

SOUTHCENTRAL ALASKA
SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL
Meeting Minutes

Dimond Center Hotel, Anchorage, Alaska
March 15, 2023

Invocation

Gloria Stickwan gave an invocation.

Call to Order, Roll Call and Quorum Establishment

Chair Greg Encelewski called the meeting to order on Wednesday, March 15, 2023, at 9:01 am. Chair Encelewski and Council members Edward Holsten, Michael Opheim, Diane Selanoff, Gloria Stickwan, Andrew McLaughlin, Dennis Zadra, Hope Roberts, and Heath Kocan were present in person. Council member Donna Wilson participated via teleconference. Donna Claus was excused, and Angela Totemoff was absent. With ten of twelve seated Council members present (Council has one vacant seat) quorum was established.

Attendees participating:

Office of Subsistence Management (OSM): *Jessica Gill, Robbin La Vine, Brian Ubelaker, Justin Koller, Jason Roberts, Katya Wessels, Orville Lind, Sue Detwiler*
Kenai National Wildlife Refuge, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS): *Todd Eskelin**
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service: *Dave Wigglesworth, Jill Klein*
Bureau of Land Management (BLM): *Caroline Ketron, Jacob Masterfield, Chris McKee*
Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA): *Glenn Chen**
National Park Service (NPS), Anchorage: *Victoria Florey, Grant Hilderbrand, Kim Jochum**
Denali National Park and Preserve, NPS: *Amy Craver*, Pat Owen**
Wrangell St. Elias National Park and Preserve, NPS: *Dave Sarafin, Barbara Cellarius*, Kyle Cutting**
U.S. Forest Service: *Greg Risdahl*
Chugach National Forest, U.S. Forest Service: *David Pearson, Dan Schmalzer, Heather Thamm, Jordan Rymer, Ruth D'Amico**
Alaska Department of Fish and Game: *Mark Burch*
Ahtna Intertribal Resource Commission: *Dan Gorze*
Native Village of Eyak: *Matte Piche*
University of Alaska Fairbanks: *Marina Alcantar**
Members of the Public: *Toisan Deborah Smith, Judy Caminer*

*Indicates participation via teleconference.

Review and Adopt Agenda

Motion by Member McLaughlin, seconded by Member Opheim, to adopt the agenda with the following additions:

New Business item M: Department of the Interior (DOI) Update on OSM

Old Business item B: Delegations of Authority

The motion passed unanimously.

Election of Officers

Richard Greg Encelewski was elected Chair.

Andrew McLaughlin was elected Vice-Chair.

Michael Opheim was elected Secretary.

Review and Approve Previous Meeting Minutes

Motion by Member McLaughlin, seconded by Member Holsten, to approve the Fall 2022 meeting minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Council Member Reports

Diane Selanoff of Valdez reported that humpies (Pink Salmon) and kings (Chinook Salmon) were low this year. She expressed concerns about out-of-town bear hunters trespassing. There were not a lot of harvested moose. A moth species has been impacting local blueberries. Shellfish has been good. There is anticipation with the upcoming herring arrival.

Heath Kocan of Cordova reported that people that got moose tags were able to fill their tickets. He hopes that silver (Coho Salmon) fishing will improve.

Michael Opheim of Seldovia reported that rabbits are in decline this year. Moose were brought down to the road because of heavy snow. He saw a cow with an injured leg and another heavy with a calf. He noted there were not too many coyotes and wolves have moved down around Nanwalek. People are doing good on winter kings (Chinook Salmon). There have been a lot of ducks and swans overwintering between Crone Bay and Seldovia. Two nanny goats were harvested by non-local hunters.

Dennis Zadra of Cordova reported that the community had a lot of snow early in the winter, then ice. Deer population was good before the ice, but he thinks they will be ok. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game forecast for kings (Chinook Salmon) was 15% above the 10-year average and there is a good chance to see kings (Chinook Salmon) on the Copper River. The Sockeye Salmon forecast is 9% below the 10-year average. The Gulkana Hatchery has been seeing poor returns. He just finished participating the statewide Alaska Board of Fisheries meeting, where they voted to eliminate commercial guides in subsistence fisheries.

Hope Roberts of Valdez reported that it has been hard to find sea otters around Valdez, and she has been having to move to other areas to harvest.

Gloria Stickwan of Tazlina reported that the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve Subsistence Resource Commission meeting was in February and provided comments on proposed rules. Sue Entsminger was voted in as chair and Member Stickwan was voted in as vice-chair.

