

SOUTHCENTRAL SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes

Via Teleconference/Videoconference
February 10, 2022

Invocation

Gloria Stickwan gave an invocation.

Call to Order, Roll Call and Quorum Establishment

The meeting was called to order Thursday, February 10, 2022, at approximately 9:15 a.m. Council members Ed Holsten, Michael Opheim, Greg Encelewski, Diane Selanoff, Dennis Zadra, Gloria Stickwan, Angela Totemoff, Andy McLaughlin, Donna Wilson, Hope Roberts, and Heath Kocan were present. Donna Claus and Michael Rego were not present and were excused. A quorum was established with 11 of 13 seated Council members participating by phone during this meeting.

Attendees participating via teleconference:

- Office of Subsistence Management (OSM): ***Robbin La Vine, Tom Kron, Dr. Jonathan (Brent) Vickers, Pippa Kenner, Dr. Hannah Voorhees, Elizabeth Williams, Dr. Jason Roberts, Orville Lind, Scott Ayers, Jarred Stone, Lisa Grediagin, Brian Ubelaker, George Pappas, and Theo Matuskowitz***
- USDA - Forest Service (USFS): ***David Schmid, Jeff Schramm, DeAnna Perry, Greg Risdahl, Bret Christensen, Steve Namitz, Ruth D'Amico, Milo Burcham, Stormy Haught, Heather Thamm, Andrew Morse, and Stephanie Latimer***
- Ahtna Intertribal Resource Commission (AITRC): ***Karen Linnell***
- Native Village of Eyak (NVE): ***Matte Piche***
- Ninilchik Traditional Council (NTC): ***Darrell Williams***
- Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA): ***Dr. Glenn Chen, and Pat Petrivelli***
- Kenai National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS): ***Ken Gates and Todd Eskelin***
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service: ***Jill Klein***
- Bureau of Land Management (BLM): ***Paul (Chris) McKee, Valerie Lenhartzen, and Caroline Ketron***
- National Park Service (NPS), Anchorage: ***Victoria Florey and Heather Coletti***
- Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve (NPP), NPS: ***Dr. Barbara Cellarius, David Sarafin, Judy Putera, and Mark Miller***
- Denali NPP, NPS: ***Amy Craver***
- Lake Clark NPP, NPS: ***Elizabeth Rupp***

- Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G): ***Ben Mulligan, Mark Burch, and Jackie Keating***
- Members of the Public: ***Daniel Stevens, Dillon Patterson, and Mary Hake***

Welcome and Introductions

Federal Subsistence Board Member and Regional Forester Dave Schmid welcomed everyone to the meeting. He extended appreciation to the Council members, recognizing the challenges of participating in Council meetings virtually because of the COVID-19 pandemic. He provided various Forest Service updates regarding Presidential Executive Orders and issues affecting subsistence issues before the Council. Chugach Forest Supervisor Jeff Schramm introduced himself and added his welcome and appreciation to the Council. He introduced new Seward District Ranger, Ruth D'Amico (Francisco Sanchez retired).

Review and Adopt Agenda

Amended motion by Ms. Gloria Stickwan, seconded by Mr. Michael Opheim, to adopt the agenda with the following additional agenda items:

- 10b: Update on Council Application Process
- 11g: Nonrural Determination Proposal Information

Election of Officers

Mr. Greg Encelewski was re-elected the Council's Chair.
 Ms. Gloria Stickwan was re-elected the Council's Vice Chair.
 Ms. Hope Roberts was elected the Council's Secretary.

Review and Approve Previous Meeting Minutes

Motion by Ms. Angela Totemoff, seconded by Ms. Selanoff, to approve the fall 2021 meeting minutes as presented with correction to Gloria Stickwan's Council member report: "the bear mauling happened in **Glennallen**" (instead of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve as originally typed). The motion passed unanimously.

Council Member Reports

Edward Holsten of Cooper Landing reported that the community experienced a decent winter with a lot of snow and little ice. Snowshoe hare populations are still increasing and there have been more sightings of lynx. A recent newspaper article provided a grim forecast for Sockeye Salmon runs in Cook Inlet and Copper River.

Michael Opheim of Seldovia reported that his community was having a pretty good winter also with quite a bit of snow. Numerous snowshoe hares have been sighted and the population continues to increase. Fishing for winter King Salmon has been successful. A young black bear was seen last weekend and a

few moose are wandering around. There is hope for a good return on King Salmon this year in the Slough, like last year.

