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YUKON KUSKOKWIM DELTA SUBSISTENCE  
REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

PUBLIC MEETING

VOLUME II

YUPIIT PICIRYARAIT CULTURAL CENTER  
Bethel, Alaska  
August 22, 2024

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

- Alissa Nadine Rogers, Acting Chair
- Jacqueline Cleveland
- Henry Parks
- Norma Evan
- John Andrew
- Phillip Peter
- Robert Hoffman
- Myron Naneng

Regional Council Coordinator, Brooke McDavid

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P R O C E E D I N G S

(Bethel, Alaska - 8/21/24)

(On record)

MS. MCDAVID: Good morning, everyone. Thank you for joining us. Qu yana for joining us at the fall 2024 Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Regional Advisory Council. Before we get started today, Mr. Henry Parks is going to give an invocation.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Waqaa and good morning. I want to welcome you to the Yukon Kuskokwim Regional Advisory Council here in Bethel at the (In Native) Cultural Center. Today is August 22<sup>nd</sup>, current time now is 9:08 and I will call this meeting to order.

(Pause)

At every meeting, I would like to start with a prayer in the morning. Mr. Phillip, did you want to give our prayer for today?

MR. PETER: (Gives Invocation in Yup'ik)

INTERPRETER: Our Heavenly Father, we are gathered here in person, standing in respect of you and we thank you for this day that you have given us. Please lead us as we use this day for our meeting, give us wisdom and be able to discern what is right and wrong and apply it to our jobs and our lives. Please bless our work and also our families back home as they go about their daily lives, preparing for the coming winter. Please keep them safe in your hands, keep them from worries and whatnot. And also, we give this agenda to you; please bless the agenda and guide us, as we were chosen to do this work by you. We ask for your presence and your guidance in this. Please bless the meetings. Amen.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Qu yana, Mr. Peter. I am Alissa Nadine Rogers, and I'm the Vice Chair of this Council. I'm going to be Acting Chair as Mr. Oney is unable to attend this meeting this week. One thing we did not do yesterday was a land acknowledgment. The land acknowledgment is that we're on Yup'ik land of (In Native). And we want to honor that we are renting

1 or borrowing our land from our future generations. It  
2 is not ours to take now; it is borrowed from our future  
3 generations, and we need to ensure that we are going to  
4 be protecting our future generations' lands and  
5 resources, Guyana. Ms. Brooke, would you be so kind as  
6 to do our roll call for us this morning? Guyana.

7

8 MS. MCDAVID: Sure thing, Madam Chair.  
9 Mr. Henry Parks.

10

11 MR. PARKS: Present.

12

13 MS. MCDAVID: Norma Evan.

14

15 MS. EVAN: Present.

16

17 MS. MCDAVID: John Andrew.

18

19 MR. ANDREW: Here.

20

21 MS. MCDAVID: Walter Morgan. Walter had  
22 a family emergency and had to return home. So, he is  
23 excused for the rest of the meeting.

24

25 MS. MCDAVID: Jacqueline Cleveland.

26

27 MS. CLEVELAND: Here.

28

29 MS. MCDAVID: Phillip Peter.

30

31 MR. PETER: Here.

32

33 MS. MCDAVID: Wassily Alexie, are you  
34 joining us online today? You may have to press star six  
35 to unmute. One more call for Wassily Alexie online. Okay,  
36 we'll check back. Wass [sic] did let me know he was  
37 going to try to call in today. Chair Raymond Oney is  
38 excused from this meeting. Myron Naneng.

39

40 MR. NANENG: Here.

41

42 MS. MCDAVID: Robert Hoffman.

43

44 MR. HOFFMAN: Here.

45

46 MS. MCDAVID: Let the record show Myron  
47 is here, if that didn't come through on the sound. And  
48 Acting Chair, Ms. Alissa Nadine Rogers.

49

50 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Present.

1  
2 MS. MCDAVID: Madam Chair, with eight of  
3 eleven Council members present, we have a quorum.  
4

5 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Quyana,  
6 Brooke. At the beginning of every meeting and every day,  
7 we open up for public comments or public testimony. Do  
8 we have anyone in the room or online that would like to  
9 give their public testimony at this time? All right.  
10 I'll go ahead and give you guys a couple more minutes  
11 if you would like to give public testimony. But at this  
12 time, could folks who have not introduced themselves  
13 yesterday, please come to the mic and introduce  
14 yourselves?  
15

16 MS. BECK: I've gotta press the button?  
17 Good morning, everyone. I'm Laurie Beck. I'm the deputy  
18 refuge manager with Yukon Delta National Wildlife  
19 Refuge.  
20

21 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Welcome.  
22

23 MS. BECK: Thank you.  
24

25 MS HOOPER: Good morning. Jennifer Hooper  
26 with AVCP. I was here yesterday but missed  
27 introductions. So, it's good to be here.  
28

29 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Welcome.  
30

31 MS. JOHNSON: Hi, good morning. Ashley  
32 Johnson with AVCP Natural Resources as well. I was gone  
33 or -- I was late yesterday. Thank you.  
34

35 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: All right,  
36 folks, let's go ahead and get people online. If you had  
37 not introduced yourself yesterday, can we please get  
38 your first name, last name, and your organization or  
39 representation?  
40

41 MS. MCDAVID: And Madam Chair, just a  
42 reminder.....  
43

44 MR. RISDAHL: Greg Risdahl. Sorry Brooke.  
45

46 MS. MCDAVID: Sorry, Greg, to interrupt.  
47 I just wanted to remind folks online that might be  
48 joining us by phone, if you would like to address the  
49 Council, you can press star six to unmute yourself and  
50 get the attention of Madam Chair. Or you can use the

1 raise hand feature, and that's star five on your phone.  
2 Then we can call on you. Thanks. Greg, if you want to  
3 introduce yourself again, sorry about that. Thanks.

4  
5 MR. RISDHAL: Thank you, Brooke. Madam  
6 Chair, this is Greg Risdahl, the Interagency Staff  
7 Committee member for the Forest Service. And I'm joining  
8 you online today. Thank you very much. I'm sorry I missed  
9 yesterday.

10  
11 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you,  
12 Greg, and welcome.

13  
14 (Pause)

15  
16 All right. I thought I heard one more  
17 person after Greg. We didn't quite catch your first and  
18 last name.

19  
20 MS. LAVINE: Hello, Madam Chair. Can you  
21 hear me?

22  
23 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Yes, ma'am.  
24 We can hear you loud and clear now.

25  
26 MS. LAVINE: Thank you. This is Robbin  
27 LaVine, and I'm the subsistence policy coordinator for  
28 OSM. And I am listening in, and it's good to hear your  
29 voice. Thank you all for having me.

30  
31 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you,  
32 Robbin, welcome.

33  
34 MS. PATTON: Good morning, Alissa. This  
35 is Eva Patton with the National Park Service Assistance  
36 Program and ISE, it's so good to listen in to the Council  
37 today. Thank you.

38  
39 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you,  
40 Ms. Eva. Good to hear you, welcome.

41  
42 MS. PATTON: You too.

43  
44 MS. ESQUIBLE: Good morning, Council and  
45 Madam Chair, this is Janessa Esquible calling in with  
46 the Association of Village Council Presidents. Qu yana  
47 for having me.

48  
49 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Good  
50 morning, Janessa, welcome.

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(Pause)

All right. Hearing no more introductions. I would like to thank you and welcome you all to our meeting today. Ms. Brooke, do we have any more further meeting announcements to get us started?

MS. MCDAVID: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, I would like to remind folks here in the room, if you would like to sign up to give a public comment, there are blue comment cards on the table over there in the back. You can just put your name down and you can pass those to any staff member or to me. We'll make sure that the Chair knows that you'd like to comment, and that can be on any of the agenda items. That just helps us keep track of participation in the meeting and make sure that we have a good record of your comments. I'd also like to remind folks in the room that we have Mr. Patrick Sampson providing Yup'ik-English interpretation throughout the meeting. If you would like to listen to him, you can pick up one of these headsets that's on the table. It's on channel one, and we're really happy to be working with Patrick.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Quyana, Mr. Sampson.

All right. We're going to jump back into any public comments for folks who want to address the Council at this time.

(Pause)

MS. CLEVELAND: Good morning, Council. My name is Jacqueline Cleveland and I'm stepping down as RAC Council member for the moment and speaking on behalf of the Native Village of Quinhagak. I'm just going to read this letter, which will explain what Quinhagak is trying to do now. We've been getting concerned -- comments from people in the community about the first two weeks of September when we're at the height of our moose season. There are issues with sport fish floaters and other outfits that are interrupting the moose hunt. A lot of times, when someone is about to get a moose, it gets scared away by the next floater coming along. So that's kind of where this came from. In the process, we submit [sic] a proposal. Since it's a closure, we couldn't submit it as a proposal, so we did a special action request instead. Then we learned that we can't

1 use that process for what we're asking, so we wrote a  
2 letter to the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge Area  
3 Manager, Kenton Moos, on August 16th. I'll read this  
4 letter, it's regarding a request for a commercially  
5 guided sport fishing closure from September 1st to  
6 September 15th.

7  
8 Dear Refuge Manager Moos,  
9 the Native Village of Quinhagak submits this request  
10 pursuant to the ANILCA to close commercially guided  
11 sport fishing on the Kanektok River to protect  
12 subsistence moose hunting opportunities. The presence  
13 of commercially guided sport fishing on the Kanektok  
14 River during hunting season negatively affects moose  
15 hunters and interferes with this important subsistence  
16 activity. Accordingly, the Native Village of Quinhagak  
17 requests that the refuge manager close commercially  
18 guided sport fishing during hunting seasons for a two-  
19 week period from September 1 to September 15 each year.  
20 Moose are an important subsistence resource for tribal  
21 members because of increased food costs, the village's  
22 remote location, and changing environmental factors food  
23 security is a growing concern. Since 2020, subsistence  
24 hunters have not harvested Mulchatna Herd Caribou due  
25 to their low population numbers. Hunters have instead  
26 become increasingly reliant on moose hunting on the  
27 Kanektok River to fill freezers and meet the village's  
28 subsistence needs. During the fall moose hunting  
29 seasons, tribal members travel far and for long periods,  
30 handling variable river and weather conditions to find  
31 harvest opportunities. Commercially guided sport fishing  
32 on the Kanektok River compounds the difficulty for  
33 subsistence moose hunters. Commercially guided sport  
34 fishers are often present and proximate to subsistence  
35 moose hunters while on the river. Subsistence moose  
36 hunters have encountered sport fishers whose presence  
37 and conduct have scared away moose just prior to the  
38 hunters' opportunity to take the moose. Those missed  
39 opportunities have disastrous effects on the tribal  
40 members' food security. Without immediate action,  
41 commercial guided sport fishing will continue to disrupt  
42 tribal members' subsistence moose hunts from September  
43 1 to 15, rendering the sport fishing effort incompatible  
44 with ANILCA subsistence preference. Notably, some local  
45 outfitters have voluntarily ceased floating on the  
46 Kanektok from September 1 to 15, the most important  
47 hunting period to allow subsistence moose hunting to  
48 occur without interference. However, voluntary  
49 compliance is not enough. ANILCA requires that taking  
50 on public lands of fish and wildlife, for non-wasteful

1 subsistence uses, shall be accorded priority over the  
2 taking on such lands of fish and wildlife for other  
3 purposes. A change in Federal management is therefore  
4 necessary and requires Refuge Manager action. Title  
5 Eight of ANILCA requires the Refuge Manager to take  
6 action to protect subsistence moose hunters from refuge  
7 uses, including commercially guided sport fishing. There  
8 is abundant legal authority for the required action.  
9 First, under 50 CFR, the terms of all commercially guided  
10 sport fishing permits on the Kanektok River drainage may  
11 be amended to restrict sport fishing from September 1  
12 to 15. The Refuge Manager has the authority to suspend,  
13 revoke, or reasonably restrict the terms of a permit if  
14 the Refuge Manager determines the use to be incompatible  
15 with the refuge's purposes or inconsistent with the  
16 service's obligations under Title Eight of ANILCA. Those  
17 circumstances are present here. Secondly, under 50 CFR,  
18 the refuge manager has the responsibility to close  
19 certain refuge uses to ensure that the activity or area  
20 is being managed in a manner compatible with the purposes  
21 for which the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge Area is  
22 established. One such purpose of the Togiak Refuge is  
23 to cause the least adverse impact possible on the local  
24 residents who depend upon subsistence uses for the  
25 resources of the public lands in Alaska, and to manage  
26 the taking of fish and wildlife for subsistence uses  
27 consistent with ANILCA. When there is a conflict between  
28 managing both subsistence uses and other refuge uses,  
29 the subsistence priority in Title Eight of ANILCA  
30 controls. Thus, the refuge manager must close the  
31 Kanektok River to commercially guided sportfishing from  
32 September 1 to 15 to prevent the use from interfering  
33 with federally qualified subsistence moose hunting.  
34 Although the Refuge has previously analyzed the  
35 potential effects of commercially guided and unguided  
36 sport fishing on subsistence hunting and wildlife and  
37 acknowledged that there are impacts such as displacement  
38 and avoidance due to sport fishing activities,  
39 environmental and social concerns have changed  
40 dramatically since the Refuge's 2009 compatibility  
41 determination. That determination does not consider the  
42 specific relationship between users and evidence of the  
43 adverse effects between users. Where subsistence hunters  
44 have experienced lost harvests due to commercially  
45 guided sport fishing, and where other sport fishers  
46 recognize the potential for interference and have  
47 voluntarily ceased their activities during the prime  
48 hunting season. Importantly, the Refuge's 2009 decision  
49 assumed that subsistence hunting can harvest the  
50 Mulchatna Caribou Herd, which has not been available for



1 hunting since 2021. The refuge manager must take action  
2 to preserve subsistence moose hunting opportunities for  
3 federally qualified rural residents. ANILCA requires  
4 that subsistence uses of fish and game be afforded a  
5 priority over other uses, and when other uses interfere  
6 with subsistence uses, the incompatible uses must be  
7 restricted. Here, the refuge manager must protect  
8 subsistence moose hunting opportunities on the Kanektok  
9 by closing commercially guided sport fishing during  
10 seasons for a two-week period from September 1 to 15  
11 each year. We look forward to your action. If you have  
12 any questions, please contact us. Native Village of  
13 Quinhagak.

14  
15 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Quyana,  
16 Jacqueline. Do we have any questions or comments for her  
17 at this time? Mr. Naneng.

18  
19 MR. NANENG: Thank you, Madam Chair. I  
20 just want to add to your comment about needing the Refuge  
21 to monitor moose hunting in the region. Every year, we  
22 hear from people in the village, especially along the  
23 Yukon, about headless moose being found along the  
24 riverbanks, sloughs, and sometimes piles of meat left  
25 at the airports where moose hunters have gone hunting,  
26 sports hunters. And the people from the villages have  
27 complained that there is no action taken by those who  
28 allowed the permits to be issued. But if a native person  
29 is caught with a moose without a permit or a hunting  
30 license, I'm sure every means will be taken by law  
31 enforcement to ensure they comply with the laws or rules  
32 that have issued. So, this concern needs to be addressed.  
33 And many of the people along the Yukon River have raised  
34 this issue. One of the other things too is that we --  
35 our village corporations own land, yet there is no  
36 trespass enforcement on sports hunters that are not  
37 invited to come to our lands. I know that people have  
38 flown down from Nome and from other parts of the state,  
39 and they have gone on to hunted moose on our lands around  
40 Kusilvak, because that is reported to us by a guiding  
41 operation permitted to hunt in our areas by the village  
42 corporation. So there needs to be action taken to comply  
43 with what Jackie has stated -- cited by the Fish and  
44 Wildlife Service or whoever's monitoring that. I know  
45 that the excuse will be its navigable waters. The state  
46 of Alaska issues permits, hunting licenses, and things  
47 like that, but that should not be the excuse. So, I  
48 would request Fish and Wildlife Service, because we're  
49 within the National Wildlife Refuge, take action and  
50 with any other federal agency involved within our area

1 here, to be involved in providing law enforcement to  
2 those sports hunting camps and sports hunting operations  
3 that come out of Bethel, Nome, and other areas. Because  
4 there's a lot of meat brought here to Bethel by sports  
5 hunters. What do they do with the meat that they're not  
6 able to give out to those that might be in need? The  
7 only thing that you see departing from Bethel are the  
8 number of antlers. Trophy hunters, you don't eat  
9 antlers, yet that's the only thing that comes out of our  
10 airports here in Bethel. That's an observation that I've  
11 seen, packaged antlers being shipped out of our area. I  
12 would request our Regional Advisory Council to write a  
13 letter to the Board -- the Federal Subsistence Board to  
14 request Fish and Wildlife Service and other agencies  
15 that are with in our region to put law enforcement people  
16 that would monitor this, as many of our people in our  
17 villages call want and waste. So, we really would  
18 appreciate - I know it's not a laughing matter or a  
19 discussion that people take lightly in the village  
20 because I've heard it year after year, it happens. And  
21 if RITs can be utilized to help with this enforcement,  
22 I think that would be one plus. Because in the  
23 communities, we have VPSOs that try to help law  
24 enforcement in the communities, but let's utilize our  
25 Refuge Information Technicians to help monitor what is  
26 going on during the month of September with sports  
27 hunters that come to our region. With that, thank you  
28 very much, Madam Chair.

29  
30 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you,  
31 Mr. Nanuk. Mr. Hoffman.

32  
33 MR. HOFFMAN: Yes, this issue is a very  
34 serious issue because of the state regulations on  
35 hunting. The state regulations say in there; if you are  
36 an Alaska resident, you can do these things. The problem  
37 that I'm having is we the tribes, don't have any say so  
38 in the matter. Since we don't have any say so in the  
39 matter about what we the tribes would like to see, this  
40 is what is happening. The point I'm trying to make is  
41 someone else, rather than the tribes, writes the rules  
42 and regulations for the state of Alaska, and in there  
43 it says if you are a resident of Alaska, you can do  
44 these things. What we need is tribal requests that are  
45 also involved in the state regulations. That's what we  
46 need. We need some way to insert our information and our  
47 hurts that we're having along with the state's  
48 regulations, so that we have at least some say so. Again,  
49 again, like I said yesterday, if it continues to do  
50 this, we're going to do what we're told again. And the

1 guided hunters, because of the rules that the state  
2 makes, if they're a resident, they can come and hunt.  
3 Something's got to be done about this. We gather here  
4 to help our tribes, not to just come in here and get  
5 their information and take it to our tribal meetings.  
6 It's sad, we're just wasting money, the tribes are  
7 wasting money allowing their tribal members to go to  
8 these meetings and try to hope and pray that they have  
9 some say so. And so far, I haven't seen any. This is  
10 what I've been seeing. Somehow, some way, the tribes got  
11 to have their insertion of what their needs and wants  
12 are prioritized because they're the ones that live in  
13 the region. And I don't want to hear, like I said  
14 yesterday, and I don't want to hear this, that it just  
15 so happens you want to live there, but the state makes  
16 the rules. It's not fair to us tribal members to continue  
17 year after year after year, this happens. We gotta stop  
18 this, somehow allow the tribes to have a little  
19 information of the harm that they are getting at this  
20 time, and I don't know how to do that. I know somebody  
21 does, how to have a -- somehow put in the tribe's request  
22 in the state regulations. The state is the one that does  
23 all this to our people, and we don't even talk about  
24 them. It's sad. Okay, that's all I got Madam Chair.  
25 Thank you.

26  
27 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you,  
28 Mr. Hoffman. Mr. Parks.

29  
30 MR. PARKS: (Indiscernible) Chair.  
31 Henry, for the record, from Nunap. You stated that the  
32 sports fishermen are in your area. So, my question --  
33 who's the primary owner of the land around your area?  
34 Question.

35  
36 MS. CLEVELAND: Along the Kanektok River,  
37 it's kind of complicated. It's -- so its state  
38 jurisdiction up until the refuge, (indiscernible) refuge  
39 and then it's refuge after that, refuge waters. But the  
40 land along the waters is a mix of corporation, native  
41 allotment, until you get to the refuge.

42  
43 MR. PARKS: Okay, thank you. So, in this  
44 case, earlier Myron brought it up the land uses, because  
45 right now we all have land selections under corporation.  
46 So, in that case I'm gonna make an example, like if I  
47 go to my cousin's or my friend's land here, she's going  
48 to say you're trespassing. So, you know, so in that  
49 case, do the corporation landowners enforce the land in  
50 your area?

1  
2 MS. CLEVELAND: Through the Chair. On the  
3 Kanektok River, since it's under state jurisdiction,  
4 even though there's corporation and allotment land, the  
5 water itself is still fully navigable by anyone or for  
6 use. But on the Arolik River, it's different. If I'm not  
7 mistaken, it's one of three unique rivers in Alaska where  
8 the state doesn't have navigability on that river  
9 because it's not navigable to the lake, only on high  
10 water. And then there is where the corporation, Kanektok  
11 Inc., has control of the -- like the waterbed, the lands,  
12 and they actually issue limited permits for floaters who  
13 want to use that river, but they pay a fee to the  
14 corporation. And then yeah so -- but with that river  
15 they've already -- the corporation has already ceased  
16 issuing any permits from September 1 to 15, so that  
17 river is fine for -- if that answers your question. It's  
18 just complicated, we have two rivers, and they're both  
19 very different and both under different jurisdictions,  
20 but we have better luck on the Arolik because the  
21 corporation owns most of it or part of it. Yeah.

22  
23 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Mr. Hoffman.

24  
25 MR. HOFFMAN: Like I stated in the  
26 regulations, that the state makes they put -- they have  
27 inserted in there, what is called and it'll state that,  
28 the high water level mark is permissible even if it's  
29 on my land, on the edge of my land, and they shoot a  
30 moose, they are gonna walk up there and they say no the  
31 high water is up there they could shoot. And that's just  
32 what they have told us, when I -- we asked them about  
33 that while I stood in my fish camp. They said they are  
34 allotted to shoot moose up to the high-level water mark.  
35 Even though it's not high now, they said that's where  
36 the high-water mark is. And what has happened is these  
37 people are shooting moose, tying it up with a rope and  
38 pull it right down to the high-water mark. We gotta have  
39 some say so in the matter of the state regulations.  
40 Either we move that high water mark which they have  
41 inserted to allow this to happen and deny our people  
42 that animal or that whatever to take. We have to -- what  
43 I'm getting at is we have no say so, no say so in the  
44 state regulations which I would like to see. And if  
45 somebody could bring that forward to the state of Alaska  
46 or the Federal government, I'd really really appreciate  
47 it rather than coming here just to talk and bring this  
48 message back to my tribe. The authority people, I would  
49 like to talk to, the people with authority. No offense  
50 honestly, being here we do a good fine job and were

1 trying, at least we are trying. But in there it's what  
2 the regulations state, the high-water mark. And it's  
3 written in there, and that's not a tribal way to do's  
4 [sic]. Somebody shooting animals on our land, its not  
5 good. And it hurts the people that the residents are  
6 trying to get some kind of subsistence for themselves  
7 for the winter because of the cost of living in the  
8 stores are so high. You live from paycheck to paycheck  
9 and yet since we have no say so in that matter, we have  
10 to purchase what we need even though it's with no says  
11 so. It's a very sad situation here, our tribal members.  
12 I have seen it that this is the hub of the region, they  
13 come, their tribal members come to purchase because in  
14 their villages they either don't have any or the cost  
15 of living is like we heard yesterday, 18 dollars a gallon  
16 somewhere. And it's only seven dollars here in Bethel.  
17 That's all I got, thank you ma'am.

18  
19 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you,  
20 Mr. Hoffman. Ms. Cleveland, I had a question for you.  
21 Did they say why it couldn't go through the special  
22 action request? Because it doesn't seem any different  
23 than the way we did with the chinook salmon. So, if  
24 someone could help, please clarify why it was denied,  
25 that would be greatly appreciated.

26  
27 MS. CLEVELAND: Through the Chair. I'm  
28 glad you brought that up. That's a detail I forgot to  
29 mention, is that we haven't received the -- is it the  
30 analysis? I'm not sure what it's called but the reasons  
31 why it couldn't go through the Special Action request.  
32 We have not received those reasons from OSM yet. So --  
33 but since September 1 is just around the corner, we just  
34 decided to write the letter anyway, even if we don't  
35 have those reasons.

36  
37 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you,  
38 Ms. Cleveland. That was -- go ahead but, regardless of  
39 an analysis being done, there's a need that needs to be  
40 met, and I believe that OSM should have taken action and  
41 continued to work on these things while you're waiting.  
42 There's a dire need, and with moose hunting right around  
43 the corner, something should have been done immediately.  
44 Go ahead.

45  
46 MR. AYERS: Thank you, Madam Chair. This  
47 is Scott Ayers, for the record, the Fisheries Division  
48 supervisor at the Office of Subsistence Management and  
49 thank you for the question. And I just wanted to let the  
50 Council know that we actually have correspondence that's

1 in review and we're hoping to get it out the door  
2 probably today or tomorrow. Related to this topic to get  
3 back to the concerns were raised here. Unfortunately,  
4 as has been the case with our correspondence for a while  
5 now things take time and with the transition of our  
6 office from the Fish and Wildlife Service to the  
7 Department of Interior, we've been -- it's slowed down  
8 our process a little bit, and unfortunately some of these  
9 items that normally would go a bit faster have been  
10 delayed for that and a couple of other reasons. But  
11 we're hoping to try to circle back around and get  
12 responses to those things quickly. I don't want to speak  
13 to the reasons on the record here because that letter  
14 is not finalized, and I don't want to harsh things out  
15 or say thing incorrectly on the record, but I did want  
16 to let the Council know we're working on it and hoping  
17 to get that message out here very quickly.

18  
19 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you,  
20 Scott. This is towards the Office of Subsistence  
21 Management, both the Department of Interior. That's an  
22 excuse, and it's not geared toward you, Scott. It's  
23 geared toward your paygrades above you. That's an  
24 excuse, that's not our fault, that's not our issues. You  
25 provide a service for us, and you need to follow through  
26 with it. They need to follow through with it. Telling  
27 us that it's slowing your process, well that's not on  
28 us and you're just pulling our legs, pretty much. I  
29 apologize to you, Ms. Cleveland, and to the village of  
30 your [sic] Quinhagak in regards to what you're going  
31 through. This should not have happened. You should have  
32 had a timely response, and I need you guys to write a  
33 letter to the village apologizing for your delay in  
34 responding. Thank you.

35  
36 MR. AYERS: Noted, Madam Chair. Thank  
37 you.

38  
39 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: All right.  
40 We're going to move on to our next item. Mr. Sampson.

41  
42 MR. SAMPSON: Good morning. My name is  
43 Pat Sampson, and I'm here maybe behalf on myself and  
44 especially on my hunting buddy, that he always comments  
45 on this issue. I've heard many intelligent, brilliant  
46 ideas have been written on napkins before, so I wrote  
47 that and see I wanna test that theory. The issue I'm  
48 going to bring up is not a new one; and we've heard it  
49 all before. And it's about the beaver, the rodent that  
50 really does not have any natural predators in this area.

1 And I want to focus on the community of Bethel regarding  
2 the beaver dams. That -- the Brown Slough goes from up  
3 there and ends up behind my house, about 2 or 3 miles  
4 up. And when I first moved there, there were no beavers  
5 in that little creek, and now there's like about ten  
6 beaver houses in there. And during that time, the BIA  
7 Tundra Ridge Road has -- especially last year they kept  
8 -- the beavers kept damming the culverts there. And then  
9 every time you have soil on the ground and then water  
10 hits it, that softens that whole foundation. And with  
11 the vehicles passing on it and with the vibrations, that  
12 just weakens it, and so there were holes that last summer  
13 kept forming there, every time there was a storm, the  
14 area would wash out and it's because the water inundated  
15 on the foundation caused by the beaver dams, was  
16 weakening it. And that does not even begin to say out  
17 further from Bethel, where there's beaver dams there's  
18 more water accumulation -- accumulating in these beaver  
19 ponds. Because beaver ponds get bigger and bigger every  
20 year. And when you put more water in the tundra, it  
21 facilitates the defrosting of the permafrost. And so,  
22 with these rains and these floods and -- I don't want  
23 to belliger [sic] that point though. And these beaver  
24 dams get bigger and bigger every year, and each year the  
25 fish that are landlocked by these beaver dams are being  
26 - are not able to come out of -- from the beaver ponds,  
27 and during cold winters, the ponds freeze down to the  
28 bottom and that -- therefore killing all those fish  
29 there. And I'm just reiterating what people have said.  
30 But my hunting partner, like I said wanted to remove  
31 from this one section that we always go hunting at, he  
32 wanted to remove a beaver house but I said the state and  
33 Federal regulations prohibit you touching beaver houses.  
34 It doesn't say anything about the beaver dams. And so,  
35 I know that we take off enough beaver dam to be able to  
36 float our boat across, and the next morning when we come  
37 back through it, the beaver damn is again the same as  
38 it was before we took it off. And so, he wanted to remove  
39 a beaver house, but that's against the state and  
40 Federal regulations. And if there is a proposal to be  
41 able to allow people to take out beaver houses, that  
42 would be my wish, my hunt. A lot of people out in the  
43 villages would be able to eradicate the beaver  
44 population a lot more effectively if we took out the  
45 beaver houses. And that's all I had for my brilliant  
46 idea. Thank you.

