

YUKON-KUSKOKWIM DELTA
SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL
Meeting Minutes

Via Teleconference due to COVID-19 public health and safety restrictions
October 6-8, 2021

Invocation Council member Richard Slats gave the invocation.

Call to Order, Roll Call and Quorum Establishment

The meeting was called to order Wednesday, October 6, 2021, at 9:24 AM. Council members Raymond Oney, Thomas Alstrom, John Andrew, Jackie Cleveland, Norma Evan, James Landlord, Myron Naneng, Sr., Henry Parks, Phillip Peter, Sr., Alissa Nadine Rogers, and Richard Slats were present via teleconference. The Council currently has a full membership with all 13 seats filled. Council members Robert Aloysius and Wassily Alexie were on excused absence. A quorum was established with 11 of 13 seated Council members participating by phone.

Attendees participating via teleconference:

- Office of Subsistence Management, Anchorage: Eva Patton, Pippa Kenner, Cory Graham, Tom Plank, Lisa Grediagin, Robbin La Vine, Orville Lind
- Orutsararmiut Native Council, Bethel: Janessa Esquible, Danielle Lowry; Kylie Ford
- Kuskokwim River Intertribal Fish Commission: Mary Peltola, Terese Schomogyi, Bethel; Kevin Whitworth, McGrath
- Association of Village Council Presidents, Bethel: Jennifer Hooper, Paige Jones
- Native Village of Alakanuk: Gabriel Buster
- Evon Waska, Bethel
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge, Bethel: Boyd Blihovde, Spencer Rearden, Aaron Webber, Chris Tulik, Aaron Moses
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Togiak National Wildlife Refuge, Dillingham: Stan Culling, Andy Aderman
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: Jill Klein, Holly Carroll, Keith Ivy, Anchorage; Gerald Maschmann, Vince Mathews, Fairbanks
- Bureau of Land Management, Anchorage: Bonnie Million, Bruce Seppi, Chris McKee
- Bureau of Indian Affairs, Anchorage: Pat Petrivelli
- National Park Service, Anchorage: Kim Jochum, Victoria Florey, Dillon Patterson
- U.S. Forest Service, Anchorage: Greg Risdahl
- Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Wildlife Conservation Bethel: Patrick Jones, Phillip Perry, Palmer; Mark Burch, Rick Merizon, Commercial Fisheries Division; Ben Gray, Nick Smith, Anchorage; Deena Jallen, Christy Gleason, Fairbanks; Sportfish Division, John Chythlook; Subsistence

Division, Alida Trainor, Chris McDevitt, Brooke McDavid, Fairbanks; Western Board Support Savannah Hollingworth; Sam Decker, Fairbanks

- Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association: Serena Fitka, Catherine Moncrieff
- US Geological Survey Alaska Science Center: Dr. Vanessa von Biela
- Yup'ik Interpretation, Bethel: Pat Samson, Sophie Evan

Election of Officers

The Council held an election of officers since the Council has full membership again with the recent Secretary of Interior appointments.

Raymond Oney was elected Chair
Myron Naneng, Sr. was elected Vice Chair
Richard Slats was elected Secretary

Service Awards

Raymond Oney – 20 year award
John Andrew – 15 year award
Robert Aloysius – 18 year award and retirement recognition

Review and Adopt Agenda

Motion by Ms. Rogers, seconded by Mr. Naneng, to adopt the agenda as read with some modifications to the order to provide best flow of information for the Council action items and request for additional topics of Area M Fisheries and the Bering Sea “Donut Hole” to be added under fisheries discussion. Yukon River Tribal Fisheries Commission was not available to present due to overlap with the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council meeting occurring at the same time. The motion passed unanimously.

Review and Approve Previous Meeting Minutes

Motion by Mr. Andrew, seconded by Ms. Rogers, to approve the winter 2021 meeting minutes as written. The motion passed unanimously.

