

NORTH SLOPE SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes

Dr. Tom Albert Conference Hall, Iñisagvik College
Utqiagvik, Alaska
September 16–17, 2025

Invocation

Esther Hugo provided an invocation.

Call to Order, Roll Call, and Quorum Establishment

The meeting was called to order on Tuesday, September 17, 2025, at 9:06 a.m. Council members Wanda Kippi, Peter Williams, Esther Hugo, Leonard Barger, Jenysa Ahmaogak, Quincy Adams, and Chair Brower Frantz were present in person at the meeting. Council member Martha Itta was present via teleconference. With nine of the nine-seated Council members present (Council has one vacant seat), quorum was established.

Attendees:

*Asterisk * identifies if present via teleconference.*

- North Slope Borough: Chastity Olemaun, Todd Sformo, Lucy Leavitt, Robert Aqpiq Jr., Qinugan Roddy, Ralph Kaleak
- Voice of the Arctic Iñupiat: Katie Mumford*
- Native Village of Nuiqsut: Phillip Tony*
- Department of the Interior (DOI): Sara Taylor
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS): Gilbert Castellanos, Holly Carroll, Soch Lor, Matt Sprau, Nathan Graff, George Yaska*, Clayton Merrill*, Jill Klein*
- National Park Service (NPS): Eva Patton*, Kyle Joly*, Marcy Okada*
- Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA): Scott Davis, Jolene John, Wes Parrell
- Bureau of Land Management (BLM): Jonathan Priday*, Donna Wickson*, Beth Mikkow*, Jamie Kasak*
- Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G): Carmen Daggett, Jordan Pruszenski, Joelle Helper*, Aaron Poetter*, Phillip Perry*
- Office of Subsistence Management (OSM): Lisa Grediagin, Tom Plank, Kristen Morrow, Orville Lind, Gisela Chapa, Kevin Foley*, Crystal Leonetti*, Katerina Wessels*, Robbin La Vine*, Brooke McDavid*, Nissa Pilcher*

Review and Adopt Agenda

- Motion by Member Williams, seconded by Member Barger, to adopt the agenda as presented.

The motion **passed** unanimously.

Report from the Secretary's Office

The Council was provided with an opportunity to provide comments on a Federal Subsistence Management Program review initiated by the Department of the Interior. The Council provided comments on the record but expressed their discontent by the lack of information and little notice the Department provided to the Council on such an important topic.

- Motion by Member Adams, seconded by Member Ahmaogak, to approve comments as discussed and to submit the Council's comments for the Department of the Interior's consideration.

The motion **passed** unanimously.

Review and Approve Previous Meeting Minutes:

- Motion by Member Barger, seconded by Member Kippi, to approve the winter 2025 meeting minutes as presented.

The motion **passed** on a unanimous vote.

Council Member and Chair Reports:

Peter Williams of Anaktuvuk Pass shared that he had been in a lot of caribou meetings recently and expressed his concerns about reports of the herd's movement. He stated that the caribou were reported around Nuiqsut and Arctic Village and that the herd was starting to move towards Beaver, away from Anaktuvuk Pass. He concluded his report by stating that there were two moose harvested in Anaktuvuk Pass and one muskox sighted around Tulugak Lake.

Esther Hugo of Anaktuvuk Pass added to Member Williams' report and stated that the summer was very hot with some days soaring to 90 degrees. She also shared that some of the community's young hunters were able to hunt sheep and shared a lot of what they harvested. Member Hugo expressed her worry about the fall hunting season as people had not spotted any stragglers (caribou) as of the date of the meeting. She also explained that the situation in her community is very tense after making the decision not to send (designated) hunters to the Nuiqsut area to harvest caribou. She shared her grief for the loss of food, customs, and tradition, as caribou get diverted away from her community by the pipeline and sport hunters. She also expressed her frustration about the fact that people don't seem to believe them when they say that sport hunters are deflecting caribou or hunting carelessly without concern for how they impact others, more specifically the Nunamiut Peoples. Member Hugo also clarified that the two moose harvested in her community were for ceremonial purposes due to a death in the community. She further elaborated by explaining that traditionally, caribou is served but moose was the only fresh meat available to them. Her report concluded by stating that Arctic char and grayling were not as abundant as expected and she was not able to harvest many *appiks* (salmonberry) over the summer but that blueberries were abundant.

Leonard Barger of Point Hope was happy to report that whaling was successful over the summer with 13 whales harvested and only one lost as the ice caved where the whale had been beached. Member Barger also shared that among all the whaling crews 63 belugas were harvested in the springtime. He said that State Troopers were giving citations for harvesting caribou without a license and stated that getting a hunting license is a barrier for people in small communities like Point Hope who may not have the means to do so. He went on to share that *aqpik* and blueberry season was great this summer. He concluded his report by saying it is part of their tradition to help others in the North Slope community. Member Barger concluded his report by sharing there were less muskoxen sighted this year in the Point Hope area.