47  
48 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you,  
49 Mr. Sampson. Any further comments or questions regarding  
50 Mr. Sampson's? Go ahead, Brooke.

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MS. MCDAVID: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to let the Council know there is a group called the Arctic Beaver Observation Network, and they mostly work a little further north, but they are documenting similar types of change and expansion of beaver and the impacts of beaver. If the Council is interested in hearing from them at a future meeting, we could schedule that. You could also talk to them about what you're observing in your region. I just wanted to put that out there. Thanks.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you, Ms. Brooke. Mr. Hoffman.

MR. HOFFMAN: You know, Pat is absolutely right. But what we don't know is the will and the energy and the strength of a beaver. I too removed a whole dam, all day chainsaw, axe, me and my boys in a little creek near my fish camp, so I could go up there. Cause that beaver dam was way over here, not down there, it was way over here. So, I did remove that and the next morning, in the kind of dark, I took off full boar and I bumped another wall. Them beaver are so energetic they will rebuild what we destroy. What we need to do; I think, my recommendation would be to ask the authority people, the state of Alaska, since they got the authority to open up a beaver hunt because these beavers are not only plugging up the streams, they're harming the fish that go up these little sloughs to lay their eggs. And they're not able to anymore because of the beaver. What we really need to do is contact the Arctic Beaver people and to get some recommendations on how they have some say so in the matter and formulate our own beaver hunting thing so that we can eliminate these beaver because a long as they exist, they'll build what they want. I've seen them carry trees on their shoulders, walking. They're so tough, and they're so willing to live these little guys there. And I you go to one you get slapped by a beaver tail, your gonna feel it. They slap very, very hard, I got slapped on the head one time, I thought I was gonna have to have surgery. So that's what we need to do, it's get hold of these people; the artic beaver people and see how they -- and if they created their own so that we could do that in our own tribal region here, to get some help. To ask the state of Alaska if they can open a beaver hunt, like the wolves they kill and brown bears they get to kill. Let's not wait for them to do it; let's ask if we could do it. Thank you.



1  
2                   ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you,  
3 Mr. Hoffman. Currently, right now beaver hunting is open  
4 year-round.

5  
6                   MR. HOFFMAN: Can we...?

7  
8                   ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Yeah!

9  
10                   (Simultaneous speech)

11  
12                   And to answer your question, Mr.  
13 Sampson, yes, we can do something about it. And the  
14 other thing too, according to delta -- not delta,  
15 discovery, according to the Discovery Channel, they use  
16 stick of dynamite.

17  
18                   MR. SAMPSON: Mr. Chair, what I wanted  
19 the proposal to be able remove beaver dams because that  
20 currently is not allowed in the hunting regulations. We  
21 can hunt; the beaver hunt is open year-round, but you  
22 can't touch the beaver dens.

23  
24                   ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: We can get  
25 that fixed.

26  
27                   MR. SAMPSON: Thank you.

28  
29                   ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: All right.  
30 Thank you. Anybody else online who would like to address  
31 the Council at this time?

32  
33                   MS. MCDAVID: As a reminder, you can  
34 press star five on your phone or raise your hand if  
35 you'd like to give a comment online. We are still on  
36 comments on non-agenda items.

37  
38                   ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: All right,  
39 hearing none. Let's go ahead and take a five-minute break  
40 really quick. It is now 10:00.

41  
42                   (Off record)

43  
44                   (On record)

45  
46                   ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: All right,  
47 folks, can you please go ahead and take your seats?  
48 We're going to go ahead and get started here.

49  
50                   (Pause)

1  
2           ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Quyana,  
3 folks. Thank you for the long-extended break. Everyone's  
4 hopefully got their food, coffee, and is ready for the  
5 long haul. We're going to go ahead and get jumped right  
6 into our agenda item where we left off. It is going to  
7 be B-2026 Fisheries Resource Monitoring Programs and  
8 PINs development on the Office of Fisheries and  
9 Anthropology. You have the floor.

10  
11           (Pause)

12  
13           MR. FOLEY: Madam Chair, members of the  
14 Council. For the record, my name is Kevin Foley, and I'm  
15 a fish biologist with the Office of Subsistence  
16 Management. And I'm joined here today with my colleague  
17 Pippa Kenner, an anthropologist also with OSM. Before  
18 we dive into the Priority Information Needs discussion,  
19 if it pleases the Council, I would like to lead off with  
20 a brief update on the Fisheries Resource Monitoring  
21 Program. There's no materials for this should you decide  
22 to hear an update. Thank you. So, as you know, no new  
23 projects were funded for the FRMP for the 2024 fiscal  
24 year. Previous decisions on funding in OSM and  
25 unfortunate circumstances did not allow us to proceed  
26 with any new projects. However, there were nine projects  
27 submitted in response to the 2024 Notice of Funding  
28 Opportunity for the Kuskokwim region. When asked if  
29 investigators wished to keep their proposal packets in  
30 processing for a possible 2025 start, all said yes, but  
31 we won't know funding until sometime after the new fiscal  
32 year, October 2024. So currently, there are four ongoing  
33 projects in the Yukon region and six in the Kuskokwim  
34 region, beginning with the Yukon region. The four  
35 ongoing projects from 2022 are the East Fork Andreafsky  
36 River weir chinook and summer chum salmon. The Gisasa  
37 weir chinook and summer chum salmon. Presence and use  
38 of salmon in the Pastolik and Pastoliak Rivers, and  
39 humpback whitefish and other non-salmon fishes  
40 traditional ecological knowledge and biological sampling  
41 in the upper Koyukuk region. Moving into the Kuskokwim  
42 region, the six ongoing projects from 2022 are Takotna  
43 River Weir, Salmon Run Timing and Abundance; Kuskokwim  
44 River Broad Whitefish Subsistence Harvest and Spawning  
45 Abundance, George River Salmon Weir, Bethel Subsistence  
46 Harvest Survey, Kuskokwim Management Area Postseason  
47 Subsistence Salmon Harvest Survey and Community-Based  
48 Harvest Monitoring Network for Kuskokwim River chinook  
49 salmon. The Office of Subsistence Management administers  
50 the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program and will

1 announce the 2026 Notice of Funding Opportunity for the  
2 monitoring program this winter. We will be seeking  
3 proposals for projects that gather information to manage  
4 and conserve subsistence fishery resources in  
5 Federal public waters. The monitoring program is also  
6 directed at supporting meaningful involvement in  
7 fisheries management by Alaska Native and rural  
8 organizations and promoting collaboration among Federal,  
9 state, Alaska Native, and local organizations. The first  
10 step in this process is for the Regional Advisory  
11 Councils to identify the Priority Information Needs for  
12 their respective regions. These are research needs or  
13 gaps in information needed to manage Federal subsistence  
14 fisheries. These priority information needs to provide  
15 the framework for soliciting, evaluating, and selecting  
16 projects for funding through the monitoring program. The  
17 development of the Priority Information Needs is an  
18 important process for the Council. Your final version  
19 of the Priority Information Needs determines the types  
20 and subjects of project proposals that are sought for  
21 your regions. Three primary types of research are  
22 requested; harvest monitoring, traditional ecological  
23 knowledge, and stock status and trends. Harvest  
24 monitoring and traditional ecological knowledge projects  
25 provide information directly from subsistence users,  
26 including descriptions of fishing effort, and harvest  
27 and use patterns. Stock status and trends projects  
28 address fish abundance, migration, and behavior in  
29 specific fisheries. Research priorities that fall  
30 outside of that scope of the monitoring program are not  
31 considered or funded, and they include projects focused  
32 on habitat protection, mitigation, restoration and  
33 enhancement, hatchery propagation, restoration,  
34 enhancement, and supplementation, and contaminant  
35 assessment, evaluation, and monitoring. These kinds of  
36 projects are mostly -- are most appropriately addressed  
37 by the local land management or regulatory agencies. In  
38 addition, projects for which the primary objective is  
39 education or outreach, such as sign camps, technician  
40 training, or intern programs, are not eligible for  
41 funding under the monitoring program. Council Chairman  
42 Raymond Oney worked with OSM staff and the Council  
43 members from Eastern and Western Interior to exchange  
44 information and discuss Priority Information Needs for  
45 the Yukon region. Council member Walter Morgan worked  
46 with OSM staff and Kevin Whitworth from Western Interior  
47 to exchange information and discuss Priority Information  
48 Needs for the Kuskokwim region. We will discuss the  
49 results of these meetings now and then ask this Council  
50 to finalize and adopt the 2026 Priority Information

1 Needs for the Yukon and Kuskokwim regions. Thank you,  
2 Madam Chair. This concludes the Fisheries Resource  
3 Monitoring Program update. Are there any questions  
4 before we begin reviewing the list of Priority  
5 Information Needs?

6  
7 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you,  
8 Kevin. Do we have any further comments or questions at  
9 this time? Go ahead, Mr. Naneng.

10  
11 MR. NANENG: Yeah. Thank you, Madam  
12 Chair. Kevin, we know that Kwethluk weir was not in  
13 operation earlier this year, and I know that there  
14 numbers and results will probably be known later of  
15 salmon escapement. Can there be a follow-up report? I  
16 know Fish and Wildlife and Fish and Game worked together  
17 on that Kwethluk Weir along with the tribe of Kwethluk.  
18 If we can get a report as to the escapement levels with  
19 the absence of that weir. If the escapement improved,  
20 or was it any different than when the weir was there?  
21 It would be good to know it, to see if the numbers have  
22 increased or decreased, depending on that weir that was  
23 there. Thank you.

24  
25 MR. FOLEY: Through the Chair, Councilman  
26 Naneng. I'm not certain, did you say that Kwethluk Weir?  
27 Is that right? And it is my understanding you also  
28 mentioned that Kwethluk Weir is not in operation this  
29 year. Is that correct? Is that what you said?

30  
31  
32 MR. NANENG: It was not in operation  
33 earlier this summer because of, I think, high water was  
34 one of the concerns. So, it would be good to at least  
35 try and get a comparison of the number of fish that may  
36 have made it to the spawning grounds versus the time  
37 when the weir was in operation earlier, like in the  
38 previous years. You get my question?

39  
40 MR. FOLEY: Through the Chair, Councilman  
41 Naneng, I do understand your question. And there will  
42 be a report on the results from the year, whether or not  
43 that will specifically address the number of fish that  
44 made it past the weir site when the weir was not in  
45 operation. That's not very clear to me at this time. We  
46 can certainly look at that and maybe ask that or even  
47 see if that comes through in the report.

48  
49 MR. NANENG: Yeah, I understand, but I  
50 know that aerial surveys are probably done to do a survey

1 on salmon that are going upriver, if not probably someone  
2 driving a boat or walking the streams and whatnot when  
3 they do the counts.

4  
5 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Mr. Hoffman.

6  
7 MR. HOFFMAN: (In Native). Okay. We are  
8 -- the state of Alaska makes its rulings by what we call  
9 escapement, okay, and that's justified. My question is,  
10 what about the other tributaries such as Gweek in my  
11 fish camp? When I was a young boy, there were no fish  
12 in there. We never fished in there in my life, all my  
13 life. Now they're drifting right in my fish camp, a mile  
14 and a half above, inside Gweek. They're drifting,  
15 people. Now, I just mentioned your escapement, and  
16 they're making rules on their escapement. What about  
17 other tributaries like Gweek? (indiscernible) where  
18 they're fishing now? He goes and fishing there. Johnson  
19 River, they go in there and fish. If your numbers are  
20 wrong on your escapement due to the fact that the fish  
21 are going up other tributaries now, why are you still  
22 using wherever you go as considered escapement to  
23 justify whether we fish or we don't fish without having  
24 the information of the other tributaries that the fish  
25 are going up now and harming our people by saying  
26 escapement was low? Well, they're going up the other  
27 tributaries now, and I know why, and I'd rather not get  
28 into that because take, for example, Tuluksak River. I  
29 used to go up there with 120 horse full blast all the  
30 way. Then they started their weir, and the weirs created  
31 obstructions to the main flow of water, and which created  
32 sandbars down below the weirs. And same way that we  
33 learned the example in Brown Slough; they put barges in  
34 there, now it's shallow. And the reason for this is  
35 obstructing the main flow of water creating sandbars.  
36 The Stony River people on radio tried to inform the  
37 people that since the fish are not going up the way to  
38 the weirs anymore because of the shallow water at the  
39 beginning of the tributary, where the fish go way up  
40 there and spawn. They think because it's so shallow way  
41 up, there is no water at all. That's why the Stony River  
42 people informed me that the fish are mingling around the  
43 mouth of Tuluksak now. And now, like I stated, they're  
44 going up the other tributaries, which hurts what you  
45 guys are calling escapement. Now, if you have no machines  
46 up in Gweek and down in Kialiq, have you been telling  
47 the informing the people of the wrong escapement number  
48 because of the fact you don't have no counting systems  
49 in Gweek and in Kialiq? And I don't want to hear, oh,  
50 they're just in there just for a little while, mingling

1 around. They're fishing in there, mile and a half up  
2 now. So, I was just trying to give you a little more  
3 information on you guys ruling by escapement, and that  
4 you are not counting all the fish because they're going  
5 up other tributaries. It would enhance yourselves if you  
6 would conduct weirs in all the tributaries now, just to  
7 be assured, you're not hurting the people by what you  
8 call escapement. Thank you.

9  
10 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you,  
11 Mr. Hoffman. Go ahead.

12  
13 MR. FOLEY: Through the Chair. Councilman  
14 Hoffman, thank you very much for those observations and  
15 bringing that to the attention of OSM. I would also like  
16 to respond by saying that that's exactly why we're having  
17 these conversations, it's so that we can identify these  
18 areas where there are information needs. And from your  
19 testimony, it sounds as if there is an information need  
20 on the abundance, the numbers, and the types of fish  
21 that are going up in these other tributaries that we may  
22 not have any information on or very little information  
23 on to support what the runs are doing in this area. So  
24 that might be something for the Council to think about  
25 going forward with developing PINs is whether or not  
26 looking at these tributaries, maybe identifying specific  
27 tributaries and saying, yes, we would like to have some  
28 type of assessment information on this particular river  
29 for these particular types of fish. Thank you.

30  
31 MR. HOFFMAN: Yeah, that's the reason  
32 ma'am. Just to answer his question, that's the reason  
33 I'm informing you that they are now fishing in there  
34 already and they're down in Kialiq. I have a fisherman  
35 over there that fishes in Kialiq. And already by doing  
36 this, they already hurt our people by denying us fishing  
37 privileges due to your low escapement. And we already  
38 got hurt. And that's all? There is no payback or  
39 whatever? It's done. No offense, but because of the fact  
40 that the state is not counting all the fish as far as  
41 escapement, which is the ruling, I would really  
42 appreciate it if the state would -- if they want to  
43 count escapement, count all the tributaries. And it  
44 would be only fair and honest to the tribes of the Yukon  
45 and the Kuskokwim, and not just employment for the state  
46 of Alaska people.

47  
48 MS. KENNER: Thank you, member Hoffman.  
49 For the record, this is Pippa Kenner through the Chair.  
50 Yeah, so, I just wanted to let you know that there have

1 been new weirs started on the Kuskokwim River in the  
2 last ten, twenty years. One is on the salmon fork of the  
3 Pitka River, upriver, where because of the closures to  
4 the harvest of chinook salmon, more chinook salmon have  
5 been making it up the river and into the Pitka River.  
6 And our program has in the past and hopefully will in  
7 the future, help keep some of these smaller -- keep  
8 weirs on some of these smaller tributaries, like the  
9 Takotna and the Tuluksak. And we always have a Priority  
10 Information Need for not just weirs, but other ways of  
11 assessing escapement. And we invite people to give us  
12 proposals that address that Priority Information Need.  
13 It's probably the most important information need on the  
14 Kuskokwim, and that's kind of acknowledged by everybody,  
15 is to get as accurate a count of escapement as we can  
16 using good methods, including weirs. So, I just wanted  
17 to assure you that that is on OSM's radar. We don't  
18 manage, we are a regulatory public process, and we also  
19 have a grant arm that provides money to stimulate  
20 research into areas that otherwise wouldn't be funded  
21 because it's focused on subsistence. And so, thank you  
22 very much for your comments. You're making us feel good  
23 about what we've got on this list now. So, thank you.  
24 Which will be presented, oh, there it is. Yeah. So, it's  
25 the one -- oh that's Yukon. Do we have the Kuskokwim?

26  
27 Rely. It's one, two, three, four, five,  
28 five bullets down or now it's one, two, three, four  
29 bullets down. It says reliable quantitative or  
30 qualitative estimates of salmon run size escapement and  
31 harvest in the entire Kuskokwim River watershed,  
32 including Kuskokwim Bay tributaries.

33  
34 MR. PETER: Madam Chair.

35  
36 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Go ahead.  
37 Kevin might be answering questions that we're going to  
38 ask anyway.

39  
40 MR. FOLEY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I  
41 just wanted to draw our attention sort of to the process  
42 of reviewing the PINs, if I may. And I just wanted to  
43 point out that the group that we discussed earlier, the  
44 individuals, the representatives from the RACs that we  
45 had worked through some 2022 and the 2024 Priority  
46 Information Needs, previously funded projects, and some  
47 data gaps. And the resulting draft list is what we're  
48 looking at. Or at least one of the draft lists is what  
49 we're looking at on the screen, but I believe also has  
50 been handed out to the Council members as a handout. And

1 I wanted to ask the Council how you would like to  
2 proceed. We can work through these, I guess the list of  
3 PINs by region, one by one, and make final edits as we  
4 go. And then I would offer that after the Council has  
5 approved any Priority Information Needs for the Yukon,  
6 then we move on to the Kuskokwim region. And I would  
7 recommend to the Council that after we have reviewed all  
8 the Priority Information Needs that the Council put  
9 forward a motion to approve the list, including any  
10 changes that you would like to see made to the list. At  
11 which point the 2026 Priority Information Needs will be  
12 final and then published in our notice of funding  
13 opportunity. So once again, I'm sort of the question  
14 before the Council is whether or not you would like to  
15 read the PINs within the Kuskokwim region. I'm sorry,  
16 the Yukon region to yourselves or if you would prefer  
17 that I read them out loud, enter into a discussion, and  
18 then make changes. Thank you, Madam Chair.

19  
20 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Would we be  
21 able to stick to our agenda? We had the Yukon first and  
22 then the Kuskokwim, if that's okay with you. So, we stay  
23 in order of our agenda as approved. Go ahead, Mr. Peter.  
24 And then Mr. Naneng.

25  
26 MR. PETER: Yeah, Kevin -- Kevin and  
27 Pippa. You mentioned about these tributaries, Takotna.  
28 I know all the tributaries upriver, Devil's Elbow, Swift  
29 River and down below is the Stony River and Holitna. One  
30 time I went to Holitna, I ended up in the lake. There  
31 is a fence at the entrance of the lake. When I see it,  
32 me and my brother went up there, and then my brother  
33 showed me there a lot of red fish on the -- trying to  
34 get into the Lake Fish. And that Lake Fish still  
35 operating in the Holitna, Kevin?

36  
37 MR. FOLEY: Through the Chair. Councilman  
38 Peter, can you repeat the name of the creek and or the  
39 lake, please? I'm not aware of -- I'm sorry.

40  
41 MR. FOLEY: Hoholitna?

42  
43 MS. MCDAVID: Hoholitna, in the Holitna?

44  
45 MR. PETER: Yea, Hotlina.

46  
47 MS. MCDAVID: Can you tell Kevin where  
48 that is?

49  
50



1  
2 MR. NANENG: It's the only river that  
3 flows to the north.

4  
5 (Simultaneous speech)

6  
7 It's right across from Sleetmute. And  
8 it goes -- it's the only river that flows north.

9  
10 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Kevin, there  
11 used to be a weir up there. I believe they pulled that  
12 weir in, decided to use one, one of the weirs that we  
13 had that was over 20 years of data. And when we had the  
14 prices, not our prices, but our grant funding cut, that's  
15 one of the weirs that they pulled.

16  
17 MR. MOSES: Sorry. I was gone  
18 (indiscernible) I was printing stuff, so could someone  
19 repeat the question, please? I was gone. Sorry.

20  
21 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: So, the first  
22 question was in regard to the tributaries of Gweek. And  
23 what's the other one?

24  
25 MR. HOFFMAN: Kialiq.

26  
27 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Kialiq.  
28 Regarding.....

29  
30 MS. KENNER: We got that.

31  
32 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: .....okay.  
33 So, he wanted to know -- catch him up. Yeah. So, they  
34 were talking about people drifting in those, and if they  
35 affect the escapement numbers. So, and right now we're  
36 currently talking about the Kuskokwim and the tributary  
37 of Hoholitna. If there's a -- we're still currently up  
38 there.

39  
40 MR. PETER: (Indiscernible) Holitna.

41  
42 (Simultaneous speech)

43  
44 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Sorry,  
45 Holitna, the Holitna.

46  
47 MR. MOSES: Thank you. Just for the  
48 record, this is Aaron Moses. I'm the subsistence  
49 coordinator. There is a weir up the Holitna on the

1 Kogrukluq, and that was operating until, I think until  
2 August 11th.

3 MR. PETER: Still operating?

4  
5 MR. MOSES: I don't think it's operating  
6 right now, but it operated this year.

7  
8 MR. PETER: The other thing, how far is  
9 the George River, how far is it the weir from the mouth  
10 -- from the George River? How far is it?

11  
12 MR. MOSES: I'm not 100% sure. It's --  
13 I'll get back to you on that. I'll look it up for you.

14  
15 MR. PETER: Yeah, quyana. I know all the  
16 rivers, upriver. And then they mentioned -- Bobby was  
17 mentioning about those tributaries. They're not  
18 tributaries. The Gweek River is not a spawning ground.  
19 And the Johnson and the (In Native) Kialiq, they're not  
20 they're not tributaries, they're not spawning. And then,  
21 I always wonder in August when I start berry picking, I  
22 see Department of Fish and Game going up there. I don't  
23 know why. My question is, what they're doing in that  
24 Gweek? Those two people going up to, maybe they're  
25 observing something. That's why I always wonder. I  
26 always wonder, and sometimes I was thinking about maybe  
27 they're tracking whitefish or something, salmon. And  
28 these not spawning tributaries, they open up only for  
29 the consumption and also for the fish which we keep. We  
30 set our net and drift. Me and my cousin, they used to  
31 have a fish camp by the mouth of the Gweek when we were  
32 young. We used to drift in there to catch chums and reds  
33 and sometimes king salmon. We used to drift when we --  
34 they got -- they used to have a fish camp up there. So,  
35 my father brought me down to help my iluq to fish for  
36 the family of my iluq. And then, the other question will  
37 be the operation of the weir in Tuluksak. I never heard  
38 of it for quite a while about weir in Tuluksak.

39  
40 MR. MOSES: Through the Chair. Yeah, as  
41 for the non-spawning tributaries, Fish and Wildlife  
42 doesn't have any projects going on there. We did -- we  
43 do have law enforcement that would go up and check, go  
44 up into those areas just to do patrols. And so, I'm  
45 pretty sure that's what, what that is, is just people -  
46 - our law enforcement guys going up and doing regular  
47 river patrols. As for the George River, I just looked  
48 it up. It's four miles from the mouth of the George  
49 River. And as for Tuluksak Weir, it hasn't been running  
50 in at least five years, it ran out of funding. And this

1 year, we to -- this year the Refuge, along with Kenai  
2 FES, we pulled almost all the infrastructure out of  
3 Tuluksak this summer, and so we have no plans at this  
4 point of restarting it unless we are able to find funding  
5 for that. So, yeah.

6  
7 MR. PETER: And the other one, there's  
8 no weir in Kisaralik and Kasigluk, but I know that the  
9 flyer plane and survey those fish that are going spawn,  
10 they still do that? They still do that?

11  
12 MR. MOSES: Through the Chair. Yes, Fish  
13 and Game, Sam Decker -- I don't think she's here. Oh,  
14 she'll be back, and she'll be able to -- she's the one  
15 that does all those aerial counts. And she -- they also  
16 fly rivers that have weirs just to proof and get numbers  
17 for that. So pretty much every single, for the most  
18 part, tributaries, are aerial counted.

19  
20 MR. PETER: Quyana Mr.-- Madam Chairman.

21  
22 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Mr. Hoffman.

23  
24 MR. HOFFMAN: You know, that's what I've  
25 been talking about, escapement. And we are justified  
26 whether to fish or not to fish due to what we call  
27 escapement. Okay, you know how far Tuluksak and Holitna  
28 and all them other weirs are? The fish isn't going to  
29 jump on a plane and fly up there. It takes them weeks  
30 to get there. And yet we hear the regulators stating,,  
31 oh, you can't fish low escapement. They never got there  
32 yet, they're so far up there. And that's another problem  
33 that we have, the ruling, the regulations, and versus  
34 the time and distance to get there. You know, it harms  
35 the tribes down way down here below. And by the time  
36 they get their escapement count, the fish are gone. And  
37 you already harm the tribes below. It's so sad the way  
38 they do it. And we have to take what we're told to do.  
39 It's again, it's so sad. But we're justified because  
40 that's the truth. And as long as it's the truth, you  
41 can't take it out. I'm an elder, use my knowledge. No,  
42 that's too much. So, I'm just trying to say that the  
43 distance between the escapement counts and where we are;  
44 the tribe's lower end are getting hurt because of the  
45 fact that the escapement count hasn't even started yet  
46 and the fish are passing by to let us -- allow us to  
47 fish. And it gets so far down the line it's already  
48 fall, and I don't want to -- I'm sad to hear you can  
49 fish all you want now when we don't need them anymore,

1 it's too late. Well, that's another harm, sad but it's  
2 okay. No offense. Thank you.

3  
4 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Yeah.

5  
6 (Simultaneous speech)

7  
8 Go ahead.

9  
10 MR. MOSES: Through the Chair. Yeah, I'll  
11 be giving my management presentation later on, so I'll  
12 be able to answer a bunch of questions for you later.  
13 And -- but I do know from working up on the Kwethluk  
14 that it does take two weeks for shinook salmon at least  
15 to go to make it from the Johnson River to Kwethluk  
16 River. We did telemetry on them about almost ten years  
17 ago now. So, we do know how long it takes for fish to  
18 make it to certain areas. I don't know how long -- I  
19 know it takes a lot longer to get up to Holitna and  
20 that, but a lot of the weirs that we do use is -- we  
21 don't use them in-season. We use them post-season to see  
22 how successful we were. And so, this year a lot of the  
23 weirs were underwater during their peak passage. So, we  
24 probably won't get a real picture of what this summer  
25 looked like. But we have other projects that we use,  
26 like the Sonar and Bethel Tester to figure out how it  
27 went. And I'll get that -- into that when I do my  
28 presentation later on.

29  
30 MR. HOFFMAN: Yeah, we're hearing you're  
31 digging a deeper hole, so we better stop there.

32  
33 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Okay, folks,  
34 I'm gonna call this meeting back to order. That way we  
35 on track. We want to make sure we're staying on schedule.  
36 Let's go ahead and I -- you were -- I did have a question.  
37 I heard you over say hatchery.

38  
39 MR. FOLEY: Madam Chair. Yes, I was in  
40 my explanation of projects that are or are not funded.  
41 I did use the word hatchery, and it is, in fact, one of  
42 the research priorities that falls outside of the scope  
43 of our managing program. So therefore, the FRMP would  
44 not fund projects that -- let's see, where do we have  
45 here? We have restoration and enhancement or hatchery  
46 propagation. So that would not be considered under the  
47 FMP funding. Thank you, Madam Chair.

