

0001

1 WESTERN INTERIOR FEDERAL SUBSISTENCE
2 REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING

3
4 PUBLIC MEETING

5
6
7 VOLUME I

8
9 Pikes Waterfront Lodge
10 October 19, 2022
11 Fairbanks, Alaska
12 9:00 a.m.

13
14
15
16 COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

17
18 Jenny Pelkola, Acting Chairman
19 Timothy Gervais
20 Don Honea
21 Jack Reakoff
22 Pollock Simon
23 Darrell Vent
24 Kevin Whitworth

25
26
27
28
29
30
31 Regional Council Coordinator, Nissa Pilcher

32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41 Recorded and transcribed by:

42
43 Computer Matrix Court Reporters, LLC
44 329 F Street, Suite 222
45 Anchorage, AK 99501
46 907-227-5312/sahile@gci.net

47
48
49
50

0002

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

(Fairbanks, Alaska - 10/19/2022)

(On record)

MS. PILCHER: Good morning, everyone. This is the Western Interior Subsistence Regional Advisory Council meeting. If folks could take their seats, we'll be getting started in just a few minutes. For those joining us on the phone you can find the agenda and meeting materials online on the Federal Subsistence Program website. The internet address is www.doi.gov/subsistence under the regions tab choose Western Interior and then meeting materials.

For all participants on the phone please remember to mute your phones when you are not speaking. If you do not have a mute button on your phone you can press *6. That will mute you. If you would like to speak, unmute by again pressing *6. If we do find that a line is not muted and creating a distraction, the operator will mute that line.

All right.

MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay. At this time we're going to have the invocation by Don Honea, Jr.

(Invocation)

MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Thank you, Don. I'd like to call this meeting to order at 9:05. With that we'll have roll call.

MS. PILCHER: All right. So roll call. Member Rebecca Wilmarth, were you able to call in?

(No response)

MS. PILCHER: All right. So Don Honea, Jr. from Ruby.

MR. HONEA: Here.

MS. PILCHER: Pollock Simon, Sr. from Allakaket.

0003

1 MR. SIMON: Here.

2

3 MS. PILCHER: Kevin Whitworth from
4 McGrath.

5

6 MR. WHITWORTH: Here.

7

8 MS. PILCHER: Jack Reakoff from
9 Wiseman.

10

11 MR. REAKOFF: Here on the phone.

12

13 MS. PILCHER: Tim Gervais from Ruby.

14

15 MR. GERVAIS: Here.

16

17 MS. PILCHER: Darrell Vent from Huslia.

18

19 MR. VENT: Here.

20

21 MS. PILCHER: Jenny Pelkola from
22 Galena.

23

24 MS. PELKOLA: Here.

25

26 MS. PILCHER: And then Tommy Kriska,
27 were you able to call in?

28

29 (No response)

30

31 MS. PILCHER: He's stuck in a weather
32 hold, but he's hopeful to be in this morning. We do
33 have a quorum.

34

35 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay. As you
36 know, my name is Jenny Pelkola and I'm sitting in for
37 Mr. Reakoff today, who is home, but he's on the phone.
38 So thank God. Welcome again to everyone. If you would
39 introduce yourself. We'll start over here in the front
40 row.

41

42 MS. WILLIAMS: Good morning. I'm Liz
43 Williams. I'm an anthropologist with Office of
44 Subsistence Management. This is my first meeting with
45 you guys.

46

47 MR. SIMON: Good morning. My name is
48 Jim Simon. I'm a consultant with Tanana Chiefs
49 Conference Tribal Resource Stewardship Program and the
50

0004

1 Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission. Good
2 morning.

3
4 MR. HAVENER: Good morning, everyone.
5 I'm Jeremy Havener. I'm the Refuge Subsistence
6 Coordinator for Koyukuk/Nowitna/Innoko in Galena and
7 it's great to see everybody in person.

8
9 MR. GRAHAM: Good morning. I'm Cory
10 Graham. I'm a fisheries biologist with OSM. It's nice
11 to be here.

12
13 MR. UBELAKER: Good morning. Brian
14 Ubelaker, wildlife biologist with OSM.

15
16 MS. JULIANUS: Good morning, everybody.
17 Erin Julianus, wildlife biologist for BLM, Central
18 Yukon Field Office.

19
20 MS. MCDAVID: Good morning. My name is
21 Brooke McDavid. I'm Council Coordinator with OSM and I
22 coordinate Eastern Interior and Y-K Delta.

23
24 MS. FARNHAM: Good morning. I'm Nicole
25 Farnham with the Tanana Chiefs Conference and I'm one
26 of their fisheries biologists.

27
28 MR. CAMERON: Good morning. My name is
29 Matt Cameron. I'm a wildlife biologist for the Gates
30 of the Arctic National Park and Preserve. It's great
31 to be here in person.

32
33 MS. OKADA: Good morning. My name is
34 Marcy Okada. I'm the subsistence coordinator for Gates
35 of the Arctic National Park and Preserve.

36
37 MR. DOWDLE: Good morning. I'm Mark
38 Dowdle with National Park Service Superintendent, Gates
39 of the Arctic National Park and Preserve.

40
41 MR. RICHARDS: Good morning, Madame
42 Chair, members of the Council. I'm Mark Richards. I'm
43 the executive director of Resident Hunters of Alaska
44 and I'm here representing our organization today.

45
46 MS. STUBY: Good morning, everyone.
47 I'm Lisa Stuby. I'm with the Alaska Department of Fish
48 and Game and I'm the area management biologist for
49 Sport Fish Division for the Yukon River excluding the
50

0005

1 Tanana.

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. CARROLL: Good morning. I'm so happy to be here in person. I'm Holly Carroll. I work with Fish and Wildlife Service as the Yukon Federal In-Season Manager.

MR. MASCHMANN: Good morning. I'm Gerald Maschmann. I'm a fisheries biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service here in Fairbanks.

MR. MOSES: Good morning. Aaron Moses. I'm the subsistence specialist for Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge.

MR. GUSSE: Good morning. Walker Gusse, Bureau of Land Management, Law Enforcement out of Anchorage.

MR. CHEN: Aloha, Council Members. My name is Glenn Chen. I'm the subsistence branch chief of Bureau of Indian Affairs. Always a pleasure to be here.

MS. WESSELS: Good morning, Madame Chair. Members of the Council. My name is Katya Wessels and I'm Council Coordination Division Supervisor with OSM. I'm very happy to see you here in person today. Thank you.

MR. KRON: Good morning, Madame Chair and Council. I'm Tom Kron here for the OSM leadership team to help with this meeting and I'm super happy to be here in person after two and a half years. Thank you, Madame Chair.

I wanted to say a special thanks to your Chairman. Jack, I'm sorry to hear about your accident. I was looking forward to seeing you, but I'm looking forward to hearing you at this meeting. Thank you.

MS. PILCHER: All right. This is Nissa Pilcher again. So now we'll do introductions of those on the phone. So what I will do is I will run down a list of organizations and call out if you're with that organization, introduce yourself, and then we'll go to members of the public.

0006

1 So we'll start with tribal governments.
2 If there's anyone online representing a tribal
3 government if you could please introduce yourself now.

4
5 (No comments)

6
7 MS. PILCHER: All right. How about any
8 Native organizations.

9
10 (No comments)

11
12 MS. PILCHER: All right. And then how
13 about U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

14
15 MS. MONCRIEFF: Hi. This is Catherine
16 Moncrieff with the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries
17 Association.

18
19 MS. PILCHER: All right. If I breeze
20 by anybody, feel free to jump in as well. How about
21 National Park Service on the phone.

22
23 MS. KLEIN: Nissa, this is Jill Klein.
24 Sorry to go back to Fish and Wildlife Service.

25
26 MR. NICORI: Hi, my name is Emmitt
27 Nicori with the Yukon Delta.

28
29 MR. HARRIS: Good morning. Frank
30 Harris, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. I'm a
31 fisheries biologist with the Kenai Fisheries Office.

32
33 MS. FOX: Good morning. Joanna Fox.
34 I'm the Refuge Manager for Kanuti National Wildlife
35 Refuge.

36
37 MS. PATTON: Good morning to everybody.
38 This is Eva Patton, Subsistence Program Manager for the
39 National Park Service Regional Office here in
40 Anchorage. Good morning, everyone.

41
42 MS. PILCHER: Good morning, Eva.

43
44 MR. DEACY: Good morning. This is Will
45 Deacy with National Park Service.

46
47 MS. PILCHER: All right. This is
48 Nissa. Sorry, I'm moving fast. This is only my second
49 meeting so I'm still a little nervous. If anyone is on
50

0007

1 from BLM, if they'd introduce themselves.

2

3

4 MR. MCKEE: Good morning. This is
5 Chris McKee, Statewide Subsistence Coordinator for BLM
6 and Interagency Staff Committee member.

7

8 MS. PILCHER: Good morning. If there's
9 anyone on from Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

10

11 MS. JALLEN: Hi, Nissa. Good morning.
12 This is Deena Jallen with the Alaska Department of Fish
13 and Game. I'm the Yukon River Summer Season Manager.
14 I'm located here in Fairbanks. Thanks.

15

16 MS. GLEASON: Good morning. This is
17 Christy Gleason, the Yukon River Fall Season Manager
18 here in Fairbanks with Alaska Department of Fish and
19 Game. Good morning.

20

21 MS. COLEMAN: Good morning. This is
22 Jesse Coleman. I'm the Subsistence Resource Specialist
23 for the Yukon and Interior Region.

24

25 MS. DECKER: Good morning. This is Sam
26 Decker with Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Thank
27 you.

28

29 MS. PILCHER: All right. Then the last
30 on the list. Is there anyone on from OSM that's not in
31 the room?

32

33 MS. LAVINE: Robbin Lavine, Subsistence
34 Policy Coordinator with OSM.

35

36 MR. FOLEY: Good morning, Nissa.
37 Madame Chair and Members of the Council. This is
38 Kevin Foley, fish biologist with the Office of
39 Subsistence Management. Good morning.

40

41 MS. VOORHEES: Good morning. This is
42 Hannah Voorhees, anthropologist with OSM.

43

44 MR. AYERS: Good morning. This is
45 Scott Ayers. I'm the Fisheries Division Supervisor
46 with OSM based out of Anchorage. Glad to hear
47 everybody this morning. Thank you.

48

49 MS. PILCHER: All right. Any members
50 of the public or anyone else that's on that I missed.

0008

1 MR. RISDAHL: Good morning, Madame
2 Chair. This is Greg Risdahl. I'm the USDA Forest
3 Service Subsistence Program Leader and Inter-Agency
4 Staff Committee member. Pleased to be here.

5
6 MS. STRAM: Good morning. This is
7 Diana Stram with the North Pacific Fishery Management
8 Council. Hopefully you guys can hear me okay.

9
10 MS. PILCHER: Yes, we sure can. Loud
11 and clear. Is there anyone else online that would like
12 to introduce themselves.

13
14 (No comments)

15
16 MS. PILCHER: All right. Just a couple
17 quick things before we get started. I just wanted to
18 let everybody know Fairbanks is currently sitting at a
19 low Covid community level as indicated on the CDC
20 website. So we can proceed with this meeting with no
21 restrictions or mask requirements. Those that would
22 like to are more than welcome to wear one and they're
23 provided on the public table for any who wish to do so.

24
25 For those attending our meeting in
26 person please make sure you do sign in at the front
27 table. There's a sign-in sheet for each day of the
28 meeting and we'd appreciate if you would sign in each
29 day you are here. It does help greatly with our
30 process.

31
32 This is a regulatory meeting and the
33 Council will be discussing and deliberating fish
34 proposals and closures. There will be an opportunity
35 for public comment during the proposal period. You can
36 see the steps for the proposal presentation procedure
37 on Page 67 of the meeting book.

38
39 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: I think a couple
40 more people walked in. If you would introduce
41 yourself.

42
43 MS. GOSSELIN: My name is Monica
44 Gosselin. I currently work as (indiscernible).

45
46 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Anybody else?

47
48 (No comments)

49
50

0009

1 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Thank you.
2 Okay. With that we'd like to review and adopt the
3 agenda. Is there any additions or changes?
4

5 MS. PILCHER: This is Nissa again for
6 the record. Just to let you guys know there was an
7 updated one at your meeting place when you guys first
8 walked in. It's a little different from the one that's
9 in your meeting book. There's also copies over on the
10 public table as well.
11

12 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay. With that
13 is there a motion to adopt the agenda.
14

15 MR. HONEA: So move.
16

17 MR. VENT: Second.
18

19 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Moved by Don
20 Honea and seconded by Darrell Vent. All in favor say
21 aye.
22

23 IN UNISON: Aye.
24

25 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: All opposed
26 say.....
27

28 MR. REAKOFF: Aye.
29

30 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Sorry, Jack.
31 Motion carries. The next one we have is review and
32 approve the previous minutes. I'm sure you've all had
33 a chance to read it. Is there a motion to accept the
34 meeting minutes.
35

36 MR. REAKOFF: I make a motion to adopt
37 the minutes as presented.
38

39 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: A motion by Jack
40 and seconded by Darrell. All in favor say aye.
41

42 IN UNISON: Aye.
43

44 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: All opposed same
45 sign.
46

47 (No opposing votes)
48

49 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Motion carries.
50

0010

1 Now we're up to.....

2

3

4 MR. HONEA: Madame Chair. Can we go
5 back? Usually there's discussion on the -- or am I out
6 of order here? I thought that we put it on the floor
7 and accept it, but any questions or comments about it.
8 Is that open?

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

MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Yeah.

MR. HONEA: Okay. I specifically have a question on the meeting. This was a teleconference and there was a motion on Page 9 of this book by Arnold Demoski, seconded by Tim to select Tim and Darrell and Kevin to be the Council's delegation to the North Pacific Fishery Management Council June meeting. I was just wondering if they wanted to give a brief update on that. I mean did that happen? Would they like to discuss it? Thank you.

MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Tim.

MR. GERVAIS: Thank you, Madame Chair. I was going to discuss it in my opening comments.

MR. HONEA: Okay, okay. Great. No other questions. Thank you.

MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay. With that I guess the motion passed to accept the minutes. Reports. Council reports. We'll start off with Kevin.

MR. WENTWORTH: Madame Chair. Kevin Wentworth. Could I pass and let the elders of the group go first.

MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Sure. Sorry about that.

MR. WENTWORTH: Caught me off guard.

MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Pollock. Pollock, can you do your Council report, please.

MR. SIMON: Thank you, Madame Chair. I'm Pollock Simon, Sr. from Allakaket, upper Koyukuk River. It's kind of different nowadays with no fish and no numbers of moose and no black bears. Occasionally you see some grizzly bears that still roam

0011

1 the country.

2

3 Yeah, we're getting used to not eating
4 king salmon. No chum salmon to eat. We rely heavily
5 on sheefish and whitefish. The last two years I've
6 been restricted to even setting a 6-inch mesh net. We
7 just have a smaller net like 4-inch mesh for little
8 whitefish and pikes. The dogs eat the pikes and the
9 suckers and the little whitefish.

10

11 So kind of hard times in Allakaket
12 because the virus is going around and we're losing some
13 peoples, some elders, some young peoples. This is the
14 first time we sit down and face each other at a meeting
15 for maybe two years or more. It's good to see all of
16 you. I took part in the teleconference, but sometimes
17 I couldn't hear what the speaker was talking about.
18 Sometimes I just hang up my phone and leave. This is
19 good facing all of you. I'm glad I'm here.

20

21 Thank you, Madame Chair.

22

23 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Thank you,
24 Pollock. I look around and I guess I'm next.

25

26 (Laughter)

27

28 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: It's good to be
29 here with all of you. Like Pollock said, it's been over
30 two years that we met. It's hard to meet on the phone
31 because all you're looking at is paper and just
32 yourself in the room. So it's good to be here and good
33 to have an audience, to see all of you. I recognize
34 some faces.

35

36 I'd just like to say that over these
37 couple years we've had a hard time with our fishing.
38 As you know, there's been no fishing, but our Village
39 Council was able to get some fish from -- I can't
40 remember where, but we cut it like we did with the king
41 salmon and it's a different kind of fish, so we had to
42 learn how to work a drier fish I guess you would call
43 it. There's hardly any oil in it.

44

45 Many of us had a hard time with that
46 because it was a new type of fish for us. But we're
47 thankful for everything we did get. I'm sure the
48 people along -- whoever received the fish were also
49 thankful for it. Many councils did get fish, so we

50

0012

1 just thank the people that donated it to us.

2

3 With that I believe many people were
4 successful at their moose season. My husband and I
5 were unable to go due to Covid and the aftereffects of
6 Covid, but I'm sure everybody is enjoying their catch.

7

8 I know last winter the Loudon Council
9 had a bounty on moose -- not moose, wolf. I know some
10 other councils that are doing that, which would keep
11 the moose surviving in the years to come. Just last
12 week someone told me that they took a ride about maybe
13 five miles out of Galena and they saw 16 cows with
14 their babies, so I think there were like 12 babies. So
15 the moose are coming back, I think. Hopefully.

16

17 With that, again I'd like to say it's
18 good to be here. I'm sorry that Jack couldn't be here.
19 He's the one that knows this job in and out. I'll just
20 do the best I can. With that I'll just close my
21 report.

22

23 Jack, you're up next if you want to do
24 yours on the Chair. You can do it then or you can do
25 it now.

26

27 MR. REAKOFF: Thank you, Madame Chair.
28 After our meeting in February I participated in writing
29 and shepherding the Wildlife Special Action Request
30 22-02 for the Dall sheep closure for Unit 24A and 26B
31 west of the Sagavanirktok through the Federal Board
32 process.

33

34 I also participated in the wood bison
35 planning meeting that was held last week. Wood bison
36 are in our region and I've been filling in Robert
37 Walker that would do that, participate for the Council,
38 but so far nobody in our region has been able to
39 participate in that aspect. We need a member from GASH
40 area, Grayling, Shageluk, Holy Cross, Anvik, if we can
41 get that.

42

43 But I will continue to participate in
44 the wood bison plan because it's very important. This
45 Council advocated for the release of wood bison within
46 our region and the wood bison project is a very
47 worthwhile for future generations of people in our
48 region. Mainly they talked about allocation and when a
49 hunt would occur.

50

0013

1 Conditions here we have two inches of
2 snow and very few caribou have come into the Central
3 Brooks Range and the Upper Koyukuk Drainage. Very few
4 rabbits, hares, snowshoe hares. Really the only
5 increase in abundance of any animal has been spruce
6 grouse. Moose population is low and there's lots of
7 bear predation. It was a bad blueberry year and
8 berries in general. So we're digging roots and chasing
9 moose around quite a bit.

10

11 That would be my report. Thank you,
12 Madame Chair. I also wanted to inform the Council that
13 I had a nine-foot fall on the frozen ground and damaged
14 my heels and feet and lower legs. I have small cracks
15 and bruising, so I can't walk at this time. I really
16 wanted to participate in this meeting.

17

18 Thank you.

19

20 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Thank you, Jack.
21 With that we'll go to Kevin.

22

23 MR. WHITWORTH: Thank you, Madame
24 Chair. Thanks for passing it on to the elders of the
25 group. Don had brought up the North Pacific Fisheries
26 Council summary, so I had to scramble to try to find
27 that summary and I found it. Anyway, Kevin Wentworth
28 from McGrath. Council member from McGrath. I'll keep
29 this brief.

30

31 So right now on the Kuskokwim River
32 we're experiencing a multi-year multi-salmon collapse
33 in the fishery. Ten years ago, as you all know,
34 chinook salmon crashed, Federal management took over.
35 We've been trying to rebuild that fishery. It's doing
36 better. It's not good. People aren't reaching their
37 subsistence needs for chinook salmon and they haven't
38 in the past 10 years.

39

40 About three years ago roughly the chum
41 salmon crashed and this year again the fishery is not
42 good at all. The chum salmon crash is historically low
43 for three years now. It's rebounded. I mean it's just
44 low. It's really, really low, the chum salmon. That's
45 a prized fish as well.

46

47 People talk about that fish being less
48 oily so elders like to have chum salmon. They like to
49 have chum salmon for drying. There's other means for
50

0014

1 using chum salmon. There's still lots of dog teams on
2 the Kuskokwim River. People use those for feeding
3 dogs. So chum salmon is a very important resource and
4 it's not there.

5
6 This year also we saw the first ever
7 major closure for the coho salmon run on the Kuskokwim
8 River. So three species now has collapsed and this is
9 a huge hardship for the people on the river. It's a
10 food security issue. The ecosystem is just completely
11 upside-down and it's just hurting the people on the
12 river. Up and down the river, from the bay to the
13 headwaters.

14
15 The coho run it was coming in weak. It
16 looked low. The fishery was open 24/7 until about
17 August 16 and that's about when they start to arrive in
18 the middle part of the river and get up into the upper
19 headwaters. That's when the closure took effect. It
20 was a river-wide closure for all gear types.
21 Everything was closed.

22
23 You couldn't have a whitefish net out.
24 Fishwheels were closed, seine nets. Everything was
25 closed. All gear types were closed except for rod and
26 reel. I think you could use those for catching pike in
27 slack water areas. I think there was other areas you
28 can fish for in slack water. You can have a fishwheel
29 in slack water, which doesn't make sense to me.

30
31 Anyway, it was a huge hardship to have.
32 Everybody who couldn't catch chinook salmon they'd
33 usually wait for the chum. Then if they can't catch
34 chinook or chum, they wait for the coho. This year the
35 coho was completely shut down. So with these high
36 restrictions on the Kuskokwim River to try to conserve
37 these three species, folks aren't able to catch
38 relatively healthy sockeye salmon.

39
40 I can't remember the numbers. Over
41 500,000 sockeye salmon on the Kuskokwim. They don't
42 all go up to the upper headwaters. Most of them stay
43 in the middle to lower river. They spawn in those
44 areas. So with these high restrictions for chinook and
45 chum during the sockeye run people aren't able to
46 target those species. It's really difficult for people
47 to supplement sockeye salmon.

48
49 Also in the fall time when the coho
50

0015

1 salmon were completely closed folks aren't able to
2 catch whitefish or pike or sheefish or any of the other
3 species to try to supplement their diet. So people are
4 really hurting. I mean this is the -- I've never seen
5 -- I know I'm young, but I've never seen an entire
6 system closed for that long.

7

8 So June 1st was a chinook salmon
9 closure and it was basically -- I mean it opened a few
10 times for chinook salmon and then the same with chum
11 salmon and then there was a complete month-long closure
12 for coho through September 15th. So August 16 through
13 September 15 roughly it was completely closed for coho.
14 We've never seen that.

15

16 So when you're out moose hunting you
17 bring your fishnet for whitefish and you can't do that.
18 In the fall time you're trying to put some fish in your
19 freezer. We couldn't do that. By the time September
20 15th comes around, the silver salmon, they're getting
21 more towards their spawning time, so they're not as
22 good as the first part of the run.

23

24 I know that silver salmon fishing all
25 my life basically. The first part of the run is when
26 you find the best fish to put away in the freezer, jar
27 them, whatever you want to put them away for. So by
28 September 15 people are mostly hunting as well, so
29 they're not focused on fishing.

30

31 It's very difficult times right now for
32 the people. I just wanted to touch on the food
33 security issues there, the three river three salmon
34 collapse. I think that could be probably said on the
35 Yukon as well from what I'm hearing from folks. Three
36 multi-year multi-species collapse of salmon on the two
37 rivers.

38

39 Don had brought up the North Pacific
40 Fisheries Management Council June bycatch meeting and I
41 was supposed to attend that and I did not attend that
42 meeting. It's in June, which is right in the middle of
43 -- which is unfortunate, but that's right in the middle
44 of in-season management for chinook salmon. I just
45 could not go to that meeting. But there's people who
46 went, people I work with, people that I collaborate
47 with often, so I can give a summary of that meeting.

48

49 Basically North Pacific Fisheries

50

0016

1 Management Council -- that June meeting is when salmon
2 bycatch issues was brought up, which is unfortunate
3 because in June is when us subsistence fishermen are
4 busy fishing. So to have that meeting, to talk about
5 it at a June meeting, it does not make sense to me. I
6 had brought that up with NOAA before at other meetings.
7 Not at this meeting. I brought that up before, but
8 that schedule does not work for us.

9

10 The North Pacific Fisheries Management
11 Council took no action on any concrete -- to limit
12 chinook or chum bycatch. Right now there is a cap on
13 chinook, but they did not take any action to lower
14 that. They took zero action on establishing a chum
15 bycatch cap at all. There isn't anything right now.
16 So even though chum bycatch, even if it's low right now
17 or I don't even know the numbers, but if it is low, we
18 don't know what next year will bring.

19

20 It could be a high bycatch here next
21 year. There's no cap. It's basically unregulated for
22 chum salmon. They could catch whatever they want.
23 It's not unregulated, but you know what I mean. As far
24 as chum bycatch goes, they could catch 500,000 without
25 -- it's not a problem for them. There needs to be a
26 chum bycatch limit. At that meeting they took no
27 action at all.

28

29 That's basically that meeting, Don. I
30 hope that helps with the summary. Also I represent the
31 Western Interior RAC on the Kuskokwim River Salmon
32 Management Working Group. This is a State of Alaska
33 riverwide working group. It's a lot like the YRDFA
34 weekly call-ins. We have something similar with the
35 Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group, which
36 I represent this body on that.

37

38 Very busy summer, like I said. All
39 three species, lots of food security issues. There's a
40 lot I could talk about there, but I won't talk about it
41 now. The entire summer it was just depressing. The
42 amount of restrictions on the people, people not
43 reaching their harvest needs. We were doing everything
44 we can to work with the State of Alaska through this
45 working group to try to provide some opportunity while
46 conserving the fishery, especially in that coho run
47 when people were completely cut off from catching
48 anything.

49

50

0017

1 My understanding with the State of
2 Alaska they didn't have the tools in the toolbox that
3 they could allow for any four-inch opportunity during
4 that coho closure or silver salmon closure. They
5 couldn't allow for fishwheels to be run so you could
6 release coho salmon like they've done with chinook
7 salmon. That's just not in their toolbox. It's not in
8 their management plan, so they just -- they can only
9 open it or close it. So they decided it was best to
10 close it completely.

11
12 We tried to ask the State of Alaska at
13 this working group meeting to do window closures or do
14 roaming closures, whatever it's called when you close
15 the lower river first and you work your way up as the
16 run builds, but they said no. Complete closure.

17
18 Anyway, I don't want to get into
19 details at this working group. Please ask questions if
20 you guys have other questions. I will just leave it at
21 that. Thank you. I hope, Jack, you get feeling better
22 soon. We miss you.

23
24 Thank you, Jenny.

25
26 MR. REAKOFF: Thanks, Kevin.

27
28 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Thank you,
29 Kevin. With that we'll go to Don.

30
31 MR. HONEA: Good morning. Hey, I'm
32 real thankful my cousin Jenny is able to Chair this
33 meeting. I'm sure it's not an easy thing to do. So
34 I'm really thankful. Thank you, Jenny, for chairing
35 this. I'm sorry -- you know, Jack has always been at
36 the helm of our -- you know, and he's real
37 knowledgeable and everything and I'm thankful for that.

38
39 Like Tom mentioned from OSM there, it's
40 really good to be online. It's really hard out in the
41 villages or anywhere to be online. I've got to have an
42 extra cell phone and stuff like that. So it's really
43 great to meet like this.

44
45 I thank Kevin for bringing up the
46 fisheries thing. It was kind of a surprise to him to
47 -- for me to point that out, to ask about that, but I'm
48 sure that we're not going to find a lot of willing
49 participants to be on that board. I'm sure it's going
50

0018

1 to be -- you know, it's already a controversial issue.
2 I'm hoping that we get that filled.

3
4 As for hunting, Jenny mentioned no fish
5 and that's how it is for the last two years. No fish
6 at all. We don't even put a net in. In fact, last
7 week in Ruby somebody put a net in and whitefish to
8 feed his dog team. So it's really kind of trying.
9 It's gotten to the point where some places -- I
10 remember 10, 15 years ago, maybe when I first got on we
11 were talking about Area M and the effects that it might
12 have. Yet, in the last year or something I seen kind
13 of a bycatch of 200,000 chum or something. Maybe it
14 was destined for the Yukon. Maybe it was destined for
15 the Kuskokwim. I think we have to bring all these
16 factors into place and find something.

17
18 I mentioned coming to this meeting and
19 somebody mentioned bring up the bycatch. The bycatch
20 issue is almost kind of a moot point when we're talking
21 about -- you know, I remember meeting in Galena there
22 and Ken Chase and I were on the same page saying, hey,
23 we could always -- let's not bother the kings for a
24 year or so or whatever. We can always depend on the
25 fall -- summer and fall chum, 500,000, 700, you know.
26 Now what's the number, 200 or less? 200,000 or less?
27 I mean there's something definitely wrong.

28
29 So whether it's a global issue it seems
30 like we're not doing anything. Right, Mr. Simon? It
31 seems like -- I mean, you know, I think we have to
32 bring it on a more humanitarian global issue than that.

33
34
35 Other than that one other point I'd
36 like to make is, you know, there's some areas in our --
37 in the Western Interior that's not represented and I
38 don't really like that. I'm thankful for Kevin to get
39 on here taking Ray's place. He's knowledgeable in
40 fisheries and stuff, but what about Aniak, Stoney
41 River, Georgetown, that area.

