

**SOUTHEAST ALASKA SUBSISTENCE
REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL
Meeting Minutes**

Dena'ina Civic and Convention Center
600 W 7th Avenue, Anchorage, Alaska 99501
March 8, 2024

Call to Order, Roll Call, and Quorum Establishment:

The meeting was called to order Friday, March 8, 2024, at approximately 1:30 pm. Council members Calvin Casipit, Michael Douville, Ted Sandhofer, Albert Howard, Patricia Phillips, Louie Wagner, Jr., Harvey Kitka, John Smith, III, Cathy Needham, and Don Hernandez were present in person. Larry Bemis, Frank Wright, Jr., and James Slater were not present and were excused. With 10 out of 13 seated Council members present, the quorum was established.

Attendees:

*Asterisk * identifies if present via teleconference.*

- U.S. Forest Service (USFS): **Greg Risdahl (Anchorage), DeAnna Perry (Alaska Regional Office), Rob Cross (Petersburg), Jake Musslewhite (Juneau), and Ashley Bolwerk (Sitka) (all of the Tongass National Forest)**
- Office of Subsistence Management (OSM): **Anchorage: Scott Ayers, Brent Vickers, Ph.D., Jason Roberts, Ph.D., Kristen Morrow, Justin Koller, Orville Lind, Janel Day**
- Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA): **Anchorage: Jolene John, Glenn Chen**
- National Park Service (NPS): **Josh Benick (Glacier National Park and Preserve), : Amber Cohen and Benjamin Pister (Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve)**
- Ketchikan Indian Community (KIC): **Steve Hartford (Ketchikan)**
- Members of the Public: **Jackson Combs (Hoonah Indian Association), Kyle Rosendale*, Jeff Feldpausch***
- Other Regional Advisory Council Members: **Rebecca Skinner (Kodiak/Aleutians Council), Norm Anderson (Bristol Bay Council), Don Woodruff (Eastern Interior Council), Robert Hoffman, Henry Parks, Phillip Peter, John Andrew, and Walter Morgan (all of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Council)**

Review and Adopt Agenda:

Motion by Member Needham, seconded by Member Kitka, to adopt the agenda as a guide with the following additions:

- Discuss authorization for Member Casipit to continue representing the Council's interest at North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) meetings
- Discuss submitting formal comment on proposed rule to add three new public members to Federal Subsistence Board (Board)

- Discuss sending a letter to the Board re: support for compensation for Council members
- Discuss sending a letter to the Board requesting additional resources for Council work
- Discuss other joint Council actions taken previously in the week

The motion passed on a unanimous vote.

Election of Officers:

Member Hernandez was re-elected the Council's Chair.

Member Needham was re-elected the Council's Vice Chair.

Member Frank Wright, Jr. was re-elected the Council's Secretary.

Review and Approve Previous Meeting Minutes:

Motion by Member Howard, seconded by Member Sandhofer, to approve the fall 2023 meeting minutes with the following modifications:

- In Member Casipit's report, add the word 'lower' in front of 'amount of Pink Salmon...'
- In the justification for WP24-04, correct the transposition in the word 'suer' to read 'user'

The motion passed on a unanimous vote.

Council Member and Chair Reports:

Patricia Phillips of Pelican reported that the local deer hunt was successful, and she expressed her appreciation for the support of the Council for the recent deer proposal for Lisianski Inlet.

Ted Sandhofer of Petersburg reported that there was concern about sea otter populations moving into central and southeast inner channel waters of Southeast Alaska. The Stikine Sockeye Salmon harvest was good this year and the Chinook Salmon fishing was closed by emergency orders. Moose and deer populations were generally good in most areas. He has heard a lot of talk about the Ketchikan non-rural determination proposal.

John Smith, III of Juneau reported that he saw a lot of salmon this year and the community experienced an average year for salmon harvest. He also shared that deer hunters had to really work to get deer this season. In the interest of time, he will provide a more detailed member report at the fall 2024 meeting.

Albert Howard of Angoon shared that his community is concerned about king (Chinook) salmon and that they would like to fish for them as they traditionally had in the past. The commercial crab pots are causing overfishing of Dungeness crab in an area normally used by local subsistence users. Member Howard conveyed that the State of Alaska's video (which stated that Admiralty Island had the highest population of Sitka black-tailed deer in Southeast Alaska) had a negative impact on the ability for locals to harvest deer. The submission of the wildlife proposal to restrict non-federally qualified users hunting

for deer on Admiralty Island, resulted in the unintended consequence of increased hunting and unfair competition.

Michael Douville of Craig stated that his community survived the winter and is looking forward to fish eggs. In the interest of time, he will provide a more detailed member report at the fall 2024 meeting.

Cal Casipit of Gustavus reported that household harvest surveys will be conducted next week in his community – the first surveys done since the 1980s. He will provide a more detailed community report at the fall 2024 meeting.

Don Hernandez of Point Baker reported that deer hunting in Unit 2 was poor this season. The one-month wolf trapping season netted 70 wolves, which seems to be the average over the last three years.

