



EASTERN INTERIOR ALASKA
SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL
ADVISORY COUNCIL

Meeting Materials

March 5-6, 2019
Fairbanks



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On the cover...

Moose (*Alces alces*) are Denali's largest herbivores, weighing up to 1,500 lbs. Federal managers rely on accurate estimates of moose population size, age structure, and sex ratios to evaluate moose population health and productivity and to set hunting limits.



Photo by Tim Rains, DENA, NPS, public domain

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EASTERN INTERIOR ALASKA SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Pike’s Waterfront Lodge
Fairbanks

March 5-6, 2019
convening at 9:00 am daily

TELECONFERENCE: call the toll free number: 1-877-407-8065, then when prompted enter the passcode: 8201631.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: Public comments are welcome for each agenda item and for regional concerns not included on the agenda. The Council appreciates hearing your concerns and knowledge. Please fill out a comment form to be recognized by the Council chair. Time limits may be set to provide opportunity for all to testify and keep the meeting on schedule.

PLEASE NOTE: These are estimated times and the agenda is subject to change. Contact staff for the current schedule. Evening sessions are at the call of the chair.

AGENDA

*Asterisk identifies action item.

- 1. Invocation**
- 2. Call to Order** (*Chair*)
- 3. Roll Call and Establish Quorum** (*Secretary*)..... 4
- 4. Welcome and Introductions** (*Chair*)
- 5. Review and Adopt Agenda*** (*Chair*) 1
- 6. Election of Officers**
 - Chair (*DFO*)
 - Vice-Chair (*New Chair*)
 - Secretary (*New Chair*)
- 7. Review and Approve Previous Meeting Minutes*** (*Chair*) 5
- 8. Reports**
 - Council Members’ Reports
 - Chair’s Report
 - Council Coordinator’s Report
- 9. Public and Tribal Comment on Non-Agenda Items** (available each morning)

10. Old Business (Chair)

- a. Hunter Ethics Education Program Update (*Katya Wessels*)

11. New Business (Chair)

- a. Wildlife Closure Review WCR18-42 (Unit 12 within WRST caribou)*28
- b. Call for Federal Wildlife Proposals*47
- c. Council Charter Review* 70
- d. Approve FY2018 Annual Report* 56
- e. Alaska Board of Game Call for Proposals (Arctic, Western, and the Interior Regions) for 2019/2020 Meeting Cycle*65

12. Agency Reports

(Time limit of 15 minutes unless approved in advance)

Tribal Governments

Native Organizations

Special Actions

USFWS

- 1. Preliminary 2019 Yukon River Pre-Season Outlook – (Joint report by USFWS and ADFG)
- 2. Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge Update
- 3. Arctic National Wildlife Refuge Update

NPS

- 1. Yukon-Charlie Rivers National Preserve Update (Marci Okada)
- 2. Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve Report (Barbara Cellarius and David Sarafin)
- 3. Denali National Park and Preserve Report

BLM

ADF&G

Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association report

OSM

- 1. General Update
- 2. Fisheries Program Updates

13. Future Meeting Dates*

- Confirm Fall 2019 meeting date and location67

Select Winter 2020 meeting date and location68

14. Closing Comments

15. Adjourn (*Chair*)

To **teleconference** into the meeting, call the toll free number: 1-877-407-8065, then when prompted enter the passcode: 8201631.

Reasonable Accommodations

The Federal Subsistence Board is committed to providing access to this meeting for all participants. Please direct all requests for sign language interpreting services, closed captioning, or other accommodation needs to Katerina “Katya” Wessels, 907-786-3885, katerina_wessels@fws.gov, or 800-877-8339 (TTY), by close of business on February 22, 2019.

REGION 9
Eastern Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

Seat	Year Appointed Term Expires	Member Name and Community
1	2001 2019	Susan L. Entsminger Mentasta Chair
2	2007 2019	Andrew P. Firmin Fort Yukon Secretary
3	2017 2019	Michael J. Koehler Dry Creek
4	2019	VACANT
5	2005 2017	William L. Glanz Central
6	2002 2017	Andrew W. Bassich Eagle
7	2017 2020	Robert C. Wright, Sr. Tanana
8	2018	VACANT
9	2018	VACANT
10	2018	VACANT

**EASTERN INTERIOR ALASKA
SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL**

Meeting Minutes

October 11 – 12, 2018
Tanana Community Hall, Tanana

Invocation: Council Chair Sue Entsminger provided an invocation.

Call to Order, Roll Call and Quorum Establishment:

The chair called the meeting to order Thursday, October 11 at 8:00 a.m. Katerina Wessels, Council Coordinator and Designated Federal Officer (DFO), conducted a roll call. Council members Sue Entsminger, Michael Koehler, Andy Bassich, Bill Glanz, Charlie Jagow, and Donald Woodruff were present in person. Vigil Umphenour was absent for an hour the first day of the meeting and was present for the rest of the first day and whole second day via teleconference. Robert C. Wright, Sr. of Tanana was absent both days due to attendance at the Salmon Fellows meeting. Andrew Firmin of Fort Yukon was absent both days due to participation in a search and rescue mission in his home community. Lester Erhart, Sr. of Tanana passed away September 15, 2018. With 7 of 9 seated Council members present during the first day of the meeting a quorum was established. Introductions were made for Council members, staff, and guests.

Attendees:

The following individuals attended some portion of the meeting either in person or by teleconference, in addition to the Council members.

In person:

Katerina Wessels	Anchorage	Office of Subsistence Management (OSM)
Frank Harris	Anchorage	OSM
Carl Johnson	Anchorage	OSM
Vince Mathews	Fairbanks	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge (NWR)
Fred Bue	Fairbanks	USFWS
Barbara Cellarius	Copper Center	National Park Service (NPS), Wrangell-St. Elias National Park & Preserve (NPP)
Glenn Chen	Anchorage	Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)
Karen Linnell		Ahtna Intertribal Resources Commission (AITRC)
Stan Zuray	Tanana	Tanana/Rampart/Manley State Advisory Committee (AC)
Kayla Albert	Tanana	

Faith Peters	Tanana	
Charlie Campbell	Tanana	
Barbara Martin	Tanana	
Phyllis Erhart	Tanana	
Curtis Sommers	Tanana	Tanana Tribal Council
Judy Kangas	Tanana	
Dorothy Jordan	Tanana	
Kathleen Peters-Zuray	Tanana	
Denise [no last name indicated]	Florida	

Via teleconference:

Wayne Jenkins		Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA)
		Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC)
Brian McKenna	Fairbanks	USFWS
Carol Damberg	Anchorage	USFWS
Nathan Hawkaluk	Fairbanks	ADF&G
Holly Carroll	Fairbanks	ADF&G
Christy Gleason	Fairbanks	
Gloria Stickwan		
George Pappas	Anchorage	OSM
Brooke McDavid	Fairbanks	ADF&G
Amy Craver	Anchorage	NPS
Mark Burch	Anchorage	ADF&G
Marcy Okada	Fairbanks	NPS

Review and Adopt Agenda

Motion #1 by Mr. Bassich, seconded by Mr. Glanz, to add a presentation on the NPS proposal to amend regulations for hunting and trapping on National Preserves in Alaska to Old Business as item 9 (b).

The motion carried unanimously.

Motion #2 by Mr. Woodruff, seconded by Mr. Glanz, to adopt an amended Agenda as read with the following changes:

- *Under New Business (10) Fisheries Proposals (b) Crossover Proposals, add FP19-01: Expand the area and fishing time for the Federal subsistence drift gillnet fishers in Subdistricts 4B and 4C of the Yukon/Northern Federal Subsistence Fishery Management Area.*
- *Under Agency Reports (11), move ADF&G presentation on Customary Trade and Barter in the Upper Yukon Region right after New Business item (10(f)) RAC appointment to the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park Subsistence Resource Commission.*

The motion carried unanimously. The agenda was adopted as amended.

Review and Approve Previous Meeting Minutes

Motion #3 by Mr. Bassich, seconded by Mr. Koehler, to approve the winter 2018 meeting minutes with one correction proposed by Sue Entsminger. Chair Entsminger provided a correction to the title of KCAM radio program “Caribou Clatter” (page 13, paragraph 4, line 4), which was recorded incorrectly as “Caribou Clutter.”

The motion carried unanimously.

Dedication of the Council’s Meeting in Tanana to Lester Erhart, Sr.

Mr. Bassich stated on the record that Mr. Erhart served as an example of valuable participation by a Council member from a remote community. Mr. Erhart had significant long-term knowledge about subsistence practices and traditional knowledge. He was a man of very few words, but when he spoke his statements were succinct and powerful. Mr. Bassich proposed to dedicate the meeting to Lester Erhart and to hold a moment of silence in his memory. Chair Entsminger told the Council a story shared with her by Mr. Erhart’s family that when he died an eagle showed up and stayed in the town all through the funeral for a week, which they associated with Mr. Erhart’s spirit being present there.

The Council held a moment of silence.

Mr. Glanz shared with the Council that prior to his passing, Mr. Erhart invited him to stay at his house for the duration of the meeting. Mr. Woodruff said that he bonded with Mr. Erhart over dog mushing experiences and that he was the epitome of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK). Ms. Wessels added that Mr. Erhart was really looking forward to having the Council’s meeting in Tanana and enumerated Mr. Erhart’s life accomplishments. Amy Craver with NPS recounted that Mr. Erhart was a great asset for the Denali National Park Subsistence Resource Commission and will be missed.

Council Member and Chair Reports:

Bill Glanz of Central shared that people of his community were upset because of the absence of new Federal wildlife regulations and would not believe that the old ones are in force. He stated that it is disappointing that the new regulations cannot be published on time despite of all of the work done by the Councils. Mr. Glanz also requested if something could be done to remedy the dangers of the situation created by harvesting in excess of 900 caribou in a period of six days in the vicinity of his residential neighborhood. The residents of Central and Circle harvested a sufficient amount of fish and moose for the year. A discussion ensued between Mr. Glanz and Chair Entsminger on how State license vendors can get a sufficient number of Federal subsistence regulations booklets.

Donald Woodruff of Eagle told the Council that it was good that the break up was slushy without much ice and water. The King Salmon season was productive with good quality fish and reaching escapement goals. The Chum Salmon quality was extraordinary, and Mr. Woodruff could have dried 50 percent of 700 he caught. This year’s situation with caribou is still not clear.

Andy Bassich of Eagle talked about fall Chum Salmon, which is an essential resource for dog mushing subsistence practices. Over many years, the managers would assure the mushers that the Fall Chum run managed in a way to have a sufficient abundance to harvest in Fort Yukon and Eagle; however, this year about 50 percent of the mushers in these communities did not have enough to feed their dog teams for the year. Mr. Bassich agreed with Mr. Woodruff's comment that the quality was good but abundance was not. Fish wheels were producing only about 20 to 50 fish a day. Mr. Bassich relayed to the Council that many people in his area are concerned about the fisheries management and not providing for subsistence needs in Eagle. Since the run has been only restored to half of its historic size, Mr. Bassich was quite shocked that the first pulse protection was removed. The run restoration means not only restoring the numbers but also restoring the quality of escapement, meaning the return of large seven-year-old fecund females that were lost over the last two decades. Mr. Bassich spoke about the importance of long-term conservation and not reducing escapement goals, but increasing them. Mr. Bassich said that there needs to be some serious conversations with managers on how to balance conservation with harvest in the future.

Mr. Bassich also informed the Council that the Fortymile Caribou Herd was not present along the Taylor Highway this year, and pressure by caribou and moose hunters seemed to be less around Eagle and the Yukon River. It is good, however, to see that the Fortymile Caribou Herd is expanding.

Michael Koehler of Dry Creek said that the moose hunting was very good in the Dry Creek and the Upper Tanana and that it snowed very early. The grouse population is almost non-existent this year due to the high snow levels and a very wet spring. Mr. Koehler expressed a concern that many users were not able to get enough fish due to the closures on the Copper River.

Charlie Jagow of Porcupine notified the Council that there are some concerns about the Porcupine Caribou Herd not coming back to their old migration route. Hunters from Fort Yukon and Porcupine River are forced to travel to harvest caribou right at the Canadian Border.

Chair Sue Entsminger of Mentasta Pass talked about how it is sometimes necessary to send a Council representative to the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) meetings and about the complexity of representing the Council. She noted that during the Board meeting the representative needs to make a clear distinction when he or she represents the Council's position or expresses his or her own opinion. Ms. Entsminger said that at the last Board meeting, Council representative Don Woodruff incorrectly reported the Council's position and vote on the opening of the Arctic Village Management Area for non-qualified subsistence users. As a result, Chair Entsminger needed to call into the next Board meeting to straighten the record.

Chair Entsminger reported about attending the Hunter Ethics Education and Outreach workshop meeting in Fairbanks for two days prior to the Council's meeting and commented that it was good to have productive discussions and that people agreed on what could be done. The representatives from the Alaska Chapter of Safari Club International, the Alaska Chapter of the Wild Sheep Foundation, and the Alaska Outdoor Council participated in the workshop. It was interesting to Chair Entsminger that two young hunters from Arctic Village that participated in the workshop expressed interest in guiding.

Chair Entsminger told how she and a Mentasta elder together taught a class on smoking and canning fish to youth in her area.

This year, Chair Entsminger got to go sheep and caribou hunting. While hunting, she and her husband saw caribou with yellow collars, which are caribou from the Nelchina Herd that has gone north with the Fortymile Herd. This caused management to close the Nelchina Caribou hunt.

It snowed on June 11 this year, which, along with endless rain this summer, affected gardening, but the fall was nice and long with a lot of successful moose hunting.

Council Coordinator report

Katya Wessels, Council Coordinator, talked about the following topics:

1. The importance of representing the Council position correctly to the Board;
2. The order of the motion progression; it was reiterated that the discussion of the proposal should not start until the motion is made;
3. How many Council's seats will be open for reelection, recruiting the new applicants, and keeping all seats filled with qualified applicants, and;
4. Adhering to the Guidance on Regional Advisory Member Conduct and treating fellow Council members, agency and organization staff, and members of the public with respect, both, at public meetings and all other times.

Public and Tribal Comments on Non-Agenda Items

There were no initial public or tribal comments.

Old Business

Hunter Ethics Education update

Katya Wessels presented a brief update on the development of the Hunter Ethics Education program development, informing the Council that the second workshop that was just held in Fairbanks was a great success. A total of 38 representatives from different Federal and State agencies, hunter organizations, tribes, and the University of Alaska Fairbanks attended. The workshop had a lot of positive energy and was conducted with respect, which helped the flow of the ideas. The official report will be presented to the Board at its fisheries regulatory meeting. Ms. Wessels invited Mr. Bassich and Chair Entsminger to share their workshop experiences.

Mr. Bassich officially thanked the Board for supporting the initiative. In his opinion, the diverse, positive and creative participation in the workshop was "a very bright beacon." He shared with the Council that a lot of workshop participants volunteered their efforts and resources to move the three pilot project concepts forward. Mr. Bassich said that we need to move forward slowly, carefully, and keep it positive to make it beneficial to all users in Alaska. Two groups that were not represented at the workshop were the air taxi operators and professional guides, so Mr.

Bassich stressed an importance of pulling these two groups into future discussions. He opined that this initiative should help change some of the dynamics in the State for a very positive hunting experience for all users.

Chair Entsminger said that many workshop participants stressed that his initiative needs to go statewide, and she reminded them how it started and that at this point it is just for the Eastern Interior Region. She reminded the Council that its composition is 70 percent subsistence users and 30 percent commercial and spoke about how difficult it was for her to decide which category she belongs since she does both subsistence and commercial guiding. She also spoke about the efforts to get the representatives from the Alaska Professional Hunters Association to attend the workshop and why they were not able to be present. Chair Entsminger mentioned that it was great to have representatives from the hunter and tribal organizations all in the same room and communicating.

Mr. Koehler asked about the funding for the initiative. Chair Entsminger shared that the people she spoke to at the workshop would like to see the funding for this initiative come mainly from non-government sources. Mr. Bassich added that hopefully the funding of the projects will be either in-kind donations or monetary donations by non-government organizations. He thinks there is enough interest to achieve this, but to make these projects more sustainable in the long run they need to have their own funding sources. Mr. Koehler opined that applying for grant money every year is not sustainable and asked if there is a possibility to have Federal funding for the initiative. Ms. Wessels replied that at this point there is no promise of continuous Federal funding. Carl Johnson added that the funding for the first workshop came from the Connecting People with Nature, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service internal grant program, and the funding for the second workshop came directly from OSM. Mr. Bassich reiterated that the intent is to get funding through partnerships and reduce the amount of administrative work. Chair Entsminger remarked that it is possible that some funding will come from the Wild Sheep Foundation and the Safari Club International, Cabelas/Bass Pro, and Sportsman's Warehouse. Mr. Koehler insisted that although one can apply for grants, but, if we want to keep the program long term, you might think about institutionalizing it. He also reminded the Council about Mr. Bassich's idea from the last meeting to develop a small "handy-dandy" booklet on how to field dress an animal, how to take care of game in bad weather, and what is ethical for each individual area. Mr. Koehler also suggested having radio announcements as this is one of the most successful ways to reach people in the bush and on the highway system. Mr. Koehler volunteered to assist with the hunter ethics education project. Chair Entsminger also spoke about developing school curriculums for all ages on hunter ethics. Mr. Bassich talked about the success of the community hunter liaison pilot project in Fort Yukon as a very cost effective way of getting information to people going into the field and may be expanding this project to other areas. Chair Entsminger said that the Fort Yukon liaison will be "the biggest memory that all of us will take back" from the workshop.

Request for lunch presentation

Amanda Brid with the University of Alaska Fairbanks requested permission from the Council to give a lunch presentation to the Community on biomass harvest and use in the Community Hall. The Council agreed.

Public and Tribal Comment on Non-Agenda Items

Judy Kangas of Tanana talked about her son Albert Kangas not being able to harvest a moose in the fall because it was too warm, and many other people in the community were not able to either. Mr. Bassich reminded the Council that over the past 5-6 years the Council keeps bringing to the managers' attention the effects of climate change on animal movements and the necessity to adjust hunting regulations to these changes. Chair Entsminger talked about different Federal and State processes to request regulation change and that it is possible to get the local State Advisory Committee to help. She also noted that it is important for the Council to hear from the users. Carl Johnson mentioned that in the situation when a quick response was needed for a changing condition, one can file a special action request, and that if a community was not able to get a moose because of the weather conditions they can file for one.

Ms. Kangas also spoke about the young generation of hunters are not being aware of a requirement to take hunter education classes and are not familiar with regulations. Ms. Kangas suggested that this information needs to be shared with local school and hunter education classes need to be taught there. A discussion ensued over if the basic hunter education certificate was necessary when hunting on State lands or on both Federal and State.

Old Business (resumed)

NPS Proposed Rule to Amend Regulations for Hunting and Trapping on National Preserves in Alaska and the Environmental Assessment on Proposed Amendment

Barbara Cellarius, Subsistence Coordinator for Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, talked about a state-wide proposed rule to amend regulations for hunting and trapping on National preserves in Alaska and the Environmental Assessment on Proposed Amendment and how the Council can provide substantive comments on both documents. Ms. Cellarius mentioned that the due date for the comments is November 5. The Council decided to review a draft comment that was prepared prior and discuss it on record later in the meeting.

New Business

Yukon Fisheries Season Summary

Fred Bue, Federal in-season manager for subsistence fisheries on the Yukon River, presented a summary on behalf of Federal and State managers. At first, Mr. Bue presented a very brief overview of the fishery history beginning in the late 1990s. He noted that the strong summer Chum run overlapping with the weaker Chinook run are challenging to manage. Then Mr. Bue talked about working with Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the Yukon River Panel work. The forecast for 2019 predicts that management approaches will still require a conservation approach.

