramer.

4

5 MR. KRAMER: Yes.

6

7 MS. PILCHER: Member Ramoth.

8

9 MR. RAMOTH: Yes.

10

11 MS. PILCHER: Member Cleveland.

12

13 MR. CLEVELAND: Yes.

14

15 MS. PILCHER: Chair Baker.

16

17 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Yes.

18

19 MS. PILCHER: With five yays, and zero

20 nays, the motion carries.

21

22 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you. So with
23 that, we will move on to our next item of business,
24 which is the annual report. Who is our designated federal
25 officer at this time?

26

27 (Simultaneous speech)

28

29 MS. PILCHER: That is me, Nissa Pilcher.
30 So, this is just a brief call to your attention. This
31 specific is not a action item, but it is the Federal
32 Subsistence Board FY 2024 Annual Report Reply that was
33 replied back to your 2024 Annual Report. It can be found
34 on page 191 in your meeting book. The next agenda item
35 is to identify issues for FY 25 Annual Report. And that
36 one will be undertaken by Katya.

37

38 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Nissa.
39 Would anyone from OSM like to go over the replies?

40

41 MS. PILCHER: I sure can. I can briefly
42 summarize what was in the meeting book. So, in FY 2024,
43 and my apologies, I was not at your meeting at that
44 time, your Council had three topics for which a reply
45 from the Federal Subsistence Board was requested. So,
46 topic one was addressing the impacts of caribou
47 migration displacement by non-local and non-resident
48 hunters on federal and state land in Unit 23. Second
49 topic was to support the expansion of statewide
50 qualitative and quantitative research on salmon returns

1 and climate change. And item number three was support
2 the expansion of research studies that include local
3 observations and traditional knowledge of climate change
4 impacts to subsistence resource, and subsistence
5 opportunities. Your Council also had two topics that
6 were of informational nature to the Federal Subsistence
7 Board, meaning that you wanted to inform the Board but
8 you did not request any action or information back from
9 the Board. And that was to let them know about -- on
10 addressing the impact of non-resident hunting on Unit
11 23 caribou populations, as well as concerns about
12 migratory waterfowl and water quality. So, I won't
13 necessarily go into detail on these responses of these
14 topics. The responses were pretty in-depth and I know
15 we are relatively short on time. But you do have them
16 in front of you, and they are located online for anyone
17 interested in looking at them, that is listening in.
18 There are also copies in the meeting book in the back
19 of the room for those in the room. Once again, if you
20 go to the Western -- no, wrong Council, Northwest Arctic
21 Regional Advisory Councils meeting web page -- website,
22 they are located under the Meeting Materials tab. Thank
23 you.

24
25 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Nissa. Do
26 we have any questions or discussion on this before we
27 move on to the FY 2025 Annual Report?

28
29 (No response)

30
31 Seeing none. I'll call on Ms. Katya
32 Wessels to lead us in identifying issues for the 2025
33 Annual Report to the Federal Subsistence Board.

34
35 MS. WESSELS: Thank you, Mr. Chair,
36 members of the Council. For the record Katya Wessels,
37 Council Coordination Division Supervisor. As you
38 probably recall from all the previous meetings, every
39 year, during your fall meetings, the Council develops
40 the draft topics for the Annual Report and this report
41 from your Council to the Federal Subsistence Board. You
42 have the authority to submit that report, which is given
43 to you by ANILCA Title VIII. So, in general, annual
44 report should highlight subsistence trends and issues
45 from your region. And these annual reports, along with
46 the Council's recommendations that you provide on
47 proposals and closure reviews that informs the Board,
48 it gives the Board the information to make the important
49 decision on regulatory matters. The issues that you
50 bring up in your annual reports, the information that

1 you put in your annual reports, they are sometimes used
2 in analysis, they help to identify research needs, they
3 help to identify regional outreach needs. And it can
4 also help with various recommendations on management
5 strategies and program processes.

6
7 So, there are some issues sometimes the
8 Councils bring in their annual reports that are outside
9 of the Board's regulatory authority, and the Board
10 cannot take action or provide a substantive response.
11 So, you just need to keep that in mind. It doesn't
12 prevent you from putting these issues in the annual
13 report, but sometimes you might not get an answer that
14 you're looking for because [sic] Board just doesn't have
15 the authority. So, if you want to receive a response
16 from the Board on a certain issue, you need to identify
17 what you're asking. Like what do you want Board to do?
18 And some issues can be just informative, like you want
19 to inform the Board about something happening in your
20 region, but you don't really, you know, expect the Board
21 to reply. So, this would make communication with the
22 Board more effective.

23
24 So, all topics that you will identify
25 today, that's what's going to go in your annual report
26 for this year. When you review your report during your
27 next meeting, you can just make edits to these issues,
28 you cannot add new ones. Just keep that in mind, because
29 any other issues that come up to that, they will go in
30 the next year's report. So, the other thing that we are
31 implementing also, that we are going to invite the Chairs
32 or a Council representative, if Chair is not available,
33 to the Board's summer work session, where the Board takes
34 these annual reports and discusses their replies to the
35 Councils. The Board work summer session is scheduled for
36 August 4th and 5th. So, Chair Baker, just, you know,
37 keep it in mind if you're available, you're invited to
38 attend, and if not, you can appoint somebody in your
39 stead to attend the meeting. And that's a -- we think
40 it's a better opportunity for the Councils actually to
41 discuss these issues with the Board directly, instead
42 of staff just presenting your issues on your behalf.
43 Have a live dialogue. So, of course we are paying for
44 your travel, per usual. So, that's all I have as the
45 introductory part and, you know, the Council is now free
46 to discuss the issues that you would like to put in your
47 FY 25 Annual Report. Thank you.

48
49 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Katya. Any
50 discussion? Does anyone have any ideas of things that

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1 we would like to put into the report? And before you
2 leave, Katya, if there are no issues, it's fine. We
3 don't necessarily need to produce a report, correct?

4
5 MS. WESSELS: Well, I recommend that you
6 have at least some kind of a, you know, it's there's --
7 if you don't want to put any issues, maybe you can just
8 write a kind of like a cover letter thanking Board for
9 this opportunity. But if you want to highlight some
10 things, then you know, of course, that's going to be a
11 report. I mean, it's not like mandated, but it's always
12 a good thing to do it.

13
14 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Understood. Thank
15 you, Katya. Does anyone have anything that we would like
16 to put in this year's report going to the Federal
17 Subsistence Board?

18
19 MS. MONIGOLD: Yeah. Oh, I'm sorry.

20
21 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Clyde, do you have
22 something?

23
24 MS. MONIGOLD: Through the Chair, this
25 is Karmen.

26
27 MR. RAMOTH: Oh.

28
29 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Karmen, go ahead. And
30 then after you will be Clyde.

31
32 MS. MONIGOLD: Yes. Is it my
33 understanding that since I -- this is my first real year
34 on the Board, we don't do predator management, is that
35 correct?

36
37 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: When you say we, do
38 you mean the federal managers?

39
40 MS. MONIGOLD: The federal -- yeah. The
41 federal managers.

42
43 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Mr. Wiese or someone
44 close to a microphone? I believe the answer is no, there
45 is no predator management in place in our Game Units.
46 But if someone from one of the federal agencies can
47 speak to that to confirm or clarify?

48
49 MS. CARLSON: Through the Chair, Annie
50 Carlson with the Park Service. If I'm understanding the

1 question correctly, I can confirm that there is
2 currently no intensive management or predator control
3 on Park Service lands in Game Management 23.

4

5 MR. WIESE: And Wil Wiese, Selawik
6 Refuge. Same for Selawik Refuge, Fish and Wildlife lands
7 in Game Management Unit 23.

8

9 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, and with
10 that, just a nod of the head to our Fish and Game folks.
11 There's no intensive management of predators in GMU 23,
12 correct? Alex Hanson is coming to the microphone.

13

14 MR. HANSON: Thank you, and through the
15 Chair, Alex Hanson, Fish and Game here in Kotzebue.
16 Currently there is no IM taking place in Unit 23. You
17 know, that doesn't -- I would certainly say you could
18 make a recommendation that goes to the Board of Game to
19 request actions to take place in Intensive Management,
20 that's up to you but, currently, there's nothing taking
21 place. I will say, just as a reminder, the working group
22 suggested that we start tiptoeing into Intensive
23 Management, which looks like harvest by private
24 individuals, of wolves, from aircraft so, same day
25 shooting of wolves out of airplanes. So, that's a
26 proposal they plan to put before the Board of Game. You
27 guys can come up with stuff if you'd like, and I'm happy
28 to guide you through the process if you want to go that
29 route.

30

31 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Alex.
32 Nissa, did you have something?

33

34 MS. PILCHER: I did want to mention --
35 Nissa Pilcher for the record. So, you guys will be
36 meeting again in March. The Board of Game proposal -- a
37 call for proposals I don't believe has come out. The
38 deadline will be in May so, if you did want to formulate
39 anything, you don't necessarily have to do it at this
40 meeting. That is also why it is not currently on your
41 agenda, because I figured that'd be something we would
42 take up at your next meeting.

43

44 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: So, that's for the
45 State Board of Game. Karmen, did you have any other
46 questions? And I hope that answered your question.

47

48 MS. MONIGOLD: I guess I didn't clarify
49 my question, but it is a possibility, if things get dire
50 enough, that with the -- I know on the state side, it's

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1 a possibility. Is it a possibility on the federal side
2 to do something similar? Thank you.

3

4 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Karmen.
5 Annie.

6

7 MS. CARLSON: Through the Chair, Annie
8 Carlson with the Park Service. As a general management
9 policy for the Park Service, Intensive Management --
10 Predator Control would not be allowed on Park Service
11 lands. That said, FSB has the authority to take up
12 proposals and discuss.

13

14 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Alex.

15

16 MR. HANSON: And to hopefully add some
17 additional clarification, this is Alex again. Typically,
18 the I -- Intensive Management stuff would take place on
19 state lands. It could take place, you know, if we worked
20 with NANA, Corp lands, it could also potentially,
21 typically, can take place on BLM lands. But, you know,
22 as Annie mentioned, does not take place on Park Service
23 and -- nor does it take place on Refuge lands, typically.
24 And feel free to jump in, Wil, if you want.

25

26 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you. Karmen.

27

28 MS. MONIGOLD: That answers my question,
29 thank you.

30

31 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Karmen.
32 Clyde and then Mike.

33

34 MR. RAMOTH: Since we're going to be
35 talking about other discussions in March, my general
36 question -- because with our warmer temperatures
37 nowadays and, and we hear a lot of people talk and
38 testify about the concerns about our contamination of
39 our lands, the warmer temperatures that affects our
40 fish, whether it's pikes, whitefish, salmon. Is there
41 discussions about -- because we're always hearing, oh,
42 we don't have money to do more surveys. Are those
43 discussions are brought up to like, maybe raise federal
44 budgets to increase more surveys being done? It's a
45 general question. I -- it's always bothered me.

46

47 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: I'll be the first one
48 to take a stab at that, Clyde. So, on page 192 from last
49 year's report -- and our question -- our concerns
50 submitted to the Board, their response kind of touches

1 on that, with how the Office of Subsistence Management
2 initiates the FRMP, the Fisheries Resource Monitoring
3 Program, and issues a Notice of Funding Opportunity for
4 research addressing regional priority information needs.
5 So, there is that, where we have raised that concern of
6 we need someone to do more studies, do more research,
7 and for the powers that be to push more budget towards
8 those efforts. I don't know if any staff would like to
9 add on to that.

10

(No response)

11

12

13 Is there anything else, Clyde, on that
14 one?

15

(No response)

16

17

All right. Mike.

18

19

20 MR. KRAMER: Yeah. You know, quite a few
21 years ago, when I was in high school, I met an elderly
22 chief in Washington. When he laid his eyes on me the
23 first time, he got up out of his chair, shook my hand,
24 said, you guys are blessed with your great subsistence
25 resources, with the federal government protecting your
26 lands. You know, you're given lands. Ours was taken away
27 from us. Our lands was raped, treaties broken, broken,
28 lied to, killed, murdered. And we want to protect our
29 subsistence resources. My theory is, if you guys don't
30 have a predator control program, you got till our next
31 meeting, or you should turn that land over to someone
32 else who can do it. I don't know what to tell you guys.
33 You know, we're trying to protect our people. You know,
34 we got these wolves in villages, got these wolves and
35 bears coming into villages and communities. Either we're
36 going to start taking part of this now, or there's no
37 need for you guys here anymore. Once our caribou and
38 moose are gone (indiscernible), no reason to have you
39 guys here. Nothing to study, unless you guys want to go
40 study red back moles and mosquitoes. No purpose to have
41 you guys here anymore, you know. We fight. I fought
42 against many elders within this region. Many elders.
43 There was a 30-year difference when I first started, to
44 the youngest guy. 30-year difference. Now I'm one of the
45 old guys. I only got ten more years in this Council
46 left. I hope I make a difference every time I come here,
47 I want to make a difference to ensure that our people
48 could fill their freezers, safely, with no hindrances.
49 You know, it's gotta happen, we gotta start protecting
50 our people. These predators are killing our resources.

1 Nobody's going out there and shooting them. You know,
2 there's people seeing wolves in town, killing dogs.
3 People are staring them right in front of their villages.
4 Somebody saw one where there's kids walking by. It's
5 time, Park Service, Fish and Wildlife. You need to figure
6 out something because, you know, our sheep are gone. I
7 fought to have that closed long, long time ago. Nobody
8 didn't like to listen to me. I still hold that against
9 the Park Service. They didn't listen to me. Nobody
10 listens to us. So, what's the purpose of us talking if
11 we can't be listened to or even try to make an effort
12 to fix this problem? That's all I got to say.

13

14 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Mike. Any
15 other discussion? Katya.

16

17 MS. WESSELS: Yeah. I just want to add a
18 little bit about the predator control. Well, basically,
19 the Federal Subsistence Board currently does not address
20 predator control issues. And why is that? You know why,
21 you might want to ask? Because the Federal Subsistence
22 Board has jurisdiction over subsistence uses of fish and
23 wildlife on federal public lands. And subsistence use,
24 what is it? ANILCA defines it as only for direct personal
25 or family consumption. Since taking predators solely for
26 the purposes of increasing game populations is not a
27 direct personal or family consumption, it's not within
28 the Board's purview. It's not within the Board's
29 jurisdiction. Predator control is conducted by
30 individual land management agencies. That said, you can,
31 you know, because the individual land management
32 agencies are a part of the Federal Subsistence Board,
33 you can maybe direct that to that agency specifically
34 as a topic, but it's not going to be Federal Subsistence
35 Board establishing the predator control program. It will
36 need to be an individual agency as, as far as a concern
37 for federal government. So, that's what I wanted to add.

38

39 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Mike, did you have
40 something?

41

42 MR. KRAMER: Yeah. If you go over there
43 looking at Federal Subsistence Management book over
44 there, you trap on federal lands, that is the type of
45 predator control. You're trapping on federal lands. To
46 provide clothing for your family. So that is the type
47 of predator control on federal lands. Because if we
48 closed trapping down on federal lands, oh, my gosh! You
49 want a federal uprising? Whoa! Yeah. Yep. Go look in
50 that book. I guarantee you'll see it. Trapping on federal

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1 land. That is a type and a source of predator control.

2

3 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Any other discussion
4 from members of the Council for what we can put into our
5 Annual Report to the Federal Subsistence Board? Karmen,
6 did you have anything?

7

8 MS. MONIGOLD: We'll have another
9 opportunity in March, correct?

10

11 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: We will not have
12 another opportunity for this specifically. In March,
13 we'll be able to put forward proposals. Wildlife special
14 actions. Wildlife proposals. But at this time, this is
15 our only opportunity to identify the issues going in the
16 report to the Federal Subsistence Board, which is just
17 sending them a letter, essentially. And it helps inform
18 them on what our concerns are. But as far as action
19 being taken, we will have opportunities in March at our
20 next meeting to make proposals for action to be taken.
21 Nissa, did you have something?

