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FEDERAL SUBSISTENCE BOARD MEETING

WORK SESSION

DIMOND CENTER HOTEL  
CHESLOKNU CONFERENCE ROOM

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA  
July 26, 2022  
9:00 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

- Rhonda Pitka, Acting Chair
- Charles Brower, Public Member
- Sara Boario/Jill Klein, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Steve Cohn, Bureau of Land Management
- Grant Hilderbrand, National Park Service
- Gene Peltola/Glenn Chen, Bureau of Indian Affairs
- David Schmid, U.S. Forest Service

Ken Lord, Solicitor's Office

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P R O C E E D I N G S

(Anchorage, Alaska - 7/26/2022)

(On record)

ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Good morning. I'd like to call this meeting to order today. I'm Rhonda Pitka, I guess I'm acting as chairperson today.

Sue, can you conduct roll call.

MS. DETWILER: Hi. This is Sue Detwiler, Assistant Regional Director for the Office of Subsistence Management. I'll start with roll call for the Board members.

National Park Service.

MR. HILDERBRAND: Yeah, this is Grant Hilderbrand with the Park Service. I'm here.

Thank you.

MS. DETWILER: Good reminder. When folks who are at the speakers have their -- are speaking they need to turn on their speakers and then when they're finished turn off the speakers because once you have your speaker on nobody else can speak.

So Park Service is here.

Steve, BLM.

MR. COHN: Good morning. This is Steve Cohn with the BLM present.

MS. DETWILER: Fish and Wildlife Service, Sara Boario.

MS. BOARIO: Good morning, everyone. This is Sara Boario present. Can you hear me?

MS. DETWILER: Yes, Sara.

MS. BOARIO: I am -- I apologize I can't be there in person today. I am recovering -- unfortunately recovering from Covid and not out of my window yet. So I'm very sorry not to be with you today

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1 in person.

2

3 MS. DETWILER: Thank you, Sara. Moving  
4 on to Forest Service, Dave Schmid.

5

6 MR. SCHMID: Good morning, Sue. This  
7 is Dave Schmid with the Forest Service present.

8 MS. DETWILER: Thank you, Dave. Dave  
9 is here in the room.

10

11 Bureau of Indian Affairs, Gene Peltola.

12

13 MR. PELTOLA: Present.

14

15 MS. DETWILER: Thank you, Gene.

16

17 Public member Rhonda Pitka.

18

19 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Good morning. I'm  
20 here.

21

22 MS. DETWILER: Public member Charlie  
23 Brower.

24

25 (No comment)

26

27 MS. DETWILER: Chair Anthony  
28 Christianson.

29

30 (No comment)

31

32 MS. DETWILER: Okay. Madame Acting  
33 Chair, we have six of eight Board member -- or yeah,  
34 six of eight Board members present.

35

36 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Great. Thank you.  
37 I'd like to welcome everybody here today. This is our  
38 first in person meeting so one of the things that we  
39 have to remember is that when we speak we hit the  
40 right-hand button and when we're done speaking we turn  
41 it off so that other people can hear.

42

43 I think that Sue is going to do some  
44 housekeeping right now.

45

46 MS. DETWILER: Yes. As Rhonda  
47 mentioned this is the first meeting that we've had in  
48 person and Anchorage just moved to a community level of  
49 red on CDC's website and so Department of Interior has  
50

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1 certain protocols that we have to meet when we're  
2 meeting in person like this, and so I will just go  
3 through what those protocols are. And these protocols  
4 are for -- obviously for the folks who want to attend  
5 the meeting here in person in the room.

6  
7 So when you enter the room you'll be  
8 asked to provide information about your vaccination  
9 status. That will be at the table that's just outside  
10 the door. If you do not wish to provide information  
11 about your vaccination status or you're not fully  
12 vaccinated then you need to provide proof of negative  
13 -- a negative Covid-19 test within the last three days.

14  
15 We are required to wear masks in the  
16 room so even -- so when you're presenting please be  
17 sure and speak loudly and clearly so that we can all  
18 understand.

19  
20 And then we also need to keep the  
21 attendance of people in -- in this room at any one time  
22 to less than 50 people.

23  
24 Thank you, Madame Chair.

25  
26 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you, Sue. I  
27 appreciate that.

28  
29 At this time are there any additions or  
30 changes to the agenda?

31  
32 (No comments)

33  
34 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Hearing none, I'd  
35 like to call for a motion to approve the agenda today.

36  
37 MR. PELTOLA: I so move.

38  
39 MR. SCHMID: Forest Service. Second.

40  
41 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you. Do we  
42 need a roll call vote or is it okay for a voice vote --  
43 okay, all in favor of approving the agenda say aye.

44  
45 IN UNISON: Aye.

46  
47 (None opposed)

48  
49 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you. The  
50

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1 motion to approve and adopt the agenda has passed.

2

3

Thank you.

4

5

MR. PELTOLA: Madame Chair.

6

7

ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Yes.

8

9 MR. PELTOLA: Madame Chair, I've been  
10 on terminal leave since mid May, end of -- end of May,  
11 using up my annual leave. I'm retiring on Friday. So  
12 with that being said I'm still on leave today and so I  
13 was going to turn over BIA's representation to Glenn  
14 Chen, our ISC member and then I'll stop by tomorrow  
15 afternoon to say good-bye.

16

17

18

MR. BROWER: Good morning, Madame  
Chair. Charlie here.

19

20

21

ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Oh, good morning,  
Charlie. For the record Charlie Brower has called in.

22

23

24

25

26

27

MR. BROWER: For your information I was  
on roll call, but I was only on listen mode, I pressed  
the wrong button so I had to redial and press the right  
button. So I've been online just for your information.

28

29

30

31

Thank you.

ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you for  
calling in this morning.

32

33

34

At this time Sue is going to.....

35

36

37

MR. BROWER: Can you speak up a little  
louder, I can barely hear you guys, everyone.

38

39

40

41

ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Oh, I'm sorry  
about that. We'll try to speak as loudly as we  
possibly can.

42

43

44

At this time Sue is going to ask for  
introductions for the people online.

45

46

47

48

49

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MS. DETWILER: Yes. Thank you, Madame  
Chair. Not -- I'll just go -- continue to go through  
our other call for other folks who are usually on these  
calls so we know who is present at the meeting.

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1 Starting out with legal counsel,  
2 Department of Interior, Ken Lord and Mike Routhier.

3

4 MR. LORD: Good morning, Chair. Good  
5 morning, everyone.

6

7 MS. DETWILER: Thank you. USDA Office  
8 of General Counsel, Jim Ustasiewski.

9

10 MR. LUCAS: Hi. This is Boykin Lucas.  
11 I am on in place of Jim Ustasiewski.

12

13 MS. DETWILER: I'm sorry, I didn't get  
14 the name.

15

16 MR. LUCAS: Boykin Lucas.

17

18 MS. DETWILER: Thank you. Got it.  
19 Liaisons to the Board starting with U.S. Fish and Game.  
20 Ben Mulligan.

21

22 MR. MULLIGAN: Hi, Sue. This is Ben.

23

24 MS. DETWILER: Thanks, Ben. Mark  
25 Burch.

26

27 MR. MULLIGAN: Sara, Mark is.....

28

29 MS. DETWILER: Thank you. And moving  
30 to the Regional Advisory Council Chairs. Region 1,  
31 Southeast, Don Hernandez.

32

33 MS. PERRY: This is Deanna Perry,  
34 Council Coordinator for the Southeast Council. Mr.  
35 Hernandez couldn't be with us today, he's out fishing,  
36 but I'm standing by if you have any need for Southeast.

37

38 Thank you.

39

40 MS. DETWILER: Thank you, Deanna.  
41 Region 2, Southcentral, Greg Encelewski.

42

43 (No comment)

44

45 MS. DETWILER: Region 3, Della Trumble.

46

47 (No comment)

48

49 MS. DETWILER: Region 4, Bristol Bay,

50

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1 Nancy Morris Lyon.

2

3 (No comment)

4

5 MS. DETWILER: Region 5, Yukon-  
6 Kuskokwim Delta, Ray Oney.

7

8 (No comment)

9

10 MS. DETWILER: Region 6, Western  
11 Interior, Jack Reakoff.

12

13 (No comment)

14

15 MS. DETWILER: Region 7, Seward  
16 Peninsula, Louis Green.

17

18 (No comment)

19

20 MS. DETWILER: Region 8, Northwest  
21 Arctic, Mike Kramer.

22

23 (No comment)

24

25 MS. DETWILER: Region 9, Eastern  
26 Interior, Sue Entsminger.

27

28 (No comment)

29

30 MS. DETWILER: Region 10, North Slope,  
31 Gordon Brower.

32

33 (No comment)

34

35 MS. DETWILER: Moving to DOI, Field  
36 Specialist Assistant for Alaska, Sara Taylor, are you  
37 on.

38

39 (No comment)

40

41 MS. DETWILER: Thank you, Madame Chair.  
42 That's who we have online.

43

44 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you all.  
45 Okay. At this time I'd like to open the floor for the  
46 information exchange.

47

48 Go ahead, Mr. Hilderbrand.

49

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1 MR. HILDERBRAND: Thank you very much.  
2 I just want to give a few Staffing updates for the  
3 National Park Service. First, our regional director,  
4 Sarah Creachbaum, sends her regards. She's in Katmai  
5 today which is why she's not attending.

6  
7 We've been able to fill recently three  
8 of our vacant superintendencies and we're really  
9 excited about the individuals that are going to come in  
10 and serve. Ray McPadon is our new superintendent for  
11 Western Arctic Parklands. For Gates of the Arctic and  
12 Yukon Charlie Rivers, Mark Daddle is our new  
13 superintendent. And for Denali National Park, Brooke  
14 Merrill is our new superintendent. And that's all the  
15 updates I have.

16  
17 Thank you.

18  
19 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you for  
20 that, I appreciate it.

21  
22 MS. BOARIO: Madame Chair, Fish and  
23 Wildlife Service.

24  
25 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Go ahead.

26  
27 MS. BOARIO: I also have some Staffing  
28 updates. I wanted to make sure all were aware that  
29 currently we have an Acting Deputy Regional Director,  
30 Alisa Voraddy, who will be with us through September.  
31 And then very soon we're preparing to advertise for  
32 three Refuge Manager positions, one at Arctic National  
33 Wildlife Refuge, one at Selawik National Wildlife  
34 Refuge and then the Refuge Manager for the Innoko,  
35 Koyukuk, Nowitna Complex out of Galena. So three  
36 Refuge Manager positions that we'll soon be  
37 advertising.

38  
39 Thank you, Madame Chair.

40  
41 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you. I  
42 appreciate the update.

43  
44 Does anybody else have updates.

45  
46 MR. SCHMID: Madame Chair.

47  
48 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Yes. Go ahead,  
49 Mr.....

50

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1 MR. SCHMID: Good morning all, it's  
2 great to be here in person with most of us in this  
3 hybrid environment. But no -- several Staffing  
4 updates, but none specific to share here. The Forest  
5 Service has embarked on restoring a lot of our non-fire  
6 capacity so we're adding a hundred positions here over  
7 the next year or so. We're well on our way with most  
8 of those at the ground level working directly with  
9 communities.

10

11 And we'd just share that through the  
12 bipartisan infrastructure law and other legislation,  
13 the America Great Outdoors Act, the Forest Service has  
14 seen more funding come to the State of Alaska and the  
15 communities than we have for quite some time in my  
16 career here. So we are working through both in the  
17 Southeast Alaska through a sustainability strategy with  
18 about \$25 million of initial funding coming through to  
19 communities, over half of that is targeted tribes in  
20 those communities. And we've also had some significant  
21 changes in our ability to grant funds and partner with  
22 communities and the ability to essentially waive any  
23 cost matches, any substantial cash contributions that  
24 have been required in the past. And so it's just  
25 provided a lot of flexibility within our agency here  
26 and it's working from a -- just a whole different  
27 model, from a model of scarcity to a model of  
28 opportunity.

29

30 And appreciate the opportunity to share  
31 that with you this morning.

32

33 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you for  
34 that. Yeah, it's definitely different to have some  
35 money onhand to do all the things that you want to do --  
36 that you wanted to do your whole career, right.

37

38 Does anybody else have updates.

39

40 MR. COHN: Madame Chair.

41

42 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Mr. Cohn.

43

44 MR. COHN: Thank you, Madame Chair.  
45 Just first I'd like to introduce myself. I'm Steve  
46 Cohn and I'm new in this role. I've been in this  
47 position just two months at this point. I was -- I  
48 started with the Bureau of Land Management in 2001 and  
49 was -- came to Alaska in 2013 as the Deputy State  
50

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1 Director for Resources, including fish and wildlife and  
2 subsistence were two of the programs that I had a  
3 Deputy State Director. And then I left Federal Service  
4 about four -- just over four years ago in 2018, went to  
5 work for the Nature Conservancy as the State Director  
6 for the Alaska Chapter here, based also here in  
7 Anchorage and then came back to Federal service two  
8 months ago in this role. And very happy to be here  
9 this morning and really looking forward to engaging  
10 with this -- with this program and this group here for  
11 years to come.

12

13 I'll just make a couple of Staffing  
14 announcements. So we have two key vacancies that we're  
15 going to be looking to fill here fairly soon. One is  
16 our Field Manager position for the Anchorage Field  
17 Office which includes Southwest Alaska. And then we're  
18 also filling a Deputy District Manager position in  
19 Fairbanks for our Central, Yukon and Eastern Interior  
20 Field Offices. And then we're currently in the process  
21 of filling a Tribal Liaison position for the State and  
22 hope to have a selection here fairly soon for that  
23 position. So and we have a few other vacancies not  
24 quite ready to announce yet, but they'll be coming open  
25 soon.

26

27 So a lot's happening and similar to  
28 Forest Service and the other agencies we're excited  
29 about the opportunities and got a lot of interesting  
30 and important work ahead of us. So glad to be here.

31

32 Thank you.

33

34 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you for  
35 that. I appreciate it. Does anybody else have any  
36 updates.

37

38 Mr. Glenn Chen.

39

40 MR. CHEN: Well, I'm honored to sit  
41 here at the meeting in Gene's stead. He has very large  
42 shoes to fill. I would mention that our BIA  
43 anthropologist, Pat Petrivelli, retired at the end of  
44 May and we are in the process of refilling her  
45 position. We will put the word out when the vacancy  
46 comes up.

47

48 Thank you, Rhonda.

49

50

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1                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Go ahead, Sue.

2

3                   MS. DETWILER: Yes. Thank you, Madame  
4 Chair. We do have a couple Staffing updates in OSM,  
5 but also I wanted to remind the folks here in the room  
6 who are speaking into the microphones, we're getting  
7 some feedback from people who are on the call remotely  
8 on teleconference to ask people to please speak loudly  
9 into the microphones, they're having a hard time  
10 hearing. So thank you for that.

11

12                   And I -- we do have a couple of  
13 Staffing updates in the Office of Subsistence  
14 Management. First we have Bernard Shavings, he joined  
15 the OSM team in May, 2022. He's standing in the back  
16 of the room right now. He's an -- our administrative  
17 support assistant and he will be handling our front  
18 desk and main OSM phones lines. He grew up on Nunivak  
19 Island, served in the U.S. military and worked in a  
20 variety of administrative positions from VA to Beans  
21 Cafe to Dow Engineering and he also commercial fished  
22 for many years.

23

24                   Next we have Michelle Andrews who has  
25 also joined our administration -- administrative  
26 support team. She came to us in June, 2022 as our  
27 executive secretary. She's a lifelong Alaskan with a  
28 wide variety of administrative experience from Mountain  
29 Village to Dutch Harbor, Unalaska to Anchorage.  
30 Michelle served six years in the Army National Guard as  
31 a communications specialist where she traveled to Haiti  
32 to assist with medical missions. And Michelle is here  
33 with us today as well.

34

35                   And finally we have Kari Crow. Kari  
36 will be returning to OSM full-time on July 31st as our  
37 budget analyst. Kari was with OSM previously for many  
38 years before stretching her wings with both the Refuge  
39 Program in the Regional Business Office. She's  
40 continued to help OSM over the years and she's been  
41 instrumental in helping our office with all aspects  
42 related to our budget. So we're very happy she's  
43 coming back to OSM.

44

45                   Thank you, Madame Chair.

46

47                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you, Sue. I  
48 appreciate it. I think the only update that I have is  
49 as we all know the Yukon River chinook and chum salmon  
50

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1 have crashed this year to such an extent that we  
2 haven't had any subsistence openings at all. We've had  
3 a little bit of success fishing for whitefish with the  
4 whitefish nets, but that's definitely a limited, a  
5 limited food source. So people on the river are very  
6 frustrated and there's a lot of discussion about by-  
7 catch and, you know, regulations and the fairness of  
8 those regulations, you know, throughout the river.  
9 It's definitely been a challenge. I feel like it's  
10 been probably about three years of really bad runs.  
11 And, you know, it'll probably continue on unless  
12 something drastic changes.

13

14 So that's about all that I have right  
15 now.

16

17 Usually I wouldn't come to this meeting  
18 at least until August, I would have asked for it to be  
19 held in August so we could have that last pulse to fish  
20 on. But now I guess I have time. So that's terrible  
21 but, at this.....

22

23 (Distortion)

24

25 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you very  
26 much. So unless there are more updates I'd like to ask  
27 for the agenda item number 4, is that the Regional  
28 Advisory Council annual report replies.

29

30 MS. WESSELS: Thank you. And good  
31 morning, Madame Chair, members of the Board. For the  
32 record my name is Katya Wessels, Council Coordination  
33 Division Supervisor with OSM. Can you hear me okay?

34

35 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Yes.

36

37 MR. BROWER: Yes.

38

39 MS. WESSELS: I will try to speak  
40 loudly, but if I'm too loud please let me know. I'm  
41 very sorry that I'm not with you there in the room as I  
42 intended up until yesterday when my husband  
43 unexpectedly came up with Covid. I'm feeling fine, but  
44 I didn't want to expose anyone at our first in person  
45 meeting, but I wish that I was there in the room with  
46 you.

47

48 Today I've got to present to you an  
49 overview of the Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

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1 FY21 annual reports and the Board replies. The  
2 authority for the Subsistence Regional Advisory  
3 Councils to submit annual reports originates in Section  
4 .805 of ANILCA that states, that a Regional Advisory  
5 Council in each subsistence resource region shall have  
6 an authority to prepare a annual report to the  
7 Secretaries which shall contain first, identification  
8 of current and anticipated subsistence uses of fish and  
9 wildlife populations within the region. Second, an  
10 elevation -- an evaluation of current and anticipated  
11 subsistence needs of fish and wildlife populations  
12 within the region. Third, a recommended strategy for  
13 the management of fish and wildlife populations within  
14 the region to accommodate such subsistence uses and  
15 needs. And fourth, recommendations concerning  
16 policies, standards, guidelines and regulations to  
17 implement the strategy. The Secretarial regulations  
18 subsequently modified that to be a report to this  
19 Board.

20  
21 This past fiscal year, 2021, all  
22 Councils had subsistence related issues that they  
23 wanted to share with the Board in their annual reports.  
24 These reports are a great avenue of sharing Councils'  
25 concerns with the Board. The types of issues included  
26 in the annual reports mostly cannot be addressed  
27 through the regulatory process. Development of an  
28 annual report is a lengthy process as reports encompass  
29 a lot of subject matter. But before I describe the  
30 subject matter in more detail I would like to provide a  
31 quick overview particularly for the benefit of our  
32 newer Board members on how this process works.

33  
34 The Councils' annual reports are  
35 reports of the issues encountered in the previous  
36 fiscal year. Each year at the fall meetings the  
37 Councils are asked to identify issues they would like  
38 to include in their annual report. With that intent  
39 the Staff develops draft annual reports that the  
40 Councils then review, modify and approve at their  
41 winter meeting. Staff principally from OSM, but also  
42 from other offices and other agencies, draft responses  
43 on behalf of this Board to the issues outlined in the  
44 annual reports. The draft responses are then collated,  
45 reviewed by OSM Leadership Team and then by the  
46 InterAgency Staff Committee. And now these replies to  
47 the Councils' annual reports are before you for your  
48 review and approval.

49  
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1                   In addition to that the Secretarial  
2 Review sets forth a directive to specifically ensure  
3 that the Secretaries are informed when non-departmental  
4 rulemaking entities develop regulations that may  
5 adversely affect subsistence users. So sometimes there  
6 are issues that come up through the annual report  
7 process which are elevated to the Secretaries per that  
8 directive.

9  
10                   Now I'm going to share my screen with  
11 you and if you can go to your supplemental material  
12 handout I will speak to that handout. So that  
13 supplemental material is titled Regional Advisory  
14 Councils' Annual Reports 2021, Duplicate Issues. Some  
15 of you are accustomed to seeing this table from  
16 previous years. These tables identifies the issues and  
17 concerns that are raised by more than one Council and  
18 that come up fairly often. Therefore this table can  
19 serve as an indicator of a potential bigger or  
20 overarching issue that can be of importance to more  
21 than one region. As you can see in this table the  
22 crossmarks mark the issues that were brought up by more  
23 than one Council and I will speak a little bit more in  
24 detail about each of these issues.

25  
26                   Salmon declines. This issue is  
27 important to 50 percent of the Councils. Southcentral  
28 Council raises alarms regarding limited salmon runs in  
29 the last two years and suggest that it is necessary to  
30 gather specific data on ocean acidification and the  
31 fact of climate change that may explain the drastic  
32 changes observed.

33  
34                   Bristol Bay Council expresses concerns  
35 about the poor chinook salmon return especially in the  
36 western portion of Bristol Bay decreases in the size of  
37 returning fish and changing composition of age  
38 structure. The Council has a special concern regarding  
39 the Chignik area fishery and the area residents where  
40 the chinook fishery was completely closed and the chum  
41 salmon fisheries were restricted to Federally-qualified  
42 subsistence users only in 2021.

43  
44                   The Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Council is  
45 increasingly concerned that chinook and chum salmon  
46 failures in 2021 on both Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers  
47 resulted in the complete closure or severe restriction  
48 of subsistence salmon fishing for all communities along  
49 the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers, tributaries and coastal  
50

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1 areas. There was no fish to feed the family, no fish  
2 to share with elders or those in need and no resources  
3 available to replace salmon. This was the lowest ever  
4 Yukon River coho and chum salmon returns on record for  
5 the second year in a row and that's current for 2021.  
6 Kuskokwim harvest of chinook and chum salmon was half  
7 of lowest ever recorded subsistence harvest levels.

8

9 Western Interior also highlights that  
10 returns of chinook and chum to the Yukon and Kuskokwim  
11 Rivers in 2021 were catastrophically low, resulting in  
12 no salmon harvest opportunities on the Yukon River and  
13 several harvest restrictions on the Kuskokwim. The  
14 Council recommends that Federal, Tribal and State  
15 Managers implement precautionary cooperative management  
16 of the chinook and chum salmon fisheries.

17

18 Eastern Interior Council joins the  
19 other Councils and labels 2021 being the worst season  
20 for rural subsistence users. The Council encourages  
21 the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association, the  
22 Association of Village Council Presidents, Yukon River  
23 Intertribal Fish Commission and the Office of  
24 Subsistence Management work together to unify Yukon  
25 River people in order to make management decisions that  
26 would best serve the salmon fisheries on the Yukon  
27 River.

28

29 So now I'll move on to the second  
30 duplicate issue which is by-catch and it was brought up  
31 by two Councils and the by-catch issue goes hand in  
32 hand with the salmon decline. Two Councils brought up  
33 this issue.

34

35 Yukon-Kuskokwim Council is concerned  
36 about Bering Sea commercial trawl fisheries and high  
37 rates of chinook and chum salmon by-catch. Subsistence  
38 communities are bearing the burden of conservation  
39 while the Bering Sea trawl fisheries continue unabated.  
40 The Council with the other three Yukon Councils had  
41 requested that the North Pacific Fishery Management  
42 Council immediately reduce the by-catch hardcap for  
43 chinook salmon to 16,000 with further adoption to  
44 10,000 in a year and establish a hardcap for chum  
45 salmon at 250,000 with further reduction to 150K. The  
46 Council request that the Board elevate these concerns  
47 to the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture and the  
48 Secretary of Commerce and the Fishery Subsistence  
49 Management Program engages with the Alaska Department  
50

0016

1 of Fish and Game on Area M commercial fishery during  
2 strict catch of Arctic, Yukon and Kuskokwim chinook and  
3 chum salmon stocks in that commercial fishery in  
4 support of subsistence priority for salmon.

5

6 Eastern Interior Council also raises  
7 by-catch issue. To support the recovery of Yukon River  
8 salmon stock the Council strongly recommends that the  
9 hardcap of chinook by-catch in the Bering Sea, Aleutian  
10 Islands fisheries be reduced to 10,000 chinook and that  
11 a hardcap be put in place for no more than 150,000 chum  
12 salmon.

13

14 And this Board will hear more in detail  
15 about the by-catch issues when the joint letter of the  
16 four Yukon Councils is presented to you later in this  
17 meeting.

18

19 So the next overarching issue is the  
20 food security and access to other resources due to the  
21 lack of salmon which also go hand in hand with two  
22 previous issues. Four Councils brought up these issue.

23

24 Kodiak/Aleutians Council points out  
25 that Covid related supply chain challenges underscore  
26 the importance of having reliable and adequate access  
27 to subsistence resources and secure as much food  
28 locally as possible.

29

30 Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta says that more  
31 than ever whitefish are a critical subsistence food and  
32 the only fish you eat when the salmon fishing is  
33 restricted or closed due to chinook and chum salmon  
34 population crash. Yukon-Kuskokwim Council also  
35 requests the Board to support additional subsistence  
36 moose harvest opportunity on the lower Yukon River to  
37 assist communities in need due to low salmon returns.

38

39 Western Interior Council is requesting  
40 increased monitoring of populations of other fish  
41 species and terrestrial animals as subsistence users in  
42 the region begin to adjust their harvest patterns to  
43 compensate for low chinook and chum salmon salmon  
44 stocks in the Yukon and Kuskokwim River drainages.

45

46 Eastern Interior Council says that the  
47 closure of Yukon River salmon fisheries requires an  
48 increased reliance on large land mammals such as  
49 caribou and moose. The lack of available moose

50

0017

1 contributes to larger challenges of food security in  
2 the region. Eastern Interior Council also adds that  
3 the recent Yukon River salmon fisheries collapse led to  
4 stronger reliance on moose and caribou. Moreover  
5 subsistence users shifted their fishing focus from  
6 salmon to non-salmon species as a subsistence resource.

7  
8 The next overarching issue that is  
9 important to 80 percent of the Councils is the request  
10 for research. As you see eight out of 10 Councils are  
11 requesting some kind of research.

12  
13 Southcentral Council requests research  
14 necessary to get information for C&T determinations.  
15 C&T analysis would be -- should be all inclusive and  
16 should address all affects.

17  
18 Bristol Bay Council requests to conduct  
19 more comprehensive research on the chinook salmon  
20 decreases in the size and changing composition of age  
21 structure and to develop long term solutions at a  
22 higher management level.

23  
24 Yukon-Kuskokwim Council requests  
25 additional research and monitoring on whitefish species  
26 on the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers due to their  
27 declines. They also are requesting specific research  
28 on how sockeye salmon increased population impacts  
29 other salmon such as chinook and chum and this increase  
30 can exceed carrying capacity in the available spawning  
31 and rearing habitat.

32  
33 Seward Peninsula Council requests the  
34 ADF&G and Federal agencies initiate genetic research on  
35 what appears to be a resident herd caribou or reindeer  
36 in the northern Seward Peninsula.

37  
38 Northwest Council requests ongoing  
39 monitoring and population surveys for moose in Unit 23  
40 and regular reports at the Council meetings as well as  
41 report on the extent of beaver expansion and  
42 interaction with other subsistence resources.

43  
44 Eastern Interior Council strongly  
45 recommends that genetic mixed stock analysis be  
46 undertaken for both chinook and chum salmon by-catch in  
47 the Alaska Peninsula Management Area M groundfish  
48 fisheries in order to monitor the proportion of by-  
49 catch which comes from Yukon-River salmon stocks.

50

0018

1 Eastern Interior says that the comprehensive survey is  
2 necessary to assess the health of moose populations  
3 near Rampart and the Nowitna River and to ensure  
4 continued and increased subsistence harvest opportunity  
5 in that area.

6  
7 North Slope requests monitoring of Unit  
8 26 muskox. Information of cross boundary management of  
9 muskox within Arctic Refuge and Canada and would like  
10 to explore options for the creation of a U.S./Canada  
11 muskox joint management group similar to the Porcupine  
12 Caribou Herd Management Board.

13  
14 So as you see there's a slough of  
15 different research requests.

16  
17 Then there is some specific requests  
18 for the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program that we  
19 know also as FRMP. That's another duplicate issue for  
20 several Councils.

21  
22 Southcentral Council suggests that  
23 gathering information research on the impacts of ocean  
24 acidification and other effects of climate change on  
25 salmon runs could be a good FRMP project for Native  
26 Tribal organizations where local traditional knowledge  
27 could be incorporated. Also Southcentral Council is  
28 concerned about the shortage of funds in recent years  
29 for the projects that provide vital information and  
30 suggests including work that can be done by tribes and  
31 regional organizations in the FRMP project. More  
32 projects should be awarded to local Native and tribal  
33 organizations as they have TEK to offer.

34  
35 Kodiak/Aleutians Council requests that  
36 FRMP project to support the efforts of eradication of  
37 invasive species.

38  
39 Western Interior Council believes there  
40 needs to be more consultation and involvement with  
41 tribes and that the current FRMP process precludes  
42 tribal input. Furthermore the Council believes the  
43 Technical Review Committee should be expanded to  
44 include technical expertise from Alaska tribal  
45 organizations.

46  
47 Northwest Council requested Arctic  
48 grayling and salmon research in Unit 23 to be made a  
49 research priority for funding under FRMP for other  
50

0019

1 fisheries research initiative.

2

3 So now I will move on to the next  
4 duplicate issue which is incorporation of local  
5 knowledge in OSM recommendations. Three Councils  
6 brought up this issue.

7

8 Southeast Council believes that many  
9 data variables that impact the subsistence resources  
10 are missing when the Federal analyses are developed and  
11 recommendations are not consistent with local Council  
12 member observations. The Council requests to develop a  
13 mechanism that ensures local knowledge is considered in  
14 OSM recommendations.

15

16 Northwest Council calls for the Board  
17 to further engage with local, rural communities and  
18 talk with people about their on the ground experience  
19 and observations. A combination of western science and  
20 local traditional knowledge is necessary to monitor and  
21 inform management of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd  
22 throughout its range. Incorporating traditional  
23 knowledge, both current and historic observations, is  
24 essential to the sound management of this caribou herd.

25

26 North Slope requests that the Board  
27 better incorporate local and traditional knowledge in  
28 its decisionmaking as it is an important part of  
29 substantial evidence that the Board relies on.

30

31 And now I'm moving on to the last  
32 overarching issue is Council vacancies. So this one is  
33 kind of -- other duplicate issues are kind of all  
34 interrelated this issue stands alone and there are  
35 three Councils that are concerned about this issue.

36

37 Kodiak/Aleutians is concerned regarding  
38 vacancies on the Councils that cause a lack of adequate  
39 representation throughout a diversity and widely  
40 disbursed region.

41

42 Bristol Bay expressed their concerns  
43 regarding four vacancies on their Council which is 40  
44 percent of all the Council seats of this Council. The  
45 Council is requesting that the membership on the  
46 Council is maintained and that the representation from  
47 Togiak, southern Bristol Bay and/or Chignik area is  
48 necessary.

49

50

0020

1 Northwest Council is also concerned  
2 about the vacancies on the Council and about lack of  
3 representation on the Council from the upper Kobuk  
4 River villages and Selawik and requests the support of  
5 the Federal Subsistence Management Program to conduct  
6 outreach in these communities and encourage  
7 applications.

