

# NORTH SLOPE SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

## Meeting Minutes

Qalgi Community Center

Point Hope

October 23-24, 2019

### Invocation:

Steve Oomittuk gave an invocation.

### Call to Order, Roll Call and Quorum Establishment:

The meeting was called to order on Wednesday, October 23 at 9:15 am. Council members Gordon Brower, Wanda Pitka, Steve Oomittuk, Martha Itta, and William Hopson were present in person. Edward Rexford participated by telephone. With 6 out of 7 seated Council members present throughout the meeting, (Council has 3 vacant seats) the quorum was established.

### Attendees:

#### *In person:*

- *Native Village of Point Hope:* Peggy Frankson, Jack Schaefer
- *Point Hope:* Daisy Sage, City of Point Hope Mayor, Mary Jane Attungaruak, Herbert Kimecveauk, Leonard Barger, Billy Stone, Nancy Stone, Edna Attungana, Paul Sage, Guy Omark
- *Tikigaq, Point Hope:* Pearl Oktollik Gould, Micheal Dres Sr., Mary Toksoule
- *Point Hope High school:* Ronnie Holley, Teacher; *Students:* Kaesyn Hill, Makayla Lane, Leo Kinneeveauk, Joshua Stone, Gevin Oenga
- *Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Fairbanks:* Brendan Scanlon, April Behr; *Utqiagvik:* Carmen Daggett
- *Bureau of Indian Affairs, Anchorage:* Pat Petrivelli
- *US Fish and Wildlife Service, Fairbanks:* Vince Mathews
- *Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Fairbanks:* Steve Berendzen
- *Office of Subsistence Management, Anchorage:* Orville Lind, Greg Risdahl, Karen Hyer, Tom Evans, Eva Patton

#### *Via teleconference:*

- *Office of Subsistence Management, Anchorage:* Pippa Kenner, Hannah Voorhees, Christine Brummer
- *National Park Service, Anchorage:* Joshua Ream
- *Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve:* Marcy Okada, Kyle Jolly
- *Bureau of Land Management, Fairbanks:* Debbie Nigro, Shelly Jones

- *Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Palmer:* Mark Burch; *Bethel:* Phillip Perry; *Fairbanks:* Beth Lenart; *Anchorage:* Daniel Gonzalez

### **Review and Adopt Agenda:**

Motion #1 by Mr. Hopson, seconded by Mr. Oomittuk, to adopt the agenda as read with the following changes:

- Tribal engagement presentation by Orville Lind moved to before public and Tribal comments
- Add discussion on ADF&G Tier II levels and Alaska Board of Game proposal discussion
- Request for additional updates on caribou movement

The motion #1 passed unanimously.

### **Review and Approve Previous Meeting Minutes:**

Motion #2 by Ms. Itta, seconded by Mr. Hopson, to approve the April 3-4, 2019 meeting minutes as presented. Motion #2 passed unanimously.

### **Council Member and Chair Reports:**

*Steve Oomittuk of Point Hope* reported that the last few years have been so different with warmer winters and early spring. Animal migration routes have changed and the duck migration and prevailing winds have changed. The community of Point Hope relies on the winds to bring animals. The weather patterns are changing the migrations. The prevailing winds were South to Southeast this year. Usually, they have Northwest winds, but since they haven't come, Point Hope is losing land on the North side including their traditional whale bone yard. There are not many walruses, not like there used to be. It rains in January and February. The sun sets later. Stars aren't in the same place as they used to be in the last 40-50 years. The Big Dipper is in a different place. It's like the world has shifted. Mr. Oomittuk relayed that the animals have fed us since time immemorial, but the cycle of life is changing. Now they only have a few months to gather food. The ice broke off in late May, which is early. When you live in a place your whole life, you see changes. Point Hope celebrates the beginning of the ice by bringing out the whale's tail. Now freeze up is happening much later, in November/December, around Thanksgiving time. They have an abundance of fish, but the river isn't freezing up. They haven't been seeing any Belugas in springtime the last two years. The water is warmer. He saw 300 birds at Cape Thompson and 600,000 birds at Cape Lisburn. The birds came 2-3 weeks early and lots of dead birds washed up on the beach.

This year Point Hope had a good whaling season even though it came early. There were lots of seals, and Mr. Oomittuk counted over 200 from his house. There was an abundance of seals on the ice in early April and May before the ice broke. He does not recall seeing so many seals on the ice, maybe hundreds or thousands over an area of about 7 miles of flat ice. This year there was an abundance of caribou around Point Hope. The caribou are staying around and people are still catching them.