22

23 MS. PILCHER: I did, this is Nissa
24 Pilcher for the record. As I've noted earlier, I am
25 newer to this Council and with my other Councils I have
26 assisted in helping on the record, you guys -- my other
27 Councils formulate some topics and what I have heard
28 over and over and including right now is you guys have
29 concerns over -- so first off, you have discussed
30 appreciation towards having the larger harvest limits
31 for both hunting and trapping. In fact, you guys have
32 drafted proposals to do that to help your guys' -- your
33 individual communities take more predators where you
34 can, which is on federal lands. That's one way of you
35 could look at conducting predator control because you're
36 doing it yourself. The government isn't doing it, you
37 guys are doing it. So, that could be a topic that, you
38 know, we're actively working towards this, we're
39 encouraging larger season or longer seasons, higher bag
40 limits, I'm encouraging people to go out and do it and
41 we would appreciate additional assistance potentially,
42 from the federal government. I'm not quite sure how that
43 would be worded. Not the Federal Subsistence Management
44 Program, but you know, the landowners in Unit 23. If
45 anything can be done to assist with this, that could be
46 a topic. An informational topic could be -- because the
47 Federal Subsistence Board, of course, can't do anything
48 to the Board of Game, just inform them that there is
49 this ongoing predator problem of predators coming too
50 close to town, into town, being caught or seen in town

1 near children just so that they are aware and that, if
2 it -- a proposal doesn't come from you guys to the Board
3 of Game, you expect it to be coming from another entity
4 and they should be aware of, these are things that are
5 happening. So, that could be another topic. And then
6 another topic that you guys -- this Council generally
7 always has or at least the last couple annual reports
8 that I've looked at is and something that you've talked
9 about at length is concern over caribou populations. And
10 just because the Federal Subsistence Board has heard it
11 last year and the year before, doesn't mean that they
12 shouldn't continually be aware that this is an ongoing
13 problem. The numbers aren't going up, and you guys are
14 concerned. So, those could be three different topics
15 that, at least, at bare minimum, that could be put in a
16 report that you guys could look at in March. Thank you.

17
18 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Nissa.
19 Mike.

20
21 MR. KRAMER: Yeah. You know, with that
22 being said, you know, we might as well go ahead and make
23 you know -- the biggest predators that hinder our
24 subsistence resources, our wolves and bears. I think
25 what we need to do is under the subsistence program, you
26 know, for bears, we just make it unlimited.
27 (Indiscernible), cows, sows, calves, whatever, whatever
28 it is, you know, cubs that they have. I know there's a
29 couple of regions in the state that does that. They're
30 allowed to shoot cubs in their dens. Wolf pups. Gotta
31 start somewhere. You know, we might as well make those
32 two predatory animals unlimited. But I know that with
33 bears, we know we have to salvage them eating everything.
34 And I don't know if they follow state laws, state
35 regulations with the harvest, two bears a year, sell the
36 hides and skulls. I don't know if federal follows that,
37 but I know that maybe on the state it does. I believe.
38 Yeah. That's what it says in there. Like she was saying,
39 we might as well bring up the, you know, bring up the
40 amount of predators, bears and wolves that we could
41 harvest because they're the biggest threat to our moose
42 and our sheep, caribou. These are our subsistence
43 resources. Might as well just make them unlimited. No
44 holds bar. No limit. No season. Open season. That's my
45 suggestion.

46
47 MS. MONIGOLD: Yeap.

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49 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you for that,
50 Mike. Any other discussion from members of the Council?

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MS. MONIGOLD: This is Karmen, Chair.

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Yes. Please go ahead, Karmen.

MS. MONIGOLD: Hi. Can we put in what the lady said right before Mike for me, please? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Yes, that was going to be my suggestion is based off of the different discussions we've had over the last couple days is taking our concerns over the caribou population, and everyone is aware of the issue, but continuing to put that in our report is very important. The concerns over climate change and the needs for further studies and -- more studies and research into different populations. Some of the hurdles that we're looking at in making proposals and making decisions, as the people making recommendations to the Federal Subsistence Board is we don't have the data on how many muskox live in the Selawik area, we don't have the data on X, Y, Z. So, taking from these discussions we've had and using those to draft our report, if we can glean those from the minutes of yesterday and today of these main concerns we brought up, as Nissa kind of laid them out, streamlined, I think that would be a very good basis for our report. Did you have anything else, Karmen?

MS. MONIGOLD: No, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Mike.

MR. KRAMER: Yeah. Since we have wolves on the, you know, the federal land and trapping and stuff, we might as well add beers to that so we could trap them, bait them, shoot them with artificial light, trap them. You know, I think if they're added to the list of animals that we're allowed to trap, then that's one way to take care of the issue. Add them to the list of animals that we could trap, these bait, artificial light, shoot from the boat. As long as we'd be able to harvest the animal and utilize what we have to on the meat and everything. Harvest the meat and hand it out to elders.

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Mike. Any further discussion? Ideas?

00090

1 MR. LEE: Yes, this is Ray Lee, Jr. With
2 a comment on that.

3
4 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: At this time, I'm
5 going to ask that we hold any comments until the end,
6 if you don't mind, Mr. Lee.

7
8 MR LEE: Okay. It'll be about the subject
9 that you guys are.....

10
11 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, it's just
12 that we need to -- we'll have to make a motion to direct
13 staff to write these things down. So, after that, you
14 can make your comment, sir. Clyde.

15
16 MR. RAMOTH: Yeah, Clyde Ramoth, Selawik.
17 I was just about to make a motion to approve what was
18 discussed for our report with Nissa Pilcher just stated,
19 and Karmen backed that up so -- about just those topics
20 that, including our minutes, we've been talking about
21 the last day and a half, is my motion.

22
23 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: So motion.....

24
25 (Simultaneous speech)

26
27 MR. RAMOTH: For the annual report.
28 Sorry.

29
30 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Motion made by Clyde.
31 Is there a second?

32
33 MR. CLEVELAND: Second.

34
35 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Seconded by Vern. All
36 those in favor of moving those topics forward, and this
37 will all be rediscussed in March when we meet again, so
38 that we can review what is said, and we can fine tune
39 it then, but we just need to make the motion now to say,
40 this is what we would like put into it, and then we can
41 review it and finalize it. Correct, staff? Correct. I'm
42 getting nods from the back of the room. So, motion was
43 made by Clyde, seconded by Vern. All those in favor,
44 please signify by saying aye.

45
46 IN UNISON: Aye.

47
48 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: All those opposed,
49 same sign.

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1 (No response)

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And so, with that, the motion carries to compile all of this into our draft report. At this time, Mr. Lee, I'll give you two minutes for your comment, and then Mr. Towksjhea after him.

MS. SCHAEFFER: And me next.

MR. LEE: Okay, thank you. You know, about the controlling of the wolves, it would be good to have it unlimited for hunters like myself, you know, I get ten wolves and then that's it. And I don't try to hunt anymore unless I can go to other units and get more wolves. Is that okay? Like, if I'm in Unit 23 and I go to Unit 22, or I go to Point Hope on their side and hunt more wolves, is that possible, or do I -- or just got to stay within our limits of killing -- the bag limits on hunting with a machine or things like that? That's just concerned about that one. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you for your question, Mr. Lee. Someone is going to come up to the microphone and address your question.

MS. OSBURN: Hello, Mr. Lee, my name is Christie Osburn. I'm with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. And to answer your question, what you see, at least in the state regulations, is an annual bag limit. So, for -- if you're hunting out of Unit 23, for example, that's 20 wolves that you can get under the hunting license or it's unlimited under a trapping license during the trapping season. So, if you were to reach your 20-wolf bag limit but you wanted to then continue pursuing wolves under the trapping license, the trapping license has no limit. However, if you go to a different Game Management Unit, your annual bag limit will still stay with you for that regulatory year. So, if you go to a unit that has a lesser bag limit and you've already reached your 20 in Unit 23 you will not be able to hunt any additional wolves. If you go the other way, if you're in a unit that has, say, a bag limit of 15 wolves, and then you come into Unit 23, where we have a hunting bag limit of 20, you could still hunt those additional five wolves. Does that answer your question?

MR. LEE: Yes, okay, thank you. So, I know now it's 20 wolves, not 10. Thank you.

1 MS. OSBURN: For Unit 23, under state
2 management, on state lands, that's correct.

3
4 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Hunting. But it is
5 unlimited for trapping wolves on state land, correct?

6
7 MS. OSBURN: Correct. During the trapping
8 season and with the trapping license.

9
10 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you for that,
11 Christie. Mr. Towksjhea, did you have a comment you
12 wanted to make? If you do, if you could just state your
13 name and you'll have two minutes. And then after you,
14 will be Ms. Schaefer.

15
16 MS. TOWKSJHEA: Hi. How are you? I'm very
17 confused in my life. We have -- I have -- my mom was
18 born in Point Lay, and we got lots of rules up there,
19 too, caribou rules with that last one. She talked to me.
20 She told me she -- there was a big hole. Big hole in the
21 in the front of the ocean they make from the pipeline,
22 and the caribou got lost in there, and they cover it up
23 at night. And that's -- my mama told me no more caribou
24 come down Point Lay. Then my second one is my daddy,
25 Benjamin Towksjhea, he was from Point Hope. He's a good
26 whale hunter. And he taught me a lot when you were there,
27 when I'd go visit him. He taught me how to harpoon and
28 (In Native). And then when he moved to Kotzebue, I was
29 born and raised in Kotzebue. I went to school for a
30 while, but the whole thing got me so confused, I don't
31 know where am I, or who am I? I'm an Eskimo. I
32 (indiscernible). I'm Point Lay, I don't know which one,
33 who am I? I'm confused because my generation's come from
34 Point Lay and Point Hope, and I'm having a little bit
35 of confusion on how far you fellas have been coming to
36 Alaska and put the rules down. I wanted to know that for
37 sure and make sure that the law didn't come from Russia.
38 Russia had a takeover Alaska long ago, United States,
39 but Russia not the rules come from there or either from
40 the United States. I need to know how powerful is that
41 to be? Are we still Russians or are we still American?
42 And I'm Inupiaq. But the confusing part is, where does
43 it all start? One mistake make another. Two mistakes
44 make a bigger thing. Three mistake is where the boundary
45 line is. So, I'm asking, where is your boundary line
46 start?

47
48 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Mr.
49 Towksjhea. Our boundary line is what our elders teach
50 us, it's what we're supposed to know as Inupiaq People.

1 That's where we're getting our knowledge from at the
2 table and from people like you, from the community that
3 live off the land. So that's our line, that's where we
4 get our knowledge from and where we appreciate people
5 like you coming in to ask the questions, to share the
6 knowledge, that's where we're coming from.

7

8 UNIDENTIFIED: Good afternoon.

9

10 UNIDENTIFIED: Is it that it there?

11

12 MS. SCHAEFFER: Okay.

13

14 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Ms. Schaeffer, are
15 you still wanting to make a comment?

16

17 MS. SCHAEFFER: Yes.

18

19 UNIDENTIFIED: Hi.....

20

21 MS. SCHAEFFER: This is Margaret
22 Schaeffer.

23

24 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Two minutes for your
25 comment.

26

27 MS. SCHAEFFER: Yeah, my mom is from
28 Kiana and my dad is from, originally from Shishmaref
29 area. So, we've occupied both areas subsistence wise.
30 And I'm married to, was married to Alex Sheldon from
31 Kobuk, and we spent many years in Ambler. And now I find
32 out that there are water bodies merging because they're
33 getting overloaded with water and they're connecting to
34 the next water body. And I'm afraid that's going to
35 happen sooner than we think. And therefore, we're going
36 to be looking for higher ground. And our ancestors found
37 higher ground between Kiana and Ambler. That's our
38 sacred land between Kiana and Ambler, and it still is.
39 It was for many thousands of years. It's been our hub
40 city. Everybody lived inland. But then they went to
41 Kotzebue, Kotzebue Sound to hunt seals, and they brought
42 their seal oil after it rendered, they bring it back
43 upriver all the way to Kobuk and the other villages. So,
44 I'm saying that every other place that I notice is going
45 to be in flood area except for the land that I mentioned
46 between Kiana and Ambler.

47

48 So, we need to keep that area sacred.
49 We need to keep it as original as it is, without anybody
50 bothering or even stepping on a plant, a little plant

1 or bug, those are the most important ones. We need to
2 keep the ecosystem all in place as one whole one. So,
3 from Kiana, all the way to Ambler, is a whole big
4 ecosystem and there's lots of animals comfortably living
5 there. They live there with the Natives for thousands
6 of years, and we need to get back and interact with that
7 to prevent our people from unexpectedly being flooded
8 out of their villages. We should start locating where
9 we should preserve animals, certain plants, animals,
10 bugs, everything. And that place right there, I think,
11 I know, and what elders say that to my great great
12 grandparents were born. And that's where my great
13 grandmother was born. That's where lots of people lived,
14 between Kiana and Ambler, that whole section. I just
15 want to let you know that we want to keep it as original
16 as possible without too many people around and too much
17 contamination. And that's all I have. Thank you.

18
19 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Ms.
20 Schaefer. At this time, we will conclude the identifying
21 issues for the FY 2025 Annual Report, and we'll move to
22 page 199, in our books. We will need a motion made,
23 correct? To confirm our next meeting date and then the
24 fall meeting date.

25
26 MS. PILCHER: This is Nissa Pilcher for
27 the record, that is correct, yes. It could either be one
28 motion for both or individual motions for each, the
29 winter and the fall.

30
31 UNIDENTIFIED: All right, you guys can
32 hear me.

33
34 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you for that,
35 Nissa. So, if we look at page 199, we have March 24th
36 and 25th for our next meeting, the winter meeting. And
37 then on the next page, we have September 24th and 25th
38 for our fall 2026 meeting. Would anyone like to make a
39 motion?

40
41 MR. RAMOTH: Yes, Mr. Chair, Clyde
42 Ramoth, for the record. I'll make a motion to approve
43 meeting dates for March 24th and 25 for our RAC. And a
44 winter meeting for October -- excuse me, September 24-
45 25, 2026, for the record.

46
47 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Motion made by Clyde
48 to confirm both the winter and fall meeting dates for
49 the dates listed in our book. And location would be in
50 Kotzebue, as listed on both of those pages. So, motion

00095

1 made by Clyde. Is there a second?

2

3 MR. KRAMER: Second.

4

5 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Seconded by Mike. All
6 those in favor, please signify by saying aye.

7

8 IN UNISON: Aye.

9

10 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Those opposed, same
11 sign.

12

13 (No response)

14

15 So, with that, we will confirm that in
16 Kotzebue on March 24-25 of '26, we will have the winter
17 meeting and then Kotzebue on September 24 and 25, we'll
18 have the fall meeting. Nissa, did you have something?

19

20 MS. PILCHER: This is Nissa.....

21

22 (Simultaneous speech)

23

24 UNIDENTIFIED: I must be muted.

25

26 MS. PILCHER: Oh, we can hear you, sir,
27 but if you would like to mute, that is star six to do
28 that, so you're not disrupting the meeting, but we can
29 hear you. So, this is Nissa Pilcher, for the record. I
30 did want to let those in the room and online know that
31 the Council did previously discuss quite a few wildlife
32 proposals and closure reviews. If anyone is interested,
33 there will be another opportunity for tribal and ANSCA
34 consultations, that's going to be on February 20th for
35 this region. If you're interested, please reach out to
36 our Native Liaison Orville Lind with OSM. He can be
37 reached at (907) 786-3953. Once again, that's Orville
38 Lind, (907) 786-3953 if you'd like to participate or
39 have questions about the upcoming February 20th tribal
40 and ANSCA consultations on these wildlife proposals and
41 closure reviews. Thank you.