42
43 Years ago we had a meeting in McGrath,
44 so I was just relating to what was going on because I
45 only know what's going on in my particular area. So
46 one of the Council members says, hey, Don, you've got
47 to remember you're speaking for the whole area. Sure,
48 that's fine and dandy, but I don't know what's going on
49 in Koyukuk or Nulato or Kaltag. I just know what's
50

0019

1 going on around Ruby.

2

3

4 With that I really think that we ought
5 to somehow in some form get those places represented.
6 That's a concern for me because right now -- I mean,
7 you know, when the topic of hunting and fishing with
8 the Federal -- with our respective refuges coming up,
9 I'm concerned about my moose population. It's really
10 down from 19 moose. It's always been consistent, maybe
11 30 or better. The wolf numbers on the Novi. So that's
12 what I mean. I want all of our areas represented.

13

14 So with that I will -- this is my last
15 year on here, but I'm going to re-up for maybe next
16 year because I think we have too much at stake. It's
17 always been my kind of take and my contention if we
18 can't do a doggone thing about fishing, if we can't
19 somehow bring those fish back, we've got to take care
20 of our moose. We've got to take care of our game. So
21 I'm really concerned about that. I'm just going to
22 keep our AC alive and work on that matter.

23

24 Thank you, Madame Chair.

25

26 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Thank you, Don.

27 Tim.

28

29 MR. GERVAIS: Thank you, Madame Chair.

30 Jenny, I really appreciate you taking over the meeting
31 on short notice. I hope you have a good rehab there,
32 Jack. We all know each time we fall down every year
33 it's harder to get up, but keep trying. We're rooting
34 for you.

35

36 Okay. So regarding the report. We
37 have a lot of frustrated people with the closure on the
38 Yukon River for salmon. People didn't eat that much
39 fish. They utilized whatever store canned fish or
40 canned strips that they had left over from prior years.
41 People did eat. I was not there, but I believe they
42 got some red salmon shipped in. There was kind of some
43 mixed reaction to it, but I mean they appreciated to be
44 able to get fish.

45

46 Sockeye is kind of an unknown species
47 in our region. People didn't quite know how to prepare
48 it and their pallets weren't used to it, but they
49 appreciated other fishermen from around the state and
50 some of the transportation companies and TCC helping

0020

1 out with distributing that. I think there was about
2 four families that put out whitefish nets to get
3 whitefish harvest in lieu of any king, chum or silver
4 harvest.

5
6 The commercial harvest for chum in Area
7 M was approximately 813,000. That's down about 25
8 percent from the 1.1 million last year. Area M
9 fishermen, that's a seine drift gillnet and setnet
10 fishery. They have quite a bit of fishing opportunity
11 in June and then July and August the State managers had
12 to choke down or close down quite a bit for protection
13 of chum and protection of pink salmon.

14
15 This Council had nominated me to speak
16 at the Sitka North Pacific Fisheries Management Council
17 meeting in Sitka, which was June 6th to the 14th. As
18 we got more information on the meeting, we learned that
19 the salmon testimony was not going to be until the
20 latter half of the meeting, like the 13th or 14th of
21 June, and I had to depart on my boat for fishing by
22 that time.

23
24 So I apologized to the Council for not
25 -- for saying I would participate in a meeting. I was
26 hoping to be able to do a testimony June 6, 7 or 8, but
27 basically in any year until I retire I'm commercial
28 fishing. Anything after June 10th would be unlikely
29 for me to be -- have access to testify by telephone or
30 by internet. So I apologized for that.

31
32 But, yeah, Kevin did make a good point
33 that it is -- June is always problematic for
34 subsistence or commercial salmon fishermen to be able
35 to make testimony. These North Pacific Management
36 Council meetings they cover a lot of topics and they're
37 very long and I would hope maybe there is or maybe
38 there could be a way that people could record their
39 testimony and then the Council could play that
40 testimony whenever it comes up.

41
42 Unless you're professional in fishery
43 management council things it's really hard to make
44 someone available for three days knowing -- not knowing
45 exactly when you'll actually be able to get to testify.
46 We can talk with Dr. Stram later on in the meeting and
47 see what kind of options are available so that we can
48 make our voices heard.

49
50

0021

1 One other thing on North Pacific
2 Fisheries Management Council is they are accepting
3 nominations for -- I believe it's a newly-formed Alaska
4 Native tribal seat on its advisory panel. The advisory
5 panel is not the actual council itself, but it's a
6 panel that discusses the same issues and makes advisory
7 or preferential recommendations to the North Pacific
8 Council. I'm glad to see that the North Pacific
9 Management Council is recognizing -- starting to
10 recognize that there should be some Native voice in
11 their system. Hopefully we can get some good
12 participation through that.

13
14 That nomination needs to be in prior to
15 November 15th. It's on their website. I have interest
16 in applying for the bycatch task force that North
17 Pacific Fisheries Management Council set up, but I was
18 involved in a deposition process for a lawsuit against
19 me at the end of September. From that distraction I
20 forgot to get my nomination in on time for that bycatch
21 board so that didn't happen.

22
23 This recent typhoon that put a lot of
24 high storm surge into western Alaska knocked out power
25 to some of the villages. I think that situation where
26 a lot of subsistence fishermen lost a lot of meat and
27 fish product from losing electricity, that highlights
28 the significance on the Yukon and I imagine the
29 Kuskokwim also.

30
31 We've lost a lot of our fish camp
32 culture in the last three decades due to declining
33 salmon runs. Because of that people aren't putting up
34 as much fish traditionally as they used to and the
35 younger generations are ignorant as how to prepare
36 strips or eating fish and to some extent pressure
37 canning. With those traditional methods they wouldn't
38 be affected by power outages or by a big storm event
39 such as that. So that incident just kind of highlights
40 on a food security situation the value of being able to
41 put up fish and meat and traditional methods were not
42 relying on modern conveniences such as electricity and
43 freezers to hold your subsistence harvest.

44
45 We had a Priority Information Needs
46 meeting approximately about a month ago. That went
47 pretty good. We had good representation up and down
48 the river. People from OSM communicated with us that
49 the Kuskokwim PIN meeting they were able to reduce
50

0022

1 their needs down to about five things of real priority.

2

3

4

5 The way our meeting went we barely took
6 anything off the list because we felt, whether it was
7 salmon or alternative species, such as whitefish or
8 pike, that all those things are important now because
9 we don't have a reliable salmon resource now or in the
10 foreseeable future. We'll probably get some
11 information later in the meeting from OSM on the status
12 of those PIN meetings.

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

So one thing I would like some
assistance on either from Council members in particular
Jack or OSM Staff, I would like to know what this
Council can do to -- I mean it's advisory capacity, but
I would like to know what kind of powers are granted to
the Western Interior Council because we could take some
more significant action on trying to get our salmon
runs resolved. It just seems to be getting worse and
worse every year. I just would like this Council to be
able to operate at its best level to bring a change
about in supporting stronger salmon returns.

From the meeting minutes I read for the
North Pacific Management Council meeting, it seems like
a lot of membership there just interested in continuing
on with business as usual with the Bering Sea/Aleutian
Island trawl fishery and talk about having a task force
or having research or whatnot, but I think what really
needs to happen is they need to slow down the amount of
fishing and the amount of time they have their nets in
the water until we can get some kind of reversal in our
salmon abundance.

We've talked about in other meetings
how -- I mean we have documentation that there's Alaska
Native doing net fishing for salmon on the Yukon back
in the 1860s and anthropological theory would suggest
that people have been eating salmon on the Kuskokwim
and Yukon Rivers for approximately 12,000 years. It
would seem unlikely that people could survive without a
salmon resource in a pre-contact setting.

So I feel that that historical use of
that resource is more important than any kind of use of
that resource is more important than any kind of
commercial, whether it's a State-managed fishery or a
Federally-managed fishery that's taking salmon out of

0023

1 the ecosystem.

2

3 That's all I have for now, Madame
4 Chair.

5

6 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Thank you, Tim.
7 Darrell.

8

9 MR. VENT: Good morning, everyone.

10 Glad to be back here enjoying the meeting. Yeah, we're
11 going to have to start really looking at how this
12 management of our resource is being affected. Our
13 people are not able to go out to their summer camps and
14 utilize the traditional ways of harvesting their fish
15 or taking of fish for food for our families or animals.

16

17 I was raised up in an Iditarod racing
18 family. My grandpa raced in there and my father raced
19 in there, so I was busy all the time in the summer. I
20 remember about eight, ten years I was out there
21 constantly all summer long except for 4th of July, but
22 now we can't carry on those traditions. Our kids are
23 not learning these traditions.

24

25 Recently I heard -- last night or about
26 3:00 this morning I got a phone call. There was a bear
27 trying to break into a window of a house in the
28 village. A grizzly bear. So we're seeing all kinds of
29 signs. Our Native traditional ways we understand
30 what's going on out there, but we aren't taking --
31 we're only taking that advisory. We're not taking
32 seriously when it comes to managing our game and our
33 fish, our gathering.

34

35 There's not a lot of berries out there.
36 The water was high this fall. It was hard to catch a
37 moose in our area. There was no fish. You know, we
38 look 10, 15 years down the road, 10, 20 years, what are
39 we going to live on? We're supposed to be living a
40 subsistence lifestyle and that's not happening. Our
41 rural people are really going to be affected because of
42 this.

43

44 We can't think that the moose
45 population is going to increase in our areas. We have
46 no information on that, but that's our main source of
47 food now because we don't have fish, we don't have
48 caribou. A lot of our animals are starting to
49 disappear. We need some kind of management that's
50

0024

1 going to either replace what we have there or
2 repopulate.

3
4 It's going to be hard to replace the
5 fish that was taken from the river because of the size.
6 When you have this big Yukon River kings that were 90
7 pounds, those fish were Canada-bound. We don't have
8 that no more. You've got a lot of jacks, you've got a
9 lot of smaller king salmon. They're not going to
10 survive. We can see that already.

11
12 This is something that's really
13 affecting our people. We depended on all that kind of
14 fish. Now we can't even catch our fall chum. It's
15 hard to think about what our future is going to be.
16 We're not really thinking of this is a management.
17 It's more of a money controlled environment. People
18 are taking what they need for the money and then
19 leaving us with nothing. That's what happened. I can
20 see our kids are going to be growing up and it's going
21 to be hard for them because they're going to have to
22 depend more on stores, which is not a subsistence use.

23
24 You know, it's a reality. We all got
25 to look at what we're doing here and think, you know,
26 hey, how could we relieve the situation. How could we
27 help our people. How could we help the State. How
28 could we help the Federal government. It's been a
29 one-sided venture for our people. We've been
30 complaining, saying that we're not getting this, we're
31 not getting that, but it's advisory capacity only.
32 We're not taken seriously because they think, you know,
33 money is more important than what you guys are living
34 on.

35
36 So that's the way it looks because this
37 meeting down in Sitka they were telling me that, you
38 know, it's just business as usual. It's not about our
39 people. It's about everybody in the whole world,
40 international waters. These are big companies that
41 we're trying to go up against and we don't have the
42 power or money to influence them from a little village.
43 But we're hurting and we're going to complain and
44 that's our nature. We need to figure out how to work
45 with management. If we don't, then we're not going to
46 -- there's not going to be no management. What is
47 there going to be to manage.

48
49 Those grizzlies are coming out of the
50

0025

1 mountains now because they're hungry. There's no fish
2 up in there. Our moose are getting hit hard. I mean
3 that's our main thing that -- main food that we depend
4 on for the whole year now because we don't have the
5 fish, we don't have the caribou. The moose will have
6 to provide for us and they're not in very good shape
7 sometimes too.

8
9 I'm just concerned just from our area.
10 Not our area alone. It's all over Kuskokwim. We're
11 all saying the same thing. When are we going to be
12 listened to. It's hard to address these issues when
13 you have to sit there and listen to the same stories.
14 I wish that we could, you know, change things when it
15 first happened, but now it's too late. We're trying to
16 figure out how to fix a mistake and we're pointing
17 fingers when we should have fixed it before it
18 happened.

19
20 That's just some of the things that I
21 think of and I hear from my elders. We're going to get
22 hit really hard with hard times here. Our food
23 resource is not going to be there, so we've got to
24 figure out ways to replace that food source in our
25 areas as people are really relying on moose. The
26 grizzlies are doing the same thing. They're getting
27 hungry and they're coming into our village.

28
29 About three, four years ago we had
30 about four or five of them that had to be gotten rid of
31 in the village. It's something that people don't want
32 to talk about because they're scared. They might get
33 in trouble with the State because they got to have a
34 tag or something just to take that bear. All along
35 when we used to manage our resource we didn't have to
36 buy tags or get a license. Our people just took care
37 of the problems. Now the restrictions make it harder
38 and people don't want to do it. So we're having an
39 increase in predation.

40
41 We can't talk about bounties. You
42 know, it's incentive programs. You know, it's
43 something different when it comes to bounties. They
44 don't understand how it is for us to live up in this
45 area. We have to compete for this food and that's what
46 predation is all about. We're a major part of the
47 problem right now because we have to learn to manage.
48 That's our issue right now. I'm just concerned, so I
49 just wanted to mention that.

50

0026

1 I sure wish I could have made the
2 meeting this spring in June, but I'm busy working.
3 I've got to try to provide for the family. These
4 meetings are not at the right time. I sure wish I
5 could have went there and spoke, but it's hard when you
6 have to make your choices.

7
8 You know, predation is going to get
9 harder and more and more because in our area we noticed
10 that the wolf population is picking back up again.
11 That means that the kind of moose -- there's more moose
12 around Koyukuk and Galena area than there is around our
13 area. We used to have way more moose in our area.

14
15 Like I said, when you take a look at
16 your management, you're taking those big breeding bulls
17 and you're catching them and taking the horn, but
18 you're also taking the strain when you do that. So
19 your moose are not able to compete against predation.
20 They've got a higher percentage of loss then the moose
21 are smaller or weaker when they don't breed with them
22 big bulls.

23
24 That's the same thing happened with
25 fish. You take the big strain out and it's hard for
26 them to compete against going up the wrong river or
27 predation. So we understand from a different point of
28 view of what's going on with our fish, our moose, our
29 caribou. We lost our caribou migration pattern. We
30 used to have caribou coming in in the fall time. That
31 don't happen no more.

32
33 I always spoke about that because my
34 grandpa always told me about it one time, Pollock's
35 uncle. He used to tell me stories about fishing stuff.
36 It was good to listen to elders, but now we're getting
37 at that stage where I'm starting to getting to be
38 halfway elder now.

39
40 Thank you guys for letting me speak in
41 the meeting.

42
43 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Thank you,
44 Darrell. With that I know when we start our meeting
45 sometimes we forget to ask the question is there
46 anything else to add or delete from the agenda. We're
47 thinking and then later on we think of something. I
48 think Tim thought of something and maybe we'll just see
49 what he has. If the Council wants to add it or not to
50

0027

1 the agenda, we could.

2

3

4 MR. GERVAIS: It's not an agenda item,
5 Madame Chair. It's just a part of my report because I
6 forgot to put it in. That was the moose hunting around
7 Ruby went fairly well. Quite a bit better hunting
8 towards the second half of the season. Subsistence
9 needs were met for the village. So that turned out to
10 be a real big or real important issue right now that
11 salmon is not part of our subsistence economy this
12 year.

13

14 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Thank you. Don.

15

16 MR. HONEA: Yeah. Hey, I think that's
17 real important that we discuss whatever we've reported
18 on. Like we're going to get into some heavy stuff, but
19 I just wanted to mention what Darrell had mentioned and
20 maybe we could use that for future whatever.

21

22 It just goes back to something that
23 happened in the village of Ruby maybe three, four years
24 ago. There was a brown bear, grizzly, whatever,
25 entered the village and for safety sake a villager got
26 the bear, harvested, and yet in the next day or say,
27 whether it was -- I don't believe it was Fish and
28 Wildlife, but Alaska State Troopers, whatever, their
29 Game Division, and it almost led to somewhere where you
30 -- instead of thinking about the village's safety, they
31 were more concerned about, hey, you shouldn't have shot
32 that bear in the village or did you have a tag, crap
33 like that.

34

35 You know, it was -- so things like
36 that, I agree, we have to change those. You know, I
37 mean for instance brown bear or grizzly tags and stuff,
38 you're not going to see one hardly in your lifetime. A
39 lot of time you don't. There's a few times I've been
40 able to do it, but, you know, do you have a harvest
41 ticket. Stuff like that.

42

43 So I'm glad he mentioned that. For
44 safety sake maybe it was something we could use as a
45 valid measure or something to think about in the
46 future. I thank you for the time that we can discuss
47 this.

48

49 Thank you, Madame Chair.

50

51

0028

1 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Kevin.

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

MR. WHITWORTH: Thank you, Madame Chair. Tim had brought up the question of what we can do to get these salmon back. I was just thinking about that as well. I don't know if it's in the agenda, but can we have a discussion about writing letters, comment letters to like the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council? I don't know if it's in the agenda or not.

MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: I guess you can add that on somewhere. We usually write letters anyways.

MR. WHITWORTH: Yeah. I just didn't see it on the agenda. One thing that's coming up is this December North Pacific Fisheries Management Council meeting is coming up and they are going to take up salmon bycatch issues again at that meeting. This may be a good time for us to write a comment letter for that meeting. There's other things I'd like to talk about too for letters.

Thanks.

MS. PILCHER: Diana Stram with the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council will be giving an update later on in the agenda and at that time would be a good place to bring up if you wanted to draft a letter to that Council. I guess as for the other correspondence things we can figure out where they can get it as they go.

MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Thank you. Okay. With hearing the other Council members speak, I also added a couple things on my list. Tim said he couldn't attend a meeting.

MR. VENT: Are there other Council members on the line too?

MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay. Just a minute. Rebecca, are you online?

(No response)

MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Tommy.

(No response)

0029

1 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: I guess not.
2 Maybe Tommy is flying in. I'll ask Jack after I do
3 mine. With that we were talking about how Tim couldn't
4 attend a meeting. Darrell couldn't attend a meeting.
5 I know at one time -- well, we've talked about this
6 many times in our past meetings about getting an
7 alternate, a couple of alternates in case the main
8 person couldn't make it. So we should think about that
9 again.

10
11 Hearing Darrell's story about the bear
12 is weird because I dreamt about last night in my dream
13 was a bear was trying to break into somebody's house
14 and woke up. Hearing him say that, oh, my gosh.

15
16 I was thinking about the bulls, about
17 our moose. In the past I've seen -- I don't know,
18 maybe it's just me, but it seems like the big bulls are
19 where the moose continue to come from. They stay way
20 back in the woods. And then come to think about it,
21 when the hunters go out there, the planes they drop
22 those people way out in the woods. I just started
23 thinking that's where they're getting those big bulls.
24 They go out for the horns. We don't eat horns. It's
25 good to see them on the walls, I guess. I don't have a
26 moose horn in my house.

27
28 I hope many of you in the audience will
29 understand that -- you probably hear us gripe all the
30 time, but it's part of our life because we grew up
31 eating fish, moose, beaver, chickens. We call them
32 chickens, but they're spruce grouse. A lot our -- like
33 king salmon, when I came to one of the meetings,
34 somebody was talking about something else and I didn't
35 know what they were talking about. We were talking
36 about the same fish, but different names.

37
38 So we grew up on that and, you know,
39 it's good to have. It's good to have. Like one day I
40 was just craving my king salmon with all that oil in
41 it. Thankfully I have a couple cases from the last
42 time I fished and I just went and opened that and there
43 was all that grease staring at me. Oh, my goodness,
44 that was -- you know.

45
46 And something like that -- and I know
47 you probably go to the store or you're craving, oh,
48 man, I want a chicken or I want pork, I want this, you
49 can just run down the street and get it. It used to be
50

0030

1 like that a long time ago for us. We used to just be
2 able to go in the woods and get what we want. Now we
3 can't with all the regulations.

4
5 I agree with Don about bears walking
6 into our village. We have to defend ourselves. If
7 somebody came into our house, broke into our house,
8 they always say defend, but make sure you shoot them in
9 the house or whatever. Get them in the house. So if
10 the animal comes into our house, we have to protect
11 ourselves and I don't see why in cases like that that
12 it's allowed. I'll defend my grandkids if a bear comes
13 in or try anyway. I'm sure anybody in this case would
14 also defend their family. So we need to think about
15 something like that.

16
17 The bears now are actually living in
18 our village. They're right in town. Right in our
19 backyard. So it's sort of scary. With that, Jack, do
20 you have anything else to add?

21
22 MR. REAKOFF: Thank you, Madame Chair.
23 I'm pretty distraught with the North Pacific Fisheries
24 Management Council having a bycatch meeting on salmon
25 in June when they know full well most of the people
26 who are having a problem with bycatch are in the middle
27 of their subsistence fisheries.

28
29 I feel strongly that the North Pacific
30 Fisheries Management Council should redo their agenda
31 to address salmon bycatch at appropriate timeframes in
32 the winter, a winter meeting schedule, so that the
33 people who are most affected by bycatch can
34 participate.

35
36 The reason this Council did not is
37 everybody was too busy. Everybody knows there's
38 seasonal work in Alaska, especially rural Alaska. The
39 North Pacific Fisheries Management Council should be
40 strongly reprimanded for not providing a platform to
41 address the bycatch of salmon when it's appropriate for
42 people to participate.

43
44 Thank you, Madame Chair.

45
46 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Thank you, Jack.
47 With that -- do you have something to add?

48
49 MS. PILCHER: I was just going to add
50

0031

1 in I got a note from a member of the Staff that the
2 next Council meeting looks like it will be December 5th
3 through the 13th.

4

5 MR. GERVAIS: North Pacific Council.

6

7 MS. PILCHER: Sorry. Yes, the North
8 Pacific Fisheries Management Council. And then just to
9 revisit what Kevin had asked. So one thing we could do
10 is we could entertain a motion to reconsider the agenda
11 to add stuff to it. We just have to put it back on the
12 table. Since everybody voted in the affirmative, then
13 it would just take anybody making a motion to put it
14 back on the table to add stuff.

15

16 MR. WHITWORTH: Madame Chair. I'm not
17 sure we will need to add anything. If we can discuss
18 letters, you know, like under North Pacific Fisheries
19 Management Council update. That was the only thing I
20 was thinking about, just the discussion of potential
21 comment letters coming from this body.

22

23 MR. HONEA: Madame Chair. I also agree
24 with that. Jack brought up a very good point, very
25 valid point in drafting a letter to them. Maybe we
26 could have that under consideration when we do write
27 letters or whatever. Thank you.

28

29 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Tim.

30

31 MR. GERVAIS: Thank you, Madame Chair.
32 In regards to changes of the agenda, I guess I would
33 like feedback from Jack or OSM Staff. Is this Council
34 already doing everything they can that's vested in
35 their charter to address salmon bycatch or is there
36 other functions we can do other than our advisory
37 letter writing and testifying to other committees or
38 councils such as North Pacific Fisheries Management
39 Council? Is there more to our toolbox than what we're
40 already doing? If so, I'd like to add that to the
41 agenda.

42

43 MS. PILCHER: Through the Chair. This
44 is Nissa. So I'm new. That's a really good question.
45 I'm not sure I can answer you exactly right now. I
46 believe you are doing everything the Council possibly
47 can do, but I can certainly take another look.

48

49 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Thank you.

50

0032

1 Thank you, Tim. I just want to thank Nissa for helping
2 us like we're both new up here, so we keep looking at
3 each other. So I hope you can bear with us.

4

5 With that, Jack, are you going to give
6 your chair report now?

7

8 MR. REAKOFF: I pretty much gave my
9 report when I spoke earlier. I do feel that the
10 Council has only certain abilities. We can't lobby --
11 you know, we (indiscernible) the reauthorization for
12 the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council. We
13 can't lobby because of the Hatch Act. So we can write
14 letters to the North Pacific Fisheries Management
15 Council through the Federal Subsistence Board process
16 to change their agenda to address bycatch at the
17 appropriate time. The next meeting is in December, but
18 they're probably not going to be talking about salmon
19 bycatch. They need the participation of the people who
20 are affected.

21

22 We also need to write a letter to the
23 State Board of Fish because of this Area M extreme
24 interception in the South Alaska Peninsula Fishery.
25 The Area M Fishery is taking as many or more chum
26 salmon than the trawl fleet. So we need to be writing
27 to the State Board of Fish, Chairman of the Board of
28 Fish, to recognize the extreme hardship of meeting
29 escapement and subsistence needs on the Yukon -- AYK
30 stocks. The Board of Game needs to direct Department
31 of Fish and Game, managers of Area M, to consider the
32 extreme dire situation of the chum salmon and chinook
33 salmon and other stocks that move through the South
34 Alaska Peninsula.

35

36 Thank you, Madame Chair.

37

38 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay. If our
39 Council is done with any more of their reports, if you
40 have anything else to add, this is your last chance.

41

42 MR. WHITWORTH: Madame Chair. Thanks.
43 Last chance. On the lines of writing a letter and
44 Darrell had brought up what can we do more than just
45 advise as a body. That's hard to -- for me it's hard
46 to figure out. I mean I have no idea -- like Nissa
47 said, we're new -- what this body can do.

48

49 As far as tribal governments go,

50

0033

1 there's -- the Biden Administration is on the table
2 trying to do more for co-stewardship and co-management
3 of resources that are important to tribal people. I
4 think that's maybe something this body cannot do, but
5 we can write a letter acknowledging this that DOI and
6 NOAA both should build these relationships with tribes
7 so that we are at the table more than an advisory role,
8 but more at a co-management role. Co-stewardship. So
9 there's this push.

10

11 Last week we had a Bethel meeting. I
12 think there was a meeting here in Fairbanks as well,
13 October 5 and 7, for DOI and NOAA tribal consultation.
14 I don't know if anybody -- if you all went to it. But
15 that meeting had a good turnout from tribal people.
16 This topic, co-stewardship and co-management of these
17 species came up and I think it's a really important
18 thing especially at this time period with this
19 administration with the people in DOI.

20

21 To make that happen at NOAA may be a
22 little bit more challenging, but I think DOI is really
23 ripe for co-management and co-stewardship. I know it's
24 not idea, but it is a step in the right direction as
25 far as getting people's voice. More than just an
26 advisory role. So I would hope this Council could form
27 a letter of some sort writing the DOI leadership and
28 NOAA leadership in talking about this opportunity.

29

30 I think we should also put in that
31 letter that there needs to be more of a gravel to
32 gravel management for salmon species. So where the
33 salmon are born in the gravel all the way out to their
34 migratory paths out into the Bering Sea, whether
35 they're going through False Pass, whether they're going
36 out to the Bering Sea, and then their return trip back
37 home to spawn.

38

39 Entire management needs to -- there
40 shouldn't be jurisdictional boundaries here. There is.
41 There's State, there's Federal, there's NOAA, there's
42 DOI, there's other State agencies in Area M compared to
43 in-river. There's very little collaboration between
44 all those agencies. There needs to be more
45 collaboration. So I think if we -- we need to point
46 that out. There should be.

47

48 So, for instance, folks talked about
49 bycatch, talked about intercepting the Area M and
50

0034

1 bycatch. Those bycatch numbers are not part of --
2 they're not considered -- how do I put it. They are
3 bi-caught out in the Bering Sea and they're not
4 considering our escapement goals and the people's needs
5 being met, right? It should be.

6
7 So people when they come -- when those
8 fish come into Pilot Station and are counted, the
9 regulations are affecting the people in the river the
10 most. The regulations out in the Bering Sea they're
11 not accounting for us and there needs to be a
12 connection there.

13
14 So gravel-to-gravel management, DOI and
15 NOAA, tribal consultation, working with the tribes,
16 working with the people in river, more co-stewardship
17 and co-management of the species so we have more than
18 an advisory role.

19
20 Anyway, thank you.

21
22 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Thank you,
23 Kevin. Anyone else? Darrell.

24
25 MR. VENT: I agree that we need to
26 really look at this because it's a big area. That bowl
27 we're talking about, that's our food there out in the
28 ocean, but it's not only ours. Like he's pointing out,
29 you know, we need to be at the table sitting there
30 discussing these issues because international waters
31 and there's a whole bunch of different places that have
32 hatchery fish that are being injected into these, their
33 areas where it's becoming more of a competition for our
34 natural stocks. So, you know, that's something that we
35 have to consider too because they put a lot of hatchery
36 fish out there. I hear that there's been quite a bit
37 that's been injected into their waters over there.

38
39 The chinook salmon that -- you look at
40 a plate of food over there in the international side
41 and it's pretty expensive to buy our chinook salmon.

42
43 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Thank you,
44 Darrell. Okay, with that we have service awards, I
45 guess.

46
47 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Yes. So we
48 wanted to take a moment to recognize those for their
49 time spent volunteering on this Council. It's time
50

0035

1 spent to represent your communities and your region,
2 but it is time spent away from family both while
3 preparing for the meetings as well as attending them.

4

5 So one thing to note, I was only able
6 to search a few years going back on transcripts to
7 check who had been recognized. So if I've missed
8 anyone, please let me know and we can address that
9 during the fall meeting. I will now be turning it over
10 to Mr. Kron.