*Wanda Kippi of Atqasuk* reported they had good berry picking around her area, but it ended early and no other species became available. They netted two Broad Whitefish, which they don't normally see and they were very good to eat. They get Humpback Whitefish more often. Fishing is late because the freeze-up is late; normally they used to start in September catching Grayling with nets. They put up nets for Whitefish and now at the end of October they are just beginning to catch fish. Burbot are just starting to migrate.

Ms. Kippi reported a fast melting spring around Atqasuk but it was still a good goose season. There were lots of caribou in the area. The river was very high in August, and there were big herds of caribou all over till mid-September. Then, some musk ox came around and scared the caribou, so people had to travel farther South to get caribou. She hasn't seen a single bear around Atqasuk, but heard there were a lot in Nuiqsut.

*Martha Itta of Nuiqsut* reported that winter is coming later and people can't set nets. The ice freezes only on top and is thin. Ms. Itta reported the pipeline and infrastructure around Nuiqsut is a big problem because they are restricted where they can shoot. The roads are useful to get to wildlife, but traffic is really a big problem, and even if they are told they can go hunting, they are afraid to shoot around the pipeline.

Residents of Anuktuvuk Pass asked Ms. Itta to represent them on the Council since that seat is now vacant. They have been unable to get caribou in their area, so they go to Ms. Itta's area around Nuiqsut to hunt. More caribou are sick with green meat bugs. Sick fish are also increasing, and they have sent some samples to ADG&G and the North Slope Borough Wildlife Department, but we haven't gotten a report back yet. Ms. Itta is very concerned about cleaning up industrial debris around her community, most importantly the contaminated lakes and waters. She is also concerned about the Willow Project, which, if permitted, will block subsistence areas on the west side Nuiqsut. They are having a hard time this whaling season. Nuiqsut had a quota of six, but only got three. There is lots of boat traffic scaring the whales away.

*Edward Rexford of Kaktovik* reported that people are getting their animals and there are a lot of salmon showing up around Kaktovik. He reported they wanted the moose season expanded to May-August and a quota of five moose, but they were allowed only a quota of 3 moose for the whole community. Mr. Rexford talked with Mr. Berendzen about expanding the season. There was a public meeting in Kaktovik in early October, and the season was just opened on October 20 until April 30 for 3 bull moose.

*William Hopson of Utqiagvik* reported that things are changing around Barrow. There is less time to dry fish than they are accustomed to. They used to put up 200-300 pounds of fish in the ice cellar for winter, but it is no longer possible because the rain causes the fish and meat to mold. So, they don't store it in the ice cellar anymore because they would have to throw it away from spoilage. Right now, there is no ice near Barrow and they have not sighted any whales. This is really hurting the community. He would like to see real-time reports with observations.

Mr. Hopson reported that in these times of climate change migrations are changing. It's hard to put meat away. Nutritional values in food from the Food Bank hurts the people—it is not as nutritious as wild foods. Regulations need to be changed for what people need to survive in the winter before sport hunts are allowed. Let the people hunt when they need it. Only after that, should sport hunters be allowed to hunt. There hasn't been a good caribou hunt in 15 years because the transporters have changed the migration, and subsistence users are hurting. Please recognize the people in the North Slope villages. These tribes have a government-to-government relationship and need to be considered.

*Gordon Brower of Utqiagvik* requested a moment of silence and remembrance for Council member and whaling captain Tad Reich.

Mr. Brower reported that there's no ice for 50 miles out of Utqiagvik. You go out 20-30 miles and see nothing where there should be 20,000 bowhead whales right now. Where are they!? What is scaring the whales away? He is reminded of 1989 when there was lots of seismic activity and no whales. NOAA should be here at this meeting to report on the whales. There are probably 500 people in Barrow and 50% rely on subsistence resources. Mr. Brower reported he made calls to Shell, Exxon, BP, etc., and asked them if they are doing seismic activities? Where are the whales? People are going to the beach to pray. They need whales to eat.

Mr. Brower reported the warming temperatures are causing the ice cellars to cave in. These ice cellars are over a 100 years old and now just a 3-4 degree increase in temperature is ruining them. Rain filled his cellar just this past week and his *muktuk* and *quak* turned to mush and was spoiled. For the first time in his life he had to throw out *muktuk*. Mr. Brower has two cellars, one is for personal use and the other is for elders. Last year he only made 25 sacks of fish, but back in the 70s, he supported residents of all communities. Now the weather does not keep the resources in good shape. They used to build an ice house above ground to store whitefish. Whitefish preserved this way can feed 10,000 people. His family used to preserve 100 sacks and now, last year only 25. The weather in the 70s, 80s and 90s was good to sack and bring fish to Barrow in September. These fish are passed along a great distance and are used for Thanksgiving and Christmas. We can't preserve 100 sacks now. People like to eat caviar when it's fresh, it's a choice resource, but now it ferments. He proposes funding to build a big solar powered freezer to store fish—agencies need to help with this. Mr. Brower sees the need to study these fish through the FRMP program, to know why some local fish populations are sick. Mr. Brower noted that his nephews gave him a caribou and it had live little black worms inside the meat. He took it to ADF&G but hasn't heard back yet. He would like feedback on this.

