



YUKON-KUSKOKWIM DELTA  
SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL  
ADVISORY COUNCIL  
Meeting Materials

*March 12-13, 2019  
Bethel*





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## *On the cover...*

Caribou in Kilbuck Mountains on Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge



USFWS photo by Kristine Sow

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**YUKON-KUSKOKWIM DELTA SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL**

Yupiit Piciryarait Cultural Center  
Bethel

March 12 – 13, 2019  
convening at 9:00 am daily

**TELECONFERENCE:** call the toll free number: 1-866-864-5314, then when prompted enter the passcode: 3091862.

**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 Member Reports
  - Chair’s Report
- 9. Public and Tribal Comment on Non-Agenda Items** (available each morning)

**10. Old Business (Chair)**

**11. New Business (Chair)**

a. Wildlife Closure Reviews\*

WCR18-38 (Unit 18 moose – Kuskokwim) .....22  
WCR18-40 (Unit 18 moose – South of the Kanektok River) .....31  
WCR18-39 (Eastern portion of Unit 19A moose) .....37  
WCR18-43 (Unit 19A remainder moose) .....46

b. Call for Federal Wildlife Proposals\* .....58

*Joint wildlife report/discussion with Federal and State biologists and managers prior to development of proposals*

c. Council Charter Review\* .....77

d. Approve FY2018 Annual Report\* .....67

e. Yukon River Pre-season Outlook (*Joint report by Federal and State Yukon River Fisheries Management staff*)

f. Kuskokwim River Pre-season Outlook (*Joint report by Federal and State Kuskokwim River Fisheries Management Staff*)

g. Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program (FRMP) and Partners Program Updates (*OSM staff*)

h. Call for Alaska Board of Game Arctic, Western, and Interior Regions .....72

**12. Agency Reports**

(Time limit of 15 minutes unless approved in advance)

Tribal Governments

- a. Orutsararmiut Native Council
- b. Native Village of Napaimute

Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program (ANSEP) Student reports

Native Organizations

- a. Association of Village Council Presidents
- b. Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fisheries Commission
- c. Yukon River Inter-Tribal Fisheries Commission

Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association

Special Actions (if any)

USFWS

- a. Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge

b. Togiak National Wildlife Refuge

Alaska Department of Fish and Game

a. Division of Subsistence FRMP project reports

North Pacific Fisheries Management Council

Bureau of Land Management - Bering Sea-Western Interior Resource Management Plan and Red Devil Mine remediation updates

Donlin Mine update

Office of Subsistence Management

**13. Future Meeting Dates\***

Confirm Fall 2019 meeting date and location.....74

Select Winter 2020 meeting date and location.....75

**14. Closing Comments**

**15. Adjourn (Chair)**

**To teleconference** into the meeting, call the toll free number: 1-866-864-5314, then when prompted enter the passcode: 3091862.

*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 Eva Patton, 907-786-3358, [eva\\_patton@fws.gov](mailto:eva_patton@fws.gov), or 800-877-8339 (TTY), by close of business on March 4, 2019.

**REGION 5**  
**Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Subsistence Regional Advisory Council**

<b>Seat</b>	<b>Year Appointed <i>Term Expires</i></b>	<b>Member Name and Community</b>
1	2004 <b>2019</b>	<b>William F. Brown</b> Eek
2	1997 <b>2019</b>	<b>James A. Charles</b> Tuntutuliak <span style="float: right;"><b>Vice-Chair</b></span>
3	2006 <b>2019</b>	<b>John W. Andrew</b> Kwethluk
4	<b>2019</b>	<b>VACANT</b>
5	<b>2020</b>	<b>VACANT</b>
6	<b>2020</b>	<b>VACANT</b>
7	2017 <b>2020</b>	<b>Alissa N. Rogers</b> Bethel <span style="float: right;"><b>Chair</b></span>
8	<b>2020</b>	<b>VACANT</b>
9	<b>2020</b>	<b>VACANT</b>
10	<b>2018</b>	<b>VACANT</b>
11	<b>2018</b>	<b>VACANT</b>
12	<b>2018</b>	<b>VACANT</b>
13	<b>2018</b>	<b>VACANT</b>



**YUKON-KUSKOKWIM DELTA SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL**

AVCP Housing Authority Meeting Room  
September 26, 2018

Yupiit Piciryarait Cultural Center  
September 27-28, 2018  
Bethel, Alaska

**MEETING MINUTES**

**Call to Order**

The chair called the meeting to order at 1:36 p.m. on September 26.

**Invocation**

At the request of the chair, James Charles provided the invocation.

**Roll call**

The Council secretary, Raymond Oney, conducted a roll call of the Council. James Charles, John Andrew, Robert Aloysius, David Bill, Sr., Michael Peters, Alissa Rogers, Raymond Oney. William (Charlie) Brown, was excused absent for medical reasons. A quorum was established with seven Council members present. Recent Secretarial appointments left four seats vacant on the Council including the Chair and one Council member that moved out of the region which brings the current Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Regional Advisory Council membership to only eight of 13 seats filled.

**Welcome and Introductions**

The chair invited the meeting participants to identify themselves for the record. The following individuals participated in person or via teleconference:

*Tribal and Alaska Native Organizations:*

Jennifer Hooper, Natural Resources Director, Association of Village Council Presidents  
Sarah Mutter, Natural Resources, Association of Village Council Presidents  
John Orr, Natural Resources, Association of Village Council Presidents  
Mary Peltola, Executive Director, Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission  
Johnathan Samuelson, Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission  
Mary Mathias, Natural Resources Director, Orutsararmiut Native Council  
Robert Lekander, Orutsararmiut Native Council  
Jenessa Esquible, Partners Program Biologist, Orutsararmiut Native Council  
Elijah Lindley, Student Intern, Orutsararmiut Native Council  
Janelle Carl, Student Intern, Orutsararmiut Native Council  
Cynthia Allen, Orutsararmiut Native Council  
Martin Andrew, Organized Village of Kwethluk  
Nick J. Ayapan, Kwethluk Incorporated  
Martin Nicholai, Kwethluk Incorporated  
Philip K. Peter, Sr. Akiachak Native Community, Akiachak  
Marvin Parent, Marshall Traditional Council, Marshall  
Representative Bethel Native Corporation, Bethel

Leone Gaett (spelling?) Bethel

*Public and Local organizations:*

Danielle Stickman, Outreach Coordinator, Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association  
Sarah Inman, PhD Student, University of Washington, Seattle  
Mary Nanuwak, Bethel  
Ron Rimelman, NOVAGOLD

*Agency staff:*

Eva Patton, Council Coordinator, Office of Subsistence Management  
Pippa Kenner, Anthropologist, Office of Subsistence Management  
Orville Lind, Native Liaison, Office of Subsistence Management  
Greg Risdahl, Fisheries Division Leader, Office of Subsistence Management  
Susanna Henry, Refuge Manager, Togiak National Wildlife Refuge  
Ken Stahlnecker, Refuge Manager, Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge  
Ray Born, Deputy Refuge Manager, Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge  
Lew Coggins, Fisheries, Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge  
Spencer Rearden, USFWS Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge  
Aaron Webber, Fisheries Biologist, USFWS Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge, Bethel  
Aaron Moses, Fisheries Biologist, Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge, Bethel  
Christopher Tulik, RIT, USFWS Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge, Bethel  
Gerald Maschmann, USFWS Yukon Subsistence Fisheries, Fairbanks  
Lisa Olsen, Deputy Director, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Subsistence  
Holly Carroll, Yukon River Inseason Management Biologist, Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
Jeff Estensen, Yukon River Fall Season Management Biologist, Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
Aaron Tiernan, Kuskokwim River, Area Management Biologist, Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
Patrick Jones, Wildlife Biologist, Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
Jen Peeks, Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group In-season Coordinator & Western Region Board Support Coordinator ADF&G, Bethel  
Pat Petrivelli, Interagency Staff Committee, Bureau of Indian Affairs  
Tom Whitford, Interagency Staff Committee, USDA Forest Service

*Via teleconference:*

Gary Decossas, Fisheries Statistician, Office of Subsistence Management  
Wayne Jenkins, Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association  
Catherine Moncrieff, Anthropologist, Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association  
Suzanne Worker, Wildlife Biologist, Office of Subsistence Management  
Clarence Summers, Interagency Staff Committee, National Park Service  
David Runfola, Subsistence Research Specialist, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Subsistence  
Mark Burch, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Wildlife Conservation, Palmer  
John Chythlook, Sport Fish Biologist, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Fairbanks  
Colton Lipka, Kuskokwim Assistant Area Management Biologist, Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
Bill Alstrom, St. Mary's, Yukon Subsistence  
John Lamont, Yukon Subsistence and commercial fisher, St. Mary's  
Lisa Fierheisen, Kuskokwim Salmon Management Working Group representative  
Dan Graham, Donlin Gold  
Jamie Hyslop, Army Corps of Engineers  
Bonnie Million, Bureau of Land Management

Yup'ik translation services were provided by Patrick Samson and Sophie Evan with Tia Lupie and Zach Brink assisting for the extra half day meeting.

### **Adoption of agenda**

The Council reviewed and approved the agenda with flexibility to combine all Yukon and Kuskokwim fisheries reports prior to review and recommendation on the Federal subsistence fisheries regulatory proposals. Additional ANSEP student presentations were added to the agenda. Also added Recognition of Service Award to long time Chair Lester Wilde Sr. who served over 21 years on the Council.

### **Review and Approve Previous Meeting Minutes**

The Council reviewed the March 14-15 and May 3, 2018 meeting minutes. Corrections were made to one name misspelling for Kwik'Pak Fisheries and "their"/"there" replacement and page 10 first sentence replace pikes are "blooming" with "booming" in the March 14-15 minutes. Minutes approved with those corrections by unanimous consent.

### **Council member reports**

The following is a summary of what Council members reported.

#### *David Bill – Toksook Bay*

The increasing occurrence of sick and injured seals is still an ongoing issue of great concern for the coastal communities. Prior to all the big commercial fishing ships that have been working the Kuskokwim Delta and around Nelson Island they used to have healthy bearded seals and now they are starting to see dead salmon washing ashore. There are grave concerns about the Bering Sea trawl fisheries destroying not only the salmon but also the habitat and feeding grounds of all the marine animals that they rely on for subsistence. If something is not done to protect this critical marine habitat from the destructive commercial trawl fisheries, it would devastate the animals and their habitat and lead to a famine for people in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta and up into Norton Sound. Something must be done now so that the younger generation will have a future. It is paramount to work together and really engage each other to ensure the health of subsistence foods that we provide for our children. We need the support of the Federal agencies to help address the impacts to marine resources to ensure subsistence foods are protected.

#### *James Charles – Tuntutuliak*

He attended many meetings over the summer for the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission and the Kuskokwim Salmon Management Working Group. He thanked the Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of Fish and Game, and the Inter-Tribal Fish Commission for all the work together with the Working Group in managing the fisheries. People in his community of Tuntutuliak are concerned about having fresh fish in the spring when subsistence foods run low at the end of the winter and fishing restrictions are in place to protect Chinook Salmon. So he worked with several others in his village to draft proposals requesting to keep fishing opportunity open 100 yards up the tributary rivers that do not have salmon spawning grounds and submitted these to both the Federal and State regulatory process. James thanked the Federal and State staff that assisted him with submitting the proposals. He also thanked the staff that replaced the regulatory markers on the Tuntutuliak River so that the 100 yard boundary is nice and clear where people can fish. These measures have helped the community get some food they need in the springtime and have caught Whitefish, Burbot, Pike, and even a few little Kings. People are very happy to be able to get a few fish early in the springtime.

*Bob Aloysius – Kalskag*

He had health issues that had prevented him from engaging in subsistence activities this spring and summer so he did not have much to report at this time. He is very concerned about the Donlin Mine and cautioned great care with the land and waters that they depend on for subsistence. It is not a subsistence way of life but a “subsistence way of living” and that nature provides everything that all the many subsistence communities in the region need to live. Nature provides for the people in a way that nothing else can, it cannot be replaced and the powers that be need to recognize that.

*Michael Peters – Marshall*

The salmon run in the Y2 area of the Yukon River was slow to start at the beginning of the season. His community has been very conservative with fishing to help the Chinook Salmon conservation but they appreciated even the brief opportunities for subsistence fishing this year. The communications from fisheries management were very helpful in updating the sonar salmon passage and opening fishing opportunity when there was a brief window to harvest without jeopardizing the Chinook conservation efforts. Communities, and elders especially, need to have an opportunity to comment on the fisheries regulatory proposals and have a voice in the management process. Managers should consider the changing weather conditions, as rainy weather hampers fish preservation and warmer rainy weather in the fall hampered many people from Marshall being able to get a moose before the hunt season closed.

*John Andrew – Kwethluk*

The summer salmon season was a bit hard on people in Kwethluk due to the subsistence fishing restrictions. There were only four brief fishing opportunities during the main part of the summer salmon run. When restrictions were lifted later in July, the weather was very rainy and windy and the water levels were too high and full of debris to be able to fish. The weather also made it very challenging to preserve fish in the traditional way. They usually take two or three weeks at a time once they start smoking and intermittent fishing makes it difficult to put up fish in this way. Some of the younger generation may use a fast smoke in one day in one of those little smokers, but the traditional ways are being lost and the taste is very different than what people are used to. Some people reported brown bears raiding their fish camp this summer, but there were very few black bears.

When people had the opportunity to fish during the subsistence openings, the catches were pretty good. The first opener was a little slow, but they were happy to get at least some first taste of fish and share with others in the village and at fish camps. The run picked up and by the third opening at the end of June the catch rates were good. One morning he caught 60 chums and reds combined and he gave them away to his neighbors in the village and family fish camps. He then went out again in the afternoon and caught another 40 chums and reds and gave those away too. There are many families that need the fish more than he does, so he shares much of what he harvests. During the last fishing opportunity in July, he harvested 30 salmon and kept most of those for his family. He still shares with those who are in need. The Whitefish harvest was good this year and people spent a lot of time fishing up in the lakes for whitefish, even catching a few lost salmon that got pushed into the lakes by high water levels. They caught a lot of big Broad Whitefish that they had not seen in a while. John thought perhaps the high water flooded the beaver dams and the Broad Whitefish got out over the top and migrated out the Kwethluk River to the Kuskokwim.

Berry pickers were very happy this summer, noting that practically everything was growing everywhere on the tundra this year. In the fall some people in Kwethluk did get out duck hunting and brought back a few geese to share with the elders in the community. Moose hunting was slow around Kwethluk because the moose were staying way back in the hills and off the river. When the migratory birds start moving then the moose will start moving down into the rivers.

*Raymond Oney – Alakanuk*

They had a late start fishing on the Lower Yukon River this year. The salmon came in late after the breakup and it was not until the second or third week of June that they started picking up fish. Overall it was a pretty good year for both subsistence and commercial fish harvests on the Yukon even though the King salmon came in late. This year they were able to keep the subsistence caught King Salmon for the first time in many years and people all along the Yukon River are very grateful for that. For so many years, communities all along the Yukon River have made so much effort and sacrifice for Chinook Salmon conservation efforts. Now it seems to be finally paying off as the Chinook Salmon begin to return in abundance.

Many people are out at this time picking berries, hunting moose, and preparing for winter as the birds are flying south.

*Alissa Nadine Rogers – Bethel*

Bird hunting lasted a little longer this year – approximately one week – and the Lush fish (Burbot) were bigger this spring. They missed catching Blackfish this spring and the fall Blackfish they caught were really small. The subsistence greens they usually pick bloomed quickly and they had to rush to pick them before it was too late. The summer was very moist and it was hard to dry salmon even with a tarp and heaters or even trying to dry fish in the garage. The berries were really good this year – big and plump – and perhaps the humidity this summer was good for the blackberries, cranberries, and blueberries. While out fall bird hunting they saw a lot of geese and cranes but hardly any swans. The area they hunt in is usually abundant with swans, but this year they only saw one flock of 12 swans.

On the first opportunity to fish for salmon on the Kuskokwim this year, her family felt they were catching too many Chinook Salmon (Kings) and quit after the first drift for conservation to allow the Kings to make it to the spawning ground. They gave the Kings they did catch to those who needed it – her elders and her mom. Her family caught a bunch of big Broad Whitefish when they were fishing in the first subsistence opener, which is also unusual because the Broad Whitefish typically don't show up in drift nets until after the Chinook Salmon run. However, they hardly caught any Humpback Whitefish this year.

Chum Salmon matured fast this year, coming into spawning condition earlier and she wonders what that means. Conversely, they caught a bunch of rotten Chums later in the season when they were fishing for Coho Salmon, which is very unusual. She is very concerned about the low Coho Salmon returns this year. Her family only caught a few even with long drifts and repeated attempts over several weeks. It makes her wonder if perhaps the Coho population took a hit with the shift increasing fall Coho fishing in efforts to conserve Chinook.

**Report from the Federal Subsistence Board action on wildlife proposals**

The Council received a copy of the ANILCA 805(c) report from the Federal Subsistence Board detailing the Board's action on the Councils recommendations for 2019 wildlife regulatory proposals. Council Coordinator Eva Patton walked through the letter with the Council reporting on which proposals were adopted by the Board and the justification for the Board's action. Publication of the new wildlife regulatory proposals adopted by the Federal Subsistence Board have been delayed in the Federal Register, but are expected to go into effect later this fall.

**Recognition of Service Award for past Chair Lester Wilde, Sr.**

The Council presented Lester Wilde, Sr. (participating from Hooper Bay by teleconference) with a framed certificate of appreciation signed by each of the Council members. The Council spoke of their gratitude for Lester Wilde Sr. for his 21 years of service to the Council and lifetime of dedication to subsistence in the Yukon-Kuskowkim Delta Region.

### **Public and Tribal Comment on non-agenda items**

Marvin Parent, Tribal Administrator for the Marshall Traditional Council, attended the meeting in person to share the community's subsistence issues and concerns with the Council and to seek support from the Council on Yukon River subsistence fisheries proposals. Marvin also requested the Council's consideration of Alaska Board of Fisheries Proposal 97, which deals with Yukon River commercial fisheries in District 2 and affects the community of Marshall. The Marshall Traditional Council is completely opposed to this proposal and requests the Council's support on its position on the proposal. The Council discussed the concerns relayed by the Marshall Traditional Council, but opted not to make any recommendations on the proposal since it was regarding commercial fisheries allocations and outside of the Councils mandate specifically addressing subsistence issues. The Council expressed great appreciation for the engagement with the Marshall Traditional Council and support for Marvin to attend this meeting in person. The Council thanked Marvin for his participation and highlighted the importance of public participation in Regional Advisory Council meetings.

### **Old Business**

#### *Donlin Mine Final EIS update*

The Council received a joint update and discussion on the Donlin Mine final EIS with Dan Graham of Donlin Gold, Jamie Hyslop, Army Corps of Engineers and Bonnie Million, Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The Council was provided with the latest Donlin Mine newsletter outlining the timeline of events, public meetings and final EIS for the Donlin Mine. At the Council's request, copies of the ANILCA Section 810 Analysis of the EIS, which details potential impacts to subsistence, was also provided to the Council.

Jamie Hyslop, Acting Chief, Regulatory Branch U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), provided the Council with an overview of the six-year-long EIS study under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for the Donlin Gold project. The USACE is the lead Federal agency involved, and started the NEPA process in 2012. The USACE issued the draft EIS in 2015, and then published the final EIS on April 27, 2018. The USACE published the Record Of Decision (ROD) on August 13, and issued a permit authorizing the discharge of dredged and fill material into waters of the United States, namely the Kuskokwim River. Jamie reported that there are a lot of permits that will be issued for the Donlin Mine project and he is just presenting those permits that the USACE is authorized to issue. These include permits issued for Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, which is for the discharge of dredged and fill material into waters of the US that includes streams and wetlands. USACE also issues a permit under Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act that is specifically for navigable waters. Jamie clarified the USACE did not authorize dredging in the Kuskokwim River.

Dan Graham, Permit and Environmental Manager for Donlin Gold, LLC, further reported on the timeline for the permitting process and referenced the newsletter that they are wrapping up six years of the NEPA process. He highlighted that the USACE held 66 Tribal Consultations and several hundred meetings in the region over that time period. Now with the final EIS completed, and the ROD issued, they are moving on to the permitting process, which is conducted at both the State and Federal levels. Several Federal permits have been issued already and there are several more that are being worked on with the Alaska Department of Natural Resources. Dan estimated that it would take another year or two to complete all the permitting, followed by the engineering and procurement process, before they can begin the construction phase of the mine. Dan acknowledged the Council and communities' concerns about impacts to subsistence by the river barge activity required for the transportation of all materials for the mine. He reported that they are working on developing a barge communication plan to address subsistence concerns. Donlin plans to hold meetings prior to the barging season to talk about the number

of barges per day and the planned schedule. They also plan to employ pilot boats ahead of the barge to let people know when the barge is coming and to clear congested areas. Dan also reported that Donlin Mine plans to organize a subsistence committee to meet regularly with local communities throughout the life of the mine and address conflicts that may arise. He invited the Council to participate in these communications and would follow up with more information as the committee process is organized.

Bonnie Million reported on the BLM involvement as a cooperating agency on the Donlin Mine EIS process since the proposed 97 miles of the proposed natural gas pipeline, necessary to provide electricity to the project, would cross over BLM-managed land. BLM was part of the joint ROD and issued the right-of-way grant for that pipeline right after the joint ROD was signed.

