



***Southeast Alaska
Subsistence Regional
Advisory Council***

**Don Hernandez, Chairman
1011 E. Tudor Road, MS121
Anchorage, Alaska 99503**

**In Reply Refer To:
OSM.24060**

May 28 2024

Anthony Christianson, Chair
Federal Subsistence Board
c/o Office of Subsistence Management
1011 East Tudor Road, Mail Stop 121
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

Dear Chairman Christianson,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council) to request additional resources for Regional Advisory Councils to fulfill their responsibilities.

Council members enjoyed the opportunity to speak with members from other Regional Advisory Councils across the state at the All-Council meeting in March 2024. It became apparent through our discussions that there were issues that this Council has identified in the past which are needs in common throughout most all ten councils.

This Council is not speaking on behalf of other councils. The All-Council meeting discussions just reminded us that council members still lack resources that would assist us in our work. Therefore, we would like to reiterate some of the requests we have made over the last several years. These requests center around additional resources that the Council would like to have to better perform our duties.

1) Additional Funding:

- The Council would like to see an increase in money given to the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program so that current and future projects can be adequately funded. Some of these long-term projects provide crucial information for long term and in-season management. They also provide vital trend data.

- The Council would like to see the Wildlife Resource Monitoring Program (WRMP) created. We have previously requested that this type of program be created to study many wildlife species such as deer and wolf and the complexity of dual management of such subsistence resources. In an initial presentation to us on the proposed move of the Office of Subsistence Management (OSM) from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to the Secretary of the Interior, representatives from the Office of the Secretary claimed that there would be an increase of funding for OSM and subsistence activities including for wildlife monitoring. The Council would like an update on when the WRMP will be created.

2) Need for Additional Staff:

- In addition to funding the research programs mentioned above, the Council would like to see an increase in staff to support those projects.

3) Independent Data:

- The Council would like to see more inclusive data from independent resources because traditional ecological knowledge and real-time observations differ from the data presented in the State's information. In its 2020 Annual Report, the Council brought to the Board's attention that the most relevant and current information is needed to make appropriate recommendations to the Board. Without current data, the Council is handicapped in making educated decisions. The Council realizes that much of the data used for analyses within the program comes from the State of Alaska. Further, the State does not always collect information in the particular area of interest stated in a proposal.
- As an example, data regarding wolf populations in Unit 2 have been disputed by many residents on Prince of Wales Island. This has led to controversial decisions made on wolf management. The Council believes an alternative data-gathering program would help improve management of wolves on the island.
- The Council would like to see additional staffing and resources to support an independent research/data gathering program. It is believed that an additional source of information will lead to better available science that the Council can consider along with public testimony, traditional ecological knowledge and the State's data.

The addition of these resources and programs would better equip the Council in considering proposals and management plans. The Council would appreciate the availability of more comprehensive information and evidence when performing its deliberations and forming its recommendations.

Thank you for considering our requests on this issue and the Council looks forward to hearing how they may be addressed. We would appreciate an update on the proposed WRMP and any possible independent data-gathering program that could be funded by the Departments of Agriculture and Interior.

If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact me via DeAnna Perry, Subsistence Council Coordinator, USDA – Forest Service, at deanna.perry@usda.gov or, (907) 209-7817.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Don Hernandez", written in a cursive style.

Don Hernandez, Chair

cc: Federal Subsistence Board
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