42

43 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Nissa. So,
44 with that, it is 2:50. I'd like to propose we take a
45 break until 3:05, and when we come back, we will start
46 the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program. So, 3:05 will
47 be back online.

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49 (Off record)

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1 (On record)

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CHAIRPERSON BAKER: All right. It is now 3:07. This is Thomas Baker, Chair of the Northwest Arctic Regional Advisory Council to the Federal Subsistence Board. We're going to go ahead and get started. Who from OSM Fisheries will be leading the FRMP discussion?

MR. FOLEY: Good afternoon, Mr. Chair. Can you hear me? All right.

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Yes, I can.

MR. FOLEY: Thank you. Good afternoon, Mr. Chair, members of the Council. My name is Kevin Foley and I'm a Fisheries Biologist with the Office of Subsistence Management and this is my first time presenting to you all. Many of you are familiar with my predecessor, Karen Hyer, who has retired from public service and left behind some pretty big shoes to fill. And while I can't not [sic] be with you in present or in person to present this material, I'm really looking forward to meeting everyone at our winter meeting coming up in March so, thank you, Mr. Chair and Council members. Once again, this is Kevin Foley, Fisheries Biologist with OSM. And I'm joined on the line with my colleague, Dr. Hannah Voorhees, OSM Anthropologist. And I'd like to share with you a brief overview of the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Programs funding process. After describing this funding process, we'll request Council comments on the projects submitted for the northern region. And this is not an action item, but your comments are incredibly important part of this process. And for your reference, the Monitoring Program materials may be found starting on page 201 of your Council books.

The goal of the Monitoring Program is to fund research on federal subsistence fisheries, to enhance management, and to work with rural Alaskans to sustain these fisheries. The Monitoring Program funding process starts with the Councils identifying information gaps and developing priority information needs for each of the regions that are listed on the bottom of page 201. Volunteers from this Council, the Seward Peninsula and North Slope Councils met during the fall of 2024 and created the list of priority information needs for the northern region. And you can see that list beginning on page 212 of your Council books. So, we took this list and requested projects that address these priorities. Investigators then submitted projects proposals to OSM.

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CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Kevin

(simultaneous speech)

MR. FOLEY: Northern region -- yes, sir.

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: We're getting some feedback. If everyone that is not Kevin Foley can mute, please. Kevin, can you try speaking now?

MR. FOLEY: Yes. Can you hear me? Is the -- how's the feedback?

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Loud and clear. No more feedback. You may continue.

MR. FOLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, we were talking about the priority information needs and discussing how OSM had put out a sort of request for projects. And these projects were submitted to OSM. And for the northern region, we received six proposals that were submitted for funding. And each of these proposals are listed in the table on page 212 of your books. These proposals are currently going through OSM's review process, and the first step in this process is for the Technical Review Committee to assess the projects themselves. And the TRC is a panel of expert scientists that review the proposals based on five criteria, and the criteria are: strategic priority, technical and scientific merit, investigator ability and resources, partnership and capacity building, and cost benefit. The Technical Review Committee writes justifications that summarize what they thought of the projects, and these justifications can be found at the end of each project's executive summary in the Council booklets. After the Technical Review Committee review, we collect the Council comments on the projects and that's what we're doing here today. So, your comments and the Technical Review Committee's justifications are combined and presented to the Interagency Staff Committee or the ISC. And the ISC, who are Federal Subsistence Board staff, also provide comments on the project. So, it's a big collection of feedback and input. And then the Federal Subsistence Board will meet early next month, during their February 5th work session meeting. And the Board will be presented with all the information from the TRC, the Councils, ISC, and we'll also add their recommendations on what projects to fund. And ultimately the final selection of projects will be determined by

1 the director of OSM based on all the feedback provided
2 and how much money is available as allocated by Congress.

3
4 OSM funds as many projects as possible
5 based on our budget, and many of the funded projects,
6 once determined, will start later this year in the spring
7 of 2026. So, the whole process happens every two years,
8 and projects can be funded for up to four years. And
9 again, just to remind you, this is not an action item,
10 but I cannot stress how important your comments are as
11 a part of this funding process. So, we are requesting
12 your thoughts and comments about the proposed projects
13 in the northern region that are listed on page 212. And
14 we would greatly be interested to hear the Council's
15 comments and whether or not you have any specific
16 concerns or directed comments about the proposed
17 projects. And so, to that end, if the Council wishes,
18 we can go through each project and provide a brief
19 summary or the Council can simply work through and
20 comment on the projects listed on page 212. Mr. Chair,
21 how would the Council like to proceed?

22
23 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: I saw a hand raised.
24 Clyde, did you have a question?

25
26 MR. RAMOTH: Question, comment. I'm
27 excited about these projects and I mentioned earlier
28 about funding sources and how could the Board approve
29 more monies for further studies and Wil Wiese and
30 Brittany I know, a few months ago, consulted with our
31 tribe and got the blessing for and introduce studies for
32 the pike and we're always concerned because the warmer
33 temperatures start with the algae growth and our
34 whitefish, we got five different species of whitefish,
35 possibly six with the (In Native) meaning Fish River so
36 Fish River fish. But the biggest concern -- I mean, we
37 got a lot of beaver so, seeing these, I don't know if
38 we're going to do one at a time, but that was my comment.
39 I just wanted to thank for the development of these
40 plans. Thank you.

41
42 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Clyde. So,
43 with that, would the Council like to go through each one
44 with a brief summary and we can comment as we go? Or are
45 there any initial comments at this time?

46
47 (No response)

48
49 Hearing none. Kevin, if you'd like to
50 go down the list on page 212 and give a brief overview

1 of each one, we'll take questions and discussion from
2 the Council as we go.

3
4 MR. FOLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. All
5 right. So, for the submitted projects beginning on page
6 212, we have project 26-100 - Assessment of Life History
7 Patterns and Hypoxic Stress of Northwest Alaska
8 Whitefish and Arctic Grayling. This project aims to
9 characterize habitats, movement patterns, life history,
10 and hypoxia frequency for whitefish and Arctic grayling
11 in northwest Alaska using otolith microchemistry. More
12 details about this project begins on page 213 of your
13 books, and we would ask if there are any comments from
14 the Council on this project.

15
16 (No response)

17
18 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Doesn't appear that
19 there are any questions at this time.

20
21 MR FOLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Next up
22 we have project 26-101 - Beaver Expansion Into the
23 Arctic: Current Impacts and Future Implications for
24 Fishes in Northwest Alaska. This project will study the
25 effects of expanding beaver populations on subsistence
26 fisheries in northern Alaska region, and more details
27 is available beginning on page 215 of your book. Do we
28 have any comments or concerns from the Council on this
29 project?

30
31 (No response)

32
33 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: None at this time.

34
35 MS. MONIGOLD: Mr. Chair.

36
37 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Karmen?

38
39 MS. MONIGOLD: Yes, I just wanted to say
40 that it's good to see this one in here, because with
41 more beaver dams, you know, it's -- I mean, you know,
42 we have a bunch of creeks that we drink out of, and with
43 them moving into our water sources, the chances of beaver
44 fever is like, you don't want to take that chance so,
45 it's good to see this in here and how it affects the
46 area so, thank you.

47
48 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Clyde.

49
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000100

1 MR. RAMOTH: Clyde Ramoth, for the
2 record. Selawik. Yeah, the beaver expansion in our area
3 is -- especially with the different river channels we
4 have -- the refuge have 10,000 lakes and ponds, the
5 beaver population really going up. I serve as a School
6 Council President and an advisory school. Our shop
7 teacher is going to -- he has been teaching their kids
8 about trapping but, how could we educate our people in
9 the region to get into more beaver trapping? Because it
10 really does affect our water quality. Thank you. And the
11 fish.

12
13 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Mike, I'm being told
14 you're trying to say something, but we can't hear you
15 on our end.

16
17 MS. PILCHER: This is Nissa, Michael. We
18 are trying.

19
20 MR. KRAMER: Oh.

21
22 MS. PILCHER: Never mind, we can hear
23 you.

24
25 MR. KRAMER: Okay. Sorry about that, I
26 was having an issue with either the iPhone mute or the
27 regular keypad mute. But, on the first portion of it,
28 was there any studies regarding Arctic char in the
29 Kivalina River, Noatak, Kobuk, Buckland River? I mean,
30 the reason why is because at our last Kotzebue Sound AC
31 meeting someone had mentioned that they flew over the
32 Walik and the Kivalina River, and they didn't see any
33 char in the river. If they did, they said it wasn't very
34 many. You know, I'm kind of wondering if this has to do
35 with either, you know, the waste pile that's up on the
36 hillside in Red Dog, you know, because it's off gassing
37 SO₂ and who knows what's going down that hillside when
38 it's raining and other animals are subjected to these
39 contaminants. You know, that's my concern. I'd like to
40 see them go through, do a full study, not be on Teck
41 payroll, not be on NANA's payroll, and not to be that
42 doctor's payroll. Someone else's payroll. College,
43 please. That's the University of Alaska Fairbanks, or
44 Anchorage. Let's get local people in there and study
45 these, you know, the effects of the Red Dog mine that
46 it has to our, you know, our people. But I really hope
47 that, you know, we can go ahead and try and get some
48 studies done on char.

49
50

1 I know that our Kotzebue ACR -- or AC
2 meeting, we really touched up on sheefish, since they
3 have a real, very sensitive tolerance for being caught
4 and released and, you know, it takes roughly 8 to 11
5 years for them to spawn for the very first time. We need
6 to start looking at possibly protecting sheefish. We've
7 already eliminated the commercial fishing for sheefish.
8 And we were looking at continuing to study because they
9 are such a fragile resource, very fragile resource. And
10 they're, you know, they're subject to, you know, full,
11 you know, I mean, a whole year without anything spawning,
12 but, you know, they're even talking about, well, we're
13 going to have to start allowing people not to harvest
14 them for dog food and, and then have to go elsewhere to
15 get dog food. There's no salmon, I don't know what
16 they're going to do, but, you know, sheefish are such a
17 fragile resource, we need to start protecting them as
18 soon as we possibly can. Limit and monitor, you know,
19 yearly. Thank you.

20
21 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you for that,
22 Mike. Is there any other questions or discussion for the
23 beaver expansion into the Arctic project?

24
25 MR. KRAMER: Yes, it's Mike again.

26
27 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Go ahead, Mike.

28
29 MR. KRAMER: Yeah, hi, Helen! How's it
30 going? Hello, Helen. Helen Cold, but, yeah. The beaver,
31 you know, like Clyde said is -- it's starting to get
32 pretty bad. You know, my brother usually traps about 30,
33 40, 50, 60 beavers back here behind Kotzebue. He said
34 this year, there's such unusually real thick ice. And
35 he, I mean, he's using an 18-inch bar not even reaching
36 water yet. And this is why the lodges. Yeah, it'd be
37 interesting to see how things go. I know that Helen Cold
38 had some people up on the Noatak, and locals were taking
39 them out and about, looking at beaver dams and beaver
40 lodges and, you know, in the Noatak Delta upper --
41 between the village and the (In Native) area, you know
42 trying to find a lot of them. They look -- they locate
43 a lot of them through satellites, satellite data. But
44 I'd like to see this continue because we need to start,
45 you know, conserving our trout, whether it's in the
46 Noatak, you know, people are going to start harvesting
47 beavers. Clyde, if you guys want to get somebody who
48 sure knows how to trap beaver and otters, my brother
49 Lance. He likes to trap beavers and otters and he loves
50 to teach. So, there you go. Thank you.

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CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Mike. And I was told Kevin Clark has his hand up in the chat.

MR. CLARK: Yeah, hello. I just would like to qualify, just for the record, this is Kevin Clark with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, the Comm Fish Commercial Manager. There was a proposal before the Board during this last cycle to basically eliminate the commercial fishery for sheefish in the Kotzebue area, that did not pass. So, there is still a commercial fishery, I just want to qualify that.

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you for that, Kevin Clark. Any other comments, questions from the Council on the Beaver Project before we move on to the Selawik Northern Pike Population Project?

MR. FOLEY: Mr. Chair, this is Kevin Foley with OSM.

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: One second, Kevin. Clyde, did you have something for the beaver?

MR. RAMOTH: Yeah, my younger brother, Ralph Jr., sits on a beaver committee. I know they had a meeting at Fairbanks and their next one is, I believe, at Canada at some point, but I haven't seen any kind of -- those reports go to federal or state or both with their plans or inputs or recommendations for regulation changes?

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: I know in the past we have seen and we've had presentations on beaver. I don't know if it's that specific committee, but we have. That -- this Council has seen things regarding beaver across the Arctic. Nissa, did you have something?

MS. PILCHER: I sure did, this is Nissa Pilcher, so, when we do get to reports Lori is in the room. She's going to give an update on the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society Beaver Workshop Opportunity briefing. So, we will be discussing it, may not be exactly what you're after, but we will be discussing beaver here shortly.

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Clyde. Kevin, what was it you had?

1 MR. FOLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair, I just
2 wanted to address a few points that Council member Kramer
3 had brought up in particular with char and his questions
4 or concerns about investigations or studies looking at
5 char. And if that is a concern from Council Member
6 Kramer, then I would encourage him and perhaps others
7 to revisit this topic in the future when we develop our
8 priority information needs for the next FRMP cycle. And
9 lastly, on Council Member Kramer's comments, he had
10 brought up sheefish and that's -- there is a proposal
11 that has been submitted that will speak to very shortly.
12 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

13
14 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you.....

15
16 (Simultaneous speech)

17
18 MR. KRAMER: Mr. Chairman, It's Michael,
19 again.

20
21 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Go ahead, Mike.

22
23 MR. KRAMER: Yeah, I'd like to find out
24 who made that decision on not closing commercial
25 sheefishing.

26
27 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Kevin Clark. Kevin.
28 Clark, please.

29
30 MR. CLARK: Yeah, yeah. This is -- yeah,
31 this is Kevin Clark with the Alaska Department of Fish
32 and Game, for the record. Yeah, that was a Board
33 decision. There was a proposal before the Board, to the
34 Alaska Board of Fisheries. There was a proposal before
35 the Board to stop -- to basically eliminate the
36 commercial fishery and that was not ratified. So, the
37 commercial fishery that is on the books now remains on
38 the books. Yeah, but that was a Board of Fish decision.

39
40 MR. KRAMER: Okay. That way we know who
41 to go after for, you know, certain issues, if we lose
42 our sheefish. Yeah, we know who to knock on somebody's
43 door and say, hey, we need to get this fixed because
44 sheefish are very, very fragile resource, very fragile.
45 And if you don't take it serious, those sheefish are
46 gone, we're looking at you. That clear?

47
48 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Duly noted, thank
49 you, Mike. With that, Kevin Foley, if you'd like to
50 continue to 26-102.

1
2 MR. FOLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair, members
3 of the Council, project 26-102 is Selawik Northern Pike
4 Population Dynamics, Movement and Habitat Use. And this
5 project will provide baseline information about northern
6 pike in Selawik National Wildlife Refuge using radio
7 telemetry. More detail about this project can be found
8 on page 217 of your Council books. And are there any
9 comments or concerns, discussion on this project from
10 the Council?

11
12 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Any questions from
13 the Council? Discussion?

14
15 (No response)

16
17 Hearing none. Please move on.

18
19 MR. FOLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Next
20 we have project 26-103 - Kobuk River Sheefish Spawning
21 Abundance. This project aims to enumerate sheefish
22 migrating to their spawning grounds in the Kobuk River
23 using sonar techniques. Is there any comments or
24 concerns, we have questions from the Council on this
25 project?

26
27 MS. MONIGOLD: Through the Chair, this
28 is Karmen.

29
30 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Yes, please, Karmen,
31 you have the floor.

