

# NORTHWEST ARCTIC SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

## Meeting Minutes

Northwest Arctic Borough Assembly Room  
Kotzebue  
October 28-29, 2019

### Call to Order, Roll Call and Quorum Establishment:

The meeting was called to order on Monday, Oct. 28, 2019 at 9:00 a.m. Council members Tristen Pattee (via teleconference the morning of Oct. 28, due to a weather-related flight cancellation and in-person on the afternoon of Oct. 28 and Oct. 29), Beverly Moto, Michael Kramer, Raymond Lee Jr., Replogle Swan Sr., Louie Commack Jr., Enoch Mitchell, and Barbara Atoruk were present in person. With eight out of eight seated Council members present (Council has two vacant seats) the quorum was established.

### Attendees:

#### *In person:*

*Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), Fairbanks:* Klaus Wutting, Philip Joy; *Kotzebue:* Alex Hansen

*Office of Subsistence Management (OSM), Anchorage:* Thomas Doolittle, Lisa Maas, Karen Hyer, George Pappas, Zach Stevenson, Hannah Voorhees

*Northwest Arctic Borough, Kotzebue:* Charlie Gregg, Carl Wisener

*Selawik National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Kotzebue:* Susan Georgette, Tessa Johrendt, Brittany Sweeney

*Western Arctic National Parklands (WEAR), Kotzebue:* Maija Lukin

*Bureau of Indian Affairs, Homer:* Glenn Chen

*Alaska Wildlife Troopers, Kotzebue:* Scott Bjork; *Fairbanks:* Justin Rodgers

#### *Via teleconference:*

*OSM, Anchorage:* Orville Lind

*NPS, Anchorage:* Joshua Ream; *Fairbanks:* Marcy Okada; *Denver:* Kyle Joly

### Review and Adopt Agenda:

Motion #1 by Ms. Atoruk, seconded by Mr. Commack, to adopt the agenda with the following changes:

- Item #10, New Business, (b) the 2020 Fisheries Resources Monitoring Program will be presented by the OSM Fisheries Division and Anthropology Division;
- Under Item #11, Agency Reports, (e) the Bureau of Land Management will present an Anchorage Field Office update for the fall 2019 season; and
- At the request of Mr. Pattee, a presentation will be delivered on caribou by a caribou biologist affiliated with the Red Dog Mine.

The motion #1 passed unanimously.

### Review and Approve Previous Meeting Minutes:

Motion #2 by Mr. Kramer, seconded by Mr. Swan, to approve the winter 2019 meeting minutes with the following modifications:

- The minutes incorrectly state that Selawik NWR opposed the Ambler Road. In the December 2019 meeting of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group in Anchorage, the working group, not the Refuge, took a position opposing the Ambler Road

The motion #2 passed unanimously.

### **Council Member and Chair Reports:**

*Barbara Atoruk of Kiana* reported the absence of caribou when they should have been present, which continues a pattern observed for the past two years. Otherwise fishing and hunting were good. Hunters traveled to Onion Portage to harvest caribou. Some caribou gathered near a village before the freeze-up. Berry picking was good and occurred during rainy weather conditions.

*Replogle Swan Sr. of Kivalina* reported that caribou arrived later and that this pattern has been observed for the past five years. Mr. Swan added that hunters try to adapt to this change, even if caribou arrive a month later than usual.

*Raymond Lee Jr. of Buckland* also reported caribou arriving later than normal. Mr. Lee added that moose are showing signs of infestation by tapeworms, a condition never observed before, and some people were able to salvage some of the moose meat. It is raining hard in Buckland, and the water is unsafe.

*Enoch Mitchell of Noatak* reported fishing and berry picking were favorable this year. Caribou hunting was favorable too, though predators kept caribou from gathering by the river. Mr. Mitchell added that many people harvested caribou. Mr. Mitchell noted the Federal closure helped provide a successful hunting season for Federally qualified subsistence users this year. Mr. Mitchell reported that the Teshekpuk Caribou Herd lingered in the area longer than last year. He also said that caribou were sighted up until the bull closure date, while normally they have left by this time. Mr. Mitchell added that the caribou migration pattern has been diverted, and it is very important to document these observations to help with future decision making. The climate is changing, the rut is occurring later, and people are having difficulty harvesting caribou. Mr. Mitchell emphasized that documentation of these changes will be helpful when advocating for these subsistence resources.

*Beverly Moto of Deering* reported strong wind conditions and the absence of caribou, adding it was a poor spring hunt for caribou. Ms. Moto explained that people now have to travel farther to harvest caribou, requiring more gasoline, and wondered if the caribou migration has changed. Ms. Moto noted many people had successful fishing and berry picking seasons. Ms. Moto added that she observed people sharing their moose harvest and thinks moose hunting was favorable.

*Louie Commack Jr. of Ambler* reported a favorable summer fishing season, starting in July, producing salmon, whitefish, and Sheefish. Mr. Commack reported people were able to harvest caribou, moose, and bear during the fall season. Mr. Commack added that berry picking was favorable during the fall season too and that bears and wolves were within or near the village.

