

SOUTHEAST ALASKA SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes

VIA TELECONFERENCE

March 24 – 26, 2020

Call to Order, Roll Call and Quorum Establishment

The meeting was called to order Tuesday, March 24, 2020, at approximately 10:30 a.m. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Council meeting was held via teleconference. Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council) members Donald Hernandez, Larry Bemis, Michael Douville, Albert Howard, Cathy Needham, Harold Robbins, Robert Schroeder, Frank Wright, Jr., and John Yeager were present by telephone. Ronald Leighton was not present. The Council has three vacant seats. A quorum was established with 9 of 10 seated Council members participating by phone.

Attendees Via teleconference:

- Office of Subsistence Management (OSM), Anchorage: *Tom Doolittle, Scott Ayers, Pippa Kenner, Greg Risdahl, Robbin La Vine, Suzanne Worker, Tom Kron*
- US Forest Service (USFS), Juneau: *DeAnna Perry, Dave Schmid, Wayne Owen, Nicole Grewe, Jake Musslewhite, Marci Johnson, Melinda Hernandez-Burke, Raeanna Wood*; Anchorage: *Tom Whitford, John Kinsner*; Yakutat: *Susan Oehlers*; Sitka: *Terry Suminski, Justin Koller*; Petersburg: *Rob Cross*
- Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), Anchorage: *Mark Burch*; Juneau: *Tom Schumacher, Lauren Sill*
- National Park Service (NPS), Anchorage: *Joshua Ream*; Glacier Bay: *Adam Dermish*
- Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Anchorage: *Glenn Chen*
- US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Kenai NWR: *Jeff Anderson, Todd Eskelin*
- Ketchikan Indian Community: *Tony Gallegos, Keenan Sanderson*
- Yakutat Tlingit Tribe: *Jennifer Hanlon, Havaleh Rohloff*
- Southeast Alaska Conservation Council: *Sally Schlichting*
- Sitka Conservation Society: *Heather Bauscher, Cora Dow*
- Defenders of Wildlife: *Gwen Dobbs*
- Sitka Tribe: *Kyle Rosendale*
- Earthjustice: *Kate Glover*
- Women's Earth and Climate Action Network (WECAN), Women for Forests and Fossil Fuel/Mining/Mega-Dam Resistance Program: *Wanda Culp, Rebekah Sawers*
- *Tony Christianson*, Chair, Federal Subsistence Board, Hydaburg
- *Michael Kampnich*, Craig
- *Larry Edwards*, Sitka

- **Lauren Bell**, University of California

Review and Adopt Agenda

Motion by Ms. Needham, seconded by Mr. Wright, to adopt the agenda as written with the following changes:

- Add: Update on Request for Reconsideration (Board's action on RFR18-01) Unit 2 deer
- Add: Unit 2 Wolf Harvest Report (ADF&G)
- Add: Southeast Federal Subsistence Wildlife Status Update (USFS)
- Remove: SE AK Wildlife Risk and Prevention (USFS) – *speaker not available for new meeting date*
- Add: National Environmental Policy Act Proposed Changes Update
- Move: ADF&G Agency Report (*before Old Business to accommodate speaker's availability due to rescheduled meeting date*)
- Defer: Service Awards (*these will be presented in person at fall meeting*)

The motion passed unanimously.

Election of Officers

Mr. Hernandez was elected Council Chair. Ms. Needham was elected Council Vice Chair. Mr. Wright, Jr. was elected Council Secretary.

Review and Approve Previous Meeting Minutes

Motion by Ms. Needham, seconded by Mr. Wright, Jr., to approve the fall 2019 meeting minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Council Member and Chair Reports

In addition to observations of how COVID-19 was impacting each community, the Council members shared additional information:

Frank Wright, Jr. of Hoonah reported high local unemployment because of the cancellation/delay of cruise ships and out-of-state workers unable to travel to Alaska to work at the Black Cod fishery. The sea otter population seems to have declined and the community is able to get Dungeness Crab.

Michael Douville of Craig reported that there was a lot of interest in the recent wolf harvest, which was higher than he had expected on Prince of Wales Island (POW). Many thought ADF&G's last population estimate was extremely low, and he hopes that there isn't a panic about the current population. People are still seeing a fair amount of wolf signs and there is hope that ADF&G will work with the community on its decisions for the upcoming wolf harvest season. The community is also seriously concerned about the continued logging of old growth trees and thousands of acres going into stem exclusion. These affect deer habitat, which negatively affects deer populations.

