

SEWARD PENINSULA SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes

Grand Hall, UAF Northwest Campus
Nome, Alaska
March 30 – 31, 2026

Invocation

Elmer Seetot, Jr. provided an invocation.

Call to Order, Roll Call and Quorum Establishment

The meeting was called to order on Tuesday, March 30, 2026, at 9:08 a.m. Council members Kelsi Ivanoff, Elmer Seetot, Jr., Martin Aukongak, and Chair Louis H. Green, Jr. were present in person at the meeting. Council members Ronald Kirk and Robert Moses were present via teleconference. With six of the six-seated Council members present (Council has four vacant seats), quorum was established.

Attendees

*Asterisk * identifies if present via teleconference.*

- Kawerak, Inc: Lisa Ellana*
- Reindeer Herders Association: Nathan Baring*
- National Park Service (NPS): Jeanette Koelsch, Letty Hughes, Nicole Braem, Ken Adkisson*, Kyle Joly*, Victoria Florey*, Dr. Elizabeth Bella*
- Bureau of Land Management (BLM): Dr. Brent Vickers*, Craig Townsend*, Jake Villapando*, Donna Bach*
- U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS): George Yaska*
- Office of Subsistence Management (OSM): Jarred Stone, Justin Koller, Gisela Chapa, Dr. Hannah Voorhees*, Tom Plank*, Katerina Wessels*, Grace Cochon*, Robbin La Vine*, Jason Roberts*, Lisa Grediagin*, Brian Ubelaker*, Janel Day*, Cory Graham*
- Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G): Sarah Henslee, Alicia Carson, Luke Henslee, Alex Hanson*, Perry Phillip*
- Sitka Conservation Society: Heather Bauscher
- University of Alaska Fairbanks: Todd Brinkman*
- Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program (ANSEP): Ivy Bahnke, Roselyn Paniptchuk, Newelo Hoogendorn, Sage Gregg, Renee Brown, Amelia Richards, Sara James, Michael Meloridor, Kacey Miller, Jimmy Nidevity, Alora Stasenko
- General Public: Charles Ellanna*, Marie Katcheak*, Gayla Hoseth*

Election of Officers

- Louis H. Green was elected Chair
- Martin A. Aukongak was elected Vice-Chair
- Kelsi M. Ivanoff was elected Secretary

Review and Adopt Agenda

- Motion by Member Ivanoff, seconded by Member Aukongak, to adopt the agenda as presented.

The motion **passed** unanimously.

Review and Approve Previous Meeting Minutes

- Motion by Member Seetot, seconded by Member Ivanoff, to approve the Winter 2025 meeting minutes.

The motion **passed** unanimously

- Motion by Member Ivanoff, seconded by Member Seetot, to approve the Fall 2025 meeting minutes with edits as discussed.

The motion **passed** unanimously

Council Member Reports

Ronald Kirk from Stebbins stated that subsistence activities in the region during the fall were generally successful. Community members reported a productive moose-hunting period, with many households able to meet their needs. Berry harvests were also strong, and the gathering of blackberries was notably good. Member Kirk stated that fishing, however, was less abundant than usual. Catches were minimal, and overall fish availability did not meet typical seasonal expectations. Despite this shortfall, the community experienced a positive subsistence year overall, with ample success in land-based harvests.

Robert Moses from Golovin shared that conditions were generally positive and conducive to subsistence activities. Community members successfully harvested caribou, with many obtaining their animals around the Paragon area. Trapping, particularly for wolverines, was productive, and several wolves were taken by trappers who travelled their trap lines by snowmachine. Member Moses added that crabbing efforts were mixed due to the thickness of the ice, which limited access until a strong east wind cleared the ice from the area. He added that the moose season was notably successful, with many households able to harvest moose. Likewise, berry harvests were strong this year, providing an important source of subsistence foods. Member Moses concluded his report by sharing that overall fishing opportunities were limited. Salmon fishing during the summer was poorer than in previous years, continuing a downward trend in salmon returns. Trout arrived later than normal, tomcods were also late, and a few smelt were taken.

Kelsi Ivanoff from Unalakleet shared that trout fishing started later than usual due to an extended cold winter, but that the same cold conditions contributed to an excellent smelt year, with strong harvests reported. She shared that some residents headed out caribou hunting, despite the long travel required, since animals remained far from Unalakleet. Member Ivanoff stated that few people harvested moose over the winter despite hunting opportunities available. She concluded her report by sharing that for the first time in many years, they had stable ice conditions that persisted throughout the season. The improved ice allowed community members to set subsistence crab pots for the first time in roughly ten years, offering renewed access to this resource.