8  
9 So consistent with other years there  
10 are a variety of unique concerns important to specific  
11 Councils. They're not in that supplemental table that  
12 you see in front of you and I'm not going to go over  
13 all these in detail because there are too many, but  
14 just to mention a few they range from anywhere --  
15 anywhere from Southeast concern about if the  
16 information sharing policy exists between ADF&G and  
17 Federal Subsistence Management Program to confusing  
18 public comment protocols and impacts of kelp farming to  
19 Southeast Council interest in establishing dual  
20 jurisdiction, Federal and State, for their resources in  
21 the marine waters of Prince William Sound to provide  
22 meaningful opportunities for subsistence and personal  
23 use harvest;

24  
25 To Kodiak/Aleutians concerns regarding  
26 invasive species;

27  
28 To Bristol Bay wanting to know how the  
29 Board makes its regulatory decisions when agency  
30 specific regulations are in conflict with ANILCA;

31  
32 To YK-Delta Council concerns regarding  
33 the impacts to subsistence resources from the  
34 development of the Donlin gold mine and barging of  
35 mining materials, fuel and chemicals on the Kuskokwim  
36 River;

37  
38 To Western Interior asking the Board to  
39 take immediate action because of State violation of  
40 ANILCA Title VIII during a Federal closure on the  
41 Kuskokwim;

42  
43 To Seward Peninsula requests to elevate  
44 to the Secretary of the Interior Council's concern  
45 regarding the lifting of public land orders and its  
46 affects on subsistence resources;

47  
48 To Northwest Arctic request to have  
49 representation on the Ambler Road Project Subsistence  
50

0021

1 Advisory Committee and on the Western Arctic Caribou  
2 Herd Working Group;

3

4 To Eastern Interior opposition to HR  
5 4716, Refuge Cruel Trapping Act of 2021;

6

7 And to North Slope Council highlighting  
8 the importance of traditional community harvest and  
9 sharing of subsistence food.

10

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So that concludes my presentation of the Councils' annual reports. And now I'm going to be moving on to Councils' -- to the Board's replies to these reports portion of the presentation. So let me share the other supplemental material that was handed out to you this morning, supplemental material number 2, the second.

Okay. I'm going to provide you with a short overview of the responses that were developed on behalf of the Board to the issues brought in the Council annual reports.

First of all when we develop the responses on behalf of the Board we endeavor to provide specific substantive responses rather than standard canned agency responses. We really want to give the Councils good information and even if it's in some cases that issues that are outside of this Board's jurisdiction we want to make sure that we provide the Councils with the information or tools necessary to address the issue or explore it further. As I mentioned earlier salmon decline is one of the major overarching concerns of the Councils right now and spans across several subsistence regions. The Board takes the Councils' comments on the extreme affects of limited salmon harvest opportunities on the lives of people living in the Yukon and Kuskokwim River drainages very seriously to do what is within its regulatory authority on this topic.

The Board is already taking proactive actions and in their reply they let the Councils know that with expected poor returns of Yukon salmon again they approved temporary special -- temporary fishery special action request, FSA 22-01, on the Yukon River. This action closed Federal public waters on the Yukon River area to the harvest of chinook and summer and fall chum and coho salmon except by Federally-qualified

0022

1 subsistence users effective June 1st, '22 through  
2 September 30th, '22, with harvest opportunities to be  
3 determined by the Federal Fisheries Manager if the  
4 fishery run strength is sufficient to allow a Federal  
5 subsistence priority. The actual help to aid  
6 conservation efforts of salmon and provide a priority  
7 for non-wasteful subsistence uses as required by Title  
8 VIII of the Alaska -- of ANILCA.

9

10 The Board also delegated authority to  
11 the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge Manager to  
12 periodically open Federal public waters of the main  
13 step in the Kuskokwim River to Federally-qualified  
14 subsistence users to use gillnets to harvest salmon.  
15 The Board also highlights in their responses that the  
16 Federal management team work collaboratively with ADF&G  
17 to manage Yukon River salmon runs in 2021.

18

19 The Board understands the continued  
20 concerns regarding by-catch of chinook and chum salmon  
21 and agrees with the Council regarding the importance of  
22 communication and coordination among Yukon River  
23 stakeholders regarding by-catch issue. The issue of  
24 establishing a hardcap for both chinook and chum salmon  
25 by-catch in the Bering Sea, Aleutian Islands commercial  
26 fishery is beyond the Board's authority and that's  
27 what's indicated in the reply. However the Board is  
28 supportive of the Council request to the North Pacific  
29 Fishery Management Council.

30

31 It is visible that several overarching  
32 topics are interrelated with one another such as food  
33 security, the access to other resources is important as  
34 a result of salmon declines. The Board acknowledges in  
35 their replies the impacts that are limited -- that  
36 limits subsistence opportunity on food security and  
37 traditional ways of life for those who depend on these  
38 resources. In their replies the Board promises to  
39 continue to be flexible and responsive in its efforts  
40 to help Alaskans meet their subsistence needs through  
41 the regulatory process. Their responses highlight the  
42 special action process and delegation of authority  
43 process that can provide an avenue for responding to  
44 unexpected issues and changes. However the Board  
45 alerts that closures to non-Federally-qualified  
46 subsistence users, or ANILCA Section .805,  
47 prioritization among Federally-qualified subsistence  
48 users may become necessary if shortages of traditional  
49 subsistence resources continue to be prevalent.

50

0023

1                    Their replies vary, the Board replies  
2 vary to another overarching topic, request for  
3 research. OSM does not conduct research or collect  
4 primary data. Instead it incorporates available data  
5 from other research institutions or agencies in  
6 analysis. So for some research requests the Board  
7 replies provide an overview of existing research or the  
8 sources where more information can be obtained. In  
9 other instances when the requested research is for  
10 fisheries, the Board replies either provide the  
11 information on completed or ongoing FRMP research  
12 projects or suggest that the Council highlight this  
13 request, that they're developing priority information  
14 needs for the subsistence region.

15  
16                    The FRMP annual report topics vary in  
17 their scope and replies provided vary as well.

18  
19                    Kodiak/Aleutians' request an FRMP  
20 project to support efforts in eradication of invasive  
21 species. Eradication is not considered information  
22 gathering and therefore cannot be funded through FRMP.

23  
24                    Western Interior Council request  
25 includes tribal representatives of the FRMP Technical  
26 Review Committee, but it cannot be fulfilled at the  
27 moment because that would require TRC to be chartered  
28 under Federal Advisory Committee Act. However the  
29 Board highlights that the partners for Fisheries  
30 Monitoring Program that can still fill the need to  
31 strengthen Alaska Native and rural environmental in  
32 Federal subsistence fisheries management and research.

33  
34  
35                    There is a lot of concrete factual  
36 information in the Board replies. The Board's reply to  
37 the Southcentral inquiry to fund more monitoring  
38 projects done by tribes and regional organization  
39 outlines the DOI and DA funded percentages and how many  
40 projects were awarded to the Alaska rural organizations  
41 and to other entities. Their reply informs the Council  
42 that a majority of the State and Federal projects have  
43 partnered with co-investigators from Alaska rural  
44 organizations. The Board continues to encourage OSM  
45 Staff to work closely with tribal entities and provide  
46 outreach on the funding mechanisms that allow the  
47 organizations to grow and build capacity to conduct  
48 fisheries research.

49  
50

1                   The Board acknowledges the Council's  
2 frustration regarding full incorporation of traditional  
3 ecological knowledge and strives to continue improving  
4 in these area. The challenge is that OSM, again, as I  
5 said earlier does not conduct primary research and thus  
6 must rely on published literature, the record of  
7 Council meetings and public testimony and tribal and  
8 ANCSA corporation consultations. The Board  
9 acknowledges that in many cases TEK indicates whether a  
10 conservation issue exists before such affects are  
11 reflected by western science. When the Board approved  
12 wildlife special action WSA21-01A with modification on  
13 March 30th, '22, it based the decision to create a  
14 targeted temporary closure both on TEK and photocensus  
15 evidence of herd decline.

16  
17                   In reply to all other overarching issue  
18 of Council vacancies, the Board relays to the Council  
19 that it cannot provide recommendations to the  
20 Secretaries without a sufficient number of applications  
21 from the region. The factual information on the number  
22 of open seats and the number of applications received  
23 is provided to the Councils that brought up this issue.

24  
25  
26                   Even when the Council has a topic that  
27 is only related to the region, to their specific  
28 region, the Board replies are very factual and try to  
29 provide the best information possible. As for example  
30 the Board replied to Southcentral Council their request  
31 to establish dual jurisdiction, Federal and State, for  
32 the marine environment in Prince William Sound. Their  
33 reply indicates that there are no Federal public waters  
34 in the marine environment and managing these resources  
35 is outside of the Board's authority. However the Board  
36 informs the Council there's a process for petitioning  
37 the Secretaries to exert regulatory authority over  
38 activities on non-Federal lands under State laws to  
39 protect subsistence activities on Federal lands.

40  
41                   Another example is Southeast Council  
42 concern regarding kelp farming and mariculture  
43 permitting and it's affect on subsistence sensitive  
44 areas. The Board reply indicates that since this type  
45 of permitting is issued by the ADF&G the response  
46 provides information on the proper State personnel that  
47 the Council can reach out to to express their concerns  
48 and receive additional information.

1                   So as you look at the supplemental  
2 material two, keeping track of FY21 annual report reply  
3 follow-ups you notice that when I was describing the  
4 Board replies there's certain promises that are made  
5 and there's certain follow-up that is necessary. You,  
6 the Board, is telling these Councils that we will  
7 provide it with these three source of -- make these  
8 happen or we'll contact this agency and we'll forward  
9 these to the Secretary. So this handout helps us to  
10 keep track of the promises that were made and so we can  
11 conduct the follow-up on behalf of the Board and of the  
12 Program.

13

14                   So when you look at this table you just  
15 see that only one issue on Southeast annual report that  
16 might need to be elevated to the Secretaries and the  
17 Department of State. However this is contingent upon  
18 the Councils' resubmitting their concerns to this Board  
19 in a letter.

20

21                   The other follow-up that there are  
22 several items here that I have broken them down by  
23 Council so you can see them. So you can keep track of  
24 the other things in these replies and the Board is --  
25 what the Board is promising to the Council what it will  
26 do. And a lot of this is directing Staff, encouraging  
27 follow-up, encountering particular issue, inviting  
28 representatives or subject matter experts to provide a  
29 presentation or information.

30

31                   So this concludes my overview of the  
32 replies that this Board provided to the Councils. And  
33 at the end I would like to acknowledge the incredible  
34 amount of work that goes into these replies. Almost  
35 every division at OSM have contributed to drafting  
36 these replies. In addition to OSM drafting replies, we  
37 receive draft responses from the Forest Service, BLM,  
38 NPS and USF&W. The timing is challenging when we  
39 prepare these responses because the Staff, OSM Staff,  
40 who are working on these are also starting to get new  
41 proposals coming in during the fishery cycle. A lot of  
42 the Staff who are writing these responses also were  
43 preparing proposal analysis. I would like to  
44 acknowledge the substantial involvement of the  
45 InterAgency Staff Committee members in developing and  
46 reviewing these replies. OSM really appreciates  
47 working with ISC members on developing this product and  
48 every year we do this I think we put out a much better  
49 and better product. If we have room for improvement  
50

0026

1 and of course there is room for improvement as usual,  
2 but I would still recognize there's a lot of incredible  
3 work that went into these and really high quality work.  
4 And I just would like to thank OSM Staff and ISC  
5 members for all of the work they did. And I believe  
6 that the Board appreciates it as well.

7  
8 But at this juncture I would like to  
9 remind the Board that the replies that you have in  
10 front of you in your meeting materials are still  
11 considered to be draft until you approve them. If you  
12 have some specific things that you would like to ask me  
13 regarding the annual report replies, please ask. If  
14 the Board members have any specific suggestions to  
15 change particular language or insert new language in  
16 the replies, now's the time to make suggestions for  
17 proposed changes and discuss them. If you don't want  
18 to make any changes then we can have a motion to  
19 approve the annual report -- I mean, the annual report  
20 replies and then they become official.

21  
22 So this is all I have at the moment and  
23 thank you, Madame Chair.

24  
25 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: I hit the wrong  
26 button. I'm not even sure what that button did.

27  
28 Thank you, Katya, for that presentation  
29 and the incredible amount of work that's gone into  
30 those replies. I'm really grateful for the  
31 thoughtfulness of the replies and the thoroughness and  
32 the -- all of the work that the Regional Advisory  
33 Council puts into all of these replies.

34  
35 So at this time I'm going to open the  
36 floor for questions on the Regional Advisory Council  
37 reports or clarification.

38  
39 (No comments)

40  
41 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Well, hearing none  
42 from everybody else I just wanted to ask, some of the  
43 Regional Advisory Councils asked about more targeted  
44 outreach to solicit more applicants for the program. I  
45 would like to ask do we have a plan in place to provide  
46 that more targeted I guess outreach for those  
47 applications?

48  
49 Thank you, Katya.

50

0027

1 MS. WESSELS: Thank you, Madame Chair.  
2 May I reply to your question?

3  
4 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Yes.

5  
6 MS. WESSELS: Thank you. Yes, we have  
7 a plan for targeted outreach. It will mostly reside  
8 with Council Coordinators. As you know that there were  
9 five new Council Coordinators hired by OSM this year.  
10 They each have their own regions that they're  
11 responsible for. I've been working with Council  
12 Coordinators highlighting the importance of this  
13 targeted outreach. They are going to be reaching to  
14 the tribes and tribal organizations in their region,  
15 trying to establish the connections and trying to  
16 encourage the applications that are -- that will come  
17 from the communities that currently are not represented  
18 on the Councils.

19  
20 As, you know, Covid restrictions allow,  
21 Council Coordinators might be able to travel to the  
22 regions to meet with different communities and tribes  
23 to encourage the applications being submitted. They  
24 will also work through their regional networks in order  
25 to submit -- to solicit more applications as well as  
26 they will encourage the nominations because anyone can  
27 nominate a Council member. It can be a tribal  
28 organization, it can be any other type of organization,  
29 it can be an individual, a Board member can nominate a  
30 Council member if they know of a good individual that  
31 potentially can serve on the Council. Of course it's  
32 always recommended to ask an individual if they want to  
33 serve on the Council if you plan to nominate them. But  
34 it's, you know, a rather easy processes of nominating a  
35 potential Council applicant. So that's in short what  
36 we are planning on doing.

37  
38 I hope I answered your question, Madame  
39 Chair.

40  
41 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Yes. So -- so  
42 specifically the Council Coordinators are going to be  
43 responsible for tribal outreach, for making sure that  
44 they make connections to the tribes in their individual  
45 regions. So it won't.....

46  
47 MS. WESSELS: That's correct.

48  
49 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: .....it won't fall  
50

0028

1 specifically to our one tribal liaison for the program?

2

3

4 MS. WESSELS: That's possibly correct,  
5 Madame Chair. I think it's a little bit too much of a  
6 job for one person to reach out to all the tribes  
7 across Alaska. Plus we're -- you know, we'd be more  
8 than happy working with Orville on this and we can get  
9 him engaged in the process if -- like again if there's  
10 any community visits are allowed perhaps it can be a  
11 working between Orville Lind and Council Coordinator  
12 for that region.

12

13

14 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: I do have one  
15 suggestion and that's your Council Coordinators meet  
16 with the tribal liaisons for all of the agencies that  
17 are represented on the Federal Subsistence Board and  
18 that you form a working group to perhaps network  
19 further in the regions. All of the different agencies  
20 have tribal liaisons and they have different networks  
21 that may not be the same.

21

22

23 Thank you very much, Katya, for that.  
24 And does anybody else have any.....

24

25

26 MS. WESSELS: Thank you very much,  
27 Madame Chair. I think that is a great suggestion.

27

28

29 MS. BOARIO: Madame Chair, Fish and  
30 Wildlife Service.

30

31

32 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Yes. Go ahead,  
33 please.

33

34

35 MS. BOARIO: Thank you, Madame Chair.  
36 I think that's a great suggestion too. And I -- to add  
37 another component to it, I think all of our bureaus  
38 also have a broader either external affairs or public  
39 affairs Staff and -- and could draw on those resources  
40 across bureaus to help with that if there were a  
41 subcommittee or a working group set up.

41

42

43 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you. I  
44 appreciate that. Orville Lind, do you have a comment?

44

45

46 MR. LIND: Thank you, Madame Chair.  
47 Board members. For the record Orville Lind, Native  
48 Liaison for the Office of Subsistence Management. In  
49 the previous two months we have just been talking about  
50 the Refuge Information Technician Program, getting more

50

0029

1 involved in assisting OSM Staff in the outreach  
2 efforts, especially the RAC applications, gettingthe --  
3 to spread the word out and the applications out. And  
4 it's a -- it was taken very well. Some RITs, new RITs,  
5 are really especially excited about being able to get  
6 their folks informed and encourage them to apply. And  
7 as you say the other Native Liaisons, that -- we've  
8 also touched base on that last month in the RIT Program  
9 and so we are on it and we are working towards that.

10

11 Thank you, Madame Chair.

12

13 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you. I  
14 appreciate it. Does anyone else have any clarifying  
15 questions on the -- on the replies.

16

17 (No comments)

18

19 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Hearing none, I'd  
20 like to entertain a motion to approve all of the  
21 replies.

22

23 MR. SCHMID: Madame Chair, Forest  
24 Service.

25

26 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Okay. Forest  
27 Service made a motion to approve the Regional Council  
28 annual report replies.

29

30 MR. HILDERBRAND: Madame Chair, this is  
31 Park Service. We'll second.

32

33 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you very  
34 much, Park Service. Does anybody have any questions or  
35 further discussion.

36

37 (No comments)

38

39 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: If -- if not I'd  
40 like a roll call vote right now.

41

42 Thank you.

43

44 MS. DETWILER: Thank you, Madame Chair.  
45 Starting -- the motion is to approve the replies.

46

47 Start with Dave Schmid, Forest Service.

48

49 MR. SCHMID: I support.

50

0030

1 MS. DETWILER: Thank you.

2

3 Steve Cohn, BLM.

4

5 MR. COHN: I support.

6

7 MS. DETWILER: Glenn Chen, BIA.

8

9 MR. CHEN: The BIA supports the motion.  
10 And we'd like to express our gratitude to the OSM Staff  
11 and the Staff Committee for their very good job putting  
12 the report replies together.

13

14 Thank you.

15

16 MS. DETWILER: Thank you.

17

18 Sara Boario, Fish and Wildlife Service.

19

20 MS. BOARIO: I support. Also with my  
21 thanks to the RACs and OSM Staff weeding through all of  
22 those responses, especially as a newer member of the  
23 Board, was so informative in helping to -- me to see  
24 the large range of issues across the State.

25

26 So thank you very much.

27

28 MS. DETWILER: Thank you, Sara.

29

30 National Park Service, Grant

31

32 Hilderbrand.

33

34 MR. HILDERBRAND: Park Service  
35 supports. And I just echo the comments of my  
36 colleagues, just a huge thanks to the RACs and the OSM  
37 Staff for compiling the replies.

37

38 MS. DETWILER: Thank you.

39

40 Public member Charlie Brower.

41

42 (No comments)

43

44 MS. DETWILER: I'm not sure if you got  
45 disconnected, Charlie.

46

47 Move on to public member Rhonda Pitka.

48

49 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Yes, I support.

50

0031

1 And thank you to all of the Staff for those excellent  
2 replies and all the work that's gone into it by the  
3 Regional Advisory Councils.

4  
5 Thank you very much.

6  
7 MS. DETWILER: Public member Charlie  
8 Brower. We're finishing up the vote on the motion to  
9 approve the Regional Council annual report replies.

10  
11 (No comments)

12  
13 MS. DETWILER: We're showing that Mr.  
14 Brower is online. Perhaps he's just having a hard time  
15 getting through, but we do have a vote of six out of  
16 seven present, Madame Chair.

17  
18 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Okay. What are  
19 the instructions to unmute a line?

20  
21 OPERATOR: To mute and unmute your line  
22 it's Star, six.

23  
24 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Okay. Maybe if  
25 you press Star, six, Mr. Brower.

26  
27 (No comments)

28  
29 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: All right. Sounds  
30 like we have a motion that passed even without Mr.  
31 Brower's vote.

32  
33 Thank you very much.

34  
35 At this time I'd like to ask for a 15  
36 minute recess.

37  
38 (Off record)

39  
40 (On record)

41  
42 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Okay. It looks  
43 like we're all coming back to order now and I believe  
44 we're at agenda item number 5, the annual report reply  
45 review process.

46  
47 Robbin LaVine.

48  
49 MS. DETWILER: I think we need to do  
50

0032

1 roll call.

2

3 MS. LaVINE: Thank you, Madame....

4

5 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Oh, I'm sorry, my  
6 apologies. We need to do a roll call first.

7

8 MS. DETWILER: Thank you, Madame Chair.  
9 I'll just make sure we have a quorum here.

10

11 National Park Service, Grant  
12 Hilderbrand.

13

14 MR. HILDERBRAND: Present.

15

16 MS. DETWILER: Bureau of Land  
17 Management, Steve Cohn.

18

19 MR. COHN: Present.

20

21 MS. DETWILER: Fish and Wildlife  
22 Service, Sara Boario.

23

24 MS. BOARIO: Present.

25

26 MS. DETWILER: Forest Service, Dave  
27 Schmid.

28

29 MR. SCHMID: Present.

30

31 MS. DETWILER: Bureau of Indian  
32 Affairs, Glenn Chen.

33

34 MR. CHEN: Present.

35

36 MS. DETWILER: Rhonda Pitka, you are  
37 here. Do we have public member Charlie Brower?

38

39 (No comments)

40

41 MS. DETWILER: We have six members at  
42 the moment, Madame Chair.

43

44 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you very  
45 much. Robbin.

46

47 MS. LaVINE: Thank you, Madame Chair  
48 and members of the Board. For the record my name is  
49 Robbin LaVine and I'm the Subsistence Policy  
50

0033

1 Coordinator at the Office of Subsistence Management and  
2 the ISC Chair. I must say for all of you listening  
3 online it is delightful to see everyone here in person  
4 and after two and a half years I'm grateful that we  
5 were able to do this. For those of you that are not  
6 here, I look forward to seeing you in the future.

7

8 So this is the annual report reply  
9 process review, this is agenda item 5. It is a  
10 briefing, this is not an action item.

11

12 During the Federal Subsistence Board's  
13 August, 2021 work session the InterAgency Staff  
14 Committee briefed the Board on the annual report reply  
15 process and possible revisions to improve  
16 responsiveness to Regional Advisory Council concerns  
17 and improve programmatic workflow. Suggested revisions  
18 to the Board response to annual reports include writing  
19 a letter to the Board on topics of concern that request  
20 a reply and maintaining the annual reports as a way to  
21 inform the Board on local conditions, issues and needs.  
22 The Board reviewed and discussed the report reply  
23 process and agreed to forward this topic to the  
24 Councils' for their input on suggested revisions.

25

26 The OSM leadership presented this topic  
27 to the Councils during their winter meeting, Council  
28 comments were captured in their meeting minutes and  
29 have been added to your materials as a supplemental  
30 document. You should have all just received the  
31 handout. There are more for those of you in the room  
32 at the back table, at our handout table. Also included  
33 in the supplemental document are the directions in  
34 ANILCA Title VIII for Council preparation of their  
35 annual report to the Board. ANILCA does not mention a  
36 requirement for a Board reply however it does stipulate  
37 that the Board shall consider the reports and  
38 recommendations of the Regional Councils. This is  
39 something -- a process you just completed and we do  
40 this every year.

41

42 As you review the Council comments you  
43 will note that they fall into three broad categories,  
44 Councils who are happy to retain the process as is,  
45 Councils who are critical of the process as it and some  
46 Councils who are receptive to change. I think they're  
47 all receptive to improvements. One Council had no  
48 comment. Many of the Councils provided suggestions for  
49 improvements if the process is to remain the same or  
50

0034

1 ideas to support a revamping of the process. All  
2 Councils expressed value of consistent communication  
3 with the Board. The discussion begun with the ISC, the  
4 InterAgency Staff Committee and extended to Councils  
5 has provided OSM Staff and leadership with a number of  
6 good ideas to support a more effective annual report  
7 and Board reply process. So this work, these  
8 discussions, they're ongoing. OSM and the ISC will  
9 keep you apprised of further development.

10

11 And again this is a briefing and we're  
12 ready for your questions.

13

14 Thank you, Madame Chair.

15

16 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you very  
17 much. At this time we'll entertain questions or  
18 request for clarification.

19

20 MR. BROWER: For your information I'm  
21 online again, I had a hard time trying to connect.

22

23 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Oh, thank you.  
24 Thank you, Mr. Brower. Charlie Brower is back online.

25

26 Do you have any questions about the  
27 annual report reply process, Charlie?

28

29 MR. BROWER: No, I don't.

30

31 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: So I notice that  
32 in some of these -- in some of these asks for  
33 clarification from the Councils they ask that the Board  
34 provide specific detailed responses. Did they have any  
35 specific I guess requests on how that should look for  
36 them or was it just more that they were unsatisfied  
37 with the length of the reply?

38

39 MS. LaVINE: Thank you, Madame Chair.  
40 I think some of the dissatisfaction comes with rather  
41 ambiguous responses, responses that are related to, you  
42 know, the Board's limited authority on where the Board  
43 has authority to act. And because of those limitations  
44 often issues will return again and again and, you know,  
45 with no great satisfaction. But the Councils are  
46 grateful for the back and -- the back and forth, an  
47 opportunity, an avenue to communicate directly to the  
48 Board. Some of them expressed interest in the idea  
49 that a letter directly to the Board with specific  
50

0035

1 requests might get more response, others have been  
2 dissatisfied with that process. Because there are a  
3 lot of ideas floating around from the Councils and we  
4 can review the transcripts for those, there are a lot  
5 of ideas floating around OSM, we've got new Staff,  
6 we've got a lot of fertile grounds for excellent --  
7 additional conversations. I think we need more time to  
8 review the transcripts. to review these ideas and to  
9 find a way to have a more satisfactory and responsive  
10 process, whatever it may be.

11

12                   And thank you, Madame Chair.

13

14                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you for  
15 that. So I saw on the Western Interior's response they  
16 said that they took the letter writing suggestion under  
17 consideration and they just felt like they weren't  
18 getting responses from that, like from that direct  
19 letter writing. So I guess what is our response to  
20 them on that, do they feel like they were getting  
21 enough specifics or was it just that they didn't feel  
22 like it was timely enough, I'm not sure of that. I  
23 used to sit on a Regional Advisory Council so I  
24 understand the importance of the annual report. For a  
25 lot of the Regional Advisory Councils it's a very  
26 important venue for communication to the Board  
27 specifically. Maybe not on issues that, you know, are  
28 in our authority which I understand that, but it's on  
29 issues that are important to those Regional Advisory  
30 Councils, to those specific areas.

31

32                   Thank you.

33

34                   MS. LaVINE: Thank you, Madame Chair.  
35 When we were presenting this agenda item to the  
36 Councils I think the most important thing we stressed  
37 was the value of their reports to us, the Board, our  
38 program. It is unique to this program and it is how we  
39 keep ourselves informed in a way that does not wait for  
40 years of research. We have people who are on the  
41 ground reporting their experiences in unique locations  
42 across this really large State. And I think everyone  
43 has emphasized the tremendous value of these reports in  
44 that regard. And it doesn't have to relate just to the  
45 Board's authority. The subsistence way of life is  
46 really broad, expansive, human lifeway and so many  
47 things are relevant to the subsistence way of life and  
48 there's so many different issues that the Board I think  
49 would welcome being informed on as you make decisions

50

0036

1 on fish and wildlife -- the fish and wildlife  
2 regulatory process. Not all of it is within your scope  
3 of authority, but it's all relevant.

4

5                   And so that's real -- that's not  
6 speaking directly to your question so I'm going to roll  
7 myself back in and go back to your question on letter  
8 writing and the Western Interior. There are also  
9 challenges as we work our way through the process.  
10 Sometimes tracking letters sometimes to the Board,  
11 sometimes through the Board in this program to other  
12 agencies and within OSM we are working on processes,  
13 tools to track all of the letters and all of the  
14 correspondence as it comes and goes. We've just come  
15 out of a lean period in regard to staffing and I think  
16 as we've staffed up and we have now a full Regional  
17 Advisory Council Coordination Division and we have new  
18 people on the leadership team, both understanding the  
19 value of the annual reports, the values of Board  
20 replies, how we can be effective in this process and  
21 developing tools to support that process, this is --  
22 these are discussions we're having on the leadership  
23 team at OSM and these are processes that we hope to  
24 develop quickly.

25

26                   Again -- so I'm really giving you a  
27 status update rather than a solid answer.

28

29                   Thank you, Madame Chair.

30

31                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you for that  
32 response. I appreciate it. Does anybody else have any  
33 questions or clarifications on the process.

34

35                   MR. SCHMID: Madame Chair, just one --  
36 I think -- Forest Service, Dave Schmid here. Thanks so  
37 much, Robbin. You answered a lot of my questions I  
38 think by just sharing that. It was around  
39 correspondence, data base or tracking and timeliness, I  
40 think are -- we were -- all of our agencies tend to be  
41 challenged and I think OSM is no shortage of that with  
42 staffing and capacity and sounds like we've added to  
43 that and we've got something in place. And I think if  
44 anything just timeliness is usually one of the biggest  
45 factors, I saw it was brought up in a few places.

46

47                   Thank you.

48

49                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Yes, thank you for

50

0037

1 that. I for one -- I really appreciate those annual  
2 reports personally because, you know, my experience  
3 living in the Interior of Alaska is much different than  
4 somebody who lives in Southeast Alaska or, you know, or  
5 on the Yukon Delta. So I definitely appreciate the  
6 information that I get from those and, you know, all of  
7 the I guess work that those Regional Advisory Councils  
8 put into those reports and all the discussion that they  
9 have. That's informed me in a lot of different ways  
10 that I wouldn't have been informed otherwise.

11

12 So thank you for that. If there's no  
13 further questions for Ms. LaVine, we'll move on to  
14 number 6, the AITRC community hunt framework revision.

15

16 MS. GREDIGAN: All right. Thank you,  
17 Madame Chair, members of the Board. For the record my  
18 name is Lisa Gredigan and I'm the Wildlife Division  
19 Supervisor with the Office of Subsistence Management.  
20 I am presenting an overview of the revisions to the  
21 Ahtna InterTribal Resource Commission community harvest  
22 framework which can be found on Page 117 of your  
23 meeting books.

24

25 The Board approved this framework in  
26 January, 2021, but as a result of the Board's adoption  
27 of wildlife proposal WP22-36 in April, 2022, several  
28 revisions to this framework are needed. The major  
29 changes to the framework are highlighted in yellow in  
30 your meeting books. These revisions have been reviewed  
31 and agreed upon by Federal agency staff, the Solicitor  
32 and representatives from AITRC. Specifically the  
33 framework was revised to include language as well as a  
34 map of where the community harvest system applies in  
35 unit 12 and clarified the use of designated hunters for  
36 participants and nonparticipants in the community  
37 harvest system.

38

39 Thank you, Madame Chair, that concludes  
40 my presentation and I'd be happy to answer any  
41 questions.

42

43 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Does anybody have  
44 any questions or clarifications.

45

46 (No comments)

47

48 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: If not, it looks  
49 like we have a testimony request from Ms. Linda Pete.

50

0038

1 MS. PETE: Good morning. My name is  
2 Linda Pete, I am from Gakona Village and I'm currently  
3 the Chair of the Ahtna InterTribal Resource Commission  
4 and I'm here in support of the hunt and the map that  
5 she's talking about is part of our traditional hunting  
6 area. I think it's been documented throughout the  
7 years where Ahtna people hunted and still do hunt.  
8 It's partly in the State system too that the unit 11,  
9 12 and 13 is our hunting area. So I think the revision  
10 to the hunt is good. And I also wanted to say that  
11 with Covid barriers through -- in the -- since the hunt  
12 started, it's been slow, but things should get better  
13 as people are getting around more. And that, you know,  
14 when Karen comes to the meetings and speaks on behalf  
15 of the villages, she does have all the support and she  
16 speaks for our people. So it's not -- you know, I just  
17 want people to know that she speaks for our villages.  
18 And I believe that the administration and Board should  
19 support this hunt and, you know, when we all work  
20 together things should be good for everyone.

21  
22 So thank you.

23  
24 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you. Does  
25 anybody have any questions for Ms. Pete at this time.

26  
27 (No comments)

28  
29 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Is -- is there any  
30 testimony online. I forgot to ask that earlier, I'm  
31 sorry.

32  
33 MS. PETE: Are you done with me?

34  
35 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Yes. Yes, if  
36 you're done. Thank you.

37  
38 MS. DETWILER: Rhonda, I don't think  
39 Robbin heard you.