Robert Schroeder of Juneau reported that there are food security concerns throughout Southeast communities since many are subsistence-based economies with limited access to other foods. He encouraged the Council to keep in their minds the limited availability and increased cost of foods during these emergency times. There may be a need for modification of subsistence fishing regulations in the future that allow people to fish for others and share fish more easily than under existing regulations. Mr. Schroeder said that everyone needs to keep current on the Alaska Roadless Rule process.

Albert Howard of Angoon reported that the Tribe is working to declare a state of emergency for the community of Angoon because of the decreased ability to secure food. There is limited ferry service to his community, and the subsistence resources in their backyard become more important to maintain the health and well-being of community members. Mr. Howard also reported that there are less Halibut and Coho Salmon and there is a concern that subsistence users will have to compete with non-local users for fish in their area. There is also a concern about the condition of deer—very lean deer have been observed.

Harold Robbins of Yakutat reported that there was a large amount of snow in Yakutat. Eulachon showed up this spring in fairly strong numbers. Deep snow has prevented boats from landing in Dry Bay to attempt to fish any Eulachon. Predators are observed in reasonable numbers, so they've survived quite well.

John Yeager of Wrangell reported that some Eulachon are starting to show up in good numbers on the Stikine River. There is a small amount of sport fishing going on, but many people are trying to hunker down and get through the COVID-19 crisis. There is a lot of uncertainty in all aspects of peoples' livelihoods, especially as far as potential impacts to commercial, subsistence, or sport fishing.

Larry Bemis, Jr. of Yakutat reported that King Salmon fishing in the area was good until the closure went in place in mid-March. He observed numerous food sources such as Needle Fish, Pacific Smelt, and Herring. Fish seem to be more abundant. Deer survived the winter well as a good deal of both large size and small size deer have been seen on the islands. There are restrictions on King Salmon, because of their low count in the Situk River and the low escapement count in the Alsek River. The community is petitioning for restrictions to be rescinded because there is no emergency. The community is concerned about people traveling to and from Yakutat because of COVID-19.

Cathy Needham of Juneau reported that although she is a Juneau resident, she has been staying on Prince of Wales Island during the pandemic crisis. She has remained involved with monitoring the Alaska Roadless Rulemaking (AKRR) process and wanted to commend the Council on its recent work having provided detailed and strong comments on the AKRR draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). She reported that stakeholders on POW met to identify and prioritize projects for a "Klawock Lake action plan." ADF&G started a genetic study to identify stream of origin of salmon caught in the commercial fishery, and a number of organizations are coming together to secure funding to estimate subsistence harvests. Subsistence users on POW may try to resurrect the Unit 2 Deer Management Plan, and she supports addressing the concerns about POW deer populations.

Don Hernandez of Point Baker reported that hunting was poor for most people on the north end of POW and deer were hard to come by. Many hunters had to harvest their deer away from the places traditionally hunt. Mr. Hernandez also heard that local residents plan to get together and develop a deer plan for POW. A POW Landscape Level Analysis is on hold due to litigation, and he hopes there will be an opportunity for a new management plan that might address subsistence needs better than the previous plan. Local fishermen saw a small increase in King Salmon caught this winter, but there was no increase in food resources observed and no whales.

Chair's Report: Mr. Hernandez commented on the difficulty experienced in submitting the Council's detailed comments on the Alaska Roadless Rulemaking issue without the special Council meeting that had been anticipated and planned. The meeting did not take place because of the Federal Advisory Committee Act meeting notice requirements, the expiration of the Council's charter, and expiration of several Council members' terms—all during the time when the special meeting was expected to be held. Though a stressful process, the work group used the Council's previous meeting discussions on the record to formulate a letter that captured and communicated the substantive comments.

Old Business

Alaska Roadless Rulemaking

The Council received a report on the pending Alaska Roadless Rulemaking process from Nicole Grewe, USFS AKRR Team. The Council asked about the status of the ANILCA Title VIII, Section 810 analysis in the rulemaking process and Ms. Grewe advised that she will inform the Council Coordinator as soon as this information can be released. The Council asked several questions and made comments that the US Department of Agriculture timeline was aggressive and not very accommodating for meaningful public engagement. The Council was advised that there is no objection period for AKRR nor an ongoing public comment period. The Final EIS is expected to be published in late May and the final rule published in early July with a 30-day stay in between.