32
33 MS. MONIGOLD: Hi, yes, I just wanted to
34 say that the two sheefish -- I'm going to just combine
35 them at this moment. You know, for the amount that's
36 going through, if they do get approved is really great
37 to see because we need more studies done on the sheefish
38 so that we know what population we have. Because, you
39 know, we just heard that the Board of Game didn't stop
40 the commercial fishing, and that's probably because
41 there's not enough studies being done on the fish to
42 know what our baseline is, whether they're going up the
43 numbers or going down in numbers. And with every -- all
44 the other land mammals not doing well, a lot of people
45 are going to rely more heavily on our water. And, you
46 know, the birds, the fish, the plants, those type of
47 things. So, you know, if I had to prioritize, my top
48 three would be the sheefish study and the pike study and
49 pollock because that one, you know, for the Selawik
50 people is very important. So, thank you.

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CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you for that, Karmen. Any other questions or discussion on the sheefish project?

(No response)

Hearing none.

MR. FOLEY: Mr. Chair, this is Kevin, OSM.

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Yes, please go ahead.

MR. FOLEY: Yes, sir. I wanted to speak to Council member, and forgive me, Karmen Monigold. Thank you. First off, thank you for stressing the importance of the sheefish projects. We'll certainly make note of those going forward in writing up these recommendations. But I did want to mention that unfortunately, we cannot prioritize projects in order of importance to the Council, but what we can have is the -- how important it is to the Council and your support for a given project. And what I'm -- and I've clearly been able to capture that with the sheefish projects. And I just want to clarify, please, I heard you mentioned two sheefish projects that we need more sheefish projects, but I think I heard you say, mentioned the pike project. Am I correct or was it another one? Please and thank you.

MS. MONIGOLD: Through the Chair, this is Karmen. Yes, I did mention the project that was also important. Thank you.

MR. FOLEY: Through the Chair, thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Kevin. Thank you, Karmen, for those comments. I'm not seeing any other questions or discussions. We can move to the next project.

MR. FOLEY: Thank you. Mr. Chair next project is 26-150 - The Harvest and Use of Sheefish and other Non-salmon Fishes in Hotham Inlet, Alaska. This project will update, harvest estimates and document local and traditional ecological knowledge of sheefish and other non-salmon fishes in Hotham Inlet for Kotzebue and Noorvik. More details about this project begins on

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1 page 222 of your booklet. Are there any comments or
2 concerns from the Council on this project?

3

4 (No response)

5

6 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Not seeing any in the
7 room, Mike or Karmen, any questions or discussion?

8

9 MS. MONIGOLD: This is Karmen through the
10 Chair.

11

12 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Yes, please, you have
13 the floor.

14

15 MS. MONIGOLD: Hotham Inlet is Kobuk
16 Lake, correct?

17

18 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Yes, that is correct.

19

20 MS. MONIGOLD: Yes. I just want to make
21 sure that was portrayed over the radio. Thank you.

22

23 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you for that,
24 Karmen. Any other -- Clyde.

25

26 MR. RAMOTH: Whatever I can think, Mr.
27 Chair, Clyde Ramoth, Selawik. When we talk about the
28 harvesting of sheefish in Hotham Inlet or anywhere else,
29 and, you know, it's springtime when a lot of people go
30 out and fish and enjoy their numbers, a lot of times we
31 don't get accurate numbers because the local guy or gal
32 will be -- not correctly stating their -- they got 100
33 and brought 50 home. They won't be honest. And I'm just
34 trying to figure out -- I didn't read the, this entirely,
35 but I'm just hoping that the listeners out there give
36 you accurate numbers whenever there's is harvest
37 surveys, because it could impact our future with the
38 sheefish studies and regulations. Thank you.

39

40 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you for that,
41 Clyde. Any other questions, comments from members of the
42 Council?

43

44 (No response)

45

46 Hearing none. Kevin, you can move
47 forward with the next project.

48

49 MR. FOLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Next
50 for consideration is project 26-151 - Kawerak Tribal

1 Fisheries Stewardship Program. What -- forgive me, I'm
2 Awatipta Ecosystem Monitoring Project. I'm pretty sure
3 I butchered that one. This project will use a co-
4 production of knowledge framework to implement an
5 indigenous sentinel monitoring program for salmon and
6 their habitat in the Seward Peninsula region. More
7 detail about this project begins on page 225 of your
8 books. Are there any comments or concerns from the
9 Council on this project?

10
11 (No response)

12
13 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: None in the room.
14 Anything, Mike or Karmen?

15
16 (No response)

17
18 Doesn't appear to be anything. Do you
19 have anything else to report on at this time, Kevin?

20
21 MR. FOLEY: Mr. Chair, thank you for the
22 opportunity, I do. I'd like to present to the Council
23 some information on the Partners for Fisheries
24 Monitoring Program. And this Partners Program, well, the
25 monitoring program is collectively known as our Partners
26 Program. And so, OSM posted a Notice of Funding
27 Opportunity for our Partners for Fisheries Monitoring
28 Program last spring. And the program is a competitive
29 grant for Alaska Native and rural non-profit
30 organizations. The intent of the program is to
31 strengthen Alaska Native and rural involvement in
32 federal subsistence management by providing salary funds
33 to organizations so they can hire a professional
34 biologist, a social scientist, or an educator. The grant
35 also provides funds for sciences and culture camps and
36 paid student internships. And there was a total of eight
37 applicants for new funding beginning in 2026, and this
38 funding lasts for up to four years in total.

39
40 The Partner Program Review Panel, made
41 up of subject matter experts across various Department
42 of Interior agencies, have reviewed the proposals and
43 the Office of Subsistence Management Regional Director
44 Crystal Leonetti, has approved funding for three new
45 partners. The new partners are the Bristol Bay Native
46 Association, the Native Village of Eyak and Ahtna
47 Intertribal Resource Commission. The next Notice of
48 Funding Opportunity will be sometime in the spring of
49 2027, for funding to begin in 2028. If you would like
50 to learn more about this program, you may contact Jarred

1 Stone or Liz Williams by way of email or phone, and
2 their contact information can be found on the Partners
3 web page at www.doi.gov/subsistence/partners or if
4 anyone at the meeting is interested, please talk with
5 any OSM staff member present and they will provide you
6 with the information about the program or its main points
7 of contact. Thank you, Mr. Chair, members of the Council,
8 this concludes my update on the Partners for Fisheries
9 Monitoring Program. Does the Council have any questions
10 regarding this program?

11
12 (No response)

13
14 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: I'm seeing none in
15 the room. Karmen or Mike, do you have any comments or
16 questions?

17
18 (No response)

19
20 I'm not seeing or hearing anything but
21 if I could ask staff to just make sure that we get that
22 email to all members of the Council so that even those
23 that are not present with us today are able to provide
24 input if they so like. Thank you, Kevin, for your
25 presentation, and we look forward to seeing more on these
26 projects in the future and hope they get funded.

27
28 MR. FOLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair, members
29 of the Council, I appreciate your time and I'm looking
30 forward to meeting you each come March.

31
32 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you. So, with
33 that, we'll move on to the next item on the agenda,
34 which is reports. I'm going to keep a pretty strict time
35 limit of 15 minutes per topic, as we do have to be out
36 of the room by a certain time tonight. We're going to
37 begin with tribal governments. Do we have any tribal
38 governments that would like to make a report at this
39 time?

40
41 MR. RAMOTH: Clyde, on behalf of the
42 Native Village of Selawik, I serve as a secretary for
43 the tribe. Food security is always our main, top of our
44 priorities with the number of caribou and moose down.
45 Of course, the fish is very important to us. That's what
46 Selawik means, the place of sheefish. Our -- we're very
47 grateful for the culture camp, I just wanted to mention
48 that to the Selawik Refuge staff, the funding sources
49 that comes out there, and getting the state RAC with
50 three members from each community that was discussed

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1 yesterday is probably three of our top topics when it
2 comes to subsistence for the Native Village of Selawik,
3 and that's my comment. Thank you.

4

5 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you for that,
6 Clyde. Any other tribal governments I would like to make
7 a report at this time?

8

9 (No response)

10

11 Hearing none. Do we have any Native.....

12

13 (Simultaneous speech)

14

15 MR. BALLOTT: Hello.

16

17 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Hello. Can you please
18 state your name?

19

20 MR. BALLOTT: My name is Percy Ballott
21 from Buckland.

22

23 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Yes, please, Percy.

24

25 MR. BALLOTT: It's Percy.

26

27 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Yes, please.....

28

29 (Simultaneous speech)

30

31 MR. BALLOTT: Good afternoon. Good to
32 hear you all on that Board. I just wanted to make a
33 little report to -- for Buckland. There's nobody else
34 is, (indiscernible) used to be on the group here, but I
35 heard you didn't get off -- on, back on. So, anyway we
36 had a (indiscernible) of bear problems this year. We had
37 to get 1 or 2, for some reason, there's been sightings
38 of more than one fifth of (indiscernible) the bird, so.
39 And this one bear had two sets of different
40 (indiscernible) bears with it. So, we got a lot of bears
41 over here, I hope you guys do a little more whatever to
42 get some (indiscernible) hunters up here. Our way, to
43 get some of those down the line. There's been some wolves
44 around in town again. For whatever reason, I have never
45 seen that (indiscernible) of animals come into town,
46 like usual, I keep hearing about a lot of wolves, but
47 I'm not -- I haven't been going out lately for a few
48 years, but I know go a long way to find wolves or wolf
49 pack. We were thinking about (indiscernible) if you guys
50 are not doing anything, who can do a bounty on wolves

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1 to get guys going out to go do a little more hunting and
2 stuff on wolf. Is that something that the tribe or the
3 state or whatever can do? To somebody (indiscernible)
4 shot down?

5
6 We know our caribou has come down very
7 low over the years. I have to keep them by the thousands
8 when I was hunting and start getting 500 or something
9 like that, a thousand. Now I hear about 20-30 in the
10 pack, you know, I mean, caribou in the bunch. And I know
11 the herd is gone way down, and we're trying to save by
12 just hunting only bulls. It's been really late for us
13 this year. Again, for whatever reason. And, you know,
14 the later gets into the bull (indiscernible), but we
15 gotta find the young ones and stuff. Right now, they're
16 getting a few a year. But the terrain out there is really
17 bad. Hardly been snowing or it's rough and people are
18 wearing out all their equipment out there. At least a
19 few are getting something. I'm hoping that -- I know
20 that it's two a day, right? For caribou, for a hunter.
21 And when we go out, these guys, they -- that the limit
22 they can get. And the country being real hard at it to
23 get animals. A lot of these folks who don't have enough
24 money to buy a lot of gas to go out every day, but you
25 go out one day you have an opportunity to get 4 or 5.
26 Is there a way, if you haven't changed that or an
27 addendum to that catch per day to include a
28 (indiscernible) quota on your report or something? Did
29 you get 5 in 1 day, do that good for a week or whatever,
30 but that's what I was wondering about. It's getting
31 harder to get the animals, and we got to make sure we
32 get the right ones and stuff.

33
34 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Percy.

35
36 MR. BALLOTT: And I, yeah, I absolutely
37 know that I do not want Federal Subsistence Board to go
38 under the state of Alaska, I want to make sure that I
39 (indiscernible) out. I think you guys do well enough for
40 us. Doesn't that -- we need our local hunters. You guys
41 as part of this group overseeing the research versus
42 anybody else.

43
44 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you for that,
45 Percy. I'm going to ask Mr. Alex Hansen to answer your
46 question about the wolf bounty and how many caribou you
47 can get per day.

48
49 MR. HANSEN: Thank you, to the Chair and
50 for the record, my name is Alex Hansen. Percy, to your

1 question about the wolf bounty, the state doesn't offer
2 a wolf bounty program. But there are other tribes and
3 entities, one that comes to mind is, I believe, the
4 Community of Nulato that was shared at the working group.
5 So there is a bounty that is basically, functionally,
6 it's a bounty, but basically it's an incentive program.
7 So, a Native corporation, for instance, could have funds
8 to incentivize the harvest of wolves. So maybe let's
9 just say the Community of Kotzebue, the Native Village
10 of Kotzebue has funds set aside, hunters could go out
11 and harvest wolves and the community or sorry, the Native
12 Village could reimburse individuals for that in some
13 fashion. I don't think, if you're going after federal
14 grants, that you're going to want to say that it's a
15 bounty program necessarily, but there are ways where you
16 could use them in handicrafts or whatever, right? So,
17 sounds like it has been done in the past and we could
18 probably dig into that if you wanted more info.

19
20 As far as the caribou harvest, there's
21 not a daily bag limit at this point in time, that went
22 away at the last Board of Game. So, currently the harvest
23 limit in Unit 23 is 15 caribou per day. Only one of
24 those caribou -- sorry, per year, but you could harvest
25 all 15 in one day, if you wanted. It used to be five per
26 day, but now it's 15 per year so, you could harvest all
27 those in one day or three days or three months if you
28 wanted. But only one can be a cow.

29
30 MR. BALLOTT: Thanks for clarifying that.
31 I guess I got the wrong information. Good to know.

32
33 CHAIRPERON BAKER: All right. Thank you,
34 Alex. And thank you, Percy, for joining us today. Are
35 there any other tribal governments that would like to
36 make a report?

37
38 (No response)

39
40 Hearing none. Will move to Native
41 organizations. Do we have any Native organizations on
42 the call that would like to make a report?

43
44 (No response)

45
46 Hearing none. Ms. Petrowski, If you'd
47 like to come up, you're next with the Native American
48 Fish and Wildlife Society. If you could put your name
49 on record, please. You have the floor.

50

1 MS. PETROWSKI: Thank you. My name is
2 Lori Petrowski and I work for the Native American Fish
3 and Wildlife Society. Thank you, Council members and
4 Chairman for having me. So, I'm going to go through the
5 first bit of this pretty quick, so that I can focus on
6 getting your feedback. Can you go to the next slide?
7 I'll go through these pretty quickly too. So, just as
8 an introduction to what NAFWS was or Native American
9 Fish and Wildlife Society is. It's a nonprofit
10 organization whose mission is to assist Native American
11 and Alaska Native tribes with the conservation,
12 protection, and enhancement of their fish and wildlife
13 resources. So, there are about 20 of us that work
14 throughout the country. There are five: four staff in
15 Alaska and one contractor, and we are located in, myself
16 in Fairbanks, and we have Shaktoolik, Anchorage, Palmer
17 and a contractor in Wrangell, in Southeast Alaska. Could
18 you go to the next slide? These are the regions that are
19 broken up. So, there's five of us working currently in
20 the Alaska region, and the rest of the 20-ish fifth
21 staff are in the rest of the Lower 48. If you go to the
22 next slide, please.

23
24 So just to give you an idea of what our
25 organization works on, these are the 2025 initiatives.
26 So, we have a grants team that works on tribal fish and
27 wildlife funding and helping tribes find funding and get
28 funding. Tribal conservation law enforcement, which is
29 more relevant for the Lower 48. Habitat connectivity,
30 climate resilience and adaptation, which is what I and
31 several others in Alaska are mostly focused on. We have
32 wildlife health and invasive species. So, in my role
33 with the organization I also work with the Alaska Tribal
34 Resilience Learning Network, which focuses on climate
35 adaptation, and we are based in the Alaska Climate
36 Adaptation Science Center at UAF. We have an invasive
37 species team that works on invasive species on tribal
38 lands. Biologist team, one of our biologists is in Palmer
39 and this last year, she held a avian influenza training
40 in Anchorage that was co-hosted by the Alaska Migratory
41 Bird Co-Management Council. And our grants team that
42 helps tribes find and acquire funding.

