

EASTERN INTERIOR ALASKA SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes

Wedgewood Resort
Fairbanks, Alaska
December 16-18, 2025

Note: *The Eastern and Western Interior Councils met together on December 17. Joint Council items are noted in their own section below.*

Invocation

Council member Linda Evans provided an invocation.

Call to Order, Roll Call, and Quorum Establishment

The meeting was called to order Tuesday, December 16, 2025, at 9:25 am. Council members Sue Entsminger, Donald Woodruff, Dorothy Shockley, Linda Evans, Gerald Alexander, Eva Burk, and Chair Robert “Charlie” Wright were present in-person and Andrew Bassich attended online. Galen Gilbert was absent and excused. With eight out of nine seated Council members present, a quorum was established. There is currently one vacant seat on the Council.

Attendees

* *Denotes attended virtually*

- Office of Subsistence Management (OSM): Brooke McDavid, Nissa Pilcher, Lisa Grediagin, Brent Vickers, Tom Plank, Grace Cochon, Liz Williams, Kristen Morrow, Brian Ubelaker, Jarred Stone*, Robbin La Vine*, Crystal Leonetti*, Kevin Foley*, Hannah Voorhees*
- Secretary of the Interior’s Office: Sara Taylor*, Lisa Doehl*, Eva Vrana*
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS): Clayton Merrill, Mark Bertram, Keith Herron, Shane Ransbury, Tina Moran, Jeremy Havener, George Yaska*, Christian Alexie*, Shawn Bayless*, Shelby Burrige*, Jill Klein*, Timothy Knudson*, Aaron Moses*, Emmitt Nicori*, Christopher Tulik*
- National Park Service (NPS): Kim Jochum, Marcy Okada, Matt Cameron, Kyle Cutting, Amy Craver*, Annie Carlson*, Amber Cohen, Emily Creek, Victoria Florey, Kyle Joly*, Dillon Patterson*, Eva Patton*, Benjamin Pister*, Mark Sturm*, Mallory Zharoff*, Hanem Abouelezz*
- Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA): Rosalie Debenham*
- Bureau of Land Management (BLM): Angela Yemma, Claire Montgomerie, Dana Miller, Ryan Lane, Caroline Ketron, Erin Julianus, Kent Slaughter, Neil Perry*, Craig Townsend*
- U.S. Forest Service: – Greg Risdahl*

- Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G): Jeff Gross, Mark Nelson, Jordan Pruszenski, Luke Rogers, Deena Jallen*, Aaron Poetter*, Mark Burch*, Alicia Carson*, Sara Henslee*, Marie Jamison*, Todd Rinaldi*
- Alaska Wildlife Troopers: Daniel Valentine
- Tribal and Native Organizations: Ahtna Intertribal Resource Commission (AITRC) – Deanna Kosbruk*, Jim Simon*; Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) – Chief Brian Ridley, Krystal Lapp, Diloola Erickson, Kimberly Nicholas; Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments (CATG) – Bruce Thomas*, Chief Rhonda Pitka*; Bristol Bay Native Corporation – Gayla Hoseth*; Calista Corporation – Rose Bennett*; Kuskokwim River Intertribal Fish Commission (KRITFC) – Terese Vicente*; Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in Government – Karlie Knight*; Kawerak, Inc. – Lisa Ellanna*; Yukon River Intertribal Fish Commission – Jazmyn Vent, Janessa Newman; Native Village of Venetie Tribal Government – Sarah James; Denakkanaaga – Glenn Carlo
- Non-profits and Other Organizations: Resident Hunters of Alaska – Mark Richards; Bering Sea Fishermen’s Association – Suzanne Little*; Northern Alaska Environmental Center – David Leslie, Jeffrey Groenke; Arctic Connections - Pamela A. Miller, Backcountry Hunters – Mary Glaves; Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association – Serena Fitka; Alaska Federation of Natives – Geoffrey Toy
- Public: Carrie Stevens, Norman Richards, Leonardo Wassillie*; Jennifer Yuhas, Gale Vick, Chaya Gordon-Bland, Misty Walsh, Raina Thiele, Randy Mayo, Robn Haglin, Todd Brinkman, Bruce Ervin
- Western Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Western Interior Council)
Members: Chair Jack Reakoff, Tommy Kriska, Don Honea, Jenny Pelkola, Tim Gervais*

Review and Adopt Agenda

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

Review and Approve Previous Meeting Minutes

- Motion by Member Woodruff, seconded by Member Burk, to approve the Winter 2025 Council meeting minutes. *The motion passed on a unanimous vote.*

Council Member Service Awards

Linda Evans received a 5-year service award. Susan Entsminger received a 24-year service award.