### **Old Business:**

Tom Evans, Wildlife Biologist, Office of Subsistence Management, provided the Council with an update on Wildlife Closure Review WCR20-31: closure to non-Federally qualified users for moose in Units 26B, remainder and 26C. The Council made a recommendation on this at the previous meeting and no action is required.

Eva Patton, Council Coordinator, presented an overview of the 805(C) report to the Council on the Federal Subsistence Board actions and recommendations from the April 2019 Board meeting.

### **New Business:**

#### ***Wildlife Proposals:***

##### **Regional Proposals:**

No proposals submitted for Unit 26 A, B, or C

##### **Crossover Proposals:**

*WP20-43/44/45/46: Eliminate bull closure and remove prohibition of calf harvest of caribou in Unit 23, remainder.* Motion #3 by Mr. Brower, seconded by Mr. Hopson, to support WP20-45 for a year-round bull season for caribou in Unit 23, as requested by the Northwest Arctic Subsistence Regional Advisory Council. Motion #3 passed on a unanimous vote. Took no action on WP20-43, 44, and 46.

The Council discussed their support for residents of Unit 23 including the North Slope community of Point Hope to be able harvest bull caribou at any time and make the decision locally, whether the bulls are in rut or not and good to eat. Council members discussed their observations that the migration and movement of caribou are changing and that the caribou have been coming by Point Hope later in the season. The Council expressed that an open bull season would allow for flexibility to hunt bull caribou when the timing is right, if the caribou are nearby the community and not in rut. The Council felt that while the closure was intended as a conservation measure initially, that perhaps it would be more beneficial to reduce pressure on cow harvest by lifting the bull closure, while traditional knowledge will inform when the bulls are in rut or are good to eat.

The Council specifically supports the proposal WP20-45 in deference to the neighboring Northwest Arctic Subsistence Regional Advisory Council and the communities in Unit 23 to be able to increase subsistence opportunity for the harvest of bull caribou. However, the Council has concerns about the proposals requesting the harvest of calves since the Western Arctic Caribou Herd is still in conservative management. The Council recognizes traditional subsistence uses of calves but suggests ongoing protection of calves at this time for the future of the herd as the population is still recovering.

*WP20-47: Request closure the cow moose season and require the use of a State registration permit (RM880) to harvest moose in Unit 23.* Motion #4 by Mr. Brower, seconded by Mr. Oomittuk, to support WP20-47. Motion # 4 passed unanimously.

The Council discussed that Point Hope occasionally has the opportunity to hunt moose when they are pushed north into the area by wildfires but is not familiar with other communities' subsistence moose hunting in Unit 23. However, the Council is supportive of the Northwest Arctic Council's efforts for conservation to help rebuild the moose population by closing the cow hunt and focus subsistence harvest on bull moose only. Further, the Council recommended that if the use of a registration permit were to be implemented that managers work with the local tribes to distribute permits so that they are readily accessible in each rural community in Unit 23.

*WP20-49: Rescind the closure to non-Federally qualified users for sheep in Unit 25A, the Arctic Village Sheep Management Area.* Motion #5 by Mr. Oomittuk, seconded by Mr. Hopson, to support WP20-49. Motion #5 failed by 5 no votes with one member absent.

The Council expressed support for the community of Arctic Village recognizing the importance of sheep for their subsistence and traditional way of life. Maintaining the closure will help to ensure continuation of subsistence uses and traditional hunting practices without conflict with other users. The Council discussed that the North Slope community of Kaktovik primarily hunts on the north side of the Brooks Range, and the Council would like to defer to the Eastern Interior Subsistence Regional Advisory Council since they are more directly involved with the Arctic Village Sheep Management Area. The vote to oppose WP20-49 aligns with the home region Council recommendation.

*Statewide Proposals:*

*WP20-08: Require traps and snares to be marked with the name or State identification number for all furbearers in all units.* Motion #6 by Mr. Oomittuk, seconded by Ms. Kippi, to support WP20-08. Motion #6 failed by 4 no votes with two members absent.