43
44 So, the point of NAFWS is to create a
45 national network of tribal fish and wildlife
46 professionals around the country. So, we have an annual
47 national conference, and we have a regional conference
48 every year in each of our regions. So, the Alaska
49 Regional Conference, which we had in October, we had
50 about 70 participants from 20 different tribes

1 throughout the state. We focused on youth and fisheries,
2 and it was hosted by the Organized Village of Grayling.
3 So, this is a list of trainings that we've done in the
4 last year. So, I want to point out the avian influenza
5 one that I mentioned. And this coming year we're going
6 to have an Alaska specific NEPA training. And these are
7 just some photos from electrofishing and the avian
8 influenza training. And we also have a lot of education
9 and outreach programs. And Council member Clyde, I heard
10 you talking a lot about the youth, so we have
11 scholarships and paid internships available. Next slide.
12 And in Alaska specifically, we have a weeklong summer
13 youth practicum, where it's a free weeklong camp for ten
14 high school students mostly coming from the villages.
15 And we focus on tribal fish and wildlife management. And
16 we work with tribes more around the Anchorage region to
17 take kids out and show them how to do salmon monitoring
18 programs with Chickaloon Village and other things like
19 that so, if -- I'll be asking for your contact
20 information so I can -- you can send it out to the folks
21 in your region.

22
23 Okay, so, the reason why I'm here is we
24 have funding currently to put on a beaver workshop, and
25 we are partnering with the Arctic Beaver Observation
26 Network. And based on their recommendations, they
27 recommended that we focus on this region and so that we
28 have possible -- these are the possible topics and some
29 of these I've heard already today. Councilwoman Karmen
30 talking about water quality. And Clyde, you mentioned
31 increasing beaver trapping in the region. And so those
32 are several things that we could focus on for this
33 workshop. And so, I'm here to ask for your feedback. Oh,
34 no worries. About what topics you think would be helpful
35 to focus on in a 2-to-3-day workshop in Kotzebue. And
36 there's a briefing on page 231 of the book. So, possible
37 topics and also if there's anybody in your villages or
38 region that you think I -- we should connect with people
39 who have special interest or knowledge in the topic,
40 that would be great to hear from.

41
42 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Clyde.

43
44 MR. RAMOTH: For the record, Clyde
45 Ramoth. Thank you for the introduction. And I was curious
46 about you guys' goal and your priorities. So, some of
47 these stuff, like water studies -- invasive species,
48 it's always a concern nowadays with the barges coming
49 in, we've got gravel, we got Conexes, you know, that
50 comes into every community. They could be carrying some

1 plants or bugs or anything of that nature. That's always
2 a concern. I think we got rats here in Kotzebue now,
3 besides the muskrats. But partnering with like, the Fish
4 and Wildlife Service or Park Service, is that something
5 you guys could do for like student that want to seek
6 like studying whitefish, sheefish? We have excellent
7 staff here that -- is that something you could introduce
8 to like, us? I'll give you my contact information, but
9 I think with more kids like, for Selawik, we're retaining
10 all our teachers again, second year in a row. So, a lot
11 of our kids want to do -- like Red Dog's not enough, I
12 mean, either you're away from home. So, if you get paid
13 to go boating and snowmachining and doing some studies
14 out in our country, I think you could attract some young
15 and old, older alike from our whole region. That's
16 something always concerned me is about our studies, the
17 water, the beaver, the invasive species, all of that
18 that we've been talking about. So, thank you.

19
20 MS. PETROWSKI: Yeah, thank you for your
21 comment.

22
23 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Any other questions
24 from members of the Council?

25
26 (No response)

27
28 Karmen or Mike, do you have any
29 questions, comments?

30
31 (No response)

32
33 At this time, it doesn't look like we
34 have anything else. So, thank you, Ms. Petrowski. I
35 apologize for not pronouncing your name correctly at the
36 beginning. But if we have any members of the Council not
37 present, we'll be sure to get them your contact
38 information to continue the conversation. Thank you. So,
39 with that, we'll move to our next topic. Will be the
40 Alaska Department of Fish and Game for their report.
41 Helen Cold, are you on the line?

42
43 MS. PILCHER: So this is Nissa Pilcher,
44 for the record, Helen did have to get off at about 2:30.
45 She did say that she will be giving her report to you
46 guys at your March meeting. One of the things she did
47 want to discuss with you -- and my computer is doing
48 lovely things today -- is, she did talk to you guys last
49 year -- cool, okay, don't mean to show that. Let's try
50 this. She did talk to you guys' last year about a

1 sheefish project that she was going to work on, that she
2 was going to request a letter of support from the Council
3 on sheefish and the non-salmon fish on Hotham Inlet. I
4 won't put any words in her mouth. This is the slide that
5 she gave me. She is seeking a letter of support from the
6 Council. So, she submitted a request for funding through
7 OSM to update harvest estimates of sheefish in Kotzebue
8 and Noorvik. The focus area would be Kotzebue and
9 Noorvik. Methods would be ethnographic interviews with
10 mapping component, harvest surveys and participant
11 observations. The project proposal submitted in spring
12 of 2025.

13
14 She's still awaiting decisions on the
15 award. So, she herself is seeking -- well, she through
16 Fish and Game is seeking a letter of support from this
17 Council. And then, she has received letters of support
18 from the Kotzebue IRA and Noorvik IRA. I'm not going to
19 go any further into it because I don't know much about
20 the project and that is, of course, Fish and Game, it's
21 up to you guys whether or not you choose to take it up,
22 based on that little bit of information or not. But I
23 did want to make you guys aware, since you guys did
24 mention sheefish a couple times and your concern. And
25 also, if you wanted Luke Henslee with Fishing and Game,
26 did want to mention a creel survey he was going to be
27 doing on sheefish ice fishing, if you wanted to let him
28 speak for one minute. Thank you.

29
30 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Luke Henslee, would
31 you like to add anything to that?

32
33 MR. HENSLEE: Yeah, thanks, for the
34 record, my name is Luke Henslee. I'm the Assistant Area
35 Management Biologist for Kotzebue based in Nome and has
36 been brought up a few times this meeting, there's been
37 a lot of discussion about sheefish. There were some
38 proposals submitted by the State Advisory Committee
39 regarding the sheefish commercial fishery, amongst some
40 other harvests tracking tools. And while the Board of
41 Fish did not pass any of the sheefish related proposals
42 that were submitted, it did start a lot of conversations
43 about the use and subsistence uses of sheefish in the
44 Kotzebue region. And so, I just wanted to mention that,
45 to that end, commercial fisheries and sport fisheries
46 will be -- staff will be in Kotzebue this March to sort
47 of start a feasibility study for something resembling a
48 creel survey in which Fish and Game staff would go out
49 on the ice during peak ice fishing season for sheefish
50 and contact some fishers and, if they're willing, let

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1 us sort of enumerate their catch count, how many fish
2 they're keeping, be able to potentially, sample some of
3 these fish, get some lengths. There's a few different
4 ways we can determine age from a sheefish. And so,
5 that'll be a good way for community members that are
6 concerned about subsistence sheefish populations to sort
7 of be able to partner with the departments. So, I just
8 wanted to make everyone on the Council and is listening
9 online aware that we will have some folks out there in
10 March. It's not set with the dates yet, we're going to
11 kind of see how fishing is going. And if anyone has any
12 further questions, they can contact me or Brendan
13 Scanlon. He's a Sport Fish Biologist who's -- I think
14 he's listening, but he's driving now. So, if anyone has
15 any further questions about that, I'd be happy to answer
16 but I just wanted to make folks aware about that.

17
18 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Questions or
19 comments from members of the Council?

20
21 (No response)

22
23 Hearing none. Thank you Luke for that.
24 We will move on. Patty Schwalenberg. Are you on the line
25 for the Alaska Migratory Bird Co-management Council?

26
27 (No response)

28
29 Hearing none. We will move into the
30 local side. U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Selawik National
31 Wildlife Refuge update.

32
33 MR. WIESE: Wil Wiese, Selawik National
34 Wildlife Refuge Manager. I've talked a lot this meeting,
35 so I'm going to keep this short, provide a quick oral
36 update. I guess, first of all, I just want to say thanks
37 to the members of the RAC for the work you put into
38 this. It's hard work, and I really appreciate it, we
39 need it as agencies. And also thanks to other agencies,
40 they put a lot of work into it, and OSM and their
41 analyses are really good. And it's been a pleasure being
42 here. All right, for my update, quickly, on some of our
43 permitting activities. I've talked about some of these
44 in the past, but just an update. Guided hunting on
45 Selawik Refuge. There isn't any, recently. We have one
46 guide use area. There is no guide assigned to that area.
47 Every year we open up the application period for guides
48 to apply. We haven't gotten any applications in the past
49 years, but we'll open it up again this year. Also, air
50 taxis and transporters for hunters. Annie Carlson

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1 yesterday did a presentation for the Park Service's side
2 on air taxis and transporters into the parks for Fish
3 and Wildlife Service on Selawik Refuge. We permitted
4 last year two transporters, Golden Eagle and Arctic
5 Backcountry, they're locals here and neither one of them
6 flew anybody into Selawik Refuge. So, a big zero this
7 past year.

8
9 Other permitting updates: the NANA
10 broadband fiber optic cable project that's been talked
11 about in the region, we're moving forward with the
12 permitting process on that, we signed a finding of no
13 significant impact after doing an environmental
14 assessment on the project. I would expect a final
15 decision on permit issuance to occur by mid-April this
16 year, by April 15th, if not sooner. As part of that --
17 I mentioned that one because that's a project where we
18 did a Section 810 -- ANILCA Section 810 analysis and
19 analyzed the subsistence impacts and found that there
20 wouldn't be a significant restriction to subsistence.
21 Another upcoming project that will end up doing an ANILCA
22 810 analysis on is for permitting the Iron Dog. The Iron
23 Dog, as far as I know, their route is the same as it's
24 going to be -- going to be the same this year, coming
25 up in February, as it has been. But they've requested a
26 different route, and the different route would go
27 basically from Huslia up to Shungnak and then on to
28 Kotzebue and then back south. We'll be evaluating that
29 change in route because it does cross Selawik Refuge
30 lands and doing an 810 analysis on that. And so, I would
31 imagine that the next meeting I might be asking you
32 specifically do you have concerns about subsistence
33 impacts to, of that, such as foreshadowing that for the
34 next meeting.

35
36 Okay, a couple updates on biological
37 program. I'm going to save most of these for the next
38 meeting but Clyde -- member Ramoth mentioned, you know,
39 we've been working with Selawik and Noorvik on a
40 whitefish survey. We're trying to get more information
41 on whitefish, we hope data collection to start really,
42 real soon on that, we're excited about that. Working
43 with both tribes. As always, sheefish, happy to hear a
44 lot about sheefish. You know, we are Selawik Refuge. One
45 of our core purposes is conservation of sheefish so,
46 really glad to have a lot of interest in it. Next
47 meeting, I believe, you know, we just wrapped up a big
48 study of sheefish and the effects of the thaw slump. I
49 say we, Fish and Wildlife Service broadly, led by Ray
50 hander out of Fairbanks and with Bill helping, we're

1 going to provide the final report for that real soon, I
2 hear it's almost completed. So hopefully by your March
3 meeting, you'll have a final report, we can provide a
4 formal update. The byline I'm getting is good news.
5 Doesn't look like the thaw slump had an effect on, a
6 noticeable effect on recruitment of sheefish. So, it
7 seems like they were able to spawn even though
8 there was, you know, this thaw slump in the Upper Selawik
9 River. But the full report is coming.

10
11 The other thing I'll just say with
12 sheefish, it's really good that we're having
13 conversations now and putting a lot of focus on it,
14 because I agree, as other resources have been depleted,
15 we're seeing less salmon. Caribou numbers are down,
16 there could be more focus on sheefish. But also, it is
17 the right time to do it because, right now, all our
18 indicators are indicating that there is a good number
19 of sheefish, and they appear to be doing well. We don't
20 have any indicators right now that show that they're not
21 doing well so, it's really good to be concerned and be
22 concerned about those things ahead of time. But I don't
23 want people to get the wrong impression and think that
24 we're noticing something wrong with the sheefish and
25 that's why we're talking about them.

26
27 I think that's about all the updates I'm
28 going to give for now. Again, really appreciate the time
29 of the RAC and you know, want to -- I guess my final
30 words will be on caribou, because I think that's what's
31 on most people's mind in this region, lately with the
32 Western Arctic Caribou Herd. And it's a really tough
33 issue, we're talking about caribou and the declines, and
34 there's only so much we can do. The decline isn't one
35 thing, one group's issue, or one caused by one thing.
36 And there's only so much we can do. And even if we do
37 everything we can, a lot of it will be out of our
38 control. And so, let's continue to have good discussions
39 on it, do everything we can right now. I think what that
40 means is everybody in this room and listening can take
41 only what they need. Try not to harvest cows. Let their
42 friends know this is the time to try and conserve caribou
43 so, 3 years, 5 years, 10 years, 50 years, there's caribou
44 to harvest. Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair and
45 members of the Council.

46
47 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Wil. Do
48 we have any questions or comments for Selawik National
49 Wildlife Refuge?

1 MR. RAMOTH: Keep up the good work.

2

3 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: I thought I heard
4 Mike. Go ahead, Mike.

5

6 MR. KRAMER: Yeah. You know, they said
7 that the reason why we started monitoring the sheefish
8 now is because prevent a crash later because people are
9 starting to depend on other resources now. Sheefish is
10 one of them. Once -- they're very fragile species and
11 our sheefish are gone, they're gone. Whether they come
12 back, we don't know. So, you guys are rolling a set of
13 dice (indiscernible) or, you know, the federal
14 fisheries, you're rolling a set of dice, taking a chance
15 with the resource. That's pretty much all I have to say
16 for now. Thank you.

17

18 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Mike. Any
19 other questions or comments at this time?

20

21 (No response)

22

23 Hearing none. Thank you, Wil. We will
24 move on to the National Park Service. And first on that
25 list is the Western Arctic Parklands update. Annie.

26

27 MS. CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair and
28 members of the Council. My name is Annie Carlson. I work
29 as the Resources Program Manager for the Western Arctic
30 National Parklands. I've got an update here, you can
31 find it in your booklet on page 233. And for the sake
32 of time, I'm not going to read all the information, you
33 can peruse it on your own. One thing to note is that we
34 wrote this in October for the RAC meeting before the
35 shutdown. So, some of this information is a little bit
36 outdated, including some of our staffing information on
37 the first page. Siikauraq Whiting, who is from Kotzebue,
38 many of you know Siikauraq. She did resign as our
39 Superintendent in August, and we went for a few months
40 with people in different acting roles prior to Jeanette
41 Koelsch, who was in the room previously, she had to fly
42 back to Nome. She's currently our Acting Superintendent.
43 So, we really appreciate her sort of stepping up -- she
44 -- her full-time job as Superintendent for Bering Land
45 Bridge National Preserve. So, she's helping out with our
46 headquarters here in Kotzebue. But a huge thank you to
47 Siikauraq for providing leadership to our staff during a
48 pretty stressful and chaotic year. So, we really
49 appreciate her and wish her all the best and see her around
50 town and thank her for the gingerbread making event.....

1

2 MS. SCHAEFFER: Excuse me, Ma'am, could
3 you clear your voice so I can hear you? Your voice is -
4 - sounds like you need to clear your voice.

5

6 MS. CARLSON: Apologies. I did lose my
7 voice this week, so it doesn't sound great, I admit it.

8

9 MS. SCHAEFFER: Thank you.

10

11 MS. CARLSON: I'll do my best, thanks. A
12 few other folks I want to give a shout out to, we had a
13 few of our permanent staff members here in Kotzebue take
14 other jobs and move on this year, including Ken Andrews,
15 Dana Sharp, and Brad Walton. And significantly for this
16 group, because there's a lot of conversation about
17 enforcement of regulations, Joe Dallemolle was our Law
18 Enforcement Ranger here, living in Kotzebue, and he and
19 his family moved to Anchorage this year. He's now working
20 for Lake Clark National Park so, at this time, we don't
21 have a commissioned Law Enforcement Ranger based in
22 Kotzebue. Our Chief Ranger Scott, is still working with
23 us, he's in Fairbanks. So, we are hoping this next year
24 to hire a new Law Enforcement Ranger to help with
25 enforcement on a massive scale, on a large landscape.