Council Member and Chair Reports

Raymond Oney of Alakanuk introduced himself as a lifelong subsistence user utilizing the resources throughout the seasons spring, summer, winter, and fall. He described his life growing up and living a semi-nomadic subsistence lifestyle until he had to leave his village to attend high school. His community relied on subsistence resources throughout the year fishing in the summer and hunting and trapping in the fall and winter. But now the community of Alakanuk is experiencing great hardship with the decline in Chinook and Chum Salmon. Due to the salmon population crash fishing was close all along the Yukon River, and they did not get an opportunity to fish – not even once. Only 4 –inch mesh was allowed for other small species of fish – but this is not the salmon that they depend on to feed their family and

community throughout the year. They look forward to when the salmon comes and normally would prepare to go out to fish camp for the summer.

Raymond reported that the seasons are changing from what he recalls growing up. This season has been very wet. The spring started out very warm and rainy and while it did cool down again a bit in the summer the rainy weather continued through until the fall. People are out hunting for moose now, fall birds, and fishing for Bering Cisco.

Thomas Alstrom of Alakanuk reported that as Raymond Oney said there was not any salmon fishing at all on the Yukon River. All commercial and subsistence Kings Salmon fishing was closed the entire season. Thomas noted that the ADF&G Test Fishery did catch some King Salmon that they distributed to local communities from their Emmonak office so some people did get a couple salmon that way. Thomas also reported that salmon caught from Bristol Bay was distributed to communities along the Yukon River and his parents received a box of frozen Bristol Bay Chum Salmon. He said it looked and tasted different than Yukon River salmon. Because there was no subsistence salmon fishing, some people from Lower Yukon villages were trying fishing with rod and reel off the coast for other fish species. He heard reports from his community of Alakanuk and also Kotlik, Emmonak, and Nunam Iqua that fishers were going out 20 or more miles off shore into the Bering Sea to catch some halibut. Some caught one or a few halibut per boat and some were catching up to a dozen Pacific Cod or even a Salmon Shark.

Thomas highlighted that at least moose are plentiful on the Lower Yukon River in this part of Unit 18, noting that he had not yet gone hunting for moose this fall because all his family and relatives already had a freezer full of moose. In a recent trip by boat around the island that Alakanuk is located on, he saw five nice big bull moose and three cow moose right near the shore within the 45-minute trip. Snow geese are starting to migrate south now and so many people are out all along the coast to hunt geese.

Jackie Cleveland of Quinhagak introduced herself as a new Council member and is honored to be able to work with Council members from throughout the Y-K Delta. Jackie reported her primary concern was how the fisheries were conducted and monitored on the Kanektok River and Kuskokwim Bay. All three fisheries were open in the area, sport fishing, commercial fishing, and subsistence fishing. While the community did meet its subsistence salmon needs, this year the sport fishing activity was of great concern especially due to COVID having people from outside the region coming through the community. Often there are upwards of 60 sportfish boats and rafters on the river and the community is concerned about impacts to the river habitat and also mortality from catch and release fishing. She is also concerned that the salmon escapement is not monitored close enough with only aerial surveys conducted, which do not provide the most accurate count. Traditional knowledge from Quinhagak indicates the Chinook and Chum Salmon returns are lower this year. The aerial survey estimate indicated Chum Salmon did not meet escapement goals and Chinook Salmon just met lower minimum escapement goals. Sockeye Salmon were very abundant.

Jackie reported she harvested enough salmon just to meet her needs and some extra to share with extended family. She is grateful for the fish they get in her area and very saddened that so many

subsistence communities were not able to harvest any salmon or only have a few Chinook to put away for the whole winter. A lot of subsistence fishers came down to Kuskokwim Bay to get salmon and Native Village of Quinhagak is sharing community and they too travel to other areas for other subsistence resources, but they are concerned about the potential for overharvest of salmon. The Tribe did pass a resolution to self-restrict the subsistence fishery in the W4 Bay area to match the Kuskokwim, such as six inch mesh, 45 depth but their main concern was that some of these boats had two and three nets. The community requests better monitoring and management of this fishery and a harvest report on how much salmon harvested from the Bay since where the fish comes from is not reflected in subsistence harvest reports.

