



U.S. Department of the Interior News Release

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Contact: Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

Biden-Harris Administration Strengthens Alaska Tribal Representation on Federal Subsistence Board

WASHINGTON — The Departments of the Interior and Agriculture today announced a [final rule](#) to strengthen Alaska Tribal representation on the Federal Subsistence Board (FSB), which manages subsistence use on federal lands and waters in Alaska. The final changes to the FSB reflect the meaningful role of Tribal consultation and the Biden-Harris administration's commitment to engaging directly with Tribal leaders when making decisions that impact their communities.

For thousands of years, subsistence practices have been immensely important for Alaska Native communities, and remain deeply intertwined with their lifeways, food security, and cultures. The final rule being announced today, which follows extensive consultations between the Biden-Harris administration and hundreds of Alaska Native Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, and Tribal organizations, adds three new public members to the FSB, all nominated by federally recognized Tribal governments in Alaska. These members will have personal knowledge of and direct experience with subsistence practices in rural Alaska, including Alaska Native subsistence uses, and will be appointed by the Secretary of the Interior with the concurrence of the Secretary of Agriculture. The FSB Chair will also be required to have expertise in rural subsistence.

"Rural Alaskan communities depend on sound and equitable subsistence decisions to sustain their ways of life. Foundational to this effort must be a balanced and diverse Federal Subsistence Board that recognizes the unique perspectives of Alaska Native people, for whom subsistence practices have been integral to their social, economic, spiritual and cultural needs since time immemorial," said **Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland**. "In strengthening Indigenous representation on the Federal Subsistence Board, we can and ensure the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge for subsistence-related planning. When Indigenous communities are at the table, everyone who enjoys a subsistence lifestyle has more opportunities to thrive."

"Ensuring that Alaska Native Tribes and rural communities have a strong voice in managing the natural resources vital to their livelihoods is essential, and this effort aligns with our commitment to reshape our programs to incorporate Tribal and Indigenous perspectives," said **Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack**. "By adding representatives nominated by federally recognized Alaska Tribes to the Federal Subsistence Board, we reaffirm our commitment to respect and incorporate Indigenous knowledge and local expertise in decision-making."

The Federal Subsistence Management Program, jointly managed by the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture, is overseen by the FSB, which administers the subsistence priority and manages regulations for the use of fish and wildlife resources for subsistence purposes on federal lands and waters in Alaska. The FSB also contributes substantially to fisheries knowledge by funding research on the status of fish stocks, subsistence harvest and use patterns, and the collection and analysis of Indigenous knowledge. The board is currently comprised of five members from federal agencies and three public members.

In 2022, several listening and consultation sessions were held by the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture, along with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, to explore improvements to the Federal Subsistence Management Program. Feedback from these sessions, summarized in the [Federal Subsistence Policy Consultation Summary Report](#) pointed to the adverse impacts that the changing climate is having on Alaska Native subsistence practices and Alaska Native and rural communities; the need to expand Tribal partnerships and the incorporation of Indigenous Knowledge into subsistence management; and the need for greater Tribal representation within the federal subsistence management system. Tribes and Tribal consortia also requested that the chair of the FSB be required to possess personal knowledge and experience with subsistence uses in rural Alaska to ensure that they understand the scope and impact that the board's decisions have on all subsistence users.

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