After the presentation, Mr. Bassich expressed the Council's concern that the first pulse protection of Chinook Salmon had been removed. He wanted to know what caused such a

drastic change in management strategy, especially since the 2018 run was coming in below expectations. Holly Carroll with ADF&G replied that the Board of Fisheries (BOF) provided permanent requirement of first pulse protection; it is implemented only during years when the harvest needs to be severely restricted based on a pre-season forecast. With the previous management strategy, all of the pressure was on the third and fourth pulses, and there was a possibility of overharvesting the local Alaskan stocks (the lower stock, the middle stock, Tanana stock, and the upper Porcupine stock). Since those stocks come a little bit later in the run, Ms. Carroll opined that the better strategy was to spread the harvest out and take a little bit from each pulse. Mr. Bassich warned that this type of strategy can lead to “oops management” and subsequent negative effect on the users in Fishing Districts 4 and 5.

Mr. Bassich was also concerned about the percent of seven-year-old fish at the Eagle Sonar and asked what is being done to bolster this age class. Ms. Carroll replied that quality of escapement is a huge issue. There is across the board reduction in seven-year-olds and a lot of this class of fish are coming back smaller. She said that there is no set benchmark on what percentage of what age class or what percentage of females needs to return, and that is a problem. Ms. Carroll noted that through conservative management, we are seeing higher spawning escapement the last five years than is required by the International Agreement. However, in some of the years when we had our highest escapements we also saw pretty low returns. Ms. Carroll also explained why the BOF authorized 7.5-inch nets and concerns for Chinook Salmon “drop out,” causing stress and death when using 6-inch mesh. She asserted there was no data to support the notion that using 6-inch mesh will bring the seven-year-old Chinook back. Mr. Bassich added that there's also a lot of testimony that reducing mesh size over time has changed the phenotypic development of fish; they're now longer and thinner than they ever were before. Ms. Carroll said that they are constantly analyzing the selectivity of the nets being used.

Mr. Woodruff asked a question about the accuracy of the Eagle Sonar counting when the Chum and Chinook Salmon runs overlap. Ms. Carroll replied that less than three percent of the runs overlap. Mr. Woodruff added that he works his net in a way that does not produce any “drop outs,” and that other fishers should do the same.

The Council and managers also had a discussion about closures on the Porcupine River.

Fisheries Proposals

OSM staff fisheries biologist Frank Harris provided the Council with an overview and analysis of all fisheries proposals relevant to the Eastern Interior Region. The Council heard State and Federal agency comments, recommendations from other Regional Advisory Councils, Advisory Committees, and Subsistence Resource Commissions, where relevant, and also listened to the summary of public and tribal comments before taking action on each proposal.

Regional Proposals

FP19-06 Yukon Chinook Salmon – First pulse protection of Chinook Salmon in Districts 1-5 using closures announced by Federal in-season manager

Motion #4 by Mr. Bassich, seconded by Mr. Koehler, to support proposal FP19-06.

The Council recognized the merit of the proposal's intent, especially for protection of the first pulse of Yukon River Chinook Salmon, but expressed concern about complicating management and imposing hardship on subsistence users. The Council concurred with the OSM staff analysis and found the ADF&G report very compelling. However, the Council stressed that the conservation of Chinook Salmon and the first pulse protection are critical in order to protect this resource for future generations and that management needs to continue to keep this in mind. The Council wants to protect this resource for future generation.

At this point the Council had a small discussion about proper procedure to end the debate in accordance to the Robert's Rules of Order.

The motion failed 1 to 6.

Agency Reports

Tribal Co-Management

Karen Linnell with the Ahtna Intertribal Resource Commission (AITRC) spoke about tribal co-management, which she identified as a fair sharing of the responsibility and authority for managing fish, wildlife, and lands as mutually negotiated, defined, and agreed on by indigenous peoples and managing agencies. Ms. Linnell informed the Council about the status of co-management in the Eastern Interior Region, including the annual funding agreement between the Council of Athabaskan Tribal Governments (CATG) and USFWS. Ms. Linnell talked about AITRC stewardship planning across their traditional territories and the projects they have been working on. She also updated the Council on the progress on the AITRC Memorandum of Agreement with the Department of the Interior. Ms. Linnell spoke about the opportunities for tribal co-management that will help to achieve the obligations under the Title VIII of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). She noted that during times of constrained Federal and State budgets, one should develop partnerships to make money go farther while managing fish and wildlife resources together.

New Business (resumed)

Fisheries Proposals

Crossover Proposals

FP19-01: Expand the area and fishing time for the Federal subsistence drift gillnet fishery in Subdistricts 4B and 4C of the Yukon/Northern Federal Subsistence Fishery Management Area

Motion #5 by Mr. Bassich, seconded by Mr. Woodruff, to support proposal FP19-01.

The Council stated on the record it was appalled by this proposal and opposed it on the basis that, if passed, it would allow more liberal, efficient fishing practices that will specifically target larger fish. Such targeting should not be allowed during a time of salmon conservation. If approved, this proposal would have a huge impact on the long term sustainability of salmon stocks, undermine rebuilding efforts, and hinder achieving quality escapement. The Council stressed that reducing the mesh restrictions allows fishers to fish deeper, which further allows them to be more effective at catching the large fish, instead of allowing them to swim to the spawning grounds. Expanding Subsistence drift gillnet fishery will allow fishers to catch larger older fish containing larger eggs that swim further offshore. The Council considered this proposal to undermine all that had been done over the course of the last seven to eight years for salmon conservation and opined that OSM analyses did not recognize the impacts of the proposal on rebuilding salmon stocks and conservation for the long-term sustainability of Chinook Salmon on the Yukon River. The Council quoted late Council member Lester Erhart of Tanana, who said in the past that the reason “we got into this Chinook crisis was the drift gillnet fishery,” and agreed with Mr. Erhart’s opinion.

The Council noted that the State Board of Fisheries (BOF) has consistently rejected similar proposals for the last 20 years; however, the BOF approved such a proposal in March 2018. The Council recognized that if the Federal Subsistence Board does not pass this regulation, there would be conflicting regulations in different parts of the Yukon River due to a varied and complex land status and, ideally, the Council would like to have regulations that are easy to understand.

The Council, however, stressed that there is a lot of evidence that stripping and selling of fish is occurring as a commercial activity, not just for subsistence. The Council questioned the subsistence harvest numbers given by ADF&G because of the way this data is collected. The Council noted that illegal stripping and selling of fish during times of low Chinook Salmon abundance adds an uncontrolled variable for the managers to consider. Therefore, liberalizing methods of subsistence harvest opens up an opportunity for a greater harvest, which in turn will morph into a commercialized activity that is completely unregulated. The Council also stated that just because the BOF approved a similar proposal does not mean that the Federal Subsistence Board should.

The Council unanimously voted to oppose FP19-01. Following the vote on the motion, the Chair noted, “That’s for you, Lester!”

The motion failed 0 to 7.

FP19-02: Decrease time of subsistence fishery closure prior to State commercial fishing opening in Districts 1, 2, 3, and 4A (excluding Koyukuk and Innoko Rivers) from 24 to 6 hours.

Motion #6 by Mr. Bassich, seconded by Mr. Woodruff, to support proposal FP19-02.

The Council opposed the proposal because it would impair effectiveness of management. The Council noted that the purpose of the closure is to conduct orderly commercial and subsistence

fisheries and help to prevent the illegal sales of subsistence-caught salmon in the commercial fishery. Approving this proposal might make conserving salmon more difficult as law enforcement would lose the ability to bring charges against someone engaging in illegal sales. Rejecting the proposal would not be detrimental to subsistence fishing, as subsistence would still be able to occur, and it would not restrict subsistence. It would just separate subsistence from commercial fishing by time. The Council noted that it is aware of a prosecution of a case in 1992 when subsistence fishermen from District 1 were catching subsistence fish and selling to commercial processors in District 1. The Council felt that it was important to oppose the proposal in order to continue the separation of subsistence and commercial fisheries and prevent cases similar to the 1992 case from happening.

The motion failed 0 to 7.

FP19-03/04: Decrease time of subsistence fishery closure prior to and following Sate commercial salmon fishing periods in Districts 1-3 (prior 18 to 6 hours, after 12 to 6 hours)

Motion #7 by Mr. Bassich, seconded by Mr. Woodruff, to support proposal FP19-03/04 as written.

The Council concurred with the comments by the State and Federal in-season managers regarding the limitations of the proposed regulatory change and stated that current regulations provide managers with the best ability to use their existing management tools to provide for reasonable subsistence opportunity while keeping subsistence and commercial fisheries separate. The Council also incorporated by reference their comments and justification related to FP19-02, noting similarities and differences of the two proposals.

The motion failed 0 to 7.

FP19-05: Repeal fin clip requirement of subsistence caught Chinook Salmon in Districts 1, 2, and 3.

Motion #8 by Mr. Bassich, seconded by Mr. Woodruff, to support proposal FP19-05 with OSM modification.

The Council noted it was torn about the proposal. Although it may be helpful to not have to clip the fins when there are no commercial fisheries, it is important to keep methodologies the same on the river to avoid confusion. The Council would not want to see someone get cited for not fin clipping if a commercial opener occurs. There is not a conservation concern, but there is the potential for people to cheat and get subsistence-caught fish into the commercial fishery. Clipping fins is an enforcement tool to prevent illegal fish sales, but the Council is willing to support the regulation that makes subsistence fishing easier for people. The Council supported the proposal only in modified form and was against completely eliminating fin clipping because people on the lower Yukon would want the fin clipping during Chinook Salmon commercial fishery. In summary, the Council agreed that if FP19-05 is adopted as modified by OSM, the new regulations would not be too complicated – you won't have to clip fins of subsistence-

caught fish if there is no commercial fishery, but will be required to clip subsistence-caught fish during a commercial fishery.

The motion carried 6 to 1.

FP19-07: Add dip nets as allowable gear type for subsistence harvest of salmon for the Yukon River.

Motion # 9 by Mr. Bassich, seconded by Mr. Glanz, to support proposal FP19-07 with OSM modification

The Council stated that this is a tremendous tool for subsistence or commercial opportunity and at the same time a very important conservation tool that requires the release of salmon species when conservation concerns exist. It will be 100% beneficial to subsistence uses and needs without causing conservation concerns. It will not restrict other users. The Council suggested that it may be prudent in the future during times of conservation concern for Chinook Salmon to add an amendment that would require any fish over 750mm to be returned to the Yukon River. According to the Council's experience, a 750mm fish is usually weights between 17 and 18 pounds, so returning larger fish into the water would preserve large fecund females.

The motion carried 7 to 0.

FP19-15: Move requirement to check fish wheel from fish wheel owner to fish wheel operator

Motion # 10 by Mr. Koehler, seconded by Mr. Glanz, to support proposal FP19-15

The Council remarked that it is a common sense proposal to have the operator of a fish wheel be responsible for checking it and removing the fish. If adopted, the Federal regulations language would match the State regulations. The Council also noted that the owner of a fish wheel may sometimes live a long distance from the wheel, so it is unreasonable to require the owner to supervise the wheel. Some Council members expressed an opinion that the requirement to check your fish wheel at least once every 10 hours and remove all fish might set up a too short of a time period and felt that 24 hours requirement might be more reasonable, especially for the Yukon River, since one might have engine trouble or other delays. The other Council members noted that the ten-hour requirement on the Copper River is related to keeping a higher quality of fish for human consumption, compared to the Yukon River where the fall harvest is mostly for dog food.

The motion carried 6 to 1.

FP19-16: Clarify gear usage for Upper Copper River District subsistence salmon fishing permits

Motion # 11 by Mr. Umphenour, seconded by Mr. Glanz, to support proposal FP19-16

The Council noted that adopting this proposal would give people the opportunity to pass down knowledge of gear types from one generation to the next, and it would be a liberalization of regulations, not a restriction. The Council also stated that there is no conservation concern, as the practice is currently utilized. The proposal would be beneficial to subsistence users and not cause any restriction to other users.

The motion carried 4 to 3.

State Board of Fisheries Proposals

Motion #12 by Mr. Bassich, seconded by Mr. Koehler, to suspend the rules to take the BOF proposals out of order on the agenda.

The change of agenda order was necessary to be able to ask Stan Zuray, Tanana/Rampart/Manley Advisory Committee (AC) Chair, who was present at the meeting, some questions regarding the BOF proposals. The Tanana/Rampart/Manley AC and Fairbanks AC were proponents on some of the proposals under discussion.

The motion carried 7 to 0.

Proposal 87: 5 AAC 01.220. Lawful gear and gear specifications.

Allow subsistence fishing for salmon with drift gillnets in the entire Yukon River

Motion #13 by Mr. Bassich, seconded by Mr. Woodruff, to support BOF proposal 87.

Mr. Bassich noted he understood that the intent of this contradictory proposal is to make a statement and to force managers to finally realize that drift gillnets can be very unmanageable, unpredictable, and detrimental to the run. He said that he understands that drift netting probably cannot be stopped completely, but maybe this proposal is what is needed to get the users to realize that they need to stick with conservation efforts for much longer. Mr. Bassich relayed to the Council that he has been involved in the conservation efforts including reducing drift net fishing on the Yukon River since 1999 and understands that if drift nets are allowed in the entire river, the quality of escapement will go down. He stated that targeting larger fish with drift nets is a great conservation concern. This proposal gives equal and fair opportunities to all subsistence users through the entire river and will have short term benefits to them, but with likely long-term adverse impacts. However, Mr. Bassich expressed his support for the proposal, since he believes that it will help the managers to see the impact of drift gillnetting on the fishery. Mr. Jagow noted that a lot of damage can be done just to make a statement and just in the name of fairness, and the damage could take a lot longer to repair than the time it takes to make a statement. Mr. Koehler observed that we are trying to learn a lesson that we have already learned, and that we do not need another reminder of all the damage it may cause in a long run.

The motion failed 3 to 3 to 1

Proposal 88: 5 AAC 01.220. Lawful gear and gear specifications.

Require fish wheels to be closely attended during times of conservation for any species.

Motion #14 by Mr. Bassich, seconded by Mr. Glanz, to support BOF proposal 88.

Mr. Bassich highlighted the testimony of Stan Zuray and his observations from 20 years of experience in studying the impacts of live boxes on both Chum and Chinook Salmon. Mr. Bassich expressed his support for Mr. Zuray's recommendation that live boxes should not be used as a conservation tool to preserve Chinook during periods of rebuilding the run. Chinook Salmon are most adversely-impacted by the use of live boxes that do more harm than good. Chinook Salmon are very delicate and can damage themselves easily due to a panic while in the live box. The Council discussed different mechanisms of releasing Chinook alive caught in a fish wheel. Mr. Umphenour noted that we do not need to be killing fish by hurting them in a live box and then letting them go, especially when we have conservation issues.

The motion carried 7 to 0.

Proposal 92: 5 AAC 01.220. Lawful gear and gear specifications; and 5 AAC 05.331. Gillnet specifications and operations.

Restrict gillnet mesh size to a maximum of 6 inches in Districts 4, 5, and 6 subsistence and commercial salmon fisheries.

Motion #15 by Mr. Bassich, seconded by Mr. Glanz, to support the BOF proposal 92.

Mr. Bassich again highlighted Mr. Zuray's testimony that reduced-size mesh reduces the drop-out rate of larger fish. It was noted that if the mesh size is reduced to 6 inches the only drop-out is going to be for smaller fish, as well as it will not catch larger fish. Mr. Bassich reminded the Council that the main argument for not using 6-inch mesh was because it is too effective with summer Chum Salmon; however, there is almost no summer Chum in the upper portions of the river and that these fish are not used as much for human consumption. Mr. Bassich said that this proposal will restrict users in fishing Districts 4, 5, and 6 and will represent a sacrifice in order to further long-term survival of Chinook Salmon. Mr. Umphenour cited a 1981 report to the BOF about restricting mesh size to 6-inch mesh in Cook Inlet that concluded that no directed Chinook Salmon fishery is sustainable with gill net mesh size larger than 6 inches, so he supported the proposal. Mr. Woodruff noted it will impact him a little bit, but he fished 6-inch gear all summer and his subsistence needs were met. Mr. Bassich added that as fish size decreases over time, 6-inch mesh will become a more efficient mesh size than 7-inch.

The motion carried 7 to 0.

Proposal 96: 5 AAC 01.210. Fishing seasons and periods.

Allow subsistence fishing for fall Chum Salmon in District 5 without time restrictions if commercial fishing for fall Chum Salmon is open in other Yukon River districts.

Motion #16 by Mr. Bassich, seconded by Mr. Glanz, to support the BOF proposal 96.

Bassich noted this proposal will slightly liberalize or maybe make it more conducive for fall Chum to be hung during good weather periods and useful for human consumption. There is not a conservation concern because managers always have the ability to shut down a fishery due to conservation concerns. This would allow people in District 5B to harvest more liberally when

weather and dry conditions permit; this flexibility is needed in a changing climate. Weather is a huge issue for people in this part of the river when it comes to putting up fish. Mr. Woodruff noted that last year was a bad year for drying fish; this year he waited longer and was successful freeze-drying fish.

The motion carried 7 to 0.

Proposal 100: 5 AAC 05.333. Fish wheel specifications and operations.

Adopt maximum size and depth restrictions for fish wheel baskets.

Motion #17 by Mr. Bassich, seconded by Mr. Woodruff, to support the BOF proposal 100.

Mr. Bassich stated that this is a frivolous proposal used to try to create divisiveness among various groups up and down the river. This Council has been working hard to unite the river and have a constructive meaningful dialog. Mr. Woodruff remarked that everyone has different size baskets and are not going to rebuild their fish wheels. It is a one-size-fits-all proposal, and there needs to be variation up and down the river to have a basket size appropriate to that part of the river. The basket size in the proposal is not appropriate for all parts of the river. There needs to be more cooperation among users on the river.

The motion failed 0 to 7.

The Council and Mr. Johnson discussed the Council's legal right to address issues in Area M, such as bycatch caps and limits and intercept fisheries, since those issues affect and impact the fish that come up the Yukon River, such as fall Chum Salmon stocks.

Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program (FRMP) Priority Information Needs

Mr. Harris provided an overview of the FRMP and priority information needs (PIN) development process. Mr. Bassich provided an overview of the early September 2018 three Yukon Councils PIN working group meeting that developed the recommendations for the Council to consider.

Motion #18 by Mr. Bassich, seconded by Mr. Woodruff, to adopt the draft priority information needs developed by the working group

The motion carried 7 to 0.

Motion #19 by Mr. Bassich, seconded by Mr. Koehler, to prioritize seven particular PINs that are relevant to the Eastern Interior Region portion of the Yukon River:

- Reliable assessment of Porcupine Fall Chum Salmon; for example, migration characteristics, abundance, escapement, and harvest quantities.
- Reliable methods of forecasting Chinook, Summer Chum, Fall Chum, and Coho salmon run abundance.

- Quality of escapement measures for Chinook Salmon, for example, potential egg deposition, age, sex, and size composition of spawners, percentage of females, percentage of jacks, and spawning habitat utilization.
- Baseline information about whitefish population, migration patterns, and harvest, particularly those where habitat and traditional harvest practices could be affected by proposed road and mine development.
- Assessment of incidental mortality of gillnet, dip nets, and seines, with particular consideration for delayed mortality from entanglement from drop-outs and live release of Chinook Salmon (for example, loss of Chinook Salmon from 6-inch mesh nets during Chum Salmon fisheries and the live release of Chinook Salmon from dip nets and seines).
- Analysis of recent regulation changes and effects on salmon escapement in the Yukon River drainage.
- Reliable quantitative and/or qualitative estimates of in-season salmon harvest to support management.

The motion carried 7 to 0.

Mr. Harris provided the Partners for Fisheries Monitoring Program update and asked the Council to spread the word about this funding opportunity and to recommend partners.

Identifying Issues for FY2018 Annual Report

The Council discussed and identified the following topics for its FY2018 Annual Report:

1. Hunter displacement and the “Domino Effect” contribution to changing hunting patterns and user conflict;
2. Accurate reporting of customary and traditional trade of all subsistence-caught Yukon River Chinook Salmon;
3. Effects of releasing 1.6 billion hatchery salmon into the marine environment;
4. Concerns over the Alaska Department of Fish and Game lowering the biological escapement goal and its effect on salmon stocks;
5. Advancing the hunter ethics education and outreach program.

