

**Bristol Bay Subsistence Regional Advisory Council**

c/o Office of Subsistence Management

1011 East Tudor Road, MS 121

Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6199

Phone: (907) 786-3888, Fax: (907) 786-3898

Toll Free: 1-800-478-1456

RAC/BB 20005.DM

**APR 20 2020**

Mr. Anthony Christianson, Chair  
Federal Subsistence Board  
c/o 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 FY2019 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 in Dillingham, Alaska, on October 30-31, 2019, the Council brought forward the following concerns and recommendations for this report. The Council approved this annual report at its winter 2020 meeting in Naknek. The Council wishes to share information and raise a number of concerns dealing with implementation of Title VIII of ANILCA and the continuation of subsistence uses in the Bristol Bay Region.

**1. Climate Change**

Council members have discussed climate change within their respective regions and said that the summer season has been hotter than normal, affecting river and stream levels. These in turn, affect the environment that the finfish and wildlife populations inhabit. The Council requests that the Board ensures cooperating agencies develop investigative plans that examine how recent changes in the environment affect the finfish and wildlife populations within their range and habitats.

**2. Chignik Area Fishery**

For the past several years, poor returns of Sockeye Salmon have resulted in closures to subsistence fishing for rural residents in the Chignik area. The Council requests that Federal and State managers begin investigating why the Sockeye Salmon are returning in low numbers. Investigation should include assessing the influence of climate change on spawning beds and marine water environments and developing management plans for the fishery.

### **3. Finfish**

With climate change being a major topic of concern, the Council is worried about the outmigration of all salmon species. The Council requests that a study be initiated on the outmigration of salmon and on effects of the Bering Sea blob on the lifecycle of salmon.

### **4. Mulchatna Caribou/Moose**

The Mulchatna Caribou Herd is an important subsistence resource for Bristol Bay residents. Recently, the population has been declining within its range. The Office of Subsistence Management (OSM) presented to the Council a special action request (WSA19-07) to decrease the harvest limit from 2 caribou to 1 caribou. The Council had an opportunity to provide comments on WSA19-07.

The Council encourages local agencies to collaborate and address the declining population of the herd by conducting baseline studies on the caribou and moose populations and their habitats within the Bristol Bay Region. The baseline studies would be a reference for understanding how climate change has affected caribou and moose populations and their ranges, including diseases associated with these populations. Collaborators should also investigate subsistence community harvest areas through traditional ecological knowledge projects for all land mammals. Results of these studies can be compared with the 1980s studies to determine how recent climate change has affected caribou and moose populations, and the communities using these resources.

### **5. Invasive Species**

The Council is concerned about invasive species, plants and insects, which are inadvertently introduced to the region. The Council requests an investigation to develop survey or study methods on invasive species in the region. The Council is uncertain how invasive species affect caribou and moose populations and other subsistence resources.

### **6. Predator and Prey Relations**

The caribou and moose populations are important subsistence resources for rural residents of the Bristol Bay Region. The Council requests a presentation on predator-prey relationships for caribou and moose and spring mortality of caribou and moose calves by bears.

### **7. Tribal Reports**

The Office of Subsistence Management (OSM) distributes the Regional Advisory Council draft meeting agenda to agencies and partners in the region prior to each meeting with a request to contribute relevant topics. Agencies are encouraged to submit reports to be included in the Council meeting materials. The Council urges tribal organizations to submit tribal reports to OSM to be included in the Council meeting materials prior to meetings, as well.

## **8. ANILCA/Subsistence Regulations**

Under Section 805 of ANILCA the Council is responsible for providing a public forum on any matter related to subsistence and to initiate, review, and evaluate proposals for regulations, policies, management plans, and other matters relating to subsistence use. The Council provides its recommendations on fish and wildlife proposals for the Board to consider. The majority of actions taken by the Board on regulatory proposals are in deference to the Regional Advisory Councils' recommendations.