26

27 On our second page, you'll find some of
28 our summer 2025 projects. I'm not going to read them all
29 to you, but a few that might be of interest: The Upper
30 Kobuk Place Names Collaboration included two boat trips
31 with elders from Shungnak and Kobuk, and collaborators
32 included NANA, Akhiok Trust, Kobuk Valley National Park
33 staff and Gates of the Arctic staff documenting Inupiaq
34 place names in the Upper Kobuk. We supported the Native
35 Village of Kotzebue Camp Sisualik with subsistence based
36 activities and an oral history and film of the Sisualik
37 area, and seven interviews were conducted. Shout out to
38 RAC member Mike Kramer for participating in a preview
39 of the film may be showed this afternoon, but we're also
40 short on time so, to be determined. But we're really
41 excited about the upcoming film.

42

43 We did issue three permits this year for
44 federal muskox hunts, two in Cape Krusenstern, and one
45 for the area north and west of the Kobuk Valley River
46 drainage. We typically will have that lottery open for
47 about a month prior to issuing the permit in mid-July
48 for next year's hunt, so stay tuned. We post it on the
49 radio, on Facebook, on flyers to let people know when
50 the muskox lottery for permits is open. And, also

1 exciting, we have -- we're in the process of completing
2 the Kiana traditional use study, which will be a 420-
3 page ethnographic overview of ties between Kiana and
4 other Kobuk communities to Kobuk Valley National Park.
5 So, we're working with the publisher right now to get
6 that across the finish line.

7
8 On page three, several people probably
9 noticed there were major fires in Kobuk Valley this last
10 summer. And the amount of fire was so large that the
11 sort of the term for it is that they were complex and
12 they brought in a type-two fire crew from Wyoming, and
13 they based their operations out of the Ambler school.
14 So, thank you to several people who helped support the
15 fire crews. Thankfully no allotments or camps were
16 harmed. We did put in point protection measures for the
17 historic Giddings cabin, and shout out to RAC member
18 Tristen Pattee for his efforts in transporting crews up
19 and down the Kobuk River with his boat. For everyone's
20 awareness, we are trying to build replacement housing
21 on our Fifth and Mission property in Kotzebue so, sort
22 of if people know the old Dairy Queen on that corner,
23 we're still working on compliance and trying to get some
24 of our designs across the finish line. Possible start
25 of construction in 2026, but it's looking like it may
26 be 2027 instead. We're also working on our ranger
27 stations and cabins out at the Anigaaq ranger station
28 in Cape Krusenstern. So, we've been painting, building
29 bunks, a new outhouse. You might notice changes like
30 that. And we are working on a new, what we call a unit
31 grid, which is like the park service's brochure for Kobuk
32 Valley National Park. So, you might see some more about
33 that in the coming meetings.

34
35 And final thing to report on page four,
36 we have two awards that I want to recognize. The National
37 Park Service named our own Ed Viglione, who grew up in
38 Sisualik and Kotzebue. He is the 2025 Frontline Hero of
39 the Year, which is a National Park Service award that
40 recognizes his exceptional dedication to public service,
41 for more than 20 years working with the Park Service
42 here in Kotzebue. So, a huge thank you and
43 congratulations to Ed. You can read a little bit more
44 about his nomination on this page. And we also want to
45 recognize that Cyrus Harris of Kotzebue was awarded the
46 National Park Service's Eileen Devinney Award which is
47 to recognize people who are collaborating with and
48 cooperating to help uphold traditional values. His work
49 with (In Native), with the Hunter Support Program and
50 many more. You know, his work on the SRC, many years of

1 collaboration with the Park Service. So, thank you,
2 Cyrus, for your work. And we say we'll see you at camp.
3 That's what I've got for our parks update. Are there any
4 questions?

5

6

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Clyde.

7

8

9 MR. RAMOTH: Thank you for your report.
10 I got a curiosity, question. I'm (In Native) from my
11 dad's side meeting. We came from a settlement between
12 Kiana and Ambler. And Dr. Wanni and Doug Anderson out
13 of Brown University did studies about -- and I did
14 represent our family in meetings, I mean, at Selawik and
15 just informational. I haven't -- I need that booklet
16 again but, is that something you could collaborate more
17 with, like the traditional Council of Kiana? I know
18 that's -- that archaeological study got closed because
19 part of the agreement was if they ran into human remains,
20 that it would be stopped. But with the concern of the
21 erosion going on. And it's a rich history because the
22 biggest (In Native) the main log that's in the middle
23 of the meeting place, you couldn't get even three biggest
24 men in the world to probably go around that whole log.
25 Maybe 2 or 3. But there's big slabs of rocks. It's quite
26 interesting. And I was just curious, is it through the
27 Park Service or how does that work to get that going
28 again or protect it maybe in some sort of -- because
29 that's rich history?

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MS. CARLSON: Sure. Thank you for your
question. Are you referring to the, what we call the
Swift Water Place site in Kobuk Valley National Park,
the archaeological site? If, it's that's what I think
you may be referring to. Certainly, Doug Anderson and
Wanni Anderson were instrumental in documenting the
site. There were actually human remains excavated with
the permission and the collaboration of the Council in
Kiana. And we're actually working on a NAGPRA process
at this time to help repatriate remains to Kiana, we're
hoping to have a repatriation ceremony and celebration
this summer. So, we're in pretty close contact and Emily
Creek is our Subsistence Coordinator and our Cultural
Anthropologist. She works very closely both on the
NAGPRA process and also on the Kiana traditional use
study that's helping to capture that connection between
current people living in Kiana and traditional sites in
Kobuk Valley National Park. Does that answer your
question?

1 MR. RAMOTH: Not quite. So, my -- part
2 of the question is that going to continue to be excavated
3 and preserve everything they find so far?

4
5 MS. CARLSON: The excavations are no
6 longer occurring. What is currently proposed to happen
7 is to take remains that were excavated and return them
8 to Kiana to be re -- I'm forgetting the proper word for
9 it. Reinterred, excuse me, at the site itself, but we're
10 no longer excavating archaeological artifacts out of
11 that site.

12
13 MR. RAMOTH: Is that for funding? Is it
14 funding? Or is it the traditional Council said that was
15 enough, because there's trade beads, there's all kind
16 of old tools, ivory, all kinds of stuff. So, I was just
17 curious whether -- was it...?

18
19 MS. CARLSON: My understanding the
20 excavations themselves.....

21
22 (Simultaneous speech)

23
24 (Interruption)

25
26 MS. SCHAEFFER: Can we comment, Mr.
27 Baker? Can we comment on someone to make him remind --
28 we live in the same area our grandparents and I just
29 needed to remind him for the comment that he's making,
30 Mr. Baker.

31
32 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: I understand that,
33 but you need to wait to be called on because someone
34 else was speaking.

35
36 MS. SCHAEFFER: Okay, okay, good. That's
37 good. Now you can continue, Mr. Baker.

38
39 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Annie Carlson,
40 please.

41
42 MS. CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. To
43 answer your question about whether the excavation is
44 continuing, my understanding is that Doug Anderson
45 completed that work around 2014. And I can't speak to
46 exactly why it finished, but I'm assuming it's both of
47 the things that you mentioned that, in collaboration
48 with Kiana, the decision was made that enough had been
49 excavated and may have been a funding issue, but that I
50 can't actually speak to, I don't know if it was funding.

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MR. RAMOTH: Okay, so, thank you very much. And we'll probably be expecting a final report then sent to all our tribes or whomever did the agreement part?

MS. CARLSON: Absolutely.

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you for that, Clyde. Were there any other questions or comments for the Western Parkland update from the Council?

MS. MONIGOLD: Through the Chair, this is Karmen.

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Yes, please, Karmen, you have the floor.

MS. MONIGOLD: Hi, yes, I just wanted to say congratulations to Ed and to Cyrus on their awards. And also, I wanted to say thank you so much to the firefighters. You know, we had a fire, I think it was 2 or 3 miles behind (In Native) and within calling in, we had a plane show up within like 45 minutes, I mean, it was mind blowing. I guess there was other fires in the area for them to come check it out real quick, because it was started by a lightning storm the day before, and we didn't notice it until the next day, until it was going up a mountain. So, I just want to say thank you so much for the help because we, you know, we have 12 cabins. And, I mean, it was, we were all at camp with no boat. It was crazy. So, I just want to say thank you very much and we appreciate all the help that we got. Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you for that, Karmen. Any other questions, discussion from the Council.

(No response)

Hearing none. Annie, will you also be doing the SRC or is that Emily's territory?

MS. CARLSON: Let's do a quick check to see if Emily has called in. Emily if you are.....

(Simultaneous speech)

MS. CREEK: I'm here.

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MS. CARLSON: Great. Go ahead.

MS. CREEK: Chair, Mr. Chair, am I able to start?

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Yes, please, go ahead.

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MS. CREEK: Okay, great. So, thank you. My name is Emily Creek. I am the Subsistence Coordinator at Western Arctic, and I facilitate the Cape Krusenstern and Kobuk Valley Subsistence Resource Commissions, or SRCs. So, I don't have a huge update, so I'm going to kind of do it all together. I know there are separate on the agenda. But the Subsistence Resource Commissions were also impacted by the government shutdown for their fall meeting, and therefore they were unable to meet. You do have the rosters in your books on page 239 and 240. And there is one change, very exciting. We got Timothy Smith of Kotzebue, recently appointed by one of the governor of Alaska seats, and we're really happy to have him on the Cape Krusenstern Commission. The next meetings will be in March. The Cape Krusenstern SRC will meet March 10th and 11th and the Kobuk Valley SRC will meet March 12th and 13th. Those meetings will both be in Kotzebue, and I look forward to providing the RAC with a more robust update at your March meeting. I do have a few other little announcements. Both SRCs will meet over the phone to discuss and make comments on the Federal Subsistence Program Programmatic Review. Kobuk Valley will meet at 1:30 pm on January 29th, and Cape Krusenstern will meet at 1:30 pm on January 30th. I also wanted to thank the RAC for all your work in appointing members to the SRC, SRCs, plural. Currently all of our RAC seats are full, so we're really grateful for your work in getting folks on our commissions. We did just publish the call from the Secretary of the Interior for a few vacancies so, if folks are interested, they can call or text me at (907) 412-0229 or stop in the Heritage Center in Kotzebue. There are some folks who submitted applications to me already, and I have those and will be sending them in. Applications are due on March 9th. So that's all I have for the SRCs.

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I did want to quickly address member Ramoth, his question about continued work at (In Native). And we are meeting with the Traditional Council, actually really soon this month, and erosion has been brought up and our archaeologist is, has been

1 doing and will continue to do what we call condition
2 assessments to monitor erosion on the site. In addition,
3 all of the materials from that site are currently at
4 Brown University, at their brand-new museum actually,
5 that is opening. And so, they're being well taken care
6 of, they've actually all been re-catalogued in the past
7 couple of years. And I'm happy to provide you with more
8 information on that. And then finally, next on the agenda
9 was a film preview for Recollections of Sisualik, which
10 is an oral history and film project. And I think, if
11 it's okay with the Chair and the members of the Council,
12 we should do that at our March -- at your March meeting,
13 just in favor of time today. That's all I have.

14

15 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Emily. Do
16 we have any questions or comments from members of the
17 RAC? Verne, then Clyde.

18

19 MR. CLEVELAND: Yes. Do you have Upper
20 Kobuk and Lower Kobuk SRCs?

21

22 MS. CREEK: Through the Chair, thank you,
23 Member Cleveland. For the Kobuk Valley SRC we have two
24 members from Shungnak, two members from Noorvik and a
25 member from Kiana at this time.

26

27 MR. CLEVELAND: No, I'm talking about
28 an Upper Kobuk SRC. There's three from Ambler, three
29 from Kobuk, three from Shungnak, and a Lower Kobuk
30 Advisory Committee from -- three from Kiana, three
31 from Noorvik, three from Selawik. Are these going to
32 be brought back up?

33

34 MS. CREEK: Thank you for your question,
35 I apologize. The Subsistence Resource Commissions are
36 subsistence advisory groups for the National Park
37 Service. I believe you're referring to the Advisory
38 Councils on the state side.

39

40 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Yeah, those are on
41 the state side and that's what we talked about yesterday
42 so, that individual, Sam Kirby, someone is going to be
43 reaching out to Sam Kirby regarding that from yesterday.

44

45 MR. CLEVELAND: (In Native).

46

47 MS. CREEK: Thank you.

48

49 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Clyde.

50

1 MR. RAMOTH: Clyde Ramoth, for the
2 record, Selawik. Through the Chair. Somebody could
3 answer my question, you say you got the two vacancies
4 filled? Are these filled for the Kobuk Valley
5 Subsistence Resource Commission that's appointed by the
6 governor of Alaska? Are those two filled? And where --
7 what's the qualification for the communities? I see
8 Shungnak, Ambler, Noorvik, Kiana, Shungnak, Noorvik,
9 Deering. Is that state or federal lands or...? I'm just
10 a little confused. Maybe, long day.

11
12 MS. CREEK: Yeah, thank you. So those two
13 seats are currently vacant, and if folks are interested,
14 I can help them with that application. The membership
15 requirement for the Subsistence Resource Commissions is
16 anyone in the NANA region. Typically, they are kind of,
17 you know, subregion folks from the related areas apply.
18 But as you noted, we do have a member from Deering,
19 which is great to get that perspective. But anyone who
20 is a resident of NANA region can apply to be on the
21 commissions.

22
23 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you for that,
24 Emily and Clyde. Any other questions or comments from
25 members of the Council? Mike, if you are trying to speak,
26 we can't hear you.

27
28 (No response)

29
30 So, Mike Kramer, if you are able, we can
31 see that you're trying to speak, it seems like you're
32 muted still.

33
34 (No response)

35
36 Looks like Mike may have been
37 disconnected from the call so, we're going to go ahead
38 and move on. If it's all right with the rest of the
39 Council, we'll take Emily's suggestion of waiting for
40 the March meeting for watching the recollections of
41 Sisualik video. This morning, we already had Kyle Joly's
42 update, and then we had Marcy Okada, who was supposed
43 to be after that. Annie.

44
45 MS. CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair, this
46 is Annie Carlson with the National Park Service. Marcy
47 Okada with Gates of the Arctic National Park had to
48 leave the call. She's a Subsistence Coordinator there,
49 and I don't think that her update is in the booklet, but
50 there are some pages on the table.

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MS. PILCHER: This is Nissa, correct. And members did have them in the very back of their blue folders they were handed.

MS. CARLSON: Similar to Emily's update for the Western Arctic SRCs, due to the government shutdown, the SRC meeting for Gates of the Arctic that was scheduled, was cancelled and is rescheduled for April 8th and 9th, 2026. So, we don't have much to report out from a meeting, but you can see on the first page some background and membership information on the SRC for Gates of the Arctic. The second page has an overview of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd, which we've talked about quite a bit. And then the third page of interest, has a brief summary of the summer 2025 Dall sheep survey that was conducted in July 2025. That population estimates are still being generated, but certainly we do have information if people want to know more about sheep populations in the region. Zack Delisle, with Arctic Inventory and Monitoring Network, is the biologist who is sort of the keeper of that data, and he provides us with summaries that we can provide to you as well. And finally, there's a new publication of Brown Bear Book about brown bears in Alaska's national parks, and Kyle Joly, who is on the call earlier, is the point of contact, he's one of the co-authors of this book. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Annie. Not much to ask, but is there -- are there any questions or discussion regarding the Gates of the Arctic side of things? If not, we'll point people in the right direction to connect with folks at Gates of the Arctic, if they do have questions. So, thank you, Annie, for all of the Park Service updates. And Emily with that, we'll move to our next item, which is the University of Alaska Fairbanks Master's Research Study. Clyde.