Appointment to the Wrangell-St. Elias Subsistence Resource Commission (SRC)

Barbara Cellarius of NPS gave a presentation on the Wrangell-St. Elias SRC and the candidate for appointment. This position is a RAC member position, and Sue Entsminger is the only RAC member eligible for appointment to the SRC.

Motion #20 by Mr. Bassich, seconded by Mr. Glanz to appoint Sue Entsminger to the Wrangell-St. Elias SRC.

The Council stated that Ms. Entsminger been serving as the Council representative on Wrangell-St. Elias SRC for many years and has been an extremely good representative to

the Eastern Interior. She is incredibly knowledgeable about the region and its specific issues, and the Council cannot think of a better person to serve in that capacity.

The motion carried 7 to 0.

Agency Reports (resumed)

Customary Trade and Barter in the Upper Yukon Region

Brooke McDavid with the Division of Subsistence, ADF&G, gave an overview of the results from a study of barter and customary trade in three upper Yukon communities of Fort Yukon, Manley Hot Springs, and Venetie. The Council considered the study really important, especially because of the Council's hunter ethics initiative and discussions of competition and impacts on rural people. It also highlights the difficulty that people have living in remote areas in Alaska to obtain an economic gain of any sort, which is necessary for living. There was a short discussion about different State and Federal regulations regarding customary trade.

New Business (resumed)

State Board of Fisheries Proposals (resumed)

Proposal 135: 5 AAC 09.365. South Unimak and Shumagin Islands June Salmon Management Plan.

Repeal the current South Unimak and Shumagin Islands June Salmon Management Plan and readopt an amended version of the management plan in place prior to 2001.

Motion #21 by Mr. Bassich, seconded by Mr. Glanz, to support the BOF proposal 135.

Council comments: Mr. Umphenour said that the Area M fishery harvests migrating stocks that are heading north, and this intercept fishery has direct impact on Chum and Chinook Salmon that come up the Yukon River. There are a number of tagging and genetic stock identification studies that demonstrate that this fishery is intercepting Yukon River fish. As many as 25% of the Chum Salmon tagged in Area M returned to the Yukon River. Test fisheries also showed that up to 15% of the Chum Salmon caught in Area M are Yukon River Chum Salmon.

Mr. Umphenour conveyed that this intercept fishery also catches a lot of Chinook Salmon; for example, three years ago over 30,000 Chinook Salmon were caught in a 12 to 14 day period. However, there have not been any genetic studies done to determine the origins of those Chinook Salmon, but tagging studies have shown a connection between those and Chinook Salmon caught at the Yukon River.

The Council recommended that the BOF revert to the 2001 management plan for the Area M fishery. Currently there are many problems in the marine environment related to the productivity of salmon, but for this Council the two main issues that affect resources in the Eastern Interior Region are competition for food among species of salmon and interception of salmon. This

proposal would provide three 16-hour periods of fishing a week. There needs to be an ability to make in-season management determinations of what the status of the salmon stocks are. The fishery in Area M is the only commercial fishery in the State without such capacity. The Council stated that we cannot have these unmonitored intercept fisheries that are targeting stocks of concern, especially when the upriver fisheries are monitored closely by in-season managers, and fishing opportunities are limited for those fisheries.

The motion carried 7 to 0.

Board of Fisheries Protocol on Personal Non-Profit Hatcheries

Motion #22 by Mr. Bassich, seconded by Mr. Woodruff, to support the Petition to the Alaska BOF Support Section regarding finding of emergency and denial of additional capacity of 20 million egg take and rearing of hatchery pink salmon resulting from recent amendments to Prince William Sound Private Non-Profit Hatchery Management Plan.

Mr. Umphenour said that the BOF Protocol on Personal Non-Profit Hatcheries was passed in 2002 and is still a legal document; however, currently there is no compliance with this protocol mainly because of the promises made by the hatchery operators. Last March this Council sent a letter to the BOF regarding compliance with the protocol. The BOF will discuss it at an upcoming meeting. The Council underlined its concern regarding impacts of hatchery produced salmon on the Yukon River Chinook Salmon in the marine environment.

The motion carried 7 to 0.

Agency Reports (resumed)

Council of Athabaskan Tribal Governments and Gwitchyaa Zhee Gwich'in Tribal Government Yukon Flats Moose Management Planning Meeting Notes and Outcome

Bruce Thomas of Council of Athabaskan Tribal Governments was not able to participate in the meeting due to his participation in a search and rescue operation in Fort Yukon. Vince Mathews with Yukon Flats NWR relayed that the Moose Management group's main goal is to address the low moose population in Unit 25.

The Council discussed a statement made in the written report that "the RAC is dominated by commercial hunting guides" and pointed out that currently there are only two commercial/sport representatives on the Council. The Council talked about how transporters have taken over Unit 25, that currently only two guides are operating in the Yukon Flats area, and they have to follow the concessions guidelines and operations plan on Federal lands. One of the guides deliberately did not take his clients to hunt at the Black River as it is considered an important area for local hunters of Chalkyitsik and Fort Yukon. His clients only hunted in the Coleen River area. Additionally, the Council stressed that it was very happy to have young and contributing members.

Tanana Chiefs Conference Research Projects Presentation

Brian McKenna with TCC provided an update on their recent research projects. He spoke about:

- The Henshaw Creek weir project (funded through the FRMP) – weir did not operate due to high water level;
- Youth culture and science camp at Henshaw Creek was cancelled;
- Baseline studies on Chinook and Chum Salmon spawning populations in the Teedraanjik and Coleen Rivers, 2017 and 2018 investigation – cooperative work with Circle and Chalkyitsik Tribal Councils;
- Tissue sample collection project on the Nenana River drainage for Chinook Salmon; and
- Study estimating Chinook Salmon spawning escapement using unmanned aerial systems (drones) in the Salcha River – nine spawning sites were surveyed;

The Council requested that in the future age-sex-length data be presented showing change in parameters (size and percent female) over time. The Council was particularly interested in changes in fecundity and egg deposition in spawning streams.

Arctic National Wildlife Refuge Summary of Activities

Vince Mathews with the Arctic NWR reported on:

- International management of the Porcupine Caribou Herd;
- The results of aerial transect surveys on the Refuge conducted to estimate Dall's sheep abundance in the central and eastern sections;
- Bird survey projects; and
- Public use management, including commercial permits, polar bear viewing management, visitor outreach, and youth outreach.

Mr. Mathews also mentioned that the Refuge created a guide use areas map that can be provided to all Council members. Chair Entsminger talked about State guiding licenses, guide use areas, and Federal concession permits that guides are required to get and suggested that all of this information needs to be compiled into one map. She also mentioned that guides need to jump through a lot of hoops to carry their business; however, transporters only need a business license and go anywhere unrestricted.

Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge Summary of Activities

Nathan Hawkaluk with the Yukon Flats NWR gave a summary of Refuge updates:

- The moose management planning meeting;
- A community hunter liaison project;
- Lynx capture assessment project;
- Plans for a moose survey in November 2018; and
- Refuge outreach projects.

Mr. Mathews offered the Council copies of the Hunter Liaison Project report.

Yukon-Charley National Preserve Report

Marcy Okada with the Yukon-Charley NP gave a summary update:

- Recap of the Eagle Subsistence Working Group meeting;
- Dall's sheep survey;
- Caribou studies;
- Planned November 2018 moose survey;
- Wolf ecology project, including den survey and photography project;
- Ranger Division staffing update;
- Visitation increase and upgrades at the Coal Creek Dredge and Glenn Creek cabin; and
- Fire management overview.

Mr. Glanz noted that he received a lot of complaints regarding the Fortymile Cabin not being maintained. He also commended the Preserve for conducting a sheep survey. Mr. Koehler pointed out that although the sheep were considered to be declining, he was surprised to see that the next survey is not scheduled until 2023. Ms. Okada said that each subsistence resource has its scheduled timeline for surveys and promised to let the Council know at the next meeting if the sheep surveys can be schedule more often and if there is any similar work being done by the State.

The Council discussed of the State's work collecting tissue and mucous samples for *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* (M. ovi) virus in caribou.

A written Denali National Park and Preserve update was provided to the Council.

Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve Report

Barbara Cellarius with Wrangell-St. Elias NPP provided a summary report:

- Staffing update;
- Superintendent's listening sessions for 23 park resident-zone communities;
- Caribou research and monitoring;
- Federal subsistence hunting permits;
- Recent sheep survey information;
- For the Love of Freedom – Miners, Trappers, Hunting Guides, and Homesteaders: An Ethnographic Overview and Assessment;
- Fisheries Research/Monitoring projects; and
- Upper Copper River Federal Subsistence Management Fisheries.

NPS Proposed Rule to Amend Regulations for Hunting and Trapping on National Preserves in Alaska and the Environmental Assessment on Proposed Amendment (resumed)

Ms. Cellarius provided a recap of the overview of two documents: 1) NPS Proposed Rule to Amend Regulations for Hunting and Trapping on National Preserves in Alaska, and 2) Environmental Assessment on Proposed Amendment, out for public comment. She noted that

these are two separate rulemaking and comment opportunities, with comments due on November 5, 2018.

Motion #23 by Mr. Glanz, seconded by Mr. Woodruff, to discuss a draft comment letter on the proposed rule, develop edits, and separate comments for two final letters on the proposed rule and the Environmental Assessment (EA).

The Council reviewed a draft letter prepared as a comment on the proposed rule and developed substantive and unique comments for OSM staff to include in the final version of the comment letters on the proposed rule and the EA. The Council directed OSM staff to prepare the final comment letters based on the comments made during the meeting and, in cooperation with the Council's Chair, submit them to the NPS by the deadline.

The Council stated that it is in favor of retaining all aspects of the proposed rule that would keep traditional subsistence practices in place. It was noted on the record that this Council has for the past five or six years been diligently working towards liberalizing regulation to align with traditional practices within Federal Parks and Preserves.

The following substantive comments on the EA were developed during the meeting:

- The Council favors Alternative 1 in the EA and does not like the Take No Action option as stated in Alternative 2.
- Wildlife 3.2 conclusion (page 9), where it talks about activities that result in conditioning of bears in areas, might be slightly exaggerated, and the Council noted its disagreement with that assessment. It was noted that when you close out your bait station, bears disperse. If they come back and there is no bait, they quit coming back.
- Subsistence Use 3.3 states that there could be localized decreases in number of predators available for subsistence harvest. The Council felt this may be over exaggerated. Bears move for their food sources.
- Public use and experience 3.4 states that the proposed rule could increase sport hunting and reduce opportunity for visitors to view predators. While it could have those impacts, it is likely not to.
- Wilderness character 3.5 – numbers of predator and prey in localized areas are intentionally altered. It is not intentional, it is just a part of harvest and bag limits.

The motion carried 7 to 0.

Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFa) Report

Wayne Jenkins with YRDFa delivered an overview of the report:

- In-season teleconference;
- Pre-season fishermen's meeting;
- Building and maintaining public support of salmon resource management;
- In-season harvest interviews;

- Traditional knowledge of anadromous fish in the Yukon Flats with a focus on the Draanjik Basin;
- Yukon River Salmon Subcommittee Educational Exchange;
- YR DFA newsletter: building and maintaining public support of salmon resource management;
- Education and outreach;
- The Yukon River Comprehensive Salmon Plan;
- YR DFA transboundary efforts; and
- Involvement with BLM's regional planning.

OSM Report

Carl Johnson, Council Coordination Division Chief with OSM, provided an overview of the OSM report including staffing update and the status of the 2018-2020 Federal Wildlife Regulations.

Future Meeting Dates

The Council confirmed March 5 – 6 as the meeting dates for the winter 2019 meeting to be held in Fairbanks.

The Council discussed the possibility of holding a joint winter meeting with the Western Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council at some point in the future, preferably during a fisheries cycle.

The Council selected October 15 – 16, 2019, and Fairbanks as preferred fall meeting dates and location respectively.

The Council discussed when to have next Hunter Ethics Education meeting and agreed that logistically it would be better to move it to the winter meeting cycle. There is a potential that a small working group for one of the pilot projects will meet prior to the winter 2019 meeting in Fairbanks. The Council also proposed that members Koehler and Jagow join the working group.

Closing Comments from the Council

- The meeting was very productive.
- Thank you to OSM for having this meeting in Tanana; it was a good and honorable way to recognize the late member Lester Erhart, Sr.
- Meaningful participation by the two younger Council members Koehler and Jagow, who are incredibly up to speed, is greatly valued.
- Significant and valuable local input was received.
- Warm welcome from the community of Tanana, hospitality, and great meals are appreciated.

- All of the work done by OSM, ADF&G, BLM, and other agencies to prepare for the meeting is appreciated.
- Chair Entsminger’s leadership and great skills in leading the meeting are greatly appreciated.
- Appreciation offered to Tina Hile, Court Reporter.

Motion #24 to adjourn by Mr. Glanz, seconded by Mr. Koehler. The motion carried 7 to 0.

I hereby certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the foregoing minutes are accurate and complete.

December 17, 2018

Katerina “Katya” Wessels, 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 next regularly-scheduled meeting, and any corrections or notations will be incorporated in the minutes at that meeting.

**FEDERAL WILDLIFE CLOSURE REVIEW
WCR18-42**

Closure Location: Unit 12—Caribou

Current Federal Regulation

Unit 12—Caribou

Unit 12—that portion within the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park that lies west of the Nabesna River and the Nabesna Glacier. All hunting of caribou is prohibited on Federal public lands. No Federal open season

Unit 12—that portion east of the Nabesna River and the Nabesna Glacier and south of the Winter Trail running southeast from Pickerel Lake to the Canadian border — 1 bull by Federal registration permit only. Aug. 10-Sept. 30

Federal public lands are closed to the harvest of caribou except by Federally qualified subsistence users hunting under these regulations.

Closure Dates: Year-round

Current State Regulation

Unit 12 remainder—Caribou

Residents and Nonresidents No open season

Regulatory Year Initiated:

Mentasta Caribou Herd - 1993

The original closure was for: *that portion west of the Nabesna River within the drainages of Jack Creek, Platinum Creek, and Totschunda Creek - The taking of caribou is prohibited on public lands.*

Chisana Caribou Herd - 1994

The original closure was for: *that portion lying east of the Nabesna River and south of the Winter Trail running southeast from Pickerel Lake to the Canadian border - The taking of caribou is prohibited on public lands.*

Regulatory History

Mentasta Caribou Herd (MCH)

In 1991, Federal subsistence hunting regulations for caribou in Unit 12 remainder were one bull from Sept. 1-20 and one caribou during a to-be-announced winter season for residents of Tetlin and Northway only as they had a customary and traditional use determination for the Nelchina Caribou Herd (NCH) in Unit 12 (OSM 1991a). Dates for the September season have remained unchanged since then, however, some of the area has been closed to the harvest of caribou due to conservation concerns.

Also in 1991, the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) approved Special Actions S91-05 and S91-08. Special Action S91-05 opened the winter caribou hunt in Unit 12 remainder on Oct. 28 (OSM 1991b) and S91-08 closed it on Dec. 9 after subsistence needs had been met (OSM 1991c).

In 1992, the Board rejected Proposals P92-105 (OSM 1992a) and P92-106 (OSM 1992b) due to biological concerns. Proposal P92-105 requested abolishing the to-be-announced winter caribou season in Unit 12 remainder and Proposal P92-106 requested lengthening the fall caribou season in Unit 12 remainder from Sept. 1-20 to Aug. 20-Sept. 20. The Board determined that there was no biological reason to eliminate the winter hunt and that extending the September hunt could impact the declining MCH and jeopardize the more popular winter hunt.

Also in 1992, the Board adopted Proposal P92-107, which changed the harvest limit for the winter caribou season in Unit 12 remainder from one caribou to one bull in order to protect the declining MCH, which mixes with the NCH in Unit 12 during the winter (OSM 1992c).

In 1993, the Board adopted Proposal P93-034 to close the area west of the Nabesna River within the drainages of Jack Creek, Platinum Creek, and Totschunda Creek to caribou hunting to protect the declining Mentasta Caribou Herd population (OSM 1993). There has been no Federal open season since 1993 for Unit 12 west of the Nabesna River and Nabesna Glacier.

Chisana Caribou Herd (CCH)

Because of its small population size, the CCH has never supported a large harvest. Between 1989 and 1994 under State regulations, the harvest limit was 1 bull caribou and the annual harvest ranged between 16–34 animals (Gross 2005). The Federal subsistence regulation from 1989 to 1994 was one bull, Sept. 1- 20. By 1991, due to declining population numbers, the harvest was reduced through voluntary compliance by guides and local hunters. In 1994, the bull portion of the population declined below the ADF&G's management objective and hunting of Chisana caribou was closed by both the Alaska Board of Game (BOG) and the Federal Subsistence Board (Board). There was no legal harvest of CCH in Alaska between 1994 and 2011.

In 1989 and 1990 the reported harvest of Chisana caribou in the Yukon was 18 and 11 animals and in Alaska was 34 and 34 animals, respectively (Gross 2005). Gross (2005) also reported that the estimated unreported harvest of Chisana caribou between 1989 through 2002 ranged from 1 – 20 in the Yukon and

1-3 animals in Alaska each year. After 2001, Yukon First Nation members voluntarily stopped harvesting Chisana caribou and there continues to be no legal harvest of Chisana caribou in the Yukon.

In 1994, the caribou hunt areas in Unit 12 were split from two areas: 1) Unit 12- that portion lying west of the Nabesna River within the drainages of Jack, Platinum, and Totschunda creeks and 2) Unit 12- remainder, to three hunt areas: 1) Unit 12 west of the Nabesna River within the drainages of Jack, Platinum, and Totschunda creeks, 2) Unit 12- that portion lying east of the Nabesna River and south of the Winter Trail running southeast from Pickerel Lake to the Canadian border, and 3) Unit 12-remainder (OSM 1994). In 1994, the Board adopted Proposal P94-71, which closed the area east of the Nabesna River to the Canadian border to the harvest of caribou (OSM 1994). The closure for the Mentasta Caribou Herd remained in effect for the area west of the Nabesna River, and the area east of Nabesna River was closed primarily to protect the declining Chisana Caribou Herd (CSH), resulting in the following hunt areas:

Unit 12 – That portion west of the Nabesna River within the drainages of Jack Creek, Platinum Creek, and Totschunda Creek.

Unit 12 – That portion lying east of the Nabesna River and south of the Winter Trail running southeast from Pickerel Lake to the Canadian border.

In 2000, the areas previously designated west and east of the Nabesna River were combined into one area in Proposal P00-59 (OSM 2000):

Unit 12 – That portion of the Nabesna River drainage within the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve and all Federal lands south of the Winter Trail running southeast from Pickerel Lake to the Canadian border.

In 2010, the BOG approved a hunt for residents and nonresidents from September 1 through 30 on the CCH for one bull by drawing permit. The hunt was authorized in the portion of Unit 12 within the White River drainage and that portion within the Chisana River drainage upstream from the winter trail that runs southeast from Pickerel Lake to the Canadian Border. However, on Federal public lands the Federal closure supersedes the existing State regulation and thus Federal public lands effectively remained closed to hunting of the CCH under State regulations at this time.

The entire area remained closed to caribou hunting in the Federal subsistence regulations until 2012, when the areas west and east of the Nabesna River were once again split out into two areas (OSM 2012a).

Unit 12 – that portion within the Wrangell-St-Elias National Park that lies west of the Nabesna River and the Nabesna Glacier.

Unit 12 – that portion east of the Nabesna River and the Nabesna Glacier and south of the Winter Trail running southeast from Pickerel Lake to the Canadian border.