40  
41 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Oh, I'm sorry.  
42 Robbin, was there any requests for testimony from the  
43 phone lines from anybody who's on the phone.

44  
45 MS. LaVINE: We asked the operator to  
46 provide.....

47  
48 OPERATOR: Thank you. We will now  
49 begin the comment section of this call. If you'd like  
50

0039

1 to make a comment please press Star, one, unmute your  
2 phone and record your name. Your name is required to  
3 introduce your comment. If you need to withdraw please  
4 press Star, two.

5

6 Thank you.

7

8 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Is there anyone  
9 online willing to comment today.

10

11 OPERATOR: I'm showing no comment.

12

13 Thank you.

14

15 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you for  
16 that. At this time I'd like to ask for a Board motion  
17 to approve the revisions.

18

19 MS. DETWILER: Madame Chair.....

20

21 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Oh, I'm sorry.  
22 You hit Star, one to make a comment at this time.

23

24 OPERATOR: Yes. Again as a reminder  
25 please press, Star, one, if you would like to make a  
26 comment and press Star, two to withdraw your comment.

27

28 (Pause)

29

30 OPERATOR: Okay. I'm showing no  
31 comment, thank you, at this time.

32

33 MR. BROWER: Madame Chair.

34

35 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Yes.

36

37 MR. BROWER: So, you know, to make a  
38 motion, I would make a motion to approve the AITRC  
39 community hunt framework revision.

40

41 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Okay. Charlie,  
42 right now we're still waiting for a couple minutes for  
43 comments. We heard that Karen Linnell was trying to  
44 comment. It's a little bit awkward right now.....

45

46 MR. BROWER: Okay.

47

48 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: .....because we're  
49 on the phone line and I.....

50

0040

1 MR. BROWER: Okay.

2

3 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: .....forgot to  
4 mention that on the phone. So you hit Star, one to  
5 make a comment and I think Star, two to record or  
6 something. I didn't hear that last part.

7

8 Thank you.

9

10 MR. BROWER: Thank you, Madame Chair.

11

12 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Yep. So hold the  
13 motion for a moment until.....

14

15 MR. BROWER: I will withdraw my motion  
16 for now until the comments are done.

17

18 Thank you.

19

20 OPERATOR: AS a reminder if you would  
21 like to make a comment please press Star, one, unmute  
22 your phone and record your name. Your name is required  
23 to introduce your comment. If you need to withdraw  
24 your comment please press Star, two. Again to ask --  
25 I'm sorry, to make a comment please press Star, one.

26

27 (Pause)

28

29 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Operator, do you  
30 see Karen Linnell's line, she's trying to unmute her  
31 line to get through to make a comment and it doesn't  
32 seem like she can. She says she can't get the operator  
33 to see her call.

34

35 OPERATOR: I don't have any signals and  
36 I have two screens up. All participants are in listen  
37 only mode. To be placed into the queue press Star, one  
38 and it's going to pop up in another window for me.

39

40 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Oh, okay.

41

42 (Pause)

43

44 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: So it doesn't seem  
45 like it's working for several people online right now.  
46 Is there another way, operator, that we can open lines?

47

48 OPERATOR: Yes, ma'am.

49

50

0041

1                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA:   Okay.  Let's try  
2 that, let's open lines and then ask everybody to mute.

3  
4                   OPERATOR:   Okay.  So you would like for  
5 me to open all lines?

6  
7                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA:  Yes,  for the next  
8 few moments, please.

9  
10                  OPERATOR:   Thank you.  One moment.

11  
12                  (Teleconference       interference       -  
13 participants not muted).

14  
15                  ACTING CHAIR PITKA:   I hear  somebody  
16 now.

17  
18                  OPERATOR:   All lines are open.  To mute  
19 your phone please press Star, six.

20  
21                  MS. LINNELL:   Hello.

22  
23                  ACTING CHAIR PITKA:   Hi.  We can hear  
24 you.  Hello.  Please state your name for the record.

25  
26                  (Teleconference       interference       -  
27 participants not muted).

28  
29                  ACTING CHAIR PITKA:   You have a lot of  
30 background noise.

31  
32                  MS. LINNELL:   Hello.

33  
34                  (Laughter)

35  
36                  ACTING CHAIR PITKA:   Can everybody  
37 please mute their lines while we have testimony and  
38 then I'll call on people.

39  
40                  MS. LINNELL:   Hello.

41  
42                  ACTING CHAIR PITKA:   Is that you, Karen  
43 Linnell.  I got a message that you.....

44  
45                  MS. LINNELL:   Karen's on the phone.

46  
47                  ACTING CHAIR PITKA:   I got a message  
48 that you were trying to comment on the -- on the  
49 community harvest framework.

50

0042

1 (Teleconference interference -  
2 participants not muted).

3  
4 MS. LINNELL: Yes, I was. I just  
5 wanted to thank the OSM Staff, the Federal Subsistence  
6 Board, Southcentral and Eastern Interior RACs in  
7 working through this process. Being able to finalize  
8 and get a description of the hunt area in GMU 12 was an  
9 important piece to our hunt. As Linda said this is  
10 where our community members and tribal members have  
11 hunted for generations. I'd also like to especially  
12 thank Barbara Cellarius and Lisa Gredigan for their  
13 support in this process, define -- getting a definition  
14 that will work and can be described in words rather  
15 than in pictures was an important part to this and it  
16 was feeling very cumbersome and difficult to do and  
17 they were able to work through that with us and we  
18 found something that worked for -- for -- for all of  
19 us. So I appreciate that very much and I'm glad to see  
20 that this part of our process is -- is done. And again  
21 I want to thank you, the Board, for your support in  
22 this effort.

23  
24 Thank you.

25  
26 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you, Mrs.  
27 Linnell, I appreciate that.

28  
29 I believe Jim Simon was also going to  
30 comment. Are you on the line, Jim?

31  
32 (No comments)

33  
34 OPERATOR: Please press Star one, to  
35 unmute your phone and record your name. Star, one.

36  
37 Jim, your line is open.

38  
39 MR. SIMON: Hello. Can you hear me  
40 now?

41  
42 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Yes. Please go  
43 ahead.

44  
45 MR. SIMON: Thank you. Thank you,  
46 Madame Chair. Star, one finally worked. Yeah, I'm a --  
47 my name is Jim Simon, I'm a consultant with the Ahtna  
48 Intertribal Resource Commission. And I just -- to  
49 follow-up with what our Executive Director, Karen  
50

0043

1 Linnell, just said about thanking everyone for their  
2 hard work on this. I also wanted to thank them for  
3 adding the specific language to address the concerns  
4 previously expressed by the Department of Fish and Game  
5 and providing weekly harvest reports even if the  
6 harvest is zero. Hopefully that will satisfy everyone  
7 involved.

8

9 Thank you very much.

10

11 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you for your  
12 comments. I appreciate it.

13

14 Were there any more comments, operator?

15

16 OPERATOR: Ms. Gloria, your line is  
17 open.

18

19 MS. STICKWAN: I just want to say I  
20 support the community harvest hunt and the definition  
21 that was included for Unit 12 too of that area in Unit  
22 12. Southcentral was a part of this and I'm glad AITRC  
23 supports this proposal as well as Eastern Interior and  
24 Wrangell-St. Elias.

25

26 (Teleconference interference -  
27 participants not muted)

28

29 MS. STICKWAN: Barbara Cellarius helped  
30 with that as well as there's good collaboration, I'm  
31 glad to see that something's going hopefully be  
32 finalized.

33

34 Thank you.

35

36 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: I'm sorry, ma'am.  
37 Did you -- can you please state your name for the  
38 record. I heard Gloria, but I didn't hear your last  
39 name.

40

41 MS. STICKWAN: Gloria Stickwan.

42

43 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Oh, sorry. Go  
44 ahead.

45

46 MS. STICKWAN: Gloria Stickwan.

47

48 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Oh, sorry. Gloria  
49 Stickwan. Hi, Gloria. It's very nice to hear your  
50

0044

1 voice. Thank you for your comment.

2

3 Was there anybody else online.

4

5 OPERATOR: I show no further comments  
6 in queue.

7

8 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you. So now  
9 at this time I'd like to -- oh, sorry.

10

11 MS. GREDIGAN: Thank you, Madame Chair.  
12 Lisa Gredigan with OSM for the record. And I would  
13 just like to thank Karen and Jim and everyone at AITRC  
14 for working for OSM through this process. As they  
15 mentioned it's been a long time coming. We spent years  
16 getting to this point so again I'd also like to extend  
17 thanks to everyone at AITRC for working with us to get  
18 this system on the ground and finally crossing the  
19 finishing line.

20

21 Thank you.

22

23 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Yeah. Thank you  
24 for that. I believe when I first got appointed to the  
25 Board in 2017 this first came up so it's definitely  
26 been a long process. That's sometimes how the Federal  
27 government works, long and slow. I appreciate  
28 everybody's hard work on this.

29

30 So at this time I'd like to ask for a  
31 motion to approve the revisions.

32

33 MR. HILDERBRAND: Madame Chair, this is  
34 Park Service. I'd like to make a motion to approve the  
35 revisions to the AITRC community harvest system  
36 framework as outlined in our background materials.

37

38 Thank you.

39

40 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you for that  
41 motion. At this time I'd like to entertain a second.

42

43 MR. BROWER: Second.

44

45 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Was that you,  
46 Charlie Brower?

47

48 MR. BROWER: Second by Public Member  
49 Charlie Brower, yes.

50

0045

1                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you. Very  
2 clear for the record. Is there any further questions  
3 or discussions on the -- on the motion or the  
4 information.

5  
6                   (No comments)

7  
8                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA: If not, can we  
9 have a roll call vote, please.

10  
11                   MS. DETWILER: Yes. Motion is to  
12 approve the AITRC revisions. Starting with the maker  
13 of the motion, National Park Service, Grant  
14 Hilderbrand.

15  
16                   MR. HILDERBRAND: Park Service  
17 approves.

18  
19                   MS. DETWILER: Fish and Wildlife  
20 Service, Sara Boario.

21  
22                   MS. BOARIO: Fish and Wildlife Service  
23 approves.

24  
25                   MS. DETWILER: Thank you, Sara.

26  
27                   BIA, Glenn Chen.

28  
29                   MR. CHEN: The BIA supports the motion.  
30 And we would like to extend our appreciation to all the  
31 OSM Staff and AITRC folks that made this possible.

32  
33                   Thank you.

34  
35                   MS. DETWILER: Thank you. Bureau of  
36 Land Management, Steve Cohn.

37  
38                   MR. COHN: The Bureau of Land  
39 Management approves.

40  
41                   MS. DETWILER: Forest Service, Dave  
42 Schmid.

43  
44                   MR. SCHMID: Forest Service approves.

45  
46                   MS. DETWILER: Public Member Charlie  
47 Brower.

48  
49                   MR. BROWER: Approve. Public Member  
50

0046

1 Charlie Brower.

2

3 MS. DETWILER: Thank you. And finally  
4 Public Member Rhonda Pitka.

5

6 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Yes, I support the  
7 motion. And thanks to everybody for the -- for the  
8 long road that this took and all the work that went  
9 into it to form this cooperative agreement.

10

11 Thank you.

12

13 MS. DETWILER: Thank you. Motion  
14 passes unanimously.

15

16 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you. We are  
17 at Wildlife Temporary Special Action Request, WSA22-02.

18

19 MS. DETWILER: Madame Chair.

20

21 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Yes.

22

23 MS. DETWILER: Let's see, this special  
24 action request, there are some people who were  
25 interested in testifying and so we told them that we  
26 would start this item at 3:00 p.m. today so that they  
27 would know when to call in to testify.

28

29 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Oh, okay. Great.  
30 So if it's okay with the Board we'll move number 7 to  
31 3:00 p.m.

32

33 Were there any other changes.

34

35 MS. DETWILER: Madame Chair, the next  
36 item number 8 I believe we may have been still doing  
37 some final edits to the presentation on the Yukon  
38 Council letter to the Board on salmon by-catch and I  
39 would just ask if anybody in the room here knows  
40 whether we would be ready to proceed with that item.  
41 But yes, I'm being told that we are.

42

43 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Okay. So we're on  
44 agenda item number 8, joint Yukon Council's letter to  
45 the Board on salmon by-catch.

46

47 MS. McDAVID: Thank you, Madame Chair,  
48 members of the Board. For the record my name is Brooke  
49 McDavid and I'm the Council Coordinator for the Yukon-

50

0047

1 Kuskokwim Delta and Eastern Interior Regional Advisory  
2 Councils. Today I will be presenting some background  
3 information to the Board about a joint letter sent to  
4 the Board by four Councils with customary and  
5 traditional use determinations for salmon in the Yukon,  
6 Kuskokwim and Unalakleet River drainages. A copy of my  
7 presentation is available on the table at the back of  
8 the room if you would like a copy.

9

10 The four Councils that were signatories  
11 to the letter include the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, the  
12 Seward Peninsula, the Western Interior and the Eastern  
13 Interior Councils. As this is an action item I will  
14 end my presentation with some potential actions that  
15 the Board may wish to consider in response to this  
16 letter.

17

18 Slide two, please.

19

20 The context of the joint Council letter  
21 centers on the topic of salmon by-catch in the Bering  
22 Sea Aleutian Island or BSAI Groundfish Management Area.  
23 This area is in Federal marine waters off the coast of  
24 western Alaska and the Aleutian Island chain. It's  
25 shown on the dark gray area on the map on slide two.

26

27 The Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries  
28 Conservation and Management Act is the primary  
29 legislation governing management of fisheries in this  
30 region. The Act authorizes the North Pacific Fishery  
31 Management Council to develop the fisheries management  
32 plan for this region. That plan has been approved by  
33 the Secretary of Commerce. Members of the North  
34 Pacific Fishery Management Council include government  
35 agency representatives and members of the public  
36 appointed from the States of Alaska and Washington.  
37 In-season fishery management is carried out by the  
38 National Marine Fisheries Service housed under NOAA and  
39 the Department of Commerce.

40

41 Salmon in the BSAI Management Area are  
42 caught incidentally in offshore commercial trawl  
43 fisheries targeting groundfishes and primarily pollack  
44 -- in the pollack trawl fishery. Salmon are considered  
45 a prohibited catch species and cannot be retained for  
46 sale. There are hardcap limits in place for chinook  
47 salmon at 60,000 fish and in years of low abundance  
48 that cap is 45,000 fish. There are no by-catch  
49 hardcaps in place for chum salmon at this time.

50

0048

1 Additionally management of fisheries in this area  
2 utilizes a variety of by-catch avoidance measures and  
3 requires 100 percent observer coverage on fishing  
4 vessels.

5

6

Slide three, please.

7

8

9 Salmon by-catch in the BSAI trawl  
10 fisheries is not a new concern for subsistence users.  
11 Concerns for chinook and chum -- chum salmon by-catch  
12 have been raised continuously by Councils for  
13 approximately two decades. And Councils began to voice  
14 their concerns around the year 2000 when Yukon River  
15 salmon returns declined and subsistence salmon fishing  
16 became restricted or closed while marine commercial  
17 fisheries continued. Over time the Councils have  
18 written numerous letters to the North Pacific Fishery  
19 Management Council expressing concerns about by-catch,  
20 requesting lower by-catch caps and subsistence user  
21 representation on the North Pacific Fishery Management  
22 Council. In the past the Federal Subsistence Board has  
23 elevated Councils' salmon by-catch and subsistence user  
24 representation concern to the Secretaries of Interior  
25 and Agriculture. The Board has also provided comments  
26 and recommendations to the North Pacific Management  
27 Council and National Marine Fishery Service regarding  
28 by-catch during the EIS and Management Plan scoping  
29 processes.

29

30

Slide four, please.

31

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The -- only a portion of the BSAI  
salmon by-catch comes from Western Alaska and upper  
Yukon River stocks and even less would actually return  
to their natal streams, the sentiment of the concerned  
Councils is that every fish matters for the

0049

1 sustainability of these stocks. Additionally Councils  
2 have expressed that they feel it is inequitable for  
3 commercial fishers in marine waters to harvest salmon  
4 bound for AYK drainages when subsistence fishing is  
5 closed or heavily restricted in river.

6  
7 Slide five.

8  
9 So at their fall Council meeting in  
10 2021 the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Council voted to write a  
11 letter to the North Pacific Fishery Management Council  
12 and they asked three other western Alaska and Yukon  
13 River Councils to be signatories for that letter and  
14 their hope was to present a stronger and more unified  
15 voice on this issue. They also voted to have the Board  
16 elevate their concerns. In January of this year the  
17 Secretary of Commerce made a disaster declaration for  
18 2020 Yukon and Kuskokwim salmon fisheries and 2021  
19 Yukon salmon fisheries.

20  
21 At the winter Council meetings this  
22 year in February and March the other three Councils  
23 were presented the draft letter from the Yukon-  
24 Kuskokwim Delta and they all voted to support and sign  
25 the letter. Some of those Councils suggested  
26 modifications and following the Council meetings the  
27 four Councils came to a consensus and submitted a final  
28 letter to the North Pacific Fishery Management Council  
29 in April of this year. In June that letter was also  
30 submitted as a public comment during the North Pacific  
31 Fishery Management Council meeting and in June is also  
32 when the four Councils forwarded that letter to the  
33 Board along with an additional letter.

34  
35 Next slide.

36  
37 So I'll briefly highlight the request  
38 made in each of those letters. First the joint Council  
39 letter addressed to the North Pacific Fishery  
40 Management Council. This letter can be found on page  
41 176 of your meeting books. And this letter contains  
42 four requests. Those requests are one, to immediately  
43 reduce Bering Sea Aleutian Islands chinook salmon by-  
44 catch hardcap to 16,000 fish and to further reduce it  
45 to 10,000 fish within one year. Number 2, to  
46 immediately implement a chum salmon by-catch hardcap of  
47 250,000 fish and to further reduce it to 150,000 fish  
48 within one year. Number 3, to require 24/7 video  
49 monitoring coverage on all trawl fishing vessels. And  
50

0050

1 number 4, to add two subsistence or tribal  
2 representative seats to the North Pacific Fishery  
3 Management Council and to require that these  
4 representatives have no direct ties to community  
5 development quota or CDQ fisheries.

6  
7 In regard to the first two requests on  
8 this slide, to immediately reduce by-catch levels, this  
9 would require an emergency action and the emergency  
10 rule authority in the BSAI Management Area ultimately  
11 rests with the Secretary of Commerce. NOAA policy  
12 dictates specific criteria for what constitutes an  
13 emergency and outlines justifications for the use of  
14 emergency action. This policy is attached as an  
15 enclosure to the joint Council letter to the Board and  
16 can be found on page 186 of your meeting books. It  
17 should be noted that the Department of Commerce's  
18 emergency rule guidelines are very similar to our own  
19 programs special actions regulations and policy.

20  
21 And regarding number 4 on this list,  
22 permanently adding subsistence or tribal seats to the  
23 North Pacific Fishery Management Council, that would  
24 require amending the Magnuson-Stevens Act which would  
25 be an act of Congress. There were two U.S. House bills  
26 introduced in 2021 including one by late Representative  
27 Don Young which sought to add language to the Act  
28 requiring tribal or subsistence representation. But so  
29 far those bills have not made it out of Committee.

30  
31 Next slide, please.

32  
33 The supplemental letter from the  
34 Councils to the Board can be found on page 173 of your  
35 meeting books. And it contains the following three  
36 requests. Number 1, to elevate the concerns expressed  
37 in the joint Council letter to the North Pacific  
38 Fishery Management Council to the Secretaries of  
39 Interior and Commerce. Number 2, to officially  
40 petition National Marine Fisheries Service to use  
41 emergency rule authority to reduce or set hardcaps on  
42 salmon in the BSAI trawl fisheries. And number 3, to  
43 ask the Secretary of Interior to urge the Secretary of  
44 Commerce and National Marine Fishery Service to take  
45 these actions.

46  
47 And finally on the following slide I  
48 will suggest some potential actions that the Board may  
49 wish to consider.  
50

0051

1                   The first action that the Board may  
2 wish to consider is writing a letter to the Secretaries  
3 of Interior and Agriculture to notify them of the  
4 Councils' concerns and requests. The Board has sent  
5 similar correspondence to the past Secretaries. And  
6 the second action the Board may wish to consider is  
7 writing a letter to the Secretary of Commerce to notify  
8 her of the joint Councils' concerns and their request  
9 for her to use emergency action authority to  
10 immediately reduce or implement by-catch hardcaps for  
11 salmon.

12  
13                   At this time OSM is not recommending  
14 that the Board officially petition National Marine  
15 Fishery Service yourselves and this is because of the  
16 propriety of that action. And I believe our Solicitor,  
17 Ken Lord, would be able to answer additional questions  
18 that the Board may have about that.

19  
20                   The Board may also combine options  
21 number 1 and number 2 and finally the Board may choose  
22 to defer or to take no action.

23  
24                   Madame Chair, members of the Board,  
25 that concludes my presentation. Thank you very much  
26 and myself and other Staff are ready to take questions  
27 if you have any.

28  
29                   Thank you.

30  
31                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you. I'd  
32 like to open up the floor for Board questions at this  
33 time.

34  
35                   MR. BROWER: Madame Chair.

36  
37                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Yes, Mr. Brower.

38  
39                   MR. BROWER: On the third one where  
40 it's not recommended to make their -- a letter to or  
41 notify National Marine Fisheries, is it because they're  
42 a different agency or they override Wildlife Service or  
43 what can -- I need some direction there why we can't do  
44 that.

45  
46                   MS. McDAVID: Madame Chair.

47  
48                   MR. LORD: Madame Chair, this is Ken.

49  
50

0052

1                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA:    Yes.  Go ahead,  
2 please.

3  
4                   MR. LORD:    Because -- let me explain,  
5 I'm not -- there's some concerns here.  No one is  
6 saying that the Board cannot do this, but if you look  
7 down the delegated authorities that the Secretary gave  
8 to the Board, if you look down that list, it's not  
9 really clear where the Board was given the authority to  
10 do this.  So it -- you know, I'd leave it to the  
11 Board's discretion about whether or not they think it's  
12 a good idea, but I just wanted to point that out is all  
13 as something that caught my attention.

14  
15                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA:    So I think what  
16 Charlie's concern was.....

17  
18                   MR. BROWER:    Thank you.

19  
20                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA:    .....was -- are  
21 you saying we don't have the authority to send a letter  
22 to the Secretary, that -- that's what he was concerned  
23 about and questioning?

24  
25                   MR. LORD:    Oh, I'm sorry, I  
26 misunderstood the question.  No, I -- there's no  
27 problem sending a letter to the Secretaries at all.  It  
28 was a petition to NMFS that I was focusing on.

29  
30                   MR. BROWER:    Thank you.

31  
32                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA:    Does anybody else  
33 have any questions or clarifications.  I believe Fish  
34 and Wildlife Service is still online, do they have any  
35 questions?  Sorry if I neglected to ask, you know, the  
36 online Board members.

37  
38                   MS. BOARIO:    Madame Chair, this is Fish  
39 and Wildlife Service.

40  
41                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA:    Yes.  Go ahead,  
42 please.

43  
44                   MS. BOARIO:    I'm having a hard time  
45 hearing just what everyone has already asked, but I  
46 think I understood Ken's clarification there about  
47 petitioning the Sec -- NMFS and the Secretary of  
48 Commerce.  I was wondering though about in terms of  
49 elevating it to the Secretary of Interior what the  
50

0053

1 Board has done in the past. And if I missed that in  
2 the presentation I apologize, but just looking for  
3 clarity there. And I guess along those lines if we  
4 have elevated in the past what was the content of our --  
5 that letter and what might -- how might the content  
6 look different this time?

7

8 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thanks for the  
9 question. Go ahead.

10

11 MS. McDAVID: Through the Chair. In  
12 2014 the Board sent a letter to the Secretaries of  
13 Interior and Agriculture and the content of that letter  
14 was focused on subsistence representation on the North  
15 Pacific Fishery Management Council. Three Councils had  
16 raised that concern in their annual reports and so the  
17 Board chose to forward those concerns onto the  
18 Secretaries at that time. That was the only elevation  
19 of an issue similar to the one at hand that I'm  
20 familiar with, but perhaps other Staff may have  
21 additional input.

22

23 Thank you.

24

25 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Ken Lord, do you  
26 have additional input?

27

28 MR. LORD: Madame Chair, it has not  
29 been uncommon for the Board to elevate issues to the  
30 Secretaries in the past, but I don't know the details  
31 of this particular issue.

32

33 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you.

34

35 MR. CHEN: Madam Chair, BIA.

36

37 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Go ahead.

38

39 MR. CHEN: Thank you, Madame Chair.  
40 Brooke, if the Board decides to take up option one and  
41 prepare a letter for the Secretaries do you have an  
42 anticipated time frame for when this would happen?

43

44 MS. McDAVID: I would ask that some of  
45 our other Staff potentially weigh in on that, but it  
46 shouldn't take particularly long.

47

48 MR. BROWER: Madame Chair.

49

50

0054

1                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA:     It looked like  
2 Robbin LaVine was going to make a comment or a  
3 clarification.

4  
5                   MR. BROWER:    Oh, sorry.  Sorry.

6  
7                   MS. LaVINE:    Madame Chair and all of  
8 those listening online, this is Robbin LaVine,  
9 Subsistence Policy Coordinator with OSM.  And Board  
10 member, Mr. Chen, asked about the timing of a response  
11 to elevate the letter to the Secretaries of Interior  
12 and Agriculture.  And I would just note that and  
13 confirm that as Brooke said this is part of our flurry  
14 of activities immediately following almost any Board  
15 meeting, we look at all the action items that are left  
16 to follow-up on upon completion of our proceedings and  
17 so it would happen as Brooke said pretty quickly.

18  
19                   And so I would -- and I actually would  
20 just like to note for everybody here this is Brooke  
21 McDavid, one of our brand new people and she did a  
22 spectacular job preparing for this issue.  So anyway as  
23 a membership of the leadership team we would support  
24 our Staff in following up really quickly on this issue.

25  
26                   Thank you, Madame Chair.

27  
28                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA:   Thank you.  And  
29 thank you the question.

30  
31                   MS. BOARIO:    Madame Chair, Fish and  
32 Wildlife Service.

33  
34                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA:   Yes.  Go ahead.

35  
36                   MS. BOARIO:    Thank you.  I'm wondering  
37 if there are other actions the Board can take outside  
38 of the specific request in this letter.  So in addition  
39 to elevating it to the Secretary of Interior I'm  
40 wondering if we might be able to invite members of the  
41 North Pacific Fishery Management Council into some kind  
42 of joint session.  I feel like that was in the RAC  
43 responses list as a potential item, something along  
44 those lines of meeting with the Council or somehow  
45 connecting with the Council more closely.  And then I'm  
46 also wondering if it's worth exploring shared or more  
47 collaborative research opportunities with the Council.  
48 I think that was also in the RAC requests looking at  
49 more research opportunities around.  So just wondering  
50

0055

1 if there's more that we can do beyond what's in this  
2 letter based on other feedback we've gotten.

3

4 MS. LaVINE: Madame Chair.

5

6 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Go ahead.

7

8 MS. LaVINE: Through the Chair. This  
9 is Robbin LaVine. And I apologize for not being better  
10 prepared to respond to Board member Boario's questions  
11 and I would ask if there are more seasoned members of  
12 the Federal Subsistence Management Program including  
13 our Solicitor that may respond to that question again  
14 for additional actions that Board members can take  
15 relative to their own positions within their agencies  
16 to be responsive to this issue.

17

18 Am I summarizing your request  
19 correctly, Sara?

20

21 Thank you, Madame Chair.

22

23 MS. BOARIO: Oh, thanks, Robbin. I  
24 guess that could be one question and maybe it was more  
25 a question to the full Board about are there other  
26 actions we can contemplate collectively and Ken might  
27 have a perspective on that as well. And I thought I  
28 saw in the RAC the table of kind of RAC interest  
29 responses that was presented earlier something about  
30 potentially a joint session or somehow a connection  
31 between the Federal Subsistence Board and the North  
32 Pacific Fishery Management Council. I'm wondering if  
33 that's a possibility or if it's been done before?

34

35 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Ken, are you  
36 online?

37

38 MR. LORD: I am on -- yes, Madame  
39 Chair. Thank you. It has not been done before, but I  
40 know of no reason why it couldn't be done.

41

42 MS. BOARIO: Thank you.

43

44 MS. McDAVID: Madame Chair, I'd like to  
45 also respond to Member Boario, please.

46

47 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Yes, please.  
48 Thank you.

49

50

0056

1 MS. McDAVID: Through the Chair, member  
2 Boario. This is Council Coordinator, Brooke McDavid.  
3 I would also just like to let you know that at the  
4 upcoming fall meetings for these four Councils we will  
5 be reaching out to North Pacific Fishery Management  
6 Council to see if they can provide an update to the  
7 Councils on these issues.

8  
9 Thank you.

10  
11 MS. BOARIO: Thank you.

12  
13 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you for that  
14 response, I appreciate it.

15  
16 Did they answer all of your questions,  
17 Fish and Wildlife Service?

18  
19 MS. BOARIO: Madame Chair, thank you.  
20 You -- I guess I would still leave it out there and  
21 maybe for consideration that we might as a Board invite  
22 the North Pacific Fishery Management Council to some  
23 kind of joint session. And it seems like in the  
24 absence of recognizing that to change the Council and  
25 add more tribal representation, for example, that would  
26 be an Act of Congress, by having a joint session we  
27 could ensure a broader perspective is presented in a  
28 session like that. And it might be a tool that's  
29 available to us in addition to having the Council go  
30 and present -- Council representatives go and present  
31 at the RAC.

32  
33 So just I guess a suggestion or hear  
34 back from other members I guess at some point.

35  
36 Thank you.

37  
38 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you. I  
39 think that could be included in a motion perhaps as one  
40 of our action items.

41  
42 (Teleconference interference -  
43 participants not muted - garbled)

44  
45 MR. HILDERBRAND: .....with that  
46 Fishery Board I see a lot of utility and improved  
47 communication there. So I think I'm less inclined to  
48 go the formal petition route, but I'm being long-  
49 winded. I guess what I'd like to say is rather than  
50

0057

1 just express concern let's also express a willingness  
2 and potentially some ideas on how to communicate and  
3 collaborate better.

4

5 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you for that  
6 suggestion, I appreciate it.

7

8 MR. BROWER: Madame Chair.

9

10 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Yes, Mr. Brower.

11

12 MR. BROWER: Just a question to Brooke  
13 regarding the number 2 I believe where they -- their  
14 request for a number of level to go -- I mean, dropping  
15 down to 100,000 or 150,000 then to 10,000. Then with  
16 this in mind, the direction to the -- to the fishery at  
17 this time they're at least -- I mean, there's no zero  
18 -- there's zero subsistence hunting -- subsistence  
19 fishing opportunity right now on both rivers and is  
20 that number pretty well satisfied to the need of the  
21 subsistence users, those numbers that you gave us,  
22 Brooke?

23

24 MS. McDAVID: Through the Chair, member  
25 Brower. I will try to answer your question. So those  
26 numbers that I mentioned, those are the hardcap limits  
27 that were set by the North Pacific Fishery Management  
28 Council for chinook salmon. That's 60,000 fish, not  
29 all of those fish are necessarily bound for AYK rivers.  
30 And additionally because of mortality in the ocean  
31 environment not all of those fish that are by-caught  
32 would have returned either. The hardcaps suggested by  
33 the four joint Councils are to reduce -- further reduce  
34 that number from the 60,000 down. And currently there  
35 is not a hardcap for chum salmon by-catch and so the  
36 Councils are requesting that the North Pacific Fishery  
37 Management Council implement or to put into place a  
38 hardcap. And they're suggesting right now 250,000 fish  
39 and that would be approximately of what was by-caught  
40 in 2021. At their June meeting the North Pacific  
41 Fishery Management Council has been having discussions  
42 about potential for establishing a chum salmon or a  
43 non-chinook salmon by-catch, but they're still  
44 discussing that and further researching options to  
45 possibly implement that in the future.

46

47 Please let me know if that was helpful.

48

49 MR. BROWER: Thank you. One final

50

0058

1 question. One final question. I'm not aware that all  
2 salmon go -- by-catch is bound for western Arctic. Is  
3 that known -- known to be true or what or all salmon --  
4 perhaps there's different migrations of certain salmon,  
5 right?

