

SOUTHCENTRAL ALASKA SUBSISTENCE
REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL
Meeting Minutes

BP Energy Center, Anchorage, Alaska
October 12–13, 2022

Invocation

Gloria Stickwan gave an invocation.

Call to Order, Roll Call and Quorum Establishment

The meeting was called to order Wednesday, October 12, 2022, at 9:02 a.m. Council members Greg Encelewski, Edward Holsten, Angela Totemoff, Dennis Zadra, Andy McLaughlin, Gloria Stickwan, Hope Roberts, Diane Selanoff, and Michael Opheim were present in person and Donna Claus and Donna Wilson were present on the teleconference line. Michael Rego was not present and was excused. Heath Kocan had difficulties calling into the teleconference line and was unable to join. A quorum was established with 11 of 13 seated Council members participating.

Attendees participating:

- Office of Subsistence Management (OSM): *Scott Ayers, Dr. Jason Roberts, Justin Koller, Orville Lind, Brian Ubelaker, Robbin La Vine, George Pappas, Katerina Wessels*, Kevin Foley*
- USDA - Forest Service (USFS): *Dave Schmid, DeAnna Perry, Greg Risdahl, Bret Christensen, Heather Thamm, Ruth D'Amico*, Steve Namitz*, Jeff Schramm*
- Ahtna Intertribal Resource Commission (AITRC): *Karen Linnell, Jim Simon, Dan Gorze, Sterling Spilinek, Kelsey Stanbro*
- Ahtna, Inc.: *Kathryn Martin**
- Chugach Regional Resources Commission (CRRC): *Christine Brummer*
- Kenai National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS): *Todd Eskelin, Ken Gates**
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service: *Jill Klein*
- Bureau of Land Management (BLM): *Chris McKee, Caroline Ketron, Leanne McDonald, Marnie Graham*
- National Park Service (NPS), Anchorage: *Victoria Florey, Eva Patton, Elizabeth Bella, Andee Sears, Grant Hilderbrand*
- Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, NPS: *Barbara Cellarius, David Sarafin, Amber Cohen*
- Denali National Park and Preserve, NPS: *Amy Craver**
- Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G): *Jackie Keating, Jake Engelhoff, Matt Miller**

- Chickaloon Native Village: *Laura Pevins**, *Amy James**
- Native Village of Eyak (NVE): *Matte Piche*, *Mark King**
- Ninilchik Traditional Council (NTC): *Darrell Williams*
- Alutiiq Pride Marine Institute: *Annette Jarosz*
- National Weather Service: *Dr. Brian Brettschneider*
- Members of the Public: *Donald Mike*, *Judy Caminer*, *Milo Burcham**

*Indicates participation via teleconference.

Review and Adopt Agenda

Motion by Member Totemoff, seconded by Member Holsten, to adopt the agenda with the following addition:

11b, item 6: Add FCR23-05 as a crossover closure review

The motion passed unanimously.

Review and Approve Previous Meeting Minutes

Motion by Member McLaughlin, seconded by Member Zadra, to approve the winter 2022 meeting minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Motion by Member Totemoff, seconded by Member Holsten, to approve the joint Eastern Interior/Southcentral Councils meeting minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Council Member Reports

Edward Holsten of Cooper Landing reported on the warm spring and early summer, followed by rain. He noted an outbreak of spruce beetles killing trees and a good first and second run of Sockeye Salmon.

Angela Totemoff of Anchorage reported that the first half of summer was very warm. She noted seeing a herring spawn near Tatitlek, which has not happened in a long time. The Sockeye and Pink salmon runs were weak, but it was a good berry season.

Dennis Zadra of Cordova reported that the spring was late and cold, then unseasonably warm. There were good returns of Chinook and Sockeye salmon on the Copper River and the commercial fishery was managed conservatively. Hunting opportunities were challenging due to extreme rain. There were very poor Coho Salmon returns in Cordova.

