

BRISTOL BAY SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes

Dolly's Hall
Naknek, Alaska
March 10, 2020

Invocation

Mr. Richard Wilson gave an invocation.

Call to Order, Roll Call and Quorum Establishment

The meeting was called to order Tuesday, March 10, 2020 at 12:43 pm. Council members: Nanci Morris Lyon, Dan Dunaway, Richard Wilson, Lary Hill, and William Trefon, Jr. were present in person. Mr. William Maines was present via teleconference. Molly Chythlook and Robert Larson were not present and were excused. The Council has two vacant seat(s). A quorum was established with six of eight seated Council members present or participating by phone.

Attendees:

In person

- *Office of Subsistence Management (OSM), Anchorage:* Orville Lind, George Pappas, Robbin La Vine, Scott Ayers
- *Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Anchorage:* Glenn Chen
- *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Alaska Peninsula/Becharof National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), King Salmon:* Susan Alexander, Josh Macri
- *National Park Service (NPS), Katmai National Park (NP), King Salmon:* Mark Strum, Jason Lux, Troy Hamon, Linda Chisholm
- *State Wildlife Troopers, King Salmon:* David Bump
- *NPS Lake Clark NP, Anchorage:* Liza Rupp
- *NPS, Anchorage:* Joshua Ream
- *Naknek:* Paul Boskofsky
- *Bristol Bay Native Association (BBNA), Dillingham:* Heidi Kritz
- *Igiugig:* Randy Alvarez

Via teleconference

- *BLM, Anchorage:* Bruce Seppi
- *Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), Anchorage:* Mark Burch, Lee Borden, Lauren Watine
- *OSM, Anchorage:* Chris McKee

Review and Adopt Agenda

Motion by Mr. Dunaway, seconded by Mr. Trefon, Jr., to adopt an open agenda format to accommodate those staff that are conducting winter aerial surveys. The motion passed unanimously.

Election of Officers

Ms. Nanci Morris Lyon was elected Council Chair.

Mr. Dan Dunaway was elected Council Vice Chair.

Mr. Richard Wilson was elected Council Secretary.

Review and Approve Previous Meeting Minutes

Motion by Mr. Dunaway, seconded by Mr. Trefon, Jr., to approve the winter 2019 meeting minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Council Member and Chair Reports

William Maines of Dillingham had no report to present to the Council.

William Trefon, Jr. of Nondalton had no report to present to the Council.

Lary Hill of Iliamna reported a concern regarding large wolf packs in the Iliamna area preying on the local moose population. With bad snow conditions and freeze and thaw cycles, the wolves are able run on top of crusted snow while preying on moose. The low ptarmigan population is still a concern for Iliamna residents, but some areas of the region are reporting more observations. Due to low water levels last fall, and difficulty accessing hunting areas, not many residents reported harvesting a moose. Because of higher weather temperature last summer, large fish die offs were observed.

Richard Wilson of Naknek reported that the spring smelt run is very good and there are harbor seals in the area. The fall red fish (Sockeye Salmon) harvest was successful, and Mr. Wilson said that cooperation with land management agencies was positive.

Dan Dunaway of Dillingham actively participated in the management of the Mulchatna Caribou Herd and submitted a letter to the Alaska Board of Game requesting a closure of the Mulchatna Caribou hunt due to conservation concerns. Local residents reported low ptarmigan levels in the Dillingham area. The winter snow depth in the area has caused difficulty for moose to range and forage.

Nanci Morris Lyon of King Salmon reported an abundance of smelt run on the Naknek River. Ms. Lyon expressed her concern regarding the extreme heat last summer and the winter 2020 cold temperatures and how it will affect the fish and wildlife populations.

Coordinator's report: Mr. Orville Lind, acting Council Coordinator, talked about action items for the Council agenda under new business, the 2019 Annual Report, and wildlife special action, WSA20-04,

under agenda item E. Additionally, the Council agreed to add appointments to the Subsistence Resource Commission for Lake Clark NP under agenda item F.

Public Testimony

Randy Alvarez of Igiugig provided testimony on wolves and caribou. Low snow for the past several years has reduced wolf harvest, in part due to other hunting methods prohibited. With hunting pressure on wolves declining, the population is rising and reports of wolves ranging near communities are increasing. With the wolf population increasing, Mr. Alvarez expressed concern that the wolves will impact the moose and caribou populations and affect subsistence harvest opportunities. Mr. Alvarez commented on the Mulchatna Caribou Herd and provided some observations. He observed a herd of caribou of approximately 200 animals in the Kukaklek Lake area for the past 30 years. The group of animals are considered part of the Mulchatna Caribou Herd, but these animals have not left the area.

Old Business

No agenda items.

New Business

Wildlife Special Action

Temporary Wildlife Special Action Request WSA20-04, submitted by the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) and Yukon Delta NWR, requests that the Federal in-season manager be delegated authority to open and close seasons, announce harvest limits, and set sex restrictions for caribou in all or portions of Units 9A, 9B, 9C, 17A, 17B, 17C, 18, 19A, and 19B for the 2020-2022 regulatory cycle.

