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1 EASTERN INTERIOR ALASKA SUBSISTENCE
2 REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

3
4 PUBLIC MEETING

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6
7 VOLUME II

8
9 PYKE'S WATERFRONT LODGE
10 Fairbanks, Alaska
11 February 20, 2025
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15

16 COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

17 Robert Wright, Sr., Chair
18 Donald A. Woodruff
19 Andrew W. Bassich
20 Linda M. Evans
21 Olivia Henaayee Irwin
22 Eva D. Burk
23 Susan L. Entsminger
24 Gerald K. Alexander
25 Galen D. Gilbert
26 Dorothy Shockley
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30 Regional Council Coordinator, Brooke McDavid
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P R O C E E D I N G S

(Fairbanks, Alaska - 2/20/25)

(On record)

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Good morning, everybody. We're going to call the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. Thank you. I think we'll start today with the roll call, please.

(Pause)

MR. WOODRUFF: Gerald is here. Don Woodruff is here. Galen Gilbert?

MR. GILBERT: Yes.

MR. WOODRUFF: Robert Wright.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Here.

MR. WOODRUFF: Andrew Bassich.

MR. BASSICH: here.

MR. WOODRUFF: Olivia Irwin.

MS. IRWIN: Here.

MR. WOODRUFF: Eva Burk.

MS. BURK: Here.

MR. WOODRUFF: Linda Evans.

MS. EVANS: Here.

MR. WOODRUFF: Dorothy Shockley. Dorothy, are you online?

(No response)

Sue Entsminger

MS. ENTSMINGER: Here.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Linda, could we bother you for a prayer this morning? Again, I'm sorry To wear you out. Unless somebody else in the crowd wants

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1 to do it.

2

3 MS. MCDAVID: And we'll just let the
4 record reflect that Dorothy Shockley is present now.
5 Thanks.

6

7 (Pause)

8

9 MS. EVANS: Heavenly father, we thank you
10 for this day. We thank you for all the blessings you've
11 given us. We thank you for our families. We just ask
12 your blessing over them. Keep them safe and healthy and
13 in prosperity. We ask your blessing over this meeting,
14 Lord, and that our minds will come together, and we will
15 have a productive meeting with good results that help
16 the people we represent. Amen.

17

18 MS. MCDAVID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This
19 is Brooke McDavid Council Coordinator for the EIRAC.
20 Good morning, everyone, and welcome back to day two of
21 the Eastern Interior Regional Advisory Council meeting.
22 I just had a couple of announcements and reminders this
23 morning before we get going. First off is -- please
24 remember to sign in if you're here in the room. And we
25 will be doing a public comment opportunity right after
26 this for non-agenda items. We do have two cards in the
27 queue. So, if you do want to comment today on any agenda
28 items or non-agenda items, please just fill out a blue
29 card or a green card that's on the front table there and
30 you can pass those to me or other staff and they'll get
31 them -- appear to me in the Chair. If you're online and
32 want to provide comments on non-agenda items this
33 morning, you can press star five if you're on the phone
34 or use the raise hand feature on Teams, and that'll put
35 you in the queue to comment. A couple notes about our
36 agenda today. We're going to have a couple of things,
37 maybe a little bit out of order, but not too much. Just
38 for your awareness. We're going to -- this morning the
39 Council is going to talk a little bit, recap about last
40 night's engagement session with North Pacific Fishery
41 Management Council on the chum salmon bycatch. And then
42 we're going to have a presentation from YRDFA, and then
43 the Council will resume with the action items that they
44 left off with yesterday and that will be the statewide
45 Board of Game proposal comments. There's a couple
46 proposals folks are hoping to comment on. And then after
47 that we'll probably get into reports.

48

49 The call for Board of Fish proposals
50 will be at 1:00 pm right after lunch. There's some folks

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1 that want to engage with the Council on that. So that
2 will be a time-certain right after lunch. And I believe
3 that is everything for me, Mr. Chair. Actually, please
4 remember to try to state your name for the record when
5 you're introducing yourself. And that's all. Thank you.

6
7 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you, Brooke.
8 Okay, well, we can recap last night. Visit with the
9 North Pacific. Anywhere however you like. Go ahead,
10 Andy.

11
12 MR. BASSICH: Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Chair.
13 I felt like that was a really good space last night. It
14 was really nice to have the North Pacific Council come
15 to our turf. I think that's -- it's good for them to
16 come and see the people and see the -- meet the people
17 who have boots on the ground here. I think it's really
18 important. I know we have a lot of challenges ahead of
19 us. It's big industry. It's big money. And I like I use
20 the analogy, we're a little flea on a big sheepdog at
21 times in some of these issues, but I feel like it's only
22 going to change through good dialogue. And I know if we
23 start moving towards a gravel-to-gravel approach for
24 managing our fisheries, hopefully statewide it's going
25 to be imperative that we have their cooperation and their
26 help. One thing I did want to -- I left that meeting
27 with last night, one of the things that I observed is
28 that they also have concerns with carrying capacity in
29 the marine environment, and overproduction of hatchery
30 fish is one of the leading causes of that by -- in many
31 people's minds. And it's scientifically -- there's a lot
32 of scientific evidence to show that that is beginning
33 to have an impact on all species of fish, including
34 pollock. So, I see that we have some common ground there
35 with them, and I would encourage us to cultivate that
36 common ground as we start to talk with them to develop
37 some positive relationships, there's going to be plenty
38 of adversarial type of comments that will have to engage
39 in. But that, I see, is one that we can build some
40 cooperation and trust on. So that was kind of my
41 takeaway, and I really appreciate the effort of whomever
42 put that together. I'm guessing that's probably you,
43 Brooke and OSM but, I think that was really productive,
44 really useful and set a really good foundation for
45 hopefully future discussions. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

46
47 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Anyone else want to
48 say anything? Go ahead, Donald.

49
50

1 MR. WOODRUFF: Thank you, Charlie. This
2 is Don Woodruff. From my perspective they're doing the
3 best they can but, we've got a longways to go, and I was
4 happy to hear about almost all the vessels have salmon
5 excluders, which allows the fish to escape from those
6 big nets. And I was lucky enough to have breakfast with
7 two of those guys this morning. And I conveyed to them
8 that I thought, you know, that it's a slow process, but,
9 I was happy with some of the discussion we had yesterday.
10 And I hope that in the future that we can meet again. I
11 didn't want to beat him up this morning at breakfast.
12 And we did talk a little bit about gravel-to-gravel. It
13 was a good visit. Thank you, Charlie.

14

15 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Anybody else?

16

17 MR. ALEXANDER: My name is Gerald
18 Alexander. You know when I came into this committee, I
19 thought I knew everything about the fish, but,
20 apparently, you know, just because you grew up from
21 Alaska doesn't -- you don't know much about them. I
22 mean, Andy shed some light on it and I think I got a
23 long way to go, and I hope I can stay on this Board long
24 enough to, like Charlie said, you know, we'll give it
25 back. And that's hoping what I can do. Thank you.

26

27 MS. IRWIN: Olivia Irwin, for the record
28 I think that something that became really apparent last
29 night through the conversation and became apparent
30 through testimony as well, is that there's a big
31 conversation between in-river issues that are outside
32 of the Council's control and then ocean issues that are
33 within the Council's control. And there's a lot of
34 blaming going on from both ends, I think of in-river
35 issues being, you know, the narrative that those are the
36 predominant issues, the contributing factors to the
37 decline of western Alaska chum salmon. So, I think that
38 the more that, like our Council and the other Boards
39 that we sit on, the more that we can also address and
40 start bringing to light the work that we're doing in-
41 river, continuing to bring up the fact that we're not
42 happy with Doyon Hilcorp, that we don't support the
43 exploration. The more that we can highlight community
44 led projects that are analyzing tributaries and
45 culverts, the more that we can shed light on all of the
46 work that we're doing and all of these spaces so that
47 it becomes really apparent that there's work being done
48 in all of these sectors. And what we need you to do is
49 focus on what you can do, which is the bycatch issue.

50

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1 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Anyone else?

2

3 MS. SHOCKLEY: Good morning. I've been
4 to some of their meetings over the years. And actually
5 met, I think, Brian in Juneau when we were doing the
6 training for how they come up with, you know, some of
7 their decisions through NOAA. But, you know, it was --
8 to me it was nice to kind of get to know them on a
9 personal level instead of them being a, you know, kind
10 of separated from us. So, I appreciated that. And, you
11 know I agree with Olivia in regards to, you know, just
12 the blame game. I know the State, you know, says it's
13 all in the ocean. The other groups that work in the
14 ocean say, you know, it's not always us. It's, you know,
15 the State as well. So, you know, just driving in this
16 morning, I was like, you know, in this whole scheme of
17 thing, of thing of, you know, our issue as far as our
18 salmon, you know, they're like I was saying yesterday,
19 there's so many different players and decision makers.
20 And, you know, what part does the North Pacific Council
21 have in that circle? You know, we have the bar chart and
22 all of those. So, I think it would be good to, you know,
23 to come up with, you know, maybe a bar chart and say,
24 okay, you know, North Pacific is responsible for this.
25 You know, the State Fish and Game is responsible for
26 this. You know who you know, who actually you know --
27 how do we work together and in regards to fixing what
28 we need? And I know, you know, as an indigenous person,
29 you know, we have our rights or we have knowledge that
30 is not being used. And how do we bring that to, you
31 know, to the table in a way that, you know, will be
32 accepted and used and -- so it was good. I appreciated
33 this opportunity and thank you.

34

35 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you, Dorothy.

36 Go ahead, Eva.

37

38 MS. BURK: Thank you. And thank you for
39 everyone's comments and we at the Fish Commission of the
40 Yukon River Inter Tribal Fish Commission. A lot of the
41 things, Dorothy, we are working on those things. We have
42 a regulatory strategy. We've shared it with many groups.
43 And that is trying to do what we can in each space where
44 we know things are happening. But I'll tell you what,
45 you start going to these fishery meetings and you start
46 talking to people. There's a lot of things that we that
47 we don't have counted. And I heard from a fisheries
48 scientist is like, count everything and make everything
49 count. And I think that's really important, and the North
50 Pacific has asked the tribes to step up and put forth a

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1 salmon rebuilding plan. And I think that's what we really
2 need to lean into is that in the rest of the areas where
3 salmon has needed restoration, it's always been led by
4 tribes. And I think for this group, we did like priority
5 information needs, and we really realized the importance
6 of community-based monitoring. And so, I think as we're
7 all trying to navigate this salmon crisis, finding those
8 ways that we can invest in ourselves and get ourselves
9 back out on the land is going to be really important to
10 being able to develop really robust community-based
11 monitoring. And there's a lot of indigenous communities
12 that we can learn from and that want to help us. So,
13 we're not out there like trying to do everything from
14 scratch, there's a lot of momentum out there. And when
15 it comes to the North Pacific, I think it's really
16 important to continue to build relationships, but, also
17 really hold them accountable and the -- the things that
18 they're using in their science and the stories and the
19 data that they're presenting, that's just from their
20 limited viewpoint. That's only industry funded data. A
21 lot of not, say only but, a lot of it is industry funded
22 data. And it's really not taking into account cumulative
23 effects and it's really not taking into account the long
24 history of our lands. And so that's one thing that we're
25 doing at the Fish Commission too, is going back and
26 finding all the written history. Both of our own
27 indigenous people along the river but, also the state
28 and federal governments and agencies that have written
29 multiple reports over the years. I think putting all
30 that history into perspective is really important,
31 because I made a comment about, it's about manifest
32 destiny, and capitalism is why we don't have salmon. And
33 it might sound smart but, if you actually start to really
34 delve into that comment, there's a lot of truth there.
35 And I think that's what -- I was really grateful to hear
36 the Chair Angel say bycatch is part of the problem.
37 There's the salmon have a thousand things that are going
38 wrong, and everybody's hands are dirty. And I think when
39 people take accountability and work to make it right,
40 that's a really good step in the right direction. So, I
41 really applaud Angel. I think there's a lot of growth
42 there and I think that's the work of us is the individual
43 growth and understanding of each Council member is
44 really critical to getting decisions made that really
45 have an impact on our salmon. And like I said we need
46 to do everything that we can and just give salmon a
47 chance and that means commercial fishing needs to also
48 bear-in the burden of conservation. That's real right
49 now. So, thank you.
50

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1 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you, Eva. I
2 think that it's -- I appreciate everybody spending their
3 time with us last night and asking the hard questions.
4 It's important we have to make changes, and we see change
5 happening. It's slow but, we are seeing it and the
6 willingness to work together in unity is something
7 that's very special in my mind. I think that's the only
8 way forward. We all have to do our part. I thank all of
9 you. I think it was a really good meeting last night
10 myself and getting to know each other better and having
11 tough conversations is the way forward. Thank you all.
12 And you have something to say? Go ahead.

13
14 MS. MCDAVID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I did
15 just want to bring to the Council's attention that the
16 tentative publication for the draft environmental impact
17 statement is going to be in August, and it will be a 60-
18 day comment period. It might not -- it will probably
19 close before your next Council meeting. So, if you all
20 wanted to be able to submit comments as part of that
21 open comment period, the time would be to develop that
22 at this meeting. You did submit previous comments to
23 them on the very preliminary alternatives that were
24 released last year. And you -- there's a letter. The
25 letter that you sent is in your supplemental materials
26 under tab seven. If you wanted to update or add to your
27 comments about the alternatives based on the new
28 information that you've received, you could send -- we
29 could work to draft another comment for that open comment
30 period that will be at the end of summer sometime.

31
32 MR. BASSICH: Thank you. I have a
33 procedural question. For us to make comments, does it
34 have to be at this meeting with a full vote, or can we
35 assign a committee to make comments and then approve
36 that committee? Which might, A: help us a little bit at
37 this meeting with the time and B: give us a little bit
38 more time to formulate our thoughts and comments and
39 questions. So just more of a procedural. But I -- if
40 that's possible, I would recommend that. I really hate
41 it when you're forced to do something really fast because
42 you always come back and think later on. Boy, I wish I
43 would have included this or that, so.

44
45 MS. MCDAVID: Thank you, Andy. So, what
46 I would say to that is you could definitely have like a
47 working group get together to formulate the exact
48 wording and everything that you would like to have in
49 the letter but, it would be important to have on the
50 record during the public meeting. Just kind of a general

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1 stance of, you know even looking at your -- what you
2 supported last time and saying, yeah, we can -- we
3 continue to oppose the no action alternative. We -- you
4 know, we're in support of you know some of these other
5 alternatives about the time area closures, etc. and then
6 you could work to formulate more in-depth comments about
7 that. I mean, you did have a lot of discussion about it
8 but, it would be important to vote as a RAC and make
9 sure everyone is in agreement with those general
10 positions. Thank you.

11
12 MR. BASSICH: Thank you for that, Brooke.
13 Member Bassich here. I guess I would defer to the Chair
14 when or when in the meeting they would want to do that.
15 And I would propose that maybe what we should do is make
16 a motion to send a letter that would open up discussion,
17 and then we don't have to delve into everything but, we
18 can highlight a few topics and then let a working group
19 or committee work on that.

20
21 MS. BURK: Thank you. Through the Chair.
22 This is Eva. I -- I'm kind of liking this idea of a
23 committee, Andy, and also wondering if we could work
24 with the other Yukon RACs and have a kind of a position
25 that might be a good way to go about it. Because for the
26 sake of time in this meeting, it is a little complex,
27 the motion. It would take me a little bit of time to go
28 through it and tell you all the, like, little nuances.
29 And the things that we basically agreed on before was
30 like a cap of 150,000. They've been operating with a cap
31 -- self-imposed cap at 200,000, like, all over. And then
32 the thing that really is to save more western Alaska
33 chum is the alternative five with the conservation
34 corridor but, then they have sub options in there that
35 make the corridor a little smaller because it would have
36 more impacts on this one fleet if we close the whole
37 thing. And there's a -- that might not make it through
38 the process. And so that's our question. Do we want to
39 say what we want for salmon. Are we trying to think
40 about different impacts on different sectors of the
41 pollock industry. And because that's what I do at the
42 advisory panel but, I don't know if I would necessarily
43 do that in this space. I might just say this is what the
44 salmon need. And so that helps.

45
46 MS. MCDAVID: I will just say that we do
47 just have to be careful about you know some of the
48 details, like if you would want to support, you know, a
49 change in that cap number, that's something different
50 than what you've discussed on the record before, then

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1 that would need to be done in the public meeting. And
2 that's something that other RACs, if you wanted to them
3 to join in this letter would also need to discuss. And
4 so, I guess there's another option that I'm thinking
5 about is that there's going to be this comment period
6 on the EIS that's in the -- you know, that's the public
7 comment period that will come out in the Federal
8 Register. They'll also be a letter or comment period for
9 the meeting of the North Pacific Fishery Management
10 Council in December. Is that correct? And so that's
11 another opportunity to submit comments. And that would
12 give you more time in the fall to even change and add
13 more if you wanted. So just putting that on the record
14 too.

15

16 MS. IRWIN: Thanks for that. Brooke, this
17 is Olivia Irwin for the record, through the Chair. I
18 think that we should do both. I think that we should
19 come up with some -- have discussion right now about
20 just some overarching themes that we could add for the
21 60-day comment period, and then we could, when we meet
22 again, be more specific. So, I'll go ahead, and I'll
23 make a motion to send a letter to the North Pacific
24 Fisheries Management Council for -- do you want to do
25 it, Eva?

26

27 MS. BURK: Thank you. Through the Chair.
28 You can continue. But we -- the first letter would go
29 to the Federal Register, and I don't know the salutation
30 for that. And then the second letter would be the one
31 for the meeting, and we could add more detail in our
32 October meeting, so.

33

34 MS. MCDAVID: I think your motion is
35 okay, Olivia, if you just specify that this would be for
36 the EIS comment period in the Federal Register, that
37 it's forthcoming. We don't know the exact details yet,
38 but just -- that's your intent.

39

40 MS. IRWIN: Okay. Yeah. I'll make a
41 motion to write a letter to the North Pacific Fisheries
42 Management Council during the August comment period on
43 the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for chum
44 bycatch.

45

46 MR. BASSICH: Member Bassich. Second.

47

48 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Is there any more
49 discussion?

50

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1 MS. IRWIN: I guess I'll speak to it. I
2 think that we have a good baseline from the original
3 letter that we sent to the Council. This is an ever-
4 changing process, even depending on what the comments
5 come out in August and discussion leading up to December,
6 there might be changes. So, I think that our letter
7 looking at a low cap of 150,000 and being in support of
8 that alternative five of the corridors, we can get more
9 specific with those options with our December comments
10 but, for these ones, I think we could keep it more
11 general.

12
13 MR. BASSICH: Charlie? Yeah. Member
14 Bassich. I guess I wouldn't want to limit ourselves but,
15 I'm wondering if it wouldn't be good in this brief
16 discussion, Eva if you could maybe identify the most
17 concerning topics that we want to address in this letter
18 so that the intent of the letter is pretty clear. Now
19 you started to do that, is there anything else that you
20 think as a topic for our position as a RAC to be included
21 in that or could we just say make it a much more general
22 letter as far as the topics on that letter go? I just
23 don't want to get to the point to where we're -- we
24 decide once there's a working group or committee that
25 because something wasn't identified in the letter, that
26 we're not able to put it into the letter. So, I think
27 if we keep it from my perspective, if you keep it kind
28 of broad and talk about more of the Eastern RAC's
29 position on chum salmon conservation issues that pretty
30 much keeps it open for a wide range of discussion and
31 positions.

32
33 MS. BURK: Thank you. Through the Chair.
34 This is Eva. I think one of the most important things
35 is like what we've been -- our messaging is every salmon
36 counts. And then I was able to find this language in one
37 of the Canadian scientific articles. And it clearly
38 stated that discrete stocks are critical to the
39 rebuilding and sustainability of salmon populations in
40 a rapidly changing environment. And so that's in this
41 chum bycatch action. And then in the way that they fish,
42 they can catch hundreds of chum in one tow, right. Some
43 of our tributaries are classified as minor or major
44 spawners. And so, they can have majors over 500 pairs
45 of spawners, right. So just thinking about those
46 numbers, we're in the situation where we really need to
47 protect these discrete stocks. And we believe that this
48 action does it. And furthermore, the unique thing about
49 chum is when you look at the age data of what the bycatch
50 is, a lot of it is age 4 to 5 chum, and they are making

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1 a tight bend around Unimak and on their way home. And
2 they've even explained that to me in their fishing
3 behavior is that they'll -- they know the chum are here
4 and they'll, they won't fish in this more western area
5 above Unimak. And then they'll see the chum show up on
6 the more eastern side of Unimak. And so, they do know
7 that those are 4 to 5 chum probably making their way
8 home. And the younger chum are probably being taught
9 right there, like, this is where you swim to go get some
10 grub for your travels home you know, and so I think it's
11 important like that's why we want the migration
12 conservation corridors is because of that understanding
13 of the fish behavior and their migration patterns and
14 it's been known for a long time. So those are the major
15 reasons that we've put on the record. And then also, you
16 know, genetics only came about in 2011 for bycatch.

17
18 And when I look back at our data and I
19 think it really is more astounding, even for chum or
20 sorry, chinook, is that we've been going through this
21 decline very easily since the 80s. We've never returned
22 to those abundance levels of salmon, never. And that
23 actually impacts the way that bycatch is managed,
24 because there -- we have a shifting baseline of what
25 used to be 300,000 chinook on the Yukon is now 175. And
26 in our heads, we've told ourselves that that's normal
27 and it's not. And if we're going to rebuild salmon
28 populations, we need to really have a better grip on
29 historical salmon abundance levels. And so, I think
30 that's part of my issue. And there's a lot of comments
31 that I'm happy to share that the Yukon River Inter Tribal
32 Fish Commission has prepared that kind of delve into the
33 language and the data behind this. So, for the sake of
34 time, I'll stop there. Thank you.

35
36 MS. SHOCKLEY: Thank you. I appreciate
37 that. I think with the new information that we've gotten
38 since last year or October 2024. I think to me, I mean,
39 I agree, we don't want to limit ourselves, you know. And
40 so having more well, stronger language I think is
41 important and you know, add some of the more specific
42 things that, you know, you're talking about. I think
43 would go a long way. And I think updating it for sure
44 and putting stronger language in it. And, you know,
45 since, you know, they already are capping themselves at
46 200,000, then, you know, I think we should always go
47 above what we want and then negotiate. Thank you.

48
49 MS. IRWIN: I would just like to add you
50 know, just for the record, that it's the intent, I think,

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1 of this Council to continue to look into what in-river
2 affects we can be making decisions on and strategizing
3 on, and we're committed to not only addressing the issues
4 with our chum in the ocean but, also in-river. And it's
5 also not the intention to shut down any communities that
6 rely on that resource. I just wanted to make those final
7 comments. And I'll call the question.

8
9 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay. Can you
10 reinstate your motion, please?

11
12 MS. IRWIN: Yes. Thank you, Charlie.
13 Through the Chair. This is Olivia Irwin. My motion is
14 to send a letter to the North Pacific Fisheries
15 Management Council during the August 60-day comment
16 period on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement
17 regarding chum bycatch.

18
19 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: I'll ask for
20 unanimous consent. Anybody that's against this, please
21 signify by saying aye.

22
23 (No response)

24
25 Seeing or hearing none, passes. Thank
26 you. Okay. At this time, we'll go to public comment and
27 then YRDFA will be after that.

28
29 MS. MCDAVID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just
30 a reminder for folks online, if you'd like to comment
31 on any non-agenda items, please raise your hand on Teams
32 or press star five and we will start with someone here
33 in the room and then we'll go online. Thanks.

34
35 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Ross Martin.

36
37 MR. MARTIN: Good morning, Mr. Chair and
38 Council members. I introduced myself yesterday. Ross
39 Martin. I'm a PhD student at the Yale School of the
40 Environment, and I'm focused on subsistence politics and
41 issues in Alaska for some of my dissertation research.
42 Some of you Council members who were here in October may
43 remember that I came and introduced myself and expressed
44 interest in analyzing the historical transcripts from
45 these Council meetings. Since then, I've gotten the
46 Council transcripts from Brooke and have put them into
47 a form that is easily searchable. So, I've written
48 computer code that can search through the past 30 years
49 of transcript data for basically any search query that
50 you want. Of course, it's a huge amount of data. I think

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1 I have 140 files, each file representing one day of
2 meeting transcripts since 1994. So, I'm just coming to
3 give an update on that. And also offer the ability to
4 search back in time to establish a historical record. I
5 know Eva was talking about that earlier, about what has
6 happened in the past. What has the Council commented on?
7 How have those comments translated into legislation and
8 official stances on the management agencies? So yeah,
9 I'm just -- I'm happy to take any questions. And I'm
10 grateful to have been able to work with Brooke and with
11 the data because I think they're a really rich source
12 of you know, history and knowledge about Alaskan
13 ecosystems. So, the data I'm working with right now is
14 for the eastern region and the western region. So yeah.
15 And then a little bit about me before I started my PhD,
16 I worked with tribal hunting and fishing treaty rights
17 down south, specifically in Yellowstone for the hunting
18 of bison. So, I -- as I'm starting my research career I
19 moved up to Alaska. So yeah, that's a little bit about
20 me but, thank you so much. And we'll take any questions.
21

22 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Go ahead, Dorothy.
23

24 MS. SHOCKLEY: Thank you. So must be very
25 interesting. I -- do you see any trends? I mean, I don't
26 know how much you've gone through as far as, you know,
27 these meeting records. But just from what you've done
28 so far, have you seen any trends or anything that kind
29 of just popped up in your research?
30

31 MR. MARTIN: So, I'm still -- I'm in the
32 process of cleaning it and refining the search
33 techniques themselves so I can do things like search
34 within 30 or 50 words around a keyword, right. So, I
35 could search salmon, for example, and then search the
36 30 words preceding and following salmon, something like
37 that. So, you can associate like, say I could do a
38 search. I haven't done this yet. I'm still working on
39 the outputs. But you know, say in the 90s you would do
40 that search for salmon and you don't have a lot of
41 language like decline around the word salmon. But then
42 as time goes, you can say, oh, people are talking more
43 about salmon decline or something like that. I can search
44 based on the identity of the speaker, which is useful.
45 And, you know, I could do the same sort of search for
46 like Fish and Game, right. So, I could -- whenever Fish
47 and Game is mentioned, I could see -- what's doing --
48 and the format of the court transcription is very useful,
49 right. Because all of the speakers identities are in all
50 caps, right? So, you can tell the computer whatever's

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1 in all caps. We know that that's a name. Things like
2 that. I'm in -- I mean, what I would love to hear from
3 you all is, is what our search queries that you think
4 would be useful. Because quite honestly, I've been in
5 Alaska for nine months and I'm still very much in the
6 learning period. So yeah, an open dialogue about what
7 you think would be useful to search, what would help me
8 and also, I hope, help you all.

9

10 MS. IRWIN: Through the Chair. This is
11 Olivia Irwin and thank you, Ross, so much for this work.
12 And thank you for coming up to present. This is really,
13 really interesting and really important work that's
14 tedious and it takes a lot of time and energy. And
15 there's folks like us sitting around this table who maybe
16 might have some of that knowledge of how to do that, but
17 we don't have the capacity to. So, thank you. I would
18 love to talk to you off record about some of those
19 keywords. I'm sure a lot of us would. One that comes to
20 my mind from our conversation last night would be bycatch
21 since you're going all the way back to 1994. My question
22 for you, though, is can you apply your code to Board of
23 Fish and North Pacific Fisheries Management Council
24 meeting recordings? And is that at all part of your
25 long-term plan for the transcriptions?

26

27 MR. MARTIN: Yeah. I mean, it takes a
28 little bit of tweaking based on the consistency of the
29 records but, any text-based document can be used here.
30 The Council transcripts are particularly useful because
31 there has been a common format since the 90s. So, if
32 there are other documents that you think would be useful,
33 they can certainly be searched. It would just take a
34 little bit of time to -- the most important part is to
35 get it into plain text format. It's just a file type.
36 And then once it's there and you just have the text, you
37 can search it quite easily, actually. Like you said,
38 what I have as a PhD student is time and capacity and
39 that's about it. But so -- but that's useful because I
40 can I'd like to be of services, especially some of the
41 Council members said, you know (distortion). And these
42 can be in service of that goal to use all the knowledge
43 that we can to make good decisions for wildlife and
44 fish.

45

46 (Pause)

47

48 MR. BASSICH: Yeah. Andrew Bassich. Yeah.
49 Thank you. I'm just going to throw a few search words
50 that you -- that I think would be very useful. Changes

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1 in size for salmon is huge. (Distortion) and hopefully,
2 depending on how (distortion) salmon only or on any.
3 Pretty much anything.

4

5 MR. MARTIN: My database is you all.

6

7 MR. BASSICH: Okay.

8

9 MR. MARTIN More documents could be
10 incorporated, like fishery Council meeting minutes and
11 things like that.

12

13 MR. BASSICH: I'd just like to let you
14 know I've been called a lot of things but, never a data
15 point. So, this is a new first for me, and I thank you
16 for that.

17

18 MR. MARTIN: But you're much more than
19 that.

20

21 MR. BASSICH: Okay. Another word,
22 fecundity. Yeah. That's huge for our rebuilding and
23 another phrase, traditional knowledge will be very
24 useful as we move more and more into Gravel-to-Gravel.
25 Those are three kind of top things in my mind anyway.
26 But thank you for your work on that. And, you know,
27 we've all heard how complex this issue is. Anything that
28 we can do to consolidate and then be able to retrieve
29 back out of that is super helpful. So, appreciate it.

30

31 MS. BURK: Thank you, through the Chair.
32 I don't have the code to go scan these documents so,
33 I've just been doing it as a human being. And so, I've
34 noticed things, too. Like the change in size different
35 things about commercial fishing popping up in documents
36 all the way from 1919. And so, I started to think about
37 the different crashes and the cycles of salmon, where
38 it'll be like, go up and down. Would it be helpful --
39 and we're putting this in like a timeline format. Would
40 it be helpful for your research to kind of to have that?
41 Because I'm wondering, like thinking about the formation
42 of this body and the records that exist for this body,
43 and then I've been going through not so much Board of
44 fish but, North Pacific historical records back into the
45 90s and 80s. So, my -- some of what I'm thinking about
46 the salmon might be in these more historical reports
47 that are not part of the transcripts of any of the
48 decision making bodies like North Pacific Board of Fish
49 or these Regional Advisory Councils. So -- is would it
50 be helpful to kind of like have some of that timeline

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1 when you're thinking about your research? And then like
2 what Olivia said, talking offline is probably a lot
3 easier getting into those details.

4
5 MR. MARTIN: Yeah, that would be very
6 helpful. It's harder than you would think, actually, to
7 go back and see certain events, especially as they
8 pertain to particular fishery stocks or wildlife herds.
9 In the last WIRAC meeting, I remember there was lots of
10 talk about the decline of the Nelchina Caribou Herd,
11 right. So, what that brought to mind for me is you could
12 go back -- I can search by year. I've organized the
13 files by their date stamp and search, you know, the five
14 years preceding the decline of the Nelchina Herd, for
15 example. And then see what the Council was talking about
16 before that. And then what happened regulation wise and
17 whether those two things align. So, I just use that
18 anecdote to say, yes, that would be very helpful to get
19 a historical record of, you know, say the folks in Nenana
20 started to notice the salmon decline in the 80s. And
21 then you can go back and look for documents around those
22 time on that topic and search them. That could be very
23 insightful as to the interplay between you know,
24 community-based management programs and these Councils
25 and their bearing on how Fish and Game is regulated.

26
27 MS. BURK: Thank you for that. The nerd
28 in me got really excited.

29
30 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Go ahead, Donald and
31 then Dorothy.

32
33 MR. WOODRUFF: Donald Woodruff. Thank you
34 for your research and one thing that comes to mind to
35 me is that the Upper Yukon genetics, it is a unique
36 signature. And we haven't been talking about that for a
37 long time but, I think it's an important search. Thank
38 you.

39
40 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Go ahead, Dorothy.

41
42 MS. SHOCLKEY: Yes. again, thank you.
43 Really appreciate this. One word that comes to mind as
44 well is commercial. You know how that kind of rolls into
45 different scenarios. Thank you.

46
47 MR. BASSICH: I'm just curious, does your
48 database include Yukon River panel discussions or
49 transcripts? Unfortunately, we haven't had transcripts
50 going way back but, it might be really useful if it's

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1 possible to incorporate that. Because that also brings
2 in the Canadian component, which has been talking about
3 these declines and really rebuilding efforts and a lot
4 of traditional knowledge and things like that. So that
5 might -- it just a suggestion, if you could bring that
6 in, it would actually probably really bolster the data.

7
8 MR. MARTIN: Yes. That's helpful. Thank
9 you. As of right now it only includes the Eastern
10 Interior Regional Advisory Council and the Western
11 Council. But it would take a bit of time, but the
12 methodology is the same. So, I could incorporate any
13 documents that you think would be useful such as those.
14 So that's helpful. Thank you.

15
16 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Did anybody else?
17

18 (No response)

19
20 Appreciate you. It sounds like it's
21 going to be very useful going forward. And we appreciate
22 you coming and testifying today. Thank you so much.

23
24 MR. MARTIN: Yep. Thank you.

25
26 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Next is Janet Woods.

27
28 MS. WOODS: Good morning, everyone.
29 Yesterday when I walked in the room, I went up to Brooke,
30 and I told her it feels so comfortable in here. Not so
31 stuffy so, and that was a really nice feeling. Because,
32 you know, when you testify, depending on what group,
33 it's -- you get a little nervous and etc. but -- and my
34 name is Janet Woods, and I grew up in Manley. My dad was
35 from Rampart, born and raised; my mother from Tanana,
36 born and raised. And I raised my children in Rampart.
37 And listening to the comments yesterday, I -- after the
38 meeting yesterday or last night, I went home and started
39 writing some topics that I thought I would talk about.
40 And I -- looking at, I said, gee whiz, that's a lot. But
41 when they were talking about -- so I just kind of wrote
42 down some of the topics that I heard yesterday and what
43 I wanted to comment on. And one of them was the predator
44 control. And I remember a long time ago, they used to
45 use aerial predator control. And then the State put a
46 stop to that. But I could remember my uncle, John Starr,
47 Jr., was born and raised in Tanana talking about the
48 area control. And how it really was a positive impact
49 on keeping the wolves and everything manageable. The
50 ecosystem was just really manageable, and he was really

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1 disappointed when the State decided to stop that. And
2 maybe that's something that we need to start thinking
3 about, especially when it's starting to affect the food
4 that we eat and you know, coming into -- some of the
5 animals coming into our homelands, close to home. So
6 that was one thing that I wanted to mention. And the
7 other thing that I noticed, and I haven't seen it in a
8 long -- since I've been in Rampart, was how close the
9 porcupines are starting in where I live, and it's
10 downtown and it's more quiet maybe, but I've noticed
11 more porcupines coming out, and I mean, just walking on
12 the road. So, I'm not sure and I've never seen that
13 before. And also, martin coming close, I mean, this fall,
14 I was in Rampart until late October and just so close
15 to town, maybe because people are not trapping them or
16 -- it's it was just really strange. And then of course,
17 you know, the squirrel population has really kind of
18 gotten out of control. It just seems like they're all
19 over. All over. And so, and it's just like, you know,
20 we talk about the ecosystem, the warming and everything,
21 and, you know, just these are just some of the changes
22 I see. That -- with -- I guess, just the changes I see
23 because there's -- I mean, everything is changing. So,
24 I just wanted to kind of bring that to the attention.
25 And the other thing that -- that I miss, and we don't
26 see any more is the seagulls like we used to in the
27 morning when there was a lot of fishing. And just their
28 -- the noise across the river. I really enjoyed the
29 sound waking up to the seagulls in the morning, and then
30 you know, with the bird flu, it's just worrisome, you
31 know, about -- with the geese, the ducks, the swans,
32 the cranes all the small animals -- all the small birds that
33 the cranes bring in when they come into town or come
34 into the State of Alaska. That's really worrisome. You
35 know, we think about the robins, the -- just all those
36 little birds that come in, and I just -- that's really
37 worrisome for me. So, I just want -- I just don't know
38 what the effects are going to be when they come in in
39 the springtime.

40
41 Another area that was mentioned was the
42 mining and how it is affecting our area. And another --
43 as a child, I could remember again, our uncle John Starr,
44 Jr., talking about, I mean, this is when we were kids
45 talking about the mining in Manley and how it affected
46 Fish Lake with the silt. Just the changing of Fish Lake,
47 he would -- I heard him mentioned -- mention that many
48 times. And then, you know, it's -- and I just think
49 about what's happening with -- up in the flats with
50 Hilcorp coming in and how that's going to affect the

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1 land up there. Not only that, but the -- our water system
2 and the amount of water that they're going to use and
3 like, everything, you know, flows down to us. And another
4 worry I have is a small mining -- two-person mining is
5 almost at the top of Idaho Bar and that's in Rampart.
6 And I was wondering where are they going to get the
7 water and where that water flow once it's used, where
8 it's going to flow into. And I could remember that Idaho
9 Bar is, you know, people used to go up there and pick
10 berries. And so that's really worrisome too. And it was
11 mentioned that -- by Michael -- Mike Peters that, you
12 know, the boats that he saw at the mouth of Birch Creek
13 and a lot of you know, that live on the Yukon or close
14 to the Yukon River bridge, in the fall time there's no
15 parking because there's so many boats, you know, hunters
16 going up and down. But now I see, and it was more
17 prevalent in the fall time. But now I see more and more
18 boats, all from spring to fall, big boats and some going
19 upriver. And I always think, I wonder where they're
20 going, if they're going upriver. And I worry about the
21 low extreme boats that only need a couple inches of
22 water. Are they getting into the spawning areas? And,
23 you know, with those boats that are going up the river,
24 they have a lot of technology in those boats where they,
25 you know, the depth of water if there's fish, I mean,
26 they have the technology in those boats where they can
27 just go all over. But not only that, you know, they I'm
28 sure they use drones on where, you know, if they're
29 hunting in the fall, where are the moose? You know, they
30 can use those drones. And so, I think all this is really
31 encroaching on our lands. And with that being said, I
32 wanted to submit or if this body could submit a proposal
33 in the regulation books that come out every fall on --
34 and I had asked this for TCC to do this during our annual
35 convention years ago, when we were talking about
36 protecting our lands. In the regulation books, is it
37 possible and or a proposal to submit a proposal that
38 indicates where the regional village Native Allotment
39 Act lands are. So, when they come, because a lot of
40 people come from outside, they don't know about our
41 lands. And I think this is a way that we can start
42 protecting our lands. But I would like to see a proposal
43 submitted in these booklets where it states how we can
44 protect our -- just the regional village allotments are
45 and I know I'm taking up a lot of time but, you know,
46 the reason I say that is, two years ago -- and the boat
47 wasn't really that big, but, you know, just five racks
48 in that boat and very little meat. And the meat that was
49 in there was all green. Me and my son-in-law had seen
50 that. And you know, that's really disturbing. And going

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1 back to work, sitting at the airport you know, see people
2 coming in with three racks on a cart with maybe 4 or 5
3 boxes of -- you know, the frozen boxes with I'm sure
4 it's meat in there, but, you know, for three racks,
5 that's very little meat that they're taking. So, what's
6 happening to the rest of the meat?

7
8 And I know Charlie had mentioned it. You
9 know, with the loss of our fish, it really changed our
10 lives mentally, physically and emotionally. I mean, you
11 just look at what it's done to us. And I talked about
12 one generation being lost, our culture being lost. But
13 I started thinking about it. And that's almost three
14 generations that's not going to know and learn our
15 traditional ways on how to preserve and keeping our fish.
16 And, you know, with the loss of fish, that's also -- and
17 I'm almost done here -- with the loss of that fish you
18 know, it's -- people can't have dogs like they used to.
19 And that was mentioned before. And maybe, you know,
20 there's -- it will never go back to the same because it
21 just can't. Because there's no fish. So, we can't have
22 dogs. And I'm thinking about with the gas prices, you
23 know, it's -- everything is really changing. But with
24 that being said, I think that I appreciate this body and
25 what they're doing and -- but I think the most important
26 thing is really protecting our lands, our way of life
27 and how we can start rebuilding our stock. So, with
28 that, thank you very much.

29
30 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: We have a question
31 for you.

32
33 MS. BURK: Thank you. Through the Chair.
34 This is Eva. Do you know if your villages of Rampart or
35 Manley have land use plans?

36
37 MS. WOODS: I believe Manley does and I
38 know at one point in time Rampart was working on a land
39 use plan. So, -- but I haven't seen them, you know. But
40 I never thought about looking at it either. But I know
41 Manley, they were working on a land use plan.

42
43 MS. MCDAVID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This
44 is Brooke, for the record. Janet, I did want to let you
45 know in response to your request about the maps to
46 include, you know, the Native corporation land and
47 allotment. This RAC is requesting -- has put in a request
48 that that be included in future reg books. We won't have
49 any response to that until maybe the next meeting or
50 later. The Board has to consider the annual reports at

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1 their work session this summer. But, also wanted to let
2 you know that BLM is going to be talking later in the
3 meeting about some work they're planning at the bridge
4 to put up some maps there and information about land
5 ownership. So that's another way that that might be
6 addressed. Thanks.

7

8 MS. WOODS: Thanks for that, I appreciate
9 it.

10

11 MR. BASSICH: Yeah, member Bassich. I
12 want to thank you for your testimony and let you know
13 that many of the things that you talked about -- about
14 some of the issues with hunters, whether they be outside
15 or not, outside, they are recognized, and we're trying
16 to work on that through the hunter ethics initiative
17 that we're doing. And we're just now kind of revamping
18 that, getting that going. But a lot of the things you
19 talked about are things that we've identified, and it
20 really helps that you testify that put that on the record
21 to support, hopefully, future efforts to reduce those,
22 I'm going to call them infractions because they're
23 really -- I understand how you feel.

24

25 MS. WOODS: Thank you.

26

27 MR. BASSICH: And it's very painful to
28 watch that.

29

30 MS. WOODS: The other thing that I wanted
31 to mention, too, is you know I'm not sure. I know it's
32 a large number of permits that the State -- every year
33 that they -- the permits that are issued and I know the
34 State makes a lot of money on those permits. So, you
35 know, that's another factor that we have to deal with
36 is everything is money, you know. And for us, it's our
37 livelihood. So, thank you.

38

39 MS. SHOCKLEY: Thank you. This is
40 Dorothy. Thanks, Jen. Appreciate your testimony. Just
41 you know, as I worked for the - our Village Corporation
42 for several years and pretty much I think almost every
43 year we would request that, you know, the State put in
44 our boundaries or our lands, and I know that Doyon has
45 done that as well. And you know, the State just hasn't
46 yet, and -- but, Doyon is coming up with some really
47 good maps that include the Native allotments. So, you
48 know, if anybody, you know, goes there, they're they
49 have -- yeah, some really good maps and you can Google
50 and get those.

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MS. WOODS: Yeah. Yeah, I do understand that. So hopefully, you know, with the technology and those boats that they'll be able to Google those and see where the allotments, etc. is if they want to, you know. So that's the other thing. But thank you.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you, Jen. The next testifier will be online Bruce Thomas.

MR. THOMAS: Good morning, Mr. Chair and members of the Council. Can you hear me, Charlie?

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Yes, sir. You got the floor.

MR. THOMAS: Okay. My name is Bruce Thomas, and I work for the Council of Athabaskan Tribal Governments here in the Yukon Flats. And for the record, I am here testifying this morning on Wildlife Proposal 26-22, wildlife closure review for moose and Unit 25D West. The Council of Athabaskan Tribal Governments supports the closure of 25D West for moose, except for residents of Beaver, Birch Creek and Stevens Village. I state this because we have noticed in the Yukon Flats the last several years, just like I've been hearing on, on this meeting last several days, there's been a huge influx of urban hunters coming into the Yukon Flats via the Yukon River bridge boat landing and I've never seen so many hunters. I've hunted here all my life, but -- and I'm over 60 years old, but anyway. And these people that are doing this, they have these big, huge boats and they got 4 or 5 boats with them and there's, there's a huge gang of them and they, you know, they don't -- they're trespassing on their hunting grounds, Native land, Corporation land. And I've also I've noticed that these last few years, there's a huge influx of airplane hunters flying out of Circle, just bypassing all the villages for -- in one instance, last fall, we were hunting up in the (In Native) country, and about oh, 10, it was dark, you know, 10 -- in September darkens at 10:00 and there was this plane flying, probably from Circle, and they had a big spotlight on their airplane flying over these meadows in the Black River or -- and I was wondering, you know, what are these people doing? But anyway that -- I can hear them land over in the porcupine country around and we found out they were landing around Curtis Slough. They had a big gas depot there, there was like two 206 and a and a floatplane. And they were bombing up and down the rivers chasing.