Elmer Seetot, Jr. from Brevig Mission stated that from late February through early March, the region experienced sustained cold weather. Trapping continued during this period, with several wolverines taken, although not in large numbers. Member Seetot shared that the Bering Sea has remained frozen since November, thus creating stable ice conditions beneficial for Port Clarence Bay. As an important estuary and deep-water port, Port Clarence Bay serves as the entry point for fish moving into Imuruk Basin, the Kuzitrin River, and the surrounding wetland system. Member Seetot also noted that despite its ecological importance, the area has received limited research attention from state and federal agencies. He also noted that caribou activity increased in several areas, including Igloo, Igloo Creek, American Creek, and surrounding areas. He stressed the significance of this occurrence as it marked the first time in many years that caribou have been seen in these specific locations, which historically supported reindeer herding. He also shared that the strong presence of lichen in the area demonstrates long-term habitat regrowth, even though it takes over 50 years for lichen to recover. Additionally, Member Seetot shared that caribou was harvested near Davidson Landing, suggesting movement through the Bendeleben Mountains. He remarked that caribou entering from the north rarely travel through the flats or Davidson Landing, indicating a shift in typical migratory patterns. He also shared that wolf activity appeared more concentrated to the north. He concluded his report by stating that ice fishing opportunities for saffron, cod, and smelt were limited due to the extreme cold and that communities were looking ahead to spring as conditions change.

Martin Aukongak from Golovin supported Member Moses' report and reiterated that they had a good winter for trapping.

Chair Louis Green, Jr. from Nome shared that moose hunting was brief and intensive. In the area observed, the season lasted only three days, and in Unit 22C near Nome, it closed after about two days. He shared that the moose population remained low, and with many hunters actively searching, the harvest window typically lasts only three to four days. He elaborated on the challenges this creates for families, given high fuel costs—around \$6.30 per gallon—and the need to travel farther to find an animal. For the same reasons, Chair Green stated that Unit 22C has become a preferred area simply because it requires less travel, but this pressure leads to significant overharvest, with approximately 40 moose taken despite a target of about 16–17, raising questions about long-term sustainability of the moose population. Chair Green also noted a strong winter crab season, supported by good ice conditions. Many community members reported successful commercial crabbing efforts. Berry harvests in the fall were also good, with strong salmonberries gathering along the Teller Road. Additionally, Chair Green shared recent reports of caribou located farther south or southwest, aligning with observations from other communities. He concluded his report with hope for a productive harvest of waterfowl and marine mammals as the season progresses.

Public Testimony

Kasey Miller, Director of the ANSEP Acceleration Academy program based in Nome introduced a cohort of ten Acceleration Academy students. Ms. Miller stated that several of the students of the cohort are active subsistence users and active hunters in their families, and stressed the importance of this experience, that is relevant to their current studies, and to help them find their voice on issues that impacts their lands, their people, as well as their family.

Amelia Richards, ANSEP student, introduced herself to the Council and stated that as a hunter herself, she believes it is important to ensure that populations of subsistence resources, such as caribou, are thriving through the implementation and enforcement of hunting and fishing regulations.

Alora Stasenکو, ANSEP student, introduced herself to the Council and asked for an explanation of State and Federal regulations. The Council and participating staff provided additional information to Ms. Stasenکو regarding dual management in Alaska.

Action Items

Call for Federal Fish and Shellfish Regulatory Proposals

Jarred Stone, OSM Fisheries Biologist informed the Council about the Federal fish and shellfish regulatory call for proposals for the 2027 – 2029 regulatory years.

- Motion by Member Ivanoff, seconded by Member Aukongak, to submit a proposal eliminating the time and date restrictions on subsistence fishing on the Unalakleet River, in the Norton Sound/Port Clarence Area, and allow subsistence fishing for salmon without date and time restrictions during open subsistence fishing periods.

The motion **passed** unanimously

Deferred Wildlife Proposals

Brian Ubelaker, OSM Wildlife Biologist provided an overview of deferred wildlife proposal WP26-53, which requests to modify season dates for caribou in Units 22B and 22D. Nathan Baring, Program Director of the Reindeer Herder's Association, provided an update on the status of the reindeer herd of the late Council member Thomas Gray.

