

0137

1 NORTH SLOPE SUBSISTENCE
2 REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

3
4 PUBLIC MEETING

5
6
7 VOLUME II

8
9 Kaktovik, Alaska
10 February 23, 2023
11 9:00 a.m.

12
13
14
15 COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

16
17 Steve Oomittuk, Chairman
18 Esther Hugo

19
20
21
22
23 Regional Council Coordinator, Jessica Gill
24

25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33 Recorded and transcribed by:

34
35 Computer Matrix Court Reporters, LLC
36 329 F Street, Suite 222
37 Anchorage, AK 99501
38 907-227-5312/sahile@gci.net
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50

0138

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50

P R O C E E D I N G S

(Kaktovik, Alaska - 2/23/2023)

(On record)

CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: So good morning (in Native). We're about ready to get started and reconvene the North Slope Regional Advisory Council meeting, February 22 and 23, '23 in Kaktovik, Alaska. We were on recess since 6:05 yesterday and we will reconvene. We will open up with a prayer before we get started.

Did you want to do the honor, Esther.

MS. HUGO: Okay.

CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Okay. Esther will open it up with a prayer.

MS. HUGO: Okay. Good morning to all out there. Let's pray, close our eyes.

(Invocation)

IN UNISON: Amen.

CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Taikuu, Esther. Can we have a roll call, Janelle [sic].

MS. GILL: Good morning, everyone. This is Jessica Gill, the Council Coordinator for the North Slope Regional Advisory Council. I'll do a roll call here. I'll start with Gordon Brower from Utqiagvik.

(Not present)

MS. GILL: All right. Wanda Kippi from Atqasuk.

(Not present)

MS. GILL: Steve Oomittuk from Point Hope.

CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Here.

0139

1 MS. GILL: Thank you. Eddie Rexford
2 from Kaktovik.

3
4 (Not present)

5
6 MS. GILL: Martha Itta, Nuiqsut.

7
8 (Not present)

9
10 MS. GILL: Esther Hugo from Anaktuvuk
11 Pass.

12
13 MS. HUGO: Here.

14
15 MS. GILL: Thank you. Brower Frantz
16 from Utqiagvik.

17
18 (Not present)

19
20 MS. GILL: Peter Williams from
21 Anaktuvuk Pass.

22
23 (Not present)

24
25 MS. GILL: All right. So we have two
26 of eight seated Council members so we do not have
27 quorum, but we took care of most of the business
28 yesterday so we should be good to go.

29
30 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you. I think
31 we've done all our action items. So we will
32 introduction of guests. You can state your name and
33 who you represent. We'll start with the people here in
34 Barter Island and move to the ones online.

35
36 MR. VICKERS: Good morning, Mr. Chair,
37 members of the Council, everyone present. This is
38 Brent Vickers, I am the Anthropology Division
39 Supervisor for the Office of Subsistence Management.
40 I'm also representing the leadership team for OSM
41 today. Looking forward to some fun.

42
43 Thank you.

44
45 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you.

46
47 MR. CHEN: Aloha again. This is Glenn
48 Chen from the Subsistence Branch of the Bureau of
49 Indian Affairs.

50

0140

1 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you.

2

3 MR. NELSON: Good morning, North Slope
4 RAC. My name is Martin Nelson, I'm with the Alaska
5 Department of Fish and Game Wildlife out of Fairbanks.
6 Good morning.

7

8 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you.

9

10 MS. COLD: Good morning, Mr. Chair,
11 members of the Council and everyone else present. My
12 name is Helen Cold and I'm the Arctic area Subsistence
13 Resource Specialist with the Alaska Department of Fish
14 and Game, Division of Subsistence.

15

16 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you.

17

18 MR. LEONARD: Good morning. My name is
19 Paul Leonard, I'm the Lead Ecologist for Arctic
20 National Wildlife Refuge.

21

22 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you.

23

24 MR. HAWKALUK: And good morning members
25 of the Council. Nathan Hawkaluk, Acting Refuge Manager
26 for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

27

28 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you.

29

30 MR. GONZALEZ. Good morning. This is
31 Daniel Gonzalez with the UAF Anthropology Department.

32

33 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: All right. Thank
34 you.

35

36 MS. MCGUIRE: This is Rosemary McGuire
37 with the Wildlife Conservation Society.

38

39 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you.

40

41 MS. STINCHCOMB: Good morning, Mr.
42 Chair, members of the Council. This is Taylor
43 Stinchcomb, I'm a Social Scientist with the Wildlife
44 Conservation Society.

45

46 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you.

47

48 OFFICER SMITH: Cody Smith, good
49 morning. I'm a Senior Law Enforcement Officer for the

50

0141

1 northern zone of Alaska, U.S. Fish and Wildlife
2 Service.

3

4 Thank you.

5

6 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you.

7

8 MS. HOLMAN: Good morning, Mr. Chair,
9 members of the Council. My name is Kendra Holman, I'm
10 a Wildlife Biologist with the Office of Subsistence
11 Management.

12

13 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you.

14

15 MS. DAGGETT: (In Native). My name is
16 Carmen Daggett, I'm based out of the Alaska -- State of
17 Alaska Fish and Game Barrow office and I am the 26A
18 Area Biologist. Good morning.

19

20 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you and
21 welcome. We have one more I think.

22

23 MS. HONIG: Good morning, members of
24 the Council and Mr. Chairman. My name is Leigh Honig,
25 Council Coordinator for Office of Subsistence
26 Management.

27

28 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you. Do we
29 have anybody else here in person that did not.....

30

31 (No comments)

32

33 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Okay. We'll go
34 down the line and go to the ones on telephonically. If
35 you want to start one at a time, anybody online.

36

37 MS. WESSELS: Good morning, Mr. Chair,
38 members of the Council. This is Katya Wessels, I'm the
39 Council Coordination Division Supervisor with OSM.
40 Welcome to the second day of the meeting.

41

42 MR. LIND: Good morning, Mr. Chair and
43 Council members. Orville Lind, Native Liaison for the
44 Office of Subsistence Management. Good morning,
45 everyone.

46

47 MS. LEAVITT: (In Native), this is
48 Doreen Leavitt with Inupiat Community of the Arctic
49 Slope.

50

0142

1 MS. MIKOW: Good morning, this is Beth
2 Mikow of the Arctic District Office for BLM. I'm an
3 Anthropologist in the (indiscernible) in Fairbanks.
4 Good morning.

5
6 MR. McKEE: Good morning, this is Chris
7 McKee, the Statewide Coordinator for the Bureau of Land
8 Management calling in from Anchorage.

9
10 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Anybody else
11 online.

12
13 MS. PATTON: Good morning, everyone,
14 this is Eva Patton with the National Park Service
15 Subsistence Program in Anchorage. Good morning.

16
17 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Good morning.
18 Anybody else.

19
20 MS. KLEIN: Good morning, this is Jill
21 Klein with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. I'm the
22 Regional Subsistence Coordinator based in Anchorage.
23 Good morning.

24
25 MS. HYER: Good morning, this is Karen
26 Hyer from OSM.

27
28 MS. LaVINE: Good morning, this is
29 Robin LaVine, Subsistence Policy Coordinator with OSM.

30
31 MS. OKADA: Good morning, this is Marcy
32 Okada, Subsistence Coordinator for Gates of the Arctic
33 National Park and Preserve.

34
35 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: And anybody that we
36 missed online.

37
38 MR. JOLY: Good morning, this is Kyle
39 Joly. I'm a Wildlife Biologist (indiscernible -
40 distortion).

41
42 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Anybody else or
43 Council members that called in.

44
45 (No comments)

46
47 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you. We are
48 going to reconvene our meeting from our recess at 6:05
49 p.m. yesterday. Today is the -- actually it's
50

0143

1 02/23/2023. Just had to get that right. But thank you
2 for calling back in and we will -- we were on item 12F,
3 Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program update. I don't
4 see a name in front of that.

5

6 (Pause)

7

8 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Just a few minutes
9 and they'll be deciding. And I want to welcome Eva
10 Patton, thank you for calling in.

11

12 MS. PATTON: Thank you, Steve. It's
13 wonderful to hear your voices and wish I could be there
14 with you in Kaktovik.

15

16 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Okay. The floor's
17 yours.

18

19 MR. VICKERS: Thank you. Good morning,
20 Mr. Chair. Good morning again, Mr. Chair and members
21 of the Council. Once again for the record this is
22 Brent Vickers, I am the Anthropology Division
23 Supervisor at the Office of Subsistence Management.
24 Now I have three updates coming from the Fisheries --
25 well, Fisheries and Anthropology Division, but based on
26 Fisheries and one of them is for the Fisheries Resource
27 Monitoring Program, the other is for the Partners for
28 Fisheries Monitoring update and the third is for the
29 Fisheries Regulatory Cycle update.

30

31 Would you like to start with just from
32 the -- is there somewhere you'd like to start with the
33 Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program since you just
34 mentioned that?

35

36 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: If you want to just
37 go through the report and then we'll ask questions
38 after.

39

40 MR. VICKERS: Okay. I'll go through it
41 as it is written. Okay. So first off starting with
42 the Partners for Fisheries Monitoring Program update.

43

44 Okay. This winter the Office of
45 Subsistence Management sought proposals for Partners
46 for Fisheries Monitoring Program to strengthen Alaska
47 Native and rural involvement in Federal subsistence
48 management. The Partners Program funds salaries for a
49 biologist or social scientist or educate -- educator

50

0144

1 positions in Alaska Native and rural nonprofit
2 organizations with the intent of increasing the
3 organization's ability to participate in Federal
4 subsistence management. The program also supports a
5 variety of opportunities for local rural students to
6 connect with subsistence resource monitoring and
7 management through science camps and paid internships.
8 For this funding cycle it is anticipated that
9 approximately \$1 million will be available yearly.

10

11 There were 15 proposals received for
12 this cycle. The Review Panel met in mid February to
13 determine which applicants would be funded. For more
14 information about that -- more information about that
15 will be provided in the near future through a news
16 release from the Office of Subsistence Management.
17 Karen Hyer is the point person in our office for this
18 program.

19

20 This concludes the Partners for
21 Fisheries Monitoring update.

22

23 Are there any questions.

24

25 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Is there any
26 questions from the Council.

27

28 (No comments)

29

30 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Any Council members
31 online that called in late.

32

33 (No comments)

34

35 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: I have a comment.
36 You know, this last summer, you know, we see a lot of
37 unidentified ships or boats that said that they were
38 fishery doing studies to see what was out there and
39 they were about three, four miles right outside of --
40 outside of Point Hope, but, you know, we wanted to
41 inform them. Do you guys have a responsibility to
42 inform the public or the tribe or -- we know there's a
43 city limits of three miles and then on the north side
44 it's after three miles, you know, the borough, you got
45 international waters. But do you notify people of
46 those experiments or studies that are going on within
47 the Bering Sea or the Arctic Ocean or is this a follow-
48 up or I -- it seems like there's already studies being
49 performed out there, we heard the fisheries were out

50

0145

1 there checking on different species of fish and crab
2 that are out there with the warmer climate coming and
3 warmer waters and currents coming within our area, you
4 know, our ocean don't freeze like it used to. So I'm
5 just curious has this started already, you know,
6 the.....

7

8 MR. VICKERS: Thank you for that
9 question, that's a great question, Mr. Chair. So first
10 off the Office of Subsistence Management does have a
11 program that funds research -- fisheries based research
12 on Federal public lands. And that program is the
13 Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program which I'm
14 actually going to update you with information on that.
15 All that research goes through a funding mechanism, we
16 aren't the ones that conduct the research, Office of
17 Subsistence Management does not do any primary
18 research, we collect data. We -- the only avenue we
19 have to help with getting -- collecting data for
20 subsistence uses is through the Fisheries Resource
21 Monitoring Program. All of that resource -- all that
22 research is done on Federal public lands so not out in
23 the ocean. I -- and when these programs are -- the
24 research that we help fund, the projects are very tied
25 into the communities. They need to have community
26 support, they need to have community participation.
27 And so it would be very unlikely that a -- one of our
28 funded projects that are usually carried out through
29 org -- other organizations would be doing research
30 without the community knowing about it, they need to
31 have permission in advance.

32

33 That said I don't know about the boats
34 that are doing research. Is there anyone online, Karen
35 Hyer, or anyone else involved with that research and
36 know anything about it that can help with the Chair's
37 question?

38

39 Thank you.

40

41 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you. You
42 know, where.....

43

44 MS. HYER: Hi, Brent, it's Karen.
45 Could -- could you.....

46

47 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Did you have a
48 comment on that.

49

50

0146

1 MS. HYER: It's Karen Hyer here online.
2 Can you guys hear me?

3
4 MS. GILL: We can hear you, Karen.

5
6 MS. HYER: Okay. Could you repeat the
7 question, please.

8
9 MR. VICKERS: Hi, Karen, it was a
10 lengthy question. Sorry. Yes, the Chair had a
11 question regarding research, fisheries based research
12 outside of Point Hope if I'm not mistaken in the marine
13 waters outside. He was wondering if we were involved
14 with that, who is involved with that. I -- I'm
15 guessing we don't have anything to do with that as far
16 as the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program is
17 concerned and was wondering if anyone knew about that
18 research and what they were doing. He seemed to
19 believe that they were not working through the
20 community and was surprised to see them out there.

21
22 Is that correct, Mr. Chair?

23
24 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Yes. Thank you.
25 And they were parked in one area for three to four days
26 and there they were about three, four miles straight
27 out from the community. And there was a lot of curious
28 people and nobody came onshore and we had no way of
29 contacting the. And there was just -- then later on we
30 found out it was fisheries doing studies on -- on what
31 kind of species are out there and also crab. They
32 noticed they're moving further north. And it's
33 something that we were concerned about.

34
35 MS. HYER: So through the Chair. That
36 -- that -- if it's in the marine environment we don't
37 have jurisdiction. But I am curious because -- so was
38 it -- because I could do a little looking around to see
39 if I could figure out who it was, was it a big marine
40 vessels or were they small skiffs or were they like
41 dragging, were they like putting out pots, can you tell
42 me a little bit more?

43
44 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: You know, we -- we
45 couldn't quite see what they were doing. It just was a
46 -- kind of a big boat or a ship, but we couldn't tell
47 the actual size, but it had cranes out there, you know,
48 and they were putting something and pulling stuff up
49 from the water. And it was straight down from the city

50

0147

1 of Point Hope.

2

3

MS. HYER: Okay.

4

5

CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: And second, you know, we have so much traffic nowadays and I couldn't believe how much traffic there was through the northwest passage now especially in the international waters. And the amount of aircraft and Russian planes that flies the borderline, you know, we're 60 miles from the borderline of the Russian boundary line, but, you know, after three, four miles you're in international waters, but tribal waters jurisdiction goes a lot further because if I'm right it's about 60 miles. And we have concerns of, you know, the ecosystem, we're concerned about the animals with all the traffic. When you look at the international water you see the red line that, you know, the Arctic goes from in this map. And it looks like and, you know, above that in international waters we have no jurisdiction. But we're -- but we're not -- you know, and this is the North Slope Advisory Council and we have no jurisdiction out there. You know, we might be able to voice our concerns, we have the AWC Commission, we have the Beluga Commission, we have the Walrus Commission, the Polar Bear Commission. And it -- it's something that kind of bothers us sometimes, you know, when we have concerns dealing, when you're considered North Slope Advisory Council, you know, you want to see that big picture. You know, we're totally subsistence lifestyle people, not just the land and the rivers and the creeks, but also the ocean. And it's something that we're limited to on voicing our concerns sometimes and we have to go to -- like I said it's either the Walrus Commission or Beluga Commission or Polar Bear Commission. I -- there was a lot of curious people about the different ships, boats that were out in front of Point Hope without any knowledge who they are.

39

40

41

42

43

44

45

46

47

48

49

50

I don't know if that's legal for us to talk about it here, you know, we know we're an Advisory Council that strictly deals with subsistence on land and the rivers and the creeks.

MR. HYER: Mr. Chairman, Council members, I completely understand and I certainly emphasize with you with how complicated our system is. I -- that is not -- it's not us doing the research, but

0148

1 I'm happy to poke around and see if it's maybe the
2 State or NOAA or see what I can come up with. And it
3 would be really interesting to find out and maybe
4 they're finding something that they could bring to the
5 Council and share as a presentation. We've had outside
6 organizations come and share. So I can't guarantee
7 that I can figure it out, but I'm willing to give it a
8 try because I'm always kind of curious who's doing what
9 too.

10

11 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you.

12

13 MS. DAGGETT: I -- this is Carmen
14 Daggett for the record. So I have a contact at NOAA
15 and I've messaged him. I know that there was a vessel
16 that was doing some work, I'm not exactly sure where
17 they were working this summer, but I passed this
18 gentleman that I have contact with at NOAA this summer
19 when he was going out to do work so my guess is it's
20 most likely them, but I'm following up with that right
21 now and I'll get back to you with what he says if they
22 were near Tikigaq this summer or not. So that's what I
23 know so far. I'll get back to you with more if I hear
24 back from him today.

25

26 Thank you.

27

28 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you.

29

30 MR. VICKERS: Okay. Thank you, Carmen
31 and Karen, for chiming in and adding your information
32 and willingness to help. We're all -- now I'm really
33 curious so please update me as well.