Diane Selanoff of Valdez reported that salmon were very slow in returning in 2021; however, when they did run, the abundance was normal. Winter King Salmon have been easy to get with fishermen being about 90% successful. Lynx and weasels are abundant. People have been successful hunting and are sharing with others; however, probably because of COVID, people were less likely to gather and go hunting together with their extended families. Deer have been seen less, and this might be because of the amount of snow in the area.

Dennis Zadra of Cordova reported that the community experienced a really early snow fall that started on September 14th, which resulted in about two feet of snow. By December, snow was thigh deep off the beach and in meadows and the deer were right on the beach and easy to harvest. The Alaska Board of Fisheries met in Cordova in early December, and it was a productive meeting. Mark and Sandy King, longtime residents of Cordova, submitted a letter regarding the subsistence moose hunt, and Mr. Zadra wanted to inform the Council of the issue: a permit was issued to a family member that had died, and OSM then issued the permit to the next person in line instead of issuing it to the family of the deceased. This is the process in the regulations regarding issuing individual permits and to change this permitting would require the regulation to be changed.

Gloria Stickwan of Tazlina reported that winter came early with snow and cold temperatures (down to 60 below zero). The area is receiving a lot of snow now, and it is difficult for the moose to move in the deep snow. The king salmon return goal on the Copper River was not met, but the Sockeye Salmon goal was met.

Angela Totemoff of Anchorage reported slow King and Red salmon runs; however, harvesting of Silver Salmon were good for community members. There are low populations of octopus and increased populations of both land and sea otters. Herring are returning to spawning grounds but spawning deeper than usual. They are looking into the cause of this. An interesting marine monitoring group has started up in the area and they are excited to see what information comes from that.

Andrew McLaughlin of Chenega Bay, reported that there were early heavy snows, and there is concern about the impact it will have on the deer population. Hardshell clams and crabs are minimal, while softshell clams and octopus harvests are average. Sun stars are back and are found deeper in tidal zones. There are a lot of sea otters in the area. It is anticipated that snow will impact the berry crop next fall.

Donna Wilson of just below Sheep Mountain Reserve, new member of the Council, shared that she enjoys fishing and trapping and that she is very familiar with her area from her experience in running a guiding business between the Nelchina and Matanuska. She reported that Unit 13 receives a tremendous amount of pressure from all users. There is an additional problem with an early State hunt for moose affecting availability of the resource by the time subsistence users are able to hunt. She would like to see better access for subsistence earlier in the season. She looks forward to learning about the various work of the program to become an effective Council member. She would like to hear from subsistence people in the

area about how they feel the Council can help manage or make resources available. She wants to help residents who want to access animals for hunting, her neighbors who have fish wheels, and those who fish the Copper River.

Hope Roberts of Valdez, new member on the Council, shared that she is of Tlingit/Athabascan/English descent and shared her affiliations: Native Tribal Liaison at Chugach Regional Resources Commission, Chair of Valdez Advisory Committee, and Secretary of the Board of Directors of Valdez Native Tribe. She owns a sportfishing charter and is a marine mammal hunter. She provided a community report. Moose were seen for the first time in 13 years in Valdez. A local Wildlife Trooper said the wolves are pushing the moose down due to the amount of snow in Thompson Pass. The amount of snow also helped deer hunters be successful. Lynx have been spotted in town, presumably because of all the bunnies in Valdez. The sea otters in the local area are one-third the size of the otters seen on the Kodiak Islands and in the Homer area. Seals seem very healthy, and they are harvested as needed.

Heath Kocan of Cordova, new Council member, introduced himself. He is a subsistence user and he was recently hired on with the Science Center in town. His new job has kept him busy, so he only has a little to report. He was successful in his moose hunt. He has heard reports that winter King Salmon run has been slow.

Greg Encelewski of Ninilchik reported a good moose hunting season for his area. It was a good winter season with more snow than needed, and it is taking a toll on the moose as are wolves. Winter King Salmon are doing pretty well. Clams are an important resource. The clam population has decreased significantly, so the local Advisory Council discussed a few proposals regarding the management of this resource. His community receives bountiful blessings, and they continue to share those with each other.

