

**EASTERN INTERIOR ALASKA SUBSISTENCE
REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL**

Meeting Minutes

Pike's Waterfront Lodge
Fairbanks
October 15-16, 2019

Call to Order, Roll Call and Quorum Establishment:

The meeting was called to order Tuesday, October 15, 2019 at 9:00 a.m. Council members Susan Entsminger (Chair), Andrew Firmin (Vice-Chair), Michael Koehler, William Glanz, Andrew Bassich, Robert Wright, Sr., Charlie Jagow, Donald Woodruff, and Timothy McManus were present in person. With nine out of nine seated Council members present (Council has one vacant seat) the quorum was established.

Attendees:

In person:

Office of Subsistence Management (OSM), Anchorage: Zachary Stevenson, Katya Wessels, Pippa Kenner, Lisa Maas, Frank Harris, Tom Kron, Thomas Doolittle
Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Fairbanks: Nathan Hawkaluk, Vince Matthews
Ahtna Intertribal Resource Commission (AITRC), Glennallen: Karen Linnell, Shirley Smelcer
United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Fairbanks: Gerald Maschmann, Fred Bue
Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), Fairbanks: Lisa Stuby, Holly Carrol, Bonnie Borba, Christy Gleason, Brook McDavid, Alida Trainor, Tom Seaton; *Palmer:* Mark Burch, Eddie Grasser; *Juneau:* Ben Mulligan
University of Newfoundland, Newfoundland, Canada: Alistair Bath
Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve (NP), Fairbanks: Marcy Okada, Scott Sample

National Park Service (NPS), Anchorage: Dr. Joshua Ream
Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve (NPP), Copper Center: Barbara Cellarius
Arctic Village: David Smith, Evon Peter, Galen Gilbert, Sarah James, Tiffany Yatlin, Shayna Tritt, Marjorie Gemmill, Tonya Garnett
University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF), Fairbanks: Carrie Stevens
Tetlin NWR, Tok: Timothy Lorenzini, Ross Flagen
Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Fairbanks: Jim Herrigas
Tanana Chiefs Conference, Fairbanks: Brian McKenna, Ben Stevens
Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFFA), Girdwood: Catherine Moncrieff

Via teleconference:

OSM, Anchorage: Orville Lind
NPS, Denver: Kyle Joly
Denali NPP, Denali Park: Amy Craver
ADF&G, Anchorage: Deena Jallen
USFWS, Anchorage: Carol Damberg

Ahtna Corporation, Glennallen: Gloria Stickwan
Donlin (indiscernible): Sarah Scott

BLM, Anchorage: Dan Sharp

Review and Adopt Agenda:

Motion #1 by Mr. Firmin, seconded by Mr. Woodruff, to adopt the agenda with the following changes:

- Add round table discussion with residents from Arctic Village and take comments on the first day of the meeting;
- Move Federal wildlife proposal WP20-50 discussion to the second day of the meeting due to the ADF&G scheduling conflict.

Motion #1 to adopt the agenda passed unanimously.

Motion #2 by Mr. Bassich, seconded by Mr. Firmin, to allow the Chair flexibility in changing the order of agenda items to accommodate scheduling conflicts. Motion #2 passed unanimously.

Review and Approve Previous Meeting Minutes:

Motion #3 by Mr. Firmin, seconded by Mr. Woodruff, to approve winter 2019 meeting minutes as written. Motion #3 passed unanimously.

Council Member and Chair Reports:

William Glanz of Central shared that there was overharvest of caribou in a State hunt in Unit 25C. He said that local people could not hunt during the first hunt because it is overcrowded and dangerous. Mr. Glanz also addressed a public comment regarding hunting in a Wild and Scenic River.

Timothy McManus of Nenana mentioned the high water conditions and that many hunters came into Nenana to launch their boats. Fishing was good this year, especially the fall run. Mr. McManus said that public commented on gosling chicks not being as abundant as before.

Robert Wright Sr., of Tanana observed that climate change is affecting the migration of birds in Rampart. He said that birds were starving along the river due to lack of food. There was low water on the Yukon River during the summer King Salmon season. The summer season King Salmon management and timing were effective. Moose hunting was difficult due to temperatures above 70 degrees, and moose did not go into rut until the end of hunting season and many people that didn't harvest moose still need meat.