34

35

36 Second item is the Fisheries Regulatory
37 Cycle update. So this is an update on the recently
38 concluded fisheries regulatory cycle, it was just
39 concluded at the board meeting last month. The Federal
40 Subsistence Board took action on all of the fisheries
41 proposals and closure reviews at their January
42 fisheries regulatory meeting and we expect that the new
43 regulations should be published in the Federal Register
44 in late spring or early summer. The following is a
45 list of actions on fisheries proposals or closures that
46 your Council provided input on.

47

48 Fisheries proposal FP 23-01 for the
49 Yukon northern area. The Board approved allowing the
50

0149

1 harvest of nonsalmon fish in the Jim River drainage by
2 rod and reel only using the State's sport fishing
3 regulations except for a higher limit for Arctic
4 grayling.

5

6 Fisheries closure review 23-02.

7

8 (Teleconference interference -
9 participants not muted)

10

11 MS. GILL: If you're online could you
12 please mute yourself, we're getting a little feedback
13 here.

14

15 MR. VICKERS: Thank you. Fisheries
16 closure review FCR 23-02 for the Yukon northern area.
17 The Board removed the closure to subsistence harvest of
18 nonsalmon fish in the Kanuti River, but it kept the
19 closure to harvest of salmon.

20

21

22 Fisheries closure review FCR 23-03 for
23 the Yukon northern area. The Board removed the closure
24 to subsistence harvest of nonsalmon fish in Bonanza
25 Creek, but it kept the closure to harvest of salmon.

26

27 Lastly fisheries closure review FCR 23-
28 05 for the Yukon northern area. The Board deferred
29 action on the closure review for the Delta River until
30 the next fisheries cycle.

31

32 We will begin our next fisheries cycle
33 during your winter, 2024 meeting. At that meeting we
34 will also provide Councils with draft closure reviews
35 if there are any -- if there are any for your region
36 and will also (indiscernible) of proposals to change
37 the Federal fish and shellfish regulations.

38

39 This concludes the Fisheries Regulatory
40 Cycle update.

41

42 Are there any questions.

43

44 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Any questions from
45 the Council.

46

47 MS. HUGO: Good morning, Mr. Chair.
48 This is Esther. I just got a question. You don't have
49 any research under another agency for research in our
50

0150

1 area, in the Brooks Range, in inland, another agency
2 are doing our studies on our fish?

3

4 MR. VICKERS: Thank you for that
5 question. I -- the closest we -- so the presentation I
6 just gave was just on regulatory -- on regulatory
7 proposals. So those are just the actions that the
8 Board just took. None of those fisheries mentioned,
9 Kanuti River, Bonanza, Delta River are anything
10 research based, just the changes in regulations. A lot
11 of those really don't affect the two of you or really
12 many of the North Slope residents, but it is part of
13 the Yukon northern area.

14

15 The next item of my presentation is on
16 the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program, that's an
17 update. And that will be an update regarding some of
18 the research that we have funded on subsistence
19 fisheries. And that is -- once I've concluded that
20 topic I will open up your question to see if anyone
21 knows about some of the -- I -- I'm trying to remember,
22 I can't remember off the top of my head, but the area
23 biologist for -- would have a much -- much more cued in
24 on what projects are going on currently and they will
25 be able to answer that question if you don't mind just
26 waiting for it.

27

28 MS. HUGO: Thank you.

29

30 MR. VICKERS: Thank you. Any other
31 questions.

32

33 (No comments)

34

35 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you, you can
36 continue. Did someone just call in, a Council member?

37

38 (No comments)

39

40 MR. VICKERS: Okay. Now the item we've
41 all been waiting for, the Fisheries Resource Monitoring
42 Program update. This is an update on the Fisheries
43 Resource Monitoring Program and the funding opportunity
44 that closes on February 24th -- yeah, closes tomorrow
45 on February 24th. The mission of the Monitoring --
46 Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program which I'll just
47 call Monitoring Program is identify and provide
48 information needed to sustain subsistence fisheries on
49 Federal public lands. The Monitoring Program also

50

0151

1 supports meaningful involvement in fisheries management
2 by Alaska Native and rural organization and promotes
3 collaboration amongst Federal, State, Alaska Native and
4 local organizations. These funding opportunities seek
5 applications for projects that address priority
6 information needs you developed by the Councils. For
7 the 2024 funding cycle it is anticipated that
8 approximately \$2.25 million will be available for the
9 first year of new projects. Applications will be
10 reviewed by the Technical Review Committee. Summaries
11 of project proposals submitted by your region will be
12 presented to you at your next meeting for your input.

13

14 If there are any questions I would be
15 happy to address them now. This concludes my
16 presentation so I can answer questions about the call
17 for proposals that's right now and I will -- if there's
18 no questions or if you want to know about ongoing
19 projects particularly in the Brooks Range, I open the
20 floor to that as well.

21

22 Thank you.

23

24 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: I just want to
25 clarify something here. So we just did F, G and H, is
26 that what you just talked about, are you on the agenda?
27 So I -- and then we still have I to go after it, but I
28 just.....

29

30 MS. GILL: Mr. Chair, that's correct.
31 We just finished -- oh, we kind of did it in a little
32 bit different order so we did 12G, we did 12H and then
33 12F. And so it's supposed to be 12I next.

34

35 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Okay. Thank you.
36 I just wanted clarification on that so I don't go over
37 the same agenda.

38

39 Is there any questions.

40

41 (No comments)

42

43 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: You know, 2.4
44 million sounds like a good chunk of money, you know,
45 and how much of that portion is going to benefit the
46 community that you're doing studies or research or do
47 you have a budget in place for our next meeting or are
48 these grant funds that are -- are they -- are they
49 allocated or is something that is comparable where you
50

0152

1 got to go after it, get the approval from the Council?

2

3 MR. VICKERS: Yes. Thank you for that
4 question, Mr. Chair. So the -- we don't know the total
5 funding yet. That won't be decided -- that ends up
6 being decided probably at the beginning of next year,
7 bef -- after all the -- there's a -- after a rating
8 process has been approved and then we usually get the
9 final word on how much is going to be available for the
10 first year. And these projects typically go for --
11 they apply for two years and -- two to four years and
12 it can be extended. So when we get a final
13 determination on the budget we'll know the budget for
14 that first year. And then that budget level typically
15 continues for following years to continue funding those
16 projects.

17

18 There is -- the Fisheries Resource
19 Monitoring Program is competitive. So organizations,
20 typically other Federal agencies, State agencies,
21 universities, Alaska Native organizations be it tribal
22 corporation or -- and also nongovernmental
23 organizations are the primary organizations that apply
24 for funding. So they send out an application and it
25 goes through this review and rating process that takes
26 about a year, that goes -- the first real level is the
27 Technical Review Committee which is comprised of
28 experts in fisheries subsistence issues from Federal
29 and State agencies. And then we bring the -- those --
30 and then the Office of Subsistence Management will also
31 present the applications, the proposals, to -- that
32 affect your area, to you at your next Council meeting
33 in the fall. And then you as a Council can provide
34 input on those -- on those proposals that affect your
35 area. So you get to hear about the -- typically about
36 the whole Yukon northern area, those proposals, and you
37 get to say, you know, we like this one the best and we
38 like this one. So these are -- definitely fit our
39 priority information needs which we discussed as a
40 Council last year.

41

42 After you get -- make those
43 recommendations the final review process occurs where
44 they take in the rating from the Technical Review
45 Committee and also recommendations from the Councils to
46 decide which are the top -- like a ranking of the
47 projects and then those top ranked projects are the
48 ones that are most competitive for funding. This is
49 typically not enough funding for all projects, but what
50

0153

1 they do is distribute it by region so really the
2 projects -- the projects that occur -- are proposals
3 for the Yukon northern area aren't competing statewide,
4 they're competing only with the proposals in the Yukon
5 northern area. So those top ranked proposals for the
6 Yukon northern area will probably get funded.

7

8 I hope that answers some of your
9 questions, please let me know if you have others.

10

11

Thank you.

12

13

14

15

16

17

(No comments)

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

29

30

31

32

33

34

35

36

37

38

39

40

41

42

43

44

45

46

47

48

49

50

CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Yes, thank you for
that. Anybody got the Council online that has any
questions or.....

CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: You know, the high
cost of living and the high cost of travel and, you
know, the isolation, you know, takes a big change out
of a 2.4 million if that's awarded. But, you know,
hiring local people that have knowledge and boats or
folders or campsites, they might be on some allotments,
you know, getting jurisdiction in some of these places,
are we talking on State lands or Federal lands to do
these.....

MR. VICKERS: Thank you.....

CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK:studies?

MR. VICKERS: Yeah. Thank you for that
question. The proposed projects have to occur on
Federal public lands and particularly Federal public --
the fisheries at Federal public lands. They have to
directly feed into issues of subsistence. So they --
the proposals have to do with subsistence matters and
they have to do on Federal public lands. So the
National Parklands, the Arctic Refuge, the proposals in
this area would have to be based there. And again part
of the review process and the rating process is to --
that these projects are -- have permission from
communities and tie into communities and buy-in from
communities and the Councils to say yeah, this is
something we really want to do. We wouldn't fund
projects that don't -- have not shown in their
application that they've been in communication with
communities and have approval from communities that

0154

1 this is something that they definitely can do in that
2 area or allotment or whatever was on the Federal public
3 lands. That's a requirement for the applications.

4

5 Thank you.

6

7 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you. And I
8 think that -- so are you looking for support from the
9 North Slope Subsistence Advisory Council to better your
10 chances in obtaining these competitive grants or can we
11 wait until -- we can't do any action, but you mentioned
12 about going to the communities and you're talking
13 Nuiqsut area, Anaktuvuk Pass area and Barter Island, is
14 that what you're or in that area or just Nuiqsut
15 and.....

16

17 MR. VICKERS: Yeah. Thank you again
18 for the question. So this is just an update. The
19 applications are -- come from other organizations. I
20 don't -- I haven't looked at any of the applications
21 that have come in yet, I don't know what's out there.
22 The application period closes tomorrow. So whoever is
23 applying for funding for projects would have to submit
24 their application by tomorrow. At this point I'm not
25 sure if any or how many applicants are directly related
26 to the North Slope. Unfortunately I think and
27 historically we don't get that many because of a lot of
28 things that you mentioned, the high costs of actually
29 doing research up there, it's actually a small pool of
30 researchers that actually can pull it off, that have
31 the equipment, that have the know how, that have the
32 buy-in from the communities. And we would like -- love
33 -- I know in the past the former Chair, Gordon Brower,
34 talked about how much he would love to see much more
35 research done by -- through the Fisheries Research
36 Monitoring Program on some of the fisheries that are
37 directly related to the communities represented here.
38 And hopefully we do see that, I don't know for sure,
39 but we'll have a better idea. So at the next Council
40 meeting you will hear which applicant -- which
41 proposals are. We don't know right now, but we will
42 let you know. Hopefully there's some that really
43 directly affect you, but I certainly can't promise that
44 and typically we don't get that many for the North
45 Slope just again because of all the requirements to
46 actually do good research up here. Takes a lot of
47 money, takes a lot of equipment so but that doesn't say
48 I -- I'm not sure if any have come in. You will be
49 updated on that at the next Council meeting. I don't

50

0155

1 have anything -- any updates on project proposals right
2 now. In the next fall meeting you will take -- have an
3 action to make recommendations for funding on those
4 projects that we tell you about.

5

6 Thank you.

7

8 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you for that
9 update and I think we set our meeting for August in
10 Barrow of 2023.

11

12 MS. GILL: October 31st.

13

14 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Any other questions
15 or comments from the Council before we move along our
16 agenda.

17

18 MR. VICKERS: I have one question.
19 Again this is Brent Vickers of Office of Subsistence
20 Management. Does anyone know -- Council member Hugo
21 had a question about research, particularly Fisheries
22 Resource Monitoring funded research or any of the
23 research in the Brooks Range, does Karen or anyone else
24 know of any ongoing research in that area?

25

26 Thank you.

27

28 MS. HYER: Mr. Chairman, members of the
29 Council and Brent, this is Karen. So you're interested
30 -- can you repeat the question, Brent?

31

32 MR. VICKERS: Thank you, Karen. Do you
33 know off the top of your head or on the sheet of paper
34 in front of you because I don't know off the top of my
35 head of any ongoing Fisheries Resource Monitoring
36 projects in the Brooks Range or any fisheries based
37 research in the Brooks Range. That was a question that
38 was presented by Council member Hugo when we -- earlier
39 and I just wanted to make -- to check in and see if you
40 or anyone else knew of any?

41

42 Thank you.

43

44 MS. HYER: Thank you, Brent. So no,
45 currently we do not have anything that's going on like
46 -- we have in the past done some work in Anaktuvuk Pass
47 area and I noted some interest in that -- that area and
48 it's -- there is an attempt. But our work is -- we do
49 have some work that's wrapping up within the Colville
50

0156

1 and we do have some work on the other side up towards
2 Noatak and Kotzebue, but we don't have anything
3 specifically in the Brooks Range at the moment.

4

5 MR. VICKERS: Thank you, Karen.
6 Council member Hugo nodded her head and she appreciates
7 that.

8

9 Thank you.

10

11 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you. You
12 know, when we talk about the Brooks Range it's pretty
13 widespread and it covers other borough governments.
14 You know, there's Northwest Arctic Borough and, you
15 know, I -- you know, I now hope for, you know, the
16 Athabaskan country, I don't know what their name is, in
17 that area. But it's something that's, you know, I
18 think in the future, you know, we will know that
19 studies are being done within the Northwest Arctic
20 Borough in some way and they're, you know, looking at
21 Red Dog and, you know, I know they're building a road
22 system, the Ambler Road, what affects it might have. I
23 don't know if they're doing studies. You know, the --
24 their -- the Ambler Road, but, you know, it's something
25 that we want to work with the Northwest Arctic Borough
26 and having a joint meeting and trying to work together
27 and to ensure that the animals, especially the Western
28 Arctic Caribou Herd or the fish in the creeks or the
29 rivers that migrate to spawn in the different areas,
30 you know, not just within the North Slope, but in the
31 Northwest Arctic Borough also.

32

33 But thank you. Any -- if there's no
34 other questions we'll move on down the agenda.

35

36 (No comments)

37

38 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: I guess we're under
39 i, the NPS. They seek input in the proposed changes to
40 2020 hunting and trapping regulations.

41

42 MS. GILL: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This
43 is Jessica Gill, Council Coordinator. I think Marcy
44 Okada from the National Park Service is online to
45 tackle this item.

46

47 Marcy, go ahead.

48

49 MS. OKADA: Okay. Thank you. Good

50

0157

1 morning, Council members. My name is Marcy Okada, I'm
2 a Subsistence Coordinator for Gates of the Arctic
3 National Park and Preserve. I'll be sharing
4 information about the National Park Service proposed
5 wildlife hunting and trapping rule which affects
6 National Preserves around the State of Alaska. The
7 only National Preserve in your North Slope region is
8 the Itkillik Preserve which is the northeastern portion
9 of Gates of the Arctic. I'd like to refer you to the
10 map that's on Page 141 of your meeting packet. That's
11 the map of the North Slope region. The Itkillik
12 Preserve is colored light purple and it's in game
13 management units 26A and 26B.

14

15 So if you have the map in front of you
16 both sport hunting and subsistence hunting are
17 authorized in National Preserves where is just
18 subsistence hunting by residents of zoned communities
19 like Anaktuvuk Pass are authorized in National Parks
20 and Monuments. So for today's discussion we're
21 referring to National Preserves which allow sport
22 hunting and subsistence hunting. So if you just
23 reference the map.....

24

25 MS. GILL: Sorry, Marcy. We have a
26 black and white map in person here so I just wanted to
27 point out to the Council members that it's -- there's a
28 really dark area right below the right hashed area on
29 the map, and it's just to the -- just to the right of
30 that area on the map in the -- in person here. It's
31 kind of like a lightly shaded.....

32

33 MS. OKADA: Okay.

34

35 MS. GILL: All right. Sorry, Marcy.
36 Go ahead.

37

38 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you.

39

40 MS. OKADA: Thanks, Jessica. So if you
41 have that reference on the map that's the portion where
42 I'll be speaking to today. And then if you could refer
43 to pages 66 to 73 of your meeting packet. These pages
44 are the Federal Register and public notice that was
45 released on January 9th. And I'm going to try and
46 summarize what this Federal Register notice shares.

47

48 The National Park Service is proposing
49 to change its regulations for sport hunting in National
50

0158

1 Preserves in Alaska. The Park Service is reevaluating
2 the harvest regulations for sport hunting and trapping
3 that were adopted in 2020. The Parks Service at this
4 time is not considering any changes to Federal
5 subsistence harvest regulations. What was adopted in
6 2020 authorized harvest practices for sport hunters in
7 National Preserves and these included the baiting of
8 bears, both brown and black bears, taking of female
9 bears with cubs in dens, the taking of wolves and
10 coyotes and their pups during the denning season and
11 the harvest of swimming caribou. The reason why we're
12 revisiting this topic is because the Secretary of
13 Interior is because the Secretary of Interior has asked
14 the National Park Service to reevaluate this current
15 2020 rule. We have concerns that the baiting of bears
16 will lead to more human/bear conflicts and public
17 safety issues on National Preserve lands. We also
18 think that several practices authorized in 2020 may be
19 appropriate for Federal subsistence users, but the Park
20 Service does not believe that these opportunities
21 should be authorized for sport hunters.