Council Member and Chair Reports

Donald Woodruff of Eagle reported that fisheries on the Upper Yukon River remain a “total disaster,” noting he has not been able to put up salmon since 2017. He said Yukon River residents are increasingly frustrated with being unable to fish for salmon, and that even non-salmon fishing is now restricted to scheduled windows. He said Fortymile caribou numbers are down and may be increasing only slowly. Moose are doing okay, though they remain low-density due to poor habitat. He observed fewer outside

hunters this fall, which he viewed positively because it reduces competition along the river. He also mentioned harvesting seven marten and noted their correlation with increasing rabbit numbers.

Linda Evans of Rampart/North Pole echoed concerns about declining subsistence resources, describing how food insecurity is worsening as prices for store-bought goods rise. She expressed sadness for elders who rely on Native foods but increasingly cannot access them. She raised strong concerns about Bering Sea trawlers and Area M fisheries intercepting salmon headed to the Yukon and Kuskokwim rivers. She also shared cultural impacts, noting that her grandchildren are growing up without knowing fish camp. Despite these challenges, she emphasized the importance of working together toward solutions that benefit everyone.

Sue Entsminger of Mentasta Pass described high hunting pressure in Units 12 and 13 due to road access from Anchorage and Fairbanks. She noted increasing requests to close federal lands to sport hunting, which she believes could create harmful domino effects. She reported declining sheep numbers and lower moose counts in some areas, along with reduced Fortymile caribou harvest opportunities. Although she hasn't harvested from the Slana fish wheel recently, she said others still getting fish there. She mentioned that friends from Kenai gave her fish, which she then shared with Mentasta residents. Marking this as her final meeting after 24 years, she reflected that Yukon River salmon issues are still unresolved and stressed the need for respect and cooperation across Native, non-Native, rural, and urban communities.

Eva Burk of Nenana/Fairbanks emphasized the severity of the fisheries crisis, contrasting her community's limited 25-chum salmon harvest limit under a State Cultural/Education permit with more than 151,000 chum taken as commercial bycatch in the Bering Sea. Despite the limited harvest of 25 fish, she still described it as healing to once again be able to harvest salmon from the Tanana River. They were much juicier than the Sockeye Salmon flown from Bristol Bay in the past several years. Later in the season, they also fished for whitefish and a few Coho Salmon. Coho escapement was higher in the Delta River than in many previous years. Member Burk remarked that everyone is doing their best to keep their culture alive and that they held another successful culture camp this year. She is worried about low water levels on the Tanana River affecting salmon spawning. She also discussed challenges harvesting moose for potlatches, wood bison moving into the Nenana-Totchaket area, and the need for community-based habitat stewardship such as stream clearing and controlled burning. She urged more serious recognition of the broader ecosystem crisis and proactive measures to address it. She noted the upcoming North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) action on Chum Salmon bycatch and that she would be serving on the Advisory Panel at the meeting.

Dorothy Shockley of Manley Hot Springs/Fairbanks began by sharing news that Fairbanks City Council recently adopted a land acknowledgment ordinance. She expressed deep concern about the declining ability to live off the land under current state and federal management, and she highlighted federal actions that she feels undermine environmental protections and Indigenous rights. She described experiencing anxiety about these changes but also finding grounding in cultural practices and ancestral strength. She emphasized the need for Indigenous-led environmental planning that reflects holistic worldviews, rather

than fragmented Western approaches. She urged collaboration across tribes, corporations, and regions, and expressed hope in young people who are asserting Indigenous perspectives.