Jackie reported that the moose hunt was off to a slow start due to the very wet and windy weather. However, the community did harvest some moose and even young first time hunters like her nephew got a moose. She is very grateful to everyone throughout the region that had supported the earlier moose moratorium because now the Kuskokwim moose population is growing. As it grows, the population is also expanding on the Kanektok and Arolik rivers, and there is now now moose hunt near Quinhagak. Jackie harvests berries, greens, and medicinal plants. She learned traditional knowledge of plants through her grandparents. She learned that when the cotton grass grows and spread out then the berries will be spread out, but if the cotton grass grows clumped then the berries will be clumped. She observed this phenomenon year with the salmon berries growing in bunches. Overall most berries were abundant this year but not as many cranberries as in years past.

Norma Evan of Marshall introduced herself as a new Council member. Her first language is Yup'ik. She was raised by her grandparents the late Martha and Jacko Evan and they taught her everything and lived a nomadic subsistence lifestyle growing up. Norma highlighted that she started fishing as a young child and never missed a year subsistence or commercial fishing on the Yukon River since then. This year was very difficult with no salmon fishing at all. Norma believes that the lack of snowfall over the past five or six years is a part of the reason for this recent Chinook and Chum salmon decline. There was no snow in the mountains and the ice was very thin, so she wonders how the salmon survive without any water. She noticed in the small streams that there were hardly any pools with salmon fry that she normally would see in the spring time after break up. Norma also reported that the tundra permafrost is melting and wonders if that meltwater, methane and what is now leaching out of the ground is toxic to juvenile salmon. She noted she has to fish farther out in the river now because the river banks are eroding. Water levels are lower than usual and the water has been quite warm even in the middle of the river in recent years. This summer they also saw a low number of whitefish.

Norma reported that at least people in Marshall are able to get subsistence harvest of moose and are still out berry picking now. There is no snowfall yet and no ice on the river at this time.

James Landlord of Mountain Village reported that spring breakup was a little early this year and as soon as they could, people were out setting nets and drifting for Sheefish with seven inch mesh nets, but then the entire river was shut down for Chinook and Chum salmon. The community always gathers firewood in springtime for the winter, but this year there was not much wood coming downriver with spring

breakup like there usually is. The winds may be part of the issue blowing wood to the other side of the river, as well as for the Chinook and Chum Salmon too. The salmon rely on the winds blowing strong into the mouth of the river to come in. He wonders where all the fish went. He did have a chance to fish around Point Romanof when taking his daughter back to her boyfriend's place in St. Michaels. They set nets for two nights at his family fish camp near there and caught about 16 Chum Salmon. They froze a few and half dried the rest and feel very fortunate for the salmon they were able to get. James was surprised to see many from the lower Yukon communities had traveled that far too to try fishing for salmon there. They also received a few Chum Salmon from Bristol Bay that were distributed to the Yukon River communities. The fish tasted different, but they were grateful to have some fresh fish to eat. James expressed how strange it is to not have any dryfish, having grown up always having dryfish he can't imagine the future without salmon.

Moose are very plentiful and everyone has been able to fill their freezer with moose. James reported that he had not yet hunted for moose himself because he was given moose meat from others. He did receive reports of guided sport hunters passing by his friend's camp with four set of moose antlers in the boat but did not appear to be weighed down by the meat of four moose. The community is concerned about wanton waste, so he enquired where to report that. A resident of Mountain Village also suggested that the Thirtymile and Andreafsky rivers be closed to sport hunters because those areas are very important for subsistence moose hunting and harvest of whitefish. It was a very wet rainy summer with lots of cotton grass as other noted. It was good berry year. They got a lot of blueberries and salmon berries between Mountain Village and St. Mary's.

Myron Naneng, Sr. of Bethel introduced himself as a new Council member and lifelong subsistence fisher, hunter, and trapper and has worked on subsistence issues most of his life. He worked for AVCP for over 20 years, served as the Water Fowl Conservation Committee Chair for a long time, as well as a member of the Alaska Migratory Bird Co-management Council and has attended many fisheries management meetings over the years. He is originally from Hooper Bay and is still connected there through his work with the Sea Lion Corporation. Myron noted that he used to fish commercially for salmon on the lower Yukon River and still goes to the coast to fish for herring and rod and reel for Halibut.

