

SOUTHCENTRAL SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Building – Gordon Watson Conference Room
Anchorage
March 4 – 5, 2020

Invocation

Gloria Stickwan gave an invocation.

Call to Order, Roll Call and Quorum Establishment

The meeting was called to order on Wednesday, March 4, 2020, at approximately 9:00 a.m. Council members Ed Holsten, Richard (Greg) Encelewski, Gloria Stickwan, Andrew McLaughlin, Dennis Zadra, Aaron Bloomquist, and John Whissel were present in person. Council Member Michael Opheim was present by telephone. Council Member Diane Selanoff had planned to join the meeting by telephone, but was unable to do so. The Council has four vacant seats. A quorum was established with eight of nine seated Council members present or participating by phone.

Attendees

In person or via teleconference

- Kenai National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Kenai: ***Jeff Anderson, Todd Eskelin***
- USFWS, Anchorage: ***Carol Damberg***
- U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Anchorage: ***Tom Whitford, John Kinsner***; Cordova: ***Milo Burcham, Luca Adelfio***; Juneau: ***DeAnna Perry***; Moose Pass: ***David Pearson***
- Ahtna Intertribal Resource Commission (AITRC): ***Karen Linnell, Shirley Smelcer, Odin Miller***
- Native Village of Eyak: ***Matte Piche***
- Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Glennallen: ***Valerie Lenhartzen, Jill Lucero***
- BLM: ***Casey Burns***
- Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), Anchorage: ***Charity Lehman***
- National Park Service (NPS), Anchorage: ***Joshua Ream***
- Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve (NPP), NPS: ***Judy Putera, Barbara Cellarius, David Sarafin***
- Denali National Park, NPS, Anchorage: ***Amy Craver***
- Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Anchorage: ***Pat Petrivelli***
- Ninilchik Traditional Council, Ninilchik: ***Ivan Encelewski***
- Office of Subsistence Management (OSM), Anchorage: ***Scott Ayers, Greg Risdahl, Suzanne Worker, Derek Hildreth, Christine Brummer, Chris McKee, Robbin La Vine***

Review and Adopt Agenda

Motion made by Mr. Whissel, seconded by Mr. McLaughlin, to adopt the agenda as written with the following changes:

- Add Special Action WSA20-01 (Unit 13 Caribou) to ‘New Business’
- Add deferred WP18-19 update to ‘Old Business’
- Add Federal Subsistence Fisheries Jurisdiction and marine waters in Prince William Sound to ‘New Business’

The motion passed unanimously.

Election of Officers

Mr. Greg Encelewski was elected the Council’s Chair.

Ms. Gloria Stickwan was elected the Council’s Vice Chair.

Mr. Andrew McLaughlin was elected the Council’s Secretary.

Review and Approve Previous Meeting Minutes

Motion made by Ms. Stickwan, seconded by Mr. Whissel, to approve the fall 2019 meeting minutes as written.

The motion passed unanimously.

Council Member and Chair Reports

Edward Holsten of Cooper Landing reported that it was a tough season in his area due to fires and there is a local concern for the potential of soil slippage in the Kenai River Canyon. There was a great Sockeye run this year and the sport limit was increased to nine per day. It has been a good winter resulting in good ice fishing and increased snowshoe hare populations. Everyone is looking forward to a good Sockeye dip-netting season at Russian River Falls this coming year.

Greg Encelewski of Ninilchik reported that the Ninilchik Traditional Council had a government to government meeting where the fishery for the past year was reviewed, as well as other items. The fishery on the Kenai was awesome this past year. Since it has been a good winter the community has experienced some predator issues. Wolves were trapped and it was found that wolves were coming from Unit 15A all the way from up past Kenai and down to the Ninilchik area, probably due to the previous wildfires. This movement creates concern for the moose population at Ninilchik, which is just recovering. Clams used to be one of the biggest staples in Ninilchik, but because the harvest is on State land where Federally qualified subsistence users have no preference, they have to travel farther to try to harvest them. There was a new draw permit for any bull in the Ninilchik area, and this may have an impact on subsistence opportunities. Large Kenai King Salmon are a concern, and there are restrictions expected again this year. Escapement goals for red salmon have been increased. There are big changes expected for commercial fishing outfits.

