

KODIAK/ALEUTIANS SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes

Via Teleconference due to COVID-19
September 27 and 28, 2021

Invocation

Patrick Holmes gave an invocation.

Call to Order, Roll Call and Quorum Establishment

The meeting was called to order on September 27 at 8:30 A.M. Council Chair Della Trumble, Vice-Chair Rebecca Skinner, and Council members Melissa Berns, Coral Chernoff, Natasha Hayden, Patrick Holmes, and Richard Koso were present via teleconference. Samuel Rohrer and Chris Price were not present. The Council has one vacant seat. A quorum was established with 7 of 9 seated Council members participating by phone. Vince Mathews served as acting Council Coordinator.

Attendees participating via teleconference:

- Koniag Inc.: Amy Peterson and Tom Panamaroff
- OSM: Vince Mathews, Lisa Grediagin, Orville Lind, Jarred Stone, Kendra Holman, Robbin La Vine, George Pappas, Pippa Kenner, Katya Wessels, Brent Vickers, and Tom Plank
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS): Mike Brady and Joy Erlenbach (Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge (NWR)); Jill Klein, Joel Garlich-Miller, and Paul Schuette (Anchorage); Leticia Melendez and Alison Williams (Izembek NWR); and Jeff Williams (Alaska Maritime NWR)
- U.S. Forest Service (USFS): Greg Risdahl
- Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA): Pat Petrivelli
- National Park Service (NPS): Dillon Patterson
- Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G): Kelly Krueger, Mark Witteveen, Lisa Fox, Tyler Lawson, Jackie Keating; Rick Merizon, Todd Rinaldi and Mark Burch (Palmer); Dave Crowley (King Salmon)
- Members of the public: Matt Nielsen (Cold Bay)

Review and Adopt Agenda

Motion by Vice-Chair Skinner, seconded by Mr. Holmes, to adopt the agenda with modifications provided by Mr. Mathews. The motion passed unanimously.

Review and Approve Previous Meeting Minutes

Motion by Vice-Chair Skinner, seconded by Mr. Holmes, to approve the winter 2021 meeting minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Council Member and Chair Reports

Patrick Holmes of Kodiak reported that COVID-19 had really changed things for a lot of folks here. The Buskin River was closed to fishing early and people had to go to Litnik, Port Lions or Pasagshak to get their fish. His daughter and their family all came down with COVID-19.

Vice-Chair Rebecca Skinner of Kodiak reported that subsistence fishing in the spring was slow. She echoed the comments by Mr. Holmes. She was able to get a few Silver Salmon the past week.

Coral Chernoff of Kodiak reported that they had a phenomenal berry year and the salmon berries kept producing thru the summer. The Sockeye Salmon return to the Buskin River was dismal, but the Silver Salmon are coming in now. She caught some Silver Salmon there two days ago and the fish were large. She hasn't seen or heard of too many deer being taken. She reported the Alaska Migratory Bird Co-Management Council opened along the Kodiak road system and issued 47 permits. People are sending in their reports now. Crayfish at Buskin Lake are terrible. A lot of trash bins have been taken out to prevent bear problems in town. There were lots of sea bird (murre and gull) die offs last summer and it sounds like the birds were starving; PSP and avian bird flu don't seem to be a problem.

Richard Koso of Adak reported that lots of Sockeye Salmon showed up at Lake Andy. Adak did pretty well for salmon. There is concern that people weren't able to get caribou. There have been conflicts between sport and subsistence fishermen that need to be ironed out.

Melissa Berns of Kodiak reported that Old Harbor people are doing all their fall fishing now. Silver Salmon are plentiful and smokers are going. The berries were plentiful last summer. Old Harbor is having their first bison harvest, and six tags are being issued.

Natasha Hayden of Kodiak reported that she did get some gull eggs early last summer, but not as many as normal. She had a really good berry year. Salmon berries, raspberries, and blueberries were very productive. She doesn't know very many people that have gotten deer around Kodiak Island. People are overwhelmed with how many bears there are on Afognak Island. The Buskin River Sockeye Salmon return failed last summer. She heard that the Port Lions and Settler Cover salmon returns were strong. People around Ouzinkie and Spruce Island also had success getting salmon this year.