Myron reported the moose hunting has been good for Hooper Bay and other coastal communities. He goes back to the Black River in the Kusilvak Mountains area to hunt, and everyone is able to get at least one or two moose. He noted they have village corporation land up by Kusilvak and have established a guide authorized land use permit to bring in sports hunters because they are getting concerned about the rapidly increasing moose population in the area and don't want it to deplete the habitat and crash. But he noted the moose are also expanding and being seen even over by Nelson Island now.

Myron is very concerned that the coastal villages of Hooper Bay, Scammon Bay, and Chevak have been so affected by salmon fishing closures since the salmon that pass by these coastal communities are bound for the Yukon River. Myron noted that because he is able to fish on the Kuskokwim he has been able to share fish with his relatives in the coastal communities and help take care of family that way so they have food for the winter. However, he is very concerned about the drastically low Chum Salmon returns on

both the Yukon and Kuskokwim rivers and wonders if this is the result of the heat wave that caused the salmon die-off a couple years ago. Myron stressed that there needs to be conservation measures and a subsistence priority management under Title 8 of ANILCA. He stressed that the Area M commercial fisheries should be restricted when subsistence salmon fishing is closed because those salmon do migrate through there on the way to the Yukon and Kuskokwim rivers.

Henry Parks, of Nunapitchuk introduced himself as a new Council member and lifelong subsistence fisher, hunter, and trapper. He also picks berries, gathers wild greens, and goes to the coast to hunt seals in the spring. The birds and the moose were plentiful this year. Nunapitchuk is a tundra village and it is a long way to travel down the Johnson River to get to the Kuskokwim River to harvest salmon. He was grateful for the few opportunities to fish for salmon and caught a few King Salmon but hardly any Chum Salmon and wonders why the latter were so late and had such dramatically low returns. The Sockeye Salmon were abundant though. Henry expressed concern about the conflict between the State and Federal managers this past summer and admonished they are supposed to work together. He stressed it was the subsistence fishers that got caught in the middle and it made people very uncomfortable.

Phillip Peter, Sr. of Akiachak reported that there were a lot of geese this spring and bird hunting was excellent. After spring breakup they were able to set small mesh nets and caught Sheefish and whitefish. Then the smelts came in and were so abundant people were gifting five gallon buckets full of smelts. Phillip took his nephew out to show him how to subsistence fish, and they caught some King Salmon during the salmon fishing opportunities. His wife cut them up and distributed them to elders in the community. He only caught seven Chum Salmon but then the Reds (Sockeye Salmon) came in and the fishing was good. Phillip stressed that the Yupik laws are that when the animals come they give themselves to you and you cannot sit around and wait. Especially with COVID people need to help take care of each other and share their fish.

Phillip expressed great concern about the confusion caused by the State fishing opening when it was closed under Federal regulations. Fishers had confirmed the opening on the State recording line but then some fishers were stopped and cited and had their nets confiscated. This is very serious and makes him sad that it caused so much confusion, caused people real harm, and made them afraid to go out fishing again. Phillip admonished the fisheries managers to make sure to not repeat this mistake again.

Alissa Nadine Rogers of Bethel shared that it has been a very difficult year with the passing of several of her extended family. She did not go fishing for salmon this year because others needed it more. It breaks her heart to see empty fish racks and hear of the hardship especially on the Yukon that people have not been able to fish at all. Her grandparents taught her not to go out hunting or fishing with a heavy heart because the animals will see you are sad and it affects them.

Alissa reported she did get out this past spring to gather eggs with her husband, and they picked a lot of wild greens. It was a very warm spring and unusually abundant cotton grass everywhere so much that it looked like a field of snow. The smelts were very brief, with a short run that only lasted a day but the smelts they got were nice a big. The birds came in on time and there were lots of young birds everywhere

and waterfowl hunting was good this year for everyone with large flocks of snow geese flying in low as they headed to the coast.