Andrew McLaughlin of Chenega Bay reported that the summer started off hot, then quickly turned to consistent rain. The black bear population is doing well, but the moose he harvested from interior Alaska had no fat on them. There are concerns about Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning in the community, and people have not been clamming much yet. He has noticed decrease in size for halibut and noted lots of Sockeye Salmon being caught in the Chum Salmon fishery for Prince William Sound Aquaculture. Lowbush blueberries were fantastic.

Gloria Stickwan of Tazlina reported that the Subsistence Resource Commission for the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve met on October 3-4 and discussed a variety of issues, including the fisheries proposals being discussed at the Council's meeting. She noted high water on the Copper River that delayed people from putting in their fishwheels and might have impacted peoples' ability to harvest fish. She noted that the Village of Tazlina lost their fishwheel due to the high water and the village was not able to provide fish for Tribal members. A house was also lost downriver due to the high water. Moose and caribou harvest has been low.

Michael Opheim of Seldovia reported that it was an average year for King (Chinook) Salmon, and it was nice to see folks getting fish, but the commercial harvest was low and slow going. Berries were good this year. Six to eight black bears were harvested this year, slightly larger than normal. He noted that there is a possible increase in population size and the bears he has seen have been looking good for the winter. Moose have been rebounding, and he has seen many cows with two calves making it through the winter. There have not been too many wolf sightings this year, possibly helping with the moose population. Rabbits and spruce hen have been good this year.

Diane Selanoff of Valdez reported that salmon have been extremely minimal this past summer and, in some places, desolate. Areas where she previously harvested Silvers had no fish or birds; that happened at multiple locations. Salmon have been smaller in size, but halibut have been normal with average sizes. Many bears have been around town, appearing hungry. A sea lion came into town, a ways up from the harbor, but was pushed back with help of the Valdez Police Department. Berries were good, but harvest was minimal due to weather. The rain impacted the salmon returning upstream as well; the fish did not mill about in the bays, instead just went straight upriver. Shellfish and marine mammal numbers have been normal. In town, there have been lots of coyote sightings.

Hope Roberts of Valdez reported that she has been teaching a course for urban Alaska Natives to reconnect to marine mammal harvesting. She noted the sea lion found in town that Member Selanoff highlighted, adding that there was a bear cub picked up this morning by animal control. Marine mammals seem normal.

Donna Claus from 100 miles up the Chitina River reported that it has been dumping snow today and noted that normally her location sees up to 8 inches of moisture a year including snow, but this year, the rain gauge indicates 19.7 inches; it was a very rainy summer. There have been fewer fish in the Chitina River, and they have not seen fish in their usual spots. For the first time in 40 years, there are no fish in her freezer. Mountain goats appear fat and fluffy. Spruce hens have been around, and moose and buffalo seem to be doing fine. She has seen more bears and hearing more wolves around.

Greg Encelewski of Ninilchik reported that the subsistence fishery on the Kenai River went well, nearly all permits were filled, and some fish were distributed to elders. The commercial fishery seemed to be getting a fair number of halibut. The Kings (Chinook Salmon) have been a disaster, though. Late run escapement or early run escapement goals have not been met for a few years. Commercial setnetters have

been shut down, and he only fished his setnet permit two days this year. Clam beds have been closed for four or five years, but the west side of Cook Inlet appear to be doing well. Tanner Crab in Kachemak Bay have been doing ok. Moose in Unit 15C are doing well, possibly due to thinning out the wolf population. There have been quite a few bears in the area. It was a warm spring, then a wet fall.

Service Award

Council Member McLaughlin and Member Opheim were acknowledged for serving on the Council for ten years and presented with an award by Federal Subsistence Board member Mr. Dave Schmid, U.S. Forest Service. Council Member Selanoff, Member Holsten, and Member Zadra were recognized for their five years of service to the Southcentral Council.