*Michael Kramer of Kotzebue* reported that he was not able to do much hunting this year due to health related reasons. Mr. Kramer reported observing people having successful hunts. He also reported observing caribou traveling near Kotzebue, the Agashashok (Aggie) River, Knapp Creek, Hugo area, and Lower (Noatak River) Canyons. He added that he did not get a moose tag this year, though he observed six bull moose. Mr. Kramer noted that many people were successful in harvesting bearded seals, adding there were several sick animals and reports of seals and birds washing ashore sick or dying for reasons unknown. Mr. Kramer reported the salmon fishery and berry harvest were productive. He also reported

favorable weather conditions changing to strange weather conditions. Mr. Kramer said that he heard concerns about caribou numbers. He has been recently reappointed to the ADF&G Kotzebue Advisory Committee. Mr. Kramer added that caribou hunting on the Upper Kobuk River was slow, with caribou arriving late and in low numbers in Ambler and Kiana. He also reported that spring fishing was favorable for Sheefish and King salmon and that conditions were favorable for bird hunting.

*Tristen Pattee of Ambler* reported the fall caribou hunt was successful for residents of Ambler. Mr. Pattee noted that while the herd arrived late, people were successful in harvesting enough meat for the winter season. He emphasized some positive news, noting multiple observations from hunters, of thousands of caribou migrating through Onion Portage and the hunting grounds near Ambler and the Jade Mountains in late September and early October. He explained that this hunter success improved local morale as many residents invested considerable time and resources hunting up to that point with limited success. Mr. Pattee also reported that some hunters were successful in harvesting moose and shared their harvest with family and friends in Ambler and other communities. He said that sport hunters shared their harvest and that this was greatly appreciated. Mr. Pattee acknowledged several people for sharing their harvest including Gig Williams, Johnny Emal, Eva Downey, Lorne and Jade Genteman, Charlie Douglas, and Morgan and Lolo. Mr. Pattee also reported hearing concerns about the presence of wolves before the caribou arrived. Some people believed the wolves were responsible for the delayed migration. He added that some people were concerned about public safety while hunting at Onion Portage with more than 50 boats in the area. Mr. Pattee reported that some hunters used large caliber rifles to hunt caribou swimming in the river and this was unnecessary. He also acknowledged those who took children or grandchildren hunting and instilled the values of respect for other hunters and their harvest.

#### **Old Business:**

- Wildlife closure review WCR20-19 (Unit 23 moose) – information update (*OSM Wildlife*)
- 805(c) Report – information update (*Council Coordinator*).

#### **New Business:**

##### ***Wildlife Proposals:***

##### **Regional Proposals:**

*WP20-43/44/45/46: Eliminate bull closure and prohibition on calf harvest for caribou in Unit 23*

Motion #3 by Ms. Atoruk, seconded by Mr. Mitchell, to support WP20-43 that requests a year round bull season in Unit 23.

The Council stated that WP20-43 would increase subsistence opportunity for Federally qualified subsistence users and supported harvesting young bull caribou when larger bull caribou are in rut.

Motion # 3 passed on a unanimous vote.

Motion #4 by Ms. Atoruk, seconded by Mr. Mitchell, to support WP20-44 that requests permitting of caribou calf harvest in Unit 23. The motion #4 passed on a seven to one vote.

Motion #5 by Mr. Mitchell, seconded by Ms. Atoruk, to reconsider and rescind the previous vote on WP20-44. Mr. Mitchell said that he has vision difficulties that prevented him from fully reading the motion and hence he requested a rescinding and reconsideration of the previous motion. He said he is opposed to calf harvest. The motion #5 passed on a unanimous vote.

Motion #6 by Ms. Atoruk, seconded by Mr. Mitchell, to support WP20-44.

The Council justified opposition to WP20-44, citing cultural values as the basis for wanting to avoid establishing an open season for any calf, while supporting the incidental harvest of mortally wounded or orphaned calves. The Council discussed the possibility of modifying the proposal to allow the incidental harvest of wounded or orphaned calves. An Alaska Wildlife Trooper noted the enforcement of such a modification is impossible given the vast geography and limited number of law enforcement personnel in the region. The Council clarified the harvest of calves is uncommon and suggested modifying the RC907 permit to document the incidental harvest of wounded or orphaned calves. One Council member expressed opposition to the harvest of calves, noting the harvest of calves is inconsistent with Iñupiaq cultural values.

Motion #6 failed on a vote three to five.

Motion #7 from Mr. Mitchell, seconded by Ms. Atoruk, to take no action on WP20-45 that requests a year-round bull season for caribou in Unit 23 and on WP20-46 that requests a year-round bull season and that calf harvest be permitted for caribou in Unit 23, because of action taken on WP20-43 and WP20-44.

Motion #7 passed on a unanimous vote.