Donald Woodruff of Eagle noted that moose hunting was difficult due to the warm season. Fall Chum Salmon season was productive. Mr. Woodruff reported that a survey showed the amount needed for subsistence was 17,000 salmon and is helpful to show what needs are.

Andrew Firmin of Ft. Yukon noted the moose harvest was decent and produced medium-sized and small-bodied moose. Proxy hunting for elders and extended family was common.

Andrew Bassich of Eagle reiterated the effect of climate change on the timing of the moose season and rut.

He added that in the future there might be a need to change seasons. Signs of grizzly bear in the area are more abundant than observed over the past decade. Mr. Bassich was disappointed that caribou did not cross the American summit region in Zone 3. Salmon and caribou are the most important subsistence resources for Eagle. Mr. Bassich complimented Holly Carrol with ADF&G for her effective work balancing the needs of getting fish to people up and down river with escapement needs. The King Salmon return was at or below 50% of the historic average and more work must be done to restore King Salmon. Eagle subsistence users caught enough fall Chum Salmon for the last two years. The majority of the fall Chum Salmon run returned later in September and no visible pulse was seen in Eagle, just a steady flow. As a result, it takes users much longer to catch enough fish to satisfy the amounts necessary for subsistence, and in the late season fish wheels are icing up. Mr. Bassich suggested that the management needs to consider this when working on balancing priorities. River levels were low and water temperature was very high all summer.

Michael Koehler of Dry Creek observed that the fall caribou season was slow again, noting the hot weather conditions and late arrival of the herd. Warm weather conditions made for difficult moose hunting and meat processing. A high number of black bear were observed at Dry Creek at higher elevations along with a good blueberry season. Dry Creek already received 18 inches of snow.

Charlie Jagow of Porcupine River reiterated concern for hot weather conditions reported by other Council members. Early break up of ice occurred on the Sheenjek and Colleen Rivers. The summer was very hot and dry. It was a very bad fire year at Yukon Flats. The warm fall season with heavy rain made for very poor moose hunting, which was burdensome for those without freezers, requiring people to keep meat in a smokehouse.

Susan Entsminger of Mentasta noted that there had been ten days of warmer weather in March, followed by cold. It rained a lot in July and August resulting in great berry production. Some locals trapped wolf, and people in Mentasta were successful in harvesting moose, more so than in Tok, who took advantage of hunting seasons farther north. Isolated snowfalls, about a foot all together, were early, heavy, and wet, making for difficult snowmachining and trapping. Chair Entsminger helped Ahtna collect hair samples for their bear study. She attended the Subsistence Resource Commission (SRC) meeting for Wrangell-St. Elias NPP and said that Ms. Cellarius would provide more details later. Chair Entsminger talked about the previous work on Arctic Village issues and the Council's efforts to establish a dialogue with Arctic Village residents. Ms. Entsminger said OSM is understaffed and did not send the letter to Arctic Village, requested by the Council, until August. She contacted Carrie Stevens with UAF who has been involved with Arctic Village and also spoke with Ben Stevens with TCC regarding wanting to have a meeting with residents of Arctic Village. She finally succeeded with Ms. Stevens' help and met for two hours with eight people from Arctic Village a day prior to the fall 2019 Council meeting. During her meeting with representatives from Arctic Village, Chair Entsminger took responsibility for the Alaska Board of Game proposal and explained the differences between the Federal and State proposal process, seasons, bag limits, and what you can and cannot do. The resulting dialogue was productive and respectful. She also told the Arctic Village representatives about the hunter ethics education and outreach efforts of the Council and that, perhaps, this program could include the sheep hunting issues near Arctic Village as one of its components. She invited the Arctic Village representatives to attend the Council meeting and participate in the round table on this topic.

Old Business:

- Wildlife Closure Review WCR20-42 information update by Lisa Maas
- Status update on the hunter ethics education initiative by Katya Wessels
- The Council held roundtable discussion on hunter education initiative with all interested meeting participants
- “Domino effect” information requested by the Council by Lisa Maas
- 805(c) Report information update by Zachary Stevenson.