- Motion by Ms. Needham, seconded by Mr. Wright, to send a letter to the decision-maker (USFS) requesting a suspension of the decisions on the Alaska Roadless Rulemaking due to the coronavirus pandemic. The motion passed on a unanimous vote.
- Motion by Mr. Schroeder, seconded by Mr. Yeager, to send a letter to the decision-maker (USFS) restating the Council's comments previously submitted and to reiterate that the correct procedure for Alaska Roadless Rulemaking process was not followed. Therefore, the draft EIS was fatally flawed and should be pulled. A supplemental EIS should be done recognizing ANILCA requirements for the reasons given previously by this Council. The motion passed on a unanimous vote.

Unit 2 Wolf Harvest Report

Mr. Schumacher of ADF&G provided an update on the recent harvest of wolves on POW. He reported that the season length will probably be announced next August/September, after the fall 2019 population estimate is determined on the data received and analyzed.

Request for Reconsideration (RFR18-01)

Ms. Pippa Kenner of OSM informed the Council of the Federal Subsistence Board's (Board) action on the request for reconsideration RFR18-01, which asked the Board to reconsider its support for proposal WP18-01 to reduce the deer harvest limit for non-Federally qualified users hunting on Federal public lands in Unit 2 from four male deer to two male deer. The Board found no demonstration that its interpretation of information, applicable law, or regulation was in error or contrary to existing law.

New Business

As an introduction to wildlife and fish status reports, Chair Hernandez explained that he wanted to start incorporating some of the wildlife and fisheries harvest information as a recurring item in the Council's annual reports to the Board, per ANILCA Title VIII Section 805.

Subsistence Wildlife Harvest Report

Mr. Justin Koller of USFS provided an overview of wildlife harvest in Southeast Region through 2018. Mr. Koller fielded questions from the Council on current wildlife issues across Southeast Alaska

Subsistence Sockeye Harvest and Escapement – Southeast Alaska Region

Mr. Koller provided a summary of Sockeye Salmon harvest and escapement trends in Southeast Alaska. He shared information on various monitoring projects throughout the Southeast. Mr. Rosendale, fisheries biologist with the Sitka Tribe, provided specific information to the Council on the Klag Lake Sockeye Salmon stock assessment project. Ms. Needham provided specific information to the Council on Hydaburg's Subsistence Sockeye Program project at Hetta Lake. Tony Christianson, Principal investigator with Hydaburg Cooperative Association, stated that Hydaburg Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program (FRMP) project was a "game changer" in his community. Comments were made by Council members and the public on the importance and value of FRMP projects across Southeast.

Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program Update

Mr. Risdahl of OSM provided an FRMP update and informed the Council that the 2020 FRMP cycle is nearing its end and that the next step for the Council will be to begin developing their priority information needs (PINs) for the 2022 FRMP call for proposals that will be due in November 2020. The Council has been diligent in maintaining a PINs list and adding new needs as appropriate. Chair Hernandez volunteered to speak with OSM over the summer, if his schedule allowed, to offer additions to the ongoing PINs list currently kept by the Council.

Call for Federal Fish and Shellfish Proposals

Mr. Risdahl informed the Council that the Board is accepting proposals through April 20, 2020 to change Federal regulations for the subsistence harvest of fish and shellfish on Federal public lands and waters for the 2021-2023 regulatory years. The Board will consider proposals to change Federal subsistence fish and shellfish seasons, harvest limits, methods, and means related to taking of fish for subsistence uses, as well as customary and traditional use determinations. The Council did not submit any Federal fish

proposals; however, the Council did discuss the desire to submit a variety of proposals to the State Board of Fisheries.

State Fish Proposals

The Council discussed and identified topics to address with State fishery proposals. The Council formed three working groups to draft exact wording for the proposals with staff assistance. From Council discussions and specific issues discussed by the three workgroups, five fishery proposals were drafted to be submitted to the Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF):

Allow subsistence users to use set gillnets when harvesting salmon

Motion by Mr. Wright, seconded by Ms. Needham, to submit a regulation to the BOF dealing with the use of set gillnets in Southeast Alaska.

Justification: The current regulation prohibiting set gillnets is unnecessarily restrictive. Subsistence users should be allowed to use the most efficient legal gear type available to them. In particular, allowing the use of set gillnets will allow people to fish alone more effectively. Managers will still be able to use permit restrictions to address issues at specific sites.

Motion passed on a unanimous vote.

Remove permit restriction on King Salmon

Motion by Mr. Yeager, seconded by Ms. Needham, to submit a proposal that would remove the permit restriction on King Salmon.

Justification: The BOF has already recognized the customary and traditional use of King Salmon in Southeast Alaska; however, salmon fishing must occur with a permit. Under current regulations, no permits can be issued for King Salmon in the Southeast Alaska area. King Salmon harvest season limits should be addressed on an area-by-area basis and as proposals are submitted.