Bonnie reported that BLM also was the lead agency in the ANILCA Section 810 Analysis that evaluated potential impacts to subsistence and analyzed all alternatives. She directed the Council to page 23 summary of findings of the analysis, since Alternative 2 is what was selected in the final ROD. The summary of findings indicates Alternative 2 may cause significant restrictions to subsistence users for projects as a result of activities associated with barging on the Kuskokwim River and with pipeline right of way access by non-subsistence users. The analysis found significant restrictions to subsistence users in the communities of Bethel, Tuntutuliak, Napakiak, Napaskiak, Oscarville, Kwethluk, Akiachuk, Akiak, Tuluksak, Upper and Lower Kalskag, Aniak, Chuathbaluk, Napaimute, and Crooked Creek. The analysis also indicated there would be a substantial reduction in the opportunity to continue uses of subsistence resources on the Kuskokwim River. There would also be extensive interference with access to the Kuskokwim River by subsistence users. And, the analysis indicated there would be a major redistribution of salmon, Rainbow, smelt, and whitefish, which are important subsistence resources to those villages. Section 2.2.42 of the final EIS further reports significant restrictions to subsistence use for the communities of McGrath, Takotna, Nikolai for moose, caribou, black bear and furbearer subsistence resources.

Bonnie also provided a very brief update to the Council on the BLM Western Interior Management Plan, along with a handout of their newsletter. The process began in 2015 and BLM expects to conclude the final EIS in November 2018 with a 90-day public comment period. They have conducted numerous community meetings and Tribal Consultations. Bonnie reported BLM is committed to the Tribal Consultation process and noted that it requires a request directly from a Tribal council. She offered that she is available also to meet with the Council or communities at their request.

#### *Kuskokwim Partnership Project Update*

Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge Manager, Ken Stahlnecker, provided a brief overview of the Kuskokwim River Partnership Project, recalling that it started in 2014 when Deputy Secretary Mike Conner announced plans for a demonstration project on the Kuskokwim River at the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) conference. The purpose of this partnership was to develop a meaningful partnership project that could be implemented administratively with the goal of more meaningfully integrating Kuskokwim River tribes and rural residents into Federal fisheries management on the Kuskokwim River. The first phase was to development of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fisheries Commission and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This was completed in May of 2016 with the signing of that MOU. The MOU also specified development of phase two of the partnership, which specified the formation of a subcommittee of the two Regional Advisory Councils representing Kuskokwim River communities. This subcommittee would meet and provide input to the fishery management process. However, after a couple years working on this, it was decided that there may be a better way to accomplish phase two by bringing together the primary partners. These partners, which include the State of Alaska, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fisheries Commission, the two Regional Advisory Councils, and the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group, would try to develop a group that would comply with the Federal Advisory

Committee Act (FACA), which would advise the State and Federal managers in the management of the fisheries. However, this approach was also abandoned as too cumbersome for inseason management due to concerns about representation and the length of time it would take to complete the FACA committee process. Since then, phase two of this partnership has been modified to the way that they managed the subsistence fishery during the 2018 fish season, by incorporating the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, the State of Alaska, USFWS, and a representative of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta and Western Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils into the weekly decision-making process. James Charles of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Council and Ray Collins of the Western Interior Council were nominated by their respective Regional Advisory Councils to serve in this capacity and participated in the inseason management meetings in person and by teleconference.

### **New Business**

#### *Yukon River Pre-season Management Overview (Joint USFWS and ADF&G discussion)*

Yukon River Federal Inseason Subsistence Fisheries Manager Gerald Maschmann provided a subsistence fisheries management presentation, with ADF&G fisheries management biologists Holly Carroll and Jeff Estensen participated via teleconference to discuss preseason management plans with the Council. Gerald provided the Council with a comprehensive packet of information and data on Yukon River salmon and management strategies. A map of salmon stocks on the Yukon River and patchwork of Federal lands and State and Federal waters on the Yukon River was also provided. He noted that management is fairly complex and thanked the Council for letting him know their concerns and issues which help refine management strategies. Preliminary salmon escapement data and subsistence salmon harvest estimates for 2018 show improvement in both the Chinook Salmon run and the ability of subsistence communities to harvest more fish.

#### *Kuskokwim River Pre-season Management review (Joint USFWS and ADF&G discussion)*

Ken Stahlnecker provided the Council with a handout on 2018 inseason subsistence management actions. He reported jointly with Aaron Tiernan, ADF&G Kuskokwim Area Fisheries Manager, on the conservative approach to this past salmon fishing season and preliminary data on escapement for all salmon species. Mary Peltola, Executive Director for the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fisheries Commission, reported on their involvement with inseason subsistence fisheries management. They highlighted the collaborative process by jointly synthesizing information coming in through a collaborative, structured decision-making process.

### ***Federal Subsistence Fisheries Proposals***

Office of Subsistence Management Staff Anthropologist Pippa Kenner, and Fisheries Biologists Gary Decossas and Frank Harris, provided the Council with a comprehensive analysis of each fishery proposal for the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers. The Council heard information and recommendations from State and Federal fisheries biologists, received tribal and public comment, and received comments from other agencies on the proposals.

### **Kuskokwim Fisheries Proposals**

**FP17-05:** This was a proposal deferred from the 2017 fisheries cycle that requested independent Federal subsistence management of the Kuskokwim River. It also requested that Federal subsistence management plans, strategies, fishing schedules, openings, closings, and fishing methods for the Kuskokwim Area be issued independently by the Federal Subsistence Management Program in consultation with appropriate agencies and other entities.



**Recommendation:** Oppose FP17-05

**Justification:** The Council discussed the current inseason management at length and felt that the process was working relatively well for the Federal inseason manager consulting with the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fisheries Commission, the Working Group, and State managers. The Council felt this process should be allowed to continue to grow rather than trying to manage strictly through an encompassing regulation. The Council felt the regulation would be too cumbersome for management and that the MOU with KRITFC would work better. It was noted by the Council Chair that the proponent expressed that he no longer felt this proposal was relevant—that the process of management had moved on. The Council discussed its interest in and support for the development of a Kuskokwim Management Plan with the Federal inseason manager so that some guidance was in place in the event of turnover in Federal management staff at the refuge. The Council felt this management plan would be critical to continuing to build on the collaborative salmon management efforts and open communication that had developed over the past couple seasons.

**FP19-08:** This proposal requests that during June 1 – June 25, the use of 6-inch or less gill net be restricted only if necessary during rolling closures.

**Recommendation:** Oppose FP19-08.

**Justification:** The Council concurred with feedback from Kuskokwim Tribal representatives, as well as the Federal and State inseason managers, that the 6 inch mesh gillnets were an important tool for Chinook conservation management and the variability in the salmon run requires flexibility to manage during the June 1 – June 25 timeframe.

**FP19-09:** Prior to June 1st, the use of 6” or less gillnet shall not be restricted.

**Recommendation:** Support FP19-09

**Justification:** The Council supports the opportunity to harvest Sheefish and other larger whitefish right at ice-out as a very important source of fresh fish after subsistence foods put away for the winter have run low. Local knowledge observations indicate there are no or very few Chinook Salmon in the river prior to June 1<sup>st</sup> and thus this proposal should not impact Chinook conservation. Sheefish are large and larger mesh nets such as 6-inch mesh is needed to catch them. The 4-inch whitefish nets are not effective for Sheefish and in recent years with 6-inch mesh restrictions people have not been able to catch early run Sheefish, which is a very important source of fresh fish first thing in the spring. Sheefish are preferred by some Elders and can be dried or half-dried and put up for the year similar to salmon. The 5 1/2 inch mesh may also catch Burbot and large Pike and it is all good fresh food first thing in the spring right after break-up.

**FP19-10:** This proposal requests that during fishing closures any tributary in which no salmon exists remain open to using gillnets more than 100 yards upstream of its confluence with the Kuskokwim River.

**Recommendation:** Support FP19-10. During times of salmon fishing closures, any tributary of the Kuskokwim River in which salmon do not spawn will remain open to the use of gillnets more than 100 yards upstream of its confluence with the Kuskokwim River.

**Justification:** The Council supported subsistence opportunity to fish on non-salmon bearing tributaries, as these rivers have traditionally been very important for local communities for subsistence fishing for many non-salmon species. The Council discussed at length the concerns for catching salmon that may come up these non-spawning rivers and Council members who fish in those areas note that few salmon

are caught. A member of the public participating in the meeting reported that they heard rumors about being able to catch a lot of salmon in these non-salmon spawning tributaries, so he went and tried it out himself with various sized nets and did not catch any salmon. Council members appreciated hearing these accounts and felt it helped confirm that this proposal would not cause a conservation concern for Chinook Salmon. Especially in times of Chinook conservation closures, these non-salmon tributaries are extremely important for people to be able to harvest some fish, including large Humpback Whitefish and Broad Whitefish, Burbot, and Pike. A Council member from the tundra village of Tuntutuliak noted that historically they used to stay on these non-salmon spawning rivers year-round to fish and they have always been traditionally very important for the harvest of non-salmon fish for subsistence needs.

### Yukon Fisheries Proposals

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

**Recommendation:** Oppose FP19-02

**Justification:** The Council discussed that it would like to see an opportunity for subsistence fishers to be out earlier or longer on the river around commercial fisheries openings for more time to harvest for subsistence. However, Yukon River community Council members expressed that their experience has been that ADF&G had been managing this pretty well. The Council concurred based on overall feedback that inseason management was working pretty well and that a little bit of buffer between fisheries could actually be helpful for those that engage in both subsistence and commercial fishing, which is common in many lower Yukon communities. The Council stressed that they saw this as good management to have a brief buffer between commercial and subsistence fishing, but emphasized it should not be viewed as a criminal enforcement issue. Few to no people would try to travel all the way to a buyer in such a short time to try to sell subsistence fish. The Council expressed again all the efforts that subsistence communities all along the Yukon River have made in support of Chinook Salmon conservation.

**FP19-03 & 04:** The proposal requests to decrease time of subsistence fishery closure prior to and following State commercial salmon fishing periods in Districts 1-3 (prior 18 to 6 hours, after 12 to 6 hours)

**Recommendation:** Oppose FP19-03 and FP19-04.

**Justification:** Oppose for the same reasons listed for FP-19-02. The Council also felt that some buffer between subsistence and commercial fishing would help prevent overfishing on salmon stocks by managing for a break between harvest efforts.

**FP19-05:** This proposal requests to repeal the fin clip requirement of subsistence caught Chinook in Districts 1, 2, 3.

**Recommendation:** Support FP19-05 with the OSM modification. The modification would allow Federally qualified subsistence users to harvest Chinook Salmon without clipping the tails during times that the commercial sale of Chinook Salmon is not allowed in lower Yukon River Districts 1, 2, and 3. It would also provide the updated language only one time in the regulation to avoid redundancy.

**Justification:** The Council feels that fin clipping is an unnecessary regulation that is burdensome on subsistence fishers and is contrary to traditional beliefs that if you catch a fish you should use the whole thing. There are traditions considered “unwritten regulations” and people should defer to the ancestors who said you should not waste or throw anything away—clipping and throwing away the fins contradicts

these traditional laws. The Council discussed at length the origins of the fin clipping regulation in the late 1990's when the Chinook commercial fishery was quite large and there were issues with law enforcement who were challenged to keep subsistence and commercial fish separate. This regulation assumes an enforcement issue when there was a single incident or few "bad actors" and does not represent communities on the Yukon River that strive to be law-abiding. The Council also highlighted that commercial Chinook Salmon harvest had not occurred in many years due to low Chinook returns, and yet the regulation continued to be burdensome for subsistence harvesters even though there was no need to differentiate subsistence-caught fish. Subsistence fishers all along the Yukon River have made every effort to support Chinook conservation. The Council discussed the OSM modification with State and Federal inseason managers. The Council realized this regulatory change might have a better chance of passing under both State and Federal regulations if the OSM modification were adopted. Thus, the Council supported the proposal with the OSM modification to allow Federally qualified subsistence users to harvest Chinook Salmon without clipping the tails during times that the commercial sale of Chinook Salmon is not allowed and provide the updated language only one time in the regulation to avoid redundancy.

**FP19-07:** The proposal requests to add dip nets as allowable gear type for subsistence harvest of salmon on the Yukon River.

**Recommendation:** Support FP 19-07 with OSM modification.

**Justification:** The Council supports adding dipnets for legal gear for subsistence to offer more opportunity for subsistence harvest especially in times of conservation when gillnets are restricted since Chinook or other salmon can be released alive. Moreover, dipnets have been a traditional subsistence gear for salmon and other fish for many along the Yukon River and will make legal again this traditional method if people choose to use it. Dip nets may be easier than gill nets for some or more affordable or functional than gillnets in some instances. The Council supported the OSM modification—to live-release Chum or Coho, as well as Chinook Salmon, in times of conservation.

#### Crossover Fisheries Proposals

**FP19-01:** This proposal seeks expansion of area and fishing time in Yukon River Subdistricts 4B and 4C and repeals max mesh depth restriction of 35 meshes deep for drift gill net in Subdistricts 4A and 4B.

**Recommendation:** Support FP19-01. Expand the area and fishing time for Federal subsistence drift gillnet fishery in Yukon River Subdistricts 4B and 4C, and repeal the maximum mesh depth restriction of 35 meshes deep for drift gillnets in District 4B and 4C.

**Justification:** The Council heard reports from State and Federal managers, as well as positive feedback from communities on the Yukon River in this area, that there would be no conservation concern by this change, but it would allow residents in 4B and C to be able to drift fish in their own area on the river. The Council supported this subsistence opportunity for communities in that area of the Yukon River and noted it would also help alleviate crowding and competition for drift fishing in the lower river since they would not have to travel in order to fish.

**FP19-06:** This proposal requests first pulse protection of Chinook Salmon in Yukon River Districts 1-5 using closures announced by Federal inseason manager.

**Recommendation:** Oppose FP19-06.

**Justification:** The Council voted to oppose this proposal after hearing detail from the State and Federal managers about the management of Chinook Salmon pulse protection. It is important to provide some protection for all pulses of Chinook throughout the run in order to spread harvest out over all the stocks on the Yukon River. A complete closure of any harvest on the first pulse of Chinook Salmon would be an unnecessary restriction to subsistence since the best conservation strategy is to spread limited harvest throughout the entire Yukon Chinook run. Thus, the Council supports managing for some harvest opportunity throughout the season, especially some limited opportunity for subsistence salmon early in the season for fresh fish and when the season is good for drying fish. The Council is supportive of limited harvest throughout the run so as to not overharvest any one stock of Chinook Salmon.

*Alaska State Board of Fish Recommendations*

The Council voted unanimously to submit the same recommendations to the Alaska Board of Fisheries on proposals that are identical the Federal subsistence fisheries proposals, as there are several that were submitted as “companion proposals” to both the Federal Subsistence Board and State Board of Fisheries.

*Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program Priority Information Needs*

Pippa Kenner, OSM Anthropologist, provided an overview of the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program and review of a draft compilation of research Priority Information Needs. The Office of Subsistence Management seeks technically-sound projects for the Monitoring Program that gather information to manage and conserve subsistence fishery resources in Alaska. The Monitoring Program is also designed to support meaningful involvement in fisheries management by Alaska Native and rural organizations and promote collaboration among Federal, State, Alaska Native, and local organizations. The program promotes partnerships and capacity building. Every two years there is an announcement of a funding opportunity for research and the priority information needs for each subsistence fisheries management area. Funds are directed to research that is critically necessary for the management of the health and management of the fisheries and for continuing subsistence uses. Each of the ten Regional Advisory Councils help to determine what those priority information needs are for their region. Two types of research projects are requested: Harvest monitoring or Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Stock/Status/Trends.

The Council discussed the draft list of priorities that were generated by the Council’s working group, as well as feedback from area managers and others involved with fisheries in the region. The Council voted unanimously to support the following subsistence fisheries priority information needs for the Kuskokwim River:

- Local knowledge of whitefish species in Central Kuskokwim River Drainage communities; Groups of communities might include Kalskag, Lower Kalskag, Aniak and Chuathbaluk or Red Devil, Sleetmute and Stony River;
- Fish harvest and use patterns within non-salmon tributaries of the lower Kuskokwim River in which salmon do not spawn;
- Geographic distribution and abundance of whitefish species on the Kuskokwim;
- A spatially robust indexing method for estimating species-specific whitefish harvest on an annual basis;
- Effects of increased use of 4-inch mesh for salmon conservation on whitefish abundance;
- How salmon subsistence harvest restrictions have or are likely to affect people’s uses of fish and other resources in the Kuskokwim area;
- Changes in abundance and distribution of Sockeye Salmon within the Kuskokwim River drainage, including the documentation of traditional ecological knowledge. Coho Salmon was also added due to concerns about very low returns this past year;

- Weirs, harvest assessment and reliable quantitative and qualitative estimates of salmon run size escapement and harvest throughout the Kuskokwim River drainage.

Pippa Kenner reviewed the draft list of Yukon River priority research needs with the Council. The Council discussed these and the challenge of addressing all the needs on such a large and varied river with limited funding. The Council voted unanimously to support the following subsistence fisheries priority information needs for the Yukon River:

- Chinook Salmon run size, harvest, and quality of escapement;
- Reliable assessment of Porcupine River fall Chum Salmon;
- Ongoing Age, Sex, Length assessments (subsistence ASL sampling);
- Information concerning genetic composition to help know where fish have come from and where they're going and how many are bound for Canadian spawning grounds;
- Baseline information about lamprey populations, migration patterns and harvest quantities;
- Assessment of incidental mortality from gillnets, dipnets and seines with particular consideration for delayed mortality from entanglement from drop-outs and live release of Chinook Salmon;
- Baseline information about whitefish populations, migration patterns, and harvest, particularly where habitat and traditional harvest practices could be affected by proposed road and mine development;
- Quantitative and qualitative estimates of salmon harvest.

#### *Notice of Funding Opportunity for the Partners for Fisheries Monitoring Program*

The Council received a brief update on the Partners for Fisheries Monitoring Program and upcoming notice of funding opportunity to apply for this grant program. Currently, the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Region, Orutsararmiut Native Council and Native Village of Napaimute have biologists, student interns, and subsistence fisheries funded through this grant program. The call for grant proposals is open to all rural organizations, tribes, and non-profits.

#### *Identify Issues for 2018 Annual Report*

The Council discussed environmental observations, traditional knowledge, and subsistence concerns to bring to the Federal Subsistence Board's attention. The Council confirmed the following topics to be included in its FY2018 Annual Report to the Board:

- Warmer and wet weather effects on the fall moose hunt;
- Abundance of moose on the Yukon causing habitat decline;
- Interest in fisheries research focused on important but lesser studied subsistence fish;
- Increasing observations of fish with deformities and disease;
- Increasing observations of sick and injured seals and other marine life;
- Elders teachings and the story about famine;
- Engaging youth in subsistence management;
- Need for full and balanced membership on the Council.

### **Agency Reports**

#### *Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA)*

Danielle Stickman, YRDFA Communications and Outreach Director, provided the Council with a handout on projects for 2018-19 and an overview of ongoing initiatives of their program. The YRDFA inseason fisheries weekly teleconferences continue to be a very important part of community outreach and information sharing with participants from villages all along the Yukon River, as well as Alaska State and Federal fisheries managers, Canadian biologists, and First Nations representatives. The weekly call-in

helps inform fisheries management with real-time feedback and tracking if subsistence harvest needs are being met. Danielle provided a brief overview of the research projects underway, many of which are funded by the OSM Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program and the Yukon River Panel. Projects encompass harvest monitoring to traditional knowledge studies. These projects work to build and maintain public support and meaningful participation in the Yukon River salmon resource management by strengthening local community capacity. YR DFA hired 10 local people to conduct inseason fisheries harvest surveys in the communities of Alakanuk, Mountain Village, Marshall, Russian Mission, Anvik, Huslia, Ruby, Tanana, Fort Yukon and Eagle. A total of 466 interviews were conducted in all of these communities over the course of six weeks. Danielle reported on their efforts to increase local engagement with younger people in fisheries management. YR DFA will hold its 3<sup>rd</sup> workshop for young fishers between the age of 18 to 40 to learn about Federal and State management on the Yukon River, the Yukon salmon treaty agreements with Canada, and other avenues to be involved and have their voice heard.

*Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP)*

Jennifer Hooper, Director for AVCP Natural Resources, introduced new staff to the program: Sarah Mutter who has been there a year and John Orr who was just hired a few weeks ago. Jennifer highlighted some of the recent changes to the program in efforts to help collaborate with other AVCP programs to provide services to the region—they now work with the AVCP Reality and Environmental Sciences Programs.

AVCP remains involved with the regional Waterfowl Conservation Committee, which serves as the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Region's migratory bird co-management body, and meets twice a year. Jennifer was very happy to report that Sarah had completed the AVCP Regional Forest Management Plan, which included a lot of work removing hazardous fuels, grasses, and trees around communities to help prevent fires. Completion of the Regional Forest Plan helps open up potential forest economic development opportunities for communities in the AVCP region.

AVCP provides financial support to the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fisheries Commission and also continues to fund a fisheries technician at the Pilot Station Sonar for over 20 years now. AVCP has also been working with Bering Sea Elders Group, focusing on partnership with the seafood industry to address commercial fishing impacts to subsistence in the Bering Sea and Kuskokwim Bay areas. New AVCP hire John Orr's work will be focused on Bering Sea fisheries issues, as well as addressing increasing marine shipping concerns. Jennifer also highlighted Sarah's work with the Coast Guard this summer to organize their "Arctic Guardian" seminar in Bethel to provide the region with information on oil spill prevention and response.

Jennifer reported on AVCP involvement in developing a climate change adaptation and resiliency workshop called "ADAPT YK" They have been working on this in conjunction with the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge and Western Alaska Landscape Conservation Cooperative staff for the past six months. So far they have organized several steering committee meetings and hope to bring representatives from communities throughout the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Region together for a workshop to work on resilient options to address climate change priorities. So far there are three main tracks that focus on for this workshop that include infrastructure, subsistence, and trails and travel.

*Orutsararmiut Native Council (ONC)*

Mary Matthias introduced herself as the new Executive Director for ONC and reported on the ONC Subsistence Committee recommendations for select Kuskokwim River fisheries proposals. Mary also highlighted that ONC works to help tribal members and elders in the community by hunting moose for those who are not able to provide for themselves. She noted this is one of the ways ONC works to collaborate with others to help provide subsistence foods and support for elders.