Andrew McLaughlin of Chenega Bay reported that the snow started early, followed by rain then freezing and ice. There is not a lot of snowpack at high elevations; willows and alders are sticking up. There might be low run-off and low water events locally. Natural streams might not get enough water for salmon spawning. Silver (Coho Salmon) returns are poor. Clam beds that have been harvested historically are being disrupted by sea otters. Herring and humpback whales are late to return to the area. No mountain goats have been seen on Bainbridge Island. There has been less subsistence harvest due to fuel prices hindering excursions. There have been few deer harvested with fewer hunters attempting to harvest. Winter kings (Chinook Salmon) are getting harvested by trollers in Prince William Sound.

Edward Holsten of Cooper Landing reported that there has been lots of snow with no rain. After the first snow, a few bears wandered through town without causing trouble. The rabbit population is high. There have been more younger moose around, possibly due to snow in the mountains, and there has been hardly any roadkill. The community is facing some severe Chinook Salmon closures.

Donna Wilson of Sutton reported that there have been concerns about the proposed haul road for mining activity in Tok with possible impacts of dust and transport.

Greg Encelewski of Ninilchik reported that there has been a lot of snow and no rain. Snow machiners and seismic work have been impacting local animals. The Federal moose hunt went well. People have been going across the bay to get clams. Salmon forecast projection is a little lower than average. Kings (Chinook Salmon) closure is earlier than normal, and the only river open to sport fishing is the Ninilchik River because of the hatchery upstream; harvest on wild stocks is closed. There has been a battle between the drift gill fleet and the Federal and State governments. Set nets on the Kenai River are closed because of low king (Chinook Salmon) returns. A few wolves have been taken around Ninilchik and there have been lots of coyotes around. Food security is getting tight, and subsistence is really important in and around communities.

Old Business

Follow up on May 2023 North American Caribou Workshop and Arctic Ungulate Conference

The Council received a follow up presentation on the North American Caribou Workshop and Arctic Ungulate Conference in May 2023 by Mr. Brian Ubelaker, Wildlife Biologist with Office of Subsistence Management.

Delegation of Authority Letters

Member McLaughlin provided a background on the Unit 6 deer & moose Delegation of Authority Letter for the Cordova District Ranger. The Council in the past voted in support of a temporary special action and associated delegated authority and approved the letter with a two-year sunset clause. He noted that local people should be consulted before the Federal manager acts. Member McLaughlin motioned, seconded by Member Selanoff, to request the Federal Subsistence Board rescind the Unit 6 moose and deer Delegation of Authority Letter from the Cordova District Ranger. The motion passed unanimously.

New Business

Wildlife Closure Reviews

The Council reviewed two regional wildlife closure reviews and two crossover closure reviews. Mr. Ubelaker presented the analysis for all four closure reviews. The two regional closure reviews were WCR24-03 (Unit 7, draining into King's Bay closed to moose hunting except by residents of Chenega Bay and Tatitlek) and WCR24-41 (Unit 6C closed to moose hunting by non-federally qualified users in November and December). The two crossover closure reviews were WCR24-35 (Unit 12, east of the Nabesna River and the Nabesna Glacier and south of the Winter Trail running southeast from Pickeral Lake to the Canadian border closed to caribou hunting by non-federally qualified users (Chisana caribou)) and WCR24-42 (Unit 12, within Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve that lies west of the Nabesna River and the Nabesna Glacier closed to caribou hunting by all users (Mentasta caribou)).

Call for Federal Wildlife Proposals

Prior to opening the call for Federal wildlife proposals, the Council heard reports on the status of wildlife in the region from Kyle Cutting, wildlife biologist, and Barbara Cellarius, cultural anthropologist, with Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve; Pat Owen, wildlife biologist with Denali National Park and Preserve; Todd Eskelin, wildlife biologist with Kenai National Wildlife Refuge; David Pearson, Subsistence Program Lead with Chugach National Forest; and Caroline Ketron, anthropologist with the Glennallen Field Office, Bureau of Land Management.

Mr. Ubelaker presented the call for Federal wildlife proposals. The Council voted to submit one proposal to the Federal Subsistence Board for the 2024-2026 wildlife regulatory cycle. The proposal was to rescind the delegation of authority letter for the Cordova District Ranger for Unit 6 moose and deer.

Department of Interior Update on Office of Subsistence Management

Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Bryan Newland presented on the President's proposed FY 2024 budget, which included a proposal to move the Office of Subsistence Management from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs office.