Old Business

The Council received presentations on the following topics:

- The Federal Subsistence Board (Board) 805(c) Report summary from Council Coordinator Ms. Jessica Gill
- Board FY-2021 Annual Report Replies summary from Ms. Gill
- Special Actions update from Fisheries Biologist Mr. Justin Koller (FSA 22-05)

New Business

Southcentral Federal Subsistence Fisheries Harvest Update

Mr. Dave Sarafin, fisheries biologist with Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, presented information on the Tanada Creek weir counts and provided an update on the Federal subsistence fisheries that occurred on the Copper River in 2022.

Fisheries Proposals

Regional:

FP23-07: Revise Kenai River Chinook Salmon harvest regulations

Public Testimony: *Darrel Williams*, Ninilchik Traditional Council; *Dr. Jim Simon*, representing himself

Motion by Member Holsten, seconded by Member McLaughlin, to **support** FP23-07. The Council found no biological concern given the low harvest levels of Chinook Salmon in the Kenai River Federal subsistence fishery. The Council felt that this regulation would remove a meaningful subsistence priority for Federally qualified subsistence harvesters. The Council noted that the Federal fisheries regulations do not need to align with State regulations.

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

FP23-08/09/12: Revise customary and traditional use determination for Kenai Peninsula District fish

Public Testimony: *Darrel Williams*, Ninilchik Traditional Council; *Karen Linnell*, representing herself, *Dr. Jim Simon*, representing himself

Motion by Member Holsten, seconded by Member Claus, to **support** FP23-08 and **take no action** on FP23-09/12 based on action on FP23-08. The Council supported in part because Moose Pass was recently granted rural status and customary and traditional use determinations for multiple wildlife species. The Council noted that residents of Moose Pass generally lead a rural lifestyle. One member of the Council also noted that the probability of conservation concerns was low due to the characteristics of the Russian River fishery and the low population of Moose Pass. The Council was happy to see Moose Pass continue with the customary and traditional use determination process.

The motion **passed** on a 6-5 vote.

FP23-19: Rescind Lower Copper River salmon fishery

Public Testimony: *Karen Linnell*, Ahtna InterTribal Resource Commission; *Mark King*, Native Village of Eyak; *Milo Burcham*, representing himself

Motion by Member Holsten, seconded by Member McLaughlin, to **support** FP23-19. The Council felt the Lower Copper River Area fishery needed more time to develop to assess harvest amounts and noted the very small estimated harvest in this fishery is not likely to cause conservation concerns. The Council highlighted the Federal subsistence priority on the Copper River and suggested limiting personal use and commercial fisheries before restricting access to Federally qualified subsistence users.

The motion **failed** on a 7-3 vote.

Crossover:

FP23-14: Revise customary and traditional use determination for Chitina Subdistrict salmon

Public Testimony: *Karen Linnell*, Ahtna InterTribal Resource Commission; *Dr. Jim Simon*, representing himself

Motion by Member Totemoff, seconded by Member Holsten, to **support** FP23-14. The Council felt that the residents of Serendipity did not fully demonstrate the criteria necessary to be granted customary and traditional use status for salmon in the Chitina Subdistrict, particularly with regard to long-term patterns of use. The Council wanted to see additional research conducted into this community before granting Customary and Traditional status for this resource. They also noted that none of the community members spoke in support of their proposal at the Council meeting. Separately, the Council voiced support for the Board to review and revise the Customary and Traditional use request process.

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

FP23-15/16: Revise customary and traditional use determination for the Chitina Subdistrict salmon

Public Testimony: *Karen Linnell*, Ahtna InterTribal Resource Commission

Motion by Member Totemoff, seconded by Member Holsten, to **support** FP23-15. The Council had concerns over harvest of salmon resources by members of communities located outside the traditional harvest region. The Council expressed desire to hear testimony from the proponents of the proposal, as well as members of the communities that this customary and traditional use determination request might impact. The Council was also concerned about recent changes in the Customary and Traditional use determination process that were making the process too inclusive and allowing residents to gain Customary and Traditional use status without providing formal documentation of their subsistence practices.