Andy Bassich of Eagle described the past two years as the poorest he has seen in 40 years of remote subsistence living. He reported extremely low moose numbers and virtually no caribou presence. Since he has not been able to fish for salmon, he has been harvesting more black bears in recent years, though he is now concerned about a sudden decrease in black bear sightings. Member Bassich expressed strong alarm about the prolonged failure of fall Chum Salmon to meet escapement goals over the last six years and warned of possible extirpation, noting their ecological role in transporting marine derived nutrients and their importance as a staple food source for upper Yukon River people. He asserted that hatchery salmon production is a major contributor to wild stock declines and urged all Councils to elevate this issue. He advocated for co-management on the Yukon River similar to the successful Kuskokwim River model, which prioritizes upper end escapement goals. He also reported modest improvements in songbirds, low waterfowl numbers, and a surprising increase in swans, potentially linked to beaver created habitat.

Galen Gilbert of Arctic Village was absent but provided a written report to the Coordinator to share at the meeting. Member Gilbert reported that caribou behavior has been irregular; they had a late arrival in fall, quick departure, and there have only been sporadic sightings since, resulting in poor harvest opportunities. He said trappers are trying to help with predator control, but the wolves haven't been near town because they followed the caribou. He noted several community cultural activities, including a successful Gwich'in Gathering in Arctic Village, culture camp, hide tanning, and language programs. He expressed significant concern over reports from sheep hunters who did not see any sheep tracks when they went out hunting.

Gerald Alexander of Fort Yukon provided a brief report, noting that very little fishing going on in his community because of the salmon fishing closures. He stated there is no smoke in the smokehouses like there used to be, and people are just trying to get by.

Charlie Wright (Chair) of Tanana/Rampart echoed many of the subsistence resource and ecological concerns raised by other members. He said climate uncertainty is one of the big stressors at present, as is overproduction of hatchery fish affecting wild salmon. He described how a salmon spawning stream near Rampart has been impacted by melting permafrost, creating extensive erosion that the water is "running earth". He said that the Yukon River Intertribal Fish Commission is working toward co-management with the federal fisheries managers and expressed hope that traditional knowledge and Western science can combine to do what is best for the fish. He applauded the Kuskokwim River's management approach of targeting the upper end of escapement goals and said he would like to see similar management on the Yukon too. Chair Wright highlighted the sport hunting pressure on moose, caribou, and black bear along the rivers and road system. He voiced deep concern about wanton waste, stating that hungry community members suffer while some other hunters discard meat. Chair Wright advocated for checkpoints for moose and caribou road hunts to ensure salvage compliance, as well as hunter education. He described serious food security challenges in many communities and the difficulty of witnessing such hardship knowing how abundant resources once were. Bears are also hungry and increasingly angry, wrecking

cabins all along the Yukon River. He emphasized the need for collective action and cooperation to support resource recovery.

Action Items

Wildlife Proposals and Closure Reviews

Tom Plank, OSM Wildlife Biologist, Liz Williams, OSM Cultural Anthropologist, and Hannah Voorhees, OSM Cultural Anthropologist, presented proposal and closure review analyses and OSM recommendations to the Council.

Statewide Proposals

WP26-01 – Move authority delegated through letters to unit-specific regulations

Motion by Member Entsminger, seconded by Member Woodruff, to support Proposal WP26-01 as modified by OSM. *The motion passed unanimously.*

The Council voted to **support WP26-01 as modified by OSM**. The Council hopes that moving delegated authority into unit-specific regulations will make it easier for the public to look up which managers have delegated authority and what authorities they have been delegated. The Council also noted this proposal is intended to help streamline the administrative workload and help make routine management actions more efficient.

WP26-01i – Eastern Interior Region wildlife delegated authority information

Motion by Member Burk, seconded by Member Entsminger, to support Proposal WP26-01i with Council modifications. *The motion passed unanimously.*

The Council **voted to support WP26-01i with the following modifications:**

- Modify delegated authority for Fortymile caribou to include 1) the ability to set harvest quotas, 2) the ability to designate harvest areas/zones, 3) require consultations with the Eastern Interior Council members who serve on the Harvest Management Coalition (HMC) (in addition to the Council Chair), and 4) require consultations with the TCC Tribal Resource Stewardship Department.
- Modify delegated authority for Chisana caribou to require consultations with the TCC Tribal Resource Stewardship Department and AITRC.