Denali National Park and Preserve Individual C&T Analyses

Ms. Amy Craver, Subsistence Manager/Cultural Resource Manager, presented two individual customary and traditional use requests for Denali National Park and Preserve: ICTP 23-01 and ICTP 23-02. Member Opheim motioned to support both proposals, Member McLaughlin seconded. The motion passed

unanimously. The Council supported these two proposals because they would benefit subsistence users and would not unnecessarily restrict other users and there are no conservation concerns.

2021 Council Charter Review

Ms. Jessica Gill, Council Coordinator, reviewed the Southcentral Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council charter. Member Holsten motioned to approve the 2021 Council Charter, adding in language about a non-voting youth representative seat that could receive college credit for participation. Member Opheim seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Review and approve FY2022 Annual Report

Member Selanoff motioned to adopt the FY2022 Annual Report with two additions:

- Support for expanding educational and other opportunities for youth and young potential Council members within the Federal Subsistence Management Program and on the Council
- Request standard 4-year review of all Delegation of Authority Letters within the region

Member Opheim seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Federal Subsistence Board Updated Draft Council Correspondence Policy

Ms. Robbin La Vine, OSM Policy Coordinator, reviewed the updated Council Correspondence Policy. Member McLaughlin motioned to support the draft Council Correspondence Policy as written and Member Opheim seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program Update

Mr. Justin Koller, OSM Fisheries Biologist, presented an update on the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program.

Partners for Fisheries Monitoring Program Update

Mr. Koller presented an update on the Partners for Fisheries Monitoring Program. Mr. Matt Piché, Fisheries Biologist, presented a report on Copper River Chinook Salmon distribution and run timing funded through the Partners program for the Native Village of Eyak.

Regulatory Cycle Update

Mr. Koller updated the Council on the fisheries regulatory cycle.

Request for Reconsideration RFR22-01

Mr. Koller updated the Council on the request for reconsideration for the Lower Copper River Federal subsistence dipnet fishery.

NPS seeks input on proposed changes to 2020 Hunting and Trapping regulations on national preserves in Alaska

Dr. Grant Hilderbrand, Associate Regional Director for Resources, updated the Council on the proposed rule for sport hunting on national preserves. Member Stickwan and Dr. Barbara Cellarius, anthropologist with Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, presented a letter on the proposed rule from the Wrangell-St. Elias Subsistence Resource Commission (SRC). Member Stickwan motioned to adopt the SRC comments on the proposed rule and submit them as comments from the Council to the National Park Service. Member Selanoff seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Testimony *(for complete testimony, please review transcripts for March 15, 2023)*

No members of the public provided public testimony.

Agency Reports:

- Ninilchik Traditional Council report was presented by Mr. Greg Encelewski, President
- Ahtna Intertribal Resource Commission report was presented by Mr. Dan Gorze, Fisheries Biologist
- Chugach Regional Resources Commission report was presented by Mr. Michael Opheim, Inter-Tribal Liaison
- Report on ocean acidification impacts on Pink Salmon and Razor Clams was presented by Ms. Marina Alcantar, Doctoral Candidate, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Marine Biology Program
- Chugach National Forest Law Enforcement update presented by Mr. Jordan Rymer, Law Enforcement Officer
- Chugach National Forest report presented by Mr. David Pearson, Biological Science Technican (Fisheries)
- Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve Subsistence Resource Commission and anthropology report presented by Dr. Barbara Cellarius, Anthropologist
- Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve fisheries report presented by Mr. Dave Sarafin, Fisheries Biologist
- Office of Subsistence Management report presented by Ms. Robbin La Vine, Policy Coordinator

Future Meeting Dates:

Fall 2023 meeting to be held October 3-4, 2023, in Kenai.

Winter 2024 All Council meeting preferred date is March 4-8, 2024, in Anchorage.

Fall 2024 meeting to be held October 10-11, 2024, location to be determined.

The meeting was adjourned after one day.

Jessica Gill, Designated Federal Officer
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Office of Subsistence Management

Greg Encelewski, Chair
Southcentral Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

These minutes will be formally considered by the Southcentral Subsistence Regional Advisory Council at its Fall 2023 meeting, and any corrections or notations will be incorporated in the minutes at that meeting.

A more detailed report of this meeting, copies of the transcript, and meeting handouts are available upon request. Contact Jessica Gill at 1-800-478-1456 (toll free) or 907-310-6129, or by email at jessica_gill@fws.gov.