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1 You know, the local people. That's where they hunt, the
2 corridor of the river. And these people were chasing
3 these moose from these hunters and doing all kinds of
4 crazy things. We could hear them landing and shooting
5 back in the lakes. And no, there was no enforcement
6 here. So, I just thought I'd let the Council know that.
7 And I really appreciate the Council for extending our
8 moose season here till October 15th, because I myself
9 hunted moose last year. For three weeks I was in the
10 bush, and I finally got a moose like October 7th. I
11 mean, it was the fattest moose but, he was meat and I
12 was thankful for that. So, thank you for letting me
13 testify here this morning.

14

15 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you, Bruce.
16 Thank you so much. Duly noted. Okay. Any questions for
17 Bruce? Okay, Henaayee.

18

19 MS. IRWIN: This is Olivia Irwin for the
20 record. Thank you, Bruce, for your testimony. This
21 Council yesterday put in a motion to support the closure
22 of 25D remainder for non-federally qualified users. And
23 I'm just wondering if that's something that CATG
24 supports the action of the Council?

25

26 MR. THOMAS: Yes, we will support that.

27

28 MR. BASSICH: I'm sorry, this member
29 Bassich, I'm wondering, do you have any of the -- your
30 community members involved in the (distortion) -- the
31 Sentinel program, wildlife Sentinel or any of those
32 types of programs? People that are out on the land just
33 kind of looking at what's happening with birds, and fish
34 and moose and things like that. And I guess the reason
35 I'm asking is, you know, when those types of events
36 happen, like what you described, it's really important
37 to get that back to law enforcement really quickly so
38 that those kinds of things can be discouraged through
39 law enforcement that, you know, things like that are
40 pretty egregious and need to be reported and followed
41 up on. So just a recommendation from the Council and
42 your words are heard. We've been talking about this for
43 a lot of years, and I can remember bringing your concerns
44 to this Council boy back in 1950 or 2015 or 12, somewhere
45 around there or so. Well, that's it. Thank you.

46

47 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Bruce, this is
48 Charlie. Tell your people to take pictures. Tell your
49 people to take pictures of those airplanes and those
50 camps. That's what you need is proof and having tail

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1 numbers of -- well, we'll do -- we'll take care of that.

2

3 MR. THOMAS: Yes, we will start doing
4 that, Charlie.

5

6 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: That's the way you
7 get enforcement to go talk to them. You got to have
8 those numbers.

9

10 MR. THOMAS: Pretty hard to get numbers
11 when they're flying around in the dark, though, bro.

12

13 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Well, I guess you
14 got to get a spotlight, too.

15

16 MR. THOMAS: Yeah.

17

18 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: But they also go in
19 there in the daytime so -- or go where they're coming
20 from. You gotta think strategically and get to where
21 they're landing and get those numbers. Otherwise, you're
22 never going to stop them.

23

24 MR. THOMAS: We're on it, Charlie.

25

26 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Dorothy has a
27 question for you. Go ahead, Dorothy.

28

29 MS. SHOCKLEY: Just to comment, you know,
30 we have many incidents in Manley as well. And what the
31 troopers told us to do is when you see something, say
32 something and report it, they said, regardless of
33 whether most of the time, of course they won't do
34 anything but, it's on record that something has happened
35 or an incident has been reported. So, it's really
36 important that you report these and there's an 800 number
37 that you can call anytime 24/7. Thank you.

38

39 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay. No more
40 questions or comments. Thank you so much, Bruce. Next
41 in line is Chance Shank. You online Chance?

42

43 MR. SHANK: I'm online. Good morning.
44 Good morning, Chair and members of the Council. My name
45 is Chance Shank, and I'm here as a representative for
46 the Dot Lake Village Council. My village is a federally
47 recognized tribe located in the interior of Alaska and
48 Upper Tanana subregion. I came here to this meeting today
49 to provide testimony on behalf of my tribe, on the
50 importance of keeping protections in place across D1

1 lands from the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. In
2 March of 2024, I traveled to Washington D.C. to advocate
3 for D1 land protections to remain in place with the
4 Department of Interior, White House staff and also
5 Alaska's congressional representative. The protections
6 for D1 lands were important to Dot Lake Village because
7 of the rural subsistence preference and preservation of
8 the lands critical to the survival of our fish and
9 wildlife. These include some lands that are Salmon River
10 headwaters for the Yukon River. An environmental impact
11 statement, EIS was done for 19 public hearings were held
12 across the State of Alaska to hear directly from Alaskans
13 on what they thought should happen to these D1 land
14 protections. I attended one of those hearings, which was
15 in Fairbanks, in January of 2024. Of the four alternative
16 options presented, Dot Lake chose alternative A. The
17 lowest option available were no lands would be released
18 from the D1 protections. The majority of the other
19 attendees in person also went with alternative A. The
20 results showed -- the results of the EIS showed
21 overwhelming support, which included over one half of
22 all federally recognized tribes, four regional Alaskan
23 Native corporations, hundreds of small businesses, and
24 over 145,000 people from across the country. The Federal
25 Subsistence Management Program divided Alaska into ten
26 subsistence resource regions, with each of those regions
27 being represented by Subsistence Regional Advisory
28 Council. The Eastern Interior sent in a joint letter in
29 April 2024, with their support to keep D1 protections
30 in place. Many other Councils did too, including Western
31 Interior, Seward Peninsula, Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta and
32 Bristol Bay RAC's. In addition, the Western Arctic
33 Caribou Herd Working Group also took action, as did the
34 Yukon River Inter Tribal Fish Commission, supporting
35 protections for all 28 million acres of D1 lands.

36
37 After participating in the statewide EIS
38 process and traveling to Washington, D.C. to advocate
39 for D1 land protections, Dot Lake Village celebrated in
40 August 2024, when it was announced that the lands would
41 remain protected. In January, the new administration
42 recommended overturning these protections. The Eastern
43 Interior RAC should make sure the new Secretary of
44 Interior knows how unique this situation is. If these
45 lands are open, they would be available for foreign
46 companies to stake mining claims almost immediately. The
47 State selected lands would lose the rural subsistence
48 preference, which would be a huge loss for our part of
49 the State. On these lands, rural residents would lose
50 federal subsistence priority and instead be subject to

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1 state hunting regulations. This would impact the food
2 security in the Eastern Interior region. The Dot Lake
3 tribe requests for the Eastern Interior RAC to send an
4 updated letter to the Secretary of Interior as soon as
5 possible so he does not make a mistake and open these
6 lands to industry. They should be prioritized for
7 subsistence and habitat of salmon, caribou, moose and
8 wildlife. The voices of all Alaskans who participated
9 in the EIS process for D1 land should not be ignored,
10 because it did not fit into the new administration's
11 agenda. Alaskans have spoken on this issue, and we want
12 the voices to be heard. Thank you.

13

14 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you. I've got
15 a question from Olivia.

16

17 MS. IRWIN: Olivia Irwin, for the record.
18 Chance, thank you for your testimony and thank you for
19 bringing the protections of D1 lands to the attention
20 of the Council. We have had multiple testimonies
21 throughout the past two days now about it, so I
22 appreciate you bringing that to our attention. I believe
23 you said that there were four ANCSA corporations that
24 supported the alternative A, could you tell me if you
25 remember what those four ANCSA corporations were? Thank
26 you.

27

28 MR. SHANK: I'd have to look but, I don't
29 have it right on hand. It's just in my notes. When I was
30 writing my testimony, I could get them and resubmit it.
31 Is there a way I could send it by email?

32

33 MS. IRWIN: Chance yeah, you could send
34 it to Brooke McDavid. But that's okay. I was just
35 wondering if you had them on-hand. It's just interesting
36 to see what of -- our corporations are supporting these
37 types of protections. I could look at public record as
38 well. So, thank you very much for your testimony.

39

40 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Any more questions
41 for Chance?

42

43 (No response)

44

45 Seeing or hearing none. We thank you for
46 your testimony today, Chance. Thank you very much. Next
47 in line is Randy Mayo.

48

49 (Pause)

50

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1 You on Randy?

2

3 (No response)

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5 MS. MCDAVID: Randy, this is Brooke. If
6 you can hear me, it looks like you're still muted on our
7 end. If you're on the phone, you could press star six
8 to unmute.

9

10 (Pause)

11

12 And we're still showing you muted,
13 Randy. If you're on a computer, you would just need to
14 click on the microphone button to unmute your mic.

15

16 (Pause)

17

18 And unfortunately, I can't unmute you
19 from my end. So, if that's not working for you, you
20 might need to just hang up and call back in or join
21 again.

22

23 (Pause)

24

25 Randy, this is Brooke. We still can't
26 hear you in the room. We would like to be able to take
27 your comments. So, if you wouldn't mind trying to
28 disconnect and reconnect and we'll allow you to comment
29 when you're able to do that.

30

31 (Pause)

32

33 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: We're going to take
34 a short break, five minute break, to let Randy try to
35 figure out what's going on and give him a chance to
36 comment. Thank you.

37

38 (Off record)

39

40 (On record)

41

42 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay, people, let's
43 get back to order. Thank you.

44

45 (Pause)

46

47 Okay. Thank you. I think we have Randy
48 all set up to testify now. Randy, are you there?

49

50 MR. MAYO: Yeah. Can you hear me?

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CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Yes, sir. You have
the floor.

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MR. MAYO: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair, Board, staff, for the record, my name is Randy Mayo, a tribally enrolled citizen of the Stevens Village Tribe, former first chief, former village corporation president, and also one of the formers is the former EIRAC Board member, way back in the early 90s. I served on this Board. Currently, I'm the tribal buffalo herd manager for the tribally owned buffalo herd right now. And also, one of my other duties is serving as the Native Caucus Board Chair for the Alaska Migratory Bird Co-Management Council, the Native Caucus made up of 10 regional tribal regions of the State from North Slope down to the Aleutian Pribilofs, all areas except the southeastern area. I served on this Board representing Tanana Chiefs for quite a few years. Dealing with the legalized spring hunt of for waterfowl. So, I talked to Brooke since I've been -- having participated in this EIRAC for quite a while that you know, speak to just listening in a little bit yesterday and today that a lot of the things I wanted to speak to sounds like it, you know, a lot of these topics are already in discussion but, you know, I just wanted to kind of talk a little bit about my concerns dealing with the, you know, the new administration, which as a tribal vote in private, you know, citizen I can speak to and I realize the agencies can't, you know, have a position or whatnot but, as a citizen, just pretty concerned at, you know, what I'm hearing about rollback of protections which were secured under the previous administration.

And some things that are under threat within our traditional lands, like the D1 lands issue. But I'm also concerned of the pipeline corridor lands, the BLM administered lands north of the Yukon. The Haul Road corridor and the Public Land Order 51-50 lands which are retained by the federal government and have rural preference designations on those lands. The Haul Road corridor is a 10-mile strip of land going north all the way to I believe just south of up to Deadhorse, you know, and it traverses quite a few tribal traditional lands, hunting and fishing grounds. And of course, it's you know -- the Road cuts right through it. And there's also travel restrictions within that corridor. So, you know, we're very concerned of the -- you know, for -- since the creation of the Haul Road, the State had always wanted to secure those corridor lands and have them under

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1 State management, which you know, we are very opposed
2 to. The Haul Road corridor cuts through about 30 miles
3 of traditional Stevens Village Tribal lands that, as
4 outlined in the Stevens Village Traditional
5 Comprehensive Land Use Plan. So, you know, if those were
6 rolled back and lifted and the State gained ownership
7 of those lands, you know, we're very concerned at -- you
8 know, throughout the years since the opening of the Haul
9 Road from Livengood, north to the public, you know, at
10 first it was supposed to only be an industrial use road
11 but, under public pressure, it was opened.
12

13 So, you know south of the Yukon, you
14 know, where we're seeing a lot of impacts, especially
15 during the hunting season. But also the trapping season
16 too, where there is no state enforcement presence. So,
17 we're seeing a lot of those impacts, you know, ATV use
18 off of the Haul Road. So, we're very concerned of that.
19 And I, you know, just hearing some of the discussion
20 that -- I'm pretty encouraged to hear some of the
21 discussion of inclusion of you know, Native allotments
22 and village lands, village corporation lands, you know,
23 so the public would know where they're at. I still have
24 to follow up with the BLM on the signage that's going
25 to be put up at the Yukon Bridge, which does include
26 some of the traditional place names. I had, you know,
27 on my list to work with the BLM on furthering some of
28 the ethno-geographic, traditional place names within our
29 traditional lands north of the Yukon, up to the northern
30 border of our traditional lands, which is now called
31 Finger Mountain. But you know that the traditional place
32 name is (In Native). And a lot of these areas, you know,
33 for the public information, aren't on any informational
34 publications that, you know, for example, one of the
35 creeks crossing the Haul Road north of the river, you
36 know, a name was just put on it, no name creek. So now
37 it's very important that you know, and I know that, you
38 know, work in many years with the Yukon Flats Refuge and
39 also with CATG that it's been on the radar screen for
40 many years about the traditional lands boundaries
41 predate and statehood going back, you know, even
42 predating territorial government days that -- so that -
43 - I think that more and more emphasis needs to be put
44 on that, you know, years ago when I first became the
45 Chief of the Village Council and started working with
46 the Fish and Wildlife Service Refuge, that I was pretty
47 appalled and shocked that on the maps and publications,
48 that what was left of our traditional tribal governance
49 lands, the village and regional corporation lands
50 surrounding the communities, you know, we were described

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1 as innholders (distortion) on the federal public lands,
2 which is very you know, like I said, it -- very -- in
3 my traditional governance model, very you know,
4 politically incorrect coming from a tribal governance
5 standpoint. So, and, you know, this ties into that, you
6 know, regulatory Board such as this, which is very
7 important. Like I said, I'm very encouraged that there
8 are these mechanisms like this for tribal and non-tribal
9 citizens concerned with the conservation of the land and
10 the wildlife resources we all live off of. Now -- and,
11 you know, don't take for granted that you know, speaking
12 of the -- what's coming up, I understand that the fall
13 meeting and it sounds like the Board is already going
14 to support the continued closure of the 25D West
15 designation to keep it a rural preference hunt. You know,
16 it is a very, very low moose population area. It's
17 struggled -- the moose population has struggled for
18 decades. But just real briefly and I know I worked with
19 Anne or Liz Williams on the analysis regarding a proposal
20 that was put forth previously to open up the 25D West
21 and you know, had worked with her on the analysis and
22 the background on the creation of the 25D West subunit
23 and the three tribal communities allocated take that
24 prior to statehood. Right after the Indian
25 Reorganization Act was extended to Alaska, 1936, the
26 Stevens Village Traditional Council, the elders and the
27 leaders, you know, knew there was going to be a lot of
28 changes coming up and had already seen, you know, impacts
29 and, you know, newcomers coming into the country during
30 the gold rush period. And the steamboat days up and down
31 the Yukon River, that -- so, you know, the tribe wanted
32 title to 2 million acres of traditional tribal
33 governance lands. These boundaries came from -- it
34 didn't come from any state or federal designation. You
35 know, this was before statehood. You know, these lands
36 were governed in coordination and agreement with the
37 surrounding tribes around us. So, you know that the tribe
38 put in many claims over the years up until the passage
39 of the land claims in 1971, to no avail. So, the second-
40 best thing the tribe and village Corporation worked on
41 was the creation of the Traditional Land Use Plan. Which
42 a great portion of the land now encompasses Yukon Flats,
43 Fish and Wildlife Service land, and also to the west of
44 BLM administered Haul Road corridor and to the south of
45 us to Hess Creek on State of Alaska lands. So, the
46 importance of traditional land use plans with strong
47 ethno-geographic components that outline all the -- you
48 know, how important the land is but, also the traditional
49 place names designate key hunting and fishing and
50 gathering (distortion).

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MS. MCDAVID: Hold on Randy. We have an echo. Are you still there?

(No response)

Randy, we're not hearing you in the room.

(Simultaneous speech)

Oh, there you go. We got you again. Sorry you cut out for -- you might want to repeat what you said.

MR. MAYO: Oh, where do you lose me at?

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: We only lost you just for a couple words.

MR. MAYO: Oh, okay. Well, yeah, that that you know, we've used the plan with the refuge and also the BLM administered lands and consultative status over different land management issues. And also, you know, we went to court a few years ago over the State of Alaska Central Yukon area plan, a huge area in the interior over its draft land use plan. So, when we went to the court, the state judge issued a partially favorable ruling directing the DNR to go back and consult with the Stevens Village community in Rampart. At that time, it was found the State violated its own -- the DNR violated its own state rules and regulations over land use planning. So out of that judgment -- you know, and also, the State is supposed to, by law, consult with any communities, tribal or not, over communal -- community governance, land use planning documents. And they had failed to do that. So, some of the designations were really whittled down, and some of them have been put on hold indefinitely. And one of those was the remote recreational cabin site sale program, and also the creation of subdivisions between Rampart and Stevens Village off of the Haul Road. So, you know, those are some of the things that land use plans can be used for. So, this kind of ties into what I mentioned. The basis of these land use plans were created out of petitioning to put our land into federal trust, which didn't happen, but, the plan and document was created to use it contemporarily with how the state and federal governments and their regulations have to take these plans and documents into consideration so that, you

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1 know, that's just a little -- I don't know if it's in
2 the analysis that you're going to go over on 25D West,
3 the retaining the closure. But -- so, those are just
4 some of the things I wanted to mention, and.....

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(Simultaneous speech)

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CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you, Randy.

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MR. MAYO:in the future be
participate more and just sounds pretty encouraging with
all of the issues this Board has taken up and taken
notice too. So, thank you, Mr. Chair.

15

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CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you for that
very informational. Appreciate your time. Questions for
Randy?

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(No response)

Thank you, Randy. Oh. Oh. I'm sorry.
Linda has a question for you, Randy.

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MR. MAYO: Okay.

MS. EVANS: What -- did you have any
comments to make on the D1 lands? I didn't hear them.

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MR. MAYO: Well, the D1 lands but, also
the other federal land protection orders like the Haul
Road corridor PLO 51-50 lands within the corridor. And
I was just some mentioning under the new administration,
potential rollbacks of protections placed on those
federal lands that came about under the previous
administration.

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CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: All right. Thank
you. All right. One more. Go ahead.

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MS. EVANS: So, you're opposed to opening
those lands?

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MR. MAYO: Oh. Excuse me? I propose to
open those lands?

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MS. EVANS: Or lift those protections?

MR. MAYO: Yes, that's what I'm very
concerned about the current administration and, you
know, lifting or rolling back the protections on those

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1 federal lands that like, for instance, the Haul Road
2 corridor, the 51-50 lands that, you know, the state has
3 been trying to get those lands for decades and what that
4 would do to the rural preference designation on those
5 lands.

6

7 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: All right. Thank
8 you. Anybody else? Thank you so much, Randy, for your
9 testimony today. Appreciate it.

10

11 MR. MAYO: Okay. Yep. Thank you.

12

13 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay. Yukon -- Yeah.
14 Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association, you have the
15 floor.

16

17 MS. KIRKEY: Good morning. Thank you all
18 so much for having me. Mr. Chair and Council members,
19 my name is Grace Kirkey. I work for the Yukon River
20 Drainage Fisheries Association, and I'm their community-
21 based monitoring program coordinator. I don't think I
22 know all of you yet. So, I'd just like to take a moment
23 and introduce myself. I'm Grace Kirkey. My mother is
24 from Washington State. My father is from Alabama. But
25 for my whole life, he's been in Alaska. So, I've been -
26 - grown up all over the United States. So where am I
27 from? That's always kind of an interesting question. I'm
28 really not too sure, but I do call it home, Alaska. I
29 went to school in Washington State and I studied
30 fisheries, and that was my plan, my pipeline to come
31 back up here. So came up here and did some work with
32 them, heat stress and establishing water temperature
33 monitoring networks in South Central. And then took this
34 job relatively recently with YRDFA. So, with that, I
35 have so much to learn and I'm aware of that. And if you
36 have anything you'd like to share with me please do or
37 any way to educate me, I'm all ears. So new and young
38 and excited to be here and be around for a long time.
39 And yeah, so with that, I'm going to give you a brief
40 report today on the activities that YRDFA's been up to,
41 some of our key accomplishments since we last met, kind
42 of where we are with things.

43

44 So, our harvest survey program, in 2024,
45 it was funded by the National Park Service. It began in
46 20 -- nope, 2002. We have 10 communities along the Yukon
47 River with locally hired surveyors. This runs from June
48 through August, and each week these surveyors interview
49 the same households with the same questions. And then
50 that information is reported anonymously to partners in

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1 management agencies. This year we launched a digital app
2 for surveyors to use as an option for -- paper based is
3 still an option for them as well. 2025, we've applied
4 for a few sources of funding. We're waiting to hear back
5 if nothing comes through, we do have some leftover funds
6 from NPS. And we're going to run that program as well
7 as we can with what's left over. The Yukon River In-
8 season Teleconference Program, we don't currently have
9 funding for the 2025 season. We are pursuing funds, and
10 we'll revamp that program and move forward with those
11 teleconference calls if funding becomes available. The
12 Yukon River Watershed Ecosystem Action Plan, in 2023,
13 established with funding from Gravel-to-Gravel
14 Initiative, the steering committees purpose is to create
15 a publicly accessible story map tool, a resource that
16 prioritizes assessing threats to salmon habitat and
17 identifying the highest priority restoration actions.
18 This tool will be open to all, fostering a sense of
19 community and shared responsibility for the Yukon
20 watershed, with an overall commitment to assist YRDFA
21 in creating a Yukon River Ecosystem Action Plan. During
22 July and August 2024, YRDFA's environmental specialist
23 James Van Lanen and field technician Matthew Lohrstorfer
24 conducted field data collection for YRDFA's WEAP
25 project, that's that water -- Watershed Ecosystem Action
26 management plan. Data collection this season consisted
27 of water quality sampling, culvert surveys in the Middle
28 and Tanana River watersheds. Using U.S. Fish and
29 Wildlife's GIS database, Matthew and James collected a
30 total of 64 culvert surveys and 50 water quality samples.
31 Fieldwork locations this season consisted of the areas
32 surrounding Nulato and the Road System, accessible areas
33 around Minto, Manley Hot Springs, Eureka, and the
34 Tofty/Tanana Road. The field crew identified multiple
35 additional culverts of potential concern for Yukon
36 Salmon Fish Passage, which were not previously listed
37 in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's database.
38 Culvert survey data was entered into the Fish Barrier
39 Hunter app, which is an app developed by U.S. Fish and
40 Wildlife Service, and the water quality data was entered
41 into a survey designed using Survey123 by YRDFA's
42 contractor, Michael Baker. The data collection will
43 continue in 2025. Fieldwork locations are currently
44 being determined by the WEAP steering committee and
45 YRDFA staff, and we have a meeting next week with the
46 steering committee, so more to come on that very soon.

47
48 Moving on the Clearinghouse project. The
49 purpose of this project is to identify data gaps along
50 the Yukon River and act as a clearinghouse for social

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1 and ecological change along the Yukon, using both
2 physical and biological data and traditional ecological
3 knowledge. We have a TEK technician, Jadon Nashoanak,
4 and he is conducting interviews. He conducted for last
5 year in 2024 and we will generate a historical timeline
6 of observed change that affect the Yukon River.
7 Additionally, we have hired physical biological science
8 technician, that's Matthew Lohrstorfer, who this past
9 season helped conducting those culvert assessments,
10 stream assistance and water quality samples with both
11 the physical, biological science and traditional
12 ecological data. YRDFA will create a data submission
13 platform, and we're working with contractors now to
14 create that. And ideally, that's going to be a space
15 where you can see the efforts that are happening along
16 the Yukon River and also be a conduit for partnership
17 so you can see who else is doing something similar, who
18 might be somebody to work with and put your efforts
19 together.

20

21 The engaging fishers in chinook salmon
22 research on the Yukon River. This project is funded by
23 the North Pacific Research Board and began in January
24 2023 and will end February of 2026. We are partnering
25 with the communities of Alakanuk and Emmonak to conduct
26 interviews about the health of chinook as they enter the
27 river. We are gathering this information to help inform
28 our companion project led by Dr. Katie Howard and Vanessa
29 von Biela, which is seeking to understand the drivers
30 of chinook salmon decline and they theorize that one
31 driver is their diet in the Bering Sea and with this
32 strongly correlated -- and how this is strongly
33 correlated to their health when they enter the river.
34 We are -- we have completed our interviews in Emmonak
35 and Alakanuk and are providing summaries of the results
36 to the partners and their Tribal Councils. We plan to
37 travel to these communities in March, where we'll hold
38 community meetings, gather feedback from these
39 communities. We're also working with the communities of
40 Saint Mary's and Huslia to monitor water temperature and
41 develop a community action plan, if there is another
42 heat event that causes a mass salmon die off in the
43 future.

44

45 Additionally, last year some new staff
46 came on. Myself, Grace Kirkey, Jadon Nashoanak, our
47 traditional ecological knowledge technician, our
48 physical biological science technician, Matthew
49 Lohrstorfer, Olivia Irwin, yours truly and Brian McKenna
50 is our biologist. So that is my report. That concludes

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1 my report. And I will open it up to questions but, I
2 don't work on all of these projects so I will do the
3 best I can to answer your questions but, I might have
4 to reconnect with you later. Serena Fitka is also online
5 so we can direct that way if we need to as well.
6

7 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Any questions? I
8 have one myself about water quality. It's just knowing
9 that there's 11 million gallons per day of sewer water
10 (distortion) Fairbanks here. I was curious about the
11 numbers on parts per million of copper and ammonia that
12 come from those discharges in you guys, water quality
13 testing. Do you guys do any testing in that area or
14 anything on the town? This is one of the contributing
15 rivers for a lot of our salmon habitat. Some of the
16 major salmon habitat is along the Tanana River. As we
17 all know, anybody that knows fish. So, I'm really curious
18 about that, the volume that's going into that from the
19 sewer here in Fairbanks. And it's coming from the
20 university, the military post and the community all
21 going out to the same place. So that's an awful lot of
22 discharge. Okay. Serena, I see you raised your hand. Go
23 ahead. Oh. Okay. She went away.
24

25 MS. KIRKEY: Oh, yeah. So, that would
26 definitely be more of the WEAP and that is not a project
27 I'm on. But I -- I'm more than happy to reach out to
28 them and connect further about that but, that is
29 definitely something that they're -- that they are
30 looking at is the contaminant. It's not just what's
31 currently happening. It's why -- how we've gotten there,
32 so.
33

34 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you. Yeah. We
35 could talk later. Keep moving. Go ahead, Andy.
36

37 MR. BASSICH: Yeah, something
38 informational since you brought up water quality.
39 There's quite a bit of work done up around Dawson City
40 because of the same issues. Probably almost a decade
41 ago. Maybe a little bit more. One of the disturbing
42 things that they found is that the residue from birth
43 control was affecting salmon and their production. So,
44 you know, we know that Chena and Salcha are huge
45 producers of salmon and just something that maybe should
46 be looked at when they start studying that water, because
47 it kind of fell off the table as far as a discussion
48 point. But it's -- there's a lot of scientific proof
49 behind some of those causational things. I did have one
50 quick question for you. I don't know if you can answer

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1 it. On the studies that they're doing in the lower river,
2 studying the health of the salmon. Obviously, those are
3 the adults returning. I know they're doing a lot of
4 juvenile work down there. How are they getting those
5 samples for fish? Are they doing that through the test
6 net fisheries, or is that just incidental harvest? How
7 are they -- what are they doing to try and determine the
8 health of the fish down there? And how are they procuring
9 those samples?

10
11 MS. KIRKEY: I'm not on the engaging
12 fisheries grant. So, if Serena wants to chime in on that
13 -- or I am but, not quite on that objective. So, yeah.
14 And I can definitely reach out to you more Andy, on
15 that. But definitely our partners with the USGS. And
16 then Katie Howard would -- are more on that side of
17 things but, I'm happy to reach out and connect further.
18

19 MR. BASSICH: Yeah. Mr. Chair, we don't
20 need to take up time, but I'll follow up on that. I'm
21 just really curious about that project.
22

23 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: All right, Andy,
24 anybody else have any comments or questions?
25

26 (No response)
27

28 Hearing none. Thank you so much for the
29 wonderful presentation. Thank you for your time today.
30

31 MS. KIRKEY: Thank you so much.
32

33 (Pause)
34

35 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: We're going to go
36 back up the agenda to F, number 12F, Alaska Board of
37 Game statewide proposal comments.
38

39 MS. MCDAVID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This
40 is Brooke. Just as a reminder to the Council, this is
41 not a required action item. So, you might want to be
42 judicious with your time. I know some of these issues
43 are important to you. So, I did pass out -- some folks
44 had suggested a list of proposals you might be interested
45 in taking up. And so earlier this morning, you should
46 have a copy of that list and copies of those proposals
47 that were on that list for your discussion. Thanks.
48

49 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Go ahead.
50

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1 MS. IRWIN: This is Olivia Irwin, for the
2 record. Hey, Brooke. How should we -- should we --
3 someone present a motion to discuss or support all of
4 them as a block?

5
6 MS. MCDAVID: You could do it two ways.
7 You could take them up individually if you wanted or you
8 could take -- yeah, make a motion to take them up and
9 then come up with your agreed upon positions for each
10 of them and vote on it as a as a block at the end if you
11 want.

12
13 MS. IRWIN: Okay. This is Olivia Irwin.
14 For the record, I make a motion to take up proposal 88
15 of the statewide Board of Game proposal.

16
17 (Distortion)

18
19 MS. MCDAVID: One moment. I'm going to
20 mute some folks online. Okay, let's try it again. Thanks
21 -- or I guess there's a motion. Did we hear a second?

22
23 (no response)

24
25 MS. IRWIN: Okay. This is...

26
27 (Simultaneous speech)

28
29 MR. BASSICH: Mr. Chair. We were just
30 talking. I'm just wondering if it might be more efficient
31 just to make a motion to support and then have a brief
32 discussion and then vote on it, rather than to take it
33 up and then have to make a proposal to support it. I'm
34 just trying to save a little bit on time.

35
36 MS. IRWIN: Okay. Yeah, this is Olivia
37 Irwin for the record, I'll resend my original motion and
38 put forward a new motion to support proposal 88 from the
39 statewide Board of Game proposal booklet.

40
41 MR. BASSICH: Member Bassich. Second.

42
43 MS. IRWIN: Okay. And I'll speak to it
44 really quickly. I don't want to take up a lot of time.
45 This proposal was submitted by Minto-Nenana AC and
46 Tanana Chiefs Conference. It's a similar purpose, and
47 I'll refer to my comments yesterday on the proposal for
48 EIRAC to submit cultural determination of -- a positive
49 C&T findings for wood bison in the federal regs. This
50 is a state reg and because we cannot establish a C&T at

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1 this time we are looking to add wood bison to the use
2 of cultural purposes. This would allow us to use bison
3 -- with bison in our potlatches and cultural events. It
4 could provide further food security for local
5 individuals who are attending these gatherings, and it
6 would provide the continuation of education of how to
7 properly harvest animals and would continue cultural
8 traditions of harvesting. While it's not a -- an animal
9 that is -- that we have engaged with for many, many
10 years it would provide opportunity for us to continue
11 educating our people on how to properly harvest animals
12 and use them for cultural purposes.

13
14 MR. BASSICH: If there's no further
15 questions or comments, I'd like to call the question on
16 this, Mr. Chair.

17
18 MS. SHOCKLEY: I have a comment. Yeah.
19 During -- well the past couple of years, you know, when
20 we had the wood bison meetings with Fish and Game, Manley
21 was totally opposed to the wood bison in our area and I
22 know it's not super close but, close enough. And, you
23 know, at the time, the Chief of Manley did not want to
24 rely on the wood bison because instead of you know --
25 he felt Fish and Game was bypassing the important issues
26 of moose and subsistence, that they were going to use
27 the wood bison, you know, as a crutch kind of thing. So,
28 while I understand, you know, the importance of culture
29 and those kinds of things, I think, you know, using wood
30 bison as a cultural tool, I don't think is something
31 that Manely would support. So, thank you.

32
33 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you for that.
34 Go ahead, Eva.

35
36 MS. BURK: Thank you, through the Chair.
37 It does say on this proposal that this was done in
38 support with the Tanana-Manley Rampart Advisory
39 Committee. So, I think it's important to note that. And
40 then I think, Dorothy, we were really involved with this
41 in Nenana, and our tribe also does not support the
42 reintroduction of the bison. But also, we are -- want
43 to be prepared because it's happening anyways, with or
44 without our consent. And then as far as like, Eva Burk
45 as what do I believe about wood bison being on the
46 landscape? I believe that our landscape is going to
47 change. We have climate models that show we're turning
48 to grasslands. Our elders have predicted that this
49 region will turn into grasslands. And so, I guess I am
50 interested in seeing if these bison can make it and

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1 establish themselves. But I'm also very concerned about
2 the bison as well. There's a lot of fall flooding that
3 makes the area where they were put in on the Kantishna
4 River might not be super suitable for bison moving around
5 in the area and getting themselves from low ground to
6 upper to high ground. So, and then with the ecosystem
7 issues that we have going on with the lack of salmon,
8 the increased predation, one wonders if putting more
9 game on the landscape might just go to the predators,
10 right. So, there are a lot of concerns that we have but
11 I guess from an individual standpoint -- because these
12 bison are actually put just 3-miles from my dad's -- the
13 camp he grew up on, the Kantishna so, and we have many
14 young people that are interested in Minto that are
15 supporting their reintroduction. There are some
16 positions created. So, I guess I have mixed feelings and
17 the main issue that we all came up with on our advisory
18 committees was not so much the reintroduction of bison
19 itself, because as tribes and village corporations, we
20 could be doing the same. We could be also putting bison
21 on the landscape. My issue is more with the management
22 of the bison and how much is actually allotted for local
23 harvest and how much will actually go out for permitted
24 hunt. So, it's a long road. It's a really long road
25 before we even get to hunt the bison. I think that's
26 what they've saw in the Inokko bison herd, is that it
27 didn't establish well, it's actually losing animals. So
28 that's kind of what we're waiting to find out is how
29 well does this do and then our issue is mostly with is,
30 is this for local people or is this another species to
31 be exploited and hunted? That's the issue that I'm come
32 to understand.

33
34 MS. SHOCKLEY: If I may respond, please.
35 Yeah. This is Dorothy. You know, it was very disturbing
36 to see the Sierra Club, you know, donating money for
37 this project. And from what I could tell or see,
38 especially since they're very close with the Governor,
39 you know it -- we started out very good plan. We started
40 out with a very good plan with the state at one of the
41 first meetings we had and then as soon as the Governor
42 got involved in the Sierra Club, I suppose you know, he
43 didn't care, you know, where or what was going to happen.
44 He wanted the bison on the ground immediately, and so
45 they were put there. It's mainly from what I can see a
46 sport hunt issue, a product or -- an animal. And so, you
47 know I too would like to see whether they can survive
48 or not, but, you know, it's very disturbing, you know,
49 to have them there and yeah. Thank you. Appreciate it.
50

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1 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Sue, sorry if I
2 skipped you there.

3
4 MS. ENTSMINGER: No problem. I think it
5 worked out perfectly. You know, the Council has had a
6 30% for sport and commercial, and I'm the only one in
7 this Council that's supposed to represent that part of
8 the people in the State. So -- and I feel like I wear
9 both hats, which all of us really do. But I just wanted
10 to say, you know, I'm members of the Safari Club. And
11 they do a lot in Washington D.C. to help hunting, to
12 keep hunting alive and not be destroyed. So, a lot of
13 times when they do give money to projects like this and
14 then they see -- I don't know how to say it. I do want
15 to be very respectful, and I respect all the people of
16 Alaska, and I guess I would like you to know that if we
17 work together, we will have that respect, and the people
18 are only there for the benefit of the resource also. So,
19 I just wanted -- you know, I only have another meeting
20 here but, it's important to bring out this kind of thing
21 that you have to understand. There's people -- when you
22 get these people together, I believe you're going to
23 have a little more understanding from each other. So, I
24 needed to bring that out. Thank you.

25
26 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you for that,
27 Sue. Any other comments?

28
29 MR. BASSICH: Call question.

30
31 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Can you reinstate
32 the motion, please? For the record.

33
34 MS. IRWIN: This is Olivia Irwin. For the
35 record, the motion is to support Alaska Department of
36 Board of Game Proposal 88, permit to take big game and
37 use for cultural purposes, adding wood bison.

38
39 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Could we do a roll
40 call vote, please?

41
42 MR. WOODRUFF: I'll start at the top. Sue
43 Entsminger. How do you vote?

44
45 MS. ENTSMINGER: Yes.

46
47 MR. WOODRUFF: Dorothy Shockley. How do
48 you vote?

49
50 MS. SHOCKLEY: No.

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MR. WOODRUFF: Linda Evans, how do you
vote?

(No response)

Do you support this proposal, Linda?

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: We need to use the
microphone, please.

MS. EVANS: Yes.

MR. WOODRUFF: Thank you. Eva Burk, do
you support this proposal?

MS. BURK: Yes.

MR. WOODRUFF: Olivia Irwin, you support
this proposal?

MS. IRWIN: Yes.

MR. WOODRUFF: Andrew Bassich. Do you
support this proposal?

MR. BASSICH: Yes.

MR. WOODRUFF: Charlie Wright, do you
support this proposal?

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Yes.

MR. WOODRUFF: Galen Gilbert, do you
support this proposal?

MR. GILBERT: Yes.

MR. WOODRUFF: Donald Woodruff does
support this proposal. Gilbert Alexander, do you support
this proposal? Gerald, sorry.

MR. ALEXANDER: Yes.

MR. WOODRUFF: Thank you.

MS. MCDAVID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The
motion passes 9 to 1.

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1 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you. Moving
2 on. Proposal 89, Hunter education and orientation
3 requirements.

4
5 MR. BASSICH: Member Bassich here. I'd
6 like to make a motion to support proposal 89 from the
7 Alaska Board of Game, Hunter education and orientation
8 requirements.

9
10 MS. ENTSMINGER: Second.

11
12 MR. BASSICH: And I think I'd like to
13 just turn this over to the Chair, as you were part of
14 one of the co-authors of this. I guess I would just add,
15 are there any other Units we would want to add to that?
16 That would be the only thing that I would see if we
17 wanted to add any other Units within our region to this
18 requirement. It covers 20. And I guess I would need
19 clarification when it says 20. Does that include all
20 subunits of 20 or just 20? How does that work the way
21 it's stated?

22
23 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Yeah, I think it's
24 statewide. I think it should be statewide. Yeah.

25
26 MR. BASSICH: Okay, thank you.

27
28 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: And it's just to
29 educate people. People need to be educated. It's our
30 natural resources are almost gone. So, we need to educate
31 people on how to shoot, how to use the meat or give the
32 meat. It's all -- it says it pretty clearly in here. So,
33 I support this motion going forward with all things said.
34 Thank you.

35
36 MR. BASSICH: So, point of clarification
37 in the motion. It was to support it as basically
38 presented to us, which doesn't it -- doesn't state
39 statewide. Is that something that we would like to have
40 it statewide as a recommendation from our RAC?

41
42 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Yes, sir.

43
44 MR. BASSICH: Okay.

45
46 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you.

47
48 MR. BASSICH: Yeah. I just wanted to make
49 that clarification before we go down the line. So maybe
50 I would rescind my motion if that works or what's the

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1 best course of action?

2

3 MS. ENTSMINGER: I'll take the second
4 back. You can restate it.

5

6 MR. BASSICH: You -- all right.

7

8 MS. IRWIN: This is Olivia Irwin. I
9 suggest an amendment to the original motion made by
10 Member Bassich to edit the proposal and suggest it to
11 be applied statewide.

12

13 MR. BASSICH: And I think that speaks for
14 itself. I'll just reference -- reinstate. So, the motion
15 would be to.....

16

17 (Simultaneous speech)

18

19 MS. MCDAVID: We need a second on the...

20

21 MR. BASSICH: I'm sorry.

22

23 MS. MCDAVID: ... new motion, please. On
24 Olivia's motion.

25

26 MR. BASSICH: I'll second Olivia's
27 motion. And I guess if there's no further comments, I
28 would ask for question then and reference our discussion
29 from the Chair who was co-authored on this.

30

31 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay. At this time
32 can you -- can you reinstate it for us? Just for the
33 record, please?

34

35 MS. IRWIN: The edited motion is to
36 support proposal 89 with the amendment to make it
37 applicable statewide.

38

39 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay, we'll call for
40 a roll call vote again. Is that how you want -- okay.
41 Let's do the unanimous consent vote to support. All those
42 in favor signify by saying aye.

43

44 IN UNISON: Aye.

45

46 All those against same sign.

47

48 (No response)

49

50

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1 Seeing or hearing none. Thank you.
2 Proposal passes.

3
4 MS. MCDAVID: And Council just for your
5 -- the notes I made on your list of proposals you
6 suggested to take up, I grouped them so, some of them
7 are single. Others that are grouped, you had noted you
8 might want to take those up together.

9
10 MS. ENTSMINGER: I have a quick question.
11 Procedurally, that was an amendment to the motion. So
12 that we have the motion amended. Shouldn't we have voted
13 on it?

14
15 MS. MCDAVID: Well, Sue, I heard you
16 rescind your second and Andy, take it away. I think.....

17
18 MS. ENTSMINGER: Then I heard amendment
19 so, sorry.

20
21 MS. MCDAVID: I think the intent is
22 clear. If you're okay.....

23
24 MS. ENTSMINGER: I'm okay.

25
26 MS. MCDAVID: Thanks.

27
28 MS. IRWIN: I'll make a motion to support
29 proposal 92, Hunter education orientation requirements.
30 This is Olivia Irwin for the record.

31
32 MR. BASSICH: Member Bassich. Second.

33
34 MS. ENTSMINGER: I'll let -- Charlie
35 walked out.

36
37 MS. BURK: You want to go, go ahead. I'm
38 the Vice Chair.

39
40 MS. ENTSMINGER: Yeah. Okay. Thank you.
41 We talked about this, and I thought there has to be a
42 way to not require this of old-time sheep hunters. So,
43 this makes it sound like if you just go pull a sheep
44 harvest ticket, then you have to take this class. We
45 talked about it at our working group.

46
47 MS. IRWIN: Sue support this -- Olivia
48 Irwin for the record, would you support this proposal
49 if it was amended to say except for resident hunters
50 Over the age of -- cover a certain age, or is there

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1 anything that you like about this?

2

3 MS. ENTSMINGER: What's hard for me is,
4 I took my kid out hunting when he was eight years old
5 for sheep. And, you know, and if he was under age 39,
6 then he'd still have to take it. So, I don't know how
7 you would write it to -- that it would be good, but
8 maybe after -- I don't know, ten harvest tickets, then
9 you take the class, I don't know. I'm sorry -- it's --
10 I'm sure that the Board will wrestle right through this
11 and come up with a solution. So, I would say that our
12 intent is that first time sheep hunters have to have
13 this class. I mean, we can just vote for it and just
14 say, first time sheep hunters have to have this class.
15 Okay. Thank you.

16

17 MS. IRWIN: So, do you want me to resend
18 my initial motion, or do you want to amend my motion?

19

20 MS. ENTSMINGER: I think all you need to
21 do is just let it go and put our intent. Okay, I think
22 that's fine.

23

24 MR. BASSICH: There's no further
25 discussion. I call question, maybe reinstated.

26

27 MS. IRWIN: Yeah. Olivia Erwin, for the
28 record, the original motion is to support proposal 92
29 with comments suggesting this applies to first time
30 sheep hunters.

31

32 MR. BASSICH: Mr. Chair, we have question
33 called in. This motion is restated so we're ready to
34 vote.

35

36 MS. ENTSMINGER: I think we can get
37 unanimous.

38

39 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Excuse me. Okay.
40 Motion has been restated so we ask for unanimous consent
41 to support. At this time all those in favor signify by
42 saying aye.

43

44 IN UNISON: Aye.

45

46 All those against same sign.

47

48 (No response)

49

50

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1 Okay. Yeah, well, I keep getting
2 discombobulated. I'm sorry. I think we're done. Okay.
3 Moving on. Proposal 93, sealing of -- Okay, okay. We're
4 skipping these. Why are they in there?

5
6 MS. MCDAVID: Well, I wasn't going to
7 delete text out of the thing just to make it special for
8 you, so I'm sorry about that.

9
10 MS. IRWIN: I'll make a motion to --
11 Olivia Irwin for the record -- to support proposal 95
12 and 96.

13
14 UNIDENTIFIED: Second.

15
16 MS. ENTSMINGER: I'll just speak to the
17 motion. I'm an avid sheep hunter, and it's very difficult
18 to age sheep at eight. And people that think they got
19 an eight-year-old and it isn't full curl. It causes a
20 lot of problems. So, in short, I'd be in favor.

21
22 MS. IRWIN: Olivier Irwin for the record.
23 Sue, are you saying you'd be in favor of both 95 and 96?
24 Just for clarity. Okay.

25
26 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Go ahead, Donald.