The Council supported delegating additional authorities to the Federal in-season manager for the Fortymile Caribou Herd to provide more effective and flexible in-season management tools. This additional authority is especially warranted since the Fortymile herd has been declining and is currently of conservation concern. These additions will also enable the Federal manager to better collaborate with the State manager and provide greater flexibility in aligning federal and state management actions. Additionally, the Council strongly supported adding Tribal organizations to the list of entities required for coordination prior to in-season management actions for both the Fortymile and Chisana caribou herds.

The Council responded to a public comment submitted by AITRC requesting Tribal coordination and also conferred with a representative from TCC during the meeting who confirmed TCC's desire for coordination. Further, the Council felt that the Federal manager for Fortymile caribou should also consult with the Eastern Interior Council members who serve on the Fortymile Caribou HMC.

Eastern Interior Region Proposals and Closure Reviews

WP26-70 – Units 20E, 25A, and 25B black bear; allow sale of handicrafts using any nonedible part except gallbladders

Motion by Member Shockley, seconded by Member Entsminger, to support Proposal WP26-70. *The motion passed unanimously.*

The Council voted to **support WP26-70**, which they submitted. The Council agreed with the OSM analysis and recommendation. The sale of handicrafts using the nonedible parts of black bears is already allowed in Units 1-5 and this proposal just expands it to units in the Eastern Interior Region. The proposal poses no conservation concerns and provides a way for subsistence users to more fully utilize a resource harvested for food. They noted that utilizing as many parts of the animal as possible is a traditional practice and is respectful to the animal. The sale of handicrafts provides limited but nevertheless important income to rural users living in places with limited economic opportunities.

WP26-71 – Unit 12 brown bear; increase harvest limit to 2 bears

Motion by Member Entsminger, seconded by Member Woodruff, to support Proposal WP26-71. *The motion passed 6-2.*

The Council voted to **support WP26-71**, which they submitted. They noted that Unit 12 has a good brown bear population and that increasing the harvest limit is not expected to substantially increase harvest or affect the population. Most hunters target boars and only harvest one bear since it is so much work. The increase would provide more subsistence opportunity and an option to get one additional bear under Federal regulations. People often harvest brown bear in the fall when the bears are berry fed and the meat is good to eat.

The Council further noted that two bears can already be harvested under State regulations so this proposal would only really affect a remote portion of Unit 12 in Wrangell-St. Elias National Park. This proposal aligns State and Federal regulations and reduces regulatory complexity. However, the Council is concerned about the lack of data on bear population trends and emphasized the need for better monitoring.

WP26-72a – Unit 20E brown bear; recognize customary and traditional use for Unit 20E residents

Motion by Member Woodruff, seconded by Member Entsminger, to support Proposal WP26-72a. *The motion passed unanimously.*

The Council voted to **support WP26-72a**, which they submitted. They noted that this is somewhat of a housekeeping proposal and will correct a previous oversight where the C&T of residents of other units was recognized for Unit 20E but not of the people who live in Unit 20E. Council members from Unit 20E noted that although brown bear may not be frequently targeted, they are harvested opportunistically and help contribute to food security, especially as salmon, moose, caribou, and sheep populations decline. Local observations suggest brown bear populations are increasing, and berry-fed bears are really good eating in fall. Bear fat can last all winter and is great for making pie crusts, cookies, and salve. Hides can also be used to make moccasins, hats, and ruffs among other items.

WP26-72b – Unit 20E brown bear; increase harvest limit to 2 bears

Motion by Member Woodruff, seconded by Member BurkBurk, to support Proposal WP26-72b. *The motion passed 6-2.*

The Council voted to **support WP26-72b**, which they submitted. The Council has no conservation concerns about overharvest because most Federal lands in Unit 20E are within Yukon-Charley National Preserve and only accessible by the Yukon River, resulting in low harvest pressure on brown bears. Most brown bear harvest occurs opportunistically during the fall moose season. State regulations already allow a 2-bear harvest limit, so this proposal would align regulations and reduce regulatory complexity. It may encourage people to harvest more brown bears, which might help moose calf survival. However, the Council was concerned about the lack of bear population data and emphasized the need for better monitoring.