Chair Della Trumble of King Cove reported that she had heard about conflicts between sport and subsistence users in Cold Bay. Berries have been plentiful. People did fairly well subsistence salmon fishing; there were lots of Silver Salmon. People are hunting caribou and birds right now. One of the guides in King Cove dropped off some caribou and moose meat from Nelson Lagoon and Sandy River, so people in King Cove are pretty happy. The hunting of birds or caribou on King Cove Corporation lands is

not allowed and the corporation is working to get the word out. They tried to hold hearings on subsistence on McLees and the units around Unalaska but weren't able to get everyone together.

Service Awards

Mr. Patrick Holmes received a 20-year service award. Mr. Mathews, Ms. Petrivelli, Chair Trumble, Mr. Lind, Ms. Chernoff, Ms. La Vine, Ms. Wessels and Mr. Koso all thanked Mr. Patrick Holmes for his 20-year year of service to this Council.

Old Business

2021 805(c) Report Summary

Mr. Mathews provided a summary of the Board's 2021 805(c) Report to the Council.

Board's FY2020 Annual Report Reply Summary

Mr. Mathews provided summary of the Board's FY-2020 Annual Report Reply.

Fisheries Closure Reviews

Mr. Stone gave an update on the outreach effort for Fisheries Closure Reviews 21-08, 09, 11, 13, 16, 18, and 19. All of these were deferred by the Federal Subsistence Board from the last fisheries regulatory cycle at the request of this Council.

Annual Report Reply Process Review Briefing

Ms. La Vine provided a briefing on the annual report reply process review. Some Council members supported writing letters to agencies on items for which they would like a response and thought having the annual reports as more of an informational piece for the Board with no expectation of a response would be a good idea. Council members thought this distinction provided clarity to the process, especially since many replies from the Board on annual report topics were perfunctory. The Council understands the time/effort drain on staff to write replies that are not very helpful but were glad they'd have more time to think about the issue and discuss it again at their winter 2022 meeting. Overall, the Council was fine with not getting a response from the Board on every annual report topic and writing a letter instead if a response is desired but was interested in hearing feedback from other Councils and discussing this further at their winter 2022 meeting.

New Business

Council members expressed frustration with not getting their Council books and materials soon enough. Ms. Wessels apologized that the meeting materials came out so late.

Joel Garlich-Miller and Paul Schuette gave an overview on sea otters for the USFWS Marine Mammals Management (MMM) Office. The Council expressed appreciation for the discussion with MMM staff and would like to continue working with them on sea otter issues in the future.

Todd Rinaldi and Dave Crowley from ADF&G and Jeff Williams from the USFWS gave overviews of caribou on Adak and Unimak Islands.

Jackie Keating from ADF&G gave a report on the Division of Subsistence work at Unalaska and Kodiak.

Wildlife Proposals and Closure Reviews

Regional:

WP22-37:

Mr. Vickers presented the analysis for WP22-37 to recognize the customary and traditional use of ptarmigan for residents of Cold Bay, King Cove, Sand Point, Belkofski, Sanak, Pauloff Harbor, Unga, and Nelson Lagoon in Unit 9D. Mr. Holmes made a motion to recommend supporting the proposal as modified by OSM (to include residents of Unit 9D and including Akutan, Cold Bay, False Pass, King Cove, Nelson Lagoon and Sand Point), seconded by Ms. Chernoff. The Council voted unanimously to recommend that the Federal Subsistence Board adopt this proposal as modified. The Council recognizes the importance of establishing the customary and traditional uses of ptarmigan by all residents of Unit 9D because these hunting practices sustained the residents in this area for thousands of years.

WP22-38a:

Mr. Vickers presented the analysis for WP22-38a to recognize the customary and traditional use of caribou for residents of Cold Bay and Nelson Lagoon in Unit 10, Unimak Island. After much discussion, Mr. Holmes made a motion to support the proposal as written, seconded by Ms. Chernoff. The motion passed unanimously. The Council supported their proposal as written, recognizing the customary and traditional uses of additional communities rather than by geographic area. The Council noted that historically residents of all six communities: Akutan, Cold Bay, False Pass, King Cove, Nelson Lagoon, and Sand Point, have utilized the resource. Therefore, adding communities of Cold Bay and Nelson Lagoon to the customary and traditional use determination will expand the ability of the residents to access caribou.

