

**Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, Seward Peninsula, and Eastern Interior Alaska Subsistence
Regional Advisory Councils**

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

In Reply Refer To:
OSM.24049

APRIL 17 2024

Anthony Christianson, Chair
Federal Subsistence Board
1011 East Tudor Road, MS 121
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6199

Dear Chair Christianson,

We write to you on behalf of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, Seward Peninsula, and Eastern Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils (Councils) to request that the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) elevate the concerns of several Councils regarding the proposed withdrawal of Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) Section 17(d)(1) lands to the Secretary of Interior.

The ten Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils met together during the All-Council Meeting March 5-8, 2024, in Anchorage Alaska. Among the items discussed was the pending decision on the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) draft Environmental Impact Statement (DOI-BLM-AK-0000-2022-0003-EIS). The Councils are extremely concerned about the potential revocation of ANCSA 17(d)(1) withdrawals in part or in total. The pending decision has the potential to negatively impact millions of acres of land and hundreds of rural communities.

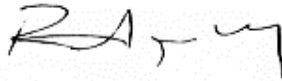
A revocation of any size will result in a loss of habitat protections and the Federal subsistence priority. Our subsistence resources and way of life are already under threat. D-1 lands support large contiguous landscapes and provide critical habitat for fish and wildlife that we depend on for food, culture, and well-being. We strongly advocate for the No Action Alternative to be selected because it will retain the status quo and keep these lands protected from development.

The Councils ask that the Board expeditiously forward these concerns to the Secretary of the Interior and urge her to take action to protect our subsistence resources and way of life by keeping D-1 protections in place. One Council has previously requested you elevate these concerns and several other Councils have submitted comments to BLM in support of maintaining D-1 protections as they currently stand. We have enclosed copies of those submissions with this letter for your awareness.

Thank you for your timely attention to this important matter. If you have questions or would like

to discuss this further, please contact Katerina Wessels, Council Coordination Division Supervisor, Office of Subsistence Management, at 1-800-478-1456 or (907) 786-3885 or katerina_wessels@fws.gov.

Sincerely,



Raymond Oney, Chair
Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta
Regional Advisory Council



Louis Green, Chair
Seward Peninsula
Regional Advisory Council



Robert Wright, Sr., Chair
Eastern Interior Alaska
Regional Advisory Council

Enclosures

1. BBRAC Support for D-1 Protections
2. YKDRAC Comments on ANCSA D-1 Withdrawals
3. WIRAC Comments on ANCSA D-1 Withdrawals
4. WIRAC Request to FSB to Elevate ANCSA D-1 Withdrawals
5. SPRAC Comments on ANCSA D-1 Withdrawals

cc: Federal Subsistence Board

Bristol Bay Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Seward Peninsula Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Western Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Eastern Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Office of Subsistence Management
Interagency Staff Committee
Administrative Record

Bristol Bay Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
c/o Office of Subsistence Management
1011 East Tudor Road, MS 121
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Phone: (907) 787-3888, Fax: (907) 786-3898
Toll Free: 1-800-478-1456

In Reply Refer To:
OSM 24017

FEB 08 2024

BLM Alaska State Office
ATTN: PLO EIS
222 W. 7th Ave, Stop #13
Anchorage, Alaska 99513

Dear State Director Cohn:

I write to you on behalf of the Bristol Bay Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council) to provide Council's **comments on the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) regarding the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) Section 17(d)(1) lands (D-1 lands) withdrawals (DOI-BLM-AK-0000-2022-0003-EIS)**.

The Council represents subsistence harvesters of fish and wildlife resources on Federal public lands and waters in the Bristol Bay Region in Southwest Alaska. The Council was established by the authority in Title VIII of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) and is chartered under the Federal Advisory Committee Act. Section 805 of ANILCA and the Council's charter establishes the Council's authority to initiate, review and evaluate proposals for regulations, policies, management plans, and other matters related to subsistence uses of fish and wildlife within the region. The Council also reviews resource management actions occurring outside their regions that may impact subsistence resources critical to communities served by the Council. The Council provides a forum for the expression of opinions and recommendations regarding any matter related to the subsistence uses of fish and wildlife within the region.