WP26-73 – Unit 25B brown bear; increase harvest limit to 2 bears

Motion by Member Woodruff, seconded by Member BurkBurk, to support Proposal WP26-73. *The motion failed 4-4.*

The Council voted to **oppose WP26-73**, which they submitted. After reviewing the analysis, they felt that there was not enough data to make an informed decision, and they did not want to risk unintended conservation consequences. Of the data that was available, the Council pointed out the extremely low reported harvests by local residents, suggesting subsistence users can meet their needs under the current harvest limit of one bear per year. Lastly, they also noted that the State harvest limit is only 1 bear and opposing the proposal maintains alignment with State regulations. Once again, the Council expressed concerns about the lack of bear population data and emphasized the need for better monitoring.

WP26-74 – Unit 12 sheep; recognize customary and traditional use for Chitina and Kenny Lake

Motion by Member Entsminger, seconded by Member Woodruff, to support Proposal WP26-74. *The motion failed on a unanimous vote.*

The Council voted to **oppose WP26-74**. They agreed with the OSM analysis and preliminary conclusion. The analysis did not find information to support a long-term pattern of traditional use of sheep in Unit 12, and there is no evidence of successful sheep harvests in Unit 12 by residents of these communities. These communities were established due to industry and do not have inter-generational patterns of use. The

Council opposed the proposal in line with the positions of the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve Subsistence Resource Commission and AITRC.

WP26-75 – Unit 25D moose; close to non-federally qualified users in Unit 25D remainder

Motion by Member Woodruff, seconded by Member Bassich, to support Proposal WP26-75. *The motion passed 6-2.*

The Council voted to **support WP26-75**, which they submitted. The Council noted there are conservation concerns for moose in the unit. They expressed concern over the lack of recent biological data, noting that the last moose population count was conducted in 2015. There has been an increase in the number of hunters in the unit but no corresponding increase in reported harvested, suggesting the moose population is not doing well. The Council noted that local knowledge also points to lower moose numbers and harvest success. Due to the lack of biological information, paired with stressors of climate change, development, and increased hunting pressure – the Council feels that this area must be managed conservatively to help protect this low-density moose population and protect subsistence uses. They noted that user conflict and high harvest pressure along the Yukon River system is a major problem, and that this proposal may also help reduce that. Local communities have experienced extreme difficulties harvesting moose in recent years and have no other means to feed their families, especially since salmon fishing is closed. This further affects their food security, which is already exacerbated by the Yukon River salmon collapse and the high cost or absence of store-bought food. The potential of transferring hunter pressure upriver into Units 25B/25C is not a concern due to the extremely low harvest pressure there by subsistence users. The Council also noted that the existing longer season for federally qualified subsistence users is not much of a priority despite how it appears on paper because all the readily available moose are taken during the State season, so there are rarely any moose accessible after the State hunt closes. Additionally, the Council noted that the CATG submitted a resolution in support of this proposal.

WP26-76 – Units 20E and 25C sheep; extend closure to all users for 2 years

Motion by Member Bassich, seconded by Member Woodruff, to support Proposal WP26-76 as modified by OSM with additional modification to extend the closure until 2029.

- Motion by Member Bassich, seconded by Member Woodruff, to amend the main motion to eliminate the sunset clause. *The amendment passed 7-1.*

The amended main motion passes 7-1.

The Council voted to **support WP26-76 as modified by OSM with an additional Council modification to remove the sunset clause**. The Council submitted this proposal and continues to support it due to significant conservation concerns for sheep. They recommended modifying the proposal to remove their initial suggested timeframe for the closure to sunset, and instead have the closure remain in place and be reviewed every four years, per the Federal Subsistence Board's (Board) Closure Policy, until the sheep population can support harvest. Survey data indicates a dramatic population decline for sheep in the area since 2015, and it's important for the closure to remain in place longer to allow time for the sheep population to recover, recruitment to improve, and for younger rams to grow.

