

Southcentral Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

c/o Office of Subsistence Management
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In Reply Refer To:
RAC.R26024

APRIL 14 2026

Anthony Christianson, Chair
Federal Subsistence Board
c/o Office of Subsistence Management
1011 E. Tudor Road, MS 121
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6199

Dear Chairman Christianson:

The Southcentral Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council) appreciates the opportunity to submit its FY-2025 annual report to the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) under the provisions of Section 805(a)(3)(D) of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). At its public meetings held on January 13-14, 2026, the Council identified concerns and recommendations for this report. The Council approved this annual report at its March 17-18, 2025, meeting. The Council wishes to share information and raise several concerns dealing with the implementation of Title VIII of ANILCA and the continuation of subsistence uses in the Southcentral Region.

1. Fund Wildlife Resource Monitoring Program

The Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program (FRMP) has been of great benefit to subsistence users and resources. It is unclear to the Council why a Wildlife Resource Monitoring Program (WRMP) was not created when the FRMP was established decades ago. The Council again requests that WRMP be established. Numerous biological needs and data gaps across the state would benefit greatly from such a program. The Council has heard concerns from this and other regions regarding declining availability of subsistence resources, while pressure on these resources is increasing from all user groups.

Recommendation:

The Council recommends addressing the biological data gap by creating a WRMP. Because the FRMP already provides a basic framework, only minimal modifications would be needed to support terrestrial research projects. The only missing component is funding.

2. Use of Council Time and Lack of Compensation

Council members currently volunteer their time to serve their region on the Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils (Councils). All Councils have drafted correspondence on the lack of compensation to multiple Administrations. The lack of compensation is a limiting factor in recruiting and retaining new members. Currently, Council members must take time off from their jobs and schools, spend time away from their communities, families, and potentially important subsistence activities to share their valued knowledge with the Federal Government at Council meetings. Not everyone is in a position to take time off work, especially without financial compensation.

During the fall 2025 meeting cycle, Council members were asked to supply recommendations on 24 regional, statewide, and crossover wildlife proposals, as well as to draft this Annual Report to this Board to whom the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture delegated this authority, among other typical Council business. Council members also received reports from relevant government and non-government agencies. In addition to this heavy workload, the Council was also asked to supply comments to an ongoing Secretarial Review of the Federal Subsistence Management Program (Program). This was a heavy lift on a complex topic, and a large workload for volunteers. The results of these agenda items are of high importance to subsistence users of the region, but the workload was heavy and the hours long.

Council members would also like to request that planning for a future All Council Meeting be undertaken. The All-Council meetings strengthen relationships, foster collaboration, and benefit the Councils, the Program, and the resources. Due to growing concerns about resource shortages, the Council wishes to emphasize the need for dialogue between neighboring Councils.

Recommendation:

The Council would like to remind both the Office of Subsistence Management (OSM) and the Board to be mindful of what is asked of the volunteers that comprise the Councils. The Council understands that there are deadlines and timeframes in which business must be conducted, but there is only so much that volunteers can work through. In future situations, the Council suggests utilizing work sessions or other avenues to assist in reducing the workload of the Council at the biannual Council meetings. Additionally, the Council would like to request that planning for another All-Council Meeting is undertaken. The Council understands that preparing for an All-Council meeting takes time to secure funding and to plan the meeting and would like to request that OSM begin this process now.

3. Commercial Trawling Operations Detrimental to Subsistence

Council members are both experiencing and hearing from the region that marine resources are being increasingly difficult to find and harvest, and that salmon returns are becoming even weaker with few exceptions. The Council has heard of the horrific situation that those that reside on the Yukon and Kuskokwim are facing. One ongoing practice that the Council believes is partially responsible is the commercial trawling fleet, operating in Alaska's marine waters. The Councils concern lies in both the targeted and incidental biomass removal from the marine environment, as well as physical damage to ecosystem as trawling nets are drug across the sea

floor, both of which are highly detrimental to the marine food webs and the ability for subsistence users to meet their needs.

