

BRISTOL BAY SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes

Teleconference
October 29 – 30, 2024

Invocation:

Richard Wilson provided an invocation.

Call to Order, Roll Call, and Quorum Establishment:

The meeting was called to order Tuesday, October 29, 2024, at 8:57 am via teleconference. Originally the meeting was scheduled to be in person in Dillingham on the same dates but was changed to teleconference due to extreme weather and flight cancellations. Council members Dan Dunaway, Richard Wilson, John Rhyshek, Robert Hill, William Trefon, and Kenneth Nukwak were present. John Christensen and Nanci Morris Lyon were not present and were excused. Member Dunaway served as the Chair. With six out of eight seated Council members present (Council has two vacant seat(s)) the quorum was established.

Attendees:

- Bristol Bay Native Association (BBNA): *Gayla Hoseth, Cody Larson, and Jorjana Dray*
- Katmai National Park and Preserve: *Mark Sturm, Jenya Anichtchenko, Troy Hamon, Mallory Zharoff*
- Lake Clark National Park and Preserve: *Susanne Fleek-Green and Liza Rupp*
- National Park Service (NPS): *Dillon Patterson*
- Togiak National Wildlife Refuge (NWR): *Andy Aderman and Kenton Moos*
- Office of Subsistence (OSM): *Kendra Holman, Jarred Stone, Leigh Honig, Pippa Kenner, Lisa Grediagin, and Justin Koller*
- Alaska Peninsula and Becharof NWR:
- Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G): *John Landsiedel and Amy Vandervoort*
- Fish and Wildlife Service: *Jon Gerken*
- Bureau of Land Management: *Chris McKee*
- Members of the public: *Walter Kanulie and Courtenay Carty*
- Department of the Interior: *Eric Werwa*

Review and Adopt Agenda:

Motion by Member Trefon, seconded by Member Nukwak, to adopt with the following changes:

- Add agenda item 12.i. ADF&G BOG Central & Southwest proposals; and
- Add agenda item 12.j. Joint Eastern Interior and Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta RAC letter regarding Magnuson-Stevens Fishery and Conservation Management Act.

The motion **passed** on a unanimous vote.

Review and Approve Previous Meeting Minutes:

Motion by Member Wilson, seconded by Member Trefon, to approve the winter 2024 with one edit to correct a typo.

The motion **passed** on a unanimous vote.

Motion made Member Wilson, seconded by Member Hill, to approve the Joint All Council meeting minutes.

The motion **passed** on a unanimous vote.

Council Member and Chair Reports:

Robert Hill of Kokhanok reported that Sockeye Salmon were abundant around Iliamna Lake. Four moose were harvested during the fall season, which is considered a good number for the village. The ptarmigan population has been steadily increasing, and there are still a significant number of rabbits and lynx in the area.

Billy Trefon of Nondalton shared that the moose hunting season was challenging, even with the addition of ten extra days. The rainy, cold weather made it difficult for people to hunt. He also reported that the issue with low-flying aircraft over their land improved this season, possibly due to the weather. The aircraft, typically transporting non-local hunters, appeared to be flying closer to the mountains near the Chulitna River, avoiding their hunting grounds. He believes three moose were taken by non-local hunters from his area. There was some confusion regarding the new hunting regulations extending the moose season, particularly whether they applied to Preserve land or Park land, but the situation was clarified. Everyone was able to get the number of fish they needed. Member Trefon also noted that there were hardly any issues with brown bears this past year, with no reports of bears interfering with people's fish harvests.

Kenneth Nukwak of Manokotak shared that he saw many cow moose with twins around the Igushik area. While moose hunting, he noticed a large number of ptarmigan, stating that their population has more than quadrupled. He and his family also observed a lot of bears along the Igushik, Amanka, and Ongoake rivers. Member Nukwak believes that the presence of bears in this area causes the moose to move further up into the mountains, away from the rivers and predators such as wolves and bears. He mentioned that they decided not to harvest a bull, concerned that a bear might try to steal the meat while they were packing it out.

Their fish camp, located near the Igushik River, has experienced frequent break-ins and thefts. One family lost their brand-new Toyo stove. In addition to the thefts, bears have broken into several cabins, tearing down walls to get inside. Member Nukwak reported that Sockeye Salmon numbers were good. The Village of Manokotak is still interested in creating their own State Advisory Committee.

Richard Wilson of Naknek reported that during the past winter, the Northern Peninsula Caribou Herd did not move much and did not travel far enough north for people to access them. A few people were able to harvest caribou that came off the hills or were otherwise accessible. The river experienced significant freeze-ups and thawing, which caused problems throughout the winter.

He mentioned that while there was a fair abundance of salmon, they were notably smaller than usual. Chinook Salmon were particularly hard to find, and those that were harvested were also small. The Chinook Salmon populations in the Naknek River branch remain a concern.