11

12 MR. KRON: Madame Chair. I would ask
13 for a round of applause for you, for Ms. Jenny Pelkola.

14

15 (Applause)

16

17 MR. KRON: Thank you, Madame Chair.
18 You've served on the Western Interior Regional Advisory
19 Council since 2006. We want to thank you very much for
20 your service. For your 15 years of service.

21

22 You've rarely missed meetings. You
23 always bring you're A game. That's what we see.
24 You've been attentive. You add relevant information,
25 help with questions and discussion on many subsistence
26 and non-subsistence topics. You also ensure that the
27 meetings move along by offering motions as needed.

28

29 You've been active in your community,
30 participating in subsistence activities and effectively
31 communicate trends and concerns in your community and
32 your region.

33

34 Ms. Pelkola is also quick to recognize
35 other Council members through their communities and she
36 also makes people laugh. We appreciate that.
37 Sometimes we need to laugh.

38

39 Ms. Pelkola is an important voice for
40 the Western Interior Regional Advisory Council and we
41 thank her very much for her service.

42

43 (Applause)

44

45 MR. KRON: We have a plaque for you to
46 put on your refrigerator or your wall.

47

48 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Thank you.

49

50

0036

1 (Applause)

2

3 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: It's like
4 getting an award for first place or something.

5

6 (Laughter)

7

8 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay. With that
9 we'll -- we don't need a break, do we? Do you need a
10 break? Okay. I'm usually right on time, so if I say
11 five minutes, it's five minutes. So I'll give you a
12 10-minute break. Be back in 10 minutes.

13

14 (Off record)

15

16 (On record)

17

18 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay, with that
19 we'll continue with our meeting but before we do that,
20 I think we have more people online, do you want to.....

21

22 MS. PILCHER: For the record this is
23 Nissa Pilcher with OSM. If anyone's joined us that
24 wasn't able to introduce themselves this morning at
25 9:00, if you'll please go ahead and do so right now
26 we'd appreciate it.

27

28 MR. BLIHOVDE: Hi, good morning. This
29 is Boyd Blihovde with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
30 and Refuge Manager at Yukon National Wildlife Refuge.
31 Thanks.

32

33 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay. At this
34 time we're going to have the public, tribal comments on
35 non-agenda items.

36

37 MS. PILCHER: For the record this is
38 Nissa Pilcher with the Office of Subsistence
39 Management. During the fall 2022 Council meeting cycle
40 the public can provide written or oral comments to the
41 Council in-person, telephonically, or by email. You
42 can submit written comments up until the start of the
43 presentation of each proposal or closure review.
44 Please indicate your name, affiliation, if that's
45 applicable, and if commenting on a proposal or closure
46 review, please review the proposal or closure review
47 number. You can submit your comments by either
48 emailing your comments to subsistence@fws.gov, bringing
49 a hardcopy of your written comment to the Council

50

0037

1 meeting and presenting it to the Council Coordinator
2 for distribution, or asking someone to deliver it to
3 the Council meeting on your behalf if you are unable to
4 attend. You can also provide oral comments to the
5 Council either in-person, or telephonically. The Chair
6 will announce the opportunity to provide oral comments
7 after the presentation on the analysis of the proposal
8 or closure review. To provide in-person comments, you
9 must fill out a comment form provided on the public
10 table. These blue cards. And turn it in to the
11 Council Coordinator or other OSM Team member. During
12 the appropriate time the Chair will call your name when
13 it is your turn. Telephonically, after the in-personal
14 oral comments and summary of written public comments,
15 the Chair will ask if anyone on the phone -- if there
16 is anyone on the phone that would like to provide
17 comments. For those on the phone who would like to
18 speak start by saying Mr. or Madame Chair, and wait to
19 be recognized by the Chair before speaking. Comments
20 on non-agenda items are accepted at the start of each
21 day of all Council meetings. The Chair will announce
22 this opportunity daily, which that's where we're at
23 right now in the agenda.

24
25 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: All right, I
26 guess at this time we have Jim Simon on non-agenda
27 items, public testimony. Are you online Jim.

28
29 MS. PILCHER: He's here.

30
31 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Oh, I'm sorry.

32
33 MR. SIMON: Thank you, Madame Chair.
34 For the record my name is Jim Simon. I'm a consultant
35 with the Tanana Chiefs Conference and the Kuskokwim
36 River InterTribal Fish Commission but I'm just giving
37 my personal comments here right now.

38
39 And because of the great conversations
40 the Council has had regarding the impacts of commercial
41 fisheries on our failure to have reasonable
42 opportunities for subsistence and meeting escapement
43 goals, et cetera, I wanted to bring to your attention
44 to something that I believe is in your book, it's the
45 2022 Kuskokwim River Salmon Situation Report produced
46 by the Kuskokwim River InterTribal Fish Commission.
47 And, in particular, on Page 8 there's a blue box that
48 says: At a Glance: impacts of commercial salmon
49 interception and bycatch. And the last bullet in that
50

0038

1 blue square, both State and Federal policy declare that
2 meeting salmon escapement goals and providing for
3 subsistence uses are to be prioritized over commercial
4 harvest. However, in practice, the current management
5 regimes under both North Pacific Fisheries Management
6 Council and the Alaska Board of Fisheries effectively
7 prioritize commercial uses over Western Alaska
8 escapement needs or subsistence uses. For example, in
9 2021 when chum salmon harvest were severely restricted
10 on the Kuskokwim and not allowed on the Yukon, over
11 740,000 Western Alaska chum were legally caught between
12 both the Area M Fishery and the Bering Sea pollock
13 fishery. And that's just one example of the.....

14

15 (Teleconference interference -
16 participants not muted - on hold)

17

18 MR. SIMON:more extensive efforts
19 that the Kuskokwim River InterTribal Fish Commission
20 Team did in their situation report this year where
21 there's a lot of information about both bycatch and
22 interception of our salmon are discussed.

23

24 I also wanted to mention that I believe
25 that Council Member Whitworth briefly mentioned some of
26 the efforts that Alaska tribes are working with and the
27 recent joint consultation between NOAA and the
28 Department of Interior regarding the salmon crises in
29 the AYK region. But I also wanted to mention that
30 Arctic, Yukon, Kuskokwim Tribal Coalition has hired a
31 Staff member and Kevin Whitworth can give you more
32 information about this if you'd like, to focus on
33 bycatch and try to really bring the voice of AYK
34 tribes, that's Kawarek, Tanana Chiefs Conference,
35 Association of Village Council Presidents, the Yukon
36 River InterTribal Fish Commission and the Kuskokwim
37 River InterTribal Fish Commission. You know the
38 coalition was first established more than 20 years ago
39 with just the three regional non-profits to partner
40 with NOAA, Fish and Wildlife Service and the Alaska
41 Department of Fish and Game, Division of Commercial
42 Fisheries and Division of Subsistence and Bering Sea
43 Fishermens Association to establish the AYK Sustainable
44 Salmon Initiative, and through the late Senator
45 Stevens, you know, there was a lot of funding provided
46 prior to the loss of earmarks to that effort and
47 something like 30-some million dollars worth of salmon
48 research has been conducted there, mostly focused on
49 chinook or king salmon and we are beginning to see
50

0039

1 managers actually take into account, particularly the
2 Federal manager on the Kuskokwim in partnership with
3 the Kuskokwim River InterTribal Fish Commission to
4 recognize the importance of the loss of large salmon on
5 the spawning grounds, et cetera, a lot of this approach
6 that's being applied to the co-management of the
7 Kuskokwim River salmon stocks is being informed by this
8 extensive research that's been conducted.

9
10 You know local people tend to make
11 these observations and it takes scientists, you know, a
12 decade or two to sort of catch up. You know 20 years
13 ago when I first started working at the Department of
14 Fish and Game after leaving Tanana Chiefs Conference
15 everyone was talking about the declining size of salmon
16 and how mesh size was affecting perhaps the decline of
17 salmon and the concerns that local tribal
18 representatives had about what that means for salmon
19 escapement and, you know, we finally are seeing the
20 Department of Fish and Game recognize that on the Kenai
21 River where they actually have an escapement goal for
22 large chinook salmon reaching the spawning ground. And
23 I really encourage the Department to avail themselves
24 of all of this new salmon science that's coming out to
25 really try to rebuild these runs. What we see -- I
26 really agree with what Member Darrell Vent said we
27 really see money driving the decisionmaking and the
28 call for more research before taking any action and I
29 don't think that is serving the fish very well and I
30 think that both the Federal and State governments need
31 to start prioritizing the fish over money.

32
33 And with that I'd also like to point
34 out that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service does have a
35 role on the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council,
36 it's only advisory I believe but there is an annual
37 report that is submitted to the North Pacific Fisheries
38 Management Council by the Fish and Wildlife Service and
39 it would be really good if that report was -- a little
40 more attention was paid in that report to -- for
41 example, acknowledging the Kuskokwim River InterTribal
42 Fish Commission and the Yukon Delta National Wildlife
43 Refuge's efforts for in-season harvest monitoring
44 rather than attributing to the Department of Fish and
45 Game. The Department of Fish and Game has assessed in-
46 season harvest management and has basically concluded
47 that it can't be done, but the Yukon Delta National
48 Wildlife Refuge and the Kuskokwim River InterTribal
49 Fish Commission has demonstrated that it can be done
50

0040

1 and it can be done well with scientific rigor.

2

3

Thank you.

4

5

MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Thank you, very
6 much.

7

8

MR. GERVAIS: Can we ask him questions
9 Jenny.

10

11

MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: I guess Tim has
12 some questions.

13

14

MR. GERVAIS: Thanks for your comments,
15 Jim. From what I've seen in this situation report it
16 looks like a lot of good information that everybody on
17 the Council needs to go over and be familiarized with
18 all the information brought in here.

19

20

So you're saying that the Fish and
21 Wildlife Service has an advisory capacity with the
22 North Pacific Council, do you know who prepares that
23 report?

24

25

MR. SIMON: I do not have a lot of
26 familiarity with the specific role of that Fish and
27 Wildlife Service person advising the North Pacific
28 Fisheries Management Council. I don't know who that
29 person is. And it is unclear to me, specifically, who
30 writes that report for the AYK region to give to the
31 North Pacific. But because of the three river index,
32 you know, that is used to determine whether or not the
33 lower hardcap for chinook salmon is put in place for
34 bycatch or the higher -- you know it's 60,000 if the
35 combined three river index of the Yukon, I believe it's
36 the middle and upper Yukon, the Kuskokwim and the
37 Unalakleet if it's something like a quarter of a
38 million or higher it's the king bycatch cap is 60,000
39 and if it's below that, so depressed runs it's
40 something like 45,000 and we've been in a number of
41 years now where that 45,000 hardcap for bycatch of
42 chinook salmon is in place. And that's what I believe
43 Member -- Council Member Whitworth was talking about is
44 there is no such provision to protect chum catch and
45 why you see the -- from that Kuskokwim River
46 InterTribal Fish Commission situation report that I
47 read into the record, why there is so much chum
48 harvested that would return to Western Coastal Alaska
49 stocks. It's hard to genetically distinguish each
50

0041

1 river from that genetic group. In part because of lack
2 of interest in trying to find more specific genetic
3 markers, at least, from my experience being on the
4 steering committee of the Arctic, Yukon, Kuskokwim
5 Sustainable Salmon Initiative for 13 or so years for
6 the Department of Fish and Game.

7

8 Thank you.

9

10 MR. GERVAIS: Jim, do you know if the
11 Kuskokwim River InterTribal Fish Commission, do they
12 conduct their own genetic testing in addition to the
13 Federal and State testing?

14

15 MR. SIMON: I should probably let my
16 boss speak to that but he can correct me if I'm wrong.
17 But, no, at this point they're not conducting any
18 specific genetic stock identification work but I think
19 that it is definitely of interest. The most recent
20 project that I am aware of, and, again I'm not a
21 fisheries biologist, I'm the Anthropologist for that
22 InterTribal Commission, it's really starting to look at
23 smolt out-migration and following up on a previous Fish
24 and Wildlife study that really -- that demonstrated a
25 dramatic decline in the numbers of salmon smolt leaving
26 the Kwethluk River drainage. This is something that I
27 hope the Department of Fish and Game will also start
28 paying attention to. A year ago when representatives
29 from the Kuskokwim River InterTribal Fish Commission
30 and the Yukon River InterTribal Fish Commission had a
31 meeting with Commissioner Doug Vincent-Lang about the
32 salmon concerns, his comments were that it's all a
33 marine ocean issue and so we were able to point out
34 this decline in small out-migration through the four
35 years of that study on the Kwethluk as an indication
36 that it's not just -- you can't just all blame it on
37 what's happening in the ocean, I think some of the
38 Department's own research that Dr. Katie Howard and
39 Sabrina Garcia are working on with looking at Yukon
40 smolt out-migration into near shore waters and how that
41 has become a reliable predictor of future adult returns
42 also demonstrates that there is -- there are things
43 happening -- and the lack of predictability to some
44 extent for chum salmon indicate that there are things
45 happening in both fresh water and the marine
46 environment that need to be addressed.

47

48 You know bringing that up makes me
49 think, you know, that everything we're hearing is, oh,

50

0042

1 it's climate change and we can't do anything about it,
2 well, climate change is nothing new to indigenous
3 people in Alaska. I'm sorry I cannot remember the
4 gentleman's name but I know that there was a Point Hope
5 tribal citizen testifying before Congress about the
6 impacts of climate change in 1975. My own neighbors,
7 growing up in the Ahtna region, you know, spoke about
8 how the climate was changing with watching tundra in
9 the Ahtna region becoming shrubby, you know, and
10 forested and landscapes and how that affected caribou
11 herds. I mean none of this is really new. It's maybe
12 new to the Western Scientists but indigenous stewards,
13 you know, are aware of these connections in this
14 ecosystem approach that fortunately Western scientists
15 are beginning to embrace and look into more.

16

17 Sorry, that was a long-winded answer to
18 that question.

19

20 MR. GERVAIS: Okay. So I'm learning
21 that you're an anthropologist, can you give this
22 Council a story or a case where some disenfranchised
23 people were able to overcome money and politics to do
24 the right thing, and then how that may -- how that
25 could play into what needs to happen to get our salmon
26 back.

27

28 MR. SIMON: That's a tough ask but
29 actually I think I have a good answer. The Kuskokwim
30 River InterTribal Fish Commission, I think is one of
31 the best examples I can come up with. Many of the
32 elders and the formal elder advisors to that Commission
33 and it's in-season management team were -- were
34 commercial fishermen. You know commercial fishing in-
35 river disappeared long ago and many of the elders on
36 the Kuskokwim that I have learned from speak to, in now
37 retrospect, how the co-modification of those fish for
38 commercial sales was really the beginning of these
39 problems and I think that's why they are being
40 successful in trying to -- every year that the
41 Commission, in partnership with the Federal -- you know
42 the Fish and Wildlife Refuge there have met the
43 escapement goals but it's not making a difference, the
44 runs aren't -- the escapement goals have been met for
45 something like ever since this -- the last time the
46 escapement goal wasn't met was when the State was still
47 managing the chinook run and I believe in 2013, and so
48 we should start to see the returns based on those
49 escapements being met and we're not. And so something
50

0043

1 else is going on and we need to really look at these
2 management plans, both in the Kuskokwim and the Yukon
3 River, look at these management plans in light of
4 climate change and what we've learned since many of
5 them have been put into place, you know, a decade or so
6 ago, to see if they are still consistent with the
7 Sustainable Salmon Fisheries Management Policy adopted
8 by the Board of Fish like 20 years ago, which calls for
9 precautionary management. Precautionary management to
10 this anthropologist, anyhow, does not mean we keep
11 doing everything we have been doing to co-modify and
12 sell, make money off of these resources when the whole
13 regime, the ecosystem regime is changing and when
14 escapement goals are met but the returns are not coming
15 back from those, something is wrong with the system and
16 precautionary management says be cautious, don't just
17 say, well, we're going to keep doing everything we have
18 been doing until we have new data that suggests we
19 should do something differently. That's not
20 precautionary in my understanding of that means.

21

22 Thank you.

23

24 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Any more --

25 Darrell.

26

27 MR. VENT: Yeah, Jim, thank you for
28 that information and input there. You know we always
29 sit in meetings and speak about how, you know, we're
30 trying to figure out what's going on with the fish and
31 we have a -- you know, in our environment we have a lot
32 of issues that could affect our fish. I know I hear
33 stories from down in the Lower 48 where the fish were
34 being affected by predation. They injected a lot of
35 fish in there but it didn't come back the way it should
36 have because predation was pretty high so they had to
37 like put a bounty or incentive program on the pike or
38 predation that was taking the fish. And I see
39 something similar up in our area here. You know we
40 have a lot of pike in our area now, it's more than
41 usual. You know a lot of people are catching them in
42 their nets. And back in the early '90s and 2000s there
43 was not as much but now we look at all these fish racks
44 and you're seeing a lot more pike. So, you know,
45 that's one of the issues that maybe they could put in
46 as information on how to get that fish back in our
47 river. You know, we're being affected by many, many
48 ways, more than just predation, it's out in the ocean,
49 it's in our areas, it's maybe pollution, we don't have
50

0044

1 everything on record of how our fish are being
2 affected. So there's more information that we need to
3 try to look at. And when the small ones are heading
4 down the river we don't -- we don't look at predation,
5 we talk about it but, you know, there's more
6 information out there that we need to look into.

7
8 MR. SIMON: Yeah, thank you, Darrell.
9 I think you're right and, again, having worked for the
10 Department of Fish and Game, Division of Subsistence
11 for the AYK region for 14 years, I know that the
12 research Staff there have documented many local
13 observations about how even some whitefish will take
14 and eat salmon eggs. Pike, in particular, you know, as
15 some of you may know there are programs in Southcentral
16 Alaska to actually poison the pike, you know, because
17 of their impacts on Alexander Creek salmon returns, et
18 cetera. I think that in the AYK region on the
19 Kuskokwim and Yukon, the Department, you know, relies
20 on subsistence fishermen to take care of that. And I
21 think some of the problems that Kevin Whitworth spoke
22 about earlier with during the coho closure of any
23 gillnet gear, you know, in the river, that prevented
24 taking of non-salmon fish, that's -- we need to come up
25 with better solutions. And it's my hope that the
26 Department will have submitted proposals to give them
27 the management tools they need to address coho
28 conservation on the Kuskokwim.

29
30 You know, again, following up on what
31 Kevin Whitworth said about the working group meetings,
32 I mean there were also questions made to the Department
33 of whether or not they have considered submitting an
34 emergency petition to give them that management
35 flexibility and those tools so that they could provide
36 for some non-salmon subsistence fishing opportunities
37 in the middle and upper Kuskokwim, but they said the
38 process would take too long, I guess. But a month
39 closure -- an emergency petition implies, you know,
40 that it could happen within that month timeframe but.

41
42 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Darrell.

43
44 MR. VENT: Yeah, on that note there's
45 issues that we got to look ahead on is that whitefish
46 and sheefish are being utilized in our villages now
47 because we can't rely on the salmon. We don't have any
48 data on these fish but they're really starting to get
49 hit now. I'm just hoping that we could maybe get some
50

0045

1 more information on the other species because now that
2 we're relying on them they're going to start declining,
3 we don't know what kind of shape they're in or
4 anything, at the moment. I know up around Allakaket
5 and up in the rivers up there that's where the sheefish
6 spawn up there and those are really important areas to
7 us. So I just wanted you to know that.

8

9 MR. SIMON: Thank you, Darrell. I know
10 that you didn't have a specific question for me but,
11 you know, it is important for the Council to recognize
12 that this is also not new. You know some of the
13 studies done in the upper Koyukuk River by the Division
14 of Subsistence by Dave Andersen of 20 years ago was
15 specifically looking at non-salmon fish populations and
16 their uses given the salmon collapse of 20 years ago
17 and so the Councils adopted priority information needs
18 to provide funding to study those non-salmon fish. I
19 believe there is another project starting to do that
20 same thing in the upper Koyukuk that's being funded by
21 the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program. I could be
22 wrong but I think that's accurate. To look at this.

23

24 And so the question is, what are we
25 going to do differently from 20 years ago.

26

27 You know the problem with the way our
28 current management regimes operate is that we only
29 study things after a crises has happened, it's like
30 ichthyophonus. 20 years ago it was being studied but
31 then it sort of disappeared so it wasn't being studied,
32 and now it's being studied again so that we can
33 evaluate what we might -- how management might be
34 influenced by that information. And, you know, also
35 with those non-salmon projects that the Fisheries
36 Resource Monitoring Program have funded, you know, when
37 I became the Regional Supervisor at Subsistence
38 Division was a major priority of mine to do non-salmon
39 work throughout the Kuskokwim and Yukon areas and there
40 was sort of a hold put on the FRMP funding of those
41 until there was sort of a research and management plan
42 developed, which then.....

43

44 (Teleconference interference -
45 participants not muted)

46

47 REPORTER: Go ahead Jim.

48

49 MR. SIMON: Which then Caroline Brown

50

0046

1 with the Division of Subsistence and Randy Brown with
2 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service conducted and is
3 really -- identifies the information gaps and what the
4 information needs are that we have to make sure that
5 that non-salmon fish species can continue to be
6 sustainably managed as people shift their focus from
7 non-existent salmon to those other species.

8
9 I can tell you that after looking at
10 some of that work 20 -- 15 to 20 years ago I could not
11 see a clear indication that people were harvesting a
12 sufficient replacement poundage of non-salmon to
13 replace the lost salmon. So it's just also like what
14 Kevin Whitworth was mentioning earlier, you know,
15 because of the conservation concerns on the Kuskokwim
16 for chinook, chum and now coho, those conservation
17 management restrictions prevent people from being able
18 to fully utilize sockeye. So even before the coho
19 collapse if you looked at whether or not people were
20 harvesting more coho in order to replace the lost kings
21 or chums, you don't really see it being a sufficient
22 replacement value. So I think that's why we're seeing
23 such hardship, is that, while the opportunities may
24 exist for these other replacement fish, for whatever
25 reason they're really not filling the gaps from the
26 loss of salmon. So we really need to rebuild the
27 salmon stocks. And if -- and on the Kuskokwim, if
28 meeting the escapement goals aren't helping, then maybe
29 the escapement goals aren't right or something. That's
30 why the Kuskokwim River InterTribal Fish Commission has
31 been shooting for the upper end of the escapement goal
32 range, not the bear minimum. And -- but unfortunately,
33 you know, on the Yukon they're just not being met
34 period. Not meeting Treaty obligations. You know the
35 Fish and Wildlife Service gets a couple million dollars
36 a year to support the Yukon Panel process, funds a
37 bunch of the Department of Fish and Game and a team of
38 managers and yet the metrics are a failure, I mean
39 we're not meeting Treaty goals, we're not meeting
40 escapement so we can't, as -- and what I'm hearing from
41 the various tribal official representatives of the 37
42 member tribes of Tanana Chiefs Conference we cannot
43 keep doing the same thing over and over again and
44 expect a different result, something needs to be done
45 differently because what we have been doing is not
46 working.

47
48 Thanks.
49
50

0047

1 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Thank you, Jim.
2 Okay.

3
4 MR. GERVAIS: One more please.

5
6 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: One more.

7
8 MR. GERVAIS: Thank you, Madame Chair.
9 Jim, can you estimate what percentage of ADF&G's
10 management, not just in-river, but the commercial
11 management too, how much of that comes from regulation
12 and how much comes based from the top down, either the
13 Governor or the Commissioner of Fish and Game?

14
15 MR. SIMON: Wow, that's a loaded
16 question for sure.

17
18 (Laughter)

19
20 MR. SIMON: You know I never
21 specifically studied this as a social scientist, you
22 know, your question, so all I have is sort of my
23 observation and my gut. I do know that State
24 Administrations change just as Federal Administrations
25 change you can see differences in management. I know
26 that not so much for this -- and let me also say that
27 the managers on the ground, you know, they are doing
28 the best that they can and trying, I do know that in
29 recent years I do -- I have been told by some, at least
30 one manager outside of the AYK region that those
31 decisions are coming from Juneau, you know, the actual
32 on the ground decisionmaking. I think there's various
33 levels of review and approval depending on which
34 Administration is in office and that's not really a big
35 surprise I don't think to anyone.

36
37 I guess that's all I can really say at
38 this point.

39
40 MR. GERVAIS: All right, that's good.

41
42 MR. SIMON: A lot of it, it's just the
43 uncertainty. You know it's the uncertainty. And
44 that's where the importance of precaution comes in.
45 Commercial fish managers and commercial fishermen, from
46 my experience having never been either, are very
47 optimistic people and I think that optimism could be
48 better balanced with a dose of realism and precaution.
49 Oh, it'll be better. There are many times in the past
50

0048

1 20 years, especially when I worked for the Division of
2 Subsistence where there was still incidental sales of
3 king salmon allowed in the lower Yukon River and then
4 by the time the sort of picture of what the run was
5 doing arrived to the managers minds, and the data they
6 would then try to shut down the Yukon Flats, 5D, and,
7 you know, there were still times when I still worked
8 there when I would say well how many sales of kings did
9 you just allow to happen and it turned out to be about
10 the same amount that the subsistence priority fishery
11 in the Yukon Flats had and I said, so you just sold
12 their fish and now you're going to shut them down, and
13 at least in that particular year, in that instance,
14 they chose not to shut them down. And so that's, you
15 know, that was a different era perhaps for the
16 Subsistence Division, the subsistence isn't a division
17 anymore at the Department of Fish and Game and what I
18 hear is they call the Staff Subsistence Resource
19 Specialists now, not Subsistence Research Specialists,
20 [sic] not Resource Specialists -- when I worked there
21 they were all Subsistence Resource Specialists with
22 jobs of helping to implement the subsistence priority
23 law.

24

25 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay, thank you
26 very much. Okay, at this time we'll have Virgil
27 Umphenour on Proposal 140 Area M.

28

29 MR. UMPHENOUR: Thank you, Madame
30 Chair. My name is Virgil Umphenour, I'm representing
31 the Fairbanks Fish and Game Advisory Committee this
32 morning. We submitted a proposal to the Board of
33 Fisheries to address the issue in Area M and the June
34 Fishery. It's Proposal 140. I served three terms on the
35 State Board of Fisheries and when I was on the Board of
36 Fisheries we attempted various and numerous times to do
37 something about the interception of the, primarily chum
38 salmon, in the Area M June Fishery and the post-June
39 Fishery as well.

40

41 But a little bit of history on the Area
42 M Fishery. The Area M Fishery is on the south side of
43 the Alaska Peninsula, commonly referred to as False
44 Pass, that fishery has been going on, the commercial
45 fishery there since the early 1900s but the one on the
46 Yukon has as well, basically, if you count what the --
47 if it wasn't going out of state for commercial purposes
48 it was not called a commercial fishery although there
49 was a giant commercial fishery and it started with when
50

1 Alaska became a state and the Army had to have dog
2 teams and so there were people that were hired by the
3 Army to catch fish for the Army for their dog teams and
4 to feed the soldiers. And then Hudenstuck* when he was
5 the Archdeacon of the Episcopal Church in Alaska he
6 started orphanages, because we had the big flu epidemic
7 that killed lots of people and there were lots of
8 orphans, anyway he had one at Nenana and he operated
9 out of Fort Yukon, but there was a big crash of salmon
10 in the Yukon River in 1918 and 1919 right at the time
11 when they had all that as well and he went back to
12 Washington D.C., and spoke before what was called the
13 White Commission, because Congressman White was in
14 charge of the fur and fisheries division for the United
15 States Congress and that's who controlled the fisheries
16 and the fur trade in Alaska prior to statehood and that
17 resulted in what was called the White Act, where they
18 dissolved -- they did away with the commercial fishery
19 and they did away with that to provide subsistence use
20 for the people on the Yukon. And about the same time
21 then that put a lot of emphasis when the White
22 Commission -- put a lot of emphasis on management of
23 the fisheries and on what the subsistence needs were of
24 the people. So that stayed that way until about the
25 early 1930s when they started a commercial fishery
26 again.

27
28 But the Area M Fishery, there's no
29 spawning fish, no local fish in the June fishery and
30 very few until after the middle of July, so that
31 fishery is an intercept fishery. It's harvesting
32 migrating stocks and most of those migrating stocks are
33 headed north but not all of them. At the -- and this
34 last April the Department put out a summary of the
35 previous fishery, the 2021 fishery and an outlook for
36 the 2022 fishery and in the very opening paragraph of
37 that it states:

38
39 This is not an exact quote but to the
40 best of my memory it's a pretty close to an exact
41 quote.

42
43 It says: The Area M June Fishery is --
44 and the Southeast Alaska chinook salmon fishery is the
45 only two fisheries in the state, commercial fisheries
46 that are managed by what returns, by the -- the in-
47 season management of what returns. The one in
48 Southeast, the chinook salmon fishery, that is set by
49 the Pacific Salmon Commission, it's a Treaty between
50

0050

1 the United States and Canada. I've been on the -- I'm
2 part of that as well but I'm on the Yukon River Panel
3 and I've been on it since 1988, before we even had a
4 Treaty, I was one of the people that helped negotiate
5 the Treaty and, in fact, I've been on that -- I think
6 I'm the senior member as far as longevity, been on the
7 Salmon Commission longer than anyone from either
8 country, since 1988 -- anyway, so that fishery is set
9 by a Treaty. The one in Area M is only set by the
10 management plan, the current management plan.

