

**SEWARD PENINSULA SUBSISTENCE
REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL**

Meeting Minutes

Mini Convention Center
Nome
March 11-12, 2020

Call to Order, Roll Call and Quorum Establishment

The meeting was called to order Wednesday, March 11, 2020 at 9:07 a.m. Council members Tom Gray (Acting Chair), Elmer Seetot Jr., Charles Saccheus, Leland Oyoumick, Deahl Katchatag, Lloyd Kiyutelluk, and Ronald Kirk were present in person. Louis Green, Jr., was not present and was excused. The Council has two vacant seats. A quorum was established with seven of eight seated Council members present.

Attendees:

In person

- Tom Kron, Anchorage, Office of Subsistence Management (OSM)
- Frank Harris, Anchorage, OSM
- Hannah Voorhees, Anchorage, OSM
- Patricia Petrivelli, Anchorage, Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Thomas Whitford, Anchorage, U.S. Forest Service
- Carol Damberg, Anchorage, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Jeanette Koelsch, Nome, National Park Service (NPS)
- Ken Adkisson, Nome, NPS
- Nicole Braem, Nome, NPS
- Mike Thompson, Nome, NPS
- Tom Sparks, Nome, Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
- Walker Gusse, Anchorage, BLM
- Bruce Seppi, Anchorage, BLM
- Bill Dunker, Nome, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G)
- Sara Germain, Nome, ADF&G
- Jim Menard, Nome, ADF&G
- Jenifer Bell, Nome, ADF&G
- Roy Ashenfelter, Nome, Kawerak, Inc.

- Brandon Ahmasuk, Nome, Kawerak, Inc.
- Anita Parlow, Esq., Washington, D.C., Consultant/Reporter

Via teleconference

- Karen Deatherage, Fairbanks, OSM
- Rick Thoman, Fairbanks, International Arctic Research Center
- Mark Burch, Palmer, ADF&G
- Charlie Lean, Nome, Northern Norton Sound Advisory Committee

Review and Adopt Agenda

Motion by Mr. Kiyutelluk, seconded by Mr. Kirk, to adopt the agenda as read with the following changes:

- Add Norton Sound Red King Crab Fishery under Agency Reports
- Add Climate Change on the Seward Peninsula under Agency Reports
- Remove Alaska Board of Game Update under Old Business

The motion passed unanimously.

Review and Approve Previous Meeting Minutes

Motion by Mr. Kiyutelluk, seconded by Mr. Seetot, to approve the winter 2019 meeting minutes with the following modifications: Add Jeanette Koelsch as an attendee and change Cape Dirk to Cape York.

The motion passed unanimously.

Council Member and Chair Reports

Mr. Oyoumick of Unalakleet reported that there was a good winter in Unalakleet but it was cold. He shared that many people were catching smelt and trout up the Unalakleet River. There were King Salmon this year as well, which was really good for the community. Mr. Oyoumick expressed his continued concerns with cancer in the community and worried that it may be coming from the food.

Mr. Saccheus of Elim reported that he serves on the Alaska Beluga Whaling Committee and counts in Eastern Norton Sound usually range between 36,000 to 50,000 beluga, from Bald Head, Isaac's Point and down to Cape Darby. Tomcod and shrimp are their main diet. When the ice went out, Mr. Saccheus reported seeing thousands of beluga in front of Elim. Mr. Saccheus expressed concern about beluga hunters in Kotzebue using noisy high-powered motors, which drive beluga out into the ocean. Mr. Saccheus wished everyone good luck with hunting beluga whales this season.

Mr. Gray of Nome, Chair of the Alaska Beluga Whaling Committee, reported to the Council that in 2017 the Norton Sound population of beluga whales was at 9,200. Hunters, not the Committee, will be putting together a management plan for the Norton Sound and Yukon beluga whales. Mr. Gray shared concerns with the short moose season, which generally only lasts a few days due to the quota. Mr. Gray disagrees that there are a lot of bears in Unit 22 and has concerns that larger bears are being removed from the population. Mr. Gray remarked on this year's dismal Red King Crab fishery in Norton Sound. The quota was 150,000 lbs. of which only 80,000 lbs. were caught, after which the season was closed. He noted that Charlie Lean would be available to share additional information on the crab fishery with the Council later during the meeting. Mr. Gray shared that salmon fishing was good this year, but as a fishing guide, he would like to see more fish coming into the rivers. He mentioned the large amount of snow over the past two years. Warming temperatures are causing large algae growth on the river, which threatens fish populations. Mr. Gray would like to see more wolves taken, as he believes they are worse for ungulate populations than bears.