The Council also supports the OSM modification to include all federal lands in the Gracier Mountain Controlled Use Area. The Council further noted that sheep populations are down statewide and are experiencing numerous stressors. Heavy snowfall years have resulted in high winter mortality of sheep. Rain on snow events three winters in a row created ice layers, making it difficult for sheep to access forage. Windblown ridges further lock-up habitat, preventing feeding. Predation, especially by Golden Eagles, continues to depress sheep populations and hampers recovery.

WP26-77 – Units 12, 20, and 25 wood bison; recognize customary and traditional use

Motion by Member Entsminger, seconded by Member BurkBurk, to defer Proposal WP26-77 until further consultation with Tribes and communities in the region has been conducted. *The motion passed unanimously.*

The Council voted to **defer WP26-77 until further consultation with Tribes and communities in the region has been conducted.** The Council wants to wait to make a recommendation to the Board so they can gather additional input from affected users. The Council submitted this proposal and continues to support recognition of customary and traditional use (C&T) of wood bison in the region. However, after hearing public testimony during their meeting, they would like the opportunity to refine the original proposal by incorporating additional feedback from Tribes and communities. The Council noted that more outreach is needed regarding the intent of the proposal, citing confusion on behalf of some Tribes and the public on whether recognition of C&T indicates support for reintroduction efforts, especially in Unit 12. The Council noted that the reintroduction of wood bison is an on-going divisive issue in the region but that reintroductions efforts being led by the State are distinctly separate and not impacted by a Federal C&T finding. It is the hope of the Council that additional outreach and consultation will help clear up misunderstandings and ultimately result in greater consensus for this proposal among affected users.

WP26-78 – Units 25C and 25D; modify subunit boundaries to align with State

Motion by Member BurkBurk, seconded by Member Woodruff, to support Proposal WP26-78. *The motion passed unanimously.*

The Council voted to **support WP26-78.** They noted that this is a housekeeping proposal to align the unit boundaries with State regulations. It will reduce regulatory complexity and make it easier for everyone.

WCR26-22 – Unit 25D west moose, closed to hunting except by 25D west residents and Birch Creek

Motion by Member Woodruff, seconded by Member BurkBurk, to retain the status quo on Wildlife Closure Review WCR26-22. *The motion passed unanimously.*

The Council voted to **retain status quo on WCR26-22.** They highlighted conservation concerns and a low-density moose population that cannot support higher harvest levels. The Council agreed with the OSM analysis, which noted that this is a longstanding closure, and there is a corresponding Tier II permit hunt under State regulations. They also noted that harvest data is limited and support collaborative efforts to conduct more harvest surveys. The Council referenced public comments that reported increased

numbers of non-federally qualified users hunting below the mean high water mark on State lands. This increase is having detrimental impacts on federally qualified subsistence users by making it more difficult to get a moose, a food source which is of increased importance for food security due to the Yukon River salmon collapse. The Council would like to see more outreach and education to help reduce user conflicts and trespassing issues in the Yukon Flats area during the fall hunting season.

Southcentral Region Crossover Proposals

WP26-24 – Unit 11 brown bear; increase harvest limit to 2 bears

Motion by Member Woodruff, seconded by Member Entsminger, to take no action and defer to the home region but provide a comment to the Board. *The motion passed unanimously.*

The Council voted to **take no action and defer to the Southcentral Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Southcentral Council), and to submit a comment to the Board.** The Council submitted this proposal with the intent to increase subsistence opportunity but ultimately decided to not take action on it, since it is outside of their region. Although the Council deferred to the home region, they would like to note that this proposal would misalign State and Federal regulations. Additionally, the Council agrees with comments submitted by AITRC and the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park Subsistence Resource Commission that if this proposal is adopted, there needs to be improved monitoring of brown bear populations in Unit 11 in coordination with AITRC and other local stakeholders. Brown bear population information is severely lacking, and the Council expressed concerns about increasing the harvest limit without a way to assess the impact to the population. They also noted the Board cannot guarantee monitoring would occur if this proposal were to be adopted.