Martha Itta of Nuiqsut reported that at the time of the meeting, their fall hunting season was in full swing, and people were busy whaling, and hunting for moose and caribou. She also reported a lot of changes to the land, many of which have spanned over the last 30 – 40 years and they have been forced to adapt to continue their subsistence practices. Member Itta also explained that caribou are abundant in Nuiqsut but is aware that their migration pattern has changed because of infrastructure from the oil and gas industry, mainly pipelines. She expressed her concern with the Willow project and the associated infrastructure close to Atqasuk and Teshekpuk Lake. She stated that the caribou are following the pipeline going down to Willow but not crossing the pipeline and cutting off Anaktuvuk Pass. She also advised other Council members to be engaged and attend community meetings with the BLM to voice their concerns about the impacts to subsistence resources and their communities. Member Itta concluded her report by sharing that she has sighted one muskox in the area but has heard that there's more muskox across the river.

Wanda Kippi of Atqasuk reported she spent most of her time out at camp. She went on to share that *nigliq* (goose) hunting was successful in the springtime and that her grandkids caught *sulukpaugaq* (grayling) at the creeks. In the spring she also observed several *amaguqs* (wolves) activity and over the fall she observed *aklaq* (bear) activity and seeing a *qavvik* (wolverine). She attributed the low presence of caribou around her hunting camp to the presence of predators and stated that caribou (mostly females with young bulls) eventually arrived around the end of August and first part of September. She recalled that the caribou were not as abundant as she remembers them to be. She went on to note that the river was unusually high this season from all the rain and that her son harvested a rock ptarmigan, which is unusual for her area. She concluded by sharing that she had not seen any muskox but had heard others sight them near Topagaruk River.

Jenysa Ahmaogak of Wainwright reported that their spring was a little different with only three Bowhead whales harvested. Despite the low harvest of whales, Member Ahmaogak shared the summer harvest was plentiful with walrus and seal, and her community harvested 23 belugas. Fall caribou harvests were in full swing at the time of the meeting, and she shared that City of Wainwright hosted its first fishing derby for grayling. Overall fish and furbearers were abundant, and *aqipiks* bloomed in the summer despite the rain and warmer than usual temperatures. She concluded her report by stating that blueberries were abundant and that only a few people in Wainwright tried getting muskox permits.

Ernest Nageak, Jr. of Utqiagvik shared he had not observed many caribou or bird die offs in the year but that there were many foxes in town and several attacks/bites reported. Member Nageak also shared his

concern for the safety of his relatives in Kaktovik due to increased polar bear activity and expressed the importance of polar bear patrols to ensure the safety of the community. He stated they had a good whaling season with about a dozen whales harvested and conveyed his gratitude to the Borough and the Alaska Migratory Bird Co-Management Council for pushing back the 30-day migratory bird closures as a result of late thaw over the last few years. He went on to explain that spring/summer migratory bird harvests are the primary harvest for the people of Utqiagvik, and that traditional closures (effective June 15th) are a barrier to subsistence because of late snow. Member Nageak also shared that the ice stuck around this year enabling him to harvest an *oogruk* (seal) and *aiviq* (walrus). He also noted high water levels in the river and that because of the extended period of ice in the ocean, there were not that many salmon around, but that many people have dried whitefish. He said he was able to secure a muskox hunt permit last year, but he could not fulfill it. Member Nageak also encouraged the State and Federal manager to modify the permitting system to improve harvest success rates for muskoxen. He also elaborated on the fact that people have to travel long distances to hunt and tend to hunt opportunistically as a result. He concluded by advocating for industry people to help the people of Anaktuvuk Pass to cover the cost of freighting caribou meat back from Nuiqsut or pay people to monitor airlines for wanton waste. He agreed that there has been a surge in sport hunters going up north but noted that there is no oversight over their activity. He concluded his report by stating that there are too many “regulators” that do not work together and that is an issue that needs to be addressed.

Quincy Adams of Utqiagvik shared that the year has been plentiful. Starting with the springtime, Member Adams stated that his crew landed seven Bowhead whales and lost seven. Over the summer, his crew also harvested six belugas. He stated that seals and walrus were plentiful and that many people successfully harvested both over the season. Member Adams shared that people in Utqiagvik were starting to go caribou hunting and fishing for the fall. Member Adams had just returned from a caribou hunting trip and shared he was able to harvest three very healthy young bulls, harvested 30 whitefish, two burbot and a pike. He also reported sighting about 13 muskox and a couple of black bears on the Chipp River while hunting.

