

OSM report for winter 2022 Council meetings

Mr. Chair/Madam Chair, members of the Council,

On behalf of OSM, I want to thank all Council members for your exceptional work on behalf of your communities and user groups during these trying times. We value your expertise and the contribution of your knowledge and experience to the regulatory process.

It has been very difficult for all of us dealing with the COVID-19 environment.

Teleconferences

We are holding all 10 winter 2022 Regional Advisory Council meetings via teleconference. The DOI guidelines advises that people avoid travel and refrain from meeting in person to minimize risk and help prevent the spread of COVID-19. OSM received direction from the Department of Interior that no Federal Advisory (FACA) Committees meetings would be held in person during winter 2022 meeting cycle, and all Regional Advisory Councils are FACA committees. The Federal Subsistence Management Program recognizes that in-person meetings are preferable; however, until we can ensure the safety of all participants, we will follow current guidance and hold all meetings via teleconference. We thank you again for being willing to participate in the lengthy teleconference and appreciate your patience as we deal with the various technical issues that arise from the poor telephonic connections, the vast distances involved, and differing communication systems throughout the State of Alaska.

OSM Staff Changes

We are very pleased to announce the following OSM staffing changes that have occurred since your last Council meeting in fall 2021. Scott Ayers was hired as the OSM Fisheries Division Supervisor in January. Scott worked for 3 years as a Fisheries Biologist for OSM several years ago before he took a job with the USFWS Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration program. We welcome Scott back to OSM.

Jarred Stone and Cory Graham have both been promoted with the Fisheries Division. Two additional Fisheries Biologists, Kevin Foley and Justin Koller have just been hired, and will be starting later in February. In January, Sherri Gould-Fehrs, OSM Administrative Support Assistant was temporarily promoted to the

ARD Secretary position. Kayla McKinney stepped up to temporarily serve as Subsistence Outreach Coordinator.

In December and January, Liz Williams and Jason Roberts were hired as OSM Anthropologists. Liz worked for OSM about 12 years ago and is returning. Welcome back Liz. OSM is pleased to welcome three newly hired Subsistence Council Coordinators: Nissa Bates Pilcher, Leigh Honig, and Brooke McDavid, all with the wealth of knowledge and experience in working with rural users and communities, as well as Alaska subsistence issues.

We also had departures at OSM through retirement and new opportunities. We bid a fond farewell to Administrative staff Catherine Avery and Ricky Cabugao. The OSM team continues to work on rebuilding our capacity and hope to advertise positions in our regulatory and administrative support functions soon.

DOI & USDA Conduct Listening Sessions on Federal Subsistence Policy

The U.S. Departments of the Interior and Agriculture conducted virtual listening sessions and Tribal consultations on January 10, 20, 21, and 28, 2022 on Federal Subsistence Policy. The Secretaries requested input from Tribes, Tribal consortia, and Alaska Native Organizations and Corporations. The DOI Senior Advisor for Alaskan Affairs and Strategic Priorities met with Federal Subsistence Board members prior to the consultations to introduce Board members and Department of Interior leadership and to provide Board members with an update on DOI activities related to subsistence management. .

Real ID for Travel to Council Meetings

Over the past two plus years we have been reminding Council members about the change in requirements for IDs at airports. Beginning May 3, 2023, every air traveler will need to present a REAL ID-compliant driver's license, or other acceptable form of identification (e.g. passport), to fly within the United States. This is applicable even when you fly on small bush carriers. Please note that all Council members will need to make sure that they have the required Real ID for travel to the fall 2023 Council meetings.

Lawsuit from the State of Alaska

As you were previously briefed, on August 10, 2020, the State of Alaska filed a lawsuit against the Federal Subsistence Board after it adopted Emergency Special Action WSA19-14. This special action allowed the village of Kake to engage in a

community harvest of up to four bull moose and ten male Sitka black-tailed deer. Also included in the lawsuit was Temporary Special Action WSA20-03, which closed Federal public lands in Units 13A and 13B to moose and caribou hunting by non-Federally qualified users for the 2020-2022 regulatory cycle. As part of the lawsuit, the State asked the Court to issue two preliminary injunctions -- one to prevent the Unit 13 closure from taking effect and another vacating the Kake hunt and prohibiting the Board from allowing any additional emergency hunts related to the impacts of COVID-19.

On December 3, 2021, the U.S. District Court denied the State's request for declaratory and permanent injunctive relief, finding in favor of the Federal Subsistence Board on both matters. The Court found that: 1) it lacks jurisdiction over the issues associated with the Kake hunt because that portion of the State's claims are moot; and, 2) the FSB's decision to close Units 13A and 13B to non-subsistence users was both legally permissible and supported by the information on record. The State recently filed an appeal of the District Court's decisions, but the Ninth Circuit has not yet set a schedule for briefing.

Art Contest

The Federal Subsistence Management Program is sponsoring its annual art contest for all students in Alaska grades K-12. Deadline for submission is April 1, 2022. This year, entries may focus on either subsistence wildlife or fish, and two winners will be selected. The winners' artwork will be published on either the cover of the 2022-2024 Subsistence Management Regulations for the Harvest of Wildlife on Federal Public Lands in Alaska book or the 2023-2025 Subsistence Management Regulations for the Harvest of Fish and Shellfish on Federal Public Lands in Alaska book, both distributed statewide. The art contest offers an exciting opportunity for students to express their talent and creativity while sharing their knowledge of subsistence resources. You can find directions on how to submit your artwork and further information on our website.

I would be happy to answer any questions.

Thank you Mr. Chair/Madam Chair, Council members.