27
28 MR. WOODRUFF: Thank you. This is Don
29 Woodruff. I'll just read on 95. It says here most
30 hunters, even professional biologists, can mistakenly
31 miscount annual ranks on a three quarter or 7/8 ram on
32 the mountainside. Many hunters cannot age sheep when in
33 the hand, which can be documented with a high number of
34 young rams being seized by the department at sealing.
35 Some sublegal rams are abandoned and not documented as
36 a loss. That's tragic. Thank you. Call for question.

37
38 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: I'm confused a
39 little bit on whether we supporting this or going against
40 it. Not enough discussion for me.

41
42 MS. IRWIN: Olivia Irwin, through the
43 Chair. Same. Yeah. I feel the same way. I'm not ready
44 for question. Sue, can you explain in a little bit
45 greater detail what these two proposals are going to
46 change about the curl management? I see that it's
47 repealing criteria three, but.

48
49 MS. ENTSMINGER: They're eliminating the
50 it's full curl or eight years old okay. Eight years old

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1 can be under full curl. And they want to -- they're --
2 you know you just heard the reasoning why he put it in
3 there is -- after all my years at (indiscernible), I
4 feel like I can age a sheep in my hand, and I can see
5 false annuli. And there are false annuli. Sometimes
6 they'll -- spring will be early and then they grow when
7 they eat green feed, they -- and then it makes another
8 annuli in the horn and people -- you can't judge that
9 from a spotting scope even at 100 yards, it's very
10 difficult to do. And people that are shooting eight-
11 year-old rams under full curl are pretty doggone lucky.
12 So, it's -- I get where it's coming from. It should --
13 and then you can argue too for this eight or older. Like
14 if it's a ten-year-old and it's not full curl, that's
15 the one you'd like to get out of the genetics. So right
16 now, I think the way the sheep populations are so low,
17 it's better to have something like this in place.

18

19 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: So going forward,
20 it'd be really good for us if you would -- you give your
21 explanation to say I support, so people can understand
22 in the room.

23

24 MS. ENTSMINGER: Oh, I didn't hear that.

25

26 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Because we're not
27 sheep hunters and you guys are. So, we're looking for
28 clarity and leadership.

29

30 MS. ENTSMINGER: Yes. Okay.

31

32 CHIRPERSON WRIGHT: Yeah. Thank you.

33

34 MS. ENTSMINGER: Thank you. I'm getting
35 too old, I guess. Thank you. I guess I have that, like,
36 keep it simple and I'm sorry. So, I'll do a better job.

37

38 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: I'll do the same
39 thing on moose. And I think everybody should understand,
40 but sometimes people don't. And so, you're the
41 professionals in the room that deal with sheep. So, I
42 appreciate you.

43

44 MS. ENTSMINGER: Thank you very much.

45

46 MR. WOODRUFF: Call for question again.

47

48 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay. Please
49 reinstate for the record.

50

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1 MS. IRWIN: That's mine. This is Olivia
2 Irwin, for the record. The original motion is to support
3 proposals 95 and 96 from the statewide Board of Game
4 proposal booklet.

5
6 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Sorry. Okay, we'll
7 ask for unanimous consent. Anyone against, please
8 signify by saying aye.

9 (No response)

10
11 Hearing or seeing none, passes. Thank
12 you. 97, 98 and 99 are next.

13
14 MS. IRWIN: Olivia Irwin for the record,
15 I make a motion to support 97, 98, 99.

16
17 UNIDENTIFIED: Second.

18
19 MS. ENTSMINGER: Hey, can I speak to
20 this? Unfortunately, the first to make it longer for --
21 able to fly and spot sheep and the third one makes it
22 shorter. So, I for one would say just leave it where
23 it's at. There's a youth hunt, the first to the fifth,
24 and pilots are out flying that have airplanes and the -
25 - but then they can't fly when the main season opens.
26 And this you can get wrapped around and get very
27 complicated. But I think I would vote down all of these
28 for that very reason, there's a system in place right
29 now. It starts August 10th that they are not allowed to
30 out be spotting and that's when the main season opens.
31 And this came about some time ago already. And these
32 pilots are all disgruntled about it. But my son's a
33 pilot and he's a guide and he thinks it's a great thing
34 that there's a law against spotting sheep during sheep
35 season.

36
37 MS. IRWIN: Olivia Irwin for the record,
38 I have a question, Sue. What about proposal -- what
39 about -- so 97 and 98 are to lengthen it, and you just
40 don't feel like it's needed to lengthen that time period
41 that aircraft is not allowed to be to be used. It just
42 doesn't really align with the season. Is that what you're
43 saying?

44
45 MS. ENTSMINGER: Well, it's for the youth
46 hunt and I just feel -- and the youth hunt ends on the
47 fifth. So, the first through the fifth is the youth
48 hunt. And there's not that many people out hunting during
49 the youth season, but it changes greatly on the 10th of
50 August.

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CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: So, just so I understand it's okay for them to fly on the youth season?

MS. ENTSMINGER: Yep.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay.

MS. ENTSMINGER: Okay. So, I don't know. It's up to you guys if you want to take it to the first, you would be in favor of 97 and 98 and you wouldn't be of 99.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay. Yeah. I don't I don't think it's a fair -- no matter who you are, you're hunting to use a airplanes, so.

MS. ENTSMINGER: So, we might want to take up 97. What is it, 97 and 98 separately and take out 99.

MS. IRWIN: Okay with Don, I think you were my second with your approval. I'll resend my original motion to adopt -- to support 97, 98 and 99.

MR. WOODRUFF: Yes.

MS. ENTSMINGER: Not 99. 97 and 98. Not 99.

MS. IRWIN: Oh. I thought -- okay sorry. Okay and now Council doesn't make sense to take up 97 and 98 together then. Okay, so, I will then make a motion to support proposal 97 and 98 in the Statewide Board of Game proposal booklet.

MR. WOODRUFF: Second.

MS. IRWIN: Okay. For the record, Olivia Irwin. So, I guess I'll just refer to Charlie's comments on 97 and 98, is -- it's from what Sue said. Basically, this would just extend, lengthen the time period by a few days and would not allow the use of aircraft for hunting sheep during the youth hunt. That's basically the reasoning for the change of motion.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Any more question? Go ahead.

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1 MS. BURK: Thank you. Through the Chair.
2 On proposal 98, I feel it's written a little more clear
3 than 97. And the reasoning is aerial scouting for dall
4 sheep is currently allowed outside of the general
5 season, dall sheep season of August 10th through
6 September 20th. Currently, all youth hunts and some
7 archery hunts fall outside of these general season
8 dates, and therefore aerial scouting during these
9 seasons is allowed. Dall sheep populations are in
10 decline. Restrictions on all aerial scouting during all
11 open seasons will reduce pressure on sheep. So that's -
12 - I feel it helps me put my mind around this.

13
14 MS. ENTSMINGER: So, I would say that I
15 would probably go with 97 first but, I understand how
16 you're feeling. But supporting them both would just send
17 it to the Board of Game that you support it. Yeah.

18
19 MR. WOODRUFF: Call for question.

20
21 MS. IRWIN: I'll reinstate the motion
22 Olivia Irwin, for the record, the motion on the table
23 is to support proposal 97 and 98 in the statewide Board
24 of Game proposal booklet.

25
26 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay. Asking for
27 unanimous consent. All those against, please signify by
28 saying aye.

29
30 (No response)

31
32 Hearing or seeing none, passes. Thank
33 you. Moving on to proposal 99.

34
35 MR. WOODRUFF: I make a motion to support
36 Board of Game proposal 99 as written.

37
38 MS. IRWIN: Second, Olivia Irwin.

39
40 MS. ENTSMINGER: Okay, this is Sue. I
41 would be opposed to this because there's a lot of people
42 that are still out in the mountains, and it's not -- it
43 shortens the time that they would be out there allowed
44 to do that. I couldn't word that a little better but,
45 yeah, I would be opposed to this.

46
47 MR. WOODRUFF: Thank you, Sue. I'm
48 opposed too.

49
50 MS. IRWIN: Call the question.

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CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Please reinstate.

MS. IRWIN: The original motion was to support proposal 99 from the Board of Game statewide proposal booklet.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: So, I'll ask for unanimous consent. All those opposed, please signify by saying aye.

IN UNISON: Aye.

Thank you. Passes. Proposal 100 is next.

MS. IRWIN: I'll make a motion to support proposal 100 and the statewide Board of Game Boardgame Regulation proposal booklet.

MS. ENTSMINGER: Second.

MS. IRWIN: I'll lean to Sue to start the conversation.

MS. ENTSMINGER: Thank you. This one, I personally am opposed to. As you know, I have a guide license, and I for many years guided sheep hunters. And they're -- the ratio to -- this organization called Resident Hunters of Alaska, they really want to minimize it. But at this time, I -- this is too complicated. It's going to have to put everything on a drawing, and it's just way too complicated. And we are not going to get through this at this meeting.

So, for instance, my son hunts the Tok management area, and at one time there was 120 sheep taken there or permits given out. Ten were -- for 10% were given to guides. That was 12. And then it went down to 100. Then it went down to 80 and then it went down to 60. And now it's down to 10. And one is still allowed for a nonresident. And my son has luckily gotten those. But if -- how would you do that across every Unit in the State? There are some areas like Delta Controlled Use Area that's on permit. And there's -- I'm not familiar with everything across the State but, there's -- to me, there's a lot of regulations across the State that should be eliminated before we do something this complicated. And the full curl law does help sheep. It allows the young rams to grow up. In the northern region, there's

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1 places where there's a three sheep limit. I feel that
2 stuff needs to go away long before we do crazy things
3 like this. So, I could.....

4
5 (Simultaneous speech)

6
7 MR. WOODRUFF: I agree with.....

8
9 MS. ENTSMINGER:probably go on and
10 on, but I won't.

11
12 MR. WOODRUFF: I agree with Sue. This is
13 way too complicated for us to support.

14
15 MS. MCDAVID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This
16 is Brooke, for the record. I did take a note during your
17 working group meeting that you all commented that this
18 type of proposal would be something that you would be
19 looking to discuss during like, a coalition process that
20 you are advocating for. So, if you would like that also
21 included as part of your comment, we'd need some
22 indication from you guys if it should be.

23
24 MR. WOODRUFF: I move that we add that.
25 Thank you.

26
27 MS. ENTSMINGER: So, can we just say that
28 we would add that from discussion? Yeah. Okay. We don't
29 need a motion. Yeah. Thank you.

30
31 MR. BASSICH: Chair. So maybe my comment
32 from my perspective would be to not support this proposal
33 due to the complications and -- in organizing the hunt
34 and recognizing that all sheep populations have specific
35 parameters, and it would be recommended that the sheep
36 working group would work on specific populations and
37 help to develop management plans for specific
38 populations. That's one of the things that we discussed
39 and kind of agreed on at our working group there, that
40 one size doesn't fit all. And so, it's going to be really
41 important as we move forward for sheep conservation and
42 also hunting opportunities to identify each sheep
43 population and make regulations a little bit more
44 refined for each population. So that is a plug to try
45 and formulate a sheep working group so that we can do a
46 good job of managing these populations, which are so
47 diverse that the one size fits all does not work and
48 hasn't been working. Thank you.

49
50 MS. IRWIN: Call the question.

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CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Please reinstate the motion.

MS. IRWIN: The motion is to support proposal 100 from the statewide Board of Game proposal booklet.

MS. MCDAVID: So just to clarify, there's a motion to support. So, if you do not support it, then you can vote against it. So, we always make our motions in the positive.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Yeah. Okay. So, all those for you ask for unanimous consent. So, all of those support this. Please signify by saying aye.

(No response)

And all against same sign. I get confused, I'm sorry. I'm trying to think about the motion, and I get discombobulated, and I apologize for that. So. Okay. Thank you. Yeah. Anybody in favor of this motion signify by saying aye. Hearing or seeing none. Thank you. Passes.

MS. MCDAVID: Or to correct that. For the record, the motion fails.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: 101, please.

MS. IRWIN: This is Olivia Irwin. For the record, I'll make a motion to support proposal 101.

MS. ENTSMINGER: Second.

MS. IRWIN: Sue.

MS. ENTSMINGER: Yeah, this is very important. Sheep is not on intensive management. And that Upper Tanana Fortymile Advisory Committee had put in a proposal to do things for sheep in the TMA and the Board of Game voted against it. And it's because of this. This sheep has to be in intensive management.

MS. SHOCKLEY: I have a question.

(Pause)

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1 Mr. Chair, thank you. Dorothy. So, what
2 is the difference between a regular management and
3 intensive management?

4
5 MS. ENTSMINGER: They can do more
6 predator control. It has -- they have to start working
7 and doing the predator control.

8
9 MS. IRWIN: I'll be in support of this.
10 If there's no further discussion, I'll call the
11 question. I'll reinstate the motion. Olivia Irwin, for
12 the record. The motion is to support proposal 101.

13
14 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay, we'll ask for
15 unanimous consent. All that -- all those that support
16 this motion, please signify by saying aye.

17
18 IN UNISON: Aye.

19
20 All those against same sign.

21
22 (No response)

23
24 Hearing none, passes. Thank you. Moving
25 on to proxy hunting proposal 123.

26
27 MS. IRWIN: Olivia Irwin, for the record,
28 I'll make a motion to support proposal 123.

29
30 MS ENTSMINGER: Second. Can I speak to
31 the motion?

32
33 MS. IRWIN: Yeah, go ahead, Sue.

34
35 MS. ENTSMINGER: I'm totally against
36 getting rid of the -- getting paid to go shoot something
37 for someone else. That's my short term remuneration.
38 Because it says a person may not give or receive
39 remuneration in order to obtain, grant or influence the
40 granting of a proxy authorization. And this is State's,
41 as the State calls it, proxy, and the federal calls it
42 what designated hunter, I believe. So, I don't think
43 anyone should be paid to go shoot something for someone
44 else.

45
46 MS. SHOCKLEY: I agree we need to keep
47 this traditional.

48
49 MS. IRWIN: Olivia Irwin, for the record.
50 I will just say to put on record that I am sure there

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1 are people in rural spaces who are thinking about this
2 in terms of can I give my nephew some gas money for
3 going out and getting the moose for me because I -- he's
4 my designated proxy hunter. So, I just want to
5 acknowledge that I'm sure there are rural people who are
6 thinking that this could be a solution to being able to
7 support their proxy hunters, not you know, pay them off
8 to proxy hunt for them but, simply providing some sort
9 of compensation. So, I just want to acknowledge that.
10 But I also will not be in support of this proposal. I
11 think that this statement needs to stay in record. But
12 I just wanted to put on record that I recognize some of
13 our rural people might see this as an opportunity to
14 provide some compensation but, it would be very easily
15 abused, I believe. So, I'm not going to be in support
16 of it. Thank you.

17
18 MS. SHOCKLEY: If I may. This is Dorothy.
19 I think -- I mean -- I think that already is happening.
20 It's kind of like a trade. I mean, you know, to support
21 someone to like, your nephew or your grandson or whoever
22 to go hunting for you. I think, you know, those kinds
23 of things are probably already happening but, we don't
24 want to put it, you know -- or yeah, we just don't want
25 it to get out of the traditional systems that we already
26 have in place. Thank you.

27
28 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Of course. Thank you
29 for that comment. I don't know or seen -- ever seen
30 anybody get paid to hunt moose for elders. They might
31 take some gas, but that's about it. And nobody, no
32 traditional person is going to charge an elder for that.
33 So, thank you for your comment.

34
35 MS. IRWIN: Call the question. Olivia
36 Irwin for the record.

37
38 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Can you reinstate,
39 please?

40
41 MS. IRWIN: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair.
42 The motion is to support proposal 123.

43
44 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: I ask for unanimous
45 consent. All those in favor of the motion, please signify
46 by saying aye.

47
48 (No response)

49
50 All those opposed same sign.

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IN UNISON: Aye.

Passes. Thank you. We're going to recess for lunch now. Yeah, 1:00. We're going to try to get through today. All right.

MS. MCDAVID: Thank you all. And right after lunch, we'll be taking up the call for Board of Fish proposals.

MS. ENTSMINGER: Charlie, I would want to say that that working group we had the other day and doing things like this for Board of Game proposals and Fish proposals. That's excellent. It helps us to get through our meeting. Thank you.

(Off record)

(On record)

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay. About the one-minute mark.

(Pause)

Okay, everybody, welcome to the afternoon. We'll get the meeting back to order again. And it looks like we're at the call for Alaska Board of Fish proposals.

MS. MCDAVID: Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Yes.

MS. MCDAVID: Thank you. This is Brooke, for the record. I'll just draw your attention. In your meeting, book the small one. On page 55 is the Board of Fish tentative meeting schedule for 2025 and 2026. As you probably all are well aware that AYK fin fish meeting is coming up this November here in Fairbanks. And the AYK meeting will be next February. Comments -- or proposals are due April 10th, according to this document, and comments will be due in the -- in November for AYK and in February for the Area M meeting so you'll be able to comment on any proposals at your fall meeting this year. The call for proposals starts on the next page of your meeting book. And I do believe we have Gale Vick in the audience who wanted to speak to you all about -- about proposals.

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CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Is that what you want, Gale? Come on up, then.

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MS. VICK: There we go, thank you. Thank you to the Chair and members of the RAC. My name is Gale Vick, and I Chair the fisheries subcommittee for the Fairbanks Fish and Game Advisory Committee. And today - - and I also coordinate the BBAYK meeting, we had one this morning, and I'll bring those discussions to you in a minute. I have given the RAC members the copy of a schedule that we worked up with the Fairbanks AC. We are on a deadline for the April Board of Fish proposals. We have four areas to concentrate on and that the first one, of course, is AYK. And then we've got Bristol Bay and we've got Alaska Peninsula, which is Area M and statewide. And statewide is particularly interesting to us this year because the Board of Fish decided at the Council meeting -- or at the Board meeting in December that they would only review hatchery proposals at the statewide meeting, which is every three years now. We are going to be pushing for a hatchery meeting at the Board of Fish but that is non-regulatory so that -- no proposals will be discussed at that meeting. It's just informational.

So, we have put together this deadline. Monday night is the first real conversation we're going to have at the Fairbanks fisheries subcommittee. And at 6 p.m. it's a virtual only meeting. I invite everybody here to join us. We are trying to get as many AC members and others around -- in the AYK, Bristol Bay and Nelson Lagoon-Chignik region. Because our proposals going forward, we have very little time left and we want to make sure that all the ACs can review these, if we can, to support each other. We're not going to be able to do that all the time. But as much as we can, we have strength in supporting each other on these proposals. I want to say something that you probably heard from Virgil yesterday, and that is that this cycle is probably the most important cycle in the history of the Board of Fish. And that's because what we're trying to do is to save salmon. And we've never had such an urgency as we've had right now for both chinook and chum salmon. But coho is going down as well, as well as other species. So, this is really an important Board cycle, and I encourage all of you to participate with each other. And let's come up with very strong proposals. So that's pretty much what I had to say. But I do have a list that came along with a schedule of all the items that we've

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1 had at various meetings, that where we've said these are
2 important to have proposals in. So, if there are any
3 questions from the RAC members, I'd be glad to answer
4 what I can. Thank you.

5
6 MS. BURK: Through the Chair, this is
7 Eva. Gale, last spring, the Western Interior Regional
8 Advisory Council submitted the -- I think it was the
9 agenda change request. Do you know if they are going to
10 resubmit that same proposal as a regular proposal in
11 this Board cycle and can we at this Eastern Interior RAC
12 maybe support that, or is there going to be other ACS
13 supporting that as well?

14
15 MS. VICK: You're talking about the mesh
16 thing.

17
18 MS. BURK: Yes.

19
20 MS. VICK: Okay. Yeah, for Area M. As far
21 as I know Chignik probably will be resubmitting that.
22 And if they don't, somebody will for sure. There will
23 be many other proposals that we've had that weren't --
24 ACRs that didn't get accepted or in past proposals. And
25 we're going to be resubmitting those in different
26 formats. The timeline is the problem because we have to
27 have these proposals in on April 10th, and we only --
28 our Fairbanks AC only has one full meeting where we can
29 approve the proposals we submit. As far as proposals
30 that other people submit, I am recommending that we join
31 as co-signers on proposals where we can but, that means
32 that our various ACs are going to have to have the time
33 to review that and make that recommendation and approve
34 it, because we have to have the minutes attached to each
35 of these. We don't have to have the minutes attached
36 with the proposals. That's the important thing. We can
37 do this later and when the Board meeting comes up. But
38 that's the other option for all of us. When the various
39 Board meetings come up that we can support other
40 proposals at the same time. But as all of you know here,
41 the Board is very often, depending on the composition
42 of the Board, very often will take the weakest proposal
43 and rather than the strongest. So, we want to make sure
44 that we don't have too much of a range that we want to
45 have the strong proposals.

46
47 MS. BURK: Yeah. Thank you. Through the
48 Chair. This is Eva. I think my understanding too is that
49 the -- actually the same length -- shortening the net

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1 length of the salmon seines was going to be a statewide
2 proposal.

3
4 MS. VICK: I think it will be. I don't
5 know who's going to put that in for statewide. But we
6 certainly will be having that discussion. And that is
7 on this list. On the Monday night meeting, that's the
8 preliminary discussion at the AC level. And since we
9 have such little time, we have had -- on January 22nd,
10 we had a Joint Interior AC meeting that was well
11 attended, as an introductory. But now we don't have the
12 time for a separate meeting for that. We just -- if we
13 -- everybody can join our AC and discussions we will
14 hear comments from anybody who wants to make a comment.
15 And so, we're just trying to get proposals down so that
16 we know who the specific proposers are going to be
17 because we can't write all of them. And -- but each of
18 the regions will have their particular strengths.

19
20 MS. BURK: Thank you. Obviously, this is
21 my favorite topic.

22
23 MS. VICK: You're good at it.

24
25 MS. BURK: This is Eva, for the record.
26 And then also, do you know, at this time, if Fairbanks
27 AC will be resubmitting proposal 140 in some form?

28
29 MS. VICK: Yes, we will. Okay. No
30 question. Okay. And we'll be doing that for Area M. And
31 then we'll be resubmitting some proposal at the
32 statewide. Just for the record, the Board of Fish is
33 very limited as to what they can do about hatcheries.
34 And 140 was the proposal that we had submitted at the
35 last Board cycle for Area M for timing closures for that
36 June chum fishery, especially. But there are other
37 related proposals that we're going to be submitting for
38 Area M, and we're going to probably break them down into
39 categories. The hatchery proposals in general for
40 statewide are going to have to be a little different
41 because the Board is limited to basically reducing the
42 egg reduction. And also, as another reminder, there are
43 two other deadlines coming up that we'll be talking about
44 Monday night. And those have to do with hatchery
45 recommended regulations and with the permitting through
46 DNR. So ADF&G and DNR both have commentary periods out
47 right now and we are going to pay close attention to
48 that hatchery commentary period, because there is a --
49 I don't know if you'd call it a movement but, there is
50 an action to take away more authority from the Board and

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1 give it more directly to the department. And so, we want
2 to be careful of that. And the other thing is that at
3 this last Board meeting for a statewide, there was a
4 deferment of an item on miscellaneous business to the
5 March meeting. And that is to talk about the Board's
6 authority and to the Board of Fish. So, we want to pay
7 close attention to that so we can have commentary on
8 that. So, there's other actions happening. It's very
9 critical that we pay attention to all the little things
10 as well as the big things, and some of the things that
11 don't go before the Board of Fish that this morning at
12 the AYK meeting, we had a really big discussion on the
13 genetics that are so important for us to get out of Area
14 M. We've been pushing that for a long time. Senator
15 Hoffman gave money to the Bering Sea Fishermen's
16 Association two years ago, or a year and a half ago, to
17 have -- to conduct some genetic sampling for chinook out
18 of Area M which has never been done, not chinook. And
19 the department was supposed to have a an agreement with
20 BSFA to jointly work on that project. They stalled on
21 that and then the legislature -- that -- they appealed
22 to the legislature to transfer that funding directly to
23 the department. The department did not conduct any
24 chinook sampling last year, and we're under the
25 impression they're not going to do it this year either.
26 So, all of those things -- and the money is still there.
27 So, we're making inquiries into that. All of these things
28 are -- I can't speak for the department but, I know that
29 they're very concerned about the southeast ESA listing
30 right now, potential for that. And so, I think some of
31 these decisions are driven by that threat right now.

32
33 MR. WOODRUFF: Gale, I want to say that
34 we really appreciate you coming here and sharing your
35 knowledge with us. And I personally feel that you're the
36 most engaged person I've met in the fisheries. And it's
37 great to hear that you're sharing that knowledge with
38 us. And I think that that the Council here would really
39 like to support you in the Area M of genetic studies.
40 Thank you.

41
42 MS. VICK: Yeah. Thank you very much for
43 those kind words. There's a few of us, Andy is one of
44 them. Virgil and I were at a certain age, and we feel
45 that press of time, and we want to leave as much of our
46 knowledge behind to the next generation that you all are
47 picking up. A lot of you, and I applaud you for that.
48 So, thank you.

49
50 MR. BASSIH: Yeah. Member Bassich. Gale,

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1 could you just talk a little bit more about maybe some
2 strategies to try and get that genetics work done in
3 Area M?

4
5 MS. VICK: At this point, we -- in our
6 discussion this morning, it's legislative. So, there are
7 going to be inquiries into, first of all, Senator
8 Hoffman's office and then it will go from there. I can't
9 tell you where right now, but I know BSFA is making
10 those inquiries. I have asked the department directly
11 from the Fairbanks AC for the same thing, they were --
12 last year They were hoping to be on record, this year
13 to get -- to start that. But I haven't heard a word
14 since so, I -- like I said, I can't speak for the
15 department. I don't know if they're going to do that or
16 not but, all indications are that that's not going to
17 happen this year. But we'll have to wait and see.

18
19 MS. IRWIN: Olivia Irwin, for the record.
20 Thank you, Gale, for being here. Following up on your
21 answer to Andy's question is that -- does it have to go
22 through the legislature because of the added cost of the
23 genetic testing? Why can't the Board...?

24
25 MS. VICK: Because it was legislative
26 funding. And so right now, no matter what we say to the
27 department, it would still have more. I mean, they it
28 would be the legislature -- Senator Hoffman's office
29 would have to make the inquiry.

30
31 MS. MCDAVID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This
32 is Brooke. Gale, I'd be happy to share that zoom link
33 with the Council members for the meeting on Monday, if
34 you wouldn't mind emailing.....

35
36 MS. VICK: I would love that. Thank you
37 very much. Yeah, and because of the timing of everything
38 right now, I can't come before you and ask you for
39 support of any particular proposal because we don't have
40 any written up. But as some of you have mentioned
41 earlier, if you are predisposed to particular actions,
42 it would be helpful to know what you're thinking about
43 those actions, and we can utilize that in our commentary.

44
45 MS. BURK: Thank you. Through the Chair.
46 Gale, I am interested in -- I would like to encourage
47 this Council to support shortening the same depths -- I
48 think statewide is important. I do believe that we've
49 honed in on Area M but, I do know that through talking
50 to other fishermen, like there was a large landing of

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1 chum off of Kodiak, right. So, there's all these other
2 places that are hammering salmon and the idea behind
3 shortening the net length statewide is that it would
4 allow the king to -- who swim a little bit deeper, they
5 would be able to target sockeye. Some of the push back
6 was that you would be fishing more. But when talking to
7 the Area M guys who are salmon seiners who use this gear
8 type, that's not actually the case, and you probably
9 wouldn't have to fish as much more. Therefore, you're
10 probably not going to be increasing more intercept
11 numbers. So, I think that that's one thing to -- that I
12 would encourage supporting is shortening that same
13 depth. There's also -- this might come as a little bit
14 of news to folks around the table, but it's something
15 that Charlie and I were able to talk to the area -- the
16 Chignik folks about. And also, because we did go to
17 Kodiak and work -- we found out that we could take two
18 kings every day of the year per person. And so, there
19 was also interest in putting a limit on how much kings
20 a person could retain. And I think that's important to
21 include.....

22
23 MS. VICK: You're talking about sports
24 fish?

25
26 MS. BURK: Yeah. It was I think personal
27 is what our permit was, right? Personal use for
28 residents.

29
30 MS. VICK: Oh, okay.

31
32 MS. BURK: So, it might -- so we'd have
33 to think of that about that. I think we could talk about
34 that more. That's something I'm flagging. Is there, you
35 know.....

36
37 MS. VICK: The personal use fisheries,
38 there's only like four of them in the State that are
39 defined under the personal use fisheries. That would be
40 Cordova, Susitna has got one. Help me out. I think
41 there's 4 or 5, but Copper River is the biggest one and
42 then Susitna has got another one, and -- well, Kenai.
43 I'm sorry. Kenai. So, the regulations attached to those
44 are seasonally specific. The saltwater fishing --
45 there's two issues there. Saltwater fishing sports is -
46 - you're absolutely right that needs to be looked at in
47 terms of what is the annual limit versus the daily bag
48 limit. Then the other issue is the commercial fishing
49 home pack. What commercial fishermen are allowed to take
50 home in their boats. I fished commercially for 21 years,

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1 and Prince William Sound and I know that issue really
2 well. We don't -- and I need to put this on the list
3 because I keep forgetting to do it. We don't require
4 home pack commercial fishermen to have a -- to have
5 weights on what they take in a home pack or so when you
6 pull up to a tender and you offload -- and I'm talking
7 about gillnetters right now, and you offload on your
8 fish ticket, your commercial catch that you get paid for
9 is weighed. And it's pretty much specific to a species.
10 You -- on your fish ticket, it has a place to put in the
11 number of your home pack. But that's voluntary and the
12 tenders don't lift up your broiler bag for your home
13 pack and find out how much fish are or what species
14 you're taking. You can put anything in there, you want
15 to on the on the fish ticket. I think most fishermen are
16 pretty honest about that. But in times of conservation,
17 when it comes to chinook, we don't really know what that
18 home pack is taking. We don't have any statistics on
19 that, so.

20
21 MS. BURK: Through the Chair. This is
22 Eva. So, I think that you're correct. So is sport fishing
23 with the limit and I think for me there's a couple of
24 things there is there was concern about some of the
25 local people who might be doing those charters, taking
26 people out for the salmon. But I also think there does
27 need to be limits. If we can't keep any of the fish in
28 the river, we should be probably looking at those daily
29 bag limits. So, I think that's fair.

30
31 MS. VICKS: I do want to tell everybody,
32 though, that in sports fishing especially in the Gulf,
33 a lot of the times if you're winter fishing and stuff,
34 if you're not catching Alaskan fish, you're gonna --
35 you're catching Canadian fish, chinook. It's a mixed
36 bag. So, it depends on how far out you are from shore.
37 Yeah. But yeah, that's a very good point. And also, it's
38 a reminder that some of these fish are caught out in
39 federal waters. These are, you know, our limitations. 0
40 to 3 miles for the Board of Fish.

41
42 MS. BURK: Thank you. Chair. This is Eva.
43 So, I think those were the two statewide. And then as I
44 don't really have any other recommendations unless we've
45 talked about, AYK proposals for a four inch, but I don't
46 know if we're comfortable talking about that yet because
47 it -- every time we bring it up, it causes a lot of
48 contention. And so, I really want to be careful with
49 that one but, I -- I'm just flagging that as one that
50 is -- keeps coming up here and there and not sure when

1 and where and how to address it, but, it's just something
2 to keep on -- keep on our minds. But those were the main
3 ones. And then also supporting the 140 to limit time
4 area. I think we asked for that cap, but I still think
5 they're taking out like 500,000 chum, right. So, there's
6 still quite a bit of chum coming out of Area M, right.
7 I would be in support of the -- you guys submitting that
8 and us supporting the Fairbanks AC. And I think those
9 are my main proposals that I'm interested in for these
10 upcoming Board cycles. I don't know how to address the
11 escapement goals. Is that a proposal? And what were --
12 what were you thinking on those issues?
13

14 MS. VICKS: That's a very good question,
15 Madam Chair. The stock of concern is -- number one,
16 stock concern and escapement goals are not technically
17 a part of -- mean, how can I say this? They're through
18 the department, usually and we keep bringing this up.
19 We need to write something -- I need to write something
20 up, I guess about how that process works in most stock
21 and concerns and escapement goals. The problem we have
22 in the Yukon River, of course, is that we have a summer
23 wide for chum salmon -- for summer chum salmon. We have
24 a drainage white escapement goal, and that's the only
25 escapement goal we have for summer chum. On the fall
26 chum, the only escapement goal we have, I believe, is
27 on the T'ee Drinjik. Is that correct?
28

29 MR. BASSICH: Porcupine and main stem,
30 Canadian bound.
31

32 MS. BURK: Okay, yeah. Porcupine, main
33 stem. Thank you. So, that's problematic. Very
34 problematic for chinook and chum, both because of the
35 numbers that are going down in our discrete stocks. And
36 how we get that changed is something I have to do a lot
37 of research on, and I'll be talking with better minds
38 and mind on that, so.
39

40 MR. BASSICH: Member Bassich. Yeah. Thank
41 you. Actually, it's great you brought that up. That's
42 one of the topics that I wanted to bring up here is
43 maximum sustained yield. And it might be good to -- for
44 -- we have a number of new Council members here. If you
45 could maybe just talk briefly about some of the different
46 designations, biological escapement goals, what MSY
47 stands for. That might be really helpful for those
48 members that are up in the Fort Yukon and that area.
49

1 MS. VICK: I'm probably not the best
2 person to ask about this, and I know -- there are very
3 few people. Actually, I was surprised. One day I was
4 talking to somebody at the department, and they had the
5 same problem I have. Those MSY stands for maximum
6 sustained yield. SET stands for sustainable escapement.
7 Well, yeah, there's biological escapement goals, which
8 are BEG and SET stands for -- I use these acronyms all
9 the time. Sustainable escapement something and there are
10 several of different levels of escapement goals that are
11 used in different systems, and some are used in discrete
12 streams. So, I did a write up on that. I will have to
13 defer to that and get -- give that to anybody who would
14 like to do it, and I'll do a cleanup if necessary. But
15 those are very important to us. When we go into -- when
16 the JTC, for instance, the Joint Technical Committee for
17 the Yukon River panel has these discussions about the
18 escapement goals across the border, these escapement
19 criteria come up all the time, and it's really important
20 for us to understand what they mean in terms of how it
21 relates to stock of concerns and how it relates to our
22 general escapement goals and the numbers. The one thing
23 that I want to impress on all of us is that there is a
24 thing called shifting baseline that all of us have
25 discussed at various times. And that's important to
26 remember because sometimes on escapement goals there is
27 a tendency to want to shift that baseline. We're doing
28 that with the Anvik River right now, and that means to
29 lower those escapement goals, because the numbers
30 haven't been up for so many years. There's a real danger
31 in that, and I'm not qualified to have that in-depth
32 conversation, but I think we need to have it with people
33 who are qualified. So, I encourage that. Thank you. Thank
34 you for the question, Andy.

35
36 MR. BASSICH: Yeah. Member Bassich again,
37 I think the other topic, you brought it up that is really
38 important is getting some designations for stock of
39 concern on these stocks. Fall chum are at an all-time
40 low and chinook salmon are certainly, in the same boat.
41 And those are really important to get input in, put into
42 place. So that the greatest conservation management
43 strategies can be used on those stocks. And it's also -
44 - I'm not clear on this, but I think it's also, those
45 stocks would need to be listed like that before you
46 would be able to identify them as endangered species.

47
48 MS. VICK: Correct.
49
50

1 MR. BASSICH: If I'm not mistaken. I
2 might be wrong on that, but, I think they must be listed
3 that way first. So those are also very important.

4
5 MS. VICK: Actually, endangered species
6 of course is a federal designation and stock of concern
7 is a State of Alaska designation. There are three levels
8 of stock of concern. There's the yield management and
9 conservation, which is the highest. We've been trying
10 for a very long time to get chinook to a conservation
11 concern on the Yukon and managers have said to us -- and
12 this is probably has some truth to it, that -- well,
13 we're doing everything we can anyway that we would do
14 under a conservation concern but, having it listed as a
15 conservation concern is really important to have that
16 in the record. And we are -- have enough years now they
17 go by certain criteria of how many years that, you know,
18 you've had a depletion in order to do that. So, we really
19 -- and they also do it under Board cycles. And so now
20 as we go into the AYK cycle, we really need to push for
21 stock of concerns in so many different levels so many
22 different areas. Thank you, Andy and thank you Chair.

23
24 MS. IRWIN: Through the Chair. Olivia
25 Irwin. Just a quick clarifying Gale. So, you had said
26 though that it's the department that lists the stocks
27 of concerns, but you just mentioned bringing it up at
28 the Board. So, should we just put pressure to -- like
29 to ADF&G staff through testimony at the Board of Fish
30 so that staff would do that, or is that something that
31 the Board can direct staff to look into and analyze
32 stocks of concern?

33
34 MS. VICK: Through the Chairs. Olivia,
35 that's a very good question because there's been a lot
36 of conflict at Board of Fish meetings on that very
37 subject about who has a right to bring it up. And this
38 was a recent issue with Chignik. I would still bring it
39 up, and I would bring it up every time that we can. And
40 I would bring it up in your AC meetings. I think that's
41 something we've let go for too long a time. Thank you.

42
43 MS. BURK: Okay. Through -- thank you.
44 Through the Chair. Thank you, Gale, for all that -- all
45 your work on this. And I'm just going to say I'm Eva,
46 for the record. Thank you. If we look at what Fish and
47 Game has on their website for State of Alaska special
48 status species, fish stocks of concern, it is really
49 concerning because the Yukon was like one of the first
50 stocks. The Yukon chinook was listed in 2000 as a yield

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1 concern, and it's never been elevated to management or
2 conservation.

3

4 MS. VICK: Right. Right.

5

6 MS. BURK: And there's many other rivers
7 that have already made their way to management concern.
8 And I think that's really shocking that we've kind of
9 been left behind here. So, it's my understanding,
10 according to this page, is that the policy for the
11 management of sustainable salmon fisheries 5 AAC 39.222.
12 There you go, Olivia. 39.222 directs the Alaska
13 Department of Fish and Game to provide the Alaska Board
14 of Fish with reports on the status of salmon stocks and
15 identify any salmon stock that present a concern. In
16 consultation with Alaska Department of Fish and Game,
17 the Board may designate, amend or discontinue stocks of
18 concern based on stock status reports and
19 recommendations from Fish and Game. So, my question
20 would be who in Fish and Game can we communicate with?
21 Because it seems like that might be an avenue.

22

23 MS. VICK: Yeah, I would say that would
24 be the commissioner and the deputy commissioner. And at
25 this point -- but I think you can bring it up at a Board
26 meeting. You can even put it in a proposal, but I don't
27 -- at this point I don't recommend putting in proposals
28 that are not in the -- are not part of the due process,
29 are not going anywhere. We just -- we need to be focused
30 on those that are really going to make a difference. And
31 there should be other venues, and I can certainly check
32 into that even more. I do think the ACs have a perfect
33 right to ask them -- the department at each of the
34 meetings. And I think that would be the appropriate path.
35 Thank you.

36

37 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: There's some people
38 from ADF&G in the room that -- anybody have anything
39 that they can add to this?

40

41 MS. VICK: Yeah, I don't know who's here,
42 but please.

43

44 MS. BURK: Thank you. Through the Chair,
45 this is Eva, and then Gale, I just sent you the federal
46 staff analysis for the Yukon River Special Action
47 Request last year. And I believe there are three
48 escapement goals for summer chum and three as well for
49 fall chum. And I think this is where you know, really
50 understanding this is important because right now it's

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1 my understanding that the way that we have our escapement
2 goal for the Yukon River setup, with the drainage wide
3 and we use our preseason run outlook, right.

4

5 MS. VICK: Right.

6

7 MS. BURK: And we're like expect, how
8 many fish. And then if we expect over 550,000 summer
9 chum, right. There could technically be commercial
10 opening. But what's left out of the story is that, you
11 know, the two other escapement goals would be the East
12 Fork Andreafsky Weir and the Anvik Sonar. And I think
13 the Anvik is really the one that like, really gives me
14 a lot of pause and thinking about how do we manage the
15 Yukon, because the Anvik goal is 350,000 to 700,000
16 summer chum, and the historical median is 450,229. and
17 in 2023, only 60,556 summer chum made it to the Anvik.
18 And so how can we expect to keep producing summer chum
19 when we're not making it to these really important
20 spawning tributaries. So, I think that -- I just want
21 to put on the record, I'm not sure how we address it,
22 and maybe this is the argument that we need to be
23 bringing up to Fish and Game, to the Board about what -
24 - you really need to look at, how to manage this
25 differently and elevate this to a management concern.
26 I'm like -- I feel like I'm talking and thinking through
27 this out loud, but I just kind of wanted to put that on
28 the record because we think we're doing okay when it
29 comes to summer chum but, I honestly don't think we are,
30 and I'm not really sure how to address that.

31

32 MS. VICK: Thank you, Madam Chair. That's
33 really a very critical issue and thank you for the
34 clarification. There is a separate summer chum for the
35 Anvik, as you mentioned, and we're down to about 10% of
36 the historical average on that. There is one for sockeye
37 on the Andreafsky. I don't think that's summer chum, is
38 that correct? I think it's sockeye. And -- but having a
39 drainage wide summer chum for the rest of the Yukon is
40 really problematic. And for the very reasons that you
41 just listed. And how we voice that is to write a
42 statement. And I think we can give it to the department
43 for getting a response. If you go through your ACs, the
44 department is required to respond to you accordingly.
45 And so, I recommend going through the AC process on that
46 one. But this RAC certainly can bring that up. And I
47 would encourage that as well because those are -- I
48 think we're getting to the point, all of us. We've got
49 so many cross-jurisdictional issues that we have to stop
50 being too polite and too careful about the

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1 jurisdictions. We have to start crossing those
2 jurisdictions. We heard that last night when you had
3 testimony at the during the Council session. We're not
4 going to get to answers until we look at ecosystems
5 approach to all of our fish issues. Thank you.

6

7 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Holly Carroll is
8 online. She'd like to add a few comments, if she may.

9

10 MS. VICK: Oh of course. Thank you,
11 Holly.

12

13 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Go ahead, Holly.

14

15 MS. CAROLL: Hey everybody. I hope you
16 can hear me, okay.

17

18 MS. MCDAVID: Yep. We got you, Holly.
19 Thank you.

20

21 MS. CAROLL: Okay. So. Yeah, a couple
22 corrections there. So, gosh, thanks, Gale, for having
23 all that back pocket information about goals. But Eva
24 was right. There is a summer chum goal on the East Fork
25 Andreafsky River and the Anvik. There are no sockeye
26 goals in the Yukon drainage. We don't really have real
27 sockeye runs for now, although those are increasing.
28 But.....

29

30 (Simultaneous speech)

31

32 MS. VICK: Yeah, (distortion) that
33 correction.

34

35 MS. CAROLL:I wanted to kind of --
36 I love that you're bringing up this escapement goal
37 issue. And one thing that I guess I would kind of
38 backtrack and say, when you guys were discussing how to
39 get those stock designations change through the Board
40 of Fish process. Just because I used to be the manager,
41 and I used to help write all the Board materials as we
42 would go into a cycle. Those stock status updates are
43 prepared by the research staff at Fish and Game. So, for
44 instance, for the Yukon, you'd want to be connecting
45 with Zach Liller and Fred West and Bonnie Borba. And
46 they will do an internal process to determine what that
47 stock status is and whether or not sort of they want to
48 change it or whatever, That's what I noticed because I
49 remember we had the stock status in 2013, I think in
50 chinook it was already, you know, that that stock of

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1 concern. And then in 2018 when it increased, there was
2 some internal consideration that like, oh, maybe we can
3 -- the run increased, maybe we can remove that stock
4 status concern. And I remember being the manager and
5 saying like, why would why would we do that? You know,
6 it's only one good year of passage. So, I don't know
7 what the formal Fish and Game process is internally for
8 deciding those stocks of concern, but, they will -- from
9 my recollection -- and I don't know why there's not Fish
10 and Game staff in the room kind of speaking up but, from
11 my recollection is they will have all of those analyses
12 done before the Board of Fish. So, when the AYK Board
13 of Fish meets, those documents are done. And so like
14 Gale is saying, I think the time to connect with your
15 Fish and Game staff, your research coordinator Zack
16 Liller or your management coordinator Erin Tiernan, the
17 time to do that is before that Board meeting. And I do
18 think the AC process is a good process, because then
19 you're doing that in a public forum where those staff
20 are there so or contacting them directly. I don't think
21 you should be afraid to do that, but I do recall that
22 being quite an internal process. And so, if you wait
23 till the Board to make comments on it, they're going to
24 be reporting out to the Board their findings, I believe,
25 if I'm remembering that right. So better to get in there
26 kind of prior to that meeting is my suggestion on that
27 one.

28
29 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you, Holly.