*WP20-47: Eliminate cow season for moose in Unit 23*

Motion #8 by Mr. Mitchell, seconded by Mr. Swan, to support WP20-47 as modified by OSM. The Council justified its position noting a concern for conserving the region's declining moose population while also expressing concern about the ability for Federally qualified subsistence users to access the RM880 permit.

Motion #8 passed on a unanimous vote.

#### *Statewide Proposals:*

*WP20-16/17: Extend the sealing period and eliminate the harvest quota for hunting and trapping, and liberalize the hunting harvest limit for wolf in Unit 2*

Motion #9 by Mr. Pattee, seconded by Mr. Commack, to take no action on WP20-16/17. This proposal was brought to the attention of the Council at the request of the Chair, who expressed interest in learning how other regions are addressing predator management. The Council justified its position on the proposal, noting that WP20-16/17 is strictly limited to Unit 2 and would not affect the Northwest Arctic region.

Motion #9 passed on a unanimous vote.

*WP20-08: Require traps or snares to be marked with name or State identification number for all furbearers in Unit 2*

Motion #10 by Mr. Swan, seconded by Ms. Atoruk, to support WP20-08.

The Council stated WP20-08 would be burdensome to Federally qualified subsistence users as the justification for its recommendation. A Council member noted that they boil traps to remove any scents,

but did not think the tags would could be boiled, so the tag's scent could deter furbearers from their traps.

Motion #10 failed on a unanimous vote.

### ***2020 Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program:***

Council members wanted to know why Project 20-151 *Increasing Beaver Activity in Northwest Alaska* investigators limited their investigations to the communities of Noatak, Kotzebue, Shungnak, and Kobuk, as the negative impacts of beaver activity have occurred region-wide. Council members asked to expand the project to more, or even all, communities in the region. Council members also had concerns about threats to water quality, public health and safety caused by beaver activity.

### ***Identify Issues for FY2019 Annual Report:***

- The Council is concerned about impacts to Federally qualified subsistence users from the proposed Ambler Road and the desire for: 1) Reducing impacts to air quality from the release of naturally occurring asbestos known to cause cancer; 2) Reducing impacts to Federally qualified subsistence users from disturbances to the leaders migration of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd; 3) Reducing impacts to Federally qualified subsistence users from disturbances to graves, cultural, archaeological, and historic sites; and 4) Reducing impacts to water quality, fisheries habitat, and spawning areas.
- The Council desires to develop a youth educational initiative to help teach students about the importance of the subsistence way of life and how to effectively participate in the Federal regulatory process to influence decisions affecting the management of subsistence resources on Federal public lands important to their communities.

### **Agency Reports:**

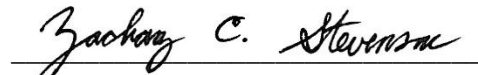
- Selawik NWR Update presented by Susan Georgette
- Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve Update presented by Marcy Okada
- ADF&G Update presented by Alex Hansen, Kotzebue
- Western Arctic National Parklands Superintendent's Report presented by Maija Lukin
- Western Arctic National Parklands Wildlife Report presented by Raime Fronstin
- Cultural Resources Report presented by Justin Junge, WEAR and Bering Land Bridge National Preserve
- Cape Krusenstern National Monument Subsistence Resource Commission (SRC) and Kobuk Valley National Park SRC Report presented by Hannah Atkinson, WEAR
- National Park Service Anchorage Regional Office Report by Dr. Joshua Ream
- Gates of the Arctic National Parks SRC Report and Wildlife Report by Marcy Okada, NPS
- ADF&G Advisory Committee Report presented Hazel Smith, Kotzebue
- ADF&G Report on the Western Arctic Caribou Herd presented by Alex Hansen, Kotzebue
- Office of Subsistence Management Report presented by Tom Doolittle
- State Subsistence Liaison Report presented by George Pappas, OSM

- Invitation to apply to serve on the Regional Advisory Council presented by Zachary Stevenson, OSM
- Ambler Mining District Industrial Access Project Report presented by Bill Hedman, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Central Yukon Field Office
- BLM Anchorage Field Office Report presented by Tom Sparks
- NANA Lands Report presented by Elizabeth Cravalho, NANA Regional Corporation
- Law Enforcement Update by Joe DalleMolle, Western Arctic National Parklands, Walker Gusse, BLM Anchorage Field Office, Scott Bjork, Alaska Wildlife Troopers, Kotzebue, and Kirk Gregg, NANA Lands Department, Kotzebue.

### **Future Meeting Dates:**

Motion #8 by Mr. Mitchell, seconded by Ms. Atoruk, to confirm February 20-21 dates for the winter 2020 meeting in Kotzebue and to select November 3-4 dates for the fall 2020 meeting in Kotzebue.

Motion #8 passed unanimously.



Zachary Stevenson, DFO  
USFWS Office of Subsistence Management



Michael Kramer, Chair  
Northwest Arctic Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

These minutes will be formally considered by the Northwest Arctic Subsistence Regional Advisory Council at its winter 2020 meeting in Anchorage, 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 Zachary Stevenson at 1-800-478-1456 or 907-786-3674, email zachary\_stevenson@fws.gov.