Alissa expressed concern about fisheries management on the Kuskokwim and is worried that Chinook and Chum Salmon escapement will not be met without more conservation measures. The Sockeye and Coho Salmon runs were strong, so many people focused on that. However, she is concerned about whitefish as she hardly even caught any by rod and reel as they usually do. Overall it was a rainy summer and difficult for putting up subsistence foods due to mold. The blueberries were small this year and did not seem to grow much, cranberries were also small and sour, and the blackberries were big but did not have any flavor.

Richard Slats of Chevak reported that they finally had some good snow this spring after several years of so much heat. The ptarmigan were back, not as many as he recalls when he was young, but it sure was good to have ptarmigan soup again. Richard reported as others have that the subsistence salmon fishing was closed all summer and even the coastal communities could not fish at all except for with 4 inch mesh that most people don't have. They are not catching the same whitefish that they used to either. He was very concerned that this complete subsistence salmon fishing closure took place without any warning or consultation with the community or the Tribal Council. Richard reported that Chevak essentially had an unwritten agreement with USFWS that their coastal rivers would not be closed to salmon fishing and the community would manage their own rivers. He stressed that they are a fishing people, a fish community, and how are they supposed to make it through the winter without any fish? COVID-19 has had a big impact on his community with many lockdowns and limited services, and it is more important now than ever that people have access to their traditional healthy subsistence foods.

Richard implored that managers listen to the Council and the hardships subsistence communities are enduring and consider subsistence first and foremost. Normally the community would spend the summer at fish camp and dry fish to feed their families through the winter. This is their culture, tradition, and heritage: what are they going to pass down to their children and grandchildren if they can't fish?

John Andrew of Kwethluk reported that starting this spring, a lot of Kuskokwim salmon species were late coming in. He noted that there were a few days of subsistence fishing opportunities with one opening per week in June, but the water was too high especially around the "Y" confluence of the Kwethluk and Kuskokwim River so many did not attempt to fish until the end of June. John stressed that the Chum Salmon were barely non-existent, hardly anyone caught any and just a few Sheefish, and not too good for whitefish because water levels were low in the spring when they usually catch whitefish. Everyone did well though when the Reds (Sockeye Salmon) started picking up. John caught around 300 Reds and gave most them away to people in his community and the few Chum Salmon he caught he gave to the elders. Weather was very rainy later in the summer and many people had a hard time drying fish due to the wet conditions.

Moose hunting was slow in the fall due to warm weather. John reported that it was too warm for the moose to be moving about much. Some people caught young bulls, but the big bulls often don't start

moving until the first frost. The water levels were too low to go far upriver into Zone 2 to hunt moose without a jet boat. Few local people have jet boats and he heard complaints from his neighbors about guided sport hunters going up the Kwethluk, Kasigluk, and Kisaralik rivers in big jet boats and coming back with big antlers but wondering where the meat was.

Old Business

2021 805(c) Report Summary

Ms. Patton provided the Council with a summary of the Federal Subsistence Board actions and justifications on the fisheries proposals and closure reviews as outlined in the ANILCA 805(c) report.

Board's FY-2020 Annual Report Reply Summary

Council Coordinator Ms. Eva Patton presented a summary of the Federal Subsistence Board's reply to the Council's 2020 Annual Report. The Board is seeking feedback on this Annual Report Reply process and will follow up with the Council at the winter 2022 meeting.

Annual Report Reply Process Review

Ms. La Vine of OSM presented an overview of the Interagency Staff Committee proposal to review and improve the Annual Report reply process. The Council was not requested to provide a feedback, but this topic will be brought up again during the winter 2022 meetings and the Board hopes to receive Council's recommendations during that meeting cycle.