6  
7 MS. McDAVID: I will answer your  
8 question the best I can, Charlie. I'm certainly not an  
9 expert on by-catch in the marine fisheries, but in a  
10 report that was put out by the North Pacific Fishery  
11 Management Council they do genetic sampling of salmon  
12 that are by-caught in the fisheries. And the results  
13 that I'm looking at from their report show that  
14 approximately 40 percent of chinook salmon are from AYK  
15 drainages and approximately 15 percent of chum salmon  
16 by-caught are from western Alaska. But like I said I'm  
17 just reading that off of North Pacific Fishery  
18 Management Council report, if anyone that might be an  
19 expert on the subject wants to weigh in that would be  
20 great.

21  
22 Thanks.

23  
24 MR. BROWER: Thank you. Just curious.

25  
26 MS. LaVINE: Madame Chair.

27  
28 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Yes.

29  
30 MS. LaVINE: This is Robbin LaVine,  
31 OSM. And I would also like to ask if any of our OSM  
32 Fisheries Division Staff might be able to respond to  
33 these questions. In addition I understand that the  
34 Federal Fisheries Manager, Holly Carol, is also online  
35 and may also be able to respond to these questions if  
36 you ask her directly.

37  
38 Thank you, Madame Chair.

39  
40 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Yes. Holly or  
41 Scott, please respond.

42  
43 Thank you.

44  
45 MR. AYERS: Hi. This is Scott Ayers.  
46 Can you all hear me?

47  
48 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Yes. Go ahead.

49  
50

0059

1 MR. AYERS: I would just say that what  
2 Brooke has provided as background information is fully  
3 relevant to the question that Charlie has been asking.  
4 I believe Holly is online, but Holly is not an expert  
5 on the Bering Sea by-catch issue. She can certainly  
6 speak to what's been going on in the Yukon for the past  
7 number of years related to the chinook and all other  
8 salmon returns, if there's any information on that  
9 front that the Board would like to hear about.

10

11 I'm happy to answer any direct  
12 questions, if there are any others that are specific to  
13 me that I can help with. And otherwise I will sit back  
14 and let you all continue with your work.

15

16 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you. Are  
17 there any further questions?

18

19 MR. COHN: Madame Chair, I'd like to  
20 ask a question.

21

22 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Go ahead.

23

24 MR. COHN: This is Steve Cohn with the  
25 Bureau of Land Management and not being very familiar  
26 with the by-catch issue and the feasibility of -- I  
27 guess I have a question. Is it at all feasible that  
28 by-catch can be required to be retained and made  
29 available to help with the food insecurity issues?

30

31 MS. McDAVID: Through the Chair. I  
32 will tell you what I do know about that. I know that  
33 there is a program that the North Pacific Fishery  
34 Management Council currently has for some of those by-  
35 caught salmon to be redistributed to Alaskan  
36 communities. And I believe it is called the Sea Share  
37 Program. But I don't have any more details than that.

38

39 Thank you.

40

41 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: I could probably  
42 speak to that a little bit. The people on the Yukon  
43 River wish to fish for salmon in the river themselves,  
44 they don't wish to get the fish that's usually given to  
45 the Seattle -- what are they called, Food Box Programs.  
46 That's where they're usually distributed to is Seattle  
47 and they're canned. So we -- yeah, we would definitely  
48 prefer to fish for our own fish in our own traditional  
49 territory.

50

0060

1 Are there any other questions  
2 specifically on the.....

3  
4 MR. SCHMID: Madame Chair.

5  
6 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Go ahead.

7  
8 MR. SCHMID: Just one for  
9 clarification. So as I understood it would take  
10 Congress to actually amend the Act to provide for other  
11 seats or additional seats on the Council; is that  
12 correct?

13  
14 MS. McDAVID: Through the Chair, member  
15 Schmid. Yes, that's correct to add permanent -- a  
16 permanent requirement that those seats be added to the  
17 Council. Currently the Governor of Alaska does submit  
18 names, he nominates people to fill those seats and --  
19 when they become vacant. So that could be another  
20 option, but it's not a permanent option.

21  
22 Thank you.

23  
24 MR. SCHMID: Yeah, thank you. And I  
25 would share I know we did -- hosted some national  
26 consultation with tribes across Alaska late last winter  
27 and this did come up as an issue I think before it was  
28 the Assistant Secretary of Congress that did hear and  
29 respond to that. But.....

30  
31 Thanks.

32  
33 MR. BROWER: Madame Chair.

34  
35 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Yes. Go ahead.

36  
37 MR. BROWER: Are you done, I was just  
38 going to -- I had a question. In light of what he just  
39 said can we also write to our Alaskan Delegation in  
40 regards to the issue. I know that they know pretty  
41 well what's happening, but maybe we get some letters --  
42 our concerns to them we might get more support as they  
43 are able to to Department of Commerce or National  
44 Fisheries. Just a con -- just a thought.

45  
46 MS. McDAVID: Madame Chair, I would ask  
47 that that question be deferred to Ken Lord, please.

48  
49 Thank you.

50

0061

1                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you. Ken  
2 Lord, can you answer that one?

3  
4                   MR. LORD: Well, the -- we have to be a  
5 little cautious about not violating the Hatch Act, but  
6 I'm sure there's a way to bring it to their attention  
7 although I suspect they already know about it. I can  
8 work with OSM to try and put something together if  
9 that's what the Board wants.

10  
11                   MS. BOARIO: Madame Chair.

12  
13                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Yes, Sara.

14  
15                   MS. BOARIO: Fish and Wildlife Service.

16  
17                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Go ahead.

18  
19                   MS. BOARIO: Ken, I'm wondering if we  
20 do send a letter to the Secretaries of Interior and  
21 Agriculture alerting them to this and with additional  
22 information could we just copy the Delegation on that?

23  
24                   MR. LORD: I think that's an excellent  
25 plan.

26  
27                   MS. BOARIO: Okay. Madame Chair, may I  
28 call the motion?

29  
30                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Go ahead.

31  
32                   MS. BOARIO: Madame Chair, I move to  
33 approve a letter to the Secretaries of Interior and  
34 Agriculture to alert them to this issue with an  
35 overview as to what was described in the presentation  
36 by OSM and what the Councils have asked for and ask the  
37 Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture to liaise with  
38 their peer at Commerce on this to explore engagement  
39 and relationship building between our agencies to  
40 addresses salmon migratory life cycles and by-catch  
41 holistically. And I also move to invite North Pacific  
42 Fisheries Council management members and Staff to our  
43 next meeting to discuss this issue together.

44  
45                   Thank you, Madame Chair.

46  
47                   MR. BROWER: Second, Madame Chair.  
48 Public Member Brower.

49  
50

0062

1                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you for the  
2 motion and the second. Are there questions on the  
3 motion.

4  
5                   (No comments)

6  
7                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Any discussion.

8  
9                   MR. HILDERBRAND: Yeah, this is -- just  
10 a -- this is Grant with Park Service. I'm definitely  
11 in support of the motion I guess and if I'm not in  
12 protocol please let me know. I did have a question for  
13 Brooke. You mentioned that there was limitations on  
14 adding permanent seats to the North Pacific Fishery  
15 Management Group, is it possible to request that they  
16 add temporary or advisory seats to that Board? I don't  
17 mean to put you on the spot, when you used the word  
18 permanent I was -- I was curious if there was something  
19 intermediate we could consider.

20  
21                   Thanks.

22  
23                   MS. McDAVID: Through the Chair, member  
24 Hilderbrand. I believe the -- that the only other way  
25 for temporary seats would be through the Governor  
26 nominating someone to fill those seats.

27  
28                   Thank you.

29  
30                   MR. HILDERBRAND: Thank you.

31  
32                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you for that  
33 answer. Are there any further questions on the -- on  
34 the motion or any other discussion on it.

35  
36                   (No comments)

37  
38                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA: If not, I believe  
39 I heard somebody say question.

40  
41                   MR. BROWER: Question called for.

42  
43                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you, Sir.

44  
45                   MR. BROWER: .....Madame Chair.

46  
47                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA: I really  
48 appreciate that. Can we have a roll call vote, please.

49  
50

0063

1 MS. DETWILER: Yes. To adopt the  
2 motion as presented by Fish and Wildlife Service and  
3 I'll start with Fish and Wildlife Service.

4  
5 Sara Boario.

6  
7 MS. BOARIO: I vote to approve.

8  
9 MS. DETWILER: Thank you.

10  
11 National Park Service.

12  
13 MR. HILDERBRAND: Park Service votes to  
14 approve.

15  
16 MS. DETWILER: Thank you.

17  
18 BIA, Glenn Chen.

19  
20 MR. CHEN: BIA supports the motion.

21  
22 MS. DETWILER: Steve Cohn, BLM.

23  
24 MR. COHN: BLM votes to approve.

25  
26 MS. DETWILER: Thank you.

27  
28 Dave Schmid.

29  
30 MR. SCHMID Forest Service supports the  
31 motion.

32  
33 MS. DETWILER: Thank you.

34  
35 Public Member Charlie Brower.

36  
37 MR. BROWER: Public member Charlie  
38 Brower approves.

39  
40 MS. DETWILER: Thank you.

41  
42 Finally, Rhonda Pitka.

43  
44 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Yes, I support.  
45 And I'd like to thank you all for your support for  
46 these letters. It's been a very rough two years with  
47 no salmon on the Yukon River. The people on the river  
48 are facing a great depression right now and it's  
49 because of the lack of salmon in our river. And we --  
50

0064

1 you know, at this time normally I would be at home  
2 fishing the last pulse, you know, and hopefully trying  
3 for some fall chum, but it -- it's just not possible  
4 right now. And the amount of whitefish is not  
5 comparable to the amount of salmon that we normally  
6 would get.

7  
8 So thank you for all your support on  
9 this matter.

10  
11 The motion passes. At this time I'd  
12 like to ask for a recess for lunch. What time do we  
13 come back?

14  
15 MR. BROWER: 1:30.

16  
17 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you, member  
18 Brower. Okay. We will come back at 1:30 then. And we  
19 will start with number -- agenda item number 9 at 1:30  
20 p.m.

21  
22 Thank you.

23  
24 (Off record)

25  
26 (On record)

27  
28 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Well, my  
29 apologies, it's 1:35 now. I'm having a little bit too  
30 much fun with that gavel.

31  
32 (Laughter)

33  
34 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Somebody needs to  
35 come and take it away from me after.

36  
37 Sue, can we do a roll call. Thank you.

38  
39 MS. DETWILER: Thank you, Madame Chair.  
40 Just make sure we have a quorum of the Board.

41  
42 Starting with National Park Service,  
43 Grant Hilderbrand.

44  
45 MR. HILDERBRAND: Present.

46  
47 MS. DETWILER: Thank you.

48  
49 BLM, Steve Cohn.

50

0065

1 MR. COHN: Present.

2

3 MS. DETWILER: Fish and Wildlife  
4 Service, Sara Boario.

5

6 (No comments)

7

8 MS. DETWILER: All right. Sara might  
9 still be trying to get on.

10

11 Forest Service, Dave Schmid.

12

13 MR. SCHMID: Present.

14

15 MS. DETWILER: Thank you.

16

17 Public Member Rhonda Pitka, you are  
18 here.

19

20 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Here.

21

22 MS. DETWILER: Public Member Charlie  
23 Brower.

24

25 (No comments)

26

27 MS. DETWILER: I'll go back to see if  
28 Sara Boario has joined us.

29

30 (No comments)

31

32 MS. DETWILER: I understand Sara is  
33 going to have to leave a little early today so I don't  
34 know if Joe is -- oh, okay. Sara is responding.

35

36 Sara Boario, I want to make sure, are  
37 you online right now, I just got a chat from you saying  
38 you couldn't hear very well. So it's a reminder to all  
39 of us to speak loudly and directly into the microphone  
40 especially if we're here in the room.

41

42 So, Sara, are -- can you hear us now,  
43 are you in the meeting.

44

45 MS. BOARIO: Yes, I can hear you.

46

47 MS. DETWILER: Okay. And you're kind  
48 of breaking up, but we could hear that you're there.  
49 So.....

50

0066

1 Thank you.

2

3 MS. BOARIO: Okay.

4

5 MS. DETWILER: And BIA, Glenn Chen. So  
6 we have all seven members who are here today here,  
7 Madame Chair.

8

9 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Public Member  
10 Charlie Brower.

11

12 (No comments)

13

14 MS. DETWILER: Oh, I apologize. I  
15 missed him.

16

17 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Okay. Then I  
18 guess we can get right into number 9, briefing Federal  
19 fisheries managers and delegation of authority.

20

21 MR. AYERS: Can you all hear me?

22

23 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Oh, you're really  
24 breaking up.

25

26 MR. AYERS: All right. Can you hear me  
27 any better now?

28

29 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Not -- not all the  
30 way.

31

32 MR. AYERS: All right. Let me try  
33 something else, hold on a moment.

34

35 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Okay. Thank you.

36

37 MR. AYERS: How about now?

38

39 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: That's better. We  
40 can hear you now.

41

42 MR. AYERS: Okay. Great.  
43 (Indiscernible - distortion).....

44

45 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Okay. You're  
46 still kind of breaking up.

47

48 MR. AYERS: All right. Well, I'll try  
49 to go (indiscernible - distortion).....

50

0067

1                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA:   Okay.  We  can't  
2  hear you.  It sounds like Charlie Brown.

3  
4                   (Laughter)

5  
6                   MS. WESSELS:   Madame Chair, this is  
7  Katya.  I  wonder if the issue's at your end because we  
8  -- everyone on the phones can hear him really clearly.

9  
10                  ACTING CHAIR PITKA:  Is it us?

11  
12                  REPORTER:   It's us.

13  
14                  MS. WESSELS:   Maybe something on that  
15  end.  I  can hear him really clearly and he's not  
16  breaking up at all.

17  
18                  ACTING CHAIR PITKA:  Okay.  Now you're  
19  breaking up.  Okay.  We'll try something.

20  
21                  MS. WESSELS:   Yes.

22  
23                  ACTING CHAIR PITKA:  Hold on.

24  
25                  MS. WESSELS:   Because I'm on the phone.

26  
27                  ACTING CHAIR PITKA:  Okay.  Hold on for  
28  a few minutes and we'll see what we can do.

29  
30                  MS. WESSELS:   Thank you.

31  
32                  (Off record comments - distortion).....

33  
34                  ACTING CHAIR PITKA:  Okay.  Scott, I  
35  think you should just start a little bit and we'll stop  
36  you if we need to.  Okay.

37  
38                  MR. AYERS:    Okay.  That sounds good.  
39  Thank you very much.

40  
41                  So again this is Scott Ayers, the  
42  Supervisor for the Fisheries Division at OSM.

43  
44                  ACTING CHAIR PITKA:  Now it's not  
45  working.  Okay.  We'll try something else.  Hold on.

46  
47                  (Off record comments - distortion).....

48  
49                  ACTING CHAIR PITKA:  Okay.  So, Scott,

50

0068

1 we're going to take some time and figure this one out  
2 and in the meantime we're going to go onto number 10 on  
3 our agenda and then we'll come back to you.....

4  
5 MR. AYERS: Okay.

6  
7 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: .....I mean, if  
8 that's okay with the Board to give a little bit of  
9 leeway in this situation.

10  
11 Thank you. Thank you all.

12  
13 Okay. So number 10, Sitka Kaagwaantaan  
14 petition for Secretarial extension of jurisdiction.

15  
16 Go ahead, Mr. Risdahl.

17  
18 MR. RISDAHL: Thank you, Madame Chair,  
19 members of the Board. For the record my name is Greg  
20 Risdahl, I am the Subsistence Program Leader for the  
21 Forest Service and an Interagency Staff Committee  
22 member for the Forest Service. I'm going to give you  
23 an update on the Sitka Kaagwaantaan clan position for  
24 Secretarial extension of jurisdiction.

25  
26 In response to Board member Peltola's  
27 request at the last Board meeting we are providing the  
28 Board with an update on the Sitka Kaagwaantaan clan  
29 petition that -- dated October 16, 2020 for Secretarial  
30 extraterritorial jurisdiction over the herring fishery  
31 in Sitka Sound. I may say ETJ in the future here, it's  
32 quite a mouthful.

33  
34 So the group is staffed from OSM and  
35 the Forest Service including Lori Cooper, special  
36 assistant to the Regional Forester, myself, Sue  
37 Detwiler, and Robbin LaVine and Theo Matuskowitz, a  
38 Regulations Specialist at OSM, met on June 16th, 2022  
39 to discuss the status of the Sitka Kaagwaantaan  
40 petition and a path forward. We reviewed and agreed  
41 that the Secretarial ETJ expeditions are strictly under  
42 the authority of the Secretaries of the Interior and  
43 Agriculture because delegated authority was never  
44 granted to the Board specifically regarding  
45 applicability and scope and remains under the purview  
46 of the Secretaries in subpart (a).

47  
48 Unfortunately the petition was not  
49 processed according to regulation and policy and as  
50

1 such it was not acted upon during the past  
2 Administration. That brings us to today. The plan is  
3 to offer guidance to the Kaagwaantaan clan in  
4 resubmitting a petition that will be processed in  
5 accordance with Federal regulations, petitions for  
6 rulemaking under 43 CFR 14 and Board policy. So that  
7 means that the petition would be sent directly to the  
8 Department of the Interior first with a CC to the  
9 Department of Agriculture. The Board cannot submit a  
10 petition on a clan's behalf. Concurrently the Forest  
11 Service will speak to Harvey Kitka and we have been  
12 trying to get ahold of him by the way, the  
13 representative for the Sita Kaagwaantaan clan petition  
14 about resubmitting their petition with the necessary  
15 information. Once the petition is forwarded and  
16 received by both Secretaries it will set in motion the  
17 process for the Secretaries to begin to take action.

18  
19 Just so folks understand what goes into  
20 one of these, there are three elements that need to be  
21 put into a petition before it can be reviewed and  
22 considered by the Department of Interior and USDA.  
23 Number 1, the area must first be clearly defined;  
24 number 2, subpart (a), Section 3 must be cited; and  
25 number 3, the petitioner must state exactly what they  
26 want. Therefore using this petition as an example the  
27 specific boundaries of Sitka Sound would be delineated;  
28 number 2, section 3 and subpart (a) would be cited in a  
29 statement saying something to the effect of exert  
30 Federal management authority over the herring fishery  
31 in Sitka Sound, not just Federal management, along with  
32 a clear and concise justification; number 3, finally  
33 the petition would specify the details of what the clan  
34 would like to see in their request such as the Federal  
35 Subsistence Board will develop seasons, season dates  
36 and harvest limits for the herring fishery in Sitka  
37 Sound.

38  
39 In addition to providing guidance to  
40 the Sitka Kaagwaantaan clan in how to resubmit a  
41 petition as previously outlined, we will ensure that  
42 it's processed correctly. OSM will follow-up with a  
43 response letter to the Southeast Regional Advisory  
44 Council to update the Council about the status of the  
45 clan's petition. This is because the Council had  
46 written a letter in support of the clan and requested a  
47 status update on the petition as well.

48  
49 And with that I'll take any questions.  
50

0070

1 Thank you.

2

3 MR. SCHMID: Madame Chair.

4

5 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Yes.

6

7 MR. SCHMID: Yeah, just a comment. I  
8 want to apologize here on behalf of -- certainly on the  
9 Forest Service and Department of Agriculture. As Greg  
10 mentioned at the beginning when this petition came in  
11 it went to the Secretary -- Secretary Perdue's office  
12 and the Alaska Administration. I did get a CC copy so  
13 I was aware when it did go in and it took a long time  
14 to get a response and I think the response was just  
15 that we've got it and are reviewing it. And then  
16 unfortunately with the change in Administration and no  
17 follow-up there it fell off of some of our radar  
18 screens here. And so it did come back to us through  
19 the Council and I -- as Greg had mentioned we certainly  
20 commit to working -- we can't do that, but we can  
21 certainly -- I mean, in terms of the petition, but we  
22 can certainly support the clan in developing a petition  
23 and plan to do that as well and respond to the Council  
24 as well.

25

26 But just an apology between the  
27 Administrations and other presses of business and  
28 change and transitions, I feel bad that this did not  
29 get the proper response immediately which would have  
30 put us on a course a little bit more quicker here for  
31 folks. So we do have it now and we are working and  
32 will continue to work with the RAC and the clan.

33

34 Thank you.

35

36 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Go ahead.

37

38 MR. CHEN: Thank you, Madame Chair. On  
39 behalf of Mr. Peltola we thank Mr. Schmid and Mr.  
40 Risdahl for those updates and that additional  
41 information.

42

43 Gunalcheesh.

44

45 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you very  
46 much for that --for the updates onthat and thebriefing.

47

48 Do we need some additional time or does  
49 anybody else have any additional questions for Mr.

50

0071

1 Risdahl.

2

3

(No comments)

4

5

6

7

8

9

ACTING CHAIR PITKA: I didn't see any action items on there. Okay. There were no action items, it was just a briefing. So we'll take maybe a 10 minute recess or so until we get our next presenter here.

10

11

12

Is that enough time do you think?

13

14

MS. DETWILER: I think so.

15

16

17

18

ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Okay. So we'll come back -- we'll come back at 2:00 p.m. and hopefully everything the rest of the day works out wonderfully.

19

20

(Laughter)

21

22

ACTING CHAIR PITKA: And smoothly.

23

24

MR. BROWER: I hope so because we're behind there, Madame Chair.

25

26

27

ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you. Okay.  
2:00 p.m.

28

29

(Off record)

30

31

(On record)

32

33

34

ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Do we need another roll call, Sue, or are we okay?

35

36

37

MS. DETWILER: I think we're probably okay.

38

39

40

41

ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Okay. Okay. We have our next presenter, this is agenda item number -- I lost my agenda. Okay.

42

43

REPORTER: Number 9.

44

45

46

47

48

49

ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you. Agenda item number 9, briefing Federal fisheries manager and delegation of authority, Scott Ayers. And thank you very much for, you know, accommodating us and coming down here. We definitely appreciate it.

50

1 MR. AYERS: Okay. Well, I'm glad to be  
2 here and hopefully everyone can clearly hear me now as  
3 clearly was not the evidence -- the case previously.  
4 So again I will try now for the third time. This is  
5 Scott Ayers, I'm the Supervisor for the Fisheries  
6 Division at OSM and I'm here today to provide you a  
7 briefing on the delegation of authority for Federal  
8 fisheries managers, a topic that we hope to include in  
9 your January fisheries regulatory meeting. Today's  
10 briefing is intended kind of just as a bridge to that  
11 discussion.

12  
13 So the Board has delegated authority to  
14 managers of both fish and wildlife resources around the  
15 State to issue special actions to contend with resource  
16 issues in a timely manner. These actions come in two  
17 different types, emergency special actions that can  
18 last up to 60 days and temporary special actions that  
19 can last up until the next regulatory cycle and require  
20 a public hearing. There's one stark difference between  
21 these letters to the fish and wildlife managers in that  
22 all 58 wildlife delegation letters allow for the  
23 issuance of both emergency and temporary special  
24 actions, while the 18 fisheries delegation letters only  
25 allow for emergency special actions. The 60 day limit  
26 on the fisheries actions can be challenging in some  
27 situations like the current Yukon salmon season where  
28 the Board has limited the fishery on Federal public  
29 lands for salmon to Federally-qualified users from June  
30 1st to September 30th which is a period of 121 days.  
31 Due to the exceptionally poor run strength which we  
32 discussed earlier today and the lack of harvestable  
33 surplus the Federal fisheries manager has to close the  
34 fisheries through a series of emergency special actions  
35 over the course of multiple runs rather than one or two  
36 larger actions that would encompass the season.

37  
38 Between now and the January meeting we  
39 plan to review program documentation to understand if  
40 there's a record of why this discrepancy exist. Based  
41 on these findings we may come to you with a request to  
42 update the delegation of authority letters to some or  
43 all of the fisheries letters to include temporary  
44 special actions.

45  
46 And that is the extent of my comments  
47 today. I'm happy to answer any questions and I'm sorry  
48 that our technological issue delayed this as long as it  
49 did.

0073

1 Thank you.

2

3 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: You're fine.  
4 Thank you very much. We could hear you clearly this  
5 morning, but for some reason after we came back from  
6 lunch we couldn't hear certain lines.

7

8 Does anybody have any questions for  
9 Scott right now on this briefing?

10

11 (No comments)

12

13 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Charlie, do you  
14 have any questions for Scott?

15

16 (No comments)

17

18 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Sara, are you  
19 still online and do you have any questions for Scott?

20

21 MS. BOARIO: Not at this time, but it  
22 is really -- I'm so sorry, it is really hard -- it was  
23 hard to hear Scott. Before he was coming in really  
24 loud for me and now he's very faint. Appreciate you  
25 guys' effort with the technology.

26

27

28 MS. DETWILER: Sorry about that. He  
29 came here in person and now you can't hear him on the  
30 phone.

31

32 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you very  
33 much. We have no further questions right now and we  
34 look forward to the further presentation in January.

35

36 At this time, I forgot to do it this  
37 morning, I'd like everybody to introduce themselves now  
38 that it's like 2:00 o'clock in the afternoon.

39

40 Go ahead, Glenn.

41

42 MR. CHEN: Good afternoon, everyone.  
43 My name is Glenn Chen. I'm the Subsistence Branch  
44 Chief for the Bureau of Indian Affairs. And with Gene  
45 retiring soon he's asked me to be the BIA Board member  
46 until we hire a new Regional Director.

47

48

49 Thank you.

50

0074

1 MR. COHN: Good afternoon. I'm Steve  
2 Cohn. I'm the State Director for BLM here in Alaska  
3 and have been in this role now for two months.

4  
5 MS. DETWILER: And I'm Sue Detwiler,  
6 the Assistant Regional Director for the Office of  
7 Subsistence Management within Fish and Wildlife  
8 Service. And I have been in this position for about  
9 two and a half years now. And this is actually the  
10 first in person meeting I've been to since I've been  
11 here and seeing a lot of people I've never met in  
12 person before, but I've seen them on Teams a lot.

13  
14 And also I want to say thank you to  
15 everybody for your patience with our technological  
16 issues. This is a whole new set of technological  
17 issues now that we're meeting in person, but still  
18 trying to have teleconference availability. So thank  
19 you for your patience as we work through this.

20  
21 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: I'm Rhonda Pitka.  
22 I am Acting Chair right now while Tony Christianson is  
23 on leave. His -- he just had a beautiful  
24 granddaughter. He sent some pictures so I forgive him  
25 for making me Chair the meeting today.....

26  
27 (Laughter)

28  
29 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: .....and having to  
30 prepare myself and deal with all these technological  
31 issues.

32  
33 I'd like to thank everybody for, you  
34 know, being really -- really flexible for this meeting  
35 and it's really good to see everybody in person. And I  
36 think that's about it for now.

37  
38 Go ahead.

39  
40 MR. SCHMID: Hi. Good afternoon. I'm  
41 Dave Schmid. I serve as the USDA Forest Service  
42 Regional Forester here in Alaska. I spent most of my  
43 career here in Alaska living and working in rural  
44 Southcentral and rural Southeast Alaska. And I came  
45 back five years ago here -- almost five years ago, I've  
46 been working with this Board. And as I've shared  
47 before this is some of the most important work that we  
48 do within the Forest Service in Alaska.

49  
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0075

1 Thank you.

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Thank you.

MR. HILDERBRAND: Good afternoon. I'm Grant Hilderbrand. I'm the Associate Regional Director for Resources for the National Park Service. I've been in Alaska since 1994, spent the first 12 years of my career with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game as a Research Biologist and later as a Regional Supervisory. And then moved to the Department of Interior in 2010. I spent time with the USGS as Associate Science Center Director for the Alaska Science Center and now I've been in this particular role with Parks Service for about four or five months. So yeah, really happy to be here and learn and work with my new peers.

ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you. I don't know how we would do the other people, we usually have a microphone.

(Off record comments - microphone)

MS. DETWILER: So, Robin and Chris, you guys want to kick it off.

ACTING CHAIR PITKA: We used to have like a microphone we could pass around.

MR. MCKEE: Good afternoon, members of the Board. My name is Chris McKee and I am the Statewide Subsistence Coordinator for the Bureau of Land Management. I've been in that position for about a little over two years now. Previous to that I worked at OSM for about 10 years.

So welcome.

MS. KLEIN: Good afternoon, members of the Board and guests. My name is Jill Klein and I'm the Regional Subsistence Coordinator for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service serving as the InterAgency Staff Committee members as well and I've been in my position for just over one year. And previously I did serve in the role as the liaison for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to the Federal Subsistence Board and also worked for the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association for just about 15 years and I'm happy to be here.

Thank you.

0076

1 MS. JOCHUM: Hello, members of the  
2 Board. My name is Kim Jochum. I work for the National  
3 Park Service in the Regional Subsistence Program and  
4 it's been just under two years for me in this position.  
5 So this is my first Federal job, I've been in Alaska  
6 for over 12 years. I have an accent because I grew up  
7 in Germany, but I'm really happy to still be in Alaska.

8  
9 Thanks.

10  
11 MS. PATTON: Good afternoon, members of  
12 the Board. My name is Eva Patton and I'm the new  
13 Subsistence Program Manager for the National Park  
14 Service having just started two months ago there.  
15 Previously worked with OSM for the past 10 years prior  
16 to that. So familiar group of folks here. And had  
17 worked as a Fisheries Biologist in the YK-Delta region  
18 too, the Partners for Fisheries Monitoring Program and  
19 many other fisheries resource monitoring program  
20 research projects as well.

21  
22 So thank you all, it's great to see  
23 everyone in person here today.

24  
25 Thank you.

26  
27 MR. RISDAHL: Good afternoon, Madame  
28 Chair and members of the Board, the public. I just  
29 introduced myself a moment ago, but I'll give a little  
30 more detail. My name is Greg Risdahl, I am the  
31 Subsistence Program Leader for the U.S. Forest Service  
32 and InterAgency Staff Committee member. My career  
33 began in Montana in 1984 and '85 as a Bear Biologist  
34 for the Forest Service so I've kind of come full  
35 circle. Finished graduate school and worked for  
36 Montana Department of Fish and Wildlife and Parks for  
37 15 years as a Fish and Wildlife Management Area  
38 Biologist. And then I had to get back to Alaska so I  
39 took a position with Fish and Wildlife Service and  
40 worked as a Subsistence or excuse me, as an Endangered  
41 Species Biologist for a couple of years and then I  
42 joined OSM and was a Wildlife Analyst and then the  
43 Wildlife Division Chief for quite a while. And I just  
44 felt compelled to get back out in the field so I took a  
45 Refuge Manage job up at Tetlin Wildlife Refuge. From  
46 there I went to Kofa National Wildlife Refuge in  
47 Arizona for three years and then had the opportunity to  
48 come back and became the Refuge Manage at Izembek  
49 National Wildlife Refuge. From there my wife said you  
50

0077

1 need to come home, honey, and she was in town so I  
2 moved back to Anchorage and worked as the Subsistence  
3 Division Lead for Fisheries. And then Forest Service  
4 position came open and I've been in this position for  
5 about a year and a half now.

6

7

Thank you.

8

9

10 MR. LIND: Good afternoon, Madame  
11 Chair, Board members. My name is Orville Lind. I was  
12 born and raised in a small village on the Alaska  
13 Peninsula called Chignik, Chignik Lake with a whopping  
14 population about 130 people. The population now is  
15 about 48 people, a commercial fishing community. There  
16 are three Chigniks down there actually and they're  
17 struggling right now, they're having a bad season as  
18 you may have heard. But I started off with the Service  
19 in 1990 and was a Refuge Information Technician and  
20 then in 1994 I was promoted to Refuge Ranger and from  
21 there I went to be a research vessel Captain for four  
22 years and then onto Native Liaison December of 2014.  
23 And like the military always says, it's not a job, it's  
24 an adventure.....

24

25

(Laughter)

26

27

28

MR. LIND: .....and I certainly enjoy  
my work.

29

30

Quyana. Thank you.

31

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MS. LaVINE: Hello, Madame Chair and  
members of the Board. As you heard earlier I'm Robbin  
LaVine, I am the Subsistence Policy Coordinator at OSM,  
but I have been working with and alongside the Federal  
Subsistence Management Program since I started as an  
intern at OSM I think in 2001. So it's been a long  
journey. I was -- I worked for the Bristol Bay Native  
Association, I lived in Dillingham with my young family  
at the time, I worked for the Alaska Department of Fish  
and Game as a Subsistence Research Specialist and I've  
been with OSM since 2014. I love my work, I love this  
program and I'm delighted to be here. And again as I  
said I'm delighted to see you all.