Janessa Esquible, Partners Program Biologist with ONC, provided the Council with an overview of the ONC inseason and postseason fisheries monitoring projects with ONC technician and ANSEP student Elijah Lindley gave a PowerPoint presentation to the Council. Elijah reported on the ONC inseason subsistence harvest surveys at Bethel area fish camps this year that assessed fishing effort and harvest. They compile results from these surveys each week and write a report for the salmon management working group meeting. Janessa noted that ONC will also continue its annual subsistence caught Chinook Salmon age-sex-length sampling with communities from Tuntutuliak to Akiak to gather this data. ONC is also conducting postseason salmon harvest surveys in conjunction with ADF&G to obtain harvest numbers for Chinook, Sockeye, Chum and Coho Salmon. Elijah also assisted ONC with inseason age-sex-length monitoring for subsistence-caught Chinook Salmon.

Janessa highlighted the ONC youth and internship programs with several college interns and the successful hosting of the Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program youth career academy in Bethel with a focus on the biological sciences and traditional knowledge. Over 50 students from the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta participated in this weeklong program, which included a day of fishing and time with Elders teaching traditional skills at the ONC community fishcamp.

ONC summer youth technicians Janelle Carl and Calvin Sampson reported on their tree swallow monitoring project, which was conducted in Bethel May through July. Tree swallows are being monitored because there's a decline in area insectivores around the country. Swallows have a tolerance for disturbance, which means that they can check their nest boxes and they'll still come back. The nest boxes are provided by U.S. Fish and Wildlife and hung around town. Technicians check each box for tree swallows, count the eggs laid, and then band the chicks before they fledge. They record all the data, which is shared nationally.

The Council asked many questions of all three student interns and expressed just how pleased and encouraged they are to see young people so engaged with subsistence and science. The Council invited the student interns to present again at the next meeting.

#### *Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (KRITFC)*

Mary Peltola, Executive Director with the KRITFC, provided the Council with an overview of KRITFC structure and shared highlights from their work with inseason subsistence fisheries management this past summer. Mary described the organization structure as somewhat similar to the State-facilitated Kuskokwim Salmon Management Working Group. However, KRITFC is specifically organized to work in conjunction with the Federal in-season managers on recommendations for fisheries management in Federal waters. The organization represents 33 tribes on the Kuskokwim River. Every tribe appoints a commissioner, and four are further selected to serve as in-season managers to participate in the weekly planning meetings with Federal fisheries staff and in consultation with the State. The current KRITFC inseason managers are Nick Kameroff, representing upriver Tribes down to Lower Kalskag; James Nicori representing four villages above Bethel; Robert Lekander representing Bethel, Napakiak, Napaskiak, and Oscarville; and James Charles representing the lower part of the river and the coast. During the Chinook Salmon season, the KRITFC in-season managers meet with the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge staff at least once a week or sometimes twice a week, as needed, to discuss the latest data and fisheries management strategies. Mary highlighted that in addition to review of fisheries data, KRITFC provides guidance based on local and traditional knowledge. She reported this year that local observations and traditional knowledge specifically helped to inform understanding about the run timing and fish passage, leading to additional brief subsistence fishing opportunities this past summer. Increasing the number of community-based inseason harvest monitors on the Kuskokwim River this year really helped to inform inseason management and adds to the work ONC has been doing for many years with Bethel fish camps and at the boat harbor.

*Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge*

Aaron Moses, Fisheries Biologist for the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge, provided the Council with an overview of the past summer's work around the refuge. Aaron reported on the recent moose hunt for Zone 1 and Zone 2, but noted that there is still a few days left in the season and more time for reports to be submitted. A complete moose harvest report will be provided for the Council at the winter meeting. A lot of research was focused on birds. Aaron highlighted the emperor goose nesting ecology and survival, and coastal waterfowl nest surveys monitoring water level and salinity. There was an additional project testing unmanned aerial vehicles as a potential tool for research that may cause less disturbance to nesting birds than human interaction. The Refuge has been banding geese and ducks for many years as part of the Pacific Flyway waterfowl monitoring program.

Aaron provided an overview of fisheries monitoring and management this past summer, including a new study to determine fish harvest effort on non-salmon tributaries. He also highlighted support from graduate student Ben Staton, who helped to compile and analyze harvest numbers for the inseason managers and Kuskokwim Salmon Management Working Group meetings. Aaron has been working on monitoring water level, temperature, and dissolved oxygen in the Kuskowkim River near the Bethel Bluffs. Aaron has also been working on a subsistence fish preservation project in collaboration with ONC at local fish camps. They are working on ways to dry fish in wetter weather and prevent insects and birds from getting to the fish on open drying racks. They have experimented with bug netting that allows airflow but keeps flies off the fish. They assisted approximately 130 families with installing bug netting, many shared feedback that it has helped to prevent loss or spoilage of their fish.

*Togiak National Wildlife Refuge*

Susanna Henry, Refuge Manager of Togiak National Wildlife Refuge, referenced the Refuge Information Bulletin included in the meeting book and provided the Council with an overview of recent activities in the Togiak area relevant to Unit 18. The Refuge recently hired Thomas Dock of Togiak as the new Refuge Information Technician (RIT). Mark John, long time RIT from Quinhagak, recently retired, but they are hoping to hire another RIT in Quinhagak soon. The Refuge is working on lifting a moose hunting closure in on Federal lands in the Kenektok and Arolik River drainages because the moose population has increased enough to be able to sustain a more liberalized harvest in that area.

*Alaska Department of Fish and Game*

David Runfola, Subsistence Resource Specialist with the ADF&G Subsistence Division, provided the Council with updates on their FRMP projects and community outreach from this past summer. A two-year survey and ethnography project in the lower Yukon River communities of Marshall, Pilot Station, Mountain Village, Kotlik, Alakanuk and Nunam Iqua has just been completed. A report was published in June. The focus of this study was to interview people about harvest and use of non-salmon fish such as Whitefish, Pike, Burbot and Lamprey. David reported that another project just being finalized this year is the Middle Kuskokwim In-season Harvest and Effort Study, which includes the communities of Kalskag, Aniak, Chuathbaluk, Crooked Creek, Red Devil, Sleetmute, and Stony River. They contacted people during the fishing season to monitor their progress in salmon fishing and to talk to them about whether people were getting the salmon that their households needed. This summer they completed 240 household surveys out of about 430 households in the region. This information is shared at the Kuskokwim Salmon Management Working Group meetings and with all involved with inseason fisheries management. David also reported on an ethnography project to learn more about the harvest and use on non-salmon fish in the coastal communities of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. Participating communities include Quinhagak, Kipnuk, Nightmute, Mekoryuk and Scammon Bay. David concluded with a brief update on the ongoing Kuskokwim River post season subsistence salmon harvest surveys and that staff from the ADF&G Subsistence Division will be visiting many people at their homes to document fish harvest from this past summer.



*Office of Subsistence Management*

Pippa Kenner, OSM Anthropologist, provided the Council with a very brief update on staffing changes within the program and the schedule for the upcoming Federal Subsistence Board meeting to address Federal subsistence fisheries proposals, as well as a rural status proposal submitted to the Board.

**Future Meeting Dates**

The Council confirmed the fall meeting date for September 27-28, 2018 to be held in Bethel and selected March 12 - 13 in Bethel for the winter 2019 meeting.

**Closing Comments**

The Council thanked staff and all the meeting participants. Council members further shared personal closing comments reflecting on their role in advocating for a subsistence way of life in the region and acknowledging their elders.

*The meeting adjourned by unanimous consent.*

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

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Eva Patton, Designated Federal Officer  
USFWS Office of Subsistence Management

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Alissa Rogers, Chair  
Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

These minutes will be formally considered by the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Subsistence Regional Advisory Council at its next public meeting, and any corrections or notations will be incorporated in the minutes of that meeting.

**FEDERAL WILDLIFE CLOSURE REVIEW  
WCR18-38**

**Closure Location:** Unit 18—Moose

**Current Federal Regulation**

**Unit 18—Moose**

*Unit 18—that portion east of a line running from the mouth of the Ishkowitz River to the closest point of Dall Lake, then to the east bank of the Johnson River at its entrance into Nunavakanukakslak Lake (60°59.41' N. Latitude; 162°22.14' W. Longitude), continuing upriver along a line 1/2 mile south and east of, and paralleling a line along the southerly bank of the Johnson River to the confluence of the east bank of Crooked Creek, then continuing upriver to the outlet at Arhymot Lake, then following the south bank east of the Unit 18 border and then north of and including the Eek River drainage—1 antlered bull by State registration permit; quotas will be announced annually by the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge Manager* Sep. 1 – 30

*Federal public lands are closed to the taking of moose except by residents of Tuntutuliak, Eek, Napakiak, Napaskiak, Kasigluk, Nunapitchuk, Atmaultlauk, Oscarville, Bethel, Kwethluk, Akiachak, Akiak, Tuluksak, Lower Kalskag, and Kalskag*

**Closure Dates:** Year-round

**Current State Regulation**

**Unit 18—Moose**

*Residents: Unit 18, Kuskokwim area, that portion easterly of a line from the mouth of the Ishkowitz River to the closest point of Dall Lake, then to the east bank of the Johnson River at its entrance into Nunavakanukakslak Lake (60°59.41' N. Latitude; 162°22.14' W. Longitude), continuing upriver along a line 1/2 mile south and east of, and paralleling a line along the southerly bank of the Johnson River to the confluence of the east bank of Crooked Creek, then continuing upriver along the east bank of Crooked Creek, then continuing upriver* RM615 Sep. 1 – 20

*along the east bank of Crooked Creek to the outlet at Arhymot Lake, then following the south bank of Arhymot Lake easterly to the Unit 18 boundary, and north of and including the Eek River drainage—one antlered bull by permit available in person at ADF&G in Bethel and villages within the hunt area from Aug. 1 – Aug. 25. Quota to be announced. Season will be closed by emergency order when quota is reached.*

**Regulatory Year Initiated:** 1991

**Regulatory History**

Federal public lands in the Kuskokwim area have been closed to non-Federally qualified users since 1991, when the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) acted on Proposal P91-124. Submitted by the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge, P91-124 requested that the moose season in the southern portion of Unit 18, including the Kanektok and Goodnews River drainages, be closed to allow establishment of a harvestable population. The Board adopted this proposal with modification to close Federal public lands throughout Unit 18 to moose harvest, except by Federally qualified subsistence users, given low moose densities throughout Unit 18.

Until 2004, Federal and State moose harvest limits for the lower Kuskokwim River area were one bull or one antlered bull, and the fall seasons were approximately one month. The State winter season varied widely from a continuous fall/winter season (Sep. 1–Dec. 31) to a 10-day December season and a winter “to be announced” season. The Federal winter season has varied from a 10-day season to a “to be announced” season.

Both the Federal and State seasons were closed in the fall of 2004 as part of a coordinated effort to build the Kuskokwim moose population. In 2003, at the request of local residents, the Alaska Board of Game (BOG) established a five-year moratorium on moose hunting under State regulations. The Board adopted Proposal WP04-51 in April 2004 that established a five-year moratorium on Federal public lands. The intent of the moratorium was to promote colonization of underutilized moose habitat. The moratorium was largely instigated by the Lower Kuskokwim Fish and Game Advisory Committee, which worked with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and area residents to close the moose season for five years or when a population of 1,000 moose was counted in the lower Kuskokwim survey unit. Considerable outreach efforts were made to communicate the impact of the moratorium on the growth potential of the affected moose population to local communities.

In March 2009, the BOG established a registration hunt (RM615), in preparation for ending the moratorium on June 30, 2009. A Sep. 1 – 10 season was established, with a harvest limit of one antlered bull by registration permit. The season was closed when the quota was met. In November 2009, the BOG adopted a proposal that changed the boundary separating the Unit 18 lower Kuskokwim area from the Unit 18 remainder area.

In May 2010, the Board adopted Proposals WP10-58 and WP10-62, with modification to make boundary changes similar to the BOG actions. Adoption of these proposals helped to clarify the boundary for moose hunters and law enforcement. At the same meeting in May 2010, the Board adopted Proposal WP10-54 with modification to reduce the pool of Federally qualified subsistence users eligible to hunt moose on Federal public lands within the lower Kuskokwim. This was necessary because of the small number of moose available to harvest relative to the large number of subsistence users with a customary and traditional use determination for moose (42 communities including Bethel). As specified in Section 804 of ANILCA, whenever it is necessary to restrict the subsistence uses of populations of fish and wildlife on Federal public lands, a priority must be implemented through appropriate limitations based on the application of three criteria including: 1) customary and direct dependence upon the population as a mainstay of livelihood; 2) local residency; and 3) availability of alternative resources. In accordance with Section 804, an analysis was developed that evaluated all users with a customary and traditional use determination for moose, and fifteen communities were found to be most dependent on this resource in this area.

Temporary Federal moose seasons were approved for the lower Kuskokwim area in 2010 and 2012. In 2010, Wildlife Special Action WSA10-02 was approved to establish a Sep. 1 – 5 moose season. In 2012, Wildlife Special Action WSA12-06 was approved to establish a Sep. 1 – 30 moose season. The harvest quota was set prior to the start of the season and the harvest limit was one antlered bull moose via a State registration permit.

In April 2014, the Board adopted WP14-27 with modification, establishing a Federal moose season in the lower Kuskokwim area. The Sep. 1 – 30 season had a harvest limit of one antlered bull by State registration permit. The Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge manager was delegated the authority to establish an annual quota and close the season once the quota was met.

In August 2018, the Tuluksak Native Community submitted Emergency Special Action Request WSA18-02, requesting that the Board open the moose season early in the Kuskokwim hunt area to accommodate a food shortage emergency. The Board approved this request with modification to open an Aug. 18 – 31 emergency season only to residents of Tuluksak, with a quota of 7 antlered bulls by Federal registration permit.

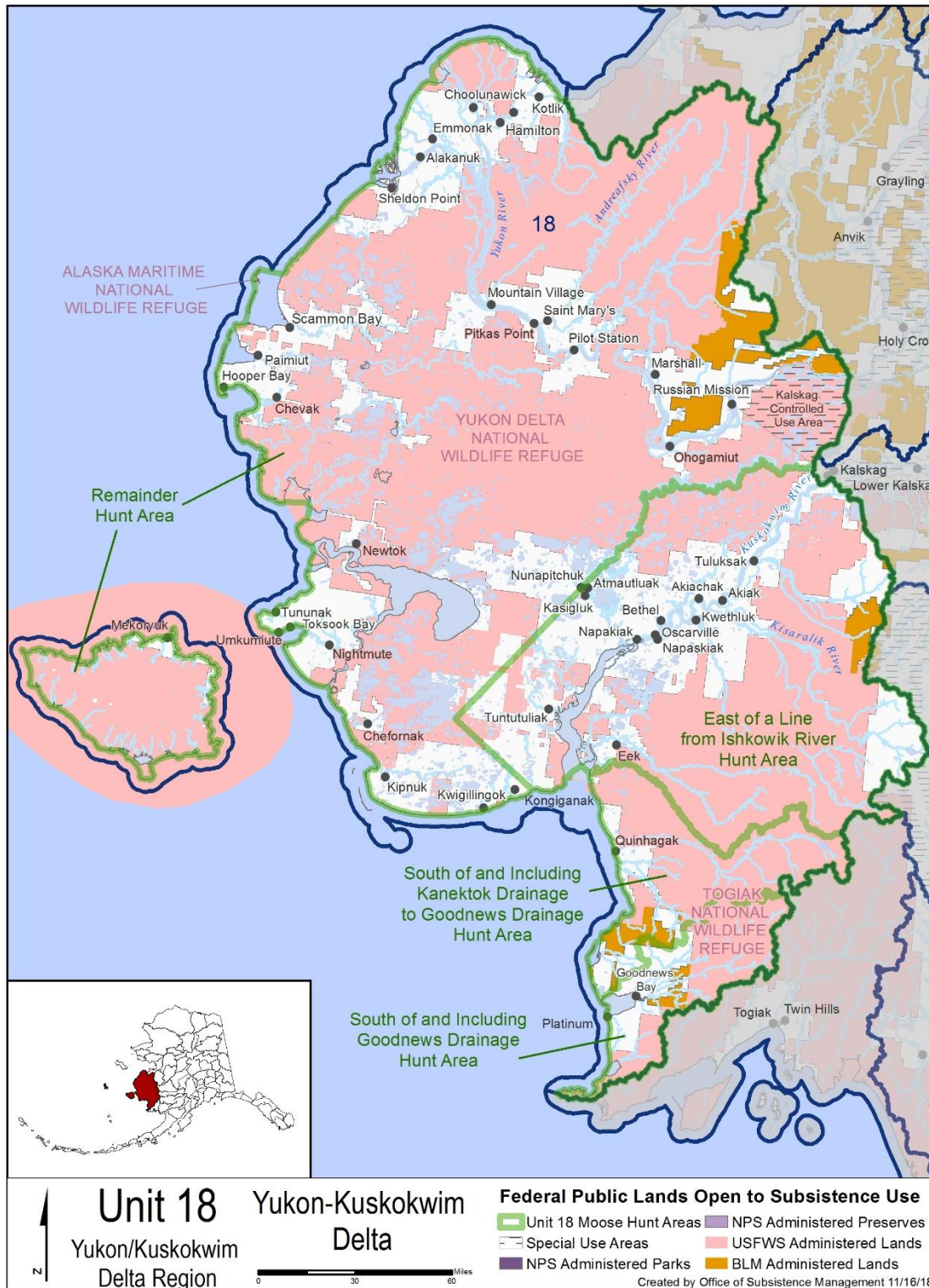
Unit 18 is comprised of 67% Federal public lands and consists of 64% U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service managed lands and 3% Bureau of Land Management managed lands (**Figure 1**).

**Closure last reviewed:** 2014 – WP14-27

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

*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 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...*

Given low moose densities throughout Unit 18, closure of Federal public lands except to Federally qualified subsistence users provided rural users a subsistence priority.



**Figure 1.** Unit 18 Federal moose hunt areas. The Kuskokwim hunt area is the area described as *East of a line from the Ishkowiak River*.

### Council Recommendation for Original Closure:

This closure was initiated prior to the formation of the Regional Advisory Councils in 1993.

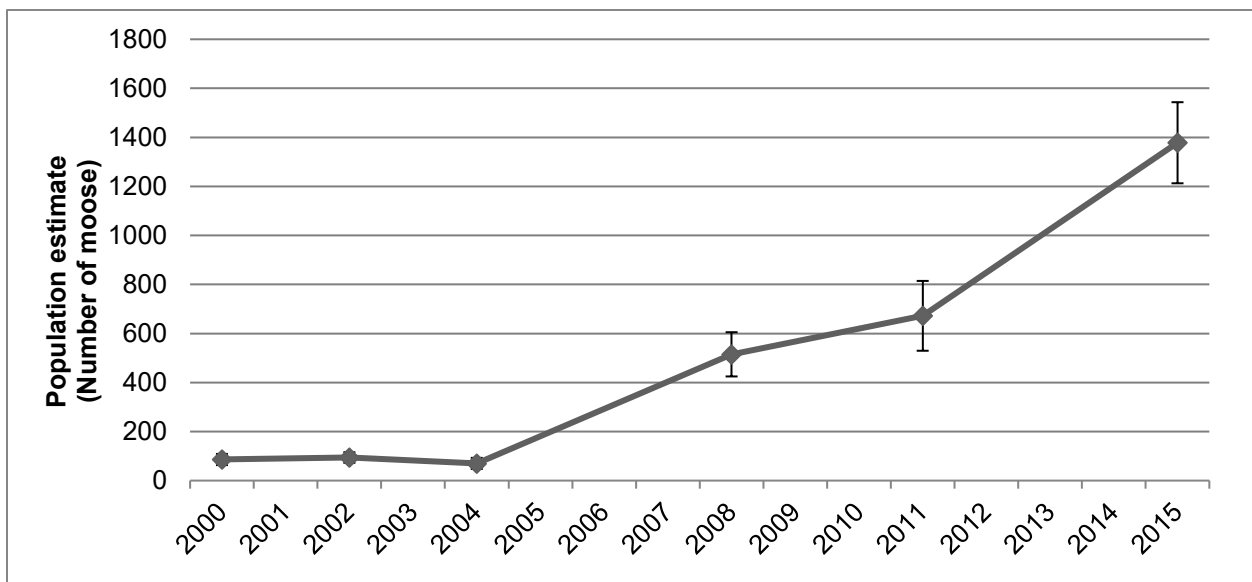
### State Recommendation for Original Closure:

Apart from the southernmost drainages, the State did not support closure of Federal public lands in Unit 18 to non-Federally qualified users, arguing that a closure was not warranted in terms of biological information or demands for moose by local users.

### Biological Background

Moose are believed to have begun colonization of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta in the 1940s (Perry 2014). By the 1990s, when this closure was initiated, moose densities throughout much of Unit 18 were very low. While established populations existed in the far eastern portions of Unit 18, moose were only sparsely distributed throughout much of the unit. Harvested moose were likely to be immigrants from other areas, rather than part of a local breeding population (FSB 1991), and hunting pressure was effective in limiting growth of the moose population along the Kuskokwim corridor (Perry 2014). The 2004 – 2008 hunting moratorium was effective in establishing a harvestable population, and current indicators suggest that the population along the Kuskokwim main stem and in its tributaries continues to grow.

The most recent population survey of the lower Kuskokwim survey area, which includes the main stem riparian corridor between Kalskag and Kwethluk, occurred in 2015. At that time, the population was estimated to be 1,378 moose, or 1.6 moose/mile<sup>2</sup> (Figure 2). This represents an annual growth rate of 20% between 2011 and 2015. At last count, the Kuskokwim moose population remained below the State’s population objective of at least 2,000 moose in this area (Perry 2014). Browse surveys indicate that the population is about half of what it could be (YKDRAC 2017a).