Gloria Stickwan of Tazlina reported that her community experienced a colder winter than usual. There was a Subsistence Resource Commission meeting recently and the group made comments on the Unit 13 caribou issue.

Dennis Zadra of Cordova reported that having a 'normal' winter was welcomed after the hot summer of last year, and it looks like a needed increase of snow pack is happening on the mountains. The bull/cow ratio was not as high as usual, and some people were having a harder time harvesting bulls in the Federal subsistence moose hunt. Trollers are reporting that it is the best season for king salmon that they've ever seen and so there is optimism about the survivability of King Salmon.

Michael Opheim of Seldovia reported that three subsistence fishing proposals were passed (with some amendments) at the recent Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF) meeting in Seward: 1) extended fishing period into June; 2) providing a shorter distance between nets; and 3) an increased fishing area. Seldovia now has a moist air incubator. Permits are in order and there is hope to get Coho Salmon returning to the area in greater numbers. Mr. Opheim is excited with his permit for the Nelchina caribou hunt.

Andrew McLaughlin of Chenega Bay reported that there are significant climate changes observed in Chenega Bay and western Prince William Sound and that these may warrant extended seasons in areas that are designated Federal so that resources can be harvested more efficiently. The run of red salmon was late and the silver salmon run was close to non-existent. The warmer water temperatures are causing concern. There is paralytic shellfish poisoning in Southeast and Kodiak. The flowing water from these areas is having a significant impact on clam harvest, which is a subsistence resource in his community. Bear population is increasing. There are concerns for the deer and goat populations based on deep snow levels this year. Last fall, abundant berries were ripening at all elevations all at once.

Aaron Bloomquist of Palmer/Copper Center reported that there was a mediocre fish run last summer in the Copper Valley. People with wheeled transportation and those with gillnets seemed to get plenty and sport fishing was okay. The area experienced warm temperatures last summer. There are reports that the Nelchina Caribou Herd is doing well and most people with tags are finding caribou to harvest. He is on the Mat-Su Advisory Committee, which was recently successful with its proposals at the BOF meeting. Mr. Bloomquist is exploring options for starting a summer camp for kids in the Copper Valley.

John Whissel of Cordova reported that there was an overall decent fishing season; however, the Coho Salmon run didn't do well. There were some restrictions on sport fishing for Coho Salmon, which were not imposed on Federal subsistence users. There was a fairly good number of king salmon this year. Temperatures in the lower Copper River were a bit high and there were reports of very thin ice with abundant snow on top. For the first time in a few years, the community experienced a winter with colder temperatures and a snow pack, which will be good for streams and salmon resources. There seems to be a good number of deer based on the harvest this year.

Old Business

The Council heard the status of the Nonrural determination process and the pending proposal for the community of Moose Pass. No action by the Council was necessary.

New Business

Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program Update

Scott Ayers, OSM, provided information on the 2020 Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program (FRMP). Council members Gloria Stickwan and John Whissel volunteered to help identify potential priority information needs for consideration by the Council at its upcoming fall meeting. This will provide a framework for evaluating and selecting 2022 project proposals.

Call for Federal Fish and Shellfish Proposals

Mr. Ayers 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, and methods and means related to taking of fish for subsistence uses, as well as customary and traditional use determinations.

The Council did not submit any proposals for the following:

- Call for Federal Fish and Shellfish Proposals
- Call for State Fish Proposals (Prince William Sound Finfish and Shellfish)
- Call for State Hunting/Trapping Proposals (Central/Southwest Region)

Wildlife Special Actions

WSA 20-01 – Special Action on Unit 13 Caribou:

The Council received a presentation on a wildlife special action request for a continuous caribou season in Unit 13 from August 1 to March 31 and for a change of the caribou harvest limit in Unit 13 remainder from two bulls to two caribou for the 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 regulatory years.