Chair Brower Frantz of Utqiagvik shared that caribou numbers were above average and reported abundant populations of white-fronted, snow, and Canada geese around. He also shared that whitefish fishing went well, and no mold issues had been reported. He stated that salmon numbers were lower this year. He went on to share that there were many reports of predators, thus indicating larger than usual numbers. Chair Frantz also reported that moose, bearded seal, and walrus were abundant and overall, a good harvest year for the area. Chair Frantz has been tracking area reports of muskoxen, and he observed few during a moose hunting trip. He concluded by reporting sightings of porpoise and an increase in orca sightings.

Council Member Service Awards:

- Council member *Esther Sanauraq Hugo*, was recognized for eight years of service on the Council
- Council member *Martha Amy Ruth Itta*, was recognized for six years of service on the Council
- Council member *Peter Earl Williams*, was recognized for five years of service on the Council

Public Testimony:

Lucy Leavitt, a resident of Utqiagvik, shared her experiences with about the limited opportunities to harvest muskoxen in Unit 26A. Ms. Leavitt stated that in addition to the limited number of State and Federal permits available to harvest muskoxen, there is a very low harvest success due to the vast landscape and long distances that hunters must travel to encounter muskoxen. Ms. Leavitt expressed her desires to see a different permitting system that would improve the hunter success rate and inquired about the process to modify federal harvest regulations for the species.

Council Training:

Gisela Chapa, OSM Council Coordinator, provided the Council training on Council Member Roles and Responsibilities, and How to Make, Amend, and Rescind a Motion.

Action Items:

Wildlife Proposals

Tom Plank, OSM Wildlife Biologist, and Kristen Morrow, OSM Anthropologist, provided an overview of Federal wildlife statewide, regional, and crossover proposals and closure reviews to the Council.

WP26-01, Move authority delegated through letters into unit-specific regulations

Motion by Member Nageak, seconded by Member Barger, to support WP26-01 as modified by OSM. The Council stated that the proposal will reduce the administrative burden on Federal land managers. Additionally, the Council shared the change will not have an impact on subsistence uses.

The motion **passed** unanimously.

WP26-65, Unit 23 muskox, establish a muskox hunt in Unit 23 remainder

Motion by Member Barger, seconded by Member Kippi, to support WP26-65. The Council believes it is important to support subsistence users in the adjacent regions represented by other Regional Advisory Councils since the Western Arctic Caribou Herd (WACH) has declined in population size, and this opportunity would provide supplemental meat to Unit 23 residents. Additionally, the Council stated that population estimates are needed since there is no data available since 2009.

The motion **passed** unanimously.

WP26-66 Unit 23 wolf, modify season and increase harvest limits

Motion by Member Nageak, seconded by Member Barger, to support WP26-66 as modified by OSM. The Council supports this proposal due to declines in the WACH.

The motion **passed** unanimously.

WP26-67 Unit 23 muskrat, extend trapping season

Motion by Member Ahmaogak, seconded by Member Nageak, to support WP26-67. The Council supported extending the season, which would provide federally qualified subsistence users with increased harvest opportunities.

The motion **passed** unanimously.

WP26-68 Unit 23 ptarmigan, increase harvest and possession limits and modify season dates

Motion by Member Barger, seconded by Member Kippi, to support WP26-68. The Council shared their desire to assist their neighboring region with harvesting more subsistence foods as they're facing food insecurity due to the declining WACH population.

The motion **passed** unanimously.

WP26-69 Unit 23 mink/weasel, extend season to close April 15

Motion by Member Williams, seconded by Member Barger, to support WP26-69. The Council indicated the proposal would align State and Federal regulations and provide more subsistence opportunities to Unit 23 residents.

The motion **passed** unanimously.

Wildlife Closure Reviews

Mr. Plank and Ms. Morrow provided an overview of the wildlife closure reviews (WCR) to the Council.

WCR26-25 – Unit 26C, Muskox harvest closure except by Kaktovik residents

Motion by Member Nageak, seconded by Member Ahmaogak, to adopt the proposal as modified by OSM, which proposes retaining the closure but modifying the closure regulatory language to clarify that the hunt is open to federally qualified subsistence users. The Council stated that the proposed modification would not reduce or change opportunities for residents of Kaktovik since no other communities currently have a customary and traditional use determination for muskox in the closure area. The Council noted that muskox harvests are a good opportunity for residents of Kaktovik.

The motion **passed** unanimously.

WCR26-18: Unit 23, Sheep harvest closure to non-federally qualified users in the Baird Mountains

Motion by Member Williams, seconded by Member Adams, to retain the closure. The Council stated that the closure is necessary for the conservation of the sheep population. Additionally, the Council stated that rescinding the closure could reduce hunting opportunities for federally qualified subsistence users and promote competition for harvest with non-federally qualified users.