30
31 MS. CAROLL: Yeah. And I guess -- I don't
32 have anything else for the topics you brought up, but,
33 I just wanted to let you know that Keith and I are both
34 going to be involved in giving you guys updates, and so
35 I'll just stand by if there was further questions. But
36 also, if you're eager to move on, you know, I'll be
37 around for the Yukon report component.

38
39 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you so much.

40
41 MS. VICK: Thank you, Holly.

42
43 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Go ahead, Dorothy.

44
45 MS. SHOCKLEY: Thank you. For the record,
46 Dorothy Shockley. Thanks, Gale. Good to see you. In
47 regard to the consideration or conservation concerns, I
48 would suggest that we not only contact the Commissioner,
49 but the Governor and the legislators. If we could propose
50 to write a letter as well. But I really appreciate you

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1 bringing that up last night, you know, the endangered
2 species. And I think writing to our Alaska delegation
3 would be appropriate at this time as well. Thank you.

4

5 MS. MCDAVID: Mr. Chair. Just for the
6 record so, Dorothy, in the RAC correspondence policy,
7 you can't write to elected officials. So, that is
8 something as a private citizen, you could do or, you
9 know, you could write to the Board and potentially ask
10 them to forward things but, they are also limited in
11 certain capacities due to the Hatch Act. Thanks.

12

13 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: I'm sure you could
14 do it tribally.

15

16 MS. VICK: Yeah, that would be a good
17 avenue.

18

19 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Anything more for
20 Gale?

21

22 (No response)

23

24 Okay. Thank you so much. Very
25 informative.

26

27 MS. VICK: Thank you, all of you and
28 thank you for the great work that you're all doing.

29

30 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: So, thanks for being
31 with us today. Appreciate you.

32

33 MS. VICK: And thank you again.

34

35 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay, we're moving
36 down the list to Tanana Chiefs Conference Tribal
37 Resource Stewardship Division. Diloolala, thanks for being
38 here and joining us today.

39

40 MS. ERICKSON: Good afternoon. Council
41 members, I have just a really quick report for you guys.
42 I think Krystal was pretty comprehensive with her report
43 yesterday for what TCC has really been up to. As I said
44 in my last update to you guys last fall, we're a small
45 but mighty team. And so, most of our efforts has been
46 gone -- has gone towards the EIS engagement and getting
47 our tribes to engage with that process. So that's taken
48 up like the bulk of our time since I last talked with
49 you. But I wanted to share a couple other big updates
50 with you guys. So, in October, Tanana Chiefs Conference

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1 signed a self-governance agreement with the Department
2 of the Interior. It was the first of its kind, and it
3 was a self-governance agreement that covered National
4 Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, BLM and
5 USGS. And this is meant to be the first step towards
6 building better consultation, communication and
7 communication and partnership with the federal programs
8 and our partners over there. And so, we're still figuring
9 out how to make that partnership work through the first
10 scope of work that we signed, scope of work, one that
11 is meant to kind of streamline tribal engagement with
12 their processes for public land management. And so
13 that's I think the biggest update I have for you guys
14 is that we have that signed, and we're figuring out what
15 that looks like in the new administration right now. We
16 also are finishing wrapping up the rest of our fisheries
17 studies from the 2024 field season, and we're prepping
18 for the 2025 field season.

19
20 The only project our fisheries program
21 will be working on this summer is the closing out of the
22 Mid River Sonar feasibility study. So, we're hoping to
23 have that finished by the end of this field season and
24 a report done next spring. We've also been engaging
25 pretty heavily in all of the RAC meetings for the
26 Interior. Between Krystal and I, we attended the Yukon
27 Flats, the upper Tanana Fortymile, the Middle Yukon,
28 McGrath, middle Nenana, Delta AC, Nenana AC, Nenana
29 Minto AC, the Joint Interior AC meeting, and a number
30 of the Fairbanks AC meetings and their subcommittees.
31 Just trying to get our grounding there and figure out
32 how we can get our tribes to engage there. And then just
33 a notice if anyone is interested in attending. I can
34 send an invite out to the RAC but, we'll be hosting our
35 TCC region Alaska Migratory Bird Co-Management Council
36 meeting March 5th here in Fairbanks. And then the
37 statewide meeting will be April 7th through 10th in
38 Anchorage. And then I did want you all to know that we
39 did receive the letter about the dall sheep coalition,
40 management coalition. And I met with a number of partners
41 in the federal government, and we talked about it, and
42 I think Tim Hammond sent a letter back to you guys. So,
43 we're aware of it, and we're engaging. I think that's
44 everything I have right now.

45
46 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you. Does
47 anybody have any questions? Go ahead.

48
49 MS. IRWIN: Olivia Irwin for the record,
50 thanks, Loo, so much for the report. I just had a

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1 question. So, you said this summer they're going to be
2 closing out the feasibility study for Mid River Sonar,
3 right?

4

5 MS. ERICKSON: That's the hope, and Brian
6 Lepping's on line two. If you had more detailed questions
7 for him.

8

9 MS. IRWIN: Yeah. Maybe, Brian, maybe
10 this is a good one for you. I'm just wondering, is there
11 an estimated time frame or -- for the, you know, if the
12 feasibility study is happening now, my question is
13 because I'm wondering about the incorporation of Mid
14 River Sonar into any potential proposals coming up at
15 Board of Fish as an additional way to count fish. So,
16 I'm just wondering what's the timeline on the project
17 is, maybe estimating to either of you.

18

19 MS. ERICKSON: For, like, actually
20 operating a sonar? So, we're seeking funding for it. We
21 don't have funding to actually operate it. We were only
22 funded to execute a feasibility study. Yeah.

23

24 MR. LEPPING: And Olivia, I would say I
25 would have a report out by the beginning of 2026 at some
26 point in time.

27

28 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Excuse me. Brian,
29 you forgot to introduce yourself, sir. Thank you.

30

31 MR. LEPPING: Sorry, sorry. I'm Brian
32 Lepping with Tanana Chiefs Conference and the fisheries
33 biologist for the Mid River Sonar project, and sorry
34 about that. But like I said, I would expect a report out
35 in early 2026.

36

37 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay. Go ahead,
38 Andy.

39

40 MR. BASSICH: Yeah. Thank you. Member
41 Bassich, here. I'm wondering if there's been any
42 preliminary estimations for cost for deploying that
43 site. The fish wheel site?

44

45 MR. LEPPING: I haven't done any cost
46 estimates yet. But I know how much Pilot Station is
47 required to run. I would estimate a yearly cost of around
48 \$400,000. And there's going to be quite a bit more than
49 that. Just as a start-up cost. If we have to build a
50 camp and buy more equipment and things like that. So, I

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1 haven't actually calculated out any numbers yet but, I
2 would say at least the yearly cost of 400,000.

3
4 MR. BASSICH: Yeah. Thank you. Member
5 Bassich again. I would highly recommend maybe talking
6 to Stan Zuray, who operated similar type projects in the
7 Rampart region. He might have some real insights as to
8 how you can get it up and running a little bit cheaper.
9 Pilot Station is a highly involved site and just running
10 a fish wheel site should be considerably less expensive
11 than that as far as implementation and daily costs for
12 operational use. But just a suggestion. I really am in
13 favor of that project. I think it's very, very critical
14 to check on many different aspects of both king and fall
15 chum in the Upper Yukon River. So, I'm highly supportive
16 and really want to see that project come because it's
17 going to enlighten us in a lot of different ways. So
18 yeah, thank you very much. I really appreciate the effort
19 that TCC put into to getting that project tested, and
20 hopefully we'll see it implemented ASAP.

21
22 MS. ERICKSON: Thank you. Just to correct
23 -- through the Chair. And Brian, correct me if I'm wrong,
24 but, I don't think we're planning to have a test wheel
25 fishery. We're going to have, like a setnet test fishery
26 with it. Yeah.

27
28 MR. LEPPING: Yeah. It was -- sorry.
29 Sorry, Charlie.

30
31 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Go ahead, Brian.

32
33 MR. LEPPING: Well, I was going to say
34 we've been testing the drift that I mean it -- I've been
35 designing this off of Pilot Station and Eagle. So that's
36 the way we've been running it. There was some ideas
37 early in the project that we might use a fish wheel, and
38 we just never got around to that. And in the areas that
39 we did test this past summer; drifting is feasible in
40 those areas. So, I think that if this project was to
41 move forward, we would run with drift nets. I have talked
42 to Stan and he is -- he's been a really valuable resource
43 but, I -- that is a good idea. I will reach back out to
44 him and see what his thoughts are.

45
46 MS. IRWIN: Olivia Irwin, for the record.
47 I think this is a question for Brian. Brian, would it
48 be -- have you guys looked at whether or not it would
49 be the most effective to be near the mouth of a
50 tributary, similar to what I believe the Koyukuk has?

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1

2 MR. LEPPING: Well, I'm not sure what
3 you're referencing as far as the Koyukuk but, we did
4 look at a spot that was just below the Tanana River, and
5 there was -- there's an idea there about using genetics
6 and bank orientation there. I haven't got any of those
7 results back from the State yet so, I don't -- I can't
8 really speak on that. There is another site, kind of an
9 alternative site that is further down river in between
10 Ruby and Galena. And we are -- I'm going to plan to take
11 a look at that site as well this summer.

12

13 MS. IRWIN: Okay. Thank you.

14

15 MR. LEPPING: Yeah. Thank you.

16

17 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Any more questions?

18

19 (No response)

20

21 Hearing or seeing none. Thank you so
22 much for being here.

23

24 MS. ERICKSON: Thank you.

25

26 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Yukon River Coho
27 Salmon Radio Telemetry Project. Andy.

28

29 MR. PADILLA: Good afternoon. My name is
30 Andy Padilla. Can you hear me? Okay.

31

32 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Yes, sir. You have
33 the floor.

34

35 MR. PADILLA: Okay. Thank you. As I said,
36 my name is Andy Padilla. I am the assistant fall season
37 research biologist with the Alaska Department of Fish
38 and Game and in Fairbanks here, Commercial Fisheries.
39 And I am presenting on the 2022 Radio Telemetry Project
40 that we conducted on Yukon River coho salmon. This
41 project marked the first time coho salmon were tagged,
42 radio tagged in the Yukon River, and it served as a
43 feasibility study for future purposes. Previously, Fish
44 and Game has cooperated with other agencies to conduct
45 radio telemetry studies on chinook and summer chum and
46 some components of the fall chum salmon in the Yukon
47 River drainage. Funding for this cooperative project was
48 provided by OSM, ADF&G, Yukon Delta Fisheries
49 Development Association, Fish and Wildlife and Yukon

00078

1 River Salmon Research and Management fund. Next slide
2 please.

3
4 This study was developed to address the
5 limited knowledge about coho salmon within the Yukon
6 River drainage. Baseline information needs to be
7 collected to assist in effective management of the
8 fishery -- or fishery management. Coho salmon are
9 harvested as you all know, across important fisheries,
10 including subsistence, commercial, personal use, and
11 sport fisheries within the Yukon River drainage. As the
12 last major salmon species to migrate up the Yukon River
13 in the fall, migrating -- studying their migration is
14 particularly challenging due to the onset of winter. The
15 project objectives included mapping the distribution of
16 tagged coho salmon, calculating proportional
17 contributions to five drainage groups, determining the
18 mean migration speed between river sections, and
19 analyzing run timing through low river for each drainage
20 group. Additionally, the project aimed to identify
21 migration -- migration routes and (distortion) waters
22 catalogue, which is maintained by Fish and Game and
23 pinpoint areas to enhance the genetic baseline. First,
24 I will cover some of the fieldwork conducted as part of
25 the project, followed by preliminary -- followed by
26 results that addressed the objectives. Next slide
27 please.

28
29 This map highlights the five drainage
30 groups represented by the colored polygons which were
31 chosen to define coho salmon drainage groups for the
32 study. The groups were selected based on available tower
33 locations used from previous radio telemetry projects,
34 and the limited coho salmon data that we do have for
35 spawning areas. The map also shows the 11 locations of
36 -- 11 locations of 11 remote tracking stations, also
37 known as towers, established for the project. The four
38 towers were positioned along the main stem Yukon River,
39 while six were placed on the tributaries. The white area
40 in the lower Yukon downstream from the first tower is
41 not included in the drainage groups. We know that coho
42 salmon are present in the Andreafsky River, which is
43 downstream of our tagging location at other systems in
44 lower Yukon River. The tagging location was chosen based
45 on river morphology. Nice single channel. Their
46 logistics with the community of Russian Mission and its
47 position above any potential commercial fisheries that
48 existed, which they didn't occur during the project.
49 Next slide please.

50

00079

1 In 2021, the tower sites were cleared
2 as they had not been visited since the 2025 summer chum
3 salmon tagging project. In 2022, just before the tagging
4 began, the towers were revisited to upload tag frequency
5 tables, which are essential for detecting individual
6 fish as they pass the towers. The initial phase of the
7 project involved dedicating a couple of days to fishing,
8 with snag nets at potential sites, and training staff
9 on tagging procedures. Tagging officially started on
10 August 15th and continued daily until September 5th.
11 Following the release of the tagged fish, fish were
12 tracked via stationary tracking towers and aerial
13 surveys. Next slide please.

14
15 This chart compares the number of coho
16 salmon tags deployed shown in the black line to the coho
17 salmon daily passage estimates provided by the sonar
18 operator near Pilot Station, shown in the colored bars.
19 The data on the bottom axis is lagged to Russian Mission,
20 which is 90 river miles upstream of the sonar site. The
21 tags deployed occurred during the bulk of the run and
22 covered both large pulses. We totaled -- or we tagged a
23 total of 349 tags of fish. Next slide, please. This map
24 displays the final tracked locations of coho salmon
25 throughout the drainage. Additional tributaries were
26 surveyed with no tagged detections. A total of 67 tagged
27 coho salmon traveled to previously undocumented areas,
28 and this resulted in 19 additions to the Anadromous
29 Waters Catalog and also provided a documentation for 37
30 additional waterbodies. Each and -- each of those points
31 is the final location. In the lower left-hand corner of
32 the map, you'll see where the tagging location was. Next
33 slide please.

34
35 This donut chart illustrates the
36 observed percentages of coho salmon that migrated to
37 within the four region regions of the prior map. Right
38 here we -- as I mentioned before, there were five. We
39 did not have any fish. We -- pardon. Excuse me. We had
40 one fish that made it into the Upper Yukon below Ravens
41 -- or above Ravens Ridge. But that's not included in
42 this chart here. It wasn't observed past the tower. And
43 this is data based from towers and aerial survey tracking
44 flights. Describing clockwise coho salmon primarily
45 migrated to the Tanana River. 53% is shown to the right
46 -- in the rightmost section, the yellow one, while
47 significant portions occupied the Lower Yukon group,
48 which was 34%, the largest left segment, which includes
49 the Anvik River and one fish that went into the Innoko
50 River. The Yukon, or pardon the Koyukuk drainage

00080

1 accounted for 7% in the dark blue segment, and the Middle
2 Yukon accounted for 6%, the green slash teal segment at
3 around 12:00 and included fish found in the Yuki River
4 headwaters. As I mentioned before, the Upper Yukon area
5 above the confluence of the Tanana representing the
6 fifth drainage group had only one coho salmon,
7 constituting less than 1%. Next slide please.

8
9 A little bit about the characteristics
10 of our samples, that of the tagged fish. This chart
11 describes the length of coho salmon that were tagged.
12 The bottom axis of the chart are the lengths in
13 millimeters, and the left axis is the number of males
14 and females tagged, the number of them, frequency.
15 Catches influenced by net selectivity and fishing
16 locations, we fish close to the shore due to coho salmon
17 behavior and to reduce chum salmon capture. Female coho
18 salmon are usually smaller than males, as you can see
19 in the chart here. In 2022, male coho salmon were notably
20 smaller than females, with a mean of 525mm for males and
21 535mm for females. Which was consistent with other test
22 fishery projects in the Lower Yukon this year as well.
23 Our project avoided tagging some of the smaller coho
24 salmon as we prioritize best fit to the fish size. Best
25 tag fit to the fish size. Next slide please.

26
27 Migration speed was calculated based on
28 the time and date of release to each of the tower
29 locations. This box plot chart is based on fish that
30 were tracked between successive towers in kilometers per
31 day. Kilometers per towers is on the x axis on the
32 bottom, and kilometers per day is on the y axis on the
33 vertical axis. Vertical lines represent the minimums and
34 maximums for each of those towers, and the shaded area
35 represents the 25 to 75% quartiles. Horizontal lines
36 with boxes represent the medium speed, and points
37 indicate any outliers within that group. For instance,
38 the first one at the Paimiut tower, we had one fish that
39 was recorded at just under 80km per day. That's after
40 the initial tagging, the average travel speed was slowed
41 -- is slowed, likely due to the tagging event. Once they
42 resume the migration the average main stem migration
43 speed was 33km per day. The migration speed -- if we
44 look at this plot here, the migration speed slowed as
45 coho salmon approached spawning areas such as shown in
46 the blue box where are fish in from the Anvik River that
47 were only traveling 22 miles per day. As we -- as they
48 get closer to the spawning areas, and similarly fish
49 within the Tanana River drainage also showed some
50 slowing over successive stations in that drainage shown

00081

1 in the blue area or blue arrow. The Manley, Kantishna
2 and Nenana towers. However, these towers were not
3 located on spawning streams but, were on the on the main
4 stem of the Tanana and Kantishna River. Next slide
5 please.

6
7 This chart shows the date fish were
8 tagged relative to where they ended up. So, the date is
9 along the bottom and the final location -- on the x axis
10 of when they were released, and the final location is
11 noted in the gray boxes on the right of each chart.
12 Going from top to bottom would be from lower river to
13 upper river. It would be below Paimiut, Lower Yukon,
14 Koyukuk River, Middle Yukon, Tanana and the one fish
15 that went to the -- into the Upper Yukon. And just for
16 orientation, the colors on the chart correspond to the
17 presentation maps. There was no identifiable migration
18 pattern by drainage group. All drainage groups were
19 present throughout the tagging period. Next slide
20 please.

21
22 Based on the tracking, coho salmon in
23 the study, several areas were identified as needing
24 additional genetic baseline coverage. These areas were
25 determined by comparing our study results with existing
26 lab samples. The areas are listed by Regional Advisory
27 Council regions. On the far right is the one here,
28 Eastern Interior. So, I can go through some of those.
29 Some of those areas of interest would be the Tozitna
30 River in the Yukon, Toklat River in the Tanana drainage,
31 Richardson Clearwater in Delta Clearwater River and in
32 the Porcupine drainage, the Draanjik and Fishing Branch
33 as well. Please contact Fish and Game Gene Conservation
34 Lab if you are interested in collaborating on sample
35 collections for this baseline, or if you know of any
36 other locations where coho salmon are spawning in
37 accessible congregations of at least 200 fish, that's -
38 - try to get a certain number of fish in order to reach
39 the threshold for the uncertainty required. Please --
40 yeah, and please share this information. Elizabeth Lee's
41 contact information there, elizabeth.lee@alaska.gov.
42 She's our fishery geneticist. Next slide please.

43
44 As discussed in the previous slide,
45 tracking fish to spawning locations within the Yukon
46 River drainage, identified key sites to improve the
47 genetic baseline for coho salmon. We have already
48 started generating proposals to collect additional
49 baseline samples from these locations. This project
50 marked the first time coho salmon were radio tagged in

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1 the Yukon River, serving as a feasibility study, as
2 mentioned, to better account for natural variability,
3 we recommend conducting similar studies over three
4 years. We weren't able to due to funding limitations,
5 and we would urge funding agencies to prioritize funding
6 for coho salmon research alongside chinook and coho
7 salmon, as coho salmon are crucial to the ecosystem as
8 well. The observations from this project would be
9 strengthened with additional years of tracking, which
10 would build documentation to increase nominations to the
11 Anadromous Waters Catalog, confirming coho salmon in the
12 same areas as future studies will help list more
13 locations in the AWC, Anadromous Waters Catalog, and
14 that provides greater habitat protections for these
15 critical areas. The landing zones and tower maintenance
16 established during this project streamlined preparations
17 for the current coho salmon telemetry study, as well
18 saving costs. These resources are ready to support
19 future coho or chum salmon telemetry efforts. Next slide
20 please. And I just want to take a minute to thank our
21 sponsors for cooperating with -- or this cooperative
22 project to study Yukon River coho salmon with funding
23 from Office of Subsistence Management, Alaska Department
24 of Fish and Game, Yukon Delta Fisheries Development
25 Association, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the
26 Yukon River Salmon Research and Management Fund. And on
27 the slide there are both Bonnie Borba and my contacts,
28 if you have any additional questions. And there's some
29 folks of from the project that made it happen. Thank you
30 for your time.

31
32 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you. We have
33 a question for you here. Hold on. Okay.

34
35 MR. WOODRUFF: This is Don Woodruff from
36 Eagle. And my question is, did you see any coho tagged
37 on the Upper Yukon?

38
39 MR. PADILLA: Hi, Don. This is Andy
40 Padilla. Fish and Game. We had one coho salmon that was
41 detected at our uppermost tower, and that was just below
42 -- or yeah, just below Rampart. So, it didn't even --
43 we didn't not see anything above Rampart.

44
45 MR. WOODRUFF: Follow up question. My
46 other question is why did you not tag fish at the
47 beginning of your fish run? Because there's some
48 evidence that early run fish have to swim the furthest.
49 And there's TEK evidence that the Canadians are catching
50 coho salmon. Thank you.

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MR. PADILLA: Yeah, thank (distortion)

MS. MCDAVID: You. You're breaking up a little bit. Could you start over with that response? Thank you.

(Distortion)

Oh, we still -- so sorry, Andy. We still can't hear you. I'm going to stop sharing the screen in the room, and maybe that'll help with the connection. Okay. Do you want to try again? Thank you.

MR. PADILLA: Can you hear me, Brooke?

MS. MCDAVID: All right. I think we got you now. Thanks.

MR. PADILLA: Hi, Brooke. Can you hear me?

MS. MCDAVID: We can hear you, Andy. Can you hear us?

MR. PADILLA: I can now, yes. Thank you. Would you be able to go to slide five for folks?

MS. MCDAVID: Yes. One moment please.

MR. PADILLA: Mr. Woodward was asking why we didn't tag at the beginning of the of the fish run, which was one, two, three, four, five days before we started was really when our pilots started seeing fish. That was due to reduce bycatch from -- well, first of all, our timing for project operations were based off of the main run timing at Pilot Station lag two -- lagged between Pilot Station and Mountain Village to give us an estimate of when we should be there. Had it been a three-year project and we had had funding, we would have extended it both on both ends. However, since this was a feasibility study, we wanted to cover at least 80% of the historical run timing. And that is what our tagging schedule was based off of, which does, as you see in this graph, shows that we hit the vast majority of those fish. But I do want to recognize that, yes, we were really hoping to see a lot more fish go up the up the - in the Upper Yukon. We also did have U.S Fish and Wildlife put out a receiver on the Porcupine River. And that again did not see any fish. And we do, yes, we do

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1 know that coho salmon go up and folks out of Old Crow
2 and above do catch those coho. But again, it was a
3 feasibility study, and we tried to get the bulk of the
4 run.

5

6 MR. WOODRUFF: Thank you for that answer.

7

8 MR. PADILLA: You're welcome.

9

10 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Andy, and then Eva.

11

12 MR. BASSICH: Yeah. Andy Bassich here. A
13 couple quick questions. This may not have been something
14 associated with this particular project but, do you have
15 any information or data on the changing size of Coho
16 salmon over time? I assume you have some baseline data
17 on, you know, previous years and you were obviously
18 measuring now. So, I'm just wondering what kind of
19 changes you may observed over time. And then the second
20 question I had is, I'm looking at slide 11 here, and it
21 shows that you have some coho salmon samples collected
22 in 2024. And I'm just curious what sampling was done and
23 if any work was ever done on -- if you had carcasses or,
24 or live fish or anything on fecundity of those fish at
25 the time.

26

27 MR. PADILLA: Hi Andy. This is Andy
28 Padilla with Fish and Game. Thanks for those questions
29 to address the first one. This coho salmon guess we
30 collected age or length for the fish that we tagged. I
31 do not have in front of me the historical average sizes
32 of fish. But that is something that we keep track of.
33 And I would defer to Bonnie Borba on the specifics of
34 that. I do believe there has been noted shifts in even
35 between seasons where coho salmon do tend to be more
36 smaller in some seasons. Whether there's a trend to that
37 or not again, I would defer to Bonnie on that. And to
38 answer your second question, the coho samples collected
39 in 2024 were carcass samples that we -- excuse me. I'm
40 not sure about the Draanjik ones, I couldn't be 100%
41 sure on those ones, but the Delta Clearwater and
42 Richardson were samples, either they were -- they didn't
43 -- I don't think that they took any -- they're
44 specifically just for genetics. I don't think that they
45 were -- the aim was always to release fish alive, I
46 think if they were catching live fish. Carcasses, I don't
47 believe that there was any additional fecundity data.
48 But that would definitely be something interesting to
49 look at.

50

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1

2 MR. BASSICH: Okay. Yeah. Thank you. I'm
3 always interested in those two particular parameters
4 because it goes to impacts in marine environments and
5 changing fish more -- changing fish into the future,
6 which also impacts fecundity which impacts productivity,
7 which impacts rebuilding. So anyway, I'm always
8 interested in that. Thank you for that. I'll follow up
9 with Bonnie on that. Appreciate it.

10

11

12 MR. PADILLA: And if I just might add
13 that, yes. Thank you. And that kind of leads to the --
14 a little bit of why we started focusing a little more
15 on coho because we don't know a lot. And those are things
16 that have traditionally been reserved for those specific
17 research topics or have been reserved for more present
18 species or more important species such as chinook. So
19 yeah, all more potential. Thank you.

20

21 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Eva.

22

23 MS. BURK: Thank you. Through the Chair,
24 this is Eva. I just have a quick question. When you're
25 talking about the final fish location, does this study
26 also measure like mortality, or how is that done?

27

28

29 MR. PADILLA: Yes. Thank you for that.
30 So, fish were signed and this -- I didn't get into the
31 detail of how we assigned. But fish were assigned. Each
32 individual fish was assigned a fate. And these fish in
33 the map that you had the distribution of -- that would
34 be slide six shows the final locations these fish were
35 designated as -- not all -- the fish that we're talking
36 about were designated as spawners. We did have some fish
37 that we couldn't account for, those fish that were caught
38 at or -- excuse me. We had three fish that were harvested
39 -- presumed harvested but, the fish below camp, we did
40 have a handful that we attributed to tag mortality and
41 some where we couldn't determine a final fate. Just that
42 they were below our tagging location. We weren't able
43 to track them a third time, essentially. So, yes, there
44 were some based on the tags, do have mortality indicators
45 on them, which is one of the factors that we use in
46 determining a final fate.

47

48 MS. BURK: Thank you for that.

49

50

MR. PADILLA: My pleasure.

CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: Go ahead, Dorothy.

1

2 MS. SHOCKLEY: Thank you. Thank you for
3 the information. This is Dorothy. I do appreciate, you
4 know, the research and -- I'm gathering information you
5 know that apparently you don't have. I think, you know
6 first of all, I would suggest that you talk to local
7 people in regards to traditional knowledge of coho and
8 other species, of course. But I just wanted to comment
9 to in regard or on -- I guess on behalf of our ancestors
10 and our elders that have told us over the years that
11 once you start messing with the species, whether it's
12 fish or animals and tagging them and those kinds of
13 things, we were told many times that once you start
14 doing that, they're going to leave. And, you know, I
15 just think about, you know, the years that, you know,
16 Fish and Game has been so-called managing and tagging
17 and those kinds of things. And, you know, our species
18 are leaving. And so, I just wanted to put that on the
19 record that you know, traditional knowledge, and what
20 our ancestors told us in regards to tagging and messing
21 with our animals and our fish. Thank you.

22

23 MR. PADILLA: Yeah. Hi Dorothy, this is
24 Andy Padilla. Thank you for both of those. The first
25 point mentioned, you asked to consult a -- local folks
26 to determine additional knowledge and locations of where
27 coho are and actually one of the first things that we
28 used in order to kind of help locate where we were
29 thinking that coho might be, was through local
30 knowledge. In the early 90s, during the subsistence
31 salmon survey for two years they -- the surveyors went
32 to all the communities up and down the Yukon River. The
33 same survey that's conducted now but added an additional
34 question. And that was, do you know where any coho salmon
35 are, and where, and can you give us any information? And
36 then those were matched. Some of them were confirmed
37 right then and there and added to the Anadromous Waters
38 Catalog and have been the baseline for coho salmon and
39 the drainage largely due to local and traditional
40 knowledge. We -- those points that we had from people
41 were mapped, and we used those as a way to help target
42 where we wanted aerial surveys to help confirm and get
43 values to match that traditional knowledge so that they
44 could be added and also, again, just be used as a source
45 of where people have been seeing them. And secondly in
46 regards to your comment about touching fish I -- you
47 know, I respect what your elders have taught you and I
48 appreciate that you brought that up. So, thank you.

49

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1 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Any more questions?
2 Go ahead, Donald.

3
4 MR. WOODRUFF: This is Don Woodruff
5 again. Have you considered research on dolly varden and
6 where they spawn?

7
8 MR. PADILLA: Hi Don, this is Andy
9 Padilla, Fish and Game. Dolly varden that would -- since
10 we're commercial fisheries and handle management of
11 commercial and subsistence management within the
12 commercial fisheries and subsistence fisheries. We don't
13 focus on resident species unless they're being harvested
14 in large quantities. And that's definitely something
15 that may have been done. I know it's being done on the
16 North Slope for certain -- for dolly varden with the
17 division of Sport Fish. However, I'm not aware of
18 anything specifically to dolly varden in the Yukon
19 drainage.

20
21 MR. WOODRUFF: One follow up is that, I'm
22 beginning to catch dolly varden in my whitefish net.
23 Thank you.

24
25 MR. PADILA: Thank you for letting us
26 know.

27
28 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you. Yeah. We
29 need to move on or we're going to be only going over.

30
31 MR. PADILLA: No problem. Thank you.

32
33 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Yep. Thank you.
34 Thank you for your presentation. Next will be
35 subsistence project updates with Brooke Fisher.

36
37 MS. FISHER: Thank you, Mr. Chair and
38 Council members. Great, so good afternoon. My name is
39 Brooke Fisher, and I am a subsistence resource
40 specialist at the Alaska Department of Fish and Game in
41 the Subsistence Division. I'm one of the people
42 responsible for research along the Yukon and its
43 tributaries. I would like to take this opportunity to
44 introduce the division, review previous work in an in
45 eastern interior communities, and provide an update on
46 current and upcoming projects in your region. Next slide
47 please.

48
49 The job of the Subsistence Division is
50 to scientifically quantify, evaluate, and report

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1 information about customary and traditional uses of
2 Alaska's fish and wildlife resources. Next slide please.
3 In order to accomplish our mission statement, the
4 division first identifies a research topic and develops
5 a research question. These topics and questions are
6 developed from priority information needs identified by
7 Regional Advisory Council meetings and/or current data
8 gaps. Most often, we conduct household surveys which
9 provide quantitative harvest and use data and conduct
10 traditional knowledge interviews with long time members
11 of the study community. The quantitative and qualitative
12 data gathered from the surveys and interviews are then
13 combined in a technical paper available to the public.
14 Next slide please.

15
16 The Division of Subsistence has
17 conducted research with communities throughout Alaska
18 covering a variety of topics. Some research projects
19 document the use of a specific resource category, such
20 as non-salmon harvest and use in Arctic Village. Other
21 projects are focused on specific subsistence issues,
22 such as the 2017 report that documented exchange
23 practices in three Eastern Interior communities.
24 Finally, other projects document comprehensive
25 subsistence harvests and use. Over the past 15 years,
26 the division has conducted comprehensive surveys in
27 several Eastern Interior communities. Next slide please.
28 In the past three years, most of the division's work has
29 been focused on Western Interior and Yukon Delta
30 communities. Unfortunately, there are no active
31 projects, and we do not have any upcoming projects in
32 Eastern Interior communities. The Northern Regional
33 Program Manager will attend the upcoming Fortymile
34 Caribou Herd management meeting and give a brief
35 presentation on subsistence law as it pertains to the
36 herd. Next slide please. And this concludes my
37 presentation. If you have any questions or comments,
38 please don't hesitate to reach out. I left my contact
39 information on the board. Yeah. That's it for me right
40 now.

41
42 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you so much.
43 I see we have a question. Go ahead Andy -- or okay. Go
44 ahead.

45
46 MS. IRWIN: Through the Chair. Olivia
47 Irwin, for the record. Thank you, Brooke. And I recognize
48 that it's -- you're probably not doing studies in Eastern
49 Interior because you're doing them in other regions
50 right now for funding purposes. Is that I would assume

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1 correctly? Yeah?

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MS. FISHER: Yes. That's correct.

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correctly? Yeah?

MS. FISHER: Yes. That's correct.

MS. IRWIN: I just want -- I just -- for the record to show I, I just want to put in a request for ADF&G to continue doing these studies when possible, in the Eastern Interior region. For Mentasta and Manley Hot Springs, those studies are now 15 years old. Which I recognize again, you guys have limited capacity. But for myself as a Nenana resident, that household survey has been an incredible document to use at North Pacific Fisheries Management Council at Board of Fish. So, these are really, really important data for our communities to have for ourselves. And it's really good work. And I appreciate the work that you Alida Brown -- or Caroline Brown, Alida Trainor and I know Jim Simon a long time ago worked on some of this so, thank you. And it's really important work. So as, as much as you can continue to do in Eastern Interior, I would appreciate it. Thanks, Brooke.

MR. BASSICH: Thank you. Member Bassich here. I -- we think alike. It's been so long, and there have been so many dramatic changes in our region that need to be documented to support some of the trying work -- trying to support some of the work we're trying to do especially in the fisheries, but also with ungulates. So, I would highly encourage ADF&G and requests that they try to seek funding to at least hit a 1 or 2 of the upper communities within our region here on the Eastern RAC. Thank you. I think it's really important. We need that update.

MS. FISHER: Thank you. And through the Chair, I would recognize that, yes, that is something that we would need to circle back on and apply for in the next funding cycle.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Any more questions, comments? Hearing or seeing none. Thank you. Thank you for your nice speedy report.

MS. FISHER: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Appreciate it. Thank you. Okay. Next, we're on Northwest Alaska area updates, Mark Nelson.

00090

1 MR. NELSON: All right. Thank you, Mr.
2 Chair. For the record, my name is Mark Nelson. I'm the
3 Northeast Alaska area biologist, and I have three topics
4 today I'd like to discuss with the Council. The first,
5 I'll try to be quick. Porcupine caribou came up earlier.
6 Just a quick little update on porcupine caribou. We're
7 continuing our monitoring of porcupine caribou. For 40
8 years, that herd has increased, and we're just now
9 starting to see signs in some of the metrics we monitor
10 that might suggest that it's probably not increasing.
11 It's probably at least stable. We'll find out when we
12 get a photo census done, which we've tried now for a
13 couple of years. It's been since 2017 when we had our
14 last photo census, and that was at 218,000, was the
15 midpoint of that. That was the -- and that was the
16 highest we'd ever counted. So hopefully we can get one
17 of those done. We're putting a ton of effort of airplane
18 time and people on the ground and really trying to make
19 that happen. And it's one of those deals that the weather
20 has to cooperate and the caribou have to cooperate but,
21 as soon as that happens, we'll be ready to go to get
22 that next census to figure out where we are. But I just
23 kind of want to, you know, let folks know that I'm pretty
24 sure they're not growing. They're at least stable.
25 There's a slight chance that they're declining. But I
26 would kind of caution from panicking just yet. But just
27 kind of be prepared that, that story of the porcupine
28 caribou is going to start to change over the next few
29 years from what we're seeing. Let's see, are there any
30 kind of questions on that I can go into actual -- go
31 ahead.

32
33 MR. ALEXANDER: Excuse me, my name is
34 Gerald Alexander. I live on the Yukon River and Fort
35 Yukon. I hunted that area before up on the porcupine,
36 and we had to sit on the border. But anyway the -- is
37 there any such thing as a predator control up there in
38 that area from Canada on down?

39
40 MR. NELSON: Through the Chair. Member
41 Alexander. There is not a predator control on porcupine
42 caribou right now. Part of the reason is, like I said,
43 that herd's just been growing and growing, and there has
44 not been a need for that. If the decline starts, we are
45 seeing no evidence right now that predators would -- are
46 responsible for that. It's much more likely that it has
47 something to do with habitat. As these herds get big and
48 think about any caribou herd in Alaska, none of them
49 stay stable forever. They just about all kind of go up,
50 and then they'll go down and then hopefully they go back

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1 up. Most of them go back up again. But the constant is
2 changed with caribou. And so, I -- yeah, right now I
3 don't see predator control kind of being a factor in
4 managing porcupine caribou.

5

6 MR. WOODRUFF: So, Mark, would you say
7 that this is probably the carrying capacity for that
8 area?

9

10 MR. NELSON: It sure looks that way. You
11 know, that's something that's really hard to actually
12 measure and develop. But one way you can do that is by
13 looking at exactly that. As populations grow, once they
14 tip over, you know, you probably passed it. So, it looks
15 like there's a pretty good chance we've maybe passed it
16 for now. You know, some herds bounce back pretty quick
17 and some don't. Western Arctic is going to take a while
18 to bounce back. The Central Arctic went through a
19 decline, and we've already bounced back above our
20 management objectives there. So, you know, every herd
21 is different. And there's just yeah -- there's a lot
22 that goes into it on the habitat side that we're just --
23 -- don't very -- don't understand very well, to be honest.

24

25 MR. WOODRUFF: In Eagle, we sometimes go
26 up the nation and the Kanak River on the upper part of
27 those rivers and harvest porcupine caribou.

28

29 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Any other
30 questions?

31

32 (No response)

33

34 Hearing and seeing none. Thank you.

35

36 MR. NELSON: Okay, I've got two more
37 things, Mr. Chair. That -- I'll be fast. I just kind of
38 want to -- the second thing I want to talk about real
39 quick is sheep. I just want to echo what Sue kind of
40 said earlier. But start back, you know, for a long time,
41 the State has held their -- hung their hat on this full
42 curl strategy. Full curl strategy really targets the
43 harvest to those very, very old rams. Male only harvest.
44 So, if this -- if you could do something like this for
45 moose, it would be like a 70 inch only regulation or,
46 you know, an eight-year-old moose. Like the very oldest
47 moose or the very oldest caribou. Sheep is the only
48 species we can kind of do that with, with the way the
49 horns grow. So, this -- there's just a very small portion
50 of the population that's ever eligible for actual

1 harvest under this strategy. We also know from horn data
2 that every year we seal all the horns that that get
3 harvested in the State. In the Brooks Range, between 60
4 and 80% of those sheep that we seal were legal at least
5 one previous year. So, every year all the sheep that are
6 harvested, there's still a whole bunch of sheep on the
7 -- in the mountains, on the landscape that would have
8 been legal for harvest that were, you know, either full
9 curl or eight or double broken that weren't taken that
10 year. And so, from all those things, we're making the
11 assumption that this full curl strategy really has
12 basically no impact on the sheep population itself. We
13 realize that those are assumptions and to test those
14 assumptions, we started two major millions and millions
15 of dollar projects to test those assumptions. The first
16 one was in the Brooks Range and the second one is in the
17 Alaska Range. And with both of those projects we have
18 adjacent areas. One that is hunted heavily or at least
19 hunted, and one that is essentially not hunted. Both of
20 those are in national parks. And in order to test these
21 assumptions, this full curl strategy, we're able to --
22 we collared ewes and rams in both of those. We're able
23 to look at or the goal is these are just kind of getting
24 off the ground. The goal is to look at the contribution
25 of those old rams and medium age rams in producing those
26 lambs over the next year. And then we can compare that
27 to an area where that's -- where we're hunting sheep,
28 where we're taking some of those really old sheep out
29 to an area where we're taking none of those old, old
30 sheep out. And it's important to note that in the Brooks
31 Range, right after we did that, the Federal Subsistence
32 Board, actually closed hunting in one of our hunted
33 areas. And so, I just want to point out that this has
34 made us testing, this full curl strategy really
35 difficult. We're dealing with it. We're trying to figure
36 out ways to kind of manipulate the project to still get
37 the data up there. But that's just something that that's
38 going on. So, I just wanted to point that out. When you
39 guys have that information, when you have your sheep
40 discussion later.

41
42 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: I got a question.
43 What role does the big rams play in the flock on what
44 you know, like teaching the young rams and breaking trail
45 and uncovering food. You know, what role do they play?
46 I don't really know enough. So, I just kind of want to
47 know their place in the flock and what you guys know
48 about it. Please. Thank you.
49
50

1 MR. NELSON: Yeah. Thank you, Mr., Chair.
2 In this we're -- we hear from a lot of people that they
3 play different roles socially and a bunch of different
4 ways. And then we're trying to take a scientific approach
5 and look at travel. We're looking at movement rates of
6 those big sheep versus the smaller sheep, of ewes that
7 are associated with big sheep, versus ewes that are
8 associated, you know, with groups without those really
9 big sheep in it. And like I said, we're just kind of
10 getting started on that. But some of the movements of
11 those rams are big. They move a lot and some are small,
12 and they stay on a very small mountain or small area
13 throughout the year. But once we get a little further
14 along in this project, I think this would be a great
15 opportunity for us to come and share a bunch of that
16 information, and we can answer that question a little
17 bit better at that time.

18
19 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you so much.
20 Go ahead, Olivia.

21
22 MS. IRWIN: Olivia Irwin, for the record.
23 Thanks so much, Mark. I just want to build the record a
24 little bit with a just a concern with the analogy that
25 you gave about the moose, because as much as I'm aware
26 of and know about moose is we really don't want to be
27 taking -- like if we wouldn't want restrictions on just
28 taking 60 inch bulls, because then the genetic makeup
29 of our moose population would just be smaller and
30 smaller. So just curious about how -- building on
31 Charlie's question, not just the social impact of the
32 big ramps, but is there genetic downfalls to the
33 population if we are allowing solely full curl
34 management, I guess is just -- and these are just
35 questions I'm not a sheep person either. So, I'm just
36 inquiring.

37
38 MR. NELSON: Yeah. Through the Chair to
39 member Irwin. That's a great question. And it's
40 something we do think about. It's important to remember
41 that half the genetics of all these come from the
42 mother's. And so that right there helps kind of mitigate
43 that. It's also important to remember that whether a ewe
44 is bred by an eight-year-old sheep or a seven-year-old
45 sheep, those genetics are, are still being passed on,
46 right. And that seven-year-old sheep will be an eight-
47 year-old sheep next year. And so, there's so much
48 variation there that we don't think that again, that's
49 another assumption we're testing. We don't think that
50 that actually causes problems. But we're taking genetics

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1 on all these sheep we're collaring and on every sheep
2 in the areas that are coming in to get sealed to test
3 it for that exact question.

4
5 MR. WOODRUFF: So, Mark, we had two huge
6 rams end up practically downtown Eagle across the bluff,
7 and they were there for a couple of years, and we didn't
8 realize that some electrical workers that came to help
9 us after our 209 flood, had the knowledge to go up there
10 and kill them, since we were seeing them every day when
11 we were checking our nets. So, Mark Gross -- I mean,
12 Jeff Gross said that we could have sanctioned that area
13 but, we didn't know that. Thank you.

14
15 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: More questions or
16 comments?

17
18 MR. NELSON: Okay. One last thing then.
19 I would like to -- first off, I'd like to invite Clayton
20 from the Yukon Flats up to sit with me here for a minute.
21 And we'd like to just talk a little bit about the biology
22 of moose in Unit 25D. We heard earlier there's a proposal
23 on the table for closing the eastern section or the
24 remainder. And I think it would be helpful to just have
25 a little more data on the population in that area, as
26 well as some issues that this might raise. So, I'll
27 start first with the just the kind of biology of the
28 area. I'll try to find my notes here.

29
30 Oh, good. And Mark Bertram is also on
31 the line. Let me pull up my notes. So first off, these
32 two areas are fairly different. They're similar in that
33 they have very similar moose habitat types, and the moose
34 habitat is actually quite good. There -- we know it's
35 good because we look at things like how many calves
36 these moose produce, they produce a lot of calves and
37 they produce a lot of twins. We've done twinning surveys
38 in that area, or at least Mark -- the U.S. Fish and
39 Wildlife Service has in their area, which is pretty
40 similar there in that they've had almost 60% of the cows
41 producing twins instead of calves -- or yearlings or,
42 I'm sorry, singles. When cows produce more twins, that's
43 a sign that there's a ton of food on the landscape for
44 them. And so, we're seeing that in these populations.
45 We're seeing a lot of calves. However, we're also seeing
46 a lot of predators. There's a ton of black bears in that
47 country. In fact, when we did a survey in 25D West, we
48 found more black bears than we did in moose. That's the
49 highest black bear density in the State that we know of.
50 And what's happening is these moose are producing a ton

1 of calves but, it's just really difficult for those
2 calves to actually live, to become a yearling and then
3 to become a two-year-old. Those bears are taking a lot
4 of them, and that's just part of what's keeping this
5 population held, kind of where it is. The -- so the
6 population in both of these areas over the long term,
7 over the last 20 years, has remained incredibly stable.
8 It's been between about 0.2 and 0.5 moose per square
9 mile in both of these areas. And this is again, because
10 of this kind of situation we have with predators that
11 it's just really holding these -- both of these
12 populations right there. And there's been no change,
13 almost no change in harvest in the -- either side. And
14 until we see a change in harvest, we wouldn't really
15 even expect to see a change in moose population.