- Motion by Member Ivanoff, seconded by Member Aukongak, to defer wildlife proposal WP26-53 to the next wildlife regulatory cycle until any State regulations are codified.

The motion **passed** unanimously

Wildlife Special Actions

WSA26-01, Western Arctic Caribou

Tom Plank, OSM Wildlife Biologist, provided an overview of Wildlife Special Action Request WSA26-01.

- Motion by Member Ivanoff, seconded by Member Seetot, to support WSA26-01 with a modification to change the caribou harvest limit to four bulls and zero cows per year, per hunter, in Units 22, 23, and 26A west of the Colville River drainage, upstream from the Nuka River, and drainages of the Chukchi Sea, south and west of and including the Kuk and Kugrua River drainages.

The Council stresses that the Western Arctic Caribou Herd (WACH) population is in dire condition, and eliminating cow harvests will help ensure the herd's future viability. The Council received a concerning report indicating that 4,000 cows are estimated to be taken by hunters each year, while the herd's current status does not support any harvestable surplus of females. Conserving cows is vital to the future of the herd. The Council further emphasized the need to reduce other causes of mortality, such as predation, but concluded that human harvest is the only factor users can control to reduce cow mortality; therefore, prohibiting cow harvest is a necessary measure. The Council acknowledges that this change in regulations will be an adjustment that ultimately benefits federally qualified subsistence users in the long-term and four bulls should still provide sufficient subsistence opportunities.

The motion **passed** unanimously

WSA26-02, closure of Federal public lands in Unit 22 to caribou hunting by non-federally qualified users for the 2026-2028 regulatory cycle

- Motion by Member Ivanoff, seconded by Member Moses, to support WSA26-02.

The Council stated that it is important to provide a subsistence priority to support subsistence users within the impacted region due to the decline of the WACH.

The motion **passed** unanimously

National Park Service Proposed Rule 1024-AE96

Dr. Elizabeth Bella, Environmental Planning and Compliance Team Lead, provided the Council with a brief overview of the Proposed Rule (PR). The Council had an extensive discussion on the PR, which centered around how the passage of this PR would impact subsistence users, the complexity of the PR, and concern over the comment deadline.

- Motion by Member Ivanoff, seconded by Member Seetot, to submit a letter requesting an extension to the comment period for the PR.

The motion **passed** unanimously.

- Motion by Member Ivanoff, seconded by Member Moses, to submit comments on the proposed rule outlining the Council's discussion.

The motion **passed** unanimously.

Call for Alaska Board of Game Proposals

Gisela Chapa, OSM Council Coordinator, informed the Council about the Alaska Board of Game (BOG) call for proposals for the Western Arctic/Western and the Interior and Eastern Arctic Regions, and the proposal submission deadline of May 1, 2026. The Council voted to submit the following BOG proposals:

- Motion by Member Ivanoff, seconded by Member Seetot, to submit a proposal extending the muskoxen hunting season in Units 22B, D, E and 23, the portion of Seward Peninsula west of and including the Buckland River drainage, to March 30.

The motion ***passed*** unanimously

- Motion by Member Ivanoff, seconded by Member Kirk, to submit a proposal allowing bear baiting in Unit 22, in the harvest of brown and black bears.

The motion ***passed*** unanimously

- Motion by member Aukongak, seconded by Member Ivanoff, to submit a proposal allowing the sale and/or barter of brown bear gall bladders in Units 22A, B, D, and E.

The motion ***passed*** unanimously

- Motion by Member Ivanoff, seconded by Member Moses, to submit a proposal establishing and implementing an Intensive Management plan in Units 22, 23, and the southwestern portion of 26A, for the WACH.

The motion ***passed*** unanimously

- Motion by Member Ivanoff, seconded by Member Kirk, to submit a proposal modifying the current caribou bag limit in Units 22, 23, and the southwestern portion of 26A to four bulls per regulatory year and to close the cow caribou hunt.

The motion ***passed*** unanimously

- Motion by Member Ivanoff, seconded by Member Aukongak, to submit a proposal closing nonresident caribou hunts in Unit 22.