22

23 So these proposed changes, the
24 practices with these proposed changes, the practices
25 that would no longer be allowed are the killing of
26 black bears, including cubs and sows with artificial
27 light at densities, the killing of black and brown
28 bears over bait, the killing of wolves and coyotes,
29 including their pups, during denning season and the
30 shooting of caribou while swimming. But for the
31 shooting of caribou while swimming, this does not
32 affect Federally-qualified rural users in the Kotzebue
33 region.

34

35 Your input and guidance are important
36 to this process. Comment -- current comment period
37 deadline is March 10th.

38

39 I just want to thank you for your time
40 and ask if there are any questions.

41

42 MS. HUGO: Mr. Chair.

43

44 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Anything else you
45 have a question -- any comments or questions on this.

46

47 It's not an action item, I think it --
48 this is informational. We don't have a quorum here and
49 then.....

50

0159

1 MS. HUGO: Informational maybe.

2

3 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Yeah.

4

5 MS. HUGO: Mr. Chair.

6

7 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Yeah, go ahead,
8 Esther.

9

10 MS. HUGO: Good morning, Marcy.

11

12 MS. OKADA: Good morning.

13

14 MS. HUGO: I'm speechless. It's good
15 to hear some kind of I would say probably news to us,
16 but on the sport hunting which we've been fighting for
17 a long while and we still are and there was a little
18 light in the tunnel somewhere that had to be set. I
19 mean, I knew it was there, but I couldn't figure it out
20 for the longest time being in the Committee for
21 subsistence. And like I say I'm just speechless
22 looking at the pages 66 through -- well, it's just --
23 thank you. Like I said like a little light in the
24 tunnel that we've been waiting for and this is
25 something that each talked about. And I think after
26 all they can work things together and maybe our caribou
27 won't always migrate like they always did.

28

29 Thank you.

30

31 MS. OKADA: Thank you, Esther.

32

33 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you. Any
34 other comments or questions.

35

36 (No comments)

37

38 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Is there any other
39 Council members online.

40

41 (No comments)

42

43 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: So this is only
44 information only and for something that's coming up in
45 the future. You mentioned that northwest Arctic or
46 Kotzebue region. And it's something that, you know, in
47 the future having a joint meeting with the Northwest
48 Arctic Borough Advisory Council and the North Slope
49 Borough Advisory Council would be a big benefit, you
50

0160

1 know, to pretty much the same people. And, you know,
2 we want to ensure that our way of life continues into
3 the next generation and not overhunt or overtrap the --
4 certain animals. And we've seen abundance of predators
5 lately, you know, the caribou are at a decline, the
6 number of wolves that are being caught, number of
7 wolverines within our area. And, you know, they're
8 actually seeing lynx in our area now, we haven't seen
9 lynx in so many years. So the number of predators
10 moving back up north is getting higher and our
11 population of caribou is dwindling down.

12

13 So but thank you for that and hopefully
14 at our next meeting will have a full Council and, you
15 know, when it's in Barrow we pretty much have a full
16 table. So and it'll be in August, July 31st, August.

17

18 MS. GILL: You're really trying to make
19 that meeting go up. It's in October.

20

21 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you. Any
22 other comments or questions before we move down the
23 agenda.

24

25 (No comments)

26

27 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Okay. Thank you.
28 We'll go down to item 13, agency reports. It says a
29 time limit there of 15 minutes, we will be monitoring,
30 you know, and enforced.

31

32 Item A, tribal governments. Do we have
33 anybody online from tribal government? And I can't go
34 waiting 15 minutes to have.....

35

36 MS. LEAVITT: Good morning, this is
37 Doreen Leavitt with ICAS.

38

39 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Yes, Doreen, ICAS.
40 For the record that's Inupiat.....

41

42 MS. LEAVITT: Sure. I have.....

43

44 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK:Community of
45 the Arctic Slope.

46

47 MS. LEAVITT:I can barely hear
48 you.

49

50

0161

1 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Okay. The floor is
2 yours. Thank you. Can you hear me okay, the floor is
3 yours.

4
5 MS. LEAVITT: I don't -- I can hear you
6 now. ICAS doesn't really have anything to report other
7 than, you know, attending listening sessions on
8 subsistence and the North Slope Subsistence Advisory
9 Group as well. We have no concerns at this time.

10

11 Thank you.

12

13 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you. Any
14 other tribal governments.

15

16 (No comments)

17

18 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Okay. We'll go to
19 item B, Native organizations. Is there any Native
20 organizations online, agency reports.

21

22 (No comments)

23

24 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Okay. That's 15
25 minutes. Okay. We'll go to item C, Wildlife
26 Conservation Society.

27

28 Rosemary and Taylor.

29

30 MS. STINCHCOMB: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

31

32 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: The floor is yours.

33

34 MS. STINCHCOMB: Thank you, Mr. Chair
35 and good morning members of the Council. And thank you
36 all for a few moments of your time. My name is Taylor
37 Stinchcomb and I'm a Social Scientist with the Wildlife
38 Conservation Society which is a research based,
39 nongovernmental organization out of Fairbanks. And
40 this is my colleague Rosemary.

41

42 MS. MCGUIRE: Hello, I'm Rosemary.

43

44 MS. STINCHCOMB: And we're presenting
45 updates on a project to learn from local people across
46 the North Slope, northwest Arctic and northern boreal
47 region about bears, wolverine, wolves, fox and lynx
48 populations. And our two page flyer is in the
49 supplemental meeting book with our logo and a nice
50

0162

1 picture of a wolverine on the front. I'm not sure
2 exactly what page. But just basically they're talking
3 with local experts because they can contribute a lot of
4 knowledge about these animals and their environment
5 that ecologists cannot easily capture. We recognize
6 that this local knowledge is intimately tied to
7 subsistence so we welcome discussion of harvest
8 activities, but subsistence is not necessarily the
9 focus of our project. Jessica's going to interject.

10

11 MS. GILL: Council members, you can
12 find that in your supplemental materials on Page 21.

13

14 MS. STINCHCOMB: Thank you, Jessica.
15 We would like to emphasize that subsistence rights of
16 your communities will not be affected by the outcome of
17 this study. We want to learn more generally about the
18 carnivore populations, their behaviors and changes
19 being observed. For example scientists often look at
20 these different species in isolation, but what we've
21 found so far in our conversations are the fascinating
22 relationships between species like wolves and
23 wolverines and the intelligence or curiosity of
24 different animals that people have spoken of.

25

26 So I'm now going to share several
27 updates on the project with you. Our colleagues,
28 Martin Robards and Kevin Fraley have presented this
29 project to the RAC Committee in 2022 and we have since
30 then embraced your previous feedback including the need
31 to provide honoraria and reporting back regularly to
32 participants and their communities. We've also taken
33 time to review past testimonies from RAC meetings and
34 the results from other efforts such as Steven R.
35 Brawn's work and Henry Huntington's work and we're
36 incorporating this information into the project as we
37 go.

38

39 Rosemary and I are carrying out the
40 study in close and compensated collaboration with
41 Cayanne Harcharek from Utqiagvik to help ensure that
42 the work reflects local needs in addition to our
43 research goals to better understand these species. We
44 began our interviews in Utqiagvik this past January and
45 we also spent last week in Kotzebue and Point Hope.
46 It's been really exciting to hear people's stories
47 about these animals, some of which don't necessarily
48 get the attention they deserve. In Utqiagvik we
49 conducted five interviews with experienced hunters,

50

0163

1 trappers and knowledge holders and two of those
2 interviews were groups of three people so nine total
3 participants from Utqiagvik. We interviewed four
4 hunters and trappers and knowledge holders from
5 Kotzebue and three from Point Hope last week between
6 February 10th and 17th. And that included one well
7 respected elder from each of those communities.
8 Everyone seems to enjoy our conversation about their
9 knowledge and experiences with the animals and we like
10 to bring these big, laminated maps with us to
11 interviews. Most people like seeing the maps and many
12 have actually used them to point out certain areas.
13 And there's an example map produced during an interview
14 with Utqiagvik on the back page of our supplemental
15 materials.

16

17 We hope to use these maps and other
18 places named during the interviews to create a larger
19 visual story of the animal populations across different
20 villages and regions. You can see that we have an
21 ambitious 20 villages that we hope to speak with local
22 experts and get a picture of carnivore populations
23 across northern Alaska. And I want to emphasize that
24 we will seek approval of the maps and any summary
25 reports from participants and community representatives
26 so that any sensitive or proprietary information can be
27 identified and removed. For instance we will not share
28 locations of family camps and cabins. Each participant
29 has and will receive a \$100 honorarium for sharing
30 their time and knowledge and have given and will give
31 their free, prior and informed consent before
32 interviewing.

33

34 We were also able to visit the North
35 Slope Borough Wildlife Department in Utqiagvik, the
36 Tikigaq school in Point Hope and the Native Village of
37 Kotzebue office to build important connections in each
38 village and local awareness about the project. We are
39 wrapping up the first wave of interviews in early March
40 because we do not want to interfere with people's time
41 on the land during spring and summer subsistence
42 activities. We will return to interview work in the
43 fall hoping to continue learning from the communities
44 across the North Slope, northwest Arctic and northern
45 boreal regions.

46

47 And with permission from the Chair I'd
48 like to ask my colleague, Rosemary, if she has anything
49 to add before questions.

50

0164

1 MS. MCGUIRE: No, just wanted to say
2 it's been a real privilege listening to people's
3 stories and we want to respect that and so far I'm
4 really excited about this project, what we've learned.

5

6 MS. STINCHCOMB: And today from Council
7 members and anyone in the audience we would be
8 interested in your feedback. The project at this
9 stage, whether your community is interested in
10 participating as well as any ideas about how we can
11 record and return people's knowledge in a way that
12 would directly benefit your community because we are in
13 a -- at a point where we can still talk about that and
14 plan it out.

15

16 Thank you.

17

18 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you. That
19 sounds really good. Any comments or questions from the
20 Council.

21

22 (No comments)

23

24 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Do we have anybody
25 online that called in late?

26

27 (No comments)

28

29 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Esther, do you have
30 any comments or concerns or.....

31

32 MS. HUGO: Mr. Chair, Esther. No, I'm
33 just excited that you will be heading our way and we'll
34 go from there. I'm happy that this Wildlife
35 Conservation Society you guys are able to do that other
36 than subsistence and the feel of our community, the
37 people. Yeah. And we'll be looking forward for your
38 visit.

39

40 Thank you.

41

42 MS. STINCHCOMB: Thank you, Councilman
43 Hugo. We are very excited to visit Anaktuvuk Pass.

44

45 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you. You
46 know, I was raised by my grandparents and, you know, I
47 was watching TV with them one time in the early '80s
48 when we finally got TV into Point Hope. And there was
49 this coyote that came on, you know, this show. And he

50

0165

1 says I seen those when I was young, he was born in 1960
2 and he says it was about in the 1920s they was these
3 kind of animals around, a coyote. And they -- and then
4 they got lost after 20 or 30 years later. But he
5 talked about the coyotes and how smart they were, you
6 know, because they set traps, they did a lot of
7 trapping back then for the furs in the early 1900s and
8 after the whale industry died or the commercial whalers
9 so trapping was real big in foxes, wolverines, wolves,
10 lynx and coyotes too, you know. So but it's something
11 that, you know, there's a -- we have a lot of young
12 trappers out there that would be willing to, you know,
13 tell their stories and where they come -- you know,
14 where they do their hunting. The older people don't
15 trap like they used to, but it's the younger generation
16 that is taking over. But I think setting -- if you
17 have dates for the different communities and whether
18 you get to the city hall or to the tribe, you know, you
19 mentioned the schools and having -- but, you know, and
20 they use the schools as public meetings. And I'm sure
21 you'd get a good crowd at that. And, you know, like
22 you said a stipend, \$100 a hour. Some are shy people,
23 but once they start talking about their hunting and
24 trapping they get real into it.

25

26 So but thank you. So this is
27 information and we need to get more information out to
28 the communities, when you'll be coming in certain
29 areas.

30

31 How much funding are you -- were you
32 guys able to obtain for the North Slope or.....

33

34 MS. STINCHCOMB: We have -- we have
35 enough funding to continue this project through this
36 year and we will also -- we are confident that we can
37 receive more from our funders for -- to continue it
38 through the next year which we anticipate this will be
39 a multi year project just because of how many
40 communities we would like to hit and visit and for a
41 week at a time and not interfering with summer and
42 spring activities.

43

44 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

45

46 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you. Do we
47 have any other comments or questions.

48

49 (No comments)

50

0166

1 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you for that
2 update. We're looking forward to seeing you in Point
3 Hope or the other villages.

4

5 MS. STINCHCOMB: Yes, Mr. Chair. We
6 hope to come back to Point Hope and spend more time
7 with you.

8

9 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you. We'll
10 move down the agenda. We are at item C on agency
11 reports or that's a E, National Park Service, Gates of
12 the Arctic National Park.....

13

14 MS. HUGO: D.

15

16 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK:and Preserve.
17 Oh, no, that's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

18

19 Nathan.

20

21 MR. HAWKALUK: Yeah.

22

23 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Sorry about
24 that.....

25

26 MR. HAWKALUK: That's fine.

27

28 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK:I went further
29 down.

30

31 MR. HAWKALUK: All right. Good
32 morning, members of the Council. For the record my
33 name is Nathan Hawkaluk and I'm the acting Refuge
34 Manager at the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. And
35 with me is Paul Leonard.

36

37 Do you want to introduce yourself,
38 Paul?

39

40 MR. LEONARD: Good morning, everyone.
41 My name is Paul Leonard. I'm the lead Ecologist for
42 Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

43

44 Thank you.

45

46 MR. HAWKALUK: And if you look in the
47 meeting materials our summary of activities for the
48 Arctic Refuge this past year is on Page 74. It might
49 look familiar to you, it was also in the October, 2022
50

0167

1 materials although it didn't make it into the booklet,
2 it was in the supplemental materials. So it's gone and
3 changed, but I -- you know, what I wanted to do today
4 is provide just one or two updates from that because
5 some of the information is a little stale, it's got
6 some updates and then I'm going to turn it over to Paul
7 to talk a little more -- a little more detail on some
8 of the -- some of our scientific research that might
9 have a nexus to subsistence resources in the coastal
10 plain of the Arctic Refuge.

11

12 So the one thing I will mention is in
13 this report, the -- you know, something that's at the
14 top of our list of priorities is the oil and gas
15 leasing program and the only thing I'd update the
16 Council on is the timeline in this -- in the document.
17 In your meeting materials it has a estimated record of
18 decision for the supplemental EIS of August of 2023 and
19 that's shifted later into 2024. And that's just an FYI
20 for this group in case anybody's paying attention to
21 the timeline on that.

22

23 And so with that if there's any
24 questions we could certainly take those at the end, but
25 I was going to turn it over to Paul to talk a little
26 bit about some of our research on caribou, moose and
27 maybe some other items.

28

29 So, Paul.

30

31 MR. LEONARD: Thank you. So I will
32 provide a few updates on a couple of our scientific
33 projects. From the outset I just want to say that a
34 lot of the stuff that I'll be talking about today are
35 collaborations with State agencies, other Federal
36 agencies and in the case of Porcupine Caribou
37 international agencies as well.

38

39 So I'll touch a little bit on the --
40 what happened this summer, so summer of -- or last
41 summer, summer of '22 and two projects I really want to
42 highlight. One is our ongoing monitoring for the
43 Porcupine Caribou Herd. This is a long term monitoring
44 project with collars on animals in this herd and over
45 the last couple of years we started a five year project
46 to better understand the diet of the Porcupine. And at
47 three really important life history phases for these
48 animals so during calving, during post calving and
49 during insect relief. We really wanted to get a better
50

0168

1 understanding of how their diet is changing across
2 those periods of time and how we might use that
3 information to help us understand the impacts of
4 climate change and industrial development if that were
5 to occur. So in the first couple of years of that
6 project we've been collecting diet information and so
7 collecting pellets from caribou and keying out
8 different forage species. And that project will
9 continue for the next three years.

10

11 Also I'd like to highlight the -- we
12 started a new collaboration project with moose this
13 year so in 2022. We did a survey for moose through the
14 Cane River drainage and ended up collaring 12 cows and
15 as well as 12 cows on the Kongakut drainage. And so we
16 did that in early spring of '22 and went back and
17 followed up and did a calving survey a few months
18 later. And then again in the summer to see -- to see
19 how those calves were surviving. So the kind of real
20 goal of this project is to help us understand basic
21 movement of -- seasonal movements of these moose, but
22 also their diet and forage quality at the kind of
23 northern extent of their range.

24

25 So some results of that calving survey.
26 I think 67 percent of our moose had calves or actually
27 no, excuse me, 75 percent of the cows had calves and
28 then 67 percent of those survived into the summer. So
29 we'll continue monitoring those cows and collecting
30 information about diet and space use and how their
31 seasonal movements occur. And again the context for
32 this is to help us understand how these -- how things
33 might change in the future.

34

35 So a couple of projects I want to talk
36 about that are upcoming for 2023, both that caribou
37 study and the moose study are -- will continue into
38 2023 to help us accomplish these goals and others. And
39 a really good map of -- I think it's on Page 86 in the
40 materials of some of that moose movement information if
41 anyone's interested in that.