45

46

Thank you.

47

48

49

50

MR. BURCH: Hello. I'm Mark Burch with  
the Department of Fish and Game.

0078

1 (Laughter)

2

3 UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: Short and sweet.

4

5 MR. REAKOFF: And Jack Reakoff, Western  
6 Interior Regional Council's on the phone.

7

8 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you, Jack.  
9 Charlie Brower, you want to introduce yourself.

10

11 (No comments)

12

13 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Sara, would you  
14 like to do an introduction.

15

16 MS. BOARIO: Thank you, Madame Chair.  
17 Good afternoon, everyone. This is Sara Boario. I'm  
18 the Regional Director for the Fish and Wildlife Service  
19 in Alaska. I have been in this position for just over  
20 four months, but have been with the Fish and Wildlife  
21 Service for eight years all in Alaska and prior to that  
22 with the U.S. Forest Service for close to nine years  
23 all in Alaska as well. And prior to that served as  
24 Chief of Staff to Alaska State Senator Georgianna  
25 Lincoln.

26

27 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: I'm sorry, all  
28 we're hearing is clicking.

29

30 MS. BOARIO: .....a big town compared  
31 to Alaska, Yakutat and Sand Point and then eventually  
32 ended up in Fairbanks for high school. I live in  
33 Anchorage now -- can you guys hear me, I'm getting a  
34 message I'm not coming through.

35

36 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: I'm sorry, you  
37 said your name and then it just went to a clicking  
38 noise. I'm not sure what happened there. It seems  
39 like we hear some people on the line, but not -- not  
40 everyone. So maybe we'll just finish introductions  
41 with the rest of the room until then. Sorry.

42

43 MR. MULLIGAN: Hi. My name's Ben  
44 Mulligan, I serve as the Deputy Commissioner for the  
45 Alaska Department of Fish and Game. I also oversee all  
46 our dealings with the Federal Subsistence Board and  
47 just in some other places where Federal subsistence  
48 touches State management as well. Along with that I  
49 also oversee our Habitat Section which means fish  
50

0079

1 habitat permits. So fish passage, stuff like that,  
2 culverts, bridges, resource development activities and  
3 then just a lot of other miscellaneous things, you  
4 know, duties as assigned.

5

6 Thank you.

7

8 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you. Lisa.

9

10 MR. BROWER: Rhonda, I was on listening  
11 mode. This is Charles Brower, Public Member.

12

13 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Go ahead, Charlie.

14

15 MR. BROWER: Yeah, they had me on  
16 listening mode only. So Charlie Brower from Barrow,  
17 Alaska.

18

19 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: I'm not -- was  
20 that your introduction, Charlie Brower?

21

22 (No comments)

23

24 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Well, we're at  
25 Lisa now.

26

27 MS. GREDIGAN: Thank you. Lisa  
28 Gredigan, I'm the Wildlife Division Supervisor with  
29 OSM. I've been in this position a little over a year  
30 and prior to that I was a Wildlife Biologist Analyst  
31 with OSM for about six years.

32

33 Thank you.

34

35 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you. Next.

36

37 MR. AYERS: Scott Ayers, happy to be  
38 here in the room with everyone. I am the Fisheries  
39 Division Supervisor. Prior to that I spent a little  
40 bit of time, a couple of years, with the Wildlife and  
41 Sportfish Restoration Program and was with OSM as a  
42 Fisheries Biologist before that. I also spent a number  
43 of years working for the Alaska Department of Fish and  
44 Game, both for the Sportfish and Commercial Fisheries  
45 Divisions and then a whole lot of years as a technician  
46 for the Fish and Wildlife Service across the State  
47 enjoying being able to get out and do projects across  
48 this great State we have here. Happy to be here today  
49 and glad to see people in person.

50

0080

1 Thank you.

2

3 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you.

4

5 MS. HONIG: Hi. Thank you. My name is  
6 Leigh Honig and I am one of the newly hired Council  
7 Coordinators. I came from Fish and Game where I spent  
8 the last 13 years in a variety of roles that all dealt  
9 with regulations and permit hunt administration. And  
10 I'm the Council Coordinator for the North Slope and the  
11 Bristol Bay Regional Advisory Councils.

12

13 Thank you.

14

15 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you.

16

17 MR. UBELAKER: Good afternoon. I am  
18 Brian Ubelaker, a Wildlife Biologist with OSM. Been  
19 doing it for just about a year and a half now. Prior  
20 to that I was with BLM out in Nome for a couple of  
21 years. Really happy to be here.

22

23 Thank you.

24

25 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you. Who'd  
26 we miss.

27

28 MR. RICHARDS: Good afternoon, Madame  
29 Chair, members of the Board and Staff. My name is Mark  
30 Richards, I'm the Executive Director of Resident  
31 Hunters of Alaska. For over 30 years my wife and I  
32 lived a true subsistence lifestyle in the remote bush,  
33 about 80 miles from the nearest village. And I'm just  
34 here today to testify on WSA22-02.

35

36 Thank you for holding this meeting in  
37 public. It's good to be here.

38

39 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you for  
40 coming, I appreciate it.

41

42 Brooke.

43

44 MS. McDAVID: Madame Chair, members of  
45 the Board. Hello, again. My name is Brooke McDavid  
46 and I am the Council Coordinator for the Yukon-  
47 Kuskokwim Delta and the Eastern Interior Regional  
48 Advisory Councils. I am pretty new Staff here at OSM,  
49 I just came on in March. And prior to this position I  
50

0081

1 worked for the State for six years in the Division of  
2 Subsistence as a Subsistence Resource specialist in the  
3 Yukon and Interior regions. So I got to -- as part of  
4 that job I got to travel out to a lot of rural  
5 communities and gather data on community use of  
6 subsistence resources, sharing and also ethnographic  
7 customary and traditional use information. Prior to  
8 that I served in the U.S. Peace Corps in the Fiji  
9 Islands for four years working with rural indigenous  
10 community there doing integrated resource management  
11 and small scale community development programs. So.....

12

13 Thank you.

14

15 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you.

16

17 MR. BROWER: Madame Chair. Madame  
18 Chair.

19

20 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Yes, Charlie  
21 Brower.

22

23 MR. BROWER: Sorry for the short  
24 introduction, but born and raised in Barrow, went to  
25 school Oregon, went to college in Kansas, joined the  
26 service '69 to '75, went home, got a job as a  
27 Subsistence Specialist for the North Slope Borough  
28 Wildlife Department. From there I became the Executive  
29 Management for the Fish and Game for the Borough, then  
30 I got promoted to the Director of Wildlife for the  
31 North Slope Borough Wildlife Management. Retired from  
32 there for 25years. Then also in that time I was the --  
33 one of the co-founders for the Polar Bear Nanook  
34 Commission in the -- on the Chukchi on the Russian and  
35 the United States side and one of the co-founders for  
36 the Southern (indiscernible - distortion) Sea Polar  
37 Bear Management with (indiscernible - distortion)  
38 Inupiats subsistence uses. Also one of the founders of  
39 the Alaska Migratory Bird Treaty Act that was signed  
40 1992 or somewhere around there. And now I'm working  
41 for the Native Village of Barrow as a Wildlife Director  
42 and the Transportation Manager. For now the -- I've  
43 been appointed Executive Director for Native Village of  
44 Barrow. So that's where I am right now for your short  
45 information.

46

47 Thank you, Madame Chair.

48

49 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you,

50

0082

1 Charlie. We sort of lost you at the end so I've just  
2 been given instructions that we're going to be getting  
3 a different conference phone so we'll be able to  
4 perhaps have all the testimony at some point.

5

6 Go ahead, Ma'am.

7

8 MS. GILL: Thank you, Madame Chair,  
9 members of the Board. My name is Jessica Gill, I'm a  
10 new Subsistence Council Coordinator with OSM here. I'm  
11 working on the Southcentral Regional Advisory Council.  
12 Before that I was with the Pacific Salmon Commission in  
13 Vancouver, BC, working as a Fisheries Biologist for  
14 them and before that grad school and then a Fisheries  
15 Biologist at the State of Alaska. And previously a  
16 fisheries observer as well. So been kind of all over  
17 the fish and all over the State for fish stuff.

18

19 So happy to be back in Alaska.

20

21 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you. It's  
22 nice to meet you. Linda, do you want to finish this  
23 up.

24

25 MS. PETE: Good evening or afternoon.  
26 My name is Linda Pete. Born and raised in Gakona. My  
27 -- I'll do my traditional introduction. My  
28 grandparents are the late Buster and Alice Jean of  
29 Gakona and Jim and Penny Kiane of Gakona. My parents  
30 were the late Nick and Betty Tyone. I currently reside  
31 in Copper Center. I came -- got involved with  
32 subsistence stuff maybe 20 years ago when the State of  
33 Alaska was threatening to take over trying to make our  
34 area a non-subsistence area. And been involved in  
35 State and Federal subsistence issues for our area. I  
36 currently sit -- am the Chair of the Ahtna Intertribal  
37 Resource Commission and I sit on the Ahtna Board of  
38 Directors. I am a Council member for the Native  
39 Village of Gakona. So that's me.

40

41 Thank you.

42

43 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you. It's  
44 really good to see you again.

45

46 MS. PETE: Yep.

47

48 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: We have a couple  
49 of newer Staff in the back.

50

0083

1 MR. SHAVINGS: Good afternoon, Madame  
2 Chair, members of the Board. My name is Bernard  
3 Shavings. I am Alaska Native and I was born in Bethel,  
4 Alaska and raised on Nunivak Island to Mekoryuk,  
5 Alaska. And I moved here in 1976 and then my -- I  
6 guess my first real job was with the United States Navy  
7 which I did four years and then I got out and then I've  
8 had various different jobs. And then I got hired at  
9 the Department of Veterans Affairs for -- I was there  
10 for about two and a half years. And then I went and  
11 got other various jobs and now I'm here at U.S. Fish  
12 and Wildlife Service with OSM as Administrative  
13 Support.

14  
15 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you. It's  
16 nice to meet you.

17  
18 MS. ANDREWS: Hello, Madame, members of  
19 the Board. My name is Michelle Andrews and my first  
20 job was actually with the Fish and Wildlife Services  
21 when I was in high school. I've served in the military  
22 and I've had various medical jobs and medical  
23 administration as well as the Department of Justice and  
24 now with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife.

25  
26 Thank you.

27  
28 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: We finally  
29 finished everybody at 2:30. Oops, Ameer.

30  
31 MS. HOWARD: Hi, everyone. I am Ameer  
32 Howard. I am the Deputy Assistant Regional Director  
33 for the Office of Subsistence Management. This is --  
34 I'm a returnee, I was previously the Policy Coordinator  
35 at OSM, what seems like many moons ago, but really not  
36 that long ago. I've worked with a lot of you, I'm  
37 excited to get to know the new members of the Board,  
38 new members of the ISC, excited to see long time  
39 colleagues advance and grow and develop. We have an  
40 incredible team just coming onboard at OSM that I'm  
41 super happy we got to introduce you to everyone. Not  
42 everyone because we do have some folks on the phone and  
43 if we can clear up some of our technical difficulties  
44 hopefully we can get to some of them as well. But  
45 looking forward to OSM growing and definitely stepping  
46 up in this new hybrid world that we are all entering  
47 into. That it's great to see all of you who are here  
48 in person. We miss everyone who is on the phone, but  
49 can't wait to see you in person in the future.

50

0084

1                                   And again Ameer Howard and happy to be  
2 back with OSM.

3  
4                                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you. Okay.  
5 I feel like I'm willing to try it again. Can we see if  
6 there are any Regional Council Coordinators or advisors  
7 online.

8  
9                                   MS. WESSELS: Madame Chair, this is  
10 Katya, can you hear me?

11  
12                                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA: I can hear you.

13  
14                                   MS. WESSELS: You know, I actually got  
15 off the bluetooth so I'm just speaking into the phone,  
16 is that better?

17  
18                                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Much better.

19  
20                                   MS. WESSELS: Okay. Thank you. My  
21 name is Katya Wessels and I've lived in Alaska now for  
22 32 years. I've been working at first for the National  
23 Park Service for 26 years for their Division of Council  
24 Resources as well as for the Shared (indiscernible -  
25 distortion) .....

26  
27                                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA: I'm sorry, it's  
28 breaking up again. My apologies.

29  
30                                   Okay. Maybe we will take a brief  
31 recess and try to get the conference call set up.  
32 Okay. So we'll take a brief recess until 2:40 and then  
33 we'll try to figure out the phone lines and we'll come  
34 back.

35  
36                                   Thank you.

37  
38                                   (Off record)

39  
40                                   (On record)

41  
42                                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Okay. So we're  
43 back online and we have some updates.

44  
45                                   Can we do a roll call, Sue, and then --  
46 and then Robbin will provide us with some logistical  
47 updates.

48  
49                                   MS. DETWILER: Thank you, Madame Chair.

50

0085

1 Starting with the roll call.

2

3 National Park Service, Grant  
4 Hilderbrand.

5

6 MR. HILDERBRAND: Present.

7

8 MS. DETWILER: Bureau of Land  
9 Management, Steve Cohn.

10

11 MR. COHN: Present.

12

13 MS. DETWILER: Fish and Wildlife  
14 Service, I understand Sara Boario had to leave and Jill  
15 Klein will be sitting in for her.

16

17 MS. KLEIN: Present.

18

19 MS. DETWILER: Thank you. Forest  
20 Service, Dave Schmid.

21

22 MR. SCHMID: Present.

23

24 MS. DETWILER: BIA, Glenn Chen.

25

26 MR. CHEN: Present.

27

28 MS. DETWILER: Public member Charlie  
29 Brower.

30

31 MR. BROWER: I'm right here.

32

33 MS. DETWILER: Thank you, Charlie. And  
34 Rhonda Pitka.

35

36 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Here.

37

38 MS. DETWILER: Thank you, Madame Chair.  
39 We have seven Board members.

40

41 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you. So at  
42 this time I'd like to mention that tomorrow we will  
43 have an executive session. We'll be going over the  
44 Board recommendations on the Regional Advisory Council  
45 nominations. And we will also discuss attorney/client  
46 stuff.

47

48 MS. DETWILER: Privilege.

49

50

0086

1                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Privilege. Okay.  
2 Thank you. And now Robbin LaVine is going to provide  
3 us with a logistical update.

4  
5                   MS. LaVINE: Thank you, Madame Chair,  
6 members of the Board and all of those who are listening  
7 online. We've had some technical difficulties here in  
8 our live conference room. We understand that you can  
9 hear each other on the teleconference and you can hear  
10 us on the teleconference, but we cannot hear you, not  
11 for very long. We have a lot of dissonance and  
12 distortion on this end. So we are attempting to create  
13 some patches in order to ensure that we hear you. That  
14 is the most important thing because shortly we are  
15 going to be transitioning to our public meeting on  
16 wildlife special action 22-02 and that agenda item will  
17 have an opportunity for the public to provide testimony  
18 to the Board. At that time there's going to be a  
19 shift, you may hear a little bit of -- there may be  
20 some feedback, we may have some technical challenges on  
21 our end to dial it in, but we are switching, pivoting  
22 to an in room speaker phone so that we will be able to  
23 hear you. We ask you to be patient, we're grateful for  
24 all of you who are online ready to participate and we  
25 are doing our very best to accommodate you and make  
26 sure that you are heard.

27  
28                   Thank you, Madame Chair.

29  
30                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you very  
31 much for that update and I'd like to thank everybody  
32 for having patience with these technical problems.

33  
34                   Okay. We are at agenda item number 7  
35 which had a start time of 3:00 p.m., Wildlife Temporary  
36 Special Action Request, WSA22-02.

37  
38                   MR. UBELAKER: Good afternoon, Madame  
39 Chair, members of the Board. My name is Brian  
40 Ubelaker, I'm a Wildlife Biologist with OSM and I will  
41 be presenting a summary of the analysis for temporary  
42 wildlife special action, WSA22-02 which was submitted  
43 by the Western Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional  
44 Advisory Council. This analysis begins on page 125 in  
45 your meeting books.

46  
47                   Temporary special action, WSA22-02,  
48 requests that dall sheep hunting on Federal public  
49 lands in Units 24A and 26B, west of the Sagavanirktok  
50

0087

1 River be closed to all users for the 2022/'23 and  
2 '23/'24 wildlife regulatory years.

3

4

5 The Western Interior Council is  
6 concerned about the decreasing sheep abundance on the  
7 Dalton Highway. Since 2012 unusual weather conditions  
8 have caused declines in sheep abundance resulting in  
9 low lamb recruitment, poor lamb production and loss of  
10 mature rams. Increased predation by wolves is also  
11 believed to have contributed to the decline and  
12 abundance. Surveys conducted in 2021 by the BLM, the  
13 National Park Service and ADF&G showed lower numbers  
14 than from prior surveys.

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The Western Interior Council expresses  
frustration over the lack of biological data  
particularly the failure to collect age composition  
data on rams. Currently six and seven year old rams  
remain in the population, but there are very few two to  
five year old rams. The Council notes past studies  
have demonstrated detrimental affects of young rams  
breeding ewes in the absence of more mature rams  
including higher post-rut ram mortality and lower lamb  
production.

The Western Interior Council further  
states that the full curl management strategy employed  
by ADF&G works only when there is consistent ram  
recruitment, not when several cohorts are missing.  
They argue that harvesting the remaining six and seven  
year old rams over the next two years which is likely  
to occur under the current management regime, will  
exacerbate the recovery of these sheep populations  
since there are no two to five year old rams to take  
their place.

Relevant regulatory actions include the  
Board establishing the requirement of a Federal  
registration permit for sheep hunting in the Dalton  
Highway Corridor Management Area in 1992. This set a  
harvest limit of one ram with seven-eighths curl or  
larger and a season of August 10th to September 20th.  
In 2004 the season for sheep in a portion of Unit 24  
was shifted to later in the year. This provided  
additional subsistence hunting opportunity after the  
end of the moose season. Then in 2006 the Board  
aligned Federal and State regulations by incorporating  
new State subunit descriptions into Federal  
regulations. In 2012 the Board adopted regulation to

1 allow harvest of half-curl horn or larger rams in Unit  
2 24A for the 2012 season. In 2014 the harvest limit for  
3 sheep in Unit 24A outside of the Gates of the Arctic  
4 changed from a seven-eighths curl horn or larger to one  
5 ram. These actions were expected to have little or no  
6 impact on sheep abundance because sheep population  
7 estimates were stable and Federal harvest rates were  
8 minimal.

9  
10 In 2015 in adjacent Units 23 and 26A  
11 the Board of Game closed all sheep seasons because of a  
12 drastic decline in sheep abundance in the area. Sheep  
13 seasons in Unit 23 have since remained closed under  
14 State regulations. In 2020 the Board of Game extended  
15 the State sheep season with the Dalton Highway Corridor  
16 Management Area by 15 days. This was approved because  
17 of low number of sheep harvested in the area, the  
18 belief that few hunters would or could access the area  
19 in late September or early October and a stable sheep  
20 population. Although one member of the Board of Game  
21 opposed this proposal because the Koyukuk River  
22 Advisory Committee was opposed to it.

23  
24 Recently occurring events include a  
25 letter sent to the BLM of Alaska in February of 2022  
26 from the Western Interior Council requesting a  
27 cessation of all permitted hunting guides on BLM  
28 managed land within Unit 24A stating the same concerns  
29 as in their special action request as their rationale.  
30 The ADF&G Koyukuk River Advisory Committee submitted a  
31 letter of concern to the Board of Game at their March,  
32 2022 meeting requesting them to issue an emergency  
33 order to close or drastically reduce sheep harvest in  
34 Unit 24A for two regulatory years emphasizing similar  
35 concerns for the sheep population.

36  
37 OSM held a public hearing to solicit  
38 comments for this special action request on April 28th,  
39 2022. Seventeen people testified seven of which were  
40 Wiseman/Coldfoot residents in support of the request.  
41 All stated there has been a visible decline in the  
42 sheep population in the last five years. They felt  
43 that ceasing all hunting for two years would give the  
44 sheep a reprieve and allow a successful recovery in the  
45 future. Nine testifiers were non-Federally-qualified  
46 users who are in opposition to the requested closure.  
47 The most common opinion was that ADF&G data showed that  
48 sheep population is low, but is still healthy enough to  
49 have a harvestable surplus. Most believe the full curl  
50

0089

1 management regime justifies harvest during periods of  
2 low population because none of the primary breeding  
3 population is removed, only rams past their prime.  
4 Several callers asserted the Dalton Highway Corridor  
5 Management Area is the only non-draw archery harvest  
6 ticket hunt for dall sheep available in Alaska and bow  
7 hunters take a very small portion of sheep in these  
8 units.

9

10 The North Slope Regional Advisory  
11 Council acted on this requested at their winter, 2022  
12 meeting. They felt the request was justified due to  
13 the population decline and recommended to support the  
14 closure.

15

16 In the 1980s there was an estimated  
17 30,000 sheep in the Brooks Range. The eastern Brooks  
18 Range experienced a decline during the 1990s when an  
19 estimated 40 percent of the population was lost. The  
20 most likely cause of this decline was severe weather.  
21 Sheep surveys in the central Brooks Range suggested a  
22 low sheep population from the 1970s through about 1982.  
23 Then after a brief population increase they experienced  
24 a decline from '87 to the mid '90s. Once again recent  
25 weather events have affected the sheep population in  
26 the central and eastern Brooks Range. The extended  
27 winter weather in the spring of 2013 and rain on snow  
28 events in both October, 2018 and March, 2019 had  
29 dramatic effects on sheep populations, like a 39  
30 percent reduction in the sheep abundance within the  
31 Itkillik area.

32

33 ADF&G surveys one area of the Brooks  
34 Range which covers 800 square miles in eastern Unit 24A  
35 and western Unit 25A. The survey obtains a minimum  
36 count of sheep as well as an index of sex and age  
37 composition and mid summer lamb recruitment. The  
38 minimum count survey results in an index to trend in  
39 abundance and composition over time in this geographic  
40 area and cannot be used estimate total population  
41 numbers for the survey area or for the Brooks Range  
42 sheep range. While the minimum count surveys conducted  
43 by ADF&G make it difficult to establish short term  
44 trends, dramatic changes of abundance are likely  
45 detectable with this methodology. But with limited  
46 survey data available the magnitude and extent of  
47 declines cannot be quantified.

48

49 The BLM and the NPS cooperatively

50

0090

1 survey areas along the Dalton Highway Corridor. They  
2 use distance sampling in a model to produce population  
3 estimates for the larger, non-surveyed areas. This  
4 method includes a measure of precision called the  
5 credible interval which is correlated to the overall  
6 number of observations. Hence as observations increase  
7 credible intervals decrease and vice versa. Because of  
8 differing survey methodology ADF&G survey results are  
9 not directly comparable with the BLM/NPS survey  
10 results, but they still trend in concert with each  
11 other.

12

13 ADF&G minimum count data remains stable  
14 with an average 1,398 total sheep from 2002 to 2012.  
15 Then in the 2014 count coinciding with the severe  
16 winter of 2013/'14, the total count dropped to 827  
17 sheep. The cohort of lambs from this period would be  
18 the eight year olds, it would be legal rams to harvest  
19 in 2022. Later surveys conducted in 2018 and 2021 show  
20 losses of 31.8 percent and 66.4 percent total sheep  
21 respectively. The current count is 469 total sheep  
22 based on 2021 ADF&G survey results. Since 2002 ADF&G  
23 has counted an average of 24.9 percent of the survey  
24 area as rams. Of all rams counted from 2002 to 2021 an  
25 average of 14.8 percent were full curl or larger which  
26 is 3.2 percent of total sheep counted. The number of  
27 legal rams at the last count in 2021 was 12 which is  
28 2.5 percent of the total 2021 sheep count. The lamb to  
29 ewe-like ratio has averaged 25.2 lambs from 2002 to  
30 2021. 2018 was a higher than average year with 36  
31 lambs to 100 ewe-likes followed by a lower than average  
32 22 lambs to 100 ewe-likes in the latest survey in 2021.

33

34 In the 1A, 1B survey areas the BLM  
35 estimates 293 total dall sheep for 2021 which is a 77  
36 percent decrease from results of their survey conducted  
37 in 2015. This result is also much lower than the  
38 estimate from the previously conducted survey by the  
39 BLM of 1,103 in 2018. The number of full curl rams has  
40 substantially declined within the same time frame from  
41 estimates of 46 in 2014 and 45 in 2016 to seven, one  
42 and five full-curl in 2017, '18 and '21 respectively.  
43 The BLM full survey area estimate decreased 62.1  
44 percent from 3,241 sheep in 2015 to 1,229 sheep in  
45 2021.

46

47 In the Southeast Gates of the Arctic  
48 survey unit, National Park Service estimates there were  
49 2,525 total sheep in 2015. The population from the  
50

0091

1 latest survey completed in 2021 dropped 56.4 percent to  
2 1,100 sheep. The Itkillik survey area also declined  
3 from an estimated 1,577 sheep in 2012 to an estimated  
4 825 sheep in 2013 because of severe winter weather and  
5 since then has remained stable at these lower levels.  
6 The average population estimate from 2013 to '19 for  
7 the Itkillik survey area is 673 total sheep. The 2021  
8 survey resulted in an estimate of 504 total sheep which  
9 is a decline of 25.1 percent since 2019.

10

11 Ram abundance in both BLM and NPS  
12 survey areas has declined in recent years. In the BLM  
13 full survey area legal ram numbers dropped from an  
14 estimated 59 rams in 2015 to 12 rams in 2021. In 2015  
15 full curl rams accounted for 1.8 percent of the total  
16 estimate population in the BLM full survey area. By  
17 2021 that fraction fell almost in half to 2.98 percent.  
18 Full curl rams in Southeast Gates of the Arctic have  
19 declined by 65.7 percent from 137 rams in 2015 to 47  
20 rams in 2021. The overall abundance of full-curl rams  
21 in the central Brooks Range has declined since 2009.  
22 All survey results from all agencies demonstrate a  
23 decline in full curl ram numbers. A drastic decline is  
24 evident when 2021 results are compared to results for  
25 2015, but even when 2021 results are compared to the  
26 average ram abundance per survey area since 2009 a  
27 decline is evident.

28

29 The State manages harvest using a full  
30 curl strategy which is considered a conservative  
31 approach to dall sheep populations. Once sheep are  
32 eight years old their chance of surviving each  
33 additional year is much lower. Harvesting older, full  
34 curl rams allows younger rams in their prime to  
35 continue breeding. Managers can also use the full curl  
36 management strategy as an index for population trend  
37 based on the premise that a decline in sheep harvest  
38 likely reflects a decline in the overall sheep  
39 population. The average age of rams harvested in the  
40 Brooks Range from 1981 to 2013 was 9.3 years old.

41

42 It has been shown in heavily hunted  
43 sheep populations with three-quarter curl horn  
44 restrictions that ewes start being bred at an earlier  
45 age by younger rams. This led to lower reproductive  
46 frequency and possibly a compromised reproductive  
47 fitness of the ewe. When older three-quarter and full  
48 curl rams are removed from the population younger rams  
49 start breeding sooner than they typically would which  
50

1 leads to poor ram survival rates over winter.

2 The effectiveness of the full curl  
3 management strategy relies upon a relatively  
4 undisturbed age -- ram age structure and consistent ram  
5 recruitment. The negative effects of three-quarter  
6 curl management could occur under full curl management  
7 if the ram cohorts that would normally be protected are  
8 few or absent. If all or most full curl rams are  
9 harvested in an area with missing three-quarter and  
10 seven-eighths curl cohorts, only younger rams will be  
11 present in the following year.

12  
13 In Units 24A and 26B there are three  
14 Federal subsistence registration permit hunts as well  
15 as State and general harvest ticket hunts. Federal  
16 permit hunts occur in Units 24A, 24B and 26B and have  
17 harvest limits of one ram, one ram with seven-eighths  
18 curl and up to three sheep, no more than one of which  
19 may be a ewe. State regulations allow general season  
20 hunting under a harvest ticket for all of Units 24A and  
21 26B with seasons from August 1st to October 5th. Only  
22 full curl or larger rams may be harvested under State  
23 regulations.

24  
25 Federal harvest has averaged one sheep  
26 per year from 2017 to 2021 for all three of these  
27 permit hunts. This is down from the average of 1.6  
28 sheep harvested per year from 2001 to 2016. From 2002  
29 to 2021 an average of 52.3 people reported hunting  
30 sheep under State regulations in Unit 24A with an  
31 average of 16.6 sheep reported harvested. Unit 26B  
32 reported an average 158.5 people hunting under State  
33 regulations with a reported average harvest of 47.5  
34 sheep per year from 2002 to 2014. Then from 2015 to  
35 2021 an average 65.5 people reported hunting by harvest  
36 ticket in Unit 26B with an average 18 sheep per year  
37 reported harvested. This decrease in harvest ticket  
38 reports coincides with the population decline from the  
39 severe weather events in 2012 and '13. Notably these  
40 figures also represent hunt reports and harvest for all  
41 of Unit 26B, not just the proposed closure area.  
42 Harvest tickets also do not account for the fact that  
43 people may have hunted in either Unit 24A or 26B  
44 without harvesting and then hunted and harvested and  
45 reported a ram in another unit.

46  
47 Non-resident harvest in 24A and 26B has  
48 averaged 42.8 percent of the total sheep harvest  
49 reported under State regulations from 2002 to 2021.

1 While the total number of resident hunters and  
2 associated harvest has declined since 2013 along with  
3 sheep population estimates non-resident hunter numbers  
4 have remained constant at an average of 35 per year for  
5 that time.

6  
7 According to ADF&G harvest reports an  
8 average of 1.7 sheep were reported as harvested by  
9 archery from 2000 to 2021 in Units 24A and 26B.

10  
11 There were two other alternatives that  
12 were considered for this proposal. I will not go into  
13 details on those in the talking points, but they are in  
14 the analysis. You can read them for yourself if you  
15 prefer.

16  
17 If this special action is approved all  
18 Federal lands in Units 24A and 26B west of the  
19 Sagavanirktok River will be closed to the harvest of  
20 sheep to all users for the 2022/'23 and 2023/'24  
21 regulatory years. This would decrease opportunity for  
22 Federally-qualified subsistence users and for anyone  
23 hunting under State regulations on Federal public land  
24 as sheep would not be available for harvest.  
25 Individuals hunting under State regulations could still  
26 hunt and harvest sheep on private and State lands  
27 within Unit 24A and 26B. This could result in  
28 displacement and crowding of hunters onto these State  
29 managed lands.

30  
31 Substantial conservation concerns,  
32 including drastic population declines and poor  
33 composition metrics threaten the viability of the dall  
34 sheep population along the Dalton Highway Corridor  
35 Management Area. The absence of mature rams can have  
36 cascading negative population level effects which with  
37 younger ram cohorts currently missing may occur if more  
38 mature rams are harvested. Additionally current  
39 harvest rates appear unsustainable as legal ram numbers  
40 have decreased considerably while hunter effort and  
41 harvest in Unit 24A has not. Furthermore lamb  
42 production in 2013 and '14 was abysmal and these are  
43 the eight and nine year old rams which would be  
44 available for harvest this season. For these reasons  
45 no harvestable surplus seems available for these sheep  
46 populations.

47  
48 Similar action has already occurred  
49 under State and Federal regulations for sheep hunting  
50

0094

1 closures in the Brooks Range due to drastic sheep  
2 populations declines and poor lamb production. In 2015  
3 and '16 the State and Federal sheep hunts in Unit 23  
4 were closed due to serious conservation concerns.

5

6 Therefore it is OSM's conclusion to  
7 support wildlife action -- wildlife special action  
8 WSA22-02 with modification to simplify the regulatory  
9 language.

10

11 Thank you, Madame Chair, members of the  
12 Board. I will be happy to answer any questions anybody  
13 may have.

14

15 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you very  
16 much for that presentation. We're now open for  
17 questions and clarification.

18

19 MR. BROWER: Madame Chair.

20

21 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Yes, Public Member  
22 Brower.

23

24 MR. BROWER: Yeah, you stated that if  
25 this special action is approved all Federal land in 24A  
26 and 26B west of the Sagavanirktok River will be closed  
27 to harvest of sheep for all users for '22/23 '23/'24  
28 regulatory years. Does that include subsistence  
29 hunters too or all users meaning everyone?