48

1                   ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you for  
2 the clarification. You made my heart skip. All right.  
3 Did you want to go ahead and move into the Yukon?  
4

5  
6                   MR. FOLEY: Madam Chair. Yes. I'm  
7 wondering if you would -- if the Council would like for  
8 me to read the PINs individually and address them, or  
9 if you would prefer to read them on your own and come  
10 forward with discussion on PINs.  
11

12                   ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: What's the  
13 word of the Council? Okay. If you could, go ahead and  
14 read them and do the description of them or do a summary  
15 and then your review. That way everyone can understand  
16 and ask questions as we go.  
17

18                   MR. FOLEY: Thank you, Madam Chair,  
19 members of the Council. I will now read through the  
20 Yukon Region Draft Priority Information Needs for the  
21 2026 cycle, which are -- may be found in your handout.  
22 The -- and I'd like to point out that these are not in  
23 any particular order of importance, they just are. First  
24 in the list is impacts of climate change to harvest and  
25 use of fish, and impacts of climate change on fish, for  
26 example, impacts on fish migration, spawning, and life  
27 cycle.  
28

29                   ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Mr. Naneng.

30                   MR. NANENG: Yeah. Thank you, Madam  
31 Chair. I fished at Hooper Bay and also at Black River  
32 and at Scammon Bay. And Hooper Bay is impacted by the  
33 winter winds, if it's northwest winds during the  
34 majority of the time, it also impacts the lower Yukon,  
35 especially Black River, because the winds are blowing  
36 the Yukon River water along the coast. At times at Hooper  
37 Bay, we don't catch any salmon because if it's easterly  
38 winds or south winds for most of the winter, that water,  
39 Yukon water, is not going along the coast. It misses  
40 Hooper Bay, Black River, and most of the fish end up  
41 migrating up either through the middle mouth or the north  
42 mouth. So, there's historical records about that. And  
43 that's one of the impacts of migration of salmon that  
44 go to the Yukon River. So, that's something that is  
45 historically known. And I think that if you take a look  
46 at the predominant winds during the wintertime, you'll  
47 find out that the villages of Hooper, Chevak and Scammon  
48 got enough salmon that summer and the number of salmon  
49 that may have been harvested commercially when the  
50 commercial fisheries was open on the Yukon, if Black

1 River was catching quite a number of fish. But I've seen  
2 cycles where you have and/or you have not, and it's  
3 impacted by the winter winds. So, keep that in mind as  
4 part of your climate impact studies. It's not just the  
5  
6 river system itself, but how the water flows out of the  
7 Yukon into the Bering Sea.

8  
9 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you,  
10 Mr. Hoffman. I have a question for you. How many of  
11 these PINs are you going to approve this year? All of  
12 them? Go ahead.

13  
14 MS. KENNER: Thank you, Madam Chair. We  
15 -- this is Pippa, for the record. We suggest not having  
16 a long list because it's hard for people to focus on a  
17 long list. But it's up to you. It's up to the Council.

18  
19 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: I guess what  
20 I'm trying to get at is how much funding do we have in  
21 order to -- how much can we provide in regard to these  
22 projects? And if it's possible, could we start getting  
23 how much an estimate for these projects are so we know  
24 which ones we can start evaluating and being able to  
25 understand how much money we have in order to prioritize  
26 our projects, not just based on description?

27  
28 MS. KENNER: Yes again, through the  
29 Chair. This is Pippa. So, your point is well taken. So,  
30 we have to remember that we have to receive applications  
31 based on these priorities. So, what we suggest is, well,  
32 excuse me, let me back up. We do not rank these  
33 priorities. These are supposed to be the top priorities.  
34 And that's why you see so much Priority Information Needs  
35 around salmon. Because that is considered the priority  
36 information about salmon runs, are considered the  
37 priority. And within that we need to know run size. We  
38 need to know escapement, and we need to know harvest.  
39 You need those three pieces of information to then  
40 forecast what run size will be in the future. So, we as  
41 an organization, our funding fluctuates, so first, what  
42 we do when we get money is we fund the projects that are  
43 already in the water. So, projects last from 2 to 4  
44 years. So, when we get money, what we do is we first  
45 fund projects that are already ongoing and have been  
46 approved and have been funded for a first year, and we  
47 fund their second year. With money left over for the  
48 Kuskokwim, about 29% of it, about 30% of it is a  
49 guideline amount that will go to the Kuskokwim projects.  
50 And depending on how much those projects cost, we may

1 be able to fund maybe 2 or 3. That could change, but  
2 that's generally what we can do. Maybe one more,  
3 depending on how much those projects cost. From year to  
4 year, we don't know what our funding level will be, but  
5  
6 that -- we're considering that maybe a good estimate for  
7 you.

8  
9 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you for  
10 the clarification, Pippa. Next bullet.

11  
12 MR. FOLEY: Thank you, Madam Chair. The  
13 next bullet in the list of Yukon Priority Information  
14 Needs is knowledge of population, reproduction, and  
15 health of spawning habitat for Bering cisco and humpback  
16 whitefish.

17  
18 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Mr. Naneng.

19  
20 MR. NANENG: Yeah, thank you, Madam  
21 Chair. Is this only for the in-river system, or do you  
22 include the whole district, why one? Meaning, does it  
23 include also what's being cut down at Black River because  
24 it's considered to be part of the Yukon River? And also,  
25 for the last five years or so, Fish and Wildlife has  
26 been doing catch studies around two -- south of Hooper  
27 Bay or west of Hooper Bay for fish that are migrating  
28 towards the Yukon River.

29  
30 MS. KENNER: Thank you. Through the  
31 Chair, this is Pippa Kenner. So, the big picture view  
32 of these whitefish studies is that there -- about 20  
33 years ago, there began to be an acknowledgement that  
34 whitefish in some areas are even more important than  
35 salmon, and that we need to focus some funding to  
36 whitefish. And so, we at OSM funded a strategic plan  
37 that went around and talked to people in the villages  
38 about what they're seeing and where the need is for  
39 assessing whitefish populations. And so, this is a  
40 general Priority Information Need. It's not directed  
41 towards any one place on the river. What we require is  
42 that the person who applies for that funding, they tell  
43 us where the funding needs to go, and they have to make  
44 an argument about why this is the project to fund on  
45 whitefish. And that includes requirements that they  
46 confer with villages when they're doing this. So, thank  
47 you for the question.

48  
49 MR. NANENG: I have a follow-up question.  
50 Yukon River is not limited only to the south mouth, the

1 middle mouth, or the north mouth. We got up Aphrewn and  
2 Kashunuk River that go all the way up to Pilot Station.  
3 And I think that if we're going to try and do some  
4 studies regarding some of these, Aphrewn and Kashunuk  
5  
6 should be included because they're part of the Yukon  
7 River.

8  
9 MS. KENNER: Myron, member Myron, through  
10 the Chair, this is Pippa Kenner. Thank you for that  
11 question. So, the Yukon area, what we're doing is we're  
12 proposing information needs for the entire Yukon  
13 management area. And so, what happens is we bring the  
14 three Councils together, Eastern Interior, Western  
15 Interior, and YK Delta, to develop PINs on the Yukon.  
16 So, these are not just for the lower river. They are for  
17 the entire river. And the reason why we do that is  
18 because fish at the mouth are going to, you know, people  
19 are harvesting upriver, fish that come in at the mouth.  
20 So, the information we have about them at the mouth is  
21 important to -- for management of upriver fisheries. So,  
22 we bring volunteers from those three Councils together.  
23 Currently, we have -- our technical review panel that  
24 looks at these proposals, they've approved a project to  
25 do an assessment of the salmon in the Kong [sic] and  
26 Kashunuk River because there are questions about where  
27 are the salmon in those rivers? Do they spawn in those  
28 rivers, or are they really headed for the Yukon? And  
29 therefore, those communities in that area must be  
30 managed with the Yukon, which means that those  
31 communities, that area must be closed when the Yukon  
32 closes. So, we want to find out what is the status of  
33 those salmon. So, currently we have an approved project  
34 for that area. Thank you to member Slats and others, and  
35 -- but we ran out of money, but those are still  
36 priorities to be funded if money becomes available this  
37 year.

38  
39 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Mr. Naneng,  
40 I just want to let you know if you or your tribe wants  
41 to put in a proposal to work on finding that information  
42 you're asking about, you're going to have to put an  
43 application in proposal into the Office of Subsistence  
44 Management requesting that information for those  
45 specific rivers.

46  
47 MR. NANENG: And the reason why I'm  
48 asking these questions is because sometimes Hooper,  
49 Chevak, and Scammon are forgotten as part of being the  
50 Yukon River villages that are restricted or monitored



1 by either the state or the feds in the monitoring of  
2 salmon that are going up the Yukon River. So, I don't  
3 want our villages to be what you call the forgotten  
4 communities when they're included in the restrictions  
5 that are being placed on the whole Yukon River system.  
6

7 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: All right,  
8 let's go ahead and move on.  
9

10 MR. FOLEY: Thank you, Madam Chair. The  
11 next bullet in the list. Estimates of chinook, summer  
12 chum, fall chum, and coho salmon escapements and/or  
13 harvests.  
14

15 ACTING CHAIR ROGERS: Next.  
16

17 MR. FOLEY: Distribution, abundance,  
18 condition, and survival of juvenile and out-migrating  
19 salmon in the Yukon River drainage. Increase  
20 understanding of the abundance, distribution, migration  
21 patterns, and spawning locations of chinook and chum  
22 salmon in the Innoko River.  
23

24 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Question.  
25 I'm -- so I'm looking at this. And what why is that  
26 bolded out compared to the rest of them? Is there a  
27 higher priority for this PIN or was it just a printing  
28 error? Go. Go ahead. Brooke.  
29

30 MS. MCDAVID: Thank you, Madam Chair. The  
31 bolded language represents PINs that are new that  
32 weren't on the list last year. The other PINs are  
33 carryovers from the previous year, or PIN -- or parts  
34 of previous PINs that have been slightly modified based  
35 on the working group that met a couple weeks ago. Thank  
36 you.  
37

38 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you for  
39 the clarification. You may continue.  
40

41 MR. FOLEY: Thank you, Madam Chair. So,  
42 the next item in the bulleted list is non-lethal  
43 estimates of quality of escapement for chinook salmon,  
44 for example, potential egg deposition, age, sex, and  
45 size composition of spawners, weight and girth of  
46 spawners, percentage of females, percentage of jacks,  
47 and spawning habitat usage with an emphasis on Canadian  
48 origin stocks.  
49

1                   Next bullet. Community-based monitoring  
2 of salmon and resident species, presence, abundance,  
3 life history patterns, harvests, genetics and age, sex  
4 length, composition, incidental and delayed mortality  
5 from entanglements and dropouts, habitat restoration  
6 needs and/or environmental variables in tributaries to  
7 better understand fish and keep users engaged during  
8 years of limited fishing opportunities.

9  
10                   Next bullet, in-season estimates of  
11 genetic stock composition of chinook, summer chum, and  
12 fall chum salmon runs.

13  
14                   Next, traditional ecological knowledge  
15 of fishes, for example, to identify salmon spawning  
16 and/or rearing locations and expand the anadromous  
17 waters catalog.

18  
19                   Next, advance genetic baselines for  
20 chinook, summer Chum, fall Chum, and Coho salmon by  
21 screening additional populations and novel genetic  
22 markers to improve the accuracy, precision, and scale  
23 of stock composition estimates to inform stock  
24 assessment for Yukon River fisheries at the tributary  
25 level.

26  
27                   Next, funding to facilitate  
28 interagency, tribal, and stakeholder forums for  
29 gathering and sharing input on fishery management  
30 issues, including cross-jurisdictional and co-  
31 management of salmon.

32  
33                   Next seasonal salmon life stage usage  
34 of tidal tributaries, draining the Yukon Coastal  
35 District through an interdisciplinary approach  
36 documenting traditional ecological knowledge and  
37 biological surveys in order to update the anadromous  
38 waters catalog and improve management's understanding  
39 of salmon in these streams.

40  
41                   Next, and the final bullet in the list  
42 of Yukon PINs Priority Information Needs is a meta-  
43 analysis of existing information and research examining  
44 the relative importance of freshwater, for example,  
45 predation, stranding, heat, stress, and marine, for  
46 example, environmental conditions, bycatch,  
47 interception factors in causing declines of Yukon River  
48 chinook and chum salmon and/or resident species to  
49 present at relevant Regional Advisory Council meetings.  
50 So, Madam Chair, that completes the list of PINs of the

1 Priority Information Needs for the Yukon region. Are  
2 there any questions the Council has about this list or  
3 changes that you would like to make?  
4

5 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Mr. Naneng.  
6

7 MR. NANENG: Yeah, thank you, Madam  
8 Chair. The reason why I brought up Kashunuk and Aphrewn  
9 as part of being part of the Yukon River is the Sonar  
10 is located at Pilot Station, which is about 80 miles  
11 upriver from the mouth of the Yukon. Meaning the north  
12 middle mouth, south mouth, and north mouth, they're  
13 about 80 miles upriver. And we know due to the people  
14 that have gone subsistence fishing at Aphrewn and/or  
15 Kashunuk, they catch salmon. And nowadays, the test  
16 fisheries that's operated by state of Alaska, is located  
17 at Big Eddy, which is right across from Emmonak. It's  
18 from the years and observations of traveling through the  
19 Yukon in the past I've seen a lot of changes of sandbars  
20 where they weren't there before, but the following year  
21 they were there. And I'm sure the Big Eddy at Emmonak  
22 is not like it used to be. Are those being monitored or  
23 still being used as a way of monitoring the salmon when  
24 changes have occurred?  
25

26 I know they can't move, but it's similar  
27 to here in the Kuskokwim. Strait Slough, here on the  
28 Kuskokwim, you catch sometimes more salmon than you do  
29 on the main stem, where the test fishers are being run  
30 by Fish and Game. But they say they're using those test  
31 sites because of their historical records. And it may  
32 not be a true picture, because sometimes those test  
33 fisheries show a lower number than what is being reported  
34 at the Sonar at Pilot Station. And it impacts our people  
35 on lower Yukon and on the coast. That's why I'm bringing  
36 these questions up.  
37

38 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you,  
39 Mr. Naneng. Ms. Carol.  
40

41 MS. CAROLL: Hi, Myron, I might have you  
42 sort of restate your question, but one of the things I  
43 want to first address is the test fishery data will  
44 always be lower than the count at Pilot because it's not  
45 a count. It is just a measure of relative efficiency of  
46 catch. So, they're incomparable. And the other thing is  
47 that because of our concerns about salmon mortality in  
48 these really, really poor runs, we've reduced the  
49 fisheries greatly, the test fisheries. So, for instance,  
50 there is no chinook test fishery at the lower Yukon Test

1 Fish. And that was -- excuse me, there's no chinook  
2 setnet anymore. And that was really the only truly  
3 effective net at catching the chinook and giving us a  
4 pretty good CPUE. So, you're going to see pretty poor  
5 catches there. But you're right, we're always going to  
6 have issues, especially during high water or changing  
7 water flows, catching fish effectively. But when it  
8 comes to managing the fishery in the current state of  
9 affairs, where we're literally looking at full closures,  
10 there would not be any commercial opportunity. We don't  
11 need those test fishery data, quite frankly, to manage  
12 the fishery effectively. What we do need is to count at  
13 Pilot and those counts are good enough to indicate what  
14 type of surpluses might be there, which is almost no  
15 surplus. When we needed those test fisheries the most  
16 was when there were commercial fisheries being managed.  
17 And we need to know exactly when pulses were coming in  
18 and where. And so, quite honestly, I don't think that  
19 how the test fishery is run at Emmonak is affecting  
20 subsistence harvest. But I wanted to circle back and  
21 address something you were saying about these questions,  
22 this complete lack of data that we have about these  
23 coastal communities, a lot of these tributaries that are  
24 changing. And I don't know if you missed the update  
25 yesterday from Alida Trainor, but there's a very well-  
26 designed study to look at the Chevak area, the Kashunuk  
27 and Kong [sic] Rivers that would look at using oral  
28 history data, interviews with locals, use patterns, as  
29 well as doing some standard anadromous waters testing.  
30 And that project is a top priority for me as a manager  
31 because we are unable to effectively address these  
32 questions the coastal communities are asking for. And  
33 so, I was pretty bummed to see that OSM didn't get the  
34 opportunity to fund that this year, it was going to be.  
35 As they might have explained, I'm currently looking for  
36 other funding to fund it if it's not funded by OSM  
37 because it's that much of a priority. And then on the  
38 side, we've been talking with basically Chevak and  
39 Hooper about could we conduct studies? They'd like to  
40 conduct studies. And I've been in touch with them saying  
41 that if they're willing to have a meeting and discuss  
42 what questions they want answered, we could probably  
43 work together to design something and find funding. It's  
44 been, not much follow-through on finding a meeting and  
45 having those discussions, but we've definitely been in  
46 contact with at least two of the communities off and on  
47 about doing that. So, we hear you about the priority.  
48 Do you have a further question about the test fishery  
49 that I might not have answered?  
50

1 MR. NANENG: Well, the test fishery I  
2 know is important, but being located like 80 miles  
3 upriver can have an impact on what may be allowable for  
4 subsistence fishing for those on the coastal villages,  
5 as well as those around the mouth of the Yukon. So, I  
6 know that around here we try and fish as much as we can  
7 before they close it on June, depending on June 1 or  
8 June 1st. But also, you know, the monitoring that goes  
9 all the way out to Hooper Bay by state of Alaska or Fish  
10 and Wildlife Service, that impacts the people's ability  
11 to harvest salmon for food and that's the reason why I  
12 raised these questions and concerns, because using both  
13 the in the past use of the Emmonak test fishery as well  
14 as Pilot Station, they used to announce what may be  
15 available for commercial fishing, but the commercial  
16 fishing is closed. I haven't fished there since 2016 as  
17 a commercial fisherman. I haven't fished there as a  
18 subsistence fisherman since 2018. Not as a commercial,  
19 but subsistence fishing. And so, it impacts our people.  
20 I know a lot of people got a lot of chum salmon this  
21 summer using deep nets because of more abundance than  
22 there was a year or two ago. So, but there were times  
23 when that Hooper Bay, they were completely nothing that  
24 was harvestable because of the -- what I stated earlier,  
25 the predominant winds being from the south or even from  
26 the east. So, but on one more item that I see on your  
27 list regarding genetic studies, are there comparisons  
28 being made of salmon that may be intercepted bound for  
29 these river systems like the Yukon or further north?  
30 That impact -- may impact the return of spawning salmon  
31 to the river systems, or is it just limited to the in-  
32 river genetic studies?

33  
34 MS. CAROLL: Yeah, through the Chair. So  
35 currently most of the genetic research is done in-river,  
36 but we actually want to do some unique research to answer  
37 a couple different questions. So, one would be like, if  
38 we could design a study to test the genetics of the fish  
39 in the coastal communities, that would get to some of  
40 these answers. Where are they heading? Or similarly,  
41 we're struggling with being able to pull out our chum  
42 from the western Alaska stocks. So, Bristol Bay,  
43 Kuskokwim and the Yukon are lumped into one genetic group  
44 currently. We don't have the technology to sort of say,  
45 oh, that's a summer chum headed for the Yukon. So, there  
46 are some studies sort of being thought about and designed  
47 to try to address that. But so far, it's kind of a  
48 conundrum that we don't have the ability to pull that  
49 out. So, leaving that as a priority need allows, if that  
50 study is designed and we're thinking about one from our

1 office it, it allows people to put in for this funding,  
2 and it is one of the main problems with the bycatch  
3 issue is that we can't separate out our Kuskokwim chums  
4 or our Yukon summer chums. So that is an area where we  
5 need to improve baselines. But currently most of what  
6 we do is in-river.

7  
8 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Due to the  
9 time constraint. We're going to go ahead and pull --  
10 Myron you can talk with Holly aside on the different.  
11 We're going to go ahead and do the Kuskokwim. We are on  
12 a time constraint, and I want to make sure we're going  
13 through our agenda. This is the first item on our agenda  
14 today, and we have spent roughly 2 to 3 hours on it  
15 already. Let's go ahead and move on to the Kuskokwim. I  
16 would like you to go ahead and read the PINs. And then  
17 if we have any questions or answers in the end, please  
18 hold your questions or comments at the end after he's  
19 done giving the description of the PINs. Thank you.

20  
21 MR. FOLEY: Thank you, Madam Chair. If I  
22 may, this is an action item, and I would I'm wondering  
23 if the Council would prefer to make a motion to approve  
24 both the Yukon and the Kuskokwim at the end, or if you  
25 would prefer -- yes, I'm seeing a head nod; therefore,  
26 I'm moving on. Thank you, Madam Chair. So, now that  
27 we've made it through the Upper Yukon list, let's jump  
28 into the draft Kuskokwim Priority Information Needs for  
29 2026 cycle. Once again, these are presented in no  
30 particular order. First in the list: Drivers of chinook,  
31 chum, and coho salmon population declines in the  
32 Kuskokwim River drainage, including Kuskokwim Bay  
33 tributaries.

34  
35 Next, chinook, chum, coho, and pink  
36 salmon, inter [sic] and intra-species specific  
37 competition for resources in freshwater and marine  
38 environments.

39  
40 Next, northern pike distribution,  
41 abundance, habitat preferences, and predation patterns  
42 upon juvenile salmon and/or rainbow trout in the  
43 Kuskokwim River watershed, including Kuskokwim Bay  
44 tributaries, for example, the Kanektok River.

45  
46 Next, establish, develop, maintain, and  
47 collect long-term data sets of watershed-scale  
48 environmental variables to better understand their  
49 effects upon chinook, chum, and coho salmon productivity

1 within the Kuskokwim River watershed, including  
2 Kuskokwim Bay tributaries.

3  
4 Next, reliable quantitative and/or  
5 qualitative estimates of salmon run size, escapement,  
6 and harvest in the entire Kuskokwim River watershed,  
7 including Kuskokwim Bay tributaries.

8  
9 Next, explore new and cost-effective  
10 methods for conducting in-season salmon run and harvest  
11 assessments in the Kuskokwim River drainage, with an  
12 emphasis on community-based monitoring.

13  
14 Next, distribution, abundance,  
15 condition, and survival of juvenile and out-migrating  
16 chinook, chum, and coho salmon in the Kuskokwim River  
17 drainage.

18  
19 And the last bullet on the list, impacts  
20 of environmental change in continued harvest and use of  
21 fish, and impacts of climate change on fish, for example,  
22 fish migration, spawning, life cycle, and abundance.  
23 Madam Chair, that completes the list of information  
24 needs for the Kuskokwim region. Are there any questions  
25 the Council has about this list or changes that you  
26 would like to see made?

27  
28 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you,  
29 Mr. Kevin. Ms. Cleveland.

30  
31 MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, through the  
32 Chair. Kevin, I wanted to point out bullet number --  
33 it's not numbered, but it's three, northern pike  
34 distribution, abundance, habitat preferences, and  
35 predation patterns upon juvenile salmon and rainbow  
36 trout in the Kuskokwim River watershed, including our  
37 river, Kanektok River. I just wanted to point out that  
38 by saying rainbow trout, it's very specific because we  
39 have other species such as dolly varden, whitefish,  
40 grayling in the mix. So, I'm not sure how to reword  
41 this; trout, char, whitefish, grayling, I don't know.  
42 Or do you want the, you know, rainbow trout, dolly  
43 varden, whitefish, grayling. Just depending on -- but I  
44 wanted to add those other species. Thank you.

45  
46 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you,  
47 Ms. Cleveland.

48  
49 MR. FOLEY: Through the Chair.  
50 Councilwoman Cleveland, we can make those changes. We

1 can have them specifically point out, I believe we're  
2 taking notes presently on those species you've  
3 indicated. Or if the Council prefers, we can simply state  
4 other fishes such that.....

5  
6 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Sorry to  
7 interrupt, but I believe that her point is valid in  
8 regard to other species. And I think that keeping it  
9 sweet and simple of "other species" instead of having  
10 them detailed out is going to be a lot more, give a lot  
11 more room and space for people to be specific about what  
12 the projects are. Thank you.

13  
14 MR. FOLEY: Thank you, Madam Chair. With  
15 the permission of the Council, may I read back the PIN  
16 as suggested? Thank you. Northern pike distribution,  
17 abundance, habitat preferences, and predation patterns  
18 upon juvenile salmon and other fishes in the Kuskokwim  
19 River watershed, including Kuskokwim Bay tributaries,  
20 for example Kanektok River. Does that sound correct?

21  
22 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you.  
23 Any further comments, questions, or changes? Go ahead,  
24 Mr. Parks.

25  
26 MR. PARKS: Madam Chair, quyana. Henry,  
27 for the record. On bullet number one and bullet number  
28 two, and number seven. Can't we include the red salmons?  
29 Because all I see is chinook, chum and coho. Quyana.

30  
31 MR. FOLEY: Quyana through the Chair.  
32 Councilman Parks. Yes, we can, Thank you.

33  
34 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you,  
35 Mr. Foley. Any further comments or questions at this  
36 time? Okay. Hearing none. Thank you, Mr. Foley. We're  
37 going to go ahead and go on to our next -- oh, wait. I'm  
38 sorry. Go ahead. Oh, sorry. I need a motion on the floor  
39 to accept the Yukon and Kuskokwim region draft Priority  
40 Information Needs, as amended. I need a motion on the  
41 floor.

42  
43 MS. CLEVELAND: I move.

44  
45 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you,  
46 Ms. Cleveland.

47  
48 MR. PETERS: Madam Chair, I'd like to  
49 make a motion to accept those two reports.

50



1                   ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Do you want  
2 a second?

3  
4                   MS. CLEVELAND: I'll second.

5  
6                   ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you. We  
7 have a motion on the floor by Mr. Peters to accept the  
8 Yukon-Kuskokwim region draft Priority Information Needs,  
9 as amended. And the second by Ms. Cleveland. All those  
10 in favor signify by saying aye.

11  
12                   IN UNISON: Aye.

13  
14                   ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: All those  
15 opposed signify by saying nay. Motion passes. Thank you.  
16 Thank you, Mr. Foley.

17  
18                   MR. FOLEY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank  
19 you, members of the Council.

20  
21                   ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Next on the  
22 agenda item, we're going to go to item number C annual  
23 report. Our Council coordinator Brooke, you have the  
24 floor.

25  
26                   MS. MCDAVID: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm  
27 just going to pass out some documents real quick.

28  
29                   (Pause)

30  
31                   So, for folks online, we are passing out  
32 a copy of the draft annual report reply from the Federal  
33 Subsistence Board to the Council's FY 2023 Annual  
34 Report, and that can be found on our website under the  
35 YK Delta meeting materials. And that address is  
36 doi.gov/subsistence; and you can navigate to the regions  
37 to Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta and then meeting materials.  
38 This report has not yet been finalized, or this reply  
39 has not yet been finalized by the start of this meeting.  
40 But the Council will be receiving a final copy by mail  
41 or by email in the coming weeks. But we wanted to go  
42 ahead and go through last year's report with you and  
43 also talk about FY-24 report. Before we get into going  
44 through the replies, I did want to remind the Council  
45 this first handout is about your annual reports and the  
46 authority of the Council as stated in ANILCA, to bring  
47 regional subsistence uses and needs to the attention of  
48 the Secretary of Interior through preparation of an  
49 annual report. And the Secretaries have delegated to the  
50 Federal Subsistence Board the responsibility to consider

1 this report and recommendations of the Council. So, some  
2 of the things that you can include in your annual reports  
3 are listed here in the bullets; identifying subsistence  
4 uses and needs of Fish and Wildlife, evaluating current  
5 and anticipated subsistence needs, recommending  
6 strategies for the management of Fish and Wildlife  
7 populations, recommending -- recommendations concerning  
8 policies, standards, guidelines, and regulations to  
9 implement those strategies. Our leadership has been  
10 discussing ways to possibly make the annual reports a  
11 little more efficient, and they have some suggestions  
12 for the Council as you're developing your report for  
13 this coming year. And that would be to indicate clearly  
14 whether a topic is informational to the Board or if you  
15 are asking for an action from the Federal Subsistence  
16 Board. They also have asked you to consider if there are  
17 actions that an agency represented on the Board could  
18 take, that perhaps it would be better to direct  
19 correspondence directly to that agency. And then you can  
20 just -- oh.