Mr. Seetot of Brevig Mission reported that the ice froze at the proper time this year, even after a long hot summer. Mr. Seetot said Elim is seeing a lot of beluga whales in the area when normally they pass the village further out in the Bering Sea. With cold temperatures and snow conditions, people in Brevig Mission and Teller were not able to harvest caribou this year. Mr. Seetot is hopeful that temperatures are reverting to normal, as warm weather with lots of rain has resulted in fewer berries and fish not drying. Mr. Seetot noted that the villagers rarely hunt bears, and there are many bears in and around Grantley Harbor and Imuruk Basin. He also remarked that algae growth in Imuruk Basin is becoming more frequent.

Mr. Katchatag from Unalakleet reported that his main concern right now was a proposal by BLM to open up the North and Golsovia rivers area to mining. If this happens, fish that go up the main rivers will be killed. This includes not just salmon, but trout and cod. Mr. Katchatag also expressed concerns about the effects of contamination on sea mammals and fish.

Mr. Kiyutelluk of Shishmaref reported good spring hunting for bearded seal (*oogruks*) and walrus. Hunters had to go out 40-50 miles to get to ice, but they found walrus. Moose and caribou hunting in the fall was also good, but moose are coming down from the hills later due to warming weather. Snow and freeze-up did not happen until almost November. This winter subsistence users were able to hunt on the ocean with snowmachines, which has not happened for years.

Mr. Kirk of Stebbins reported a late freeze-up in the area so Tomcod fishing was not good, except when the tide went out and they were jammed up in the river. Wolves are also a problem and not far from town. Mr. Kirk is pretty sure they are having an impact on the local reindeer herd. Fall seal and *oogruk* hunting was good but some animals had sores on them, so they were not edible. Some beluga whales washed up dead on the beaches in the fall. Mr. Kirk agreed with Mr. Katchatag's concern with proposed mining in the area, especially the impacts to whitefish heading up the Yukon River to spawn. There are also concerns with people living in the communities near mining who will lose fresh drinking water.

New Business

Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program Update

Mr. Harris and Dr. Voorhees, OSM, presented the Council with the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program update.

Call for Federal Fish and Shellfish Proposals

Mr. Harris, OSM, informed the Council that the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) is accepting proposals through April 20, 2020 to change Federal regulations for the subsistence harvest of fish and shellfish on Federal public lands and waters for the 2021-2023 regulatory years. The Board will consider proposals to change Federal subsistence fish and shellfish seasons, harvest limits, methods, and means related to taking of fish for subsistence uses, as well as customary and traditional (C&T) use determinations. The Council elected not to submit any fish and shellfish or C&T proposals to the Board.

Review and approve FY2019 annual report

Motion by Mr. Kirk, seconded by Mr. Oyoumick, to add the following issues of concerns to the Council's FY2019 annual report: 1) Climate Induced Impacts to Subsistence Resources, 2) Food Contaminants, and 3) Norton Sound Red King Crab Fishery.

Motion passed unanimously.

Tribal Organizations/Agency Reports

- Climate Change on the Seward Peninsula presented by Rick Thoman, International Arctic Research Center
- Kawerak, Inc. Update presented by Brandon Ahmasuk and Roy Ashenfelter, Kawerak Inc.
- Bering Land Bridge National Park and Preserve Update presented by Jeanette Koelsch, Nicole Braem and Letty Hughes, NPS
- BLM Update presented by Tom Sparks and Walker Gusse, BLM
- ADF&G Update presented by Bill Dunker and Sara Germain, ADF&G
- OSM Update presented by Tom Kron, OSM
- Red King Crab Fishery Status presented by Charlie Lean, Northern Norton Sound AC, Jim Menard, ADF&G and Jenifer Bell, ADF&G

Motion by Mr. Kiyutelluk, seconded by Mr. Kirk, to send a letter to the North Pacific Fishery Management Council expressing concerns with the biological status of Red King Crab in Norton Sound, and the inability of subsistence users to harvest crab due to low populations.

The motion passed unanimously

Future Meeting Dates:

October 28-29, 2020, Nome

March 11-12, 2021, Nome

Motion by Mr. Seetot, seconded by Mr. Kirk, to adjourn.

Motion passed unanimously.

Karen Deatherage, Designated Federal Officer
USFWS Office of Subsistence Management

Tom Gray, Acting Chair
Seward Peninsula Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

These minutes will be formally considered by the Seward Peninsula Subsistence Regional Advisory Council at its fall 2020 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. Call Karen Deatherage at 907-474-2270 or email karen_deatherage@fws.gov.