**Figure 2.** Estimated moose population size along the main stem of the Kuskokwim River, 2000 – 2015 (Perry 2014; Jones 2018, pers. comm.)

Composition estimates for the main stem were last obtained in 2016, when there were 70 bulls:100 cows and 56 calves:100 cows (Jones 2018, pers. comm.). The bull:cow ratios, which were quite high during the harvest moratorium, declined when harvest resumed in 2009 but have remained consistently above the minimum objective of 30 bulls:100 cows (**Table 1**). Bull:cow ratios in the Kuskokwim tributaries are also reported to be high (Rearden 2018, pers. comm.).

**Table 1.** Composition estimates for moose along the main stem of the Kuskokwim River, 2007 – 2016 (YDNWR 2015, Jones 2018, pers. comm.).

<b>Year</b>	<b>Bulls:100 cows</b>	<b>Calves:100 cows</b>
2007	98	73
2009	52	49
2010	51	49
2013	41	71
2016	70	56

### Harvest History

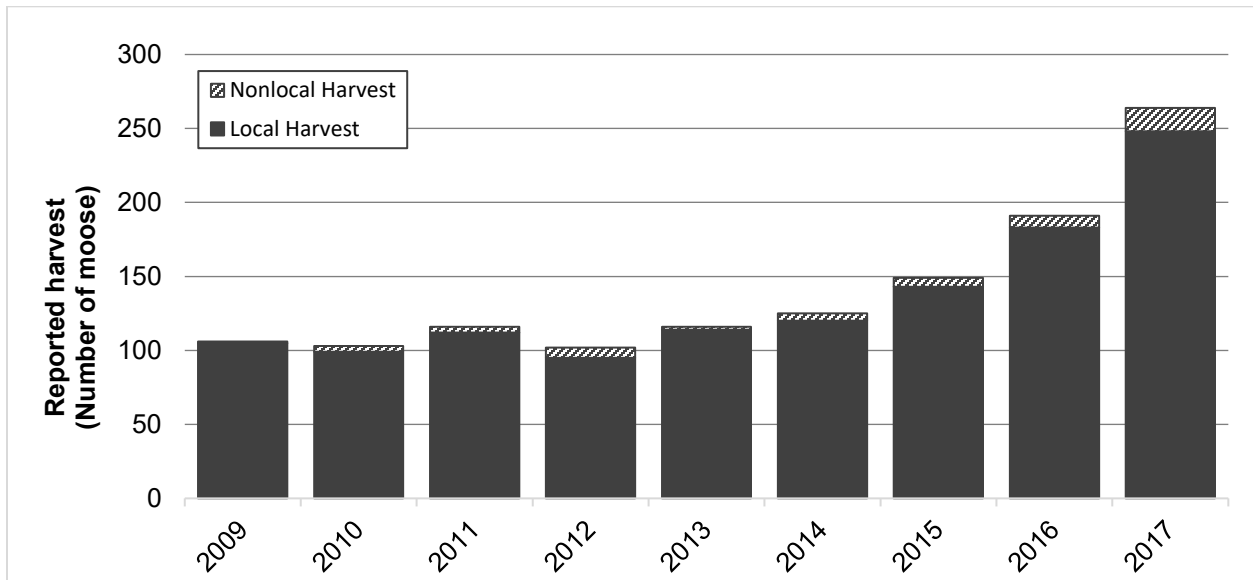
Following the harvest moratorium, moose harvest on non-Federal lands was allowed under State regulation beginning in 2009. In 2010, harvest on Federal land was opened to a subset of Federally qualified subsistence users, including residents of Tuntutuliak, Eek, Napakiak, Napaskiak, Kasigluk, Nunapitchuk, Atmautlauk, Oscarville, Bethel, Kwethluk, Akiachak, Akiak, Tuluksak, Lower Kalskag, and Kalskag. In this analysis, this user group will be referred to as local users.

Since 2009, reported harvest has averaged 141 moose annually (ADF&G 2018). Notably, reported harvest has increased over the past several years, doubling between 2014 and 2017 (**Figure 3**). Local users have taken 96% of the reported moose harvest in the Kuskokwim hunt area since 2009, with 30% of the harvest attributable to residents of Bethel. However, non-local use is increasing, from 2 harvest reports in 2013 to 16 in 2017 (**Figure 3**). Non-local users that report harvesting moose are primarily Federally qualified subsistence users from coastal communities of Unit 18, but also include a few users from southcentral Alaska (ADF&G 2018).

Despite increases in quotas and harvest, demand still outweighs moose availability. Since 2009, an annual average of over 1,300 hunters have obtained permits to harvest moose in the Kuskokwim hunt area, but only 11% of permit holders have successfully harvested moose (ADF&G 2018). The disparity between demand and the relatively small quotas has resulted in emergency closure within days of the season opening. This has resulted in some frustration among locals, who note that short unpredictable seasons make planning difficult. Local residents have also commented on the challenges of hunting in early September in recent years, given warm conditions that make proper meat care difficult. To this end, many subsistence users have advocated for a later moose season (YKDRAC 2017b).

In an effort to better serve users in an area of checkerboard land status, State and Federal managers adjusted the structure of the hunt in 2017, introducing a zone-based hunt (**Figure 4**). An important feature of the zones is that, while they correspond roughly to State and Federal lands, they are delineated

by easily identifiable geographical features (e.g. river confluences). Each of the two zones is managed with its own harvest quota. Zone 1, which is comprised primarily of State lands, is located along the main stem of the Kuskokwim River. The season and harvest quota for the main stem hunt are managed by ADF&G. In 2017, the quota for the main stem hunt was 170 bulls, and the season was closed by emergency order after just six days. Zone 2 is comprised primarily of Federal public lands, including those in the Tuluksak, Kisaralik, Kasigluk and Eek river drainages (“tributaries”). The season and harvest quota in the tributary hunt is managed by the Refuge. In 2017, the quota for the tributary hunt was 110 bulls. The Refuge manager announced a 25 day season in 2017, during which time 80 bulls were harvested (Rearden 2018, pers. comm.; YKDRAC 2017a).



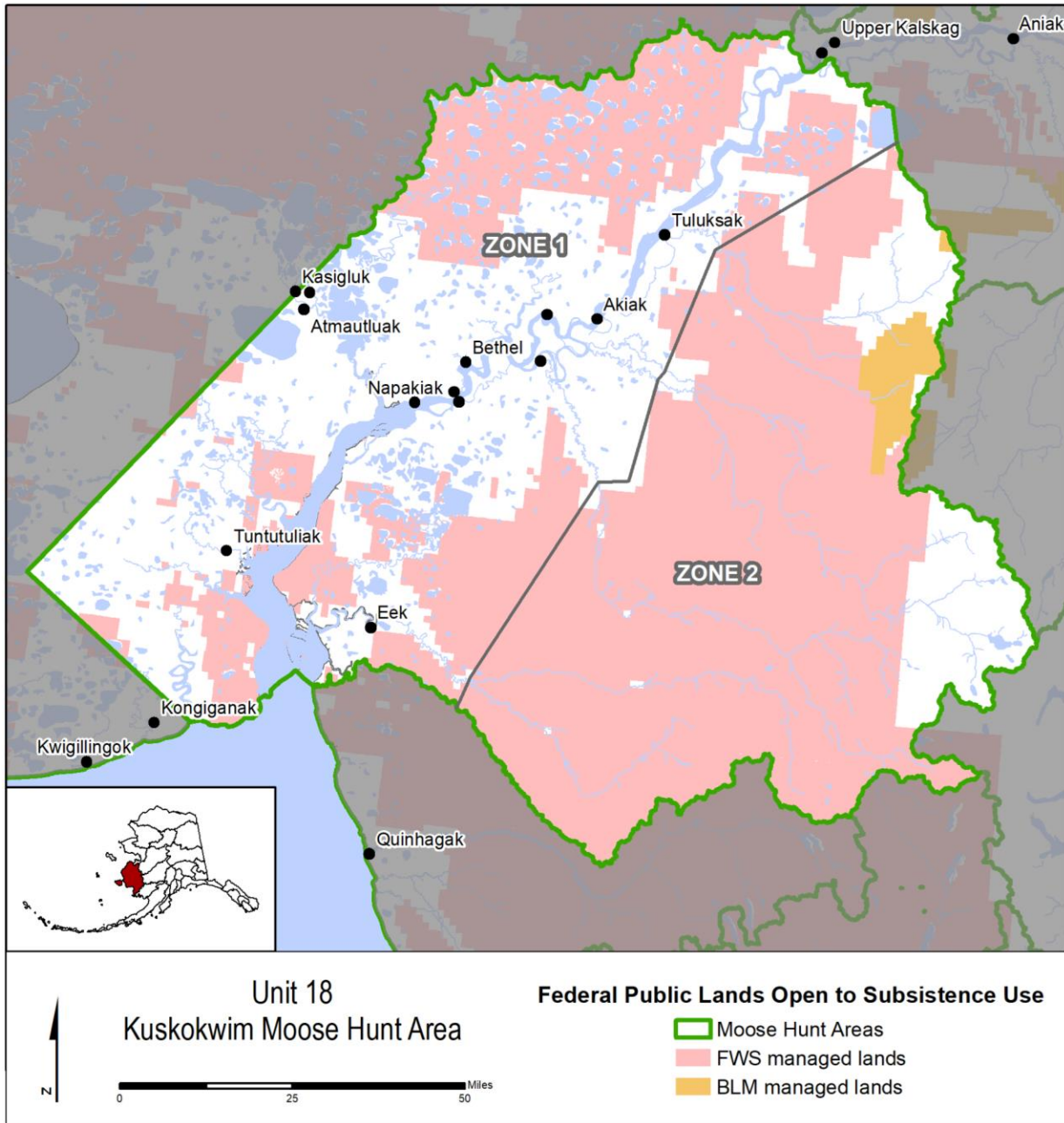
**Figure 3.** Reported moose harvest in the Kuskokwim hunt area, 2009 – 2017 (ADF&G 2018).

The unmet quota for the 2017 tributary hunt is consistent with the previous two years, when the Federal quota also remained unmet. In 2015, the quota was 45 bulls, with 31 harvested. In 2016, the quota was 90 bulls and 44 were harvested. Local managers report that hunting in the tributaries is difficult, requiring specialized boats, longer travel times, and more fuel. Heavy vegetation along the banks contributes to the difficulty. It is believed that the unmet quota is a function of these difficulties, rather than lack of need for moose meat. Federal managers are currently considering ways to improve accessibility to moose for local users, including offering additional opportunities later in the season (YKDRAC 2017a, YKDRAC 2017b, Rearden 2018, pers. comm.)

**OSM Recommendation:**

- maintain status quo**
- initiate proposal to modify or eliminate the closure**
- other recommendation**





**Figure 4.** Land status and hunting zones in the Unit 18 Kuskokwim moose hunt area.

**Justification**

Despite recent increases in population size and harvest quotas, demand for moose still far outweighs the harvestable surplus of the Kuskokwim moose population. The problem of unmet demand is exacerbated by the difficulty of the hunt in the tributaries, as evidenced by unmet Federal quotas over the past three years. Retaining the Federal public lands closure ensures that the fifteen communities who have demonstrated the most dependence on this resource continue to have a subsistence priority on Federal public lands. It also provides an opportunity for the Federal manager to explore options for improving access to moose for Federally qualified subsistence users on Federal public lands.

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**FEDERAL WILDLIFE CLOSURE REVIEW  
WCR18-40**

**Closure Location:** Unit 18—Moose

**Current Federal Regulation**

**Unit 18—Moose**

*Unit 18—south of and including the Kanektok River drainages to the Goodnews River drainage. Federal public lands are closed to the taking of moose by all users* *No open season*

**Closure Dates:** Year-round

**Current State Regulation**

**Unit 18—Moose**

*Residents: Unit 18—south of the Eek River drainage and north of the Goodnews River drainage—one antlered bull* *HT Sep. 1 – 30*

**Regulatory Year Initiated:**

1991

**Regulatory History**

Federal public lands in the Kanektok and Arolik River drainages have been closed to the harvest of moose since 1991. That year, the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) considered Proposal P91-124, submitted by the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge. P91-124 requested that the moose season in the southern portion of Unit 18, including the Kanektok and Goodnews River drainages, be closed to allow for the establishment of a harvestable moose population. The Board adopted this proposal with modification to close Federal public lands to moose harvest throughout Unit 18, resulting in the original Federal public lands closure in this area.

The closure in its current form was established in 2008, following the Board's action on proposal WP08-34. Prior to 2008, the portion of Unit 18 south of and including the Kanektok River drainage was a single hunt area. The Board's action divided the hunt area into two, rescinding the Federal public lands closure

in the southernmost portion of Unit 18 south of and including the Goodnews River drainage, and retaining it in the portion of Unit 18 including the Kanektok and Arolik River drainages.

Since then, there have been two attempts to establish a Federal moose season in this area. Proposal WP10-61 and special action request WSA14-01 were both submitted by the Native Village of Quinhagak IRA Council. Each requested the establishment of a Sep. 1 – 30 moose season with a harvest limit of one antlered bull by State registration permit. However, these requests were rejected due to ongoing conservation concerns. If these changes had been adopted, the Federal regulations for this hunt would have mirrored the State regulations, which were initiated in 2005 and have not changed.

Unit 18 is comprised of 67% Federal public lands and consists of 64% U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service managed lands and 3% Bureau of Land Management managed lands (**Figure 1**).

**Closure last reviewed:** 2014 – WSA14-01

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

*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 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...*

In 1991, there were few moose in the southern portion of Unit 18. Most moose that were harvested from the area were immigrants from other areas to the north and east. The existing seasons that allowed for the harvest of one bull by subsistence users, other residents and non-residents did not allow for the assurance of a stable and continuing population. It was believed that management should be directed towards rebuilding and establishing a harvestable population, given that the available habitat in this area was capable of supporting more moose than were present.

**Council Recommendation for Original Closure:**

This closure was initiated prior to the formation of the Regional Advisory Councils in 1993.

**State Recommendation for Original Closure:**

The State supported closing the moose season in southern Unit 18 in principle, given the desire to establish a resident moose population in the area. However, they were concerned about implementation without local concurrence, and recommended deferring closure decisions until local buy-in was secured.

**Biological Background**

Prior to the early 2000s, moose were not commonly observed in southern Unit 18. Early population growth is attributed to emigration from adjacent Unit 17A, with high calf recruitment sustaining growth (Aderman 2014). Minimum population counts, obtained by the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge as part of their Refuge-wide moose monitoring program, show substantial recent growth of the moose population in this area (**Figure 2**). In 2002, only 3 moose were observed in the Kanektok and Arolik drainages.

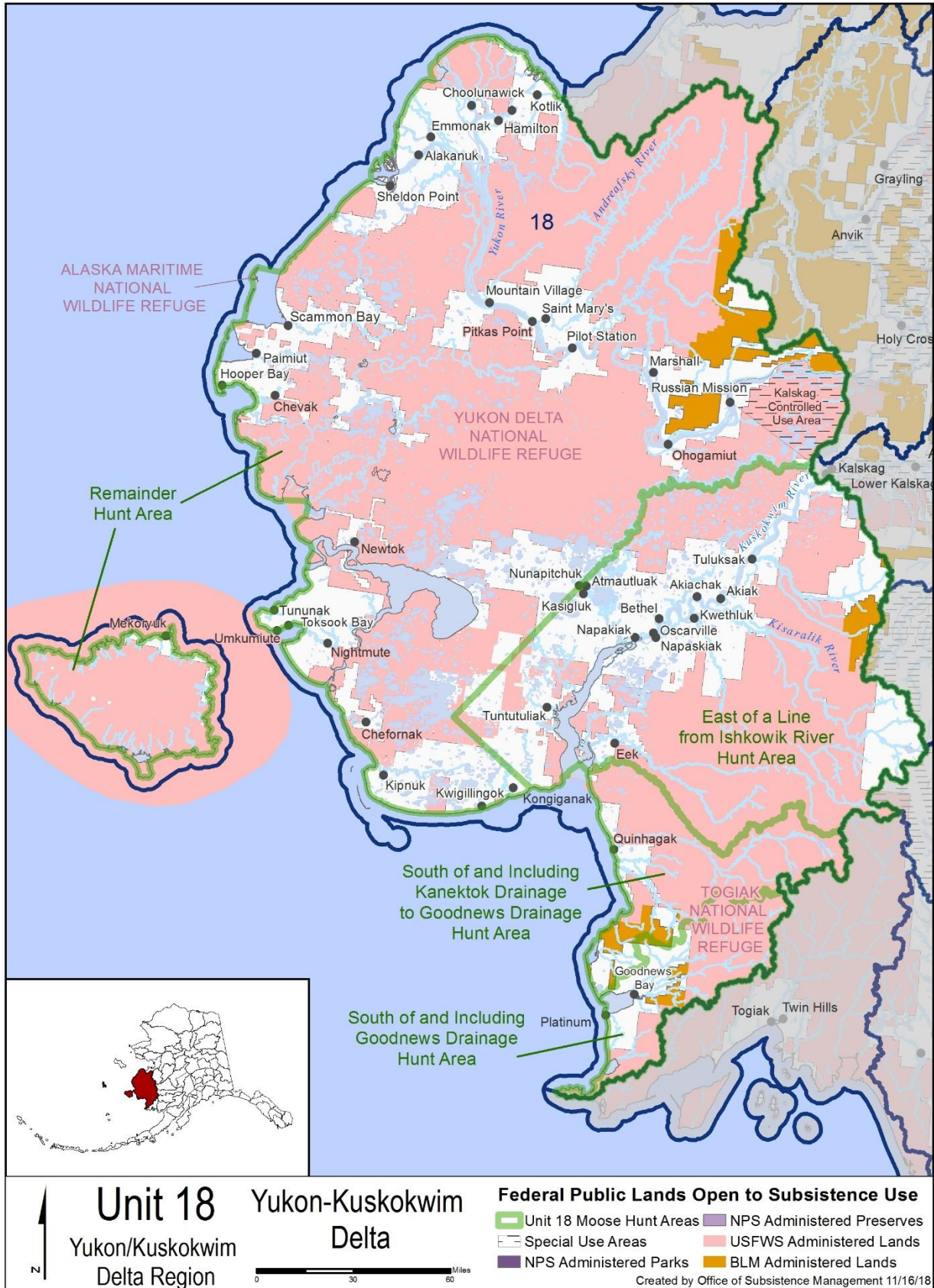
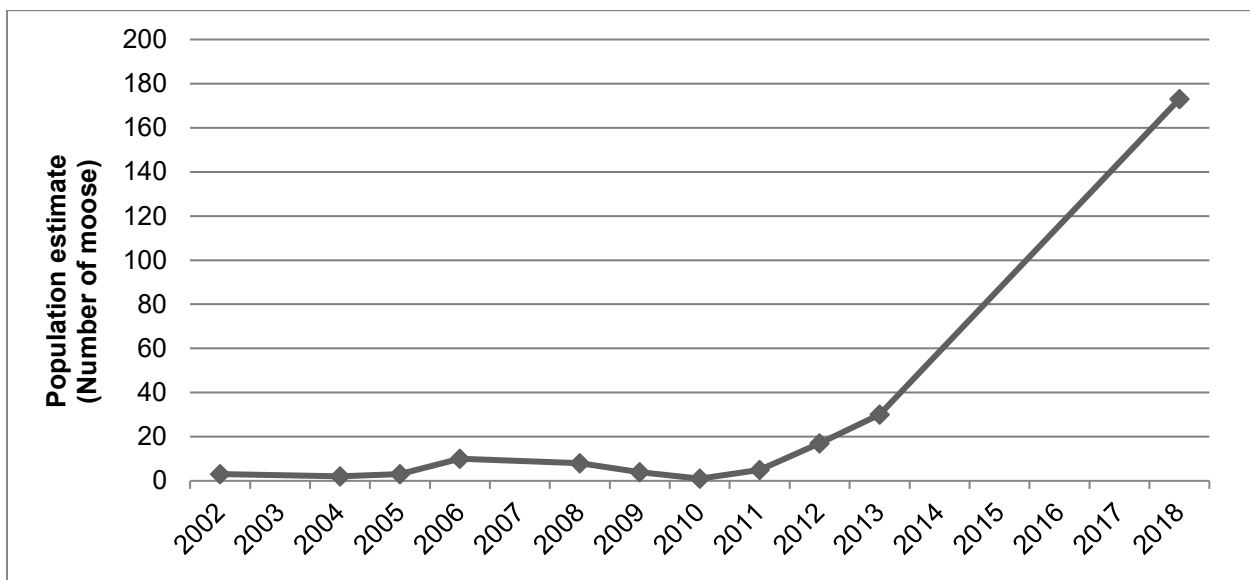


Figure 1. Unit 18 Federal moose hunt areas.

2012 was the first year that more than 10 moose were observed, and at last count, in 2018, 173 moose were observed (Aderman 2018, pers. comm.). This represents a 42% annual growth rate between 2013 and 2018.