New Business:

Wildlife Proposals:

Regional Proposals:

WP20-48 requests alignment of Federal and State regulations for the Fortymile Caribou Herd and expanding the delegated authority of the BLM Eastern Interior Field Office manager. Motion #4 by Mr. Woodruff, seconded by Mr. Glanz, to support WP20-48.

The Council said that it is extremely important to keep the herd’s population sustainable and that conservation concerns still exist. The conservation concern is actually over-population, which might adversely affect the herd; therefore, hunting opportunities for subsistence users. The Council’s position on this proposal is supported by substantial evidence, including biological and traditional ecological knowledge. Reports from area managers indicated low parturition rates for three year-old cows, showing that there is stress on the herd and that it might be outgrowing its habitat, which could lead to a population crash. The Council does not support bull caribou harvest in October when the bulls are in rut and encourages managers to open the season on November 1. The Council also noted that the proposal would be beneficial to Federally qualified subsistence users and would create more ways to manage the herd so it doesn’t crash, thereby ensuring reliable resource for subsistence users and creating more hunting opportunities. Motion #4 passed unanimously.

WP20-49 requests to open the Arctic Village Sheep Management Area in Unit 25A to the harvest of sheep by non-Federally qualified users. Motion #5 by Mr. Woodruff, seconded by Mr. Bassich, to support WP20-49.

The Council members engaged into a lengthy discussion with the Tribal representatives from Arctic Village and Venetie, who testified to the Council about their concerns with the proposal. The Council spoke of the importance of considering traditional ecological knowledge when making decisions on the Federal regulatory proposals and noted that according to the Tribal representatives’ testimonies, TEK observations show that counts of sheep are low. This is validated by the Federal survey results; therefore, the Council sees a conservation concern for the sheep population in the Arctic Village Sheep Management Area and views this proposal as detrimental to the satisfaction of subsistence needs of Federally qualified subsistence users.

The Council members pointed out that although the harvest records cited by the State may indicate that the residents of these communities rarely hunt sheep, these records might not reflect the actual reality of the situation, especially when one deals with “a paperless society.” The Council considered the lack of sufficient harvest data as justification for its decision on the proposal.

Additionally, the Council took into account the testimony of Tribal representatives from Arctic Village and Venetie about the Red Sheep Creek area. They believe it is sacred and has important spiritual and cultural significance for the Tribe. The Council thought that if the proposal passed, it would negatively affect the traditional way of life and the customary and traditional uses of sheep in the area.

The Council believes its recommendation will continue to benefit subsistence users, but will restrict other users in the area; however, the Council pointed out that there are many other areas in the State for other users to go sheep hunting.

The Council said that the Arctic Village and Venetie Tribal representatives desire to continue the dialogue about the Arctic Village Sheep Management Area and have a more in-depth government-to-government consultation on the issue, which has been a recurring concern for over many years. The Council requested to have a more detailed tribal consultation with all of the involved tribes sighting the lack of local outreach. The Council voted to send a letter to the Board to form a subcommittee (working group) composed of all interested stakeholders to work on a viable solution. Motion #5 failed on a unanimous vote.

WP20-50 requests that Federal and State hunt areas, seasons, and harvest limits for moose in Unit 12 remainder be more closely aligned to reduce user confusion. Motion #6 by Mr. Koehler, seconded by Mr. Woodruff, to support WP20-50 with modification. The modification was to extend the fall season in Unit 12, remainder from 9/8 – 9/17 to 9/8 – 9/20, any bull, and eliminate the Tok River drainage hunt area, which had antler restrictions.

The Council said that this modification will provide a meaningful opportunity for Federally qualified subsistence users. According to traditional ecological knowledge, bulls become more active later in the season and having a Federal season that is longer than the State season that allows the harvest of bulls with no antler restrictions would provide additional opportunity for the local Federally qualified subsistence users. Motion #6 passed unanimously.

WP20-51 requests the Federal Subsistence Board to recognize customary and traditional uses of sheep in Unit 12 by rural residents of the community of Slana. Motion #7 by Mr. Firmin, seconded by Mr. McManus, to support WP20-51.