The motion ***passed*** unanimously

The Council also discussed and voted to submit the following correspondence:

- Motion by Member Ivanoff, seconded by Member Seetot, to submit a letter to BLM, NPS, and USFWS requesting consideration or allowance of predator control on Federal lands to support WACH recovery.

Review and Approve FY2025 Annual Report

Ms. Chapa presented the information contained in the Council's FY2025 draft Annual Report for the Council's review and approval.

- Motion by Member Ivanoff, seconded by Member Kirk, to approve the Annual Report as discussed.

The motion **passed** unanimously

Future Meeting Dates

The Council confirmed their fall 2026 meeting dates and location: October 14 – 15, in Nome.*

- Motion by Member Ivanoff, seconded by Member Aukongak, requesting a Joint Council meeting with the Northwest Arctic Subsistence Regional Advisory Council to discuss caribou concerns with the understanding the selected meeting dates and location would need to be adjusted.

The motion **passed** unanimously

The Council selected their winter 2027 meeting date and locations: February 17 – 18, in Nome.*

The Council selected their fall 2027 meeting date and location: September 22 – 23, in Unalakleet.

** Meeting dates and location may be subject to change.*

Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program and Partners for Fisheries Monitoring Program Updates

Jarred Stone, OSM acting State Liaison, and Dr. Hannah Voorhees, OSM Cultural Anthropologist, provided an overview of the Fisheries Resource Monitoring and the Partners for Fisheries Monitoring Programs to the Council. Member Ivanoff volunteered to help develop the Priority Information Needs (PIN) for the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program for the Northern Region.

Youth Engagement in the Federal Subsistence Management Program

Heather Bauscher, Fisheries Community Engagement Specialist for the Sitka Conservation Society and an adjunct professor at University of Alaska Southeast, provided information to the Council on youth engagement initiatives developed in Southeast Alaska. The presentation included a discussion of the four-week practicum course and community workshops to increase youth and community participation in subsistence management, discussions around funding and partnership models, and response to the Council's questions about adapting the program for the Seward Peninsula region.

Agency Reports

- *March 2026 Moose Update for Units 22B and C* provided by Sara Henslee, Area Wildlife Biologist for ADF&G, and Alicia Carson, Assistant Area Biologist for ADF&G
- *Status of Unalakleet River Weir and Salmon Count Efforts* provided by Luke Henslee, Assistant Area Management Biologist for Norton Sound Fisheries for ADF&G
- *Intensive Management Plans* provided by Sara Henslee and Alex Hanson, ADF&G

- *Study on Hunter Ammunition in Alaska* provided by Todd Brinkman, University of Alaska Fairbanks Professor of Wildlife Ecology
- *OSM Winter 2026 Update* presented by Justin Koller, Regulations Division Supervisor

Other Business

Council correspondence update

Ms. Chapa provided an update to the Council with the following correspondence:

- Council comments on the review of the Federal Subsistence Management Program (FSMP) undertaken by the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture.

Land status on Federal Subsistence Management Program regulatory maps

Ms. Chapa shared a request from the Federal Subsistence Board to solicit feedback from Regional Advisory Councils regarding a request from the Eastern Interior Council to the Board to incorporate Native corporation lands and allotments on the maps that are used in the Federal regulation books to reduce trespass issues in their region.

The Council expressed support for increased land status information to aid hunters and prevent trespassing. The Council noted that current maps only show Federal ownership and that additional information would help hunters identify private lands, ultimately emphasizing the importance of hunter awareness and the need for users to research specific rules for different corporations.

Upcoming opportunities for public engagement

Ms. Chapa provided an update to the Council and the attending public about important opportunities for the public to be involved in the Federal Subsistence Management Program. She informed them of:

- Upcoming public hearing for Wildlife Special Action Requests WSA26-01 and WSA26-02
- The process to request Tribal and ANCSA consultations
- Upcoming Federal Subsistence Board wildlife regulatory meeting

The meeting was adjourned at 4:50 p.m. on March 31, 2026

Gisela Chapa, DFO
DOI Office of Subsistence Management

CERTIFIED by the Chair for accuracy on 6/26/26

Louis H. Green, Jr., Chair
Seward Peninsula Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

This document is a DRAFT version of the meeting minutes that has been certified by the Council Chair. These minutes will be formally considered and approved by the Seward Peninsula Subsistence Regional Advisory Council at its October 2026 meeting in Nome, AK. Any corrections or notations will be incorporated in the minutes at that meeting.

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.