The WSA20-04 analysis was presented by Chris McKee, OSM wildlife biologist. If approved by the Federal Subsistence Board, the in-season manager will receive the delegated authority to open and close seasons, announce harvest limits, and set sex restrictions.

Motion by Mr. Dunaway, seconded by Mr. Wilson, to support WSA20-04. Discussion: the Council heard public testimony regarding the Mulchatna Caribou Herd. Local observations indicate that a small group of the herd are ranging within the Kukaklek Lake area and do not migrate out, and should be investigated to determine if it is a separate herd from the Mulchatna population. The motion passed on a unanimous vote.

Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program Update

Scott Ayers with OSM presented the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program update. The update included the Fisheries Regulatory Cycle, Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program, and the Partners Program.

Call for Federal Fish and Shellfish Proposals

Mr. Ayers informed the Council that the Board is accepting proposals through April 20, 2020 to change Federal regulations for the subsistence harvest of fish and shellfish on Federal public lands and waters for the 2021-2023 regulatory years. 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.

Cody Larson with Bristol Bay Native Association (BBNA) presented five Federal fishery proposals to the Council. The Council supported his proposal presentation, and through Council consensus, encouraged the BBNA to be the proponent of the five proposals presented.

Review and approve FY2019 annual report

Motion by Mr. Dunaway, seconded by Mr. Wilson, to approve the Council's 2019 Annual Report. The motion passed on a unanimous vote.

NPS Subsistence Resource Commission (SRC)

Liza Rupp with Lake Clark National Park requested the Council to reappoint Thomas Hedlund of Iliamna to the Lake Clark National Park SRC. Mr. Hedlund is a resident of Iliamna and also serves on the Lake Iliamna Local Advisory Committee since 2004.

Motion by Mr. Dunaway, seconded by Mr. Trefon, Jr., to reappoint Thomas Hedlund to serve on the Lake Clark National Park SRC. The motion passed on a unanimous vote.

Agency Reports:

- Susan Alexander, Refuge Manager of Alaska Peninsula/Becharof NWR, provided an update on caribou in Unit 9. No harvest has been reported to date. The refuge hired a new law enforcement officer. The Refuge is currently in the process of conducting a vegetative and wetland investigation due to climate change. The project objectives are to develop a vegetation index and document change on wetland habitats. The Refuge hosts summer Bible and science camps, but the facilities are falling apart and, as result, the Refuge stated it will not be feasible to continue to hold camps. The refuge will leave one building as an emergency shelter.
- Bruce Seppi with BLM reported that his agency has an interagency agreement with the Togiak NWR to monitor the Mulchatna Caribou Herd. BLM law enforcement Ranger Walker Gussy has been assisting law enforcement activities with the USFWS.
- Liza Rupp, Resource Program Manager with Lake Clark NP, presented a summary of activity occurring in the Park. The Park is working on two subsistence related research projects. The Park entered into a cooperative agreement with the ADF&G to conduct community harvest surveys in Port Alsworth. This community's demographics have changed and the project investigates how harvest has changed. The Park is also investigating beaver activity, looking into

how the beavers may be affecting water quality. Park Anthropology staff have been investigating cross community projects with the Denali NP, interviewing residents about subsistence knowledge and how it is exchanged between elders and youth in the communities of Nikolai and Nondalton. Lake Clark NP has been assisting ADF&G with photo census surveys of the Mulchatna Caribou Herd each summer.

- Linda Chisholm, Cultural Resource Manager, provided an update from the Aniakchak SRC, reporting that the ptarmigan and hare populations are down in Unit 9E. The NPS is concerned about marine debris washing ashore near Port Heiden; the SRC reported on a shearwater and shorebirds die-off in the area. The NPS will have information summarizing the shorebird mortality. Ms. Chisholm provided an update on the Pelagia Melgenak monument. The family descendants are working with the Park to produce a bronze bust of Pelagia Melgenak. Ms. Melgenak is a familiar name in the Bristol Bay region. She lived in Old Savonoski, a historic village inundated with ash in the 1912 Novarupta eruption, and maintained a subsistence lifestyle in Oit'rwik (Brooks Camp). Darlene Lind has been commissioned to produce a bust of Ms. Melgenak and Katmai NP will produce an exhibit of her history and tell her story.

The NPS publicly apologized to the qualified red fish fishing communities of Naknek and King Salmon. A seasonal law enforcement ranger contacted individuals harvesting red fish. Mark Strum, Superintendent of Katmai NP, publicly apologized and ensured such incidents do not occur in the future. The Superintendent stated that it is inconsistent with the training provided to their staff.

Mr. Strum announced that Katmai NP is extending its NPS compendium for Regional Advisory Council comments to March 15. The NPS is proposing to establish a permit system in the Brooks River corridor, where permittees must review expected behaviors and proper bear etiquette. The NPS is beginning its visitor use management plan. It will be an open and transparent process. Mr. Strum reported the NPS has been in consultation with the Naknek and King Salmon Tribes on an agreement to develop a plan to restore roads affecting cultural sites in Brooks Camp. Tentative plans are to have the agreement signed in winter 2020.