The motion **failed** on a unanimous vote. Motion by Member Zadra, seconded by Member McLaughlin, to **take no action** on FP23-16 based on action for FP23-15. The motion **passed** on a unanimous vote.

FCR23-05: Reviews the closure to the harvest of all fish in the Delta River by Federally qualified subsistence users. The Council provided the following comment to the Board on FCR23-05:

The Southcentral Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council recommends the Office of Subsistence Management removing the Federal subsistence fishing closure on the Delta River but delay opening the fishery until such time that OSM has conducted an analysis to determine which Federally qualified subsistence users should receive a customary and traditional use determination of the Delta River drainage and to recommend appropriate methods and means of harvest to ensure the fishery is sustainable. It is the Council's understanding that, as written, OSM's recommendation would make the Federal public waters of the Delta River drainage available to all Federally qualified subsistence users of the Yukon-Northern Area whereas Federally qualified subsistence users in the Ahtna Traditional Use Territory would not be eligible to subsistence fish under Federal regulations in an area that the Ahtna people have fished and stewarded for countless generations.

Council member Michael Rego was not present at the meeting; however, he reviewed the proposals on his own. His e-mailed comments and votes, which were read into the record. His votes were not tallied during the Council vote count.

Fisheries Request for Reconsideration FRFR22-01 update

Mr. Koller provided the Council an overview of the Request for Reconsideration process and the status of the Fisheries Request for Reconsideration submitted by Ahtna, Incorporated regarding the newly created Lower Copper River federal subsistence salmon fishery. This was not an action item.

2024 Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program Priority Information Needs

Mr. Koller presented the Council with the 2024 Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program (FRMP) Southcentral Region Priority Information Needs overviews. The following Priority Information Needs were developed: 1) Estimate abundance, run timing, spawning site fidelity, and age, sex, and length

composition for Chinook and Coho salmon that stage or spawn in waters of Kenai Peninsula drainages under Federal subsistence fishery jurisdiction; 2) Estimate Chinook, Coho, and Sockeye salmon escapements into the Copper River drainage and delta systems with a high degree of certainty (for example projects utilizing weir, sonar, and/or mark-recapture methods); 3) Develop, test, and implement methods for monitoring escapement and/or mortality of Sockeye Salmon in the Copper River drainage and delta systems, including assessment of predation; 4) Estimate “quality of escapement” measures such as fecundity, age, sex, and size to help inform salmon management in the Copper River and Kenai Peninsula drainages; 5) Understand effects of environmental and/or climate change on stock specific migration timing and abundance of adult salmon, as well as the implications for harvest management, in the Copper River and Kenai Peninsula drainages using sonars and tagging; and 6) Collect baseline information on juvenile Sockeye Salmon outmigration, timing, abundance, condition, and mortality across the unique sub-watersheds of the Copper River and the Kenai Peninsula drainages. Member McLaughlin motioned, seconded by Member Holsten, to **accept** the 2022-2024 Priority Information Needs. The motion passed unanimously.

2024–2027 Partners for Fisheries Monitoring Notice of Funding Opportunity

Mr. Matt Piche, Fisheries Biologist with Native Village of Eyak, presented projects funded through the Partners for Fisheries Monitoring (Partners) program. The funding has been used for Chinook Salmon escapement, a Klutina River sonar pilot project, and interns from the Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program and University of Alaska Fairbanks. Mr. Koller presented the Council with the 2024 Partners for Fisheries Monitoring notice of funding opportunity.

Harvest of Wildlife for Sport Purposes on National Preserves

Mr. Grant Hilderbrand and Ms. Andee Sears, National Park Service, provided background information on an upcoming proposed rule regarding the wildlife sport harvest rules on national preserves.