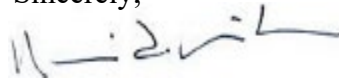
At the fall meeting held October 24-25, 2023, in Dillingham, the Council discussed the impacts of opening ANCSA D-1 lands. We, the Council members, urge BLM to retain the D-1 protections to safeguard fish and wildlife habitats and large intact landscapes that support subsistence resources and opportunities.

Subsistence users in the Bristol Bay Region will be highly impacted by changes to D-1 protections. D-1 lands support large contiguous landscapes and the fish and wildlife habitats critical for species migrations and adaptation to our rapidly changing environment. Local communities that depend on caribou, salmon, moose, and other subsistence resources are already encountering reductions in populations. Harvesters have been restricted from hunting the

Mulchatna Caribou Herd, an important subsistence resource in the Bristol Bay region, since 2021 due to conservation concerns. The Council has numerous concerns over the health of salmon runs in the region. A number of salmon stocks have failed to reach sustainable goals, including several stocks that have been severe enough to be designated stocks of management concern. These diminished returns are having widespread implications for the district and the fisheries. As environmental changes continue to increase pressure on resources, we believe it is in the public interest to protect intact lands and pristine waters as a precautionary and preventative approach to resource decline. We urge BLM to maintain the D-1 protections to support subsistence resources, subsistence opportunities, and our communities.

The Bristol Bay Subsistence Regional Advisory Council would like to thank you in advance for taking our views into consideration and the opportunity to assist the Federal Subsistence Management Program in meeting its charge of protecting subsistence resources and uses of these resources on Federal public lands and waters. If you have any questions regarding this comment, please contact me via Leigh Honig, Council Coordinator, Office of Subsistence Management, at leigh_honig@fws.gov, or 1-800-478-1456 or 1-907-891-9053.

Sincerely,



Nanci Morris Lyon,
Chair

cc: Federal Subsistence Board

Bristol Bay Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

Office of Subsistence Management

Interagency Staff Committee

Benjamin Mulligan, Deputy Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Mark Burch, Assistant Director, Division of Wildlife Conservation, Alaska Department of
Fish and Game

Administrative Record

Western Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

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

In Reply Refer To:
OSM 24018

FEB 01 2024

William Dunk
Anchorage District Manager Bureau of Land Management
4700 BLM Road
Anchorage, Alaska 99507

Dear Mr. Dunk,

I write to you on behalf of the Western Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council) to ask that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) please accept the following comments regarding the BLM draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that considers the impacts of opening Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) 17(d)(1) lands (D-1 lands).

The Council represents subsistence harvesters of fish and wildlife resources on Federal public lands and waters in the Western Interior Region. It was established by the authority in Title VIII of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) and is chartered under the Federal Advisory Committee Act. Section 805 of ANILCA and the Council's charter establishes the Council's authority to initiate, review and evaluate proposals for regulations, policies, management plans, and other matters related to subsistence uses of fish and wildlife within the region. The Council also reviews resource management actions occurring outside their regions that may impact subsistence resources critical to communities served by the Council. The Council provides a forum for the expression of opinions and recommendations regarding any matter related to the subsistence uses of fish and wildlife within the region.

The Council supports the BLM process to review and thoughtfully consider the impacts that decisions on the ANCSA D-1 lands withdrawals will have on fish and wildlife populations and subsistence resources. Federally qualified subsistence users in the Western Interior Region will be highly impacted by the BLM decisions on the D-1 lands withdrawals because of the large contiguous block of BLM managed lands in our region under review through this EIS process. The 28 million acres of BLM managed lands that are analyzed in the EIS support important subsistence resources in our region and throughout the state. They are central to fish spawning and rearing habitat and contain important habitat for moose and caribou.