In 2012, the combined proposals WP10-104 and WP12-65/66 were addressed by the Board (OSM 2012a). Proposal WP10-104 requested establishment of a joint Federal/State draw permit for the CCH in Unit 12 with a harvest limit of one bull and a season of Sept. 1–Sept. 30. Proposal WP12-65 requested establishment of a Federal registration hunt for the CCH with a harvest limit of one bull and a season of Aug. 10 – Sept. 30, while WP12-66 requested establishment of a Federal registration hunt with a harvest limit of one bull and a season of Sept. 1–Sept. 30, with the hunt restricted to Federal public lands in Unit 12 east of the Nabesna River and the Nabesna Glacier. OSM noted in its justification for WP12-66 that restricting the hunt west of the Nabesna River and Nabesna Glacier would protect the MCH with minimal impact to subsistence hunters wanting to harvest caribou from the CCH (OSM 2012a). The Board took no action on WP10-104 and WP12-65 and adopted WP12-66 with modification to list the communities allowed to harvest caribou in Unit 12, that portion east of the Nabesna River and Nabesna Glacier, and lands south of the Winter Trail running southeast from Pickerel Lake to the Canadian border: Northway, Mentasta, Tetlin, Tok, Chisana, and Chistochina. The authority to manage the Federal hunt was granted by delegation of authority to the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve Superintendent. The CCH was considered stable in 2010 and the bull:cow and calf:cow ratios were above the minimums set by the Draft Management Plan, which was finalized in the fall of 2011 (OSM 2012a, Chisana Caribou Herd Working Group 2012).

The Board adopted Proposal WP12-68, submitted by the Cheesh’na Tribal Council, which requested the residents of Chistochina be added to the Unit 12 caribou customary and traditional use determination (OSM 2012b).

In 2014, the Board adopted Proposal WP14-15/45 to expand the list of communities eligible to participate in the caribou hunt from the CCH to also include residents of the hunt area and those living in Unit 12 along the Nabesna Road (mileposts 25-46) (OSM 2014a).

In 2014, the Board also adopted Proposal WP14-49 with modification to change the fall season dates from Sept. 1-Sept. 30 to Aug. 10-Sept. 30, so that the bulls would be less likely to be in the rut, and thus, ensure the quality of the meat (OSM 2014b). In 2016, the Board adopted Proposal WP16-60 opening Federal public lands east of the Nabesna Glacier and south of the Winter Trail running from Pickerel Lake to the Canadian border to all Federally qualified users hunting under these regulations (OSM 2016).

Federal public lands comprise approximately 61% of Unit 12 and consists of 48% National Park Service (NPS) managed lands, 11% U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service managed lands (FWS), and 2% Bureau of Land Management (BLM) managed lands (**Map 1**).

Closure last reviewed:

Mentasta Caribou Herd: 1993 – P93-034

Chisana Caribou Herd: 2014 – WP16-60

Justification for Original Closure (ANILCA Section 815 (3) criteria):

Section §815(3) of ANILCA states:

Nothing in this title shall be construed as – (3) authorizing a restriction on the taking of fish and wildlife for nonsubsistence uses on public lands (other than national parks and park monuments) unless necessary for the conservation of healthy populations of fish and wildlife, for the reasons set forth in section 816, to continue subsistence uses of such populations, or pursuant to other applicable law; ...

The justifications given for the original closure for the MCH and CCH was:

Mentasta Caribou Herd

Council Recommendation for Original Closure:

The Federal Subsistence Board's April 1993 decision, which closed Federal public lands to caribou hunting in Unit 11 and a portion of Unit 12, occurred prior to the establishment of the Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils.

State Recommendation for Original Closure:

ADF&G supported the closure because the State season for Mentasta caribou in this area had been closed for several years (OSM 1993).

From 1985-1992, the MCH decreased from a peak population of 3,100 caribou to 1,300 and the fall calf:cow ratio had fallen below the threshold level required to balance the mortality of the adults ($\approx 15\%$) during the previous 2-3 years. The near total reproductive failure in 1991 and 1992 resulted in the population age structure to be skewed towards the older age classes, which generally results in delayed recovery. Another factor that may have contributed to the population declines was the relatively poor lichen conditions noted throughout a large portion of their range.

Although the fall harvest is relatively easy to track, the MCH is subject to unknown harvest when it mixes with the NCH during the winter. In addition, the extent of the illegal harvest is unknown, but considering the number of small rural communities they pass through during migration, it is likely high. Thus, the potential for over-harvest of this small herd is high. Most subsistence users also have access to the much larger neighboring NCH.

Thus, closing the subsistence hunt on the MCH was necessary to assure the herd's continued viability.

Chisana Caribou Herd:

Council Recommendation for Original Closure:

The Eastern Interior Council concluded that the Chisana caribou herd should be protected from all hunting to stop the population decrease (OSM 1994). The justification for their decision was based on the following:

- Over the past 3 years (1990-1993) the CCH population had declined from 1850 to 900 animals.
- The fall calf:cow ratio was below that which is required to balance the natural mortality of adults ($\approx 15\%$) for at least 4 consecutive years
- The potential for overharvest of this small herd was considered high since they cross international boundaries and are subject to an unknown amount of unreported harvest.
- This proposal (Wildlife Proposal 14-49) is intended to protect the continued viability of the CCH and allow them to recover more quickly.

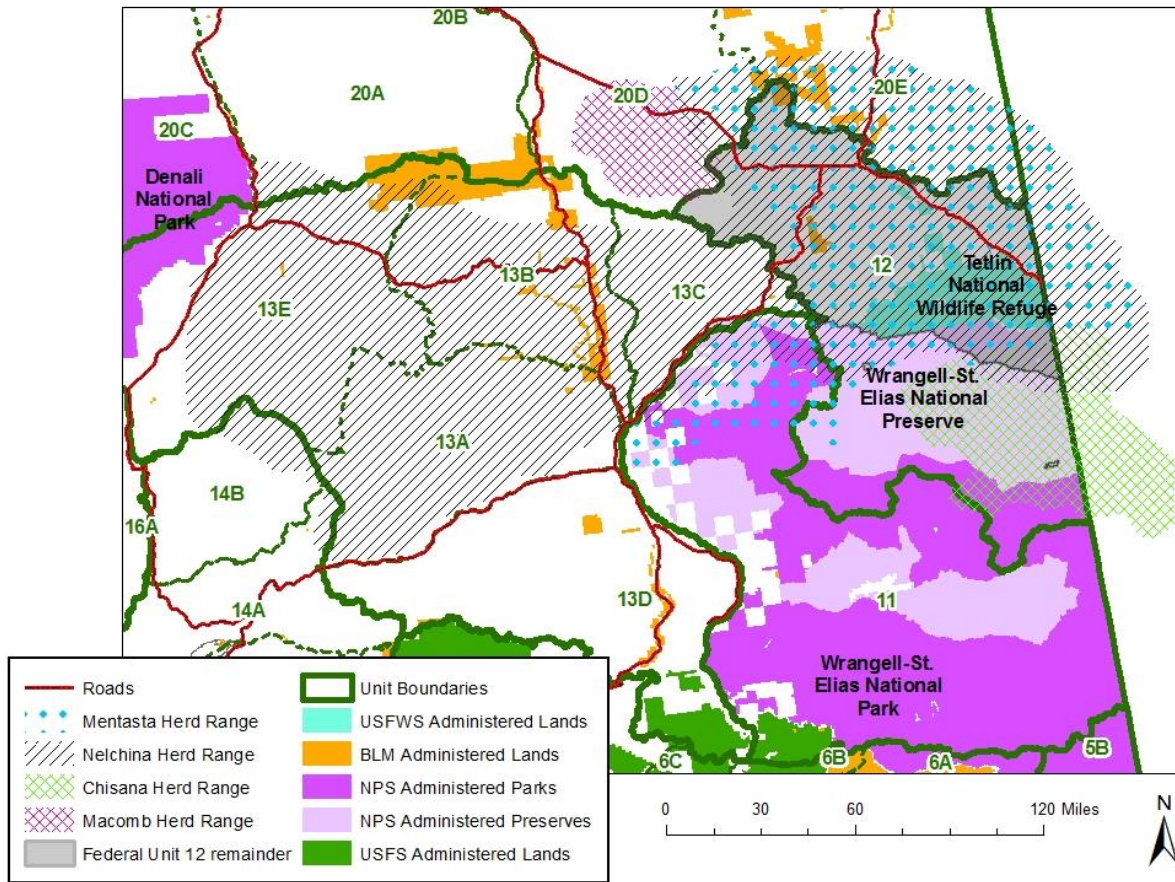
State Recommendation for Original Closure:

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) and the Yukon Department of Natural Resources supported closure to caribou hunting of the CCH until calf:cow and bull:cow ratios increased.

Biological Background

The ranges of the Mentasta, Chisana, and Nelchina caribou herds overlap in Unit 12 (**Map 1**). As of July 2018 the NCH is declining and is at the lower end of the State population objectives (ADF&G 2018, Hatcher 2018, pers. comm.). The MCH occurs primarily in the northern portion of Unit 12 (Unit 12-remainder) and the northern portion of Unit 11 within Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve (WRST). While the NCH and MCH are considered distinct herds because females calve in separate areas, the herds mix during some breeding seasons, resulting in male-mediated gene flow (Roffler et al. 2012). Therefore, the Nelchina and Mentasta herds function as a genetic metapopulation, although Nelchina and Mentasta cows have discrete mitochondrial DNA (Roffler et al. 2012). However, since there are no closures associated with the NCH, the NCH is not considered further in this analysis.

The CCH is a shared population between Alaska and Southern Yukon, Canada. Since this international herd ranges across multiple jurisdictions, multiple land agencies are involved and responsible for the management of the CCH. In Alaska the CCH occurs primarily on Federal public lands within the WRST, although there is some overlap with Tetlin National Wildlife Refuge (TNWR) and adjacent State lands. In the Yukon, the CCH ranges within the boundaries of Kluane Wildlife Sanctuary and Asi Keyi Natural Environmental Park. Since the overlap between the CCH and MCH is minimal, each population will be considered separately in this analysis. The Management Plan for the Chisana Caribou Herd (Chisana Caribou Herd Working Group 2012) is currently being reviewed and updated.



Map 1. Ranges of the Nelchina, Mentasta, Macomb, and Chisana caribou herds.

Mentasta Caribou Herd

The MCH, the primary herd within Unit 11, calves and summers within the upper Copper River Basin and the northern and western flanks of the Wrangell Mountains (OSM 2018). Barten et al. (2001) found that parturient female caribou from the Mentasta herd used birth sites that lowered the risk of predation and traded-off forage abundance for increased safety. Minimizing risk of predation of neonates may result in ungulates selecting habitats that compromise their ability to optimize foraging (Bowyer et al. 1999, Barten et al. 2001). Female Mentasta herd caribou used sites at higher elevations with sub-optimal forage, presumably to avoid predators, and, when <10 day old neonates were lost, females descended from the higher elevations to join other nonparturient females. In addition, females with neonates >10 days old also descended to join the larger group of females, which coincides with moving out of the riskiest period of predation on ungulate neonates (Adams et al. 1995a).

The calving grounds for the MCH are located in northern Unit 11 within WRST (MCH Mgmt. Plan 1995, **Map 1**). The MCH disperses across Unit 12 and southern Unit 20E in winter, often intermingling with the NCH (MCH Mgmt. Plan 1995).

In 1995, Federal and State biologists completed the Mentasta Herd Cooperative Management Plan, which specifies the following management objectives (MCH Mgmt. Plan 1995):

- To the extent possible, allow for human harvest that will have minimal effects on the production, composition, and abundance of Mentasta caribou.
- To provide harvest priority to Federally-eligible subsistence users and to allow State authorized hunting to occur whenever possible.
- To monitor the herd demographics and harvest such that all pertinent data on the health of the herd are collected and disseminated to all agencies and citizens concerned with their management.

The MCH Management Plan (1995) states “an annual fall harvest quota will be established between 15 and 20 percent of the previous 2-year mean calf recruitment as long as such recruitment is at least 80 calves. In addition, at population levels below 2,000 the harvest limit will be limited to “bulls only” and will be closed if the 2-year mean bull:cow ratio drops below 35 bulls:100 cows.” When quotas are below 30, a Section 804 analysis will determine the allocation of permits among the Federally qualified subsistence users. Since 2000, managers at the TNWR have used a 20:1 mixing ratio of Nelchina caribou to Mentasta caribou as the minimum threshold for considering winter season openings. The TNWR monitors these herds and determines the mixing ratios from aerial surveys of radio-collared caribou. Currently, there are no more than 10 active radio-collared Mentasta caribou, which is not enough to adequately monitor the location and movements of the MCH or determine a reliable mixing ratio with the NCH. Lack of availability of the drugs used in the captures prevented WRST staff from collaring additional animals in 2016 and 2017, but WRST staff expect to be able to collar approximately 5-7 animals in fall 2018 with assistance from ADF&G biologists. Population and composition surveys are also planned for the fall of 2018 (Putera 2018, pers. comm.).

The MCH population declined from an estimated 3,160 caribou in 1987 to an estimated 429 caribou in 2017 (**Table 1**). The extremely low calf :cow ratio of 2-6 calves: 100 cows from 1991 to 1993 (OSM 1992d) resulted in a complete failure of fall recruitment of young in the MCH (Jenkins and Barton 2005). Dale (2000) postulated that this may have been due to poor condition from poor forage quality in the summer. Poor forage quality in the summer can cause cow caribou to skip a breeding season to regain body condition due to being nutritionally stressed. The resulting decrease in body condition in female caribou can have a negative effect on productivity by causing lower weight gain or survival in calves (Crete and Huot 1993, Dale 2000). Between 1990 and 1997, Jenkins and Barten (2005) confirmed predation, particularly by gray wolves (*Canis lupus*) and grizzly bears (*Ursus arctos horribilis*), as the proximate cause of the MCH population decline. Grizzly bears were the most important predators of neonates and gray wolves mostly preyed on older juvenile caribou in the MCH. The combined predation by bears and wolves was 86% during the neonate and summer periods. In comparison,

predation of calves in the Denali Caribou Herd from 1984 to 1987 by wolves and bears, during the same time period, was only 53% (Adams et al. 1995b). Factors such as the timing of birth and habitat at the birth site, particularly snow patterns, affected the vulnerability and survival of neonates and birth mass affected the survival of juveniles through summer (Jenkins and Barten 2005). The MCH declined at the greatest rate from 1990-1993 compared to 1994-1997. Winter severity was postulated to decrease the birth mass of neonates and, thus, the survival and vulnerability of neonates and juveniles (Jenkins and Barton 2005). The MCH population has remained stable at relatively low levels since 2004 as evidenced by low calf productivity (Putera 2017a, pers. comm.). Between 1987 and 2017, the bull:cow ratio has fluctuated widely, ranging from 35-120 bulls:100 cows and averaging 58 bulls:100 cows. June and fall calf:cow ratios fluctuated over the same time period, ranging from 1-38 calves:100 cows and 0-33 calves:100 cows, respectively (**Table 1**, OSM 2018). Low calf production and survival and high cow mortality from 1987 and 2009 were the primary causes for the population declines in the MCH. The number of cows observed during the fall surveys declined from 2,065 in 1987 to 79 in 2009 (OSM 2012c).

Fall surveys conducted within the same 23-year period also revealed severe declines in total observed Mentasta bulls from 847 in 1987 to 68 in the fall 2013 survey (**Table 1**). Although observed fall bull:cow ratios appear high, the number of cows observed is small and the bull component likely includes a significant number of Nelchina bulls. While Nelchina bulls have wintered within the range of the Mentasta herd (OSM 2018), the range of the Nelchina herd has varied widely due to burns and their effect on lichen availability within their traditional area (Collins et al 2011). Thus, there is limited ability to predict the extent or frequency of mixing between Nelchina and Mentasta bulls, and it is impossible to discern whether the harvest of a bull would be from the Nelchina or Mentasta herd. Higher numbers of adult bulls in the population are important as it helps maintain synchrony in parturition. Holand et al. (2003) showed that skewed sex ratio and increased young male age structure of reindeer could result in fewer adult females conceiving during the first estrous cycle due to their hesitation to mate with young bulls. Maintaining synchrony in parturition also provides increased survival chances for calves since parturition is typically timed with the start of plant growth (Bergerud 2000). Late-born offsprings have been shown to have lower body mass than caribou offspring produced earlier in the season (Holand et al. 2003), which can lead to lower juvenile survival rates due to density dependent factors of winter food limitation (Skogland 1985) and deep snows (Bergerud 2000).

The MCH is considered a sedentary and low density ecotype (Bergerud 1996, Hinkes et al. 2005) versus a migratory and high density ecotype, such as the Nelchina herd, and thus more susceptible to extreme random events. The term ecotype designates populations of the same species that evolved different demographic and behavioral adaptations to cope with specific ecological constraints. A key factor in distinguishing between two ecotypes is whether animals were dispersed or aggregated when young were born (Seip 1991, Bergerud 2000). The chronic low calf productivity and recruitment for the Mentasta caribou could make random environmental events a primary driver for a more severe population decline (Tews et al. 2006). Increased winter mortality due to icing events may result in malnutrition and starvation for more susceptible calves and bulls with depleted energy reserves following the rut (Dau 2011, Miller and Gunn 2003). Bull caribou die at a higher rate than cows due to greater energy demands

during early winter rutting activities, which greatly reduce their body reserves (Russell et al. 1993, Miller and Gunn 2003).

Table 1. Population size and composition of the Mentasta caribou herd (OSM 2012c, 2018; FWS 2018, Putera 2017a, pers. comm.).

Year	June Calves:100 Cows ^a	Fall Cows	Fall Calves	Fall Bulls	Fall Calves: 100 cows	Fall Bulls: 100 cows ^b	Fall Population Estimate ^c
1987	18	2065	248	847	12	41	3,160
1988	34	1540	277	662	18	43	2,480
1989	31	1615	727	258	16	45	2,600
1990	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1991	3	1347	27	566	2	42	1,940
1992	16	973	58	399	6	41	1,430
1993	9	683	27	260	4	38	970
1994	19	591	65	224	11	38	880
1995	26	541	119	189	22	35	850
1996	16	534	59	187	11 ^d	35 ^d	780
1997	15	432	23	159	5	40	610
1998	13	350	35	150	10	42	540
1999	13	230	22	177	10	77	430
2000	1	297	0	175	0	59	470
2001	11	228	12	150	5	66	586 ^g
2002	21	190	55	86	29	45	410 ^g
2003	17	223	38	101	16	46	522 ^g
2004	8	-	-	-	5 ^e	-	293 ^f
2005	23	113	17	78	15	69	261
2006	-	66	20	51	30	77	-
2007	23	93	27	72	29	77	280
2008	14	89	18	65	20	73	319 ^h
2009	12	79	8	68	10	86	421 ^h
2010	25	88	22	106	25	120	336 ^h
2011	-	101	29	40	29	40	-
2012	-	58	20	49	34	84	-
2013	38	88	20	68	23	77	512
2014	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2015	-	60	20	44	33	73	-
2016	-	54	18	77	33	142	-
2017	11	91	18	79	18	87	429

^aIncludes small bulls that are indistinguishable from cows during fixed-wing flights.

^bObserved high bull:cow ratios likely due to presence of Nelchina bulls.

^cPopulation estimates between 2008 and 2017 are based on a June census of cows corrected for sightability, the fall calf:cow ratio, and a fall ratio of 30 bulls:100 cows.

^d1996 fall composition count was not conducted, because of early mixing with the NCH. Fall calf/cow was estimated from postcalving calf/cow ratio and survival radio-collared cows (0.70; 30 June – 30 September).

^e2004 Fall composition count was not conducted due to budget restraints. Fall calf/cow ratio estimated from post-calving calf:cow ratio and average (1987-2003) calf survivorship (0.63).

^f2004 population estimate is based on extrapolation from June census, adjusted for average calf survivorship and average bull ratios.

^g September population estimates are adjusted based on sighting probabilities.

^hSeptember population estimates are adjusted based on sightability probabilities and assuming a ratio of 30 bulls: 100 cows within the MCH to adjust for mixing with the NCH.

Chisana Caribou Herd

The CCH is a small herd that occurs on the Klutan Plateau and near the headwaters of the White River in southwest Yukon Territory and east central Alaska. During the summer the CCH spends most of their time in WRST and during the winter in the Kluane Wildlife Sanctuary and the Asi Keyi Natural Environmental Park (Chisana Caribou Herd Working Group 2012).