42

43 Two new projects in addition to those
44 that I want to touch on, one is a brown bear study.
45 This will be going on on the coastal plain of the
46 Refuge, it's in collaboration with a couple of
47 agencies, but we're going to put video collars out on
48 some brown bears to help us understand their summer
49 diet and movements. And the idea here is is to help us

50

0169

1 understand how these brown bears are meeting their
2 energetic demands in the summer inside of the context
3 that these -- with increasing summer use of polar bears
4 on land there might be increasing interactions with
5 these bears and also to help us understand if
6 human/bear conflicts might become a bigger problem in
7 the future with brown bears. So there will be video
8 collars on those bears and we'll be taking kind of
9 stable isotope information from their diet as well.

10

11 And the last project I'll touch on
12 briefly here is we will be conducting a sheep survey
13 this summer in July in the central survey area of the
14 Brooks Range and the Arctic Refuge. And if you're not
15 familiar the Refuge is split up into four survey units
16 from west to east and then the Arctic Village special
17 use area as a separate survey area.

18

19 And I think with that I'll pass it back
20 over to Nathan or take questions on any of those
21 projects.

22

23 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you for that.
24 Any questions from the Council.

25

26 (No comments)

27

28 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Do we have any
29 Council members online that called in late?

30

31 (No comments)

32

33 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Esther, do you have
34 any questions?

35

36 MS. HUGO: Mr. Chair, no. This is
37 Esther. On your sheep survey that wasn't a map, but
38 yesterday you were going -- you talked about that
39 little piece, right, right in -- because I know the
40 sheep lives in the mountains and that is a very small
41 portion and it kind of goes towards the east of our
42 Brooks Range there. Are you going to be doing studies
43 there too or is it another agency or another.....

44

45 MR. LEONARD: Yeah, thank you for that
46 question, Council member. So basically these -- all of
47 these units are surveyed just over a various number of
48 years. So we'd love to be able to survey these every
49 year, but we don't have the resources to do that so we
50

0170

1 alternate. And so we might survey any given survey
2 area every three to four years, but we're trying --
3 we'll be trying to rotate through an area each year.

4

5 Thank you.

6

7 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Any other
8 questions.

9

10 (No comments)

11

12 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: You know, we always
13 hear about -- you know, you mentioned polar bears on
14 land and, you know, within the area there in the Brooks
15 Range, National Wildlife Refuge. You know, we've
16 always heard about interbreeding with polar bears and
17 grizzly bears or brown bears.....

18

19 (Teleconference interference -
20 participants not muted)

21

22 MS. GILL: If you're on the phone could
23 you please mute yourself, we're getting a little bit of
24 feedback here.

25

26 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you.

27

28 (Teleconference interference -
29 participants not muted)

30

31 MS. GILL: If you're on the telephone
32 can you please mute yourself.

33

34 (Teleconference interference -
35 participants not muted)

36

37 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: We can hear some
38 background noises, people talking. Can you make sure
39 your phone is muted?

40

41 (Teleconference interference -
42 participants not muted)

43

44 MS. GILL: If you're on the telephone,
45 can you please mute yourself.

46

47 (Teleconference interference -
48 participants not muted)

49

50

0171

1 MS. LaVINE: Hello, this is Robbin.
2 And we're hearing someone say nose, ears, eyes. If you
3 can hear me, please mute your phone. We're hearing
4 some very sweet voices as well. Please mute your
5 phone.

6
7 Thank you.

8
9 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you. You
10 know, we heard about interbreeding, you know, with
11 polar bears and brown bears. Are they actually
12 interbreeding or is that an albino or, you know, brown
13 bear or grizzly bear, you see a grayish color, are they
14 -- can that actually happen?

15
16 MR. LEONARD: Thank you, Chair, for
17 that question. I do believe it can happen and there
18 might be some recorded evidence of that, but I don't
19 think it's a very pervasive threat at this time.

20
21 Thanks.

22
23 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you. I just
24 had a question. So the studies on the Porcupine Herd,
25 are they also being done in the Canada area also?

26
27 MR. LEONARD: So the part of the study
28 that -- thank you for that question. Excuse me. The
29 part of the study that I presented today, I do not
30 believe any of the samples are in Canada, but we are
31 collaborating with the Yukon government on this study.
32 So of course a lot of the caribou that we are collaring
33 do spend some part of their year in Canada, but we're
34 not taking any samples from Canada at this time.

35
36 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you. Any
37 other comments or questions.

38
39 MS. HUGO: One more, Mr. Chair. This
40 is Esther. You know, we've been sighting a lot of
41 blonde, white colored -- I mean, they're a -- we think
42 they're grizzly bears, brown bears, but last summer we
43 went out and we spotted like maybe a couple or more
44 just really color of the polar bear. And I'm sure
45 we're going to be up soon in the summer. It's strange to
46 see these, yeah. But it's not a threat or anything.

47
48 MR. LEONARD: Thank you for that
49 comment. I -- hopefully this study will help us
50

0172

1 understand some interactions, where those interactions
2 occur and appreciate your observations there. As far
3 as helping us understand whether or not there will be
4 human/bear conflicts I think this -- that's one of the
5 main objectives of this study is to understand what
6 these brown bears are utilizing to help them make --
7 meet their energy demands. So it could be an emerging
8 future threat, increasing human/bear interaction, but
9 right now we don't think that it's a pervasive threat.

10

11 Thank you.

12

13 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Does that answer
14 your question?

15

16 MS. HUGO: Yes. Thank you.

17

18 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you for that.
19 And, you know, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service,
20 Arctic National -- National Wildlife Refuge, you know,
21 it's a -- you know, we always hear about it being
22 opened up, you know, and it's something that we don't
23 even want to talk about or happen. And it's
24 something, you know.

25

26 So thank you. I don't know if item E
27 was part of yours also, is that.....

28

29 MR. LEONARD: No.

30

31 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: No. Okay. So
32 we're -- that's separate. But if there's no other
33 questions we'll move down the agenda.

34

35 Thank you for your report.

36

37 MR. HAWKALUK: Thank you, members of
38 the Council. Appreciate it.

39

40 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Anybody need a five
41 minute break?

42

43 MS. HUGO: Yes.

44

45 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Okay. We'll take a
46 five minute break before we go to the National Park
47 Service, item E. Gates of the Arctic National Park and
48 Preserve. So five minute break.

49

50

0173

1 (Off record)

2

3 (On record)

4

5 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Okay. Good
6 morning. We are ready to convene back to our North
7 Slope Subsistence Advisory Council meeting. We're
8 going down to item E, National Park Service, Gates of
9 the Arctic.

10

11 Marcy.

12

13 MS. OKADA: Okay. Thank you, Mr.
14 Chair, Council member Esther Hugo. This is Marcy Okada
15 with Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve.
16 I'd like to refer you to your supplemental meeting
17 packet, I'm not quite sure what page that might be on,
18 but it's in your supplemental meeting packet. And we
19 just have a quick update for Gates of the Arctic.

20

21 Okay. So our Subsistence Resource
22 Commission met in Fairbanks in November. Our
23 Commission and Park Service Staff, we continue to talk
24 about Ambler -- the Ambler access road project and we
25 have Staff member updates on the Western Arctic Caribou
26 Herd, moose surveys that occur in the Park, dall sheep
27 surveys and continued discussions on law enforcement
28 along the eastern boundary of Gates of the Arctic.

29

30 Our next Subsistence Resource
31 Commission meeting is scheduled for April 18th to 19th
32 in Fairbanks. And we're going to continue to discuss
33 the Western Arctic Caribou Herd and other -- and
34 provide other resource updates.

35

36 Esther Hugo is currently appointed by
37 the North Slope Regional Advisory Council to our Gates
38 of the Arctic Subsistence Resource Commission. So
39 included in your meeting packet there should also be a
40 letter requesting a reappointment of Esther Hugo to our
41 Commission. I can also quickly just share the letter
42 with you. The Gates of the Arctic National Park
43 Subsistence Resource Commission is asking for the North
44 Slope Regional Advisory Council to reappoint Esther
45 Hugo from Anaktuvuk Pass. At our last SRC meeting held
46 in Fairbanks in November, 2022 it was noted that
47 Esther's term expires on March 15th, 2023. Esther's
48 original appointment source to the SRC is the North
49 Slope RAC and she is qualified and interested in

50

0174

1 continuing to serve on the SRC.

2

3 MS. GILL: Marcy, this is Jessica Gill.

4

5 MS. OKADA: I do realize you don't have
6 quorum -- oh, go ahead.

7

8 MS. GILL: Sorry. Thanks. Our -- that
9 document actually did not make it into your
10 supplemental packets, but I can provide it.

11 But, Marcy, if you want to provide a
12 little bit more information, I think -- I think you
13 probably did a pretty good job though. So.....

14

15 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you.

16

17 MS. OKADA: But I guess the question is
18 whether the existing RAC members can go ahead and
19 reappoint Esther to the Gates of the Arctic Subsistence
20 Resource Commission.

21

22 MS. WESSELS: Mr. Chair, this is Katya
23 Wessels with OSM.

24

25 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Yes.

26

27 MS. WESSELS: Okay. Thank you, Mr.
28 Chair. Through the Chair, Marcy. No, they
29 unfortunately since they don't have a quorum they
30 cannot appoint the Council member to the SRC. That
31 kind of slipped I guess from our radar, that should
32 have been done yesterday when they had a quorum. If
33 they get a quorum later this afternoon then they will
34 be able to take care of this business, otherwise
35 they're not able to because they need to vote on this
36 as a Council.

37

38 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you. So.....

39

40 MS. OKADA: Okay. Thank you, Katya.
41 But I think the other option is Esther can continue to
42 serve on the Gates of the Arctic Subsistence Resource
43 Commission. As written in the SRC's charter she can
44 continue to serve on behalf of her appointing source,
45 the North Slope Regional Advisory Council and then if
46 need be we could take this up at the Regional Advisory
47 Council's next meeting.

48

49 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you. So was

50

0175

1 there a agenda item on that?

2

3 MS. OKADA: If that works for you,
4 Esther.

5

6 MS. HUGO: Yes, that will work for me.
7 Thank you.

8

9 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you. I think
10 we will go along with Esther until we have a quorum
11 when we can make changes or not or keep it the same as
12 it is. As the -- you know, the whole Council where --
13 that votes on things. So until then Esther's still
14 onboard. And you did mention something in May, a
15 Council set up.

16

17 MS. OKADA: That sounds good. I'll
18 continue with our Gates of the Arctic update. I just
19 quickly want to share that the National Park Service is
20 providing funding for each of our seven Subsistence
21 Resource Commissions to send a representative to the
22 North American Caribou Workshop and Arctic Ungulate
23 Conference. I know you folks discussed this yesterday,
24 it's a conference being held in Anchorage this coming
25 May. So we are providing supplemental funding to also
26 send a representative from each of our Subsistence
27 Resource Commissions in addition to the representatives
28 that will be attending on behalf of the Regional
29 Advisory Council.

30

31 And then lastly National Park Service
32 continues to conduct surveys for dall sheep in Gates of
33 the Arctic. Every year sheep surveys are done around
34 Anaktuvuk Pass and within Itkillik Preserve. And this
35 past July the surveys that were conducted around
36 Anaktuvuk Pass weren't completed due to snowfall that
37 was coming down in July, but overall the survey results
38 that we did receive for the area around Anaktuvuk Pass
39 looks like the sheep population is pretty stable. Then
40 also the sheep population within Itkillik Preserve also
41 looks pretty stable. So the rest of your written
42 update just provides further detail on the sheep survey
43 that was conducted this past July.

44

45 We have a shorter update this -- for
46 this meeting, but we hope to share more information at
47 your next Regional Advisory Council meeting this coming
48 late October, early November.

49

50 So that's it for my update if folks

50

0176

1 have any questions.

2

3 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you, Marcy.
4 Any questions for Marcy for the National Park Service,
5 Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve?

6

7 (No comments)

8

9 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: When you say the
10 dall sheep is pretty thin, what numbers are you talking
11 about?

12

13 MS. OKADA: If you look -- let's see,
14 if you look at your written update there's some further
15 detail, it's broken down between Itkillik survey area
16 and then Anaktuvuk Pass survey area counts. And when
17 you take it by year since these two areas are surveys
18 every year there was a drastic decline of sheep
19 starting in 2013. That was due to freezing rain on
20 snow during the lambing season which lambs are born in
21 May. So given that time of year when lambs are being
22 born the lambs didn't make it due to the freezing rain
23 and so there was no what's called recruitment into the
24 sheep population. And so there was a decline starting
25 in 2013 and then there was another hard winter in 2014
26 and so the sheep population declined. And so from year
27 to year surveys were conducted and it's looking like
28 sheep populations have stabilized since then, but what
29 we're really watching for is just these hard, hard
30 winters, deep snow winters where sheep can't dig down
31 into the snow to get at food like caribou can. You
32 know, sheep are a little bit more delicate. But as of
33 right now the most recent sheep surveys are showing
34 that the population is recruiting younger sheep, but
35 it's still not quite back to the higher numbers that it
36 was before 2013, but yet it's also not undergoing a
37 severe decline like it did in -- you know, 10 years
38 ago.

39

40 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you. Any
41 questions or comments.

42

43 (No comments)

44

45 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: You know, I'm not
46 from that region and I -- you know, even I'm on the
47 Advisory Council sometimes I don't get to look at those
48 statistics on certain things, we don't get them. And,
49 you know, just like the Western Arctic Caribou Herd a
50

0177

1 lot of the population counts are delayed until we know
2 it's a little late sometimes. So I see you do a yearly
3 count for the last 10 years, 11 years?

4

5 MR. OKADA: Could you repeat that, Mr.
6 Chair, I couldn't quite catch the full question.

7

8 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: I'm just wondering
9 how long have you been keeping track of the numbers of
10 sheep within that area, is it 10 years, I saw 2009 in
11 there, I'm not sure that's what I saw, it's in kind of
12 small print and have they found out why the population
13 is dropping?

14

15 MS. OKADA: You're correct, Mr. Chair.
16 Data's been collected from year to year via sheep
17 surveys since 2009 and for that northeastern portion
18 and then also around Anaktuvuk Pass sheep surveys have
19 been conducted since 2009. It seems like just real
20 drastic winter events are what are impacting sheep
21 populations, not just in this area, but in areas around
22 the State as well. But for what you're asking sheep
23 surveys in Gates of the Arctic have been conducted
24 since 2009 consistently from year to year.

25

26 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you. Any
27 comments or questions.

28

29 MS. HUGO: Mr. Chair, Esther. Thank
30 you, Marcy, for that. I'm just more worried about the
31 Itkillik area. Are we going to be closing -- I think
32 we closed that area due to the low numbers. How long
33 will that be and will we continue the closure?

34

35 MS. OKADA: Thank you, Esther. So
36 you're correct, there was a sheep hunting closure in
37 Unit 24A and then also Unit 26B which does include a
38 portion of Itkillik Preserve. And so that's closed
39 until 2024, it's a two year closure. But for the area
40 that local users from Anaktuvuk Pass hunt Unit 26A is
41 still open for sheep hunting. So that closure doesn't
42 affect local sheep hunters in Anaktuvuk Pass.

43

44 MS. HUGO: Okay. Thank you, Marcy.

45

46 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you. Any
47 other questions or comments.

48

49 MS. HUGO: Mr. Chair, one more

50

0178

1 question. A couple years ago or so didn't you guys
2 find some kind of disease or sickness in the lungs of
3 the sheep?

4

5 MS. OKADA: So, Esther, there was some
6 testing through nasal swabs. Our sheep biologist at
7 the time was working with local hunters in Anaktuvuk
8 Pass as well as local hunters from other communities
9 associated with Gates of the Arctic. And through those
10 nasal swabs there was some testing for what's called
11 M.ovi or M.ovi. And it -- when test results came back
12 there wasn't -- there wasn't any positive test for
13 M.ovi in the samples that were provided. I mean,
14 hopefully we could continue some of that monitoring
15 work with the help of local hunters in the future, but
16 yeah, you're right, there is -- there are concerns
17 about sheep diseases, not just in the Brooks Range, but
18 in other places around the State as well.

19

20 MS. HUGO: Thank you.

21

22 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you for that
23 update. You know, when you hear the word Itkillik, you
24 know, it -- it's different for us further west. You
25 know, we would think of Indian country. Itkillik is an
26 indian and the indians gave us the name Eskimo and we
27 gave them the Itkillik. You know, the old stories of
28 our grandparents of how the Itkilliks used to come into
29 our country and scare us at night. In their language
30 Eskimo means the eater of raw meat, frozen, raw, you
31 know, raw meat. But in our language Itkillik is the
32 people with head lice and, you know, we all had head
33 lice growing up, but that's -- you know, that's what we
34 called them on the western side. I don't know how it
35 is on the eastern side, but that's how we grew up. Way
36 on the far east, we're what, almost 600 miles away.

37

38 But thank you for that report. I
39 always was wondering about Itkillik and I just was
40 curious about that. But thank you for your report.

41

42 If there's no other questions or
43 comments we're going to move down the line.

44

45 (No comments)

46

47 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: But thank you for
48 that update and it would be good to find out.....

49

50

0179

1 MS. OKADA: Thank you.

2

3

CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK:what's causing
4 this decline. So hopefully in the next report, I don't
5 know if you guys are doing studies this summer on
6 trying to figure out why it's at a steady pace. You
7 know, dall sheep is starting to come back in the DeLong
8 Mountains on the north side towards Cape Lisburne.
9 They've finally been seeing them in the last couple
10 years after almost 15, 20 years of not seeing them.