30

31 MR. UBELAKER: Yes, member Brower. As  
32 the proposal is written the closure would be to anybody  
33 and everybody hunting sheep in 24A and 26B west of the  
34 Sagavanirktok.

35

36 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Are there any  
37 further questions for clarification.

38

39 (No comments)

40

41 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: I was going to  
42 call for Sara, but she's not -- she's not here anymore.

43

44 Okay. Thank you very much for the  
45 presentation. I don't see any more questions. We  
46 would at this time open the floor to public testimony.

47

48 MS. LaVINE: Thank you, Madame Chair.  
49 And for all those online I'm going to ask the operator

50

0095

1 to provide instructions to those listening who would  
2 like to provide testimony as far as how to enter the  
3 queue.

4

5 Operator.

6

7 OPERATOR: Thank you. At this time if  
8 you would like to make a comment please place Star, one  
9 on your telephone key pad. Please ensure that you have  
10 your phone unmuted and you record your name at the  
11 prompt. Again that is Star, one to make a comment and  
12 enter the queue.

13

14 MS. LaVINE: Thank, you operator,  
15 Madame Chair. This is Robbin LaVine and I'm not going  
16 to switch over this teleconference line to the speaker  
17 phone in the room so that we have a better opportunity  
18 to listen to those of you who'd like to public --  
19 provide public testimony online. As I transition you  
20 may reiterate one more time, operator, the instructions  
21 on how people are to enter the queue and I'll be  
22 transitioning folks over.

23

24 Thank you, operator.

25

26 OPERATOR: Thank you. Once again if  
27 you would like to make a comment please place Star, one  
28 on your telephone keypad, ensure your phone is unmuted,  
29 record your name at the prompt.

30

31 MS. LaVINE: Madame Chair, and for  
32 those of you listening online, this is Robbin LaVine.

33

34 REPORTER: Robbin, use -- turn that mic  
35 off and just use your regular mic, yep, when you're  
36 talking. No, no, no, don't put it next to the speaker  
37 phone because -- just use that mic when you're speaking  
38 and use that microphone for when they're speaking. So  
39 leave it off unless they're talking.

40

41 MS. LaVINE: This one?

42

43 REPORTER: Yep. Now use your mic to  
44 speak. Turn it on.

45

46 MS. LaVINE: This is Robbin LaVine with  
47 the Office of Subsistence Management.

48

49 Operator, please -- please introduce

50

0096

1 the first person in the queue.

2

3

Thank you.

4

5

6

OPERATOR: The first person is Rebecca Schwanke. Your line is open.

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MS. SCHWANKE: Yeah, thank you all for the opportunity to offer public comment today. Chairman Reakoff and the Northwest RAC make some valid points about recent impacts of weather on the sheep population in this area. Unfortunately they have made some unnecessary inflammatory statements based -- about sheep population management in an attempt to sway this Board. It is clear they feel this population is in need of a moratorium on hunting. But before you make your decision on this WSA as a Federal Subsistence Board, I ask that you consider a few additional points.

First, this is not the first time sheep populations in Alaska have faced a series of bad winters and it won't be the last. Sheep populations regularly go through cycles of poor lamb recruitment, manifesting in years of limited mature ram availability. As a long time subsistence sheep hunter I can tell you that this alone keeps most sheep hunters home. Non-resident pressure will follow. As a wildlife biologist I can also tell you that this is when full curl regulations are most needed. I have personally watched sheep numbers in the Wrangell Mountains dwindle significantly in the early 2000s due largely to bad weather with a decline almost identical to what we're currently seeing in the central Brooks Range. We responded by systematically reducing the harvest opportunity, going from one sheep to one ram, to one three-quarter curl ram, to eventually one full curl ram in 2011. This has effectively allowed the population to recover even with a Federal hunt of one sheep in place for most of the time. Full curl works in poor sheep range. There is no credible evidence to the contrary and this is not a population viability issue. Definitely as long as sheep continue to move throughout the Brooks Range we must consider this range as a single population.

Having been involved in sheep management for 20 years I caution the Board against making sweeping changes, i.e., closures, without seriously considering the impacts to surrounding areas.

0097

1 If you adopt this WSA today you will effectively be  
2 responsible for pushing additional sheep hunting  
3 pressure to adjacent areas, further exacerbating low  
4 population concerns and putting undue stress on  
5 adjacent sheep. This includes both Federal and State  
6 sheep hunting especially if you leave the Federal  
7 season open to seven-eighths curl east of the  
8 Sagavanirktok River. Sheep in the central Brooks Range  
9 will recover in time, this is not an emergency and this  
10 is not a population viability issue.

11

12 Thank you.

13

14 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: And I'm sorry,  
15 ma'am, I didn't get your name for the record?

16

17 MS. SCHWANKE: Rebecca Schwanke.

18

19 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you. Okay.  
20 Next testimony.

21

22 OPERATOR: Our next comment comes from  
23 Dan Evenson (ph). Please state your name clearly.

24

25 (No comments)

26

27 OPERATOR: Mr. Evenson, your line's  
28 open.

29

30 (No comments)

31

32 OPERATOR: Please check your mute  
33 button, Sir.

34

35 (No comments)

36

37 OPERATOR: Dan Evenson, your line is  
38 open, Sir.

39

40 (No comments)

41

42 OPERATOR: One moment, I'll take the  
43 next caller. Our next comment comes from John  
44 Hestridge. Please state your name clearly for the  
45 record.

46

47 MR. HESTRIDGE: John Hestridge. Madame  
48 Chair, can you hear me?

49

50

0098

1                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA:    Yes. Please go  
2 ahead.

3  
4                   MR. BROWER:    Yes, can you have him  
5 speak a little louder, there seems to be a distance.

6  
7                   MR. HESTRIDGE.    Madame Chair, this is  
8 John Hestridge, can you hear me.

9  
10                  ACTING CHAIR PITKA:    Yes, I can.  
11 Please go ahead. And please speak clearly into the  
12 phone.

13  
14                  MR. HESTRIDGE:    So my name is John  
15 Hestridge. I'd just like to second Rebecca's  
16 statement. I have strong collation with her statement.  
17 I spent on average over 11 days in the field in 2017,  
18 '18 and '19, 11 days per year. And firsthand witness  
19 of legal rams is much higher than what was stated in  
20 the Fish and Game objective. I just want to let you  
21 know that I saw on average more than one mature ram per  
22 day. That is not with the use of an airplane, that is  
23 just strictly walk in. So I think some of these  
24 numbers have been exaggerated to try to lean towards  
25 the closure.

26  
27                  That's really all I have to say other  
28 than I am opposed to the closure. I was on direct  
29 messaging and Dan Evanson was supposed to talk prior to  
30 me getting on and he just messaged me right now that he  
31 was not -- you were not able to hear him, but he does  
32 have a comment.

33  
34                  So that's all I have and thank you for  
35 letting the public speak.

36  
37                  ACTING CHAIR PITKA:    Thank you. Okay.  
38 Operator.

39  
40                  OPERATOR:    Our next comment comes from  
41 Kyle Weight (ph). Your line's open and please state  
42 your name for the record.

43  
44                  MR. WEIGHT:    Hello. My name's Kyle  
45 Weight. Can everybody hear me?

46  
47                  ACTING CHAIR PITKA:    Yes. Please go  
48 ahead.

49  
50

1 MR. WEIGHT: Okay. I'm a resident and  
2 I oppose the closure to sheep hunting as written in the  
3 proposal. I'm very happy to hear Rebecca Schwanke get  
4 online, she's extremely well versed and educated in  
5 everything sheep and we should all value her opinion on  
6 this matter. I have personally hunted or otherwise  
7 observed sheep in 24A, I cannot speak on 26, this is  
8 specifically on 24A with my personal knowledge  
9 primarily in the proposed closure area for the last 12  
10 of the last 14 years.

11  
12 The current population decline has been  
13 predictable for several years as previous weather  
14 cycles have impacted sheep of all classes. As noted in  
15 the proposal winters and predation have taken their  
16 toll. Though we acknowledge the decrease it's  
17 important to note that we non-qualified subsistence  
18 users, have had nearly no impact in the decline.  
19 Equally we will have no adverse impact in recovery.  
20 The existence of full curl requirements coupled with  
21 the overall lack of efficiency specifically from bow  
22 hunters will not impact recovery of the population.  
23 Rather than argue anecdotal information from opposing  
24 interest group, I would suggest we observe these facts.

25  
26  
27 The full curl harvest requirement has  
28 proven to work. Any argument to the contrary is not  
29 adequately proven or verified through anything other  
30 than individual hypothesis. This doesn't mean that  
31 traditional economic -- ecological knowledge or TEK is  
32 being ignored, it simply means that the basis for  
33 individual argument is not grounded in fact. To verify  
34 this the State of Alaska has secured funding to collar  
35 rams in the control area in an effort to observe any  
36 adverse affects on recovery in areas open to full curl  
37 restriction versus areas closed to harvest.  
38 Specifically observing the impacts of younger cohorts  
39 of rams that may need to participate in breeding.  
40 Gaining this information is important to sheep  
41 management going forward. This proposal would only  
42 undermine the important biological study slated to  
43 begin.

44  
45 Secondly, severe weather cycles in  
46 conjunction with predation has historically impacted  
47 sheep numbers in Alaska. It's documented that recovery  
48 of these populations was not impacted by hunting under  
49 a full curl restriction. Sheep numbers outside of  
50

0100

1 National Parks increase at the same rate as those  
2 inside the Parks.

3

4

5 I could expand beyond these facts with  
6 discussion of bow hunter success rates, decreased  
7 participation already occurring, misleading  
8 correlations between years of great abundance versus  
9 true median data, but it would detract from the facts  
10 already mentioned. The full curl requirement works and  
11 this proposal would undermine the important work  
12 waiting to begin. If facts are used to guide  
13 management practice, then this proposal should not be  
14 adopted.

14

15 I appreciate the opportunity to speak  
16 on this matter.

17

18

Thank you.

19

20 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you very  
21 much. Operator, next.

22

23

24 OPERATOR: Our next caller is Jesse  
25 Jorgeson. Your line is open. Please state your name  
26 for the record.

26

27

28 MR. JORGESON: Thank you very much. My  
29 name is Jesse Jorgeson from Nikiski, Alaska. I  
30 appreciate the opportunity to address the Board today.

30

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And I'd just like to echo the comments  
of biologist Kelly Schwanke along with other respected  
members of the sheep community in Alaska when talking  
about the biological realities of this sheep  
population. I think it's important to note here that  
the Alaska Department of Fish and Game opposes this  
special action by the Board as proposed and it's been  
clear when we look at sheep populations as other  
callers have previously stated that that full curl  
requirement does work. We have populations of sheep in  
these areas that have a harvestable surplus that  
exceeds the average annual harvest. And that means  
that we don't have an emergency here and that we can  
still have strong ram recruitment while allowing some  
hunting opportunity to continue to exist. As previous  
callers and testifiers have already stated, when people  
realize that populations of sheep are low you have much  
lower participation in sheep hunting, but the folks

0101

1 that do go out hunting, they still have opportunity to  
2 that. The economic drivers that benefit from that  
3 hunting opportunity still exist and we have people that  
4 are able to go out and enjoy our public lands so that  
5 the public lands continue to mean something to the  
6 general public and we can all advocate to defend those  
7 lands, keeping them open and accessible to the public.

8  
9 You know, we talk about our State and  
10 Federal agencies working together. I think it's very  
11 important that they do continue to work together and  
12 come to an agreement that follows the law of what  
13 ANILCA intended and the Statehood Act as well when it  
14 comes to managing State game populations. And it would  
15 be my understanding along with many other folks that  
16 think the State is responsible for managing these  
17 populations and certainly when you have someone like  
18 Becky Schwanke talk to you about sheep populations and  
19 many others, those are the voices that are most  
20 respected as biologists go here in the State.

21  
22 So I vehemently oppose the action as  
23 proposed and believe that the full curl restriction  
24 thoroughly enables this sheep population to recover.

25  
26 Thank you.

27  
28 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you for your  
29 comments. Next person.

30  
31 OPERATOR: Our next comment comes from  
32 Raymon Hedges. Please state your name for the record,  
33 you line's open.

34  
35 MR. HEDGES: Yes, my name is Raymon  
36 Hedges. That's R-A-Y-M-O-N, last name Hedges, H-E-D-G-  
37 E-S. I'm a resident of Anchorage.

38  
39 I'd like to speak out in opposition of  
40 WSA22-02, the closure of the dall sheep hunting in  
41 units 24A and 26B on the Federal lands. And I -- many  
42 of the other speakers have spoke eloquently about the  
43 science, I would just like to say the agencythe most --  
44 with the most information and responsibility for  
45 managing wildlife on behalf of the people of Alaska and  
46 by extension the citizens of the rest of the United  
47 States, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, opposes  
48 this special action and I support their position. I  
49 feel that the management of wildlife and especially  
50

0102

1 management of game species is best left to the State  
2 which, you know, receives -- they're the closest to the  
3 people for making these decisions and have the best  
4 data. It seems like the proposal as written appears to  
5 be the opinion of one person with quite a bit of lack  
6 of scientific data supporting the proposal.

7

8                   And for those reasons I oppose this  
9 proposal. Thank you.

10

11                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you very  
12 much for your comment. I appreciate it. Next person.

13

14                   OPERATOR: Our next caller is Paul  
15 Forward. Your line's open and please state your name  
16 for the record.

17

18                   MR. FORWARD: Thank you so much. My  
19 name is Paul Forward, F-O-R-W-A-R-D. I'm calling you  
20 from Kotzebue and I have been using that as a hunting  
21 area since 1992 with my family and have a lot of  
22 experience hunting sheep and caribou in that region.

23

24                   I had prepared a bunch of comments  
25 regarding some of the topics previous speakers have  
26 already addressed regarding science and the Department  
27 of Fish and Game memorandum which outlines in detail  
28 why the science does not support this closure. But I  
29 wanted to highlight a couple of things that I think are  
30 pertinent based on my personal experience and those  
31 would be one, the question of hunter redistribution. I  
32 think as viewing that sheep population as the Brooks  
33 Range population in its entirety, this will invariably  
34 increase pressure in other portions of the range and  
35 may have unintended consequences on other sheep  
36 populations.

37

38                   And then -- I won't take much of your  
39 time, but the only other thing I would say is one  
40 potential compromise if such a thing were possible  
41 would be to utilize further archery hunting for sheep  
42 as a management option. I know that much of the area  
43 being considered is already in the archery only area  
44 and I'm a strong advocate as using archery as a  
45 management tool. It's been very successful in many  
46 parts of the world for managing populations in that you  
47 have no affect on hunter opportunity, anybody that can  
48 shoot a bow can obtain a hunter education card and hunt  
49 the hunt, but you have dramatically decreased the take.

50

0103

1 So there's essentially no downside for people who want  
2 to have a positive hunting experience and hunting for  
3 sheep with archery is certainly a very viable option  
4 and it allows for a fair chase hunt. So I would say  
5 for the areas that aren't currently under archery  
6 mandate if that would be an option that would  
7 essentially have no affect on sheep population, but  
8 would maintain hunting opportunity. I would hope that  
9 would be something that would be considered instead of  
10 a blanket closure.

11

12 And I'll conclude with that.

13

14 Thank you so much.

15

16 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you. I  
17 appreciate your comments. Next person.

18

19 OPERATOR: Our next caller is Scott  
20 Snyder. Your line's open, please state your name for  
21 the record.

22

23 MR. SNYDER: Scott Snyder. Can  
24 everybody hear me okay?

25

26 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Yes. Please go  
27 ahead.

28

29 MR. SNYDER: Okay. I am a resident of  
30 Anchorage and spent about 22 years in the Brooks Range  
31 wearing out boots and I'll tell you I'm a sheep  
32 observer first and a sheep hunter second. We're  
33 blessed with the population that we do have,  
34 populations of animals as has already been discussed.  
35 But I think more to the point that I don't quite  
36 understand why a Federal body doesn't sit down with a  
37 cup of coffee with our great State and share the  
38 information that they have and come to reasonable  
39 decisions. It seems like this is a whole other  
40 direction to push things where we got a Federal  
41 government who doesn't choose to play very nice with  
42 the State where it resides. And so my point is the  
43 State of Alaska deserves the respect that's already  
44 been granted by the law which is to govern and care for  
45 the animals which we protect and we protect well. And  
46 we've got some wonderful individuals, that if the  
47 Federal government chooses to use those resources that  
48 could really benefit this whole action that's trying to  
49 take place.

50

0104

1 And that's all I have to say.

2

3 Appreciate you guys' time.

4

5 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you very  
6 much for your comments. Next person.

7

8 OPERATOR: Our next person is Ben  
9 Stevens. Your line is open.

10

11 MR. STEVENS: Thank you very much. Can  
12 you hear me?

13

14 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Yes. Please go  
15 ahead.

16

17 MR. STEVENS: Great. Thanks very  
18 kindly for taking my call and for doing the hard work  
19 for subsistence users. For those folks that don't know  
20 me my name is Ben Stevens, I am Koyukon Athabaskan from  
21 Stevens Village. Those folks interested in the Dalton  
22 Highway will know that we are adjacent to the Dalton  
23 Highway and the pipeline.

24

25 And I am here on behalf of the Tanana  
26 Chiefs and the Tribal Resource Stewardship Program  
27 supports the WIRAC special action request to close  
28 sheep hunting in Federal lands in and around the Dalton  
29 Highway Corridor in game Unit 24A and parts of  
30 (Indiscernible - distortion).....

31

32 REPORTER: Tell him to go back to his  
33 phone.

34

35 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: I'm sorry, Ben, we  
36 can't hear you. We're having a little bit of  
37 difficulty hearing you at this point.

38

39 MR. STEVENS: I'm sorry. I'm having  
40 some challenges here, but we support this special  
41 action request in dealing with the game Unit 24A and  
42 26B. We support this action to provide for future  
43 Federal subsistence uses. And the conservation  
44 concerns raised are based upon local knowledge from  
45 Federal subsistence users and supported by the Koyukuk  
46 River Fish and Game Local Advisory Committee. We urge  
47 you to support.

48

49 Thank you again for supporting

50

0105

1 subsistence use here in Alaska.

2

3 Thank you.

4

5 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you for your  
6 comments. I appreciate it. Next person.

7

8 OPERATOR: Our next person is Joe  
9 Herkus. Your line is open, please state your name for  
10 the record, please.

11

12 MR. HERKUS: Joe Herkus. I am in  
13 opposition to the closure of hunting in the unit  
14 described. For the first time -- last year first time  
15 non-residency hunter in 26B and unsuccessful. But I  
16 wouldn't like that opportunity to be taken away from  
17 non-resident hunters like myself. And I couldn't agree  
18 more with what Ms. Schwanke had to say and she said it  
19 better than anybody.

20

21 Thank you.

22

23 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you for your  
24 comment. Next person.

25

26 OPERATOR: Our next person is Zach  
27 Decker. Your line's open, Sir, please state your name  
28 for the record.

29

30 MR. DECKER: Yes, my name is Zach  
31 Decker from down here in southeast Alaska. I'd like to  
32 just comment that I -- I support what has been said  
33 thus far and that it seems like a little bit of a  
34 stretch or overreach and I do not support this  
35 proposal.

36

37 I ask this Board to listen to the  
38 public comments. This is not my first Subsistence  
39 Board meeting to testify, but it seems like the  
40 comments usually come in opposed strongly to this and  
41 they usually go the opposite direction in the room and  
42 at the end. But I ask that you take the time to listen  
43 to the public testimony today and to see that many of  
44 the people here speaking are asking you to work with  
45 ADF&G and the State in, you know, finding some of your  
46 actions or your decisions. On this Board has many  
47 agencies that could also utilize tools in the toolbox.  
48 Listening to the discussion there was some --  
49 noticeably that some of the non-resident hunting  
50

0106

1 activities continues at a sustainable level and, you  
2 know, there might be some opportunity there to look at  
3 these agencies and what they could do to work with  
4 those operators on the ground so that we don't affect  
5 our subsistence users.

6  
7

8 But I think there's tools out there and  
9 I think that there's other things we can do than just  
10 the blanket closure for the area. And I encourage you  
11 to utilize those tools in your toolbox and go forward  
12 because I do oppose this thing and want to be on the  
13 record for that and I leave these things with you.

14  
15

Thank you.

16  
17

18 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you very  
19 much, I appreciate your comment. Next person.

20  
21

22 OPERATOR: Our next comment comes from  
23 Craig Dowersdale. Your line's open, please state your  
24 name for the record.

25  
26

27 MR. DOWERSDALE: Yeah, Craig Dowersdale  
28 from Soldotna resident.....

29  
30

31 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: I'm sorry, there's  
32 some background noise, Sir. Could you please start  
33 over. My apologies. Somebody was revving a motorcycle  
34 right outside our meeting room.

35  
36

(Laughter)

37  
38

ACTING CHAIR PITKA: My apologies.

39  
40

MR. DOWERSDALE: Sure. Are we clear?

41  
42

ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Yes, now we are.

43  
44

45 MR. DOWERSDALE: Yeah, thanks for the  
46 opportunity to call in. I'm an Alaska resident and a  
47 conservationist and am very sympathetic to the fact  
48 that dall sheep populations are suffering from several  
49 hard winter and spring winter events over the past  
50 decade. With that being said I trust and expected  
these type of closures would come directly from the  
Alaska Fish and Game Department.

51  
52

53 The Federal Subsistence Board has  
54 continually acted out of emotion with selfish

55

0107

1 intentions for years and thus has lost all credibility  
2 in my mind. Therefore I do not recognize the Federal  
3 Subsistence Board for anything other than what they  
4 have proven to be time and time again which is an  
5 unelected group of bureaucrats acting in the self  
6 interest of a single user group without regard to  
7 science, wildlife on the landscape or public interest  
8 which their overreach restricts the rights of the  
9 public on Federal land.

10

11 Most of the outlying area in this WSA  
12 is an archery only area which Mr. Reakoff states an  
13 estimated 50 hunters participated. Archery success on  
14 full curl sheep is certainly sub 5 percent, it does not  
15 warrant a closure unless ADF&G data suggests so. The  
16 observations of one man do not provide a justification  
17 for closure. ADF&G has data to support that sheep  
18 populations have rebounded under the -- under full curl  
19 management structure without closures.

20

21 If the Federal Subsistence Board wishes  
22 to be taken seriously in the future they should stop  
23 and consider the facts, make educated decisions based  
24 on sound science, supporting data with regard to all  
25 user groups.

26

27 Please record my strong opposition to  
28 WSA22-02 as stated above.

29

30 Thank you.

31

32 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you very  
33 much for your comment. Next comment.

34

35 OPERATOR: Our next comment comes from  
36 Taylor Shmedier. Sorry for the pronunciation. Your  
37 line's open.

38

39 MR. SHMEDIER: This is Taylor Shmedier,  
40 I will keep it quick.

41

42 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: I'm sorry, could  
43 you please repeat your name.

44

45 MR. SHMEDIER: Taylor Shmedier. Sorry,  
46 it's a mouthful. I just wanted to call -- I'll keep it  
47 quick, but just show my opposition to this. I just  
48 think blanket closures will just lead to unintended  
49 consequences of overpressuring the neighboring units

50

0108

1 and I just think overall blanket closures are never a  
2 very good option unless they're a final resort and I  
3 don't think from what we heard today that that is  
4 necessarily the case.

5

6 But keep it short, that was it.

7

8 Thank you.

9

10 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you. I  
11 appreciate your comment. Next person.

12

13 OPERATOR: I'm showing no further  
14 comments at this time. As a reminder please press  
15 Star, one on your phone keypad if you would like to  
16 make a comment.

17

18 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Okay. If there  
19 are no further comments online.....

20

21 MS. DETWILER: Unh-unh.

22

23 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Oh, sorry.

24

25 MS. DETWILER: Any more?

26

27 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Okay. We have  
28 three more -- four more comments online.

29

30 Thank you. Go ahead then.

31

32 OPERATOR: Yes, our next comment comes  
33 from Kevin. Your line is open, please state your name  
34 for the record.

35

36 MR. HURLEY: My name is Kevin Hurley,  
37 H-U-R-L-E-Y and I work for the Wild Sheep Foundation  
38 National Headquarters based in Boseman, Montana.

39

40 And a couple points that I would make.  
41 I thought Becky Schwanke hit a lot of the biology right  
42 on the mark, but in early May in Whitehorse, Yukon,  
43 Brad Wendling who is a Research Biologist with ADF&G  
44 presented his preliminary study plan for this ram  
45 ecology study in the Brooks Range. And one of the  
46 previous speakers, sorry, I didn't catch which one,  
47 that talked about letting that project go forward, I  
48 think is going to be critical to look at comprehensive  
49 analysis of ram survival in the Brooks Range.

50

0109

1                   And so like many of the other speakers  
2 we think that the primacy for fish and game management  
3 does reside with the State, State of Alaska Department  
4 of Fish and Game and with their opposition to this  
5 closure we would support them in that position and we  
6 would also go on record in opposition to this proposed  
7 closure WSA.

8  
9                   Thank you.

10  
11                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA:     Thank you.     I  
12 appreciate the comment.   Next comment.

13  
14                   OPERATOR:     Our next caller is Sam  
15 Mullen. Your line's open, please state your name for  
16 the record.

17  
18                   MR. MULLEN:     Yeah, my name is Sam  
19 Mullen, resident hunter of Fairbanks.

20  
21                   I've hunted this area for sheep and  
22 caribou and grizzly bear off and on since 2006. Since  
23 then more -- most recently I've noticed that a  
24 significant number of -- a significant decline in sheep  
25 numbers. It troubles me and I don't know what the  
26 answer is, but I'd just like to point out that Mr.  
27 Reakoff has some valid points, he has some good points  
28 with his proposal, but his numbers do not coincide with  
29 my personal observations. I was speaking -- messaging  
30 Mr. Reakoff today actually and I showed him a couple  
31 pictures of some rams that I had seen up there while I  
32 was bear hunting this spring. And his comment was  
33 something to the affect that they must have slipped  
34 around me. So my point is and my argument is is this  
35 proposal written by Mr. Reakoff has valid point, but  
36 his observations and what he states as factual numbers  
37 are indeed not factual numbers. I've seen sheep that  
38 he hasn't seen and I was only up there this spring for  
39 three or four days. So in those three or four days I  
40 was able to see and take pictures of legal rams that  
41 Mr. Reakoff had no idea were there.

42  
43                   We can all agree that weather has a  
44 significant impact on these sheep populations and we  
45 can all agree that there's not a dang thing that we can  
46 do about the weather. What we can do is better  
47 predator management. If we read Mr. Reakoff's proposal  
48 he states that wolf populations have exploded. We all  
49 know that wolves hunt 365 days a year, 24 hour a day.  
50

0110

1 As quote, unquote, sporthunters we have a limited  
2 season and our dent in the population is not near as  
3 much as wolf population. I know several people who  
4 have come in contact with wolves while on sheep hunt  
5 and they have chosen not to harvest the wolves due to  
6 the mangy character of their hides in early August. So  
7 rather than dealing with having to seal a wolf in early  
8 August they chose not to shoot the wolf.

9

10 So if there's something we can do my  
11 vote is better predator management, do something about  
12 sealing the wolves, do something about wolves up there  
13 because that is something that we can control.  
14 Limiting quote, unquote sporthunters I don't think is  
15 the problem.

16

17 But I'm opposed to the proposal, but I  
18 don't know what the answer is and that's all I had to  
19 say.

20

21 Thank you.

22

23 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you very  
24 much for your comment. Next comment.

25

26 OPERATOR: Our next caller is Tyler  
27 Freal. Your line is open, please state your name for  
28 the record.

29

30 MR. FREAL: Hi. My name is Tyler  
31 Freal. I'm a Fairbanks resident and a long time sheep  
32 hunter and observer. I've been hunting periodically in  
33 the central Brooks Range since 2004 and I want to voice  
34 my strong opposition to this wildlife special action  
35 request. I believe that under current management and  
36 harvest regulations the population will recover in time  
37 and hunting is not have a significant detrimental  
38 affect on the sheep population in the area especially  
39 in the archery only corridor. I would ask that the  
40 Federal Subsistence Board consider this WSA with  
41 extreme caution and consideration. Following other WSA  
42 Federal land closures in the State the door's open for  
43 even a single individual with a personal agenda and  
44 influence over a Regional Advisory Council to put these  
45 potential closures before the Board in a self serving  
46 manner. I believe that like other closures this WSA is  
47 put forward to control people, not genuinely aid in the  
48 recovery of the sheep population.

49

50

0111

1                   The proposal as it reads mentions the  
2 heavy influence of weather and predation on this  
3 population decline, but it doesn't make any suggestion  
4 to even examine predator control measures. Many of the  
5 statements made in the proposal are purely opinion  
6 based, but they're stated as fact as well as the  
7 speculation about sublegal ram takes that isn't  
8 actually observed, it's just suggested.

9  
10                   I ask the Federal Subsistence Board to  
11 vote in opposition to this WSA. I and many other  
12 residents of Alaska view passage of this WSA as  
13 continued subversion of the State's lawful management  
14 and blocking public lands away from the public.

15  
16                   Thank you.

17  
18                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you for your  
19 comment. Next comment, please.

20  
21                   OPERATOR: Our next caller is Jeff  
22 Lund. Your line is open, please state your name for  
23 the record.

24  
25                   MR. LUND: Hi. My name is Jeff Lund.  
26 Appreciate the opportunity to testify on behalf here.  
27 I'd like to echo the sentiments of those who have  
28 voiced their opposition to this. I grew up on Prince  
29 of Wales Island down in unit 2 and I've never hunted  
30 sheep up there, but I understand the value and meaning  
31 of wildlife to the rural cultures and the need to  
32 preserve resources. I'm just very, very concerned with  
33 the Federal government going against Fish and Game  
34 recommendations and undermining science and biology.  
35 That sets a very poor precedent going forward so I  
36 would definitely like to voice my opposition for this.

37  
38                   Thank you.

39  
40                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you for your  
41 comment. Next comment, please.

42  
43                   OPERATOR: Our next caller is Mark  
44 Truax. Your line is open and please state your name  
45 for the record, Sir.

46  
47                   MR. TRUAX: Thank you. Thank you,  
48 Madame Chair. Mark Truax calling today on behalf of  
49 the Boone and Crockett Club. The Boone and Crockett  
50

0112

1 Club does not support this special action for closure  
2 for sheep hunting. As has been stated by many previous  
3 speakers this closure will not facilitate population  
4 recovery. The range of this, you know, needs to be  
5 looked at and addressed. And there's plenty out there  
6 based on the previous comments and there's a  
7 harvestable surplus that exceeds the average annual  
8 harvest. And these sheep populations have recovered  
9 based on the State's management strategy and there's  
10 been good work that has been done to date.

11

12 So Boone and Crockett Club and the  
13 hunters that we represent and the members of our  
14 organization are in strong opposition to this.

15

16 And thank you to the Board for taking  
17 public testimony.

18

19 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you for  
20 comment. Next comment.

21

22 OPERATOR: Our next comment comes from  
23 Karen Linnell. Your line is open and please state your  
24 name for the record.

25

26 MS. LINNELL: Good afternoon. Thank  
27 you for the opportunity to speak. My name is Karen  
28 Linnell. I'm a long time advocate for sustainable  
29 resources for subsistence and also I'm not opposed to  
30 sporthunting so I -- when the resources allow for that  
31 take as well. It is our goal here to look at health  
32 populations and things. I do want to say that, you  
33 know, this proposal is written by the Western Interior  
34 RAC, they obviously -- they're the most closely  
35 affected and are there in the community, in the region  
36 and have the personal observations that inform their  
37 decision.

38

39 It's interesting how anecdotal stories  
40 can be taken by individuals with professional  
41 credentials behind their name such as former State  
42 biologist versus those that are out there every day in  
43 the -- in the public and they're taken as purely  
44 anecdotal and not as fact or science. Much of my job,  
45 my day job, is quantifying long term observations as  
46 long term observations are science and should be  
47 carried with the same weight. I also feel that, you  
48 know, this is not the Federal Subsistence Board  
49 subverting State management, it is the Federal

50

0113

1 Subsistence Board acting on Federal management  
2 obligations. It is your duty to protect the resource.  
3 And it seems that these folks are pretty organized in  
4 their opposition and so, you know, I just want to say  
5 that, you know, looking at this and hearing the  
6 comments the reason for the closure would be for  
7 conservation concern and it's my understanding it's not  
8 only a closure for Federal users or State users or  
9 sporthunters, but it's also a closure, a moratorium for  
10 Federal users as well to make this be -- in hopes to  
11 help this become a healthy population.