Wildlife Proposal WP18-24 requested to allow the use of a snowmachine to position caribou, wolves, and wolverines for harvest in Unit 17, provided the animals are not shot from a moving vehicle. At its November 2017 public meeting in Dillingham, Alaska, the Council recommended to the Board to oppose the Wildlife Proposal WP18-24, noting confusion over the definitions of "positioning" and "chasing".

The Alaska Board of Game (BOG) convened in Dillingham, Alaska, on February 16-23, 2018 and, among other proposals, BOG took action on Proposal 148. Proposal 148 requested to allow the use of a snowmachine for harvesting caribou, wolf, or wolverine in Unit 17. The BOG adopted the proposal with an amendment to apply only to caribou and to allow a snowmachine to be used to assist in the taking of caribou in Unit 17.

*Allow the use of a snowmachine for harvesting caribou, wolf, or wolverine in Unit 17. The board amended the proposal with substitute language from RC 52 as amended to apply only to caribou. The amended proposal allows a snow machine to be used to assist in the taking of caribou in Unit 17, provided that the vehicle is not used to chase, torment or molest the animal. A snowmachine may be used to approach within 300 yards of a caribou at speeds under 15 miles per hour, if not done with repeated approaches or that cause the caribou to alter their behavior or flee. The snowmachine must be stopped before the hunter may shoot the animal. (The board clarified on 2/23 at 11:41:12 AM that RC 52 applies only to snow machines and not to other motorized vehicles.)\**

\*<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/applications/web/nocache/regulations/regprocess/gameboard/pdfs/2017-2018/csw/soa.pdf082C9292022F2EEE83C8735BDC9A8F4A/soa.pdf>

The Council met in Naknek, Alaska, in March 2018 and was informed by OSM staff that the Alaska BOG met in February 2018 and addressed a proposal similar to WP18-24, which the BOG adopted (Proposal 148) with an amendment. The Council made and passed a motion to ask for WP18-24 to be removed from the FSB consensus agenda. The Council's justification for this motion was that while there are strong feelings about use of snowmachines for hunting, having clearer guidance to hunters and having strong outreach and education could help to make it work better.

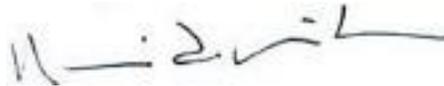
The Board convened in April 2018 in Anchorage, Alaska, and deliberated on Wildlife Proposal WP18-24. The Board heard public testimony on the proposal. The OSM conclusion was to support Wildlife Proposal WP18-24. The Board moved to adopt WP18-24, but the motion failed.

When specific agency regulations are in conflict with ANILCA, the Council seeks a solicitor's opinion on the Board voting process. ANILCA § 811(b) permits the use of snowmobiles for subsistence purposes. Multiple existing Federal agency regulations are in conflict, as stated by the Board, regarding subsistence hunting of caribou, wolves, and wolverine.

The Council seeks an explanation and reasoning behind how the Board votes and how it makes the decision when existing Federal regulations conflict with ANILCA.

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 the Office of Subsistence Management at 1-800-478-1456 or 907-786-3629, or email at [donald\\_mike@fws.gov](mailto:donald_mike@fws.gov)

Sincerely,



Nanci Morris Lyon  
Chair

cc: Federal Subsistence Board  
Bristol Bay Subsistence Regional Advisory Council  
Susan Detwiler, Assistant Regional Director, Office of Subsistence Management  
Thomas Doolittle, Deputy Assistant Regional Director, Office of Subsistence Management  
Suzanne Worker, Acting Subsistence Policy Coordinator,  
Office of Subsistence Management  
Chris McKee, Wildlife Division Supervisor, Office of Subsistence Management  
Greg Risdahl, Acting Deputy Assistant Regional Director,  
Office of Subsistence Management  
Pippa Kenner, Anthropologist, Office of Subsistence Management  
Tom Kron, Acting Council Coordination Division Supervisor,  
Office of Subsistence Management  
Donald Mike, Subsistence Council Coordinator, Office of Subsistence Management  
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