WP26-25/26 – Unit 13 brown bear; increase harvest limit to 2 bears

Motion by Member Woodruff, seconded by Member Entsminger, to take no action and defer to the home region but provide a comment to the Board. *The motion passed unanimously.*

The Council voted to **take no action and defer to the Southcentral Council, and to submit a comment to the Board.** The Council submitted Proposal WP26-25 but at the time did not realize that Eastern Interior Region does not have C&T for brown bear in Unit 13. Through their comment to the Board, the Council seeks to highlight the need for more data and monitoring of bears in the area. The Council requests that Federal and State managers collaborate with local residents and AITRIC to conduct more robust monitoring of live bears. Currently, almost all the data collected on brown bears comes from dead bears when they are sealed, which has limited utility. The Council noted that Unit 13 is primarily State-managed lands where the harvest limit is already two bears, but increasing the harvest limit without much monitoring is concerning. It is better to be conservative in management approaches when there are a lot of unknowns regarding a resource such as this.

Fortymile Caribou Herd

Jeff Gross, ADF&G Tok Area Biologist, and Angela Yemma, BLM Acting Field Office Manager, provided updates on the biological status and recent state and federal harvests. The Council Karlie

Knight, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Fish and Wildlife Manager, provided an update on the Fortymile Caribou Herd from the Canadian perspective. The Fortymile Caribou HMC met in early 2025, and an updated draft management plan for the herd has been prepared for review. The Council members who serve on the HMC will review and formulate comments to bring back to the Council for discussion at the winter 2026 meeting. Member Woodruff, the current Council representative on the HMC, let the Council know he may not be able to attend future HMC meetings. Members Bassich and Burk and Chair Wright volunteered to be alternates if needed.

Wood Bison

Luke Rogers, ADF&G Wildlife Biologist, provided an update on wood bison reintroduction efforts in the Lower Tanana and Yukon Flats areas. Brooke McDavid, Council Coordinator, reminded the Council that the Board asked the Council to provide comments on the Lower Tanana Wood Bison Management Plan as a precursor to the Board reviewing the plan for potential endorsement.

Motion by Member Burk, seconded by Member Entsminger, to form a working group to review and provide comments on the Lower Tanana Wood Bison Management plan. *The motion passed unanimously.*

Chair Wright and members Burk, Evans, and Shockley agreed to be part of the working group. They will bring comments on the plan back to the Council at their winter 2026 meeting to finalize and forward to the Board.

Annual Report

Federal Subsistence Board FY2024 Annual Report Replies

Brooke McDavid, Council Coordinator, provided an overview of the FY2024 replies from the Board.

Identify Issues for FY2025 Annual Report

The Council identified five topics of their FY2025 Annual Report:

1. Delays in Council letter elevation and lack of engagement on important subsistence issues
2. Inter-jurisdictional collaboration and co-management for rebuilding Yukon River Salmon
3. Add requirement for coordination with Tribal entities to Yukon River fisheries delegation of authority
4. Outreach and education to address hunter conflicts and ethics
5. Highlight key Council comments made regarding the Secretarial Review of the Program

Motion by Member Bassich, seconded by Member Woodruff, to approve these topics for the Council's FY2025 Annual Report. *The motion passed unanimously.*

Other Correspondence:

- Motion by Member Bassich, seconded by Member Shockley, to send a letter to the Board to elevate to the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture (Secretaries) and Alaska Congressional

delegation about concern over U.S. government buying surplus pollock and canned pink salmon.
The motion passed unanimously.

- Motion by Member Shockley, seconded by Member Evans, to write a letter to the Board expressing the Council's frustration with the delays in elevating Council letters to the Secretaries.
The motion passed unanimously.

Future Meeting Dates

The Council confirmed their winter 2026 meeting date and location: March 3-5, 2026, in Fairbanks.

The Council confirmed their fall 2026 meeting date and location: October 6-8, 2026, in Fort Yukon.