21  
22 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Are we  
23 logging back in? Sorry, folks, we are having some  
24 technical difficulties. Let's go ahead and take a five-  
25 minute break at this time. We do want to make sure we're  
26 running through our agenda items. Please be thinking  
27 about items you would like to discuss directly with the  
28 Federal Subsistence Board, items that you want to  
29 address, and then we'll take it up at the end of the  
30 meeting, all of our topics, and we'll go ahead and do  
31 that because we have a lot more stuff to go through. And  
32 I'm sure you're going to be brainstorming and needing  
33 to put more information into our letter. So, we'll go  
34 ahead and take a couple minutes break here while we're  
35 getting logged back in.

36  
37 (Off record)

38  
39 (On record)

40  
41 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Folks let's  
42 go ahead and get started with our agenda. Go ahead and  
43 take your seats at this time. We currently only have  
44 voice capability at this time. We are unable to share  
45 our screen due to technical difficulty and internet  
46 connectivity. We are going to continue trying to share  
47 our screen so folks online can see. The time now is  
48 11:44. We're going to go ahead and resume our meeting.  
49 Go ahead, Brooke.

50

1 MS. MCDAVID: Thank you, Madam Chair.  
2 Before we got cut off, I believe I was just making --  
3 passing on some recommendations about report clarity  
4 that came from the Board and our leadership team. And  
5 that was for this year's annual report to please clearly  
6 indicate whether a topic is informational, just for the  
7 Board's awareness or if you would like a response or  
8 action from the Board. And if a response is requested,  
9 the Council should clearly articulate what it is that  
10 they are asking for, whether it's action or information.  
11 Also, if the Council could consider whether or not it  
12 would be Board action or response, or if you would like  
13 a specific response from one of the agencies represented  
14 on the Board, it might be more prudent to write directly  
15 to the agency and then just let the Board know that you  
16 did send that letter. They're just trying to avoid  
17 getting letters sent to the Board and also included in  
18 the annual report and asking for a reply to the letter  
19 and a reply to the annual report. So just trying to make  
20 that a little more efficient. And let's see. Also, there  
21 was a recommendation that if you want something elevated  
22 to the Secretaries that that be sent as correspondence  
23 because there isn't currently a clear process to elevate  
24 topics that are included in the annual report. Whereas  
25 there is a process in place to elevate correspondence.  
26 So those are just a few things to note as we work through  
27 this year's annual report. But before we get to that, I  
28 did want to review with you the draft response from the  
29 Board for your last year's annual report. And that's  
30 that thicker packet that stapled together. You all had  
31 thirteen topics of concern in your FY 2023 annual report,  
32 and I did put those up on the screen just as a summary,  
33 because this letter is quite long. But I'll just go  
34 through each of them real briefly and say a couple  
35 things, and then perhaps at the end, if you would like  
36 more information on some of them, you could ask  
37 questions. Okay. So, the first one was about the Arctic  
38 Yukon-Kuskokwim Salmon Crisis and as you know, this is  
39 not a topic that is new to the Council or to the AYK  
40 region. You requested several specific actions of the  
41 Board and elevation of issues. And also, at the joint  
42 Council meeting, there was a lot of discussion on this  
43 topic. And seven Councils submitted a letter together  
44 to the Board requesting elevation to the Secretary on  
45 this issue. The Board did meet with the Secretary in  
46 November 2023, and this topic was discussed at that  
47 meeting. And those letters were elevated after that  
48 meeting to the Secretaries again. The Board is still  
49 waiting on a response and guidance from the Secretaries.  
50 They're hoping to be able to meet with the Secretary of

1 Interior again. And the Counsel's in the joint Council  
2 letter had also requested that the Chairs of the Councils  
3 be able to meet with the Secretary or their  
4 representatives to discuss this issue. So, we still  
5 haven't got a response back. We're hoping that there  
6 will be an update by the next meeting. The second topic  
7 in last year's report was Council member compensation,  
8 and that was something that you all had requested to be  
9 elevated previously. It was, and then it was elevated  
10 again following the joint Council meeting. And that is  
11 another topic that is with the Secretaries Offices' and  
12 is being reviewed, and we're still waiting on a response.  
13 Topic three was Mulchatna Caribou Herd, and you let the  
14 Board know about your continuing concerns about the herd  
15 and about the proposal to Board of Game and your support  
16 of the moratorium and about predator control. Topic four  
17 was about lead shot distribution and outreach. You did  
18 send a letter to -- oh, gosh VF Grace requesting that  
19 they cease distribution to communities and storesa  
20 in the region. The Refuge did respond that this is a topic  
21 they've been working on doing outreach about. Also,  
22 educating people about the harmful nature of lead shot.  
23 And also, I believe the state of Alaska is working also  
24 on a new outreach effort on lead shot. And unfortunately,  
25 they weren't able to present about that at this meeting.  
26 But hopefully in the spring or the winter 2025 meeting,  
27 we could get them on the agenda to talk about that work.  
28 Topic five was about the Donlin Gold mine, and you all  
29 requested that there be a supplemental EIS completed  
30 because of outdated information in the EIS and the lack  
31 of tribal -- meaningful tribal consultation. You also  
32 sent a letter to BLM about this, and BLM did respond.  
33 There's a copy of their response in the back of this  
34 report as a as an enclosure and BLM noted that the lead  
35 agency for this was actually the Army Corps of Engineers  
36 and that they also noted that this project is currently  
37 under litigation and that they're not really able to  
38 share any additional information at this time while  
39 that's litigation is ongoing. I tried to reach out to  
40 the Army Corps Engineers about an update, but I did not  
41 hear back. I would assume that they would have a similar  
42 response about the pending litigation and waiting for  
43 the outcome of that before being able to address the  
44 Council's concerns. Topic six was about ANCSA D1 land  
45 withdrawals, and there is an update on that in that the  
46 administration made a record or published the final EIS  
47 and that chose the -- what's the word I'm looking for?  
48 It was like the no -- the status quo. So, to continue  
49 to keep those protections in place and the final record  
50 of decision has not yet been published, but it will --

1 it should be published this fall. It was expected this  
2 month, but I haven't heard that it has come out yet. So,  
3 that's still pending. But it looks like it's going in  
4 the direction that the Council had hoped. Topic seven  
5 was about spring flooding on the Kuskokwim and the timing  
6 of subsistence fishing openers. The Board suggests that  
7 the Council or any Council members work with the in-  
8 season manager and the Fish Commission to address any  
9 of those issues. But they thanked you for that  
10 information and passed along your concerns to the in-  
11 season manager. Topic eight was about the four-inch mesh  
12 size impacts to salmon and other fishes; the drop out  
13 and the delayed mortality. And as you just heard on the  
14 review of the PINs this primarily is an issue on the  
15 Yukon, where four-inch mesh has been a gear type that's  
16 been utilized in recent years during salmon closures.  
17 But the Board suggested that studies could be done on  
18 the Yukon, and they provided some information about  
19 studies that have been done in other regions. But there  
20 isn't currently a study that or there hasn't been a  
21 study yet on the Yukon on this. So, we'll have to wait  
22 and see if any proposals are put in to do research on  
23 that topic. Topic nine was about Leave No Trace and the  
24 need for more outreach in Yukon Delta and Togiak Refuges.  
25 The Refuges responded with how they currently do  
26 outreach on Leave No Trace, and they did say that they  
27 are hoping to look for funding to develop a Refuge Leave  
28 No Trace educational video. Topic ten was about  
29 increasing competition with non-local moose hunters and  
30 concerns about trophy hunting. And we did hear more about  
31 this topic from some of our Council members during this  
32 this current meeting. So, one thing that the Refuge noted  
33 that they have done to help address this is to limit --  
34 I'll just read one sentence from here. The Refuge limited  
35 the commercial transporter air taxis on where they can  
36 drop off hunters, typically non-local hunters, to areas  
37 that are not boat accessible to try to avoid conflict  
38 with local hunters traveling by boat. So that is one  
39 direct action that the Refuge is currently taking. Also,  
40 the Board wanted to note that at the last Board meeting,  
41 they did keep the closure in place and the Kuskokwim  
42 hunt area in Unit 18 as recommended by the Council, and  
43 the Board also adopted the proposal that added the  
44 communities of Kipnuk, Kong, Kwig and Kwinhagak to the  
45 list of communities that are eligible to hunt in that  
46 area. Topic 11 was in regards to the loss of cranes near  
47 Marshall. And although there hasn't been a specific  
48 study about the cranes at Marshall, the general data  
49 about sandhill cranes in the region suggest that the  
50 population is stable and that perhaps, maybe the cranes

1 have just found another area to utilize within the  
2 region. Topic 12 was about the use of technology at  
3 Council meetings, and OSM responded that we are  
4 currently trying to make improvements to the technology  
5 that we use. Sometimes we are limited by where we meet,  
6 and we are going to keep continuing to be able to  
7 integrate more video and visual presentations at the  
8 meetings. And topic 13, the Council has several  
9 suggestions for improving outreach and also presentation  
10 of analyses and a request for more Yup'ik translation.  
11 And this is something that OSM is also continuing to  
12 work on and improve. This summer was a big shift for us.  
13 There was a lot of changes happening with our move from  
14 U.S. Fish -- excuse me. I'm sorry, Madam Chair. It's  
15 hard to concentrate. Thanks. I just -- this is the last  
16 topic -- is that we will continue to try to work on  
17 these efforts, and we're always open for recommendations  
18 from the Council about better ways we can work with our  
19 interpreters, work with translators, and provide more  
20 meaningful engagement at meetings. So that concludes my  
21 summary of your FY 2023 annual report. Thank you, Madam  
22 Chair.

23  
24 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you,  
25 madam. Sorry, madam coordinator. Do we have any comments  
26 or questions for Brooke at this time? I did have a  
27 couple, Brooke if you might have a little more detail.  
28 So, in regards to the no response from BLM lands they're  
29 already going through with the actions that they had  
30 planned. I'm not sure if our letter had any impact on  
31 what they're currently going through, because we haven't  
32 heard anything back from them. I'm worried that they're  
33 going to take action before they respond to us. Do you  
34 know more information in regards to that BLM letter and  
35 where the status is? I know you said status quo, but  
36 that's pretty alarming.

37  
38 MS. MCDAVID: Well, I believe that the  
39 decision or that was in the EIS, it's not -- so, I guess  
40 there's two processes, and we might have someone from  
41 BLM that can speak better to this, but in the EIS, it  
42 was recommended that they keep the current protections  
43 in place. But the final record of decision is issued  
44 separately, and it just hasn't been signed and published  
45 yet. So, those protections should remain in place, but  
46 because that final record of decision hasn't been  
47 published yet, it's just, it's pending.

48  
49 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Okay, and the  
50 other question I had is in regards to the cranes. We

1 wanted the Federal Subsistence Board to take actions  
2 regarding Calista's Quarry, because those are the  
3 natural traditional areas where cranes and habitat are  
4 for cranes and for them just to say, oh, maybe they went  
5 to another place. Of course they went to another place.  
6 That's given, that's common sense. But what we want is  
7 we want those lands back for those cranes to return,  
8 because those are traditional hunting grounds and those  
9 are habitat that is specific, sorry, specifically chosen  
10 by the cranes, because that's best habitat that they had  
11 found as their homeland or their migration land. And  
12 those need to be returned back to the cranes. Thank you,  
13 Brooke.

14  
15 MS. MCDAVID: Thanks for that, Alyssa,  
16 Madam Chair. I am probably not the best person to speak  
17 to this one. And so perhaps someone from OSM leadership  
18 could jump in, but I believe that the Board, you know,  
19 doesn't really have any jurisdiction on Calista lands  
20 and can't really control what Calista does if they choose  
21 to develop, have development projects such as rock  
22 quarries. But perhaps, yeah, someone else from the  
23 Refuge or somewhere could, if you have additional  
24 questions, might be able to address that.

25  
26 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: As a  
27 Subsistence Board in the Federal Subsistence Board do  
28 have weigh in on decisions and how to protect lands. It  
29 is within their ANILCA and within our Constitution that  
30 those lands need to be protected. And if we're not doing  
31 our job then I don't see how we can just say, oh, they  
32 just moved somewhere else. It doesn't work that way. We  
33 have lands that we need to protect, and we need to  
34 protect our lands for our future generations. So I would  
35 like to put this back on the list as well, that we get  
36 a little more into detail of exactly what we're  
37 requesting, who we're requesting it from, and ask that  
38 the Federal Subsistence Board use their weight that they  
39 have, and the power that they have within the Federal  
40 Subsistence Board to request Calista to move their site  
41 because of the fact it displaced the cranes that  
42 naturally and historically had used that lands. Thank  
43 you. Go ahead, Jackie.

44  
45 MS. CLEVELAND: Thanks, through the  
46 Chair. I had maybe a suggestion for number 13, which  
47 says suggestions for improving outreach and presentation  
48 of analysis and a request for Yup'ik translation of  
49 documents, in the response its -- they cannot promise  
50 to help us now, but I figured in the meantime, we could

1 utilize RITs in community to help translate and help get  
2 that information distributed. With the Yup'ik language  
3 if needed. Quyana.

4  
5 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Any further  
6 comments or questions in regards to our responses back?  
7 All right. Hearing, seeing none. I'm going to go ahead  
8 and call this meeting for a break, for lunch break.  
9 Let's go ahead and meet back here at 1:30. Thank you

10  
11 (Off record)

12  
13 (On record)

14  
15 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: We are just  
16 waiting for our members to come in and have a seat. So,  
17 let's go ahead and have our members come in and sit  
18 down. After you get your yummys at the table. Yeah.  
19 Thank you.

20  
21 (Pause)

22  
23 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Good  
24 afternoon. Sorry, let me start over. Good afternoon,  
25 folks, and welcome to the Yukon-Kuskokwim Regional  
26 Advisory Council. The time now is, what time is it? 1:42  
27 pm in the afternoon, and we're going to go ahead and  
28 reconvene our meeting. Currently on deck right now we  
29 have identifying issues for FY-2024 annual report. I did  
30 want to backtrack and see if you had any more in regards  
31 to the Board FY-2023 Annual Report Reply, Brooke. If  
32 not, we can move on.

33  
34 MS. MCDAVID: Madam Chair, I don't have  
35 anything else to add unless Council members have any  
36 more questions about the reply. Like I mentioned before  
37 lunch, you will be getting the final draft of the reply  
38 via email or by mail shortly. Thank you.

39  
40 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Mr. Naneng.

41  
42 MR. NANENG: Yeah, thank you, Madam  
43 Chair. I think for FY-24, there needs to be more  
44 representation from the Yukon as well as the coastal  
45 villages. You know, not only Hooper Bay, Chevak, but  
46 also probably Nelson Island, because I don't see anyone  
47 here from Nelson Island area. And we're not -- yes. And  
48 we're not including those villages that are also  
49 subsistence users. And another request for 2024 is that  
50 YK Delta region is the highest subsistence use area



1 within the state of Alaska for many of the resources. I  
2 think the request should be made to the Federal  
3 Subsistence Board that we have representation on the  
4 Federal Subsistence Board to represent a lot of issues  
5 that are impacting our people here in the YK Delta. So  
6 those are the two that I would like to request.

7  
8  
9 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you,  
10 Mr. Naneng. For clarification, are you asking that the  
11 Federal Subsistence Board appoint someone to their  
12 Federal Subsistence Board, or because we currently do  
13 have current representation on the Federal Subsistence  
14 Board during our meetings.

15  
16 MR. NANENG: Who's that?

17  
18 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: The  
19 Chairman.

20  
21 MR. NANENG: No. I want someone to sit  
22 directly with the Federal Subsistence Board. The  
23 Chairman may be at a meeting to make a report, but he  
24 doesn't participate in any discussion directly or make  
25 decisions on behalf of our people. So that's why I'm  
26 asking that it should be -- there should be  
27 representation from the AYK Board.

28  
29 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Go ahead,  
30 Brooke.

31  
32 MS. MCDAVID: Thank you. Through the  
33 Chair, member Naneng. Those are two great things to  
34 include. For the first suggestion, you mentioned more  
35 representation from -- making sure that we have good  
36 representation from the different regions within YC,  
37 including coastal, Nelson Island, Mekoryuk and the Yukon  
38 and balance -- making sure it's more balanced. And I did  
39 mention this to Myron during a break, but next year, you  
40 will have the opportunity to review your charter every  
41 two years. That's something that the Council does. And  
42 some regions in their charter, they have added  
43 requirements for geographic representation within their  
44 regions. And so, you could notify the Federal  
45 Subsistence Board in your annual report that that is  
46 something that you're interested in and would like to  
47 see and that you will be making probably making those  
48 recommendations when your charter review comes up.

49  
50 MR. NANENG: Madam Chair.

1  
2                   ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Go ahead, Mr.  
3 Maneng.

4  
5                   MR. NANENG: Yeah, thank you. I think the  
6 charter should be reviewed sooner than later. If we want  
7 to have fair representation of members on the YKRAC, it  
8 should be done sooner than later rather than waiting for  
9 a couple of years. So that will be my motion if anyone  
10 is willing to second it.

11  
12                   ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Go ahead,  
13 Brooke.

14  
15                   MS. MCDAVID: Just to clarify the  
16 process, Myron. So, for the -- you're asking this to be  
17 included in the annual report to the Board, this topic?

18  
19                   MR. NANENG: Yes, but I think action  
20 should be taken sooner than later regarding  
21 representation of the Board from throughout the YK  
22 Delta.

23  
24                   MS. MCDAVID: Gotcha. So, on the second  
25 topic that you said about having a representative on the  
26 Federal Subsistence Board, currently, there was a  
27 Federal -- a proposed rule that was released earlier  
28 this year to add three more public members to the Federal  
29 Subsistence Board, and the Council and other Councils  
30 provided comments on that this last meeting. And a lot  
31 of the comments were exactly what you're saying. We want  
32 to make sure there's representation from all the  
33 different regions, and we still haven't heard -- The  
34 final decision on that hasn't been published yet, but  
35 we can definitely reiterate that. And hopefully, I mean,  
36 we should be hearing within the next month or two back  
37 on the results for that. Thank you.

38  
39                   MR. NANENG: Okay, thank you.

40  
41                   ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Ms. Pippa,  
42 you have the floor.

43  
44                   MS. KENNER: Thank you very much, Madam  
45 Chair. This is Pippa Kenner. What I think I heard member  
46 Naneng say is that, you know, representation from this  
47 region at the Board meeting. And I do want you to know  
48 that the Chairs of all the Councils are -- sit with the  
49 Board during Board meetings as advisors, and they do  
50 participate in discussion. And the Board would not be

1 as effective as it is if it weren't for that. So, they're  
2 there. And the other thing though, I want to put a plug  
3 in for the Council. We have to get applications or people  
4 can be nominated. You can nominate somebody to be on the  
5 Council. We have to get those applications in order to  
6 process them. And with member Slats gone now, we do need  
7  
8 representation from Nelson Island. And thank God we have  
9 somebody from Kuskokwim Bay. And so, thank you.

10  
11 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you,  
12 Ms. Kenner.

13  
14 MR. NANENG: Just one final comment. I  
15 don't think just being advisors is fair to our region  
16 out here with the many of the issues that we have. I  
17 think we need full participation in the discussions of  
18 the Federal Subsistence Board. And I'll just say that  
19 you are there to advise us. That's my comment. Thank  
20 you.

21  
22 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you,  
23 Mr. Naneng. Let's go ahead and move on. Do you want to  
24 -- Brooke can we take up item number identifying issues  
25 for 2024 annual report. So, Council members.....

26  
27 (Simultaneous speech)

28  
29 MR. NANENG: Madam Chair.

30  
31 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: .....I'm  
32 sorry. Let me finish.

33  
34 MR. NANENG: Point of order. I made a  
35 motion that action -- that the request for action on  
36 these two items be taken as soon as possible. That's,  
37 that was my motion.

38  
39 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: There is a  
40 motion currently on the floor. Do we have a second?

41  
42 MR. PETER: Madam Chair, second the  
43 motion.

44  
45 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Motion has  
46 been seconded. Can you restate your motion, Mr. Naneng?

47  
48 MR. NANENG: I think the motion is to  
49 have representation from throughout the region on the  
50 Regional Advisory Council. And also, the second one is

1 to have a representative from this YK RAC to be able to  
2 be full participants, not just advisory on the Federal  
3 Subsistence Board. So those are two things that are made  
4 as part of the motion. And it's been seconded.

5  
6  
7  
8 MS. MCDAVID: And just to clarify, this  
9 is to add these topics and requests to the annual report  
10 so that they -- okay.

11  
12 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Motion on the  
13 floor by Mr. Naneng and seconded by Mr. Peter. Any  
14 further discussion or comments at this time? Question  
15 has been called. All those in favor signify by saying  
16 aye.

17  
18 IN UNISON: Aye.

19  
20 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: All those  
21 opposed signify by saying nay.

22  
23 (No response)

24  
25 Motion passes. Go ahead, Brooke.

26  
27 MS. MCDAVID: Yeah. As far as I just  
28 wanted to make a comment about the process. We can --  
29 you guys can keep adding topics, and you can just vote  
30 on them all at once. You don't have to necessarily do  
31 what we just did and vote on them, like in small pieces.  
32 If you just want to continue adding to the list and then  
33 we can make one motion at the end, it might just simplify  
34 things a little bit. Just a suggestion. Thank you.

35  
36 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you,  
37 Ms. Brooke. All right, if you guys have any more ideas  
38 or anything else that you would like to put onto our  
39 annual report, go ahead and let Brooke know and announce  
40 it on record. If we're going through our processes and  
41 you have a decision that you would like to add it to the  
42 annual report, we can take it up at that time. At the  
43 end of the meeting, we're going to go ahead and make a  
44 motion to approve all of the topics and items that we  
45 want on the annual report at the end of our meeting, so  
46 that we can keep thinking about things and if something  
47 comes up, we can continue to continuously add into the  
48 annual report. All right, we're going to move on to item  
49 number D, future meeting dates. Item number one is to

1 confirm the 2025 meeting date and location. It's going  
2 to be on page 107 of your meeting book.

3  
4 (Pause)

5  
6 All right for the Winter 2025 Regional  
7 Advisory Council meeting calendar for the Yukon Delta  
8 Regional Advisory Council. We currently have March 4th  
9 and March 5th currently on dates, so we need a  
10 confirmation that those are the dates that we would like  
11 to have, is there any other changes to these dates or  
12 any conflicting dates that might not?

13  
14 (Pause)

15  
16 MS. MCDAVID: Through the Chair. We were  
17 just going to check and see if member Wassily Alexie was  
18 able to call in this afternoon. Wassily, if you're  
19 online, if you could press star six or unmute yourself  
20 and let us know, we'd appreciate it. Thank you.

21  
22 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: What say of  
23 the Board is March 4th and March 5th work for everyone.  
24 I'm seeing a lot of gavlaks go up.

25  
26 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: All right,  
27 it's set in stone for March 4th and March 5th for the  
28 Winter 2025 Regional Advisory Council meeting. Next on  
29 the agenda is for the Fall 2025 Regional Council Meeting  
30 calendar on page 108. Brooke.

31  
32 MS. MCDAVID: Thank you, Madam Chair.  
33 Yeah, as the Council can probably see you selected  
34 October 21st through the 23rd for your meeting dates and  
35 the location that you previously suggested was either  
36 Anchorage or Bethel. And I do have an update on the  
37 Council's ability to meet in Anchorage. It is because  
38 it is outside of your region. You will have to put in a  
39 request to OSM to be able to meet there and provide some  
40 justification for why you think it would be important  
41 for the Council to meet outside of your region. So, I  
42 just wanted to throw that out there. Thanks.

43  
44 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Ms.  
45 Cleveland.

46  
47 MS. CLEVELAND: I just wanted to double  
48 check to see if these dates were during youth and elders  
49 or AFN. Which could be a conflict. Thanks.

50

1                   ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: For folks  
2 online, we're going to double check these dates. If you  
3 can, go ahead and stand by for a minute.

4  
5                   (Pause)

6  
7                   MS. MCDAVID: For the record, you can  
8 always at your winter meeting. If the dates for AFN have  
9 come out, you can always move your fall meeting dates  
10 at that meeting.

11  
12                   ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you for  
13 the clarification, Brooke. As of right now, as it stands,  
14 does these days currently work for everyone? Seeing nods  
15 head and gavlaks go up. All right, hearing no changes  
16 to this, will go ahead and continue to keep October  
17 21st, 22nd and 23rd. We do need a motion on the floor  
18 to have our meeting in Anchorage. And if I get a motion,  
19 I can do a justification.

20  
21                   MR. PETER: Madam Chair, I would like to  
22 make a motion. October 21, 22, 23 for Anchorage.

23  
24                   ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you,  
25 Mr. Peters. Can I get a second.

26  
27                   MS. CLEVELANG: Second.

28  
29                   ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you,  
30 Ms. Cleveland. There's a motion on the floor by Mr.  
31 Peter to have our meeting October 21st, 22nd and 23rd  
32 in Anchorage and seconded by Ms. Cleveland. It is --  
33 floor is open for discussion. Why should we have our  
34 meeting in Anchorage is the question. Mr. Parks, why is  
35 it a good idea to have our meeting in Anchorage?

36  
37                   MR. SPARKS: Madam Chair. (In Native).

38  
39                   ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Mr. Phillip,  
40 do you have any idea of how good it is to have a meeting  
41 in Anchorage?

42                   (Simultaneous speech)

43  
44                   UNIDENTIFIED: The question of why they  
45 should meet in Anchorage.

46  
47                   (Simultaneous speech)

48  
49                   MR. PETER: We had the meeting in  
50 Anchorage, last year. And even though there are not many

1 people we can make actions what people need in this  
2 area, Kuskokwim and also other communities. That's why  
3 I like the meeting in Anchorage, less expensive for  
4 hotels and there are more restaurants. Quyana.

5  
6 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Quyana, Mr.  
7 Peter. Ms. Cleveland, why should we have our meeting in  
8 Anchorage?

9  
10 MS. CLEVELAND: I think that around that  
11 time in October, there's a lot of gatherings besides the  
12 native gathering, AFN, and it's a good time to network.  
13 So, network is my reason why.

14  
15 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Quyana, Ms.  
16 Cleveland. Mr. Naneng, why should we have our meeting  
17 in Anchorage?

18  
19 MR. NANENG: I think the people from Fish  
20 and Game that are not here will be present at that  
21 meeting. I know a lot of them don't like to travel out  
22 because of lack of space and availability to stay here  
23 in Anchorage, unless they camp at Fish and Wildlife  
24 Service Offices in their camp. So that's my excuse for  
25 having the meeting in Anchorage. Quyana.

26  
27 MR. ANDREW: My name is John Andrew. I  
28 like it better in Anchorage because we have excellent  
29 staff service over there, and shoppers are always ready  
30 to go on the back streets. Thank you.