Chair's Report: The Federal Subsistence Board met February 1, 2022 and took action on the Individual C&T for Kathryn Martin—she had a long-standing tradition of use in the area. The Board also approved the FY-2022 Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program (FRMP) program, which included one project in the Southcentral Region.

Old Business

Overview of 2021 Council Charter Changes

Tom Kron, OSM, and Council Coordinator, DeAnna Perry, USFS, provided a summary of the changes to the Council's 2021 charter as approved by the Secretary of the Interior. For this Council, these included the 'carryover terms' clause to allow members to continue to serve until new Secretarial appointments are made, and some Description of Duties, which referenced Executive Orders that were either irrelevant or revoked by newly issued Executive Order, were stricken from the Charter.

Council Application/Nomination Update

Council Coordinator DeAnna Perry, USFS, provided information about the annual appointment process and announced that an application/nomination season is currently open until February 28th, 2022.

Application information can be found on the Program's website or by contacting the Coordinator by email: deanna.perry@usda.gov.

Deferred FP21-10 Information

Tom Kron, OSM, reminded the Council of Fisheries Proposal FP21-10 details, including the history of actions on this proposal by the Southcentral and Eastern Interior Councils. The Board deferred this proposal back to the Councils in hopes that a compromise could be reached that the Board could consider in the future. The date for this joint meeting between the Councils is March 16, 2022.

New Business

Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program Information Update

Jarred Stone, OSM, presented the Council with the FRMP update and explained the next steps in the process. The 2022 FRMP funding cycle is in its final phase. Council members Gloria Stickwan and Heath Kocan volunteered to work on Priority Information Needs (PINs) for the 2024 FRMP cycle over the summer and assist with identifying knowledge gaps and information needed for the management of subsistence fisheries for the Southcentral Region. The resulting draft PINs list will be presented to the Council for their final approval during the fall 2022 meeting.

Prince William Sound Freshwater and Marine Water Jurisdictions

Robbin La Vine, OSM, shared information regarding the freshwater and marine water jurisdictions in the Prince William Sound area. She had previously provided this briefing to the Council's workgroup for this issue. There are no Federal waters in Prince William Sound. Federal government management of the Exclusive Economic Zone for waters that lie between the three miles from shore to 200 miles offshore is governed through the Magnuson-Stevenson Fisheries Conservation and Management Act, not ANILCA. She also explained that the granting of extra-territorial jurisdiction would not transform those State fisheries jurisdiction waters into Federal subsistence fisheries jurisdiction waters, and it would not initiate a procedural methodology to create an aligned Federal Subsistence, State marine, or the Federal marine fisheries regulatory processes.

Alaska Board of Fisheries Regulatory Actions Information Share / Fisheries Report

Dave Sarafin, NPS, gave an overview of some of the actions taken by the Alaska Board of Fisheries at its November – December 2021 meeting that would affect the Southcentral Region. These included: prohibiting professional guide service assistance in the Upper Copper River District, adding subsistence bag possession limits for Dolly Varden, Prince William Sound, establishing gear size restrictions or definitions for subsistence, adding of Pink and Chum salmon additional limits for subsistence. The Alaska Board of Fisheries also took up various proposals directed at dipnet fishing, and a proposal requesting the establishment of an optimum escapement goal and departing from the sustainable escapement goal of the fishery management plan.

Mr. Sarafin then provided a fisheries report, which included specific details regarding salmon activity in the Copper River District and Federal and State of Alaska management decisions on these resources. He

shared the ADF&G preseason Copper River forecast and informed the Council of 2022 early season management strategies for the Federal subsistence fisheries.

Copper River Sockeye Salmon Research Projects Report

Mark Miller, NPS, provided a brief overview of three new NPS funded research projects focusing on Copper River Sockeye Salmon stocks, noting that two of those projects will begin this year: evaluation of genetic analysis as a tool for estimating the stock composition of Sockeye Salmon harvest, using existing data sets to look at factors affecting migratory success of Copper River Sockeye Salmon to develop a better understanding of the impact of environmental changes, and further genetic sampling to characterize health and energetic status of genetically determined Sockeye Salmon stocks to determine mortality risk. He also informed the Council of ADF&G's recommendation to lower the sustainable escapement goal for Chinook Salmon and answered questions about two separate management plans: Copper River District Salmon Management Plan and the Copper River King (Chinook) Salmon Management Plan.