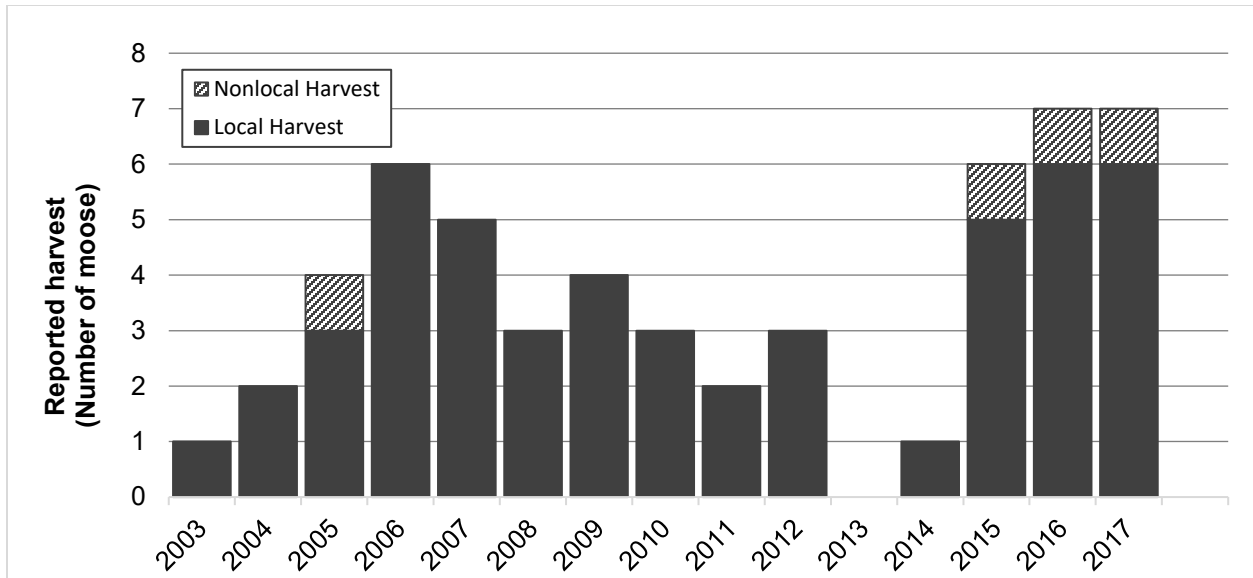
Recent growth of the Kanektok/Arolik moose population is similar to that previously exhibited by the Unit 17A and Goodnews River moose populations. In these areas, early surveys revealed few to no moose. Then, over a period of several years, the population increased rapidly and now supports harvest on both Federal and State lands. The population in the Goodnews hunt area, in particular, may provide context for understanding when it is appropriate to modify the Federal public lands closure in the Kanektok/Arolik hunt area, given similarities in size, location, land status, and human population size. In the Goodnews hunt area, State and Federal seasons were established in 2008, when the population exceeded a threshold of 100 moose. Subsequent population growth was sufficient to establish may-be-announced winter seasons in 2017 and 2018. This appears to validate that the timing for initiating harvest was not premature.



**Figure 2.** Estimated moose population size (minimum count) in the Kanektok and Arolik river drainages, 2002 – 2018 (Aderman 2014, Aderman 2018, pers. comm.).

### Harvest History

Harvest within the Kanektok and Arolik drainages is allowed under State regulation, by harvest ticket. Harvest is dominated by local users, defined here as Federally qualified subsistence users (residents of Unit 18 and Kalskag). Between 2003 and 2017, reported harvest was 54 moose (**Figure 3**). Of those, 93% (50 moose) were taken by local users. Residents of Quinhagak, the only community located within the hunt area, harvested 72% (39 moose) of the total reported harvest during this time period (ADF&G 2017; Jones 2018, pers. comm.). While reported moose harvest is low, averaging just 4 moose per year, observations by local biologists in the past decade indicate that at least some illegal harvest occurs. (Aderman 2014). The magnitude of noncompliance is unknown.



**Figure 3.** Reported harvest in the Kanektok and Arolik river drainages, 2003 – 2017 (ADF&G 2017, Jones 2018, pers. comm.).

**OSM Recommendation:**

- maintain status quo
- initiate proposal to modify or eliminate the closure
- other recommendation

**Justification**

The moose population in the Goodnews/Arolik hunt area has increased significantly in recent years. Reported harvest is low, and moose in this hunt area are taken almost exclusively by Federally qualified subsistence users. While unreported harvest is believed to occur and may be significant, it has not outpaced production or prevented population growth.

Given the relative newness of this population, the small area it occupies, and the lack of published population objectives, it can be difficult to find context for assessing future management actions. However, the adjacent Goodnews moose population likely provides an adequate model. Assuming so, establishing a season on Federal lands is appropriate at this time. The first step is modifying or rescinding the Federal public lands closure.

Full rescission of the Federal public lands closure will allow for development of parallel Federal and State regulations, which will ease the burden of compliance for Federally qualified subsistence users. The approach used in all neighboring moose hunts, from the Kuskokwim River drainage to Bristol Bay, is to require a State registration permit in both State and Federal regulation. If administered similar to adjacent hunts, where permits are only available locally, this approach runs little risk of attracting an influx of non-local hunters and thus poses little risk to the moose population. This approach would require concurrence from local State and Federal managers, and would also require changes in the State hunt structure.

An intermediate approach could be considered if there is reluctance to require a State registration permit. In that case, Federal public lands could be opened only to Federally qualified subsistence users, giving them an definitive priority on Federal lands. This approach requires no changes in State regulations, but would increase regulatory complexity in this hunt area.

Neither of the above approaches are likely to result in significant additional harvest, given the current user base and the availability of mechanisms to prevent an influx of non-local users. Either approach could be combined with the use of quotas, which would further guard against overharvest. Finally, both approaches represent an increase in subsistence opportunity and pose little threat to the conservation status of this population.

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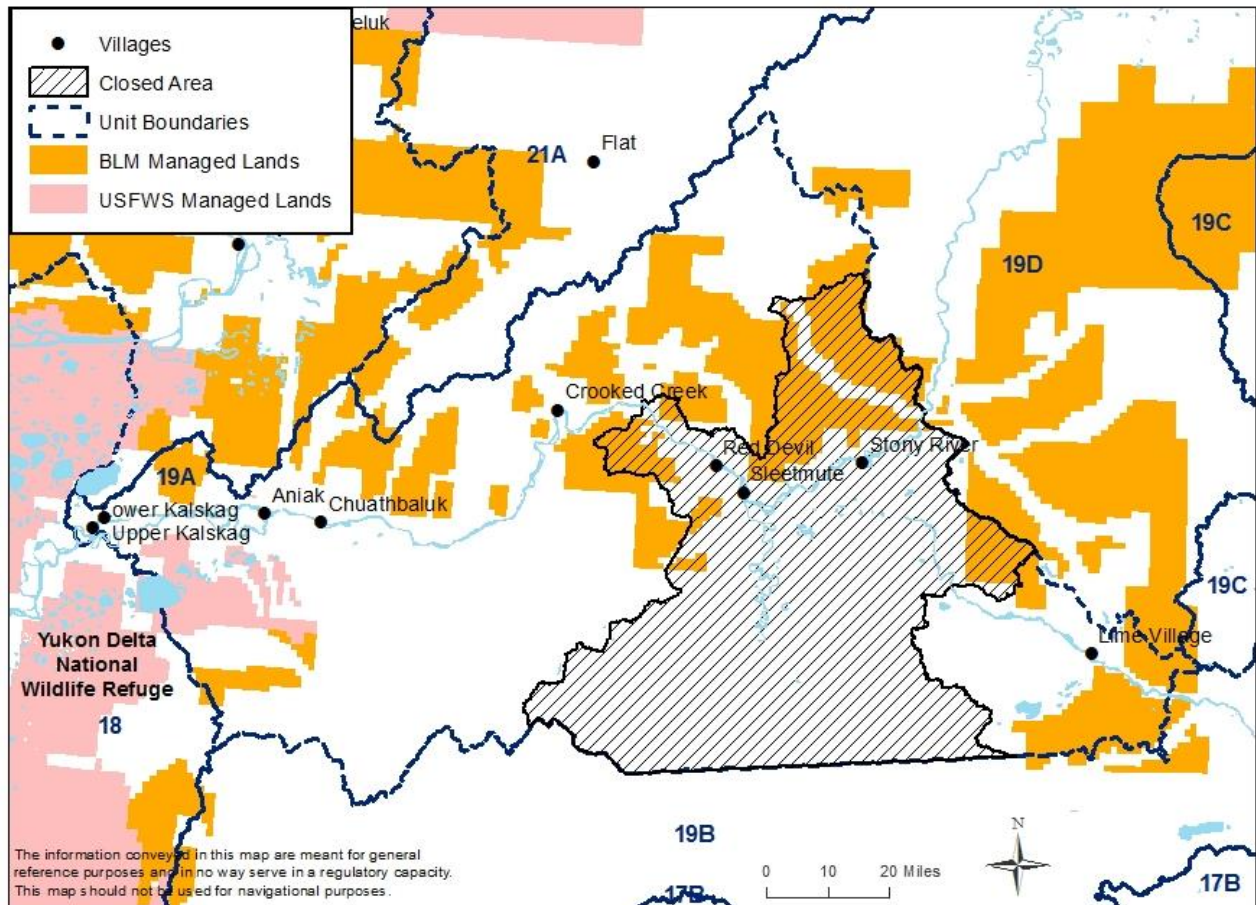
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## FEDERAL WILDLIFE CLOSURE REVIEW WCR18-39

**Closure Location:** Eastern portion of Unit 19A (Map 1) – Moose



**Map 1.** Federal hunt area closure for moose in Unit 19A, north of the Kuskokwim River, upstream from (but excluding) the George River drainage, and south of the Kuskokwim River upstream from (and including) the Downey Creek drainage, not including the Lime Village Management Area.

### Current Federal Regulation

#### Unit 19A–Moose

*Unit 19A, north of the Kuskokwim River, upstream from (but excluding) the George River drainage, and south of the Kuskokwim River upstream from (and including) the Downey Creek drainage, not including the Lime Village Management Area.* No Federal open season

*Federal public lands are closed to the harvest of moose.*

**Closure Dates:** Year round

## **Current State Regulation**

### **Unit 19A–Moose**

*Unit 19A remainder*

*Residents and Nonresidents*

*No open season*

**Regulatory Year Initiated:** 2007

### **Regulatory History**

In 1990, Federal hunting regulations were adopted from State regulations. The moose season in Unit 19A was Sept. 1-Sept. 20, Nov. 20-Nov. 30, and Feb. 1-Feb. 10. The harvest limit was one moose, although antlerless moose could be taken only from Nov. 20-Nov. 30 and from Feb. 1-Feb. 10.

In 1992, the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) adopted Proposal P92-111 with modification to change the Unit 19A moose season to Sept. 5-Sept. 25, Jan. 1-Jan. 10, and Feb. 1-Feb. 5 to provide harvest opportunity during Russian orthodox holidays in January (FSB 1992). Antlerless moose could only be taken during the winter seasons. The Board rejected Proposal P92-66 to liberalize moose hunting regulations in several units including Unit 19A because moose densities were too low to sustain increased harvests.

In April 1994, the Board deferred Proposal P94-54 to align Unit 19A Federal harvest limits and seasons with State regulations because not all affected Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils (Councils) had considered the proposal. In November 1994, the Board adopted P94-54 with modification, aligning Unit 19A Federal moose regulations with State regulations with the exception of retaining the January season (FSB 1994). Unit 19A was divided into two hunt areas: that portion north of the Kuskokwim River upstream from, but not including the Kolmakof River drainage and south of the Kuskokwim River upstream from, but not including the Holokuk River drainage (Unit 19A east) and Unit 19A remainder. The seasons in both hunt areas were Sept. 1-Sept. 20, Nov. 20-Nov. 30, Jan. 1-Jan. 10, and Feb. 1-Feb. 10. The harvest limit in Unit 19A east was one moose, although antlerless moose could only be taken during the February season. The harvest limit in Unit 19A remainder was one bull.

In 2003, the Board adopted Proposal WP03-31 to shorten the February season in Unit 19A east to Feb. 1-Feb. 5 and eliminate the antlerless moose season because of declines in the Unit 19A moose population.

In 2004, the Board adopted Resolution 04-1 to support the Central Kuskokwim Moose Management Plan (Management Plan) (ADF&G 2004). The Board also adopted Proposal WP04-58 to eliminate the November, January, and February moose seasons in Unit 19A. Additionally, the Board adopted Proposal WP04-59 with modification to combine the Unit 19A hunt areas, require a State registration permit, and change the harvest limit to one antlered bull. These restrictions addressed severe declines in the Unit 19A moose population and complied with the Management Plan.

In 2006, the Alaska Board of Game (BOG) closed moose hunting in Unit 19A remainder (same as Federal hunt area Unit 19A east below) due to conservation concerns (OSM 2006). Subsequently, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) submitted Special Action WSA06-01b to close moose hunting in Unit 19A, North of the Kuskokwim River, upstream from but excluding the George River drainage, and south of the Kuskokwim River upstream from and including the Downey Creek drainage, not

including the Lime Village Management Area (Unit 19A east). (WSA06-01a requested limiting hunter numbers in Unit 19A remainder). The Board approved WSA06-01b to conserve the moose population and align with State regulations.

In 2007, the Board adopted Proposal WP07-35 with modification to close moose hunting in Unit 19A east (the modifications applied to Unit 19A remainder) because of continued conservation concerns for the Unit 19A moose population including low productivity, bull:cow ratios, and density combined with historically high hunting pressure (OSM 2007). The Western Interior Council submitted and supported the proposal because of conservation concerns over the moose resource. The Yukon-Kuskokwim Council also supported WP07-35 for conservation reasons (OSM 2007).

Moose hunting in Unit 19A east has remained closed under Federal and State regulations since 2007. In 2008, the Board rejected Proposal WP08-35 to establish a moose season in Unit 19A east due to continued conservation concerns. The closure was reviewed in 2011 by WCR10-39 and in 2014 by WCR14-39. The Western Interior Council recommended continuing the closure during both reviews.

In 2019, the BOG will consider Proposal 127, which requests opening a Tier I registration hunt for moose in Unit 19A east. (This hunt area is Unit 19A remainder under State regulations).

Federal public lands comprise approximately 18% of Unit 19A east and consist of 100% Bureau of Land Management (BLM) managed lands (**Map 1**).

**Closure last reviewed:** 2014 – WCR14-39

**Justification for Original Closure:**

§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 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...*

A portion of §816(b) of ANILCA states:

*The Secretary....may temporarily close any public lands (including those within any conservation unit) or any portion thereof, to subsistence uses of a particular fish and wildlife population only if necessary for the reasons of public safety, administration, or to assure the continued viability of such population.*

The combination of low moose population densities, low calf production and survival, low bull:cow ratios and high hunting pressure contributed to declines in the Unit 19A moose population. In response to these conservation concerns, the Board closed moose hunting in Unit 19A east in 2007.

### **Council Recommendation for Original Closure:**

The Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta and Western Interior Councils supported the closure to protect the moose resource for future generations.

### **State Recommendation for Original Closure:**

The State supported the closure due to continued conservation concerns for the Unit 19A moose population. The BOG closed State managed lands in Unit 19A remainder (same as the Unit 19A east Federal hunt area) to moose hunting at its March 2006 meeting.

### **Biological Background**

In 2004, ADF&G in cooperation with the Central Kuskokwim Moose Management Planning Committee published the Central Kuskokwim Moose Management Plan (Management Plan) (ADF&G 2004). State management objectives for the composition of the moose population in Unit 19A are the same as those in the Management Plan (Peirce 2018, ADF&G 2004):

- Maintain a minimum fall post hunt bull:cow ratio of 20-30 bulls:100 cows.
- Maintain a minimum fall post hunt calf:cow ratio of 30-40 calves:100 cows.
- Maintain no fewer than 20% calves (short-yearlings) in late winter.

ADF&G has the additional intensive management objectives for both Units 19A and 19B (Peirce 2018, Seavoy 2014):

- Achieve a moose population of 13,500-16,500 moose (7,600-9,300 in Unit 19A) with 750-950 moose available for harvest annually.

Predation by wolves, black bears, and brown bears influences moose abundance in Unit 19 and may be limiting population growth (Peirce 2018, Keech et al. 2011). ADF&G conducts intensive management in Unit 19A to reduce predation on moose. Wolf control has been ongoing in the wolf control focus area since 2006. In 2013 and 2014, black and brown bears were removed from the Bear Control Focus Area (BCFA) (**Map 2**) (Peirce 2018). ADF&G removed 89 bears (84 black and 5 brown) and 64 bears (54 black and 10 brown) in 2013 and 2014, respectively (ADF&G 2014).

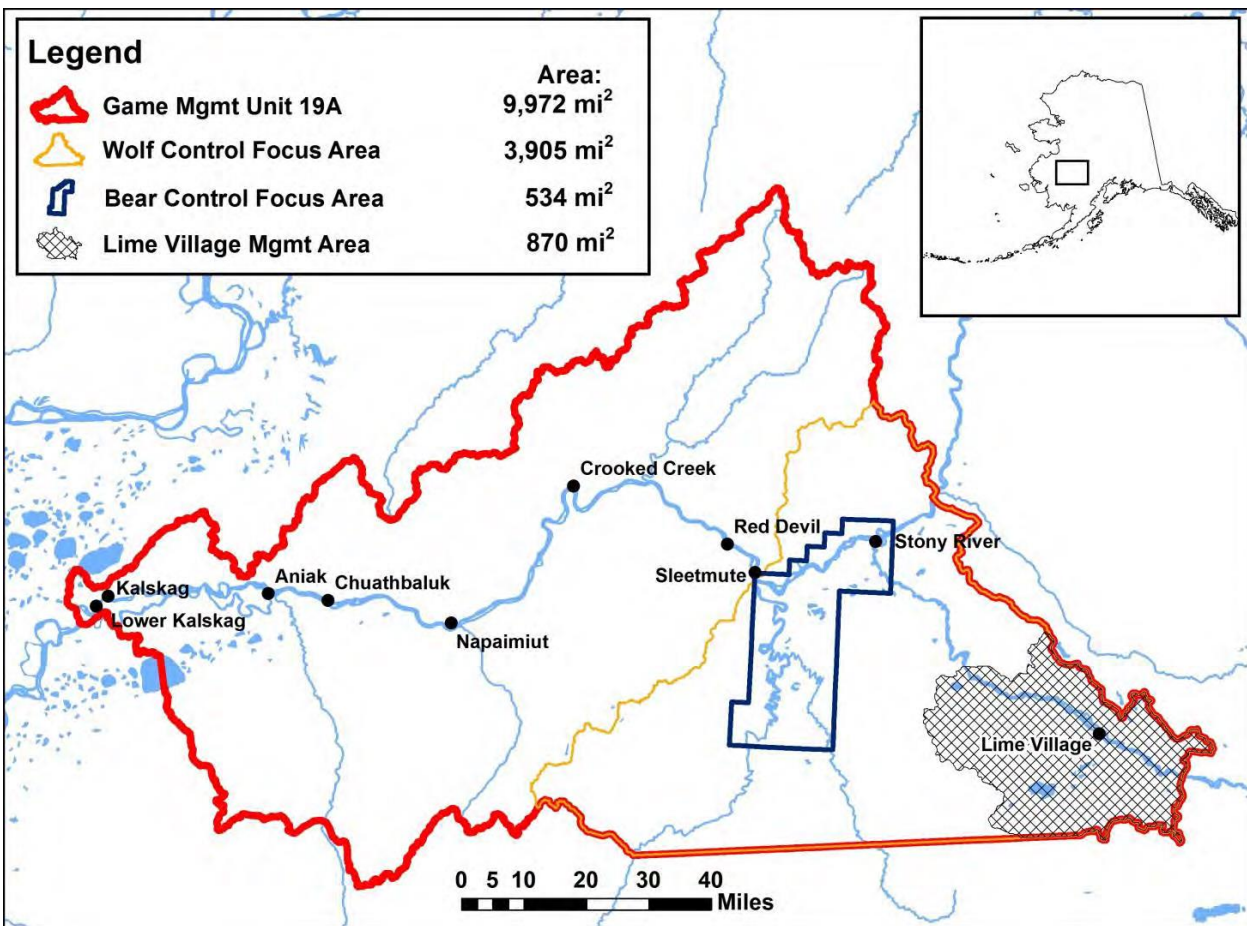
ADF&G conducts aerial surveys in Unit 19A to estimate the moose population in March (**Map 3**) (Peirce 2018, Seavoy 2014). The Federal closed area, Unit 19A east, primarily falls into the Unit 19A east (Holitna) moose survey area (MSA). ADF&G surveys the Holitna MSA every three years and the Aniak MSA opportunistically (Seavoy 2014). Since 2005, the Unit 19A moose population has appeared relatively stable due to overlapping confidence intervals, but remained well below the State's management objective of 7,600 moose (**Figure 1**).