During the fall moose season, they took advantage of the early season but had little success. Member Wilson spent time hunting in the lower two-thirds of the Kvichak River system, where he saw one cow and two calves over the course of a week to ten days. He believes the low moose sightings were due to warming weather affecting moose movements. Not many hunters took advantage of the early season, but in the upper area of the Kvichak River, some people did harvest moose during this time. On the Naknek side, however, the season started slowly, with hunters not having much success until later in the season when the moose began moving more. The thick foliage made it difficult to spot them. They did not have the chance to participate in the fall fishery in Naknek.

Dan Dunaway of Dillingham reported that Sockeye Salmon were abundant in the Nushagak area, although they were smaller than usual. This was particularly noticeable when he visited the Wood River later in the fall, where it looked like a goldfish pond filled with small males. Despite their smaller size, he shared that people still managed to catch plenty of fish. Chinook Salmon numbers were low, leading to numerous closures, though he did not think the subsistence fishery closed. Chum Salmon were more abundant this year than he had seen in a while, although he didn't catch many himself. Coho Salmon were sparse in the Wood River, and he reported that people had to travel to the Nushagak River to harvest a few, but the numbers were still not abundant.

He mentioned that the moose season was successful in the Dillingham area, despite some tough weather conditions. There was an extension to the season. Salmonberries were very abundant, but blueberries were sparse, and huckleberries were also scarce. A few people were able to harvest huckleberries, but it required considerable effort. He also noted that there weren't many low-bush cranberries this year.

There were some bear issues around Dillingham, linked to landfill management challenges, but he hopes that these issues will be addressed. Grouse hunting has been okay, and a few people have been harvesting ptarmigan.

Public and Tribal Testimony:

Gayla Hoseth, representing the Curyung Tribal Council and the Alaska Federation of Natives, informed the Council that three public seats that are nominated by tribes have been added to the Federal Subsistence Board (FSB), and nominations are now being accepted. These nominations can include both tribal and non-tribal members. The addition of the three public seats will expand the FSB to an 11-member board, which will be advantageous when voting on proposals.

Walter Kanulie from Togiak shared with the Council that, after two unsuccessful years, two walrus were harvested from Round Island to be shared with the Togiak Village. He also reported that the village harvested approximately 11 bulls and three cows during the moose season, which was challenging due to wet, rainy weather. In addition, community members have been harvesting Sockeye Salmon from Upper Lake and plan to hunt for seals later in the season. Seagulls were present, and the smolt were running.

Council Training:

Kendra Holman, OSM Wildlife Biologist, provided the Council training on Delegation of Authority.

Briefing on Proposed Changes to Wildlife Delegation of Authority Letters

Ms. Holman provided an overview of proposed changes to existing wildlife Delegation of Authority Letters. The proposed changes would move some wildlife delegated authorities into unit-specific regulations rather than Delegation of Authority Letters. This briefing was intended to serve as an introduction to the topic and additional opportunities will be provided to the Council to review and comment on these proposed changes.

Action Items:

Fisheries Proposals

Pippa Kenner, OSM Anthropologist, and Jarred Stone, OSM Fisheries Biologist, provided an overview of the regional proposals to the Council.

FP25-11: Bristol Bay Add Gear Types to Align with State

Motion by Member Nukwak, seconded by Member Hill, to **support as modified by OSM** fishery proposal FP25-11. The Council recognizes that people in the Bristol Bay area are using beach seines and dipnets to harvest salmon, sometimes without realizing they are illegal. These gear types are efficient and selective and have been traditionally used in the region. They allow subsistence users to harvest smaller quantities of salmon compared to methods like set gillnets and are selective in that they permit live release of non-target fish. Allowing subsistence users to use drift gillnets only in Sixmile Lake and Lake Clark will help prevent overharvest of certain fish species, such as Chinook Salmon, by restricting the use of this method in other freshwater areas of Bristol Bay.

The motion **passed** on a unanimous vote.

FP25-14: Togiak Refuge additional gear types

Motion by Member Nukwak, seconded by Member Hill, to **support** fishery proposal FP25-14. The Council said that these methods and gear types are traditional, selective, and efficient methods of harvesting salmon. While some of these methods and gear types are being used less than in the past, the method of snagging salmon has become more common because of its efficiency and selectivity.

The motion **passed** with a vote of four in favor and one opposed.

FP25-12: Bristol Bay Togiak Marking

Motion made by Member Trefon, seconded by Member Nukwak, to **support** fishery proposal FP25-12. The Council said the regulation is little used, burdensome, and should be rescinded.

The motion **passed** on a unanimous vote.