31  
32 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you,  
33 Mr. Andrew. My justification for having the meeting in  
34 Anchorage is A, the cost efficiency is -- the cost  
35 effectiveness is a lot more beneficial in regards to  
36 having more staff available, the resources, the network  
37 and connectivity, and the ability to connect with folks  
38 that are in Anchorage that would like to attend our  
39 meeting that are from our region. It also gives not only  
40 the availability for them to attend our meetings and  
41 voice their opinions, but also give us insights to when  
42 they come out here and how they experience subsistence  
43 out here and how it's affecting them as well, because  
44 they still come out in subsistence with us and our  
45 families, and also because of the higher up people who  
46 we are asking for to attend our meetings and those above  
47 our pay grades of our staff here, who can attend our  
48 meetings and answer those really hard questions that we  
49 have and be able to talk to them and tell them our  
50 concerns and issues that we want, instead of it coming

1 through a letter, we'll be able to be there in person  
2 to discuss these issues with them. My third  
3 justification is that we will have the capability of  
4 having more resources. All of the offices and all of the  
5 locations that -- organizations that we have to go  
6 through and see in regards to Congressional Offices,  
7 Alaska Legislation Offices and resources that we need  
8 in order to be as effective as possible are located in  
9 Anchorage. They're not located in Bethel. They pulled  
10 out of Bethel and have moved to Anchorage. Those  
11 resources are very important to us for us to be an  
12 effective Council. Thank you. Those are my  
13 justifications. Ms. Evan, why should we go to Anchorage?  
14

15 MS. EVAN: I think you pretty much  
16 covered everything, plus shopping opportunities.  
17

18 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you,  
19 Ms. Evan. Is that a good enough justification? All right,  
20 thank you. We need a motion on the floor. Oh, there is  
21 a motion on the floor, sorry. I need more coffee. Do we  
22 have a question on the floor?  
23

24 MR. ANDREW: Question.  
25

26 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Question has  
27 been called by Mr. Andrew. All those in favor signify  
28 by saying aye.  
29

30 IN UNISON: Aye.  
31

32 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: All those  
33 opposed signify by saying nay. Motion passes. Thank you,  
34 folks, we're going to go on to item number 13 for  
35 reports, must be approved in advance and time limit of  
36 15 minutes unless otherwise arranged. Currently on the  
37 floor we have Alaska Department of Fish and Game, the  
38 Subsistence Division Project updates.  
39

40 MS. MCDAVID: Madam Chair, I have an  
41 update for you on that. The Subsistence Division  
42 provided their updates yesterday. It was a time certain  
43 item and then the next ADF&G report about the Mulchatna  
44 Caribou Intensive Management. They requested to be  
45 scheduled tomorrow morning first thing after public  
46 comment. So, we did accommodate that because we knew it  
47 was an important thing the Council wanted to hear.  
48

49 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you,  
50 Ms. Brooke, for the updates. That brings us to item



1 number B, the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish  
2 Commission. Theresa, are you going to do the report? No?  
3 Okay.

4 MS. MCDAVID: She did request if --  
5 Sorry, Madam Chair.

6  
7 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Go ahead.

8  
9 MS. MCDAVID: She did request if -- I  
10 think she said she could be back after 2:30. If we could  
11 skip her and come back just because of conflicting  
12 meetings and sorry one more. The Yukon River Inter-  
13 Tribal Fish Commission Executive Director Karma Olviq  
14 is also busy today. She asked if she could go in the  
15 morning after ADF&G predator control.

16  
17 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Do we need a  
18 motion on the floor to make that amendment?

19  
20 MS. MCDAVID: I don't.....

21  
22 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: No?

23  
24 MS MCDAVID: I think -- yeah.

25  
26 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you for  
27 the updates. That brings us down to item number D,  
28 Association of Village Council Presidents for the  
29 Natural Resources Department. And they're also not here.  
30 All right, we're going to move down to the native village  
31 of Napaimute, Mr. Gilligan. All right, moving on. Bering  
32 Sea Fishermen's Association. Are you guys online? All  
33 right, moving on. Item number G, U.S. Fish and Wildlife  
34 Service, the Yukon Area Salmon Management. I'm sorry,  
35 who's online?

36  
37 MS. MCDAVID: Ashley Johnson from AVCP  
38 is raising her hand.

39  
40 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: All right.  
41 We're going to jump back to item number D, Association  
42 of Village Council Presidents with Ms. Ashley Johnson.  
43 You have the floor.

44  
45 MS. JOHNSON: Hi, good afternoon. Sorry  
46 we weren't there in person. We do have other meetings  
47 that we are attending and Jennifer Hooper is ending one  
48 meeting and we'll be jumping on to this one. Maybe in  
49 about twenty minutes. She would be available, if that's

1 okay with the Council to delay our presentation or our  
2 report.

3  
4 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: That is fine  
5 with me. Thank you for the update. All right. We're  
6 going to move back right where we were on to item number  
7 G, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, item number I, Yukon  
8 Area Salmon Management. Oh, there's look like a note for  
9 the -- is today the 22nd? Okay. Today is the 22nd. Thank  
10 you, Ms. Carroll. I appreciate it. Thank you. You have  
11 the floor.

12  
13 MS. CARROLL: Thank you, Madam Chair.  
14 Yeah, one of the benefits of you being so good at moving  
15 us through an agenda is most people aren't ready, but  
16 I'm here, and so I'm going to keep it pretty brief.  
17 We're actively managing right now. In fact, my team just  
18 put out a news release today while I was here.  
19 Unfortunately, our salmon runs on the Yukon, as many of  
20 you know, have been really, really very poor. And so, I  
21 don't have a lot of great news today. So, our chinook  
22 salmon run was the total Pilot Station Sonar for the  
23 season ended up being just 64,000 fish. And the Canadian  
24 component of that that escapes into Canada. The current  
25 count up at Eagle Sonar is 24,000 chinook salmon. So,  
26 that's an improvement over last year. Last year we only  
27 escaped about 15,000, which is one of the lowest on  
28 record. 24,000 is better than last year. But for  
29 perspective it is 50,000 fish below our current  
30 escapement goal at that border, which is 71,000 fish.  
31 So, you know, it's very poor. But it is a testament to  
32 the fishermen who have stood down voluntarily on chinook  
33 as well as complied with all the closures that the number  
34 that we were expecting to see at the border with our  
35 kind of adjusted in-season forecasts was about right.  
36 We were expecting to see about 24,000 there, and we did.  
37 But again, it's a terrible situation for the chinook in  
38 the, in the sense that they're not recovering to fishable  
39 run sizes like you still have on the Kuskokwim. Now, the  
40 summer chum run is our one bright spot. It has started  
41 to rebound since these very, very terrible runs in 2021  
42 and 2022. And so, this year, we did, again, have a  
43 fishable harvestable surplus on that run size. We saw a  
44 final count at the Pilot Station Sonar of just under  
45 758,000 fish. Now for perspective on that run size, our  
46 drainage wide goal for summer chum is 500,000 to 1.2  
47 million. So, we did meet the drainage wide goal for that  
48 species. That's how we knew we had a harvestable surplus,  
49 and we were able to allow some selective fishing for  
50 that species. So, that means gear where kings could be

1 released, but summer chum could be retained. So, deep  
2 nets, manned fish wheels, hook and line. Because of that,  
3 we did get some reports from mostly lower river  
4 communities that they were very happy to be putting up  
5 summer chums for their family, but that's really only  
6 the only salmon harvest that occurred. And so, you know,  
7 our forecasts for summer chum and chinook were pretty  
8 much spot on. The runs came in within the forecast. So,  
9 that's at least good that our forecasting methods are  
10 working for giving us plenty of warning. The fall species  
11 are a little bit different. Our forecast on the fall  
12 chum run was for a better run than we ended up seeing.  
13 The fall chum are still passing. That run is not over,  
14 but we're well past the midpoint of the run. And we're  
15 not seeing really large pulses come in. So, our roughly  
16 current count at Pilot Station Sonar for fall chum is  
17 162,000 fish. For perspective, our drainage wide  
18 escapement goal for that species is a minimum of 300,000  
19 fish. So, for fall chum, we are unlikely to meet any  
20 escapement goals throughout the drainage and we've had  
21 to keep the fishing for fall chum closed. Coho was also  
22 predicted to be very weak and it is so far we're probably  
23 only at the quarter point, we're before the midpoint, I  
24 think, but we're only counting about 13,000 coho in the  
25 river. So, we -- today the news release that went out  
26 is, is letting people know that even in their selective  
27 gears now, they may not retain coho. So, at this time  
28 you can't retain any salmon really. What we have been  
29 trying to do on the Yukon River, because we do have such  
30 a sort of a draconian situation where you can't get any  
31 salmon to meet your family's food needs. We have had a  
32 very liberal approach to allowing four-inch gear. Four-  
33 inch gear limited to 60 ft, so it's nice and short. We  
34 did limit it also to be used as a set net so that people  
35 can be targeting pink salmon in the lower river. Because  
36 we did have a lot of pinks, they could be targeting any  
37 sockeye, although we have, you know, almost negligible  
38 numbers of sockeye but if you got one, you could keep  
39 one. And then we do have bountiful whitefish runs like  
40 you do here. So, the hope there is that anyone who's  
41 still wanting to, you know, maintain some tradition  
42 around fish, put up food. That's why we allow that  
43 liberal opportunity for non-salmon. But what's what  
44 we're seeing on the Yukon is that -- actually many of  
45 our fishermen are so concerned about the salmon runs  
46 that we may not be being conservative enough. And many  
47 of our fishermen want us to stop allowing four-inch gear.  
48 And so, we did get some suggestions of not allowing net  
49 gear in certain areas or reducing the use of it. And so,  
50 this summer, for the first time, to protect the king

1 salmon, because the king salmon on our river only come  
2 in for four weeks, it's nice and condensed run. For two  
3 of the kind of highest passage weeks, we pulled all  
4 four-inch out of the river so, no one could be using  
5 their non salmon four-inch nets for that two weeks in  
6 each area where the kings were passing through. And we  
7 did that so that there would be much less incidental  
8 catch of the kings, because if you catch a king salmon  
9 in your four-inch net, you can keep it if it's dead,  
10 because that's lethal gear we can't require people to  
11 release salmon from those gears. And so, I also want to  
12 point out that some of you, especially I was I was really  
13 moved by your comments member Peter. That is the way our  
14 Yukon fishermen are getting a taste of salmon. There is  
15 incidental harvest in those four-inch gears. There's a  
16 very small amount of king harvest in those gears, and  
17 there's probably a little bit more summer chum harvest  
18 in those gears. And we recognize that. And so that is  
19 the way that the occasional family is getting that  
20 occasional salmon. But there are some people that, you  
21 know, truly believe that when we say there's no  
22 harvestable surplus, there is no harvestable surplus.  
23 And so, we are getting people asking for us to do more,  
24 removing the four-inch. And as your Manager, I am  
25 constantly looking for feedback on this because it's a  
26 rare situation to be having fishermen tell me I'm not  
27 being conservative enough and that is what I'm hearing  
28 lately. There are some people that wanted to pull all  
29 four-inch use during the fall season, or for the whole  
30 king season, and particularly in the upper river. So,  
31 if any of your members have feedback on that, we are  
32 going to be continuing to grapple with some of those  
33 very hard management choices of taking away a little bit  
34 of non-salmon opportunity in order to just further  
35 protect those kings and fall chum. So that's something  
36 that's very tough, that both the state and the Federal  
37 team have been grappling with and are going to continue  
38 to.

39  
40 One way that we took a compromise on  
41 that is that news release that went out today puts  
42 fishermen's four-inch gear on a three day a week schedule  
43 so you can fish for your non-salmon on the weekends, and  
44 then you got to pull those four-inch out of the water.  
45 And the hope there is that less of the fall chum in the  
46 coho will be caught in those nets. So, that's the  
47 compromise we've found for now. And we will probably  
48 leave that in place. And many of these closures will  
49 stay in place until the fall chum are known to be  
50 completely out of the area. So, for some drainages

1 that'll be closed until -- up through December. So, it's  
2 a pretty harsh situation on the Yukon. Like I said, the  
3 bright spot is that the summer chum are rebounding a  
4 little bit and that we met goals drainage wide for that  
5 run. But one update I have is that because you guys are  
6 kind of asking really good questions about, you know,  
7 why don't you have escapement projects on every river?  
8 And, you know, what are you doing about some of those  
9 other weak stocks? So, one of the things that's going  
10 to come up around summer chum, and I'm getting asked a  
11 lot, is that for summer chum we have that drainage wide  
12 goal I just told you about 500,000 to 1.2 million. And  
13 what's interesting is we can meet that goal. You know,  
14 we have 800,000 fish in the river. Okay, we met that  
15 goal, that population seems healthy. We don't  
16 necessarily know where all those summer chum are going.  
17 And we only have two other summer chum goals in the  
18 drainage. One of them is in the Anvik River and that  
19 goal, I might get it wrong, but I think it's 350,000  
20 fish at a minimum, and we have not met that goal for  
21 many years, even when our runs are doing well like the  
22 last two years when we met the summer chum goal, we're  
23 failing that goal. And then we had a very surprising  
24 situation on the Andreafsky River, which is down in the  
25 lower drainage. That river is below the Pilot Station  
26 Sonar, so it is one of the lowest rivers in the drainage  
27 where we have spawning chinook and summer Chum. And we've  
28 had a really hard time getting the weir in and having  
29 it in and counting all season because like you guys are  
30 probably experiencing on the on the Kuskokwim, we are  
31 having a lot of like flash flooding in our drainage  
32 stuff we haven't seen for 20 years. And so, our success  
33 rate of installing a weir and keeping it installed is  
34 very poor, it's probably less than 50% on that river.  
35 And so, we've not had viable estimates in that project  
36 costs about \$170,000, and OSM has always funded that  
37 project. We have never had the base funding to run it.  
38 So, this year, what was very kind of surprising and  
39 scary and weird was that we did get the weir in before  
40 the fish got there, and only 24 king salmon went up that  
41 river and only 190 summer chum salmon went up the river,  
42 and we don't really have an explanation for it. We might  
43 have missed fish because there was about three or four  
44 days when flooding came up and the in the weir wasn't  
45 fish tight, but thousands of fish did not pass through  
46 that weir when we weren't fully counting. And Fish and  
47 Game did do an aerial survey. I know you guys brought  
48 that up too and they do some verification by flying  
49 those drainages, and they found similar numbers of  
50 chinook and summer chum. What was interesting is they

1 found a couple hundred summer chum and 70 kings. But  
2 they counted I believe it was like 130,000 pink salmon  
3 in that drainage. So, I do think pinks are doing okay,  
4 and they might even be competing with our chums. And I  
5 think chums are moving to new places, and we don't know  
6 why, and we need to start studying them. And so that's  
7 something our Fairbanks Fisheries branch is looking  
8 into. That's what we've prioritized is studying our  
9 summer chum distribution. So, that's kind of on our plan  
10 is to develop some good studies around that. But the  
11 Andrafsky was last year of operation or funded  
12 operation is next year, 2025. And because of the  
13 complexity of it, we're probably going to have to just  
14 decommission the site. So, we'll work with the  
15 corporation land and the and the tribes to see how they  
16 want it left. But it's a lot of work to kind of pull  
17 that infrastructure out. And so, we probably won't be  
18 applying for more funding for the Andrafsky River. I  
19 think it's time to focus on kind of other questions  
20 about where the summer chum are going in the whole  
21 drainage. But I just wanted to kind of let folks know  
22 that, because maybe people don't know that, you know,  
23 everybody watches that OSM pot of money, and we all put  
24 in projects, and we basically compete with each other.  
25 And as you guys heard, you know, there's all these things  
26 you want answers on, and like us, we can only do one or  
27 two or four or five projects at a time. And when we put  
28 those projects in, we might outcompete something more  
29 important. And so, it is one of the reasons we've chosen  
30 not to put it in as, for instance, I wouldn't want to  
31 compete with that Chevak study. I think that's a study  
32 that hasn't been done and needs to be done and so, these  
33 are the kind of things I'm just sharing with you guys  
34 so that you see kind of how we're thinking through how  
35 we prioritize our assessment. From a management  
36 standpoint, I think that's all I have for a summary, and  
37 I'd rather just keep it short so you guys can ask  
38 whatever questions you might have.

39  
40 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you,  
41 Ms. Carroll, for your thorough report. We greatly  
42 appreciate it. Any questions or comments at this time?  
43 Mr. Naneng.

44  
45 MR. NANENG: Thank you, Madam Chair. I  
46 know that state of Alaska has a study going on as to  
47 where the chinook salmon are heading out to the Bering  
48 Sea, that was presented by Doctor Katie Howard and any  
49 updates regarding that study?

50

1 MS. CARROLL: Yeah. So, I may not be  
2 following exactly what study she's got going on. She's  
3 got a few. So, there's an on-river chinook tagging study,  
4 but there's also a Bering Sea Survey study that's going  
5 on, maybe we should ask if Fish and Game is on the line  
6 if they want to give any updates on any of their research  
7 on Ccinook, or they could do it during their Fish and  
8 Game report maybe, it should be coming up on the.....  
9

10 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Okay, we're  
11 going to go ahead and wait.  
12

13 MS. MCDAVID: Just there's no fishing  
14 game report from Fisheries on the agenda, FYI.  
15

16 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: All right.  
17 Hearing that we don't have one, do we have Fish and Game  
18 online? Does anybody have their number so I can call  
19 them?  
20

21 MS. CARROLL: Well, I can certainly  
22 follow up to I could actually text some folks or send a  
23 quick email and then give the Council an update if you  
24 wanted. Are you asking about adult salmon or juvenile  
25 salmon in the Bering Sea?  
26

27 MR. NANENG: Its juvenile salmon that  
28 they were doing a study on a few years ago.  
29

30 MS. CARROL: That's ongoing.  
31

32 MR. NANENG: Yes.  
33

34 MS. CARROL: I can answer that. Yes,  
35 that's ongoing and they're doing a lot of research with  
36 that. So many things, so they do these trawl surveys in  
37 the -- they're doing the northern and the southern Bering  
38 Sea and so, some of that will answer some questions  
39 about Kuskokwim chinook actually. So, the Bering Sea  
40 research they're doing is really great because they've  
41 got this long-term data set on the juveniles, and because  
42 of that, they actually were able to make a long-term  
43 forecast. That's why we know usually two and three years  
44 ahead what our chinook runs will be. That's unique to  
45 that research and it's actually unique to this river.  
46 There's not many rivers that have a three year forecast  
47 like that. So, they're doing that every year. And then  
48 on top of that they're taking all kinds of data. They're  
49 taking health data. They're taking diet data. That's how  
50 we've been kind of learning that the -- one of our main

1 problems with the salmon across the species is poor diet  
2 right now in the ocean. So, yeah, that's definitely  
3 ongoing. And then some other research that they're doing  
4 that's really fascinating as well is we just concluded  
5 the third year of our ichthyophonus study on chinook and  
6 they've also been studying the ichthyophonus component  
7 in the fishes out in that Bering Sea. So, they're looking  
8 at pollock and they're looking at other species. So,  
9 that's going to be helpful for health. And then they've  
10 also been working to look at like egg health, like the  
11 thiamine in the eggs from our -- some of our adult  
12 projects where we're sending them samples. So, they're  
13 doing a ton of stuff on, you know, basically overall  
14 health of chinook and these other species. So, there's  
15 a ton of collaborative work happening right now between  
16 Fish and Game, Fish and Wildlife, USGS and the  
17 universities.

18  
19 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you,  
20 Ms. Carroll. Mr. Naneng.

21  
22 MR. NANENG: So, it's not climate impact,  
23 but all these other things that are caused may be causing  
24 a reduction of salmon returning to the river systems.

25  
26 MS. CARROLL: I would say it's definitely  
27 also climate impact. I think one of our biggest issues,  
28 and the way we know is that all the salmon are affected,  
29 except sockeye are doing great. But the -- we definitely  
30 know that the warming in the Bering Sea is affecting  
31 where the food are going. And so, it's affecting the  
32 quality of the food. It's affecting the fish size and  
33 health. So, I don't think anyone would say it's not  
34 climate change. Climate change is a huge factor. But,  
35 you know, many of us don't have like the smoking gun.  
36 But I think most of us biologists would agree that right  
37 now, especially for our kings on the Yukon, it's death  
38 by a thousand cuts. So, if there's less of them and then  
39 they're smaller and then they're younger, then it means  
40 less females are coming up, and then you add  
41 ichthyophonus, for instance. And we're not -- we don't  
42 have conclusive evidence, but there's good evidence that  
43 if they're getting quite sick, they might be dying before  
44 they reach the upper reaches. That's what we've been  
45 seeing on the Yukon, this disconnect between what comes  
46 in and is counted at Pilot and then what makes it 800  
47 more miles to Canada. So that's one of the things we're  
48 seeing. It doesn't super explain why the fall chum did  
49 so terribly but they're also when they come back,  
50 sometimes they're migrating through record warm water.



1 And so yeah, I think climate change is definitely at the  
2 heart of a lot of these factors.

3  
4 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Any further  
5 comments or questions. Mr. Peter.

6  
7 MR. PETER: Madam Chairman. You mentioned  
8 that they're going to pull off the four-inch there in  
9 Yukon.

10  
11 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Sorry, Mr.  
12 Peter. For those of you online, we're getting some  
13 background noise. Can you please mute your phones or  
14 press star six to mute your phone? It is hard for other  
15 participants, and we hear heavy breathing. If you could  
16 go ahead and please star 6 to mute your phones or press  
17 the mute button would greatly appreciate it. All right.  
18 Thank you very much for doing that. Go ahead, Mr. Peter.  
19 I apologize for the interruption.

20  
21 MR. PETER: Thank you, Madam Chairman.  
22 You mentioned about the four-inch gear in Yukon. They're  
23 planning to pull out the four-inch gear, what you  
24 mentioned, if I heard you correctly, because we used  
25 that four-inch in Kuskokwim. And when they had the big  
26 meeting in Fairbanks, I mentioned that -- and I call it  
27 the killer net. The catch and kill those whitefish nets.  
28 Some are monofilament, right now they're using --  
29 they're making monofilament whitefish net, which is  
30 disappearing when you set it out on the water. It's  
31 really clear and good thing they plan to pull out the  
32 four-inch gear in Yukon. And, they should -- the Federal  
33 Subsistence Board should change the gear to a five and  
34 a half, sixty feet, forty-five mesh or six inches.  
35 They're good for catching those salmons, even though  
36 they're really short it's good for the consumption and  
37 the first arrival of the salmon in Yukon River, also in  
38 Kuskokwim, and I think we need to -- using it in both  
39 rivers. We're using it in Kuskokwim, but on the Yukon,  
40 even though they set it out in the non-spawning grounds,  
41 non-spawning river sloughs. They're good, they should -  
42 - they catch right size whitefish, sheefish, anything  
43 the fish swims. My other question will be about you  
44 mentioned about rod and reel fishing, and they still use  
45 a deep net in Yukon? Yeah, yeah. What about them, fish  
46 wheels? Oh, okay. Thank you Madam.

47  
48 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Go ahead, Ms.  
49 Carroll.

50

1 MS. CARROLL: So, for your first comments  
2 about the four-inch. So, I do want to clarify a couple  
3 of things. For one, we're not going to do away with the  
4 four-inch yet, that is undecided. We are being asked to  
5 do that, but it would take all food away for three months  
6 if we did that. So, we're going to need a lot more public  
7 discussion before those are gone. What you are saying  
8 about it would be better to use five-inch or six-inch.  
9 That's what a lot of our fishermen would prefer as well.  
10 They would prefer those bigger meshes because they want  
11 the bigger broads, the bigger humpbacks, the bigger  
12 sheefish, especially like in fall time when they're  
13 coming out of the lakes, they don't want those little  
14 ones. Unfortunately, we will not be allowing five-inch  
15 or six-inch gear because we can't allow any harvest of  
16 salmon, none. We don't have runs that would support  
17 people taking those fish. That's why we have to limit  
18 to non-salmon gear. We aren't allowing any salmon  
19 fishing like you have on the Kuskokwim. We don't even  
20 have one opening a week for salmon, not for chinook. So,  
21 we have a slightly different situation where we can only  
22 allow those larger mesh gear when they will not have any  
23 salmon present, and there's not that many streams that  
24 we know of that are just non-salmon streams, and they  
25 certainly aren't well distributed streams throughout the  
26 drainage. So, even if we could open a few here and there,  
27 there would be very few people that could benefit from  
28 using larger mesh in these non-salmon streams. So, it's  
29 a pretty complicated situation because if we want to  
30 allow someone to get a summer chum because they swim at  
31 the exact same time as the kings, we can't allow any  
32 gill nets. Their only option is a rod and reel, a dip  
33 net, or a manned fish wheel where they could release  
34 that king and keep that summer chum. And so, four-inch  
35 now becomes the controversy because four-inch is not  
36 salmon targeting gear yet. We all know it'll catch them  
37 by the lips, you know, as it were. And there's also  
38 people concerned they will fall out of the four-inch and  
39 die, and so mortality might occur. There's also those  
40 people that are getting a few salmon in those and so  
41 it's a real divided river because some people say, pull  
42 it out. If you're serious about saving all the salmon,  
43 there should be no four-inch. And others are saying, if  
44 you're serious about us feeding our families, you will  
45 protect our non-salmon fishing. So, nothing is decided,  
46 but we won't be allowing five or six-inch on the main  
47 stem of the Yukon when we can't allow harvest of salmon,  
48 if that makes sense, because then they'd just get more  
49 of those salmon.  
50

1                   ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Any further  
2 comments or questions for Ms. Carroll? All right, seeing  
3 none. I have a couple for you. For the coho fishing, you  
4 said there's no coho fishing, pretty much no fishing at  
5 all. What was your estimate for escapement numbers on  
6 those?

7  
8                   MS. CARROLL: So, we're still right in  
9 the thick of our fall season. And so, I'm not sure if  
10 we've even reached the midpoint of the coho run yet. We  
11 might be at the quarter point or so, and we've only  
12 counted about 13,000 coho at the Sonar. The run should  
13 be closer to 100,000 when we're comfortable fishing or  
14 50, 60,000, I think.

15  
16                   ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Okay and what  
17 is your -- I guess I'm looking for the minimum and the  
18 maximum if that's.....

19  
20                   MS. CARROLL: That's a great question.  
21 We don't have that for coho. There's only one goal and  
22 that's on the Delta River and they're not even there yet  
23 really. So, I can't remember what that goal is, and it  
24 might have just been removed. So, there's almost no goals  
25 for coho. We know very little about them and so we don't  
26 have great numbers. But the other side of that coin is  
27 Yukon fishermen don't actually harvest many coho. I  
28 mean, we will see less than a thousand fish, probably  
29 400 fish harvested because they come in so late, and  
30 most people are moving on to other activities. So, in  
31 that river they're not heavily utilized.

32  
33                   ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: And one more  
34 question. How many years has the Andraefsky been  
35 operational? How long of data set do we have on the  
36 Andraefsky?

37  
38                   MS. CARROLL: That was a great question.  
39 I think it's over twenty or twenty-five years. But like  
40 I said, the last ten, it's been real hit and miss whether  
41 we got consistent data from it. But yeah, it's been a  
42 long-term data set for sure.

43  
44                   ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: And the last  
45 question I have for you, what is your major concerns in  
46 your professional opinion at this time right now in  
47 regards to the fisheries? Can you put them in bullet  
48 points for me?

49

1 MS. CARROLL: Yes. I'm going to be  
2 completely frank with you, especially since you on the  
3 Kuskokwim are still fishing. My biggest concern is that  
4 we have lost all our fishing on the Yukon, and we have  
5 lost culture, and we have lost connection to salmon. And  
6 so, the effects on our tribes, our villages, the way of  
7 life there is profound. The amount of hurt and food loss  
8 that's occurring is massive. And what we do in our jobs,  
9 we don't really have a way to fix that. You know, if I  
10 could send funds to villages for other types of food or  
11 something like that, that would be a useful thing. So,  
12 then instead, we turn to what is the research we can do  
13 to answer some of these questions and try to understand  
14 what's occurring. And so, for me ichthyophonus has been  
15 the number one question. Is it killing our fish before  
16 they get upriver? If so, what is the percentage? Because  
17 in future years, when those fish come back, we've got  
18 to stop assuming that there's a zero mortality, and that  
19 has to go into the math before we let people fish and  
20 figure out if there's a surplus. So, I'm hoping that  
21 this massive collaborative project that we did for three  
22 years, and fish were sacrificed for will lead to  
23 quantifiable results. It'll take us well over a year to  
24 analyze all that data, publish it, and figure out, you  
25 know, how it's going to affect management. But then we  
26 also need to develop a long-term monitoring program,  
27 which I hope will be community driven. I hope we can  
28 find a way for the community to monitor this disease  
29 going forward. So, that's one kind of main goal of our  
30 fisheries branch. But another one is our questions  
31 around summer chum. We don't know where they're going  
32 and the more we know about where they're going in the  
33 drainage and why they're not going to certain drainages  
34 will be helpful for management. But one of these  
35 questions that, you know, the coastal community is  
36 asking, one of the hardest things about studying it is  
37 that thing I said about not being able to pull out our  
38 individual stocks. And when people are bringing up  
39 bycatch, one of the problems with studying bycatch for  
40 our chums is that it is hard to pull out our Yukon stocks  
41 and say, hey, you got exactly these, this many of our  
42 Yukon fish. So, if we could find some breakthroughs on  
43 that baseline that that would be huge as well. But then  
44 my third top priority that if you asked me like what  
45 should be funded. Absolutely, I would say that marine  
46 research that we don't do, Fish and Game and NOAA are  
47 doing that research, but what they are finding out about  
48 what is happening to our fish at the juvenile life  
49 stages, at the subadult life stages in the ocean, I  
50 mean, that's been huge, and we have more questions and

1 more to ask about it. We used to think the Chinook were  
2 surviving out there after they got in the ocean at a  
3 certain age. That's why we have that forecast, because  
4 there's this reliable mortality factor and that may not  
5 be true anymore. So, we need to keep studying that too.  
6 So, those would be the things I'd say if we put some  
7 focus on, will help us go forward. But the number one  
8 thing is we might have to start doing some other form  
9 of outreach, science in the schools, getting people into  
10 culture camp around other fish so that people are  
11 connecting to fish and staying engaged in conservation  
12 of fish, rather than getting angry and frustrated and  
13 maybe backsliding into just taking what they need or not  
14 understanding why we have to stand down for so long, and  
15 why it may be so many years before they ever get to  
16 catch their first king. So, I think there's a huge amount  
17 of outreach and connecting with people that we might  
18 need to shift and focus on.