Cathy Needham of Juneau, Harvey Kitka of Sitka, Louie Wagner, Jr. of Metlakatla, all deferred their member/community reports to the fall 2024 meeting, in the interest of time.

Action Items:

Special Actions Report:

Rob Cross, Tongass Subsistence Program Manager, USFS, provided a summary of in-season management special actions. There were seven (1 fisheries, 6 wildlife) special actions placed on Southeast resources since the last Council meeting.

Review and approve FY2023 Annual Report

Motion by Member Howard, seconded by Member Needham, to approve FY2023 annual report. Amended motion by Member Howard with concurrence of the second to include the following modification:

- Include a request for a special out-of-cycle meeting of the Council to discuss the Tongass National Forest Plan Revision

The motion passed on a unanimous vote.

Fisheries Management Report:

Jake Musslewhite, Tongass North Zone Subsistence biologist, USFS, presented a synopsis of catch and escapement throughout Southeast Alaska fisheries in 2023, providing details for many different geographic areas. Mr. Musslewhite, Mr. Cross, and Ashley Bolwerk, USFS Fisheries Biologist, answered various questions from the Council.

Call for Federal Fish and Shellfish Regulatory Proposals

Mr. Cross notified the Council that the proposed rule, which will open the window to submit proposals to change Federal subsistence fisheries regulations should be published in the next few weeks.

Introduction of Draft Federal Fisheries Closure Review analyses

FCR25-03 Makhnati Island Herring: Mr. Cross informed the Council that a review of the Federal subsistence fishery closure to the harvest of herring and herring spawn to non-federally qualified users in waters under Federal subsistence fisheries jurisdiction in the Makhnati Island area is taking place. He provided cursory information from the drafted analysis and reminded Council members that this closure review will come before them for action at the upcoming fall 2024 meeting. The Council posed questions and provided suggestions for the incorporation of additional information into the final analysis.

Development of Regulatory Fish and Shellfish Proposals

Taku River Salmon

Fishery Update:

Mr. Cross provided an update on the Taku River Federal salmon fishery, conveying details about the in-season management plan, the prohibition of accumulating State and Federal harvest limits, interactions with the Transboundary River Panel, and the responsibility of adhering to the terms of the Pacific Salmon Treaty.

Taku River Salmon Federal Proposal:

Motion by Member Casipit, seconded by Member Smith, to submit a proposal to implement Federal fisheries on the Taku River.

After the closure to Federal subsistence on the Taku River was rescinded, the fishery defaulted to the general Federal Southeast Alaska salmon regulations. The proposed regulations are more restrictive but would allow the fishery to adhere to the Pacific Salmon Treaty. The Council submits this proposal (using similar specifics that closely match the regulations currently in place on the Stikine River), to improve the successful implementation of the Taku fishery, to meet the responsibilities set forth in the Pacific Salmon Treaty, to make the harvest limit and effort of traveling up the Taku worthwhile, and to avoid incidental catch of Chinook Salmon in years when the escapement goal was not met.

The motion passed on a unanimous vote.

Eulachon in Unuk River

Member Wagner asked the Council to consider increasing the subsistence harvest of eulachon on the Unuk River. The Council discussed ways to provide a meaningful priority to subsistence users on that fishery, which would effectively result in a larger harvest.

Unuk River Eulachon Federal Proposal:

Motion by Member Needham, seconded by Member Smith, to submit a proposal to close the Unuk River to non-federally qualified users for the harvest of eulachon.

This Federal subsistence fishery was closed for years by special action, in-season management for the conservation of a healthy fish population. The fishery was then opened on the Unuk River in 2021 to a limited harvest with gear restrictions to federally qualified subsistence users. This limited harvest continued in 2022 and 2023. Harvest was restricted to one five-gallon bucket per household and limited to cast net, ring net, and dip net methods. The limited harvest represents a significant restriction to Federally qualified users. A closure to non-federally qualified users will help conserve the Unuk River eulachon population while continuing to provide harvest opportunities to federally qualified subsistence users.

The motion passed on a unanimous vote.

Call for Alaska Board of Fisheries Regulatory Proposals

Mr. Musselwhite said that several Council members have spoken to him about submitting proposals to change state fisheries regulations. The Council discussed four possible issues and voted to submit three proposals. The Council decided to wait and comment on any proposals on unguided fishing that may appear in the State proposal book instead of submitting another Council proposal to try to address this concern.

STATE PROPOSALS

Establish King Salmon Fishery State Proposal:

Motion by Member Howard, seconded by Member Sandhofer, to submit a proposal requesting that an allocation and a management plan be established to provide for subsistence king (Chinook) salmon fishery in the Southeast.

The Council's request would establish a regulatory structure for the long-standing and ongoing subsistence use of king salmon that currently occurs within the sport fishery regulations. The subsistence user group has long been using the resource, and this proposal simply provides the Board an opportunity to create an effective management structure for a user group that is currently unrepresented in the existing system. The proposal applies the time and area restrictions used in the sport fishery to protect Alaska stocks, so that only areas open to sport fishing for king salmon will be open to subsistence harvest. Finally, it provides for unused allocation to be rolled over to the commercial troll fishery, so that treaty fish are not left on the table.