The previous administration prepared five Public Land Orders (PLOs) without adequately consulting the federally recognized Tribes and federally qualified subsistence users who will be impacted by the decisions. The flawed decision to advance the PLOs was also made without consideration of how lifting D-1 lands orders could negatively affect cultural use areas, fish and

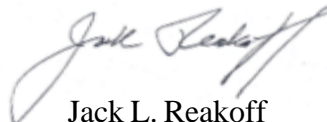
wildlife habitats, subsistence resources, hunting, fishing, gathering rights, and the food security of hundreds of communities and thousands of federally qualified subsistence users.

Under ANCSA, the Secretary of the Interior must evaluate whether the D-1 lands protection should remain in place to protect the public interest in the Western Interior Region. The Council believes it is in the public's interest to retain the D-1 public land orders to maintain land under Federal management. Alaska is at the forefront of climate change, and widespread impacts are already occurring including melting permafrost, coastal and riverbank erosion, increasing air and water temperatures, and habitat displacements of fish and wildlife populations across subarctic and arctic environments. These environments support our subsistence resources, and they are changing rapidly. With so many unknowns, it is in the public interest to adopt precautionary approaches and to prioritize protection of intact lands and pristine waters of the natural environment.

We urge action to retain the D-1 public land orders to protect subsistence habitat and resources that support the way of life of our region's federally qualified subsistence users.

The Council would like to thank you in advance for taking the views of the Council into consideration. Any questions or comments regarding this matter can be addressed to me through our Council Coordinator Nissa Pilcher at (907) 891-9054 or nissa_batespilcher@fws.gov.

Sincerely,



Jack L. Reakoff
Chair

cc: Federal Subsistence Board
Office of Subsistence Management
Steve Cohn, Alaska State Director BLM
Jacob Vialpando, Anchorage Field Office Manager, BLM
William Hedman, Acting Central Yukon Field Manager, BLM
Kenneth Lord, Assistant Regional Solicitor
Western Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Interagency Staff Committee
Administrative Record

Western Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

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Phone: 907-786-3888 Fax: 1-907-786-3898
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In reply refer to:
OSM.23095

JUL 31 2023

Anthony Christianson, Chair
Federal Subsistence Board
1011 East Tudor Road, MS 121
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6199

Dear Mr. Christianson,

I write to you on behalf of the Western Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council) to ask that the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) elevate to the Secretary of the Interior the Council's concerns on the ongoing Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) 17(d)(1) (D-1) withdrawals.

The Council supports the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) process to review and thoughtfully consider the impacts that decisions on the ANCSA D-1 withdrawals will have on fish and wildlife populations and subsistence resources. Federally qualified subsistence users in the Western Interior Region will be highly impacted by the BLM decisions on the D-1 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) because of the large contiguous block of BLM managed lands in our region under review in this process. The 28 million acres of BLM managed lands that are analyzed in the EIS support important subsistence resources in our region and throughout the state. They are central to fish spawning and rearing habitat and contain important habitat for moose and caribou.

The previous administration prepared five Public Land Orders (PLOs) without adequately consulting the federally recognized Tribes and federally qualified subsistence users who will be impacted by the decisions. The flawed decision to advance the PLOs was also made without consideration of how lifting D-1 orders could negatively affect cultural use areas, fish and wildlife habitats, subsistence resources, hunting, fishing, gathering rights, and the food security of hundreds of communities and thousands of federally qualified subsistence users.

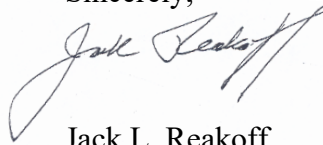
Under ANCSA, the Secretary of the Interior must evaluate whether the D-1 protection should remain in place to protect the public interest in the Western Interior Region. The Council believes it is in the public's interest to retain the D-1 public land orders to maintain land under Federal management. Alaska is at the forefront of climate change, and widespread impacts are already occurring including melting permafrost, coastal and riverbank erosion, increasing air and water temperatures, and habitat displacements of fish and wildlife populations across subarctic

and arctic environments. These environments support our subsistence resources and they are changing rapidly. With so many unknowns, it is in the public interest to adopt precautionary approaches and to prioritize the protection of intact lands and pristine waters of the natural environment.

We urge action to retain the D-1 public land orders to protect subsistence habitat and resources that support the way of life of our region's federally qualified subsistence users.