The CCH is a genetically distinct population (Zittlau et al. 2000, Zittlau 2004). Genetic analysis of the CCH found large genetic distances between the CCH and the other 5 adjacent herds, which suggests that the herd has been unique for thousands of years and that the CCH is correctly classified as a woodland caribou (Zittlau et al. 2000). The CCH acts and looks like woodland caribou, but the herd's classification is ambiguous. Behaviorally, the CCH is typical of other mountain herds, particularly with respect to calving females, where, rather than aggregating in certain areas, they disperse up in elevation away from other calving females as an anti-predator strategy (Farnell and Gardner 2002). In Canada, the CCH is classified as woodland caribou, whereas in Alaska the CCH is classified a barren-ground caribou (Miller 2003). Occasionally the CCH mix with the Nelchina and Mentasta caribou herds during the winter in Alaska and Yukon in the vicinity of Beaver Creek, Yukon Territory. For example in 1989/1990, a large portion of the CCH shifted northeast into the upper and middle portions of Beaver Creek, where some mixing between the CCH, Nelchina, and Mentasta caribou herds occurred (Lieb et al. 1994).

In Canada, the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) has designated the Northern Mountain Caribou population, which includes the CCH, as a species of "Special Concern" under the Canadian Federal Species at Risk Act (SARA). In 2002, the CCH was designated as "Specially Protected" under the Yukon Wildlife Act, which prohibits all licensed harvest of the CCH and requires a regulation change to initiate a harvest. A cooperative draft CCH Management Plan and Yukon CCH Recovery Plan were developed for the CCH in 2001 and 2002, respectively. In 2009, a working group consisting of members from the Government of Yukon, ADF&G, White River First Nation, Kluane First Nation, the National Park Service, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service developed a five-year management Plan for the CCH (Chisana Caribou Herd Working Group 2012). The working group is now in the process of updating the plan.

The CCH Management Plan guidelines for harvest are:

- A bull:cow ratio greater than 35 bulls: 100 cows
- A calf:cow ratio greater than 15 calves: 100 cows based on a 3-year average
- A stable or increasing population trend

The Management Plan guidelines for a harvest include a maximum allocation of 2% of the herd size, a bull-only harvest, and an allocation equally distributed between Yukon Territory and Alaska (Chisana Caribou Herd Working Group 2012).

Information about the CCH prior to 1970s is limited. The population estimate from first survey conducted in 1977 was about 1000 caribou (Kellyhouse 1990). In 1988, the CCH reached a peak of 1,900 caribou (Kellyhouse 1990) and then declined to an estimated low of 315 in 2002 (Farnell and Gardner 2002). Since 1988, a majority of the CCH have been located east of the Nabesna River (Bentzen 2011). Adverse weather conditions, poor habitat, predation, and harvest pressure were factors for the low calf recruitment and high adult mortality associated with the decline (Farnell and Gardiner 2002). From 2003-2006, a recovery effort, which included an intensive captive rearing program to increase recruitment and calf survival, was conducted by the U.S. Geological Survey and CWS. The recovery effort involved capturing pregnant cows and enclosing them in holding pens during the last weeks of gestation and for a few weeks following calving. An intensive radio-collaring program was also initiated in 2003 along with the captive rearing program, which resulted in more reliable population and composition data. Therefore, sex and age composition and herd size estimates prior to 2003 are not directly comparable to those after 2003 (**Table 2**) (Bentzen 2011, 2013; Gross 2015, Putera 2017b). In 2010, the CCH population was stable at 696 animals and the 3-year average for the bull:cow and calf:cow ratios were 45: 100 cows and 20: 100 cows, respectively (Bentzen 2011, Gross 2015). The 2017 bull:cow ratio of 32 bulls per 100 cows was below the minimum threshold of 35 bulls:100 cows set by the Chisana Caribou Management Plan, triggering a meeting of the management authorities. This occurred as part of the conversations regarding updating the plan, and the consensus of the group was that a 3 year running average was a more appropriate threshold and that the 2018 hunt could occur (Cellarius 2018a). The calf:cow ratio of 21 calves:100 cows was above the minimum threshold set by the Plan of 15 calves: 100 cows (Chisana Caribou Herd Working Group, 2012).

Table 2. Fall sex and age composition of the Chisana Caribou Herd, 2000-2013 (Chisana Caribou Herd Working Group 2012, Gross 2015, Putera 2014, 2017b, Taylor 2018).

Regulatory Year	Total Bulls:100 Cows	Calves :100 Cows	Calves (%)	Cows (%)	Bulls (%)	Composition Sample Size	Estimated Herd Size
2000 ^a	20	6	5	80	15	412	425
2001 ^a	23	4	3	79	18	356	375
2002 ^a	25	13	10	72	18	258	315
2003 ^b	37	25	15	62	23	603	720
2005 ^b	46	23	14	59	27	646	706
2006 ^b	48	21	13	59	28	628	N/A ^c
2007 ^b	50	13	8	61	30	719	766
2008	44	21	13	61	27	532	N/A
2009	48	15	9	61	30	505	N/A
2010	42	23	14	61	25	622	697
2011	38	16	14	66	25	542	N/A
2013	49	16	N/A	N/A	N/A	631	N/A
2014	40	23	N/A	N/A	N/A	528	N/A
2015	40	19	N/A	N/A	N/A	399	N/A
2016	46	28	N/A	N/A	N/A	534	N/A
2017	32	21	N/A	N/A	N/A	540	N/A

^a Surveys conducted by ADF&G based on a visual search of the herd range.

^b USGS survey results.

^c Not available.

Harvest History

Mentasta Caribou Herd

There has been no Federal open season since 1993 for the area west of the Nabesna River and Nabesna Glacier in Unit 12. There has been no reported harvest from the MCH since 1998 as there has been no State or Federal season. However, some incidental harvest of Mentasta caribou may take place during winter hunts targeting the NCH and Forty-mile caribou herd in Unit 12-remainder. While the MCH management plan does not specify an appropriate mixing ratio, the 20:1 ratio has been used to determine winter season openings by the Board since at least 2000 (OSM 2000). The MCH management plan suggests that incidental harvest of Mentasta caribou is usually minimal (MCH Management Plan 1995). In 2012, the Board excluded the area west of the Nabesna River and Nabesna Glacier to protect the MCH, when it established a Federal registration hunt for the CCH in Unit 12 east of the Nabesna River and Nabesna Glacier (OSM 2012a).

Chisana Caribou Herd

The CCH has historically been an important food source for the Athabascans of Alaska and the First Nations of the Yukon in Canada (Gross 2007). During the early to mid-1900s, the CCH was used as a subsistence food source by the Ahtna and Upper Tanana Athabascans. Although subsistence hunting has declined in recent years, the CCH continues to be an important aspect of Upper Tanana and Ahtna Athabaskan culture. Subsistence use of the CCH declined after 1929. For the last 60 years, few people in Alaska or the Yukon have depended on the CCH as a food source (Bentzen 2011), although First Nation members continued to harvest from the CCH in the Yukon through the 1990s.

In addition to providing an important subsistence resource, in the late 1920s, Chisana caribou became economically important to local hunters as guided hunting became common in the Chisana area. Caribou from the Chisana herd were harvested by nonresident hunters guided by local guides until 1994, when hunting was closed. Primarily five guide/outfitters hunted the herd (4 operated in Alaska and 1 in the Yukon). Bulls were desired by sport hunters, because of their large stature. From 1990 to 1994, 43% of the hunters participating in hunting were nonresidents, who were responsible for 58% of the harvest. Local subsistence users accounted for 9% of the harvest during that time period (Gross 2005).

At its January 2012 meeting, the Board authorized a limited harvest of the CCH consistent with the herd's management plan. The Board delegated authority to the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve Superintendent to open and close the season to announce the harvest quota, the number of permits to be issued and the reporting period. Based on the estimated population size and the guidance in the management plan, the harvest quota for the 2012 was set at seven animals.

The National Park Service met with participating communities and associated tribal governments and other stakeholders to ask for their input regarding permit distribution. As a result, a decision was made to allocate two permits to each of the four eligible communities with Federally recognized tribal governments (Chistochina, Mentasta Lake, Northway, and Tetlin) with the understanding that all community residents, not just tribal members, would be considered for permit distribution. Any

remaining permits would be made available to Tok and Chisana residents on a first come-first served basis. The number of permits was limited to fourteen and the reporting period requirement was set at within three days of harvest. In 2017, nine permits were issued, three people hunted, and no animals were harvested (FWS 2018). Currently the CCH appears stable at approximately 700 animals and the quota for the 2018-2019 Federal subsistence hunt for the CCH is set at seven bull caribou (Cellarius 2018b). Preliminary reports (as of October 5, 2018) indicate that six permits were issued in 2018 and two caribou were harvested (FWS 2018).

Since 2012, ten caribou have been taken (**Table 3**).

Table 3. Summary of the caribou harvest in the southeast portion of Unit 12 (FC1205) (FWS 2018).

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017 ^a	2018 ^b
Permits Issued	9	9	11	11	8	9	6
Individuals Hunting	8	7	8	7	8	3	2
Caribou Harvest	2	3	2	0	1	0	2
Success Rate^c	25.0	42.9	25.0	0	12.5	0	100.0

^a 2017 data as of March 20, 2018.

^b 2018 data as of October 5, 2018.

^c Success rate is calculated based on the number of individuals hunting, not total permits issued.

OSM Preliminary Recommendation:

- X **maintain status quo – *Maintain closure for the MCH and the limited hunt for the CCH***
- _ **initiate proposal to modify or eliminate the closure**
- _ **other recommendation**

Justification

Mentasta Caribou Herd:

The Mentasta Caribou herd, as currently defined, exists in low numbers and their distribution is small groups in the summer and winter ranges has resulted in a fragmented population. Because of this, total numbers and composition can be significantly affected by sightability when searching for small groups of caribou over vast terrain. Mixing of the Nelchina and Mentasta caribou bulls makes interpreting fall composition surveys difficult and there is limited ability to predict the extent, timing or frequency of mixing between the two herds. It would be impossible for most hunters to discern whether the bull was from the Mentasta herd or the Nelchina herd. In addition, there is the possibility of increased winter mortality due to icing events, which may result in malnutrition and starvation for more susceptible bulls with depleted energy reserves following the rut furthering the decline of the Mentasta caribou population. Calf production and survival remain critically low and have resulted in low numbers of adult cows and bulls observed during recent fall population surveys. Calf production and recruitment in particular

remains below the management objective. These declines are indicative of low production, poor recruitment, and low survival rates among cohorts within the population.

In addition, the MCH has not increased much, despite a moratorium on hunting since 1993. This may be due to a variety of factors including low calf production and recruitment due to relatively poor range quality, predation, and susceptibility to severe weather events. The MCH population has remained at relatively low levels of approximately 400 (mean = 413) caribou since 1998 (**Table 1**). The relatively low number of active collars presently in the MCH (≈ 10) makes it difficult for biologists and managers to adequately monitor the location and movements of the MCH in relation to the much more numerous NCH. Without a reliable mixing ratio, Federal public lands within WRST in Unit 12 should continue to remain closed to caribou hunting, west of the Nabesna River and Nabesna Glacier, for the conservation of a healthy population.

Chisana Caribou Herd:

Historically very few Chisana caribou have migrated west of the Nabesna River and Nabesna Glacier in Unit 12. Restricting the current hunt to east of the Nabesna River and Nabesna Glacier will protect the Mentasta Caribou herd with minimal impact to subsistence hunters wanting to harvest a caribou from the CCH. The relatively few caribou harvested from the CCH in WRST since 2012 do not seem to be having a negative population level effect on the CCH. In addition, the WRST Superintendent has Delegated Authority to open and close the season, and to announce the harvest quota, the number of permits and the reporting period. Thus, the current season and limited harvest by Federally qualified subsistence users in that portion east of Nabesna River and the Nabesna Glacier and south of the winter trail running southeast from Pickerel Lake to the Canadian border in Unit 12 are consistent with recommendations and management guidelines in the CCH Management Plan (Chisana Caribou Herd Working Group 2012).

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Federal Subsistence Board News Release



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Bureau of Land Management
National Park Service
Bureau of Indian Affairs

Forest Service

For Immediate Release:
January 31, 2019

Contact: Caron McKee
(907) 786-3880 or (800) 478-1456
caron_mckee@fws.gov

Call for Proposals to Change Federal Subsistence Hunting and Trapping Regulations

The Federal Subsistence Board (Board) is accepting proposals through March 27, 2019 to change Federal regulations for the subsistence harvest of wildlife on Federal public lands for the July 1, 2020–June 30, 2022 regulatory years. The Board will consider proposals to change Federal subsistence hunting and trapping seasons, harvest limits, methods of harvest, and customary and traditional use determinations.

Submit proposals:

- **By mail or hand delivery**
Federal Subsistence Board
Office of Subsistence Management – Attn: Theo Matuskowitz
1011 East Tudor Road, MS-121
Anchorage, AK 99503-6199
- **Online at <https://www.regulations.gov>**
Search for docket number FWS-R7-SM-2018-0015.
- **At any Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Council meeting**
A current list of meeting dates and locations can be found at <https://www.doi.gov/subsistence/regions>, or by contacting the Office of Subsistence Management at the phone number or email address below. Due to the recent lapse in funding for the Federal government budget, some of the meeting dates published in the proposed rule (84 FR 623; January 31, 2019) have been changed. Revised meeting dates and locations will be announced in subsequent news releases as they become available.

The proposed rule, *Subsistence Management Regulations for Public Lands in Alaska—2020–21 and 2021–22, Subsistence Taking of Wildlife Regulations*, published in the Federal Register on January 31, 2019 (84 FR 623).

You may call the Office of Subsistence Management at 800-478-1456 or email subsistence@fws.gov with questions.

Additional information on the Federal Subsistence Management Program may be found on the web at www.doi.gov/subsistence or by visiting www.facebook.com/subsistencealaska.

Missing out on the latest Federal subsistence issues? If you'd like to receive emails and notifications on the Federal Subsistence Management Program you may subscribe for regular updates by emailing fws-fsb-subsistence-request@lists.fws.gov.

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This document has been cleared for public release #20601312019.



U.S.C. 4321–4370f), and have made a preliminary determination that this action is one of a category of actions that do not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the human environment. This proposed rule involves a safety zone lasting for 2 hours that will prohibit entry within 100-yards of swim participants. Normally such actions are categorically excluded from further review under paragraph L63(a) of Appendix A, Table 1 of DHS Instruction Manual 023–01–001–01, Rev. 01. A preliminary Record of Environmental Consideration supporting this determination is available in the docket where indicated under ADDRESSES. We seek any comments or information that may lead to the discovery of a significant environmental impact from this proposed rule.

G. Protest Activities

The Coast Guard respects the First Amendment rights of protesters. Protesters are asked to contact the person listed in the **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT** section to coordinate protest activities so that your message can be received without jeopardizing the safety or security of people, places, or vessels.

V. Public Participation and Request for Comments

We view public participation as essential to effective rulemaking, and will consider all comments and material received during the comment period. Your comment can help shape the outcome of this rulemaking. If you submit a comment, please include the docket number for this rulemaking, indicate the specific section of this document to which each comment applies, and provide a reason for each suggestion or recommendation.

We encourage you to submit comments through the Federal eRulemaking Portal at <http://www.regulations.gov>. If your material cannot be submitted using <http://www.regulations.gov>, contact the person in the **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT** section of this document for alternate instructions.

We accept anonymous comments. All comments received will be posted without change to <https://www.regulations.gov> and will include any personal information you have provided. For more about privacy and the docket, visit <https://www.regulations.gov/privacyNotice>.

Documents mentioned in this NPRM as being available in the docket, and all public comments, will be in our online docket at <https://www.regulations.gov>

and can be viewed by following that website's instructions. Additionally, if you go to the online docket and sign up for email alerts, you will be notified when comments are posted or when a final rule is published.

List of Subjects in 33 CFR Part 165

Harbors, Marine safety, Navigation (water), Reporting and recordkeeping requirements, Security measures, Waterways.

For the reasons discussed in the preamble, the Coast Guard is proposing to amend 33 CFR part 165 as follows:

PART 165—SAFETY ZONE; TANAPAG HARBOR, SAIPAN, CNMI

■ 1. The authority citation for part 165 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 46 U.S.C. 70034 (previously codified in 33 U.S.C. 1231); 46 U.S.C. 70051 (previously codified in 50 U.S.C. 191); 33 CFR 1.05–1, 6.04–1, 6.04–6, and 160.5; Department of Homeland Security Delegation No. 0170.1.

■ 2. Add § 165.T14–0020 to read as follows:

165. T14–0020 Safety Zone; Tanapag Harbor, Saipan, CNMI.

(a) *Location.* The following area, within the Guam Captain of the Port (COTP) Zone (See 33 CFR 3.70–15), all navigable waters within a 100-yard radius of race participants in Tanapag Harbor, Saipan. Race participants, chase boats and organizers of the event will be exempt from the safety zone.

(b) *Effective Dates.* This rule is effective from 6:30 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. on March 31, 2019.

(c) *Enforcement.* Any Coast Guard commissioned, warrant, or petty officer, and any other COTP representative permitted by law, may enforce this temporary safety zone.

(d) *Waiver.* The COTP may waive any of the requirements of this rule for any person, vessel, or class of vessel upon finding that application of the safety zone is unnecessary or impractical for the purpose of maritime security.

(e) *Penalties.* Vessels or persons violating this rule are subject to the penalties set forth in 46 U.S.C. 70036 (previously codified in 33 U.S.C. 1232) and 46 U.S.C. 70052 (previously codified in 50 U.S.C. 192).

Dated: January 23, 2019.

Christopher M. Chase,

Captain, U.S. Coast Guard, Captain of the Port, Guam.

[FR Doc. 2019–00563 Filed 1–30–19; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 9110–04–P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

36 CFR Part 242

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

50 CFR Part 100

[Docket No. FWS–R7–SM–2018–0015; FXFR13350700640–190–FF07J00000; FBMS#4500129154]

RIN 1018–BD11

Subsistence Management Regulations for Public Lands in Alaska—2020–21 and 2021–22 Subsistence Taking of Wildlife Regulations

AGENCIES: Forest Service, Agriculture; Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Proposed rule.

SUMMARY: This proposed rule would establish regulations for hunting and trapping seasons, harvest limits, and methods and means related to taking of wildlife for subsistence uses during the 2020–21 and 2021–22 regulatory years. The Federal Subsistence Board is on a schedule of completing the process of revising subsistence taking of wildlife regulations in even-numbered years and subsistence taking of fish and shellfish regulations in odd-numbered years; public proposal and review processes take place during the preceding year. The Board also addresses customary and traditional use determinations during the applicable cycle. When final, the resulting rulemaking will replace the existing subsistence wildlife taking regulations. This rule would also amend the general regulations on subsistence taking of fish and wildlife.

DATES:

Public meetings: The Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils will hold public meetings to receive comments and make proposals to change this proposed rule on several dates between February 5 and March 12, 2019, and then will hold another round of public meetings to discuss and receive comments on the proposals, and make recommendations on the proposals to the Federal Subsistence Board, on several dates between September 19 and November 5, 2019. The Board will discuss and evaluate proposed regulatory changes during a public meeting in Anchorage, AK, in April 2020. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for specific information on dates and locations of the public meetings.

Public comments: Comments and proposals to change this proposed rule must be received or postmarked by March 27, 2019.

ADDRESSES:

Public meetings: The Federal Subsistence Board and the Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils' public meetings will be held at various locations in Alaska. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for specific information on dates and locations of the public meetings.

Public comments: You may submit comments by one of the following methods:

- **Electronically:** Go to the Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov> and search for FWS–R7–SM–2018–0015, which is the docket number for this rulemaking.
- **By hard copy:** U.S. mail or hand-delivery to: USFWS, Office of Subsistence Management, 1011 East Tudor Road, MS 121, Attn: Theo Matuskowitz, Anchorage, AK 99503–6199, or hand delivery to the Designated Federal Official attending any of the Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Council public meetings. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for additional information on locations of the public meetings.