Recommendation:

The Council has not previously become as involved with the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council as other regions but will now initiate action to better understand that Councils' processes. The Council wishes for action to be taken by the Board and OSM to relay our Councils concerns to this regulatory body when possible, in the meantime.

4. Adequate Signage

The Council would like to ensure that adequate signage exists in areas of the Region where the resources are heavily used and where vehicle or other such restrictions or limitations apply. Some areas of the state are becoming increasingly heavily used. Technological advances are making all-terrain vehicles better equipped for more extensive off-road travel and their operators feel more confident in their equipment and are venturing further off the road. Combined with increased utilization of existing trail systems, especially in Unit 13, this has led to accelerated trail degradation. These machines operate on sensitive ecosystems that are becoming increasingly scarred with crisscrossing trails and blown-out mud pits where a simple puddle or water seep once existed.

Recommendation:

The Council urges the federal agency landowners to ensure any previous educational or boundary signage is still in place. Additionally, the Council requests an inventory to identify where new signage would be beneficial. If it is established that there are areas that would benefit from new or additional signage, the Council requests that the federal agency landowners ensure that this is done. At a time when staffing and funding are at an all-time low, it is important that the information on landownership and restrictions on that land is made as publicly available as possible.

The remainder of this report is for informational purposes only, and the Council does not request a response. However, these issues are significant and important, and the Board will benefit from being aware of them.

5. Concern over Marine Subsistence Resources

The Council remains vigilant regarding how changing environmental and ecosystem conditions are impacting marine food webs. Changes such as the distribution and timing of paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP), a growing list of invasive species, and the short- and long-term effects of ocean acidification have on the marine ecosystem are of particular concern. Shellfish, salmon and other marine fish, seaweed, and marine mammals are all critical subsistence resources to the people who call the Southcentral Alaska region home. These changes to marine food webs are having profound impacts on these species and on subsistence users.

The Council envisions that the combined effects of changing seasonality in PSP, invasive species, and ocean acidification will be highly detrimental to these food webs and to our ability to meet our subsistence needs.

Understanding the impacts of climate change on shellfish and salmon will allow State and Federal subsistence managers to respond more readily to changing populations. The Council will continue to seek information on these topics from leading subject matter experts. As the Council aims to enhance its understanding of these subjects, we encourage the Board members to do likewise.

6. Ensuring Subsistence Opportunities Remain Flexible

Subsistence users across the state are facing unprecedented weather patterns and increasing pressure on both marine and terrestrial subsistence resources from all user groups. Subsistence users are having a more difficult time meeting subsistence needs due to these issues. The Council would like to emphasize the importance of ensuring flexibility is a part of future regulatory changes and policy updates, especially regarding special action requests.

7. Adequate Staffing

The Council is aware that OSM and other federal agencies within the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture involved with the Program are currently understaffed. If there is not enough staff, critical subsistence work, biological data collection, and management duties cannot be fully conducted. The Council understands that the Board does not have a say over federal allocations and budgets but urges the agency members to continue to advocate for the dedicated staff who remain, and who are carrying a heavy load to ensure that this necessary and important work is completed.

The Council appreciates the Board's attention to these matters and the opportunity to assist the Program in meeting its charge of protecting subsistence resources and uses of these resources on Federal public lands and waters. The Council looks forward to continuing discussions about the issues and concerns of subsistence users in the Southcentral Region. If you have any questions regarding this report, please contact me via Nissa Pilcher, Subsistence Council Coordinator, Office of Subsistence Management, at nissa_pilcher@ios.doi.gov, or 1-800-478-1456, or 1-907-891-9054.

Sincerely,



R. Greg Encelewski
Chair

cc: Federal Subsistence Board
Southcentral Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Interagency Staff Committee
Office of Subsistence Management
Benjamin Mulligan, Deputy Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Aaron Poetter, Federal Subsistence Liaison, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Administrative Record