The Council would like to thank you in advance for taking the views of the Council into consideration. Any questions or comments regarding this matter can be addressed to me through our Council Coordinator Nissa Pilcher at (907) 891-9054 or nissa_batespilcher@fws.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jack Reakoff". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Jack L. Reakoff
Chair

cc: Federal Subsistence Board
Office of Subsistence Management
Steve Cohn, Alaska State Director, BLM
Kenneth Lord, Assistant Regional Solicitor
Western Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Interagency Staff Committee
Administrative Record

Seward Peninsula Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

c/o Office of Subsistence Management
1011 East Tudor Road, MS 121
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In Reply Refer To:
OSM 24014

JAN 30 2024

Steve Cohn, State Director
Bureau of Land Management
Alaska State Office
ATTN: PLO EIS
222 W. 7th Avenue,
Stop #13
Anchorage, AK 99513

Dear State Director Cohn,

On behalf of the Seward Peninsula Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council), please accept the following comments regarding the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that considers the impacts of opening Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act 17(d)(1) lands (D-1 lands). We urge BLM to retain the D-1 protections to safeguard the fish and wildlife habitat and large intact landscapes that support subsistence resources and opportunities.

The Council represents subsistence harvesters of fish and wildlife resources on Federal public lands and waters in the Seward Peninsula Region. It was established by the authority in Title VIII of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) and is chartered under the Federal Advisory Committee Act. Section 805 of ANILCA and the Council's charter establishes the Council's authority to initiate, review and evaluate proposals for regulations, policies, management plans, and other matters related to subsistence uses of fish and wildlife within the region. The Council also reviews resource management actions occurring outside their regions that may impact subsistence resources critical to communities served by the Council. The Council provides a forum for the expression of opinions and recommendations regarding any matter related to the subsistence uses of fish and wildlife within the region.

The Council held a public meeting on November 1-2, 2023, in Nome. Among the items discussed was BLM's draft EIS to consider the effects of opening 28 million acres of protected D1 lands to extractive industrial development. The previous administration prepared, but never finalized orders to lift the D-1 protections for specific lands within Bristol Bay, Bering Sea Western Interior, East Alaska, Kobuk Seward, and the Ring of Fire regions. The flawed decision to advance these orders was made without consideration of how lifting D-1 protections could negatively affect cultural use areas, fish and wildlife habitat, subsistence resources, hunting, fishing, gathering

rights, and the food security of communities and subsistence users in our region.

Subsistence users in the Seward Peninsula will be highly impacted by BLM's decision on whether to maintain the D-1 protections. D-1 lands support large contiguous landscapes and the fish and wildlife habitat needs for species migration and adaptation to our rapidly changing environments. Communities that depend on caribou, salmon, moose, and other subsistence resources are already encountering reductions in populations. In some regions, subsistence harvesters are being asked to harvest less to preserve species. As environmental changes continue to increase pressure on resources, we believe it is in the public interest to protect intact lands and pristine waters as a precautionary and preventative approach to resource decline.

We urge BLM to maintain the D-1 protections to support subsistence resources, subsistence opportunities and our communities.

The Council thanks you for the opportunity to comment on this draft EIS. If you have any questions or would like to follow up, please contact me through our Subsistence Council Coordinator Gisela Chapa at (907) 786-3676 or ana_chapa@fws.gov.

Sincerely,



Louis H. Green, Jr.
Chair

cc: Federal Subsistence Board
Seward Peninsula Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Office of Subsistence Management
Interagency Staff Committee
Administrative Record

Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

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In Reply Refer To:
OSM.24007

FEB 02 2024

Steven Cohn, State Director
Bureau of Land Management
222 W 7th Ave., #13
Anchorage, AK 99513

Dear Mr. Cohn,

I write to you on behalf of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council) to provide the Council's **comments on the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) 17(d)(1) Withdrawals Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) (DOI-BLM-AK-0000-2022-0003-EIS)** and express concerns for how the Council receives notifications from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) on issues and comment opportunities such as this one.