16
17 Let's see. So, when looking at
18 harvestable surplus in both of these areas. So, in the
19 western side where the closure currently exists, that
20 area -- I've got notes written in too many places. That
21 area is about 6352 square miles, and the harvestable
22 surplus is 89 moose. And right now, in that area with
23 the federal closure, we're usually taking around 40
24 moose, usually a bit less than that, 30 moose somewhere
25 in there. In the east side or the remainder, that's
26 about twice as big of an area. The density is similar
27 but there's about 3000 moose in that area. And so, the
28 harvestable surplus is about 145 moose in that area.
29 Currently only like less than 50 moose are being taken
30 each year. And so, the way it is right now, wide open,
31 we're not even really taking very close to our
32 harvestable surplus in that area. So, I guess I just
33 kind of want to make sure that folk's kind of realize
34 how many moose are available in both of those areas, and
35 kind of where we are.

36
37 Now, a couple of things that I think are
38 just important to bring up, and I urge a bit of caution
39 here. We had a Yukon Flats Advisory Committee meeting
40 last night, and I brought this idea, this proposal up,
41 and they had not heard about it. They were quite
42 surprised. And so, I think before it goes too far, I
43 would strongly encourage the RAC to reach out to the
44 Yukon Flats Advisory Committee and at least make sure
45 everybody's on the same page, because this could have
46 some major implications depending how this would be
47 implemented within the area. If the remainder is to be
48 -- it goes to be excluded for non-federally qualified,
49 all the federal land in that area would only be available
50 to be hunted by people from from communities in Unit 25

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1 that are not in West. So, Fort Yukon, Chalkyitsik,
2 Circle, Central and Arctic Village. The remainder -- you
3 would not be able to hunt the remainder if you lived in
4 Stevens, Birch Creek or Beaver the way the regulations
5 are written. One of the main issues I see with that is
6 -- oh, yeah. So, thank you, Brooke. Brooke, put this map
7 on. You see, Birch Creek is right on the line. Birch
8 Creek is used to hunting. In both sides of that in the
9 eastern and the western. I could envision an issue with
10 folks in Birch Creek. As soon as this goes into effect,
11 they would not be able to hunt on federal land on the
12 east side of that line and because they live on the
13 line, half the people I'm guessing probably hunt over
14 there. So, that is one consideration. Another
15 consideration is that this area, the way it is now,
16 people who grew up in Fort Yukon or grew up in
17 Chalkyitsik and, you know, started raising a family and
18 decided to move to Fairbanks to get a better job for
19 their family -- I get calls every year that they want
20 to go back and hunt their area. But if they're from
21 Beaver and they want to hunt near Beaver, they can't.
22 The federal lands are closed to them. And so, I envision
23 this potentially being another issue that would, if
24 nothing else, the folks there all need to at least be
25 very aware of the implications of what this could do.

26
27 We have heard of a lot of testimony
28 about a lot more non-locals coming to the area. I hear
29 about it all the time on the telephone from folks as
30 well. This is certainly an issue. I -- when folks are
31 experiencing illegal activities and we've already talked
32 about this a few times but, those illegal activities
33 need to be recorded and reported to the law enforcement
34 folks. That's the only way we can kind of battle this.
35 The other thing I'd like to point out, just with land
36 ownership in general, the western side is 70% like 75%
37 federal. The eastern side is more like about 60% and all
38 of the conflicts that we've heard about are based on the
39 river, and the Porcupine and Yukon rivers are state land.
40 The federal permit would not be -- would not even be
41 valid in those areas where we're hearing about the
42 conflicts. So, I guess what I'm kind of worried about
43 is if this were to go into effect, the conflicts would
44 still be there. People would still be able to drive a
45 motorboat up the Yukon, up the up the Porcupine, and
46 hunt just like they have been. And so, the conflicts are
47 still there but, now people in Fort Yukon are going to
48 have to have two different permits in their pocket,
49 potentially one when they want to hunt on their own
50 land, which would have to be some kind of state permit,

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1 and one when they want to hunt on federal land. And this
2 is -- this turns into a very complicated situation. And
3 that's exactly what's happening right now in the western
4 portion and the folks that have been doing it long
5 enough, they're kind of starting to figure it out pretty
6 good. But this is a huge, huge change for that area. So,
7 with that, I would ask if maybe Mark Bertram or Clayton
8 want to add anything to that?

9
10 MR. BERTRAM: Yeah, this is Mark. Can you
11 hear me?

12
13 MR. NELSON: Yep.

14
15 MR. BERTRAM: Yeah. Not much to add to
16 that. That was a really concise description that Mark
17 presented to you. I think, you know, these are just
18 considerations that the Board needs to make as they go
19 forward. And, you know, I think if the proposal is --
20 goes to the stage where it's going to be analyzed then
21 I think a lot of these issues will be discussed at that
22 time. And I'm sure that the Board and the Advisory
23 Committee and others will probably weigh in prior to
24 that to help inform that analysis, but I really don't
25 have anything else to add to any other issues that I
26 see. And so, I'll just let it go at that.

27
28 MR. LEPPING: And this is Mark Lepping
29 from the Department of Fish and Game. For the record, I
30 don't have anything to add either, Mark Nelson. So, thank
31 you for presenting that.

32
33 MR. WOODRUFF: So, Mark in Eagle and
34 Downstream, we carry two permits in our pocket. It's not
35 that confusing, you know. We realize that if we're going
36 to hunt on federal land, it has to be above high water
37 mark. You didn't mention that. So that would be helpful
38 to put that out there. And if we're going to hunt the
39 low water line or the islands, that is state land, it's
40 not really that confusing. And we talk about this at our
41 AC meetings. We talk about this at our federal
42 subsistence meetings in Eagle. And most everybody
43 understands that. So, it's not really that complicated.
44 And in 25B most of that is fed -- is state land. There's
45 a little bit of federal land along the river and so
46 that's why we carry two permits. Thank you.

47
48 MS. IRWIN: Olivia Henaayee Irwin for the
49 record. Thanks, Mark, for the additional information. I
50 just want the record to reflect that this proposal came

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1 out of public testimony from Mike Peter, second chief
2 of Fort Yukon as well as Bruce Thomas from CATG Council
3 of Athabaskan Tribal Governments today mentioned support
4 for it. We are in the preliminary stages of this proposal
5 being created. So, it's the intention of this Council
6 to ensure that we consult and go to meetings to ensure
7 that the decision that's being made for this Unit is
8 being made by this Unit. So, I just wanted the record
9 to reflect that this Council -- it is the intention of
10 this Council to take the recommendation of the residents
11 in 25D remainder. With that yesterday, Mark, I spoke
12 with you before I put this proposal forward, and I may
13 have misunderstood you but, from what I understood,
14 there's been no survey done in 25D remainder since 2015.
15 And you gave me a thousand moose estimate yesterday. And
16 then today you said the estimate is 3000 for the
17 harvestable surplus of 145 moose. That's not even being
18 close to being met. So, can you give me a little bit
19 more information on where that 3000 population estimate
20 came from? Thank you.

21
22 MR. NELSON: Yep. You bet. Through the
23 Chair. Member Irwin. So, you actually talked to Mark
24 Bertram. There's way too many Marks involved with this,
25 and I fully understand that. So, what Mark gave you was
26 our survey area. Our survey area is not the entire Unit.
27 So, we have about 1000 moose we counted within that
28 survey area. So, in order to calculate harvestable
29 surplus for that you have to extrapolate that to the
30 rest of that, what we'll call remainder the eastern
31 portion or whatever, and that's where it goes to. It's
32 about 3000 extrapolating that density estimate from our
33 survey area to that whole area.

34
35 MS. IRWIN: Okay. Just a follow up really
36 quick. So that still means that there hasn't -- there
37 still hasn't been an actual survey since 2015. This is
38 extrapolated data from...? Okay.

39
40 MR. NELSON: Correct. So yeah. And to
41 address that, we have tried pretty hard the last couple
42 of years to do that. It's a difficult place to get a
43 survey done. Weather it has to be right, we have -- to
44 do it right and to compare it to any other survey, we
45 need to do it in November, basically late October, early
46 November when there's almost no snow -- that right now,
47 you know, we're having a hard time getting enough snow.
48 We can do it with frost. Unfortunately, frost usually
49 is brought about by fog, which makes flying pretty
50 dangerous. So, we've just had a really hard time doing

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1 that. However, looking at both of the surveys for both
2 of the areas East and West, which are pretty similar in
3 habitat types. There's been essentially no change
4 outside that between 0.2 and like 0.4, 0.5 over the last
5 20 years. And so, there's no -- and with harvest being
6 the exact, you know, has not changed as well. I have no
7 concern. I'd be shocked if it was anything outside of
8 that. So yes, we'll keep trying. But the reality is it's
9 probably right in the middle there somewhere. Yep.

10
11 MR. BASSICH: Thank you. Member Bassich
12 here. I need a little bit of clarification on the map
13 here. We have federal in the striped area and then state
14 in the blue, and then in the yellow areas, which is
15 designated as private lands, how has that impacted by -
16 - if this were to be enacted as far as federal or non -
17 - sorry, federally qualified only.

18
19 MR. NELSON: Through the Chair to member
20 Bassich. So that -- those areas are checkerboarded with
21 either private or native land holdings, Corporation
22 land, anything like that. And those -- the only way you
23 can hunt moose on there is some kind of state permit.
24 This Board has no jurisdiction over those anything in
25 yellow there. State. Yeah, a state permit. Yep.

26
27 MR. BASSICH: And for the record, I guess
28 one of the things that I just like to point out, you
29 know, you look at these maps and you look at all this
30 land but, in reality, when it comes time to hunting, for
31 the most part, other than those privileged enough to
32 have aircraft, boat access is your only access. So those
33 lands may look extensive, but all the hunting pressure
34 is always concentrated along the rivers. And the bigger
35 the river, the more pressure, obviously. One of the
36 impacts that I spoke about at this Council for 20 years
37 is the increasing technology and the ability to access
38 remote lands. Now, there's virtually no place in Alaska
39 that an animal population can hide anymore, whether it's
40 in the summer or the winter. And just -- we always have
41 to recognize that we don't really think about that. But
42 for the vast majority of hunters, it's going to be boat
43 access areas which in some ways is good in my view. I've
44 always been a proponent of isolated populations not
45 being impacted, you know, keeping that seed stock there.
46 But I just wanted to put that on the record because
47 those are really important factors when looking at
48 management and hunting harvest pressures in an area. So,
49 although an area may have a tremendous amount of moose,
50 if every year is harvested extremely heavy along one

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1 particular area of it, I think that's probably what's
2 leading to some of the concerns of some of the testimony
3 that we heard. There is that direct competition with
4 people, heavy competition in that area. And
5 unfortunately, most of the time, federally qualified
6 users do not have the income to own airplanes to go into
7 less impacted areas or less competitive areas. So, I
8 think that's kind of in my mind the foundation of where
9 we have some of these conflicts and why some of these
10 concerns are there for people who live more permanently
11 in the areas. I just wanted to put that on the record.
12 I'm not advocating for either way but, I think that is
13 probably a really big reason why we have these concerns
14 from people. Thank you.

15

16 MS. BURK: Thank you. Through the Chair.
17 This is Eva. Yeah, I'm really glad that Olivia brought
18 up that this proposal came out of public testimony. And
19 we heard again this morning from the Council of
20 Athabascan Tribal Governments. So that was pretty
21 powerful and kind of I guess validating our decision
22 making about putting this forward. But I guess you
23 mentioned a couple of things that I really want to look
24 at the big picture of the way that we approach moose
25 management. Coming from the Minto Flats area, which has
26 an incredible amount of pressure, and now we have a much
27 different moose situation. We -- our accounts are way
28 down, and what we're experiencing in the past several
29 years is for, you know, two out of, I think four years
30 now, we've had rain on snow events which directly were
31 cited by Fish and Game as a contributing factor to the
32 decline of moose and the Minto Flats area, correct? So
33 we still have those kind of conditions in this Yukon
34 Flats area. So you couple that with this high amount of
35 bears, I'm afraid that -- and then you on top of that
36 put this increased amount of hunting pressure that
37 people are seeing, which is probably directly related
38 to two activities that are taking place that we're also
39 hearing about, which would be the Hilcorp oil and gas
40 exploration that is bringing significant newcomers to
41 the area that are likely interested in Alaska's
42 bountiful hunting, right. That's the story that they're
43 fed.

44

45 And so, then the other part of that
46 would be the airplane traffic that's in Central and
47 Circle that the local residents are referencing is part
48 of the issue. So, to me, I -- that's why I'm more
49 inclined to be conservative and look at these type of
50 closures. I really want to see the analysis. And I also

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1 think looking at the landscape as it is now and
2 understanding as somebody who's in state lands, myself
3 in Nenana, and then I would want to point this question
4 to Gerald a little bit, that if it seems like you would
5 know, you would already be probably getting a couple of
6 different permits because you would already have to have
7 that state permit anyway. So, I'm just thinking that
8 referencing Don's comment, I don't think the permitting
9 would become overly complicated. And I think it's really
10 wise to manage for conservation when we can see just
11 pressure and layers of stuff happening. So, can you kind
12 of maybe address some of those concerns that I'm having?
13 Thanks.

14

15 MR. NELSON: Through the Chair to Member
16 Burk, I hadn't heard about the oil and gas creating
17 increased pressure in that area, and yeah, that could
18 make sense. I have no idea about that. I brought up the
19 complexity of the permit because I hear from folks in
20 that western portion that they have a hard time figuring
21 out. They walk out their door, they got to use one
22 permit. They walk a little further. They're on federal
23 land. They use a different permit. They go a little
24 further. They're on their private inholding or whatever.
25 That's a different one. And they do struggle with that.
26 And I've had to kind of walk through the maps with folks
27 to try and get folks to understand exactly, you know,
28 which permit is required when. The other thing that we
29 did this year and I will point out that the Refuge has
30 been awesome to work with. I work with them on this
31 issue all the time. We put out a bunch of information
32 to everybody who got TM 940, which is a Tier 2 permit
33 for the West side. We had maps on there. We had links
34 to federal maps. We had links to state maps. We really
35 tried to elevate this issue of what permit is valid
36 where. And I still had a bunch of phone calls from people
37 who had those permits or the federal permit trying to
38 understand which one they needed. So, I'm glad you're
39 able to figure it out, Don. And I think a lot of people
40 do but, there's still a lot of people who kind of
41 struggle with that. And for us, the important thing is
42 that when a moose is harvested, it's reported on one of
43 those accurately and not on both. And that's another
44 issue that we kind of struggle with when people are
45 holding two permits for this kind of the same area. The
46 -- what was -- did you have another question in there?
47 I'm trying to remember what else I was going to address.

48

49 MS. BURK: Thanks. The predation because
50 we've got the climate change with rain on -- rain on

000102

1 snow and affects the calves. And then you've got the
2 predation on top of that.

3

4 MR. NELSON: Yeah. Thanks. So, right now
5 the predation is a concern but, it seems to be just
6 holding that stable. The rain on snow events are
7 problematic for anything I'm trying to dig through the
8 snow to get food. Luckily, moose can eat a lot of that
9 above the snow, you know, in the winter. Minto in
10 particular, that rain on snow event was worse, I think,
11 than anything they saw up in that country. The other
12 thing going on with Minto is the flooding over the last
13 few years. That really changed the habitat down there.
14 But, yeah, if the -- if those rain on snow events
15 occurred the same way up there where you have like a
16 two-inch-thick layer where it's just so hard to walk
17 through and you've got 3 or 4ft of snow on either side
18 of it. Yeah. That's going to be a problem. But the good
19 thing is the moose that are alive up there are fat and
20 healthy, and they are set -- their at a very low density,
21 and there's tons of food. And that really, really helps
22 those moose get through those really hard winters. Moose
23 that are managed for real high densities, like around
24 here and in Minto, oftentimes the calves are smaller,
25 the calves are lighter. The adults can even be smaller.
26 And they struggle more with those types of events than
27 moose that are big, burly, healthy, happy creatures.

28

29 MR. BERTRAM: This is Mark Bertram. Could
30 I add a comment?

31

32 MR. NELSON: Please.

33

34 MR. BERTRAM: Yeah. I was just going to
35 let people know that people that live on the Yukon Flats
36 know this but, the area around Yukon Flats is very arid,
37 very low precipitation compared with a lot of other areas
38 in interior. And that means that we don't get as much
39 snow up there during the winter as they do in a lot of
40 other areas. Generally, the snow depth is around two
41 feet or less. Very rarely does it get up to up to three
42 feet. So that's another positive for getting around.
43 Even when you have rain on snow events, the depth is --
44 which is a bad thing because that will seal off the
45 moose getting to their food. But on the positive side,
46 they don't have to worry about starvation events due to
47 lack of access to the food due to the snow depth. I just
48 wanted to point that out.

49

50

000103

1 MS. SHOCKLEY: Mark. Thank you. I
2 appreciate that. This is Dorothy. You know, yesterday
3 we heard that there was an increase of big boats going
4 up river. And I assume, you know, with the permitting
5 process, have you seen an increase in moose permits in
6 that area? And, and you know, the record of harvests?
7

8 MR. NELSON: Through the Chair. Member
9 Shockley. So, in the two different areas, first, I'll
10 go to the east or the remainder section. I have not seen
11 unreported numbers of hunters and reported harvest much
12 changed. There's about 100 hunters a year that report
13 hunting there. Sometimes it's 80, sometimes it's 100,
14 sometimes it's 110 but, it stays somewhere around there.
15 And the number of moose harvested again is pretty stable
16 over that, which is 40, 45 somewhere in there. Looking
17 at the western side, looking just at our TM940 permits,
18 our tier two permits, we allow 75 of those a year.
19 Typically, only about 40 or 30 or sometimes 50 of those
20 get issued. Last year was the first year we issued all
21 of them. So, there was absolutely an increase in interest
22 hunting that Tier 2 permit in the Flat. When we saw that
23 they were all issued, that's when we got together with
24 the Refuge and really, like, put out as much outreach
25 as we could to let people know what that -- where they
26 could actually use that permit. Because I suspected a
27 lot of folks were getting the permit thinking they could
28 hunt anywhere in the Flats, and they did, because I
29 talked to a lot of them. I emailed and called just about
30 every single one of those permit holders and made sure
31 they knew that state or federal lands, refuge lands, any
32 of those federally owned lands were not eligible for
33 their permit. And so, we did see an increase there.
34 We'll find out early tomorrow morning, our draw on Tier
35 2 permits come out, how many people are actually awarded
36 permits for this year, and I suspect it's going to be
37 down, but that's a guess.
38

39 MS. SHOCKLEY: Tell me again the number
40 of permits that.....
41

42 MR. NELSON: 75.
43

44 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Rhonda Pitka, you
45 online? Did you want to comment? If so, please do.
46

47 MS. PITKA: Yeah. You know, it is really
48 alarming when you see the jump in the number of permits
49 that come into the area, especially because -- is it 13
50 were issued to locals that -- that live in the area. Is

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1 Is that -- is that right?

2

3 MR. NELSON: Through the Chair. Yes.
4 That's correct. Last year, 13 of the 75 were issued to
5 local folks.

6

7 MS. PTIKA: Yeah. So, that's a concern.
8 You know, I didn't listen in to the discussion at your
9 RAC yesterday for that particular proposal. I thought
10 that they were just talking about the, you know, the
11 closure review for 25D West, which, you know, we support
12 the status quo of that closure. But we haven't seen the
13 analysis for 25D remainder or any of the data for that.
14 So that's a little bit more difficult. And I only say
15 that because, you know, at the AC meeting yesterday, we
16 didn't have anybody from Chalkyitsik or Circle or Birch
17 Creek on the -- on the call. And Mike Peter wasn't there
18 also, he had another engagement. We're going to be having
19 another AC meeting on, I think, February 26th. No. Yeah,
20 February 26th at 5:30 to look at some of the proposals.
21 That -- it's a concern for the area because I don't
22 think that anybody on EIRAC is from, you know,
23 Chalkyitsik or Circle or Venetie, and it would be
24 important to hear what they have to say about those
25 particular closures, too.

26

27 Yeah, I'm concerned about expanding
28 closures on federal land because it's just -- it's been
29 shown to not only create regulatory confusion, which,
30 you know, we all kind of know that, but it's also been
31 shown to increase some of the hunting on the state lands.
32 So that's a concern also. And it's a concern that I've
33 heard throughout the State. I think if it's possible,
34 we did a lot of work with the Council of Athabaskan
35 Tribal Governments on moose management in, in the
36 region. But we haven't done any of those meetings
37 recently, and I think maybe if we look at some of that
38 data and some of those conversations, that might be
39 important going forward. I do support retaining the
40 closure for 25D West. I just haven't seen enough
41 information on 25D remainder. Thanks.

42

43 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you, Rhonda.
44 And I've got a little question about predation and what
45 the effects of lack of salmon is causing more predation.
46 What do you think about that in that area?

47

48 MS. PITKA: Oh, no. No, it really is.
49 We've had we've had larger numbers of bears and moose
50 in our area especially, you know, in these smaller

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1 communities like Beaver and Stevens Village. I've heard
2 it all over the Yukon, though, is that bears, and moose
3 are moving closer and closer to town. Just yesterday we
4 had a pack of wolves right across the river from Beaver.
5 And you know, it's a real concern to us because there
6 hasn't been enough fish for the bears to eat, much less
7 the wolves. So, they're trying to live to and trying to
8 survive on whatever they can. And we're concerned that
9 they're coming closer and closer to town. We've seen,
10 you know, out on the land like larger wolf packs. And I
11 don't know if you guys have had presentations on this
12 but, they're talking about, like, these wolf packs
13 joining together and creating, like, these larger wolf
14 packs and I think that that's the case. We've seen so
15 much of that though. We've had bears and wolves at our
16 dump. You know, the bears are all in the summer, spring
17 and fall months. But in the winter, we've had a lot of
18 wolves around the area. They've been chasing moose right
19 outside the village and that's really uncalled for. I
20 think you know, with the depressed numbers of salmon,
21 we're going to see more and more of that in our area.
22 And that's really unfortunate. And, you know, because
23 we live in a Refuge and we don't have like a concerted
24 predator control program, it causes issues. I know that
25 we've talked that one to death, I think, in a million
26 different ways, I think -- but, at the same time, I also
27 don't really support you know, when the State comes in
28 with their predator control program because that usually
29 ends up on the news. There's always a picture of some
30 guy in a helicopter with a machine gun. It's not a good
31 situation for anyone, you know. I mean, wildlife
32 management is so complex and I think in a lot of these
33 different arenas that we have regulatory control over,
34 we don't have a lot of the people in the room that need
35 to be in the room, that need to be hearing these
36 discussions, that need to be hearing the discussions
37 about waste and how their hunting practices affect local
38 people. That's a big deal, because, I mean, you know,
39 Alaska is a is a huge hunting and fishing place, and we
40 don't want to take that away from anybody. But at the
41 same time, when local people can't meet their needs,
42 it's a huge concern for us. Thank you.

43

44 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you, Rhonda.
45 Mark, what do you think about predation in that area?

46

47 MR. NELSON: I'm so glad Rhonda piped in,
48 because she answered that better than I could have. We
49 don't really have any other data beyond what Rhonda just
50 shared on that right now in that area. So, yep.

1

2 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: I asked that
3 question because there's a lot of people around -- along
4 the rivers and in the villages that are to the point of
5 no other means and the lack of salmon, that that was
6 such a huge part of their diets. And now some past
7 managements make me worry of we change the moose
8 management in there, then we end up like Minto Flats and
9 the people over there having a hard time eating. So, I
10 just hate to see that happen to people now and in future
11 generations. So, it's awful hard to get back something
12 like that once you lose it. So, we need to be very
13 careful going forward and to include the uncertainties
14 of climate. That's a big one. I keep saying it and saying
15 it every year and things keep happening and the climate
16 comes and pounds on it again. So, we got to really be -
17 - it's important going forward to try to add that and
18 keep it in your mind when you're when you're going
19 forward with your management strategies. Thank you.
20 That's all I have. If anybody else has anything.

21

22 MR. BASSICH: Yeah. Thank you. I'd just
23 like to for the sake of time, if this proposal goes
24 through, we'll be able to review it and have these
25 discussions in the future. So, I think, quite frankly,
26 we ought to move on the agenda. I really appreciate the
27 discussion.

28

29 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: I appreciate that.
30 Thank you.

31

32 MR. WOODRUFF: Mark, since these
33 proposals are coming up for review and analysis, I would
34 really encourage you guys to help us get some data on
35 the population. Try hard to get a survey.

36

37 MS. SHOCKLEY: Okay. This is Dorothy. A
38 question for Rhonda. In regards to the predators. I don't
39 know if this is politically correct but, you know, in
40 regards to local control of predators. I mean, is that
41 something that we can consider or are communities
42 considering that already?

43

44 MS. PITKA: Communities are already doing
45 a lot of that work. What the problem is that the -- you
46 know, there's no market for it or it's very -- it's a
47 lot more difficult than it used to be for the trapping
48 market to sell fur. It used to be -- this never used to
49 be an issue. Back when we had a lot more trapping in our
50 areas. When we had, you know, those robust networks where

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1 we could sell fur. So that's definitely one of those
2 systematic changes. But people in the area have been,
3 you know, doing what they can. It's just that when you
4 see those huge wolf packs that can wipe out moose in
5 your area and it's a lot more difficult. I think those
6 numbers have really risen. And we should probably, maybe
7 study those a little bit more closely.

8
9 Yeah. I can only speak for the area
10 around Beaver, really. That's all that I want to talk
11 about right now. But you know, we're a really small
12 community, and the land around us is, is pretty vast,
13 but it's pretty sensitive to climate change and, and
14 erosion. And we're seeing that more and more. I think
15 it was somebody earlier said something about all these
16 big boats coming up the river. And we've seen that a lot
17 more these last couple of years. We've even had people
18 stranded in my offices and that's been kind of rough and
19 super awkward. Because I don't -- yeah. I don't know
20 what the outreach would be or what that would look like,
21 whether that would be the State or law enforcement or
22 something. I don't know. But it's definitely something
23 that local people could have more control over if there
24 was a market. Thank you.

25
26 MS. MCDAVID: This is Brooke, on behalf
27 of the Chair who stepped away for a moment. He asked if
28 we could take a five-minute recess and then move on to
29 presentations from BLM. But thank you everyone for --
30 thank you, Mark and Mark and Mark and Clayton and Rhonda
31 for that discussion. That was great. So, five minutes.
32 And then we'll move on to BLM presentations.

33
34 MR. WOODRUFF: Thank you, Rhonda Pitka,
35 for helping us.

36
37 (Off record)

38
39 (On record)

40
41 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you. Thank you
42 for being here. Proceed, please.

43
44 MR. TAYLOR: Yes. Thank you very much.
45 Thank you to the Council for your service and also
46 appreciate the time to present. I'm gonna try and keep
47 this quick. But I wanted to let you know about a project
48 that the Bureau of Land Management is undertaking, and
49 my name is Steve Talyor. I'm with the Central Yukon
50 Field Office, Bureau of Land Management. Responding to

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1 public requests, we have initiated a project to place
2 some signage at the Yukon River boat launch that -- with
3 the goal of helping inform river users not just hunters
4 but, everyone that's on the river of land status along
5 the river. Public and private and with a goal to remind
6 folks to pre-plan on their trips and try and use good
7 ethics when they're out on the land.

8
9 As we kind of internally started
10 developing some of the drafts of these signs, we spent
11 a lot of time discussing the merits of how we wanted to
12 convey that message. And had some early feedback with
13 Fish and Game and some very positive, good feedback from
14 them. And we're trying to be not preachy but, try and
15 keep the message positive and thoughtful and make the
16 most out of the 2 or 3 seconds of attention that we're
17 going to get from people at the river. So that's kind
18 of our intent. And what we're proposing at this point
19 is a display of three panels. One panel will talk about
20 traditional connections along the river and uses of the
21 river. The second panel will discuss just general
22 respect for the land and a few prompting questions,
23 trying to get folks to think about why they're out there
24 and provide contact information for the various public
25 land managers along the river. And then the third panel
26 will be a map, probably the most important of the three
27 panels. And that map will depict the various public land
28 managers along the river, as well as private lands along
29 the river. And the way we've kind of proposed it at this
30 point is differentiating the different land managers by
31 color and then having the rest of the land allotments,
32 corporation land and any other private land, all
33 depicted with a white color that signifies private land.
34 So, what we've sent out to a number of different
35 Councils, and corporations, and agencies, and non-
36 profits and Advisory Councils our draft materials and
37 they are very -- or they are simplified, especially the
38 map. Just because it was difficult to print out a map
39 that's supposed to be two feet by six feet long and have
40 that in a paper form that comes out to everybody. So,
41 understand that what we've presented is not exactly what
42 it's going to look like, but we're trying to get the
43 point across. And we're looking for feedback. We want
44 to know what folks think about it. What we're missing.
45 Some of the things in particular that we're interested
46 in are if you have photos that you feel would represent
47 uses and lifestyles along the river that would be
48 appropriate to include in the displays. Are there place
49 names, traditional place names that were missing on the
50 map. We would like to include traditional place names.

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1 I've worked with our archaeologist and, and we've come
2 up with ones that we're aware of, but I'm sure that
3 there's others out there that that we don't know. So,
4 if there are place names that you feel would be
5 appropriate to include, we'd like to hear about that.
6 And then just general thoughts on what we've presented
7 and how it could be improved.

8
9 I want to also say that I have heard --
10 I've gotten some feedback already to date regarding the
11 extent of our map. And this is another thing that we've
12 spent a lot of time discussing how far to go upriver and
13 down river from the Yukon River or from the bridge and
14 it's a matter of scale and detail. So, the larger the
15 extent that we show, the less detail we show on the map.
16 So right now, we have an extent that's depicted from
17 upstream Beaver down to Tanana. And I realize that's not
18 the entire length of the river. But we felt that
19 initially that was the greatest extent that we could
20 display and still kind of communicate some of the land
21 ownership along the river. But there's -- we've also
22 considered potentially separating the map into two
23 different panels, one panel for downstream and one panel
24 for upstream. And in doing that, we might be able to
25 actually extend that reach further in each direction.
26 So, we're still in the stage of soliciting feedback. Our
27 goal would be to have feedback by the end of March. And
28 I'm not here today to ask for necessarily feedback from
29 the Council as a group. But individually and if you have
30 connections, other people that you know that might be
31 interested in providing feedback to let them know to
32 contact us. I'm happy to sit down and set up a meeting
33 and talk or talk over the phone, however that works. But
34 ideally, we'd have these signs in place prior to next
35 fall. So, I think I've covered most of everything I
36 wanted to, and if there's any questions, I'd be happy
37 to entertain them.

38
39 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: We thank you and
40 appreciate you, this as needed and be. It'd be nice if
41 it went all the way down. You know, it's -- I've had
42 guides camping in my cabin and put their tent on my
43 frame, paddling in my canoe. And, you know, it's terrible
44 the way they move in. Yeah. So, it's really important
45 and really needed thing. And we appreciate you for doing
46 that.

47
48 MR. TAYLOR: And I think one other thing
49 I'd like to suggest too, is maybe as a longer term vision
50 having a digital map that can be downloaded to a phone

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1 that is geo referenced that people can use along the
2 way. I know there's a lot of map servers out there that,
3 you know, Onyx and different apps that show land status,
4 but they're not always necessarily accurate. So, it's a
5 -- there's other options for the future but, this is an
6 initial start at least to get people thinking about it.

7
8 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you so much
9 for your presentation today. Any questions? Any driving
10 questions for you all today? We're trying to save time.
11 So, you're getting off easy questions. Do you have any
12 questions. We can contact these guys personally and ask
13 them questions. That'll be really nice if you guys do
14 have questions. Thank you.

15
16 MR. TAYLOR: Thank you for your time.

17
18 MR. HERRIGES: Mr. Chair, I'm Jim
19 Herriges. I'm a wildlife biologist with the Eastern
20 Interior Field Office, and I'll try and be very brief.
21 Just to mention a few land use activities occurring in
22 the Eastern Interior. We're doing an environmental
23 assessment for a tour company that's proposing
24 helicopter tours with a brief landing in one specific
25 area of the White Mountains as well as also increasing
26 some of their already occurring ATV and snowmachine
27 trail -- tours. And BLM is also doing an environmental
28 analysis on some of our own stream restoration work in
29 Wade Creek. And there will be this summer construction
30 -- BFIO is doing some construction on the Wickersham
31 Dome Trailhead. Increasing the size of that on the
32 Elliott Highway and also doing some road reconstruction
33 all along the Nome Creek Road. And so, then to shift
34 into caribou we have continued to cooperate and help
35 fund ADF&G efforts and monitoring. And next month
36 hopefully ADF&G will get -- attempt to get eight radio
37 callers out on White Mountains caribou, which is a herd
38 that we haven't talked about much lately since the
39 Fortymile Herd just kind of showed up and took over. But
40 it was a herd that was, you know, once estimated at over
41 a thousand caribou and hasn't been monitored in years
42 because of the problem of putting collars on caribou and
43 you don't know which herd they belong to. So, we have a
44 window of opportunity right now, and that'll be nice if
45 we can make that happen. And related to that in some
46 ways is a paper that we just recently published that
47 showed that the White Mountains Herd is actually
48 genetically distinct from eight other herds in the
49 eastern Alaska and west or and western Yukon. And it's
50 kind of a big mystery given that those herds have long

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1 commingled that -- and commingled during the rut period
2 at times how that -- those herds have remained
3 genetically distinct. But it's a very interesting
4 conundrum. And then another caribou related thing is BLM
5 is proposing to change fire management options in the
6 Steece Conservation Area and parts of the White
7 Mountains area to try and protect some lichen-rich
8 caribou habitats. And that may also involve some changes
9 to fire management zones in the adjacent Yukon Flats and
10 state lands to kind of help with the manageability of
11 large-scale fires. The caribou range is one of the
12 special values that Congress listed in ANILCA when it
13 designated the Steece, and we know that fire readily
14 destroys lichen. It can take 60 years to grow back and
15 so, this proposal is -- and so this proposal also
16 recognizes that about 400,000 acres of this Steece
17 Conservation Area, or about 31% has burned since the
18 year 2000. And so, this is an attempt at least. And most
19 of the lands currently are in limited suppression
20 status, meaning that basically it's a let burn thing
21 except for protecting values at risk. And this would
22 propose to put it in modified protection, which
23 basically tries to suppress all fires that start before
24 July 10th. And after that the fire weather is typically
25 moderated somewhat. And I provided you with a handout
26 of the Alaska Fire Science Consortium Roadmap that
27 basically is discussing, kind of the lichen caribou
28 relationship and some of the trends in caribou -- in
29 lichen the State which includes a general trend towards
30 greater shrub growth and tundra habitats and at the
31 expense of lichen cover. And with that, I'm going to
32 call that good and answer any questions if you have any.

33

34 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you. Any
35 driving questions?

36

37 (No response)

38

39 Thank you.

40

41 MR. HERRIGES: Great, thanks.

42

43 (Pause)

44

45 MS. IRWIN: Through the Chair. Sorry.
46 Really quick. Brooke is this type of propose change
47 anything that we have any intention on commenting on,
48 or have an option to the fire management option to change
49 proposal that Jim was just referring to?

50

000112

1 MS. MCDAVID: I'm sorry. I was busy
2 organizing over here. If you could give me a little more
3 info, or is it in the -- is it in the handout?
4

5 MS. IRWIN: Never mind. It's not. I guess
6 it's not important. I'll ask Jim off record.
7

8 MS. MCDAVID: Sorry about that.
9

10
11 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: If there's driving
12 questions, please ask them. We just don't want to go off
13 into the weeds, that's all. If you got a question, that's
14 why I ask to ask it. But let's just make them quick.
15 Okay. Go ahead.
16

17 MR. BASSICH: I just wanted to make a
18 quick comment. I'm really glad to see that finally there
19 -- there's been quite a bit of studies on the lichen. I
20 can remember 2004, 2005, and it was mostly related to
21 the Fortymile Caribou coalition. But we brought up a lot
22 of concerns about those fires back then and the long-
23 term impacts of caribou, and I'm certain it will be in
24 the discussion this next coming week in the Fortymile
25 coalition but, we were asking for more research and more
26 answers. So, I really appreciate that some of that work
27 has been done and that it's getting disseminated out to
28 us now. It's really helpful. Going to be really helpful
29 with caribou. Thank you.
30

31 MR. WOODRUFF: I just one thing I'd like
32 to get on the record is that after a burn from 1 to 10
33 years, there's 1lb of lichen per acre, and 100 years
34 there's 210lb of lichen per acre. Thank you. Don
35 Woodruff.
36

37 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you, Don. Any
38 more comments?
39

40 (No response)
41

42 Going forward, U.S. Fish and Wildlife
43 Service. Yukon River salmon management and response to
44 EIRAC letter, Holly Carroll. EIRAC letter is on tab 4.
45

46 MS. CARROLL: Mr. Chair, this is Holly
47 Carroll. I can speak to that real quick. And then you
48 could go into your Yukon summary, or we can go the other
49 way. We got Keith and Shane there to give just a general
50 update about the season, whichever you want to hit first.

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CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Keith said he's got the floor first. Thank you.

MR. HERRON: Thank you, Holly. Good afternoon, Council. For those of you that don't know me, my name is Keith Herron. I'm born and raised in Alaska. Originally from Bethel but, grew up in Wrangell and Seward and Kenai. Now I currently live here in Fairbanks. I work for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. I'm the assistant fishery manager on the Yukon and also the tribal liaison for fisheries on the Yukon. So, I would like to first say, at your fall meeting, we gave you the season summaries from 2024. And if you want to reference those, we provided the ADF&G summer and fall season summaries, the official reports, and then also our report of the 2024 season to the Federal Subsistence Board and those are in your meeting materials. I won't go into those details to save us some time, but feel free to ask questions on the side or anytime reach out to us. For the 2025 season, we are in spring, so it's good to -- even though there's no official forecast yet I just want to kind of prepare people on what could be expected. So, salmon fishing opportunity and closures are likely going to be like 2024 again, where we expect complete closures on the chinook salmon, summer chum. Selective fishing is likely, but we need to really avoid the incidental harvest of chinook and fall chum and coho because those are of concern. Fall chum and coho closures are expected also throughout the year and then also this coming year, the 2025 chum salmon runs, the parent years of this coming run are 2020 for the five-year-olds and 2021 for the four-year-olds. So that is our first -- like that's when the chum declines. So, we're going to see the returns of those first parent years when we had closures and so with that we've heard growing concerns, especially from this Council, about the use of four-inch gillnets and the incidental harvest of salmon. Holly will kind of cover that more in her response letter but, we really appreciate all your feedback and the knowledge you do bring to us that help inform management. Also, I believe it was yesterday, Eva maybe recommended some things she said to the Yukon River panel about management recommendations. We would love to also hear those. I haven't seen those myself so, please reach out to us too and see how we could help maybe implement some of your suggestions. I really believe in a fisheries management system, we've heard about systematic changes that need to be placed to withstand these the climate change, the declines, the rebuilds. We need a system that's rooted

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1 in the people on the river and within their indigenous
2 knowledge and their local knowledge. So, I'm all for
3 that and this Council is made up of many people I look
4 up to and really enjoy listening to. But -- and then the
5 second thing I mentioned, I'm the tribal liaison and
6 help conduct tribal consultations. This season we're
7 going to do tribal consultations upon request. So please
8 reach out. I'll be sending emails to all the tribal
9 governments and corporations about those. So, we look
10 forward to that and then we also look forward to working
11 more with the Yukon River Fish Commission, and hopefully
12 in the future, can get a working agreement in place to
13 make that more official. With that, I'll hand it over
14 to Shane to introduce himself and talk about our
15 research.

16
17 MR. RANSBURRY: Thanks, Keith. So, I'm
18 Shane Ransburry. I'm a fishery assessment biologist for
19 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and I'm here in
20 Fairbanks. And for the coming season, U.S. Fish and
21 Wildlife Service will be removing the Andreafsky weir
22 camp, but the T'ee Drinjik Sonar will operate like normal
23 for fall season. The Ichthyophonus project finished
24 fieldwork last year, and we'll be sharing project
25 results in fall of 2025. And then we have some new
26 projects or new research projects for U.S. Fish and
27 Wildlife Service for 2025, and those include testing a
28 trace elements approach as a means to differentiate chum
29 salmon from the coastal Western Alaska Reporting Group,
30 which currently lumps all ocean caught chum from Norton
31 Sound, Yukon summer stock and Kuskokwim, and the Trace
32 Elements project is a collaboration with the University
33 of Calgary and Sitka Sound Science Center. And at the
34 same time, Fish and Game, Alaska Fish and Game, their
35 genetic lab is going to do a big study where they will
36 completely genotype chum salmon. So hopefully one or
37 both of these methods will work for differentiating the
38 coastal Western Alaska Reporting Group, and we will be
39 able to create a method to find out exactly how many
40 chum salmon caught in the ocean were heading for the
41 Yukon. And we're kind of -- you know, it's two different
42 projects, but we are trying to work together to see if
43 we can expand, you know, where we're getting samples
44 from and things and help each other out as much as we
45 can. So, we'll develop more on that as we come into
46 spring.

47
48 We also have a Yukon Delta Environmental
49 Conditions study in collaboration with YDFDA and NMFS,
50 which will hopefully allow us to better understand how

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1 juvenile and adult salmon are using the delta. It should
2 also allow us to improve the juvenile outmigration study
3 that the YDFDA and NMFS conducts every year. The new
4 environmental study will include monitoring buoys that
5 will also output data to a public mobile app developed
6 by the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission and Alaska Ocean
7 Observing System. So, folks trying to go subsistence
8 fishing or hunting in the area will be able to pull up
9 a real time wind and wave information on their cell
10 phone for wherever the buoys are without having to spend
11 their gas to go out there to find out that the weather
12 is bad so it should be good for marginal days. The buoy
13 placement is still to be determined as we apply for
14 permits, but hopefully there will be in some combination
15 of north mouth, middle mouth, south mouth, and the ocean,
16 so.

17
18 Then we also have a sonar feasibility
19 project for the mainstem Koyukuk which will start us
20 down the path of determining whether a single project
21 could assess all or assess all chinook and chum salmon
22 returning to the Koyukuk. For 2025, no fish would be
23 touched. We're just investigating the lower Koyukuk
24 bathymetry, potential camp locations, and how close fish
25 swim to the banks and surface. We began outreach for
26 this project last fall, and in the coming months we are
27 meeting with TCC and (indiscernible) Corporation again
28 about the project, and I'm also working on getting some
29 information out on the project in like a pamphlet to
30 distribute to Huslia, Galena and Koyukuk. And the
31 feasibility project will take more than one year. And
32 we want to make sure that there's a lot of community
33 input into the future years of the project. So, we have
34 time to consider traditional knowledge and concerns
35 folks may have. We also want time to identify local
36 partners, because ultimately, if something like this,
37 you know, did go down the lines and we have a Koyukuk
38 mainstem project, we want there to be a lot of local
39 staff on the project. And currently we only have funding
40 for the feasibility for 2025, so we'd have to put out
41 for soft funding in the future. And I just talked to
42 Diloola about that last week, and she had some good
43 ideas. So, we'll see.

44
45 And then next we have a request for
46 funding out to R&E to investigate bank orientation of
47 chinook salmon near the Tanana River confluence, in
48 collaboration with Brian McKenna and Mr. Wright. We know
49 from traditional knowledge and other sources that
50 chinook bank orient toward the South Bank when

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1 approaching the Tanana. If they're bound for the Tanana.
2 So, we want to get a number on how strong that
3 orientation is. If nearly all the Tanana bound fish are
4 in the South Bank, and all the other fish going into
5 Canada and everything else are on the North Bank. It
6 might make a future sonar counting -- mainstem Yukon for
7 a sonar counting mainstem tana fish easier to operate.
8 And that kind of gets to what you guys were talking
9 about earlier, where Brian Lepping was saying it's like
10 \$400,000 for a sonar. So, the easier we can run it,
11 hopefully it would also be cheaper.