WP22-38b:

Ms. Holman presented the analysis for WP22-38b, which requests a closure of Federal public lands in Unit 10, Unimak Island to caribou hunting except by Federally qualified subsistence users unless the caribou population estimate exceeds a population threshold. Mr. Holmes made a motion to recommend removal of the closure from the unit specific regulations, and delegate authority to the Izembek NWR Refuge Manager to open and close Federal public lands to non-Federally qualified users annually based on the current population status of the Unimak Caribou Herd in consultation with ADF&G staff via delegation of authority letter only. Mr. Koso seconded the motion. The motion passed (5-1-0). The Council supports flexibility in harvest and season to provide additional harvest opportunity for federally qualified subsistence users and to maintain a sustainable herd level to reduce the chances of population crashes or exceedance habitat carrying capacity.

WP22-39:

Mr. Merizon, Small Game Program Coordinator with ADF&G, the proposal proponent, gave an introduction to this proposal. Mr. Plank presented the analysis for WP22-39, which requests creating specific harvest regulations for Alaska hare (*Lepus othus*) in Units 9 and 17. Mr. Holmes made a motion to support the proposal as written, seconded by Ms. Chernoff. The Council opposed the proposal (1-5-0) due to lack of biological data and population estimates. The Council remarked that they don't know what the Alaska hare population or subsistence harvest are. The Council also noted that nothing has changed since the last wildlife cycle when the Board rejected a similar proposal and that further restrictions to sport hunters should be implemented before restricting subsistence users. Hares are an important subsistence resource in the region, and especially for remote areas.

Statewide:

WP22-01:

Ms. Kenner presented the analysis for Proposal WP22-01 that requests clarification of who is and who is not a participant in a community harvest system and how that affects community and individual harvest limits. Vice-Chair Skinner made a motion to support of WP22-01, Mr. Holmes seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The Council appreciated the regulatory clarity provided by the proposal even though their region does not have any community hunts.

WP22-02:

Ms. Kenner presented the analysis for Proposal WP22-02 that requests to remove language from designated hunting regulations prohibiting the use of a designated hunter permit by a member of community operating under a community harvest system. Ms. Hayden made a motion to support WP22-02; Vice-Chair Skinner seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The Council based their decision to support this proposal on OSM justification, "The intent of the proposed regulation change is to allow members of a community with a community harvest system to designate another person to harvest on their behalf to meet either their individual harvest limit or count toward the community harvest limit, pursuant to Federal designated harvester regulations. Therefore, the statements in general and unit-specific regulations addressed by this proposal, WP22-02, will no longer be relevant and should be removed. Additionally, these regulatory changes will provide more equitable harvest options and opportunities for subsistence users."

Review of State of Alaska Board of Game Proposals

Vice-Chair Skinner made a motion that a letter be prepared to reflect the Council's comments on Alaska Board of Game (BOG) proposals. Ms. Chernoff seconded the motion.

The Council reviewed BOG **Proposal 25:** Review the intensive management findings for Unimak caribou and determine objectives if applicable and **Proposal 26:** Determine customary and traditional uses of the Unimak Island caribou herd (Unit 10 – Unimak Island). The Council decided not to provide any position or comment to the BOG on these proposals.

The Council reviewed BOG **Proposal 30**: shorten the wolf trapping season in Units 9 and 10 and **Proposal 31**: close wolverine trapping and hunting in Unit 10 and expressed their opposition to Proposal 30 and their support to Proposal 31. Since Proposal 30 will reduce the harvest of wolves, the Council believes that it will impede the caribou recovery. In regard to Proposal 31, the Council commented that to their knowledge there is only a small number of wolverines available in Unit 10 and they are not aware of anyone trapping wolverine there; therefore they support closing the season and the State biologist's position on wolverine.

The Council supported **Proposal 32**: Close the nonresident season for Emperor Goose in Units 9 and 10. The Council opposed BOG **Proposals 33 - 50** all of which request an increase in nonresident hunting opportunity for Emperor Geese in Units 9, 10, and 17; many request increasing the number of drawing permits for non-residents with some requesting allocating 50 percent of the permits to nonresident hunters for harvesting geese. The recent surveys show that the population numbers are down, and the hunt was reduced from 1,000 Emperor Geese allowable annual harvest to 500 statewide because the indicated total bird index dropped below 28,000 birds in 2021, which calls for a restricted quota. The Council supports the closure of the nonresident season in Units 9 and 10 until the indicated total bird index is above 28,000 birds.