The Council represents subsistence harvesters of fish and wildlife resources on Federal public lands and waters in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Region. It was established by the authority in Title VIII of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) and is chartered under the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). Section 805 of ANILCA and the Council's charter establishes the Council's authority to initiate, review and evaluate proposals for regulations, policies, management plans, and other matters related to subsistence uses of fish and wildlife within the region. The Council also reviews resource management actions occurring outside their regions that may impact subsistence resources critical to communities served by the Council. The Council provides a forum for the expression of opinions and recommendations regarding any matter related to the subsistence uses of fish and wildlife within the region.

The Council held a public meeting on October 10-12, 2023, in Anchorage. Among the items discussed was the ANCSA 17(d)(1) Withdrawals DEIS. The Council is extremely concerned about the impacts that revoking withdrawals could have to subsistence statewide. Revocation of 17(d)(1) withdrawals in part or in total would result in a loss of Federal lands on which rural residents have the benefits of a Federal subsistence priority, and it would open those lands up to potential development that would have further negative impacts to the environment and animal resources subsistence users depend on.

In the Bering Sea-Western Interior BLM planning area there are 13,322,000 acres of withdrawal

under evaluation in the DEIS. A vast majority of these lands are located along or near the Yukon and Kuskokwim rivers and their tributaries, in areas that provide critical habitat, migration corridors, and ecosystem services. Our Council cannot emphasize enough the importance of keeping as much of this land as possible under Federal subsistence jurisdiction and closed to development. The world is changing at a fast pace and the future presents many uncertainties. We need as many levels of protection left in place as possible because our resources and traditional practices are already under threat. Our region is experiencing significant food insecurity due to the on-going salmon crisis and caribou hunting closures. Residents of our region are already fighting the proposed Donlin Gold Mine and the impacts it will have to our subsistence lifeways. Revoking withdrawals in our region will result in even more mineral development projects and threats to subsistence. Keeping lands open to Federal subsistence management allows for a rural preference of use in times of conservation and gives rural residents a greater opportunity to continue customary and traditional practices, which sustain us nutritionally, culturally, and spiritually.

Our Council urges the BLM to adopt the alternative that will have the least impact to subsistence and leave the most amount of land under Federal subsistence management jurisdiction. Although the alternatives presented in the DEIS were not available for review during our fall 2023 meeting, the sentiments expressed by the Council at that time are in line with selection of Alternative A, the no-action alternative, which has since been released.

The Council would additionally like to let BLM know our concerns about how our Council was made aware of this issue and the accompanying opportunity for public comment on this topic. BLM did not notify the Council of this issue prior to our fall 2023 meeting; a non-governmental advocacy organization informed us. We should have been notified directly by BLM about the forthcoming ANCSA 17(d)(1) Withdrawals DEIS given the significance of this issue and its potential impacts to subsistence, as well as our Council's authority under ANILCA. We do thank BLM staff for agreeing to present on this issue to our Council at our fall 2023 meeting after we found out about it from other sources. However, in the future, we request that BLM *directly* notifies affected Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils of all upcoming and open public comment periods so that we may exercise our Council's authority under ANILCA to review and make recommendations on plans and proposals that have impacts to subsistence. It is particularly important that we receive timely notice of issues such as this one because we are chartered under FACA and we must conduct all our business in a public forum. We cannot elect to submit comments as a Council except during our biannual meetings. Further, even after BLM staff presented to us on this issue and notified us there would be an upcoming public comment period, the Council never received notification from BLM when the comment period actually opened. Again, we had to rely on other organizations and our Coordinator to make us aware.

The Council thanks you for considering these comments and for working to improve the process by which Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils are notified of such issues and comment periods in the future. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this further, please contact me through our Subsistence Council Coordinator Brooke McDavid at (907) 891-9181 or brooke_mcdavid@fws.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ray", is placed over a light gray rectangular background.

Raymond Oney, Chair

cc: Federal Subsistence Board
Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Office of Subsistence Management
Interagency Staff Committee
Benjamin Mulligan, Deputy Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Mark Burch, Assistant Director, Division of Wildlife Conservation, Alaska Department of
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Administrative Record