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

29

30

31

32

33

34

35

36

37

38

39

40

41

42

43

44

45

46

47

48

49

50

MS. GILL: Mr. Chair.

MS. OKADA: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Yes. Any other
comments or questions or.....

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Jessica.

MS. GILL: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I
believe we also have Kyle Joly on the line for Gates of
the Arctic National Park.

CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you. Thank
you for your report. We're going to go to item F, BLM,
Bureau of Land Management.

MS. MIKOW: Good morning, Mr. Chair and
members of the Council. For the record my name is Beth
Mikow. I'm the Anthropologist for the Arctic District
Office with Bureau of Land Management. In your
supplemental materials you'll find quite a lengthy
report that we submitted and, you know, we only have 15
minutes so I thought I'd highlight three major topics,
but if there's any questions, you know, regarding any
of the other activities we have going on in NPR-A
please feel free to ask.

So the first thing I wanted to touch on
was the Willow project. The final supplemental EIS is
now available for public review and in that report
there is a link to the page where you can review that
EIS. It was officially published in the Federal
Register on February 3rd of this year and a record of
decision may be issued no sooner than 30 days after
that publication. So just wanted to give a very brief

0180

1 update on the timeline. I don't have any other
2 information to share, but just wanted to give that
3 update.

4
5 Another topic I wanted to talk about
6 was our legacy wells program update. So just a little
7 history. Between 1944 and 1982 the U.S. Navy and the
8 U.S. Geological Survey drilled 136 wells on the North
9 Slope to explore for oil and gas. In 1976 the BLM was
10 given responsibility for managing the NPR-A and we also
11 inherited the responsibility for those legacy wells.
12 And many of those legacy wells were not properly
13 plugged or abandoned and surface debris or contaminated
14 soil may have been left in place. So we've come up
15 with some strategic plans to assess the condition of
16 each well and prioritize the remediation of those
17 wells. And for the winter 2023 season we have a
18 contract to complete plugging and abandonment
19 activities at the Iko Bay legacy well which is
20 southeast of Utqiagvik. So the contractor would
21 mobilize to the well via winter snow trail and complete
22 those plugging and abandonment activities. There were
23 attempts to plug and abandon this well in 2016 and
24 2017, but they were unsuccessful due to downhole
25 condition so again we're going to get out there -- our
26 contractor's going to get out there this year to
27 complete that work.

28
29 And again this is a pretty brief
30 update, but the last thing I wanted to touch on is an
31 ongoing research or the beginning of a research project
32 that might have some connection to subsistence. So
33 basically we're wanting to do a baseline assessment of
34 vegetation in the area of Fish and Judy Creeks, those
35 watersheds near Nuiqsut. The Fish Creek watershed is
36 widely acknowledged as an area important for both
37 subsistence use and caribou habitat and so this area is
38 the focus of potential near term oil and gas
39 development and of course is of great interest to the
40 public. So prior to any development it would be
41 helpful to conduct a baseline assessment of vegetation
42 in the area and this assessment would assist in
43 monitoring potential impacts and mitigation
44 effectiveness.

45
46 So the habitat in this area is used by
47 some caribou throughout the year, but especially during
48 calving season and during both spring and fall
49 migration. Approximated -- excuse me, calving habitat
50

0181

1 consists of early emergent, high nutrient forage
2 important for calf growth and development and caribou
3 select for these particular forage types during the
4 calving period and tend to return to the same general
5 area at calving time each year. Late summer forage
6 quality can also play an important role in winter
7 survival for caribou.

8

9 So a portion of the project that I will
10 be assisting with is to help target the location for
11 that habitat assessment. Our wildlife biologist will
12 be going out in the summer to collect samples from that
13 habitat, but prior to that work I am going to with --
14 I'm seeking approval from the community of Nuiqsut to
15 document traditional ecological knowledge of caribou in
16 that known subsistence use area of Fish and Judy Creek.
17 So once I receive approval I will conduct key
18 respondent interviews with active subsistence users in
19 order to collect information regarded -- regarding
20 observed caribou utilization of those watershed over
21 the course of the respondent time hunting in the
22 region. And these interviews will also include
23 questions regarding any observed changes in caribou
24 abundance and distribution and associated changes in
25 search and harvest areas to just kind of get a better
26 understanding of how caribou hunting is going in those
27 areas. And during these interviews I will also with
28 the help of the key respondent map recent and
29 historical search and harvest areas to aid in
30 identifying the sites for vegetation assessment.

31

32 So that is something that I hope to
33 kick off next month. I'm reaching out to the community
34 of Nuiqsut to get approval for that work, but I think
35 it'll be a really helpful project in understanding
36 again the habitat situation for caribou in that region
37 prior to any oil and gas development.

38

39 So that's really all the update that I
40 have. Again if there's anything in that larger report
41 that the Council might have questions about or
42 questions in general I'm happy to take those.

43

44 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you. Any
45 questions for BLM from the Council.

46

47 (No comments)

48

49 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you. You

50

0182

1 know, when you look at BLM land it's a big chunk,
2 because that's 23 million, it's one of the largest in
3 the United States. You know, it takes a big portion of
4 the North Slope. You know, lately there's been a lot
5 of talk about the sea walk trails that goes right
6 through a lot of BLM lands and did BLM have any
7 concerns on that?

8

9 MS. MIKOW: So you're talking about the
10 sea walk trails.....

11

12 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Yeah, the sea walk
13 trails.

14

15 MS. MIKOW:was that the question?

16

17 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Yeah.

18

19 MS. MIKOW: So as far as I understand I
20 think prepacking has already begun. We have -- so
21 basically the Borough has a right-of-way permit. I'm
22 trying to -- I believe it expires this winter, I should
23 double check that, but there'll be another application
24 for that. We have a lot of monitoring, you know,
25 there's thermistors checking like soil temperature and
26 all that, like figuring out the snow depth and things
27 like that prior to the construction of the trail, but
28 the monitoring -- I don't believe at this point, I can
29 -- I can look into that more, that there's any concerns
30 with that. I know it's a very important mode of
31 transportation between communities.

32

33 So, yeah, I hope that answers the
34 question, but, you know, please let me know if there's
35 anymore information I can provide. But yeah, we
36 certainly monitor to make sure there's no impacts, but
37 there haven't been as far as I understand and it's
38 quite an important thing for residents of the North
39 Slope.

40

41 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you. Any
42 questions for BLM.

43

44 (No comments)

45

46 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Any questions
47 before we move on.

48

49 (No comments)

50

0183

1 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you. You
2 know, we're always hearing about BLM out in the field
3 with helicopters and leaving gas out there, drums, you
4 know, while they're doing surveys or whatever, you
5 know, there's other -- we see other helicopters out
6 there within -- further north. But it's something, you
7 know, we know BLM is pretty busy in the summertime,
8 especially during the migration routes of the Western
9 Arctic Caribou Herd also. You know, it seems like
10 they're always in the middle of things sometimes and we
11 have concerns on that.

12
13 MS. MIKOW: That is completely
14 understandable and one of the things I didn't touch on,
15 but it is in the report that we're working on, we're
16 doing -- we're going to be completing a programmatic
17 environmental assessment for the work that we do. By
18 and large we try not to cache fuel, so if there are any
19 issues where you see fuel barrels cached that haven't
20 been removed please let us know. We generally operate
21 out of Umiat and Agok, some of the camps that we have
22 there. As far as mitigation for subsistence and
23 caribou, we certainly have rules in place where we
24 don't fly anywhere near subsistence users or low above
25 wildlife unless it's, you know, required for the
26 research, but we don't do the caribou research as far
27 as like collaring and things like that, we work with
28 other folks for that kind of thing. And we're also
29 working to -- so one of the new things in our office is
30 getting flight tracks from each permitted permittee,
31 including ourself, to understand how we're using the
32 airspace a little bit better. And that's something
33 that we can analyze and try to use to mitigate any
34 impacts on local communities. So we're very well aware
35 of the issues with aviation and it's something that I'm
36 personally doing a lot of analysis of the data that we
37 have right now and there's a lot of internal
38 conversations about that. But certainly we try
39 completely to not disrupt subsistence users or the
40 resources on the landscape that they depend on. So
41 this is a focus of research for us as well to work to
42 make, you know, aviation needs be less impactful for
43 local communities. And so that's something that we are
44 definitely working on.

45
46 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you. Can you
47 give us a Willow update on the location of the Willow
48 master development plan project area and what's
49 happening now with that?

50

0184

1 MS. MIKOW: Yeah.

2

3 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: I know it's goes
4 out of our jurisdiction, does it?

5

6 MS. MIKOW: Oh, go ahead, I'm sorry.
7 Oh, yeah, just to give you an update, nothing is
8 occurring currently in the Willow project area.
9 There's been no record of decision released at this
10 point as to whether that project will be occurring or
11 not. So it's the -- it's in the final supplemental EIS
12 stage and again there's been no record of decision. So
13 at this point in time nothing is occurring so it
14 basically comes down to that record of decision. And
15 if you want to look a little bit closer and again I
16 don't know exactly where your supplemental meeting
17 materials are in your book, but on Page 6 of our report
18 there's a map that depicts the location of where the
19 Willow project would occur if, you know, again it's
20 signed and or if it's approved.

21

22 MS. GILL: Thank you, Marcy [sic],
23 that's Page 33 in your meeting -- in your supplemental
24 book.

25

26 MS. MIKOW: Thank you. I wasn't sure
27 where it was at.

28

29 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: It's on Page 6 on
30 the book.

31

32 MS. HUGO: Mr. Chair.

33

34 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Yes, Esther.

35

36 MS. HUGO: Yes. I just wanted to know
37 when will the sea walk trails be available for Point
38 Hope, Point Lay and Kaktovik? Due to a lot of living
39 cost, high cost tickets, it really helps our community
40 right now because they're traveling with the sea walk
41 and I'm just curious to know when, in the near future,
42 we're negotiating, but I feel like they're being left
43 out because -- it's not fair.

44

45 Thank you.

46

47 MS. MIKOW: Thank you, Esther. That's
48 a good question. So as far as I understand it -- I can
49 get more information on this, but as far as I

50

0185

1 understand the North Slope Borough applied for the
2 permit and again initially it was I believe just from
3 Nuiqsut to Utqiagvik to Atqasuk and then they amended
4 the right-of-way or requested an amendment to the
5 right-of-way to include -- oh, excuse me, include
6 Wainwright next. So at this point I believe that
7 they'll be putting in an application to have another
8 five year right-of-way, I can verify that and it just
9 depends on, you know, what communities as far as I
10 understand that they would want to connect. So from
11 our end, you know, we give the permit for that
12 activity, but for the inclusion of that I believe that
13 would have to come from the North Slope Borough, but I
14 will verify that, you know, I'll let Jessica know. I'm
15 fairly new in the office still so I don't want to, you
16 know, be incorrect. So I'll get in touch with your
17 Council Coordinator with the official answer to that,
18 but that is as far as I understand, you know, for the
19 North Slope Borough if they wanted to connect those.

20

21 MS. HUGO: Thank you.

22

23 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you, Beth.
24 Is there any comments or questions dealing with BLM
25 before we move down the agenda, is there any other
26 Council members online?

27

28 (No comments)

29

30 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Hearing none, we
31 thank you, Beth with BLM.

32

33 MS. MIKOW: Thank you very much for
34 your time.

35

36 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Okay. We will move
37 to item G, Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

38

39 MR. NELSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair,
40 members of the Council. My name is Mark Nelson, I'm
41 with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and I'm the
42 Area Biologist for Units 26B and 26C. As far as Fish
43 and Game goes today here, I'm going to talk a little
44 bit about 26B and 26C and then I think Carmen's going
45 to come and talk about 26A and then after that Helen
46 behind me will talk about some of the Subsistence
47 Division's activities in the area.

48

49 To start off there's been some staffing

50

0186

1 changes within our office and just want to go through
2 that. For 15 or so years Beth Leonard was the Area
3 Biologist in 26B and C, and she retired in April. And
4 after that in July her assistant, Jason Caikoski, was
5 hired as the Area Biologist and then in.....

6
7 (Teleconference goes down - all
8 circuits are busy).

9
10 MR. NELSON: I'm going to wait until we
11 figure that out.

12
13 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Can you hold on for
14 a second.

15
16 (Teleconference unavailable - all
17 circuits are busy).

18
19 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Okay. Continue.

20
21 MR. NELSON: All right. Thank you, Mr.
22 Chair. Let's see. So November Jason was hired as our
23 Management Coordinator within the Fairbanks office in
24 region three and then just last month I was hired as
25 the new AB. So a lot of turnover in the last year
26 within our area. I'm currently recruiting for an
27 Assistant Area Biologist and hopefully next time we
28 meet I'll be able to introduce that person to you.

29
30 So I gave you a printed update here, I
31 did not get this to Jessica in time to get it in your
32 book, I apologize for that and will try to do better
33 next time. But I think I'll just go through this
34 update and then yeah, we can entertain any questions
35 whenever.

36
37 So I'll start with Central Arctic
38 Caribou. For each of these I have a, you know,
39 regulatory, a positive C&T finding on the ANS. Those
40 are just within the State system which is probably
41 similar to the Federal, but just pointing out that
42 these are State findings. As far as the Central Arctic
43 population we did get a photocensus done last July.
44 The estimate was right about 34,000 which was just a
45 little bit up from the 2019 estimate and -- of 30,000.
46 And then it's not on here, but going back even further
47 to 2017 it was like 28,000. So this population looks
48 like it's just kind of slowly creeping up. It's right
49 towards the upper end of our management objectives
50

0187

1 right now. And almost all of the indices with this
2 population look like everything is going well except we
3 did have below patrician rate this last year which was
4 the lowest we've ever recorded and something we're
5 going to keep an eye on into the future. Otherwise
6 everything else looks to be going well.

7

8 Currently the regulations for most of
9 this area is four bulls except a little area over by
10 Nuiqsut and from that we're harvesting three, four, 500
11 bulls per year and then some cows taken over by
12 Nuiqsut.

13

14 Do you want me to pause and ask for
15 questions for each kind of section or just roll
16 through?

17

18 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: I'm -- while we're
19 on that topic, I -- well, you have any questions on
20 this numbers of the Central Caribou Herd and do -- I
21 saw the other one there.

22

23 (No comments)

24

25 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: I just was curious,
26 you know, the numbers of bulls between 300 and 500 that
27 were taken. And, you know, you don't have a breakdown,
28 you know, of how many of them are residents within the
29 North Slope and how many are nonresidents, how many are
30 out of state residents, you know, what numbers are we
31 looking at when you show a picture of three -- you
32 know, three to 500 bulls. That's -- you know, you're
33 talking 200 difference, you know, you -- so you're not
34 sure how many are actually taken between three to 500
35 bulls taken, is that what it shows on there? The
36 number of permits that is handed out to nonresidents or
37 out of state hunters that come and hunt in the Central
38 Arctic Herd is something that we would like to see more
39 of, you know, who comes and goes and what -- you know,
40 whether they're bulls or females, you know, because
41 when you talk about bulls, you know, they're the
42 breeders, they're the ones that -- when you say the
43 population is steadily rising, you know, that's good,
44 but what is actually taken by local people that have a
45 subsistence way of life. I'm just kind of curious on
46 that.

47

48 MR. NELSON: Thank you for that
49 question. Yeah, that's a great question. The range

50

0188

1 there is just from the last few years. So two or three
2 years ago it was like 300 bulls and it just has slowly
3 crept up. Last year was I think 457 or something like
4 that. All this area is just a harvest ticket, it's
5 over the counter. There are some -- it's usually
6 around half and half as far as residents versus
7 nonresidents depending on the year. One thing that's
8 transitioned hunters away from this hunt up off the
9 haul road is that there have been a lot of caribou
10 accessible in the Fortymile country off like the Steese
11 and Taylor Highways. And so that's bring -- that's
12 taking hunters, resident hunters, who would normally be
13 hunting there over to that other kind of area. That
14 Fortymile Herd is declining and the quota's going to be
15 a lot smaller for the next few years so I suspect there
16 will be more resident hunters going up there. As far
17 as residents of the North Slope Hunting this area,
18 there's a special regulation over on -- near Nuiqsut,
19 it's the only place right now that cows are available
20 to be taken. And I don't have that breakdown on me
21 right now, but it's -- they're able to take cows and
22 it's a more liberal season over there right around
23 Nuiqsut.

24

25 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you for that.
26 And when you look at 500 bulls taken, what percentage
27 of 500 bulls is from the Central Arctic Caribou Herd,
28 how many actual bulls are counted in the -- what per --
29 what is 500, what percentage is that to the bulls that
30 are still there, you know, what is taken? I'm just
31 trying to figure out how many bulls we have in that
32 herd, you know, you do a photocensus and you could
33 easily tell the bulls from the females. We're just
34 wondering what the actual count of bulls are in the
35 Central Herd and when you take 500 what percentage is
36 that of the bulls that are taken from that herd?