We will post all comments on <http://www.regulations.gov>. This generally means that we will post any personal information you provide us (see the Public Review Process section below for more information).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Chair, Federal Subsistence Board, c/o U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Attention: Thomas C.J. Doolittle, Office of Subsistence Management; (907) 786–3888 or subsistence@fws.gov. For questions specific to National Forest System lands, contact Thomas Whitford, Regional Subsistence Program Leader,

USDA–Forest Service, Alaska Region; (907) 743–9461 or twhitford@fs.fed.us.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Under Title VIII of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) (16 U.S.C. 3111–3126), the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture (Secretaries) jointly implement the Federal Subsistence Management Program. This program provides a rural preference for take of fish and wildlife resources for subsistence uses on Federal public lands and waters in Alaska. The Secretaries published temporary regulations to carry out this program in the **Federal Register** on June 29, 1990 (55 FR 27114), and final regulations were published in the **Federal Register** on May 29, 1992 (57 FR 22940). The Program has subsequently amended these regulations a number of times. Because this program is a joint effort between Interior and Agriculture, these regulations are located in two titles of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR): Title 36, “Parks, Forests, and Public Property,” and Title 50, “Wildlife and Fisheries,” at 36 CFR part 242.1–28 and 50 CFR part 100.1–28, respectively. The regulations contain subparts as follows: Subpart A, General Provisions; Subpart B, Program Structure; Subpart C, Board Determinations; and Subpart D, Subsistence Taking of Fish and Wildlife.

Consistent with subpart B of these regulations, the Secretaries established a Federal Subsistence Board to administer the Federal Subsistence Management Program. The Board comprises:

- A Chair appointed by the Secretary of the Interior with concurrence of the Secretary of Agriculture;
- The Alaska Regional Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service;

- The Alaska Regional Director, National Park Service;
- The Alaska State Director, Bureau of Land Management;
- The Alaska Regional Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs;
- The Alaska Regional Forester, USDA–Forest Service; and
- Two public members appointed by the Secretary of the Interior with concurrence of the Secretary of Agriculture.

Through the Board, these agencies and public members participate in the development of regulations for subparts C and D, which, among other things, set forth program eligibility and specific harvest seasons and limits.

In administering the program, the Secretaries divided Alaska into 10 subsistence resource regions, each of which is represented by a Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council). The Councils provide a forum for rural residents with personal knowledge of local conditions and resource requirements to have a meaningful role in the subsistence management of fish and wildlife on Federal public lands in Alaska. The Council members represent varied geographical, cultural, and user interests within each region. Members are appointed by the Secretary of the Interior with the concurrence of the Secretary of Agriculture.

Public Review Process—Comments, Proposals, and Public Meetings

The Councils have a substantial role in reviewing this proposed rule and making recommendations for the final rule. The Federal Subsistence Board, through the Councils, will hold public meetings on this proposed rule at the following locations in Alaska, on the following dates:

Region 1—Southeast Regional Council	Wrangell	February 12, 2019.
Region 2—Southcentral Regional Council	Anchorage	February 26, 2019.
Region 3—Kodiak/Aleutians Regional Council	Kodiak	February 21, 2019.
Region 4—Bristol Bay Regional Council	Naknek	February 12, 2019.
Region 5—Yukon–Kuskokwim Delta Regional Council	Bethel	March 12, 2019.
Region 6—Western Interior Regional Council	Anchorage	February 20, 2019.
Region 7—Seward Peninsula Regional Council	Nome	March 5, 2019.
Region 8—Northwest Arctic Regional Council	Kotzebue	February 27, 2019.
Region 9—Eastern Interior Regional Council	Fairbanks	March 5, 2019.
Region 10—North Slope Regional Council	Utqiagvik	February 13, 2019.

During April 2019, the written proposals to change the subpart D, take of wildlife regulations, and subpart C, customary and traditional use determinations, will be compiled and distributed for public review. During a

subsequent public comment period, written public comments will be accepted on the distributed proposals.

The Board, through the Councils, will hold a second series of public meetings in September through November 2019,

to receive comments on specific proposals and to develop recommendations to the Board at the following locations in Alaska, on the following dates:

Region 1—Southeast Regional Council	Petersburg	October 8, 2019.
Region 2—Southcentral Regional Council	Seward	October 2, 2019.

Region 3—Kodiak/Aleutians Regional Council	Kodiak	September 19, 2019.
Region 4—Bristol Bay Regional Council	Dillingham	November 5, 2019.
Region 5—Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Regional Council	Bethel	October 12, 2019.
Region 6—Western Interior Regional Council	Aniak	October 8, 2019.
Region 7—Seward Peninsula Regional Council	Nome	October 22, 2019.
Region 8—Northwest Arctic Regional Council	Kotzebue	October 28, 2019.
Region 9—Eastern Interior Regional Council	Fairbanks	October 15, 2019.
Region 10—North Slope Regional Council	Utqiagvik	October 22, 2019.

Prior to both series of meetings, notices will be published of specific dates, times, and meeting locations in local and statewide newspapers, along with announcements on radio, television and social media sites. Locations and dates may change based on weather or local circumstances. The amount of work on each Council's agenda determines the length of each Council meeting, but typically the meetings are scheduled to last 2 days. Occasionally a Council will lack information necessary during a scheduled meeting to make a recommendation to the Board or to provide comments on other matters affecting subsistence in the region. If this situation occurs, the Council may announce on the record a later teleconference to address the specific issue when the requested information or data is available. These teleconferences are open to the public, along with opportunities for public comment; the date and time will be announced during the scheduled meeting and that same information will be announced through news releases and local radio, television, and social media ads.

The Board will discuss and evaluate proposed changes to the subsistence management regulations during a public meeting scheduled to be held in Anchorage, Alaska, in April 2020. The Council Chairs, or their designated representatives, will present their respective Councils' recommendations at the Board meeting. Additional oral testimony may be provided on specific proposals before the Board at that time. At that public meeting, the Board will deliberate and take final action on proposals received that request changes to this proposed rule.

Proposals to the Board to modify the general fish and wildlife regulations, wildlife harvest regulations, and customary and traditional use determinations must include the following information:

- a. Name, address, and telephone number of the requestor;
- b. Each section and/or paragraph designation in this proposed rule for which changes are suggested, if applicable;
- c. A description of the regulatory change(s) desired;

d. A statement explaining why each change is necessary;

e. Proposed wording changes; and
 f. Any additional information that you believe will help the Board in evaluating the proposed change.

The Board immediately rejects proposals that fail to include the above information, or proposals that are beyond the scope of authorities in § ____ .24, subpart C (the regulations governing customary and traditional use determinations), and §§ ____ .25 and ____ .26, subpart D (the general and specific regulations governing the subsistence take of wildlife). If a proposal needs clarification, prior to being distributed for public review, the proponent may be contacted, and the proposal could be revised based on their input. Once distributed for public review, no additional changes may be made as part of the original submission. During the April 2020 meeting, the Board may defer review and action on some proposals to allow time for cooperative planning efforts, or to acquire additional needed information. The Board may elect to defer taking action on any given proposal if the workload of staff, Councils, or the Board becomes excessive. These deferrals may be based on recommendations by the affected Council(s) or staff members, or on the basis of the Board's intention to do least harm to the subsistence user and the resource involved. A proponent of a proposal may withdraw the proposal provided it has not been considered, and a recommendation has not been made, by a Council. After that, the Board must approve withdrawal of a proposal. The Board may consider and act on alternatives that address the intent of a proposal while differing in approach.

You may submit written comments and materials concerning this proposed rule by one of the methods listed in **ADDRESSES**. If you submit a comment via <http://www.regulations.gov>, your entire comment, including any personal identifying information, will be posted on the website. If you submit a hardcopy comment that includes personal identifying information, you may request at the top of your document that we withhold this information from public review. However, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

We will post all hardcopy comments on <http://www.regulations.gov>.

Comments and materials we receive, as well as supporting documentation we used in preparing this proposed rule, will be available for public inspection on <http://www.regulations.gov>, or by appointment, between 8 a.m. and 3 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays, at: USFWS, Office of Subsistence Management, 1011 East Tudor Road, Anchorage, AK 99503.

Reasonable Accommodations

The Federal Subsistence Board is committed to providing access to these meetings for all participants. Please direct all requests for sign language interpreting services, closed captioning, or other accommodation needs to the Office of Subsistence Management, 907-786-3888, subsistence@fws.gov, or 800-877-8339 (TTY), at least 7 business days prior to the meeting you would like to attend.

Tribal Consultation and Comment

As expressed in Executive Order 13175, "Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments," the Federal officials that have been delegated authority by the Secretaries are committed to honoring the unique government-to-government political relationship that exists between the Federal Government and federally Recognized Indian Tribes (Tribes) as listed in 79 FR 4748 (January 29, 2014). Consultation with Alaska Native corporations is based on Public Law 108-199, div. H, Sec. 161, Jan. 23, 2004, 118 Stat. 452, as amended by Public Law 108-447, div. H, title V, Sec. 518, Dec. 8, 2004, 118 Stat. 3267, which provides that: "The Director of the Office of Management and Budget and all Federal agencies shall hereafter consult with Alaska Native corporations on the same basis as Indian tribes under Executive Order No. 13175."

The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act does not provide specific rights to Tribes for the subsistence taking of wildlife, fish, and shellfish. However, because tribal members are affected by subsistence fishing, hunting, and trapping regulations, the Secretaries, through the Board, will provide federally recognized Tribes and Alaska Native corporations

an opportunity to consult on this proposed rule.

The Board will engage in outreach efforts for this proposed rule, including a notification letter, to ensure that Tribes and Alaska Native corporations are advised of the mechanisms by which they can participate. The Board provides a variety of opportunities for consultation: Proposing changes to the existing rule; commenting on proposed changes to the existing rule; engaging in dialogue at Council meetings; engaging in dialogue at the Board's meetings; and providing input in person, by mail, email, or phone at any time during the rulemaking process. The Board commits to efficiently and adequately providing an opportunity to Tribes and Alaska Native corporations for consultation in regard to subsistence rulemaking.

The Board will consider Tribes' and Alaska Native corporations' information, input, and recommendations, and address their concerns as much as practicable.

Developing the 2020–21 and 2021–22 Wildlife Seasons and Harvest Limit Regulations

Subpart C and D regulations are subject to periodic review and revision. The Federal Subsistence Board currently completes the process of revising subsistence take of wildlife regulations in even-numbered years and fish and shellfish regulations in odd-numbered years; public proposal and review processes take place during the preceding year. The Board also addresses customary and traditional use determinations during the applicable cycle.

The current subsistence program regulations form the starting point for consideration during each new rulemaking cycle. The regulations at § _____.24 pertain to customary and traditional use determinations; the regulations at § _____.25 pertain to general provisions governing the subsistence take of wildlife, fish, and shellfish; and the regulations at § _____.26 pertain to specific provisions governing the subsistence take of wildlife.

The text of the proposed amendments to 36 CFR parts 242.24, 242.25, and 242.26 and 50 CFR parts 100.24, 100.25, and 100.26 is the final rule for the 2018–2020 regulatory period for wildlife (83 FR 50758; October 9, 2018).

These regulations will remain in effect until subsequent Board action changes elements as a result of the public review process outlined above in this document.

Compliance With Statutory and Regulatory Authorities

National Environmental Policy Act

A Draft Environmental Impact Statement that described four alternatives for developing a Federal Subsistence Management Program was distributed for public comment on October 7, 1991. The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) was published on February 28, 1992. The Record of Decision (ROD) on Subsistence Management for Federal Public Lands in Alaska was signed April 6, 1992. The selected alternative in the FEIS (Alternative IV) defined the administrative framework of an annual regulatory cycle for subsistence regulations.

A 1997 environmental assessment dealt with the expansion of Federal jurisdiction over fisheries and is available at the office listed under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**. The Secretary of the Interior, with concurrence of the Secretary of Agriculture, determined that expansion of Federal jurisdiction does not constitute a major Federal action significantly affecting the human environment and, therefore, signed a Finding of No Significant Impact.

Section 810 of ANILCA

An ANILCA § 810 analysis was completed as part of the FEIS process on the Federal Subsistence Management Program. The intent of all Federal subsistence regulations is to accord subsistence uses of fish and wildlife on public lands a priority over the taking of fish and wildlife on such lands for other purposes, unless restriction is necessary to conserve healthy fish and wildlife populations. The final § 810 analysis determination appeared in the April 6, 1992, ROD and concluded that the Federal Subsistence Management Program, under Alternative IV with an annual process for setting subsistence regulations, may have some local impacts on subsistence uses, but will not likely restrict subsistence uses significantly.

During the subsequent environmental assessment process for extending fisheries jurisdiction, an evaluation of the effects of this rulemaking process was conducted in accordance with § 810. That evaluation also supported the Secretaries' determination that these rules will not reach the "may significantly restrict" threshold that would require notice and hearings under ANILCA § 810(a).

Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA)

This proposed rule does not contain any new collections of information that require Office of Management and Budget (OMB) approval. OMB has reviewed and approved the collections of information associated with the subsistence regulations at 36 CFR part 242 and 50 CFR part 100, and assigned OMB Control Number 1018–0075, which expires June 30, 2019. An agency may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Regulatory Planning and Review (Executive Order 12866)

Executive Order 12866 provides that the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA) in the Office of Management and Budget will review all significant rules. OIRA has determined that this proposed rule is not significant.

Executive Order 13563 reaffirms the principles of E.O. 12866 while calling for improvements in the nation's regulatory system to promote predictability, to reduce uncertainty, and to use the best, most innovative, and least burdensome tools for achieving regulatory ends. The executive order directs agencies to consider regulatory approaches that reduce burdens and maintain flexibility and freedom of choice for the public where these approaches are relevant, feasible, and consistent with regulatory objectives. E.O. 13563 emphasizes further that regulations must be based on the best available science and that the rulemaking process must allow for public participation and an open exchange of ideas. We have developed this rule in a manner consistent with these requirements.

Regulatory Flexibility Act

The Regulatory Flexibility Act of 1980 (5 U.S.C. 601 *et seq.*) requires preparation of flexibility analyses for rules that will have a significant effect on a substantial number of small entities, which include small businesses, organizations, or governmental jurisdictions. In general, the resources to be harvested under this proposed rule are already being harvested and consumed by the local harvester and do not result in an additional dollar benefit to the economy. However, we estimate that two million pounds of meat are harvested by subsistence users annually and, if given an estimated value of \$3.00 per pound, this amount would equate to about \$6 million in food value statewide. Based upon the amounts and

values cited above, the Departments certify that this rulemaking will not have a significant economic effect on a substantial number of small entities within the meaning of the Regulatory Flexibility Act.

Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act

Under the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act (5 U.S.C. 801 *et seq.*), this proposed rule is not a major rule. It will not have an effect on the economy of \$100 million or more, will not cause a major increase in costs or prices for consumers, and will not have significant adverse effects on competition, employment, investment, productivity, innovation, or the ability of U.S.-based enterprises to compete with foreign-based enterprises.

Executive Order 12630

Title VIII of ANILCA requires the Secretaries to administer a subsistence priority for rural Alaskan residents on public lands. The scope of this program is limited by definition to certain public lands. Likewise, these proposed regulations have no potential takings of private property implications as defined by Executive Order 12630.

Unfunded Mandates Reform Act

The Secretaries have determined and certify pursuant to the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act, 2 U.S.C. 1502 *et seq.*, that this rulemaking will not impose a cost of \$100 million or more in any given year on local or State governments or private entities. The implementation of this rule is by Federal agencies and there is no cost imposed on any State or local entities or tribal governments.

Executive Order 12988

The Secretaries have determined that these regulations meet the applicable standards provided in §§ 3(a) and 3(b)(2) of Executive Order 12988, regarding civil justice reform.

Executive Order 13132

In accordance with Executive Order 13132, the proposed rule does not have sufficient federalism implications to warrant the preparation of a Federalism Assessment. Title VIII of ANILCA precludes the State from exercising subsistence management authority over fish and wildlife resources on Federal lands unless it meets certain requirements.

Executive Order 13175

Title VIII of ANILCA does not provide specific rights to tribes for the subsistence taking of wildlife, fish, and

shellfish. However, as described above under *Tribal Consultation and Comment*, the Secretaries, through the Board, will provide federally recognized Tribes and Alaska Native corporations an opportunity to consult on this proposed rule.

Executive Order 13211

Executive Order 13211 requires agencies to prepare Statements of Energy Effects when undertaking certain actions. However, this proposed rule is not a significant regulatory action under E.O. 13211, affecting energy supply, distribution, or use, and no Statement of Energy Effects is required.

Drafting Information

Theo Matuskowitz drafted this proposed rule under the guidance of Thomas C.J. Doolittle, Jr. of the Office of Subsistence Management, Alaska Regional Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Anchorage, Alaska. Additional assistance was provided by:

- Daniel Sharp, Alaska State Office, Bureau of Land Management;
- Clarence Summers, Alaska Regional Office, National Park Service;
- Dr. Glenn Chen, Alaska Regional Office, Bureau of Indian Affairs;
- Carol Damberg, Alaska Regional Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; and
- Thomas Whitford, Alaska Regional Office, USDA–Forest Service.

List of Subjects

36 CFR Part 242

Administrative practice and procedure, Alaska, Fish, National forests, Public lands, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements, Wildlife.

50 CFR Part 100

Administrative practice and procedure, Alaska, Fish, National forests, Public lands, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements, Wildlife.

Proposed Regulation Promulgation

For the reasons set out in the preamble, the Federal Subsistence Board proposes to amend 36 CFR part 242 and 50 CFR part 100 for the 2020–21 and 2021–22 regulatory years.

- The text of the proposed amendments to 36 CFR 242.24, 242.25, and 242.26 and 50 CFR 100.24, 100.25, and 100.26 is the final rule for the 2018–2020 regulatory periods for wildlife (83 FR 50759; October 9, 2018).

Dated: December 21, 2018.

Thomas C.J. Doolittle,
Acting Assistant Regional Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Dated: December 21, 2018.

Thomas Whitford,
Subsistence Program Leader, USDA—Forest Service.

[FR Doc. 2019–00424 Filed 1–30–19; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3411–15–4333–15–P

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

38 CFR Part 17

RIN 2900–AQ47

Urgent Care

AGENCY: Department of Veterans Affairs.

ACTION: Proposed rule.

SUMMARY: The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is proposing to amend its regulations that govern VA health care. This rule would grant eligible veterans access to urgent care from qualifying non-VA entities or providers without prior approval from VA. This rulemaking would implement the mandates of the VA MISSION Act of 2018 and increase veterans' access to health care in the community.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before March 4, 2019.

ADDRESSES: Written comments may be submitted through <http://www.Regulations.gov>; by mail or hand-delivery to: Director, Regulation Policy and Management (00REG), Department of Veterans Affairs, 810 Vermont Avenue, North West, Room 1063B, Washington, DC 20420; or by fax to (202) 273–9026. (This is not a toll-free telephone number.) Comments should indicate that they are submitted in response to “RIN 2900–AQ47 Urgent Care.” Copies of comments received will be available for public inspection in the Office of Regulation Policy and Management, Room 1063B, between the hours of 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday (except holidays). Please call (202) 461–4902 for an appointment. (This is not a toll-free telephone number.) In addition, during the comment period, comments may be viewed online through the Federal Docket Management System (FDMS) at <http://www.Regulations.gov>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Joseph Duran, Director of Policy and Planning, 3773 Cherry Creek North Drive, Denver, CO 80209. Joseph.Duran2@va.gov. (303) 370–1637. (This is not a toll-free number.)



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Bureau of Land Management
National Park Service
Bureau of Indian Affairs

Federal Subsistence Board Informational Flyer



Forest Service

Contact: Regulatory Affairs Division Chief
(907) 786-3888 or (800) 478-1456
subsistence@fws.gov

How to Submit a Proposal to Change Federal Subsistence Regulations

Alaska residents and subsistence users are an integral part of the Federal regulatory process. Any person or group can submit proposals to change Federal subsistence regulations, comment on proposals, or testify at meetings. By becoming involved in the process, subsistence users assist with effective management of subsistence activities and ensure consideration of traditional and local knowledge in subsistence management decisions. Subsistence users also provide valuable wildlife harvest information.