Call for Federal Fish and Shellfish Proposals

Jarred Stone, OSM, informed the Council that the Board will be accepting proposals to change Federal regulations for the subsistence harvest of fish and shellfish on Federal public lands and waters for the 2023-2025 regulatory years for a period of at least 30 days upon the publication of the proposed rule in the Federal Register. 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. In addition, there are several statewide closures currently in place that will be reviewed during the fall 2022 Council meeting cycle; however, all of those closures fall outside of the Southcentral Region.

Call for Nonrural Determination Proposals

Dr. Jason Roberts, OSM, informed the Council that the Board will soon be accepting proposals to change a community's status from non-rural to rural or from rural to non-rural in Federal regulations during the same window as the call for fisheries proposals. The call for non-rural determination proposals occurs every four years and after the pending call for non-rural determination proposals, the next opportunity to submit a non-rural determination proposal will be in 2026. Dr. Brent Vickers, Anthropology Division Supervisor, OSM, provided additional information regarding the steps in the non-rural determination proposal process.

Review and approve FY 2021 Annual Report

The Council unanimously approved the drafted Fiscal Year-2021 Annual Report to the Board with an additional topic questioning why FP21-10 was sent back to the Southcentral and Eastern Interior Councils. As the decision maker of the program, it is the Board's responsibility to take action on the proposals instead of sending back to affected Councils for further discussion. List of Topics to be included are:

1. Fisheries proposal FP21-10 deferral to the Southcentral/Eastern Interior Regional Advisory Councils
2. Concerns with process for customary and traditional use determinations
3. Subsistence Use Amounts – options to conserve salmon of Copper River
4. Jurisdictional Issue – Is there a way to provide for Federally qualified user harvest in Prince William Sound waters
5. Requests for research and funding to continue for Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program
6. Requests for further information on ocean acidification and other recent effects of climate change on fish stocks in Southcentral Region

Federal Subsistence Board Annual Report Reply Process Review and Revisions Discussion and Council comments and feedback

Tom Kron, OSM, informed the Council that the Interagency Staff Committee is working to improve workload efficiencies within the FSMP and briefed the Board on the annual report reply process and possible revisions to improve responsiveness to the Regional Advisory Council concerns. The Council was asked for input on what information it expects from the Board in the Board's Annual Report Reply letter. The Council shared that it has done its best to provide priority subjects to the Board and it feels the annual report is a successful direct communication on various issues to the Board. The Council took no action, but it understood that if the Council wanted the Board to provide detailed specific responses on a particular complex issue, that it could write a letter outlining those specific questions to the Board outside its Annual Report process.

Receiving Public Testimony Protocol – Guided Discussion

Tom Kron, OSM, informed the Council of the opportunities for the public to provide oral/written comments to the Board and to the Council during each regulatory cycle:

First opportunity: When the call for proposals is published in the Federal Register (general comments as well as proposals are accepted during this timeframe outlined in the Federal Register – window is open 45 to 90 days or longer).

Second opportunity: When validated proposals are published in the 'proposal book,' which is posted on the Federal Subsistence Management Program web page.

Third opportunity: At the Council meetings (the region within which the proposal would affect).

Fourth opportunity: During the Board meeting.

The Council was then asked for its preferences regarding the receipt of public comments and provided feedback for the program to consider as it reviews the current protocol and practice of receiving public comments during the regulatory cycle, such as: the Council appreciates public feedback orally and in writing; concerns for the lack of clarity in cut-off point where public comments are no longer accepted; concerns that council members do not have adequate time to review last-minute public comment submissions; and summaries of long public comments are acceptable but the whole comment should be available for the council to look at if they want to see the comment in its entirety.

Briefing and Council comments on proposed actions to automate Federal subsistence permits

Tom Kron, OSM, reminded the Council that there is currently a law that requires all Federal departments and agencies to gain approval through the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) prior to the collecting of information from the public. OMB contacted OSM and tasked them with exploring the use of automated permits within the program and now OSM is asking the Councils and the public for ideas on how to address issues that might arise during the issuance of permits into the future. Comments should be submitted by November 15, 2022. This was not an action item for the Council; however, a few Council members provided comments at the meeting, which included the suggestion to look at how ADF&G handles their automated permitting process.