Moose densities of 0.75-0.93 moose/mi<sup>2</sup> are required to meet State population objectives (Seavoy 2014). Between 1998 and 2017, estimated moose density in Unit 19A ranged from 0.25 moose/mi<sup>2</sup> to 1.5 moose/mi<sup>2</sup> (**Table 1**). The highest densities occurred in the BCFA, which comprises only 14% of the Holitna MSA (**Maps 2-3**) (ADF&G 2018a, Peirce 2018). The BCFA estimates are not representative of the entire Holitna MSA or the Federal Unit 19A east hunt area due to the limited survey area and because

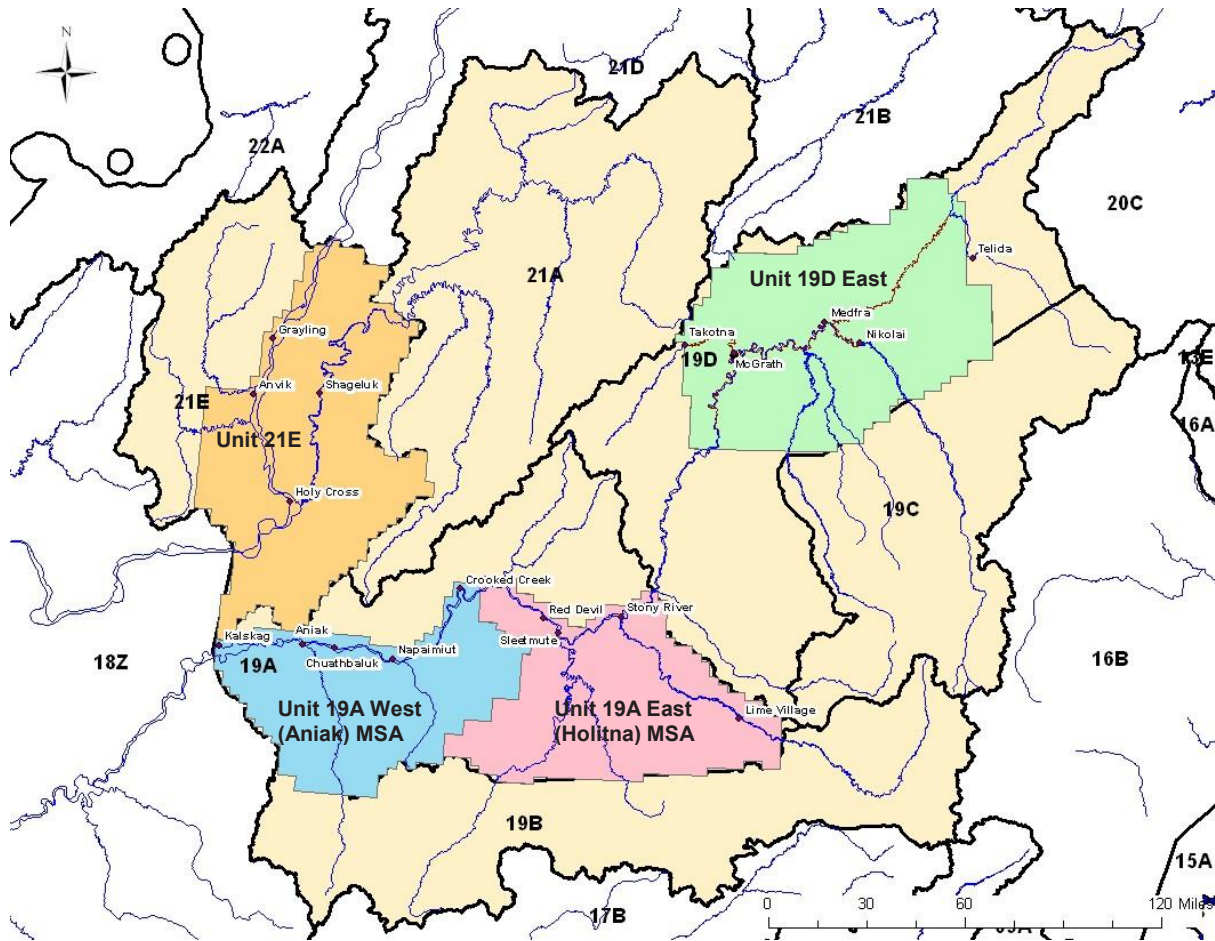
bear removal likely influenced moose abundance in that area. Additionally, most radio-collared moose in Unit 19A display limited movements (Seavoy 2014).

ADF&G conducts aerial surveys to estimate the composition of the Unit 19A moose population in November (Peirce 2018). Between 1987 and 2017, the bull:cow ratio in the Holitna MSA ranged from 6 bulls:100 cows to 58 bulls:100 cows (**Figure 2**). The lowest bull:cow ratio occurred in 2001, but has exceeded management objectives since 2007. Intense hunting pressure and predation likely contributed to the low bull:cow ratio in 2001 (Boudreau 2004). Over the same time period, the calf:cow ratio in the Holitna MSA ranged from 8 calves:100 cows to 72 calves:100 cows (**Figure 2**). The lowest calf:cow ratio also occurred in 2001. Since 2011, the calf:cow ratio has been within or above management objectives (Peirce 2018, ADF&G 2018a, Seavoy 2014).

Twinning rates indicate nutritional status and habitat quality (Peirce 2018). Twinning rates in the BCFA were 56% and 63% in 2013 and 2014, respectively, suggesting habitat is not limiting the moose population in the BCFA (Peirce 2018).



Map 2. Unit 19A wolf control focus area and bear control focus area (ADF&G 2018a).

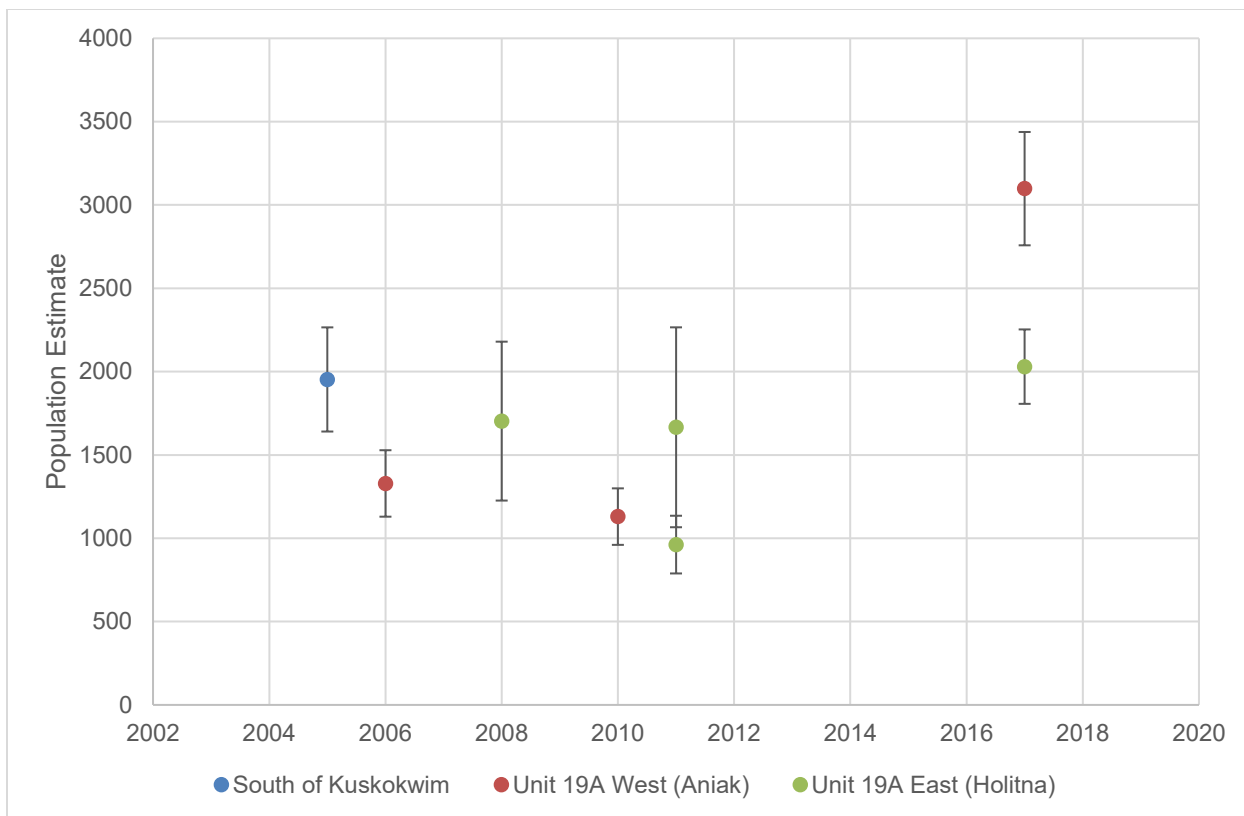


**Map 3.** Units 19, 21A, and 21E showing the 3 scheduled moose survey areas (MSA): Unit 19D East moose survey area, Unit 19A East (Holitna), and Unit 21E moose survey area. Also shown is the Unit 19A West (Aniak) moose survey area which is surveyed opportunistically. The area south of the Kuskokwim River includes both the Unit 19A East (Holitna) and Unit 19A West (Aniak) survey areas (Seavoy 2014).

**Table 1.** Moose density estimates in Unit 19A (moose/mi<sup>2</sup>). See Maps 2-3 for survey areas (ADF&G 2018a, Peirce 2018, Seavoy 2014, ADF&G 2004).

Year	South of Kuskokwim	Unit 19A West (Aniak)	Unit 19A East (Holitna)	Bear Control Focus Area
1998			1.25	
2001		0.7		
2005	0.27			
2006		0.39		
2008			0.44	
2010		0.33		
2011			0.25	
2011			0.43 <sup>a</sup>	
2014				1.50 <sup>a</sup>
2017		1.3	0.52 <sup>a</sup>	1.36 <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Includes a sightability correction factor



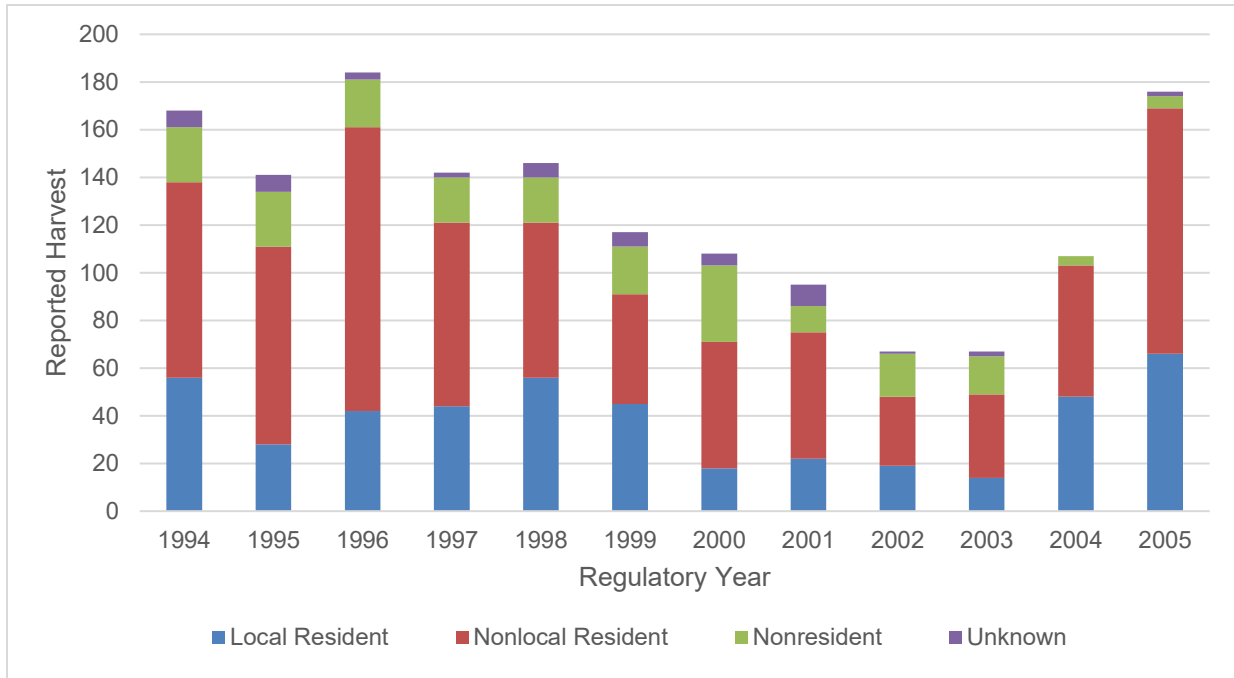
**Figure 1.** Population estimates for moose in Unit 19A with 90% confidence intervals. The higher estimate in 2011 and the 2017 estimate in the Unit 19A East (Holitna) survey area include sightability correction factors. See Map 3 for survey areas (ADF&G 2018a, Seavoy 2014).



**Figure 2.** Fall bull:cow and calf:cow ratios for the Unit 19A East (Holitna) moose survey area (Peirce 2018, ADF&G 2018a, Seavoy 2014).

### Harvest History

No legal moose harvest has occurred in Unit 19A east since 2006 when the season was closed under both Federal and State regulations. Between 1994 and 2005, reported annual moose harvest in Unit 19A ranged from 67-184 moose and averaged 127 moose (Figure 3). Over the same time period, local residents (defined as residents of Units 19A and 19B) harvested 30% of the total reported harvest on average (ADF&G 2004, 2018b). However, harvest reporting is low in many areas of rural Alaska. ADF&G (2004) estimated actual harvest in rural areas as 50-72% greater than reported harvest, resulting in an estimated 57-66 moose/year being harvested by local residents between 1994 and 2005 in Unit 19A.



**Figure 3.** Reported moose harvest in Unit 19A by residency (ADF&G 2004, 2018b). Moose hunting in Unit 19A East was closed in 2006 and has remained closed under State and Federal regulations.

### OSM Recommendation:

- maintain status quo
- initiate proposal to modify or eliminate the closure
- other recommendation

### Justification

Moose abundance in Unit 19A east has not significantly changed since the hunt area closed in 2007 because of conservation concerns. Therefore, the Federal lands closure in Unit 19A East should be retained.

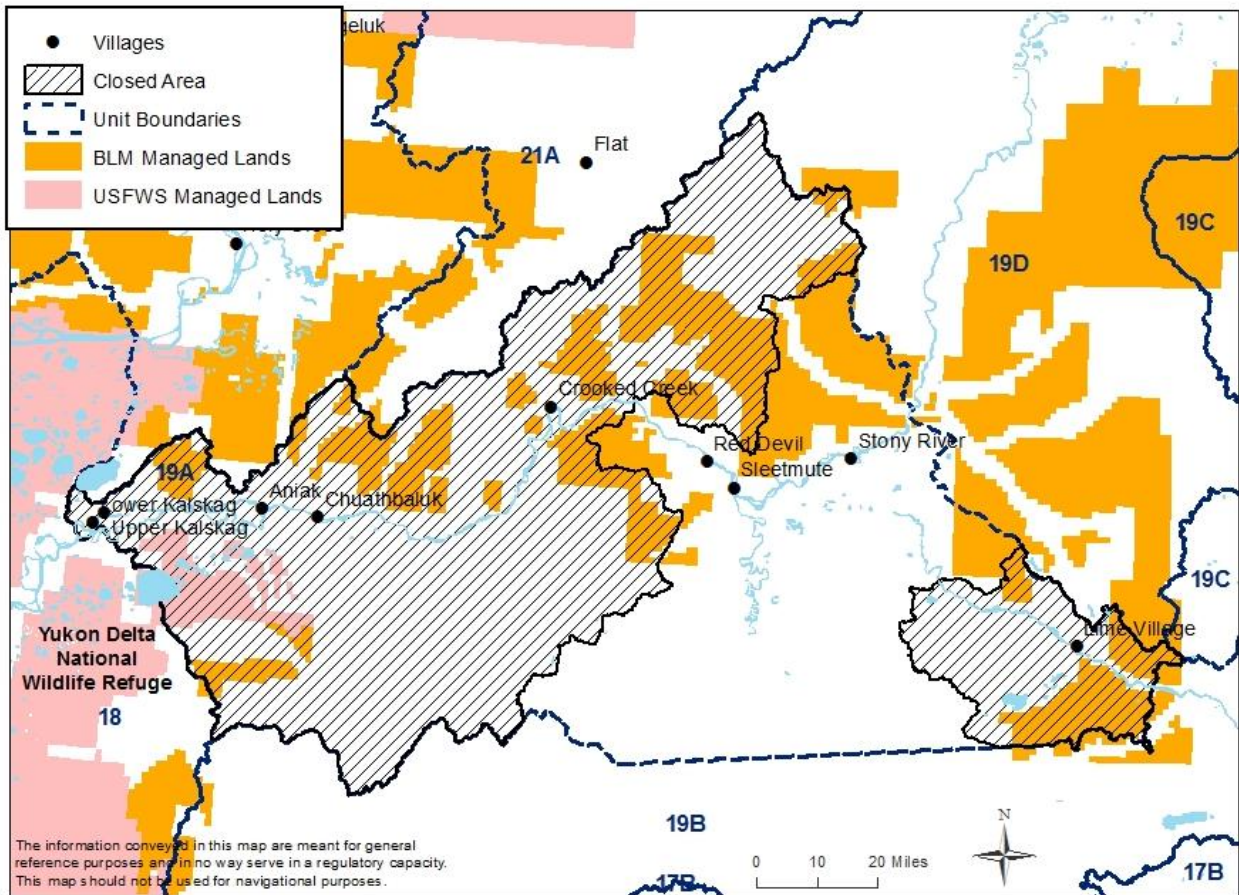


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## FEDERAL WILDLIFE CLOSURE REVIEW WCR18-43

**Closure Location:** Unit 19A remainder (**Map 1**)—Moose



**Map 1.** Federal hunt area closure for moose in Unit 19A remainder.

### Current Federal Regulation

#### Unit 19A—Moose

*Unit 19A, remainder—1 antlered bull by Federal drawing permit or a State permit. Sept. 1-20.*

*Federal public lands are closed to the taking of moose except by residents of Tuluksak, Lower Kalskag, Upper Kalskag, Aniak, Chuathbaluk, and Crooked Creek hunting under these regulations. The Refuge Manager of the Yukon Delta NWR, in cooperation with the BLM Field Office Manager, will annually establish the harvest quota and number of permits to be issued in coordination with the State Tier I hunt. If the allowable harvest level is reached before the regular season closing date, the Refuge Manager, in consultation with the BLM Field*

*Office Manager, will announce an early closure of Federal public lands to all moose hunting*

**Closure Dates:** Year round

**Current State Regulation**

**Unit 19A–Moose**

*Kuskokwim River drainage downstream from, and including, One antlered bull Sept. 1- 20  
the George River drainage, and downstream from and by permit  
excluding the Downey Creek drainage*

**Regulatory Year Initiated:** 2007

**Regulatory History**

In 1990, Federal hunting regulations were adopted from State regulations. The moose season in Unit 19A was Sept. 1-Sept. 20, Nov. 20-Nov. 30, and Feb. 1-Feb. 10. The harvest limit was one moose, although antlerless moose could be taken only from Nov. 20-Nov. 30 and from Feb. 1-Feb. 10.

In 1992, the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) adopted Proposal P92-111 with modification to change the Unit 19A moose season to Sept. 5-Sept. 25, Jan. 1-Jan. 10, and Feb. 1-Feb. 5 to provide harvest opportunity during Russian orthodox holidays in January (FSB 1992). Antlerless moose could only be taken during the winter seasons. The Board rejected Proposal P92-66 to liberalize moose hunting regulations in several units including Unit 19A because moose densities were too low to sustain increased harvests.

In April 1994, the Board deferred Proposal P94-54 to align Unit 19A Federal harvest limits and seasons with State regulations because not all affected Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils (Councils) had considered the proposal. In November 1994, the Board adopted P94-54 with modification, aligning Unit 19A Federal moose regulations with State regulations with the exception of retaining the January season (FSB 1994). Unit 19A was divided into two hunt areas: that portion north of the Kuskokwim River upstream from, but not including the Kolmakof River drainage and south of the Kuskokwim River upstream from, but not including the Holokuk River drainage (Unit 19A east) and Unit 19A remainder. The seasons in both hunt areas were Sept. 1-Sept. 20, Nov. 20-Nov. 30, Jan. 1-Jan. 10, and Feb. 1-Feb. 10. The harvest limit in Unit 19A east was one moose, although antlerless moose could only be taken during the February season. The harvest limit in Unit 19A remainder was one bull.

In 2003, the Board adopted Proposal WP03-31 to shorten the February season in Unit 19A east to Feb. 1-Feb. 5 and eliminate the antlerless moose season because of declines in the Unit 19A moose population.

In 2004, the Board adopted Resolution 04-1 to support the Central Kuskokwim Moose Management Plan (Management Plan) (ADF&G 2004). The Board also adopted Proposal WP04-58 to eliminate the November, January, and February moose seasons in Unit 19A. Additionally, the Board adopted Proposal WP04-59 with modification to combine the Unit 19A hunt areas, require a State registration permit, and

change the harvest limit to one antlered bull. These restrictions addressed severe declines in the Unit 19A moose population and complied with the Management Plan.

In 2006, the Alaska Board of Game (BOG) established a Tier II only moose hunt in Unit 19A, Kuskokwim River drainage downstream from, and including, the George River drainage, and downstream from and excluding the Downey Creek drainage (same as the Federal Unit 19A remainder hunt area) and eliminated the registration permit hunt to conserve the moose resource (OSM 2006). Subsequently, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) submitted Special Action WSA06-01a to require a permit in Unit 19A remainder that worked in concert with the State's Tier II hunt (WSA06-01b requested closing moose hunting in eastern Unit 19A). The Board approved WSA06-01a with modification, requiring a Federal drawing or State Tier II permit and closing moose hunting in Unit 19A remainder except by residents of Tuluksak, Lower Kalskag, Upper Kalskag, Aniak, Chuathbaluk, and Crooked Creek (OSM 2007). A limited harvestable surplus required a §804 analysis, which determined these six communities to be the most dependent on the Unit 19A moose population (OSM 2006).

In 2007, the Western Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council submitted Proposal WP07-35, requesting the same changes as WSA16-01. The Board adopted Proposal WP07-35 with modification because of continued conservation concerns for the Unit 19A moose population including low productivity, bull:cow ratios, and density combined with historically high hunting pressure (OSM 2007). The modification was to delegate authority to the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge manager to annually establish the harvest quota and number of available draw permits. The Western Interior and Yukon-Kuskokwim Councils and ADF&G supported the proposal because of conservation concerns over the moose resource (OSM 2007).

Federal regulations for moose in Unit 19A remainder have not changed since 2007. In 2008, the Assistant Regional Director for the Office of Subsistence Management (OSM), with unanimous consent of the Interagency Staff Committee, rejected WSA08-07 to extend the Unit 19A remainder moose season by 10 days, ending Sept. 30 because the request did not meet the criteria in §\_\_.19(b) and (c) of ANILCA for accepting Special Action requests. Specifically, there was not an unusual, significant, or unanticipated change in resource abundance or hunting conditions (OSM 2008).

Federal public lands comprise approximately 27% of Unit 19A remainder and consist of 86% Bureau of Land Management (BLM) managed lands and 14% U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) managed lands (**Map 1**).

**Closure last reviewed:** 2007 – WP07-35

**Justification for Original Closure:**

§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 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 combination of low moose population densities, low calf production and survival, low bull:cow ratios and high hunting pressure contributed to declines in the Unit 19A moose population. In response to these conservation concerns, the Board closed moose hunting in Unit 19A remainder except by residents of Tuluksak, Lower Kalskag, Upper Kalskag, Aniak, Chuathbaluk, and Crooked Creek in 2007.