FP25-10: Bristol Bay Stream Mouth

Motion made by Member Trefon, seconded by Member Wilson, to **support as modified by OSM** fishery proposal FP25-10. The Council acknowledged that harvesting fish during their migration in spring and fall at the mouth of streams, as well as through the ice in winter, is an efficient and traditional practice. While fall fishing for “red” or spawning salmon is common, particularly at lake outlets, the Council did not include salmon in the regulation.

The motion **passed** on a unanimous vote.

FP25-09: Bristol Bay Red Buoys

Motion made by Member Trefon, seconded by Member Wilson, to **support as modified by OSM** fishery proposal FP25-09. The Council stated that the proposal liberalizes the use of buoys and aligns State and Federal regulations. The modification extends this liberalization to other fishery management areas in Alaska, ensuring consistency between State and Federal regulations in those areas.

The motion **passed** on a unanimous vote.

FP25-13: Bristol Bay Egegik Gillnet Length

Motion made by Member Wilson, seconded by Member Nukwak, to **oppose** fishery proposal FP25-13. The Council stated that the residents of Egegik would not be affected by the proposed regulation because

most of the Egegik River in the area near the mouth of Lake Becharof is narrow, which limits the use of longer nets.

The motion **passed** with a vote of five in favor and one opposed.

Partners for Fisheries Monitoring Program (Partners Program)

Mr. Stone provided the Council with an update on the notice of funding opportunity for the Partners Program, which will be published in the winter of 2024-2025.

Cody Larson, Subsistence Fisheries Scientist for the Bristol Bay Native Association (BBNA) and the Partners Program, shared an update on various research projects and community-based subsistence monitoring projects conducted by BBNA through the Partners Program.

2026 Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program (FRMP) Priority Information Needs (PIN) Development

Mr. Stone presented the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program Priority Information Needs (PIN) to the Council.

Motion made by Member Nukwak, seconded by Member Trefon, to adopt the PINs for the Southwest Alaska region as follows:

- a) Reliable estimates of abundance of salmon populations in the Kodiak Archipelago and Aleutian Island areas important for subsistence use and assess changes in these populations. Specific areas of concern are McLees Lake, Mortenson's Lagoon, Unalaska Lake, and Kodiak Archipelago stocks.
- b) Using scale analyses of fresh and saltwater growth patterns over multiple years, examine how recent changes in the ocean affect growth and survival of Chinook and Sockeye salmon within their range and habitats of the Kodiak/Aleutian drainages of particular concern include the following drainages (Buskin, Karluk, Ayakulik, McClees drainages) and/or the Bristol Bay/Alaska Peninsula drainages (Chignik, Nushagak, Big Creek, Alagnak, Meshik, and Togiak drainages). The Chignik drainage is of particular concern.
- c) Reliable estimates of Chinook Salmon escapement are needed, along with evaluation of escapement quality and harvest monitoring in Alagnak River, Big Creek, Chignik River, Naknek tributaries, and Togiak River. This includes assessing egg deposition, sex and size composition of spawners, and spawning habitat quality and utilization for determining the reproductive potential of spawning stocks. Harvest monitoring by user groups for the region, with particular emphasis on those within Naknek drainage.
- d) Comparative ecological evaluation of lake rearing habitats of Sockeye Salmon stocks in southwest Kodiak Island, including Olga Lakes and Akalura Lake watersheds, and the assessment

of (1) declines of salmon stocks and associated subsistence harvest opportunities, and (2) effects of climate change on salmon production in these lake systems.

- e) Annual estimates are needed for Sockeye Salmon escapement in the Lake Clark watershed.
- f) Evaluation of Chinook and Sockeye salmon populations in the Chignik River area to understand the decline in salmon stocks and associated subsistence harvest opportunities, such as reliable estimates of escapement, quality of escapement, and environmental impacts.
- g) Evaluate effects on subsistence users in the Southwest Alaska region resulting from changes in fish populations, including biological considerations of run timing, run quality, sex ratios, and age composition, and incorporating local observations and knowledge. Research should include a multi-disciplinary approach and include elements of Traditional Ecological Knowledge as well as Stock Status and Trends.
- h) Enumeration of salmon smolt outmigration in the Buskin River system.
- i) Understanding and documenting subsistence sharing networks of fish throughout the Bristol Bay region and the importance of resource networks.
- j) Harvest use survey of Buskin River subsistence and how subsistence practices have changed in recent history during closures or reductions in harvest. Address how subsistence harvest has changed as access to the Buskin River has changed.

Multi-Regional

- a) Gain a better understanding of ecosystem factors negatively impacting subsistence salmon runs and harvest practices in Alaska, including ocean conditions, freshwater conditions, commercial fishing practices, freshwater conditions, and changing climate conditions.
- b) Statewide analyses of archived salmon scales to assess fresh and saltwater growth patterns over multiple years, examine how recent changes in the ocean affect growth and survival of Chinook and Sockeye salmon within their range and habitats.
- c) Understanding and documenting subsistence sharing networks of fish throughout the state and the importance of resource networks.