The motion passed on a unanimous vote.

Redoubt Lake Subsistence Seine Fishery State Proposal:

Motion by Member Kitka, seconded by Member Phillips, to submit a proposal requesting that a subsistence seine fishery be allowed in Redoubt Lake area after the escapement quota has been reached.

The Council would like to see the use of seine gear for subsistence fishing allowed in Redoubt Bay when the projected escapement of Sockeye Salmon is over 40,000 fish. Recent escapements have consistently exceeded the escapement goal range, and the most recent record escapement led to concerns about reduced productivity from overescapement. The use of seine gear in years with large returns would reduce conflicts by providing for a more effective means to quickly harvest Sockeye Salmon and would bar seines from the area near the falls to prevent direct conflict with dipnetters.

The motion passed with nine votes in favor and one against.

Basket Bay Sockeye Salmon Limit Increase State Proposal:

Jackson Combs, resident of Hoonah, requested that the Council consider putting in a State proposal to increase the possession limit in Basket Bay for the Sockeye Salmon subsistence resource from 15 to 20.

Motion by Member Howard, seconded by Member Phillips, to submit a proposal requesting that an allocation and a management plan be established to provide for subsistence salmon increasing the bag limit to 20 Sockeye Salmon in Basket Bay. Amended motion by Member Douville, seconded by Member Howard, for the increase to 20 Sockeye Salmon possession limit and increase annual limit to 40.

Basket Bay (Kook Lake) is an important source of Sockeye Salmon for subsistence users from Angoon, Hoonah, and other nearby communities. The current possession and annual limits for Sockeye Salmon at Basket Bay are 15 fish possession / 30 fish annual, which is lower than most other systems of similar size in the area. The current harvest limits, especially the 15 fish possession limit, make it necessary for subsistence users to make several trips across Chatham Strait to meet their Sockeye Salmon harvest needs. The proposed harvest limit increase would allow users to meet their needs for Sockeye Salmon more efficiently with less safety risk and use of gas, time, and effort.

The motion passed on a unanimous vote.

Selection of Participants for Development of FRMP Priority Information Needs

Members Ted Sandhofer, John Smith, Albert Howard, and Cal Casipit volunteered to serve on the working group to develop Priority Information Needs for the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program for Southeast Alaska.

Council Representation for NPFMC:

Motion by Member Phillips, seconded by Member Howard, to authorize Member Casipit to virtually attend and represent the Council's documented interest regarding unguided fishermen issues at the NPFMC meetings in the future.

The motion passed on a unanimous vote.

Correspondence:

The Council voted to send the following additional correspondence:

- Letter to Admiralty Monument District Ranger to express concern about the jet boat usage on Hasselborg River that is endangering salmon spawning beds
- Letter to the Board and Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture, requesting compensation to Council members for the time spent for travel and meeting attendance
- Letter to the Board requesting more timely responses and the improvement of processing Council correspondence
- Letter to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) requesting that inadequacies of the current USFWS representative on the NPFMC be addressed and a new representative be assigned
- Letter to the Board requesting additional resources from the Secretaries and the Federal Subsistence Management Program so that the Council members can better perform their duties
- Public comment letter in support of adding three new public (tribal) members to the Board

Future Meeting Dates

The Council confirmed their Fall 2024 meeting dates and location: October 22-24, 2024, in Ketchikan.

The Council selected their Winter 2025 meeting date and location: March 18-20, 2025, in Sitka.

The Council selected their Fall 2025 meeting date and location: September 30 – October 2, 2025, location to be determined.

Other Business:

Status Update on Nonrural Determination Proposal for Ketchikan (NDP25-01):

Dr. Brent Vickers, Supervisory Anthropologist, OSM, reflected on the third and last public hearing held virtually on this matter and also explained the next steps for processing the proposal to rescind the nonrural status of Ketchikan. The Council will be asked for its recommendation at the upcoming fall 2024 meeting.

Public and Tribal Comments on Non-Agenda Items:

Jackson Combs, Hoonah Indian Association, provided testimony regarding Sockeye Salmon in Basket Bay.

Steve Hartford, attorney for Ketchikan Indian Community, provided testimony on the nonrural determination proposal to rescind Ketchikan's nonrural status (NDP25-01).

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:00 p.m. on March 8, 2024.

Prepared Minutes /s/ Signature on File

DeAnna Perry, Designated Federal Official
USDA - United States Forest Service

Certified by Chair on 6/10/2024 via email

Don Hernandez, Chair
Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

This version of the meeting minutes was certified by the Chair on June 10, 2024. The Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council approved this version at its fall 2024 meeting on October 22, 2024.

A more detailed report of this meeting, copies of the transcripts, and meeting handouts are available upon request. Call Office of Subsistence Management at 1-800-478-1456 or Council Coordinator, DeAnna Perry, at 907-209-7817 or email: deanna.perry@usda.gov.