**Council Recommendation for Original Closure:**

The Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta and Western Interior Councils supported the closure to protect the moose resource for future generations.

**State Recommendation for Original Closure:**

The State supported the closure due to continued conservation concerns for the Unit 19A moose population and to better align with State regulations. The State established a Tier II only hunt in a portion of Unit 19A in 2006.

**Biological Background**

In 2004, ADF&G in cooperation with the Central Kuskokwim Moose Management Planning Committee published the Central Kuskokwim Moose Management Plan (Management Plan) (ADF&G 2004). State management objectives for the composition of the moose population in Unit 19A are the same as those in the Management Plan (Peirce 2018, ADF&G 2004):

- Maintain a minimum fall posthunt bull:cow ratio of 20-30 bulls:100 cows.
- Maintain a minimum fall posthunt calf:cow ratio of 30-40 calves:100 cows.
- Maintain no fewer than 20% calves (short-yearlings) in late winter.

ADF&G has the additional intensive management objectives for both Units 19A and 19B (Peirce 2018, Seavoy 2014):

- Achieve a moose population of 13,500-16,500 moose (7,600-9,300 in Unit 19A) with 750-950 moose available for harvest annually.

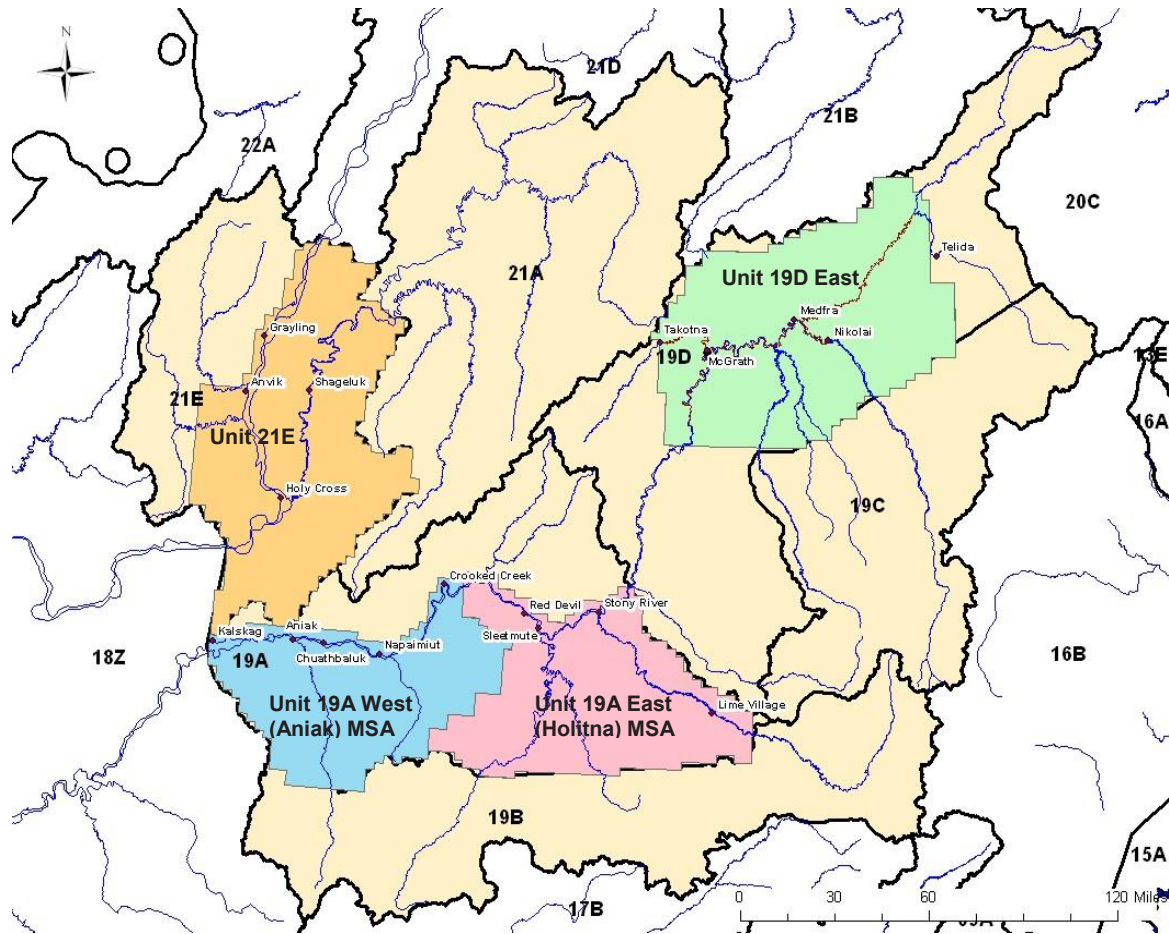
ADF&G conducts aerial surveys in Unit 19A to estimate the moose population in March (**Map 2**) (Peirce 2018, Seavoy 2014). The Federal closed area, Unit 19A remainder, primarily falls into the Unit 19A West (Aniak) moose survey area (MSA). ADF&G only surveys the Aniak MSA opportunistically, but surveys eastern Unit 19A every 3 years (**Map 2**) (Seavoy 2014). While the moose population in the Unit 19A West (Aniak) MSA appeared relatively stable between 2006 and 2010, it increased significantly in 2017 (**Figure 1**). ADF&G also surveyed the entire Unit 19A West hunt area (TM680) for the first time in 2017, estimating 4,135 moose (Peirce 2018, pers. comm.).

Moose densities of 0.75-0.93 moose/mi<sup>2</sup> are required to meet State population objectives (Seavoy 2014). Between 1998 and 2017, estimated moose density in Unit 19A ranged from 0.25 moose/mi<sup>2</sup> to 1.3 moose/mi<sup>2</sup> (**Table 1**) (ADF&G 2018a, Peirce 2018, Seavoy 2014, ADF&G 2004, Peirce 2018, pers. comm.). While the 2017 density estimate for the Unit 19A West (Aniak) MSA of 1.3 moose/mi<sup>2</sup> is the highest ever recorded for this area and is well above State population objectives, the 2017 density estimate for the entire Unit 19A West hunt area is only 0.7 moose/mi<sup>2</sup>, which is just below State management objectives (**Table 1**).

ADF&G conducts aerial surveys to estimate the composition of the Unit 19A moose population in November (Peirce 2018). Between 1987 and 2017, the bull:cow ratio in Unit 19A ranged from 6 bulls:100 cows to 58 bulls:100 cows (**Figure 2**). Between 2004 and 2017, the bull:cow ratio in the Aniak MSA ranged from 20 bulls:100 cows to 42 bulls:100 cows. The lowest bull:cow ratio occurred in 2001, but has met or exceeded management objectives since 2007. However, the 2017 bull:cow ratio in the Aniak MSA just met management objectives (20 bulls:100 cows). Intense hunting pressure and predation likely contributed to the low bull:cow ratio in 2001 (Boudreau 2004).

Between 1987 and 2017, the calf:cow ratio in Unit 19A ranged from 8 calves:100 cows to 72 calves:100 cows (**Figure 3**) (Peirce 2018, Seavoy 2014). Between 2004 and 2017, the calf:cow ratio in the Aniak MSA ranged from 23 calves:100 cows to 64 calves:100 cows. The lowest calf:cow ratio also occurred in 2001. Since 2011, the calf:cow ratio has been within or above management objectives. The 2017 calf:cow ratio in the Aniak MSA is the highest ever recorded (Peirce 2018, pers. comm.).

Predation by wolves, black bears, and brown bears influences moose abundance in Unit 19 and may be limiting population growth (Peirce 2018, Keech et al. 2011). ADF&G conducts intensive management in Unit 19A to reduce predation on moose. However, management activities only occur in eastern Unit 19A, although the Lime Village Management Area is included in the wolf control focus area (ADF&G 2018a).

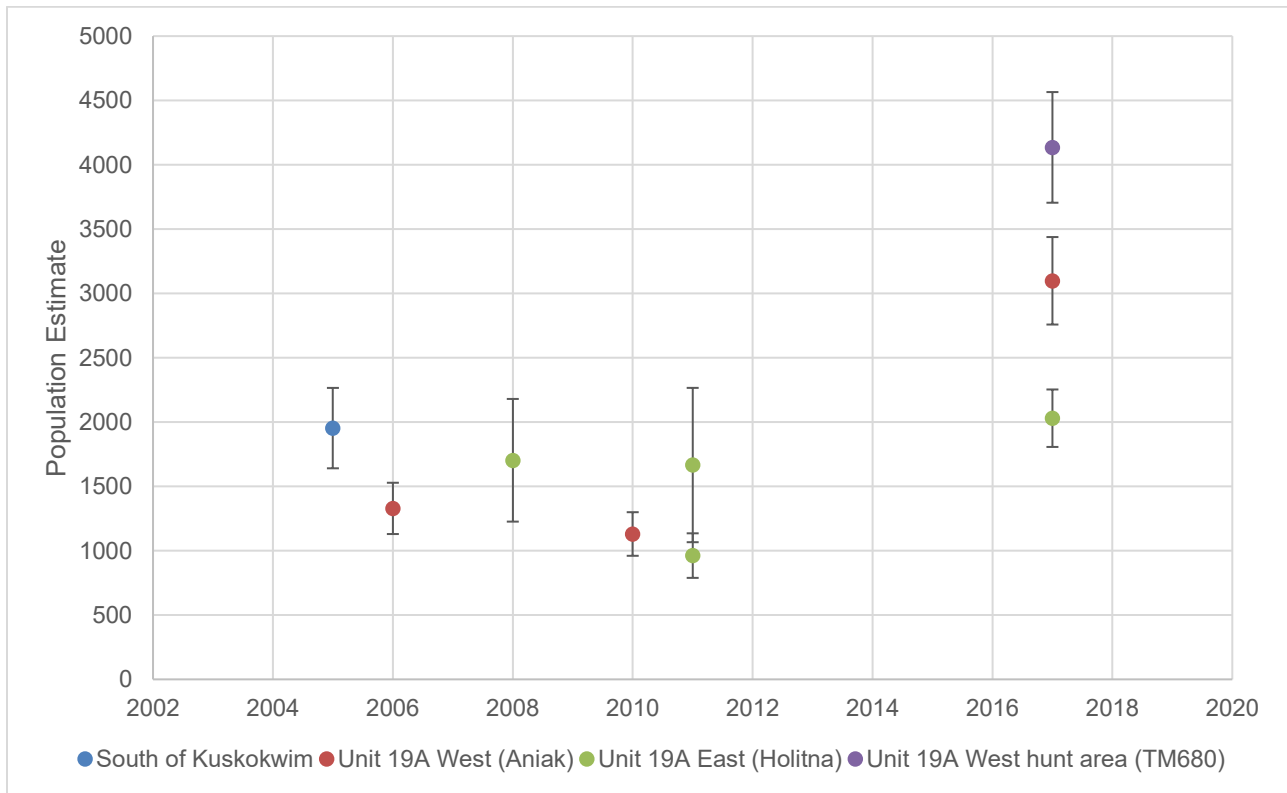


**Map 2.** Units 19, 21A, and 21E showing the 3 scheduled moose survey areas (MSA): Unit 19D East moose survey area, Unit 19A East (Holitna), and Unit 21E moose survey area. Also shown is the Unit 19A West (Aniak) moose survey area which is surveyed opportunistically. The area south of the Kuskokwim River includes both the Unit 19A East (Holitna) and Unit 19A West (Aniak) survey areas (figure from Seavoy 2014).

**Table 1.** Moose density estimates in Unit 19A (moose/mi<sup>2</sup>). See Map 2 for survey areas. The TM680 State hunt area is similar to the Federal Unit 19A remainder hunt area, but does not include the Lime Village Management Area (ADF&G 2018a, Peirce 2018, Seavoy 2014, ADF&G 2004, Peirce 2018, pers. comm.).

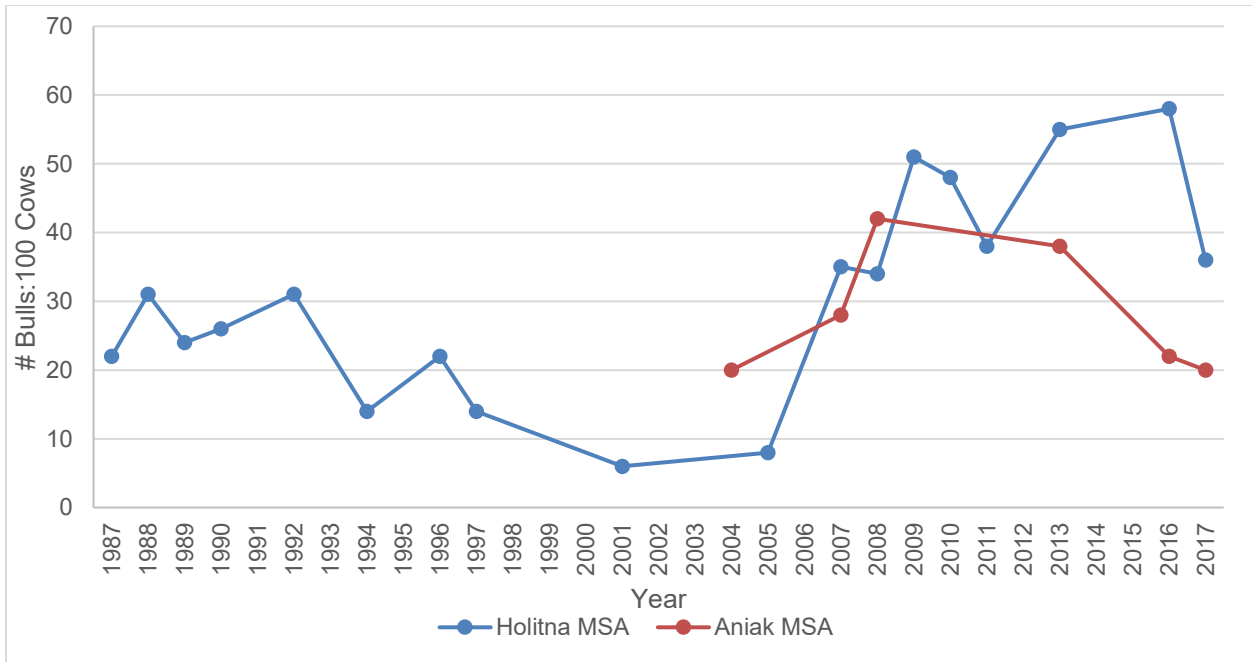
Year	South of Kuskokwim River	Unit 19A West (Aniak)	Unit 19A East (Holitna)	Unit 19A West hunt area (TM680)
1998			1.25	
2001		0.7		
2005	0.27			
2006		0.39		
2008			0.44	
2010		0.33		
2011			0.25	
2011			0.43 <sup>a</sup>	
2014				
2017		1.3 <sup>a</sup>	0.52 <sup>a</sup>	0.7 <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Includes a sightability correction factor

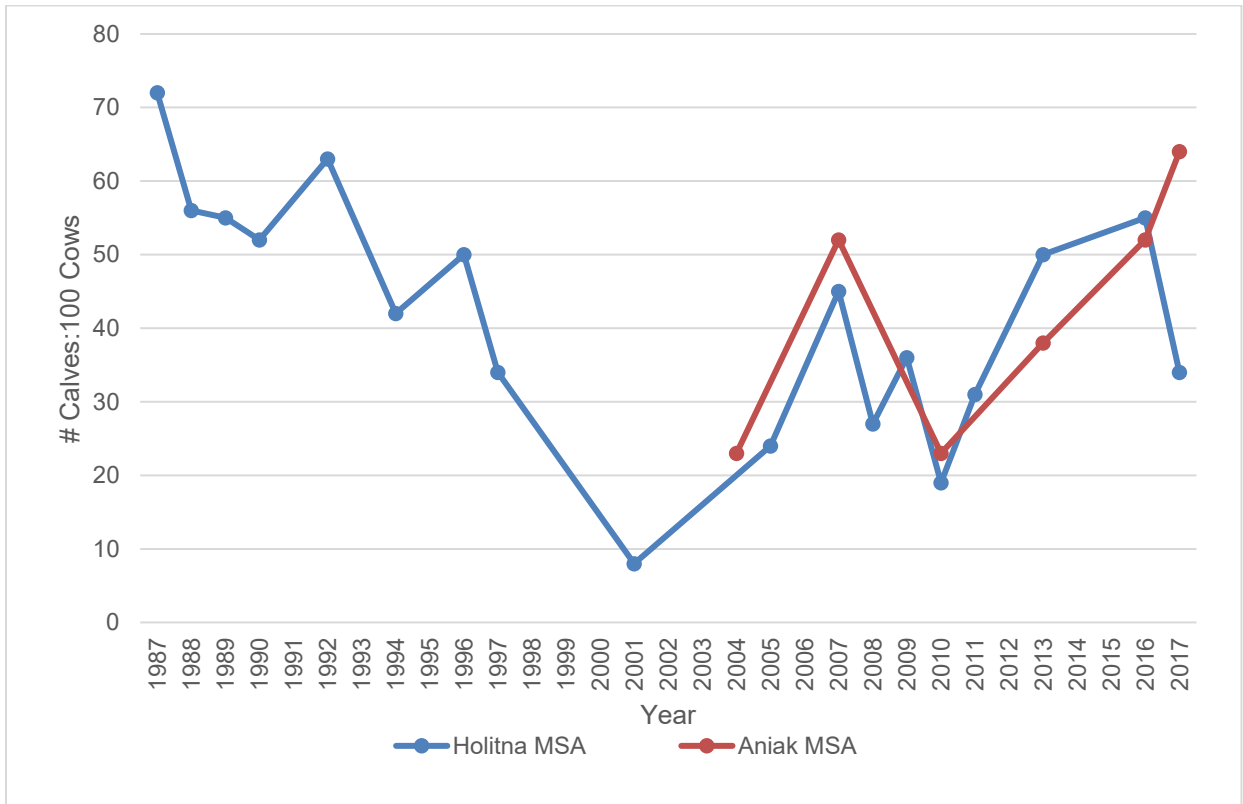


**Figure 1.** Population estimates for moose in Unit 19A with 90% confidence intervals. The higher estimate in 2011 and the 2017 estimate in the Unit 19A East (Holitna) survey area include sightability correction factors. See Map 2 for survey areas. The TM680 State hunt area is similar to the Federal Unit 19A remainder hunt area, but does not include the Lime Village Management Area (ADF&G 2018a, Seavoy 2014, Peirce 2018, pers. comm.).





**Figure 2.** Fall bull:cow ratios for the Unit 19A East (Holitna) and Unit 19A West (Aniak) moose survey areas (Peirce 2018, ADF&G 2018a, Seavoy 2014, Peirce 2018, pers. comm.). See Map 2 for survey areas.



**Figure 3.** Fall calf:cow ratios for the Unit 19A East (Holitna) and Unit 19A West (Aniak) moose survey areas (Peirce 2018, ADF&G 2018a, Seavoy 2014, Peirce 2018, pers. comm.). See Map 2 for survey areas.

## **Harvest History**

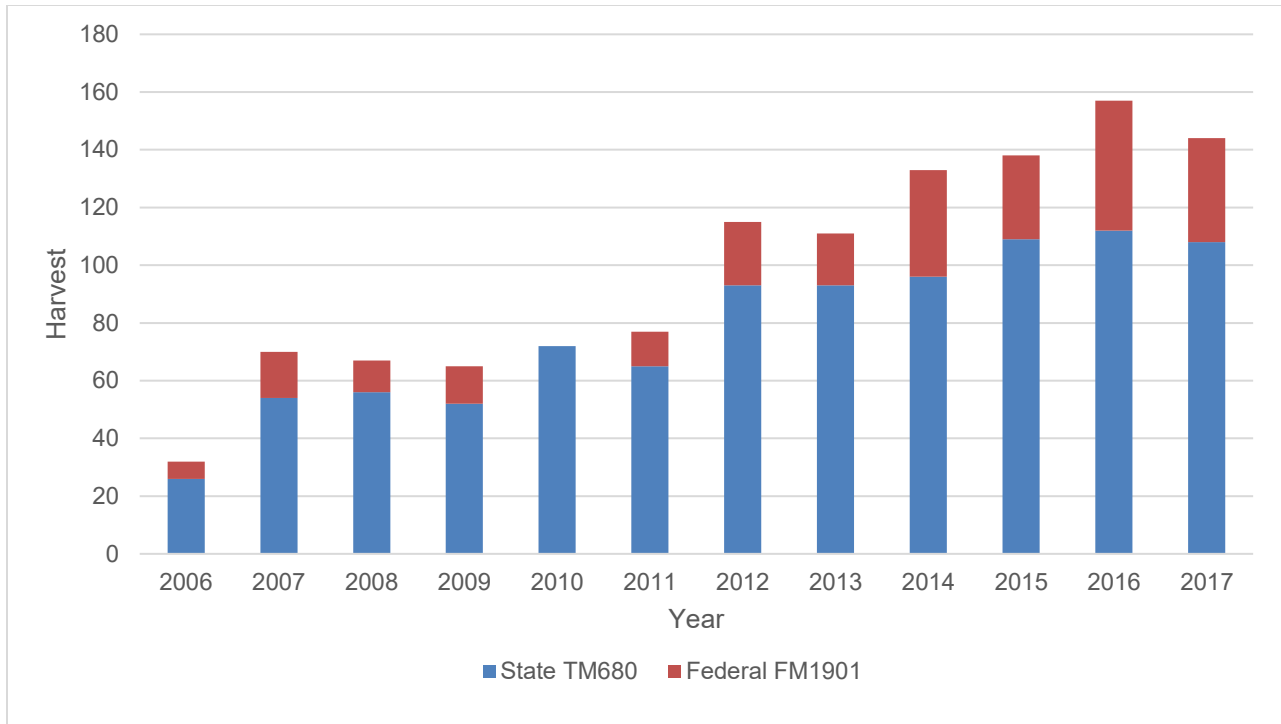
Since 2006, moose harvest in Unit 19A remainder has only occurred under a State Tier II hunt, TM680, and a Federal drawing permit hunt, FM1901. Harvest for both hunts is limited to antlered bulls and restricted to Alaska residents. Harvest on Federal public lands is restricted to residents of Tuluksak, Lower Kalskag, Upper Kalskag, Aniak, Chuathbaluk, and Crooked Creek.