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

Other Business

- The Council received an update on correspondence sent since the last meeting and an overview of their 805(c) report from the previous federal fisheries regulatory cycle
- The Council requested to send a member to upcoming NPFMC and Alaska Board of Fisheries meetings

Joint Council Items (Eastern and Western Interior)

Note: *Western Interior Council did not have quorum on December 17 during the joint meeting day. They established quorum the following day during their individual meeting and voted on the actions below at that time.*

North Pacific Fishery Management Council Chum Salmon Bycatch Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)

Krystal Lapp, TCC Natural Resource Policy Analyst, presented an overview of the Chum Salmon Bycatch DEIS alternatives to the Council.

The Councils voted to submit a joint comment letter to NPFMC supporting Alternative 5, Option 1 – In-season corridor cap, Alternative 2 – overall Chum Salmon bycatch cap of 50,000 – 100,000 chum, and Alternative 4 – mandatory Chum Salmon savings measures. These same alternatives were also supported by TCC as noted by Chief Brian Ridley during public comments. The Councils pointed to the importance for unity among subsistence stakeholders at the upcoming NPFMC meeting.

- Eastern Interior: Motion by Member Bassich, seconded by Member Burk, to support the above alternative. *The motion passed unanimously.*
- Western Interior: Motion by Member Honea, seconded by Member Kriska, to support the above alternative. *The motion passed unanimously.*

Alaska Board of Fisheries Proposal Comments

The Councils voted to submit joint comments to the Alaska Board of Fisheries in alignment with the recommendations of the Tri-Council Working Group that reviewed proposals. The Western and Eastern Councils supported Alaska Peninsula Proposals 127-133, 136, 140, 141, and 148 to protect Chinook and Chum salmon. They also supported Statewide Proposals 163-165 concerning trawling and Proposals 170 and 172 concerning hatcheries.

- Eastern Interior: Motion by Member Bassich, seconded by Member Shockley, to support the above proposals. *The motion passed unanimously.*
- Western Interior: Motion by Member Pelkola, seconded by Member Honea, to support the above proposals. *The motion passed unanimously.*

Secretarial Review of the Federal Subsistence Management Program

Sara Taylor, Alaska Region Congressional Affairs and Policy Advisor with the Office of the Secretary of Interior, provided an overview of the Secretarial review. The Councils had a lengthy discussion and voted to submit a joint comment letter to provide feedback on the topics outlined in the scoping documents, as well as to highlight a number of other topics related to federal subsistence management.*

- Eastern Interior: Motion by Member Bassich, seconded by Member Shockley, to submit joint Council comments. *The motion passed unanimously.*
- Western Interior: Motion by Member Simon, seconded by Member Pelkola, to submit joint Council comments. *The motion passed unanimously.*

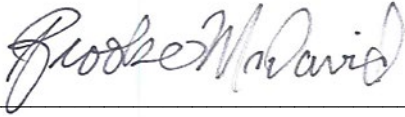
*Note: *Eastern Interior Council also voted to submit additional other topic comments during their individual meeting on December 18. These comments were noted separately in the joint comment letter since Western Interior Council did not have an opportunity to review or discuss them. Please refer to the meeting transcripts for the multiple motions for these additions.*

Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program (FRMP) and Partners for Fisheries Monitoring Program

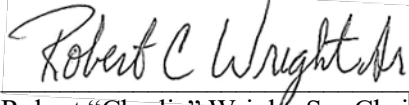
Kristen Morrow, OSM Anthropology Intern, provided updates on FRMP and Partners programs. She gave an overview of Yukon area FRMP proposals, and the Councils provided input on the projects that are seeking funding.

Agency Reports:

- *BLM update on Public Land Orders, State-selected lands, Alaska Native Vietnam Veteran land allotments, and rescission of the Central Yukon land management plan by Kent Slaughter, Acting Fairbanks District Manager*
- *Office of Subsistence Management Update by Lisa Grediagin, OSM Wildlife Division Supervisor*



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



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

These minutes were formally considered by the Eastern Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council and certified by the Chair for accuracy on March 3, 2026, during the Winter 2026 meeting.

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