The motion **passed** unanimously.

WCR26-45 – Unit 23, Caribou hunting closure to non-federally qualified users around Noatak

Motion by Member Adams, seconded by Member Williams, to retain the status quo. The Council stated that retaining the closure will benefit subsistence users as it reduces caribou harvest by non-federally qualified users and prevents user conflict and competition for limited resources.

The motion **passed** unanimously.

Attending NWARAC meeting

Motion by Member Nageak, seconded by Member Kippi, for Member Barger, or Member Williams as an alternate, to attend the fall 2025 Northwest Arctic Subsistence Regional Advisory Council meeting in Kotzebue. The Council stated that it is important for Member Barger to attend the Northwest Arctic Council meetings as a resident of Point Hope, community located in Unit 23, which spans the Northwest Arctic Region and North Slope Region.

The motion **passed** unanimously.

Annual Report

Federal Subsistence Board (Board) FY2024 Annual Report Reply Summary

Gisela Chapa, Council Coordinator, provided an overview of the Board's replies to the Council's FY-2024 Annual Report topics.

Identify Issues for FY2025 Annual Report

Motion made by Member Nageak, seconded by Member Barger, to approve the following items to be included in the FY2025 Annual Report to the Board:

1. The effects of guides, transporters, commercial operators, and fly-in hunters on caribou migration

The motion **passed** unanimously.

Future Meeting Dates

The Council confirmed their winter 2026 meeting date and location: February 24–25, in Anchorage (non-hub community for the North Slope Region) and Utqiagvik as a back-up location.

The Council confirmed their fall 2026 meeting date and location: October 1 – 2, in Utqiagvik.

Fisheries Programs Updates:

Ms. Morrow provided the following updates related to the Federal Fisheries Programs:

1. An overview of the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program funding process. Ms. Morrow also provided an overview of the projects that were proposed for the northern region for the upcoming funding cycle.
2. An update on the Partners for Fisheries Monitoring Program
3. An update on the upcoming 2027-2029 Fisheries Regulatory Cycle

Agency Reports:

1. 2025 ADF&G Unit 26A Update presented by Carmen Daggett, Wildlife Biologist for the North Slope
2. 2025 ADF&G Unit 26B and 26C updates presented by Jordan Pruszenski, Assistant Area Biologist for Northeast Alaska
3. Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve Fall 2025 Update presented by Marcy Okada, Subsistence Coordinator
4. Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) Summary of Activities presented by Clayton Merrill, Subsistence Coordinator for Yukon Flats NWR
5. Monitoring of Steller's and Spectacled Eiders at Utqiagvik, Alaska, presented by Nathan Graff, Wildlife Biologist for USFWS
6. Bureau of Land Management introduction of Jonathan Priday, new Law Enforcement District Chief of the Arctic and Fairbanks Districts
7. Arctic Council for Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF) Working Group Update presented by Gilbert Castellanos, United States Head of Delegation to the CAFF Working Group
8. OSM Fall 2025 Update, presented by Lisa Grediagin, Supervisory Wildlife Biologist
9. OSM Tribal Government and ANCSA Corporation Consultation Engagement in the Federal Subsistence Management Program presented by Orville Lind, Native Liaison

Other Business:

805c Report:

Ms. Chapa provided a summary of the 805(c) Report outlining actions taken by the Board on fisheries proposals and closure reviews impacting residents of the northern region.

Council Correspondence

Ms. Chapa also provided an update on the following correspondence:

1. The Council's comments on three Alaska Board of Game proposals considered during the Statewide proposal cycle.

2. A letter shared by the Chair of the Western Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council notifying the Council of BLM's intent to revoke Public Land Order 5150 and 5180 in the North Yukon River.

Additionally, the Council voted to send the following correspondence:

1. A letter to the BLM Arctic District Manager with a request to increase the number of Federal muskoxen permits (from five to 10) issued in Unit 26A. The Council stated that the low harvest success of muskoxen warrants the additional permits issued to increase subsistence opportunity.

Motion by Member Nageak, seconded by Member Williams, to send the identified correspondence.

The motion **passed** unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:21 p.m. on September 17, 2025.

Signature on file

Gisela Chapa, DFO
DOI Office of Subsistence Management

Signature on file

Brower Frantz, Chair
North Slope Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

These minutes were approved by the North Slope Subsistence Regional Advisory Council at its February 24 – 26, 2026 meeting in Utqiagvik, AK.

A version of these meeting minutes was certified by the Chair for accuracy January 7, 2026.

A more detailed report of this meeting, copies of the transcripts, and meeting handouts are available upon request. Call Gisela Chapa at 1-800-478-1456 or 907-310-6129 or email gisela_chapa@ios.doi.gov.