Special Actions

Ms. Patton provided the Council with an update on recent Special Actions for the region. Wildlife Special Action request WSA21-02 submitted by the Council requested that the harvest limit of Unit 18 remainder moose be increased from 2 to 3 moose for the remainder of the 2020-2021 season this past spring. The Federal Subsistence Board approved this request. A new Special Action request would be required if the Council or public wished to increase the moose harvest limit for the current fall 2021 to spring 2022 Unit 18 remainder season.

Wildlife Special Action, WSA21-03 was approved by the Board in August 2021 and extended the Kuskokwim Zone 2 fall moose season to October 15th aligning the 2021/22 season with current State regulations.

New Business

Wildlife Proposals and Closure Reviews

Regional:

WP22-41: Caribou. Units 9, 17, 18, and 19. Delegate authority to announce harvest limits, set sex restrictions, and open/close seasons. Support. Mr. Tom Plank presented the analysis. Motion by Ms. Rogers and seconded by Mr. Peters to support WP22-41 as submitted. Vote: Yes: 10 / No: 1 / Absent: 2. Justification: The Council supports the Refuge manager's delegated authority for flexibility to engage conservation measures as needed to manage the Mulchatna caribou herd. The Council is very concerned about the decline in the herd and supports the manager having the ability to open or close the hunt, and set harvest and sex restrictions in order to maintain a viable population for subsistence harvest opportunity in the future. The Council requests that the Refuge manager work closely with local communities and include their observations in management decisions for the Mulchatna caribou herd. People from the villages are always out on the land, observing and have the in-depth historical knowledge of the herd over the years.

WP22-42: Unit 18 remainder Moose – Increase harvest limit. Support. Mr. Tom Plank presented the analysis. Motion by Mr. Peter, Sr. and seconded by Mr. Naneng to support WP22-42. Vote: Yes: 11 / No: 0 / Absent: 2

Justification: Increasing the moose harvest limit will be beneficial to subsistence communities. Especially in times of low salmon returns, additional moose will help to feed families through the winter. As the moose population in this area is very high and at risk of a population crash, any additional harvest may help to keep the moose population at a sustainable level. The Council supports the season and the harvest limit restriction of only one antlered moose with no bull harvest from Oct. 1 through Nov. 30 remaining the same, so that it is consistent with State regulations to avoid confusion.

WP22-43: Unit 18 Moose - Delegate authority to the Refuge manager to adjust harvest. Oppose. Mr. Tom Plank presented the analysis. Motion by Mr. Naneng and seconded by Mr. Andrew to reconsider earlier vote on WP22-43 passed unanimously. Motion by Mr. Naneng and seconded by Ms. Cleveland for final vote to support WP22-43: Yes: 0 / No: 11 / Absent: 2.

Justification: The Council opposed due to conservation concerns for moose in Zone 1 and hopes to support population growth in Zone 1 since the bull to cow ratios are low. Harvest quotas in Zone 1 are met very quickly and most of the accessible area in Zone 1 is State lands and would be hard to manage just for a Federal hunt. The expanded season in Zone 2 proposed in WP22-44 will benefit those who are not able to get a moose in Zone 1.

WP22-44: Unit 18 Moose - Extend fall season; establish winter hunt. Support.

Mr. Tom Plank presented the analysis. Motion by Mr. Naneng and seconded by Mr. Peter to support WP22-44. Vote: Yes: 11 / No: 0 / Absent: 2.

Justification: Moose harvest quotas for Zone 2 of the Kuskokwim hunt area are often not met due to difficulty in reaching upper river tributaries of this area. Extending the fall season may allow for easier access when water levels rise with the fall rains. Also, moose are not moving around as much with warmer temperatures early in the season. The Council has heard requests from local communities and Tribes in this area that an extended season will give hunters a better opportunity to be successful. The winter may be announced season will help subsistence users meet their needs if the harvest quota is not met during the fall hunt.

WP22-45: Unit 18, 22, 23 Hare - Establish season/harvest limit for Alaska hare.

Support with OSM modification. Mr. Tom Plank presented the analysis. Motion by Mr. Naneng and seconded by Mr. Peter to support WP22-45 reducing bag limit as proposed (2 per day/ 6 per season) Vote: Yes: 10 / No: 1 / Absent: 2.