Motion made by Mr. McLaughlin, seconded by Ms. Stickwan, to concur with the Wrangell-St. Elias Subsistence Resource Commission (SRC) recommendation on this special action. The recommendation was to “support the portion of the request that would change the harvest limit in Unit 13 remainder to two caribou. Changing the limit from bulls only to any caribou will provide additional subsistence opportunity. This recommendation opposes the elimination of the closed season from Oct. 1 to Oct. 20, which overlaps with the rut.” Motion passed unanimously. A public hearing on this matter will be scheduled after the Board’s April meeting.

WSA 20-02 and WSA 20-03:

The Council was advised of two other pending special actions. These special actions have been validated and public hearings on these requests will take place if the Board does not take action at its April meeting that would render them moot. No action was required of the Council.

WSA 20-02: Ahtna Intertribal Resource Commission is requesting the development of community harvest systems for moose in Units 11, 12, and 13, and for caribou in Units 12 and 13.

WSA 20-03: Request for closure of Federal public lands in Unit 13 to the hunting of caribou and moose by non-Federally qualified users for the 2020 season.

Review and approve FY2019 annual report

Motion made by Mr. McLaughlin, seconded by Mr. Whissel, to approve the draft FY2019 Annual Report with two additional topics, which are marked by asterisks (*). The motion passed unanimously. The final FY2019 Annual Report to the Board will include these issues:

- Ask the Board to keep the working group for Unit 13 caribou/moose in Unit 13
- Ask that a FRMP project include monitoring the Copper River to identify specific stocks, run timing, and escapement (pay more attention to Coho Salmon)
- Climate Change: continue observing climate change issues in terms of salmon and fisheries and research the stressors on salmon; (* following the asterisk is an addition) research/evaluate effects on overall food web caused by warming temperatures and ocean acidification
- Research wildlife populations with a focus on parasites
- Provide an explanation of the nonrural determination process in more detail and how this will be dealt with in the future
- *Provide a summary of impacts on the representation of communities on Regional Advisory Councils as a result of the Executive Order on Evaluating and Improving the Utility of Federal Advisory Committees

Denali National Park and Preserve Subsistence Resource Commission Appointment

Motion made by Mr. Whissel, seconded by Mr. McLaughlin, to appoint Justin Lang Mason as the Council's appointee to the Denali Subsistence Resource Commission. The motion passed unanimously.

Presentations

The Council received the following informational presentations:

- Effects of Warmer Winters on Salmon Incubation presented by Luca Adelfio
- Bear Project Update presented by Milo Burcham

Agency Reports

- Niniichik Traditional Council report presented by Ivan Encelewski
- Native Village of Eyak project report on Copper River Salmon Monitoring Program (a Partners Program project) presented by Matt Piche
- Ahtna InterTribal Resource Commission presented by Karen Linnell
- USFWS updates presented by Jeff Anderson
- USFS updates on the Chugach National Forest presented by Milo Burcham and Dave Pearson
- NPS updates on fisheries, wildlife, subsistence, anthropology presented by Dave Sarafin and Judy Putera
- BLM wildlife report presented by Valerie Lenhartzen and Jill Lucero
- OSM program updates presented by Greg Risdahl

Future Meeting Dates

The fall 2020 Council meeting was set for October 7-8, 2020, in Anchorage.

The winter 2021 Council meeting was set for February 24-25, 2021, in Cordova.

DeAnna Perry, Designated Federal Officer
USDA – United States Forest Service

Richard Greg Encelewski, Chair
Southcentral Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

These minutes will be formally considered by the Southcentral Alaska 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 Office of Subsistence Management at 1-800-478-1456 or Council Coordinator, DeAnna Perry at 907-209-7817 or email deanna.perry@usda.gov.