MR. RAMOTH: Remember when we set the agenda, we added 6b. What is it? One. Two. Three. Four. Five. What was that?

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: That was Marcy Okada. The Gates of the Arctic.

MR. RAMOTH: Oh, okay.

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: So, that one's covered. So, a handout was just presented to the members

1 of the Council in the room. If you would like to put
2 yourselves on record, the floor is yours.

3
4 MR. BRINKMAN: My name is Todd Brinkman.
5 I'm faculty at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

6
7 MS. LUBY: And my name is Caitlin Luby,
8 and I'm a master's student at UAF.

9
10 MR. BRINKMAN: And thanks, everybody for
11 the opportunity to be here again. We presented at last
12 March's meeting on our research, and we're really
13 grateful for the letter of support that you provided us
14 at that time. We're here today just to provide an update
15 on our progress and next steps. To remind everybody, the
16 goal of our research was to better document and
17 understand how the availability of caribou is changing
18 for communities in the region, and how it's been changing
19 over the last three decades. So, one of the main ways
20 that we went about achieving this goal is we analyzed
21 every transcript from RAC meetings, this RAC
22 specifically, that has been conducted over the last 33
23 years. So, the work that we're sharing with you is
24 motivated by discussions and requests from this RAC
25 specifically. Also, the National Park Service, SRCs, the
26 Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group and directly
27 from -- and National Park Service science staff. This
28 is a collaboration between UAF and the National Park
29 Service and I want to recognize that Dr. Kim Jochum,
30 with the National Park Service, is our close
31 collaborator. And Caitlin, who's the lead on this, is
32 going to provide details on the process so far, our
33 progress, and give you an update on next steps.

34
35 MS. LUBY: So again, this is Caitlin Luby
36 and I've been able to attend a handful of these RAC
37 meetings in the Western Arctic Working Group meeting and
38 some of the National Park Service SRC meetings, and
39 something that comes up at almost every one of them is
40 how the availability of caribou for subsistence users
41 fits into management of the herd. And many different
42 factors contribute to good or poor availability of
43 caribou, including herd size and distribution and a
44 hunter's capacity to access these animals. And, as you
45 know, for your communities who have been hunting the
46 herd for a long time, there are pretty big implications
47 tied to the declining population. So, since March, I've
48 been doing this analysis of these transcripts from these
49 exact meetings. And we acknowledge that some of these
50 preliminary results aren't necessarily what the whole

1 community is experiencing, but we're working under the
2 assumption that representatives have had good knowledge
3 of whether caribou are available or not.

4
5 So, figure one shows the kind of our
6 preliminary results, and I'll come back to how I did
7 this on the next page, but for now I'll focus on the
8 broader picture. So, there are some colors representing
9 an availability rank by community during the study
10 period, where the green-blue color is three and
11 positive, the gray is two and neutral, and the red orange
12 is one and negative. And we see a weak but decreasing
13 trend over all communities since 1993. And there are
14 robust analysis where looking into grouping by regional
15 proximity, like the Upper Kobuk and other coastal
16 communities and/or exploring similar trends to see why
17 some communities might be feeling these differences
18 differently, or using Kotzebue as a case study, because
19 of how, because they have data for every year, which is
20 a credit to Council Member Kramer, who has served on
21 this Council for a long time.

22
23 So, at this time, this table shows us
24 that availability isn't equal across the region and
25 doesn't reflect the population declines of the herd. So
26 right now, we're exploring variables like herd size and
27 distribution, the cost of fuel distance to collared
28 animals, and river freeze updates to help explain some
29 of these trends and patterns in availability. And moving
30 on to the reverse side of that handout is my process for
31 analyzing the transcripts. Again, the goal was to use
32 information shared at these RAC meetings to determine
33 availability of caribou for communities during each
34 year. So, in figure two, reading from left to right
35 shows the process I used to estimate availability. And
36 out of the availability boxes are three important
37 factors that were reported pretty commonly. And that
38 includes population size and distribution, harvest and
39 access. And then out of those boxes, we assumed that a
40 combination of these factors determined availability and
41 which -- within each of those groups were more detailed
42 mentions of particular issues labeled in the right-hand
43 description column.

44
45 And for all of the transcripts, I
46 started by tagging or coding all of your member reporting
47 relating to caribou subsistence, and then I classified
48 them into the descriptions in the right-hand column,
49 which ultimately informed the availability rank that was
50 in figure 1. And in the chart, the size of the flow bars

1 represent how frequently the topic was mentioned. For
2 example, port access was mentioned the most at 180 times
3 in the 30-year study period, and the topics mentioned
4 less than seven times were -- aren't included in the
5 chart. So, our next steps are to identify what factors
6 might be driving this variation in availability. And
7 after concluding that analysis, we'll explore how this
8 changing availability affects food security in the
9 region. For example, we're going to explore what impacts
10 those are for sharing, like giving and receiving of
11 subsistence food or if communities are needing to shift
12 to other resources or store-bought food.

13
14 So, some key takeaways are that we've
15 reviewed these meeting transcripts from the last 30ish
16 years to determine an availability rank. And we found,
17 based on how this group has been reporting, that the
18 data indicate a decline, although the trend of
19 availability isn't declining as fast as the population.
20 But we're looking into factors that could help explain
21 why. And after we identified those important factors,
22 we'll look more closely at different sources of data we
23 have, to improve our understanding of declining
24 availability and the consequences that has for food
25 security in the region. And I'll pass it back to Todd
26 to wrap it up.

27
28 MR. BRINKMAN: Again, this is Todd
29 Brinkman, for the record. I also forgot to mention at
30 the beginning that the Alaska Department of Fish and
31 Game, especially Division of Subsistence, Helen Cold and
32 Carolyn Brown, have provided a bunch of information from
33 their surveys, and I know they're ramping up a lot of
34 work as well in the region and so, we're working closely
35 with them to integrate our data well. So, we have
36 compiled a bunch of information, it's organized, and now
37 we're ready to analyze so, we're pretty excited about
38 March, coming back and maybe being able to offer some
39 insight into why some years are good and some years
40 aren't so good for communities in the region. And as
41 always you know, we're doing this for you folks and for
42 the federal and state agencies, hopefully to inform
43 decision making and management. But your feedback along
44 the way is always critical. So, any thoughts you have,
45 we love to hear them, if not now, anytime over the next
46 few months. Caitlin's going to continue to work on this
47 stuff until it's done. Thank you.

48

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1 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you for that.
2 Any initial questions, comments from members of the
3 Council?

4
5 (No response)

6
7 I think one thing that will be
8 interesting, now that you're organized and continuing
9 to go through things, is looking at weather events over
10 the years. Specifically, if it was warm winters, this
11 and that, but also wildfires. I want to say it was in
12 the 2011 to 2014 years, there were some couple pretty
13 bad fires up in the Upper Noatak going towards the
14 calving grounds where people were concerned. Well, the
15 animals not come down like they normally would because
16 there's not enough food in that area. And as we've talked
17 about how long it takes for lichen to grow back and
18 things to come back after a burn so, I think it'll be
19 really interesting getting that kind of data outside of
20 just the harvest and if people were able to access the
21 animals, and then getting that sidebar information of
22 just natural events that are influencing things. So, I'm
23 excited to see what comes up next.

24
25 MS. LUBY: Yeah, that's -- this is
26 Caitlin. That's great. We really appreciate that
27 feedback.

28
29 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Clyde.

30
31 MR. RAMOTH: Clyde Ramoth, for the
32 record. Just a general comment because when we look at
33 surveys or charts or anything of that nature and trying
34 to grasp it and understand it, and I'm excited, too
35 about like the wildfires and stuff and, and people that
36 really rely -- we rely on the caribou and how the trends
37 or the migration route changing, the warmer
38 temperatures, the hot summers where they run to the coast
39 to just cool off and get away from the bugs, sort of
40 speak. But just a reminder, when we get charts or surveys
41 completed, we just need the real simplest way where we
42 could understand it, the 5th grader at school could
43 understand it, because a lot of those 5th graders can
44 outsmart me, that's for sure. Yeah.

45
46 MS. LUBY: Yeah, thank you. We appreciate
47 hearing that.

48
49 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Any other comments,
50 questions? Karmen or Mike?

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(No response)

Doesn't look like we.....

MS. MONIGOLD: This is Karmen. Through the Chair.

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Oh, go ahead Karmen.

MS. MONIGOLD: I wish I could see the crafts. But I'm excited to see what comes next. And we'll see you guys in March. Thank you.

MS. LUBY: Thank you, we appreciate that. Maybe we can leave some in Kotzebue at the Heritage Center for you to look at.

MS. PILCHER: I did just, well, not just, I did email you a copy. This is Nissa, for the record. You should have one in your inbox here as well. Thank you. There will be copies here.

CHAIRPERSON BAKER: So, if there are no other questions or comments, thank you for your patience. It's been a long couple days and you've been patiently waiting for your opportunity. So, with that, we'll move on to our final report. Office of Subsistence Management. Katya.

MS. WESSELS: Thank you, Mr. Chair, members of the Council. So, I'm going to try to make it as short as possible, though a lot of things have been happening since we reported to you during your winter 2025 meeting. But we are glad to find out that some Council members didn't even know that we moved in 2024 from the Fish and Wildlife to the Office of the Secretary of the Interior. And you know, basically, we've been, you know, working along to upheld the process of implementing the federal subsistence priority. And I guess we're doing a good job, if you didn't notice that anything changed. And now we also have access to the Office of Policy and Management and Budget. In the Office of the Secretary, we have access to the leadership so we're able to resolve some of the questions a little bit faster. So, the last year, the Federal Subsistence Board received 78 wildlife proposals across the state. And OSM staff developed analysis that were presented to you, and also, some staff-developed analysis with 17 wildlife closures that were reviewed by the Councils. And are

1 they -- right. We had the following regulations update
2 since we got moved. Our regulations are published in
3 Code of Federal Regulations. We used to be 50 CFR part
4 100, and now the new location is 43 CFR part 51. So that
5 took a year to move these regulations but that concluded
6 our official move.

7
8 Also, last year the OSM published the
9 Final Rule codifying federal subsistence regulations
10 that -- with amendments that Board made in February. So,
11 that was federal regulations were taken off fish and
12 shellfish for the year 25-27. During the summertime the
13 Federal Subsistence Board held the work session and
14 executive session July 23rd-24th. And during that time,
15 the Board reviewed the annual reports from the ten
16 Regional Advisory Councils, and the Board also adopted
17 Deferred Wildlife Proposal 24-01 on -- as modified by
18 OSM to allow the sale of brown bear hides harvested by
19 federally qualified subsistence users. And that proposal
20 was supported by nine Councils across the state.

21
22 Council appointments: the Board
23 discussed Council appointments and made the
24 recommendation to the Secretaries. All together, the
25 Board received, last year, 50 applications cross all ten
26 regions. And there were 48 vacant or seats -- or seats
27 with expire in terms. And the Board also received eight
28 letters from the young leaders who were interested in
29 filling the non-voting positions on the Council. You
30 might remember that the Councils voted to have these
31 positions on the Council. You got -- your Council has a
32 vacant position now for the non-voting young leader. So,
33 because last year your region did actually pretty well,
34 you received eight applications. The appointments are
35 not made yet. As I mentioned the other day, the
36 appointment recommendations is with the Secretary's
37 Office, and we're hoping to receive appointment letters
38 sometime here in January. But you -- last year -- you
39 received zero letters from the interested young leaders
40 to fill non-voting positions. So, we are encouraging the
41 Council members or anyone who listens on in the audience
42 or on the radio to reach out to young people in the
43 region that are ages between 18 and 25 and ask them to
44 submit their letters of interest for this upcoming
45 application period. And the information can be found on
46 our website.

47
48 So, there is another update on the new
49 permit app that you might be interested in. In 2024, OSM
50 initiated the modernization of the Federal Subsistence

1 Permitting Application. Part of this modernization was
2 to make permits more readily available to users through
3 an option to obtain permits online. The new system was
4 released for agency use on September 30th. However,
5 Permit Portal is not functioning at this time, so users
6 are not able to request profiles and permits online.
7 Users should continue to obtain permits by contacting
8 local issuing offices until the portal is ready. When
9 the open -- when the online option is available, we will
10 broadcast the news release and link to the online Permit
11 Portal. It will appear on the program's website. The
12 other update is OSM staffing. Approximately 25% of OSM
13 positions are vacant currently, and many employees are
14 doing double or triple duties trying to cover these
15 vacancies. It was announced in early December that the
16 government hiring -- government-wide hiring freeze was
17 going to be lifted so we are waiting for further guidance
18 so we can start filling vacant positions.

19
20 And why we have so many vacant
21 positions? Because several employees, they opted for
22 deferred retirement program that was offered to federal
23 employees. Some of these employees were working with you
24 in the region. For example, like OSM Fisheries
25 Biologist, Karen Hyer. She's been working in Northwest
26 Arctic region for a while. Your former Council
27 Coordinator, Lisa Hutchinson, she also took the deferred
28 retirement program. She was also coordinator for
29 Kodiak/Aleutian Council, besides yours. And then there
30 are a couple of other people from OSM: Cultural
31 Anthropologist Pippa Kenner and Permit Specialist
32 Delegate Derek Hildreth left through this program. So,
33 we are working on trying to refill these positions as
34 soon as possible. They are two pieces of good news that
35 we were able to do two lateral staffing moves from other
36 DOI agencies, and we got on board Karen McKee. She came
37 back to OSM, she used to work for OSM as a Subsistence
38 Outreach Specialist. And then we were able to fill one
39 vacant position in the Fisheries Division. The new
40 person working in that position is Anna Senecal. And
41 there's still two other vacant positions in the
42 Fisheries Division. So, we are very happy to welcome
43 these, both ladies to OSM. And we are also -- the other
44 piece of news that we are working on strengthening our
45 collaboration with the state. OSM Director Crystal
46 Ciisquq Leonetti and deputy directors have been
47 conducting monthly in-person meetings with Alaska
48 Department of Fish and Game, Deputy Commissioner and
49 Federal Subsistence Board Liaison. And these meetings
50 are very helpful to be informed what's happening on both

1 sides and to ensure strong communications and
2 collaboration, especially in regards to data sharing and
3 analysis review.

4
5 So, also, as you know, that your
6 meetings, eight meetings had to be rescheduled due to
7 the lapse in government appropriations. There is still
8 going to be another four meetings up to yours for
9 Councils Bristol Bay, South Central, Seward Peninsula
10 and Y-K Delta, are going to meet in January. And we are
11 going to have the second round of tribal and ANCSA
12 consultations for the proposals and closure reviews that
13 are under consideration. The dates for this new round
14 of tribal and ANCSA Corporation consultations is
15 February 19th and 20th, and they are going to be before
16 the Aprils Board meeting. But the tribes need to be
17 aware if these dates don't work for them, they can also
18 request a special date through the OSM Tribal Liaison,
19 Orville Lind.

20
21 The Federal Subsistence Board will be
22 holding Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program work
23 session on February 5th in Anchorage to review the draft
24 Fisheries Resource Monitoring Plan, and to accept
25 additional oral comments, and to make recommendations
26 to select an official who is OSM Director Crystal
27 Leonetti on the projects to include in the final '26
28 FRMP plan. So -- and then the next thing was going to
29 be happening, the Board will hold Wildlife Regulatory
30 meeting on April 20th-24th in Anchorage to consider
31 wildlife closure reviews and proposals, and to accept
32 public testimony on these proposals and reviews and non-
33 agenda items. I also have in the report litigation
34 updates, but I think we're better off, like just sending
35 them to you directly because they're really not in your
36 region. One is in relationship to Kuskokwim and the other
37 one is in relationship to Kake. So, I don't know if
38 that's so much interest to the Council members in this
39 region. So, I just want to conclude my report and saying
40 sincerely, thank you so much for serving on the Council,
41 for dedicating all of your time to serving on behalf of
42 your communities. Thank you for your time, your
43 knowledge and expertise, and we wouldn't be able to do
44 it without you. Thank you.