Motion passed on a unanimous vote.

Unguided / non-resident fishermen issues

Motion by Mr. Yeager, seconded by Mr. Howard, to submit proposals that would address the nonresident non-guided sport fishing problems. The motion passed on a unanimous vote. This resulted in three different proposals being developed by this working group:

- *Limit annual harvest of Coho and Sockeye Salmon by non-residents*

Justification: Under current regulations, non-resident sport fisherman may take six Coho and Sockeye salmon per day, every day of the season, while an entire household of subsistence users may typically only harvest an annual limit of 20-50 fish from each of a limited number of sites. This will allow ample sport fishing opportunity for visitors, while preventing excessive non-resident sport harvest of species important to subsistence users.

- *Limit unguided non-resident Halibut sport fishing so that the regulation is the same as guided sport Halibut fishing*

Justification: Under current regulations, unguided non-resident sport fishermen may take two Halibut per day with no annual or size limits. The same regulations for sport Halibut fishing should be applied to unguided non-resident sport fishermen, “Unguided resident: bag limit of one fish under 40" long or over 80" with an annual limit of six fish.” Subsistence users have reported difficulty in harvesting Halibut and the proposed regulation would lead to more Halibut available for subsistence harvest.

- *Require all non-resident sport fishermen in Southeastern and Yakutat areas (fresh and saltwater) to complete and submit a logbook of all fish and shellfish harvested*

Justification: The harvest by non-resident sport anglers has increased, while subsistence users have been subjected to increasing regulation and restrictions. Subsistence users are experiencing more difficulty in competing for and harvesting fish and shellfish in the Southeastern and Yakutat areas. Presently, recording species with an annual limit is the only enforcement tool. It does not contribute to harvest accounting since there is no requirement to submit the harvest record to ADF&G.

Review and approve FY2019 annual report

Motion by Mr. Wright, Jr., seconded by Mr. Howard, to adopt the annual report with a few edits and additions. Final topics for the FY-2019 Annual Report are: youth engagement; funding for wildlife research management program; staff representation at Council meetings; Board Correspondence Policy; Council’s advocacy for ANILCA Section 810 hearings regarding the Alaska Roadless Rulemaking issue; an expression of appreciation to the Board for its guidance and direction on the previous annual report regarding subsistence shrimp; extra-territorial jurisdiction; and a summary of the status of fish and wildlife resources in Southeast.

Motion passed on a unanimous vote.

Sitka Ocean Acidification and Impacts on Herring Roe presentation

Lauren Bell, current PhD student through University of California (living in Sitka, Alaska), gave a presentation to the Council on the study she conducted last year. This project measured the Pacific Herring response to some of the changes that are expected in the Gulf of Alaska in the coming century.

Other Business:

Motion by Mr. Wright, Jr., seconded by Mr. Douville, to send a letter to USFS, OSM, ADF&G, and possibly others, regarding the need for a Deer Summit to discuss the deer issues in Unit 2 and to explore funding for deer research and the Deer Summit meeting. The motion passed on a unanimous vote and a working group was formed to discuss specific requests for a Deer Summit.

Agency Reports:

- Jennifer Hanlon presented Yakutat Tlingit Tribe: Yakutat Forelands Water Quality Monitoring program; and Havaleh Rohloff presented the Situk River Partners in Yakutat activities by
- Lauren Sill presented Alaska Department of Fish & Game Subsistence Program Updates

- Dave Schmid, Regional Forester, presented Forest Service: Roadless/POWLLA ; Susan Oehlers, Yakutat Ranger District, presented 2019 Moose Survey in Yakutat ; Terry Suminski, Tongass National Forest, presented Special Actions ; Lauren McChesney, Regional Office, presented NEPA Proposed Changes
- Tom Doolittle and Greg Risdahl presented Office of Subsistence Management Updates

Future Meeting Dates:

The fall 2020 Council meeting was set for October 20-22, 2020, in Sitka.

The winter 2021 Council meeting was set for March 16-18, 2021 in Juneau.

DeAnna Perry, Designated Federal Officer
USDA Forest Service

Donald Hernandez, Chair
Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

These minutes will be formally considered by the Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council at its fall 2020 meeting, and any corrections or notations will be incorporated in the minutes at that meeting.

A more detailed report of this meeting, copies of the transcript, and meeting handouts are available upon request. Call DeAnna Perry at 907-209-7817 or 907-586-7918, email deanna.perry@usda.gov.