12
13 And this study would look at the site
14 near the Tanana confluence that TCC identified in their
15 ongoing mainstem sonar feasibility project. And then
16 finally, we're also collaborating with UAF on a study,
17 remote sensing fall chum habitat to hopefully make it
18 easier to notice when spawning habitat deteriorates.
19 This will focus on a -- on monitoring wintertime
20 upwelling and will involve a combination of aerial
21 flights and satellite imagery, which is kind of nice
22 because if a tool gets developed this way, satellite
23 imagery in some areas goes back decades. So, we can also
24 look back in time. And fall chum cover a huge area. So,
25 it's -- currently it's fairly difficult to monitor. So
26 that's the end of our update. Thank you.

27
28 MR. HERRON: Maybe if there's any
29 questions on those two pieces. And then we'll turn it
30 over to Holly for her report.

31
32 MR. WOODRUFF: Thank you, Charlie. This
33 is Don Woodruff. In reviewing your handout that we have
34 in our book here, in the Advisory Announcements. You
35 guys are bunching the -- all the chum together and
36 quoting that there's a relationship between the summer
37 and fall chum. Right now, there is no relationship as
38 far as I can see. I mean, we have a lot of summer chum
39 and zero fall chum so there is no relationship. And when
40 you put that in a graph or you show that to the people,
41 it's a false presentation. And I'd like you to keep them
42 separate and all the graphs and data that you give us
43 to survey. Because when you group them together like
44 that, it makes it look a whole lot better and that's not
45 the way it is. The harvest were 3000 fall chum, that's
46 a fourth of the escapement in Eagle. That's pitiful, you
47 know. And in order to stop that, we have to stop the
48 harvest when there's any fall chum in the river. Every
49 egg counts. So, to say oh, we're going to let people
50 harvest summer chum while there's fall chum in the river

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1 is unconscionable. You guys are the problem. Thank you.

2

3 MS. CARROLL: Yeah. Mr. Chair. This is
4 Holly Carroll. I can respond to that. If that works.

5

6 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Go ahead. Please do.

7

8 MS. CARROLL: Yeah. This is Holly Carroll
9 federal in-season manager, and yeah. So, thanks, Don,
10 for bringing that up. The document that you're referring
11 to is a letter I wrote in response to the letter from
12 the Eastern Interior RAC. And you guys had a lot of
13 great suggestions about kind of how to handle this
14 conservation issue of fall chum. I don't know if all of
15 the participants there got to see that letter. I hope
16 you did. We emailed it. Brooke is going to forward it
17 to the other RACs as well. And then Keith brought some
18 printed copies for you guys. I take to heart what you're
19 saying, Don. So yeah, your point is that the abundance
20 we show on the blue and orange graph on, I believe it's
21 page four of the document doesn't kind of show that
22 relative abundance of the total fall chum run to any
23 kind of harvest and that's true. What we're trying to
24 do with this chart is to show that that somewhat
25 discreteness between the runs. So, at the early part of
26 the season, we have summer chum coming in, then they
27 start to become fall chum. And what I was trying to show
28 is that -- and it doesn't always occur this way but, in
29 recent seasons we have seen a really large, relatively
30 large number of summer chums come in late, and the front
31 end of the fall chum run is, you know, a very small
32 fraction of those fish. And so, yeah, we've been trying
33 to balance allowing harvest of summer chum with that
34 closure of the of the fall chum before the fall chum get
35 there. I think one of the points that I've taken from
36 just the general feedback in your letter is that we
37 could move those closure dates sooner so that there's
38 no fishing extending into the fall season. I will say
39 that we won't ever truly have the genetic information
40 in season sort of soon enough to know exactly how many
41 fall chum are in the river. We have pretty good in-
42 season assessments, but it is lagged by a few days. So,
43 you know, we do have to take a cautious approach, and I
44 get what you're saying about, you know -- he's
45 referencing there's -- in the letter I share some harvest
46 numbers there that there was just over 3000 fall chum
47 taken in the whole drainage. And yes, that's a large
48 portion of the Canadian passage. I didn't really cover
49 the total run size of fall chum. We didn't meet the U.S.
50 goals for fall chum. So, we didn't meet those escapement

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1 goals and so, yeah, it's in theory, we have fall chum
2 fishing closed all season. There should be no legal
3 retention of fall chum. That's what we're trying to
4 achieve. But I think one of the main things I bring up
5 in there, which is another one of your really great
6 suggestions that I'm hoping we can refine the feedback
7 on, and that is where I think that harvest is likely
8 occurring, is not so much in these summer chum dip
9 netting but, I think that that harvest is likely
10 occurring as incidental harvest in four-inch gear and
11 you also make some recommendations about that. We have
12 no real way to tease that out for sure. So yes, it could
13 be that some chum are happening, some fall chums are
14 being harvested in the summer chum dipnet fishery. So,
15 we can do a couple things. We can take a more
16 conservative approach and close that summer dip netting
17 right at the turn of the fall season, or sooner if we
18 got indication from the mouth or even out in the coastal
19 districts that people are seeing those fall chum come
20 in. We could close sooner. So those are things we'll
21 consider. As far as you know, not allowing dipnet on
22 summer chum. That's going to be a real tough balance,
23 right. We have so many people benefiting from the 32,000
24 fish that were harvested in that fishery. And those
25 harvests actually went all the way up through district
26 four and five. You know, we really are seeing areas of
27 the river who don't normally take summer chum relying a
28 little bit more on those fish. At least that's what I
29 was gleaning from the harvest data. So, you know, I
30 think one thing I would like to hear more from this RAC
31 and I guess that's also why I forwarded your letter to
32 those other RACs is that, you know, this is essentially
33 preseason. We want to get feedback for both the state
34 and the federal managers as we make our strategy on what
35 changes should be -- would -- should we be looking to
36 do next season. If our fall chum runs and our summer
37 chum runs are weaker, then obviously we're not going to
38 allow as much dip netting anyway. But I also think that
39 it might be time to start limiting those four-inch gear
40 a little further. Last year we started new, more -- kind
41 of more restrictive measures for the four inch non salmon
42 gear. In summer season, we had a two-week closure to
43 protect chinook. Some people think that should be
44 longer. I'd like to hear feedback on that. The other
45 thing is that in fall season, because they're not so
46 pulsey [sic] and we couldn't really find a way to just
47 protect certain groups of fall chums. So instead, we
48 went to the weekend-only window schedule throughout all
49 fall and we think that did probably reduce the harvest
50 of fall chum. But I've also heard some suggestions that

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1 we need to reduce the fall four-inch gear even further.
2 So, any kind of feedback on changes to the four-inch
3 management actions that we could do would be helpful.

4
5 Yeah, because getting that number to
6 zero is the ideal for fall chum, right. Just like the
7 chinook, we want that number to be zero as well. But
8 yeah, there is a trade off because that is -- I think a
9 lot of it is being legally harvested as incidental catch
10 in those four-inch. But like I said, don't have a way
11 to be sure about that. And in the interest of just
12 finishing out my report, knowing there might be some
13 more comments, feedback or questions. I just wanted to
14 touch on a couple aspects of the letter. So, the other
15 thing that was mentioned in the letter was, you know,
16 working with the Fish Commission and, and I absolutely
17 would welcome a lot more in-season and preseason
18 engagement with the Fish Commission. I think they had a
19 meeting in January that we weren't at, and I know they're
20 working on some processes but, when Keith and I presented
21 at the last preseason meeting, you know, we talked a lot
22 about what would in-season co-management look like. And,
23 you know, for us, it would be really neat to be able to
24 share the data and discuss the data, like what does it
25 mean and what does it not mean? So, Don for instance,
26 your feedback on this chart, you know, is this chart not
27 meaningful? What does it mean to you? What kind of data
28 would you want to see instead? Those kinds of in-season
29 discussions where we're sharing the data in real time
30 as we get it. Those are pretty essential for co-
31 management. They kind of put us all on the same footing
32 of understanding what our projections mean, and don't
33 mean what information we have and don't have. So, you
34 know, if we can get a process where the Fish Commission
35 or some subset like the E-board of the Fish Commission
36 could start to have regular meetings with us or a
37 preseason meeting at the very least, that would sure be
38 helpful. And then we're getting a lot of what I want to
39 call regional feedback, right. So, we're getting really
40 great ideas, you know, especially from you guys are being
41 really proactive on, hey, you know, you should do this
42 or that with the four-inch gear. We need to take a more
43 conservative approach. That kind of feedback is really
44 clear and really helpful. But if it only goes to the
45 federal manager or it doesn't get brought up in a meeting
46 with lower river folks there, it's kind of hard for the
47 managers to then work out those compromise strategies.
48 It would be great to have the, you know, that full
49 breadth of the users in the conversation. And so that's
50 kind of why I'm also reaching out to the YKRAC and the

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1 Western Interior to see if they'll also weigh in on
2 these great four-inch topics and you know when to -- any
3 feedback on the dip netting for summer chum, for
4 instance. So yeah, that's my intent is to be more
5 inclusive and get those conversations going as much as
6 we can.

7
8 And then the third thing I just I
9 briefly touch on in the letter is that I think there was
10 a comment about, you know, the upriver people rely on
11 the fall term. And so, you know, could we leave those
12 for the upriver people? And it's just important that you
13 guys understand from a regulatory standpoint, the
14 managers cannot allocate use. We cannot say you folks
15 get to have these fish and you folks don't. We can't do
16 that. That's only something a regulatory body like the
17 FSB or the Board of Fish could do so. Yeah. If you could
18 help, you know, come up with some suggested management
19 action suggestions that we can implement because we can
20 do time, we can do area and we can do gear. You know,
21 that'd be super helpful. But then you also had some
22 comments about the way that people are operating their
23 non-salmon four-inch gear and how, you know, we need to
24 do a better job with outreach. And boy, you're not wrong.
25 And when we're writing these legal documents, it's
26 really hard for us to give enough kind of description
27 of what people should and shouldn't be doing in there.
28 We have to make it real legal, real enforceable, real
29 brief. And so, yeah, if there's a subset of you that
30 wants to help create some kind of local knowledge
31 outreach materials, I think that would be phenomenal.
32 And/or if you guys think that the regulations are unclear
33 about non-salmon gillnet use, then then maybe like, work
34 with us directly. Give us a call and let's see if there's
35 a proposal you want written for this AYK Board of Fish
36 cycle that's coming up by April 10th. Because you know,
37 we could help write that if we understand what change
38 you would want to see. So, that kind of covers the main
39 highlights of that letter, I hope I've touched on most
40 of the things. And yeah, again, I'm just really grateful
41 that you gave us direct feedback. You know, we're not
42 getting as many of these sorts of preseason forums, and
43 we hear a lot that people are very frustrated with
44 bycatch, and that's the issue we got to solve. But I
45 like to remind people that in-river, we're not done with
46 the tough management stuff. You know, we're still taking
47 stuff away from people, you know, restricting four-inch,
48 restricting fishing is still a major hardship that a lot
49 of people are really struggling with. And so, these
50 really tough management decisions to shorten windows or

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1 to put more restrictions in place, you know, there needs
2 to be really kind of robust public discussion about that
3 for us to kind of take more stuff away. But that's -- I
4 think that's what we're facing. I think we're down to
5 so few numbers of fall chum, like you're saying, Don in
6 chinook, that we might have to start taking away some
7 of that non-salmon fishing, but, we don't know how much
8 people are relying on that to feed their families. And
9 if that's the last thing they have left, you know some
10 people don't want to lose that or for instance, the
11 summer chum. You know, if we're going to take away that
12 dip netting for summer chum in any way, we got to be
13 real methodical about it. So just kind of throwing that
14 out there that these kinds of discussions are super
15 welcome right now. And they really help (indiscernible)
16 and her team and me and my team create a management
17 strategy that the river can embrace. So, thanks.

18

19 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Yeah. We have a
20 whole line first, her, Andy, you. Yeah. Go ahead. Go
21 ahead. Okay.

22

23 MR. WOODRUFF: Thank you, Holly, for that
24 short response. I'm going to stand with what I had to
25 say and if it's hard or tough for you guys, so be it.
26 But it's really tough for us to go hungry. We haven't
27 fished in four years and if you have to take some time
28 away from four-inch mesh, so what? If you have to take
29 time away from man fish wheels, do the whole shebang.
30 Thank you.

31

32 MR. RANSBURY: This is Shane Ransbury
33 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Yeah. Just to add some
34 context to the summer fall relationship in particular
35 before we get too far along in the discussion. So, fall
36 chum return well into summer season and the -- that July
37 16th date that's the traditional date to switch into
38 fall is a little bit arbitrary. So, I mean, just
39 something to keep in mind. It doesn't mean like we can't
40 go back to the 16th date. It's just that there are fall
41 genetic chum salmon going through in summer season as
42 well, just a very small portion of the run. And over the
43 last three years, we've used genetics primarily to make
44 that date on when we switch into fall season management.
45 Because we really start seeing big time numbers of fall
46 genetics in August. At least for the last three years.
47 Now, that's not saying that it will always be that way.
48 But it's kind of in a transition fall management away
49 from this arbitrary July 16th date toward a genetics
50 based-date. So that's kind of where that date comes from.

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1 If we're talking about, you know, like last year when
2 we fished ten days of, you know, summer management
3 essentially, and policies and that's kind of where that
4 came from. The other thing is that the fall -- the summer
5 fall relationship still works fairly well because the
6 fall season or the fall run is broken into kind of three
7 components that are more or less historically were equal
8 parts which is like the border U.S., the Canadian
9 component and the Tanana component and it's true that
10 in the last, like since the crash, essentially Canada
11 mainstem has done terribly. But we can also account for
12 that because we know roughly how bad it is compared to
13 everything else. And it's fairly consistent over the
14 last 4 or 5 years.

15
16 And then, you know, the fishing branch
17 is a little bit better. It's still missing goals and
18 things like this but, we can still use the relationship
19 and understand that we expect the Canadian component to
20 be terrible and kind of like adjust that relationship.
21 And this past year in particular we had additional help
22 because the fall season for the fall chum are mainly age
23 four, and the summer chum are kind of -- are more of a
24 mix of age four and age five. And so, when the summers
25 came in, we saw that the age four component was really
26 poor. And so, we knew that the fall chum component was
27 going to be especially poor and it led to more
28 conservative management from our point of view.
29 Understanding that we still allowed summer management
30 for a few days into fall season because of, you know,
31 the -- what we'd expect to see in the genetics coming
32 through Pilot Station. So anyway, that's not to take
33 away from, you know, any proposed management activities
34 you guys have but, just to, you know, broader context
35 of why that kind of thing happened, so.

36
37 MR. HERRON: If I can add one more thing
38 here, I understand we want to -- you guys are saying
39 every fish matters so why would we put it that -- if you
40 look at the close, we did cut it very close to the major
41 pulse of fall chum. So, I understand, I think what you
42 guys are saying is be more cautious. And that date always
43 changes every single year. It's never static, it's never
44 the same. So, we could air on the side of caution to
45 protect more fall chum is what I believe, Don is saying
46 and that we cut it way too close last season.

47
48 MR. WOODRUFF: Every egg counts. Not
49 every fish counts. Yeah.

50

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1 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you, Keith. I
2 had to put on record who you were.

3
4 MS. BURK: Thank you. Through the Chair.
5 This is Eva. I will just personally say that I posed
6 this question before, and I want to pose it again. Are
7 we rebuilding or are we fishing? And I think that
8 conversation needs to be had in these upcoming preseason
9 meetings that we do have. So, the Fish Commission
10 intentionally scheduled its meeting right after YRDFA.
11 So those last two weeks of April, that first day of May,
12 we will be planning to gather, and I think that is what
13 we really want to address is how should we manage? Now,
14 in saying this, like if I was to do it and I'm thinking
15 about what's going on with fall chum, I'm thinking about
16 what's going on with chinook, and I'm thinking about how
17 critical we are right now, and I really want to listen
18 to people on the river. And I think it's also important
19 to be able to have a fishing opportunity for summer
20 chum, if we can. The things that are non-lethal would
21 be the dip nets and the manned fish wheels, right. And
22 so, I think it's important to balance that. I'm at the
23 mindset. I'm, I'm like, who invented the four-inch? Who
24 said, let's put a four-inch on the Yukon, because I
25 don't think I've ever heard anyone from our group say
26 that. I think that was something that the managers put
27 forth. Unless somebody -- you guys can correct me if I'm
28 wrong, you heard that from somebody. I would encourage
29 us to look at the Kuskokwim, because it's my
30 understanding that what they went back and forth with
31 this 4 inch to 6 inch, and then they eventually were
32 like, we're only ever going to use a 6 inch on the
33 Kuskokwim. And so, Charlie's probably going to talk at
34 some point about his test fishery with the four-inch.
35 But you guys all -- have also heard that a bunch of
36 times. So, I guess if it was me, I would like to
37 encourage our people and I'm going to bring this forward
38 and I'll take all the beating for it. I really want to
39 worry about our kids and our grandkids at this point,
40 and if that means we have to stop fishing for a year or
41 two all the way. We might really want to think about
42 that. And I think if we want to fish for those
43 opportunities, that we should really limit ourselves to
44 non-lethal gear. And if we do need to get whitefish
45 right. This is a non-salmon species. You can do pole
46 fishing in any tributary in any time for pike, sheefish,
47 right. And if you want to target whitefish to make it
48 worth your gas money and your time, you do it in the
49 spring and you do it in the fall, right in the main
50 stem. And I think we all know that as local fishermen,

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1 I saw that was discussed at YRDFA, it was quite clearly
2 put, when people get their whitefish, it was in the fall
3 with the six-inch net in the main stem. So, I guess
4 that's where I personally sit on this and I want to let
5 you guys know in response to the Fish Commission, we've
6 got Executive Council meetings planned. We are getting
7 our ducks in a row, and then we want to extend an invite
8 for you all to come join our Executive Council meeting
9 so we can just start to discuss stuff and then because
10 we do need to work with all of our fish commissioners
11 and the YRDFA, I think it's important for us to have
12 these discussions at YRDFA and at the Fish Commission
13 in April. Unfortunately, that's after the April 10th
14 date for proposals. So, some of us ACs might have to put
15 our neck on the line and put things out and say, hey,
16 we put this out there and it's all for full discussion
17 so, please shoot us down if you want to. But we may have
18 to take those steps just so we don't miss the deadline.
19 And we are in the middle and upper rivers protecting the
20 resource. And also thinking about the people who are
21 like, without stores, without money like that, really
22 need the opportunity to get a few pinks, to get a few
23 summer chum. Like, it's a lot to balance, but that's
24 where I would start to think about the non-lethal gear
25 and who even brought up the four inch. And I know Ronda's
26 like, I don't want to hear about these four-inch. So, I
27 apologize, Ronda but, I -- and I do think it keeps coming
28 up over and over again. And it's like a dirty little
29 rash. You got to take care of it. It's just going to get
30 bigger. Like...

31
32 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Holly, online. You
33 have some more to say?

34
35 MS. CARROLL: Yeah. Thanks. Through the
36 Chair. Eva, those are great comments about the four-
37 inch. Yeah. That that is definitely, you know, yes.
38 Fishermen would prefer to use 5 or 6 inch for their
39 whitefish. Every one of them will tell us that. We as
40 managers, probably kind of limited it down to four as a
41 way to provide something but avoid most salmon. So yeah,
42 I think you're right. That is a construct of management.
43 But what concerns me is that you have a great suggestion
44 that says people will get their whitefish in fall. Okay,
45 I know so many traditional fishermen who will say yes
46 except when they want those is while we still have it
47 and need to have it closed for gillnet. So, if we let
48 them use six-inch gillnets, when those whitefish, the
49 big whitefish are running out in fall, that would still
50 overlap with our really necessary fall chum closures

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1 that in the main stem in some places we've got in place
2 to late October. So truly, if you do bring that up for
3 discussion, you might want to be very clear about what
4 you mean by fall, because we've got the main stem closed
5 to protect fall chum from large mesh gill nets in some
6 areas all the way up until very late in the year, even
7 ice running. So unfortunately, we can't just let them
8 use 5- or 6-inch gillnets for those whitefish until the
9 fall chum are completely through an area. Otherwise, we
10 would do far more harvests than you're seeing now. And
11 as -- and Andy's data showed, you would also see a lot
12 more harvest of coho. So yeah, I -- you're going to need
13 a lot of specificity around that conversation because I
14 think everyone will say yes, please. I should be using
15 a six-inch for my whitefish. We're getting constant
16 requests to allow six-inch gear for whitefish in the
17 tributaries. And the hard part with that is if any of
18 our fall chum or, you know, if you're talking about
19 spring, if any of our fall chum or chinook are going up
20 in those tributaries, we can't really allow that, and
21 we can't identify every tributary that may not have
22 those. So that's been our toughest thing, is that it
23 does kind of need to be all or nothing in some ways. And
24 so unfortunately, we've gone to no large mesh at all
25 until we're 100% sure those fall chum through. So, I
26 love that idea and maybe just yeah, put some dates and
27 some clarity around that. Otherwise, I think everyone's
28 going to vote for yep, six-inch and fall and we can't
29 be doing that yet.

30
31 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Holly, this is
32 Charlie. I've said many times that you can catch fish
33 with a six-inch mesh and a 2.7in mesh, one set below the
34 other. You can catch all sizes of whitefish in the
35 springtime as soon as the ice goes out. I've done it for
36 years. You catch 40, 50 of the smaller white fish at
37 night and 40, 50 humpies at night, the broad whitefish
38 that's before the salmon get here. As soon as the ice
39 goes out, the whitefish are moving around and going back
40 into the sloughs, as the ice recedes and those sloughs
41 and back lakes that have waterways to the river. Not
42 everybody has that, but most people do. You could put a
43 small mesh right in the Yukon all summer long and catch
44 the smaller species of whitefish and a few pike. The
45 2.7-inch mesh will catch more fish than a four-inch will
46 any day. Too many of the fish swim through the four-inch
47 or bounce off. So, there's ways to do it. People just
48 have to be in a hurry to get out there and catch some
49 fish if they want it. If they have dog teams, they can
50 keep a 2.7in mesh in the main stem for the smaller

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1 species of whitefish all summer long. It's not like it's
2 the end of the world. We want our future generations to
3 be able to have fish. We're in a seven-year agreement,
4 and what we do this year is going to be a direct effect
5 on the end of that agreement. I think it should have
6 started last year because it's either, we're eating,
7 fishing or conserving. It's like Eva said. Thank you.
8 Well, they have the date so late in the fall now that
9 you'd have to fish under the ice and that's all right,
10 that's acceptable also. People put nets in under the
11 ice. I've done it myself. In the eddies near Tanana, we
12 put two 60-foot six-inch mesh in. We catch about 25
13 mixed fish tonight. I haven't done that for a long time,
14 but it's doable. Thank you.

15
16 MS. CARROLL: Yeah. Mr. Chair, just to
17 clarify. So, yeah, what you're saying is totally already
18 legal. So, in the spring, it's legal for people to be
19 using their large mesh until we close down in June and
20 then in fall after it's completely iced up, yeah people
21 can usually be fishing under the ice. And that is what
22 a lot of traditional users told me, you know, real
23 whitefish harvesters, the ones that get the big fish,
24 that's what they say, how they do it. You know that it
25 hasn't traditionally been in summer, you know. And so
26 but, I just want to clarify, were you making a suggestion
27 that we actually allow 24 over seven small mesh gear all
28 summer, but, we now go down to a limitation of 2.75in.
29 Is that kind of a new suggestion?

30
31 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Well, it's a
32 suggestion while we eliminate the four inch to protect
33 salmon so that people that really need can have something
34 to eat. And there's some people that have a few dogs and
35 they say the four-inch goes away, then my dogs have to
36 go away and people need to eat. So, in the springtime,
37 historically, as I grew up, we ate small round whitefish
38 almost every day in the spring, we catch a lot of them
39 right below the village of Rampart, and people not
40 catching them now because they put in a four inch mesh
41 and they swim right through. So, the fish are still
42 there. They just have to have the right gear. Thank you.
43 I just don't want to take the opportunity of people
44 putting food in their kid's mouth or keeping their dogs
45 alive from having to shoot them as we go forward with
46 this management. Thank you.

47
48 MR. BASSICH: Yeah. Thank you. This is
49 Andy. (Indiscernible) I'm not really asking questions.
50 I just wanted to make a few comments. I'd like to start

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1 out with, oops management for more than 20 years now,
2 I've been involved in this process so almost 30 years.
3 And we have consistently had what we have now termed
4 oops management, where on years where there have been
5 supposedly conservation concerns and/or conservative
6 management, fisheries are opened up in lower river and
7 then once fish are determined not to be in the numbers
8 needed, the upper river gets closed down. That's the
9 definition that we have for oops management. That has
10 happened over and over and over when -- I've been at
11 preseason meetings, and managers say we're going to
12 enter the year conservatively. So, I have no faith
13 whatsoever in hearing a manager tell me we're going to
14 enter the season conservatively, because all it means
15 to me is, oh, crap, we're not going to fish this year.
16 So, I want to bring that to your attention, because
17 those comments do not instill any kind of confidence in
18 anybody in the middle and upper river. And I'm seeing a
19 lot of heads nodding right now in the room.

20
21 The second thing when that happens is
22 that is exactly what you're warning us against a minute
23 ago, and that's allocated fishing. Managers have been
24 allocating fish to lower river and the middle river, and
25 shutting down the people in the upper river that's
26 allocated fishing. So be very careful when you use that
27 term because you have been doing that and if that's
28 illegal, you've been doing that for over two decades. I
29 just want to bring that to your attention. I think some
30 of the solutions that we posed in our letter are very
31 viable. And it really kind of -- I got to apologize but,
32 it really kind of irritates me to see some of these
33 responses that are the same old scenarios, the same old
34 management scenarios, the same old strategies that have
35 failed us for 25 years and have led us down to this
36 path, that has to change. And if that means everybody
37 on the Yukon has to share that burden, so be it. I don't
38 understand where someone, just because of where they
39 live, has greater ability or greater worth in harvesting
40 when the vast majority of other people are not. And
41 that's not only in Alaska. That's closing off all of
42 Canada, where all of these fish, as far as chinook goes,
43 it's over 50% of the run is spawned. That's wrong. And
44 in my view -- and I really held back from saying this.
45 But in my view, what happens on the Yukon River is just
46 like what happens in Area M. There's no difference. It's
47 intercept fisheries. Those fish in Area M are a thousand
48 miles away from the mouth of Yukon. Those fish at the
49 mouth of the Yukon are close to a thousand miles from
50 their spawning up in northern regions of the Yukon River.

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1 So, take that into account. I know the definitions don't
2 apply but, in reality, we got to stop looking at some
3 of these definitions that don't work. We need to share
4 the burden, and I understand people in the lower river
5 want their fish. So do we. The problem that I'm sharing
6 with you is that we have no alternatives. We don't have
7 marine mammals. We don't have pink salmon. We don't have
8 other species, large species. I'm happy to share
9 pictures of all the pike and all the sheefish I caught
10 this year, and not a single one of them was much over
11 30in, and I fished every single day this summer. One
12 person can catch one giant pike or one giant sheefish
13 in the lower river. That's 30 or 40 pounds. So, we have
14 to start taking that into consideration. When you start
15 talking to those people saying, oh, we need this or we
16 need that, and I'm not trying to create any kind of a
17 scenario here where it's us versus them. I'm just trying
18 to point out what the realities are on the ground, and
19 we need to take our heads out of the sand, and we need
20 to start doing what's right for the fish so we can do
21 right for the future generations. Because once those
22 fish are gone, we will never have them in the upper
23 river. Ever. That's all I have. Thank you.

24

(Pause)

25

26
27 MS. SHOCKLEY: Hi, this is Dorothy.
28 Holly, it just really upsets me to hear you asking for
29 comments, because for decades, people along the Yukon
30 have been making comments, and it just falls on deaf
31 ears. So, you know, I'm just, you know, to a point where
32 comments are well, in some ways important but, also
33 people are just tired. You know, we're just tired of
34 making comments when it doesn't make a difference. So,
35 thank you.

36

37 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Holly, this is
38 Charlie. Maybe we can try to get together a All RAC
39 meeting, the RACs along the river to have this
40 conversation in the near future. Do you think that's
41 possible?

42

43 MS. CARROLL: Through the Chair. Mr.
44 Chair, I think that would be great. I think Brooke would
45 know a little bit more about that process. I know they
46 used to do them. But that would be great. And I hear you
47 guys, the fatigue is real, for sure. And, you know, I
48 apologize. Gosh, I'm writing down everything you say
49 because they do help us, you know. But sometimes I have
50 just as many questions after a suggestion, you know, I

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1 want to refine it and make sure I understand it. You
2 know, it's not trying to exhaust you. It's trying to
3 achieve what you're asking for. So, you know, bear with
4 us.

5

6

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you, Holly.

7

8

9 MS. MCDAVID: Mr. Chair, this is Brooke.
10 If the Council is interested in meeting with the other
11 RACs along the Yukon, you would need to submit a request
12 to OSM. There would be some things you might want to
13 consider. Given, you know, always budget limitations,
14 would a virtual meeting be sufficient? Or if you were
15 to meet in person, what a location might be. Thinking
16 about timing in regards to you know, the fishing season
17 and when, you know, pulling something together before
18 the summer might be pushing it. So, a little more
19 feedback on what you would be looking for would be
20 helpful. Thanks.

20

21

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Any feedback from the RAC members, I
guess.

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MS. MCDAVID: I'm just -- one other thing
to consider. I mean, it's -- if that was more of a
working group format that would be fine. If you want to
have an actual tri-RAC meeting, that's like an official

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1 meeting of the three RACs together. It has to be noticed
2 in the Federal Register. We have to put out news
3 releases. It's a public meeting. We have to make sure
4 that, you know, there's Zoom links for or Teams links
5 for other people to attend. So, it's not, not doable,
6 but it does take a little more, you know, logistics.

7
8 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: I agree that -- this
9 is Charlie for the record. I agree that whatever we do
10 is going to have to have effect. There's no -- we don't
11 want to do something that ain't going to have no effect
12 on any change. So, having a real meeting is the only way
13 to make change. People all on the record, and all the
14 RACs involved and if that's impossible. And it is. I
15 don't know what else to say.

16
17 MS. SHOCKLEY: Would it be possible for,
18 you know, maybe the -- OSM pay for, like, the, like, a
19 small committee, but also, if other RAC members can get
20 other organizations to pay for their way. I mean, is
21 that possible? Because, you know, there are
22 organizations out there that could possibly help with
23 logistics as far as making or paying people's way or
24 something.

25
26 MS. MCDAVID: Dorothy, I don't know that
27 I have an answer to give on the record. I think some of
28 this logistical stuff would need to be talked about, you
29 know, with our leadership team and our admin team. But
30 thank you for that idea.

31
32 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: So, I can request
33 that you please do as much as you can to figure out
34 whether we can or can't. Please. Thank you.

35
36 MS. MCDAVID: Thank you, Charlie. And one
37 thing -- I guess that's hard because we have so many
38 important meetings coming up with the Board of Fisheries
39 meetings, the North Pacific meeting and then next year
40 is the start of a federal subsistence regulatory year
41 for fisheries. You know, this is a wildlife year. So it
42 may be that you could do a like a virtual meeting and
43 in the fall sometime or late summer to talk about the -
44 - some of the proposals that are going towards Board of
45 Fish that are already out there. Talk about some ideas
46 for North Pacific. And then if you really wanted to have
47 like an in-person meeting, you know, at the start of
48 winter 2026 is the start of the fisheries regulatory
49 cycle. And from the federal perspective, that might make
50 the most sense to bring the RACs together. But just

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1 something to consider.

2

3 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you so much.

4 Got a comment?

5

6 MS. IRWIN: Yes, thank you. Through the
7 Chair. Olivia Irwin, I just have a closing comment for
8 this section. I have no comment for Holly today. But,
9 Keith, I just want to say that I really appreciate you,
10 and I really appreciate you as Fish and Wildlife Service
11 for having a native liaison. And it gives me a little
12 bit more hope knowing that we've got a (In Native)
13 fellow, somebody who is -- understands what it's like
14 to live our ways of life. And even some of your comments
15 today were a lot more liberal than I even have ever been
16 able to hear other managers say out loud, you basically
17 acknowledge the need for co-management with U.S. fish -
18 - or with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Fish
19 Commission. And I just want to say, I really, really
20 appreciate you and this work. And I'm grateful for U.S.
21 Fish and Wildlife Service for having a native liaison
22 and encourage any more funding and projects to go into
23 the continued translation of our indigenous ways of life
24 into federal management. Thank you.

25

26 MS. BURK: Thank you, through the Chair.
27 I echo those comments, Keith. We're also happy to have
28 you too, Shane, but -- and everybody's giving Holly crap.
29 I still like Holly. I mean, jeez, God, you guys be nice.
30 I really like your ideas, Brooke. I think that's doable.
31 As far as we -- the easiest thing to pull off might be
32 a virtual meeting so that we could at least comment, and
33 we would -- our expectation would be that proposals are
34 already out there. I think we can see that the proposals
35 would be coming from ACs anyway. That's a stronger way
36 to do it is to have proposals come from the Fish and
37 Game Advisory Committees themselves for trying to change
38 Fish and Game regulations. So, I think we can assume
39 that people will have great proposals, and we can get
40 together to support those. And then also, if we meet
41 within that time frame, we could probably submit written
42 comments to the Federal Register if we meet before the
43 end of October, I think. There's a 60-day window in
44 August, and I can't be sure of the beginning and end
45 dates of that. But that's just a thought, is if we are
46 going to meet, we could hit that Federal Register
47 deadline, too.

48

49 MS. MCDAVID: Thank you. There's a lot
50 to think about, but I just want to see if the intent is

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1 clear. We got Western Interior RAC meeting next week and
2 the following week is YK Delta. Is this something that
3 you want us to ask them if they're interested in? Okay.
4 It's on the record and we will have more discussions.
5 Thank you.

6

7 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay.

8 (Indiscernible). Go ahead.

9

10 MR. HERRON: Thank you for the kind
11 words. They really mean a lot. But I -- in all
12 seriousness, I know it must be frustrating. I'm new, I'm
13 young, and I'm coming to the work and trying to look
14 back at history. And I know Eva said it yesterday, like,
15 why didn't we start this in 2008? We've only met sub -
16 A&S, we don't use that term on the federal side. We only
17 focus on subsistence priority. But the A&S for chinook
18 or kings has been met one time since 2008. So, it's just
19 like what -- I really enjoy - love Eva's comments about
20 are we fishing or are we rebuilding? And I -- the
21 information I provided today, there's no official for
22 like management strategy. I'm just providing the
23 information on what is known so you guys can use your
24 circles, your advocacy and know what we expect, and we
25 can help shape that management strategy together. That's
26 all I think we're trying to do today. I hope I can be
27 around long enough to gain your trust back. I know I
28 probably won't always make -- I'll make some mistakes
29 but, hopefully I'm around long enough so we can have a
30 relationship.

31

32 MR. BASSICH: Yeah. This member Bassich.
33 I -- one thing I want everyone to be very clear.
34 Obviously, I'm a very passionate person on this, and
35 I've been doing this a long time. So, what you're
36 witnessing at times is a great deal of frustration but,
37 I want everyone to know I have the greatest respect for
38 the people in the room, the managers. What I am
39 criticizing is policy, not the people that have to
40 implement it. So be very clear that, I have tremendous
41 respect for all the people that are working in fisheries
42 management and research, game management and research,
43 so never take it personally. I know it's hard not to
44 when you're the guy at the table or you're the one who
45 has to present it to us. Unfortunately, you're the
46 messenger that we're cutting the head off. So, please,
47 please take that home with you and don't get discouraged.

48

49 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay. Wow.

50

000133

1 (Pause)

2

3 Next on the agenda is Nowitna National
4 Wildlife Refuge moose update. Jeremy.

5

6 MR. HAVENER: Hey. Good afternoon. Can
7 everybody hear me?

8

9

10 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Yes, sir. You got
11 the floor.

12

13 MR. HAVENER: Excellent. Hey. Thank you,
14 Mr. Chair and Council members. For the record, my name
15 is Jeremy Havener. I'm the refuge subsistence
16 coordinator for Koyukuk, Nowitna and Innoko National
17 Wildlife Refuges. Really appreciate the chance to be
18 here today to discuss the Nowitna River and our moose
19 management. Just want to take a step back before we jump
20 into our moose survey report. Just to kind of introduce
21 ourselves. I know I've been to this Council meeting a
22 few times, but just kind of want to lay out the picture
23 of where we're at and what we do. So, our office is
24 located in Galena, and our staff consists of nine
25 permanent full-time employees and three part-time
26 employees. Right now, we're going through a transition
27 period. We don't have an actual manager in place out
28 here. We're hopefully working on that. So, a lot of us
29 have been picking up other duties and trying to do what
30 we can with what we got. But with our staff, we've got
31 two Refuge Information Technicians, which are liaison
32 positions, myself as a subsistence coordinator. We've
33 got three wildlife biologists, two of which are pilot
34 biologists. We have a fisheries biologist and three
35 maintenance workers and a fire management officer. And
36 with those positions, we have one person staffed in
37 Anvik. We have one in McGrath at a contact station, it's
38 a park ranger. And one of our staff are located in
39 Fairbanks, one of our pilots, and just wanted to kind
40 of to lay that out there just so folks know we're where
41 we're at, you know, out in Galena. And with that being
42 said, I'll go ahead and jump into this report and I'm
43 just going to check. Did everybody get the report that
44 I sent? Its title -- is Moose Trend Summary for 2024.

45

46 MS. MCDAVID: Hi Jeremy, this is Brooke.
47 Yeah, we just passed out a copy to the Council so
48 everyone has one. Thank you.

49

50

1 MR. HAVENER: Excellent. No, awesome. So,
2 with that being said with our office, one of our big
3 programs is our inventory and monitoring program.
4 And with that, we're going out and monitoring different
5 species that are really important on the Refuge, in
6 particular subsistence species. And one of our big
7 projects that we do every November is our moose trend
8 count surveys, where we go up and we have three aircraft
9 that we fly. And we're flying around in these trend
10 count areas and you can see on page -- it's page nine,
11 one second. Page nine is a map kind of that lower Nowitna
12 River corridor. And those little boxes are the boxes
13 that we fly every year. And so, we go out there, we try
14 to go roughly the same time, and that's in November. But
15 it all depends on snow level. So, we want to make sure
16 that we have enough snow out there for a sightability
17 factor. So that way we can see moose to the best of our
18 abilities. We fly at the same height. We fly roughly the
19 same speed and try to spend the same amount of time. I
20 mean, I know that's not always possible, depending on
21 how many moose we're seeing, but try to do things as
22 consistent as possible so we can compare that data year
23 to year. And so, in this area on the Nowitna, we're
24 flying from basically the Little Mud River or Sulatna
25 River down to the mouth is what we typically fly every
26 year. And on page six is our data for that trend count
27 area. And on the top is our total counts. And the figure
28 on the bottom is our composition data. So, data we're
29 collecting is bull-cow ratios, calf-cow ratios and
30 yearling bull-cow ratios. And just kind of looking at
31 last year's data in figure two, in 2024 so there's a
32 couple good things that we saw this last year. And the
33 line that -- it's pink and it's got the square -- it's
34 a square on there. The -- that's our calf-cow ratios.
35 And we had great production this last year. It was, I
36 think 46 calves per 100 cows, which is really good. And
37 we're kind of hoping to see that carry on into the future
38 with productivity -- or with recruitment and help with
39 that population. So, 46 to 100, you can see that's the
40 that's the second highest we've had since 2001. So,
41 really good things there on productivity. The other good
42 thing we're seeing there, and that's kind of gone up
43 over the years and you know, that could fluctuate a
44 little bit with cow numbers. But we are seeing our bull-
45 cow ratios at 31 to 100 and a lot of times in these
46 management areas, 30 to 100 is what we're looking for.
47 So, we're sitting within that management objective. Now
48 the downside on this was the recruitment and you can see
49 it's the triangle towards the bottom. And that dropped
50 down to three yearling bulls per 100 100 cows. And that's

1 our recruitment. So how many bulls are surviving and
2 that number was pretty low. And that could be, you know,
3 subject to some of the lower years of productivity we've
4 seen, I think 2018, 2020 and 2023 where we were below
5 20 on all those years. But recruitment wasn't the
6 greatest. But with all that being said you know, right
7 now that population has declined slightly in the long
8 term. But in the last ten years or so we feel that
9 population is stable at a lower density. And on page
10 seven you can see we've got our densities there and that
11 population, the total moose, is sitting at just over one
12 moose per square mile. And so, with that being said,
13 we've had some meetings the last couple of years. We've
14 been talking to people, and I know there's been some
15 concerns on the population. So, one of the things we are
16 trying to do currently is to fly a geospatial population
17 estimate or a GSPE, and that will give us a much better
18 idea on what that moose population is doing. The last
19 time we held one of those was in 2008 so, we're overdue
20 for it. We typically try to fly those every 5 to 10
21 years and I think right now we're 16 years. So just know
22 that it's a priority of ours to do that. This year did
23 not work out due to the conditions we were seeing. We
24 didn't get good snow until late November, and I think
25 we flew our trend count surveys for this area November
26 26th, 27th, and really, we're getting to the end of our
27 window. Because bulls do start dropping their antlers
28 and it makes it hard for us to determine, you know, if
29 those are bulls or cows and make sure our data is
30 accurate. So, with that being said that is going to be
31 our priority coming into this fall is to do a full
32 population estimate on the Nowitna and, you know, with
33 -- if conditions are right and funding is there, we will
34 definitely be making that a priority.

35
36 One other thing I wanted to talk about
37 real quick other than our trend count data, is the
38 Nowitna Moose Hunter Check Station. And I know Charlie
39 from the check station. I usually see him out there most
40 years. So, it's nice having that familiar face but, just
41 so everybody kind of understands we operate for Fish and
42 Game or with Fish and Game a moose hunter check station,
43 and that's been in operation since 1988. There's been
44 some administrative changes over time, but how it kind
45 of works for us out here. In the Galena area is we manage
46 the Nowitna Check Station and Fish and Game mans the
47 Koyukuk River Check Station. And the purpose of that is,
48 you know, we're keeping tabs on how many hunters are
49 coming into Nowitna. We're counting how many moose are
50 being harvested. You know, we're able to talk to hunters

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1 and talk about regulations. And sure, some of those
2 regulations are being followed, checking meat quality
3 and making sure it's all there. And everything in my
4 time I've been here since 2011 has been really good out
5 there. And one of the things we look at, you know, with
6 our population data is kind of our harvest success. So,
7 on the last page, on page ten, shows our check station
8 hunter data and harvest data. And this last year we had
9 116 hunters and there were 39 moose harvested. And in
10 the long-term average for that check station harvest was
11 around 40 and hunters were 123. So, we're -- the thing
12 we feel with this population, we're comfortable with the
13 harvest that's going on there. It's fallen right within
14 kind of that long term average. So, we were happy,
15 harvest success was around 34%, which is right around
16 that average as well. Two years ago, we did see a drop
17 in harvest. And, you know, we also saw a drop in hunters
18 too. I think we had 88 hunters, but there were 19 moose
19 harvested. And that, you know, that raised some concern.
20 And I think that got some of these talks going about
21 getting a population estimate for the Nowitna. But one
22 thing that did happen is I know the area biologist for
23 this area, he did at that time reduce the draw permits
24 from 20 to 10. And so, we did see some changes there on
25 that lower corridor. And that goes from the mouth
26 basically up to the Little Mud River. But aside from
27 that, I know we're kind of at the end of the day, and I
28 think I kind of covered the main points in this report.
29 And so, I think I'll just take the time here to open it
30 up for questions.

31
32 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: This is Charlie.
33 Thank you, Jeremy. Good information. I appreciate you,
34 and if there's any other questions in the room, now's
35 the time. Go ahead, Donald.

36
37 MR. WOODRUFF: Thank you, Jeremy, for
38 your report. I noticed that the young yearlings are close
39 to zero for recruitment. Is that indicating that you
40 have a really high predator population?

41
42 MR. HAVENER: You know, that's -- through
43 the Chair. That is one of the things you know, you take
44 into consideration. But the other thing, you know, I've
45 talked with our biologists a little bit and some of that
46 could be from the poor production we've seen out there
47 as well. So, I don't want to speak exactly what that is
48 but, that's definitely -- it could be a factor for sure.

49
50 MR. WOODRUFF: Was that a yes?

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MR. HAVENER: I'm sorry. It's kind of breaking up. Did you say something?

MT. WOODRUFF: I'm asking you. Is that a yes? That there is a high predator population?

MR. HAVENER: So as far as our predator population goes, I know there's bears and wolves out there. As far as, you know, a formal survey and, you know, densities of predators. I don't have data on that. So, I don't -- I can't really speak to that. You know, we talk to people when they come out of the check station on what they're seeing. You know, and most people are seeing tracks of wolves. As far as black bears go, it seems like not very many people are seeing black bears on the Nowitna where they're moose hunting. And, you know, the other thing we do is when we're out flying around doing surveys, you know, if we see wolf packs and stuff, we do kind of keep tabs, I guess. Kind of -- like nothing's formal. But we do kind of mark down what we're seeing as far as wolves when we're when we're flying around. So as far as high densities, I can't answer that.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: This is Charlie, Jeremy. With my boots on the ground there for years, I haven't seen one bear, but I did see a few tracks but not many. And then the wolves were -- I never seen really any big packs -- tracks where I walked or when I drove, but. But they're there. I'm not everywhere. I hunt near the mouth most of the time in the first 20 miles or so but, I never seen one bear in all the years I was there. I just wanted to say that. Thank you.