Troy Hamon provided a briefing on the shearwater die-off. This event occurred in Bristol Bay, as well as the Chukchi and Bering Sea areas. Necropsy results reported that the cause of the die-offs were due to starvation. The NPS conducted moose counts and the population is steady. They also provided an update on the Mulchatna Caribou Herd closure and bear monitoring projects in Katmai. In an update on the Pike Lake Trail, Mr. Hamon stated the NPS is awaiting guidance from the Alaska Region and Washington DC offices on how to proceed.

- Andy Aderman, Togiak NWR biologist, provided the Togiak NWR report. The Mulchatna Caribou Herd season was closed on Federal lands by acting Refuge Manager Kenton Moos but State lands remained open. Mr. Aderman provided an update on the Mulchatna hunt. Seventy-two Mulchatna Caribou were harvested under the Federal hunt. The refuge provided an update

on the moose population in the Southern portion of Unit 18 and *elodea* surveys within the Refuge. No *elodea* has been documented.

- Lauren Watine, Dillingham ADF&G Biologist, provided a briefing on the Unit 17B and C moose population. In February 2020, surveys were conducted and the data is still being analyzed. Preliminary observations indicate the population is still in decline. This will likely affect changes to the fall and winter moose hunting seasons for 2020 and 2021. Biologists in the spring of 2020 will place radio collars on moose calves to estimate calf recruitment. ADF&G placed radio collars on snowshoe hares to estimate population size and health. ADF&G also reported local observations indicate that the ptarmigan population is down.

The Mulchatna Caribou winter hunt was reduced and then shut down for harvest due to conservation concerns. Federal and State staff discussed what could be affecting the decline of the herd, including range quality and predation. Agency staff instituted a communication plan to notify the public of upcoming restrictions and closures. Currently, a long term communication plan is being developed for the 2020-2021 regulatory year.

ADF&G had issued over 2000 caribou permits prior to closure of the hunt. Over 1,000 permits were returned. The total reported harvest was 113, with 73 bulls and 40 cows. The current population objectives are being reevaluated and will need to be discussed with the Alaska Board of Game at its 2021 public meeting.

State predator wolf control update: seven pilots reported a total of 23 wolves harvested.

Lee Borden, ADF&G Area Management Biologist for Bristol Bay sportfish, reported that ADF&G will begin creel surveys for Chinook on the Togiak River this season, and follow up with Coho on the Nushagak River, and finish the creel survey on the Naknek River. The ADF&G, in spring 2021, will begin survey work on Rainbow and Dolly Varden in the Iliamna drainage.

- Danielle Stickman, Western Alaska Landscape Conservation Cooperative, provided an update on priorities for projects in 2020. The Cooperative is seeking to expand stream temperature monitoring in the Bristol Bay region and the Yukon – Kuskokwim Delta. The Cooperative is also continuing to work on coastal resiliency workshops with communities experiencing environmental changes due to climate change.
- George Pappas presented the OSM Winter 2020 Council Meeting Report with briefings on Council meeting dates, Regional Advisory Council Charters, and new Council appointments. Mr. Pappas announced hiring the Assistant Regional Director for OSM, Sue Detwiler. She will report to her position at the end of March 2020. Mr. Pappas also provided update on other OSM staffing. With OSM employees taking other positions, staff size is down by 40%. By end of the year, OSM is planning to fill 3-4 additional vacancies.

Mr. Pappas briefed the Council on OSM and Federal Fishery staff holding a community meeting in Chignik to discuss fisheries in the Chignik area and restrictions put into place due to conservation concern of the fish stocks.

Orville Lind with OSM briefed the Council on Tribal engagement. Tribal engagement sessions have been completed for all 10 Council regions. The purpose of the sessions were to provide an update on the process of consultations.

Closing Comments:

Mr. Dunaway thanked the Council for their support and expressed his appreciation of Ms. Stickman's presentation on the Western Alaska Landscape Conservation Cooperative.

Mr. Wilson acknowledged all the agencies involved in the meeting and thanked them for providing informational materials to the Council. He suggested the Council invite the Bristol Bay school kids to participate in the public meetings when they are held in Naknek. Mr. Wilson also acknowledged Molly Chythlook, former Council Chair, for serving in this position for many years.

Mr. Hill stated his appreciation for Federal and State staff for participating in the public meeting, which shows commitment to the subsistence program.

Mr. Trefon commented that he appreciates being able to attend the public meetings, which are informative and provide him with knowledge about fish and wildlife populations. He likes working together to develop recommendations on regulatory issues to make them easy for the public to follow.

Ms. Morris Lyon commented on the Chignik fishery. Project proposals must be initiated to investigate the poor returns of salmon in the Chignik area.

Future Meeting Dates:

Fall meeting: Dillingham, October 28-29, 2020

Winter meeting: Naknek, February 9-10, 2021

Donald Mike, Designated Federal Officer
USFWS Office of Subsistence Management

Nanci Morris Lyon, Chair
Bristol Bay Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

These minutes will be formally considered by the Bristol Bay Subsistence Regional Advisory Council at its fall 2020 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 Donald Mike at 1-800-478-1456 or 907-786-3629, email donald_mike@fws.gov.

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