Motion by Mr. Landlord, Seconded by Mr. Naneng in support of the OSM proposed season Aug. 1-May 31. Vote: Yes: 11 / No: 0 / Absent: 2.

Justification: The Council supports reducing the harvest limit for Alaska hare due to observed low population levels and lack of biological data for this species. The Council discussed seeing few jackrabbit (Alaska hare) tracks anymore in areas where they used to be abundant, and the decline has been a common observation around communities across the Y-K Delta region. Council members noted that Alaska hare used to be abundant in snares 30 years ago, but perhaps fast snow-machines made it easier to track them down and, based on these local observations, reducing the harvest limit is warranted. The Council requested more data, but noted that it is hard to study something when it is so scarce. The Council supports the OSM season date modification so that the Federal season will not be more restrictive than the State season.

Crossover:

WP22-47: Unit 22 Caribou - Allow calf harvest. Support. Mr. Tom Plank presented the analysis.

Motion by Mr. Alstrom and seconded by Mr. Naneng to support WP22-47. Vote: Yes: 9/ No: 0 / Abstain: 2/ Absent: 2.

Justification: The Council supports reducing regulatory confusion by aligning the more restrictive Federal regulation with the more liberal State regulation, so that subsistence hunters will not be cited for taking an orphaned caribou calf. Council members noted that while people do not target calves on the Yukon Delta, if one were orphaned, it would just die anyway.

Statewide:

WP22-01: Various. Define who is/is not a participant in a community harvest program and effects on harvest limits. Support. Ms. Pippa Kenner presented the analysis. Motion to support WP22-01 by Mr. Naneng and seconded by Mr. Landlord. The motion passed unanimously. Vote: Yes: 11 / No: 0 /

Absent: 2.

Justification: The Council supports Ahtna people and their community harvest system, which is impacted by individuals who do not want necessarily to share their harvests but whose individual harvest limits are used up by the community harvest limit. Separating those two types of hunters will be helpful by identifying who is and who is not participating in the community harvest system. The proposal will benefit the Yukon Kuskokwim Region if a community harvest system is created.

WP22-02: Various. Units 6, 9, 10, 22, 23, and 26. Rescind restrictions for designated hunters in areas with community harvest systems in place. Support. Ms. Kenner presented the analysis. Motion to support WP22-02 by Mr. Naneng and seconded by Mr. Landlord. The motion passed unanimously.

Vote: Yes: 11 / No: 0 / Absent: 2.

Justification: This proposal affects general regulations and unit-specific regulations in Units 6, 9, 10, 22, 23, and 26 and rescinds restrictions for designated hunters in areas with community harvest systems in place. The Council supports Ahtna people and their community harvest system. The proposal will benefit the Yukon Kuskokwim Region if a community harvest system is created.

2022 Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program

Mr. Cory Graham, Fisheries Biologist with OSM, presented the Council with the 2022 Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program (FRMP) Yukon and Kuskokwim rivers research proposal overviews. The Council discussed interest in more whitefish studies on both the Yukon and Kuskokwim rivers since they are important subsistence species and relied upon very heavily now with recent salmon declines and closures. The Council requested tagging and outmigration studies to monitor movement of salmon and more comprehensive salmon habitat studies spanning not only the river ecosystem but also the marine environment. The Council also requested more FRMP research funding go to local Tribes and stressed the importance of traditional knowledge and local community partnerships to inform fisheries research.

Identifying Issues for FY-2021 Annual Report

Ms. Patton introduced the Annual Report process. The Council identified the following topics for inclusion into their FY-2021 Annual Report:

1. Donlin Gold Mine – Impact on subsistence resources
2. Whitefish Research Request – Whitefish in decline. Important secondary resource when salmon harvest is low.
3. Red Salmon (Sockeye) research request – Can Red Salmon abundance effect other species?
4. The “Donut Hole” is illegal, unregulated, and unreported fishery in the Bering Sea area important to Chinook Salmon; request assistance to help direct these concerns to appropriate agency.
5. North Pacific Fisheries Management Council – Request to lower salmon by-catch
6. Mulchatna Caribou Herd – All hunting opportunity should be closed to harvest until herd rebounds to above 30K.