37

38 MR. NELSON: Yeah. No, that's a really
39 good question too, thank you for that. So when we do
40 the photocensuses in July and it is a little -- you can
41 kind of tell bulls from cows, but it's not easy. What
42 we use for that is in October we do composition surveys
43 and we have not done one in two years, we're planning
44 to do one this October I hope with weather permitting,
45 but the last few years we've shown lots of bulls in
46 that herd, like 45 to 50 per hundred cows which is, you
47 know, pretty good. Our objective in that area is 40
48 bulls per hundred. So the actual percentage we're
49 taking each year is quite low, it's going to be, you
50

50

0189

1 know, just a couple, like 2 percent of the herd. So --
2 yeah.

3

4

(Teleconference reestablished).

5

6

7

CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you for your
patience. We are still under item 13G, Department of
Fish and Game. You can continue.

8

9

10

Thank you.

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

29

30

31

32

33

34

35

36

37

38

39

40

41

42

43

44

45

46

47

48

49

50

MR. NELSON: All right. Thank you, Mr.
Chair. So I'll move on from Central Arctic Caribou
then and just go over Porcupine numbers real quick.
The pop -- the latest population estimate we have, the
latest photocensus was done in 2017, that came out
around 218,000 caribou. The numbers next to those are
wrong, sorry about that, as far as the confidence
interval there. Anyway the last few years we have not
been able to do a photocensus, we just have not had the
right groupings of caribou, we need them to group up,
you know, in July or June in order for us to do that
and that hasn't happened with that herd the last five
years so we're hoping this year. It'll be a top -- a
high priority for our photocensus crew to get that done
if it happens.

As far as calving results from this
last spring, their calving rate, patrician rate, was a
little bit lower, around 70 percent, not quite as low
as Central Arctic, but everything else looked pretty
good. The calf survival is excellent, 93 percent.
There were a lot of calves in general at 68 calves per
a hundred cows. And adult overwinter and yearling
survival has been average which is good for that herd.

As far as harvest goes this is broken
down between Alaska and Canada. And this range of four
to 700, that is an estimate, we don't have as good of
harvest numbers on Porcupine. There's about 150, 200
per year that are taken by folks who do report and then
there's, you know, quite a few that are not reported,
but they're estimated here. And then the 1,000 to
4,000 harvested over in Canada, again that's -- that
varies by year and is just kind of a rough estimate.
This herd is pretty large so these harvest num -- these
numbers of harvested animals is much lower than our
harvestable surplus so there's no concern as far as how
many we're taking right now.

0190

1 Any questions on Porcupine stuff, we
2 already talked about that a little bit with the Refuge
3 folks, but.....

4
5 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you. Any
6 comments or questions on this topic before we move on
7 from the Council.

8
9 (No comments)

10
11 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Anybody online that
12 called in late.

13
14 (No comments)

15
16 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: You could go ahead
17 and continue.

18
19 MR. NELSON: Okay. Next up we'll talk
20 about Unit 26B muskox. There is some interesting stuff
21 going on with this -- with this population of muskox.
22 We've been monitoring this for a long time and that
23 population has continued to grow and is now over 300.
24 In fact the last year we counted 373 muskox in --
25 generally in 26B, some of them are just right on the
26 edge of that 26A over kind of by Nuiqsut there. We
27 have not had a hunt in muskox in 26B since 2004, but
28 that's going to change this coming fall. We -- because
29 we're over our management objective we're -- we do now
30 have a available harvestable surplus and we decided to
31 reopen it. And we've put in place the same hunts and
32 the same hunt structure that was in place when we had
33 the hunt back in 2 -- prior to 2004. So that's going
34 involve three different hunts.

35
36 One is a tier two hunt, TX108 and there
37 is a map that I gave you guys, but that hunt area is
38 going to be -- it's 26 -- it's part of 26A which is
39 going to be east of 153 west longitude. And then in
40 26B it is everything west of the Dalton Highway. So it
41 goes from the Dalton Highway going west all the way
42 over past Nuiqsut into 26A just a little bit to 153
43 degrees west. That's the hunt area for -- and that --
44 again that's a tier two hunt. And we gave four permits
45 our for this. They -- in order to apply for this you
46 had to apply last November and we did give four permits
47 out for that. That -- they'll be able to hunt those
48 either sex muskox between August 1 and March 31,
49 starting August 1 of 2023. So in a few months.

50

0191

1 The next hunt is a drawing hunt and
2 that we -- again we gave four of those out at this draw
3 period where you had to draw or you had to apply last
4 November. The hunt area for that is 26B east of the
5 Dalton Highway so it's the other side of the Dalton
6 Highway over towards like 26C. There were -- in that
7 hunt there were four permits, those are for bulls only
8 and that -- there's two hunt periods for that,
9 September 20th to August 10th and then 10 March to 30
10 March.

11
12 And then the final -- the third one is
13 going to be a registration permit. We are going to
14 give out four permits probably in Kaktovik and Nuiqsut
15 which is exactly what we did back in 2004. And that
16 hunt area is going to be the same as the drawing. So
17 GMU 26B east of the Dalton Highway.

18
19 So that's kind of the big news there.
20 We're hunting muskox again in 26B.

21
22 So any questions.

23
24 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Are there any
25 questions for Unit 26B muskox hunt?

26
27 MS. HUGO: Mr. Chair.

28
29 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Yeah, Esther.

30
31 MS. HUGO: This is Esther. So when you
32 make a drawing for the permit do you just pick or you
33 put it in a hat or what do you do?

34
35 MR. NELSON: Through the Chair. Yeah,
36 so that's a good question. We have a pretty
37 complicated system, but basically people go online,
38 they submit their application with their name and all
39 that and then people in Juneau run some kind of
40 computer program and it's total random in how that --
41 that actually that -- those people get picked. I
42 believe that this was -- this is the first year that we
43 had this drawing permit and I don't think that -- I
44 didn't think people would know too much about it, but I
45 think we had a lot of people put in for it so it was
46 actually pretty hard to draw that even this first year.

47
48 MS. HUGO: Thank you. I'm pretty
49 surprised that the drawing is done way down from
50

0192

1 Juneau, is it due to the applicants from the whole
2 State of Alaska?

3

4 Thank you.

5

6 MR. NELSON: Yes, exactly. This
7 drawing is done with every other drawing hunt in
8 Alaska, so everything from here to southeast to
9 interior and everything, yep. They just do them all at
10 -- all at once, all with the same exact system so
11 there's no -- yeah, so everything's just done the exact
12 same way across the State for the drawing hunt.

13

14 MS. HUGO: Why couldn't we be doing it
15 up this way instead of somebody down there?

16

17 MR. NELSON: No, that's a good
18 question. But yeah, the tier two hunt is done much
19 different, that takes into account how long you've been
20 hunting muskox in 26B, how long you've been there and
21 different things like that. So that one is much more
22 structured just for people who have always hunted this
23 area.

24

25 MS. HUGO: Thank you for that
26 information. Maybe in the future we can have our
27 people from the Slope to choose whether it's a person
28 from Wasilla or, you know, I think it's better if we do
29 it from out end because who in Juneau knows, you know.
30 They don't know our country as much as we do. So it
31 doesn't make sense.

32

33 Thank you.

34

35 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you, Esther.
36 I just have a question. These permits that are drawn,
37 does that include out of State?

38

39 MR. NELSON: No, those are resident
40 only.

41

42 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you. And
43 when you define residents, that's residents of the
44 State of Alaska?

45

46 MR. NELSON: That is correct.

47

48 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: And there's only
49 four, is that what he said?

50

0193

1 MS. HUGO: Yeah.

2

3 MR. NELSON: Yeah, there's -- so
4 there's four permits for either sex for the tier two,
5 there's four permits for bull only for the drawing and
6 then there'll be four permits under the registration.
7 The registration are also either sex.

8

9 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you. You can
10 continue, there's no other questions. And I think it's
11 something that we are going to look more into the
12 future because, you know, we like to eat muskox too
13 and, you know, the people within their units should
14 have full priority. It seems like we always get over
15 powered and outnumbered. You put our name in the hat
16 and you got how many other people in there and, you
17 know, for the people that subsist and depend on the
18 food source within their own land don't always get to
19 hunt animals that are right in their front door. And,
20 you know, at times in Point Hope every once in a while
21 we get a muskox in our village with porcupine quills
22 and yet we can't shoot it, we feel like we're going to
23 get in trouble or something or fined or that it'll be
24 taken away by Fish and Game. And I think it's life and
25 death issues when a muskox is chasing people or young
26 kids that are playing out and we -- sometimes we have
27 no choice but to shoot the animal, but still will --
28 can be taken away from us even though it's a food
29 source. I think these kind of things have to change
30 especially in a life and death situation. You know,
31 we'd be more than gladly to eat that muskox.

32

33 If nobody has any other questions you
34 can move on with your report.

35

36 Thank you.

37

38 MR. NELSON: All right. Thank you for
39 that. So I'm going to move on now to Unit 26B moose.
40 This is another new hunt to kind of announce here. We
41 have also been monitoring this population for quite a
42 while and last year we had up to 359 moose in Unit 26B
43 and that's -- you know, we have a management object in
44 that area of 200 moose so we're well above that now.
45 And again we haven't hunted -- we haven't offered these
46 hunts since 2013, 2014 and so to kind of start things
47 back we just put back in place exactly what was
48 happening then. And that's going to consist of another
49 two part hunt.

50

0194

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

29

30

31

32

33

34

35

36

37

38

39

40

41

42

43

44

45

46

47

48

49

50

The first part is another drawing hunt. There'll be 10 bull moose permits that we gave out in this last November draw. And those are for Unit 26B and that -- except the Canning River so that there's a little portion there way over on the eastern side that's not included, but most of 26B so both sides of the haul road are in this area. And those -- again those are bull only.

And the second part of the hunt is that we will have a 14 day season and that will be spring, 2024 so April, 2024. The 14 day season for a bull and that's just anybody can go, it's a harvest ticket hunt. So just have a harvest ticket and anybody can go hunt that hunt for a bull moose.

So yeah, those are the two hunts that we will start with.

CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Any other -- any questions on Unit 26B moose hunt.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: And this is a drawing also for 10 bulls. And when you say anybody you're talking anybody in the world or State of Alaska or United States, lower 48? Anybody is a big word. Yeah, so I just want to clarify that.

MR. NELSON: Thank you for that question. Yeah, it's any resident of Alaska. Yep, and there are -- and just to be clear there's two separate hunts, one is a drawing only and the other is a two week any resident of Alaska can hunt for two weeks in April. They're both bull only, but there's two separate hunts with this 26B moose.

CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: And again we're at 10 bulls. You know, the northern people don't get very much moose and we don't eat it, but the southern communities like moose, inland people, you know, when caribou is just not in abundance or they come through their community. But again they get over numbered because they're put in a lottery and unable to hunt because they're outnumbered again, you pick up a lucky hat. And it's things that we -- find a way to change that and, you know, the inland communities, they like

0195

1 moose. So, you know, the numbers are right and maybe
2 there should be two different lotteries, one for local
3 within the 26B villages and one for the State if the
4 numbers are climbing.

5

6 MR. NELSON: Thank you for that. And
7 that brings up another point in that next spring on the
8 State system we have a Board of Game that will cover
9 this region. And so this May proposals are due and if
10 people want something different this is like a perfect
11 time to put together a proposal to go ahead and change
12 those allocations. So yep.

13

14 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you. And we
15 don't have a quorum so maybe in our next meeting.

16

17 MS. GILL: Sure. Mr. Chair, that
18 doesn't preclude you from doing it yourself if you were
19 interested in putting in. You can do that as a
20 resident, as a like person by yourself, just for your
21 information.

22

23 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you.

24

25 MR. NELSON: All right. I have one
26 more thing to talk about here and that's Brooks Range
27 sheep, eastern Brooks Range sheep. I handed out a memo
28 that we had put together, some of our sheep biologists
29 and research biologists from 2021. It's still relevant
30 today so I gave that to you guys.

31

32 Overall, you know, we conduct surveys
33 in kind of that upper Chandalar, Matthews Creek, up in
34 that country. We do kind of surveys every year,
35 they're more like trend counts so we survey the same
36 area every year, weather depending, and then look at
37 changes over time to understand if the populations are
38 kind of climbing or decreasing or staying the same.
39 What we've seen in that area and we think is fairly
40 representative of all the Brooks Range is -- and also
41 is very similar to what we heard earlier from what the
42 Gates of the Arctic is seeing. And that's back in
43 2013, '14, even 2012 we had some hard winters, we had
44 some real hard springs, late springs. That was
45 detrimental to lamb crops and some of those winters
46 were hard enough that we actually probably lost some
47 adult animals as well. And so we did see a pretty
48 significant decline in the sheep population around
49 those periods and after that, however since 2018 we've

50

0196

1 seen a very stable sheep population and potentially
2 some slight increases, but the real take home here is
3 that we're not seeing that decline continue, that
4 population seems to have leveled out.

5
6 Part of this area was in the Federal
7 closure that was discussed earlier which is GMU 24A and
8 26B west of the Sag River. There's one more year on
9 that closure. And we also plan to -- we're in the
10 beginning stages of a research project to study a area
11 that we survey which is fairly heavily hunted and
12 compare that with the Gates of the Arctic which is
13 relatively not hunted and compare if hunting has a --
14 you know, what affects that has on the population.
15 Just looking at survey data though, you know, those
16 populations declined and stabilized at nearly the exact
17 same time. So just looking at that there's very little
18 evidence right now that hunting has much affect on
19 these sheep populations under this full curl strategy.
20 Yeah, so we are working with the Park Service to
21 collaborate on that research and we are hoping to start
22 deploying some collars in the area this summer.

23
24 Last thing -- oh, there was a -- I just
25 wanted to bring up too there was mention of M.ovt which
26 is that disease that in other sheep populations in
27 North America can have major, major detrimental
28 affects. And we actually did find M.ovt, but it's a
29 different strain than we found everywhere else. And we
30 looked at -- you know, we were swabbing moose, caribou,
31 sheep, all kinds of stuff. And we actually kind of
32 found that strain in everything. So it appears that
33 the strain we have up here is very different from the
34 strain that is in the other places in North America
35 that cause these problems. And it also looks like it's
36 been here for a really long time. So there's different
37 strains of M.ovt and we do not -- we do not have the
38 bad one is basically a good way to think about it. So
39 yeah, we -- that is something we do continue to monitor
40 that and lots of other diseases. When we catch an
41 animal we like to take as many samples as we can to
42 really understand those diseases and catch them early
43 so we can do something about it if possible.

44
45 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you. Does
46 that conclude your report?

47
48 MR. NELSON: Yes.

49
50

0197

1 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Is there any
2 questions on the eastern Brooks sheep population
3 and.....

4
5 MS. HUGO: Mr. Chair. This is Esther.

6
7 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Esther.

8
9 MS. HUGO: Yeah, I'm glad you bring up
10 the eastern Brooks Range sheep. I think if you find
11 out the results from that area to our area it will tell
12 you why the eastern sheep are declining. And due to
13 talking about it you will find out that they've been
14 hunted a lot on the Dalton Highway by the guide
15 hunters. But we'll see what the -- what the results
16 show. And I'm glad it's stable on our end, but
17 Itkillik isn't far from where we are, where they are,
18 they're hunting where they're closing -- where they had
19 closed that area. So it'll be pretty -- it will be
20 interesting to see what your results will be.

21
22 Thank you.

23
24 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Any other questions
25 or comments.

26
27 (No comments)

28
29 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Do we have any
30 Council online.

31
32 (No comments)

33
34 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: If there are none
35 thank you for your report. I kind of have one, you
36 know, in the DeLong Mountains, you know, the population
37 is very low, you know, for the sheep. You know, we
38 don't have high mountains like the Brooks Range. I
39 think over on the Lisburne side they're about 1,200
40 feet, but the elders always talked about the sheep over
41 there. Is there a plan, are you talking about any
42 moving some sheep into that area or, you know, to bring
43 the numbers up?

44
45 MR. NELSON: Not that I'm aware of over
46 there. It's interesting you bring up the elders
47 because we -- the data's not great, but there clearly
48 have been highs -- population highs in the past and
49 population lows in the past. And it seem -- there's
50

0198

1 something that seems to cause these cycles and yeah, we
2 haven't -- besides the weather and what we can tell
3 with like failed lamb crops and overwinter survival,
4 when those, you know, winters are bad enough that it
5 causes those things that's pretty obvious. But there
6 seems to be something else kind of going on and we
7 haven't quite figured it out, but it -- yeah, it's
8 interesting you say that.

9

10 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: You know, it's
11 right by a military DEW line site is right where the
12 sheep are at. And it's a concern that we've always
13 had, Project Chariot, trying to declassify documents
14 especially nuclear waste that was buried in the '60s.
15 They did some cleanup, but we still have concerns that
16 not all of it is cleaned up.

17

18 So thank you.

19

20 Any other questions before we move on,
21 we're just about done.

22

23 (No comments)

24

25 (Teleconference interference -
26 participants not muted)

27

28 MS. GILL: If you're on the telephone
29 conference line can you please mute yourself, we're
30 getting a little bit of feedback.

31

32 Thank you.

33

34 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you.

35

36 MR. NELSON: Thank you.

37

38 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Now we'll go down
39 to Office of Subsistence Management or Carmen or is
40 that.....

41

42 MR. VICKERS: You have two ADF&G.

43

44 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: I'm not sure. I --
45 it says on the agenda it's Alaska Department of Fish
46 and Game also, is that.....

47

48 MS. DAGGETT: Yeah, I wasn't sure, Mr.
49 Chair, if you wanted to break for lunch now or if you

50

0199

1 wanted to get into this because it's noontime, but.....