11

12 Now, like I said when I was on the
13 Board of Fisheries we addressed this numerous times.
14 The first time it really got addressed as far as
15 interception goes was after 1982. Because in 1982 the
16 fall chum run failed on the Yukon River and the Area M
17 June Fishery caught over a million chum salmon in the
18 June Fishery. Now, this past year -- and so what the
19 Board did is they ended up putting a chum cap on. When
20 they caught X number of chums then the fishery would
21 close. In 1991, this is right after YRDFA was formed
22 and I was co-Chair of YRDFA for the upper Yukon at the
23 time and I testified before the Board of Fish in I
24 believe, November of 1991, I know Mr. Kron was there
25 when that happened, and they had a big outlook for
26 Bristol Bay sockeye, at that time the management plan
27 said that they would get 8.3 percent of Bristol Bay
28 sockeye, that was the allocation for the Area M June
29 Fishery of sockeye salmon, 8.3 percent, but they know
30 how many sockeye salmon -- or chum salmon they would
31 catch to catch a certain amount of sockeye, it's called
32 a sockeye to chum ratio. And so going by the
33 historical sockeye to chum ratio they would have to
34 catch at least 900,000 chum salmon in order to harvest
35 the forecast for Bristol Bay, their share of the
36 forecast for Bristol Bay. So at that time the chum cap
37 was 600,000, they changed it to 900,000. So after that
38 happened I wrote a petition to the Board of Fisheries
39 and the Board of Fisheries rejected my petition so I
40 said well to the heck with this and so I got with other
41 people I knew in the AYK region and I sent that
42 petition -- well, I got signatures here in Fairbanks,
43 Will Mayo was the Chair or Executive Director or
44 whatever you want to -- President of Tanana Chiefs
45 Conference, he sent the petition to the Tanana Chiefs
46 Conference villages, I sent my petition to Nome and
47 Kawarek got it to the Nome villages because I knew a
48 lot of people in the Norton Sound region because I had
49 been an officer in the National Guard up there for
50

0051

1 awhile, anyway, and we collected over 10,000
2 signatures. At the time Jack Coghill was Lt. Governor
3 and I knew Jack Coghill, he's from Nenana and so I sent
4 the petition to him and then he told the Governor, we
5 need to make the Board of Fish readdress that chum cap
6 so the Governor ordered the Board to do that and we had
7 a meeting -- or they had a meeting in Juneau coming up
8 so they put us on the agenda for that, we got it
9 reduced down to 700,000.

10

11 But anyway so this thing's been going
12 on for years. And then they -- like I said the Board
13 of Fish did all kinds of different things to the
14 management plan but there was one thing that was always
15 going on, they called it chum chucking, and that is the
16 Area M fishermen, because they got a lot more money for
17 sockeye salmon and if they caught the cap of chum
18 salmon their fishery would close, so they would just
19 throw them overboard but we never had any hard evidence
20 of that. So I told the Trooper Captain that came out
21 to all the Board of Fish meetings I said, you know,
22 there's no reason with the new optics that are
23 available now that you guys just can't set up an
24 observation post up on one of those mountains in Area M
25 and watch where they're chucking and record what's
26 happening. So he secretly did that. And so they
27 caught several seiners that were doing that. They had
28 people throwing the chum salmon overboard. Well, they
29 got a conviction on that -- or got them convicted and
30 that happened just prior to the Board of Fisheries
31 meeting in January of 2001 but that meeting lasted
32 about 25 or 26 days, somewhere in there because the
33 Board's budget had been cut by 35 percent by the
34 Senator from Kenai who was mad at the Board over the
35 Board restricting their fishery to get escapement in
36 the upper reaches of Cook Inlet in the Susitna River
37 drainage, and so he was Chairman of Senate Finances so
38 he got the Board's budget cut by 35 percent, which not
39 just got the Board of Fish budget cut, it got the AC's
40 budget cut and the Board of Game's budget cut as well
41 so we had to do Bristol Bay, AYK, Area M in one meeting
42 and that was in January and February of 2001. Also
43 something that kind of coincided with that was I knew
44 that if I could get the fish tickets, copies of the
45 fish tickets that I could really come close to proving
46 that they were not counting all the chum salmon because
47 the processors didn't want the fishery to get closed
48 either. And so I had requested and it took three -- at
49 least three years I worked on this with Dr. White from
50

1 Bethel trying to get printouts of the fish tickets for
2 the Area M fishermen and so we finally got it, got 10
3 years worth of fish ticket printouts with a discreet
4 permit number that belongs to that permit, we had the
5 harvest by day and by statistical area and by species
6 and so in that South Unimak fishery there were
7 fishermen that caught more chums than sockeye, that's
8 what they sold, more chums than sockeye. There were
9 other fishermen that it was kind of half and half, and
10 some fishermen -- there was one fisherman that caught
11 over 7,000 sockeye in that June Fishery and zero chums.
12 And so Area M always took this guy -- Stanley was his
13 name, an attorney with him to the meetings, and so that
14 attorney threatened the Department and said he was
15 going to sue the Board because that violated the
16 statute for confidentiality, that the processors would
17 be able to figure out who the fisherman was that didn't
18 sell all their fish to that processor. And so -- I
19 can't believe that they did this, but they withdrew
20 that. But everyone got to see it for a couple of days
21 before that happened. So when we went into
22 deliberations I said there's only one thing that works
23 and that's to get them to be treated like everyone
24 else, instead of getting to fish seven days a week, 24
25 hours a day, because that is what they were fishing, as
26 long as they didn't get the chum cap, give them a set
27 schedule and so that's what we did, and that is what
28 Proposal 140 is about.

29
30 But what ended up happening a few
31 months later after Dr. White and myself and a couple
32 other conservation minded Board members got off the
33 Board they changed it, and they increased the fishing
34 time by 285 percent, is what they did. And so as a
35 result of it those guys get to fish all they can stand
36 to fish and the seiners especially like in -- well,
37 it's here in the proposal on the second page, it tells
38 how much -- or the third page, it tells how much those
39 guys caught, but they caught chum salmon in 2001 they
40 caught 1.168 million which was a record number of chum
41 salmon, more than what they caught in 1982 and look at
42 what the numbers were on the Yukon River. Our summer
43 chum run for that year was 152,000. That's all that
44 went past the sonar. That's with zero subsistence
45 fishing, zero of any kind of fishing, and the numbers
46 past that sonar with the commercial fisheries south of
47 there down river catching in the neighborhood of a half
48 a million fish before they even get to the sonar and
49 subsistence fishermen taking what they need, it would
50

0053

1 normally be around 1.6 million, but if you didn't count
2 that it would have been over 2 million. That's that
3 long-term average. On the fall chum salmon they
4 normally average 998,000 past the sonar. And, again,
5 that's with the commercial fishery down river from
6 there and with the subsistence fishery down river from
7 there. Last year they got 102,000 that's all. And the
8 king salmon, the same type of thing.

9
10 So speaking of king salmon I got to add
11 something else to this. They always say they don't
12 catch any -- none of the king salmon headed to the AYK
13 region or in -- they say in the Bering Sea, they don't
14 go down to the Gulf of Alaska which is south of Area M.
15 But that's bologna. We started really noticing
16 ichthyophonus in the late '90s. And I'm a processor
17 here in Fairbanks and I buy fish up and down the river.
18 I've bought fish all the way from Mountain Village to
19 the Border. In fact I've even bought fish out of
20 Dawson years ago. But where I buy fish primarily from
21 is District 5 and 6 which is from Tanana up and Nenana
22 and Fairbanks. And so we noticed this -- something
23 wrong with the fish. And so one time Tanana -- or
24 Doyon was going to have some type of a function and
25 they wanted 200 pounds of king salmon fillets for their
26 function so I got out 29 king salmon out of my freezer,
27 we thawed them out and started filleting them and my
28 filleter comes to me and he says these fish all have
29 the fungus, that's what he called it, the fungus.
30 Anyway it was ichthyophonus and what it looks like when
31 you fillet the fish, you can't tell from the outside
32 that it's got it, when you open it up it's got, and
33 they're about the size of a pea, maybe a quarter inch
34 or a little bit smaller, round spots in it that look
35 like they're full of puss is what it looks like, that's
36 when they really have ichthyophonus bad. Anyway, out of
37 those 29 fish I got Louie Barton, who was a research
38 scientists out of Fairbanks, Fish and Game, I called
39 him up immediately and I said Louie you need to come
40 over here and bring your camera, I want you to see
41 this. And so out of those 29 fish, 15 of them were
42 like that, and they're all the big older fish and
43 primarily the females had that. So we raised all kinds
44 of, you know, tried to really emphasize that and we
45 finally got the Department to pay some attention and we
46 got some funding. And so this guy, Dr. Kocan, who was
47 a retired professor and researcher from the University
48 of Washington and he was the guy that did all the
49 ichthyophonus research after the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill
50

0054

1 in Prince William Sound, he came up, I think at least
2 three years in a row for sure and then he did some more
3 work after that and I actually dealt with him because
4 what he would do is take his samples and then they had
5 to be refrigerated and then shipped to the laboratory
6 in Seattle and the U.S. Geological Survey Laboratory is
7 the one that analyzed all these samples for
8 ichthyphonus, anyway, and so one of the things that he
9 was trying to determine was how do these king salmon
10 get ichthyphonus because ichthyphonus kills them, they
11 don't make it to the spawning grounds, the majority of
12 them don't if they have ichthyphonus. And so the way
13 the fish get it -- or the salmon get it in Prince
14 William Sound and in other places is they get it from
15 infected herring that they eat and so he went and
16 sampled a bunch of the herring in Norton Sound and the
17 Bristol Bay to see if they had ichthyphonus, he could
18 not find any ichthyphonus in the herring in Bristol Bay
19 or in the Bering Sea and so his assumption was that
20 they have to be going into the Gulf of Alaska south of
21 the Alaska Peninsula in order to get ichthyphonus. Now
22 in 2- and Tom Kron can correct me if I'm wrong, but I
23 think it was 2017, in the June Fishery in Area M, they
24 caught 44-thousand-something king salmon in the June
25 Fishery alone. If the trawl fishery caught 44,000 king
26 salmon in one month people would go ballistic. No one
27 did nothing about that. They're taking genetic samples
28 again of the catch of chum salmon in Area M but they're
29 not doing it on the king salmon and that really, really
30 aggravates me that they're not, but they're not.

31
32 But anyway, this proposal addresses all
33 three species that are really in biological trouble
34 here in all of AYK, not just the Yukon, but the
35 Kuskokwim, Norton Sound as well. Norton Sound, this
36 past year, the fishery up there, because they don't
37 have the escapement projects or the counting projects
38 that we do on the Yukon, and the reason why we have
39 them on the Yukon the way we do, a big part of it is
40 because of our Treaty with Canada, we get money to do
41 that and we're obligated, the United States government
42 is obligated to pass X number of fish across the border
43 into Canada which we haven't done for awhile. But
44 anyway, that's why we get the money. But they do know
45 how many fish they catch. And in Norton Sound this
46 year, they shut their commercial fishery down when they
47 weren't catching hardly any chum salmon but they only
48 caught five percent of the average. Five percent is
49 all they caught.
50

0055

1 And so this proposal really needs to
2 pass because we need to get those nets out of the
3 water.

4
5 And just so you know, you know, it's
6 easy to look up on the computer how much money those
7 guys make, the average income of those seiners in Area
8 M this last year was over \$600,000 for a little over a
9 month's work.

10

11 Thank you, Madame Chair.

12

13 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Thank you,
14 Virgil. Do we have any questions for Virgil.

15

16 Tim.

17

18 MR. GERVAIS: Virgil, this is Tim
19 Gervais. So can you just briefly go through the points
20 on this 140 that are -- are you bringing this stuff --
21 is this all historical or are these dates of this.....

22

23 MR. UMPHENOUR: Now, the majority of
24 this writing on this piece of paper is stuff that's
25 getting taken out of the management plan. Everything
26 that's in brackets goes out. If you start, you know,
27 on the front page it says: South Unimak and Shumigan
28 Island's June Fisheries harvest and then it's got both
29 in brackets and then chinook salmon added, chinook
30 salmon, sockeye salmon and chum salmon in a mixed stock
31 fishery.

32

33 And then something that's real
34 important is the definition of where the fishery takes
35 place because when they changed it in 2004, when they
36 changed it, they added a whole bunch more area that
37 they couldn't fish prior to that. This puts that area
38 back in is what it does. Because it eliminates a bunch
39 of the area that wasn't opened up to them. And then it
40 goes down there again, if you look it says: June 10
41 and then it's in bold print, through June 30, that
42 gives the dates. But then you get to the second page
43 and it says, right after paragraph two it's got in bold
44 print with brackets around it, that comes out and then
45 June 24th comes out, and then -- and then just below
46 there where it says, B, the fishery will be closed for
47 one period, okay, there all the way down almost to the
48 bottom of the page, all that bold print, that would
49 come out because that's what they used to do and that's
50

0056

1 pretty much it.

2

3 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay, thank you,
4 Virgil, that was very interesting.

5

6 MR. UMPHENOUR: Thank you.

7

8 MR. WHITWORTH: Madame Chair.

9

10 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Oh, I'm sorry.
11 Kevin.

12

13 MR. WHITWORTH: Thank you, Virgil.

14 Kevin Whitworth. I've got several questions or
15 comments that you had brought up.

16

17 One thing I wanted to mention here, the
18 genetics, I know that Member Gervais has brought this
19 up, too, with the genetics. So they're starting to
20 take genetics, I guess, this year, so that data is not
21 helpful, right, I mean you don't have that data at this
22 moment?

23

24 MR. UMPHENOUR: We don't have any of
25 that yet. The latest data would be from the WASSIP
26 study that was '07, '08 and '09 and there, the average
27 of three years, I think, 57 percent or 59 percent,
28 somewhere in that neighborhood where AYK bound fish or
29 north of there fish, they always try to say they're all
30 Japanese fish but that's not true, it's only 20-
31 something percent fish were from Asia in the WASSIP
32 study. But in the middle -- in the '90s a bunch of
33 genetic samples were taken and what they used to do is
34 before they could start that fishery, this is one of
35 the things that the Board did when I was on the Board,
36 is they would have to do a test fishery and determine
37 the sockeye to chum ratio and so they took genetic
38 samples of a lot of those fish and then they also took
39 samples and we had two different people analyzing these
40 samples, we had the Federal guy, Dick Wilmont, who was
41 a geneticists for the Alaska Science Center out of Auke
42 Bay, which is next to Juneau, he did a bunch of the
43 samples and then we had Lisa Seeb and Penelope, and I
44 can't think of her last name, the other geneticists for
45 the State and they analyzed a lot of those samples and
46 some of those samples came from the trawl fishery as
47 well. So -- but when they were going those samples
48 there was a period of time, because this thing -- you
49 know the genetics is constantly improving. And like
50

0057

1 right now for our salmon Treaty meetings, they can
2 break down the Tanana River whether it's summer chum or
3 fall chum and then for fall chum we have the Border
4 stocks, which is Chandalar and Sheenjok River,
5 primarily and the Black River, they're separate from
6 the main stem Yukon stocks in Canada and they're
7 separate from the ones that go up the Porcupine River,
8 what they call the Fishing Branch, which is up past Old
9 Crow. All those stocks are totally separate and they
10 can tell them in fall chums. And summer chums, Tanana
11 River like I just said is separate and then in king
12 salmon the Tanana River is separate and they've got, I
13 don't know, at least three stocks, I think, in Canada
14 that are separate -- that they can tell that, so why
15 they can't tell it in the WASSIP study is beyond me,
16 why they can't tell that. And also when I was on the
17 Board they would not separate -- they said they
18 couldn't separate the Western Alaska stock except for
19 fall chums from Canada but I don't know why they can't
20 tell the Tanana River stocks or the Border stocks in
21 chums, and at that time they said they couldn't really
22 tell Kotzebue chums because you have to have a 90
23 percent confidence interval before they will make a
24 management decision on it. Okay, and Kotzebue at the
25 time was only 88 percent confidence interval. And the
26 way they do the confidence intervals and there's people
27 in here that are biologists and if I'm wrong they can
28 correct me, but they run this through a computer a
29 bunch of times. And so what they do is they take
30 samples of -- that they know where that fish came from
31 and they run those genetics through the computer and it
32 has to come out mixed in with all these other ones, it
33 has to show up 90 percent of the time before they can
34 count it, basically, if you're not really educated like
35 me, to try to explain it I think. But, anyway, now
36 Kotzebue they say it's over 90 percent and so they can
37 count the Kotzebue fish.

38
39 But anyway, no, that's been done since
40 the early 90s -- well, since the '80s, I know Dick
41 Wilmont, I think he's one of the pioneers of this
42 genetic stuff and he used to call it electrofrieses the
43 way they did it.

44
45 MR. WHITWORTH: Uh-huh, thank you. And
46 yeah that's the best available data we have is from
47 that -- the most recent study was in 2009 through, like
48 Virgil's mentioning there, 2009 through I think it was
49 -- I can't remember -- 2007 through 2009 which
50

0058

1 estimated 57 percent like you said. And so 2020 if you
2 look at those numbers in 2002 chum bycatch or
3 intercept, whatever you want to call it, Area M
4 harvest, if you took 57 percent in 2020 it'd be almost
5 300,000 fish going to the coastal Western Alaska,
6 middle upper Yukon, 2021 -- I'm saying this a little
7 bit because Tim had asked the question, too, 2021 it
8 was near 700,000 and that's the best available data
9 that we have and it's not the first time where we're in
10 a data limited environment on the Kusko/Yukon River.
11 There's a lot of times we're having to make really hard
12 decisions when we are in a data limited environment and
13 so this fishery -- we're in a data limited environment
14 but we do have a little bit of data from those studies
15 that tells us that these fish are being intercepted in
16 that fishery and coming to Western Alaska.

17

18 Appreciate the history there too.

19

20 But also those numbers, and Virgil had
21 brought this up, those numbers of roughly 300,000
22 coming to Coastal Western Alaska are not accounting for
23 those chum chuckers. I know trawl boats -- I mean --
24 not trawl boats, but the boats down there that are
25 receiving the fish from the boats, the fishing boats.

26

27 MR. GERVAIS: Seines.

28

29 MR. WHITWORTH: No, the tenders. The
30 tender boats, they see this. You know I've had people
31 ask me just a couple of years ago how's the chum doing
32 on the Kusko, well, there's your problem, part of it's
33 these chum chuckers. So these numbers that were
34 300,000, or 700,000 is the minimum. There's a lot more
35 that's not being accounted for, and that's coming from
36 the fishers, it's not coming from me, it's coming from
37 the people who know this fishery and see it day by day.

38

39 Also fishers, I know down there, the
40 seine fishers, their boats are getting way more
41 efficient. You know there may be limits on the size of
42 the boat but the technology they have in those boats,
43 and this is coming from fishers down there in that
44 fishery who tell me this, and they have fish finders,
45 if they limited in the number of hours that they can
46 fish it's not helping to lower these bycatch numbers
47 because they're so efficient. And these are people
48 from these fisheries, from those local areas that own
49 two boats, they know that those fisheries are -- if

50

0059

1 they're limited to -- I mean from 10 hours to five
2 hours it's not making a difference.

3

4 So I appreciate this proposal. There's
5 a lot of talking points that you could bring up here
6 with this issue.

7

8 Also Virgil had brought up mixed stock
9 fishery, you know, in-river, these are mixed stock
10 fisheries, when they come in the river like we were
11 talking this morning, when these fisheries like for
12 instance the chum salmon, the chinook salmon, they come
13 into the Kuskokwim River and when there's restrictions
14 on those two species and there's a 100,000 sockeye
15 salmon in front of Bethel there, you cannot catch them.
16 We're being restricted in-river. These fisheries down
17 there are not restricted enough. They're dealing with
18 the same mixed stock fisheries we are but they're not
19 being restricted enough. We've got to get these
20 species past that area.

21

22 Anyhow, I do appreciate this proposal,
23 Virgil, thank you. That's all.

24

25 MR. GERVAIS: Madame Chair. Could I
26 get some clarification while we're on the topic.

27

28 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Yes.

29

30 MR. GERVAIS: I'm trying to remember
31 what year it was, I remember -- I think we were in
32 Aniak talking about it but I had thought through the
33 State chinook salmon initiative, I thought they did a
34 bunch of genetic work on commercially caught salmon and
35 they were supposed to -- I thought they were collecting
36 information on genetic composition of Kodiak, Chignik
37 and Area M and just getting baseline information on
38 what the origin of those king salmon were from all
39 those fisheries. Wasn't that after 2009, I'm thinking
40 it was 2013, 2014. Does anybody remember this.

41

42 MR. UMPHENOUR: The only thing I know
43 is the Deputy Commissioner told me when I -- and this
44 was probably in 2018, he told me that they did sample a
45 few king salmon, just when they caught the 40-something
46 thousand in the Area M June Fishery, they did take a
47 few off of the top of totes and analyzed them but
48 that's not really an analysis of what they're catching.
49 And then one of the other things they said about the
50

0060

1 king salmon was that they were all small ones, they
2 only averaged around eight pounds. Well, our king
3 salmon on the Yukon River now only average around 12
4 pounds, that's all they average.

5
6 And one other, just final thing to say,
7 we have a number of problems. The marine environment,
8 the pasture and the ocean is not what it used to be,
9 it's basically in a drought status, like you would call
10 a drought on land. Every rancher, every farmer in the
11 world knows how many cattle or sheep or whatever it is
12 he raises, how many of them the land will support in
13 various weather conditions and if you don't get any
14 rain they know that they're going to have problems.
15 They've got to get rid of some of their animals or
16 they're going to have to be buying feed from someplace.
17 Well, that's what's happened in the ocean. And we have
18 all these hatcheries. The North Pacific Fisheries
19 Commission, which is the Treaty between United States,
20 Canada, Japan, South Korea and Russia, those scientists
21 have come out recently and said between 5 and 6 billion
22 hatchery fish getting into the North Pacific is totally
23 overwhelmed the capacity of the ocean pasture to
24 support all these fish and Alaska is the biggest
25 producer. They just came out with the figures of how
26 much each country dumped into the ocean last year and
27 Alaska dumps more than any country. And Washington and
28 Oregon also have hatcheries that dump fish. But Alaska
29 alone averages near 2 billion a year and they're mostly
30 pinks and chums and then there's all kinds of recent
31 studies and some of them not really that recent that
32 point out that the pink salmon are the biggest
33 competitor due to their life history cycle, just every
34 other year, they gain roughly 80 percent of their
35 weight in the last three or four months of their life,
36 they're gobbling up everything out there in the ocean
37 and they're out competing the wild fish is what they're
38 doing and not only that they're eating up out-migrating
39 smolts, and I think, and I think a lot of people think
40 that's the main reason why it's in every other year,
41 one year it's a big run, and the next year it's not,
42 and so we need to -- and this is a psychological
43 decision to have all these hatchery fish out there
44 competing with the wild fish and there's only a
45 political answer to that to reduce the hatchery
46 production and the Board of Fish has the authority to
47 do that, by the way, they can reduce the hatchery
48 production but it's going to take a gigantic effort on
49 the part of people that depend on the fish and want the
50

0061

1 fish want to comply with what our Constitution says, is
2 that we will, you know, have sustained yield on our
3 fisheries that's -- it's going to be something that has
4 to be done politically.

5

6 But I just wanted to throw that in. We
7 got to do something about these hatcheries because no
8 matter what we do we're still going to have the same
9 problem, the fish are starving to death in the ocean.
10 They measure these fish every year when they come back.
11 In all these test fisheries they do what they call ASL,
12 age, sex, length of the fish, they get smaller every
13 year and the last two years all three of our species of
14 our fish in the Yukon, that's chum, both summer and
15 fall, the coho and chinook, all of them are record
16 small fish and it's because they're starving to death.

17

18 Thank you.

19

20 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Thank you, very
21 much Virgil.

22

23 Don.

24

25 MR. HONEA: Virgil, I find this really
26 interesting. Like I mentioned prior, or this morning
27 or something when I first got on this Board years ago I
28 remember speaking about it, been talking about Area M,
29 I don't know maybe 10 years ago, Pollock you remember
30 talking about this, and it just kind of interesting or
31 ironic that in the last couple years or whatever that
32 these numbers are staggering. These are really high
33 numbers and I've always, you know, there's so many
34 variables to consider when we're talking about why or
35 we don't have at least the summer chum on the Yukon or
36 the Kuskokwim or the Bering Sea community rivers.

37

38 So this actually usually, you know,
39 when the proposal come out like this, so you're just
40 curtailing maybe the take of it by three weeks or
41 something like that, it usually says, you know, who is
42 it going to benefit and, you know, who's it going to
43 hurt or whatever but I agree that it's time that we, at
44 least, try to knock on some of these -- some of these
45 things. Like I said, I mean certainly North Pacific
46 bycatch numbers are concerning, in itself, but, hey,
47 we've already gone that route. We've tried to knock
48 those numbers down and, you know, during that time the
49 loss of our chums, it's discerning. So I, as an
50

0062

1 individual, I, could at least support this idea when it
2 comes around.

3

4

Thank you.

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

But, yeah, I just -- I just, you know,
looking at it from just a layman's all you're asking
for is like a three week curtailing of taking of the
fish, is that it?

MR. UMPHENOUR: If this proposal passes
it would be great. What really needs to happen is they
totally need to close that fishery, that's what really
needs to happen. Because it's the only fishery in the
state that gets to go fish regardless of what's coming
back, you know, where the fish are headed, so they
don't -- they don't have to worry about making
escapement goals, nothing, just go fish, that's what
they do. And what's really -- limited entry really
messed us up and that's a part of that problem, is the
way limited entry happened. What happened is a lot of
people knew that limited entry -- well, fishermen knew
limited entry was going to take place and so what they
would do, is you were going to have fish tickets to
prove that you would fish commercially, anyone could
just go buy a commercial fishing license and so what a
lot of people did is they fished different gears, a lot
of those people did fish different gears anyway but
instead of a 58 foot limit seiner that can fish a net
that's 2,400 feet long and 118 feet deep which is what
they can fish in Area M with a purse seine, a lot of
them had a 20 or a 24 foot boat with a 40 or 50 board
horsepower outboard on it and a hand purse seine, well
they got issued a purse seine permit, and then because
we had mega bucks, when we were pumping 2 million
barrels of oil a day down the pipeline the State had
lots of money to spend and so they gave people loans to
buy these big new boats and what they did is because
would fish -- some people got issued three permits in
Area M, they got issued a purse seine permit when they
were just using a little 20 foot boat with a 40
horsepower engine on it, a drift gillnet permit, and a
set net permit. And then we had the tribes down in the
Pacific Northwest, they were really upset because the
commercial fishermen were catching all the salmon and
not many salmon were going up the river where they
lived and they were suffering from the same problem
we're suffering right now, they weren't getting enough
fish to eat for them and their families and so they

1 went to court. Because in the 1850s when we colonized
2 -- when the United States colonized Washington and
3 Oregon, the Pacific Northwest, they made a Treaty with
4 the tribes and so there was a Federal judge named Bolt
5 and he issued the decision, that Treaty is valid, it
6 was a valid Treaty then and it's a valid Treaty now so
7 we're getting rid of half of these commercial fishermen
8 and we're going to give those fishing permits to the
9 tribes and that's what they did. So they put all these
10 guys out of business. So here we got guys in Area M
11 that got issued three permits and so those guys that
12 were really aggressive fishermen down from Washington
13 and Oregon, they wanted to keep fishing and they had
14 their boats and everything so what happened, you can
15 sell your limited entry permit so they sold their extra
16 permits to those guys, aggressive fishermen to come up
17 from Washington State. That's what happened. But the
18 same thing happened in Bristol Bay except it was two
19 permits, or a drift gillnet and a set gillnet, some of
20 that happened there, it happened in Cook Inlet as well
21 with both purse seines, in there they used hand purse
22 seines and now they can use big purse seines and with
23 setnets as well and with -- like a school teacher or
24 someone that doesn't have to work in the summer anyway,
25 what a lot of them did and they did this all over the
26 state, people that could not -- didn't necessarily have
27 to work in the summer would get these commercial
28 licenses and so then all their recreational equipment,
29 their boat everything, camping gear, it's all income
30 tax deductions and they might make a little bit of
31 money on the side anyway so a lot of them were doing
32 that, you can't blame them for doing that. And then
33 they knew that limited entry was coming so they would
34 get their kids a permit too and their kids would issue
35 -- you know and they may be fishing one set of gear,
36 well a set of gear in Cook Inlet is 11 -- I think 1,000
37 feet, or maybe it's 900 feet, 300 fathoms, that would
38 be nine -- whatever that is.

39

40 (Laughter)

41

42 MR. UMPHENOUR: Anyway that's what they
43 did. And so those people had all those extra permits
44 and then they ended up selling lots of them. And
45 that's what's caused a big bunch of our problems and
46 part of, Bristol Bay, Cook Inlet, Area M, all over the
47 state.

48

49 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Thank you,

50

0064

1 Virgil. That was very interesting and I learned a lot
2 from you, thank you.

3

4 (Pause)

5

6 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay, I think
7 we'll take one more report and then we'll go to lunch.
8 Nissa has a report on .805.

