

Bristol Bay Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

c/o Office of Subsistence Management

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Anthony Christianson, Chair
Federal Subsistence Board
Office of Subsistence Management
1011 East Tudor Road, MS 121
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6199

Dear Chairman Christianson:

The Bristol Bay Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council) appreciates the opportunity to submit this FY-2020 annual report to the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) under the provisions of Section 805(a)(3)(D) of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). At its public meeting held via teleconference, on February 9-10, 2021, the Council brought forward and approved the following concerns and recommendations for this report. The Council wishes to share information and raise a number of concerns dealing with the implementation of Title VIII of ANILCA and the continuation of subsistence uses in the Bristol Bay Region.

1. Public Participation in the Regional Advisory Council Public Meetings

The Council held its fall 2020 and winter 2021 public meetings via teleconference due to the COVID-19 pandemic social distancing requirements and travel restrictions and was unable to meet in person. It is important to have meaningful participation from all those attending the meeting via teleconference, especially the Council and the public. The Office of Subsistence Management (OSM) staff used Microsoft Teams' video capabilities as a way to display agency reports and track other issues for the Council to follow. During the pandemic, this was a meaningful way to get the Council members engaged, as well as other participants. The use of video conferencing capabilities (instead of teleconference phone lines) should be considered for future public meetings in order for documents and presentations to be displayed visually.

During the Regional Advisory Council public meetings held via teleconference, a lack of public participation through the teleconference method was noted. This Council encourages OSM to conduct additional outreach efforts to notify the public and encourage public participation when holding public meetings via teleconference.

2. Chignik Salmon Fishery

The Chignik Sockeye Salmon fishery run continues to be a stock of concern for the Council. The Council prioritized the research of Sockeye Salmon as a need in the Chignik watershed. Research, stock assessment, and recovery plans for this fishery may provide answers to the questions of what caused the run to decrease and the role of environmental factors in the conservation of healthy populations.

Funding for this fishery should continue to be a priority as it supports subsistence opportunities for rural residents. In 2018 – 2020, closures and subsistence fishery restrictions were initiated in the Chignik River drainage for Sockeye and Chinook salmon conservation reasons. The abundant salmon stocks are a main subsistence resource for the residents within the Chignik watershed and is a strong part of their social and cultural well-being tied to the health of the lands and waters surrounding the communities.

3. Staffing of Alaska Department of Fish and Game office in Dillingham

The position of staff wildlife biologist with the State of Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) in Dillingham has been vacant for quite some time. In the past a person in this position was able to provide residents of the area with biological information on the Nushagak Peninsula Caribou Herd. Togiak National Wildlife Refuge has been able to assist with biological information as well. Without proper staffing, it is hard for residents to get information on the State management strategies for the herd. The Council relies on biological information of the herd's status from the State and Federal wildlife biologists. The ADF&G and Togiak NWR Refuge biologists coordinate together for cooperative management and research to manage the herd.

Additionally, the Unit 17A winter moose hunt is managed by the ADF&G, while a significant portion of the hunt occurs on Togiak NWR lands. An onsite local ADF&G wildlife biologist is important for information on Unit 17A moose management strategies.

4. Brucellosis

Recently, the ADF&G reported increased cases of *Brucella suis* biovar 4, that causes a disease known as rangiferine brucellosis, affecting caribou and reindeer. The Mulchatna Caribou Herd has been affected by this disease and exposure from the contaminated parts of an animal can cause illness to people. Symptoms can include a very high fever that frequently comes and goes, chills, loss of appetite, sweats and fatigue. More detailed information can be found on this website: www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=disease.general3 and in the attached ADF&G Advisory Announcement (see enclosure).

The Mulchatna Caribou Herd is an important subsistence resource for the rural residents of Bristol Bay. The Council was informed about precautions that need to be taken when processing an infected animal and to report suspected cases of brucellosis to the ADF&G. Currently, the season for Mulchatna caribou is closed for harvest across the herd's full range.

The Council expresses concerns regarding the effects of the disease on the Mulchatna Caribou Herd, and requests that the ADF&G monitors the herd to protect the health and safety for the residents of the region. The Council requests that ADF&G keep the Council and public apprised of the current status of the Mulchatna Caribou Herd.

The Bristol Bay Subsistence Regional Advisory Council appreciates the Board's attention to

these matters and the opportunity to assist the Federal Subsistence Management Program in meeting its charge of protecting subsistence resources and uses of these resources on Federal public lands and waters. The Council looks forward to continuing discussions about the issues and concerns of subsistence users from the Bristol Bay Region. If you have questions about this report, please contact me via Donald Mike, Subsistence Council Coordinator, with OSM at 1-800-478-1456 or (907) 786-3629, or email at donald_mike@fws.gov.

Sincerely,



Nanci Morris Lyon
Chair

Enclosure

cc: Federal Subsistence Board

Susan Detwiler, Assistant Regional Director, Office of Subsistence Management

Pippa Kenner, acting Policy Coordinator, Office of Subsistence Management

Katerina Wessels, Supervisory Program Analyst, Council Coordination Division,
Office of Subsistence Management

Steve Fadden, Acting Wildlife Division Supervisor, Office of Subsistence Management

George Pappas, State Subsistence Liaison and acting Fisheries Division Supervisor,
Office of Subsistence Management

Jonathan Vickers, Anthropology Division Supervisor, Office of Subsistence Management

Tom Kron, Statewide Support Division Supervisor, Office of Subsistence Management

Donald Mike, Subsistence Council Coordinator, Office of Subsistence Management

Bristol Bay Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

Benjamin Mulligan, Deputy Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Mark Burch, Special Projects Coordinator, Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Interagency Staff Committee

Administrative Record