2

3 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: What's that?

4

5 MS. GILL: She wanted to know if you
6 wanted to break for lunch or not or just keep going?

7

8 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: I think we got
9 everybody online, I know we had some difficulties. I
10 think these -- you know, you've got two left, I think
11 Brent is next afterwards.

12

13 MR. VICKERS: No.

14

15 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: No.

16

17 MR. VICKERS: No, the next will be
18 Helen with the Division.....

19

20 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Okay.

21

22 MR. VICKERS:of Subsistence and
23 then I think I'm fine, mine brief.

24

25 MS. COLD: Mine's very brief.

26

27 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Yeah, we're just
28 about done and we understand that there's some people
29 catching a 2:00 o'clock flight and we -- we're -- and
30 it's just you got 15 minutes. You know, we could go --
31 it's 12:00 o'clock and then if you don't mind finishing
32 up and then there's people who are going to be catching
33 a flight. And we don't want to run into anymore
34 difficulties, we have the recorder going, we have
35 people online and we did all the action items so we can
36 just continue and finish out with it.

37

38 Thank you.

39

40 MS. DAGGETT: Happy to do your bidding.
41 So this is Carmen Daggett with Alaska Department with
42 the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, I'm the 26A
43 Area Biologist. I handed out some documents to you
44 yesterday, they are not part of your supplemental
45 materials, but I did hand it to you and it's got the
46 2023 Alaska Department of Fish and Game Unit 26A update
47 written across the top for your reference.

48

49 So I'm going to start out with

50

0200

1 Teshekpuk Caribou Herd information for you. We did
2 collect a new photocensus in 2022 during that summer
3 and that new estimate is about 61,600 animals. That's
4 the (indiscernible) estimate. So the Teshekpuk Herd is
5 stable at the moment and at a relatively high point in
6 their history, historical number, so that's -- they're
7 in a good place right now as far as total numbers go.

8
9 Last spring we conducted the spring
10 short yearling surveys, the recruitment surveys,
11 looking at the number of short yearlings that -- and
12 the proportion if those to adults. Unfortunately we're
13 not able to observe enough animals during that time
14 period last April due to a variety of reasons so those
15 numbers are a bit mooted in what we can interrelate
16 from them. However the previous April there were about
17 15 percent short yearlings in 2021 and that's about
18 average for that survey. So recruitment looks all
19 right according to our 2021 surveys.

20
21 So you have any questions about either
22 of those two things.

23
24 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Any questions, any
25 Council members that called in late.

26
27 (No comments)

28
29 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Esther.

30
31 MS. HUGO: No.

32
33 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: You can continue.
34 Thank you.

35
36 MS. DAGGETT: Great. So last summer we
37 did summer patrician surveys or calving surveys.
38 Calving rates were relatively low last summer, we had
39 about 45 percent of our females that were pregnant.
40 The average is about 68 percent for the Teshekpuk Herd.
41 So it was a bit low and seemingly similar to what they
42 saw on the Central Arctic Herd, a bit lower than what
43 they would normally be. We're keeping our eyes on that
44 number. It doesn't seem to currently be an issue as
45 far as the population goes, but it's something we're
46 definitely continuing to monitor and we'll conduct
47 those surveys again this summer.

48
49 We're also keeping an eye on adult
50

0201

1 female mortality as an indicator of where -- how the
2 herd is doing. And the '21 to '22 adult female
3 mortality was average, 15.6 percent average there and
4 relatively low in comparison.

5

6 Okay. We're also continuing to do this
7 caribou health assessment. It's an in depth research
8 project that I'm working with several individuals on,
9 looking carefully at caribou health in the Teshekpuk
10 Herd, specifically looking at measurements of body
11 condition, internal and external parasites, trace
12 minerals, stress related hormones and a wide range of
13 possible diseases. We keep track of many of these
14 things, but we've added a few more to better understand
15 Teshekpuk Caribou health. So that's an ongoing
16 project.

17

18 And I think that's about it for the
19 caribou information, I'm going to talk about muskox and
20 moose so if you have any questions that are related to
21 caribou we can talk about that and then move on to the
22 next.

23

24 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Yes, thank you.

25

26 MS. DAGGETT: Okay. So in the winter
27 of 2022 or in the spring we did a minimum count survey
28 and composition for the western 26A muskox, the Cape
29 Thompson population in 26A only and we didn't look at
30 Unit 23 portion of that. During that survey we had a
31 minimum count of 421 muskox and we did an aerial
32 composition survey so we took pictures out of airplanes
33 and then did a composition survey looking at number of
34 bulls and cows and yearlings. We found 70 bulls per
35 hundred cows and 61 yearlings per hundred cows. Both
36 those numbers looking pretty good.

37

38 There was a Federal hunt opened this --
39 in this area in the fall of 2022 as we talked about
40 earlier and there were six permits that were issued.
41 And now there's a -- this last fall there was a
42 drawing, a tier two drawing, for residents only, that
43 was a State hunt that was adopted by the Board of Game
44 for this same area. And so but that State hunt will
45 begin in August of 2023 for the western portion of 26A.

46

47 Do you have any questions about muskox
48 or comments.

49

50

0202

1 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Any questions on
2 the Teshekpuk Herd -- muskox.

3
4 (No comments)

5
6 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Anybody online, any
7 Council members call in late.

8
9 (No comments)

10
11 MS. HUGO: One quick question. This is
12 Esther.

13
14 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Esther.

15
16 MS. HUGO: Carmen, you said the tier
17 hunt will be -- starts in fall of -- this coming fall?

18
19 MS. DAGGETT: That is correct. So the
20 State's tier two hunt that was drawn for, the drawing
21 was in 2022 and the hunt will begin in August of 2023
22 and go through March of 2024. That's what's currently
23 open right now for the tier two hunt for the State side
24 for western 26A. There's the hunt that Mark mentioned
25 too on the eastern side of 26A, it includes portions of
26 eastern 26A and western portions of 26B and that hunt
27 was also drawn for as a tier two hunt for residents
28 only. And I believe the seasons are the same, if not
29 very close.

30
31 Any other questions on that, Esther,
32 does that answer your questions?

33
34 MS. HUGO: Thank you, Carmen. You know
35 the -- that our caribou start migrating, but it's in
36 the next valley, in the Itkillik, the next valley from
37 us so I was just wondering about that.

38
39 Thank you.

40
41 MS. DAGGETT: So I just have a little
42 bit more here for you guys on moose. So most of our
43 moose in 26A are along the Colville as you're well
44 aware although there are some that migrate out and
45 beyond, adventure into Barrow sometimes apparently.
46 The most recent minimum count was conducted in 2021.
47 That minimum count covers most of the Colville River
48 and its tributaries where the vast majority of the
49 moose are found. And in that survey we saw 427 moose,
50

0203

1 20 percent of those were short yearlings with 18 sets
2 of twins. That population seems to be steadily
3 increasing, it was quite low for a couple of years,
4 actually got down into the 150 sort of range which is a
5 historical low for that population, however it seems to
6 be pretty steadily growing which is a positive sign.
7 These known counts are done once every three years for
8 the total area and then we have a portion of that area
9 that we survey every year called the trend count area
10 and we do those annually.

11

12 Are there any questions about the
13 Colville moose population or moose hunting regulations.

14

15 MS. HUGO: Mr. Chair.

16

17 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Yeah, Esther.

18

19 MS. HUGO: This is Esther. Yes, so
20 when is the moose on the Colville open, what day -- I
21 mean, what months?

22

23 MS. DAGGETT: Excellent question,
24 Esther. And I'll consult my Handy Dandy here. So the
25 Colville moose season for residents is August 1 through
26 September 30 and then the rest of 26A remainder has the
27 same season. Both of those are for one bull only. And
28 there's no nonresident season. There -- yeah, I'll
29 leave it at that.

30

31 MS. HUGO: Thank you. And you said
32 August 1st through September 30. There's a Council
33 member that wanted me to ask if this thing comes up in
34 the -- but she felt that it's kind of like it's during
35 our migration and we know they boat a lot and they come
36 too close to the mountains with their boats. I'm just
37 wondering if that's one of the things that scare or --
38 you know, the caribou while they're trying to migrate
39 and get to our place. Have you ever asked the hunters
40 or -- how far they go because like I say they'll be
41 migrating about at least September. And we know they
42 boat a lot in August, depends on the rivers. So we're
43 concerned about that, if we can change it in the future
44 we'd gladly be doing that, but we'll have to negotiate
45 with Nuiqsut because they're our neighbors and we just
46 didn't have a -- had a say for a long time, but we
47 sometimes think that they inter -- I mean, the divert
48 because they're boating and they're coming toward us so
49 where's the caribou.

50

0204

1 Thank you.

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

29

30

31

32

33

34

35

36

37

38

39

40

41

42

43

44

45

46

47

48

49

50

MS. DAGGETT: Thank you for those comments, member Hugo. Yeah, it -- it's a possibility and we're always interested to hear what hunters have to say and the knowledge they're willing to share, our ears are always open for that information. And I haven't heard anything specifically related to that, but it's not impossible. So.....

MS. HUGO: Yes, and I just wanted to say that we will not catch moose unless we're starving, honest to god.

CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Any other questions.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Does that conclude your report or are you still -- you know, Unit 23 in, you know, Point Hope area, we don't see very much moose. Only time moose come in our area is when there's a forest fire and the moose get away from the smoke which is at least once every 10 years or so. But they're usually there in July and hunting season don't open until way later. And so, you know, when somebody catches a moose, you know, they think it's subsistence hunting, you know, that we can catch animals when we want to, it's right there in front of us, but that's not how it works. You know, when the -- you know, the dates are off for people who are up north especially if they want to hunt certain animals, they're not there. They're there in July, you know, if we want to hunt them in August we got to go all the way towards Kotzebue area, Noatak, you know. But.....

MS. DAGGETT: That's a great point, Mr. Chair. And actually there is another hunt that's available, that would be the western portion of 26A, somewhat similar to the hunt area for muskox, but the season for moose is July 1 through September 14. And currently because of how the antlerless hunt regulations were situated the bag limit is currently one antlered bull. I am aware that there is going to be a proposal that's going to be submitted to try to get that to be a one moose bag limit again and I believe the Federal regulations didn't change during that time period. So there is a hunt available during

0205

1 the summer on the western portion of 26A for one
2 antlered bull currently under State regs from July 1 to
3 September 14th.

4

5 And you're probably the most familiar
6 with Unit 23 regs for moose, but it looks like that
7 RMA80 season, the -- north of the Singoalik including
8 the Singoalik River drainage allows you to hunt July 1
9 through December 31st. So if people obtain that RMA80
10 permit from the Kotzebue office they could hunt under
11 that permit as well depending on where they were at.

12

13 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you. Any
14 other questions or comments for Carmen.

15

16 (No comments)

17

18 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Does that conclude
19 your report?

20

21 MS. DAGGETT: Yes, sir.

22

23 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you very much
24 and we appreciate it. Looking forward to the next
25 meeting.

26

27 We're going down the agenda. I think
28 this is our last. Is this Office of Subsistence
29 Management or just.....

30

31 MS. GILL: ADF&G.

32

33 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Yea, I don't know
34 if I have an old agenda. Yeah, can you state your name
35 and.....

36

37 MS. COLD: I can, yes.

38

39 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK:who you're
40 representing?

41

42 MS. COLD: Yes, good afternoon. For
43 the record my name is Helen Cold and I'm the Arctic
44 Area Subsistence Resource Specialist with the Alaska
45 Department of Fish and Game, Division of Subsistence.
46 And today I can be very, very brief. And actually I
47 was going to give the Council the option. I have
48 several slides that outline some of the current
49 research partnerships that we have going on with
50

0206

1 communities across the Slope as well as one of the
2 proposed research projects that we have, we're in a
3 consultation phase with the residents of Kaktovik.
4 These start on Page 130 and I have a few slides that go
5 through some of the details of the project, but in the
6 interest of time and understanding that our agency has
7 already taken quite a bit of your time, if the Council
8 would like you are welcome to review that at your
9 leisure and also contact me with any questions or
10 concerns. All of my contact information is on the very
11 last slide.

12
13 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Anybody have any
14 comments or questions.

15
16 (No comments)

17
18 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Did any of our
19 Council members come online late.

20
21 (No comments)

22
23 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: I couldn't find it
24 on my agenda.

25
26 MS. GILL: Mr. Chair, it's in your
27 bound book, the other book here on Page 130. This one.

28
29 MS. COLD: And through the Chair, if
30 you would like to me go through those slides, it will
31 take maybe five or six minutes, but again in the
32 interest of time I don't mind, it won't hurt my
33 feelings if you just contact me later as well.

34
35 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you for that.
36 You can continue with.....

37
38 MS. COLD: Okay.

39
40 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK:you can
41 continue if you want.

42
43 MS. COLD: Okay. Sure. I will be
44 quick. So the first project I'd like to just quickly
45 touch on is assessing the affects of oil activity on
46 subsistence in Nuiqsut, Alaska. This project is being
47 funded by Oil Search Alaska and the purpose of this
48 project is to investigate the affects of oil
49 development activities and the associated
50

0207

1 infrastructure on Nuiqsut subsistence hunters. We're
2 collaborating with the community of Nuiqsut on this
3 project and some of the research methods that we're
4 employing are working with different knowledgeable
5 individuals to conduct ethnographic interviews and do
6 some resource harvest and use mapping. And this
7 project is designed in coordination with the Nuiqsut
8 Subsistence Fisheries Project which is another project
9 that we are working on currently in this community to
10 try to reduce community research fatigue.

11

12 We began this project in late 2021 and
13 it's projected to end in 2025. And we -- our goal is
14 to conduct 15 to 20 semi structured key respondent
15 interviews with a mapping component. And so far we've
16 talked to -- as of this Power Point seven interviews
17 were conducted in April, 2022, one was done in July of
18 2022 and we were just recently in Nuiqsut in January
19 where we conducted an additional five interviews. I
20 hope to revisit the community later this spring to talk
21 to several more individuals as well.

22

23 The next project I wanted to talk about
24 was the Wainwright Comprehensive Survey Project. So
25 this is being funded in part by the Bureau of Land
26 Management and also we had some State of Alaska funds
27 going towards this effort. And it's a research
28 partnership between the community of Wainwright and the
29 Alaska Department of Fish and Game Subsistence and
30 we're also asking for North Slope Borough Wildlife
31 Department input and guidance. And the idea of this
32 project is to conduct a subsistence harvest update from
33 major resource categories to try to assess some of the
34 changes that have taken place in the last 10 years.
35 There was a similar study that was conducted in 2011
36 and part of the goal of this project is to understand
37 how things have changed for the community during that
38 time. And we're working with Wainwright on this
39 project and we're conducting household surveys of
40 different resource harvests and also ethnographic
41 interviews with some mapping and participant
42 observation where we work with individuals to learn
43 while folks are conducting different subsistence
44 activities.

45

46 So this project started in 2022 and
47 it's projected to go through 2025 and we're doing one
48 year of surveys focusing on harvest of some of the
49 major subsistence resources in the community. The
50

0208

1 fieldwork for this was approved by the Village of
2 Wainwright in December of 2022 and we have a community
3 outreach meeting planned for August of this year and
4 then hope to revisit the community in January or
5 February of next spring to do the surveys.

6

7 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Any comments or
8 questions from the Council.

9

10 (No comments)

11

12 MS. COLD: Through the Chair, there's
13 one last project that -- it's just a proposed project
14 right now that we are working with the community of
15 Kaktovik to see if they would like to participate in a
16 project to learn more about beluga whales and
17 understanding TEK of beluga whales in the community.
18 This one's being funded by the Bureau of Ocean and
19 Energy Management and the idea is to document
20 subsistence harvest practices for beluga as well as
21 some of the traditional knowledge of the Beaufort Sea
22 beluga stock. We would be working with Kaktovik on
23 this project and this information on when and where and
24 how residents of Kaktovik harvest beluga whales can
25 help inform some of the NEPA analyses to try to
26 understand possible impacts of offshore resource
27 developments should they occur.

28

29 The objectives for this project are to
30 evaluate the baseline temporal and spacial data about
31 subsistence beluga hunting by residents of Kaktovik,
32 document how people in Kaktovik hunt beluga and how
33 they process the animals and then also learn more about
34 the cultural importance of belugas and beluga harvest
35 for residents of Kaktovik. So for this project again
36 we would be interested in talking to people, doing some
37 interviews with hunters, mapping beluga habitat and
38 migration patterns in some of the traditional hunting
39 areas. We would potentially work with focus groups
40 where we do interviews with larger groups of
41 individuals and then also potentially be involved in
42 some beluga hunting.

43

44 The projected timeline for this. We're
45 in a community consultation phase so this project
46 hadn't started yet, we're still working to provide
47 information to the community and work with the tribal
48 and city councils. If this project is approved by the
49 community we would work together to develop a research
50

0209

1 plan this spring and summer and then potentially start
2 doing some work in fall of 2023 and 2024.

3

4 So that is all I have.

5

6 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you, Helen.
7 Any comments or questions dealing with the Alaska
8 Department of Fish and Game Subsistence Division, Helen
9 Cold.

10

11 MS. HUGO: Mr. Chair, Esther.

12

13 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Yes.