9

10 MS. PILCHER: All right. Ms. Chair.
11 Members of the Council. For the record my name is
12 Nissa Pilcher, Subsistence Council Coordinator with
13 OSM. This will be a fast one -- well, I guess
14 depending on if you guys have questions or not. I'm
15 going to present you with a brief summary of the
16 .805(c) report to the Council. The material for this
17 agenda item can be found starting on Page 14 of your
18 meeting materials book, that's the one with the comb
19 binding. This is not an action item.

20

21 The Board adopted actions that were in
22 line with your Council's recommendation on one regional
23 proposal concerning the boundary between two hunt areas
24 in GMU22A, three statewide proposals and three
25 proposals from other close regions and the Council --
26 excuse me -- from other close regions that the Council
27 chose to weigh in on, as well as seven wildlife closure
28 reviews, which included six reviews on moose in GMU22
29 and one on caribou in GMU23.

30

31 The Board's actions differed from the
32 Council's recommendation for two proposals and a
33 closure review. I will briefly give some information
34 on these but for a full explanation please review that
35 .805(c) report as noted that is in your meeting book on
36 Page 14.

37

38 The Board adopted actions that were in
39 line with your Council's recommendation on two wildlife
40 closure reviews from other regions your Council chose
41 to weigh -- wait, I think I might have -- I'm repeating
42 myself, my apologies.

43

44 The Board's action differed from the
45 Council's recommendations for two proposals.

46

47 WP22-40 requested that Federally-
48 qualified subsistence users be allowed to use a
49 snowmachine to position wolves and wolverines for
50

0065

1 harvest on Federal public lands in Units 9B, 9C, 17B
2 and 17C provided the animals are not shot from a moving
3 snowmachine. Your Council supported this proposal as
4 modified by OSM but the Board action was to defer to
5 the winter 2023 Board meeting as the proponent of the
6 proposal, which was the Bristol Bay Regional Advisory
7 Council requested this deferment to allow them to
8 formulate better language defining this practice.

9
10 WP22-47 requested that cat harvest be
11 permitted for caribou in Unit 22. Your Council
12 supported this proposal but the Board action was to
13 reject it. To briefly summarize their justification,
14 this herd is currently at a population level where it
15 is considered under preservative management and the
16 Western Arctic Caribou Management Plan recommends a
17 prohibition on calf harvest when this is the case and
18 since as the Board had previously reviewed and voiced
19 approval of this plan.

20
21 And then thank you, Madame Chair, that
22 concludes this report.

23
24 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Wow, that was
25 fast, thank you very much Ms. Nissa.

26
27 MS. PILCHER: Yeah, we did skip over
28 one thing. We did forget to ask if anyone on the phone
29 had any comments for any non-agenda items.

30
31 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay. Anyone on
32 the phone have any comments.

33
34 (No comments)

35
36 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: They probably
37 went to lunch. Okay, if not maybe we'll take a lunch.
38 How many hours do we get for lunch.

39
40 (Laughter)

41
42
43 MR. HONEA: 1.5 is good.

44
45 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Yeah.

46
47 MR. HONEA: Hour and a half. I mean I
48 just as soon be back in an hour if I could but usually
49 it takes an hour and a half.

50

0066

1 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay. So we'll
2 be back at 1:00 o'clock -- no, not 1:00 o'clock --
3 okay, be back at 1:45. Be back at 1:45.

4
5 (Off record)

6
7 (On record)

8
9 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay, we'll
10 continue our meeting. And the next report we have will
11 be the Board FY2021 by Nissa.

12
13 MS. PILCHER: Madame Chair. Members of
14 the Council. For the record my name is Nissa Pilcher,
15 Subsistence Council Coordinator with OSM and I am going
16 to present you with a very brief summary of the Federal
17 Subsistence Board FY21 annual report apply to the
18 Council, which in its entirety can be found on Page 19
19 of your meeting materials book which is the one that's
20 comb bound. While this is going to take a little bit,
21 it's very much reduced from what is in your book so
22 please bear with me. This is not an action item.

23
24 The reply starts with: The Board
25 appreciates your effort to communicate through your
26 annual report to the Board issues outside of the
27 regulatory process that affect subsistence users in
28 your region. In FY21 there were five topics of concern
29 on the Council's annual report.

30
31 Topic 1 was regarding the poor return
32 of Yukon and Kuskokwim River chinook and chum salmon in
33 2021. The Board replied that it is clear that the
34 catastrophically low returns of salmon to Western
35 Alaska caused extreme hardship for subsistence users in
36 the region. The low in-river returns forced managers
37 to make difficult decisions and required them to
38 prioritize future runs over the 2021 subsistence
39 harvests. It was a terrible situation for all who
40 depend on this resource. The reply then summarizes the
41 managers actions on both the Yukon and the Kuskokwim
42 for the 2021 season and the very beginning of the 2022
43 and finished by noting that the Board wanted to
44 acknowledge the efforts by this Council and other
45 Councils that work on these Yukon River and Kuskokwim
46 River issues, and noted that rebuilding these stocks is
47 going to take engagement from all groups that interact
48 with these fish during their life cycles and your input
49 is helping to facilitate that process.

50

1 Topic 2 was regarding concerns about
2 other species utilized by subsistence users as a result
3 of these poor salmon returns. The Board acknowledges
4 that poor salmon returns cause extreme hardships for
5 subsistence users in the Yukon and Kuskokwim regions.
6 The Board also recognized that as a result of this
7 subsistence users shift their harvest and that
8 monitoring is necessary to ensure healthy populations
9 of these species as well. One way the Council can
10 direct research of non-salmon fish species is through
11 the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program or the FMO --
12 FRMP, which more information on this program will be
13 presented later in this meeting by Cory Graham and Ms.
14 Williams with OSM as well as an update on a whitefish
15 project from Frank Harris with the U.S. Fish and
16 Wildlife Service. The best way for the Council to
17 direct additional non-salmon research is through
18 priority information needs development and thank you,
19 Tim and Kevin, for volunteering and participating
20 during this last season to assist in this process. The
21 Council will also identify and approve priority
22 information needs for the 2024 monitoring program cycle
23 later this meeting. This is an opportune time for your
24 Council to highlight the need to monitor non-salmon
25 fish populations in the Yukon and the Kuskokwim
26 regions. I realize I should have said Member Gervais
27 and Member Whitworth, apologies there. The reply also
28 noted Federal and State monitoring of terrestrial
29 animals and finished by noting that the Federal
30 Subsistence Program can support adaption to changing
31 conditions by using various tools available that enable
32 the program to respond to subsistence users need, such
33 as the special action process and the Board's ability
34 to delegate authority to the local land managers to
35 enable managers to respond quickly to unforeseen
36 circumstances.

37
38 Topic 3 concerned tribal representation
39 on the FRMP Technical Review Committee or the TCR
40 [sic]. The Board appreciates and agrees with the
41 Council's guidance on additional tribal involvement
42 with the FRMP funded research and is receptive to the
43 concerns raised about tribal input into this process
44 for selecting awards. In 2020 -- or excuse me, 2005
45 TRC membership was expanded briefly to include two
46 representatives of tribal organizations, however, the
47 TRC membership quickly reverted back because including
48 members of the public, which includes Council members,
49 meant that the TRC should have been chartered as an
50

0068

1 Advisory Committee under the Federal Advisory Committee
2 Act or FACA, just as the Councils are chartered. In
3 the absence of a FACA charter, any funding decisions
4 based on recommendations made by the TRC at the time
5 would have been reversed by a court which is the
6 standard legal remedy for a FACA violation. In other
7 words, the FRMP was legally vulnerable and the report
8 reply details some issues with some FACA requirements
9 and current operations of the TRC. The report then
10 highlights the Partners for Fisheries Monitoring
11 Program, which the Council will also hear more about
12 later during this Council meeting as well.

13

14 Topic 4 concerned the State violation
15 of ANILCA Title VIII during a Federal closure on the
16 Kuskokwim. The Board notified the Department of
17 Justice and the Solicitor's Office regarding this issue
18 and the Council will be getting a brief update on this
19 topic near the end of the meeting.

20

21 Topic 5 concerned the Bureau of Land
22 Management guide's use permitting for dall sheep. The
23 Board appreciates the Council's comments regarding the
24 decline in dall sheep population in the Central Brooks
25 Range. More information can be found in the report on
26 this topic. I've been talking for a bit so I will just
27 summarize the reply quickly by saying that the BLM
28 State Dire -- the BLM Director has received your letter
29 and acknowledges the.....

30

31 (Teleconference interference -
32 participants not muted)

33

34 MS. PILCHER:Council has
35 regarding the special recreation permitting process.

36

37 In closing, the Board wanted to thank
38 your Council for your continued involvement and
39 diligence in matters regarding the Federal Subsistence
40 Management Program and expressed their appreciation for
41 your efforts representing the subsistence users of the
42 Western Interior region through your work.

43

44 Thank you, Madame Chair, that concludes
45 my report.

46

47 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay. Any
48 questions or comments from the Board.

49

50

0069

1 (No comments)

2

3 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: If not we're
4 going to move on to special action Brian Ubelaker.

5

6 MR. UBELAKER: You don't have to try to
7 attempt my last name.

8

9 (Laughter)

10

11 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay. Ubelaker.

12

13 MR. UBELAKER: Good afternoon, Madame
14 Chair. Members of the Council. My name is Brian
15 Ubelaker, for the record. I am a Wildlife Biologist
16 with the Office of Subsistence Management. I will give
17 you a brief rundown of the results for Temporary
18 Wildlife Action -- Special Action WSA22-02. Which the
19 news release can be found on Page 27 and the proponent
20 letter is under Tab 1 in your meeting books.

21

22 Temporary Special Action WSA22-02
23 submitted by this Council requested the Federal
24 Subsistence Board close Federal public lands to the
25 harvest of dall sheep in Units 24A and 26B for the
26 222/23 and 23/24 seasons. Population metrics, harvest
27 pressure and unpredictable weather events led to a
28 conservation concern with a dismal outlook for ram
29 abundance along the Dalton Highway Corridor. While
30 portions of the Brooks Range sheep population appear to
31 be doing well, the easily accessed portion along the
32 Dalton Corridor appear to be faltering. The most
33 recently available survey data indicate a few, if any,
34 legal rams available for harvest. Therefore, the
35 Federal Subsistence Board adopted this temporary
36 special with modification to simplify regulatory
37 language during their July 2022 meeting.

38

39 And as I said, brief, that is it, thank
40 you, Madame Chair. I'd be happy to answer any
41 questions that anyone may have.

42

43 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Do we have any
44 questions.

45

46 MR. REAKOFF: Madame Chair, this is
47 Jack.

48

49 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Yes, Jack.

50

0070

1 MR. REAKOFF: I wanted to commend the
2 Office of Subsistence Management, Brian, in particular,
3 the analysis was concise and very thorough and I
4 appreciate the Federal Subsistence Board taking action
5 on this very important issue.

6
7 Thank you, Madame Chair.

8
9 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Thank you, Jack.
10 If there's no questions I think thank you very much.

11
12 MR. UBELAKER: Thank you, very much.
13 Thank you, Jack.

14
15 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay. With that
16 we'll hear from Cory, Cory Graham.

17
18 MR. GRAHAM: Madame Chair. Members of
19 the Council. For the record my name is Cory Graham and
20 I'm a Fisheries Biologist at the Office of Subsistence
21 Management. Materials relevant to this presentation
22 can be found on Page 28 of your Council Book. And this
23 is not an action item.

24
25 So I'm here today to present a brief
26 update on four fisheries temporary special action
27 requests. FSA22-01, 02, 03 and 04 that were submitted
28 to the Federal Subsistence Board last spring. All four
29 of the special action requests were identical and each
30 requested the Federal Subsistence Board close Federal
31 public waters of the Yukon River drainage to the
32 harvest of chinook and summer and fall chum salmon
33 except by Federally-qualified subsistence users and
34 further reduce the pool of eligible harvesters based on
35 an ANILCA Section .804 subsistence user prioritization
36 analysis. The Board met on May 4th, 2022 and adopted
37 Temporary Special Action FSA22-01 for conservation
38 purposes, and, specifically, the Board closed Federal
39 public waters of the Yukon River drainage to the
40 harvest of chinook, summer and fall chum and coho
41 salmon except by Federally-qualified subsistence users
42 effective June 1, 2022 through September 30th, 2022
43 with harvest opportunities to be determined by the
44 Federal fisheries manager should fisheries run strength
45 be sufficient to allow a Federal subsistence fishery.
46 However, in short, the returns this summer were so poor
47 that no directed opportunities were provided. Holly
48 Carroll, the Federal fisheries manager for the Yukon
49 River implemented the Board's action. Holly will be
50

0071

1 updating the Council on Yukon River salmon management
2 and can answer any questions related to the
3 implementation of this action at that time.

4
5 That concludes my update and I'll
6 standby to answer any questions the Council may have.

7
8 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay. Any
9 questions from the Council.

10
11 (No comments)

12
13 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Jack, you have
14 anything.

15
16 MR. REAKOFF: No that was great, thank
17 you.

18
19 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay. Thank
20 you. Thank you, very much. Okay, at this time I guess
21 we have -- this is for the Council, I guess, wood bison
22 restoration, a working group update. Do we want to
23 have a discussion to nominate an alternate.

24
25 (Teleconference interference -
26 participants not muted)

27
28 MR. REAKOFF: Madame Chair, this is
29 Jack.

30
31 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Yes, go ahead,
32 Jack.

33
34 MR. REAKOFF: I participated in this
35 wood bison planning process and as I stated in my
36 report, it's an important issue, the wood bison,
37 reconstruction of this population within our region.
38 At this time we don't have anybody from the GASH on our
39 Council, I will continue to participate unless any
40 other Council member would like to participate in this
41 and the closest Council member would be Kevin. So that
42 would be a question for you Kevin.

43
44 Thank you.

45
46 MR. WHITWORTH: Mr. Chair, I'd decline.
47 I'd decline. I haven't been following that issue and I
48 feel like it's out of my area. The GASH region, wood
49 bison, I wouldn't want to do that.

50

0072

1 Thanks.

2

3 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Nissa.

4

5 MS. PILCHER: Through the Chair. I'll
6 just use this as a shameless plug to remind folks that
7 currently nominations are open for all Councils,
8 including the Western Interior Council and we have
9 applications here, we have applications online, contact
10 me, I will certainly get you an application if you're
11 listening in from the RAC region and would like some
12 representation on this Council. I will also be
13 contacting Council offices in that area to try to get
14 some interest in that region as well.

15

16 Thanks.

17

18 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay, thank you.
19 So you decline, right.

20

21 MR. WHITWORTH: (Nods affirmatively)

22

23 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Anybody
24 interested. Darrell.

25

26 MR. VENT: I recently spoke with Walker
27 down there and he -- Robert Walker and he asked me to
28 say a few words for him so he could put his application
29 in, he used me as a reference and I said, okay,
30 whatever you got to do. I know he's been a Board member
31 for past years and he'd probably be interested in this
32 wood bison one.

33

34 MR. GERVAIS: Which one? Isn't there
35 two Robert Walkers.

36

37 MR. REAKOFF: Madame Chair, this is
38 Jack.

39

40 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Go ahead Jack.

41

42 MR. REAKOFF: Robert Walker was on the
43 working group this last meeting but Western Interior
44 needs representation on there. So he will submit his
45 application and would be nominated and then we could --
46 but we do need to be represented on this planning group
47 and I'll volunteer until such time as we have a GASH
48 member.

49

50

0073

1 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay, thank you,
2 Jack. So do we have a volunteer from our Council.

3
4 MR. GERVAIS: Jack.

5
6 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay.

7
8 MR. GERVAIS: Jack said he would
9 continue.

10
11 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Oh.

12
13 MR. REAKOFF: I'll continue to serve,
14 Madame Chair.

15
16 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Oh, so you'll
17 continue to volunteer, Jack?

18
19 MR. REAKOFF: Yes, I do.

20
21 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Oh, okay. Okay,
22 I misunderstood, sorry about that.

23
24 MR. WHITWORTH: Madame Chair.

25
26 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Kevin.

27
28 MR. WHITWORTH: Were we looking for an
29 alternate as well, is that what Jack was asking and I
30 think Tim is volunteering, maybe, as an alternate.

31
32 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Is that what you
33 were asking, Jack, for an alternate?

34
35 MR. REAKOFF: No. For the record, that
36 I've been participating in this for the Western
37 Interior. The Western Interior's been involved with
38 this for many years, in fact, we wrote in support of
39 changing the Endangered Species Act for the 10(J) rule
40 for experimental population to get them released within
41 our region so I have quite a bit of familiarity with
42 this issue and will continue to serve for the Council
43 until such time as we have a member from our Council
44 from that area that would like to participate.

45
46 Thank you, Madame Chair.

47
48 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay, thank you,
49 Jack. So I guess we need to get someone from the GASH
50

0074

1 area to get on the Board. Okay.

2

3

MR. REAKOFF: Correct.

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

area to get on the Board. Okay.

MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay. So with that we're going to go to new business and we're going to -- oh, not yet, Joint Meeting with the North American Caribou and Arctic -- whatever that word is -- conference in May, and this is Brian.

MR. UBELAKER: Yep, me once again. Good afternoon, again, Madame Chair. Council members. For the record my name is Brian Ubelaker and I'm a Wildlife Biologist with the Office of Subsistence Management. This is an action item which we will get to at the end of my presentation. But I will be presenting an announcement about a caribou and ungulate conference next year that will hopefully be of interest to Council members. I'll also be seeking your input on a couple matters related to the conference. An informational flyer about the conference can be found in your meeting books on Page 29.

A joint meeting of the North American Caribou Workshop and Arctic Ungulate Conference will be held in Anchorage from May 8th through the 12th of 2023. The meeting will bring together an international group of managers, researchers and indigenous and local knowledge holders who will want to share their knowledge of caribou, muskox, Dall sheep, moose and reindeer. The theme for the meeting is crossing boundaries. Arctic ungulates regularly cross landscape boundaries connecting ecological processes between different systems. This necessitates collaboration across geographical boundaries and also calls for crossing boundaries between Western Science, local and indigenous knowledge. The conference will include sessions on co-management, the status of caribou globally, integrating Western science and indigenous knowledge and the effects of climate change on caribou. Field trips, workshops, research talks, symposiums and a poster session will also be part of the conference. The conference web address is included on the flier in your meeting books and I encourage you to visit that website for more detailed information.

Before I move on are there any questions.

0075

1 (No comments)

2

3

4 MR. UBELAKER: All right. Next, I'd
5 like to ask as a Council. One of the events that will
6 take place during the conference is a facilitated
7 discussion on Alaska State and Federal ungulate
8 management. This session is intended to be a neutral
9 forum for Council members, such as yourselves, State
10 Fish and Game Advisory Committee members, Federal and
11 State agency Staff and other interested parties to
12 discuss ungulate management in Alaska specifically
13 regarding harvest regulations.

13

14

15 My question for the Council is, what
16 topics and issues would you like to be discussed during
17 the session. It could be anything of concern related
18 to harvest regulations and ungulate management.

18

19

20

21 Madame Chair, I will now turn the
22 discussion over to you for this topic. Your
23 suggestions will be very important in helping set the
24 discussion agenda.

23

24

25 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: So you want the
26 Board to discuss this right now?

26

27

28 MR. UBELAKER: Just looking for any
29 suggestions, if you have any concerns. It'll be a
30 discussion related mostly to harvest so if you have any
31 concerns that you want discussed into -- a deeper dive
32 into, any ideas you have over concerns we'd like to
33 hear.

33

34

35 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Chugach National
36 Forest Any Council members -- Darrell. Jack, were you
37 going to say something.

37

38

39 MR. REAKOFF: Yes, Madame Chair, I'll
40 speak to this issue. There's many concerns that I have
41 especially with caribou management and dall sheep
42 management. I feel that the managers don't fully
43 understand the ecology of caribou. I don't feel that
44 they understand what caribou eat throughout their
45 annual cycle and where their protein sources are at.
46 And I do feel that there needs to be discussion about
47 the basic protein intake of ungulates at specific times
48 of the year, how summer and winter conditions both
49 dictate the productivity of fecundity of those
50 populations. I do have concerns about harvest of bull

50

0076

1 caribou during the rut when they're completely
2 unpalatable. A lot of sporthunting that occurs during
3 the rutting season on caribou, that should be avoided.
4 So there's some management issues that need to be more
5 widely discussed in this forum.

6
7 So that would be my comments so far,
8 thank you, Madame Chair.

9
10 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Thank you, Jack.

11
12 Darrell.

13
14 MR. VENT: Yeah, you know, we're
15 talking about how this hunting pressure on these herds
16 compared to how our people hunt them is a little
17 different and positioning is one of them, but also the
18 way that -- you know we talk about letting the leaders
19 through because we always know that the rest will
20 follow. I know I was up in Anaktuvuk a couple days ago
21 and they were talking about, you know, their caribou --
22 their caribou don't migrate the same pattern no more.
23 They said it seems like they're diverted, they're not
24 going in the same areas. And I heard from people over
25 in Shungnak and Ambler area, they're saying that they
26 have to go to different places now to go hunt their
27 caribou. So, you know, the hunting pressure that
28 really gets to them is that you -- they wait for a
29 certain area to get them at when they're hunting, they
30 fly in and there's a lot of hunting pressure there. So
31 you know, we'll probably be noticing this Fortymile
32 herd pretty soon. I think it's, you know, something
33 that we got to learn to understand how these caribou
34 move to different areas because of hunting pressure.
35 And that's something that maybe we got to discuss, too,
36 because it's -- yeah, I hear people talking about the
37 Fortymile herd and it's like going into a combat zone,
38 you know, it's -- there's just too many people. And up
39 in Anaktuvuk they said that it was just the hunting
40 pressure and it diverted the whole caribou migration
41 pattern. So I think we need to discuss that, you know,
42 how to prevent that from happening and getting those
43 caribous coming back into those areas. Because when we
44 go hunting from Huslia we have to go practically past
45 Shungnak going toward Kobuk and that's a long travel
46 just to get a few scrawny caribou when we used to get
47 them in the falltime and they had fat on them. And,
48 you know, it's hard to depend on food resources when
49 you catch those skinny caribou, it's just not worth the
50

0077

1 travel no more and, you know, we're really running out
2 of food resources so, you know, this is a pretty
3 important matter to us.

4

5 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Thank you,
6 Darrell. Pollock.

7

8 MR. SIMON: Thank you, Madame Chair. I
9 just want to talk a little bit about caribou. In 1974
10 was the last time there was caribou around Allakaket,
11 they were just (indiscernible) and the shot into the
12 Ray Mountain Ray where there is good caribou habitat.
13 But they started pushing north with the oil pipeline
14 that year and they put in the Haul Road which was at
15 first for a private road but later the road was turned
16 over to the State and of course it was open to the
17 public and lots of peoples go up the road, not only to
18 look at the mountains but hunt here and there, and try
19 for fish, and up on the road there's a place that
20 caribou cross into the Koyukuk River Valley but with
21 the road going by with the hunters and more hunting
22 pressure there and the caribou moved more to the west
23 and no caribou has gone by since then in Allakaket.
24 Last year was nothing, and I don't know this year, it's
25 kind of early yet. But the road development impacted
26 the migration route for caribou. Every time I talk with
27 caribou -- the road building is not too good for
28 caribou but now they're talking about the Ambler Road
29 that will go north -- not too far from us, Allakaket,
30 that road will impact the caribou migration route also.
31 So the peoples in the Allakaket area they're talking
32 about caribou, with the moose population down and no
33 black bears, we're looking for some more meat and
34 caribou could be meat for the peoples but they're not
35 coming by.

36

37 Thank you, Madame Chair.

38

39 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Thank you,
40 Pollock.

41

42 Tim.

43

44 MR. GERVAIS: Thank you, Madame Chair.
45 The Western Interior Council is really concerned with
46 like what -- we've had a lot of discussion about
47 Mulchatna Caribou Herd and we were trying to wonder --
48 not trying to wonder, we were wondering what level of
49 population would be like a critical threshold to get
50

0078

1 below, like we're having a lot of trouble now getting
2 that herd to rebuild and at some point it must have
3 crossed some kind of threshold level where the herd's
4 having a lot of trouble rebuilding and it would be good
5 if there was some research done on what that number was
6 that the herd got below a certain population and now it
7 cannot seem to recover despite very limited hunting
8 pressure on it now.

9
10 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay, thank you.
11 Any more comments.

12
13 MR. WHITWORTH: Madame Chair.

14
15 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay, Kevin.

16
17 MR. WHITWORTH: Thanks, Madame Chair.
18 One concern I think should be discussed at this
19 conference is the waste of moose meat, especially, for
20 instance in McGrath, we have transporters that
21 transport from McGrath, go out to Farewell, hunt moose,
22 sheep, caribou and then they also go out to the Innoko
23 Refuge and this year the amount of waste was just -- it
24 was sickening. It was -- once these moose are brought
25 to McGrath, broth to the butchers, the butchers just
26 had to salvage what they could and it was -- it was
27 really terrible. Probably legal but the amount of
28 waste was just -- I mean the elders there in McGrath
29 are already suffering. They're not catching their
30 fish, the black bears, like Darrell said, they're
31 skinny, and then they go to the dump and they see all
32 of this moose waste. And it's just -- I mean it's just
33 piles. It's amazing. It's an area like half the size
34 of this room, it's just piled with meat and bones. And
35 I had an elder who told me this, he said you got to go
36 look, I didn't because I didn't want to get pissed off,
37 but he did and he said I didn't even get out of the
38 truck, it was just disgusting.

39
40 And so it's harder, too, because the
41 transporters that leave McGrath and they go to Innoko,
42 they have to fly over the Kuskokwim range and there'll
43 be weather days like this and they'll be stuck for
44 several days so you'll have 40 hunters and 30 moose
45 sitting on the ground for a long time so this is a
46 concern that should be discussed.

47
48 Thank you.

49
50

0079

1 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Thank you,
2 Kevin.

3
4 Darrell.

5
6 MR. VENT: Yeah, I agree with -- we
7 used to see that in our area when, you know, we had a
8 lot of hunters there, between 600, 800 hunters and then
9 we used to hear stories about how it would be full down
10 there in their dumps and then go to Fairbanks and
11 Anchorage it would be the same thing, they'd be tired
12 of all this smell and it was all the way down to
13 Seattle. So, you know, that's when they came up with
14 the wanton waste so, you know, that's got to be
15 addressed with this caribou too so, you know, it's --
16 we don't know what kind of situation that's putting
17 them -- when you're talking about transporters, I
18 don't know what the regulations are around there for
19 transporters, whether it's the same that applies to
20 guided hunters. You know I haven't had any, you know,
21 information on that area there so that might be
22 something that we'd want to kind of get a little update
23 on.

24
25 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Thank you,
26 Darrell. Yeah, I know this caribou -- discussion on
27 this caribou has been going on for years and years and
28 I've learned a lot from Mr. Reakoff on caribou and I
29 know he's very concerned about that because I never
30 knew the history -- or not the history but, you know,
31 how they feed and -- well, I just learned a lot from
32 Jack and it's hard to put into words, but, Jack just
33 continue to talk for caribou and I know a lot -- you
34 said a lot of hunters go out and you take your camera
35 and if they're doing something that they're not
36 supposed to be doing you just take a picture of them
37 and I think that's scary but if it works, it works.

38
39 Any more questions or comments for
40 Brian.

41
42 MR. REAKOFF: I have one final comment.
43 Madame Chair.

44
45 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Go ahead, Jack.

46
47 MR. REAKOFF: Yes, I feel that this is
48 an important question that Brian brought before the
49 Council. I feel that the agenda should be given --
50

0080

1 climate change is highly affecting grazing animals,
2 caribou, dall sheep, the bison population was highly
3 impacted with rain on snow events, late springs, these
4 are issues that need to be on that agenda.

5

6 Thank you, Madame Chair.

7

8 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Thank you, Jack.

9

10 Tim.

11

12 MR. GERVAIS: Thank you, Madame Chair.

13 One thing that could be added to that climate change
14 with the caribou is the amount of increase of
15 shrubification that's purportedly creating some of the
16 migration pattern changes for the Western Arctic Herd.
17 So I know in our area in the middle Yukon there's a lot
18 of grass land and some of the tundra areas are now just
19 shrubby and becoming forested. So say habitat issue.
20 And then one thing that may be of interest to the
21 conference is ADF&G was interested in doing a
22 controlled burn in the Cochrane Hills between Ruby and
23 Tanana to try to return some of that shrubification
24 area back into tundra and help out a small herd, the
25 Wolf Mountain Herd, and the people at the conference
26 might want to look at that case study to learn some
27 stuff on management technique.

28

29 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Thank you, Tim.
30 Any more comments or questions.

31

32 (No comments)

33

34 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: If not, thank
35 you, Brian.

36

37 MR. UBELAKER: Sorry not done just --
38 you're not rid of me just yet.

39

40 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Oh.

41

42 (Laughter)

43

44 MR. UBELAKER: Number 2. A critical
45 component of this conference is making sure that local
46 knowledge holders are able to attend and participate.
47 The Office of Subsistence Management is able to provide
48 financial support to send one member of each
49 Subsistence Regional Advisory Council to attend the
50

0081

1 conference. We are asking that, as a Council, you
2 nominate a member to attend and participate. Again,
3 the conference will be held May 8th through the 12th
4 next year in Anchorage and OSM will cover all expenses
5 such as travel and conference registration. One
6 expectation of the nominated Council member is that
7 they will be an active participant in the State and
8 Federal Ungulate Management Symposium for which you
9 just provided input.