Motion by Ms. Rogers, seconded by Mr. Landlord, to include topic 1 in the Annual Report. Mr. Naneng abstained due to conflict of interest. Vote: 10 yes, 1 abstain, 2 absent.

Motion by Ms. Rogers, seconded by Mr. Naneng to include items 2 through 6 in the annual report. Vote 11 yes, 2 absent.

7. The Council also added request for information on concerns about the snowy owl population and requested a population assessment.

Council Correspondence

The Council requested the following correspondence:

Letter addressed to the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council (NPFMC) expressing concerns about Bering Sea bycatch of both Chinook and Chum Salmon. The Council requests a lower bycatch limit of salmon and added concern for halibut. Additionally, the Council requests a change to the NPFMC membership and inclusion of Tribal and local subsistence representation.

Letter addressed to the Federal Subsistence Board with request to elevate the above concerns about need to reduce Bering Sea bycatch of both Chinook and Chum Salmon to the Secretary of Commerce. Share this letter with Western Interior, Eastern Interior, and other western Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils who may also wish to sign on to this request.

Letter addressed to the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council in support of the ONC's letter to NPFMC to reduce the bycatch to 17,000. The Council would note they support a bycatch number lower than that being proposed by ONC.

In order to relay Council recommendations directly Chair Raymond Oney was nominated to attend the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council meetings to address salmon bycatch issues on behalf of the Council and, Myron Naneng was identified as the second if the Chair cannot attend.

Letter addressed to Alaska Board of Fisheries and Federal Subsistence Board requesting that if subsistence salmon fishing is closed, then intercept commercial salmon fisheries should also be closed.

The Council also made a request for the winter meeting for information from ADF&G Area M Managers on data, monitoring, and genetics of Chinook and Chum Salmon caught in Area M and False Pass commercial fisheries to learn more about any stocks headed to the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region.

2022 Council application/nomination open season

Ms. Patton informed the Council about 2022 Council application and nomination open season and requested Council's members help in reaching out to the rural communities in the region and recruit new applicants.

Agency Reports:

- Orutsararmiut Native Council report and Partners Program updates presented by Danielle Lowry
- Association of Village Council Presidents report presented by Jennifer Hooper
- Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission report presented by Mary Peltola.
- Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge report presented by Aaron Moses.
- Togiak National Wildlife Refuge report presented by Andy Aderman.
- Bureau of Land Management Anchorage Field Office report presented by Bonnie Million.
- Alaska Department of Fish and Game Wildlife Division of Wildlife Conservation reports presented by Patrick Jones, Phillip Perry, Keith Oster, Rick Merizon, and Mark Burch.
- Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association report presented by Serena Fitka and Catherine Moncrieff.
- US Geological Survey Alaska Science Center report on Heat Stress in Yukon River Chinook presented by Dr. Vanessa von Biela.
- 2020 Yukon River Salmon Season Postseason discussion presented by Gerald Maschmann, Holly Carroll, and Keith Ivy, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Deena Jalen and Christy Gleason, Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

- 2020 Kuskokwim River Salmon Postseason discussion presented by Aaron Moses, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Mary Peltola, Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, and Nick Smith, Alaska Department of Fish and Game.
- Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Subsistence, report presented by Alida Trainor and Chris McDevitt.
- Office of Subsistence Management Report presented by Robbin La Vine.

Future Meeting Dates:

Winter 2022 meeting to be held March 1-2 in Bethel.

Fall 2022 meeting to be held October 27-28 in Bethel.

Adjourn meeting at 5:32 pm

Eva Patton, Designated Federal Officer
USFWS, Office of Subsistence Management.

Raymond Oney, Chair
Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

These minutes will be formally considered by the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta 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. Contact Eva Patton, Council Coordinator, at 1-800-478-1456 or 1-907-786-3888, or email eva_patton@fws.gov.