14

15 MS. HUGO: Thank you, Helen. I just
16 wish that the rest of our Committee was here. You
17 know, I got a lot of questions, but this doesn't --
18 it's not like the beluga or, you know, it's not for --
19 we don't have those. So it's just a feeling that I
20 wish they were all here. Maybe the next meeting.

21

22 Thank you. Good presentation.

23

24 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you. We know
25 one of our Council members has concerns with the
26 industry in Nuiqsut and we talked about it yesterday,
27 the impact it's having especially Alpine and the
28 blasting in -- within their area. And it's something
29 that she was real concerned about. I feel bad that
30 she's not here to voice her concerns and this impacts.
31 You know, I'm way on the other side so I don't see a
32 lot of these things, but we support whatever concerns,
33 whether the far east or, you know, we've always
34 supported each other because it's a way of life for all
35 of us how we grew up to continue, you know, especially
36 when industry is right at your back door. You know,
37 we're fortunate we don't have that in our area, but we
38 see a decline in certain species and the amount of
39 nonresidents, out of State residents, more and more
40 coming into our area, even the decline of the Western
41 Caribou Arctic Herd is down my more than half and still
42 dropping.

43

44 But thank you. If there's no other
45 questions or comments I -- you know, we're looking for
46 more of your reports. You know, more and more the
47 communities on the north are harvesting belugas now,
48 you know, Point Lay and Point Hope has always harvested
49 belugas. Now you seen Wainwright and you see going
50

0210

1 further more Nuiqsut and, you know, Barter Island's
2 been hunting. You know, but what do -- do you know the
3 population of the belugas up in the north, you know,
4 and you always hear about the belugas from the south in
5 the Cook Inlet area. But just out of curiosity what's
6 the population of the north, do they -- do they migrate
7 south and stay within that -- within Alaska itself?

8

9 MS. COLD: Through the Chair. So those
10 are all excellent questions and I -- so the Division of
11 Subsistence, we're actually social scientists that do a
12 lot of the social science research with communities so
13 I would defer to some of the biologists that manage the
14 resources for the answers to some of those questions
15 because I honestly can't answer. So I'm not sure if
16 there's anyone either here in the room or online who
17 has a better idea of beluga population dynamics in the
18 area that could answer that. Otherwise I can try and
19 get that information to you after my talk.

20

21 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you for that.
22 And is there any comments or questions or -- from the
23 Council or anybody online.

24

25 (No comments)

26

27 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: All right. Thank
28 you for your report and we're looking forward to the
29 next one with your studies.

30

31 Okay. We are to Office of Subsistence
32 Management. Brett -- Brent or.....

33

34 MR. VICKERS: Brent, yes. Brent
35 Vickers. Thank you. Yes, we have finally arrived to
36 the Office of Subsistence Management report. So, Mr.
37 Chair, Council members who are here and if any of you
38 are on the phone, on behalf of OSM I want to thank you
39 -- all Council members for your exceptional work on
40 behalf of your communities and user groups. We value
41 your expertise and contribution of your knowledge and
42 experience in regular -- regulatory process. As the
43 Division Supervisor for Anthropology I want to express
44 even more gratitude for contributions of your
45 knowledge, your experience during these meetings
46 because we rely on the -- on everything you say here,
47 your testimonies, your comments, we rely on those
48 greatly for our analyses of proposals and closure
49 reviews and special actions. So thank you.

50

0211

1 A few topics to go over here. First
2 the continuation of in person Council meetings. Last
3 fall we held our first in person Regional Advisory
4 Council meeting since the beginning of the covid 19
5 pandemic three years ago. All 10 Councils were able to
6 meet as scheduled in rural and hub communities across
7 the State. It's been a tremendous honor to work with
8 you all, our Council volunteers, OSM Staff and our
9 multi agency colleagues and subsistence to accomplish
10 our goals of informed subsistence management and the
11 implementation of Title VIII. We plan to repeat this
12 success for the winter 2023 Council meetings. We are
13 happy to work with you all face to face again.

14
15 Real ID for travel to Council meetings.
16 Over the past few years we have reminded Council
17 members about the change in requirements for U.S.
18 travelers who must be Real ID compliant to board
19 domestic flights and access certain Federal facilities.
20 Beginning May, 2025 every air traveler will need to
21 present Real ID compliant driver's license or other
22 acceptable form of identification such as a passport to
23 fly within the United States. This is applicable even
24 when you fly on small, commercial Bush carriers.
25 Please note that all Council members will need to make
26 sure that they have required Real ID for travel to the
27 fall, 2025 Council meetings. You can find more
28 information on Real ID requirement at the State of
29 Alaska's Division of Motor Vehicles website which is --
30 you know, you can find it. I can give you the website,
31 but that's just reading a bunch of letters. I can give
32 that to you if you like.

33
34 All right. The Federal Subsistence
35 Board fisheries regulatory meeting. The Federal
36 Subsistence Board recently held the fisheries
37 regulatory public meeting in Anchorage the week of
38 January 31st, 2023. This was the Board's second in
39 person meeting and first regulatory meeting of the --
40 since the covid 19 pandemic. The Board had a packed
41 agenda addressing fishery proposals and closure
42 reviews, deferred wildlife proposals and agenda items
43 touching on the importance of subsistence in regulatory
44 issues across the State. We also listen to you, the
45 Councils, to your participating representatives at the
46 meeting. Council member Brower Frantz was a
47 representative at the meeting and I just want to say he
48 did an outstanding job, contributed a lot of testimony
49 and questions and everything, he was very active at the
50

0212

1 meeting and he was great representation I thought, it
2 was great having him there. The Board is always better
3 informed by your expertise.

4

5 Final topic, changes in OSM Staffing.
6 As for changes in OSM Staffing there's not much new
7 information to report since the last time we met. OSM
8 is advertising for a cartographer position to help with
9 our mapping needs. The closing date for applications
10 is tomorrow, February 24th, for all you mappers out
11 there. We hope that during the fall meetings we will
12 be able to announce the hire of this new important team
13 member.

14

15 While there have been no new additions,
16 there has been one very large subtraction. The great
17 Tom Kron retired in early February after more than 22
18 year with the program. Tom has been an OSM institution
19 and his generosity and wealth of knowledge will be
20 greatly missed.

21

22 I will be happy to answer any
23 questions. Thank you, Mr. Chair and Council members.

24

25 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you, Brent,
26 for those comments. Any questions or comments.

27

28 (No comments)

29

30 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Is there any
31 Council members online that recently called in.

32

33 (No comments)

34

35 MS. HUGO: Mr. Chair.

36

37 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Yes.

38

39 MS. HUGO: Thank you for that
40 information. I lost all my IDs and everything very
41 important to me at the event, (in Native). I don't
42 know where I dropped that, I put it -- posted, but I
43 guess I got to start working on my ID before too long.

44

45 Thank you for that information.

46

47 MR. VICKERS: Yeah. I'm sorry that you
48 lost those and unfortunately you do have to start
49 working on getting those probably for a lot of
50

0213

1 different reasons, but yeah, that's terrible to hear.
2 I'm sorry about that.

3

4

5 MS. HUGO: Yes, and I just think one of
6 the gals that was helping -- oh, Leigh, thank you so
7 much. You know, without thinking I hopped on the plane
8 and I said -- and I went to check in and she said ID,
9 please. Oh, my god. So I had to sit there, wait a
10 little bit and talk with Leigh and we got it
11 straightened out. And I was just thankful that I was
12 able to make it.

12

13

Thanks.

14

15

16 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you. Any
17 other comments or questions.

17

18

(No comments)

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

29

30

31

32

33

34

35

36

37

38

39

40

41

42

43

44

45

46

47

48

49

50

But thank you, it's been a good couple
days. And thank you everybody. I feel like the cops

0214

1 are waiting for me out there or something.

2

3

(Laughter)

4

5

CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: But if there's
6 nothing else we thank everybody for coming and giving
7 their reports and listening. I know we have to work
8 together, you know, to ensure that, you know, we enjoy
9 the gift of life, the animals that roam this vast area,
10 one of the ruralest areas in the whole world that still
11 is in abundance. We want to keep it that way.

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

29

30

31

32

33

34

35

36

37

38

39

40

41

42

43

44

45

46

47

48

49

50

But thank you for all your reports. If
there's nothing else we went through item 18 yesterday,
we're under -- I mean, 14. I've got to bring my
bifocals with me next time. Item 15 we have closing
comments.

Anybody from the Council, Esther, you
have any closing comments.

MS. HUGO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. No, I
don't have any closing comments, but as -- you know,
I've been in the Committees, Commissions, wearing
different hats. I just wanted to let you know that I
do learn as we -- you know, as we meet and sometimes I
get, you know, you got to listen. But that's the way
it is, you get so frustrated and there's nothing being
done about it it seems like to me and our community.
We just don't have all that resource, the animals the
coastal and it's us and we're there and we're still
going to be there even if we're gone because Steve and
I are getting older. But I want to keep trying to
teach the younger ones, my kids, my grandkids, I got 10
great-grandkids. They're just babies, but hopefully to
carry on and catch, you know, at least some of my
great-grandkids to teach them. But I hope in the
future we have a lot of younger folks getting involved
because like I say we're getting older and we never --
I don't know if I'll be here next year, you know, these
kind of stuff. But I'm happy to be able to be here to
join you all and I'm ready to go home and see the
mountains.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you, Esther.
Is there any other comments whether from the agencies
or -- can you state your name for the record?

0215

1 OFFICER SMITH: Yes, sir. Thank you.
2 Cody Smith again for the record, Law Enforcement with
3 U.S. Fish and Wildlife. And I know I wasn't on the
4 agenda and I guess part of that was because I did come
5 to listen and to learn. And I hope I haven't made
6 anybody too uncomfortable by standing in the back the
7 last couple days.

8
9 (Laughter)

10
11 OFFICER SMITH: Not waiting for you.
12 But it is actually really uncomfortable to sit in this
13 gear. And if you see me in the future I probably won't
14 be wearing all this, this is not very conducive to the
15 work that I do out here.

16
17 But I do just want to say thank you for
18 what you do, you know, and sometimes it may -- I know I
19 feel that way and some of the concerns that were
20 expressed, you know, sometimes it feels like it's a --
21 it's a losing battle and so that's a tough one to
22 fight. But, you know, looking around even in this room
23 there's people, you know, and a lot more than are just
24 in this room that are trying to come alongside each
25 other and, you know, fight the good fight together.
26 And it's something I think to always remember that
27 we're -- that I know speaking for myself personally I
28 know law enforcement can sometimes be a taboo subject
29 or, you know, intimidating part of this natural
30 resource protection, but I guess I just want to make a
31 point of saying that, you know, I speak for myself and
32 I know most of my counterparts or everyone that I know,
33 that we're here, we view ourselves as allies to you all
34 and not adversaries and that we're here to help protect
35 your way of life. And this is -- I've worked for three
36 different Federal agencies and one State agency and
37 about a dozen different States. And I've seen places
38 where ways of life were not protected and it's a sad
39 thing to see. And I -- the encouraging thing up here
40 is I see it still before that stage and I see it as
41 something that can still be protected. And, you know,
42 it's something very worth fighting for. And I
43 appreciate coming and as you -- I didn't grow up here,
44 but I appreciate the welcoming atmosphere I receive in
45 a lot of the communities that I work in and I've been
46 fortunate enough to make friends all the northern two-
47 thirds of the State of Alaska and, you know, I do
48 recognize that I don't understand, you know, Esther,
49 you mentioned that yesterday that, you know, it's
50

0216

1 something I won't ever. I didn't grow up in any of
2 these communities, but it's something I -- part of why
3 I'm here is that I want to try and understand.

4

5 And anyway, so thank you again for
6 everything you guys do. Appreciate it.

7

8 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you for your
9 comments and really appreciate it and gives me a better
10 understanding, you know. Forty years ago I caught my
11 first moose in July and I was so proud of it. And then
12 this plane landed and it was a game warden plane. And
13 I was hanging my skin. It was -- since it was my first
14 moose I gave most of the meat away and I had one chunk
15 of meat left. And I was waiting for this one elderly
16 man to come home and I was hanging up my moose skin
17 because I was going to give it dried up. And he came
18 behind me and oh, that's a nice looking moose. I said
19 yeah, it was my first one, I got it down the road and
20 he said oh, what did you do with the meat. I said
21 well, you know, your first animal you give away if you
22 catch something. So I gave it all away, but I got one
23 piece of meat in my freezer. And he asked if he could
24 look at it and I wasn't expecting anything so I brought
25 him to my house and he looked at it and he said well,
26 I'm going to have to take it. So he took my meat and
27 he said oh, I'm going to have to take your skin. So he
28 took my moose skin. And I'm going to have to give you
29 a ticket and a fine and you're going to have to appear
30 in court. And never caught a moose again after that,
31 it was 40 years ago.

32

33 Yeah, it's something that always
34 embedded in me, you know, we're not moose hunters, but,
35 you know, moose do come around once in a while, but not
36 during the time that the dates when you're allowed to
37 hunt it at times, but it's something that I think, you
38 know, the younger generation like moose, you know, the
39 different animals that are coming. But we're looking
40 forward to working with everybody and, you know, within
41 a certain extent, but, you know, to continue our way of
42 life and, you know, we thank you for attending and we
43 look at law enforcement a little different, you know.
44 So.....

45

46 OFFICER SMITH: Thank you. And thanks
47 for sharing that story. And it is tough in situations,
48 you know, I wasn't there, but, you know, the -- I try
49 to have a lot of discretion with situations like that

50

0217

1 because I -- there's a very big difference in my mind,
2 you know, between somebody who's out hunting because
3 they want to and they want to put something on the wall
4 and somebody who's putting food on the table. And
5 there is a difference there. And anyway so it makes it
6 tough, it makes my job difficult.

7

8 But and is there -- and real quick too
9 while I'm up here are there any questions that I can
10 answer just to make myself available for that before we
11 close out?

12

13 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Just wondering if
14 you fly own plane, are you like a game warden or I
15 didn't quite hear what you said, what department?

16

17 OFFICER SMITH: I -- so I'm U.S. Fish
18 and Wildlife and I do fly, I'm a pilot so I fly
19 personally and then for the Service as well.

20

21 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Okay. Did you fly
22 here or did you come on a.....

23

24 OFFICER SMITH: We came commercial.

25

26 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Okay.

27

28 OFFICER SMITH: Yeah.

29

30 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: So I'm looking for
31 -- I'm kind of hitchhiking home.

32

33 (Laughter)

34

35 OFFICER SMITH: Maybe next time.

36

37 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: All right. Thank
38 you. And we're looking forward to -- you know, we have
39 a lot of concerns of sport hunters that cover up their
40 numbers on their tails and that was mentioned, you
41 know, once they get to their destination and land and
42 drop off their hunters, some of them cover up their
43 numbers with tape so we can't see and write down the
44 number so we can report them, especially if they're
45 trying to chase the caribou towards certain hunters.

46

47 OFFICER SMITH: And if -- Cody Smith
48 again. If you see something like that please document
49 it to the best of your ability, anybody that's
50

0218

1 listening to this because for one, covering up your
2 tail numbers is very illegal. I've got good friends in
3 the FAA that would like to hear about that. And
4 document the location because there's a lot more
5 capabilities and increasingly in rural areas to be able
6 to track aircraft via satellite and radar. I worked a
7 couple cases recently where we did that. So even if
8 you don't get a good photo, if you've got a location, a
9 general time and date I may be able to pull up those
10 radar records and figure out what aircraft it was that
11 was doing that. So definitely worth reporting.

12

13 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: All right. Thank
14 you. Any other comments or -- closing comments before
15 we adjourn.

16

17 (No comments)

18

19 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: We want to thank
20 everybody and our Coordinators, Leigh and Jessica and
21 our recorder. You know, we're liable for what we say,
22 you know, recorded, you know, but we thank you for your
23 time and your dedication to -- we always have a good
24 crowd of State people at our meetings and giving us
25 their reports. And, you know, even though we go to the
26 smaller villages, you know. And, you know, it sees the
27 communities, but we thank you for your hard work. And
28 we do need to work together to make sure we continue
29 the lifestyle that we enjoy, you know, especially with
30 the animals. But thank you for everything.

31

32 Hearing none, we are on adjournment.
33 Is there a motion.

34

35 MS. HUGO: Mr. Chair, I would like to
36 make -- I would like to adjourn this meeting.

37

38 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Okay. If there's
39 no objections, we are adjourned at 12:53 p.m. on 2023,
40 23.

41

42 (Laughter)

43

44 CHAIRMAN OOMITTUK: Thank you and safe
45 travels to everybody.

46

47 (Off record)

48

49 (END OF PROCEEDINGS)

50

0219

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50

C E R T I F I C A T E

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA)
) ss.
STATE OF ALASKA)

I, Salena A. Hile, Notary Public in and for the state of Alaska and reporter for Computer Matrix Court Reporters, LLC, do hereby certify:

THAT the foregoing pages numbered ___ through ___ contain a full, true and correct Transcript of the NORTH SLOPE SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING, VOLUME II taken electronically on the 23rd day of February;

THAT the transcript is a true and correct transcript requested to be transcribed and thereafter transcribed by under my direction and reduced to print to the best of our knowledge and ability;

THAT I am not an employee, attorney, or party interested in any way in this action.

DATED at Anchorage, Alaska, this 15th day of March 2023.

Salena A. Hile
Notary Public, State of Alaska
My Commission Expires: 09/16/26