Between 1994 and 2005, prior to any closures, annual reported moose harvest in all of Unit 19A ranged from 67-184 moose and averaged 127 moose (ADF&G 2004, 2018b). Between 2006 and 2017, annual reported moose harvest in Unit 19A remainder averaged 98 moose, ranging from 32-157 moose (**Figure 4**) (ADF&G 2018b, OSM 2018). Over the same time period, annual reported harvest on Federal public lands averaged 22 moose, ranging from 6-45 moose (OSM 2018). On average, 19% of the Unit 19A remainder moose harvest between 2006 and 2017 has occurred on Federal public lands.

In 2006, ADF&G estimated the harvestable surplus of moose as 60 bulls for all of Unit 19A remainder (TM680 hunt area) and as 20 bulls on Federal public lands only (ADF&G 2006, OSM 2007). Most moose harvest on Federal public lands in Unit 19A remainder occurred on Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) (ADF&G 2006). ADF&G estimated the harvestable surplus of moose for the Yukon Delta NWR portion of Unit 19A remainder as 16 bulls with a few additional harvests from BLM lands (ADF&G 2006).

Between 2006 and 2016, the moose population in the Unit 19A West (Aniak) MSA appeared stable, suggesting the harvestable surplus had not changed (**Figure 1**). Since 2007, annual reported harvest has exceeded 60 bulls, the harvestable surplus. Since 2012, annual reported harvest has exceeded 110 moose (**Figure 4**). On Federal public lands, harvest has exceeded 20 bulls/year since 2014. While the number of available Tier II and Federal drawing permits has not changed substantially, hunter success rates have steadily increased since 2006 (**Table 2**).

The significant increase in the 2017 population estimate for the Unit 19A West (Aniak) MSA suggests a parallel increase in the harvestable surplus. A conservative harvest rate of 5% yields a harvestable surplus of 207 bull moose for the Unit 19A remainder hunt area, which is well above annual reported moose harvests. However, low 2016 and 2017 bull:cow ratios in the Unit 19A West (Aniak) MSA indicate few surplus bulls.



**Figure 4.** Reported moose harvest in Unit 19A remainder (ADF&G 2018b, OSM 2018).

**Table 2.** Number of permits issued and success rates for the State Tier II, TM680 hunt and the Federal drawing permit, FM1901 hunt (ADF&G 2018b, OSM 2018).

Year	TM680 Issued	TM680 Success (%)	FM1901 Issued	FM1901 Success (%)
2006	197	13	92	13
2007	227	24	92	25
2008	230	24	97	14
2009	231	23	92	22
2010	200	36	*	*
2011	200	33	72	29
2012	165	47	82	43
2013	222	42	74	32
2014	191	50	92	64
2015	200	55	77	73
2016	197	57	96	65
2017	195	55	96	62

\* No data available

**OSM Recommendation:**

- maintain status quo
- initiate proposal to modify or eliminate the closure
- other recommendation

## **Justification**

No change to the closure is currently recommended. While Federal harvest may have exceeded the harvestable surplus on Federal public lands between 2014 and 2016, harvest can be adjusted by the in-season Federal manager who can set the quota, number of available permits, and close the season when the quota is met. While the 2017 moose density estimate for the Unit 19A West (Aniak) MSA increased significantly and is above State management objectives, the density estimate for the entire Unit 19A West hunt area is much lower and just within State management objectives. Additionally, the 2016 and 2017 bull:cow ratios for the Unit 19A West (Aniak) MSA are low, just meeting State management objectives. As moose harvest in Unit 19A West is restricted to bulls only, a robust bull:cow ratio is recommended before relaxing the closure. For these reasons, no change to the closure is recommended at this time.

While Lime Village Management Area is a separate hunt area under State regulations, it is part of Unit 19A remainder under Federal regulations. The §804 analysis (part of Proposal WP07-35) failed to realize this. Currently, residents of Tuluksak, Lower Kalskag, Upper Kalskag, Aniak, Chuathbaluk, and Crooked Creek (§804 communities) can hunt in the Lime Village Management Area while residents of Lime Village cannot. OSM recommends establishing a new hunt area for the Lime Village Management Area or adding Lime Village to the §804 communities. Submittal of a regulatory proposal is necessary to make these changes.

OSM also recommends removing the regulatory language referring to establishing quotas and permit numbers and delegating authority to a Federal land manager to set quotas and permit numbers via a delegation of authority letter only. Creation of a delegation of authority letter for the Federal in-season manager will serve to simplify regulations and allow for management flexibility through adjustment of in-season winter hunt parameters. Submittal of a regulatory proposal is also necessary to delegate authority.

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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](mailto:subsistence@fws.gov) with questions.

Additional information on the Federal Subsistence Management Program may be found on the web at [www.doi.gov/subsistence](http://www.doi.gov/subsistence) or by visiting [www.facebook.com/subsistencealaska](https://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](mailto:fws-fsb-subsistence-request@lists.fws.gov).

-###-

1011 East Tudor Road MS-121 • Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6199 • [subsistence@fws.gov](mailto:subsistence@fws.gov) • (800) 478-1456 / (907) 786-3888  
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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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.

1011 East Tudor Road MS-121 • Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6199 • subsistence@fws.gov • (800) 478-1456 / (907) 786-3888  
This document has been cleared for public release #0605132015.

**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](http://www.regulations.gov):**

1. Connect to [www.regulations.gov](http://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."

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**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](mailto: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](http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/index.cfm) or by visiting [www.facebook.com/subsistencealaska](http://www.facebook.com/subsistencealaska).

**Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Subsistence Regional Advisory Council**

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

RAC YKD 19001.CJ

Mr. Anthony Christianson, Chair  
Federal Subsistence Board  
c/o Office of Subsistence Management  
1011 E. Tudor Road, Mail Stop 121  
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6199

Dear Chairman Christianson:

The Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council) submits this FY2018 annual report to the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) under the provisions of Section 805(a)(3)(D) of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). At its public meeting in Bethel on September 26-28, 2018, the Council identified concerns and recommendations for this report, [*approving it at its winter 2019 public meeting in Bethel*]. The Council wishes to share information and raise a number of concerns regarding fish and wildlife management, changes to the environment, and the continuation of the subsistence way of life in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Region.

**1. Warmer and wet weather effects on the fall moose hunt**

The Council discussed the experience of the fall Unit 18 moose hunt on the Kuskokwim River and relayed feedback from communities that warmer weather in recent years is making it difficult to harvest and protect the meat from spoilage during the early part of the season. Cooler temperatures are needed to adequately dry and preserve the meat for the winter. Local observations indicate that increasingly warm and wet weather in the early fall has made it more difficult to locate moose since they tend to be less active in the heat, and high water covers up normally exposed river banks that moose would otherwise frequent. In warmer weather, moose tend to be far up the tributary rivers in the foothills of the Kilbuck Mountains where it is cooler. These headwater areas are far away and difficult for Federally qualified users to reach, hindering most from hunting moose there during the current season. Shifting the fall moose hunt opening back by two weeks from the current September 1 opening date would allow for a hunt to occur when the weather conditions may be cooler and more conducive to a successful hunt and safe preservation of the meat.

Additionally, the moose population in Unit 19A is growing and expanding into and around the Kalskag area with many cow sightings. Communities in this area of the Kuskokwim have been experiencing very rainy fall weather conditions that make it very difficult to get out and hunt moose. A second moose hunt in November for this area would be beneficial, as the moose population is expanding and weather is more likely to be conducive to a successful hunt.

The Council will pursue these matters to change the moose harvest season dates through the Federal subsistence regulatory process. The Council raises these issues in its annual report so that the Board is aware of these widely shared experiences about impacts to subsistence due to changing weather in order to help build flexibility into the subsistence management process.

## **2. Abundance of moose on the lower Yukon River causing habitat decline**

Council members who live and hunt on the Yukon River in Unit 18 note the abundance of moose increasing in the region and signs of related habitat destruction. Moose browse is becoming scarce to support such a large population and even areas where subsistence greens are traditionally harvested have seen a decline in subsistence plants due to concentrated amounts of moose feces and ammonia from moose urine. The Council is interested in exploring management options for Yukon River moose to ensure the population does not continue to increase and risk further habitat destruction which could result in a population crash.

## **3. Interest in fisheries research focused on important but lesser studied subsistence fish**

The Council discussed the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program priorities and made recommendations on a wide range of subsistence research topics for the Yukon and Kuskokwim regions. While it is recognized that there is limited funding for all the broad and varied research needs in the region, the Council would like to emphasize the importance of some research to focus on the lesser studied fish species that are important to subsistence.

The Council discussed declines in humpback whitefish and would like to see research on the population, reproduction, and health of spawning habitat for this important subsistence fish. The Council also raised concerns about recent declines in Coho Salmon returns on the Kuskokwim and a need for ongoing monitoring of this increasingly important subsistence fishery. Decline in Coho Salmon numbers raises some alarm since it has been an important secondary subsistence fish in the fall if subsistence salmon fishing is restricted earlier in the season for Chinook Salmon conservation.

Lastly, the Council would like to see research focused on Bering Cisco, which has been a historically abundant and important subsistence fish on both the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers, but very little is known about its population and spawning habitat.

## **4. Increasing observations of fish with deformities and disease**

The Council is concerned about increasing observations of fish with deformities or indications of disease in both Yukon and Kuskokwim salmon and other species of subsistence-caught fish. Council members have shared pictures of some of the latest examples with fisheries biologists



who concur that they had never seen such strange deformities before. The Council would like to see a systematic way to track these observations and be able to submit pictures or send specimens to a lab for pathology testing.

### **5. Increasing observations of sick and injured seals and other marine life**

The Council has concerns about increasing observations of sick and injured seals with blood in the fat and meat as though they had suffered major trauma. Many coastal communities are seeing increasing incidents of seals and other marine creatures washing up on shore, either sick or dead. While the Council recognizes that the marine environment is outside the jurisdiction of the Federal Subsistence Board, marine resources are essential for the life and livelihood of most communities in the region. Seal oil is central to the diet of nearly all communities in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. It is used for dipping dry fish and dry meat as well as mixing with traditional wild greens and berries for agutak. Seal oil is traded widely for other subsistence foods such as salmon, moose, and caribou. Some coastal communities are seeing a shift in the migration of salmon through marine waters where they have fished for generations. The Council requests support from the Federal Subsistence Management Program to get more information on these changes to critical marine resources, what is causing these injuries and illnesses to marine life, and what can be done to mitigate the impacts to subsistence communities.

### **6. Elders teachings and the story about famine**

Council member David Bill, Sr. of Toksook Bay shared a story about the teachings of his elders and their observations about the changing environment. The Council shares this story to help convey to the Board and others to be aware of what the changes in the environment and shifting animal populations may foreshadow.

During his childhood in Hooper Bay and Nelson Island, David was taught that when a famine is about to begin the fish will swim in areas where they are not normally and animals will start to go where they do not normally roam. He was told when trees start to appear and moose and caribou become abundant and come into coastal areas (not their normal habitat) that a famine will follow. Then animals numbers would decrease and go underground for a while.

Now an elder himself, David has seen a lifetime of changes to the environment and the weather. He shared his observations of changing habitat, shifting animal migrations, and changing weather. Even the stars they rely on for navigation are changing. He further recounted how his grandmother used to say “poor you, you’re still alive to see all these changes and even the weather is changing.” David concluded however, that even though the older generations have gone and so many changes are happening to the land and sea and air, if people care for one another and live within traditional Yup’ik values they will be able to continue to live their subsistence way of life.

### **7. Engaging youth in subsistence management**

The Council has enjoyed working with students, and hearing their reports about internship experiences through the Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program and the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program. The Council would like to further engage with local students at

the grade school and high school levels to hear their observations and subsistence concerns and then work with them to address their concerns. The Council requests the assistance of the Federal Subsistence Management Program staff to engage with local schools and help facilitate more in-depth youth involvement with the Regional Advisory Council meetings and Federal subsistence regulatory proposal development process.

### **8. Need for full and balanced membership on the Council**

The Council is very concerned about the number of vacancies created due to the lack of sufficient Council appointments in 2017. Most importantly, the Council lost a lifetime of knowledge and experience when four incumbent Council members were not reappointed to serve another term. The Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Subsistence Regional Advisory Council serves a large and diverse region with over 40 communities and several of the largest rivers and coastal deltas in both size and importance for subsistence fishing. The Council cannot adequately represent the many communities of the region and address resource management on the diverse subsistence hunting and fishing issues from the Yukon to the Kuskokwim, Kenektok, and Goodnews Rivers and Deltas and everything in between without a full membership of the 13-seat Council. The Council desperately needs a balanced membership and representation from throughout the region. The complexity of fisheries management on the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers in particular truly requires having representatives who are residents of at least several villages along each river in order to adequately inform the Council's recommendations. The Council wishes to convey to the Board and Secretaries the great loss and importance of having the expertise, knowledge and leadership when so many incumbents were not appointed last year. The Council requests the Board's support to ensure ample outreach in the region to recruit a balance of applications from the 41 villages and to ensure that the Secretary of the Interior appoints highly qualified applicants in a timely manner.

Thank you for the opportunity for this Council to assist the Federal Subsistence Management Program to meet 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 Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Region. If you have any questions regarding this correspondence, please contact Eva Patton, Subsistence Council Coordinator, with the Office of Subsistence Management at [eva\\_patton@fws.gov](mailto:eva_patton@fws.gov), or 1-800-478-1456 or (907) 786-3358.

Sincerely,

Alissa Nadine Rogers  
Chair

Chairman Christianson

5

cc Federal Subsistence Board

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

Acting Deputy Assistant Regional Director, Office of Subsistence Management

Dr. Jennifer Hardin, Subsistence Policy Coordinator, Office of Subsistence Management

Carl Johnson, Supervisory Program Analyst, Office of Subsistence Management

Eva Patton, Subsistence Council Coordinator, Office of Subsistence Management

Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

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

Interagency Staff Committee

Administrative Record

DRAFT

**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](http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=gameboard.proposal)  
**Email:** [dfg.bog.comments@alaska.gov](mailto: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](http://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](http://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](mailto:kristy.tibbles@alaska.gov).

## Fall 2019 Regional Advisory Council Meeting Calendar

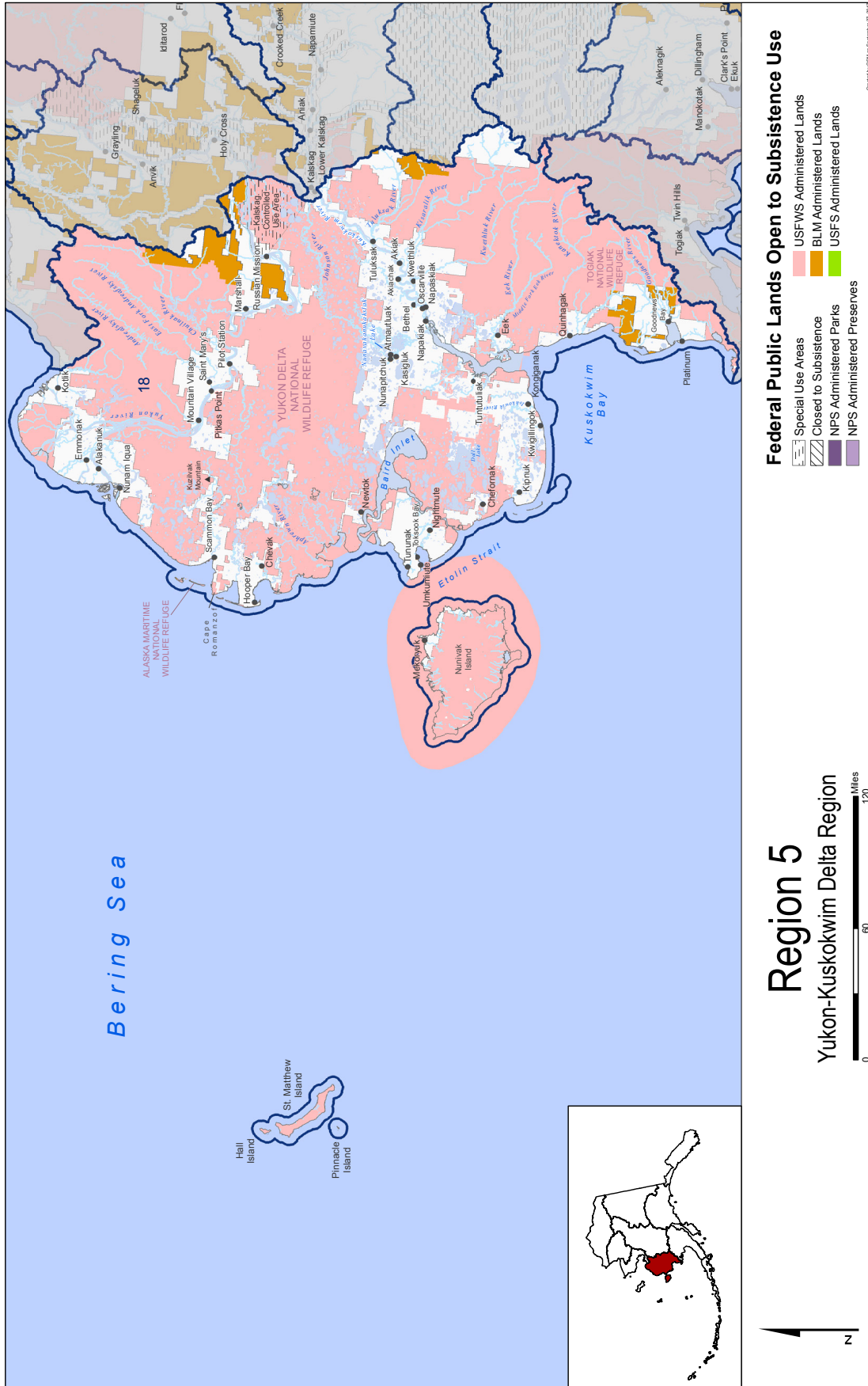
Due to travel budget limitations placed by Department of the Interior on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Office of Subsistence Management, the dates and locations of these meetings will be subject to change.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<i>Aug. 18</i>	<i>Aug. 19</i>	<i>Aug. 20</i>	<i>Aug. 21</i>	<i>Aug. 22</i>	<i>Aug. 23</i>	<i>Aug. 24</i>
<i>Aug. 25</i>	<i>Aug. 26</i>	<i>Aug. 27</i>	<i>Aug. 28</i>	<i>Aug. 29</i>	<i>Aug. 30</i>	<i>Aug. 31</i>
<i>Sept. 1</i>	<i>Sept. 2</i> <b>LABOR DAY HOLIDAY</b>	<i>Sept. 3</i>	<i>Sept. 4</i>	<i>Sept. 5</i>	<i>Sept. 6</i>	<i>Sept. 7</i>
<i>Sept. 8</i>	<i>Sept. 9</i>	<i>Sept. 10</i>	<i>Sept. 11</i>	<i>Sept. 12</i>	<i>Sept. 13</i>	<i>Sept. 14</i>
<i>Sept. 15</i>	<i>Sept. 16</i>	<i>Sept. 17</i>	<i>Sept. 18</i>	<i>Sept. 19</i>	<i>Sept. 20</i>	<i>Sept. 21</i>
<i>Sept. 22</i>	<i>Sept. 23</i>	<i>Sept. 24</i>	<i>Sept. 25</i>	<i>Sept. 26</i>	<i>Sept. 27</i>	<i>Sept. 28</i>
<i>Sept. 29</i>	<i>Sept. 30</i>	<i>Oct. 1</i>	<i>Oct. 2</i>	<i>Oct. 3</i>	<i>Oct. 4</i>	<i>Oct. 5</i>
<i>Oct. 6</i>	<i>Oct. 7</i>	<i>Oct. 8</i>	<i>Oct. 9</i>	<i>Oct. 10</i>	<i>Oct. 11</i>	<i>Oct. 12</i>
<i>Oct. 13</i>	<i>Oct. 14</i>	<i>Oct. 15</i>	<i>Oct. 16</i>	<i>Oct. 17</i>	<i>Oct. 18</i>	<i>Oct. 19</i>
<i>Oct. 20</i>	<i>Oct. 21</i>	<i>Oct. 22</i>	<i>Oct. 23</i>	<i>Oct. 24</i>	<i>Oct. 25</i>	<i>Oct. 26</i>
<i>Oct. 27</i>	<i>Oct. 28</i>	<i>Oct. 29</i>	<i>Oct. 30</i>	<i>Oct. 31</i>	<i>Nov. 1</i>	<i>Nov. 2</i>
<i>Nov. 3</i>	<i>Nov. 4</i>	<i>Nov. 5</i>	<i>Nov. 6</i>	<i>Nov. 7</i>	<i>Nov. 8</i>	<i>Nov. 9</i>

# 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> <b>PRESIDENT'S DAY HOLIDAY</b>	<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**

**Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Subsistence Regional Advisory Council**

**Charter**

- 1. Committee's Official Designation.** The Council's official designation is the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta 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. Make recommendations on determinations of customary and traditional use of subsistence resources.
- f. Make recommendations on determinations of rural status.
- g. Provide recommendations on the establishment and membership of Federal local advisory committees.
- h. 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.
- i. 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 \$190,000, 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:

Thirteen 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 Board in their nomination recommendations to the Secretary will strive to ensure that nine of the members (70 percent) represent subsistence interests within the Region and four 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. Subcommittee 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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