Briefing on the Secretarial regulations proposing the inclusion of identified submerged lands in the Tongass National Forest

Tom Kron, OSM, provided a briefing on the status of a proposed rule to complete regulatory proceedings addressing submerged public lands within the Tongass National Forest, as directed by the Court. Council Coordinator, DeAnna Perry, and the OSM regulatory specialist Theo Matuskowitz confirmed that the proposed submerged lands were all on the Tongass National Forest and outside the Southcentral Alaska Region. This was not an action item; however, the Council was advised that a 60-day comment period will be opening soon for anyone who would like to provide comment on this proposed rule.

Public Testimony (for complete testimony, please review meeting transcripts for February 10, 2022, posted online at <https://www.doi.gov/subsistence/library/transcripts/2-south-central-alaska>)

Karen Linnell: Expressed concerns about the process to review FRMP projects by the Technical Review Committee and suggested that having Tribal representation at the proposal reviews is key to making sure it is a balanced and fair process.

Agency Reports:

- Darrell Williams presented a report on the Cook Inlet Ninilchik subsistence fishery on the Kasilof and Kenai rivers
- Matt Piche, Biologist and Natural Resources Coordinator, presented the Native Village of Eyak 2021 In-river Abundance Estimate Report for the Copper River Chinook Salmon Monitoring Program
- Todd Eskelin, Biologist, presented the USFWS – Kenai National Refuge report, which included updates on various hunt harvests
- Greg Risdahl, Subsistence Program Leader, provided the annual USFS-Subsistence Program report; Milo Burcham, biologist, presented the USFS – Chugach National Forest report along with harvest reporting for Prince William Sound and Copper River Delta portions of the Chugach National Forest and he advised that the bear project work was coming to an end; and Heather Thamm provided information on harvests on the Kenai Peninsula area
- Dr. Barbara Cellarius, Wrangell-St. Elias Subsistence Coordinator, and Judy Putera, Wildlife Biologist, presented NPS – Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve updates on fisheries

(including FRMP), anthropology, and wildlife for the area. These reports included an update on the Chisana Caribou Herd, harvest information, status of several anthropological and subsistence projects with a variety of partners; Dave Sarafin, Fisheries Biologist, provided the fisheries report earlier in the meeting

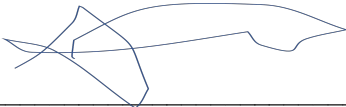
- Amy Craver, Subsistence Manager, provided a written Denali National Park and Preserve report
- Heather Coletti, Marine Ecologist, Southwest Alaska Inventory and Monitoring Program and Parks, NPS, gave a presentation on razor clams in Cook Inlet
- Caroline Ketron, anthropologist, presented the BLM - Glennallen Field Office report, which included harvest updates and project work with various entities such as Ahtna InterTribal Resource Commission (AITRC) and ADF&G; Heather Coletti answered questions from the Council regarding permitting and moose harvests
- Jackie Keating, Subsistence Resource Specialist III, presented the ADF&G Subsistence Report, informing the Council of various ongoing projects, including a clam recovery project with the Native Village of Chenega in collaboration with the Chugach Regional Resource Commission, updated comprehensive harvest surveys in Tatitlek, updating comprehensive subsistence harvest information with Wrangell- St Elias and AITRC
- Tom Kron, State Support Division Supervisor, presented the OSM report, including personnel updates, the effect of COVID-19 on Council meetings across the State, and an update on the lawsuit by the State of Alaska against the Board
- Karen Linnell, Executive Director, presented the AITRC report, including information on the community harvest system and the concerns for poor salmon returns. Ms. Linnell also advised of AITRC's work on several projects such as the Ahtna ethnography and caribou snow and ice TEK project for the Wrangell-St. Elias NP, the work with the Native Village of Chitina to development of a Tribal historic preservation office, the work with Copper River Watershed Project for DNA sampling to aid in a restoration plan, to name a few

Future Meeting Dates:

Joint Southcentral – Eastern Interior Council Meeting to be held March 16, 2022, by teleconference.

Fall 2022 meeting to be held October 12-13, 2022, in Anchorage, if able to meet in person.

Winter 2023 meeting to be held March 16-17, 2023, location to be determined.



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



Greg Encelewski, Chair
Southcentral Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

These minutes will be formally considered by the Southcentral Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council at its fall 2022 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.