The Council acknowledged there might be local concerns regarding traps being placed too close to city limits where pets or people may inadvertently encounter them. However, the Council stressed that this statewide proposal would be unnecessarily burdensome to trappers everywhere, many of whom have maintained trap lines for generations. Requiring a label on all traps would incur burden and financial hardship to subsistence hunters who may maintain hundreds of traps and share them among family members. Council members relayed that across the North Slope Region most trapping areas are established, and it is usually known who it belongs to with traditional family markings identifying their hunting equipment.

***Alaska Board of Game Proposals:***

The Council deliberated and made the following recommendation on Western Arctic 2019/2020 Alaska Board of Game wildlife proposal #26 to reauthorize the antlerless moose season in the western portion of 26A.

Motion # 7 by Mr. Oomittuk, seconded by Ms. Itta, to support Proposal 26 with modification to add language that mirrors the Federal subsistence regulations by instituting a Tier 2 hunt under State regulations. Motion #7 passed by unanimous vote.

The Council supports a continued opportunity to harvest moose in this area west of 156 west longitude and north of the Colville River drainage, which is important traditional hunting grounds for subsistence communities in this area of Unit 26A. However, given the conservation concern and limited harvest opportunity for this moose population, the Council believes the State hunt regulations should be limited to local residents of 26A who are most reliant on this moose population. Since the current State regulations allow all residents of the State of Alaska to hunt in this area of very limited moose population, the Council suggests that the new regulations include language for establishing a Tier II hunt so that only residents of Unit 26A can hunt. These residents, who rely on this moose population for subsistence the most, should have a priority for hunting moose in this area.

***2020 Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program:***

Karen Hyer, Fisheries Biologist with the Office of Subsistence Management, provided the Council with an overview of the 2020 Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program and Arctic Region research projects proposed for funding. Since no new projects were submitted for the North Slope Region in 2020 the Council deferred to the Northwest Arctic RAC to make any recommendations on the projects submitted for funding in their area.

Discussions ensued about the difference/relationship between the regulatory cycle and the FRMP program and about the process to develop Priority Information Needs. The Council is very interested in guiding the subsistence fisheries research priorities selection for the North Slope Region and directly involving local communities in the research. Key issues of concern discussed are moldy fish and fish freezing in the ice, the need for marine research to inform subsistence fisheries, and contaminants in subsistence fish.

***Identify Issues for FY2019 Annual Report:***

- Industrial contaminants in fish and the challenge of getting independent research monitoring
- Local input in the FRMP process and request for research on the mold affecting fish in Nuiqsut
- Climate change impacts to subsistence resources and access
- Request for NOAA Oceans report—no whales sighted by Utqiagvik this year!

**Agency Reports:**

- Native Village of Point Hope report by Peggy Frankson, Executive Director, and Jack Schaefer
- Arctic National Wildlife Refuge report presented by Steve Berendzen, Refuge Manager
- US Fish and Wildlife Service, Alaska Native Leadership Scholarship presented by Vince Mathews
- Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve report presented by Marcy Okada, Subsistence Specialist
- Update on the Arctic Planning Region that included Willow EIS and the ANWR EIS presented by Shelly Jones, Field Manager BLM Arctic Field Office, Bureau of Land Management NPR-A
- Alaska Department of Fish and Game Wildlife Department Updates on Western Arctic, Teshepuk, Central Arctic, and Porcupine Caribou Herds and other North Slope region wildlife updates presented by Carmen Daggett, Biologist, and Beth Lenart, Biologist
- North Slope Dolly Varden and Colville River Arctic Grayling FRMP Project reports presented by Brendan Scanlon and April Behr, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Fisheries Research Biologists
- Federal Subsistence Program Tribal Consultation presented by Orville Lind, Native Liaison, Office of Subsistence Management
- Office of Subsistence Management report presented by Greg Risdahl, Fisheries Division Lead and Acting Deputy Assistant Director.

**Future Meeting Dates:**

The Council discussed and voted to set the following future meeting dates:

- Winter 2020 meeting: February 19-20 in Utqiagvik
- Fall 2020 meeting August 18-19 in Utqiagvik with request to meet in Wainwright or Anaktuvuk Pass since the Council does not currently have representation from those communities.



Eva Patton, DFO

USFWS Office of Subsistence Management



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Gordon Brower, Chair

North Slope Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

These minutes will be formally considered by the North Slope Subsistence Regional Advisory Council at its winter 2020 meeting in Utqiagvik, 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 Eva Patton at 1-800-478-1456 or 907-786-3358, email [eva\\_patton@fws.gov](mailto:eva_patton@fws.gov).