A call for proposals to change Federal subsistence fishing regulations is issued in January of even-numbered years and odd-numbered years for wildlife. The period during which proposals are accepted is no less than 30 calendar days. Proposals must be submitted in writing within this time frame.

You may propose changes to Federal subsistence season dates, harvest limits, methods and means of harvest, and customary and traditional use determinations.

What your proposal should contain:

There is no form to submit your proposal to change Federal subsistence regulations. Include the following information in your proposal submission (you may submit as many as you like):

- Your name and contact information (address, phone, fax, or E-mail address)
- Your organization (if applicable).
- What regulations you wish to change. Include management unit number and species. Quote the current regulation if known. If you are proposing a new regulation, please state, "new regulation."
- Write the regulation the way you would like to see it written in the regulations.
- Explain why this regulation change should be made.
- You should provide any additional information that you believe will help the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) in evaluating the proposed change.

You may submit your proposals by:

1. By mail or hand delivery to:
Federal Subsistence Board
Office of Subsistence Management
Attn: Theo Matuskowitz
1011 E. Tudor Rd., MS-121
Anchorage, AK 99503
2. At any Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Council meeting (A schedule will be published in the Federal Register and be announced statewide, bi-annually, prior to the meeting cycles)
3. On the Web at <http://www.regulations.gov>

Submit a separate proposal for each proposed change; however, do not submit the same proposal by different accepted methods listed above. To cite which regulation(s) you want to change, you may reference [50 CFR 100](#) or [36 CFR 242](#) or the proposed regulations published in the Federal Register: <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/index.html>. All proposals and comments, including personal information, are posted on the Web at <http://www.regulations.gov>.

For the proposal processing timeline and additional information contact the Office of Subsistence Management at (800) 478-1456/ (907) 786-3888 or go to <http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/proposal/submit.cfm>.

How a proposal to change Federal subsistence regulations is processed:

1. Once a proposal to change Federal subsistence regulations is received by the Board, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Subsistence Management (OSM) validates the proposal, assigns a proposal number and lead analyst.
2. The proposals are compiled into a book for statewide distribution and posted online at the Program website. The proposals are also sent out the applicable Councils and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) and the Interagency Staff Committee (ISC) for review. The period during which comments are accepted is no less than 45 calendar days. Comments must be submitted within this time frame.
3. The lead analyst works with appropriate agencies and proponents to develop an analysis on the proposal.
4. The analysis is sent to the Councils, ADF&G and the ISC for comments and recommendations to the Board. The public is welcome and encouraged to provide comments directly to the Councils and the Board at their meetings. The final analysis contains all of the comments and recommendations received by interested/affected parties. This packet of information is then presented to the Board for action.
5. The decision to adopt, adopt with modification, defer or reject the proposal is then made by the Board. The public is provided the opportunity to provide comment directly to the Board prior to the Board's final decision.
6. The final rule is published in the Federal Register and a public regulations booklet is created and distributed statewide and on the Program's website.

A step-by-step guide to submitting your proposal on www.regulations.gov:

1. Connect to www.regulations.gov – there is no password or username required.
2. In the white space provided in the large blue box, type in the document number listed in the news release or available on the program webpage, (for example: FWS-R7-SM2014-0062) and select the light blue “Search” button to the right.

3. Search results will populate and may have more than one result. Make sure the Proposed Rule you select is by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and **not** by the U.S. Forest Service (FS).
4. Select the proposed rule and in the upper right select the blue box that says, “Comment Now!”
5. Enter your comments in the “Comment” box.
6. Upload your files by selecting “Choose files” (this is optional).
7. Enter your first and last name in the spaces provided.
8. Select the appropriate checkbox stating whether or not you are providing the information directly or submitting on behalf of a third party.
9. Fill out the contact information in the drop down section as requested.
10. Select, “Continue.” You will be given an opportunity to review your submission.
11. If everything appears correct, click the box at the bottom that states, “I read and understand the statement above,” and select the box, “Submit Comment.” A receipt will be provided to you. Keep this as proof of submission.
12. If everything does not appear as you would like it to, select, “Edit” to make any necessary changes and then go through the previous step again to “Submit Comment.”

Missing out on the latest Federal subsistence issues? If you’d like to receive emails and notifications on the Federal Subsistence Management Program you may subscribe for regular updates by emailing fws-fsb-subsistence-request@lists.fws.gov. Additional information on the Federal Subsistence Management Program may be found on the web at www.doi.gov/subsistence/index.cfm or by visiting www.facebook.com/subsistencealaska.

Eastern Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

c/o Office of Subsistence Management
1011 East Tudor Road, MS 121
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6199
Phone: (907) 787-3888, Fax: (907) 786-3898
Toll Free: 1-800-478-1456

RAC/EI 18027.KW

Anthony Christianson, Chair
Federal Subsistence Board
c/o Office of Subsistence Management
1101 East Tudor Road, MS 121
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6199

Dear Chairman Christianson:

The Eastern Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council) appreciates the opportunity to submit this annual report to the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) under the provisions of Section 805(a)(3)(D) and Section 805(c) of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). At its public meeting held in Tanana, October 11-12, 2018, the Council brought forward the following concerns and recommendations for its FY2018 Annual Report. [*The Report was finalized and approved at the Council's March 5-6, 2019 public meeting held in Fairbanks.*] The Council wishes to share information and raise a number of concerns dealing with implementation of Title VIII of ANILCA and the continuation of subsistence uses in the Eastern Interior Region.

1. Hunter displacement and the "Domino Effect" contribution to changing hunting patterns and user conflict

Over the last few years the Council has become increasingly concerned about the displacement of local hunters from their home region by hunters from other regions. The displacement often happens due to the various Federal and State wildlife management decisions, including closures which force hunters to hunt in a different region. This phenomenon, also known as "Domino Effect", is an underlying reason for some of the user conflict in the State.

The issue of user conflict and finding the ways of preempting and mitigating this conflict has been a long standing concern for the Council. The Council requests that the Office of Subsistence Management (OSM) provide a report with data on the hunters' communities of residency and harvest locations for various species. This information can be obtained from the harvest ticket reports filed with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, including the data on what percentage of the hunters were Federally qualified subsistence users.

Chairman Christianson

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The Council understands that collecting the requested data for the entire state is a large project, but notes that it is needed to understand hunters' moving patterns and changing harvest pressures in different areas. This data will help wildlife managers gain comprehensive picture of displacement, address the impacts of the "Domino Effect", and find approaches to mitigate it in the future.

Also, this data would assist the in Council proposing better informed regulatory changes to hunting seasons or other changes that would redistribute and lessen hunting impacts to Federally qualified subsistence users.

The Council considers this research a priority and suggests that OSM collaborate with the State on collecting the information. This may be a good research project for a UAA or UAF graduate student, such as an ANSEP student, and has potential to be his or her graduation thesis as well. The Council feels strongly that this information will also help the Federal Subsistence Board and the Alaska Board of Game understand the impacts of closing hunting in one area and the pressure that it may put on another areas. This might potentially result in developing better regulations that provide harvest opportunities on more equitable bases. There is the potential for long-term positive impacts on State and Federal wildlife management from this research.

2. Accurate reporting of customary and traditional trade of all subsistence-caught Yukon River Chinook Salmon

The Council has doubts over the accuracy of subsistence harvest data for Chinook Salmon on the Yukon River. There is a significant disparity in numbers between the total recorded run coming into the Yukon River, the reported commercial catch and subsistence harvest. In reviewing the data, the Council observed that currently approximate 20,000 - 25,000 Chinook Salmon are unaccounted for, which, in the Council's opinion, more than likely indicates that these salmon were not reported.

Joint concerns about Chinook Salmon harvest and whether customary trade has been legally conducted led to the formation of an Eastern Interior, Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, and Western Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council Customary Trade Subcommittee. This developed several proposals addressing customary trade regulations and made recommendations to the Board at its January 2013 meeting. The Board adopted one of these proposals limiting customary trade of Yukon River Chinook Salmon to those with a current customary and traditional use determination for Yukon River Chinook Salmon.

Under State regulations, exchange of subsistence-caught fish for cash is illegal unless specifically authorized by the Alaska Board of Fisheries. Currently, the customary trade of Yukon River salmon stocks for cash has not been authorized by the Alaska Board of Fisheries. Council members have personal knowledge that subsistence users regularly make harvested salmon into strips but do not report to the State the correct number of fish that have been harvested for strips to avoid being prosecuted.

The Council would like the Board to work with the State to find ways to improve the accurate reporting of customary and traditional trade of salmon on the Yukon River. The Council would like to stress that accurate information and understanding of the harvest is essential to managers to be able to correctly manage the Yukon River Chinook Salmon, especially in the times of low abundance or during rebuilding efforts.

3. Effects of releasing 1.6 billion hatchery salmon into the marine environment

Over the course of last 15-20 years, private non-profit hatcheries in Alaska have released an average of 1.6 billion hatchery salmon annually into the marine environment. The Council continues to have concerns over the effects of hatchery-released salmon on wild salmon stocks. The Council notes that some major institutions and agencies, such as University of Washington, University of Hokkaido, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Oregon State University, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, State of Alaska, and others have conducted and published a substantial amount of scientific research on the hatchery-versus-wild fish interactions in the marine environment.

The Council notes that significant evidence in the research shows that the decline of salmon stocks in Alaska is a marine phenomenon. The Council's two major concerns are:

- 1). Competition for food in the marine environment. There is substantial evidence that hatchery-released salmon compete directly with wild salmon stocks for food in the marine environment. This might result in a significant adverse effects on the wild salmon populations, especially if food resources are limited and competition is high. Consequently, this can greatly contribute to the decline of wild stocks.
- 2). Predation of larger hatchery juveniles on other salmon smolt. According to the research, hatchery-released juvenile Pink Salmon spend one year in the ocean with majority of their growth (80%) occurring during the last three to four months. This growth period coincides with the migration of other salmon species' smolt. Thus, there is the possibility of extensive predation by larger hatchery juvenile Pinks on smaller wild juveniles (fry and smolt) in the marine environment.

These two interactions may have potentially significant adverse impacts on wild salmon stocks resulting in decreased growth and survival. That is why it becomes increasingly important to understand the effects of interaction of hatchery-released salmon with the wild stocks.

From previous Board responses on issues of concern brought up by the Council, we understand that OSM staff "generally does not plan or conduct research."¹ In view of this, the Council requests that the Board seek cooperation with other agencies or organizations to compile and analyze the results of the above-mentioned research. This would provide a comprehensive

¹ Federal Subsistence Board t Reply to the Eastern Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council's Fiscal Year 2018 Annual Report, p. 4.

picture of the long- and short-term effects of hatchery released salmon on the wild salmon stocks.

4. Concerns over the Alaska Department of Fish and Game lowering the biological escapement goal and its effect on salmon stocks

The Council was troubled by a report titled *Another side of Meeting Canadian Border Escapement in 2018: US/Canada Border Escapement Cuts* prepared by Tanana/Rampart/Manley Advisory Council (enclosed). The report states that, over time, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game has been effectively lowering the cross-border interim management escapement goal (IMEG) for Chinook Salmon by shifting the unit of measure from a mark-recapture metric to one based on units produced by the Eagle Yukon River sonar. Historically, the original escapement goals set under the U.S. - Canada Yukon River Salmon Agreement of 2001 (2001 Agreement) were adjusted based on the Canadian-run mark recapture projects. In 2005, ADF&G began using Didson and split-beam sonar technology at the Eagle Yukon River site, which counted passing salmon more accurately. Statistics show that during the period between 2005-2007, the Eagle sonar counted approximately 1.7% more Chinook Salmon than the simultaneously operated Canadian mark-recapture projects.

Yearly Passage Estimates²

Year	DFO Tag/Recap	Eagle Sonar	% Higher at Eagle
2005	45,000	81,529	1.81
2006	47,965	73,691	1.54
2007	22,958	41,697	1.82

The Council feels that despite the higher Chinook Salmon passage numbers gathered at the Eagle sonar, which provides a scientific basis for increasing the escapement numbers under the 2001 Agreement, the unit conversion did not appropriately translate the relative order of magnitude, which is now set significantly lower than specified in the Agreement. Moreover, in 2008 the Yukon River Panel adopted 45,000 as the reduced IMEG for Chinook Salmon. In 2010, it was reduced further to 42,500 fish. It is the Council's understanding that that some managers would like to reduce it even further to 30,000 fish for the upcoming season.

In 2014 over 64,000 Chinook Salmon returned to their spawning grounds in Canada, which is 21,500 over the lower margin on the IMEG range (42,500 – 55,000). A similar situation repeated in 2015 with spawning escapement reaching 82,674, which was about 40,000 over the lower escapement goal (42,500 – 55,000). However, Chinook Salmon are returning at younger ages with smaller average sizes. Consequently, there are fewer eggs being deposited in the gravel than in the past because smaller fish carry fewer eggs, lowering the reproductive potential. Thus, though the estimated passage was above the lower end of the IMEG, the actual spawning potential was the same as if the passage was much lower.

² *Another side of Meeting Canadian Border Escapement in 2018: US/Canada Border Escapement Cuts* report prepared by Tanana/Rampart/Manley Advisory Council (Attachment 1).

The Council points to scientific research showing that the average size of Pacific salmon have declined over the past few decades. This decrease over the past 30 years may be “because of a decline in the predominant age at maturity and because of a decrease in age-specific length,”³ but the Council also feels the selective large mesh gillnet fishery has compounded impacts. Further research indicates that “the relationship between mean fecundity and length differed among broad regions within the [Yukon River] drainage. ... In the middle and upper portions of the drainage, Chinook salmon tended to have fewer eggs and fecundity was more strongly dependent on fish length.”⁴ When making their decisions, managers need to consider that populations in the middle and upper portions of the drainage do not have the same reproductive potential as the fish in the lower river and “may be more dependent on the size of reproducing individuals.”⁵ The Council is very concerned that the returning fish are now of younger ages and smaller average sizes and that the number of older, larger, fecund females have decreased. The Council believes that because of the decline in age classes and fecundity, management needs to compensate by increasing escapement goals.

According to the 2001 Agreement, the Yukon River Panel “shall establish and modify as necessary interim escapement objectives of the rebuilding program” and “for any year when a strong run is anticipated, the Yukon River Panel may recommend a spawning escapement objective greater than the agreed level.” Moreover, the 2001 Agreement mandates that “in any year of a strong run, the United States agrees to consider increasing the border escapement to a level greater than agreed in order to allow a higher spawning escapement for that year.” The Council is concerned that IMEG had not been set at its optimum based on solid science, and that the decisions made had been influenced by politics. Additionally, the Council is concerned that the restoration of salmon stocks have been significantly affected by these decisions. The Council would like to request that the Board direct OSM to take a closer look at these matters and prepare a report for the Council that: 1) describes the transition of units of measure of salmon crossing the U.S./Canada Border from mark-recapture to sonar units; and 2) evaluates whether the current IMEG appropriately reflects the intent of the 2001 Agreement toward rebuilding the Canadian origin Chinook Salmon stocks, given that fewer eggs are being deposited in the gravel proportionally than at the time of the Agreement when Chinook were of larger size.

5. Advancing the hunter ethics education and outreach program

The Council is very encouraged by the progress made in the development of the hunter ethics education and outreach pilot program and expresses its continuing appreciation and support for it. The Council would like relay to the Board that its support has a meaningful effect on the

³ *Changes in Size and Age of Chinook Salmon *Oncorhynchus tshawytscha* Returning to Alaska* (Bert Lewis, W. Stewart Grant, Richard E. Brenner, and Toshihide Hamazaki; 2015, PLOS One). Also see *Demographic changes in Chinook salmon across the Northeast Pacific Ocean* (Jan Ohiberger, Eric J. Ward, Daniel E. Schindler, and Bert Lewis; 2018, Wiley Online Library (access provided by NOAA Library Network)).

⁴ *Effects of Marine Growth on Yukon River Chinook Salmon Fecundity* (Kathrine G. Howard and Jeffrey Bromaghin; Yukon River Salmon Research and Management Fund Report #21-10).

⁵ *Differential Fecundity among Yukon River Chinook Salmon Populations Revealed by a Generalized Genetic Mixture Model* (Jeffrey F. Bromaghin, Danielle F. Evenson, Thomas H. McLain, and Blair G. Flannery; Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim Sustainable Salmon Initiative).

Chairman Christianson

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progress of this project. It is evident by the participation and enthusiasm of the participants that this a timely and important effort.

It is the Council's understanding that forming partnerships is crucial at the current stage of the program's development. The Council also realizes that in order for a pilot project or projects to be successful they need to have funding sources.

Prior to seeking partners, the Council would like to have a clear understanding of the mechanisms of how this Council can form partnerships to advance a pilot project and if there are any government policies or limitations associated with entering partnerships and receiving funding. These partnerships can potentially include Federal and State agencies, tribal organizations, and private entities and businesses that can contribute resources through technical expertise, research, funding, knowledge, outreach and education, and staff time.

The Council formally requests that the Board direct OSM to prepare a written report on the various mechanisms available to this Council for forming partnerships and receiving funding. The Council also would like to enquire if the Federal agencies represented on the Board have any funding that can be directed towards implementing a pilot project (or projects).

The Eastern Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council appreciates the Board's attention to these matters and for the opportunity to assist the Federal Subsistence Management Program in meeting its charge of protecting subsistence resources and uses of these resources on Federal public lands and waters. We look forward to continuing discussions about the issues and concerns of subsistence users of the Eastern Interior Region. If you have questions about this correspondence, please contact me via Katerina Wessels, Subsistence Council Coordinator, with the Office of Subsistence Management at (907) 786-3885, or katerina_wessels@fws.gov.

Sincerely,

Susan Entsminger
Chair

Enclosure

Chairman Christianson

7

cc: Federal Subsistence Board

Thomas Doolittle, Acting Assistant Regional Director, Office of Subsistence Management

Jennifer Hardin, PhD, Subsistence Policy Coordinator, Office of Subsistence Management

Carl Johnson, Supervisory Program Analyst, Office of Subsistence Management

Chris McKee, Wildlife Division Supervisor, Office of Subsistence Management

Greg Risdahl, Fisheries Division Supervisor, Office of Subsistence Management

Pippa Kenner, Acting Anthropology Division Supervisor

Office of Subsistence Management

Katerina Wessels, Subsistence Council Coordinator, Office of Subsistence Management

Mark Burch, Special Projects Coordinator, Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Eastern Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

Interagency Staff Committee

Administrative Record

DRAFT

Another side of Meeting Canadian Border Escapement In 2018

US/Canada Border Escapement Cuts

Tanana/Rampart /Manley Advisory Council

Since 2010 we have had our present US/Canada treaty agreement to pass a basic minimum of king into Canada. That number is now determined by the Eagle Sonar project. Basic spawning minimum is 42,500 kings and with some fish for Canada the harvest minimum is 51,000. So the present range is from a basic spawning minimum of 42,500 to a harvest minimum for Canada of 51,000

Going back for some history

For 3 years the new Eagle sonar project ran at the same time as the older mark recapture project run by the Canadians. Originally prior to 2008 the mark recapture project determined the border escapement. The US Canada Spawning escapement goal was 33,000 to 43,000 kings and with some fish for Canada the harvest minimum was 45,700. So to compare with later years it's correct to say the range was from a basic spawning minimum of 33,000 to a harvest minimum for Canada of 45,700.

Now no two projects count the same and the mark recapture project was probably doing some undercounting, because when the more accurate Eagle sonar came on line and ran at the same time as the mark recapture one it counted higher.

Yearly Passage Estimates

	DFO	Eagle	% Higher at Eagle
Year	Tag/Recap	Sonar	
2005	45,000	81,529	1.81
2006	47,965	73,691	1.54
2007	22,958	41,697	1.82

Eagle Sonar for those 3 years counted an average of 1.72% more king salmon. Now when the time came after these three year to transition over to making Eagle Sonar the official escapement counting project it would seem natural and

fair and scientific to increase all the US/Canada agreement numbers by 1.72% but that was not done. And it was not expected for years that it would be done that way. As a matter of fact since the first time the idea of Eagle Sonar project came about many agency people and fishermen feared that while the project would probably be more accurate, that the State would just use the moment to slip in a lower escapement. And so the state did. Instead of using their best science at the time to arrive at a range 1.72 times greater, or 56,760 to 78,604, the US portion of the Yukon River Panel (ADF&G controlled) forced Canada to accept a minimum goal of 45,000 kings. In 2010 that was reduced further to 42,500. ADF&G currently wants to further reduce this as far as 30,000.