45
46 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you for that,
47 Katya. Do we have any questions or discussion? Clyde.

48
49 MR. RAMOTH: For the record, Clyde
50 Ramoth. Yesterday I posed a question -- thank you for

1 your great report, Katya. When I asked the question about
2 the qualification and I know, I mean, I mentioned, no
3 offense to Noorvik, there's three, there's so many from
4 Kotzebue, four, I think. I know there's a vacancy, the
5 guy that resigned from upriver. But in all fairness, I
6 know we all have input, we all have knowledge, we share
7 what we learn through communications and to get -- I
8 know you're waiting for the appointment from the
9 Secretary of Interior, but you know I, we hear people
10 from Buckland. I haven't heard anything besides Tristen
11 from Ambler. But like Verne and others mentioned about
12 Kiana, also. Of course, there's other Boards and
13 Commissions or RACs or advisories, but is that an act
14 of Congress or feds, or how can the qualification change
15 where it could be from certain communities? And is that
16 a question that was brought up in any other RAC in the
17 state?

18
19 MS. WESSELS: Well, I think the only
20 other Council that was talking about this was North Slope
21 Council. They were concerned that they don't have
22 representatives from all of the communities in the
23 region. Other Councils, they really don't have that
24 concern because, you know, as Council members represent
25 not the communities, they represent the user groups. So,
26 most of you, except Mike and Tristen, represent
27 subsistence users. Mike and Tristan represent commercial
28 and sport users. You, as the representatives you like,
29 talk within the region with other people in other
30 communities and gather the information. And then you
31 bring this information to this Council. You know, you
32 would honor your charter's language, your request that
33 you put in the charter and got approved, to have
34 representatives from these communities, if we get the
35 applications.

36
37 If we don't have the applications, we
38 can't get representatives from those other villages,
39 because right now, that's how it stands. You know, you
40 as a Council, can put the request in that you will, you
41 know, just want the whole criteria change, that people
42 need to represent each community. But still, if there's
43 no applicants from those communities, then that seat
44 will remain vacant. Right now, when you -- seat is not
45 assigned to a community, it can be filled like, let's
46 say, three people from Noorvik apply, but there's nobody
47 from Kiana. Well, people from Noorvik are qualified,
48 they get appointed. And at least you have fuller Council
49 with more knowledge and expertise. But if that seat is
50 assigned to Kiana, then you -- just will remain vacant,

1 you won't be able to put anybody else in there. So,
2 that's, you know, double-edged sword, when you ask for
3 this. You know, if that's made this way. Because, you
4 know, like, you're in the region, you're like, you said,
5 you talk with other people, you find things, you know,
6 you're knowledgeable[sic]what's happening. You maybe
7 don't have such an in-depth knowledge as a person from
8 Kiana would, but you still, you know, you talk with
9 somebody from there, you hear what's happening and you
10 defend the interest of the subsistence user group here.
11 I hope I answered your question.

12
13 MR. RAMOTH: Yeah, that -- it's answered
14 in -- for the radio listener, you got the answer now.

15
16 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Verne. Sorry, I
17 thought you, thought I saw your hand up. Mike or Karmen?
18 Any comments, questions for Katya?

19
20 MR. KRAMER: Hello.

21
22 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Go ahead, Mike.

23
24 MR. KRAMER: Oh, I wasn't really too
25 sure. I was trying to get back in. The mute on my Apple
26 iPhone and the regular mute was -- kept colliding with
27 each other so. I'm listening in, though.

28
29 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Mike.
30 Anything from Karmen Monigold, any questions or comments
31 for Katya's report on the Office of Subsistence
32 Management?

33
34 MS. MONIGOLD: No, but thank you very
35 much for the in-depth report. Thank you.

36
37 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: All right, thank
38 you.

39
40 MS. WESSELS: You're welcome.

41
42 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you everyone.
43 Doesn't look like we have any further questions or
44 comments so, thank you, Katya. And to all the staff that
45 take all the time to make these meetings happen. With
46 that, we'll move on to item 16, other business. First
47 is the 805(c) report, which I believe begins on page
48 243, in our books. Nissa.

49
50

1 MS. PILCHER: Good evening, Council.
2 Nissa Pilcher, for the record. So, Mr. Chair, members
3 of the Council, for the record again, my name is Nissa
4 Pilcher. I'm the Council Coordinator with OSM. And I
5 wanted to draw your attention to the 805(c) report. So,
6 the Federal Subsistence Board took action in line with
7 your Council's recommendation for all proposals and
8 closure reviews affecting your region this last cycle.
9 Therefore, no 805(c) was needed. To refer to that cover
10 letter as well as a chart that shows you what you guys
11 did comment on or offer recommendations on, and what the
12 Board did. You can find this in the meeting book, as
13 Chair Baker noted, starting on page 243. This is not an
14 action item. And that concludes that agenda item.

15
16 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you. Any
17 questions before we move on to the next item?

18
19 (No response)

20
21 So, with that, Nissa, can you please go
22 into the correspondence update?

23
24 MS. PILCHER: Absolutely. So, at your
25 winter 2025 meeting, your Council requested that nine
26 letters be drafted and sent to various entities. As Katya
27 just outlined, we do have some staffing shortages. So,
28 these letters were triaged to ensure that any that had
29 looming deadlines were drafted, approved and sent. But
30 that did mean that many were not completed. But the
31 intention is that these will still be drafted and
32 finalized as time allows. Probably not before your March
33 meeting, but hopefully, not hopefully, it will be my
34 goal to make sure that they all get drafted before your
35 next fall meeting. So, to give you a rundown of that,
36 the letters that were completed is your Council drafted
37 a letter to the Federal Subsistence Board on D-1 land
38 withdrawals. This is found on page 249 of your book. And
39 then also a letter to the Office of Subsistence
40 Management concerning the funding of a Fish and Game
41 sonar project on the Kobuk. And that is found on the
42 following page. So, that's only two. And you guys
43 requested nine. So, the remaining seven letters that
44 will be drafted, unless by some chance, you tell me not
45 to or me, I shouldn't say me, I will probably have
46 multiple help from other OSM Council or staff members.

47
48 One: a letter to the Board of Fish in
49 support of removing a local crab fishing corridor and
50 eliminating a local marine commercial fishing quota.

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1 Two: a letter to Fish and Game and the Board of Fish in
2 support of continued research on salmon escapement.
3 Three: a letter to Fish and Game in support of funding
4 a creel survey of the winter fishery in Kotzebue Sound.
5 That does sound like that may need to be triaged up, as
6 it does sound like, Luke with Fish and Game is looking
7 at getting that going here shortly. Four: a letter to
8 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in support of a SNWR
9 water mapping project. Five: a letter to the Park Service
10 in support of the Western Arctic National Parklands
11 archaeological research. Six: a letter to UAF in support
12 of ongoing research on historic and current caribou
13 harvest, which also may be triaged as they are with us
14 today. And seven: a letter to the Alaska Science Center
15 on support of an ongoing USGS study on the rusting rivers
16 phenomenon. So, those seven letters will hopefully still
17 be drafted. And you will receive them either in March
18 or see them in their final version in March, which is
19 probably doubtful, but hopefully by September. Thank
20 you.

21
22 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Nissa. Any
23 questions or comments from members of the Council?
24

25 (No response)

26
27 Hearing none. That brings us almost to
28 the end. We'll go into Closing Comments. Karmen
29 Monigold, do you have any closing comments?
30

31 MS. MONIGOLD: My closing comments would
32 be to make sure my name is not at the top of the list
33 for roll call and closing comments. I'm just kidding.
34 There was something further up of a letter of support
35 for the sheefish project. I believe that was from the
36 Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Somebody had to leave
37 early, and we did not make any decision if we were going
38 to do that or not. That was one of my questions. And
39 just to thank everyone that, you know, is, that showed
40 up, that called in. All your guys hard work with all
41 your studies and all your data. We really appreciate it.
42 And for the people that, you know, either went to the
43 meeting or called in, we appreciate you also. But that
44 was just one thing that I kind of felt like we left
45 open, was that letter of support. Correct me if I'm
46 wrong. Thank you.

47
48 MS. PILCHER: This is Nissa Pilcher for
49 the record, Karmen, you are correct. There was no motion
50 to draft that letter of support for the Division of

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1 Subsistence Sheefish Project that was submitted for FRMP
2 funding.

3
4 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: I believe we have a
5 quorum, if Mike and Karmen are still on the phone with
6 us, both of you are still on the phone with us. So, if
7 someone wanted to make that motion, we can do that.

8
9 MS. MONIGOLD: This is Karmen. I'd like
10 to make a motion to draft a letter of support for the
11 Division of Subsistence Sheefish Project.

12
13 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Karmen.
14 So, a motion was made to draft a letter in support. Is
15 there a second?

16
17 MR. CLEVELAND: Second.

18
19 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Seconded by Verne.
20 All those in favor, please signify by saying aye.

21
22 IN UNISON: Aye.

23
24 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: And those opposed,
25 same sign.

26
27 (No response)

28
29 So, with that, if staff could draft that
30 letter of support. Thank you. Karmen, did you have
31 anything else?

32
33 MS. MONIGOLD: No, that was all. Thank
34 you guys so much. I wish I could have been there.

35
36 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Karmen.
37 Mike, do you have any closing comments?

38
39 MR. KRAMER: Yes. Thank you, everybody,
40 for being there. You know, sorry I'm so tough. Have to
41 be because we're fighting for our subsistence resources
42 and our rights. I was raised, you know, I was brought
43 up by those old guys. I remember their 30-year gap
44 between me and them, when I first started on that RAC.
45 I was the youngest kid for ten years. I fight for our
46 resources all the time, our subsistence resources, our
47 rights. I'm strict, they taught me to be strict. They
48 taught me not to give an inch. You know, if you give an
49 inch, they'll take a mile. You know, I don't know who
50 gave the Board of Fisheries the right to shoot down that

1 commercial fishery, when they know that a lot of our
2 subsistence resources are declining. People are going
3 to start depending on other things, and when those are
4 gone, they're going to go to the next. Sheepish is a
5 very, very fragile species, and it was brought up at our
6 own Comm Fisheries meeting, Kotzebue Sound Fisheries
7 meeting in Kotzebue. I mean, our Fish and Game, you
8 know, them not taking this serious, we might as well
9 just shut down trawling. No more federal fisheries. Shut
10 it all down. Close it. Goodbye. You know, just
11 concentrate on subsistence for the whole state. Feed the
12 people. You know, that's why I was brought up to be real
13 tough, to fight for our rights.

14
15 I know a lot of people, you know, kind
16 of look at me funny and think I'm going overboard, but
17 man. Ten years from now, I'll say, was I going overboard?
18 We got no more caribou, moose, nothing. Salmon.
19 Sheefish. What we got? Nothing. You know, I just -- they
20 was -- taught to be tough, you know, to all federal
21 agencies, state agencies, you know, and when they work
22 with us and they help us get what we want and what
23 partially what they want, halfway there, each, hey, we
24 work together, we put forth the effort to conserve
25 subsistence resource species. That's my intent. That's
26 my intent for being strict. That's my intent for getting
27 to the point. Pointing fingers. That's what those guys
28 taught me back then. Don't give an inch. Thank you
29 everybody. We'll see you at our next meeting. (In
30 Native).

31
32 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Mike.
33 Verne, closing comments?

34
35 MR. CLEVELAND: I'd like to thank all the
36 agencies for the report. I know it takes a while to get
37 a report and thank you. And I would like to get a report
38 from the Red Dog Subsistence Committee and Ambler Metal
39 Subsistence Committee to report, give a report to
40 somewhere. And I would like to either to all the villages
41 to try and get a harvest report from each village on how
42 many tuttu did they get. This is very important and very
43 critical situation we're in right now. And we need your
44 guys' help. And with your harvest report, that would
45 help us out a lot, too. So, thank you. And thanks to
46 everybody for that. And just the RAC Committee should
47 attend here, should be here on the table, not on the
48 phone. Should be here with the critical situation we're
49 in right now. We should have them guys sitting here on
50 the table. Thank you. Happy New Year and have a good day.

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CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Thank you, Verne.
Clyde.

MR. RAMOTH: Thank you, good meeting. You hit it on the spot there, Caribou Chief. You know, our environment is very sensitive. And when Mike mentioned about the sheefish, I mean, all our land, sea and air, animals, birds, fish. We live in a world where there -- we talk climate change, global warming, however you want to put it. But seeing our -- my late dad used to always say, well, back then, when I had black hair, dark hair, you used to say, when you get on these committees or RAC or whatever, make sure we talk about regulation changes, because the weather is changing. We're getting warmer temperatures now. I'm glad to see the fish study is going to be ongoing. Trying to stay busy. Communication is always key. Being positive and working together, including with consultation. I'd love to hear that when others consult with our tribe, traditional ecological knowledge is always important to us, especially when you're going to present surveys, data for regulation changes. That's how it's critical to have our homework done by the people that are impacted every day and see the numbers, whether they go up or down or sideways. Like I say, conservation, we want to conserve. We want to be concerned about our future generations.

Invasive species. I know in our March meeting we're going to have a lot of other topics, but thank you, Mr. Chair. Good meeting. Safe travels. And thank you. All the agencies that have been here, especially that young lady that's been sitting there for a day and a half and when they gave her report and working on her Masters. Those kind of commitments we see is encouraging, you know. And hearing everybody, I mean Leonard from Point Hope, I'm glad he's here from up north to listen in and watch us and, and we want to learn from up north, too. So, going back to communication, I think we're always saying to do with our two meetings a year. And Nissa, nice to meet you.

CHAIRMAN BAKER: Thank you for that, Clyde. For the record, this is Thomas Baker, and I just want to thank everybody for hanging in there with us. I know we had some difficulties getting off the ground and getting to Kotzebue and then getting the meeting started. So, thank you for everybody that comes together to make these meetings happen, it's really important that we're able to have this opportunity not only for

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1 us to be here in the room, but for all the folks that
2 can call in and those that are listening online and over
3 the air at KOTZ. Thank you to KOTZ for airing this
4 meeting. We've had some really good dialogue. We've had
5 really good opportunities for people to get
6 clarification on, what are the bag limits for caribou?
7 What can we do if we need to defend life and property
8 in our communities? So, thank you for all the time that's
9 put into it. Thank you to the other members of the RAC,
10 for the time that we all put in behind the scenes and
11 working with our other subsistence users. I'll keep it
12 short. The time is now 5:14. I'd entertain a motion to
13 adjourn.

14
15 MR RAMOTH: I so move.

16
17 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Motion made by Clyde.
18 Is there a second?

19
20 MR. CLEVEAND: Second.

21
22 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Second by Verne.

23
24 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: All those in favor
25 of adjournment, please signify by saying aye.

26
27 IN UNISON: Aye

28
29 CHAIRPERSON BAKER: Those opposed, same
30 sign.

31
32 (No response)

33
34 Thank you everyone. It is 5:15. We will
35 now adjourn.

36
37 (Off record)

38
39 END OF PROCEEDINGS

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C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Rafael Morel, for Lighthouse Integrated Services Corp, do hereby certify:

THAT the foregoing pages numbered 1 through 144 contain a full, true and correct Transcript of the NORTHWEST ARTIC SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING, VOLUME II recorded on the 8th day of January;

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 12th day of February 2026.

Rafael Morel
Chief Project Manager