19  
20 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you,  
21 Ms. Carroll. I greatly appreciate it, thank you for all  
22 your hard work. Thank you for sticking in there. It's a  
23 tough, tough, tough job and position to be in, especially  
24 when you're the face of it. So, I greatly appreciate you  
25 and you are very, very respected here.

26  
27 MS. CARROLL: Thank you. I guess I'd like  
28 to follow up with another thing that came up in this  
29 meeting and that is the Fish Commission. You know, we -  
30 - I think the Fish Commission is working out a lot of  
31 details, and they're trying to bring together people  
32 from the lower river, the middle River, the upper river  
33 and then Canada, too, is involved. And that's a huge  
34 undertaking. You know, I heard some of the disagreements  
35 around this table, just about the Kuskokwim, which is a  
36 little bit of a shorter system, right? And yet you have  
37 these huge differences in the way that you harvest and  
38 how you're harvesting and huge differences in what you  
39 would tell a manager you think is right. And so, the  
40 Fish Commission has this huge task, and I think they  
41 need a lot of support, and I think they need a lot of  
42 resources, and they need a lot of people stepping up  
43 into jobs and stepping up into being like in-season Fish  
44 Managers coming to these meetings. And I guess I feel  
45 I'd like to address one of the priority things, and I  
46 don't know how to change it. And it's way outside the  
47 scope of this body. So, I might get in trouble for this,  
48 but, you know, Robert you've been saying a lot of things  
49 that if you're just a government employee like me, the  
50 state of Alaska this and the Federal government that

1 could get real offended and shut down. And I've stopped  
2 getting offended because I've realized, like, what  
3 you're saying is actually true. Like at some point all  
4 of your Aboriginal rights were just taken away. And a  
5 Western Management System, was put onto these rivers.  
6 And I didn't do any of that and it was definitely before  
7 I was born. But I'm now one of those people that you are  
8 saying is benefiting from these jobs. These, like you  
9 said, even if it's closed, even if you regulate us, you  
10 benefit, we don't. You're right. I have a job, I get  
11 paid to come to these meetings. And one of the things  
12 I'm really struggling with when I see RAC members, panel  
13 members, fish commissioners, you know, often these  
14 positions are not paid positions. There's a systemic  
15 inequity where a lot of funding is not going directly  
16 to the tribes for them to develop their own fish  
17 managers, their own fish biologists, paid resource  
18 positions to go to these meetings. And so, I guess what  
19 I'm saying is, if there's any way for tribes or agencies  
20 to focus some of their time and energy into changing  
21 that system, which would, I believe, be congressional  
22 and not at our level, I think they would be more useful  
23 meetings. But unfortunately, these concerns that we hear  
24 are often told to us at the level where we can do nothing  
25 about it, and so we can hear the pain and we can sit  
26 with it, but we can't really do much about it. And so,  
27 I would say a priority is getting the capacity built for  
28 all of these tribes and organizations to have more of a  
29 seat at the table in some way. But until all of that  
30 occurs, I really do hope that the Fish Commission and  
31 the Yukon can kind of come together in this time of no  
32 abundance and find solutions together. I think that  
33 would be really productive.

34  
35 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you,  
36 Ms. Carroll. And again, thank you from the bottom of my  
37 heart for all your hard work and sticking with us,  
38 because it is a thankless job. Mr. Naneng.

39  
40 MR. NANENG: Yeah. Thank you, Madam  
41 Chair. I know there's a lot of Federal agencies and  
42 Federal land between up and down the Yukon from wildlife  
43 refuge all the way up to the Canadian border. I know  
44 there's been meetings with the Canadians to try and  
45 address the lack of chinook salmon, or the declining  
46 numbers over the years that started back in the 1990s  
47 or prior to that. One of the questions, and I'm hearing  
48 you pleading that you are wanting the Regional Advisory  
49 Council to support you to contact the -- maybe the  
50 politicians to find a way to get these different agencies

1 to work together to address the lack of returning salmon  
2 into of the lack of returning salmon to the Yukon River  
3 because it's an international issue. You know, one of  
4 the things that has happened in the past is that we  
5 worked with the Canadians on having our subsistence  
6 migratory bird hunting recognized. And I think if we can  
7 get some way to coordinate between different agencies,  
8 the state of Alaska and the Canadian side, this can be  
9 addressed. Because we don't know what exactly the  
10 Canadians are doing, because they may have more liberal  
11 opportunity and openings to fish up there, because  
12 they're just as much as a subsistence users as we are  
13 in the river system. So, if it's okay with the Council,  
14 I'd like to request a letter of support for all in the  
15 work that they're doing to request that there be a letter  
16 written to our politicians, as well as to the Secretaries  
17 of Interior, Agriculture and other Land Managers,  
18 including BLM, because they all sit down at the Federal  
19 Subsistence Board to try and find ways to coordinate the  
20 need to address this, as well as to the Governor and to  
21 the Commissioner of Fish and Game, because everybody  
22 seems to be this is my territory, but they're trying to  
23 address the one common issue that they should be  
24 addressing. So, it requests that the YKRAC write that  
25 letter to support the request to work together. And one  
26 of the other things that may have to be done that was  
27 successful in the work that we did with the migratory  
28 birds is to request different regions and their  
29 leadership to support this effort of trying to rebuild  
30 the stocks. And so, it can be done. It's been done before  
31 because the restrictions on our subsistence hunting of  
32 migratory birds was enacted back in 1916, but that  
33 changed back in 1997. That's quite a long span of years,  
34 but we were able to do it because we were working  
35 together to make it happen. Involve Rural Cap, involve  
36 AFN, Tanana Chiefs, Mekoryuk and all the other agencies  
37 that have a common interest in this, because I know  
38 people from Unalakleet come down to -- used to come down  
39 to the Yukon to go commercial fishing. So, we have a lot  
40 of potential partners out there. So, my motion would be  
41 for the RAC to write a letter of support, to try and  
42 find a way to address what's going on the Yukon. I know  
43 it's a tough job, but it can be done.

44  
45 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you,  
46 Mr. Naneng. For a point of clarification, you're asking  
47 for a letter of support to the politicians, DOI, DOA,  
48 ADF&G, FSB to find ways to coordinate and support that  
49 they work together and request for region and leadership  
50 to rebuild stocks.

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MR. NANENG: Yes.

ACTING CHAIR ROGERS: Am I hearing you correctly?

MR. NANENG: It refuses to turn on. We all know that we've had this issue for quite some time, and it's been coming since back in the late 1980s. The decline in the numbers have been occurring on the Yukon for all of those species. We know that there's been impact by trawl fishing, bycatch or intercept fisheries, as well as our own use on the river system that has impact the returns of salmon, but with a common objective of working together I think that this can be addressed, but it needs coordination by someone to help push for that. And maybe we can ask the Federal Subsistence Board to at least take the lead in trying to get this moving. So, a letter would be included to the Chairman of the Federal Subsistence Board, and that's to be included in that work plan for 2024.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Naneng. So, just for clarification for the record. We have two things currently on the floor. The first one with the motion that's currently on the floor is a letter of support to our politicians, DOI, DOA, ADF&G, FSB to find ways to coordinate and support that they work together. Request region and leadership to rebuild stocks Restrictions on the migratory bird as an example, and involve Rural CAP, Tanana Chiefs, etc. that they all have the common interest, including Unalakleet RAC or the RAC that is part of the Unalakleet area. And impacts of trawling, intercept fishery and regional use to be addressed by and in coordination and request that the Federal Subsistence Board lead this coordination to get it started. Is that correct?

MR. NANENG: I think that goes with my motion, that we need to get it started somewhere. And maybe the Federal Subsistence Board will help address that. But there needs -- also needs to be a coordination between Canada and U.S. So, we may have to ask would they call -- it wasn't just Secretary of the Interior, it was the State Department, State Department that was also involved in the negotiations for that. And we may have to even request International Fish and Wildlife Association, which is a Fish and Game -- comprised of Fish and Games of all the States in the United States. It's a common interest for all of us.



1  
2 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you,  
3 Mr. Naneng. Okay, I'm going to re-read. The motion on  
4 the floor is a letter of support to our politicians,  
5 DOI, DOA, FSB, ADF&G, International Fish and Wildlife  
6 Association, State Department, to find ways to  
7 coordinate and support that they work together. Request  
8 region and leadership to rebuild stocks restrictions on  
9 the migratory bird as an example, and involve Rural CAP,  
10 Tanana Chiefs, etc. and all those who have common  
11 interest, including Unalakleet in the upper regions that  
12 fall under the Regional Advisory Council from the  
13 impacts of trawling, intercept fishery and regional use  
14 to be addressed by and in coordination and request that  
15 the Federal Subsistence Board lead this coordination to  
16 get it started. And include coordination with Canada and  
17 U.S. I got a nod from Mr. Naneng. Can I get a second on  
18 the floor, please? Someone got to second.

19  
20 MS. EVAN: I'll second.

21  
22 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Motion on the  
23 floor by Mr. Naneng, second by Ms. Evan. We are open for  
24 discussion, is there any further discussion or questions  
25 or comments? Ms. Brooke.

26  
27 MS. MCDAVID: Yeah, just a point of  
28 clarification if that's ok since I'll be helping draft  
29 the letter. So, the letter is going to be addressed to  
30 several different agencies, departments, etc. and then  
31 it sounds like we want to CC a bunch or regional  
32 leaderships so they can get a copy and maybe write  
33 letters of support. Okay, I just wanted to clarify. So,  
34 some of those you named Rural Cap, TCC, you named  
35 Unalakleet but perhaps maybe all the regional Yukon RACs  
36 and I don't know, what? Okay, I'm hearing Acs also, AVCP  
37 would be for this region, okay. And if you guys think  
38 of anyone else, maybe the Fish Commission, okay. BBNC.  
39 Anyone else you'd like CC on there.

40  
41 MR. NANENG: Make sure you add the State  
42 Department to the letter. And I'll just say one thing,  
43 if we need help in getting to the State Department,  
44 Senator Sullivan told me go through him because he used  
45 to work for State Department in the past.

46  
47 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you,  
48 Mr. Naneng. Can we also add Bristol Bay Native  
49 Association onto this? They also are fighting for their

1 subsistence needs as well, so they have a common  
2 interest. Any further comments or questions at this  
3 time?

4  
5 (No answer)

6  
7 Hearing none. Can I get a question?

8  
9 MR. NANENG: Call for question.

10  
11  
12 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you.  
13 Question has been called. All those in favor signify by  
14 saying aye.

15  
16 IN UNISON: Aye.

17  
18 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: All those  
19 opposed signify by saying nay.

20  
21 (No answer)

22  
23 Hearing none. Motion has passed. And  
24 we're going to also be adding this letter of support  
25 in the issues that we just discussed to our 2024 annual  
26 report. So, I just added it on to my list. All right,  
27 we're going to go ahead and move on to -- where are we?  
28 It's the Orutsararmiut Native Council under the agency  
29 reports. And we may not be able to get to the native  
30 village of Napaimute today. We will try that again for  
31 tomorrow, 8/23. ONC, you have the floor. You should bring  
32 your whole crew up here so we can meet them.

33  
34 MR. HOOPER: Good afternoon, Council. My  
35 name is Delen Hooper and I'm the Partners Program  
36 Coordinator.

37  
38 MS. MATHIAS: My name is Mary Mathias. I  
39 am representing Orutsararmiut Native Council as the  
40 Natural Resources Environmental Program Coordinator.

41  
42 MS. HENRY: My name is Brianna Henry, and  
43 I'm a fisheries technician.

44  
45 MS. DOMINICK: My name is Kara Domnick  
46 and I'm also a fisheries tech.

47  
48 MR. HOOPER: Here are a list of  
49 activities that ONC has done this summer. The potato and  
50 plant starters hand-out to the community of Bethel on

1 May 25. The Boat Harbor and Fish Camp surveys started  
2 on the first fishing opportunity June 3 to the last on  
3 August 16th. 495 Boat Harbor surveys were conducted and  
4 there were 58 fish Camp surveys. Fish distribution to  
5 the elders, the disabled and people in need, we delivered  
6 196 Chinook salmon, 57 sockeye salmon and one whitefish.  
7 We lost count of the chum salmon due to delivering  
8 numerous to the Senior Services Department within ONC.  
9 All fish were caught by ADF&G Bethel Test Fish.  
10 Collecting otoliths from chinook for the University of  
11 Washington. The reason for collecting otoliths is to  
12 learn the age and the growth rates of the kings. The  
13 stones are about pea-sized that are located in the brain  
14 socket underneath the brain. Collecting the requested  
15 60 ichthyophonous heart samples for ADF&G. The reason why  
16 we collected this data was to determine if they have  
17 this disease, how bad it is, and to gain more knowledge  
18 about it. Running the Science and Culture Camp in  
19 collaboration with UAF, fourteen students attended this  
20 eight-day camp on the starting date, July 17 to the end  
21 on July 25. The students earned three college credits  
22 doing activities like skeleton articulation, necropsy,  
23 ethnobotany, and spending the day at fish camp. I also  
24 would like to add that there are two returning students  
25 from last year, and one that attended last year and the  
26 year before. The ASL Program. People who have returned  
27 data, such as collecting three scales the length and  
28 finding out their sex, received \$5 per king. And the  
29 postseason is coming up, and ONC will be conducting  
30 surveys once again on the ideal dates of September 25  
31 to October 31. And that is all I -- oh, we did the bug  
32 nets distribution, handing them out to Bethel community  
33 citizens. And that is all I have to report for ONC.

34

35 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you. Do  
36 we have any comments or questions? Go ahead, Ms.  
37 Cleveland.

38

39 MS. CLEVELAND: Just a comment. Good job.

40

41 MR. HOOPER: Thank you.

42

43 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you,  
44 ONC. Oh, Ms. Mathias.

45

46 MS. MATHIAS: I have a report to share  
47 as well. I thought it was very important. So, with the  
48 new start of ONC's EPA Environmental Program fiscal  
49 year, we developed our quality assurance project plan  
50 for starting a water quality monitoring. Hang on. I'm a

1 little nervous. And it goes hand in hand with our other  
2 project that we applied for, which is called the Swiffer  
3 Grant, to promote recycling and reduce contamination  
4 with the environment, like, such as groundwater  
5 contamination we've been studying a lot within these  
6 recent years. So, with our water quality monitoring, we  
7 are welcoming neighboring tribal communities to  
8 participate in our biweekly meetings. We'll be providing  
9 resources and notices of funding opportunities, share  
10 environmental assessments based on concerns, needs and  
11 community development needs and collect water samples  
12 with -- we partnered with Woodwell Climate Research  
13 Center Permafrost Pathways who has assisted us with  
14 collecting three water samples from three different  
15 sites here in Bethel. The reason behind this is because  
16 we've been studying the reports that have been  
17 distributed from the local municipality. There are a lot  
18 of heavy toxic toxins and heavy metals that is being  
19 found in the water, and a lot of people are drinking  
20 this water and it's having an effect on human health.  
21 So, the landfill being close to the schools and close  
22 to the water plants; that's another study that will come  
23 later on as we continue to collect samples from Bethel  
24 and then also collect water samples from five other local  
25 communities nearby. And then implement outreach and  
26 education on water contamination and assist tribes with  
27 developing their co-ops that -- who haven't developed  
28 one yet and assist with training. And so, with our  
29 Swiffer Grant, our goal is to tackle the climate crisis,  
30 reduce emissions that cause climate change, advanced  
31 international and subnational climate efforts, take  
32 decisive action on advanced environmental justice and  
33 civil rights, promote environmental justice and civil  
34 rights at the Federal, tribal, state, and local levels  
35 that are embedded, embedded environmental justice. And  
36 so, I'm sorry, I'm going through my notes here. Ensure  
37 clean and safe water for all communities. Protect and  
38 restore water bodies and watersheds, safeguard and  
39 revitalize communities, clean up and restore land and  
40 for protective uses and healthy communities, and then  
41 the last one is, reduce waste and prevent environmental  
42 contamination. So, if y'all have any questions for me.

43  
44 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you,  
45 Ms. Mathias. Do we have any comments or questions at  
46 this time? Hearing and seeing none. Thank you, ONC, for  
47 your presentations and report. At this time, I'm going  
48 to go ahead and call for 15-minute break. Please be back  
49 here at 3 -- just make it 3:15. 3:15 will reconvene.  
50

1 (Off record)

2

3 (On record)

4

5 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: One minute  
6 warning.

7

8 (Pause)

9

10 Good afternoon, folks. Let's go ahead  
11 and take our seats.

12

13 (Pause)

14

15 The time now is 3:16. Let's go ahead and  
16 reconvene our meeting.

17

18 (Pause)

19

20 Currently on the floor, we have Ms.  
21 Karen Gillis with the Bering Sea Fishermen's  
22 Association. We'll go ahead and take your report now.  
23 Thank you, Ms. Gillis. You have the floor.

24

25 MS. MCDAVID: Karen, this is Brooke.  
26 We're not able to hear you currently. It looks like  
27 you're muted on our end. You might have to press star  
28 six if you're on a phone or use the mute button on your  
29 computer.

30

31 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: It appears  
32 we're having technical difficulties with Ms. Karen  
33 Gillis from the Bering Sea Fishermen's Association.  
34 While she gets that figured out, we're going to go on  
35 to the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, Ms.  
36 Therese, you have the floor.

37

38 MS. VICENTE: Quyana, Madam Chair. And  
39 I've invited Aaron Moses with Yukon Delta Refuge up here  
40 with me, we will co-present on our co-management. But  
41 first, I'm going to pass out our report to you all, and  
42 I put some additional copies for the public on the back  
43 table.

44

45 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: If you could  
46 have someone as -- time constraints.

47

48 MS. VICENTE: Yeap. And if anyone online  
49 wants a copy, they can get in touch with Brooke. I'll  
50 send it over her way. Something like that, perfect.

1  
2                   Good afternoon, I'm Therese Vicente,  
3 Programs Manager with the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal  
4 Fish Commission. I'll just be brief in this report, and  
5 you can read what's written here. But we begin with a -  
6 just an introduction to the Fish Commission. We  
7 currently have twenty-eight appointed tribal  
8 commissioners. We have one new one, Native Village of  
9 Kwigillingok joined this summer, and we're really  
10 excited to welcome them to our compact. We have seven  
11 Executive Council members, five in-season managers, and  
12 two elder advisors. They're listed in that graphic  
13 there, and we're up to seven staff members. So, we've  
14 been growing quite a bit since our last meeting. This  
15 last summer, we employed over two dozen local seasonal  
16 staff and interns for our projects. But we'll begin by  
17 talking about our Salmon Co-Management on the Kuskokwim  
18 this past season. For the ninth year in a row, under our  
19 MOU with Fish and Wildlife Service, we've co-managed  
20 Kuskokwim salmon runs. This year, co-management extended  
21 from June 1st until August 16th under the Refuge's  
22 Temporary Special Action, our five in-season managers  
23 and two elder advisors helped make decisions and brought  
24 traditional knowledge to the table as we assess the  
25 strength of the runs and discussed openers and closures  
26 in the fisheries with Fish and Wildlife Service. We  
27 created our fourth joint Inter-Tribal Fish Commission  
28 and Yukon Delta Refuge Kuskokwim River Salmon Management  
29 Strategy that guided us to balance conservation, as well  
30 as achieve as much local subsistence harvest as  
31 possible. Every week, we compiled in-season assessment  
32 packages for our team, even up to two or three times a  
33 week, with the most up-to-date data for our team to have  
34 at their fingertips as they considered what to do. And  
35 those assessment packages in our meetings all include  
36 and begin with updates from fish camps and sharing  
37 traditional knowledge. Maybe I'll pass it to Aaron. See  
38 if you want to talk about more of the numbers of the  
39 season.

40  
41                   MR. MOSES: Yeah, thank you. For the  
42 record, my name is Aaron Moses. I'm the Subsistence  
43 Coordinator for Fish and Wildlife Service and part of  
44 the in-season management team. I'll just go over a little  
45 bit of the harvest. We also have our own, I gave this  
46 one out to you guys before lunch, I'll just briefly go  
47 over it. This year, we had a total of 498 hours of  
48 Federal subsistence fishing opportunities within the  
49 refuge, with an estimated harvest of 53,194 salmon  
50 compared to last year, where we had 270 hours and an

1 estimated harvest of 69,809 salmon. This year's harvest  
2 is on the last page of this -- of my presentation and  
3 on the second page of Theresa's presentation. So, there  
4 was more fishing opportunity, but there was less harvest  
5 this year. I could briefly go over the -- what we have  
6 a lot of the weirs from this year during peak passages  
7 were inoperable due to high water, so a lot of the weir  
8 counts that we have are minimum counts. And the Kwethluk  
9 River itself was not installed this year due to high  
10 water from day one. Since April 20th, the water has been  
11 too high on the Kwethluk to even possibly put it in.  
12 I'll just go over chinook; there on the third page is  
13 chum, sockeye, and coho. Right now, because of the  
14 inoperable or the weirs being minimum counts, we are  
15 unsure at this time if we have achieved our target of  
16 110,000 chinook salmon. But we do -- what's it? We are  
17 leaning towards that we have, due to the fact that the  
18 Bethel Sonar did count 143,000, roughly, that's the  
19 midpoint chinook Salmon at the Kuskokwim Sonar. So,  
20 we're pretty happy with that. We're trying to work out  
21 how successful we were this summer, knowing that we did  
22 have almost not double the hours, but at least 200 more  
23 hours of fishing this summer. So, I'll give.....

24  
25 MS. VICENTE: Yeah. So, we're feeling  
26 strong about chinook salmon, though the runs are still  
27 pretty low. They're kind of in line with what we've been  
28 seeing since the crash in 2009. Chum salmon this year,  
29 from our preliminary read, were much better than we've  
30 seen the last couple of years, ever since they crashed  
31 in 2021, but they're still well below average abundance.  
32 That's why there were restrictions for chum salmon  
33 fishing this year until towards the end of July when we  
34 opened it up for about eight or nine days before the  
35 coho started coming in. Sockeye salmon were strong  
36 again, as we predicted, and helped meet a lot of food  
37 security needs for people. You know, in Aaron's report,  
38 he talks about how there's more dip netting that's been  
39 seen recently on the Kuskokwim we found that's a great  
40 way to target sockeye and protect the chum and chinook.  
41 And then coho salmon this year was the last species that  
42 we managed, and it was kind of a tricky one to assess.  
43 The runs -- coho salmon runs have been largely in decline  
44 on the Kuskokwim since about 2018. Last year was an  
45 oddball, really high year, and it was really good for  
46 people after that terrible crash in 2022. And this year,  
47 we found the runs were better than the stretch between  
48 2018 and 2022; were the second best in the last five  
49 years, but that doesn't tell us a whole lot when they  
50 used to be even better before five years ago, you know,

1 back ten, fifteen years. So, we continued our concern  
2 for coho salmon, and as we were assessing the data in  
3 season, the run this year kept tracking the lower end  
4 of the management threshold that we set for ourselves,  
5 which is why we continued our joint Federal management  
6 until the middle of August. And then once we believed  
7 that about half of the run had passed through the lower  
8 river and a lot of pressure on silvers had ceased, people  
9 had started moving on to berry picking or were only  
10 going to get a couple of fish for dinner or the freezer,  
11 we rescinded management, or the refuge manager  
12 rescinded, and management went back to the state of  
13 Alaska. But the coho salmon we're glad they were better  
14 than some of the worst years we've been seeing recently,  
15 but we still don't think they're very strong and we have  
16 lots of concerns about them. That's all I was going to  
17 report on for management. I don't know if Aaron had  
18 anything else. Okay, okay.

19  
20 And then we just have a list of the eight  
21 different projects our team has been leading or  
22 coordinating or partnering on this summer. I won't run  
23 through them all, but I'll just name them out. So, we've  
24 been doing our community-based harvest monitoring in  
25 eight communities of the lower Kuskokwim this year. We  
26 employed 17 people, collected close to 600 surveys this  
27 summer from those communities. We operated the Takotna  
28 River Weir again, which this year was the only headwaters  
29 spawner assessment project because the Salmon Pikka Fork  
30 did not receive funding. So, we operated that in  
31 partnership with Takotna Tribal Council. We partnered  
32 on the Kwethluk River Smolt Outmigration project this  
33 spring. They counted what seems like a good number of  
34 salmon smolt coming out of the Kwethluk River, which is  
35 a sign for hope, but we're still in the midst of running  
36 that data and comparing it to previous counts from a  
37 couple of years back, so more to come on that. As Aaron  
38 said, the Kwethluk River weir was not installed this  
39 year, and the crew is up there right now breaking down  
40 camp and winterizing it. We've been -- here's some new,  
41 newer projects; Environmental DNA or eDNA is a new  
42 technology we're exploring to be able to measure salmon  
43 abundance without having to use a weir, or without having  
44 to use an aerial survey. All you do is take a water  
45 sample and you're able to kind of look at a filter that  
46 the water goes through and analyze the salmon DNA from  
47 it, from slime, from excrement, things like that. And  
48 they're getting reads on -- definitely if salmon are in  
49 the river and what species they're trying to see if it  
50 can tell you the number of salmon. So, we've been



1 piloting that at the Takotna River Weir, up the Kwethluk  
2 River, and with Fish and Game, we've been—they've been  
3 collecting those samples at the George River. Another  
4 new project for us is becoming part of a river-wide  
5 water temperature monitoring network. So, we've been  
6 setting out these -- they're called hobo loggers.  
7 They're just little loggers sunk in the water to take  
8 temperature readings throughout the river. We have some  
9 installed here around the Bethel area, up the Kwethluk,  
10 and up the Takotna. And there's a number of partners on  
11 that project, including Native Village of Napaimute and  
12 Native Village of Georgetown. And then a really exciting  
13 new project is a drone-based stock assessment project.  
14 We've -- this is another newer technology, basically  
15 flying drones over tributaries and using those to count  
16 salmon spawners in the rivers. So, this year, a team of  
17 5 went down 90 miles of the Kwethluk River, took pictures  
18 and videos with their drones, and now they're stitching  
19 together all those pictures and counting fish from the  
20 air. Also using those images to assess the habitat, see  
21 if artificial intelligence (AI) can be useful for this  
22 sort of thing. Water was really high up the Kwethluk  
23 this year, as many of you know, but they were still able  
24 to see fish from the air. And we're hopeful that this  
25 sort of work -- it's pretty cost-effective. It's easy  
26 to get local people trained up and give them -- not give  
27 them but train them to have their drone licenses; then  
28 they have work, employment, and a license to be able to  
29 do this sort of stuff. So, we're hopeful this can be a  
30 sustainable, cost-effective, safe, and less invasive way  
31 to count spawners in the future. So, we're continuing  
32 to explore that.