Identifying Issues for FY2022 Annual Report

The Council identified the following topics for inclusion into the FY22 Annual Report:

- The process of reporting anticipated needs of subsistence as stated in the Council Charter
- Customary and Traditional Use determination process review and competition for the Federally qualified subsistence users for Copper River Sockeye Salmon
- Climate change impacts on methods and means of use and the need for flexibility in seasons affected by climate change
- Climate change impacts on ocean resources, including Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning and ocean acidification impacts on clams and salmon ocean food webs
- Ahtna InterTribal Resource Commission Memorandum of Agreement on cooperative management of customary and traditional subsistence uses in the Ahtna Region
- Jurisdiction on subsistence shellfish resources in Prince William Sound and concern over the stock size and closure of subsistence shellfish seasons

Fall 2022 Council application/nomination open season

Ms. Gill provided information on the Regional Advisory Council application period, which closes on February 21, 2023.

Joint meeting: North American Caribou Workshop and Arctic Ungulate Conference in May 2023

Mr. Brian Ubelaker, OSM Wildlife Biologist, provided information on the North American Caribou Workshop and Arctic Ungulate Conference. The Council provided ideas for discussion topics during a symposium within the conference. Member Stickwan suggested looking at caribou feed and how the population surveys are done. Member Wilson suggested reviewing the opening dates for the various hunts. Member Stickwan encouraged the inclusion of traditional knowledge.

Member McLaughlin motioned, seconded by Member Roberts, to send Member Stickwan to the Conference to represent the Council. The motion **passed** unanimously. Member Selanoff motioned, seconded by Member Holsten, to nominate Member McLaughlin as an alternate to attend the Conference if Member Stickwan is unable to attend. The motion **passed** unanimously.

Telephonic/internet expenses related to the Council teleconference meetings

Ms. Gill informed the Council on how to get reimbursed for telephonic/internet expenses incurred during previous Council meetings held via teleconference.

Public Testimony (for complete testimony, please review transcripts for October 12-13, 2022)

Ms. Karen Linnell and Mr. Mark King provided testimony on non-agenda items.

Agency Reports:

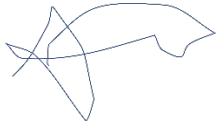
- Ninilchik Traditional Council Subsistence Fishery report was presented by Mr. Darrel Williams, Resource and Environment Director
- Ahtna InterTribal Resource Commission report was presented by Ms. Karen Linnell, Executive Director
- Chugach Regional Resources Commission report was presented by Ms. Christine Brummer, Fish and Wildlife Coordinator
- Alutiiq Pride Marine Institute presentation on ocean acidification was presented by Ms. Annette Jarosz, Biologist
- A regional climate outlook produced by the National Weather Service was presented by Dr. Brian Brettschneider, Climatologist
- Kenai National Wildlife Refuge wildlife report was presented by Mr. Todd Eskelin, Wildlife Biologist, Kenai NWR
- Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve Subsistence Resource Commission and anthropology report presented by Dr. Barbara Cellarius, Anthropologist

- Denali National Park and Preserve Subsistence Resource Commission report presented by Ms. Amy Craver, Cultural Resource Historian
- Bureau of Land Management update presented by Ms. Caroline Ketron, Anthropologist
- Chugach National Forest report presented by Ms. Ruth D'Amico, District Ranger, Chugach NF
- Alaska Department of Fish and Game Division of Subsistence report presented by Subsistence Resource Specialists Ms. Jackie Keating and Mr. Jake Engelhoff
- Office of Subsistence Management report presented by Mr. Scott Ayers, Fisheries Division Supervisor

Future Meeting Dates:

Winter 2023 meeting to be held March 15-16, 2023, in Anchorage.

Fall 2023 meeting to be held October 2-3, 2023, in Kenai.



Jessica Gill, Council Coordinator, Designated Federal Officer
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Office of Subsistence Management



Richard Greg Encelewski, Chair
Southcentral Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

These minutes will be formally considered by the Southcentral Subsistence Regional Advisory Council at its winter 2023 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 Jessica Gill at 1-800-478-1456 or 907-310-6129, or email at jessica_gill@fws.gov.