The motion **passed** on a unanimous vote.

Annual Report

Board FY2023 Annual Report Reply Summary

Leigh Honig, Council Coordinator, provided an overview of the Board's replies to the Council's FY-2023 Annual Report topics.

Identify Issues for FY2024 Annual Report

Motion made by Member Wilson, seconded by Member Trefon, to approve the following items be included in the FY2024 Annual Report to the FSB:

1. Request for increased funding for education and outreach efforts with Tribes and Corporations to enhance participation and engagement at Council and FSB meetings.

2. Concerns regarding bycatch and its impact on returning salmon runs. The Council requests that the National Pacific Marine Fishery Management Council engage with them on this issue and present relevant bycatch studies at future meetings.
3. Notification to the FSB that certain topics from FY23 remain concerns for the Council, including: the status of Chignik Drainage Sockeye Salmon and changes to the state's management strategies; a request for a legal opinion on staff analyses of proposals; a request to expedite the Council appointment process; and a request for compensation for Council members.

The vote **passed** on unanimous vote.

Future Meeting Dates

The Council confirmed its winter 2025 meeting dates as February 18-19 in Naknek.

The Council confirmed its fall 2025 meeting dates as October 29-30 in Dillingham.

Dall Sheep Management Strategy Guidelines

Ms. Honig provided information on the Dall Sheep Management Strategy Guidelines, which were drafted by the Western Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council. These guidelines were presented to this Council for consideration in drafting similar guidelines for sheep harvest and management within the Bristol Bay region. After discussion, the Council decided not to draft any recommendations for sheep conservation and management. This decision was based on the fact that Dall Sheep only inhabit a small portion of the Bristol Bay Area and are not currently a concern for the Council.

Alaska Board of Game Central and Southwest Proposals

The Council discussed Alaska Board of Game (BOG) proposals affecting the Bristol Bay region. The Council decided not to provide recommendations on these proposals and chose to utilize the State process for the BOG proposals, as the State Advisory Committees will hold meetings to discuss them.

Joint Eastern Interior and Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Council Letter

Ms. Honig provided information on the joint Eastern Interior and Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Council letter to the Board, requesting a revision of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. The Eastern Interior Council recently met and asked other Councils to review the letter and either adopt it as is or amend it as needed. The Council did not take action on writing a letter.

Agency Reports:

- Chignik Inter-Tribal Coalition report presented by George Anderson.
- Bristol Bay Native Association report presented by Gayla Hoseth.

- Alaska Federation of Natives report presented by Gayla Hoseth, Subsistence Chair.
- ADF&G, Unit 17 report presented by John Landsiedel, Wildlife Biologist.
- ADF&G, Unit 9 report presented by Amy Vandervoort, Wildlife Biologist.
- Alaska Peninsula Becharof NWR report presented by Bill Smith, Supervisory Biologist.
- Togiak NWR report presented by Andy Aderman, Wildlife Biologist.
- Lake Clark National Park report presented by Susanne Fleek-Green, Superintendent.
- Katmai National Park report presented by Mark Sturm, Superintendent, and Jenya Anichtchenko, Cultural Resource Manager.
- National Park Service Regional Office report presented by Dillon Patterson.
- OSM report presented by Justin Koller, Acting Regulation Specialist.

Other Business:

805(c) Report

Ms. Honig provided a summary of the 805(c) Report outlining Board action on wildlife proposal and closure reviews impacting resident of the Bristol Bay region.

Council Application Open Season

Ms. Honig advised the Council that the window to apply for a seat on the Council is not yet open. There will be three vacancies to fill on the Council as those terms expire December 2nd, 2025. Council members with expiring seats will be informed when this window opens, and outreach will be done across the region at that time.

Council Correspondence

Ms. Honig provided an update on the following correspondence sent on behalf of the Council since the winter 2024 meeting in Anchorage.

- Joint Council Letter to the FSB Regarding Concerns Over Bycatch.
- Joint Council Letter to the FSB Regarding Council Member Compensation.

Declining Balance Cards

Ms. Honig provided information to the Council about proposed changes to the way OSM processes payment for invitational travel for Council members. The Council supported the use of declining balance cards stating it will streamline the process.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:13 p.m. on October 30, 2024

Leigh Honig, DFO
DOI Office of Subsistence Management

Nanci Morris Lyon, Chair
Bristol Bay Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

These minutes will be formally considered by the Bristol Bay Subsistence Regional Advisory Council at its February 18-19, 2024, meeting in Naknek, and any corrections or notations will be incorporated in the minutes at that meeting.

A more detailed report of this meeting, copies of the transcripts, and meeting handouts are available upon request. Call Leigh Honig at 1-800-478-1456 or 907-891-9053, email leigh_honig@ios.doi.gov.