33  
34 And then we recently received funding  
35 to start a Indigenous Knowledge Documentation Study. So,  
36 we got some funding from the Lenfest Ocean Program to  
37 document knowledge of Kuskokwim salmon through  
38 interviews with indigenous knowledge holders throughout  
39 the river, as well as pouring through the archives of  
40 Western science and other indigenous knowledge. We've  
41 also been asking those interviewees for recommendations  
42 to improve salmon management, especially in the marine  
43 environment. So, this summer we hired an intern from  
44 Napaskiak, Kristin Maxey, and she and I traveled to  
45 Nikolai, McGrath, Chuathbaluk, Aniak, Kwethluk,  
46 Nunapitchuk, and Tuntutuliak and interviewed with some  
47 folks. So, we're going through all those interviews and  
48 transcribing them and pulling together our final  
49 products now. But we're excited for that start in this  
50 sort of work. And then the last thing is just on bycatch

1 and intercept, I pulled some numbers for you all, and  
2 they were updated just this morning. So, I can provide  
3 those as well. But this is on the last page of my report  
4 as of this morning, August 22nd, commercial fisheries  
5 in the Bering Sea, including the pollock trawl  
6 fisheries, have caught 8,637 chinook salmon and 25,249  
7 chum salmon as bycatch to date this year. Not all of  
8 those are headed back to our rivers. And as many  
9 presenters have alluded, it's really hard to tell even  
10 when you have the Western Alaska portion to know if they  
11 are going to the Yukon, Kotzebue, Kuskokwim. But on  
12 average, about 40 to 50% of all the chinook salmon  
13 bycatch would have come back to Western Alaska, and  
14 somewhere between 12 and 20% of all the chum salmon  
15 bycatch would have headed back to Western and Interior  
16 Alaska. So, we've been tracking those throughout the  
17 summer. We've also -- the Fish Commission is what they  
18 call a cooperating agency on an environmental impact  
19 statement with the National Marine Fisheries Service to  
20 explore new management for chum salmon bycatch in the  
21 Bering Sea. It's National Marine Fisheries Service  
22 leading that, but we've been working with Alaska  
23 Department of Fish and Game and Tanana Chiefs Conference  
24 as other cooperating agencies in that process to bring  
25 forward the best available information for their  
26 analysis. I won't go into depth on that, though I'm very  
27 happy to talk about it more, but I'll just let you know.  
28 You can mark your calendars for February 3rd to 10th,  
29 2025. The North Pacific Council is going to be holding  
30 a special meeting on only chum salmon bycatch. It'll be  
31 at the Egan Center in Anchorage. It'll also be online  
32 through Zoom and YouTube; you can call in; they'll take  
33 public comment. And at any point, tribes can request  
34 consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service  
35 ahead of time. So that's bycatch. And then intercept-  
36 wise, we also were tracking Area M catches in June,  
37 which is when they're catching most Western Alaska fish,  
38 and this year their drift netters, set netters, and  
39 seiners caught about 417,000 chum salmon in the June  
40 fishery. At the different points that the Board of Fish  
41 set their kind of step-down caps, they never hit their  
42 caps during the season, so they didn't have any closures  
43 that we're aware of. And then they've had some widely  
44 varying genetic compositions of Western Alaska fish in  
45 Area M recently. But in the last 15, 20 years, anywhere  
46 from 18% to 57% of all the fish caught in specifically  
47 in the month of June in south Area M, are of Western and  
48 Interior Alaska origin. So that's why we've been  
49 tracking that. And I think I'll just stop there, but  
50 happy to take any questions. Quyana.

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ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you.  
Jackie.

MS. CLEVELAND: Quyana, through the Chair. Quyana for everything, guys, and especially for also giving us the opportunity to train with you all this spring for our first year of monitoring. So, quyana for that. I wanted to go back to -- so, documenting the Kuskokwim salmon and people. If that is still ongoing, is it too late to include the Bay? Yeah. I have another question after. Oh, no. After this one, I'll ask the next one.

MS. VICENTE: Okay. Through the Chair. The grant we got for that work is -- it was very, very short. So, we're wrapping up that project next March. We're, like, really trying to crunch what we're doing now, but my hope is that it's the start of being able to find more funding and dedicate more time to this sort of work. So, we can definitely be in touch when we start the next round of everything, because I'd love to include the Bay in that work.

MS. CLEVELAND: Great. And my other question is, I see here under drone-based stock assessment that it'll be used towards artificial intelligence. And I wanted to know how.

MS. VICENTE: I'm going to have Avery answer that because he's been involved in that project.

MR. HOFFMAN: Hello, my name is Avery Hoffman. I'm the Fish Biologist for the Fish Commission. And the AI intelligence is just to help us kind of go through the 60,000 images to kind of distinguish fish from the images that we took coming down river. And then along with that, using those AI images, it can help us kind of sort through and find the fish. And then depending on the water quality, it can show, like, if - what species of salmon it is.

MS. CLEVELAND: And one last question through the Chair. Thank you for that. IA just sounds scary sometimes, so I just needed to know. Oh, and the last one was maybe for Aaron. In the last few years, I know -- well, when Kwinhagak used to have a weir, we had the same issues every start of the season. We couldn't get any numbers until the water went down. And I know since then it's been like 16 years since we last did

1 that. But I know in those years the storms have become  
2 more, the flooding is more. Like this year, the water  
3 level never went down, really, and now it's back up  
4 again. For the future, I guess, are we or is anyone  
5 talking about like the -- our weirs really effective  
6 anymore with climate change effects? And if not, is there  
7 talk about how to get accurate numbers otherwise?  
8 Thanks.

9  
10 MR. MOSES: Through the Chair. Yeah,  
11 that's a good question. That's really been talked about  
12 recently between the Fish Management team and the Fish  
13 Commission. We're trying -- the Kwethluk Weir alone has  
14 been successful roughly only 60% of the time in the last  
15 20 years. So, we're trying to find other ways, just like  
16 with the drone project and everything, trying to figure  
17 out what's the best use of our money to be able to count  
18 fish for the Kuskokwim. And we've done this by trying  
19 to go put the weir in in April. But we were up there  
20 April, what was it? Pretty early in April, right the day  
21 after it broke up there and the water was still too  
22 high. Normally it's really shallow when it breaks up  
23 there. So, we just had a problem from day one this year  
24 so.

25  
26 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you. I  
27 guess to piggyback off that, is there any anybody looking  
28 into the modification of these weirs in order to increase  
29 the length or the height of the weir to address the  
30 water issues? Because it seems like we're currently  
31 going off a based weir and it needs to be modified and  
32 then noted in the modification to address those issues.  
33 And it seems like we need to be more flexible in order  
34 to allow for these modifications. Is there any plans on  
35 having that modified so we can get accurate numbers and  
36 be able to rely on the Kwethluk Weir?

37  
38 MR. MOSES: Through the Chair. As for the  
39 weir, it's just the water depth, the pickets and  
40 everything, they're perfectly fine. It's just we need  
41 seven-foot people now to put the rails in. That's the  
42 biggest part of it, but we are looking at different ways  
43 of trying or putting it in different spots, there's  
44 different, shallower spots. The Fish Commission this  
45 summer went up to go assess that. So, we're looking at  
46 multiple ways of trying to make Kwethluk successful.

47  
48 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Any  
49 suggestions of scuba gear?  
50

1 MR. MOSES: That actually has come up.  
2 It's just a lot of training.

3  
4 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: It's well  
5 worth it, Aaron. It's well worth it. Get it done. No  
6 more excuses. We need numbers.

7  
8 MR. MOSES: Yeah.

9  
10 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Get Jackie.  
11 We need numbers. And it's very important. And having,  
12 what did you say, 60% out of the past 20 years that was  
13 reliable? That sounds like the Andrafsky. They pulled  
14 out the Andrafsky. And I'm afraid we're going to lose  
15 the Kwethluk weir if we don't start showing and pulling  
16 our weight. Go ahead, Jackie.

17  
18 MS. CLEVELAND: I just thought of  
19 something else. I know I said that was my last before,  
20 but -- so I talked with Justin Leone, I think during BIA  
21 or something and we mentioned the counting tower, and  
22 maybe that may be more effective for us to look into  
23 rather than a weir at this point. To start up a weir,  
24 it's going to be at least 500K, you know. So, talking  
25 with Justin and the reason why I asked that is I was  
26 wondering if we're going to go start going back to  
27 counting towers, maybe. I guess that's not really a  
28 question, but something I remembered with Justin that  
29 we may look into a counting tower instead for Kwinhagak.  
30 Qu yana.

31  
32 MR. MOSES: (Inaudible) The Kwethluk  
33 used to be a counting tower run through AVCP and the  
34 Fish and Game and Fish and Wildlife Service, here was a  
35 lot of partners in that. High water also affects counting  
36 towers, and so it runs into the same issues. It's just  
37 it's a lot easier to run a counting tower.

38  
39 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Any further  
40 comments or questions, Brooke.

41  
42 MS. MCDAVID: Thank you, Madam Chair. I  
43 just wanted to point out to the Council that Therese and  
44 the Fish Commission had included in here about that North  
45 Pacific Fisheries Management Council meeting that's  
46 coming up in February. And that's when they'll be  
47 addressing the chum EIS for bycatch management. And if  
48 you all because you all have commented on this before  
49 and it's been an important issue. If you wanted to  
50 request that a RAC representative attend that meeting,

1 you could do so. You would need a motion and you wouldn't  
2 have to select the exact person at this time. But we  
3 could put in a request to OSM and then talk about who  
4 might be available at a future date. But another  
5 suggestion that I might have, because this Council  
6 hasn't actually discussed what the five management  
7 alternatives are or no one has presented to them. So,  
8 if you wanted to provide a comment on your preferred  
9 alternative, we might need some more information. And  
10 that would need to happen at this meeting. And I don't  
11 know if Therese or anyone would be prepared to maybe  
12 share what that might be and then maybe the Council  
13 could choose to write a comment letter, and then the  
14 person could present that at that meeting, and we could  
15 submit that letter. Of course, these are just  
16 suggestions. But I didn't want you to miss that  
17 opportunity because I know it has come up in the past.  
18 Thank you.

19  
20 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you,  
21 Brooke. Do we have a comment deadline for that, or do  
22 we know Therese? What a comment, what time, date and  
23 time for the comment deadline?

24  
25 MS. VICENTE: Through the Chair, this is  
26 Therese. They don't have that date out yet, but it's  
27 usually their meetings start on a Monday at 8 am, and  
28 comments are due the Friday before at noon. So, I'm  
29 guessing like end of January, probably the last one of  
30 the last days of January. And what Brooke was just  
31 saying, I do have a preliminary read on the alternatives.  
32 So, if there is time at this meeting, I'm around. I'm  
33 happy to tell you guys more about them.

34  
35 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you. My  
36 recommendation would we -- every morning we have public  
37 testimony, and I believe that would be a great time  
38 because it's not currently on our agenda. And that would  
39 be a great time. So, tomorrow morning, we'll plan to  
40 hear those preliminaries so we can add them to our letter  
41 of support or comment letter to the North Pacific  
42 Fisheries Management Council. Would that be okay with  
43 you?

44  
45 MS. VICENTE: I'll see you guys at nine.

46  
47 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: See you at  
48 nine. Mr. Naneng.  
49

1 MR. MANENG: Thank you, Madam Chair,  
2 Therese and Aaron and Avery. A couple of years ago, you  
3 know, we had low returns of coho here in the river  
4 system. A good friend of mine who monitors the Area M  
5 fisheries, even though he's from Bristol Bay. And it's  
6 not a Biologist, but he's been really watching Area M  
7 said that the run timing of coho down in Area M was  
8 earlier than usual, and they got more coho than they  
9 ever did before. And that was the year where we had low  
10 returns of coho here in the Kuskokwim. I wonder if  
11 there's a possibility of checking those numbers and  
12 maybe contacting the Fish and Game at Area M to find out  
13 about the run timing of what happened a couple of years  
14 ago, because I do believe we're still living off that  
15 decline, even though we know that salmon most of them  
16 have four-year cycles. Note that chinook has at least  
17 seven years, so if you can check on that and report back  
18 to us, it would be good to know and it would confirm my  
19 good friend's assessment or report from one of the area  
20 fishermen that the timing of coho was earlier than what  
21 they usually were. So, I just want to share that because  
22 he definitely told me that's why we did not have a good  
23 coho return on the Kuskokwim as well as down in Bristol  
24 Bay. So, thank you, Madam Chair.

25  
26 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you,  
27 Mr. Naneng. Anyone else has comments or questions at  
28 this time? Hearing none. Thank you. The Fish Commission  
29 for all the work that you have done and everything, and  
30 you will be doing for us in the future. We look forward  
31 to your next report and seeing you at 9:00 in the  
32 morning. We're going to go on to Ms. Karen Gillis with  
33 the Bering Sea Fishermen Association. You have the  
34 floor, Ms. Gillis.

35  
36 MS. GILLIS: Quyana. Thank you, everyone,  
37 for your time and attention today. I just want to say  
38 to Therese and Avery and the whole Kuskokwim River Inter-  
39 Tribal Fish Commission that we're just so excited for  
40 the work you guys are doing. It was really great to hear  
41 that report, so thanks, everyone. I'm here today just  
42 to provide a quick update. We haven't presented to this  
43 RAC in a number of years, but we are definitely still  
44 engaged in working on issues that affect your  
45 communities and working closely with partner  
46 organizations like AVCP and KRITFC and others in the  
47 region and trying to defer to them as much as possible  
48 on leadership. But we have maintained a really long-  
49 standing role in supporting healthy and vibrant fishing  
50 communities within the Bristol Bay, Arctic, Yukon, and

1 Kuskokwim regions of Alaska since 1979 here. I'm Karen  
2 Gillis, and I am on Dena'ina land in Anchorage today.  
3 And I'm a Program Director at Bering Sea Fishermen's  
4 Association. My boss is Amy Spark from Chevak. She's the  
5 daughter of Lucy and Harold, the late Harold Spark. And  
6 she's been with Bering Sea Fishermen's Association now  
7 for about a year. And we're very excited to have her  
8 leadership taking us in some new directions. So, for  
9 those that aren't terribly familiar with Bering Sea  
10 Fishermen's Association, we are -- we were designed to  
11 foster greater social, financial, and political  
12 capacity; to access, sustainably develop, and protect  
13 fisheries. We call it the BBAYK or Bristol Bay Arctic  
14 Yukon Kuskokwim regions of Alaska. We are committed to  
15 the sustainable management of Alaska's resources and  
16 serve you as stewards of the extraordinary ways of life  
17 and cultures of Alaskans. We work to strengthen local  
18 communities, support long-term ecological integrity, and  
19 stimulate robust economies when possible. And we focus  
20 our attention on five different areas: empowering  
21 communities, advocacy and responsible stewardship,  
22 monitoring salmon, fishery development, and  
23 interdisciplinary research. We've had strong partners  
24 along the way, and it's been very apparent to us that  
25 in Western Alaska, organizations like ours benefit the  
26 most when we're working collaboratively on the issues  
27 that are affecting our communities. So, by joining  
28 together, our resources are allocated more efficiently,  
29 and we believe everyone benefits. My Board of Directors  
30 is made up of residents from Bristol Bay, Arctic, Yukon-  
31 Kuskokwim and have been primarily coastal living, but  
32 not always. We do have a vacancy in our Kuskokwim area,  
33 and if anyone is interested, you can reach out to me.  
34 I'll give you my email and phone number at the end of  
35 this quick presentation here. So, we'd love to see some  
36 new and fresh minds kind of coming onto our Board.

37  
38 Today, I just want to draw your  
39 attention to a couple of programs that BSFA is currently  
40 supporting. One is the Bristol Bay Arctic Yukon  
41 Kuskokwim Coalition. It's a very, it's a very loose  
42 coalition, but it's a weekly teleconference where  
43 residents from the BBAYK regions come together to  
44 identify regional concerns and develop strategies to  
45 address those concerns. We work together to prepare for  
46 Board of Fisheries and North Pacific Fisheries  
47 Management Council meetings, as well as tracking any  
48 legislative movement that has the potential to affect  
49 your fisheries. We meet every Thursday morning by Zoom,  
50 and participation is limited to residents of the Bristol



1 Bay Arctic Yukon Kuskokwim regions. We don't include any  
2 agency staff, whether state or Federal. So, if you're a  
3 resident and you want to stay up to date on engagement  
4 opportunities for fisheries management or subsistence  
5 issues or other policy priorities, again, I'll give you  
6 my email and phone number at the end of the presentation.  
7 But one other effort that we're supporting is the Arctic  
8 Yukon Kuskokwim Tribal Consortium, which grew out of the  
9 Arctic Yukon Kuskokwim Sustainable Salmon Initiative,  
10 which is the largest example of co-management of  
11 research funding addressing salmon in Alaska. The  
12 Sustainable Salmon Initiative has been in place since  
13 2002. And the Arctic Yukon-Kuskokwim Tribal Consortium  
14 is the recipient of Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund  
15 money to pass through the Sustainable Salmon Initiative  
16 for research projects. But in the last couple of years,  
17 the Tribal Consortium has expanded itself and kind of  
18 refocused itself around an overarching goal. But the  
19 Consortium members today are the Association of Village  
20 Council Presidents, Tanana Chiefs Conference, the  
21 Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, and the  
22 Yukon River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission. And their goal  
23 is to restore, maintain, and conserve the health and  
24 biodiversity of the Bering Sea ecosystems, rivers to  
25 seas, including a focus on restoration of abundance of  
26 wild salmon returns, all to provide for our subsistence  
27 way of life and other sustainable uses, including  
28 sustainable commercial uses for this and future  
29 generations. The work that the Tribal Consortium is  
30 doing is focused on providing capacity and support to  
31 our members and the tribes that they represent on policy  
32 and advocacy efforts that safeguard salmon, protect  
33 traditional ways of life, and elevate tribal voices in  
34 decision-making. And we offer tribes and tribal  
35 organizations policy and data support with an emphasis  
36 on drafting letters, developing talking points,  
37 visualizing data, and preparing for public engagement  
38 opportunities. We also offer grant writing support to  
39 tribes and tribal organizations that are seeking to  
40 apply for grants that support co-management, ecosystem  
41 conservation, and salmon science and engagement. We can  
42 do more than just that kind of segment of grants, but  
43 that's where we like to focus our attention. But we also  
44 provide travel assistance to help tribes and tribal  
45 organizations to participate in policy-making processes,  
46 like the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council and  
47 the Alaska Board of Fisheries, or other meetings that  
48 your tribe or tribal organization is wanting to  
49 participate in but may not have the funds to participate  
50 in, as long as it kind of centers around fisheries and/or

1 ecosystem conservation and those areas. So, we do have  
2 some resources that are available to folks in the region.  
3 And if you would like more information about these  
4 efforts or if you would like to participate in the weekly  
5 Zoom meetings, you can reach out to me, and I will  
6 provide any details for your engagement. My email  
7 address is karen@bsfaak.org, and my phone number is  
8 (907) 279-6519, and I'm at extension number two. I think  
9 Amy is at extension number one. So, if you want to touch  
10 base with Amy, that would be great too. I'll put that  
11 information in the chat for the people who are virtually  
12 attending today. But I think that's all I have.

13  
14 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you,  
15 Ms. Gillis. It's really great to hear your voice.

16  
17 MS. GILLIS: Yes. I'm so glad to be here.  
18 So many, you know, great people.

19  
20 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: All right,  
21 Ms. Gillis, do we have any comments or questions for her  
22 at this time? Go ahead, Ms. Cleveland.

23  
24 MS. CLEVELAN: Quyana, through the Chair.  
25 Hi, Karen. I was -- wanting to ask about your comment  
26 on restoration of salmon returns. So, I guess we've been  
27 trying to find funding to get our escapement back at  
28 home, but there's all this money available for  
29 restoration projects, and they're so far so specific to  
30 like, mines or riverbed damage and things like that. But  
31 I was wondering if restoration can include restoring of  
32 escapement numbers because we have to start somewhere.  
33 And in our case, it would be restoring our numbers since  
34 we haven't really had consistent numbers in about 16 or  
35 more years. So, I guess would that include restoration  
36 of escapement? Thanks.

37  
38 MS. GILLIS: Yeah. Hi, nice to chat with  
39 you. Absolutely. So, I would say one of the best sources  
40 for funding for projects like that would fall under the  
41 Sustainable Salmon Initiative. There's a request for  
42 proposals coming out this fall. And it will be for  
43 projects that can be started up next season and if you  
44 want to contact me, I can put you in touch with a grant  
45 writer and a research coordinator. Anybody who you might  
46 feel like you would like support from to draft that  
47 proposal. I would love to see some more projects that  
48 are funded specifically for restoration goals in your  
49 region for sure. So, yes.

50

1 MS. CLEVELAND: Through the Chair. Thank  
2 you, Karen. I'll be in touch; I have your number.

3  
4 MS. GILLIS: Excellent.

5  
6 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Any further  
7 comments or questions for Ms. Gillis at this time?  
8 Hearing, seeing none. Thank you, Ms. Gillis. I did have  
9 I believe, a question in regards to the Bristol Bay  
10 connection. What is the form of capacity that we are  
11 connecting or communicating our efforts of these common  
12  
13 concerns with the Bristol Bay area and who are we exactly  
14 working with? Thank you, Ms. Gillis.

15  
16 MS. GILLIS: So, at the BSFA level -- and  
17 quyana for your question. We have three Board members  
18 from Bristol Bay, one from Manokotak, one from Togiak,  
19 and one from Dillingham. So, they are very well engaged  
20 with the work that we're doing. We also work with BBNA,  
21 Cody Larson, Gayla Hofseth, they are our primary  
22 contacts, and they are -- I wouldn't say they attend the  
23 BBAYK meetings every Thursday, I mean every Thursday,  
24 but they are in attendance I would say, you know, almost  
25 every time to kind of work with the other regions on  
26 similar goals. So those are the primary people that I  
27 work with out of Bristol Bay in addition to my Board  
28 members. But BBNA is our, yeah, our -- generally our go-  
29 to partner in the region. And Cody and Gayla and I work  
30 very closely together. And it's really nice or helpful  
31 and I think it benefits a lot of people to participate  
32 in those weekly calls because you're hearing from people  
33 from other regions. We also have people from the Yukon  
34 First Nations groups as well on the line and it gives  
35 you an idea of what the priorities are for individuals  
36 and organizations that are working on fishery issues in  
37 our regions. So, I would encourage you to, you know,  
38 check into those meetings and connect directly with the  
39 folks from Bristol Bay if interested. And I hope that  
40 answers your question. Quyana.

41  
42 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you,  
43 Ms. Gillis. Yes, it does. It gives us a networking, and  
44 capability that we need in order to discuss these  
45 concerns because it is a YK, but also Bristol Bay this  
46 year they've been having a lot of issues, so we need to  
47 start roping them in as well. Even though they do have  
48 the commercial industry down there, they're still our  
49 counterparts and they're still a part of Alaska and  
50 they're still a part of subsistence. And I believe we

1 need to connect with them together so we can make a  
2 stronger voice as people, as one of Alaska, in order to  
3 address the issues we need. Any further comments or  
4 questions? Thank you, Ms. Gillis, and thank you for  
5 joining us.

6  
7 MS. GILLIS: My pleasure. Thanks  
8 everyone.

9  
10 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: All right. I  
11 just have a quick announcement that U.S. Fish and  
12 Wildlife Service Gravel-to-Gravel would like to be on  
13 our agenda for tomorrow, so we're going to go ahead and  
14 move them for tomorrow's agenda. Next on the line is  
15 Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge. You have the  
16 floor. Please introduce yourself as first and last name.  
17 Thank you.

18  
19 MR. ALEXIE: Hello, Madam Chair. I forgot  
20 to introduce myself earlier. I'm a Refuge Information  
21 Technician for the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge.  
22 I'm Christian Alexie Junior. I am stationed out in Eek.

23  
24 MR. TULIK: (In Native) Christopher  
25 Tulik. I'm the Lead Refuge Information Technician for  
26 the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge.

27  
28 MR. MOSES: Hello again. My name is Aaron  
29 Moses. I'm the Subsistence Coordinator. We're going to  
30 just do a quick update on our waterfowl program and also  
31 any staff changes that we've had since we last met.

32  
33 MR. ALEXIE: I'll be starting off with  
34 the avian influenza sampling and monitoring. Highly  
35 Pathogenic Avian Influenza was a concern coming into  
36 2024. Yukon Delta was unable to sample birds in 2024 due  
37 to logistical issues but did find and report twenty-two  
38 dead birds from field camps. We have found that emperor  
39 geese have really high immunities to avian influenza  
40 strains. About 98% have immunities to some avian  
41 influenza and 65% have immunities to the current strain  
42 of HPAI or Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza. From 2022  
43 to 2023, the proportion of the population of cackling  
44 geese that have immunity to HPAI went from 35% in 2022  
45 to 50% in 2023. They are getting HPAI, surviving, and  
46 having immunities. Adults seem to be surviving well, but  
47 the past two winters, there have been die-offs of  
48 juveniles because they do not have the immunities that  
49 the older geese do. Brant Colony Photographic Survey for  
50 the first time since 2019, on June 4-5 of 2024, we

1 conducted a photographic survey over the five main brant  
2 colonies in the Baird Island, Baird Inlet, Kongiganak  
3 Island, Tutakoke River and Kokechik Bay, in order to  
4 determine if numbers of brant nesting are increasing,  
5 decreasing, or stable. Photos have not been analyzed  
6 yet, but visual reports show very low nesting and lots  
7 of signs of egg hunting in Baird Island and Baird Inlet  
8 colonies, as well as the highest densities of the brant  
9 in (In Native) Colony. This is a major concern of  
10 decreased nesting in colonies. Emperor Goose Nesting  
11 Ecology and Survival; this field season is the eighth  
12 year of emperor goose nesting ecology research on (In  
13 Native) Island, four crew members searched for geese  
14 nests on eight nest plots, 245 emperor goose nests were  
15 found and monitored. Nest effort was high in 2024, and  
16 apparent nest success was high at 83%, hatching at least  
17 one egg. The crew successfully recorded 136 band re-  
18 sites and captured and banded 48 nesting females to  
19 further efforts to estimate survival, which is  
20 calculated to be only slightly declining since 2016. The  
21 crew assisted the Endangered Species Program with  
22 searching for, monitoring, and capturing spectacled  
23 eiders on the nest for mark-recapture survival analysis.

24  
25 MR. TULIK: So those are just some of the  
26 summary, a few of the summary activity reports the  
27 waterfowl biologists are doing out here in the field.  
28 So, there are other activities that they are doing, and  
29 currently, there is a waterfowl biologist -- what's his  
30 name? Randall Friendly and along with the Pathway  
31 Students, are they -- I believe they're Pathway  
32 Students, they're banding ducks are currently banding  
33 ducks up at (In Native) Lake, which is just north of the  
34 volcanic mountains. And just recently, we heard that the  
35 emperor goose is declining, and the harvest and eggling  
36 will be closed in 2025. So, as a matter of fact, all  
37 goose population on the delta, the YK Delta, are  
38 decreasing in and have been declining over the last eight  
39 years. And so, the emperor goose concern will be brought  
40 before the AVCP Waterfowl Conservation Committee when  
41 they meet next week on Monday. And it will also be  
42 presented to the delegates at the AVCP Convention, also  
43 next week.

44  
45 In addition to that, some restrictions  
46 on cackling geese may also be discussed at the WCC  
47 meeting. And, you know, so brant eggling remains closed.  
48 So, the 30-day closure that is placed every year in the  
49 spring, what the -- the waterfowl biologists monitor the  
50 birds, migratory birds that arrive out in their nesting

1 area. And they will watch when they start nesting and  
2 then they will consult with AVCP on that and then  
3 determine the closure. But five days after the closure  
4 of all other species of waterfowl, the scoters -- the  
5 black ducks, what they call is closed. And they're closed  
6 when they start eggging and until they start fledging.  
7 But eggging for emperor goose and black brant remains  
8 closed throughout the year. So, however, the eggging is  
9 also becoming a problem out on Biard Island. If you  
10 don't know where that is, that is just south of Newtok.  
11 You know, it's just a muddy flat coastal area just around  
12 Ninglik. So that's what's also happening. And that well  
13 that's my part.

14  
15 MR. MOSES: Yeah. Mine's real quickly,  
16 it's just a staff update. As you a lot of you know, Boyd  
17 left about a year ago, and we have since filled the  
18 Refuge Manager position from within. We got Spencer  
19 Reardon. He was our wildlife biologist an assistant  
20 manager, and he's done a whole bunch of stuff and he's  
21 from Bethel, so we're very grateful to have him here  
22 now. And he's the in-season manager now for the Fish and  
23 Wildlife Service for the Kuskokwim. And that's all I  
24 got. If you guys have any questions.

25  
26 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Where is  
27 Spencer?

28  
29 MR. MOSES: He is away on medical.