Now for some perspective:

In 2014 official escapement was 64,500 kings (84,000 in 2015). This was 22,000 (41,500 in 2015) over the lower end of the goal. If one considers the reduced spawning capabilities of the two run years due to genetic loss of the older age classes of king (which many experts say could be 50% of eggs in the gravel as historically) we could have only put the equivalent of 32,250 kings across the border in 2014 and 42,000 in 2015. That is 24,510 less kings in 2014 (14,760 in 2015) than the lower end of the escapement would be if ADF&G had not succeeded in lowering it in 2008 and 2010. Amazing how lead can be turned into gold.

One of managements pet reasons for lower escapements, voiced many times publically by the last Regional Director of AYK Commercial Fisheries Div., was we were putting too many eggs on the spawning grounds and it was causing over escapement and poor survival. This sentiment was also given as a possible reason for the declining King runs and voiced publically by the present AYK Regional Director in 2009 at a meeting in front of many people at the Rampart Rapids. This is the mindset within some of upper management as it concerns king salmon.

Without considering the smaller king (fewer eggs) going to the spawning grounds today and where our escapement goals used to be in the past our management of king salmon today is based on politics and a whim, instead of science.

(10/11/2018) TRM approved)

CALL FOR PROPOSALS
Alaska Board of Game
Arctic, Western, and the Interior Regions
2019/2020 Meeting Cycle

The Alaska Board of Game calls for proposed changes in the regulations pertaining to hunting, trapping, and the use of game for the following regions:

- 1) Arctic and Western Region (GMUs 18, 22, 23, AND 26A);
- 2) Interior and Northeast Arctic Region (GMUs 12, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26B, AND 26C)

PROPOSAL DEADLINE: WEDNESDAY, May 1, 2019

The Alaska Board of Game is accepting proposed changes to hunting and trapping regulations for the Interior, Arctic, & Western Regions (Game Management Units 12, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, and 26) including the following topics:

Hunting seasons and bag limits, including subsistence and general hunts for all species; trapping seasons and bag limits; big game prey populations and objectives for intensive management; predation control areas implementation plans; restricted areas including controlled use areas, management areas, closed areas, and closures in state game refuges.

Proposed changes to 5 AAC Chapter 92, Statewide Provisions specific to the GMUs in these regions will be accepted. This includes regulations under the categories of: general provisions, permits, permit conditions and provisions, methods and means, possession and transportation, and the use of game.

The following topics will be considered for all Game Management Units:

Brown Bear Tag Fee Exemptions

Reauthorization of Antlerless Moose Hunts *(State statute requires all antlerless moose hunts be reauthorized annually.)*

Proposals may be submitted by mail, fax, or online:

Online: www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=gameboard.proposal

Email: dfg.bog.comments@alaska.gov (attachments only)

Mail: ADF&G, Boards Support Section

P.O. Box 115526

Juneau, AK 99811-5526

Fax: (907) 465-6094

Proposals must be received by Wednesday, May 1, 2019 at the Boards Support Section office in Juneau. (A postmark is NOT sufficient for timely receipt).

You are encouraged to submit proposals at the earliest possible date on Board of Game proposal forms available from the Boards Support Section regional offices and on the website at: www.boardofgame.adfg.alaska.gov. All proposals must contain an individual's name and an organizational name if appropriate, contact telephone number, and address. Regional proposals must specify the applicable region or game management unit.

Providing clarity on the proposal form helps the board, advisory committees, and the public more fully understand the proposed regulatory changes. Proposals that are incomplete or unclear may be omitted from the proposal book. You are encouraged to contact the Boards Support Section staff if you have questions or need assistance with completing the proposal form. All proposals are reviewed and formatted prior to publication. Proposals published in the proposal book will be referenced with the appropriate Alaska Administrative Code citation and include a brief description of the action requested. Proposals with emotionally charged language will be rejected or redacted as they detract from the substance of the proposals, may draw opposition not germane to the element(s) of the proposal, and may elicit nonresponsive charges from the public/board members. Proposals not meeting this call or submitted late will not be published.

Following publication, proposal books will be available to the advisory committees, agencies, and the public for review and comment. Proposals will be available online at www.boardofgame.adfg.alaska.gov.

Proposals received per the above "Call for Proposals" deadline will be considered by the Board of Game at the Arctic and Western Region Meeting scheduled for January 2020, and the Interior and Northeast Region Meeting for March 2020. For more information, please contact the ADF&G Boards Support Section at (907) 465-4110 or email kristy.tibbles@alaska.gov.

Fall 2019 Regional Advisory Council Meeting Calendar

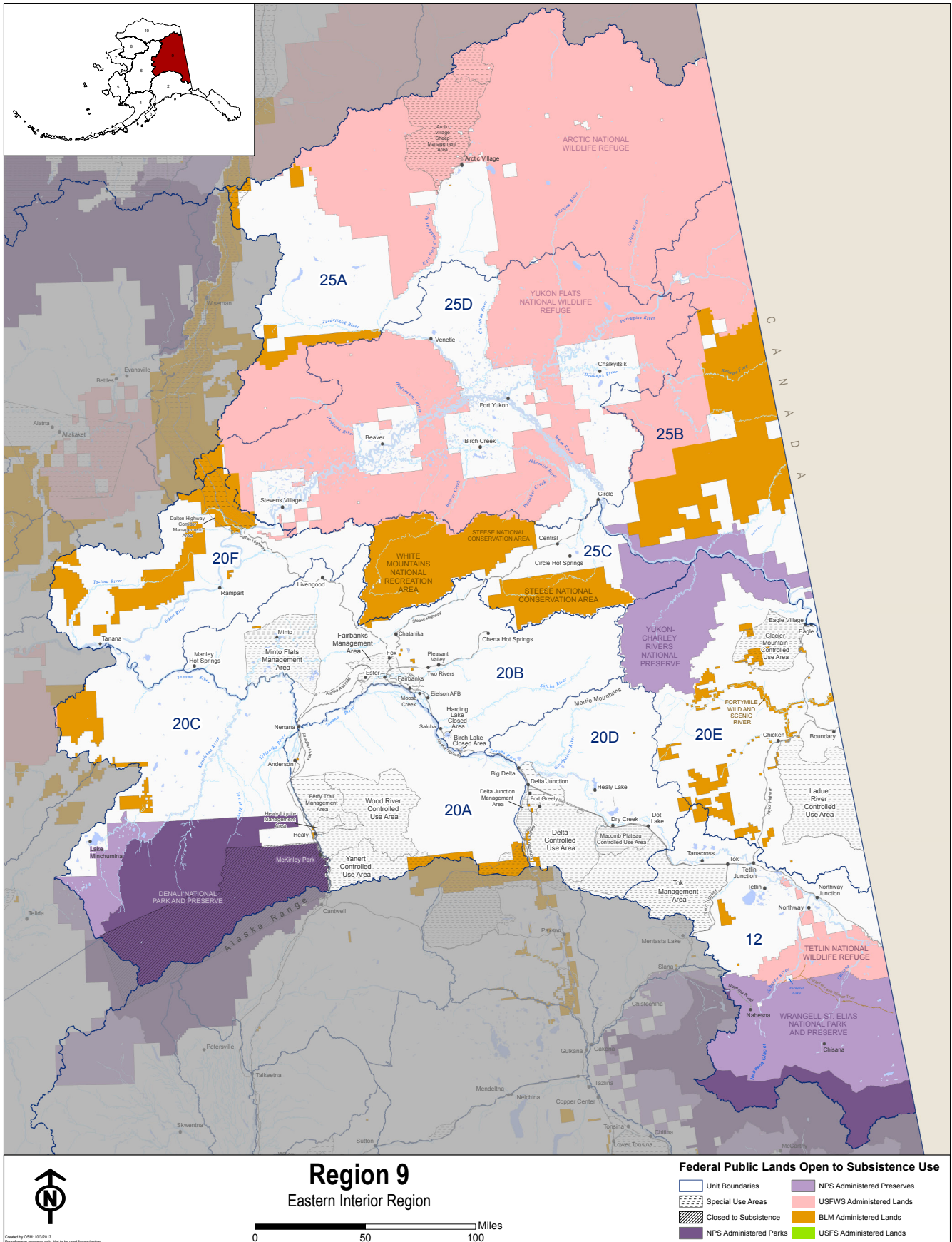
Due to travel budget limitations placed by Department of the Interior on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Office of Subsistence Management, the dates and locations of these meetings will be subject to change.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Aug. 18	Aug. 19	Aug. 20	Aug. 21	Aug. 22	Aug. 23	Aug. 24
Aug. 25	Aug. 26	Aug. 27	Aug. 28	Aug. 29	Aug. 30	Aug. 31
Sept. 1	Sept. 2 LABOR DAY HOLIDAY	Sept. 3	Sept. 4	Sept. 5	Sept. 6	Sept. 7
Sept. 8	Sept. 9	Sept. 10	Sept. 11	Sept. 12	Sept. 13	Sept. 14
Sept. 15	Sept. 16	Sept. 17	Sept. 18	Sept. 19 K/A — Cold Bay	Sept. 20	Sept. 21
Sept. 22	Sept. 23	Sept. 24	Sept. 25	Sept. 26	Sept. 27	Sept. 28
Sept. 29	Sept. 30	Oct. 1	Oct. 2 SC — Seward	Oct. 3	Oct. 4	Oct. 5
Oct. 6	Oct. 7	Oct. 8 WI — Aniak	Oct. 9 SE — Petersburg	Oct. 10	Oct. 11	Oct. 12
Oct. 13	Oct. 14 COLUMBUS DAY HOLIDAY	Oct. 15 EI — Fairbanks	Oct. 16	Oct. 17 AFN — Fairbanks	Oct. 18	Oct. 19
Oct. 20	Oct. 21	Oct. 22 NS — Utqiagvik	Oct. 23 SP — Nome	Oct. 24	Oct. 25	Oct. 26
Oct. 27	Oct. 28 NW — Noatak	Oct. 29	Oct. 30	Oct. 31	Nov. 1	Nov. 2
Nov. 3	Nov. 4	Nov. 5 YKD — Bethel	Nov. 6 BB — Dillingham	Nov. 7	Nov. 8	Nov. 9

Winter 2020 Regional Advisory Council Meeting Calendar

Due to travel budget limitations placed by Department of the Interior on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Office of Subsistence Management, the dates and locations of these meetings will be subject to change.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<i>Feb. 2</i>	<i>Feb. 3</i> <i>Window Opens</i>	<i>Feb. 4</i>	<i>Feb. 5</i>	<i>Feb. 6</i>	<i>Feb. 7</i>	<i>Feb. 8</i>
<i>Feb. 9</i>	<i>Feb. 10</i>	<i>Feb. 11</i>	<i>Feb. 12</i>	<i>Feb. 13</i>	<i>Feb. 14</i>	<i>Feb. 15</i>
<i>Feb. 16</i>	<i>Feb. 17</i> PRESIDENT'S DAY HOLIDAY	<i>Feb. 18</i>	<i>Feb. 19</i>	<i>Feb. 20</i>	<i>Feb. 21</i>	<i>Feb. 22</i>
<i>Feb. 23</i>	<i>Feb. 24</i>	<i>Feb. 25</i>	<i>Feb. 26</i>	<i>Feb. 27</i>	<i>Feb. 28</i>	<i>Feb. 29</i>
<i>Mar. 1</i>	<i>Mar. 2</i>	<i>Mar. 3</i>	<i>Mar. 4</i>	<i>Mar. 5</i>	<i>Mar. 6</i>	<i>Mar. 7</i>
<i>Mar. 8</i>	<i>Mar. 9</i>	<i>Mar. 10</i>	<i>Mar. 11</i>	<i>Mar. 12</i>	<i>Mar. 13</i> <i>Window Closes</i>	<i>Mar. 14</i>



**Department of the Interior
U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

Eastern Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

Charter

1. **Committee's Official Designation.** The Council's official designation is the Eastern Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council).
2. **Authority.** The Council is renewed by virtue of the authority set out in the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) (16 U.S.C. 3115 (1988)), and under the authority of the Secretary of the Interior, in furtherance of 16 U.S.C. 410hh-2. The Council is regulated by the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), as amended, 5 U.S.C. Appendix 2.
3. **Objectives and Scope of Activities.** The objective of the Council is to provide a forum for the residents of the Region with personal knowledge of local conditions and resource requirements to have a meaningful role in the subsistence management of fish and wildlife on Federal lands and waters in the Region.
4. **Description of Duties.** Council duties and responsibilities, where applicable, are as follows:
 - a. Recommend the initiation of, review, and evaluate proposals for regulations, policies, management plans, and other matters relating to subsistence uses of fish and wildlife on public lands within the Region.
 - b. Provide a forum for the expression of opinions and recommendations by persons interested in any matter related to the subsistence uses of fish and wildlife on public lands within the Region.
 - c. Encourage local and regional participation in the decision-making process affecting the taking of fish and wildlife on the public lands within the Region for subsistence uses.
 - d. Prepare an annual report to the Secretary containing the following:
 - (1) An identification of current and anticipated subsistence uses of fish and wildlife populations within the Region.
 - (2) An evaluation of current and anticipated subsistence needs for fish and wildlife populations within the Region.

- (3) A recommended strategy for the management of fish and wildlife populations within the Region to accommodate such subsistence uses and needs.
- (4) Recommendations concerning policies, standards, guidelines, and regulations to implement the strategy.
- e. Appoint one member to the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park Subsistence Resource Commission and one member to the Denali National Park Subsistence Resource Commission in accordance with Section 808 of the ANILCA.
- f. Make recommendations on determinations of customary and traditional use of subsistence resources.
- g. Make recommendations on determinations of rural status.
- h. Provide recommendations on the establishment and membership of Federal local advisory committees.
- i. Provide recommendations for implementation of Secretary's Order 3347: Conservation Stewardship and Outdoor Recreation, and Secretary's Order 3356: Hunting, Fishing, Recreational Shooting, and Wildlife Conservation Opportunities and Coordination with States, Tribes, and Territories. Recommendations shall include, but are not limited to:
 - (1) Assessing and quantifying implementation of the Secretary's Orders, and recommendations to enhance and expand their implementation as identified;
 - (2) Policies and programs that:
 - (a) increase outdoor recreation opportunities for all Americans, with a focus on engaging youth, veterans, minorities, and other communities that traditionally have low participation in outdoor recreation;
 - (b) expand access for hunting and fishing on Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and National Park Service lands in a manner that respects the rights and privacy of the owners of non-public lands;
 - (c) increase energy, transmission, infrastructure, or other relevant projects while avoiding or minimizing potential negative impacts on wildlife; and
 - (d) create greater collaboration with states, tribes, and/or territories.

- j. Provide recommendations for implementation of the regulatory reform initiatives and policies specified in section 2 of Executive Order 13777: Reducing Regulation and Controlling Regulatory Costs; Executive Order 12866: Regulatory Planning and Review, as amended; and section 6 of Executive Order 13563: Improving Regulation and Regulatory Review. Recommendations shall include, but are not limited to:

Identifying regulations for repeal, replacement, or modification considering, at a minimum, those regulations that:

- (1) eliminate jobs, or inhibit job creation;
- (2) are outdated, unnecessary, or ineffective;
- (3) impose costs that exceed benefits;
- (4) create a serious inconsistency or otherwise interfere with regulatory reform initiative and policies;
- (5) rely, in part or in whole, on data or methods that are not publicly available or insufficiently transparent to meet the standard for reproducibility; or
- (6) derive from or implement Executive Orders or other Presidential and Secretarial directives that have been subsequently rescinded or substantially modified.

At the conclusion of each meeting or shortly thereafter, provide a detailed recommendation meeting report, including meeting minutes, to the Designated Federal Officer (DFO).

5. **Agency or Official to Whom the Council Reports.** The Council reports to the Federal Subsistence Board Chair, who is appointed by the Secretary of the Interior with the concurrence of the Secretary of Agriculture.
6. **Support.** The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will provide administrative support for the activities of the Council through the Office of Subsistence Management.
7. **Estimated Annual Operating Costs and Staff Years.** The annual operating costs associated with supporting the Council's functions are estimated to be \$175,000, including all direct and indirect expenses and 1.15 staff years.
8. **Designated Federal Officer.** The DFO is the Subsistence Council Coordinator for the Region or such other Federal employee as may be designated by the Assistant Regional Director – Subsistence, Region 7, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The DFO is a full-time Federal employee appointed in accordance with Agency procedures. The DFO will:

- (a) Approve or call all of the advisory committee's and subcommittees' meetings;
 - (b) Prepare and approve all meeting agendas;
 - (c) Attend all committee and subcommittee meetings;
 - (d) Adjourn any meeting when the DFO determines adjournment to be in the public interest; and
 - (e) Chair meetings when directed to do so by the official to whom the advisory committee reports.
9. **Estimated Number and Frequency of Meetings.** The Council will meet 1-2 times per year, and at such times as designated by the Federal Subsistence Board Chair or the DFO.
10. **Duration.** Continuing.
11. **Termination.** The Council will be inactive 2 years from the date the Charter is filed, unless, prior to that date, it is renewed in accordance with the provisions of section 14 of the FACA. The Council will not meet or take any action without a valid current charter.
12. **Membership and Designation.** The Council's membership is composed of representative members as follows:

Ten members who are knowledgeable and experienced in matters relating to subsistence uses of fish and wildlife and who are residents of the Region represented by the Council.

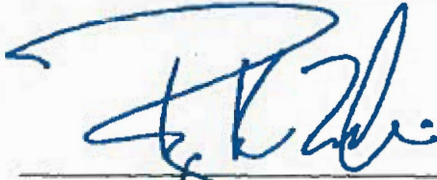
To ensure that each Council represents a diversity of interests, the Federal Subsistence Board in their nomination recommendations to the Secretary will strive to ensure that seven of the members (70 percent) represent subsistence interests within the Region and three of the members (30 percent) represent commercial and sport interests within the Region. The portion of membership representing commercial and sport interests must include, where possible, at least one representative from the sport community and one representative from the commercial community.

The Secretary of the Interior will appoint members based on the recommendations from the Federal Subsistence Board and with the concurrence of the Secretary of Agriculture.

Members will be appointed for 3-year terms. A vacancy on the Council will be filled in the same manner in which the original appointment was made. Members serve at the discretion of the Secretary.

Council members will elect a Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary for a 1-year term. Members of the Council will serve without compensation. However, while away from their homes or regular places of business, Council and subcommittee members engaged in Council, or subcommittee business, approved by the DFO, may be allowed travel expenses, including per diem in lieu of subsistence, in the same manner as persons employed intermittently in Government service under section 5703 of title 5 of the United States Code.

13. **Ethics Responsibilities of Members.** No Council or subcommittee member will participate in any Council or subcommittee deliberations or votes relating to a specific party matter before the Department or its bureaus and offices including a lease, license, permit, contract, grant, claim, agreement, or litigation in which the member or the entity the member represents has a direct financial interest.
14. **Subcommittees.** Subject to the DFOs approval, subcommittees may be formed for the purpose of compiling information and conducting research. However, such subcommittees must act only under the direction of the DFO and must report their recommendations to the full Council for consideration. Subcommittees must not provide advice or work products directly to the Agency. Subcommittees will meet as necessary to accomplish their assignments, subject to the approval of the DFO and the availability of resources.
15. **Recordkeeping.** Records of the Council, and formally and informally established subcommittees or other subgroups of the Council, shall be handled in accordance with General Records Schedule 6.2, and other approved Agency records disposition schedule. These records shall be available for public inspection and copying, subject to the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. 552.



Secretary of the Interior

DEC 01 2017

Date Signed

DEC 04 2017

Date Filed

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www.facebook.com/subsistencealaska