10

11 So now I will turn the discussion back
12 over to you, Madame Chair, and Council, to ask that you
13 nominate a member of your Council to attend whom you
14 feel will represent local knowledge and.....

15

16 (Teleconference interference -
17 participants not muted)

18

19 MR. UBELAKER:in your region
20 related -- and on a side note, I know at Southcentral
21 they nominated an alternative as well so nominate a
22 member that would like to attend and a possible
23 alternative.

24

25 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay. Anybody
26 interested. Darrell -- Darrell is interested.

27

28 MR. VENT: I'll be interested if you
29 have a -- you know it's up to you guys though.

30

31 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: How about.....

32

33 MR. REAKOFF: I'd be interested, Madame
34 Chair.

35

36 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay, Mr.
37 Reakoff is interested. Okay.

38

39 MR. JOLY: Madame Chair.

40

41 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Yes, go ahead.

42

43 MR. JOLY: Hello, Madame Chair, my name
44 is Kyle Joly, I'm with the National Park Service. I'm
45 also the lead organizer for the conference. I would
46 suggest having a list of folks that could come and give
47 priority order. We're working on trying to get travel
48 funds for additional people to come besides the one
49 person that OSM's going to fund. So if you would like
50

0082

1 to do a priority list we will try and get as many
2 people there as we can.

3

4 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay, thank you,
5 Kyle. So do we have anybody else interested. Jack --
6 oh, Jack said he was going to. Anybody else -- Kevin.

7

8 MR. WHITWORTH: I'm not interested but
9 do we have to nominate folks -- so I'd like to nominate
10 Darrell and Jack to go to this meeting.

11

12 MR. SIMON: Second.

13

14 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay. So we
15 have Darrell and Jack nominated to go. So who's the
16 motion by Tina?

17

18 REPORTER: Kevin.

19

20 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: The motion was
21 made by Kevin to nominate Darrell and Jack and it was
22 seconded by Pollock. Sorry, I got all mixed up here
23 but all in favor -- oh, Darrell.

24

25 MR. VENT: If either Jack or myself is
26 not able to attend are we going to nominate alternates?

27

28 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: We could do that
29 but let's get this one done first. All in favor for
30 Jack and Darrell say aye.

31

32 IN UNISON: Aye.

33

34 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: All opposed same
35 sign.

36

37 (No opposing votes)

38

39 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay, so Darrell
40 and Jack will go. Now do we need an -- or would like to
41 have an alternate go, anybody interested, Don.

42

43 MR. HONEA: My seat is expiring.

44

45 MR. GERVAIS: You said you were
46 renewing.

47

48

49 MR. HONEA: I am. Would it continue

50

0083

1 on.....

2

3

REPORTER: Don. Don, your microphone.

4

5

6

MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: I think it would
continue until the next.....

7

8

MS. PILCHER: No.

9

10

MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: No, oh, sorry.

11

12

MR. HONEA: Yes, I will, Madame Chair.

13

Thank you.

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

MS. PILCHER: This is Nissa, for the
record. So unfortunately how it's going to work is
Don's going to -- his term is set to expire in December
and since we didn't get his application -- we didn't
get an application in last year he'll have to sit out a
year so he wouldn't be able to represent the Council at
a May 2023 meeting because he wouldn't -- we wouldn't
-- he wouldn't be able to sit again until potentially
December 2023 or even January of 2024 so at least
through the Western Interior he wouldn't be able to sit
because we've got -- you've got to sit out for a year
until we can catch up with your application.

27

28

MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay. Sorry.

29

30

31

MR. HONEA: Is that not sufficient, I
mean I am going as an alternate?

32

33

34

35

MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Discussion -- or
any comments on that. I don't mind him sitting on it,
are we breaking the law?

36

37

38

MS. PILCHER: I wouldn't know about
law.

39

40

UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: In essence.

41

42

43

44

45

46

47

48

49

MS. PILCHER: I'm good at breaking
rules but I don't think I can break this one. So,
yeah, Don won't be seated on the Western Interior
Council in May of 2023 so he wouldn't be able to
represent the Council during this meeting but we'll
hopefully get him back on as soon as possible but,
yeah, for this meeting he wouldn't be able to be a
representative.

50

0084

1 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay. Anybody
2 else.

3
4 (No comments)

5
6 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: If not I guess I
7 can try to take a stab at it. I've never -- but I'll
8 try being an alternate.

9
10 MR. VENT: You'll be a good alternate.

11
12 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay. With
13 that, do we have anything else, anybody else want to be
14 an alternate too.

15
16 MR. GERVAIS: I'll nominate Jenny for
17 alternate for the caribou conference.

18
19 MR. VENT: Second.

20
21 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: We got a
22 nomination by Tim to have Jenny as an alternate and
23 second by Darrell. All in favor say aye.

24
25 IN UNISON: Aye.

26
27 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: All opposed same
28 sign.

29
30 (No opposing votes)

31
32 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay, I guess
33 she's the alternate.

34
35 (Laughter)

36
37 MR. UBELAKER: Okay. Then unless there
38 are any more questions that concludes this agenda item.
39 Thank you, Madame Chair and Council members. I'm
40 certainly looking forward to this conference.

41
42 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Thank you,
43 Brian. I didn't mean to kick you off before.

44
45 (Laughter)

46
47 MR. UBELAKER: That's quite all right,
48 I'm used to it.

49
50

0085

1 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: I'm just trying
2 so hard to focus on what I'm doing up here. Okay with
3 that we're going to go to our salmon reports. We're
4 going to move Diane up if she's here.

5
6 REPORTER: She's online.

7
8 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Oh, she's
9 online.

10
11 REPORTER: Yes.

12
13 MS. PILCHER: Yeah.

14
15 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay, Diane are
16 you on.

17
18 (No comments)

19
20 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: I guess she's
21 not on.

22
23 REPORTER: Jenny, ask for her again.

24
25 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Diane.

26
27 REPORTER: Stram.

28
29 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Diane Stram are
30 you online.

31
32 (No comments)

33
34 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Anybody knows
35 where she is.

36
37 (No comments)

38
39 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Well, I guess
40 we'll just continue. I hope she's on and one thing I
41 forgot to ask who's online -- anybody online.

42
43 MR. WHITWORTH: Does anybody have
44 Diane's cell phone number and we can give her a head's
45 up.

46
47 (Off record comments regarding Stram)

48
49 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Tina is there

50

0086

1 anybody online.

2

3 REPORTER: There's plenty of people
4 online but it doesn't sound like Diana is.

5

6 UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: She's on, she
7 can't unmute herself.

8

9 REPORTER: She can't unmute herself,
10 tell her to star, six or unmute with her mute button,
11 or hang up and call back. It might be easier to hang
12 up and call back.

13

14 (Pause)

15

16 MS. STRAM: Hi, this is Diana, are you
17 guys able to hear me?

18

19 MS. PILCHER: Yes, we are, thank you,
20 Diana.

21

22 MS. STRAM: Okay, thank you. I'm sorry
23 about that. Okay, do you want me to get started?

24

25 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Yes, go ahead,
26 Diana, Diane, Diana.

27

28 MS. STRAM: Okay, thanks. Okay, I'm
29 not sure -- I'll start.

30

31 Madame Chair. Members of the Council.
32 My name is Diana Stram, I'm the Senior Scientist with
33 the North Pacific Fishery Management Council. I
34 submitted a longer version awhile back that's in your
35 reference book. I sent Nissa a shorter version today
36 understanding that you wouldn't have quite as much time
37 but I'm happy to answer more questions afterwards about
38 either the longer presentation or the additional slides
39 that I have for you today. I'm mostly going to walk
40 through kind of some background on salmon bycatch
41 management and current issues, issues that were taken
42 up at the June meeting and what we anticipate for the
43 December meeting.

44

45 So moving to Slide 2. Hopefully you all
46 can see that, it says presentation to the Council in
47 June of 2022. So we had a number of presentations that
48 were requested of different agency Staff to our June
49 Council meeting and I have been listening all morning

50

0087

1 so I just wanted to provide you a little bit of
2 feedback in terms of why this was taken up in June. We
3 do normally take up salmon bycatch in April for all the
4 reasons that you have raised in comments, we had an
5 extensive data list request from the Council in October
6 but we were also, as we'll get into, responding to the
7 high chum bycatch in the summer of 2021 and in working
8 with the geneticists if we delayed the salmon reports
9 to June we would then get the genetic reports back from
10 the 2021 fishery to see if it looked different in terms
11 of the stock of origin of the bycatch. So we can talk
12 through that but I do understand that there's concern
13 about this regularly occurring in June and we'll
14 certainly bring that information back to the Council.

15

16 But going back to what we did take up
17 in June of 2022 is a list of a number of reports. I'll
18 only go over a couple of these but, again, I can answer
19 questions as needed.

20

21 The Council had asked us to provide a
22 stock, status and research update for both Western
23 Alaska chinook and chum, an overview of ongoing AFSC,
24 the Science Center NOAA research and mandates and the
25 ADF&G State of Alaska ongoing research and plans and so
26 we have some coordinated presentations. The longer
27 presentation that I provided you in your book includes
28 some of those research updates, I'm not going to go
29 over those right now but we can talk about it if you
30 wish after. I do have information on the -- both the
31 Bering Sea -- I don't have the chum salmon genetics
32 reports in this report, I just focused on the Bering Se
33 for this. We -- the geneticists have been working
34 really hard to catch up, they have been years behind in
35 providing the genetics from the salmon bycatch. They
36 are nearly caught up for chum and that we were able,
37 again, by taking this up in June, we were able to get
38 the report of the previous year's bycatch from the
39 pollock fishery. for chinook we only received report
40 through 2020, they are again working really hard to
41 catch up on those reports so that we can get them only
42 one year out from when the salmon were bycaught in the
43 fishery. We got some updates on their work and plans,
44 again, primarily to streamline things. We also took up
45 an updated chinook adult equivalency and impact report
46 and had some Staff meetings and recommendations for
47 assessing chum impacts.

48

49 In the interest of time I moved those

50

0088

1 to extra slides but if you wish me to go through them
2 at the end of this presentation I'm happy to do that.

3

4

5 And then from the industry we also
6 received a report on the salmon excluders, some ongoing
7 investigations that they're doing with that. We
8 received our reports from the pollock industry and then
9 we received an update from SeaShare, which is a food
10 donation program that works in distributing bycaught --
11 both bycaught and donated fish to the Gulf of Alaska
12 and Bering Sea.

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

So with that I'll move to the next
slide to provide you a brief history of the actions
related to chinook and chum bycatch management. This
is just for context and then I'll provide more
information on the genetics.

Next slide, Slide 4. Hopefully you can
see this is a graph that shows you in red the chinook
bycatch from 1990 to 2021 and then in blue the chum
bycatch. I have this on a different slide but just to
note that for 2022, you know, we completed the B season
for the pollock fishery so we have the information from
the whole of 2022 so for chum the numbers from the 2022
year were 242,350, for chinook they were 6,336.

The next slide then just to provide you
an overview of how we've evolved in managing salmon
bycatch in the Bering Sea. Between the 1990, until
early 2000 we had large scale time area closures called
salmon savings area in the Bering Sea and those were
triggered by a limit and when that limit was reached for
either chum or chinook these closures were in place for
a number of months. What we found then is that --
sorry, this is the next slide, Slide 6, we found that
those closures then, because they're based on
historical bycatch that we were starting to see
indications that they're misspecified so they're not in
the right place and so the bycatch of chum and chinook
outside of the closures when they were triggered was
higher than the ones that were inside of it. So the
Council understood that they needed to develop a
different measure because those time area closures were
actually making things worse. And so as an interim
measure they developed an exemption to those closures
provided that the industry was participating in a
rolling hot spot program which would put into place
short-term near time closures that the pollock fishery

0089

1 would adhere to in order to be exempt from those large
2 area closures.

3

4

Next slide.

5

6

7 Then at that time -- sorry, I guess I
8 should mention that this was also in conjunction with
9 the very high amount of over 700,000 chum that was
10 experienced in 2005. So as we were working to address
11 chum bycatch the fleet ran into 120,000 chinook in 2007
12 as you're well aware and so at that point the policy
13 shifted from addressing chum as an emergency situation
14 to addressing chinook. And then all of the focus went
15 from chum to chinook. We held a number of workshops to
16 try to figure out a new management program. The
17 Council at that time appointed a salmon bycatch
18 committee to work in assisting with developing what's
19 called a hardcap, a cap that will close the fishery,
20 and up until this point any caps on the fishery had
21 just been associated with a closure that would move
22 them out of a certain area.

22

23

Next slide.

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

That's when we developed what's called
Amendment 91. At that time we also did extensive
outreach to Western Alaska communities. We brought
Council members out to a series of every RAC meeting at
that time, over 2009 and 2010. The Council took final
action on Amendment 91 in 2009 and after that we were
also providing outreach efforts to communities to
explain the program and what the rationale was in
deciding upon it.

Next slide.

Immediately upon implementation, so in
2011 of the implementation of Amendment 91 there were a
number of provisions that went into place in
conjunction with putting that cap system in place which
I'll go over in just a minute. Part of that was
systematic genetic sampling, so prior to 2009 genetic
sampling had been opportunistic, whenever they could
get samples, so we didn't have a systematic sampling
that would be equivalent across years. From 2011 on
we've had a systematic sampling. One in 10 chinook and
one in 30 chum are sampled for genetics and that's why
we can provide these annual genetic reports. And
there's also a census on counting for salmon,

0090

1 previously there were estimation procedures in place
2 for counting salmon at sea, now it's a census so every
3 salmon that is brought on board is counted and there
4 are cameras in place to ensure that any salmon brought
5 on board is not thrown overboard before it's counted
6 and is either brought into the hold and then counted by
7 an observer, shoreside -- if it's a catcher vessel
8 delivering shoreside or it is counted by an observer on
9 board on a catcher processor or a mother ship that are
10 processing at sea. And, again, cameras are in place to
11 ensure that there is accountability at all levels.

12

13 At that timeline the Council begin to develop
14 chum bycatch measures understanding that they had had
15 to switch gears to chinook in order to figure out a new
16 program for chinook, but knew that they needed to come
17 back to chum and so beginning right in 2010 we started
18 to develop chum bycatch measures and so we did similar
19 investigations as we did with the chinook. We looked
20 at time area closures for chum, chums are only caught
21 in the B season so in the summer season, and so we
22 looked at different areas based on the opportunistic
23 genetics that we had that were indicating that Western
24 Alaska chum were more prevalent in June and July on the
25 pollock fishing ground than they were later in the
26 season. So we looked at some time area closures that
27 would go into place in June and July. We also looked
28 at a variety of cap measures. In 2012 then the Council
29 decided to hold off on taking any of these measures for
30 chum because the chinook program was brand new and many
31 of the measures, in particular, the time area closures
32 looked like they would serve to undermine the incentive
33 to avoid chinook and would cause the fleet to move into
34 higher chinook areas later in the season.

35

36 Next slide. Slide 10.

37

38 So in 2015 we implemented Amendment 110
39 that was developed in response to continued low chinook
40 in Western Alaska and we had done an analysis that
41 showed the need for stronger vessel level incentives
42 under the incentive program agreement. At that time
43 then the Council moved to, rather than manage chum
44 separately moved to include chum as part of the rolling
45 hot spot system that the industry was pursuing under
46 their incentive plan agreement.

47

48 Next slide.

49

50

0091

1 So this slide just shows you an
2 overview on how Bering Sea, Aleutian Island pollock
3 fishery is managing -- how we're managing salmon
4 bycatch, both chinook and chum. So particularly for
5 chinook we have extremely strong regulatory measures.
6 As you're probably aware under Amendment 91 we have a
7 higher and a lower cap level and with the incentive
8 plan agreements that the industry and us put forward in
9 order to fish under those agreements. With Amendment
10 110 then we put into place what's called the Three
11 River Index so every year the State of Alaska provides
12 us chinook salmon abundance for post-season in-river
13 chinook run size for the Kuskokwim, the Unalakleet and
14 the upper Yukon and that's provided to the Council in
15 October and if that value is below 250,000 chinook then
16 we kick over into a low cap system, in which case the
17 performance standard is dropped and the overall cap
18 level is also dropped. So the overall cap level and
19 this is across all sectors, goes from 60,000 chinook to
20 45,000 chinook with the actual cap that they're
21 managing towards dropping to 33,318 salmon. So in
22 recent years we have been under that low cap system and
23 we will be under that low cap system again in 2023
24 based on the information we got from the State of
25 Alaska last week. Some measures included in the
26 incentive plan then are part of their plans are
27 considered voluntarily but there are plans in place to
28 ensure that the individuals, individual captains are
29 avoiding chinook and chum under any condition of
30 encounters. They have both rewards and penalties
31 included in there for failure to avoid, particularly
32 chinook, at vessel levels, they have hot spot closures,
33 salmon escapement panels which I'll show a figure on,
34 called excluders, and then again a high proportion is
35 donated to food banks. The little figure to the bottom
36 right just shows you some of the hot spot closures that
37 are put into place when they see a high aggregation of
38 bycatch, there's a notice to the fleet and they are
39 required to stay out of those areas for a period of
40 three to seven days.

41
42 Next slide.

43
44 This slide just shows you just for
45 perspective season and area of catch patterns of the
46 Eastern Bering Sea pollock fishery. Again, chinook is
47 caught in both the A season, which is the winter season
48 and the B season, the summer season, where chum is only
49 caught in the B season. So this just gives you by
50

0092

1 year, this shows you the catch and it shows you the
2 catch, east and west of 170, which is a line that we
3 draw looking at that as well as what's caught in the A
4 season. And then the panels to the right just show you
5 those bars are the concentration of catch and it shows
6 you for 2019 through 2021 where the fishery itself is
7 actually operating. So they're operating much closer
8 to shore, they're limited very much below the
9 Pribilofs, usually for extensive ice cover and they
10 operate the -- the shoreside catcher vessels operate
11 fairly close to Unimak Island.

12

13 Next slide.

14

15 This slide shows you the same series of
16 years 2019 to 2021 but gives you the distribution of
17 the fishery during the B season. So, again, when
18 they're not limited to ice cover, in particular,
19 catcher processors and mother ship, they move up along
20 that shelf contour right up really to the 200 -- we
21 manage to three to 200 miles offshore and that boundary
22 is where they bump up against the Russian boundary in
23 the EEZ to the upper northwest.

24

25 Next slide.

26

27 This slide just shows you what a salmon
28 excluder is and all vessels are now required to use
29 them and these are designed to allow pollock to fall
30 back into the end of the net while salmon use that --
31 the lower curtain that's made -- put in place by that
32 hole in the net and the panel and the salmon are able
33 to escape. So for a number of years up until this past
34 year the industry has been testing different designs
35 and providing information to the Council on the
36 percentage of escapement that they're able to achieve
37 with different net designs. This excluder tends to
38 work much better for chinook than it does for chum.
39 The highest estimates I believe that they had for
40 chinook on the more recent ones were between 25 and 30
41 percent escapement, those are lower for chum, they've
42 never had quite as much success with the excluders for
43 chum as they have for chinook so pretty good success
44 rate for chinook.

45

46 Next slide.

47

48 I'm going to move into just the summary
49 of the genetics, again, including the recent genetics

50

0093

1 that we heard at the June 2022 Council meeting.

2

3

Next slide.

4

5

6 This first slide then just gives you
7 kind of an overview, these are all the years for which
8 we've done systematic sampling so, again, beginning
9 with Amendment 91 in 2011 so these are comparable
10 sampling years, the way that the sampling design has
11 been done. These are the breakouts of the way that the
12 geneticists are able to break out chinook into these
13 categories starting from the left then: Coastal West
14 Alaska, middle Yukon, upper Yukon, North Alaska
15 Peninsula, the Northwest Gulf of Alaska, Coastal
16 Southeast Alaska, British Columbia and then from there
17 down the whole West Coast of the United States. And so
18 we're obviously primarily interested in the Western
19 Alaska catches, in particular the Yukon and Coastal
20 West Alaska. So the difference between the upper graph
21 and the lower graph, the upper graph gives you the
22 proportion of the sample, the lower graph translates
23 those into numbers and so you can see you had a higher
24 going from the red bar at about 17,000 chinook that
25 were -- that would have returned to the aggregate
26 Coastal West Alaska grouping. And then, again, an up
27 turn in 2020 for that group. That's the most recent
28 data we have is from 2020 but there was an up turn in
29 the proportion. So it's a proportion of the samples
30 that were from there and then that translates into the
31 higher number.

31

32

33

34

35

36

37

38

39

40

Next slide.

41

42

43

44

45

46

47

48

49

50

And then similar information is
available for chum. This just shows you the same sort
of information but on a graph instead of in bars. And,
again, the stock proportion on top and the chum bycatch
numbers on the bottom. And here yellow is the Coastal
West Alaska, blue is the upper and middle Yukon that
are combined and then for comparison, the purple is
Southwest Alaska. So in general the proportion for
Western Alaska and Yukon has been much lower than the

0094

1 average over the two years and the -- in general even
2 with the large bycatch the catches have been below or
3 near average but I would note that even though the
4 proportion is small for West Alaska because the numbers
5 were so high in 2021 you'll see that while the bycatch
6 is over 500,000 and of that about 50,000 would have
7 returned to Western Alaska.

8

9 So next slide then just to finish up
10 with what the Council action is in June and what we're
11 looking for in December.

12

13 Next slide.

14

15 This is part -- there's several parts
16 to what the Council has requested for December. Again,
17 we don't normally take this up in December, we are in
18 this cycle right now because of the requests that were
19 made by the Council in June. So one of the things that
20 the Council had stressed is acknowledging the Western
21 Alaska salmon crises and the impact it's having on
22 culture and food security throughout Western Alaska.
23 The Council is committed to continued improvements in
24 bycatch management for salmon and made a number of
25 requests.

26

27 The first is the request to the pollock
28 industry to implement additional chum salmon bycatch
29 measures beginning immediately and for the summer of
30 2022 the Council will rehear back from the pollock
31 industry in December on the outcome of those additional
32 measures. They did receive some reports in June of
33 additional measures that the industry was intending to
34 put into place for the B Season and then they'll hear
35 back on how effective those were in December.

36

37 The next thing the Council requested
38 then was an updated discussion paper. So this is a
39 request to Staff and so we're working currently on
40 compiling and writing this discussion paper. And that
41 discussion paper is intended to include information on
42 the bycatch and genetics, on how that varies in space
43 and time. A description of the Council's rationale for
44 the current mechanism by which Bering Sea chum bycatch
45 is managed. Again, coming out of the 23012 analysis
46 that was not brought forward, they want a summary of
47 what was considered in 2012 and why it was not brought
48 forward, what rationale was used to move to a different
49 program under Amendment 110 in conjunction with
50

0095

1 chinook, as well as some tradeoffs in terms of the
2 different species -- prohibitive species that the
3 pollock fishery is avoiding in their fishing
4 operations, which includes both chum, chinook and
5 herring and other incidental catch. And then a summary
6 of conditions that have changed since they last looked
7 at chum separately in 2012, specifically in terms of
8 Western Alaska chum stock status as well as there's a
9 lot of interest in looking at the hatchery releases,
10 not just Asian but across the Pacific Rim and to what
11 extent those have changed over time, particularly since
12 we last looked at this about a decade ago.

13
14

Next slide.

15
16

17 I'm not sure how much you know about
18 the State of Alaska's bycatch task force but there is a
19 Gubernatorial task force that's been working over the
20 last six months with different meetings. One is
21 focused on crab bycatch in the Bering Sea and the Gulf
22 of Alaska. The other is particularly focused on
23 Western salmon subcommittee is working on
24 recommendations for better management of salmon in
25 Western -- bycatch of salmon specifically for Western
26 Alaska stocks. So those subcommittees have been
27 meeting. The overall bycatch task force itself has
28 also had meetings, they just had a meeting yesterday,
29 they had one a week ago. They're due to complete their
30 meetings on November 15th and their recommendations are
31 due to be provided to the public by November 29th. The
32 Council then intends to consider those findings and the
33 recommendations of that State of Alaska bycatch task
34 force in December as it looks at how to manage --
35 continue to make changes to salmon bycatch management
36 in the Bering Sea.

37
38

39 The Council also indicated that it
40 wishes to form a work group, especially a salmon
41 bycatch committee and that'll be comprised of tribal
42 members, industry representatives and other experts.
43 The intent of that salmon bycatch committee would be to
44 review and provide recommendations on the chum
45 discussion paper that we'll have listed (ph) by
46 November 11th, as well as the findings from the State
47 of Alaska bycatch task force overall for salmon as well
48 as the specific work by the Western Alaska salmon
49 subcommittee. And to include current information,
50 including local, traditional and subsistence knowledge
and research to determine what's driving Western Alaska

0096

1 salmon declines.

2

3

4 So the nominations for that committee
5 were made available -- were taken through -- I'm sorry
6 -- on to just the next slide that says Part 3 and then
7 I'll get through the timeline of what we're coming back
8 with.

8

9

10 The Council also prioritized research
11 on Bering Sea salmon and noted the support for NOAA and
12 ADF&G and developing models for -- predictive models
13 for where salmon stocks will be located in the Bering
14 Sea. And they are continuing to stress the need to
15 reduce the time for the analysis of the genetics data
16 and then prioritizing increased survey work in near
17 shore environments which has been proposed by the State
18 of Alaska as a really vulnerable area for salmon in
19 their first year at sea.

19

20

Next slide.

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

So then this slide just has a timeline.
Again, we had a call for nominations to the salmon
bycatch committee that was posted in August. That was
taken up until the day before our Council meeting began
two weeks ago. Those appointments have not yet been
made but they are due to be made soon, either -- they
were not made during the October Council meeting so we
anticipate that they will be made and published to our
website within the next week or so.

In November then the intention was that
salmon bycatch would meet for the first time and would
review -- at the very least that committee would have
an introductory meeting and review the information in
the Staff chum discussion paper. If those task force
recommendations are available they could also be
reviewed by the committee at that time. We do have the
Western Alaska subcommittee recommendations so those
would be made available to the committee, we just don't
know whether or not we'll have the overall State of
Alaska bycatch task force committee recommendations in
time for a meeting in late November. And then, again,
in December the Council will be reviewing that
discussion paper as well as the committee
recommendations on it and then if the task force
recommendations are available the Council will be
considering those, if they had not yet been available
there is the intention that this salmon bycatch

0097

1 committee would meet after those overall bycatch task
2 force recommendations are made available.

3

4 Madame Chair, I'll pause there. I'm
5 happy to walk through additional slides but if you'd
6 rather pause now for questions I'm happy to do that as
7 well.

8

9 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay, do we have
10 any questions or comments from the Council.

11

12 Tim.

13

14 MR. GERVAIS: Thank you, Madame Chair.
15 Thank you for your presentation Diana, this is Tim
16 Gervais. During the Sitka meeting was there any
17 discussion on limiting the amount of time the trawl
18 fleet is engaged in fishing or using some kind of model
19 of marine protected areas where there's areas where
20 trawling's not allowed to as to potential conservation
21 measures?

22

23 MS. STRAM: Thank you. Through the
24 Chair. Tim. The Council didn't discuss that as
25 options. What the Council put forward was what was in
26 their motion requesting this discussion paper and to
27 give themselves time to look at the task force
28 recommendations from the Governor's task force and then
29 with the intention to discuss, if possible, what, if
30 any, additional management measures they'd consider in
31 December. So they heard public comments on a variety
32 of different aspects to management that they could
33 consider modifying but they didn't make any of those
34 changes or indicate that they were making those changes
35 at this time, instead, they deferred that discussion
36 largely to December when they take up this new
37 information.

38

39 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Any other
40 questions or comments.

41

42 Darrell.

43

44 MR. VENT: Yeah, thanks. I just wanted
45 to, you know, give a little bit of information on we
46 were discussing in the meeting that, you know, the
47 salmon's supposed to be going all the way to Canada and
48 all of a sudden there was like 30,000 fish that wasn't
49 accounted for, that was supposed to be heading up into
50

0098

1 Canada. I spoke before, you know, that the breed of
2 the fish, you have a good strain in that breed and
3 they're able to swim all the way up into Canada and
4 people were talking up around Fort Yukon area and they
5 said, yeah, we've been having a lot of fish up in our
6 streams so I'm assuming that, you know, the fish are
7 not strong enough all the way up into Canada anymore.
8 So they go into tributaries that are on the Alaska side
9 and it's because they don't have the strain no more.
10 They can't go as far as they used to. IT just brings
11 up, you know, that we have to take into consideration
12 that that strain is not in the fish no more so they
13 can't make that long swim and same thing with the chum
14 salmon. We're not seeing a lot of chum in our area but
15 maybe in the lower Yukon they're starting to, you know,
16 they see chum but they're just not going as far no
17 more. They don't have the strength to go as far as
18 they should. So, you know, there's something going on
19 in the ocean. And like Virgil explained maybe it's
20 because there's competition out there for the food,
21 there's not enough to be eaten by the fish to make that
22 long run so they have to make shorter runs and so maybe
23 the fish are breeding in places that are unfamiliar
24 with so it's not -- you're not getting as many fish
25 coming back out anymore because it's not the right
26 place for them to, you know, go and hatch their eggs.