30  
31 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Okay. He's  
32 excused. Mr. Maneng.

33  
34 MR. MANENG: Yeah. Thank you, Madam  
35 Chair. I know I spent many years working with the  
36 waterfowl conservation issues, as well as meeting with  
37 people from states of Washington, Oregon, and California  
38 regarding some of these waterfowl of concern. Since 1987  
39 the numbers have been declining and still make -- trying  
40 to make a conservation effort with YK Delta people, as  
41 well as use of lead shots. Is lead shots still an ongoing  
42 concern or has that been reduced?

43  
44 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Aaron.

45  
46 MR. MOSES: Through the Chair. We still  
47 have a major problem with lead shot. A lot of it was due  
48 to the pandemic and production issues. A lot of the  
49 stores around here were only able to find lead shot, and  
50 they weren't able to find steel shots. So, a lot of them

1 just bought what they could from distributors. We still  
2 have the exchange program. So, anytime someone has lead,  
3 its box for box, pretty much shell for shell and through  
4 the Friends Group and through our law enforcement guys,  
5 we have been able to acquire a bunch of steel shot to  
6 be exchanged. And the RITs here are our ears on the  
7 ground. And so, they're constantly looking to see where  
8 we need to focus our efforts on for lead shot.

9  
10 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Mr. Maneng.

11  
12 MR. MANENG: Thank you, Madam Chair. I  
13 know the farmers of Oregon and Washington have had  
14 ongoing concerns with the cacklers and the geese, and  
15 I'm sure it's still going on. And I know there's limited  
16 opportunity for them to harvest some geese down there,  
17 but I hope that they're not trying to kill 50,000 birds  
18 like they proposed, like, about ten years ago. I know  
19 that's not happening. Waterfowl Conservation Committee,  
20 working with the Fish and Wildlife Service, will not  
21 allow that to happen. So -- but the mortality still is  
22 a concern and impacts of cacklers on farmlands is still  
23 an ongoing concern for them, and I hope that before they  
24 migrate up north to their nesting grounds, that Fish and  
25 Wildlife are still monitoring down there to ensure that  
26 there's not a substantial reduction in their wintering  
27 grounds.

28  
29 MR. MOSES: Through the Chair. Yeah, the  
30 biggest problem we're still having is the avian  
31 influenza. That's one of the biggest reasons our  
32 population throughout all the geese are going down. Even  
33 though we weren't able to get samples this year, there's  
34 just the telltale signs that they had the bird flu.  
35 Like, you could just walk up to them, they're swimming  
36 in circles, they look weak and so, a lot of what we're  
37 dealing with right now is just like we did through the  
38 pandemic, trying to get through this bird flu.

39  
40 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Mr. Naneng.

41  
42 MR. MANENG: And I know that the  
43 indication of numbers of declines can also be observed  
44 with shorebirds like the red, what they call them red.  
45 (Indiscernible) Yeah, they used to be large in numbers  
46 along the coast, but there seems to be a -- they may  
47 have disappeared, I'm not sure, but a few have been  
48 observed every once in a while. So, and that also can  
49 reflect on some of the issues that the waterfowl are  
50 having because of I'm not sure -- I think it's methane

1 that their lands out on the coast have very high density  
2 of. Has there been any effort to try and check to see  
3 if methane is having an impact on waterfowl? I know it  
4 can be dangerous. If you find out on the ice, a little  
5 hole of methane that's bubbled up, you can practically  
6 burn it. So just want to know if there's any relationship  
7 to that.

8  
9 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Aaron.

10  
11  
12 MR. MOSES: Through the Chair. We  
13 currently don't have any projects in that nature. A lot  
14 of ours is monitoring, like Kristin said, is monitoring  
15 the emperor geese and the black brant colonies. But that  
16 is -- we're always looking for new research. So that's  
17 -- we could pass that along. And I could ask our  
18 waterfowl biologist, if there have been studies like  
19 that around here, he would know. But he's also not  
20 available for this meeting.

21  
22 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Mr. Tulik.

23  
24 MR. TULIK: So, yeah, you're exactly  
25 right about the other species of birds, like the  
26 shorebirds, they are declining. You know, for those of  
27 us from the coast, we've seen them before, and they're  
28 not as abundant anymore. And just recently, Liliana  
29 Navas with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game have  
30 been doing this project called, you know, the  
31 traditional knowledge that she worked on and collected  
32 all that information from a number of villages,  
33 particularly out there in Hooper Bay in that area and  
34 further here. So, and they're all indicating that the  
35 shorebirds that used to be abundant are no longer that  
36 abundant or just simply have disappeared. So, Liliana  
37 Navas with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game is a  
38 good resource for that information.

39  
40 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Quyana, Mr.  
41 Tulik. Do I? Okay. I had a couple things, couple  
42 questions for you guys. The first question is if we were  
43 to write a support letter or a request letter to discuss  
44 the closure of the emperor geese, the Canadian geese,  
45 the emperor brant eggling enclosure, a 30-day closure,  
46 the black ducks, discussion of the Lower 48 with Oregon  
47 and Washington and other states that were the migration  
48 of our waterfowl are going and then the mortality of  
49 avian influenza, including shorebirds. Who else would  
50 we need to address this letter to? Besides the AVCP



1 Waterfowl Conservation, Migratory Waterfowl Committee.  
2 Do we have any friends of canine's kind of thing down  
3 Lower 48 that monitor this? And if so, who else do we  
4 need to address this issue so that we can have it be  
5 brought up an awareness, and not only including a letter  
6 to all these other organizations and identities, but  
7 also to request that an immediate special action closure  
8 on emperor geese will also need to be in effect for  
9 hopefully for special action. Mr. Naneng.

10  
11  
12 MR. MANENG: Yeah, I think all of that  
13 is being addressed by the Alaska Migratory Bird Co-  
14 Management Council and the Audubon Society and the Fish  
15 and Wildlife Service agencies that are located in the  
16 Lower 48, as well as the International Fish and Wildlife  
17 Association. That structure has already been put  
18 together by -- with the Protocol Amendment of 1997, where  
19 we have the Co-management Council up here in Alaska, and  
20 also coordination with Fish and Wildlife Service and  
21 other agencies down in the Lower 48, as well as state  
22 of Alaska is participating with their office here. So,  
23 it's already in place and whenever the decision to close  
24 some of these birds, Fish and Wildlife does not take  
25 action on their own, they have to be approved by AVCP  
26 Waterfowl Conservation Committee. And also, that  
27 decision is also passed on to the Co-management Council  
28 -- Alaska Migratory Bird Co-Management Council, which  
29 has representatives from representatives from Tanana  
30 Chiefs, Aleuts[1:11:18/4], Norton Sound, Bering Straits,  
31 Bristol Bay, and also someone from, I believe, down in  
32 Chugach area. So, it's mostly western Alaska and  
33 Interior Alaska representation. So, it's already in  
34 place.

35  
36 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you,  
37 Mr. Naneng. We need to show our support for this coming  
38 directly from our RAC, since we are a subsistence body.  
39 Go ahead, Mr. Tulik or Aaron?

40  
41 MR. MOSES: Through the Chair. I was just  
42 going to say Myron knows way more than we do.

43  
44 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you.  
45 Any further comments or questions at this time? Quyana,  
46 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. All right, folks, the  
47 time now is 4:26. And we're trying to get through our  
48 agenda so we can dismiss at the afternoon before lunch  
49 tomorrow. Currently, on the phone right now, we have  
50 AVCP. Jennifer Hooper, are you currently online still?

1  
2 MS. HOOPER: Hi, Madam Chair. Yes, I am.  
3 Can you hear me okay.?  
4

5 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Yes, ma'am.  
6 We can hear you. If you can speak up a little bit more,  
7 I would greatly appreciate it. Thank you, Ms. Jennifer.  
8

9 MS. HOOPER: Okay, I will speak directly  
10 into my phone. I sincerely apologize to the Council for  
11 not being there earlier when AVCP was called to report.  
12 Thursday is a really busy day for standing meetings and  
13 things. And anyways, I just wanted to provide the Council  
14 and attendees some updates on activities that AVCP has  
15 been engaged in and involved with. Many things are kind  
16 of standing items that we normally report on. So, I'll  
17 try to go through this quickly in respect of your time  
18 and the agenda. So, currently at AVCP, the Natural  
19 Resources Department has three full-time staff members,  
20 myself, Ashley Johnson, I'm not sure if she's back there  
21 in the room. She's our Program Coordinator. And we also  
22 have Janessa Esquible, she introduced herself this  
23 morning. She's our Marine Resource Specialist. And this  
24 summer, we did actually have our first ANSEP Summer  
25 Bridge Intern come on board with AVCP. And we had Emma  
26 Daniel from here in Bethel as part of our team for a  
27 month and a half or so. So, that was a really neat thing  
28 to see come to fruition here at AVCP.  
29

30 Quick now to updates. I've mentioned  
31 before that our program works within the Lands and  
32 Cultural Division structure here at AVCP, and we work  
33 closely with our Realty Program, the Cultural and  
34 Environmental Programs, and then Natural Resources and  
35 continue to identify ways that we can build internal  
36 capacity. And have been working on several components  
37 of a strategic plan that was created in conjunction with  
38 our Administration and Executive Board a couple of years  
39 ago. Last year, I reported that from that strategic  
40 planning, a new component to AVCP was the creation of a  
41 Subsistence Committee within our Executive Board  
42 structure. That committee has been meeting quarterly and  
43 provides guidance to the full Executive Board and our  
44 Administration. And I mentioned Janessa Esquible is on  
45 staff currently, we shared last year at this about this  
46 time that we were restructuring that position and wanted  
47 to focus more on attracting candidates with focused  
48 education and experience. And we were lucky to have  
49 Janessa come on board, and she's been engaging in various  
50 Bering Sea issues, and right now is focusing on

1 implementing a new project that we have going. In the  
2 program, we are also still considering options and  
3 looking at how to implement a forestry program with some  
4 potential projects. We've spoken about that in the past,  
5 and that continues to be something we're working on. I'm  
6 sure most people have heard updates here in the last  
7 month and a half or so about Federal Fisheries Disaster  
8 applications for the Yukon and the Kuskokwim. A couple  
9 of years for the Yukon and then for the Kuskokwim 2020  
10 and 2021. The application process was finally released  
11 and rolled out in late June, and commercial permit  
12 holders were mailed, applications and applications were  
13 available online for crew members and subsistence  
14 households. And the permit holder applications are due  
15 very soon, within the next couple of days. And then the  
16 subsistence holder applications in a month in late  
17 September. We discovered that for the Kuskokwim the  
18 eligibility criteria that was used was very short term  
19 and basically was going to mean that only permit holders  
20 who participated in the commercial openers that were  
21 structured for catcher-sellers would basically be  
22 eligible for disaster relief. And unfortunately, there's  
23 not much we can do for the next round that comes out for  
24 the Kuskokwim when it is rolled out. But we did work  
25 with the Fish Commission; big thanks to Therese there;  
26 getting comments in on the final draft plan for the 2022  
27 Kuskokwim Disaster Request. So hopefully for that, there  
28 will be a little more flexibility in how eligibility is  
29 determined for the Kuskokwim.

30  
31 In late 2023, AVCP created a guidebook.  
32 Really nice, really nice book document as a way to  
33 provide information about the regulatory processes of  
34 the North Pacific Council and then the State Board of  
35 Fisheries, and the guide outlines how each body works,  
36 what their processes and timelines are, how often they  
37 meet, and includes information about how to develop  
38 testimony. We sent out twenty copies of the book to each  
39 tribe in the region and have shared copies with partners  
40 and coalition members and other organizations. We do  
41 have more copies available, and after this, I will go  
42 and grab some and make sure to bring those back with me  
43 tomorrow morning to have there in the meeting room. And  
44 we also have an electronic PDF version that can be shared  
45 if people are interested. One quick note about the Alaska  
46 Board of Fisheries. They are going to have their usual  
47 work session in October where agenda change requests  
48 will be considered for approval. We assume there will  
49 be a similar one like there has been regarding the Area  
50 M fisheries and so, we'll be tracking that. And I wanted

1 to also update, make sure everyone knew that Kurt  
2 Chamberlain who is from Aniak, Bethel Anchorage- now  
3 works for Calista was successfully appointed to the  
4 Board of Fish over the summer, and so he will now be  
5 sitting up there with the six other Board members for  
6 the next couple of years. You've heard a lot today;  
7 thank you to Therese again for sharing updates on the  
8 North Pacific Council and where they're at with salmon  
9 bycatch. We are part of several coalitions that meet and  
10 track and strategize how to best maneuver the Council  
11 process and try to make effective change happen. She  
12 mentioned that there will be that meeting in February.  
13 Back in April, our CEO, Vivian Korthis and our  
14 Subsistence Committee members attended the April Council  
15 meeting there and provided testimony. And so, it's  
16 really important that groups continue to go in person  
17 and advocate and see this through and hopefully, in the  
18 end, come out with something that is meaningful. Karen  
19 Gillis just a few minutes ago, provided information and  
20 updates on the AYK Tribal Consortium, which AVCP is a  
21 member of. And with that group, we continue to advocate  
22 for sustainable fisheries and look at various policy  
23 needs and potential for making, you know, various  
24 aspects to our fisheries more positive and improved.

25  
26 AVCP continues engagement in the Bering  
27 Intergovernmental Tribal Advisory Council that was  
28 developed under the Northern Bering Sea Climate  
29 Resilience Area executive order. The TAC has had several  
30 meetings with the Federal task force in the last year  
31 or so and are now focusing work on kind of developing a  
32 structure and an outline for a Salmon Resilience Plan  
33 that can be elevated within the TAC and the Bering  
34 Federal task force of the White House. Chris and the  
35 refuge staff there just mentioned that our Waterfowl  
36 Conservation Committee is going to be meeting next week  
37 on Monday here in Bethel. We did work with them this  
38 summer, this past spring, on scheduling the mandatory  
39 30-day closure that we all are used to. And we'll have  
40 a lot of items to discuss, including the current emperor  
41 goose population status.

42  
43 Lastly, AVCP this spring and summer  
44 received funding to develop a fisheries-focused project,  
45 and we decided to work directly with some communities  
46 and identified a process to discuss inter-generational  
47 visions with them. Meeting with community members,  
48 elders, adults, and youth, and framing discussions  
49 around resilience and sustainability. We've started out  
50 with two communities this fall and initiated the project

1 by conducting large circle dialogues with identified  
2 community members. And then our planning to hire some  
3 local contractors who will assist in identifying  
4 potential next steps for the project and then after a  
5 successful completion in the two communities that we  
6 worked with this summer and fall, Tuntutuliak and  
7 Alagnak, we will kind of evaluate how things worked and  
8 what outcomes were developed and then look to kind of  
9 restarting the project again next year in a few more  
10 communities. So, it's been a while since AVCP  
11 implemented, you know, on-the-ground, in-the-community  
12 project. So, we're really excited for this and excited  
13 to see where things go. A big component of it is  
14 providing funding directly to community members who  
15 assist with the circle dialogues, and then with the  
16 hiring of some local contractors. And it was through  
17 administration suggestions and recommendations that we  
18 try to get as much of the funding directly out into the  
19 communities in whatever way made sense for the project.  
20 And so, really grateful that we're able to provide that  
21 opportunity for -- starting off for a few of our  
22 communities. I would be happy to take any questions, and  
23 that's all I have. Thank you, Madam Chair.

24

25 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you,  
26 Ms. Hooper. Do we have any comments or questions for  
27 AVCP at this time? Go ahead, Ms. Cleveland.

28

29 MS. CLEVELAND: Just a quick comment. I'm  
30 just happy that Kurt Chamberlain of Aniak was appointed  
31 to the Board of Fish. That's shocking and great. Thanks  
32 for giving us that news.

33

34 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: All right.  
35 Thank you, AVCP. It was a good report.

36

37 MS. HOOPER: Quyana.

38

39 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Alrighty.  
40 That's going to go ahead and move us on to the Office  
41 of Subsistence Management. I am going to inform you I'm  
42 quitting this meeting or closing this meeting for the  
43 day at 5:00. We're going home at 5:00. No ifs, ands or  
44 buts. Thank you, Scott, you have the floor.

45

46 MR AYERS: Not feeling any pressure after  
47 that. Thank you, Madam Chair, members of the Council.  
48 Again, on behalf of OSM, I'd like to thank you all for  
49 your service and the exceptional work that you do on  
50 behalf of your communities and user groups. We at OSM

1 value your experience and volunteer contribution of your  
2 knowledge and time in the regulatory process and all of  
3 the other things that you cover when we're having these  
4 meetings. Today, I have four reports on four different  
5 subject areas for you, but I promise I'll keep it brief,  
6 and it'll just be a few pages worth of information here.  
7 First, on the OSM administrative move, at the request  
8 of many stakeholders made during listening sessions and  
9 tribal consultations across the state and subsequent  
10 congressional approval with the enactment of the  
11 Department of Interior's 2024 appropriations, the  
12 Secretary of the Interior issued Secretarial Order 3413  
13 to administratively transfer OSM from the U.S. Fish and  
14 Wildlife Service directly to the office of the Assistant  
15 Secretary Policy, Management, and Budget, which was  
16 effective July 15th, 2024. This move is one of the many  
17 that the Department is making to strengthen Federal  
18 subsistence policies and structure, and to ensure that  
19 federally qualified subsistence users and Alaska Native  
20 people have an opportunity for meaningful engagement in  
21 its implementation. The move is in response to the  
22 concerns and input of Alaska Native communities and  
23 people, many of whom rely on subsistence use and the  
24 need to enhance program operations for all federally  
25 qualified subsistence users, particularly in the face  
26 of a changing climate. OSM responsibilities and  
27 functions of administrative support to the Federal  
28 Subsistence Board and the Subsistence Regional Advisory  
29 Councils remain the same following this move to the  
30 office of the Secretary. Federal Subsistence Management  
31 Program operations continue seamlessly, and the  
32 regulatory cycle is going on without interruptions. If  
33 you need to reach out to any of the OSM staff, we now  
34 have new email addresses that have been updated on our  
35 website. The main contact phone number remains the same  
36 (907) 786-3888 and our main email address is now updated  
37 to subsistence@ios.doi.gov. Second, I have an update on  
38 the regulations regarding the Federal Subsistence Board  
39 composition, also based on requests during joint  
40 consultations with Alaska Native tribes and others, the  
41 Departments of the Interior and Agriculture are in the  
42 process of revising the regulations concerning the  
43 composition of the Federal Subsistence Board. The final  
44 rule regarding this revision is expected to be published  
45 by the end of this fiscal year. The departments will add  
46 three public members nominated or recommended by  
47 federally recognized tribal governments. Require that  
48 those nominees have certain knowledge and experience,  
49 define requirements used to select the Board Chair, and  
50 affirm the Secretary's authority to replace Board

1 members and the Secretary's responsibility and oversight  
2 regarding Board decisions. These regulatory revisions  
3 are responsive to the primary request made to the  
4 departments during consultations. The rule will become  
5 effective 30 days after publication in the Federal  
6 Register. And again, as we noted earlier, it's in  
7 process. We're not exactly certain when that's going to  
8 publish, but we think it's going to happen here sometime  
9 in the next month or two. The third item is OSM staff  
10 updates. Since the All Council meeting held in March of  
11 this year, OSM welcomed our new Acting Director, Crystal  
12 Ciisquq Lionetti. She will be in this acting role until  
13 the end of September. In her permanent position, Crystal  
14 is the Alaska Native Affairs Specialist at the U.S. Fish  
15 and Wildlife Service. Among regular OSM director  
16 responsibilities, Crystal has been leading OSM through  
17 its administrative move and is doing a tremendously  
18 wonderful job. OSM Director's position will be  
19 advertised in the near future. We're hearing possibly  
20 as early as next week. OSM has also had some staff  
21 departures. Theo Mutuskowitz [1:31:45/4], OSM  
22 Supervisory Regulatory Specialist, retired in July after  
23 over 20 years of faithful service, and OSM staff will  
24 miss him greatly, especially his depth of knowledge in  
25 regulations, his kind advice, and wonderful sense of  
26 humor. Justin Kohler, OSM Fisheries Biologist, has been  
27 acting as the Supervisory Regulatory Specialist in the  
28 interim and was able to jump right in to ensure that  
29 OSM's final and proposed rules, as well as meeting  
30 announcements, are moving through the approval and  
31 publications process. This position will also be  
32 advertised for permanent hire at the same time. Kayla  
33 McKinney, OSM Subsistence Outreach Coordinator, left OSM  
34 due to move to another state. Leigh Honig and Sherrie  
35 Gould Fares are covering some of this position's duties  
36 in the interim while performing their regular duties,  
37 and they've been doing great. The vacant position of the  
38 Subsistence Outreach Coordinator will be advertised in  
39 the near future, and we encourage all individuals with  
40 diverse outreach skills and interest in working with  
41 subsistence issues and rural communities to apply. And  
42 in August, we were also saddened to learn about the  
43 upcoming departure of OSM's Deputy Director Amy Howard.  
44 She will be leaving us for a new job with the Aleut  
45 Corporation as the Director of Lands and Natural  
46 Resources. Her last day with OSM is August 30th. While  
47 congratulating Amy on her new job, we will sorely miss  
48 her inclusive and fair management style, her great  
49 support for the OSM team, and her smile. That position  
50 will also be advertised here, I believe, in the next

1 week or two. So, we've got a lot of openings coming up  
2 that we're hoping to stock up with great people once  
3 again. And then lastly, I have a brief, very brief update  
4 on current litigation. A detailed litigation update was  
5 provided to the Councils at the March 2024 All Council  
6 meeting. Since then, in the kaek [1:33:50/4] emergency  
7 hunt matter, which is Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
8 versus the Federal Subsistence Board briefing is now in  
9 progress before the Ninth Circuit Court. In the  
10 Kuskokwim matter, the United States versus the Alaska  
11 Department of Fish and Game, the district court found  
12 in favor of the U.S. on all claims and enjoined the  
13 State from taking any further action in violations of  
14 Title 8 on the Kuskokwim River. The State has appealed,  
15 and the briefing has just recently commenced before the  
16 Ninth Circuit Court. And that is my update well before  
17 the 5:00 hour. I'm happy to answer any questions you may  
18 have.

19  
20 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Wonderful  
21 job. Do we have any further comments or questions at  
22 this time for Scott? I know I had a question, and I was  
23 going to write it down, but I was hungry, and I forgot.  
24 So, I'll probably come back to you after that. I did  
25 want to know in regards to the update between the  
26 transfer between DOI and DOA. I know it's a current  
27 process that's going on right now, but what I'm trying  
28 to say is that I would like to see our services continue  
29 as normal as DOI in a timely fashion, respected  
30 correspondence. If it's going to be this way, that if  
31 we fall under DOA and this is going to become the new  
32 OSM, then something needs to be fixed. And I believe  
33 truly within my heart that our people who -- and people,  
34 subsistence people and the people of Alaska and those  
35 who choose to live in Alaska, should have that  
36 reassurance that they're being represented, their voices  
37 are being heard, and correspondence should be in a timely  
38 manner instead of leaving them waiting, hoping they'll  
39 forget. And that's not directed at you; that's directed  
40 above, above your pay grade. Thank you. Go ahead, Scott.

41  
42 MR. AYERS: If I may. Yeah, thank you for  
43 that input. And yeah, I don't think there's any mal  
44 intent with the fact that that correspondence item that  
45 we talked about earlier today was delayed. And I just  
46 have been working while we've been holding the meeting  
47 here. And I believe that that correspondence letter  
48 actually is going out this afternoon on that topic to  
49 kind of close that circle. But it has been a substantial  
50 lift to have this program moved from one agency, the



1 Fish and Wildlife Service, into a different part of the  
2 government structure. It's an unusual thing that does  
3 not happen very often, and it's required an extensive  
4 amount of effort from folks in the Secretary's office,  
5 leadership with the Fish and Wildlife Service, and then  
6 staff at OSM to make it happen. And we have tried, to  
7 the extent possible, to make it as seamless as possible.  
8 And there -- we certainly all knew that there were going  
9 to be some hiccups along the way and some bumps on the  
10 road, but we're trying to minimize those to the extent  
11 that we can. I think that's where I'll leave that for  
12 now. But I do appreciate the comment. And we're really  
13 trying hard to keep everything moving forward without  
14 interruption. Thanks.

15  
16 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you,  
17 Scott. Mr. Manneng.

18  
19 MR. NANENG: Yeah, thank you, Madam  
20 Chair. The request to move from Fish and Wildlife Service  
21 directly to the Department of Interior was done in an  
22 effort to make sure that our subsistence concerns are  
23 also on the table with other Federal agencies. This one  
24 would be to also raise the issues that we've been talking  
25 about the last couple of days, like fisheries, because  
26 North Pacific Fisheries Management Council is not  
27 listening to us, and they are they're with their  
28 Department of Commerce. And that's the reason why the  
29 request to transfer from -- directly from Fish and  
30 Wildlife Service to the Department of Interior was done,  
31 is that there at the same level with the Department of  
32 Commerce. And that would help some of the issues that  
33 we're talking about be heard directly from these other  
34 agencies that don't seem to have any concern about our  
35 subsistence concerns.

36  
37 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Mr. Ayers.

38  
39 MR. AYERS: Thank you, member Naneng. I  
40 agree, I believe that's exactly correct and while we  
41 have not yet seen the engagement on that particular topic  
42 yet, what I have observed since July 15th, when we've  
43 moved, is already engagement on a handful of other topics  
44 that the Councils and the Federal Subsistence Board have  
45 put forward. There's ongoing discussions with OSM  
46 leadership and Assistant Secretaries on a variety of  
47 those topics, and trying to find ways to move them  
48 forward in ways that I haven't been privy to prior to  
49 this. So, I think that we are already seeing dividends  
50 paid on that front with being moved, the program being

1 moved to this level, and I'm frankly pretty excited about  
2 it. It'll be nice to see some action on some of these  
3 things a little bit faster. We do have regular  
4 interaction with leadership, and they are listening, and  
5 they have connections with people at higher levels than  
6 we've had before. So, I think it's going to be good for  
7 the program and good for the Councils and good for  
8 subsistence users.

9  
10 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ROGERS: Thank you,  
11 Scott. I did have a question in regards to that. If we  
12 have our meetings in Anchorage, can these leadership be  
13 at our meeting so we can have one-on-one conversations  
14 with them?

15  
16 MR. AYERS: Thanks, Madam Chair. We can  
17 try. Much of our leadership is now in Washington, D.C.,  
18 and so we are having virtual meetings with them by and  
19 large. But they have come out to Anchorage at least once  
20 already to visit with us and kind of give us information  
21 about themselves and what they know about their program  
22 and what they want to know about the program, and to  
23 have us as a staff voice any concerns that we might have  
24 with this transition. And so, they've been very helpful  
25 on that front, but we certainly can put that forward.  
26 And I know that they are interested in more return trips.  
27 I'm sure had the All Council meeting happened post this  
28 move that we would have had representatives from those  
29 that, at that level at that meeting. Alas, it wasn't  
30 until that point in time that we found that this was  
31 actually taking place. So, I don't think it's off the  
32 table.

33  
34 ACTING CHAIRPERSON: Thank you. Brooke,  
35 can we have our meeting in Washington, D.C.?

36  
37 MS. MCDAVID: Maybe if you provide strong  
38 enough justification.

39  
40 ACTING CHAIRPERSON: We need their one-  
41 on-one time. Any further questions? Hearing, seeing  
42 none. Thank you very much. At this time, I'm going to  
43 go ahead and call this meeting to recess for the night.  
44 The time now is 4:55. We will see you all at 9am. We'll  
45 see you at 9am tomorrow. Quyana.

46  
47 (Off record)

48  
49 (END OF PROCEEDINGS)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Rafael Morel, for Lighthouse Integrated Services Corp, do hereby certify:

THAT the foregoing pages numbered 1 through 107 contain a full, true and correct Transcript of the NORTH SLOPE SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING, VOLUME II recorded on the 22nd day of August 2024;

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                  THAT the transcript is a true and correct transcript requested to be transcribed and thereafter transcribed by under my direction and reduced to print to the best of our knowledge and ability;

                  THAT I am not an employee, attorney, or party interested in any way in this action.

                  DATED at Isabela, Puerto Rico this 16th day of Sept 2024.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Rafael Morel  
Chief Project Manager - Transcriptions