12

13 We've had subsistence users also  
14 participate and if they happen to get a large moose put  
15 it into Boone and Crockett and those kind of things so  
16 thank you for, you know, your tracking those types of  
17 hunts and whatnot, but it's not the main goal. And I  
18 just -- you know, if those resources are gone all of  
19 these folks would be out of a job as well. You can't  
20 continue to get blood from a stone and so protecting  
21 those resources so that you have -- are able to come  
22 back and hunt again with your clients is an important  
23 piece.

24

25 So I just want to advocate for the  
26 resource. I think that, you know, doing what we can to  
27 ensure that we have healthy populations is important.  
28 I'd also like to thank the gentleman who spoke about  
29 predator control or management, that's important as  
30 well. You know, some agencies don't like that term,  
31 predator control, but it is necessary whether it be  
32 done through subsistence tracking or other means, but  
33 it is something to look at. We also have to look at  
34 other types of predators. Here in the Copper River  
35 basin we're seeing and hearing signs of mountain lions  
36 moving into the area and several sightings both in the  
37 southern end there at Chitina and then on the northern  
38 end by Mentasta. You know, that's something to  
39 consider and look at, are they -- have they moved that  
40 far west or is that something that needs to be  
41 addressed or looked at, it's an invasive species.

42

43 So those are things that I'm thinking  
44 about in this and just ask you to do what's best for  
45 the resource so that we have healthy populations. And  
46 that those rural residents and our neighbors and  
47 friends from other parts of this State and nation, our  
48 country, are able to use those resources.

49

50

0114

1 Thank you, Madame Chair.

2

3 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you for your  
4 comment. Our next comment, please.

5

6 OPERATOR: At this time I'm showing no  
7 further comments. Once again if you would like to make  
8 a comment please press Star, one on your telephone  
9 keypad.

10

11 (No comments)

12

13 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Okay. If there's  
14 no further comment I have one testimony request from in  
15 the room, Mark Richards.

16

17 MR. RICHARDS: Good afternoon, Madame  
18 Chairman, members of the Board and agency Staff. For  
19 the record my name is Mark Richards, I'm the Executive  
20 Director of Resident Hunters of Alaska. And I'm here  
21 in person today to represent our over 3,000 members  
22 from across the State, from Utgiagvik to Ketchikan,  
23 from Holy Cross to Eagle and parts in between, in  
24 opposition to wildlife special action request 22-02.

25

26 Now I'm going to give a little bit more  
27 nuance testimony than what you heard previously. Since  
28 our formation in 2016 we have been concerned with sheep  
29 declines across the State and the continued  
30 sustainability of sheep populations where unlimited  
31 sheep hunting opportunities exist, particularly  
32 unlimited non-resident sheep hunting opportunities. We  
33 have advocated that unlimited non-resident sheep  
34 opportunity allowed by the Board of Game needs to be  
35 restricted or limited in order to better conserve sheep  
36 and so that resident sheep hunting opportunities can  
37 continue.

38

39 Now we've heard at previous meetings  
40 here it's been mentioned by some members of the Board  
41 that the Federal agencies are not really using their  
42 own authority, rather they seem to go through the  
43 Federal Subsistence Board. But I think it makes common  
44 sense to have sort of a step down approach to  
45 subsistence hunting. I was a subsistence -- Federally-  
46 qualified subsistence hunter for 35 years and then I  
47 moved to Fairbanks and somehow I'm no longer a  
48 subsistence hunter even though I am. But I think the  
49 step down process should be subsistence comes first,  
50

0115

1 second comes Alaska residents and third comes  
2 commercial hunting which is mostly primarily non-  
3 resident hunters.

4

5 Now the Park Service, U.S. Fish and  
6 Wildlife Service, you guys operate guide concession  
7 programs, you also have the ability to limit commercial  
8 hunters. But yet you're not doing that. Some of you  
9 might support this proposal, but you're not acting on  
10 your own, within your own agency to limit the  
11 commercial hunting industry which far and away is more  
12 successful than -- than resident hunters in the harvest  
13 of sheep.

14

15 If and when sheep populations are at  
16 the point where sheep hunting for all users needs to be  
17 closed for a period of time we could support that, but  
18 only if we have some sideboards from the Board of Game  
19 as to what State regulations would be when it opens  
20 again. We can't simply close things down and then just  
21 allow unlimited hunting again especially unlimited non-  
22 resident sheep hunting. As was mentioned by Brian a  
23 little bit over 40 percent of the sheep harvest in  
24 these areas within these closure requests are from non-  
25 resident hunters, primarily guided hunters. Over the  
26 year more and more guides have taken advantage of the  
27 walk in bow hunting only opportunities as well within  
28 the corridor.

29

30 Now you heard Brian mention what the  
31 harvest rate was for bow hunters, it's extremely low.  
32 So we want to ask you that if you were to pass this  
33 proposal we would like you to exempt the corridor  
34 management area where you cannot use rifles. There's  
35 absolutely no reason to restrict bow hunters from  
36 hunting sheep in this area. They just don't take that  
37 many sheep. So yeah, most -- we have quite a few  
38 members who participate in that walk in sheep hunt and  
39 it's very important to them.

40

41 So also should this closure request  
42 pass it's going to be really difficult for hunters to  
43 determine the boundaries of this area. We're not  
44 really going to have any enforcement and as you've  
45 heard from previous testifiers, the unintended  
46 consequences of this is going to push people into other  
47 areas, more crowding, more sheep are taken out of those  
48 areas. It's kind of crazy not to consider the overall  
49 sheep population. The Brooks Range sheep population is  
50

0116

1 one big cohort and we want to close just this little  
2 area, the proponent does, without anything in the Gates  
3 or anything elsewhere and it's -- it really won't have  
4 the desired affect.

5

6                   Again, you know, we oppose WSA22-02.  
7 We have long had conservation concerns for sheep and  
8 concerns at the full curl management strategy the State  
9 utilizes is not always sustainable under all conditions  
10 particularly with the fast rate that we have in Alaska  
11 of climate change, these ongoing weather events that  
12 we're having, yeah, sheep have declined all over. But  
13 there are other means than closing it down for  
14 everybody than to deal with this situation.

15

16

17                   So that's basically our comments and if  
18 I can, Madame Chair, I just want to offer one general  
19 comment about the Federal Subsistence Board process. A  
20 lot of us -- you know, during Covid it's been very hard  
21 for everybody, but the way these special action  
22 requests work you generally don't hold a public  
23 meeting, OSM holds a meeting, telephonic meeting, we  
24 call in, we testify. We never get to see you face to  
25 face, you never get to see us face to face. And it's a  
26 real problem with how the wildlife special action  
27 requests are working. And it's causing a lot of people  
28 as you heard to have negative feelings about this Board  
29 that really shouldn't be there. This Board's very  
30 important, the RACs are important, but the process  
31 could be done better so the public feels like you're  
32 listening to us. Right now the way things work we just  
33 don't feel like you're listening to us, we feel you  
34 just hear OSM, but it's really -- that's why my Board  
35 had me come here today, I wanted to see you all face to  
36 face, I feel it's very important, I really appreciate  
37 you holding this meeting in public. And, Rhonda, great  
38 job under difficult circumstances.

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So thank you all.

ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you very  
much for your comment. I do appreciate all public  
testimony.

Oh, we have two more people in the  
queue. Go ahead.

OPERATOR: Our next comment comes from  
Cody Buchat. Your line is open, please state your name

0117

1 for the record.

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MR. BUCHAT: Madame Chair, my name's Cody Buchat (ph). I'm a first year resident at Fairbanks. It's been a dream to be in Alaska all my life. Sheep hunting was something that I wasn't too interested in until I actually got up here, started diving into the science, I realized that it's a very vulnerable population, but it's a very niche group of people that enjoy utilizing the resource.

So I've done a lot of research and I've tried getting as much information as I can to be more knowledgeable about the process and about the hunt itself. I listen to ADF&G, they have a lot of great points and I agree with their opposition to this WSA.

A few things, I haven't seen a lot of information as far as the proposals do or go, but I've looked at the FSB limits and regulations and if this is truly a population crisis then I would seriously look at the fact that the taking of ewes in the area that -- that needs to be looked at, but if the sheep population don't have enough sheep you probably shouldn't be taking ewe. We've seen management failures in the lower 48 overtaking does or cows or whatever it may be, then having these population declines, but I've -- Mr. Richards had a lot of great points, Ms. Schwanke had fantastic points.

I oppose and thank you for your time.

ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you for your comment. Next comment.

OPERATOR: Our next caller is John Sturgeon. Your line's open, please state your name for the record.

MR. STURGEON: Good afternoon. This is John Sturgeon. I am the President of Safari Club Alaska. We have about 700 members in Alaska and we do conservation work across the State.

We are opposed to this proposal, we think it's not based on science. I'd also like to start by saying if there really is a shortage of wildlife and there are rural residents in need for a food source we don't have any problem with a priority

0118

1 for rural residents if there's a real food shortage,  
2 maybe start with that.

3

4

5 I'd also like to say that the Alaska  
6 Department of Fish and Game does not approve of this,  
7 they're the main managers of Alaska's resources and  
8 this seems to me very strange that you're taking one  
9 segment of the Brooks Range and you're imposing Federal  
10 regulations on it. Sheep move all across the Brooks  
11 Range, they travel sometimes 10, 15, 20, 30 miles, long  
12 distances, especially during the rut. And to have one  
13 portion of it managed by the Feds and the other by the  
14 State, that doesn't make any sense from a wildlife  
15 management perspective. It should be the State of  
16 Alaska and it should only be in extreme situations  
17 where the Federal government takes over control of  
18 wildlife resources.

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Also I think that it was mentioned  
earlier that the State of Alaska can do intensive  
management, the Federal government does not do that. I  
think a lot of folks in rural areas are really  
supportive of intensive management and reduces the  
predator numbers and increases the game numbers which  
is a win/win for everybody.

Also there's been some concerns  
expressed about the Federal Subsistence Board process.  
I would agree with those, it's not a very transparent  
process. We don't get to talk to the Board in person.  
When you go to the Fish and Game -- Alaska Board of  
Game you get to look a person in the eye, you get to  
have a discussion and I think it's a -- you get a  
feeling that you're being listened to. In this process  
we never hear the results of what our comments are and  
it just does not feel like a very open and fair public  
process.

I guess in closing again Safari Club  
Alaska opposes this measure. We think that it's the  
proper role of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
to do the management of game and only in extreme  
situations where the Federal government steps in which  
hasn't been shown.

Also I would just add one more thing,  
as the Federal Subsistence Board keeps on closing areas  
not based on science, not based on real need of rural  
residents for a food supply, you're going to wake a

0119

1 sleeping giant. If you look at the map of what the  
2 Federal Subsistence Board has closed over the year it's  
3 getting larger and larger and larger and I think  
4 they're seeing a lot more feedback from folks outside  
5 these areas that are closed and it's going to maybe  
6 make the problem a whole lot bigger.

7

8                   Anyway thank you for the opportunity to  
9 testify.

10

11                   Thank you again.

12

13                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you for your  
14 comments. Do we have any more?

15

16                   MS. DETWILER: No.

17

18                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Okay. Hearing no  
19 more public comments we are on to the Regional Advisory  
20 Council recommendations.

21

22                   Western Interior -- North Slope.

23

24                   MS. HONIG: Thank you, Madame Chair,  
25 members of the Board. My name is Leigh Honig for the  
26 record and I'm Council Coordinator for the North Slope  
27 Regional Advisory Council and I will be reading their  
28 recommendation on their behalf.

29

30                   The Council discussed the special  
31 action request at length with the Chair of the Western  
32 Interior Regional Advisory Council, Jack Reakoff and  
33 Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve Wildlife  
34 Biologist William Deacy and believe based on the local  
35 and traditional knowledge and biological data presented  
36 that a closure to sheep hunting in units 24A and 26B is  
37 warranted. This closure would not affect the community  
38 of Anaktuvuk Pass sheep harvest within the Gates of the  
39 Arctic National Park in units 26A and 24B. The Council  
40 is otherwise willing to forego subsistence harvest of  
41 sheep in units 24A and 26B in order to help that  
42 specific population recover. Subsistence hunters are  
43 conservationists and will not hunt the dwindling sheep  
44 population into the ground.

45

46                   We support our neighboring Council and  
47 the request to close all hunting in this area. The  
48 Council fully embraces the dall sheep conservation  
49 concerns that Mr. Reakoff read into the record at our  
50

0120

1 meeting. We concur with observations on sheep decline  
2 due to climate change impacts such as rain on snow  
3 events in addition to the intensive hunting pressure  
4 Council members have witnessed along the Dalton Highway  
5 Corridor. Traditional knowledge also informs the  
6 importance of balance across all age classes and  
7 especially the mature males as important for productive  
8 breeding and maintaining a healthy population.

9  
10 The Council believes there is a clear  
11 need for conservation measures to be enacted at this  
12 time through a closure to all hunting of dall sheep in  
13 this area to allow for the population to recover.

14  
15 Thank you, Madame Chair.

16  
17 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you.  
18 Western Interior.

19  
20 MS. DETWILER: I believe the Chair of  
21 that is Jack Reakoff. Is he on?

22  
23 OPERATOR: (Indiscernible - away from  
24 microphone).....

25  
26 MS. DETWILER: You may have to press  
27 Star, one.

28  
29 MS. WESSELS: Madame Chair, this is  
30 Katya.

31  
32 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Yes, go ahead.

33  
34 MS. WESSELS: It looks like Chair  
35 Reakoff got disconnected.

36  
37 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Okay. Yes, go  
38 ahead.

39  
40 MS. DETWILER: In the meantime there  
41 are two.....

42  
43 MS. LaVINE: Madame Chair, there are  
44 also two more people in the public testimony queue that  
45 joined up.

46  
47 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Okay. Just so we  
48 don't have any dead air I'll allow it. Go ahead with  
49 the first comment.  
50

0121

1 UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: My name is  
2 (indiscernible - distortion). I'm opposed to WSA22-02.  
3 I have a place in Wiseman, Alaska and I've bow hunted  
4 within the proposed closed area every year since 1999.  
5 I feel it's especially important to note that  
6 approximately 50 percent of the proposed area is within  
7 the Dalton Highway Control Use Area which is open to  
8 archery only hunting. The estimated annual harvest  
9 within this area is less than three rams per year. 65  
10 percent of the rams harvested are greater than eight  
11 years old which refutes any claim of excessive mature  
12 ram harvest.

13 This proposed closure primarily targets  
14 hunting opportunity for a specific group of hunters,  
15 walk in archery hunters. The fact that this is archery  
16 only coupled with Alaska's full curl or eight year old  
17 restriction I do not believe that adopting this special  
18 action request will help facilitate a population  
19 recovery. I believe that the current population  
20 numbers do not meet the closure criteria found in  
21 ANILCA, Section VIII.

22  
23 Thank you for taking the time to let me  
24 speak.

25  
26 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you for  
27 calling in today. Next comment, please.

28  
29 OPERATOR: Ralph Dalstrom, your line is  
30 open.

31  
32 MR. DALSTROM: Can you hear me?

33  
34 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Yes, please go  
35 ahead. State your name for the record, please.

36  
37 MR. DALSTROM: This will be just a  
38 short comment. I agree with the points that have been  
39 made in opposition to this proposition. And I support  
40 ADF&G's use of actual science in this matter. The  
41 Federal government has not recently impressed me that  
42 they even understand the meaning of the word science.

43  
44 Thank you.

45  
46 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Can you please  
47 state your name for the record.

48  
49 MR. DALSTROM: Ralph Dalstrom.

50

0122

1                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you. And it  
2 looks like we have our Western Interior Regional  
3 Advisory Council Chair back online.

4  
5                   MR. REAKOFF: Madame Chair, this is  
6 Jack Reakoff.

7  
8                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Go ahead.

9  
10                  MR. REAKOFF: You can hear me now? I  
11 had my line muted.

12  
13                  ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Yes. Yes, we can  
14 hear you. Thank you.

15  
16                  MR. REAKOFF: Okay. This is Jack  
17 Reakoff, I'm the Chairman of the Western Interior  
18 Regional Advisory Council. And I'd make a comment --  
19 I'm discombobulated because I'm -- all my stuff is like  
20 here with the phone call.

21  
22                  ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Did we lose him?  
23 No, he's still there. Okay.

24  
25                  MR. REAKOFF: The position of the  
26 Western Interior Regional Advisory Council is to  
27 support their own proposal. Justification, and this is  
28 as of when we wrote the proposal.....

29  
30                  I'm getting a typing noise over  
31 the.....

32  
33                  ACTING CHAIR PITKA: I'm getting a  
34 typing noise too. Are you typing?

35  
36                  MS. DETWILER: There might be someone  
37 online.

38  
39                  ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Hold on. There  
40 may be somebody online who's typing voraciously. Okay.  
41 It sounds like they stopped. Please go ahead.

42  
43                  MR. REAKOFF: Okay. The Council's very  
44 concerned about the decreasing sheep population along  
45 the Dalton Highway and the central Brooks Range. We  
46 believe traditional ecological knowledge on the subject  
47 has been ignored. Since 2012 current weather  
48 conditions including rain on snow, then late springs  
49 and early and deep snows have decimated these sheep  
50

0123

1 populations resulting in extremely low recruitment,  
2 poor lamb production and loss of mature rams. The  
3 Council believes that increased predation by wolves are  
4 also contributing to the population decline.

5

6 The Council is frustrated by the lack  
7 of biological data that has been collected,  
8 particularly the failure to collect age composition  
9 data on rams. Currently there are very few six and  
10 seven year old rams that remain in the population,  
11 there are virtually very few full curl rams or older  
12 rams, if any. And the past studies have demonstrated  
13 detrimental affects of young rams breeding ewes in the  
14 absence of mature rams and larger rams, including high  
15 post-rut mortality and lower lamb production.

16

17 The Council is concerned with the  
18 current harvest management strategy and harvest levels.  
19 The full curl management strategy only works with  
20 consistent recruitment within the -- when -- not when  
21 several cohorts are missing as has happened unit 24A  
22 and 26B sheep population. Under the current management  
23 regime over the next two years the remaining six and  
24 seven year old rams will be harvested. This will  
25 exacerbate the recovery of the sheep population if  
26 there are no or very few two to five year old rams to  
27 take their place and smaller, inexperienced rams will  
28 breed ewes in their absence.

29

30 The Council considers the unit 24A and  
31 26B sheep populations to be in a dire situation that  
32 requested closures are critical to the recovery. This  
33 is the most -- and I have additional comments from  
34 current observation this spring. I just talked to the  
35 U.S. Fish and Wildlife biologist that flew part of 26B  
36 in the proposed unit, I talked to the Park Service who  
37 flew the State survey area and the National Park just  
38 last week. I have additional information if the Board  
39 chooses to deliberate the proposal.

40

41 Thank you.

42

43 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you very  
44 much. Right now we are at Tribal/Alaska Native  
45 Corporation comments.

46

47 Mr. Orville Lind.

48

49 MR. LIND: Good afternoon, Madame

50

0124

1 Chair, Board members. Orville Liaison, Native Liaison  
2 for the Office of Subsistence Management. And we did  
3 reach out to Western Interior and North Slope regions  
4 and there was no interest in Tribal or ANCSA  
5 consultations.

6

7 Thank you, Madame Chair.

8

9 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you very  
10 much. Next is Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
11 comments, Ben Mulligan. Oh, looks like Mark Burch.  
12 Okay.

13

14 MR. BURCH: I'm Mark Burch from the  
15 Alaska Department of Fish and Game. This proposed  
16 closure primarily targets hunting opportunity for a  
17 specific group of hunters, walk in archery hunters.  
18 The proposed closure will not facilitate a population  
19 recovery. The range of this sheep population falls  
20 mostly outside of Federal public lands proposed to be  
21 closed and there will be a harvestable surplus that  
22 exceeds the average annual harvest.

23

24 ADF&G opposed the proposed closure.

25

26 And, Madame Chair, I might take just a  
27 second and.....

28

29 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Uh-huh.

30

31 MR. BURCH: .....set my agency comments  
32 aside. I'm sure you can see that I deal with a tremor  
33 and on top of everything else all of you have dealt  
34 with today, I hope you'll continue to deal with that  
35 and I'll try not to pay attention to it and focus on  
36 what I'm saying if you'll please try to do the same.

37

38 Thank you.

39

40 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Yeah, absolutely.

41

42 MR. BURCH: Congress enacted ANILCA,  
43 Title VIII to ensure the continued opportunity for  
44 subsistence uses by rural residents of Alaska.  
45 Congress also clarified in ANILCA Section .815(3) in  
46 Title VIII is not intended to restrict non-subsistence  
47 uses of fish and wildlife generally permitted on public  
48 lands other than National Parks and Park Monuments  
49 unless necessary for the conservation of healthy  
50

1 populations of fish and wildlife and is necessary  
2 pursuant to Sections 804 and 816. We believe that the  
3 populations of dall sheep within the central and  
4 eastern Brooks Range is both healthy and viable in  
5 accordance with Title VIII provisions. In other words  
6 we do not believe this population is at risk of being  
7 extirpated or otherwise imperiled by catastrophic  
8 events as significant as those may be.

9  
10 At this point we are compelled to point  
11 out that written comments submitted to the Office of  
12 Subsistence Management as well as in the Species  
13 Management Report and plan cited in the analysis  
14 clearly indicate sheep in the central and eastern  
15 Brooks Range are managed as a single population, yet  
16 OSM refers to populations plural, of sheep occurring  
17 within the proposed closure. They disregard the  
18 State's management structure. Furthermore when asked  
19 how they define terms such as viability and wildlife  
20 population as used in this special action they would  
21 not clarify due to legal advice from counsel. If OSM  
22 cannot adequately define these terms ADF&G will not be  
23 or will be unable to evaluate and assess the risk  
24 relative to pertinent metrics. And the public will be  
25 unable to understand the justification for closing this  
26 area.

27  
28 We should also point out that while OSM  
29 analysis is of the issues put forth by the proponent,  
30 the proponent makes undue use of literature that has  
31 not been peer reviewed. It also ignores several basic  
32 wildlife management principles. The Federal Staff  
33 analysis, heavy reliance on Heimer and Watson, 1986, is  
34 not in alignment with ANILCA Section 101(c). In this  
35 case because Whitten published peer reviewed literature  
36 using the same data set as Hammer and Watson in 1986  
37 and refuted these ideas in 2001. Furthermore Murphy,  
38 et. al, 1990 examined the population composition of  
39 hunted and unhunted dall sheep populations and found  
40 one, no relationship between harvest of old rams from  
41 the proportions of young rams in the population. Two,  
42 no clear affect of hunting on lamb and yearling  
43 production. Furthermore Lo, Heissen, Smith have  
44 concluded that 8 to 15 percent of rams die annually  
45 across their range in Alaska without regard to hunting  
46 pressure or regulations. The Staff analysis seems  
47 unaware of the widely recognized scientific principal  
48 that harvest falls along the additive compensatory  
49 continuum and therefore erroneously assumes that any  
50

0126

1 non-harvested sheep would have otherwise survived which  
2 is an erroneous assumption even under additive harvest.  
3 Moreover the premise of the full curl strategy is not  
4 to promote trophy hunting, but rather to exploit  
5 segments of the population with higher annual mortality  
6 that are at or past their maximum reproductive value.

7

8 Like other sheep populations in Alaska  
9 the current weather related decline of the sheep  
10 population in central and eastern Brooks Range was  
11 significant. ADF&G continues to assess the situation  
12 using Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve  
13 population estimates, trend counts and harvest data.

14

15 We also feel compelled to inform you  
16 that this proposed closure would greatly diminish a  
17 Federal/State project research dall sheep, ram ecology  
18 and potential affects of harvest on the closure area  
19 that the State started just this summer in 2022.  
20 You've heard some about that earlier and I'll talk more  
21 about it.

22

23 This entails deploying satellite  
24 collars in the central and eastern Brooks range sheep  
25 population to further understand this population and  
26 evaluate hunting affects on sheep population dynamics.  
27 This project was explicitly developed to address  
28 stakeholder concerns specifically including  
29 stakeholders residing  
30 in the closure area regarding sheep harvest and its  
31 impacts on sheep populations. If this closure is  
32 passed then we will have to adjust the study plan in  
33 this area, it would have otherwise been the treatment  
34 area, would be left out of the project.

35

36 Although the decline is real lambs  
37 continue to be counted in annual and aerial -- excuse  
38 me, in annual aerial surveys and representative age  
39 structure of rams continue to be harvested each year  
40 even from the smaller numerical cohorts of the early  
41 2010s.

42

43 Additionally providing a harvestable  
44 surplus from big game populations with small herds of  
45 500 to a thousand is not unprecedented. For instance,  
46 Wolf Mountain caribou, 21C moose, Nunivak Island  
47 muskox, et cetera.

48

49 While the central and eastern Brooks

50

1 Range sheep population is likely 10,000 to 20,000 sheep  
2 based on extrapolations of recent population estimation  
3 surveys from Gates of the Arctic, ADF&G has  
4 consistently demonstrated with sheep and other big game  
5 populations that it is not necessary to conduct an  
6 annual count of a harvested population or enumerate the  
7 abundance of each individual cohort where very  
8 conservative management surveys are employed. In fact  
9 because sheep are one of the few big game animals --  
10 big game populations where age structure and cohort  
11 data are available from harvest data, it further  
12 reduces the imperative for annual survey data.

13

14 As previously discussed approximately  
15 28 percent of the central and eastern Brooks Range  
16 sheep population resides within the Gates of the  
17 Arctic. With relatively minimal harvest in Gates of  
18 the Arctic, the harvest that includes any ram and ewe  
19 harvest, the Gates of the Arctic represents a  
20 significant refugia to the sheep population. The  
21 presence of that refugia enhances the opportunity for  
22 genetic interchange, age and sex class interchange,  
23 sync-migration and escape terrain from hunting  
24 pressure.

25

26 The central and eastern Brooks Range  
27 sheep population declined due to weather, not harvest.  
28 Sheep population fluctuations of varying magnitudes and  
29 causes are not unprecedented in Alaska and those  
30 populations have recovered under full curl strategy.  
31 This is further evidence of the compensatory nature of  
32 the full curl harvest strategy. The proposed closure  
33 will not accelerate the recovery or mitigate weather  
34 related declines. Furthermore if the Board is  
35 seriously concerned about population viability the  
36 first step should be to discontinue ewe harvest. This  
37 is another basic principle of ungulate management.

38

39 While we recognize the proponent has  
40 concerns regarding the declines in the area, sheep  
41 populations over the past decade ADF&G believes based  
42 on the information we have gathered in our role as the  
43 manager of the wildlife in Alaska that the population  
44 of the sheep in the central and eastern Brooks Range  
45 continues to be viable and healthy. As a viable and  
46 healthy population we believe existing dall sheep  
47 numbers can provide both continued opportunity for  
48 rural residents to engage in subsistence way of life as  
49 required by ANILCA Section 801(1) as well as for the  
50

50

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1 existing dall sheep hunting as approved by the Alaska  
2 Board of Game to continue.

3

4

5 Current subsistence harvest numbers of  
6 sheep in the proposed closure area are estimated to be  
7 very low, less than three sheep per year and other  
8 hunting activities are already highly restricted in  
9 Gates of the Arctic, the hard Park and the Dalton  
10 Highway Corridor Management Area. For those -- for  
11 more than 41 percent of the proposed closure area.

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So in summary ADF&G emphasizes the following points. One, full curl ram harvest management strategy allows harvest without impact population growth. Two, the area affected is small and is already restricted to hunting methods and means. Three, a closure would not have a meaningful population affect. And four, the closure would have a minimal affect on harvest. Finally if it comes -- if it becomes clear that this decision will cause restriction of non-subsistence uses we ask that the Board ADF&G or we ask the Board to provide ADF&G with an explanation as to why they disagree with the information presented here and why the restriction is necessary to serve a purpose limited or listed in Section 815(c) that less restrictive measures will not achieve this purpose.

I'm really annoyed when somebody says finally and then they drone on. However.....

(Laughter)

MR. BURCH: .....excuse me, as Jack Reakoff mentioned we have done some surveys lately and I'd like to summarize some of what we saw.

We have a few more talking points as a result of a sheep survey we completed this summer and some additional information from new and research -- from new research project mentioned earlier. One, we observed 27 percent more sheep during this year's survey than in 2021 indicating that the population has not declined further and has likely stabilized or slightly grew. The 2022 results reenforce our assessment of the Brooks Range sheep population previously provided. In contrast to some statements made regarding this population, preliminary composition data indicated rams of varying ages in the population suggesting that cohorts of 2015 through 2022 are

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1 present in this population. As predicted the pre --  
2 and previously noted, it is likely that the cohorts of  
3 2013 and '14 are not present in significant numbers.  
4 Three, we initiated field work in June for the Brooks  
5 Range ram ecology study. This study was designed in  
6 part to compare the survivorship of immature rams to  
7 hunted and unhunted study areas. This study should  
8 shed light on the consequences of varying levels of  
9 mature ram removal with implications for productivity  
10 and survival of other age classes which was a primary  
11 concern of the proponent of the closure. This  
12 unnecessary closure greatly impacts the study design.

13

14 Thank you, Madame Chair.

15

16 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you very  
17 much. I appreciate that. Does anybody have any  
18 questions right now for Mr. Burch.

19

20 (No comments)

21

22 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Were your -- were  
23 the recent studies included in the literature analysis  
24 that you have at the back of your.....

25

26 MR. BURCH: I'm sorry, Madame Chair,  
27 was it included where?

28

29 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Under the cite --  
30 citations in the back of your comments for the State of  
31 Alaska?

32

33 MR. BURCH: No, this is brand new, just  
34 up.

35

36 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Okay. Great.

37

38 MR. BURCH: Yeah.

39

40 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Does anybody have  
41 any questions. Charlie, are you still there?

42

43 MR. BROWER: Yes, I'm still here.

44

45 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Do you have any  
46 questions?

47

48 MR. BROWER: I don't. Thank you.

49

50

0130

1                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you. Okay.  
2 We're under Board discussion. I knew I missed  
3 something, like that was very quick.

4  
5                   Okay. InterAgency Staff Committee  
6 comments. Sorry.

7  
8                   MS. LaVINE: Thank you, Madame Chair,  
9 members of the Board. This is Robbin LaVine again, I'm  
10 the Subsistence Policy Coordinator and the InterAgency  
11 Staff Committee Chair. And the InterAgency Staff  
12 Committee has developed comments on wildlife special  
13 action 22-02 and they are as follows.

14  
15                   Scale is crucial to evaluate dall sheep  
16 population viability. When viewed across the entire  
17 Brooks Range dall sheep numbers appear to be stable.  
18 However some local populations appear to be critically  
19 low. Specifically there are serious concerns about the  
20 viability of the dall sheep population along the Dalton  
21 Highway Corridor Management Area which I'll now refer  
22 to as the DHCMA. Recent populations estimates and  
23 minimal count surveys indicate substantial declines in  
24 legal rams, ewes and lambs in most survey areas along  
25 the DHCMA. Severe weather conditions, including  
26 extended winters and rain on snow events are thought to  
27 be a major factor in the population declines for sheep  
28 in units 24A and 26B. Declines in the sheep population  
29 within DHCMA are a concern for rural subsistence users  
30 that rely on local populations in close proximity to  
31 where they live. ANILCA Section 816(b) allows for  
32 closure of Federal public lands to the harvest of fish  
33 and wildlife for reasons of public safety,  
34 administration or to assure the continued viability of  
35 particular fish or wildlife population.

36  
37                   The Western Subsistence Regional  
38 Advisory Council, the proponent of WSA22-02 is  
39 extremely concerned about the central Brooks Range  
40 sheep population along the DHCMA and is willing to  
41 forego subsistence harvest of the species to aid in its  
42 recovery. Based on available biological information  
43 and on the traditional ecological knowledge of  
44 Federally-qualified subsistence users residing in the  
45 region, the proposed closure of dall sheep hunting by  
46 all users may be justified and approval of WSA22-02  
47 could aid in the recovery of sheep populations within  
48 units 24A and 26B.

49  
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0131

1                   The North Slope Subsistence Regional  
2 Advisory Council also recommended closing sheep hunting  
3 to all users in units 24A and 26B during their last  
4 regulatory meeting.