27
28 It's something that, you know, we
29 haven't really talked about but I think that should be
30 brought up in discussions that we have to really start
31 understanding what's going on with our fish in order to
32 try and make it to where we can start learning to
33 repopulate our strength in them. So we have to
34 understand from their side, not only what we, as, you
35 know, sitting here at the table, they go full cycle,
36 they go down in the waters in the fall time, under the
37 ice and there's a lot of predation going on, not only
38 pike, you know, there's whitefish, sheefish, eels all
39 these other areas -- when we start losing the salmon
40 then the eels start disappearing too. About the only
41 thing I see a lot around is the pike, they haven't
42 disappeared, they increased. Our ducks, our geese, our
43 muskrat, there's, you know -- Pollock said he went
44 fishing and sees some big pike now, they're huge. And,
45 you know, I spoke about predation in their fish down in
46 the Lower 48 so, you know, that's some of the things I
47 just wanted to bring up that I think is interesting to
48 understand how the fish, how the salmon, how do we, you
49 know, try to make them come back. We have to really,
50

0099

1 you know, get together and put our minds to it.

2

3

Thank you.

4

5

6

MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Thank you,
Darrell, that was.....

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. STRAM: Thank you for that. I would also encourage if you have the information in your packet, there is some more information under the research updates, we had some really interesting research updates presented to the Council by both NOAA and the State of Alaska and a lot of it had to do with warming waters and how that really changed a lot of the diet that both chinook and chum are experiencing at sea and how that basically they're getting a less nutritious diet and in recent warm years the capelin, the thing that they really are thriving on is less prevalent and so that that's having a real effect on their ability to survive basically and thrive. So that's -- there's a number of factors but that's also one of them that was brought up to us.

MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Thank you, Diana. Darrell, that was very good comments. I never really thought of that, gave that a thought, I just thought they had a lot of food out there but evidently not. Times are changing. I was just thinking about when I was young, I used to be able to run many miles, now I can hop, you know, one foot, not even that. But, you know, as things get older and the fish do get older and the cycle gets older, it slows down, so it's something to think about. I think we should continue this discussion and maybe even have a work shop or something on it, I don't know. We got to do something.

Kevin.

MR. WHITWORTH: Madame Chair, thank you. Thank you, Diana. You had mentioned a number of factors that may be causing the salmon collapse. Can you just take a moment to elaborate on that, what NOAA has discussed as far as the factors that may be affecting the salmon out in the ocean. You had mentioned warming waters and climate change, can you just elaborate a little bit more on that.

Thanks.

0100

1 MS. STRAM: Sure, I'm happy to, just to
2 provide a brief overview of some of the information
3 that they've provided to us. They showed some graphs
4 of, particularly Northern Bering Sea juvenile chinook
5 salmon abundance from 2003 to 2021 and they basically
6 noted that the abundance of juvenile salmon has been
7 below average since 2017 but that they're smaller than
8 average size during the recent warm years in
9 particular, so 2014 through 2017, and that's when they
10 started looking at some diet data and noted that during
11 those very warm years 2014 through 2017, that the diet
12 that they have of the juvenile chinook salmon is
13 showing a real lack of particularly capelin which is a
14 really high quality prey for them. And so they further
15 were discussing that the future runs, Yukon chinook at
16 least, is determined really early in their life before
17 their first winter at sea while Yukon fall chum are
18 also driven by factors early in life until 2016 and
19 that's 'when things sort of tipped over and that had to
20 do with ocean temperature and basically it seemed that
21 juvenile chinook were doing better, at first, as
22 temperatures rose but reached a tipping point whereas
23 juvenile chum, their stored energy basically it goes
24 down as temperatures warm. So the way that the scien
25 -- the researchers had likened it is that while they're
26 getting food it's basically getting less rich food so
27 instead of getting a steak you're getting celery. And
28 so they just don't have -- they're running kind of on
29 empty in terms of their ability to store some of that
30 energy and so they're less viable after that, that
31 first year, because they just aren't getting the high
32 quality prey and that one of the major factors to that
33 has to do with warming temperatures and the switching
34 of the available -- switching to other less nutritious
35 prey items where capelin is absent from their diet.

36
37 I hope that answers your question.

38
39 There's a number of factors and there's
40 a whole lot of people that are doing research on this.

41
42 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Kevin.

43
44 MR. WHITWORTH: Yeah, thank.....

45
46 MS. STRAM: Madame Chair, if I may. I
47 neglected to mention one thing. This isn't about
48 salmon bycatch but I did hear somebody mention this
49 earlier in the meeting and I just wanted to make sure
50

0101

1 that you're aware and I'll give Nissa the information.
2 One thing that the Council took up on Tuesday was
3 appointing an AP tribal seat. So we don't have
4 designated seats for our advisory panel, but they did
5 decide to add one seat as a designated tribal seat on
6 the advisory panel. So the information is on our
7 website to apply and noting -- it gives the criteria
8 noting that the individual does not need to be Alaska
9 Native but they must be nominated by a tribe and/or a
10 consortia so that they can speak for the tribes and
11 consortia and so that nomination period will be open, I
12 believe, until early April. But, again, I'll forward
13 Nissa all the information on that and so that's the
14 first time that we have had a designated seat and it is
15 an additional seat on our advisory panel that would be
16 permanent. So I just wanted to make sure you're aware
17 of that but I will make sure that I give Nissa the
18 information to circulate on that as well.

19

20 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Tim.

21

22 MR. GERVAIS: Thank you, Madame Chair.
23 Diana has -- I don't know, since 2005, have -- or maybe
24 even earlier, I don't know what year your rolling hot
25 spot program came out, but since 2001 has -- or excuse
26 me, 1991 has the implementation of salmon conservation
27 measures ever prevented the BSAI trawl feet from
28 reaching their tact?

29

30 MS. STRAM: Thanks for the question.
31 Just in terms of when the rolling hot spots --
32 voluntarily the fleet started imposing the rolling hot
33 spots back in 2000 when they were getting closed out of
34 these chinook salmon savings areas and no, I don't
35 believe that being moved out of those areas has ever
36 prohibited them from reaching their tact. There have
37 been some years where they haven't reached their tact
38 in recent years for other reasons, or because the
39 pollock were so dispersed they weren't able to find it.
40 They have provisions in place now to not extend their
41 season very much into October in order to avoid higher
42 chinook bycatch at that time so they're balancing
43 different aspects. But the closures, no, they did not,
44 because they didn't have an overall limit. I would
45 note that the fishery has not reached their overall
46 limit since the imposition of Amendment 91. It would
47 shut them down in a season for the remainder of the
48 season. That limit's divided by sector and by season
49 and so there are smaller boxes for the different
50

0102

1 sectors and by season. But if they do reach that limit
2 now it does shut them down. But those time area
3 closures were never hard limits, they were triggered
4 closures, so by design the fishery had to move out of
5 areas that had historically had high bycatch in order
6 to fish in what was supposed to be cleaner areas but as
7 we're learning static time area closures don't work
8 particularly well when conditions are shifting in the
9 ocean.

10

11 MR. GERVAIS: Has the pollock stocks
12 been affected by global warming?

13

14 MS. STRAM: Thanks, that's a great
15 question. General -- not really, we've been starting
16 to look at kind of the winners and losers of climate
17 change as it goes with groundfish stocks and obviously
18 I'm sure you've heard about the decline in the crab
19 stocks which are definitely losers in climate change.
20 Pollock so far doesn't seem to have a strong response
21 to it, partly they're fairly short-lived. Other
22 species such as sablefish, seem to be doing better
23 under warming conditions. They just had a real huge
24 recruitment event in recent years so we're still kind
25 of looking into that but there hasn't been -- but the
26 pollock stock was down, I think in 2008 kind of to some
27 of its lower levels but since then it's been at a
28 fairly stable level. We'll be getting our new stock
29 assessments for pollock, and all of our stocks actually
30 in just a couple of weeks so we'll have updated
31 information that includes the information from the 2022
32 survey.

33

34 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Don.

35

36 MR. HONEA: Thank you, Madame Chair. I
37 think Tim brought up a pretty interesting question, I
38 mean, you know, Diana -- oh, my name is Don Honea, I'm
39 from Ruby. I guess the thing, I mean, you know, we can
40 go on about there's so many doggone many facets to this
41 whole thing here, you know, but whether it's chinook or
42 chum or something they're feeding and I think it's kind
43 of interesting that are what are the numbers of the
44 pollock doing. Because, you know, I mean a few years
45 back we could consider global warming, maybe it's
46 getting too warm over there in the ocean and then an
47 elder mentioned the feeding, you know, it's kind of
48 interesting that, you know, what exactly is pollock
49 doing, is it -- is it remaining the same, why are we --
50

0103

1 I guess the point I'm trying to make is if I saw that
2 graph correctly and it showed that from 2017 to 2020 or
3 something that a lot of chum salmon was taken, much
4 more than chinook, is it because -- I mean is there --
5 can we -- do you have an answer to why that's happened,
6 what do we attribute that to, lack of chinooks now, or
7 it seems like there's an increase and it's -- I don't
8 know, if you could answer that or not it'd be nice.

9

10 Thank you.

11

12 MS. STRAM: Through the Chair. Thanks
13 for the question. We don't know the actual answer to
14 that. That's, again, why the Council's asking for
15 additional information. Some of that is most likely
16 higher encounters on the grounds. If you look at those
17 graphs you can see that chum has really fluctuated.
18 Obviously we had that high in 2005. It was gradually
19 climbing from about -- the encounters that is, so when
20 they catch them as bycatch, not necessarily what you're
21 experiencing on the grounds in Western Alaska because
22 the proportions of those fish that are from Western
23 Alaska, the chum salmon caught in bycatch is really
24 low, as compared to Asian fish and so that's why we're
25 being asked to look at has there been an increase in
26 the hatchery release of Asian fish because they're
27 running into -- when they run into these really high
28 numbers, that's still the greatest proportion of those
29 is by and large Asian hatchery fish and so we're
30 looking at is it a carrying capacity thing, are there
31 more -- are there more chum salmon on the grounds.
32 Certainly avoidance is undoubtedly an issue because
33 there hasn't been -- while there's been incentives in
34 place to avoid chum, chinook has always been the
35 priority and so when the fleet runs into chinook they
36 move off of it and that would be at the expense of chum
37 if they can't get away from both and that's because the
38 chinook has always been the priority to try to reduce
39 any possibility of encounters with chinook bycatch. So
40 I think we don't have that answer.

41

42 We did a lot of work and studies
43 initially during Amendment 91 to try to figure out is
44 there a smoking gun for the chinook encounters. We
45 looked at a lot of things, we looked at temperature at
46 depth, whether or not there could be temperature
47 directed fishing, whether or not there could be
48 day/night differences. We don't have a good estimate
49 of at-sea abundance of salmon unfortunately and so we
50

0104

1 have to look at co-location of pollock and salmon and
2 then look at runs to look at all of them and basically
3 the short answer, for chinook, at least, is that it was
4 some part of all of those things but it wasn't any one
5 single thing. So the decision was made to put the cap
6 system in place even though we didn't know if there was
7 a more refined measure but we knew that it wasn't just
8 temperature, it wasn't just depth, it's presumably co-
9 location but sometimes even in low abundance years they
10 could -- they can run into additional chinook. We've
11 looked at time areas, the -- the geneticists have done
12 a really fantastic job, with chum especially of trying
13 to break out spacial and temporal -- so time and areas
14 across the Bering Sea by season and by week where they
15 might see more -- higher aggregations of Western Alaska
16 chum because the point is to avoid the Western Alaska
17 chum above all other chum.

18

19 So I don't have a good answer for you.
20 I hope that we'll have more information to bring
21 forward in December when we start to look at hatchery
22 releases across the Pacific Rim to see if that's an
23 exacerbating factor. But it's -- that's basically what
24 we know right now. We haven't done a lot of
25 investigation into chum encounters, we've been focused
26 up until now on refining chinook measures to make sure
27 that that stays as the most stringent measure.

28

29 Sorry I can't answer your question
30 better than that.

31

32 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Any other
33 comments or -- Kevin.

34

35 MR. WHITWORTH: Thanks, Madame Chair.
36 Thanks Diana. I got a lot of comments but I'm going to
37 try to keep it simple -- or short.

38

39 You know, this morning I was talking
40 about gravel to gravel fish management and NOAA's
41 trying to do it, they're trying to look at in-river, or
42 escapement goals, the people not getting their harvest
43 needs met. I think there could be more collaboration
44 between, you know, the tribal people on the river, I
45 think Fish and Game has some research in the reports
46 with NOAA so I applaud them for working with Fish and
47 Game. NOAA needs to continue to work with the tribal
48 people, the people from the river.

49

50

0105

1 Also I think they need to take a better
2 look at the cumulative effects over the years. We have
3 a lot of data here looking at the bycatch for the past
4 year or two. She had talked about climate change being
5 an impact, the heat stress on different prey for the
6 salmon, there's human cumul -- there's cumulative
7 effects, environmental and human effects, both of them
8 need to be accounted for. Going back all the way to
9 the 2007 even where 150,000 chinook were bycaught, have
10 we recovered from, that one year? We don't know. We
11 used to have commercial fisheries on the Kuskokwim
12 River and the Yukon River, have we recovered from those
13 events? We don't know. We need to look at a more
14 cumulative effect here, not just one or two years back,
15 not look at the impacts from last year's catch and how
16 it's affecting our runs this year, in-river. That's
17 not going to help us to get these runs back to where we
18 want them. If there is, for sure, climate change,
19 environmental impacts on these runs then fisheries
20 management like NOAA needs to take these into account
21 seriously and take a more precautionary approach when
22 it come to harvesting their species like pollock.

23
24 We have -- out in the Bering Sea
25 there's -- all the salmon are decreasing, the two crab
26 fisheries are decreasing, West Coast Alaska they talk
27 about bird die-offs and there's bird bycatch as well.
28 There's endangered species being bycaught. Some
29 fisheries, if they catch one endangered species they'll
30 be completely closed yet pollock fishery continues.
31 There's -- you know I'm rambling on here but -- but
32 NOAA needs to take a more precautionary approach to get
33 to where we want to get to and that's where -- we need
34 to get to where subsistence people are getting their
35 food back. And I really do believe that NOAA needs to
36 take this more seriously.

37
38 I'll just leave it at that.

39
40 Thank you.

41
42 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Thank you,
43 Kevin.

44
45 MS. STRAM: Thank you.

46
47 MR. REAKOFF: Madame Chair, I have a
48 question.

49
50

0106

1 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Yes, go ahead.

2

3

4 MR. REAKOFF: Diana, this is Jack
5 Reakoff. Is marine temperature correlated to increase
6 chum salmon bycatch irrelevant to the chum salmon
7 biomass and can be used as a predictor, counter-
8 intuitively bycatch increases with chum salmon decline
9 but is there consideration to use this predictor as to
10 move the fleet west of the travel routes of the chum
11 salmon during the season when they would be
12 encountered.

12

13

14

Thank you.

15

16 MS. STRAM: Thanks, Jack, those are --
17 those are great questions. I'm probably not going to
18 be able to answer either of them. We did look at
19 temperature and bycatch. I think we looked at both
20 chum and chinook, it was a project that we had years
21 back but I'd have to go back to it. At least the
22 chinook, it was correlated, somewhat weakly but still
23 correlated, we haven't had a lot of success in how to
24 predict where and when we might find the bycatch.
25 That's something that we're trying to work on,
26 particularly working with the geneticists to see if
27 other -- are there times of the year, particularly for
28 chum, if we see something early on, is there a way we
29 can predict, or at the end of one season predict what
30 we might be seeing the next season, we're not really
31 there yet but we're trying to work on that. And in an
32 ideal world, having a predictive measure in place
33 management-wise would be much better than having blunt
34 management measures in place but right now we haven't
35 moved towards the sophistication to have that kind of a
36 predictive approach. I think we're trying to look into
37 that much more -- I mean we looked into it as a blunt
38 tool, that's with the three river index is supposed to
39 do, is just say, okay, when things are going down you
40 make a change. We're trying to look at much more
41 sophisticated predictive measures to see is there
42 something about the timing and the location and the
43 stock of origin, or the bycatch is this year that would
44 tell us something about next year, and I think we do
45 need to look into all those factors. We need to look
46 into temperature, we need to look into the spacial and
47 temporal location of the bycatch by stocks. They're
48 trying to isolate them by strataboxes in the Bering Sea
49 so we can get a better idea under different conditions
50 in the ocean are we seeing more aggregated, say Western

50

0107

1 Alaska stocks in certain areas so we would know to move
2 away from there, but we're not there yet. I think
3 that's where we're trying to go in this next year if
4 the Council continues to move forward with
5 considerations for something that we might do more for
6 chum.

7

8 I hope that helps, I'm sorry, I don't a
9 have better answer to that but I think we are thinking
10 of it.

11

12 And I also hope that you feel better,
13 I'm sorry about your accident, that's really horrible.

14

15 MR. REAKOFF: Thank you. That answers
16 quite a bit. Thank you, very much.

17

18 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Thank you, Jack.

19

20 Kevin.

21

22 MR. WHITWORTH: Yeah, thank you, Madame
23 Chair. So I just want to keep on this idea that
24 management's not working and Darrell's brought this up.
25 He brought this up this morning. I really do think the
26 current management at NOAA, there needs to be a deep
27 review. So their current programmatic supplemental EIS
28 that they are functioning under right now, it's a 2004
29 EIS, that is managed -- they use to manage the fishery,
30 it's outdated. It doesn't reflect the issues that are
31 going on right now well. So we've talked about climate
32 change issues, environmental issues that Diana has
33 brought up, we've heard, you know, with Fish and
34 Wildlife, Fish and Game in-river say that climate
35 change is driving some of these issues, we don't know
36 if it is or not, but the current EIS that NOAA is
37 managing the fisheries under does not account for
38 climate change, it does not account for the significant
39 shifts in the Bering Sea that Virgil has talked about,
40 a lot of people have talked about this, and the salmon
41 collapse, the crab collapses, the marine mammal
42 collapses, the bird collapses, there's studies out in
43 the Bering Sea that go back a long time about these
44 collapses and I really do think that we should write a
45 letter to NOAA telling them that they need to do a
46 complete NEPA process so that the people throughout the
47 entire Bering Sea ecosystem, including tribal people
48 from up and down the Kuskokwim and Yukon Rivers, we are
49 part of that environment, the fresh water environment

50

0108

1 is part of the Bering Sea and if they do a full NEPA
2 process to evaluate, come up with alternatives that are
3 alternatives that come from the people, not just within
4 NOAA -- NOAA right now will try to rewrite this plan
5 but without tribal input, without our input, like a
6 full NEPA process would and so I would like to -- I can
7 help draft this letter if you guys would entertain it,
8 to write to NOAA to implement a full NEPA and revision
9 of their EIS.

10

11 That's all, thank you.

12

13 MR. REAKOFF: Madame Chair.

14

15 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Yes, go ahead.

16

17 MR. REAKOFF: I make a motion to write
18 that letter to NOAA referring to the NEPA process and
19 Kevin writing it and with the Council making input into
20 that. That's the motion.

21

22 MR. VENT: Second.

23

24 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: A motion made by
25 Jack to write to NOAA, seconded by Darrell, all in
26 favor say aye.

27

28 MR. GERVAIS: Can we discuss it for a
29 minute.

30

31 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: You need to.

32

33 MR. GERVAIS: Yes.

34

35 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Darrell.

36

37 MR. VENT: Yeah, just you know, I
38 remember years back they declared a fishing disaster
39 for commercial fishing and the people in our villages
40 were affected by not being able to go out and get their
41 salmon, do their traditional, and I look back at that
42 and I say, you know, what are our tribal people, how
43 are they being compensated for a disaster that took
44 their food off their table, you know, that's like to
45 going to somebody's store and just robbing it and
46 saying, okay, you don't have no more food there, you
47 can't eat it. That's something that really affects our
48 people because they depend on this fish and it's really
49 serious that, you know, that something we got to
50

0109

1 consider later on, how do we propose to the State, the
2 Federal government, you know, all these areas that are
3 depleting what our area used to have. We haven't
4 really, you know, looked into the full depths of what
5 we got to do yet. I mean we're still just sitting on
6 the edge kind of right now but this is something that,
7 you know, our people depended on this and then it was
8 taken away from them. How are we going to go about
9 that. You know that's one of the things that we're
10 going to have to consider later on.

11

12 So I just -- you know, just been
13 thinking about that, you know, our people are really
14 hurting because we don't have that traditional use no
15 more.

16

17 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Thank you,
18 Darrell.

19

20 Tim.

21

22 MR. GERVAIS: Thank you, Madame Chair.
23 Kevin, let me know if I'm trying to add too much stuff
24 into the letter or everyone on the Council.

25

26 So Kevin's going to cover information
27 about initiating or reinitiating the NEPA process. I
28 think it's important in the letter to mention that --
29 it's my understanding that the transboundary escapement
30 on the Yukon was only about a quarter of the goal. So
31 if you look at that as a spawning escapement goal, if
32 you're only -- you're only getting 25 percent of the
33 fish you want on the ground that's just a tragic state
34 of the stock. And I think NOAA and all the Council
35 members on the North Pacific Management Council need to
36 understand that with zero nets in the water, zero
37 fishwheels in the water, we could only get 25 percent
38 of our spawning escapement and that's just really poor
39 biological performance. So I'd like information
40 stating those numbers in the letter and I would like
41 this Council to forward a -- or create -- or start the
42 discussion instead of just trying to manage bycatch we
43 need to try to get into a scheme of more precautionary
44 management where -- so there's -- there is a lot.....

45

46 (Teleconference interference -
47 participants not muted - typing)

48

49 MR. GERVAIS:of factors that are

50

0110

1 probably affecting the salmon populations with the
2 bycatch and hatchery release and water temperatures and
3 nutrition available and probably some other factors
4 too. But since all the scientists all over the Pacific
5 can't really figure out or quantify what percent of
6 these effects are, how detrimental they are in the
7 overall picture, that the precautionary management
8 means that we need to have less salmon taken out of the
9 ecosystem until we have a better science-based
10 understanding of what's causing these declines.

11

12 So I hope that we can get that message
13 across to limit the bycatch below what's currently
14 allowable because there's no spare salmon available
15 right now and these fish are being eliminated in a
16 commercial venture which when we can't meet escapement
17 goals there should be no commercial predation on the
18 stocks.

19

20 So that's a point I would like included
21 in the letter.

22

23 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay, anybody
24 else from the Council.

25

26 MR. GERVAIS: Is it -- Kevin, are you
27 proposing that this is a letter to NOAA or North
28 Pacific Management Council?

29

30 MR. WHITWORTH: Madame Chair. I would
31 probably title it to both -- we could send it to both,
32 management, NMFS and North Pacific Fisheries
33 Management, the Chair at least, I would do that. We
34 could work on that, figure that out, but I would at
35 least send it to those two entities.

36

37 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay.

38

39 MR. GERVAIS: And how do we get the
40 Federal Subsistence Board involved or just CC them on
41 it or does it have to go through them?

42

43 MS. PILCHER: Through the Chair, this
44 is Nissa Pilcher. You could certainly CC the Board on
45 it. It does not have to -- my understanding is it
46 doesn't have to specifically go through them in order
47 to get to the other entities Member Whitworth's was
48 talking about. I could be mistaken but I don't believe
49 it specifically has to go to the Board first but they
50

0111

1 can for sure be CC'd on the letter.

2

3 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Pollock.

4

5 MR. SIMON: Yeah, thank you, Madame
6 Chair. I think we're spending a lot of time on this
7 one item of business.

8

9 Thank you, Madame Chair.

10

11 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay. All in
12 favor say aye.

13

14 IN UNISON: Aye.

15

16 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: All opposed same
17 sign.

18

19 (No opposing votes)

20

21 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Motion carries.
22 Thank you, Jack.

23

24 Okay, with that we'll go to the Yukon
25 River salmon season summary by Holly Carroll.

26

27 MS. CARROLL: Good afternoon, Members
28 of the.....

29

30 REPORTER: Holly, can you hang on a
31 second. Let me tell these people to mute first, hold
32 on.

33

34 (Pause)

35

36 REPORTER: Okay, go ahead Holly. Sorry
37 about that.

38

39 MS. CARROLL: Madame Chair. Members of
40 the Council. I'm Holly Carroll with U.S. Fish and
41 Wildlife Service. I'm the Yukon River in-season
42 Federal Manager. I will try to keep this report brief
43 because I feel like we've touched on a lot of your
44 concerns and questions already with previous
45 presentations.

46

47 You have a full summary of the season
48 in your packet but I would have to ask Nissa what tab
49 it's under, it's in your supplemental materials -- Tab
50

0112

1 2 of your supplemental materials. And I will just kind
2 of reiterate that, you know, a lot of the season data
3 is still finishing up. The Alaska Department of Fish
4 and Game will produce its season summaries very soon
5 for the summer and then typically the fall season
6 summary is produced around December, so we'll
7 definitely get those full summaries to you by your next
8 RAC meeting.

9

10 So I won't belabor the details, I think
11 you all are very familiar with how the Yukon salmon
12 season went, it's been discussed a great deal today.
13 We've seen some of the lowest runs on record,
14 particularly for chinook it was the lowest run on
15 record, for chum salmon it was the second lowest. We
16 did fail to meet likely all goals within the drainage
17 for both chum and chinook. So, again, this has all
18 been discussed.

19

20 Our management was, you know, very
21 harsh as many of you said, it's -- we've had three
22 years of closures for chum, two years of closures for
23 chinook and our only ability to offer some opportunity
24 was trying to keep pretty liberal fishing for whitefish
25 and other non-salmon and we did that with our four inch
26 gear this summer. On the Yukon we were able to offer
27 that usually 24/7. We did restrict those four inch
28 gillnets to 60 feet maximum length and that's just to
29 help keep those on shore-based so that they're better
30 able to target resident species.

31

32 So, you know, in a nutshell, you know,
33 many of you discussed this, when we have runs this
34 poor, you know, our first priority is always
35 perpetuating the runs in to the future. We have those
36 biological imperatives to try to meet escapement goals.
37 And as you can tell from these abysmal run sizes there
38 wasn't enough fish to meet escapement goals even with,
39 as one of you said, zero nets in the water and zero
40 harvest of salmon, we had pretty much no chance of
41 meeting many of these goals.

42

43 So I wanted to touch on a couple things
44 some of you guys have been talking about and, you know,
45 it can be very frustrating when management and research
46 doesn't keep up with the concerns that you guys have
47 been expressing, some of you for decades. And I want
48 to echo that that's very true. I mean I actually agree
49 with a lot of the sentiments that have been discussed

50

0113

1 here today and as a biologist myself, I just feel like
2 we're always chasing our tail trying to figure out one
3 problem after another. When we think we got one
4 figured out, one species comes back, we're fishing
5 again, and another species just continues to struggle
6 no matter what we do. But one thing that I wanted to
7 highlight is that at the Service we've really tried to
8 take a more collaborative approach, I mean we have to,
9 it's kind of all hands on deck right now, but we're
10 really trying to coordinate better with the people
11 doing ocean research, with the people at the
12 universities doing research on the smolt or the
13 juvenile life cycles, or the ecosystem type of studies
14 and one of the studies that I'm particularly involved
15 with is the ichthyophonus study. I know you also heard
16 mention of that disease and there is a flier at the
17 table over here that describes what that study is
18 doing, why we are doing it, what are goals are for the
19 next few years but, you know, this is a very acute and
20 real problem particular for the Yukon. So we've heard
21 lots of speculation is it climate, is it warming water,
22 you know, there's a lot of areas of speculation
23 affecting lots of salmon but what we do know for Yukon
24 chinook, specifically, this is one disease that likely
25 could be killing them. It is definitely a disease that
26 is in higher prevalence in the population right now.
27 We've been taking samples the last two seasons and we
28 have seen some of the highest prevalence, which is to
29 say, more fish in the population appear to be carrying
30 this disease than we've seen in the past. And what
31 we're also finding is that the disease appears to be
32 more severe. And so this kind of goes along with what
33 Darrell was saying earlier, this theory that, well,
34 wait a minute, they're not making it to Canada, we're
35 seeing this big discrepancy between what's counted in-
36 river at Pilot Station, for instance, and then what
37 arrives at the Border. For chinook, at least, we
38 really have concerns that if ichthyophonus is killing
39 them before they make it to their spawning grounds that
40 could be one of the main reasons we are seeing far less
41 chinook at the Border than we expect to. It doesn't
42 really answer that same question for chum but I think
43 that heat stress and other things, in fact, it was
44 Darrell that took me on the river and showed me the
45 heat stress mass die-off of chum that occurred in 2019.
46 And so while we're scrambling to understand heat stress
47 effects in salmon, we're also scrambling to understand
48 what's going on with this ichthyophonus disease.
49
50

0114

1 So right now that program does require
2 that we sample at three sites on the river. Pilot
3 Station is in the lower river so we like to look at how
4 the disease is affecting the fish down there but it's
5 really important to check the disease at Rapids area
6 because I'm sure Jim Simon and Virgil, you may recall
7 them mentioning previous studies were done many years
8 ago and many of them centered around that Rapids area.
9 So we have a good baseline of what the disease has
10 looked like over decades and so we need to continue to
11 look at Rapids.