The subsistence users are putting forth a real effort to reduce their harvest to ensure that the Emperor Goose population goes up, but no effort has been observed on the part of nonresident hunters. Most Alaskan hunters are simply not hunting Emperor Geese, and the demand for this species is largely coming from nonresidents who hunt these birds for a trophy and not for food. While the non-resident hunters can afford to hire a guide and hunt one bird, the local subsistence users cannot and prefer to wait until the population numbers increase and they are allowed to hunt several birds at once. The Council is not against the guided hunts, especially because they help the local economy, but it is against issuing more permits to nonresident hunters because this undermines conservation efforts. The Council supports the Alaska Migratory Bird Co-Management Council's efforts to get the message out across the State on the importance of Emperor Goose conservation while also supporting harvest opportunities for subsistence users.

The Council unanimously supported this motion as specified above concerning Alaska Board of Game proposals.

2022 Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program

Mr. Stone with OSM presented the Council with the 2022 Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program Statewide and Bristol Bay and Kodiak/Aleutians Region overviews. The Council supported continuing to partner with the Bristol Bay Council to draft priority information needs. The Council supported continuing the Chignik River weir, McClees Lake weir, Buskin Lake weir, and the proposed subsistence harvest in Ouzinkie and Port Lions. The Council also expressed a desire for investigation into the age-classes missing from various runs and urged investigators to consider using age-analysis to determine other factors influencing adult returns of salmon.

Identifying Issues for FY2021 Annual Report

The Council identified the following topics for inclusion into the FY-2021 Annual Report:

- The need to fill vacant positions at Refuges (especially RIT) and OSM.
- Issues related to caribou in Units 9 & 10.
- Maritime NWR work in the Aleutians.
- The Council need to fill vacant seats.
- Praise and support to the Kodiak NWR model for RIT services and outreach provided by the Koniag Native Corporation.
- Sea otters and continue working and communications with the USFWS Marine Mammals.
- Support for food security and need for reliable and adequate access to subsistence resources for the regional communities.
- Concern about invasive species (crayfish, rats, mink), monitoring programs, and support for eradication efforts.
- Thanks for staff support on Unimak caribou and sea otter issues.
- Tribal Facebook developed for each community to share harvested resources.

2022 Council application/nomination open season

Mr. Mathews and Ms. Wessels with OSM informed the Council about 2022 Council application and nomination open season and requested that the Council's members help in reaching out to the rural communities in the region and recruit new applicants. Council members asked for annual reporting of the number of Council applications received for this region and the number of open seats. Knowing this before the application period deadline closes could help Council members with outreach to encourage others in the region to apply. Council members also asked to be reminded about when they need to reapply for Council seats.

Agency Reports:

- Mr. Tom Panamaroff gave the Koniag report. Ms. Amy Peterson of Old Harbor will be working with the Kodiak NWR to provide community affairs liaison service to facilitate communication between villages and the Refuge.
- Ms. Leticia Melendez gave the Izembek NWR report.
- Mr. Jeff Williams gave the Alaska Maritime NWR report.
- Mr. Mike Brady and Ms. Joy Erlenbach gave the Kodiak NWR report.
- Ms. Kelly Krueger with ADF&G gave the Buskin River Sockeye Salmon stock assessment report.
- Mr. Tyler Lawson with ADF&G gave the McLees salmon weir report.
- Ms. Lisa Grediagin gave the OSM report. The Council requested that the Coordinator provide them with a written copy of the OSM report in the future.

Future Meeting Dates:

Winter 2022 meeting to be held Feb. 22 and 23 in Kodiak.

Fall 2022 meeting to be held Sept. 20 and 21 in Cold Bay but requested staff to check on plane availability.

Tom Kron, OSM Statewide Support Division
USFWS Office of Subsistence Management

Della Trumble, Chair
Kodiak/Aleutians Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

These minutes will be formally considered by the Kodiak/Aleutians Subsistence Regional Advisory Council at its winter 2022 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 Katerina Wessels at 1-800-478-1456 or 1-907-786-3885, or email at katerina_wessels@fws.gov.