5  
6                   Historically most of the sheep harvest  
7 in the areas subject to this special action request has  
8 been by non-Federally-qualified users. Since there are  
9 very few if any legal rams available for harvest in the  
10 area closure of hunting by non-rural users could  
11 provide for conservation of healthy populations of  
12 sheep and likely to help ensure the continued viability  
13 of the dall sheep population in DHCMA. Although sheep  
14 harvest by Federally-qualified subsistence users is  
15 low, sheep numbers are low enough that any additional  
16 mortality from harvest may be unsustainable and could  
17 slow natural recovery of dall sheep in the area.

18  
19                   Thank you, Madame Chair.

20  
21                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you for  
22 those comments. Now we're under Board discussion.

23  
24                   MR. CHEN: Madame Chair, BIA.

25  
26                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Yes. Go ahead.

27  
28                   MR. CHEN: Thank you, Madame Chair.  
29 Last session on this particular wildlife special action  
30 Mr. Peltola had requested a deferral so that we could  
31 explore alternatives by the affected management  
32 agencies and I believe those agencies have information  
33 to report here so we'd like to hear that.

34  
35                   Thank you.

36  
37                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Okay. Great. I'd  
38 like to hear that.

39  
40                   MS. LaVINE: Thank you, Madame Chair.  
41 Again this is Robbin LaVine, the InterAgency Staff  
42 Committee Chair. And I did want to let you know that  
43 the Federal Subsistence Board members responsible for a  
44 Federal nexus in this region and this area through  
45 their Staff are prepared to provide summaries of the  
46 tools each agency has available to them and its  
47 limitations to discuss the request specifically. So  
48 I'm going to ask the ISC members for BLM and Park  
49 Service to join me here at the table and ISC member for  
50

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1 Fish and Wildlife Service, Jill Klein will remain at  
2 her seat at the Board table.

3

4 Thank you, Madame Chair.

5

6 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you.

7

8 MR. McKEE: Madame Chair, for the  
9 record my name is Chris McKee and I'm the Statewide  
10 Subsistence Coordinator for the Bureau of Land  
11 Management. In terms of administrative options --  
12 administrative options available to BLM and to address  
13 the concerns identified in WSA22-02 are limited. BLM  
14 can amend, suspend or cancel special recreational  
15 permits associated with sheep guiding in the area in  
16 question. However this would only prevent guided  
17 hunting for sheep on BLM lands in unit 24A and would  
18 not prevent non-Federally-qualified users not using  
19 guides from accessing 24A for the purposes of sheep  
20 hunting. Closures are also possible through BLM  
21 regulations specifically 43 CFR 83.64.1 under closures  
22 and restriction orders. These regulations allow for  
23 land closures to protect persons, property and public  
24 lands and resources. An authorized BLM officer may  
25 issue an order to close or restrict use of designated  
26 public lands. However the closure requested by WSA22-  
27 02 includes lands managed by other Federal agencies  
28 which would not be impacted by any BLM specific  
29 closures.

30

31 Thank you, Madame Chair.

32

33 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you very  
34 much.

35

36 MS. PATTON: Thank you, Madame Chair  
37 and members of the Board. For the record Eva Patton,  
38 ISC member for the National Park Service. And similar  
39 to BLM the National Park Service has limited options  
40 available to address the concerns identified in the  
41 wildlife special action 22-02. One is modification of  
42 the currently permitted sheep hunting guide concession  
43 in Gates of the Arctic National Preserve; two, is  
44 closure restriction to sport harvest as identified in  
45 36 CFR 13.50; or three, closure to -- or restriction to  
46 subsistence harvest as identified in 36 CFR 13.490.  
47 And overall each of these options is limited in the  
48 ability to address the entirety of the temporary  
49 special action request. As noted by BLM member that  
50

0133

1 this request spans multiple Federal land management  
2 agencies, National Park Service just being one. And  
3 suspending or cancelling guide concession in the  
4 Preserve would only prevent guided hunting for dall  
5 sheep in unit 26B and would not prevent non-Federally-  
6 qualified users who do not use guides from accessing  
7 unit 26B to hunt dall sheep. There's currently only  
8 one guide concession currently permitted within  
9 National Park Service and they have for some time  
10 voluntarily stopped the take of dall sheep in this area  
11 so suspending a permit would have little affect.

12

13 Closure to sport harvest through 36 CFR  
14 13.50 or closure to subsistence harvest through 36 CFR  
15 13.490 would only address dall sheep conservation  
16 concerns on the National Park Service lands which is a  
17 minimum amount of land compared to the overall closure  
18 request so only 10.9 percent of Federal lands in 24A  
19 and only 2.7 percent of Federal lands in unit 26B. And  
20 again it's noted the population sheep declines and the  
21 hunt closure request spans across the jurisdiction of  
22 both BLM, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National  
23 Park Service lands. And so to effectively provide for  
24 conservation of healthy dall sheep populations and  
25 allow for the continuation of subsistence uses of dall  
26 sheep across the area in question would require a  
27 coordinated effort between all three Federal land  
28 management agencies as well the public process would be  
29 disjointed. 36 CFR does require consultation with the  
30 State in the event of non-emergencies and also to  
31 provide an opportunity for public comment in one or  
32 more meetings next to the affected area.

33

34 So again the public process and  
35 opportunity to engage and comment on the closure would  
36 be disjointed across the Federal agencies and therefore  
37 the Federal Subsistence Board would be the appropriate  
38 entity and public process to address 22-02 through  
39 ANILCA Section .816(b).

40

41 Thank you, Madame Chair.

42

43 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you for  
44 that.

45

46 MS. KLEIN: Okay. Members of the  
47 Board, Jill Klein for the record and I wanted to read  
48 the administrative options available to the U.S. Fish  
49 and Wildlife Service to address the concerns identified  
50

0134

1 in wildlife special action 22-02. And they're also  
2 identified in regulations and I'm happy to share the  
3 specifics if requested.

4  
5 So these regulations apply to the  
6 issuance of competitively and non-competitively issued  
7 permits for economic and/or other privileged uses on  
8 all National Wildlife Refuges in Alaska as well as  
9 regulations that authorize the Refuge Manager who may  
10 close an area or restrict an activity on an emergency  
11 temporary or permanent basis. Additionally air taxis  
12 and transporters could be given a permit condition that  
13 limits them from dropping off clients in certain areas,  
14 in this case west of the Sagavanirktok River. These  
15 administrative options available to the Refuge wouldn't  
16 prevent non-Federally-qualified users who do not use  
17 guides or air taxis and transporters from accessing the  
18 Refuge for sheep hunting.

19  
20 And the Service acting for the  
21 Secretary and required by Section 810 of ANILCA did  
22 evaluate the affects on subsistence uses and needs of  
23 proposals that affect land use decision on National  
24 Wildlife Refuges in Alaska. And based on review and  
25 evaluation of available information at the time in 2013  
26 it was determined that the activities proposed under  
27 the special use permit wouldn't significantly restrict  
28 subsistence uses in the Arctic National Wildlife  
29 Refuge.

30  
31 Thank you.

32  
33 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you. Is  
34 there anybody else. Did I see someone raise their hand  
35 or were you just stretching?

36  
37 UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: Just stretching.

38  
39 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Okay. Sorry. Go  
40 ahead, Robbin.

41  
42 MR. BROWER: Hello.

43  
44 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Yes, go ahead.

45  
46 MR. BROWER: Hello.

47  
48 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Hi. Can you hear  
49 me.  
50

0135

1 MR. BROWER: Can you hear me?

2

3 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: I can hear you,  
4 can you hear me.

5

6 MR. BROWER: Yes, I can hear you.

7

8 (Laughter)

9

10 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Okay. Great. Did  
11 you have a question.

12

13 MR. BROWER: Anyway it's a question,  
14 it's a question to the Coordinator for the North Slope  
15 Advisory Council. This closure is not going to affect  
16 the sheep harvest by the community of Anaktuvuk Pass in  
17 26A and B; is that right?

18

19 MS. HONIG: Thank you. Through the  
20 Chair. This is Leigh Honig, Council Coordinator. Can  
21 I ask you to repeat the question one more time?

22

23 MR. BROWER: Okay. Thank you. This  
24 closure, is it going to affect the sheep harvest by the  
25 community of Anaktuvuk Pass in 26A and B, 24B?

26

27 MS. GREDIGAN: Yeah, this is Lisa  
28 Gredigan for the record. And that's correct, Charlie,  
29 this special action will not affect any harvest by  
30 Anaktuvuk Pass residents in unit 20 -- 24B and 26A.

31

32 MR. BROWER: Thank you.

33

34 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Okay. We're under  
35 Board discussion, right, we're still under Board  
36 discussion. Was there any further Board discussion on  
37 this special action.

38

39 MR. HILDERBRAND: Madame Chair, this is  
40 -- this is the Park Service. I just want to take a  
41 second to acknowledge and state our appreciation for  
42 all the folks from the public that came and testified,  
43 greatly value the insights and perspectives that you  
44 all share. Same thing for the -- for the RACs, OSM  
45 Staff, the ISC Staff and certainly the State as well.  
46 And greatly appreciate being able to do this face to  
47 face. Relative to the impacts on his own study, I  
48 don't take that lightly and displacement to other  
49 areas, don't take that lightly. And so, you know,  
50

0136

1 looking forward to the discussion on this -- on this  
2 action, but just wanted to I think reiterate what a lot  
3 of folks have said today, to be succinct, it's good to  
4 see you. So.....

5

6 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you. Is  
7 there any further Board discussion.

8

9 (No comments)

10

11 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Seeing none, I'd  
12 like to entertain a motion at this time.

13

14 MR. COHN: Madame Chair, from the  
15 Bureau of Land Management.

16

17 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Yes, go ahead.

18

19 MR. COHN: Madam Chair, I move to  
20 approve WSA22-02 as modified by OSM. And if I get a  
21 second I'll explain why I intend to vote in support of  
22 my motion to close dall sheep hunting on Federal public  
23 lands in units 24A and united 24B [sic], west of the  
24 Sagavanirktok River to all users for the 2022/2024  
25 wildlife regulatory cycle.

26

27 MR. BROWER: Second.

28

29 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Okay. That was  
30 seconded by Charlie Brower.

31

32 MR. COHN: Serious declines in dall  
33 sheep populations within the Dalton Highway Corridor  
34 Management Area or DHCMA of units 24A and 26B [sic]  
35 warrant closure of hunting for the species to all  
36 users. This is consistent with ANILCA Section 816(b)  
37 which allows for closure of Federal public lands to the  
38 harvest of fish and wildlife for reasons of public  
39 safety, administration or to assure the continued  
40 viability of a particular fish or wildlife population.  
41 Recent surveys show declines in legal rams, ewes and  
42 lambs within the DHCMA, most likely the result of  
43 severe weather events including extended winters and  
44 rain on snow events.

45

46 As stated in the analysis for WSA22-02,  
47 similar action has already taken place under both State  
48 and Federal regulations in 2015 and 2016 respectively  
49 for unit 23 and portions of unit 26A. In that case all  
50

0137

1 State sheep seasons were closed to hunting and the  
2 Federal regulation changed to a may be announced  
3 season. There have been no State or Federal sheep  
4 hunts in those areas since that time.

5  
6 Although sheep numbers across the  
7 entire Brooks Range may be stable, declines in sheep  
8 populations along the DHCMA are a real concern for  
9 Federally-qualified subsistence users who depend on  
10 efficiency of harvest of localized sheep populations  
11 close to where they live. The Western Interior  
12 Subsistence Regional Advisory Council, the proponent  
13 for WSA22-02, is so concerned with the population  
14 status of sheep within in the DHCMA that they are  
15 willing for forego their own harvest of the species for  
16 the next two years in the hopes this will allow for the  
17 recovery of sheep populations in their area. Even  
18 though most of the dall sheep harvest in units 24A and  
19 26B is by non-Federally-qualified users, the available  
20 biological data and the traditional ecological  
21 knowledge of rural users living in the area indicate  
22 that any additional harvest even by Federally-qualified  
23 subsistence users is unsustainable and a closure to all  
24 users is justified.

25  
26 Finally this closure is also consistent  
27 with the recommendation of the North Slope Subsistence  
28 Regional Advisory Council.

29  
30 Thank you, Madame Chair.

31  
32 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you.  
33 Discussion.

34  
35 MR. REAKOFF: This is Jack Reakoff, I'd  
36 like to address the Board on the proposal.

37  
38 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Okay.

39  
40 MR. REAKOFF: So I agree fully with  
41 OSM's analysis and conclusion and the InterAgency Staff  
42 Committee and I appreciate the Regional Director for  
43 the BLM's proposed -- supporting the proposal. For  
44 those Board members who don't know who I am, I've lived  
45 in the Brooks Range for 50 years plus with Native  
46 elders, elders and my own experience and sheep. I've  
47 sat on the Koyukuk River Advisory Committee for nearly  
48 30 years. I have a lot of experience. I'm sitting  
49 here with a whole table full of data. I'm not just --  
50

0138

1 this isn't by guess and by golly, I'm looking at the  
2 most recent data that was presented to the Koyukuk  
3 River Advisory Committee which I'm the Chair of. I've  
4 been on the Western Interior Advisory Council since  
5 2013 -- '93.

6  
7 This year I was there in the spring of  
8 2002 [sic], very few sheep from Galbraith Lake and the  
9 outer portion of the -- of the proposed area to the  
10 bottom of the Brooks Range in unit 24A. With six  
11 drives with a 30 power spotting scope and 10 power  
12 binoculars, several of the ewe and yearling sheep are  
13 missing that I saw last year from predation this  
14 winter. Lamb production was surprisingly low. There  
15 was one group of ewes, adult ewes, I'm comp these --  
16 I'm doing a composition, I identify adult ewes versus  
17 yearling ewes or yearling sheep, with 12 ewes with only  
18 one neonate on June 8th after the last possible date of  
19 birthing there was only three yearling lambs from last  
20 year and seven of them are missing from that same  
21 group. Seven-eighths rams in the early fall of 2021,  
22 this last year, are missing in the ram group. They are  
23 mainly four and five year old rams that are between  
24 three-quarter and just past three-quarter curl. That's  
25 this spring before they start growing, they'll grow  
26 rapidly close to the seven-eighths. There are very few  
27 seven-eighths or full curl. I found zero full curl.  
28 The mistaken harvest of near seven-eighths curl is now  
29 chronic with mavid (ph) hunters and few are recorded if  
30 taken illegally. I've watched -- observed hunters  
31 stalking sheep with archery equipment that were seven-  
32 eighths. Their intention was to kill those and they  
33 went after them two days in a row.

34  
35 Their population -- these populations  
36 are not migratory. The Department of Fish and Game's  
37 management regime is not scientific to the proposal.  
38 It's including sheep in 24B east and 26C that are  
39 healthy is not scientifically valid. I would also  
40 assert that under the recent State surveys, the State  
41 surveys include areas in unit 25A that are actually  
42 much healthier and most likely would be the increase of  
43 27 percent over last year's survey. My personal  
44 discussion with Will Deacy this morning who flew the  
45 same area and found most of the sheep quote, aggregated  
46 in one drainage in unit 25A. Don't be misled by false  
47 statements by the Department of Fish and Game, let's  
48 stick to the -- let's stick to the proposal area.

49  
50

1                   It is imperative to adopt wildlife  
2 special action request 22-02 in the attempt to  
3 stabilize declining sheep populations in unit 24A and  
4 26B west. Populations are anything but healthy. I  
5 talked to Bill Leakoff who's a U.S. Fish and Wildlife  
6 Biologist flew with pilot Andy Greenblok on the west  
7 side of the Atigun River, they couldn't even find a  
8 sheep in the corridor on the west side of the Atigun  
9 River. My observations are there's 13 ewes and two  
10 lambs in one group right by Galbraith Lake, there's six  
11 ewes with zero lambs by Rush Mountaineer (ph) and  
12 there's three ewes and one yearling on top of Atigun  
13 Pass. That's how many sheep there are there. The  
14 populations are anything but healthy.

15  
16                   I'm working with Federal land managers  
17 to develop a ram composition data to scientifically  
18 manage all sheep on the Federal land. We have talked  
19 to the -- when you fly State sur -- if you fly moose  
20 surveys you compare the population, you know, how many  
21 yearling bull moose you have in there, how many medium  
22 bulls and adult bulls. And the Department of Fish and  
23 Game is just counting full curl rams which means  
24 nothing because the harvest data that's sitting right  
25 in front of me shows that all full curl rams that were  
26 shown in the -- found in the survey area last year in  
27 2021, the harvest data shows that they were killed.  
28 The Department of Fish and Game is mixing apples and  
29 oranges. Do not include 25A, 26C and 24 -- 26B west or  
30 east in this -- in the discussion, that's not within  
31 the purview of this proposal.

32  
33                   The proposal is strictly a conservation  
34 measure, it does not quote, target any one user group,  
35 walk in, archery, Super Cub guide, horse guide or  
36 subsistence users. There's complete ignorance of the  
37 fact that there are three guides that hunt the affected  
38 unit in 24A and they have 10 assistant guides and they  
39 have three Super Cubs and the sheep move in and out of  
40 the corridors. So the bow hunters seem to think  
41 they're all their sheep, no, they're not. They go  
42 outside the corridor and they get killed. They kill  
43 them down to barely legal ram if that.

44  
45                   The State comments are off task in many  
46 areas and obfuscate the issue at hand. The State  
47 comments include vast areas of the eastern Brooks  
48 Range. Sheep are not migratory, they're not a  
49 migratory animal. And the Department of Fish and Game  
50

0140

1 seems to make the public believe that these sheep  
2 migrate around. They don't migrate. The dall sheep  
3 telemetry work by Jim Lauler for the National Park  
4 Service around Anaktuvuk show that they went no further  
5 than six to 12 miles maximum range, usually within  
6 their own block of hill. They're a very social animal  
7 and specific breeding regimes for older age class ram  
8 study that Steve Arthur also had telemetry work in unit  
9 24A that shows that these sheep are not migrating off  
10 to unit 26C or 25A, they stayed in their own little  
11 area.

12  
13 The Department is ignoring the Wayne  
14 Heimer, Watson report. It's not peer reviewed, but  
15 that was sold to the public. I was a member of the  
16 public in 1986 when we were sold this full curl  
17 management using the Wayne Heimer report that showed  
18 that if you killed nothing but three -- three-quarter  
19 curl -- down to three-quarter curl the populations  
20 would decline. They also used the Guise report of  
21 mountain sheep studies of behavior, 1971. This is  
22 important scientific literature, the Wayne Heimer,  
23 Watson page 70 -- 68 recommends in number 2 that the  
24 State managers -- quoting, the State managers should  
25 not return to three-quarter curl regulations where dall  
26 sheep are subjected to heavy hunting. All full curl  
27 age class rams should be protect -- all three-quarter  
28 curl ram segments should be protected as well as some  
29 of the full curl rams, not all full curls are  
30 recommended to be killed. This should be accomplished --  
31 this should be accomplished by full curl management  
32 for hunting, but it assumes that you have consistent  
33 recruitment. We have not had consistent recruitment in  
34 the live population which is from 2012 to 2022 we're  
35 missing six cohorts and now we're looking at extremely  
36 low lamb production in unit 24A. The State comments  
37 indicate.....

38  
39 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Chairman Reakoff.

40  
41 MR. REAKOFF: .....that full curl can  
42 be take -- all full curls can be taken in this heavily  
43 hunted area. This is false. The State claims that  
44 these comments in their -- in their comment that these  
45 populations are healthy and has a harvestable surplus.  
46 They say the recent weather events are similar to  
47 previous declines in the sheep population in the '90s  
48 and the early 2000s. Well, we had comments from  
49 Wrangell Mountain biologists, but they don't live here  
50

0141

1 and I've been involved in fish and wildlife management  
2 for years. I've never heard of a population of this  
3 low number in the Brooks Range. This is a false  
4 statement and the current population had multiple deep  
5 snow years, late springs and most important heavy rain  
6 on snow multiple times. This is climate change at its  
7 worst affect on the dall sheep in the described area.  
8 And to the west where the Brooks Range sheep have been  
9 heavily already (indiscernible - distortion). And in  
10 1991 these snow years late spring was not accompanied  
11 by heavy rain. This area has not had anything like  
12 this in 120 year oral history. And I knew old timers  
13 here who told me exactly what these sheep populations  
14 did.

15  
16 The State comments do not inform the  
17 Board of Game nor do they inform this Board of the  
18 survey data showing that 75 percent decline over the  
19 last 10 years. The State and National Park Service and  
20 BLM all concur with those surveys. The Feds fly  
21 separate survey and they all show that same decline.  
22 The State biologists were asked to model the poor  
23 recruitment at the Koyukuk River Advisory Committee in  
24 February in game management unit 24A population. The  
25 Area Biologist that got the letter said they could not  
26 because due to the lack of data only full curl rams are  
27 accounted for in the survey and in 2021 all rams that  
28 were found to be legal were taken last year.

29  
30 ANILCA is clear in Title VIII, Section  
31 103 and I will quote what the ANILCA law that we're  
32 working from here for the Board's edification. Section  
33 801(3) continuation of the opportunity for subsistence  
34 uses of resources on public and other lands in Alaska  
35 are threatened by increasing populations of Alaska with  
36 resultant pressure on subsistence resources by sudden  
37 decline in the population of some wildlife species  
38 which are crucial to subsistence resources by increased  
39 accessibility of remote areas containing subsistence  
40 resources and by taking fish and wildlife in a manner  
41 inconsistent with recognized scientific principles of  
42 fish and wildlife. Section 802, consistent with sound  
43 management principles -- oh, correction. Section 802,  
44 it is hereby declared to be the policy of Congress,  
45 one, consistent with sound management principles and  
46 the conservation of healthy populations of fish and  
47 wildlife the utilization of the public lands in Alaska  
48 is to cause the least adverse impact possible to rural  
49 residents who depend upon the subsistence resources  
50

0142

1 uses of the resource of such land consistent with  
2 management of fish and wildlife in accordance with  
3 recognized scientific principles.

4  
5 So currently the State's composition  
6 work is glaring lacking and cannot be managed with  
7 sustained yield because they don't -- they can't model  
8 the population. The State is having -- I want to  
9 remind the Board that the Board has to have deference  
10 to these Councils. The Councils are stating I would  
11 never come to this Board with a full closure like this  
12 unless I gave the State of Alaska the chance for an EO,  
13 emergency order, to close this area. They refuse to do  
14 it, they obfuscated the thing with the Board of Game,  
15 told them that the populations are all healthy in unit  
16 26C and eastern 26E, they didn't talk about the  
17 detrimental decline of the populations in unit 24A and  
18 25A also.

19  
20 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Mr. Reakoff.

21  
22 MR. REAKOFF: I have one more to finish  
23 here.

24  
25 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you, Mr.  
26 Reakoff. And can we please make it as quick and  
27 concise as possible.

28  
29 Thank you.

30  
31 MR. REAKOFF: These comments have to be  
32 read into the record for the deliberation of this  
33 proposal. I'm rebutting what the State's comments to  
34 the public have been and what the State is -- what the  
35 actual situation is. The State is harvesting beyond  
36 their own science, it's not applying standard ungulate  
37 composition and with tracking adult rams remaining post  
38 hunt is affected in the described area in unit 26 --  
39 24A and 26B. The State data used -- presented for full  
40 curl encompasses 40 years of over the entire Brooks  
41 Range. The most concerning is the number of several  
42 five to seven year old rams taken in 2021. It's in the  
43 State comments and the page number is 43. There's a  
44 bar graph that shows almost half of the sheep -- five  
45 year old sheep taken in a forty year time frame and  
46 taken in 2021 when we still had three-quarter  
47 regulation. Meaning that hunters currently are taking  
48 a lot of sublegal sheep far below the age class  
49 described in regulation.

50



0144

1 Park Service, Grant Hilderbrand.

2

3 MR. HILDERBRAND: The National Park  
4 Service votes in support of the motion to approve  
5 wildlife special action 22-02 as modified by OSM.

6

7 MS. DETWILER: Thank you. Dave Schmid,  
8 Forest Service.

9

10 MR. SCHMID: The Forest Service will  
11 also support the motion to approve as modified by OSM  
12 and in deference to the Western Interior and North  
13 Slope RAC.

14

15 MS. DETWILER: Thank you. Moving to  
16 Public Member Charlie Brower.

17

18 MR. BROWER: I move to support the  
19 wildlife special action 22-02 with modification by OSM  
20 and also support the North Slope Advisory Council  
21 recommendation.

22

23 Thank you.

24

25 MS. DETWILER: Thank you. Coming in  
26 and loud and clear there.

27

28 And finally Public Member Rhonda Pitka.

29

30 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: I vote to support  
31 22-02 because of the significant population viability  
32 concerns detailed in the analysis provided by OSM and  
33 also in deference to the Regional Advisory Councils,  
34 the Northwest [sic] and Western Interior.

35

36 Thank you.

37

38 MS. DETWILER: Thank you, Madame Chair.  
39 The vote is seven to zero, it passes -- motion passes  
40 unanimously.

41

42 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you very  
43 much. I appreciate that and I appreciate all of the  
44 analysis and all the public testimony today.

45

46 We are a number 11, other business.  
47 Other business. Is that you, are you other business?

48

49 MR. PELTOLA: Thank you, Madame Chair,

50

1 if I may. As I mentioned his morning I think that  
2 Glenn mentioned it also that I'm on terminal leave  
3 which means I'm using up my annual leave before I  
4 retire. I'll be retiring on Friday. There's a couple  
5 of outstanding issues that the Federal Subsistence  
6 Board has had before them I wanted to remind the Board  
7 of. I'm not necessarily advocating for one position or  
8 the other, just a reminder that these are all  
9 outstanding.

10

11 One is the Federal Subsistence Program  
12 still has the extraterritorial jurisdiction request for  
13 red salmon in Southeast. There's an additional  
14 extraterritorial jurisdiction request for Sitka Sound  
15 herring. At one of my first Federal Subsistence Board  
16 meetings as a member I asked the Solicitor's Office a  
17 opinion of Title II and Title III versus Title VIII in  
18 the hierarchy which we still have not received yet or I  
19 should say the Board has not received yet. There's a  
20 issue of new member training and recurrent training for  
21 existing Federal Subsistence Board meetings. I think  
22 the last training session that the Federal program  
23 hosted was at Alyeska six years ago and we've had  
24 several Board members cycle through since then. Also a  
25 new commitment is the Office of Subsistence Management  
26 correspondence review policy which the Board committee  
27 to earlier on this fiscal year. In addition too  
28 there's the OSM Fishwide (ph) Service Funding Holdback  
29 Member Annum from '91 that the Board committed to  
30 reviewing.

31

32 And I'd just like to say that of the  
33 five years I spent at the Office of Subsistence  
34 Management in addition to the almost five years as a  
35 sitting Federal Subsistence Board member has been one  
36 of the greatest privileges and honors of my career and  
37 I think everybody who's been a part of that, including  
38 the State of Alaska's participation at our meetings is  
39 greatly appreciated. Not only here, but at the  
40 Regional Council meetings as well.

41

42 And as Federal employees and at times  
43 I'm sure State employees as well, it isn't always easy  
44 to take at times the very harsh criticism that's put  
45 towards us, whether it's a State agency or a Federal  
46 agency. I just admire the courage and professional  
47 fortitude of each and very person that is immersed in  
48 what I personally call one of the most politically  
49 charged topics in the State of Alaska historically and  
50

0146

1 at times currently. Interesting fact is although  
2 subsistence accounts for less than 1 percent of the  
3 fish and wildlife harvest in our State of Alaska, it  
4 has the lion's share of the politics associated with  
5 it. For the most part I think people try to minimize  
6 that politics and take actions accordingly within  
7 policy regulation and statute and the -- and the agency  
8 or, you know, guidance provided to them.

9

10 As a reminder although the Federal each  
11 and every Federal Subsistence Board member needs to be  
12 cognizant of their individual support of NGOs and  
13 special interest groups. They do not have a priority  
14 under Title VIII of ANILCA. And although the rural  
15 subsistence user, Native and non-Native alike, they do.  
16 And at times I think this is overlooked by us as a  
17 government at times.

18

19 In closing I'd like to thank the Office  
20 of Subsistence Management, the Regional Advisory  
21 Council members and their Chairs, each of the Federal  
22 Subsistence Board members and the State of Alaska for  
23 the service that each of you provide to the Federal  
24 Subsistence Program. It could not function without  
25 each and every one of your involvement. In addition  
26 too and doing so in a very at times stressful and  
27 politically charged environments.

28

29 I thank each and every one of you for  
30 your time and contribution.

31

32 Thank you.

33

34 MR. SCHMID: Madame Chair.

35

36 (Applause)

37

38 MR. SCHMID: Madame Chair, before.....

39

40 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Yes.

41

42 MR. SCHMID: .....he gets away.....

43

44 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Uh-huh.

45

46 (Laughter)

47

48 MR. SCHMID: We'll let you go easy. My  
49 congratulations, Gene, on your retirement. You beat me

50

0147

1 to the finish line. I don't know how they keep moving  
2 that line for me, but I do want to just share that --  
3 just compliment and admire your service here to the  
4 State of Alaska, to the Federal Subsistence Board and  
5 that I consider you not only a colleague, but a friend  
6 and someone that I've learned a great deal from over  
7 the last several years here working alongside you.

8

9 So thank you so much for your service.

10

11 (Applause)

12

13 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Charlie.

14

15 (No comments)

16

17 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Well, thank you,  
18 Gene, for your service to the program and to your  
19 service to the Fish and Wildlife Service. It -- it's  
20 crazy, 35 years with the Feds.

21

22 (Laughter)

23

24 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: That's a long  
25 time, I can't even imagine. I wish you well in your  
26 retirement and I'm sure that you're not actually like  
27 going to stop working.

28

29 MR. PELTOLA: I start a new career on  
30 Monday.

31

32 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Okay. That's what  
33 I thought. I've learned so much from Gene. When I  
34 first started the program I had a background with the  
35 Regional Advisory Councils, but I showed up and you  
36 just like start spitting out CFRs left and right. I'm  
37 like okay, I've got to try to take notes because he's  
38 actually like the fastest talking Native person that  
39 I've ever met in my whole entire life especially from  
40 Bethel.

41

42 (Laughter)

43

44 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: So I really  
45 appreciate all that and, you know, thank you very much.

46

47 MR. BROWER: Charlie here.

48

49 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Yes, Charlie.

50

0148

1 MR. BROWER: Yeah, thank you, Madame  
2 Chair and also Board member Gene. Thank you for all  
3 your services you've done and your quick response to  
4 all the actions that needed to be corrected. I  
5 appreciate that from the very beginning. And also  
6 thank you for your good job and I know you'll do more  
7 action here on your retirement. I'm going to do that  
8 here pretty soon too.

9  
10 Enjoy life. Thank you very much for  
11 all you've done, Gene.

12  
13 MR. PELTOLA: Thank you, Charlie.

14  
15 MR. SCHMID: Motion to recess for the  
16 evening.

17  
18 MR. LIND: Before you go, (in Native).  
19 Thanks, Gene. When he hired me in December of --  
20 actually it was November he hired me and I had really  
21 -- I didn't really wholly understood the position and  
22 one of my first questions was, you know, what do you  
23 expect of me, Gene. He says well, first of all, read  
24 that PD over and over and over and learn that and then  
25 we'll go along and we'll develop this program, this  
26 Native Liaison position to where it's going to benefit  
27 both you and the people. Learned a lot, Gene.

28  
29 Guyana. Thank you so much for all your  
30 time.

31  
32 (Applause)

33  
34 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: Thank you,  
35 everyone. At this time I'd like to entertain a motion  
36 to adjourn the public work session.

37  
38 MR. HILDERBRAND: Park Service moves to  
39 adjourn.

40  
41 MR. BROWER: Second.

42  
43 ACTING CHAIR PITKA: I think I heard  
44 Charlie's second. Was that right, Charlie Brower, did  
45 you second the motion?

46  
47 MR. BROWER: I second the motion and  
48 also ask for -- are we coming back 9:00 o'clock?

49  
50

0149

1                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA:     Yep, 9:00 a.m.  
2 tomorrow. They'll get you a number.

3  
4                   MR. BROWER:     All right.     See you  
5 tomorrow.

6  
7                   ACTING CHAIR PITKA:     All in favor say  
8 aye.

9  
10                  IN UNISON:    Aye.

11  
12                  (Off record)

13  
14                  (END OF PROCEEDINGS)

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