MR. HAVENER: Thanks for that information, Charlie. Appreciate it.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Any more questions?

(No response)

Well, we thank you for your report today. Appreciate you. No more questions.

MR. HAVENER: Thank you very much for having us. We sure appreciate being able to tune into these meetings. So much appreciated.

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1 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: It's appreciated.
2 We appreciate you just the same. And thank you for the
3 numbers. It's good to have and to see. Appreciate you.
4 Bye. Next on the agenda is the Wood Bison reintroduction,
5 Carol.

6
7 MS. MAHARA: Hello everyone. Thank you
8 to the Chair and members of the Council for having me
9 here today. I wanted to introduce myself quick and then
10 I'll turn off my camera. My name is Carol Mahara, and
11 I'm a biologist with the Ecological Services branch,
12 with the Fish and Wildlife Service out of the Anchorage
13 office. And I've been working on the wood bison project
14 for a couple years now. We received a request on behalf
15 of the RAC for some information about wood bison and
16 some questions about some of the regulatory processes.
17 So, I'm going to provide an overview today to try to
18 address some of that. And I think you should also have
19 a handout where we went into some more detail on those
20 questions. So, with that -- I will share my screen and
21 turn off my camera. Are you able to see my screen?

22
23 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Yes.

24
25 MS. MAHARA: Okay, great. Thank you.

26
27 So here is a list of some of the topics
28 I'll be covering, starting with the historical
29 distribution and listing history of wood bison. I'll
30 explain the ten-day rule and what nonessential
31 experimental status means. Then I'll talk about the
32 conditions of the NEP status for wood bison in Alaska.
33 The scenarios when the NEP designation might be removed
34 and the current status of wood bison across the range
35 and I'll also talk a little bit about the ongoing effort
36 to develop a recovery plan.

37
38 The historical distribution for wood
39 bison was a was across western Canada and extended into
40 Alaska, and it is thought that they disappeared from the
41 Alaskan landscape approximately 200 years ago with
42 overhunting, changes in the distribution of habitat, and
43 severe winters possibly contributing to their decline.
44 During the early 1800s, wood bison numbers were
45 estimated to be at 168,000 but, by the late 1800s the
46 subspecies was nearly eliminated, with only a few
47 hundred remaining. So, wood bison were included on the
48 first list of Endangered Foreign Fish and Wildlife under
49 the 1969 Endangered Species Conservation Act, and then
50 in 1974, they were added to our current Endangered

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1 Species Act based on their inclusion of the -- in the
2 original list. And then in 2012, we received a petition
3 to downlist them from endangered to threatened. And then
4 after review of best available scientific information,
5 we agreed with the petition. And wood bison were then
6 reclassified to threatened wherever they are found.

7
8 So shortly after that came the
9 nonessential experimental designation for wood bison.
10 In Alaska, we used a provision in the Endangered Species
11 Act to create this designation so that we could minimize
12 the regulatory burden associated with reintroduced
13 populations on the landscape. And I'll go into more
14 detail about what this means in a minute. But I wanted
15 to point out that this was a federal action that required
16 an environmental assessment under the National
17 Environmental Policy Act, and that EA was done in 2013.

18
19 So, Congress added a provision for the
20 experimental or experimental populations under Section
21 10J of the Endangered Species Act. And with this
22 provision, the Fish and Wildlife Service may designate
23 a population of a listed species as experimental if it
24 will be released into suitable habitat outside the
25 species current range and will be isolated from other
26 populations of the same species. So, from there we can
27 designate an experimental population as nonessential if
28 the continued existence of the species does not depend
29 on the experimental Population. So, with this
30 nonessential experimental population or NEP designation,
31 as you'll probably hear me say in this presentation the
32 regulatory burdens associated with inter-agency
33 consultation, coordination, those are relaxed, which can
34 help relieve landowner concerns that reintroducing a
35 listed species might result in restrictions on the use
36 of private and public land. Also, the service adopted
37 bison specific rules under Section 4D of the Endangered
38 Species Act so that take due to an otherwise lawful
39 activity is not prohibited. So, this special rule for
40 wood bison that designated the NEP and provided bison
41 specific rules for take was created using Sections 10J
42 and 4D of the ESA. And then I will refer to the whole
43 package as the 10J or NEP but, there were multiple
44 components that went into it.

45
46 Okay. Now I'm going to talk about the
47 conditions that are specific to the 10J rule for wood
48 bison. This map shows the NEP boundary outlined in black,
49 within this boundary, regulatory burdens associated with
50 interagency coordination are only required for

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1 activities that occur on National Park Service or U.S.
2 Fish and Wildlife Refuge land. Also, the 10J rule
3 identified three areas where reintroductions could
4 occur. These areas were selected based on studies that
5 identified them as having suitable habitat for wood
6 bison. With this 10J rule, the service delegated to the
7 State primary management responsibility for leading and
8 implementing the wood bison restoration effort. And
9 while the State is the lead agency for wood bison
10 reintroduction and subsequent management, the 10J rule
11 requires continued coordination with the Fish and
12 Wildlife Service, and the service still has authorities
13 and responsibilities for ensuring compliance with all
14 provisions of the Endangered Species Act, including
15 consultations for actions that occur on National
16 Wildlife Refuge and National Park Service lands.

17
18 The 10J rule requires the state to use
19 public planning processes to develop implementation and
20 management plans for wood bison restoration, and the
21 planning groups are to include representatives from
22 local communities, regional population centers,
23 landowners, Alaska Native interests, wildlife
24 conservation interests, industry, and state and federal
25 agencies. Draft management plans are to be circulated
26 for public review, and the final plans are to be
27 presented to the Alaska Board of Game and Federal
28 Subsistence Board for review and approval. So, for the
29 Lower Tanana River drainage, the State has decided, has
30 decided to start with an implementation plan now and
31 develop a management plan later. This idea started at
32 one of the early planning team meetings, when
33 participants expressed concern that a management plan
34 didn't seem like the right fit for what the group was
35 trying to accomplish. The focus shifted then to
36 developing an implementation plan with the intent to
37 provide a description of the planning team input and the
38 reintroduction process for that particular area. Then,
39 once the potential for sustained yield harvest is better
40 understood, the State would start to develop a
41 management plan. So, so far, I am aware that the State
42 circulated a draft of the Lower Tanana River Drainage
43 Implementation Plan during a planning team meeting last
44 year, and they asked the service for comments last July,
45 but I am not aware of the current status of the draft
46 implementation plan.

47
48 The special 10J and 4D rules allow for
49 regulated hunting of wood bison based on sustained yield
50 principles, once the herds are deemed sufficiently

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1 resilient to support such harvest. The details for
2 harvest are to be guided by those site-specific
3 management plans for each reintroduction area. When it
4 comes to harvesting wildlife, state hunting regulations
5 apply unless they are superseded by federal regulations.
6 For wood bison, the legal interpretation is that federal
7 subsistence harvest under ANILCA cannot occur until wood
8 bison are no longer listed under the Endangered Species
9 Act. There is a provision under Section 10E of the
10 Endangered Species Act that allows Alaska Natives and
11 permanent residents of Alaska Native villages to take
12 listed species for subsistence purposes, but the State
13 and the Service have different interpretations on the
14 applicability of 10E for bison.

15

16 MS. MCDAVID: Sorry you're cutting out.
17 This seems to be at a very important point that the
18 Council would like to hear.

19

20 MS. MAHARA: Oh, no. Okay. Can you hear
21 me?

22

23 MS. MCDAVID: Yes Sorry. You cut -- you
24 cut out. That last point about the 10E that's when you
25 started to cut out, and it sounded like something
26 important the Council wants to hear more about. So, if
27 you could start back with that. Thank you.

28

29 MS. MAHARA: Sure. Yep, can you hear me
30 okay right now? Are you able to hear me?

31

32 MS. MCDAVID: Okay. We're not hearing you
33 in the room right now. Carol, if you can hear us.

34

35 MS. MAHA: I wonder if it would be
36 helpful if I don't know if. Brooke, if you have my slides
37 (distortion). Yes. Can you hear me? Hello?

38

39 MS. MCDAVID: Yeah, it's. It's cutting
40 in and out. Carol, it's cutting in and out for us here
41 in the room. Maybe just stand by for a few moments. If
42 you can hear us now. The point that you started to make
43 about exceptions under 10E is where we started to lose
44 you. If you could start back at that point. That was a
45 point of interest to the Council. Thank you.

46

47 MS. MAHARA: Are you able to hear me if
48 I stop sharing my screen? Are you able to hear me now?

49

50

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1 MS. MCDAVID: We can hear you now, but
2 it -- it's not -- it's just the internet connection.
3 It's not the bandwidth. Your slides weren't affecting
4 it. If you could put those back up, that'd be great.
5 Okay.

6
7 MS. MAHARA: Okay. All right. And you're
8 able to hear me okay right now?

9
10 MS. MCDAVID: Yes, ma'am. We got you.
11 Thanks.

12
13 MS. MAHARA: Okay, perfect. Okay so, I
14 was talking about 10E. There is a provision under Section
15 10E of the Endangered Species Act that allows Alaska
16 Natives and permanent residents of Alaska Native
17 villages to take listed species for subsistence
18 purposes. But the State and the Service have different
19 interpretations on the applicability of 10E for wood
20 bison. However, we both agree that the newly
21 reintroduced herds should be resilient enough to support
22 harvest before any harvest occurs.

23
24 And as I mentioned previously, relaxing
25 the prohibitions on take and consultation requirements
26 of the ESA is a key incentive of designating an NEP.
27 Landowners can continue to manage their lands without
28 concern of violating the ESA for reintroduced listed
29 species. So, there are two scenarios where the NEP
30 designation for wood bison could be removed. One would
31 be if wood bison recovers and are delisted under the
32 Endangered Species Act, and the other would be if
33 reintroduction efforts are discontinued and action is
34 taken by the State and the Service to remove the NEP
35 designation. The 10J and special 4D rule identify
36 scenarios where the State could remove some or all wood
37 bison from the wild, such as reintroduction efforts are
38 a failure, monitoring indicates appreciable harm to
39 native wildlife and the legal or statutory changes
40 reduce or eliminate the State's ability to complete the
41 restoration effort as designed. So, if no action is taken
42 by the Service and the State, then all remaining wood
43 bison would retain their NEP status. But if there is
44 action taken to change the NEP designation, then all the
45 protections and regulatory requirements for ESA listed
46 species would apply, and then under the recovery
47 scenario, the State would manage wood bison as they do
48 other non-listed wildlife, and opportunities for federal
49 subsistence harvest under ANILCA may become available
50 on federal lands under the scenario -- nope. I think

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1 that's it -- oh yeah, I did want to mention that under
2 the scenario where reintroduction efforts are
3 discontinued and the NEP designation is removed, it is
4 likely that the State would have first removed all of
5 the reintroduced bison from the landscape. This is
6 because of how the special 10J rule for wood bison
7 provided assurances to landowners and development
8 interests that reintroduction would not interfere with
9 their activities, and so without these assurances, the
10 reintroduction of wood bison would not be acceptable to
11 the public, development interests or the State. So,
12 under that scenario, there would be no hunting
13 opportunities for wood bison in Alaska while they were
14 still listed under the ESA.

15
16 So currently there are around 8500 wood
17 bison in Canada, with about half of those animals in
18 populations with diseases. In Alaska, we have one wild
19 herd in the lower Innoko Yukon Rivers area, and the
20 winter of 2022-2023 was tough on the herd, with prolonged
21 snow conditions hindering access to food and water and
22 the formation of hardened snow layers, making it
23 difficult for animals to move and forage. Last fall I
24 learned that the herd had rebounded some, but I do not
25 know to what extent. Currently there are wood bison and
26 holding pens near the Minto Flats State Game Refuge,
27 approximately 60 miles west of Fairbanks. The holding
28 pens were installed in May last year. Animals were moved
29 there in July and the plan is to release them in May.
30 The soft released method of holding them through the
31 winter increases the likelihood that the bison will stay
32 close to the release site.

33
34 This map shows the current and proposed
35 herd locations as well as their disease status. As I
36 mentioned in the previous slide, nearly half of the free
37 ranging bison in Canada belong to populations with
38 diseases, and you can see the locations of the 3 10J
39 reintroduction sites in Alaska. With the Innoko
40 population already established, the Minto Flats
41 population where wood bison are on site but in holding
42 pens, and the location of the third potential
43 reintroduction site in Yukon Flats. I also want to
44 mention that we are developing a recovery plan for wood
45 bison. Recovery plans are required by the Endangered
46 Species Act and initially the service hadn't intended
47 to develop one since wild herds were only in Canada.
48 However, we received a directive in 2022 to develop
49 recovery plans for listed species that didn't have one,
50 and for Alaska, that meant wood bison. These plans are

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1 a roadmap to recovery with the intent of improving a
2 species status and managing threats to a point where it
3 no longer needs protection under the Endangered Species
4 Act. So, since wood bison are listed range wide, this
5 recovery plan will consider populations in Canada and
6 Alaska. We are fortunate that the that Canada already
7 has developed a recovery strategy, and we intend to adopt
8 their strategy with an addendum that addresses the
9 requirements of the Endangered Species Act, which are
10 identifying recovery criteria, recovery actions and
11 estimates of time and cost. We've been getting questions
12 about how the Alaska NEP fits into a recovery plan for
13 the species. So, we are able to designate an NEP for
14 wood bison in Alaska, because the experimental
15 population would not be essential to the continued
16 existence of the species. However, populations in Alaska
17 can still contribute to recovery, and in this process
18 will be identifying what that looks like. So, in addition
19 to addressing those three requirements, we will also be
20 discussing how the Alaska NEP can contribute to the
21 recovery of the species. In the Canadian Plan, they
22 identify a long-term population and distribution
23 objective of at least five disease free, genetically
24 diverse, connected, self-sustaining, free ranging local
25 populations distributed throughout their original
26 Canadian range, with a minimum size for each local
27 population of 1000 animals. They also identified
28 strategies for getting to that long term objective.
29 We've got some informal working groups helping us create
30 an addendum centered around these objectives and
31 strategies so that our final project product is a logical
32 extension of the 2018 recovery plan. And with that,
33 that's it for my presentation. I'm happy to take any
34 questions.

35

36 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you. We have
37 a question from Olivia Irwin

38

39 MS. IRWIN: Through the Chair. Thank you,
40 Charlie. Olivia Irwin, for the record, thank you very
41 much Carol for your presentation. The 10E provision is
42 new to me, which is pretty shocking because I've been
43 in a lot of these conversations with the State. So, I'm
44 a little bit disappointed that I'm just now hearing about
45 this. Could you please repeat what the 10E provision is
46 and put it in the context for our Minto-Nenana heard
47 there is a heard in Minto Flats, and we -- I'm interested
48 to understand how this 10E rule would apply. And does
49 that provision apply to wood bison on state lands? And

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1 the second part of the question does this provision apply
2 to other species, i.e. fish?

3
4 MS. MAHARA: Really great questions. And
5 I will try to take a stab but, let me know if I miss
6 anything. So 10E of the Endangered Species Act states
7 that provisions of the Endangered Species Act with
8 respect to taking of a listed species, you know, are
9 like Alaska Natives and permanent residents of Alaska
10 Native villages are exempt if that take is primarily for
11 subsistence purposes. And I think on that handout, at
12 least in one of the footnotes that might be on there if
13 you need to reference it later. And then in addition to
14 that, 10E4 states that the Secretary of Interior can
15 create regulations for the harvest under 10E if it is
16 determined that harvest would negatively impact listed
17 species. So, with 10E, Alaska Natives and permanent
18 residents of Alaska Native villages can take listed
19 species, there is a provision that allows for us to
20 establish regulations if that's necessary to regulate,
21 take. However, for wood bison, the State and the Service
22 have different interpretations on the applicability of
23 10E for wood bison, And the reason is that we've
24 delegated primary management authority to the State, and
25 they can't implement something out of alignment with
26 their State's constitution. So, we are still trying to
27 navigate that. But either way, we both agree that when
28 it comes to newly reintroduced herds, we -- they should
29 become sufficiently resilient to support harvest before
30 anybody starts harvesting them. Did that answer your
31 question?

32
33 MS. IRWIN: Yes. Through the Chair. This
34 is Olivia, for the record. Thank you, Carol, that did
35 help. So, it's section two of our constitution, the equal
36 protection clause. It's what's limiting our ability to
37 take advantage of this provision in the ESA. Is that
38 correct?

39
40 MS. MAHARA: I would need to double check
41 exactly that but, that sounds right. Thank you.

42
43 MS. IRWIN: I would also like to state
44 for the record, just so that it's on record, this isn't
45 directed at you, Carol but, that while there was public
46 interest in this and there were public sessions held,
47 there were three tribes that shared the traditional
48 territory that wrote letters against this and had tribal
49 consultation against the reintroduction of the wood
50 bison. Just for the record. Thank you.

1

2 MS. BURK: Well, thank you. Through the
3 Chair. This is Eva Burk. I'm the Vice Chair. I'm from
4 Nenana and Manley Hot Springs. And it was our
5 understanding and I -- and why they wanted me to put on
6 the record that we've been bamboozled in the Minto-
7 Nenana area. And the reason being, the way it was framed
8 to us is that there could be a harvest for locals, that
9 this would be something that maybe a plan -- a harvest
10 management plan similar to what we was done for Innoko.
11 And I don't think they ever came out and explicitly told
12 us that they couldn't do that because of their State
13 constitution. I don't think that ever really came out.
14 And that's -- a lot of people had -- the reasons we
15 opposed it is because we've sort of inherently knew that.
16 And that we were concerned that this animal was going
17 to be reintroduced and that we wouldn't really benefit
18 locally because of the way the hunts would be permitted.
19 So, I'm putting that on the record. We've been
20 bamboozled.

21

22 MS. SHOCKLEY: Charlie. Yeah, I was at
23 probably every meeting. Oh, sorry. This is Dorothy. I
24 was at every meeting of those planning meetings because
25 I was on the corporation then, and we were invited. And
26 so, I mean, they kept saying, you know, it was for food
27 security and subsistence but, you know, with it being
28 under state jurisdiction there was they could not do
29 that. And so, you know, they yeah, they just went around
30 and around telling us that yes, there was a -- there
31 could be a possibility. But when it came right down to
32 it, they said no, there was not going to be any local
33 harvesting.

34

35 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you, Dorothy.
36 Online we have Christopher Sherry. You have the floor.

37

38 MR. SHERRY: Yeah. Can you guys hear me?

39

40 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Yes, sir.

41

42 MR. SHERRY: Thank you, Charlie. And
43 through the Chair. Dorothy might remember as well, too.
44 It was part of the site-specific management -- the
45 planning team, the wood bison planning team in 23 and
46 24. Specifically at the third meeting, when it became
47 rather apparent that the State intended to move forward
48 with the release maybe regardless of what the actual
49 planning team's hopes and wishes were. But in that
50 planning team, I brought forth that the State should

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1 have a positive C&T finding based on the history and in
2 respect to our religious and spiritual connection to the
3 wood bison which had been severed. And with the release,
4 a potential reconnection could honor the spiritual
5 potluck use of this animal. And so that plan should have
6 come to your guys' office and in the draft, emailed from
7 the State. I didn't see my particular card that said
8 that. And I'm hoping if you had reviewed it and had seen
9 it, you would be able to comment on that.

10
11 MS. IRWIN: Through the Chair. This is
12 Olivia Irwin. Chris, thank you for bringing that up. I'm
13 a new member to EIRAC, so I'm not familiar with the
14 letter that you're referring to. But yesterday we did
15 unanimously support putting forward a proposal to the
16 federal registry -- I -- the federal registry to add a
17 positive CNT finding for wood bison. So, thank you for
18 bringing those comments to us. And we're trying to be
19 reactive to that. And then on the state side, Chris,
20 just so you know, Minto-Nenana is putting in a proposal
21 to add wood bison for the big -- take of big game for
22 cultural purposes. Thanks.

23
24 MR. SHERRY: Okay, I caught that, Olivia.
25 That was great. And thank you for doing that. And yeah,
26 my question was for Carol about her review of that plan.
27 If she had been able to receive that and seen that from
28 the State, if that was a part of what the planning team's
29 hopes and desires for this project, if that had made it
30 to her desk?

31
32 MS. MAHARA: Yeah. This is Carol. Yeah.
33 The State provided copies of their draft at a planning
34 team meeting in February, so you might have seen that.
35 And we provided comments on a draft. Our understanding
36 is the State may be revising their plan, but, nothing
37 additional has been shared with us at this time so
38 there's not much I can share about it now. I will say
39 it is their responsibility to develop a plan, and I know
40 they're proposing to do the implementation plan now and
41 management plan later, once there's a better sense of
42 how the herd is doing. So that's what should be coming
43 out soon as their implementation plan.

44
45 MR. SHERRY: Okay, I look forward to
46 seeing it. Thank you. Yeah, I'm just hoping to see the
47 State consider and hopefully there will be an
48 unprecedented type thing to have under their current
49 guidelines. But this is an unprecedented type of event
50 to have wood bison retored and reintroduced. So, I just

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1 want to thank you.

2

3 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Any more questions
4 or comments? Okay. Go ahead.

5

6 MS. MCDAVID: Hi Carol, this is Brooke.
7 As the Council Coordinator, I was just curious if you
8 could help ensure that when that implementation plan
9 does come out, that the Council receives a copy for
10 review, and the Council does have representatives that
11 have been a part of that planning team, and they have -
12 - there has not yet been a copy of that plan or a draft
13 version before this Council. So that would be of interest
14 to the Council when it's available. Thanks.

15

16 MS. MAHARA: Yes, I can definitely make
17 sure once that's made available -- would it be best for
18 me to go through you, Brooke, when that happens?

19

20 MS. MCDAVID: Yes, please. If you could
21 send me a copy, I'll distribute it to the members. Thank
22 you.

23

24 MS. MAHARA: Okay. Thank you.

25

26 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Any more questions?
27 Comments? All right. Thank you, Carol.

28

29 MS. MAHARA: Thank you.

30

31 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you so much
32 for your presentation.

33

34 MS. MAHARA: Yes. Thank you.

35

36 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay. National Park
37 Service, the national -- Denali National Park. Pat Owen
38 and Amy Craver.

39

40 MS. OWEN: Good evening, Mr. Chair. And
41 members of the Council. This is Pat Owen. I don't believe
42 that Amy is going to be joining us, but I would like to
43 be able to give you a wildlife update and I'm a wildlife
44 biologist at Denali. In the interest of time and
45 relevance of the information that I'm going to share to
46 you -- with you, I'm going to make this really quick and
47 also just say that if anybody wants a bit more detailed
48 report in addition to the information that I'm going to
49 share with you now, I can certainly provide that to
50 Brooke for distribution. So just let me know when I get

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1 done if you would like to have a little bit more
2 information. What I kind of figured would be most
3 relevant to you would be to share some numbers --
4 wildlife numbers. So, I'll start with wolves. I've been
5 hearing an awful lot about high numbers of Wolves in
6 certain places around the Wtate. In Denali National
7 Park, our fall count included 59 wolves. That was 56
8 wolves in ten packs and then there were three resident
9 loner wolves that were not associated with packs. And I
10 will say, in comparison with wolf numbers in the Park
11 in the past, I think we've seen numbers that have
12 probably been as high as double that number. We've also
13 seen numbers lower than that. But that's where we are
14 with wolves right now. So, wolf numbers, at least for
15 us within the Park are not on the high end of the range
16 that we have seen in the past. Moving on to sheep. We've
17 done a number of different things with sheep this past
18 year. We did aerial distance sampling in July; we did a
19 minimum count covering some very specific areas on the
20 east end of the Park. We also do a ground-based survey.
21 This year we also conducted an aerial survey in the
22 Southwest Preserve. From the aerial distance sampling,
23 that's something that we've done consistently over a
24 number of years. The estimated population from the 2024
25 survey was 939 sheep. That is compared to 867 sheep in
26 2023. So, the number is up just a little bit. And the
27 other thing that we're seeing is the ratio of lambs to
28 ewe-like sheep. Nn that aerial distance sampling survey,
29 39 lambs per 100 ewe-likes. It ranged from about 18 up
30 to about 54 in the other surveys, quite a lot of
31 variation. But the aerial distance sampling is generally
32 the one that we tend to bank on a bit more than the
33 others. I know that you've already heard from Fish and
34 Game about a collaborative study that we're doing with
35 them on dall sheep. Those studies with comparisons in
36 two of the parks as areas where sheep are not hunted --
37 with comparing those with areas outside the park where
38 sheep are hunted. So, I'm not going to go into any detail
39 on any of those.

40
41 Caribou. This is our 41st consecutive
42 year of annual monitoring efforts on caribou. Our fall
43 2024 calf-cow ratio was 12 calves per 100 cows, which
44 was an increase from the previous three years, which
45 ranged somewhere between 5 and 9 cows -- I'm sorry,
46 calves per 100 calves. The fall 2024 preliminary herd
47 size estimate was 1590. This is continuing a pattern of
48 herd decline, down from a high in 2018 of almost 3200
49 caribou. But the rate seems to have slowed down a little
50 bit over the past three years so, that might be a good

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1 sign for our caribou herd. Moving on to moose, we were
2 fortunate to get some funding to be able to do a moose
3 survey this fall on the north side of the park. It's the
4 first time that we've done one of these moose surveys
5 since 2017. We were just able to get the estimates done
6 for that. The estimate total number of moose from this
7 survey was 1663, as compared to 1743 back in 2017. So,
8 moose numbers are maybe still recovering from the crazy
9 storm that we had in 2021. But interestingly, the bull-
10 cow ratio is pretty stable at about 48 bulls per 100
11 cows. The calf-cow ratio in this survey was about 22,
12 whereas it was about 26 in 2017. So, we'll see what
13 happens with moose numbers as we progress. I think those
14 are probably some of the numbers you would be most
15 interested in. Just a couple other quick things I'll
16 throw out. In terms of avian work, we're still doing
17 gold eagle nest occupancy and productivity surveys
18 annually. The numbers of golden eagles in terms of
19 occupancy of nests and productivity has been down a bit,
20 probably due to the low number of hares, although there
21 are a lot of ptarmigan on the landscape. It seems like
22 around here anyway, the number of hares is beginning to
23 rise, so that might mean some good things for golden
24 eagles. And also, we continue to do breeding bird surveys
25 along the Park Road. Last year we had a little bit of a
26 hiatus for the west end of the Park Road because of the
27 closure out there. But Carol McIntyre and I were able
28 to get out there last June and do a breeding bird survey
29 along a typical route that's been done in the past.
30 Really not, anything drastically different from what
31 we've seen in years past. Probably the biggest change
32 that we've seen and most interesting has to do with what
33 seems to be an increase in woodpecker species, probably
34 due to spruce die off due to spruce bark beetles. And I
35 think that's about it. Like I said, if you want any more
36 details, I'm happy to provide a written report that
37 contains a couple other things that I left off.

38
39 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Yes. Thank you so
40 much for that. We'll put in that request if people
41 request it. Thank you.

42
43 MS. OWEN: Gladly. Yeah, just let me know
44 and I can send it to Brooke.

45
46 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay. Any questions
47 or comments?

48
49 MS. BURK: Thank you. Through the Chair.
50 This is Eva. I would like a written copy if you could

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1 do that. I was trying to get Charlie to say it, but
2 apparently, it's really hard. Thank you.

3

4 MS. OWEN: I can sure do that. I'll make
5 sure that I get it sent to Brooke, and she can distribute
6 to you guys.

7

8 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay. Moving on.
9 Yukon-charley Rivers National Reserve. Marcy.

10

11 MS. OKADA: Good evening, Mr. Chair and
12 Council members. My name is Marcy Okada. I'm the
13 subsistence coordinator for Yukon-Charley Rivers
14 National Preserve. And in the interest of time, we can
15 keep this really brief. Just want to share that we have
16 an Eagle subsistence working group, of which there are
17 two EIRAC members from Eagle are a part of. And we had
18 a recent meeting on January 28th last month. And they're
19 about to hear some of the same updates from that meeting
20 for this meeting. So, thank you. And we have Matt Sorum
21 here, our wildlife biologist, who's going to give
22 wildlife updates.

23

24 MR. SORUM: Yeah. Hi, I'm Matt Sorum. I'm
25 a wildlife biologist for Yukon-Charley Rivers. And I'll
26 just give a couple updates on some large mammal
27 populations that we monitor in the Preserve. So I'll
28 start with sheep. We kind of talked to you guys a couple
29 days ago at the sheep working group meeting, but
30 population declined by 78% in the early 2020s. We
31 detected it in 2023. And so, the population has been --
32 we closed hunting on the south side of the Yukon from
33 23 to 24, and then this year in 25. So, we did a quick
34 ground-based survey, float-based survey on the Charlotte
35 River this last summer because it's what we could pull
36 off. And we saw really good lamb recruitment for the few
37 for the, you know, 40, 50 ewes we were able to observe.
38 So, we're encouraged by that. We're less encouraged by
39 the deep snow we have so far in the Interior, but I
40 think based off of some of the SNOTEL data we have in
41 Yukon-Charley, we don't have as much deep snow in the
42 Charley Basin as we do kind of over here in the Fairbanks
43 area and north of Fairbanks. So, so that's sheep. Oh,
44 and we do have plans to do a survey this summer. We have
45 funding. It's kind of paused at the moment, but we're
46 hopeful that we'll get the funding. And then after that,
47 we have funding in 26, 27, 28 to do surveys to help
48 guide when we reopen, when it's the best time to reopen
49 the hunting opportunities in the preserve.

50

1 So that's sheep. We'll talk about moose.
2 We do surveys every three years in Yukon-Charley, for
3 our moose surveys. The last one we did was in 2022, and
4 the population had decreased to 0.24 moose per square
5 mile. That's about half of what Yukon Flats is, Tetlin,
6 and it's about a quarter of what you'd maybe see on the
7 Taylor Highway. So, but it is at a bit of a low, but
8 we're also kind of a low population, low, stable
9 population. So, getting it up about 0.4 is about probably
10 the highest you're going to get for moose and Yukon-
11 Charley. So anyway, we have a survey plan this fall and
12 we do have funding for that at the moment. So, we're
13 excited about that. On top of that, we've been doing a
14 project, a collaring project, to kind of understand more
15 of the annual shifts in moose population better because
16 we don't have very tight data with only having three --
17 having surveys every three years. So, we have had collars
18 on moose -- on 30 plus moose for the last five years.
19 And we've been detecting calving rates, twinning rates
20 and then calf survival throughout the year. So, we'll
21 be wrapping that up this year and we'll be able to
22 provide, we have a nice five-year data set over this
23 same time frame. And we had a lot of deep snow years.
24 And then we even had years with limited snow. So, I
25 think it'll be -- actually work really well for
26 understanding how snow impacts effect moose. And then
27 we also pair that data up with a, with our wolf study
28 that we have. Long term wolf monitoring project we have
29 in Yukon-Charley, which I'll get into next. But then
30 we're going to look at how wolves and moose interact
31 with that really like high frequency GPS data. We're
32 excited about, so there's that.

33
34 And then just touching on the wolf
35 population. Currently we have about 22 GPS collared
36 wolves in the park -- in the Preserve. We studied this
37 last summer, five of the seven packs den, but only three
38 of the packs retained pups into the fall, which was
39 pretty low. So, our reproduction right now for wolves
40 is pretty low in Yukon-Charley. And also, our population
41 size is pretty low. And so, we'll -- I kind of like to
42 think that, you know, wolves kind of respond to their
43 immediate environment and they can adjust depending on
44 their food availability. And so right now we have quite
45 limited sheep, quite limited or depressed moose
46 population. And also based off the Fortymile Herd a
47 pretty low a decreasing caribou population. So, we're
48 kind of seeing that same pattern. Is that wolves also
49 are kind of depressed and about maybe a third of what
50 they normally are. So that's kind of the broad strokes.

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1 I don't want to take too much of your time. So that's
2 it.

3

4 MR. BASSICH: Thank you. Andy Bassich.
5 Do you guys ever do any surveys or anything on your bear
6 populations within the Preserve, or is it more
7 anecdotal? You never do any really official bear surveys
8 or black bear, brown bear, grizzly bear.

9

10 MR. SORUM: Nope. We do bear surveys up
11 in the Brooks Range and have done those for the last 15
12 plus years. They're pretty hard to pull off. And we were
13 able to do them there because there's less forest.
14 There's less. And so, it's pretty difficult in the Yukon
15 Charley area. And I think it would you'd have to lean
16 more into genetics, genetic sampling. And so, it just
17 hasn't been a high priority because grizzly bears have
18 shown kind of almost to be the lowest density in the
19 Forty-mile region. From studies that we've looked at
20 across the state. Yukon-Charley Fortymile region is kind
21 of the lowest density of grizzly bears in, in the state.
22 So, it hasn't been a priority to survey them for that
23 reason.

24

25 MR. BASSICH: Yeah, that's good. I just
26 maybe would like to share just local observations that
27 over the past couple of years, I've actually seen a lot
28 more sign of grizzly bear and definitely a lot more
29 black bears. So, the populations are really healthy.
30 And, you know, I'm sure that's helping to suppress some
31 of the moose populations. But I just figure it's worth
32 you having that knowledge there. And maybe you know,
33 when you talk with people who float through the area
34 what I've been noticing in the fall time, once the water
35 level has dropped, you can hardly walk a sandbar without
36 seeing grizzly bear tracks on them now. And many of the
37 areas, especially down kind of in the (indiscernible)
38 region between the (indiscernible) and the (In Native),
39 it's really prolific in that area. And it's ranging a
40 little bit farther up towards, you know, Eagle area now
41 too. Anyway, and then the only other question I had this
42 might be for you, Marcy, I'm not really sure, but have
43 you guys. I think I heard you say earlier that you don't
44 have funding for doing any peregrine falcon studies this
45 year. Was that correct? Did I hear someone say that or
46 is there any funding to do any peregrine falcon work?

47

48 MS. OKADA: Through the Chair. We have
49 continual funding annually to do peregrine falcon
50 surveys. And, so there should be surveys done again

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1 this, this coming summer.

2

3 MR. BASSICH: Okay, great. Yeah. Maybe I
4 misheard someone speak but, I, I think that's really
5 important. As I stated in my opening comments, I'm really
6 concerned about avian flu, and they will be probably one
7 of your first telltale signs that avian flu is moving
8 up into the area, whether they get it here or whether
9 they get it in their migration, that'd be probably pretty
10 hard to determine. But from what I understand, they die
11 really quick from that when it happens, like within 4
12 or 5 days. So, it might be a hard thing to tease out,
13 but, I think it's a really important data set to continue
14 to monitor and then get out to the public and other
15 people. Thank you for the work.

16

17 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Any more questions,
18 comments?

19

20 (No response)

21

22 Thank you so much. Great report.
23 Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve.
24 Anthropology, Barbara Cellarius.

25

26 MS. CELLARIUS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. For
27 the record, it's Barbara Cellarius. I'm the cultural
28 anthropologist and subsistence coordinator for Wrangell-
29 St. Elias National Park and Preserve. I do want to ask
30 if Dave Sarafin is on the phone or on the call? If he's
31 on the call, I could have -- call on him first to do a
32 quick fisheries update. If he's not, I'll just cover all
33 three of our updates. I believe it's under tab six.

34

35 MR. SARAFIN: I am online, this is Dave
36 Sarafin, fisheries biologist at Wrangell-St. Elias
37 National Park and Preserve.

38

39 MS. CELLARIUS: Dave, why don't you go
40 ahead and do your report?

41

42 MR. SARAFIN: Okay. Will do, yeah. Good
43 evening. And as I said, Dave Sarafin, the fisheries
44 biologist at the park at Wrangell-St. Elias. And you
45 should have a report, maybe it was mailed to you on for
46 the winter spring of 2025 report. Some key updates I'll
47 try to cover. We again operated Tanada Creek weir, at
48 Katie John's historic fishing site at Batzulnetas and
49 documented just, well, 14,704 sockeye salmon and 13
50 chinook. And that those numbers are -- it's a good number

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1 for sockeye but, below long-term average that we've had
2 there close to 20,000 maybe. And we are working on a
3 cooperative agreement. We're drafting that in
4 consultation with Ahtna Intertribal Resource Commission
5 with -- you know, we're hoping to transfer the lead of
6 the project over to AITRC in the future. Also, a proposal
7 was approved for some Park Service funding for an
8 inventory of harvestable freshwater fish in waters of
9 the Park and Preserve. And that's planned for this season
10 and to be led by Dan Gorze of AITRC. Some of these
11 projects are, you know, a little on hold due to some
12 hold ups and some financial agreements that are
13 currently in place in the federal system so we're hopeful
14 that both of these will be able to operate this summer.
15

16 And on the Copper River salmon return
17 for last year, it was you know, it started out similar
18 to what we've seen in recent years. You know, we've had
19 a lot of snow and delayed melt-off. And the river
20 conditions likely contribute a little bit to the low
21 start of the season. So, it began with relatively low
22 numbers during the beginning and, increase in strength
23 as the season progressed. And we had federal harvest
24 opportunities throughout the season and the sockeye
25 salmon escapement goal should be -- was achieved. Miles
26 Lake sonar estimated sonar passage of 946,188 salmon.
27 That's 58% above their management objective of 599,157.
28 The in-river run assessment of Chinook salmon however,
29 that one indicated a lower abundance and it may not
30 achieve the minimum bound of the sustainable escapement
31 goal range of 21,000 to 31,000 fish. And in response to
32 that, by mid-season the State closed all their, you know,
33 state in-river chinook salmon fisheries by mid-season.
34 There are no management actions taken in the federal
35 subsistence fisheries, though for the Copper River.
36 Upper Copper River federal subsistence fishery permits
37 were issued were 202 for Chitina Subdistrict, 293 for
38 Glennallen Subdistrict and two for Batzulnetas. And
39 historical -- I've got some tables and a figure at the
40 end of the written part of this report. Tables one
41 through four and figure three that displays historic
42 harvests and in-river return estimates of salmon from
43 2005 to 2024. The bar graph is a new figure that I've
44 added where you can actually see the 20-year visual
45 representation of you know, how the federal upper river
46 harvest has gone, and the in-river escapement has been
47 in the Copper River.
48

49 And federal subsistence fishery in the
50 lower Copper River had 80 permits issued total in season,

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1 reported harvest of 425 sockeye salmon and two chinook
2 salmon. And then at the recent Board of Fisheries meeting
3 in Cordova in December, they made some significant
4 regulatory changes to the state management plans for the
5 Copper River district commercial fishery and the Chitina
6 personal use fishery, and these will take place this
7 coming season. So, the commercial fishery will be
8 delayed now and may only open after May 21st. And that's,
9 you know, basically at least a week's delay from what
10 they had been mandated for. And the Chitna personal use
11 fishery also will be delayed. It may now open June 10th
12 or later, and it will also be closed to chinook salmon
13 harvest until after June 30th. So, prior to this, the
14 Chitina fishery had to open between June 7th and 15th.
15 And so now it's just the June 10th or later. And it does
16 not have to open by the 15th. So, if the run is very low
17 early season based on sonar, this, you know, could delay
18 the Chitina fishery -- state fishery longer. So, end
19 result, both those actions will likely result in more
20 early run fish getting up -- migrating into the Copper
21 River which should alleviate some of the concerns that
22 have been noted in the past. And for the 2025 season,
23 Fish and Game has forecast returns of 2,638,000 sockeye
24 salmon. That's 50% above their ten-year average and
25 36,000 chinook salmon, which is 25% below the ten-year
26 average. And that concludes the reports. And there's
27 more additional details on each of those topics in the
28 written materials. And if there are any questions, I'd
29 be happy to respond.

30

31 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you. Any
32 questions? Go ahead.

33

34 MR. BASSICH: Yeah. Member Bassich here.
35 I'm just curious. Can you remind me what the stock status
36 is of chinook salmon on the Copper River right now? Is
37 there any kind of concern right now? Do you have -- what
38 is the official status of that stock?

39

40 MR. SARAFIN: We -- there's no official
41 designation by Fish and Game, but we have had you know,
42 a few recent years where we did not meet their
43 sustainable escapement goal. So, it's not to the point
44 where they've made a determination for a stock status
45 designation. It was noted by the Chair of the Board of
46 Fish, you know, in passing the proposal for the
47 commercial fishery delay, it was noted, you know, the
48 chinook salmon concerns with intent that this should
49 alleviate that. And then likewise with the limitations
50 for the personal use fishery with no chinook harvest for

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1 the month of June. So, I hope that answers your question.

2

3 MR. BASSICH: Yeah. Thank you. It does.
4 I just want to say I -- we draw a lot of parallels
5 between what's happened on the Yukon and what was
6 beginning to happen on the Copper. And I'm kind of
7 pleased to hear that maybe there are some conservation
8 actions taking place before things get out of hand for
9 you. So, I applaud those efforts and Board actions that
10 are helping to alleviate potential future problems. So,
11 thank you for the information and the report.

12

13 MR. SARAFIN: Certainly. And we are aware
14 of your situation. And, you know, also with the other
15 areas of the State. So, there's -- it's kind of a yellow
16 flag that's brought attention to the managers of the
17 fishery, both state and federal.

18

19 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Donald and okay,
20 Dorothy.

21

22 MS. SHOCKLEY: Okay. Thank you. I have
23 relatives that live in, and last summer they were pretty
24 upset because of the -- you know, they get inundated
25 more so than I think any other area with outside
26 fishermen and hunters. So, they were pretty upset that
27 you know -- it -- they weren't being more conservative.
28 And I think that might be something that you might
29 consider more so now than later. Thank you.

30

31 MR. SARAFIN: Thank you for that
32 feedback. It is noted. And again, much of the actions
33 that occur are on the state fishery. And so, you know,
34 we are hopeful there'll be some positive outcome from
35 these recent changes in their management Chistochina
36 plans. So -- but thank you.

37

38 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you. Any more
39 comments or questions? Okay. Thank you so much for your
40 report.

41

42 MR. SARAFIN: You're welcome.

43

44 MS. CELLARIUS: Okay. This is Barbara
45 Cellarius again. And I'm going to do the Subsistence and
46 Anthropology report. And a quick -- some highlights of
47 that report and some highlights of the wildlife report
48 and we'll leave you to read the details. Our contact
49 information is on all of the reports. And if there's
50 questions today, I'll do my best to answer them. One

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1 thing I am kind of excited about, because I've been
2 working on it for about 20 years, is -- I now have a
3 report that we worked on together with the Ahtna
4 Intertribal Resource Commission. It is about Ahtna
5 Athabascan connections to Wrangell-St. Elias National
6 Park and Preserve. I've got two more printed copies.
7 I've given some to some of the RAC members. It's
8 available online. There's a link there in the report
9 about how to get a copy. We also have like not lots of
10 printed copies but, we have printed copies. So, I've got
11 these two additional copies. I've seen a couple of heads
12 nodding over there. And so, I'll leave these here for -
13 - if members want to pick them up if you don't already
14 have one. All right. I see Dorothy wants one for sure.
15 And then you can get a hold of me, or Brooke can get
16 ahold of me if you want to print out a copy. And you
17 haven't gotten one today. They're really, really heavy.
18 So, I just brought eight. And so really happy if I were
19 to report about that. I also because Brooke from Fish
20 and Game talked a little bit about community harvest
21 surveys. We have also been working with the department
22 on specifically a project in the upper Copper River, and
23 that project includes Mentasta, Mentasta Pass, Slana,
24 and Chistochina. We surveyed Mentasta, Mentasta Pass,
25 and Chistochina with a study year of 2022 and Slana, the
26 study year is 2023, and I'm hopeful by the time of your
27 fall meeting, or at least the end of the calendar year,
28 we'll have the report on that project. That project, we
29 started because of concerns we heard from upper Copper
30 River communities that their subsistence salmon needs
31 were not being met. So, we wanted to have like a report
32 that documented where things were with salmon. Some of
33 the results from the report were actually -- from the
34 surveys were presented at the Board of Fish meeting this
35 in December. So, the timing was good that those data
36 were available for that meeting.