The Council noted the seasons and harvests on sheep provide a reasonable subsistence opportunity. The Council pointed out that it will benefit the subsistence users of Slana who hunt in Unit 11 and want to hunt in Unit 12 on Park Service lands. The Council also mentioned support for the proposal from the

Wrangell-St. Elias Subsistence Resource Commission. Motion #7 passed unanimously.

Crossover Proposals:

WP20-19 requests revisions to the elder/minor sheep hunt in Unit 11. Motion #8 by Mr. Bassich, seconded by Mr. Woodruff, to support WP20-19.

The Council stated that it wants to use the OSM Preliminary Conclusion on page 166 of the Council's October 2019 meeting book as the primary justification for their position on the proposal. The Council also shared its concern that opening a longer season could result in more sheep harvested. The Council believes that a separate youth hunt is unnecessary because there is already an ample opportunity for youth to participate in the regular hunt and for elders to go out with youth to pass on knowledge. Motion #8 failed.

Statewide Proposals:

WP20-08 requests implementing a statewide requirement that traps and snares be marked with either the trapper's name or State identification number. Motion #9 by Mr. Bassich, seconded by Mr. Glanz, to support WP20-08.

The Council noted the proposal would be burdensome, costly, and provide no benefit to Federally qualified subsistence users in remote areas. The Council believes that this proposal will not be effective in stopping illegal trapping because those hunting out of season, using the wrong bait, or wrong size trap will not mark their traps, regardless. The Council supported OSM's justification on page 179 of the Council's October 2019 meeting book, stating that it agrees with all of the main points brought up in the justification and that the proposal is not good for Federally qualified subsistence users. The Council emphasized that the proposal will not work in the bush. Motion #9 failed on a unanimous vote.

2020 Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program:

Several Council members commented that the *Yukon River In-Season Salmon Management Teleconferences* Project 20-256 has been providing good information to subsistence users on management decisions and timing of fishing opportunities. One Council member thought the *Customary Trade in the Lower Middle Yukon River* Project 20-252 was an important project, as it would collect good information about how customary trade has changed over time.

Identify Issues for FY2019 Annual Report:

The Council identified the following topics for inclusion into the FY19 Annual Report.

- The need for more information on climate change
- Funding for small projects in the FRMP
- The need for more environmental monitoring

- The evaluation of Alaska hatchery program impacts to Bering Sea salmon production
- The hunter education and ethics initiative

Agency Reports:

The following Agency reports were presented:

- Arctic NWR and Yukon Flats NWR updates by Vince Matthews and Nathan Hawkaluk
- 2019 Yukon River Salmon season summary by Gerald Maschmann, USFWS, and Holly Carroll, ADF&G
- Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve update by Marcy Okada and Scott Sample
- Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve Staff report by Barbara Cellarius
- Denali National Park and Preserve Wildlife Update by Patricia Owen
- Overview of YR DFA's FRMP funded projects by Catherine Moncrieff
- ADF&G results from the OSM funded Yukon River Burbot Radiotelemetry Study by Lisa Stuby and Alida Trainor
- ADF&G overview of Wood Bison Program by Tom Seaton
- Eastern Interior and Central Yukon Field Offices report for BLM by Jim Herrigas
- Tanana Chiefs Conference Natural Resources Program update by Brian McKenna
- AITRC report by Karen Linnell
- OSM Staff report by Tom Doolittle and Tom Kron

Future Meeting Dates:

The Council confirmed the dates of March 3-4 for the winter 2020 meeting in Fairbanks and selected October 14-15 for the fall 2020 meeting in Fairbanks.

Zachary C. Stevenson, DFO
USFWS Office of Subsistence Management

Susan Entsminger, Chair
Eastern Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

These minutes will be formally considered by the Eastern Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council at its March 3-4, 2020, meeting in Fairbanks, and any corrections or notations will be incorporated in the minutes at that meeting.

A detailed report of this meeting, copies of the transcript and meeting handouts are available upon request. Call Zachary Stevenson at 1-800-478-1456 or 907-786-3674, email zachary_stevenson@fws.gov

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