37
38 And so, and also the Park Service worked
39 with Fish and Game and did a study in Northway in 2014.
40 So, we have 23 communities that have subsistence
41 eligibility to harvest resources in the Park. So, it's
42 kind of hard for us to get around, to get the funding,
43 to get around to all those communities. But we do the
44 best that we can and generally partner with Fish and
45 Game. On this upper Copper River project, we also
46 partnered with AITRC to build some local capacity for
47 these kinds of projects. One of the things we have in
48 the report is information about our permits. And I just
49 want to mention the Chisana Caribou Herd because that's
50 the actual one Caribou heard in the Park that we have

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1 had a harvest on this year, because the Nelchina Herd
2 was closed to harvest. So, this is a small herd. It's
3 an off-the-road system. It's fairly isolated, but it's
4 an important resource for people who live in the hunt
5 area. It's in this far southern southeast corner of Unit
6 12, which is part of the Eastern Interior Region. For
7 2024, we had a harvest quota of six, which is based on
8 having a stable population. The population estimate for
9 fall of 2022 was 582 caribou and then the herd was above
10 the population objectives for both the bull-cow and the
11 calf-cow ratio. Don had asked for a presentation related
12 to this herd for this meeting, and there just wasn't
13 time to schedule it. But potentially our biologists, if
14 there's time on the agenda, since you've got a three-
15 day meeting in Tok in the fall, and he could do a
16 presentation at that meeting. Both on the new management
17 plan, on some -- upcoming research on the herd. And then
18 I just wanted to give you a few highlights. Well, I'll
19 stop there and see if you have any questions about the
20 subsistence and anthropology highlights. And then I'll
21 give you a couple of highlights from our recent wildlife
22 work.

23
24 MS. IRWIN: Through the Chair. Thank you.
25 This is Olivia, for the record, just a quick comment. I
26 really appreciate the anthropological work that you're
27 doing, Barb, and I'm appreciative that it's being paired
28 with AITRC. So, I would just encourage continued
29 projects with AITRC, allowing a AITRC in those folks to
30 lead the direction of it. And I love that you're doing
31 subsistence harvest surveys. I think that's something
32 that we need to continue to do. And it's really
33 beneficial the ones that the state has been doing up
34 here in our, in our region. So, thank you.

35
36 MS. CELLARIUS: Thanks for your kind
37 words. And we do have some other projects with AITRC
38 that we're hoping will continue to move forward. So, I
39 just a few wildlife highlights. Our wildlife biologist
40 had to drop off the phone. But we have two caribou herds
41 that spend the majority of their time or spend a big
42 chunk of time in the Park. One is the Mentasta herd.
43 It's mostly it's having its calving area is primarily
44 in Unit 11 but, it does migrate in the winter up into
45 Unit 12. And so, we did a survey in the end of June,
46 early July of 2024, and the population estimate was 189
47 caribou, which was the lowest estimate since 2017. We
48 do have a project that's going to be starting up in 2026
49 to evaluate changes in herd overlap among the Mentasta
50 and Nelchina and Chisana Caribou Herd. Those are the

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1 three herds that we see in the Park. And so, got a study
2 coming up to try to understand better what's going on
3 with those herds. In contrast, the Chisana Caribou Herd
4 I mentioned that we actually had a under of that herd -
5 - I guess I didn't mention that we did have a couple
6 caribou harvested. We had a quota of six and had a couple
7 caribou harvested at the Chisana herd. But a composition
8 survey was conducted in October of 2024 and the survey
9 results indicate both high calf production and high bull
10 survival and so the -- that herd is actually doing pretty
11 well. It's a small herd but, the population is stable.
12 And then I'll just end with sheep.

13
14 Sheep surveys were conducted across 2.5
15 million acres in the northern Wrangell's including the
16 Nabesna area, the Mentasta and (In Native) mountains.
17 In the summer of 2024, the survey indicates -- survey
18 results indicate a slowing in the decline of adult sheep,
19 while lamb production increased slightly over the record
20 low in 2023. We also have a project starting up this
21 fall to evaluate factors contributing to recent sheep
22 declines in Wrangell-St. Elias. So, we should have some
23 more information about what's going on with our sheep.
24 And then we will also be doing surveys again this summer,
25 and I will stop there.

26
27 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you so much.
28 Any questions, comments? Everybody wants to go home.
29 Thank you for your presentation.

30
31 MS. CELLARIUS: Thank you.

32
33 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Wildlife with Kyle
34 (indiscernible). Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. He was already on.
35 Yeah. You have the floor.

36
37 MS. LA VINE: Thank you, Mister Chair.
38 Members of the Council. Once again, my name is Ronbin
39 La Vine. I am the subsistence policy coordinator for
40 OSM. And as I told you earlier, this is the first time
41 I've actually been able to attend a meeting of the
42 Eastern Interior Council in person. I've always been
43 online, or I've seen you at the All Council meetings or
44 members at the Board meetings, and I just want to express
45 my gratitude and also how impressed I am with all of
46 you. New members, as well as seasoned members of the way
47 you dig into the issues, the way you strive to help all
48 of us understand the issues that you're working on. I've
49 learned so much. And once again, I'm so impressed with
50 our Regional Advisory Councils and you folks as an

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1 amazing team. So, thank you for hosting me, allowing me
2 to be here. And I hope I get a chance to return. So, I'm
3 here to give some OSM updates. And the first one, I
4 think the most important one that I need to share is
5 that in December of 2024, OSM officially welcomed our
6 new director, Ciisquq Crystal Leonetti. So, I just want
7 to pass the mic to Ciisquq/
8

9 MS. LEONETTI: Quyana. Thank you, Robbin,
10 and thank you, Mr. Chair and Council members. (In
11 Native). My Yup'ik name is Ciisquq. It was given to me
12 in the traditional way by my grandparents, who are the
13 late Harry and Daisy Barnes from Dillingham. My mom and
14 dad are Al and Grace Poindexter from Anchor Point. I was
15 born and raised in Anchor Point and Homer. Went to
16 Dillingham in the summers to Queen Slough and did some
17 commercial fishing, set netting, and I raised reindeer
18 as a kid. I also go by Crystal Leonetti. That's my name,
19 you'll see on all the government documents. But I love
20 to hear when people call me by my Yup'ik name, Ciisquq.
21 It makes me happy. So, and it also brings all my
22 ancestors into the room with me. So, I speak that with
23 intention. Yeah. And I'm just really honored to join OSM
24 in this amazing staff. These people work really hard,
25 as you know. And I'm honored to join such an amazing
26 team. I also just want to echo what Robbin said and say
27 (In Native), which means thank you from my heart for
28 doing the work that you do. Because you are the voice
29 for the people, and you're also the voice for the fish
30 and for the animals and I believe for the land and the
31 water, too. So, I know you're volunteering and you're
32 putting in a lot of time, and I don't know how you're
33 doing it because I'm tired and I'm just sitting there
34 listening and you're putting in the work. And this is
35 what I tell my bosses in Washington DC. This is where
36 the rubber hits the road. This is where the real work
37 happens at the Council meetings. So, I appreciate you
38 and everything you do for the animals and the fish and
39 the people. I will stop there. And I came here in
40 December, as Robbin said after 30 years with the
41 government. It's crazy to think I worked for U.S.
42 Department of Agriculture and then U.S. Fish and
43 Wildlife Service. So, I'm -- this is my dream job. I'm
44 very happy to be here
45

46 MS. LA VINE: And we're so glad that we
47 have her with us. So, I know, Charlie, I'll try to be
48 really quick. I've got a couple more updates so hang on.
49 As many of you know, and as Crystal has mentioned,
50 Congress administratively moved OSM from the U.S. Fish

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1 and Wildlife Service directly to the Office of the
2 Assistant Secretary of Policy, Management and Budget.
3 PMB. It's a mouthful. This move became effective January
4 -- July 15th and was one of many efforts that the
5 Department of the Interior has made to strengthen the
6 Federal Subsistence Management Program and to ensure
7 that federally qualified subsistence users and Alaska
8 Native people have an opportunity for meaningful
9 engagement in our public process, implementing the
10 federal subsistence priority. This January, President
11 Trump returned to the white House and with him, a new
12 team of political appointees. Doug Burgum was sworn in
13 as the Secretary of the Interior. Shortly after that,
14 Charlie Dankert was appointed Senior Advisor to the
15 Secretary, exercising the delegated authority of the
16 Assistant Secretary for our office, PMB. OSM has been
17 getting Charlie up to speed with the Federal Subsistence
18 Management Program and its importance to rural Alaskans.
19 Meanwhile, it's been business as usual for OSM. We
20 continue to work with many of the same people within the
21 office of the Secretary in DC, that helped us with the
22 move, as well as the political appointees as they come
23 on Board.

24
25 In February, we welcomed new public
26 Board members Raymond Oney of Alakanuk, Benjamin Payenna
27 of Nome and Frank Woods of Dillingham, and completed
28 another successful Board meeting and that was just the
29 beginning of this month. We hope to have updated federal
30 regulations for subsistence fishing published in the
31 final rule soon. This is a transition time, so it could
32 mean anything. This proposed rule for the 2026 wildlife
33 eegulatory cycle, published on February 7th, and we are
34 accepting proposals through the 4th of April, as you
35 know, and you have been working diligently to provide
36 us with work. Since last fall's Council meeting, several
37 OSM staff acted in different roles to help through the
38 transition to Office of the Secretary. Starting this
39 February, Chris McKee. He is the subsistence coordinator
40 at BLM and a member of the ISC, came over to OSM from
41 BLM to act as the Deputy Director for four months on our
42 team. However, moving into this new year, that position
43 is vacant. So, we're grateful for Chris, who is a former
44 OSM staff person in his ability to help us for these
45 next four months. We want to continue to remind you
46 about the change in requirements for U.S. travelers who
47 must be real ID compliant to Board domestic flights
48 beginning May 7th of 2024. Even for rural flights here
49 in Alaska. For our program, you will need to have your
50 real ID and time to travel for your fall 2025 meeting.

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1 If you have any questions, work with Brooke and she'll
2 help you. I'm sure you all have been kept up to speed
3 on this.

4
5 Correspondence, we are aware of concerns
6 that have been raised on timely responses. We're
7 continuing to work on ways to help expedite things as
8 we move forward. Correspondence between Councils and the
9 Board or Councils moving on through the Board to the
10 Secretaries. You should have received a handful of
11 responses earlier this year, maybe even at the beginning
12 of last year from the Secretaries, based on issues raised
13 during individual Council meetings and the All Council
14 meeting this past winter and OSM is also integrated a
15 correspondence review standing agenda item in the
16 Federal Subsistence Board meetings just to keep them
17 appraised of all the ongoing and completed
18 correspondence to and from the Councils. We're still
19 trying to find a way to make sure that the Board members,
20 as we'll probably be cycling through new ones are kept
21 up to speed on all the issues and the communications
22 that are important to you for them.

23
24 And then finally, before I wrap up, I
25 just wanted to give you all a heads up on some upcoming
26 meeting dates that are important and we will have these
27 posted on our website soon. The first is the Federal
28 Subsistence Board summer work session. That is really a
29 Council focused. We review the annual reports of the
30 Regional Advisory Councils that you provide to the
31 Board. The Board reviews responses prepared and approve
32 or change them at that meeting. So, listening in to how
33 that process might be of interest to any of you. You're
34 all invited. We also now review the correspondences at
35 that time. Again, any time the Board members come
36 together; we're going to look at what's active in their
37 correspondence files. So, they will be discussing any
38 letters that you're sending to them or through them at
39 that time. And then finally, that is also an opportunity
40 in executive session for the Board to review new Council
41 member nominations. And so, then at that point, the Board
42 approves and sends recommendations to D.C. and we
43 hopefully hear by the end of the year in time for the
44 next winter cycle meeting.

45
46 We have scheduled tribal and ANCSA
47 corporation Operation, consultations on wildlife
48 proposals and closure reviews, August 12th and 14th of
49 2025. That's the first opportunity for the tribes and
50 ANCSA Corporations to call in and provide comments on

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1 the proposals themselves. Just the proposals. Then we
2 provide a second opportunity for consultations following
3 the winter meeting, after everyone has benefited from
4 not just hearing the proposals but, hearing the
5 analyses. And the tribes then have another opportunity
6 to provide more informed feedback on these analyses
7 based on what they've heard at the Council meetings and
8 what's kind of developed over time.

9
10 We've got meeting windows coming up for
11 2026. And I say this because this year We had some big
12 challenges with important meetings kind of overlapping.
13 And I hear you're all talking about the Board of Fish
14 meeting coming up. There's North Pacific Fisheries
15 Management Council meetings coming up. Our regulatory
16 cycle makes it almost like clockwork. We can kind of -
17 we can look at any year and say, we're going to meet
18 within this two-week window. And so, if we know our
19 cycles so well, we should advertise that two-week
20 window. And as we get closer to it and as we see who
21 else is meeting around that time, we'll try to flex it
22 within that window. And so, the windows for 2026 are for
23 the fish -- the FRMP, the Fisheries Resource management
24 -- Monitoring Program work session is going to be around
25 January 28th, 29th or February 4th and fifth. The
26 wildlife regulatory meeting is going to be scheduled for
27 the second and third week of April, one of those two
28 weeks and the summer work session, we're looking at July
29 22nd, 23rd or July 29th or 30th, and we even have August
30 5th or sixth. I think that might have changed but, you'll
31 see the windows our meeting windows on our website. Just
32 as a good heads up to let you know that we'll try to be
33 as flexible as possible with any other conflicting,
34 important meetings. And with that, I'm done, and we're
35 ready to take questions.

36
37 MR. BASSICH: Thank you. Thank you for
38 that. That was extremely concise and extremely
39 understandable. So, take that as a compliment coming
40 from the federal program. I say that with humor and
41 respectfully, for I hope I pronounce this correct,
42 Ciisquq. Okay. I just wanted to let you know that that
43 really happy that you were able to come here and take
44 the time to meet us in person. I'm a person -- I really
45 like to meet face to face with people. It really helps.
46 And I want you to know that the reason why we're still
47 here and we're still awake is we run on passion, and we
48 run on adrenaline here. And you've probably witnessed
49 both of those during the meeting. But oftentimes it's a
50 lot of adrenaline right now. But thank you for being

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1 here. Appreciate it.

2

3 MS. IRWIN: Olivia Irwin for the record,
4 I just want to say congratulations, Ciisquq. And I'm
5 really grateful that you're in this role. It's really
6 inspiring to see our people continue to advance in these
7 management systems and in positions of decision making.
8 And I'm really hoping that this new administration
9 continues to support the work that we're doing and the
10 work that you all are doing. There's more and more news
11 that keeps coming out each day about especially federal
12 Advisory Committees. So, I'm grateful for Robbin, your
13 comments that you just put on record of the need for
14 these Advisory Committees -- Councils and your continued
15 support for the work that we do. So, thank you and
16 (indiscernible).

17

18 MS. SHOCKLEY: Mr. Chair.

19

20 MR. BASSICH: Member Bassich here again.
21 Sorry if I could just -- I forgot to mention one of the
22 things I really wanted you to be able to pass on to
23 whomever you speak to at any level. At least from my
24 perspective and I think it's shared amongst the people
25 in this room. The federal program is, quite frankly, the
26 only -- its critical to our future. It really is critical
27 to our future. And it's right now critical to our
28 existence. So those are -- I mean, that's why I'm here.
29 Well, I'm going to stop with that because I'll probably
30 get really emotional. But, just please pass that on.
31 It's really important.

32

33 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Who is next?
34 Dorothy, then Linda. Do you want to say hi,
35 (indiscernible)?

36

37 MS. SHOCKLEY: Dorothy Shockley. Again,
38 thank you. Thank you for your report, Robbin. If we
39 could have that in writing, please. And welcome,
40 Ciisquq. Yeah. I am so happy to, well, to meet you, but
41 also that you're in this role and just praying that you
42 know, everything coming out of DC doesn't derail some
43 of what's happening here today. So -- or in the future.
44 So, thank you.

45

46 MR. WOODRUFF: This is Don Woodruff. I
47 want to thank you guys for funding the North Pacific
48 Management Council, to come here and help us. And it
49 made a lot more sense to be able to talk to them on a
50 personal level, rather than have to go to Nome and speak,

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1 you know, from a podium to them. And I really appreciate
2 that. We're all working together for the resources and
3 for the people. Thank you.

4
5 MS. MCDAVID: Thank you guys. I did --
6 This is Brooke, for the record, I did just -- I want to
7 give credit where credit is due. And North Pacific did
8 fund their own travel here, and they were the ones that
9 initially reached out. We saw that as a very positive
10 movement and an attempt at relationship building, and
11 we hope that more opportunities for that sort of
12 conversation continue into the future. So, thank you.

13
14 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: I too thank you all
15 for being here and thank you for stepping up and coming
16 to be with us. I appreciate it if there's no other
17 questions or comments. Thank you.

18
19 (Pause)

20
21 Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program.
22 They said go fast.

23
24 UNIDENTIFIED: Good evening, Mr. Chair
25 and Council members. I'm southern. I can't go fast. But
26 this will be really fast. For seasoned Council members,
27 you already know that OSM has two funding opportunities
28 the Partners for Fisheries Monitoring program and the
29 Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program. And both of them
30 are aimed at Alaska Native and rural Alaskan
31 organizations and the Fisheries Resources Monitoring
32 Program is a call for proposals based on the priority
33 information needs that this Council created. And then
34 Partners is really about getting staff in rural and
35 Alaska Native organizations who participate directly in
36 fisheries management. So normally by now we would have
37 had the notice of funding opportunity for both of those.
38 But it hasn't come through yet. But when it does, I will
39 have Brooke notify everybody. I'm the contact person for
40 the Partners program, and we can get you the contact
41 person for the Fisheries program as well if you want it.
42 But we'll definitely make sure that you all get an email
43 that that funding opportunity has opened. So that's the
44 end of my presentation.

45
46 (Pause)

47
48 MS. MCDAVID: All right. Mr. Chair, with
49 your permission, I'll just keep moving.

50

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1 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Yes, please.

2

3 MS. MCDAVID: Thomas, I just wanted to
4 briefly show this table because you know, there were
5 some comments about, like, what can we actually do to
6 make change? And one of the ways that -- I mean, one of
7 the main things that you all do is you make
8 recommendations to the Board on proposals. So, the Board
9 just met at the beginning of February this month. It was
10 their regulatory fisheries meeting. And I won't go
11 through all of these. We can talk about them more at the
12 fall meeting, but the Board did take action that was in
13 line with all of your recommendations on all of these
14 proposals, minus the statewide brown bear sale proposal
15 that we already revisited earlier in this meeting. So
16 those are, you know, eight or so recommendations that
17 the Board relied upon you for, for advice and moved
18 forward. So, thank you -- or in some cases, rejected.
19 And if there's any questions about any of them, we can
20 take those.

21

22 (No response)

23

24 Hearing none. Next is some working group
25 updates. I'll just say that we had a working group
26 meeting the day before the RAC meeting started. We talked
27 about the dall sheep management coalition and some
28 management strategies that you all are interested in for
29 the Eastern Interior region. And we also talked about
30 some hunter ethics. If there's any actions that or the
31 hunter ethics education and outreach initiative that you
32 guys have been pushing. If there's any actions that you
33 would like to see out of those meetings that working
34 group meeting any of the working group members could
35 speak up at this time.

36

37 MR. BASSICH: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd
38 like to make a motion that we ask the Federal Subsistence
39 Board or OSM to provide for a very small stipend to help
40 support the hunter ethics program in the tune of
41 somewhere between maybe 2 or \$5000 for printed materials
42 and other needs that we might have to be able to
43 facilitate some outreach.

44

45 MS. IRWIN: I'll second that. Olivia
46 Irwin, for the record.

47

48 MR. BASSICH: So, Andy Bassich for the
49 record. And just speaking to the motion, we had quite a
50 good meeting. We met with some of the liaisons from both

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1 Fort Wainwright and Elmendorf, and we have a number of
2 ideas to try and further and expand the hunter ethics
3 outreach. Some of it requires just notifications to the
4 public. And so, in an effort to hopefully just make that
5 a little bit more streamlined we're hoping that maybe
6 we could get some money that would just be available to
7 us at various times to do that outreach publicly. I
8 guess that's really about it. I don't want to get too
9 in depth, but I think it would really benefit the
10 program, and I think it would streamline it and help us
11 keep the momentum. And that's what we're trying to
12 establish now after -- reintroduction after Covid.

13
14 MS. IRWIN: Olivia Irwin here. I'll just
15 add that there was no funding for -- on the side of
16 Eielson or of -- sorry or thank you, Eielson or
17 Wainwright to do the printing and production of these
18 flyers. We asked them so, that's why we're requesting.

19
20 MS. MCDAVID: And Council members, we
21 just passed out or -- it's just kind of an example
22 brainstorm flyer about some -- it came out of one of the
23 last working group meetings that the RAC had -- it's
24 just a starting point for discussion to create a flyer
25 that's centered around a message of hunter ethics that's
26 short and sweet and speaks to you know, the slogan of
27 hunt like an Alaskan.

28
29 MS. SHOCKLEY: Really quick. I also
30 handed out a Inupiaq caribou hunting guide as well, that
31 was traditionally done by the Kiana elders and was
32 thinking that we could do something like this for our
33 area but, also who's on the working group?

34
35 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: I was just going to
36 ask, are you volunteering?

37
38 (Simultaneous speech)

39
40 That's what you're doing. You're
41 bringing materials.

42
43 MS. MCDAVID: Dorothy, if I recall
44 correctly, you are on it.

45
46 MS. SHOCKLEY: Oh. Okay.

47
48 MS. MCDAVID: It just hasn't met in a
49 while before this meeting we just had on Tuesday.

50

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1 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: We have a motion on
2 the floor, it needs to be reinstated, or question called.

3
4 MR. BASSICH: Yeah, the motion was --
5 member Bassich here. Yeah. The motion was that the
6 Eastern Interior RAC would request a small stipend from
7 either OSM or the Federal Subsistence Board to help aid
8 us in the promotion of hunter ethics for printing
9 outreach flyers and other public notifications as
10 needed.

11
12 MS. IRWIN: Question, Olivia Irwin.

13
14 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay. All those in
15 favor signify by saying aye.

16
17 IN UNISON: Aye

18
19 All those against same sign?

20
21 (No response)

22
23 Thank you. Passes.

24
25 MS. MCDAVID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And
26 then one last thing about the working groups, BLM had
27 sent you all a letter requesting a little bit more
28 clarity and information about what you're hoping to get
29 out of the coalition, and maybe some of the goals and
30 some of that was discussed in the working group. And you
31 pointed to the section in your draft management
32 strategies that that Don put together that had you know,
33 spoke to the long -term sustainability of sheep in the
34 region and collaboration on research and surveys. And I
35 believe if you wanted to respond to BLM and those copied
36 on that letter we could do that. I just wanted to make
37 sure it was on the record.

38
39 MR. BASSICH: Do you want a motion? Mr.
40 Chair, member Bassich here. I'd like to make a motion.
41 Make a motion that we write a letter to BLM. In regards
42 to our progress on forming a sheep coalition and, include
43 topics discussed at that working group meeting.

44
45 MS. IRWIN: Member Irwin. Second.

46
47 MR. BASSICH: And I guess I'll just
48 reference some of the comments we've already had. Thank
49 you, to support that. Okay. I'll try. It's getting late.
50 The motion was that the -- request that the Eastern

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1 Interior RAC write a letter to BLM to inform them of the
2 topics discussed during the Sheep Management Co --
3 Working Group to help further formation of a working
4 group and inform them.

5

6 MS. IRWIN: Member Irwin. Call for
7 question.

8

9 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: So, I guess you just
10 reinstated it. Don't have to do it again. Okay, we're
11 at vote now. All those in favor signify by saying aye.

12

13 IN UNISON: Aye.

14

15 All those against same sign. Hearing
16 none passes. Thank you.

17

18 MS. MCDAVID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I did
19 want to remind you all, there is a Fortymile Caribou
20 working Group or Harvest Management Coalition meeting
21 next week, and Don Woodruff will be your representative
22 at that meeting. Member Bassich will also be there
23 representing the AC from Eagle. Yeah. Go ahead, Andy.

24

25 MR. BASSICH: Yeah. Thank you. I don't
26 know if it's necessary. I think Don and I both have a
27 pretty good feel for what this Eastern RACs position is
28 on a lot of the caribou but, I just really wanted to
29 briefly. I've been thinking about this a few of the
30 things that I'd really like to make sure that we adopt
31 into the new harvest management plan is a reasonable
32 target for the caribou herd. Very briefly, in the past,
33 we've oftentimes seek the highest number of caribou
34 thinking that would be the best benefit. But over time,
35 looking at data, it appears that keeping the harvest --
36 or keeping the herd at somewhere between 50 and 60,000
37 seems to keep it much more stable. So, we don't have
38 those fluctuations in die offs. So that's one of the
39 things I want to try and promote. So basically, what I'd
40 really like to see us promote from our perspective is
41 to try and maintain a sustainable harvest. Whether it's
42 a little bit higher or a little bit lower doesn't really
43 matter. What's most important for the people on the land
44 is to have some opportunity every year, as opposed to
45 one year you're able to shoot two, the next three years
46 you can't shoot any. That's one of the things that I
47 would really like to see in the plan. And I wanted to
48 make sure to bring that to you here, to make sure that
49 that is also in alignment with your perspectives on that.
50 But that's one of the key things that I'm going to try

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1 and focus in on and make sure that we have in the plan
2 so that we don't have this up and down harvest or crash.
3 That, you know, all the data shows to these really high
4 numbers beginning to create crashes. So, I don't think
5 the land can support those high numbers. And that's why
6 we have a lot of these undulations in the population,
7 undulations of ungulates.

8
9 MR. WOODRUFF: The reason we were late
10 for lunch is because we were in consultation with BLM
11 about exactly this stuff. And one of the things that
12 came out was that Eagle Summit and American Summit are
13 a situation where the caribou come up over a pass and
14 they stall at the at the road system because they have
15 a history of really bad experiences when they hit the
16 road. And these 20-year-old cows turn around and mill
17 around, and then they go back where they come. And so,
18 we're going to advocate that those areas are closed for
19 harvest so that the caribou can cross the road system
20 and move out into the landscape and do well on the
21 habitat. And we'll see what the State -- if the State
22 will support that.

23
24 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: I want to add really
25 quick that another thing that I don't like is when they
26 say that they have to kill extra amount of animals
27 because of lack of food, and then they let side by sides
28 and four wheelers ride all over the rest of the food.
29 Just don't make sense to me. That's not hunting, you
30 know. I just want to make that comment.

31
32 MR. BASSICH: So, I guess maybe what I
33 was asking for is, is there any opposition or is there
34 any other thoughts that -- from our Council that you'd
35 like to bring to the discussion? Because we're here to
36 support -- Don's here to support your position. But being
37 a part of this position, you know, there's strength in
38 numbers.

39
40 MS. MCDAVID: I just had one thing that
41 I recall came up during the working group meeting that
42 you would may or may not want to put on the record here.
43 And that was about the membership of the coalition and
44 people in close proximity to the herd versus people and
45 outside, further away. And if you wanted to speak to any
46 of that.

47
48 MR. BASSICH: Yeah, I'll speak to that.
49 After our meeting that day, I called up Leif, who is the
50 Chair of the Fortymile AC and we had a discussion about

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1 it. And what he remembered of our previous arrangements
2 in the coalition is that the Mat-Su and Anchorage would
3 be welcomed voting members but, we stipulated because
4 at the time they were trying to increase the coalition
5 all around this kind of all around the State, we agreed
6 to, in the coalition that the home communities of the
7 caribou herd would always maintain a majority in the
8 vote. And so, when he reminded me of that, I think that
9 was the way it worked. So, I think we're on the same
10 page with that. So, it's not a concern, I guess, is what
11 I'm trying to say. Thank you.

12

13 MR. WOODRUFF: Mat-Sue and Anchorage
14 should not have a vote that cancels me out.

15

16 MS. MCDAVID: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair
17 and Council. I will quickly -- let me get it up here on
18 the screen. Turn your attention to tab number seven in
19 your supplemental materials is copies of all of the
20 correspondence that you sent this year or since the last
21 meeting, there were 14 letters. And then you received
22 four letters from the Office of the Secretary of
23 Interior. And I'm not going to go through all of them.
24 But I just wanted to check in to see if there is any
25 additional correspondence that you would like to send
26 before we wrap up this meeting.

27

28 MS. SHOCKLEY: Oh, sorry. Because of the
29 testimony that we heard here today about the D1 lands
30 Cape Nome closure, can we send another letter or. Oh.
31 Thank you. I so move.

32

33 MS. BURK: Second. Eva. I don't think we
34 know what we're doing, right. I think everybody's in
35 support of this.

36

37 MS. IRWIN: So, Olivia Irwin here, I
38 would just reference our comments or the public
39 testimony and further comments that we had earlier in
40 the day about the D1 lands. And I would call the
41 question.

42

43 MS. MCDAVID: And just to clarify for the
44 record, I'm pretty sure I know your intent, but this
45 would be a letter to the Board that you would ask to be
46 forwarded to the new Secretary of Interior. Thanks --
47 and Agriculture.

48

49 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay. Everything is
50 in order. Ask for unanimous consent. All those in favor

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1 signify by saying aye.

2

3 IN UNISON: Aye.

4

5 All those against, same sign.

6

7 (No response)

8

9 Passes. Thank you.

10

11 MS. MCDAVID: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

12 The -- I already let you know that we are recruiting for
13 the young leader seat, and hopefully by the end of the
14 year when we have the appointments for the Council, we'll
15 also get an appointment for that seat. We did have at
16 least one applicant that submitted a letter of interest
17 for our region. So, we'll look forward to hopefully
18 welcoming them in the future. And I am not at liberty
19 to say who the applicant is. You may talk amongst
20 yourselves if you have heard rumors. The final thing of
21 business that I need to let you guys know is the last
22 meeting I told you that we might be moving toward having
23 debit cards for your per diem instead of paper checks.
24 We have been told that that is something that we have
25 to do. The government is moving away from paper checks.
26 I don't know all the reasons but, some of it is for
27 security purposes. And so, you have an option if you are
28 in a financial position where you don't feel like you
29 need a travel advance at the beginning of the meeting,
30 you can elect to have direct deposit of your per diem
31 into your bank account after the meeting if that is
32 something you're interested in. Talk to me, we will fill
33 out a form. You -- I'll need your banking information,
34 etc. We'll get that to our admin people and then you can
35 receive direct deposit. It usually is within a couple
36 of weeks of the meeting. So otherwise, everyone for the
37 fall meeting will be given a new debit card. It'll have
38 your per diem travel advance like you get at the start
39 of the meetings now on a check. And that'll just be a
40 card that you'll keep with you, and they'll deposit the
41 rest of your per diem onto that card after the meeting.
42 You don't need to turn it back in. You can go to the
43 ATM, pull out the cash, if that's what you prefer. Or
44 you can use it to pay for meals and taxis and things
45 while you're traveling. So that is my final update, and
46 I'll send an email about that to remind you of that
47 choice. Thanks.

48

49 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you so much
50 for all of that. Now, we are at 16. Council member

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1 closing comments.

2

3 MR. BASSICH: I'm going to go really
4 quickly. I want to really thank Brooke for running an
5 incredible meeting. I got to say, she always does an
6 incredible job. I know it's just a broken record but, I
7 gotta [sic] say it, I want to thank Marcy and Barbara
8 for sitting through. I really appreciate you being here.
9 And I know it's hard to sit through and then have to
10 rush through your presentations but, really recognize
11 that also folks from BLM and other people still in the
12 audience. I really appreciate that you stick with us.
13 It's hard. The only other comment I wanted to make is,
14 this is one of the best meetings I've been to in a long
15 time, and I think why I really enjoyed it is there's
16 been a lot of discourse from a lot of different people
17 and recognizing that maybe two days isn't enough. And
18 I, you know, I don't mind putting in the long hours but,
19 what's most important to me is to have thorough
20 discussion and good decision making. And if it means
21 that we need a third day to some of our meetings, I
22 would just like to put that out on the table if it's
23 possible to do that, because we -- this region is
24 experiencing -- I'm just going to use the word hell from
25 all angles. And so, we have a lot to talk about and a
26 lot to work on to save or save ourselves and save our
27 resources. So, I just wanted to kind of put that out
28 there. So OSM is aware of our needs, and I think we may
29 be a little bit unique in that sense. That's all I have,
30 Mr. Chair, thank you very much for Chairing a great
31 meeting, and thank you for the new members who have come
32 on Board. Really appreciate you guys being here. And
33 you're not a guy. So, I appreciate you being here as
34 well.

35

36 MS. IRWIN: I've been kicking him under
37 the table this whole time.

38

39 MS. MCDAVID: Oh, Olivia, before you go,
40 can I respond?

41

42 MS. IRWIN: Yes.

43

44 MS. MCDAVID: Real quick. Thanks. Sorry,
45 this is Brooke. I hear you, Andy, about the three-day
46 meeting, and I almost think that for this Council, it
47 would be better to go ahead and schedule three day
48 meetings. And then if it looks like we can get through
49 the agenda in two days, we shorten it because I don't
50 know about y'all but, I am exhausted with these long

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1 days and it's hard on everyone. You know, these are
2 really important issues, and it's not fair for people
3 to be going without dinner and trying to hang on because
4 you care so much and everybody is exhausted. So, with
5 that in mind for our 2026 calendar I think if we went
6 ahead and adjusted those dates that you chose yesterday
7 to cover the Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday instead of
8 just the Tuesday, Wednesday or the Thursday or the
9 Wednesday Thursday, that that would help at least have
10 it on the calendar. And so that would be March 3rd
11 through 4th for the winter 2026 meeting, and that would
12 be April 6th through eighth for the fall 2026 meeting.
13 And I guess -- oh, Robbin. Yes. Third through fifth is
14 what I meant. Yeah. Though I made notes on top of the
15 bad calendar that's in the meeting book. But I think the
16 intent is there. And I'm seeing unanimous consent from
17 everyone in the room so, we'll do that. Thank you for
18 bringing that up, Andy. I think it'll make it a lot
19 easier for all of us.

20

21 MS. IRWIN: Okay. This is Henaayee, for
22 my closing comments. I just want to say thank you to all
23 the Council members for supporting all the new members
24 through this process. I appreciate the help with
25 motions. I appreciate the corrections when necessary. I
26 appreciated Sue for her knowledge of sheep that we could
27 lean on. And I'm really looking forward to getting more
28 and more comfortable on the Council and all of us
29 together, finding our voices and being able to share
30 more about the regions that we're from. I'm really hoping
31 that in winter I can get to know our Galen and even a
32 little bit better, you know, Arctic Village in Fort
33 Yukon. What's going on in our upriver territories. I
34 want to say thank you to everybody who testified. It --
35 coming as somebody -- this is my first time sitting on
36 this side of the table. And it's extremely nerve
37 wracking. And oftentimes we are traumatized by
38 experiences of not being heard by management systems.
39 So, it takes courage to come up and tell your story. So,
40 thank you to everybody who testified and reported out
41 to us. I'm grateful that North Pacific came. I hope that
42 that conversation continues. And I just want to say on
43 the record that this Council is extremely necessary to
44 ensure that federally qualified users meet their
45 subsistence needs. It's also necessary to make sure that
46 everybody in the state of Alaska meets their subsistence
47 needs, because we're making recommendations not only to
48 federal management systems but, throughout statewide as
49 well. And with that, my final thank you is for Brooke
50 who runs an amazing meeting, and we would not be able

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1 to be as efficient as we were without her. So, baasee'
2 to everybody.

3
4 MS. SHOCKLEY: Thank you. Thank you
5 again. Everyone here, it was really good to have new
6 members and see some more of our indigenous people on
7 the Board. That's great. And thank you to Brooke always.
8 Or I don't know (indiscernible) was but thank you for
9 that every day. Appreciate that. You know sometimes, you
10 know, meetings can be tough and, you know, relaying our
11 message and trying to be effective and those kinds of
12 things. I mean, you know sometimes I get really
13 frustrated because of the different silos or, you know,
14 circles that we're in and trying to bring them all
15 together. I just like to see in the big picture and how
16 we can, you know, be more efficient, I guess. But all
17 in all, I appreciate everyone and all the comments and
18 all of the actions that we do take. And yeah, just look
19 forward to seeing everybody. Well, I'm so
20 discombobulated about where I -- you know, what season
21 we're in. Yeah. So yeah. Thank you. Appreciate it.

22
23 MR. WOODRUFF: This is Don speaking. I
24 want to thank all the staff and the audience that helped
25 us out with this technical information. BLM, Park
26 Service, Fisheries, and the people that testified. I
27 think we got some real good testimony today. The Council
28 members, I think everybody's up to speed now. We're going
29 to expect a lot more. Brooke, you're doing a great job.
30 Thank you. And there's just one more thing I want to say
31 that has numbers in it. And that Fish and Wildlife did
32 a survey or a count of the population that depends on
33 this fishery. And it's 25,000 people, including our
34 brothers and sisters in Canada. And if we gave one fish
35 to each person, that would be the total escapement.
36 That's where we're at. And that's why I'm so passionate
37 that we have to fix this problem. Thank you.

38
39 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Sue, are you online
40 to do your closing remark?

41
42 MS. ENTSMINGER: Hi. Can you hear me?

43
44 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: I can hear you. You
45 have the floor. Okay.

46
47 MS. ENTSMINGER: Hey, I just want to let
48 you all know that I've been listening from the minute I
49 got in the car and could dial in but, then I would get
50 disconnected often, but I heard, I think 50% of it till

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1 5:00. I heard everything from five on. That's when I
2 finally reached my home. And I want to say a big, big
3 welcome to the three new members. I can see just in --
4 your involvement in this process that you are very tuned
5 in. And I deeply appreciate that. I wish I could have
6 been there and look you all in the eye. But not possible
7 this time. But I do want to thank each and every one
8 that puts their time in for this, because it's very,
9 very involved. And I really appreciate you, Dorothy,
10 because I share a lot of your frustrations at times. But
11 you guys are awesome. And I really appreciate Brooke,
12 because Brooke -- without a coordinator and someone to
13 do all the work that we sit here and talk about, we
14 would have nothing because of the volunteer. That's too
15 difficult to do. So, I deeply, deeply appreciate all of
16 you. And Charlie, good job. And, Eva, I enjoy your
17 knowledge too, all of you. I deeply, deeply love to hear
18 everything that you share with us. And thank you very
19 much.

20

21 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you, Sue. You
22 must have been going real fast. We appreciate you and
23 your knowledge and teaching about sheep. Thank you.

24

25 MS. ENTSMINGER: Okay. You're welcome.
26 You guys have a good one. Safe trip home.

27

28 MS. BURK: Thanks Sue, the speed demon.
29 I'm exhausted. And I'm really grateful for everybody
30 here and the productive conversations. Lots of different
31 thoughts. The favorite part of my of the meeting for me
32 is everyone's Council member reports and hearing what's
33 going on in your region. That's really helpful. I was
34 grateful for people's input on different parts of the
35 motions and that we were -- in different proposals that
36 we were taking up for different -- motions for different
37 proposals that we were taking up. So, I'm grateful for
38 that and I think adding an extra day is really smart,
39 because I feel like we have so many issues going on, and
40 I don't think things are going to get easier and get any
41 quicker. I think they're going to take more time. So
42 just thank you all for putting in the hard hours. I'm
43 grateful for the new members and we -- hey, guys, we're
44 getting out of here before nine. So, my first meeting
45 was till 9 p.m. I'm pretty sure one of the first ones.
46 So, Thank you.

47

48 MR. ALEXANDER: I'd like to thank -- my
49 name is Gerald. I'll catch you. Anyway. These two over
50 here man. I want to sit somewhere else next time. Get

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1 harped on them all day. Anyway, I'd like to thank you
2 all for allowing me to sit here now. Well, actually,
3 it's a learning curve, you know. And I don't expect
4 myself to just jump right in. It's not -- I mean, it
5 compared to what I've been through with the police
6 commission and the Council, it's a whole different
7 ballgame, being having to sit with all your intelligent
8 people and trying to catch up in one day. I don't think
9 so. But anyway, it's new and it's -- I'm thinking it's
10 possible, you know, and I'm like -- I'm enjoying every
11 minute of it. But, you know, I had a little hard time
12 at the beginning because I had a little family problem
13 this morning and I had to vent it. And luckily a friend
14 of mine here was -- allowed me to do that, and it sort
15 of just drifted away. But it's still here. But anyhow,
16 I'd like to thank you, and I'm looking forward to more
17 meetings. Thank you.

18
19 MR. GILBERT: Galen Gilbert. Arctic
20 Village. So, I came into this meeting, I didn't know
21 what to expect. But you know, when I first got elected,
22 my tribal administrator told me, you know, that's what
23 Charlie Wright does, and I kind of got a picture of it.
24 So, you know, that made me comfortable because and then
25 walking in, you know, I see Andy from like below zero
26 and I saw Donald Woodruff somewhere and I knew, you
27 know, everybody, you know, was a good guy. And then I
28 sit next to, yeah Gerald Alexander, I know him, but you
29 know. And then Linda here, I traveled with her and Juneau
30 and about 20 years ago. So, I was very comfortable when
31 I got here. And like I said, I didn't know what to
32 expect. But I have to admit, after first day yesterday,
33 I went to my room and I called -- my grandpa calls me
34 and asks me, how was it? I said, how you know, I've been
35 to a lot of meetings, you know, being chief and Council
36 member. I said I really, really enjoyed that. You know,
37 not only I get to talk but, listen about different
38 regions and talk about my way of life. I'm 100% for my
39 way of life, the subsistence way of life. And it was
40 really awesome being here, and I really, really enjoyed
41 it. And I just like to thank each and every one of you
42 here. And you know, staff as well made me very
43 comfortable. And yeah, I'm just, you know, I had a change
44 in leadership. But, you know, I think that's God's way
45 of showing me that, you know, hey, do this, you know.
46 So, I'm very happy right now. Mahsi' choo, so everybody
47 (In Native).

48
49 MS. EVANS: Linda Evans here. I, too, am
50 very happy to see our young people here sitting at the

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1 table with us. They have a lot of knowledge in them, and
2 I'm just impressed by their input and the questions that
3 they ask. I know I don't speak up a lot but, all of you,
4 you know, are always speaking up and saying, you know,
5 and I -- it's no use to repeat. I believe what you said,
6 you know so, that's good. You know, where I do have --
7 when I do have something to bring up, I do. So, this was
8 a pretty -- very good meeting. And lots of issues, you
9 know, and it's not issues that -- I mean, years ago, I
10 used to be on the Yukon River panel, you know, talking
11 about the salmon coming up the river and having problems,
12 then worried about how much fish, you know, we can have
13 and Area M, all this kind of stuff we talked about 20,
14 30 years ago. And we're still talking about them today.
15 But I'm very hopeful in that, you know, we'll see some
16 action in the different arenas that everybody walks in.
17 And I think you know, I'm very hopeful that my
18 grandchildren will be able to eat salmon, you know, and
19 eat the resources off the land because of the decisions
20 that we're making here, and other people are listening
21 to us. I think that's, you know, only thing that I always
22 think about is my grandmother, Galena Starr, always
23 said, you gotta take care of your land, take care of
24 your animals, you know, have respect for them so that
25 they'll always come back to you. And I see that here. A
26 lot of people talk about it, you know, and it's really
27 good. And I just -- I don't know, I'm grateful to be
28 here. Thank you.

29
30 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you, Linda,
31 for your wisdom. Thank you for being here. I'd like to
32 thank all of you for being here and sacrificing your
33 time away from your families and your lives. It's really
34 hard. This is really hard work we're doing, and our
35 future generations depend on us. I really like to thank
36 Brooke because like I said earlier, I tell her all the
37 time she just probably gets tired of it. But without
38 you, I couldn't do this. There's so much work and so
39 hard and so much work. Yep. I appreciate all of you.
40 It's very important work. We're at a time, like a tipping
41 time, where our resources are dwindling. We have to be
42 ever so vigilant and keep working hard for our future
43 generations. So, I appreciate everybody that came and
44 presented today. It's all good. Ladies back there
45 against the wall. Oh, you're not a lady. We appreciate
46 you, too. I could tease him. We've known each other for
47 a while now. I appreciate the people in the audience
48 that came to testify today. It was great testimony, and
49 I appreciate you all and appreciate your time and safe
50 travels home. God bless you all and see you again soon.

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1 Thank you for being here.

2

3 MR. BASSICH: Motion to adjourn.

4

5 MS. IRWIN: Second. That was Andy and
6 Olivia.

7

8 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Can you reinstate
9 that?

10

11 MR. BASSICH: I was thinking maybe just
12 because it's kind of -- it's a little bit late. Let's
13 adjourn.

14

15 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay. All those in
16 favor, please signify by saying aye.

17

18 IN UNISON: Aye.

19

20 All those against same sign. Thank you
21 all, everybody.

22

23 MS. MCDAVID: Thank you. The meeting is
24 adjourned at 7:19 pm.

25

26 (Off record)

27

28 (END OF PROCEEDINGS)

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

THAT the foregoing pages numbered 1 through 180 contain a full, true and correct Transcript of the EASTERN INTERIOR ALASKA SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING, VOLUME II recorded on the 20th day of February;

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 10th day of March 2025.

Rafael Morel
Chief Project Manager