12
13 But one of the theories is that people
14 in the upper river say communities like Fort Yukon and
15 communities like Eagle, they say they don't see this
16 disease in the fish and that could imply that those
17 fish are dying, the sick fish are dying before they
18 ever get there and that's why they don't see those
19 hearts with the spots and the spoiled meat. And so we
20 do want to expand our sampling into Fort Yukon next
21 summer, and we hope that the sampling will continue at
22 Eagle.

23
24 This is controversial sampling because
25 as you've all discussed, people can't go fishing for
26 salmon, they can't even do their normal traditional
27 harvests. We've got fishing very heavily restricted.
28 But for the importance of this study we've limited the
29 number of sample sizes needed to be statistically sound
30 and we need to take about 200 samples from each
31 location. To do that we have to kill the fish because
32 we have to take that heart and study that heart. But
33 what we do, is we distribute those fish to locals who
34 are getting to use those king salmon for their
35 traditional use.

36
37 So if you have more questions about
38 that study I'll be here after, there's also the flier.
39 But it's just really important that we study that
40 disease now while it's prevalent because it does come
41 and go and so we really need to understand what
42 percentage of these fish could actually be so affected
43 that they might not be making it to their spawning
44 grounds.

45
46 I also just wanted to briefly touch on
47 the Service has a real important part of its mission to
48 consult with tribal governments and on the Yukon we've
49 made an effort to have tribal consultations. Last year
50

0115

1 we did some post-season teleconferences. We offered
2 them by district and then we did a preseason round of
3 tribal consultations. And this year we'll be doing
4 that preseason round again, especially once we have
5 forecasts and start to let people know what we're
6 expecting for run sizes. But this fall we also
7 recognized that, you know, we have a Board of Fish this
8 year, we have a Federal Subsistence Board, there's so
9 many meetings. You guys have all talked about the
10 December Council meeting and it sounds like that's
11 another one to go to. So for tribal consultations we
12 would like to just have them with you whenever you want
13 or need them. And so just as a reminder that any
14 tribal government can request a tribal consultation
15 with me, the Federal Manager, and we will set up a
16 meeting for you. So just to remind you, that if you
17 want something post-season we'd like to maybe hold
18 those in November or whenever would work with you but
19 just to get in touch with us directly to schedule
20 something.

21

22 I guess I just also heard a lot of
23 other great conversation about -- you know, a lot of
24 frustration about these very complicated meeting
25 processes and what can you really do to make any change
26 and I believe that you are right some of these changes
27 are glacial and painful and there's some of you that
28 have been fighting on these issues for over 20 years.
29 But I guess I just want to remind you that, you know,
30 your work, through attending these meetings, especially
31 through the North Pacific Fishery Management Council,
32 those chinook bycatch caps and amendments that are in
33 place, those weren't there before and I believe that
34 the work of the stakeholders to make these concerns
35 known and to go to these meetings and to spur us
36 biologists, us agencies to do a better job, I do
37 believe that's working, and so I just want to remind
38 you that the December Council will be taking up salmon
39 bycatch.

40

41 I wanted to also answer a couple
42 questions that came up earlier.

43

44 The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service does
45 have just a non-voting seat on the Council. The member
46 that sits on that is our assistant Regional Director,
47 Pete Fasbender. We have various Staff that work to
48 provide reports to the Board and so one of those folks
49 is Aaron Martin at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

50

0116

1 and then we produce reports for the Board, we call them
2 the B report, and that might be any information that
3 the Service wants to present at that meeting. So it
4 could be anything from information about migratory
5 birds or mammals or it could be about salmon and myself
6 and the Area Manager Boyd, out of Kuskokwim, we have
7 been pushing to produce our B reports and to focus on
8 the -- sort of the outcomes and the effects on our
9 fishing users for the December meeting and the reason
10 is because that's a meeting where salmon bycatch is
11 brought up. So we will be giving a B report where we
12 describe our run sizes, the effects of those run sizes
13 on the fishermen for that meeting, but that's typically
14 when we produce that B report. So hopefully that
15 answered some of those questions.

16

17 And I'm certainly happy to standby for
18 any more questions you have. I am giving this report
19 on behalf of the Fish and Game managers as well so I
20 guess it would be good to see if they had anything that
21 they wanted to add about management, if they're on the
22 line.

23

24 MS. JALLEN: Hi Holly. Yeah, thank you
25 for that excellent report and good update on -- this is
26 Deena Jallen with the Alaska Department of Fish and
27 Game, I'm the Yukon River Summer Season Manager.

28

29 Yeah, and just a few things to add is
30 that we'll be getting our 2022 summer season summary
31 published here fairly soon and we're putting out
32 additional reports as part of the Board of Fish process
33 later on this winter. The 2021 area management report,
34 the AMR will be published later this winter, as well as
35 a stock status report that will include updates from
36 chinook, summer chum, fall chum and coho salmon. ADF&G
37 Staff comments on the Board of Fish proposals have been
38 drafted and those will also be put on the Board of Fish
39 website.

40

41 And, yeah, also just to echo Holly's
42 comments on her sentiment that we really, really
43 appreciate all the hard work that you do on the Council
44 and all the hard work that you do especially as good
45 stewards of the resources that we're working to protect
46 and, yeah, with that I'll turn it over to Christy if
47 she has anything else to add for the fall season.

48

49 MS. GLEASON: Yeah, hi, members of the

50

0117

1 Council, this is Christy Gleason, I'm the Fall Season
2 Manager. I work really close with Holly and Deena.

3

4

5 We were listening to your guys' opening
6 comments and your concerns for the low salmon runs. We
7 hear you. We have the same concerns. Especially with
8 -- this is the third year in a row for low fall chum
9 and coho runs. We did hear that you guys have concerns
10 for Area M and I want to let you know that they are
11 having a Board of Fish meeting this year, it's February
12 20th to the 25th in Anchorage and you can submit public
13 comments by February 3rd. There are some proposals
14 that are in right now to try and protect Yukon salmon
15 and so you guys will probably be talking about those a
16 little later in your agenda. Deena and I are also
17 available if you have any questions about the Board of
18 Fish Yukon proposals. Our Board of Fish meeting is
19 January 14th to the 18th and you can submit public
20 comments by December 30th.

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

Yeah, and I guess one other thing with
the low salmon runs that we're seeing on the Yukon
River, I want to let you know we are trying to do some
additional research for fall season. We restarted the
Sheenjek River sonar, which is a historical project
that we've had on an important fall chum spawning river
in the Porcupine River drainage. We also worked with
U.S. Fish and Wildlife and Yukon Delta Fisheries
Development to tag -- put radiotags in about 350 coho
salmon this year and we're tracking them in the Yukon
River drainage right now. We know very little about
coho salmon and so we're trying to understand more.

Another thing that we did this year was
we collected some samples to look at some stress
hormone analysis on fall chum salmon and so hopefully
we'll wrap up these research projects and have more to
report to you guys at a later time.

So thank you.

MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay, thank you
very much. Any comments. Darrell.

MR. VENT: Yeah, Holly, just, you know,
something that I kind of remembered and I had spoken
about a few years ago on the crash on the coho, I said
we really got to start worrying about our chum salmon
because it might becoming the same was as the coho and

0118

1 it actually has happened. So, you know, I was worried
2 about it then and now what I'm worried about is our
3 sheefish and whitefish. Those are going to be getting
4 hit hard and we don't have no numbers on those and it's
5 concerning because we're losing a lot of our fish
6 already.

7

8 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Thank you,
9 Darrell. Any other comments. Don.

10

11

12 MR. HONEA: Thank you, Madame Chair.
13 Thank you for your presentation, Holly. It's
14 interesting, the fact that, you know, I guess we've
15 heard for a couple years now that the fish that went by
16 X arrived at Z or whatever and the numbers are way
17 down, whatever, and so would you know about the studies
18 on say they mentioned the Sheenjek or the Porcupine or
19 something, and you also mentioned ichthyphonus or
20 something, the fish at the Rapids, how come they're not
21 getting them in Fort Yukon. So I don't know if the
22 Porcupine is -- comes in before the -- before you get
23 to Fort Yukon or not but I -- I was just wondering, you
24 know, if the Sheenjek or the Porcupine or something,
25 you know, reflects a higher number of fish that were
26 destined for Canada in the first place. I don't know
27 if you're -- if you have access to those numbers or who
28 actually does.

29

30 Thank you.

31

32 MS. CARROLL: Yeah, that's an excellent
33 question. Through the Chair. Mr. Honea. So this kind
34 of relates to what Darrell said earlier, too. Is it
35 that the fish that are going to Canada, are they going
36 into other tributaries like the Porcupine or something
37 else. And we have -- you know we have an extensive
38 network of agencies that are collecting data and so
39 within Canada they have projects on the Porcupine
40 River, they have multiple projects, long-term projects
41 and we have not seen this phenomena of, instead of fish
42 going to Canada they're going into other streams, we
43 aren't seeing higher numbers in those streams, we're
44 actually seeing record low numbers everywhere. And
45 even like you were saying, in the lower river, you
46 know, maybe they're just going and spawning in the
47 lower rivers, we're seeing no evidence of that
48 whatsoever. Every spawning area appears to be lower
49 than historical and that's for both chums and chinook.

50

0119

1 And so, no, we're not just seeing them just turn off
2 sooner. And so this problem with Rapids, you know, at
3 first -- in the very first year when it happened it was
4 mostly with chinook, we don't see the data problem with
5 chums. We don't count a certain number of chums at
6 Pilot and then not see them at the Border at Eagle,
7 those match very well. So there wasn't an indication
8 that the chums are dying but there is now, after four
9 years in a row an indication that the chinook might be
10 dying before they get there. And there's no indication
11 that they're just going off into other tributaries.

12

13 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Thank you,
14 Holly, that was very good. Kevin.

15

16 MR. WHITWORTH: Thank you, Madame
17 Chair. Thank you, Holly, for the report. I've got a
18 few questions. Just looking at my notes here. Thanks
19 for touching on the ichthyophonous, that's scary stuff
20 and one thing I would -- and, you know, you mentioned
21 Pilot Station versus Eagle River sonar, those two and
22 the discrepancy there, have you thought about -- I know
23 in years past, you know, we've thought maybe it's just
24 harvest taking place in between the two, 30,000, 40,000
25 chinook salmon being harvest somewhere, I know that's
26 been discussed in the past. Maybe they're dying
27 because of this disease. I've also heard of it could
28 be that the sonar's not accurate. There's a lot of
29 variability within the sonar estimate. I know the
30 graphics, they are black bars, you know, they just have
31 basically -- they show this number. Well, there's a
32 lot of variability this -- this confidence interval so
33 it may be helpful to point that out in these graphics
34 to have -- show that there is a variability in those
35 estimates. And as well as Eagle. You know it's a big
36 river. And when you are trying to estimate chinook
37 salmon runs or coho, whatever it is, past the sonar and
38 you're using a sonar, it's very difficult to estimate
39 each species. So just wanted to point that out.

40

41 Also will be interested later on in the
42 winter report when we have a post-season harvest
43 estimates coming out of the Yukon, especially like
44 Darrell's concern for whitefish and sheefish. If, you
45 know, now that the salmon have been basically closed
46 would be interesting to see if harvest for these other
47 species have gone up, like whitefish.

48

49 And also since there had been a lot of

50

0120

1 four inch mesh net, I'm just wondering if there's been
2 discussion about the -- this has been a big discussion
3 on the Kuskokwim with the four inch, is the die-off,
4 and the, you know, what's that, people call it, roll
5 out.....

6
7 MS. CARROLL: Drop out.

8
9 MR. WHITWORTH: Yeah. That is a
10 concern for me. People are able to catch king salmon
11 with a four inch net and if they're out 24/7 they are
12 catching king salmon, but there's also going to be a
13 lot that are not caught at all and they'll just drift
14 down stream dead and they won't be going to the
15 spawning grounds at all.

16
17 I do want to point out -- I would like
18 to ask, too, you know, the Biden Administration and
19 Holly -- no, excuse me, the Secretary of Interior,
20 there's this push for co-stewardship, co-management
21 with tribal governments, especially in DOI, I do
22 believe there's a lot of room for this on the Yukon
23 River, on the Kuskokwim, we're trying to build it more
24 and more every year. I mean even just small steps,
25 like this B report from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife
26 Service going to NOAA in December, that report, there
27 could be tribal consultation and co-management or co-
28 development of that report. That's just a small
29 gesture to tribes, they can get their voices heard
30 through a report that goes directly to NOAA and if you
31 were open to work with tribes, that's a big step in the
32 right direction. And that's just one example, I think
33 there's a lot of examples for co-stewardship, co-
34 development, co-management of these species and if you
35 work with tribes, both entities we'll win. So I really
36 encourage you to try to work with tribes as much as you
37 can in-season especially with these reports, like the B
38 report.

39
40 Thank you, that's all.

41
42 Thank you, Jenny.

43
44 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Thank you,
45 Kevin. Any more comments or questions.

46
47 Tim.

48
49 MR. GERVAIS: Thank you, Madame Chair.

50

0121

1 Yeah, I have a question for all three of you ladies,
2 when we were having a discussion earlier with Kevin and
3 Virgil on genetics and I was recalling some kind of
4 genetic study done by Department of Fish and Game in
5 the mid-teens where they were -- I thought they were
6 sampling king salmon harvests randomly for genetics in
7 each management area, Kodiak, Chignik and Area M, do
8 any of the three of you recall that study and what year
9 was it and where could we find that information?

10

11 MS. CARROLL: Through the Chair, this
12 is Holly Carroll. You know actually I worked with Matt
13 Keyes and he's now the Assistant Area Manager for Area
14 M and he did mention that study that you're talking
15 about that Fish and Game did get money when he was back
16 there managing the fishery and I believe it was 2015 or
17 2016 where they got year of funding but then something
18 happened with it so they may have only gotten one year
19 of funding, so I think unless Deena or Christy had more
20 information on that it probably is just worth
21 contacting the Kodiak office because they may have
22 information about that or letting Fish and Game follow
23 up on that.

24

25 MR. GERVAIS: Okay. So Tina [sic] and
26 Christy this is Tim Gervais. How -- in our discussions
27 and in the Board of Fish proposals there's a lot
28 of.....

29

30 (Teleconference interference -
31 participants not muted)

32

33 MR. GERVAIS:concern with
34 interception, how -- has Department of Fish and Game
35 discussed genetic sampling on kings and chums off the
36 commercial harvest for the different management areas
37 so all the stakeholders could have accurate information
38 on how much is intercept and how much is locally caught
39 fish?

40

41 MS. JALLEN: Hi, yeah, this is Deena
42 Jallen with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.
43 There was genetic sampling done in Area M this year --
44 let me pull up the preliminary information from that --
45 and this is going to be a topic of a lot of discussion
46 at the Board of Fish meeting in -- next -- later on
47 this winter that's going to discuss Area M fishery so
48 there'll be a lot of written comments, there'll be a
49 lot of ACR's, there'll be a lot of supporting
50

0122

1 documentation about, you know, Yukon fish in the Area M
2 fishery and so those would probably be good discussions
3 to weigh in on, support comments, submit comments
4 (indiscernible - paper shuffling/typing - muffled) a
5 lot more deeper than we probably want to get into it
6 here.

7
8 MR. GERVAIS: Are the genetic testing
9 programs very expensive to conduct? I commercially
10 fish in Chignik and we have allocation discussions or
11 conflicts frequently with Kodiak and Area M and I know
12 Cook Inlet fishermen get involved too with Kodiak
13 interception, so I'm just curious if the genetic
14 testing is economical and it can be part of the
15 commercial harvesting programs going forward for all
16 the areas so we can all understand what's -- how much
17 interception's going on.....

18
19 (Teleconference interference -
20 participants not muted - typing)

21
22 MR. GERVAIS:and also would allow
23 some fisheries to continue on harvesting local stocks.

24
25 MS. JALLEN: Yeah, that I don't know,
26 it might be worth reaching out to either Dan -- there's
27 a regional operational plan that's out -- I think it's
28 available through our report that talks about the study
29 plan for genetic stock composition and the dates on the
30 regional operation plan are from 22 to 26 and I'm
31 trying to scroll through it and see -- but I can email
32 that to you, Tim, I think I have your email address,
33 but, yeah, I don't know how much it cost to run that
34 project and how the associated sampling and analysis
35 cost breakdown.

36
37 MR. GERVAIS: All right. I can text or
38 email you my email address.

39
40 MS. GLEASON: And this is Christy
41 Gleason, just to add a little bit more to what Deena
42 said about Area M, we have had a lot of public
43 questions about Area M and Deena and I are not the
44 managers for that fishery and so it's hard for us to
45 answer questions but the Department did put together a
46 summary about Area M and some of the frequently asked
47 questions that people have and so we can distribute
48 that to the RAC members if you'd like, like we're
49 trying to distribute it to our AC members as well.

50

0123

1 MR. GERVAIS: Yeah, this is Tim, I
2 would appreciate that study.

3
4 MR. REAKOFF: Madame Chair. I would
5 like that document also.

6
7 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Yes Jack. Go
8 ahead, Jack.

9
10 MR. REAKOFF: I said I would like that
11 document also about Area M, the question and answer
12 sheet.

13
14 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay. Darrell.

15
16 MR. VENT: Yeah, just one more, you
17 know, she spoke on the disease the fish are getting.
18 We were discussing that in our meeting and we want to
19 put in a sonar around the Galena area to try to see if
20 that -- because you have a long distance from Pilot --
21 you know, from there, the mouth all the way up to
22 Eagle. And we wanted to see if we could get a better
23 idea of what's really going on with the fish so we're
24 trying to get a sonar put in around the Galena area for
25 that. And, you know, Virgil spoke about the size of
26 the fish, they're not the big healthy fish anymore. So
27 that's one thing that I wanted to mention. That's why
28 I spoke about, you know, they can't swim as far as they
29 used to anymore. That's just some of the things I was
30 mentioning.

31
32 (Teleconference interference -
33 participants not muted - typing)

34
35 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Thank you,
36 Darrell. Any more comments.

37
38 (No comments)

39
40 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: If not, then if
41 you don't have anymore, Holly, are you done?

42
43 MS. CARROLL: I guess, Madame Chair, I
44 would like the opportunity to followup to Kevin had
45 very many comments about some information that I could
46 actually quickly provide.

47
48 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Sure.

49
50

0124

1 MS. CARROLL: So you've brought up a
2 couple things about the difference between the sonars.
3 You bring up a really good point, there's large
4 confidence intervals around our sonar estimates. I
5 have extensive experience operating both at Eagle and
6 Pilot and other sonars, I know how complicated those
7 apportionment models are. And as a manager, the first
8 year it happened, it's the first thing you think, is
9 what's going on with the sonar. When it happens four
10 years in a row and it only happens with one species and
11 it's not an undercount, it's an overcount, right,
12 essentially, you think you have more fish and then they
13 don't arrive. That raises a lot of red flags. And
14 we've had a team of experts from Fish and Game, Fish
15 and Wildlife and also members of the Joint Technical
16 Committee in Canada review multiple datasets and
17 presentations, and I won't say that we've ruled out
18 that sonar is the problem but we're definitely looking
19 at other things as a problem. But we had a whole
20 subcommittee formed to look at this difference between
21 estimates. I don't bother presenting all that stuff
22 here because it is -- you know I could give a whole
23 presentation on it but suffices to say we also looked
24 at other factors, like you mentioned, could it be
25 harvest, and I mean we are talking about in high run
26 years, like 2019, we had a harvest of 50,000 chinook on
27 the river so it was actually a decent chinook harvest
28 year and we failed to meet the goal by about 500 fish
29 but we were expecting another 20 or 40,000 fish there.
30 So, again, we had a massive chinook discrepancy. It --
31 our entire fleet of subsistence users could not
32 possibly have harvested 40,000 fish and have it go
33 unreported. Our subsistence harvest survey on the
34 Yukon actually has confidence intervals around the
35 harvest estimate, they're actually really quite
36 accurate, we get really good reporting. People even
37 report when they take fish illegally or with gear
38 that's not legal. People generally are quite honest on
39 those surveys. And so we have this long dataset, we
40 can see outliers pretty easily and we also have a long
41 dataset of the non-salmon.

42
43 And so to get to your question about
44 should we be concerned about the harvest of non-salmon,
45 Darrell, you brought this up as well, actually we do
46 need to keep looking at that very closely but what we
47 found in the first year of the massive closure is that
48 we actually saw a decrease in the harvest of whitefish
49 that year. That could have to do a little bit about
50

1 the fact that surveyors go door to door in the
2 community or last two years it's been by phone, but we
3 typically go do that in the fall, well, typically most
4 fishers are going to fish for their whitefish in the
5 winter because they're going to do it under the ice and
6 so we think that could have been a lower estimate. So
7 we're going to look at those estimates of non-salmon
8 way closer this year. But one of the things we found
9 was that those harvests are going down. And one of the
10 theories on that is that most people in the summer are
11 not choosing to harvest those fish and some may not be
12 able to afford to open their fish camp, or go for the
13 gas to go gillnet for those whitefish because it may
14 not be worth it to them, that is what we're hearing
15 from some folks. So we're definitely going to present
16 that kind of data. I'll make a note that we highlight
17 those kind of data when we come back and do our summary
18 in the winter.

19

20 I hundred percent love your idea about
21 the tribal collaboration on the B reports and I'll
22 definitely run that up the chain to the team who works
23 on the Council.

24

25 And then I also just wanted to say that
26 when it comes to the Eagle sonar you mentioned error,
27 what's unique about the Eagle sonar is it's not like
28 the Kuskokwim and it's not like the Pilot. Those
29 species are very discreet. They don't even really see
30 a lot of resident species. So the error around the
31 estimate is usually less than 1,000 fish, it's almost a
32 fish per fish count when we're talking about the
33 chinook and the chum. So actually we don't consider
34 the Eagle sonar as likely being any part of the
35 problem.

36

37 So I just wanted to address all those
38 questions with you because I think they're super valid
39 and I certainly wouldn't want them glossed over. If
40 you want more information about that we can certainly
41 followup.

42

43 The final thing you mentioned was drop
44 out, and we have been hearing a lot of concerns about
45 that from even members here. It certainly started when
46 we reduced mesh size to six inch so on the Yukon, we
47 have been using six inch for almost 10 years in the
48 subsistence fishery and so those concerns came up for
49 large fish, particularly the large fall chum, large
50

0126

1 kings and then they've come even more now that we're
2 requiring -- or only allowing that four inch that --
3 and I, myself, have run gillnets so many times, I know
4 exactly what you're talking about, a big fish it going
5 to get entangled on the small mouth parts and then when
6 the fisherman goes to retrieve it, it's just going to
7 roll out and so not only is not retrieved and didn't
8 make it to the spawning grounds but now they need to go
9 get more fish. So we are aware of that. But what
10 we've seen on the Yukon is we're not seeing enough
11 evidence that that's a problem to warrant taking away
12 that one last final opportunity for people to get any
13 kind of food. So kind of like what you were saying in
14 your early testimony about the Kuskokwim, during coho
15 there's no ability to offer any opportunity. On the
16 Yukon we are down to people eating nothing, you know,
17 and so us being able to offer that four inch
18 opportunity, at least to me it's.....

19

20 (Teleconference interference -
21 participants not muted - typing)

22

23 MS. CARROLL:really important
24 that we continue to try to offer that whenever we can
25 as it's one of the last methods for people to feed
26 their families at this point.

27

28 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Thank you,
29 Holly.

30

31 Kevin. Tim.

32

33 MR. GERVAIS: Thank you, Madame Chair.
34 Holly, I just wanted to -- you said it but I'm pretty
35 hard of hearing. So you said that Pete Fasbender, he's
36 a non-voting member of the North Pacific Management
37 Council?

38

39 MS. CARROLL: Yes. Through the Chair.
40 That's correct, he's our Assistant Regional Director
41 and he's the Fish and Wildlife Service non-voting
42 member for us, yeah.

43

44 MR. GERVAIS: Okay. So he can
45 participate in any Council discussion but he never gets
46 to vote on an action item?

47

48 MS. CARROLL: Correct.

49

50

0127

1 MR. GERVAIS: Okay. And then Erin --
2 you're -- you're writing the B report and giving it to
3 Erin and Erin is presenting the B report to the Council
4 in December.

5
6

7 MS. CARROLL: Aaron Martin is one of
8 our Staff members who attends the meeting and compiles
9 documents so, yes, and I can get all of this
10 information and send it to Nissa to distribute. But
11 basically he's the one that makes the call on the B
12 report. I will say the B report turnaround is usually
13 less than three weeks because the Council has a meeting
14 every couple months. There's a meeting -- a three
15 meeting outlook so it's a pretty quick turnaround on
16 those reports.

17
18

18 MR. GERVAIS: Okay. And then it's an
19 annual event, every December this happens even if it's
20 years when there's not a salmon problem?

21
22

22 MS. CARROLL: No -- so actually these
23 Council meetings occur, I believe, five times a year,
24 and they're always a week long. What I was saying is
25 that the Fish and Wildlife Service will submit a B
26 report for any -- for anything that we might want to
27 tell the Council. So sometimes marine mammal issues
28 come up, we'll submit a B report. We have chosen to
29 start putting our salmon information more likely into
30 those December meeting reports because that is when
31 they take up the salmon bycatch issue but at any time
32 the Fish and Wildlife Service has the opportunity to
33 give a B report to the Council at any of their Council
34 meetings.

35
36

36 MR. GERVAIS: Okay. So like this
37 December the B report might have Western Alaska salmon
38 and also sea otters in the Aleutian or Southeast and
39 walrus and then at the next meeting in March or April
40 you may revisit more information that becomes available
41 on salmon, is that how the B report process works?

42
43

43 MS. CARROLL: Yeah, through the Chair.
44 The B report is just a way for the Fish and Wildlife
45 Service to communicate any relevant information to the
46 Council pertaining to that meeting. So at every single
47 meeting there's a B report. What we put in that B
48 report could vary meeting to meeting, there's a lot of
49 flexibility there.

50

0128

1 MR. GERVAIS: All right, thank you.

2

3 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Thank you, Tim.
4 Kevin, did you have something.

5

6 MR. WHITWORTH: No.

7

8 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay. Okay,
9 I'll make a comment. I thank you Carol -- Holly -- I
10 keep calling you Carol. But I remember years back when
11 they first started reducing the mesh size, I was a
12 little bit upset because we had one type of gear and
13 then they were reducing it from 8 to 7 or whatever. I
14 got up and I made a comment and I said, gee, every --
15 you're going to be reducing us going down from 8 to 7
16 to 6 and now you're going to bring us down to 4 and now
17 we're down to 4 inch gear. And something that Darrell
18 said was -- about the fish that we're -- we're
19 concerned -- we're concerned about years ago and it's
20 happening now and he's bringing up whitefish and pike
21 and I'm also thinking about the other fish, we have
22 grayling, burbot, what do we call the burbot -- and
23 something else in our language.

24

25 MR. VENT: Lush.

26

27 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Lush. We call
28 them lush. But anyway -- and I know down river, the
29 lower river they get eels and I don't know what other
30 type of fish that we eat but we should also be thinking
31 about those fish because maybe that's the next thing
32 that's going to be on our tables and, you know, the
33 decline of all the fish that's going on we'll probably
34 be losing those too and I don't know maybe we'll be
35 getting a new type of fish that we don't like now, when
36 we got this fish from somebody else we didn't even know
37 how to work at it so maybe we better be prepared to be
38 getting fish from way outside or different countries.

39

40 But with that, I think if you're done
41 Holly, I think we need a break.

42

43 MR. HONEA: Can I comment.

44

45 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: I think we need
46 a -- okay.

47

48 MR. HONEA: Can I comment?

49

50

0129

1 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Yes. And then
2 we'll go on break.

3
4 MR. HONEA: Sure. Thank you, Madame
5 Chair. Holly I find it kind of interesting that, you
6 know, what is your take on this, I mean -- I mean so --
7 so we come up with, you know, this and that and
8 everybody else, I mean do you have an opinion on this,
9 I mean I don't want to carry this on but you know what
10 there's actually fish out there. I have a cousin that
11 lives up above Ruby, Big Eddy and most of the boats are
12 out right now but it's surprising that she put a net in
13 and caught maybe three, four whitefish but eight, nine
14 chums. I -- you know, we just text back and forth, I
15 don't know what condition they're in or anything like
16 that but it's fish, it's edible maybe and so, you know,
17 maybe I'm saying that -- maybe some of this fish just
18 hang around, like you say and go into these tributaries
19 and stuff but, you know, I mean not to go on and on
20 about this but I just wanted to know your opinion about
21 especially the chum crash or, you know, the runs. And
22 I appreciate that, thank you.

23
24 MS. CARROLL: Thanks. Through the
25 Chair. I just want to clarify, so you brought up two
26 things. One is that people could go out fishing right
27 now and they're catching some chums and we do know that
28 chums come in way late. They'll continue to come in
29 under the ice. People get nice bright chums under the
30 ice and that's why, actually from a management
31 standpoint, we still have salmon fishing for chum
32 closed in all the major tributaries where they go, so
33 the Koyukuk River, the Porcupine and the Treejendik
34 River are still closed. They'll stay closed because
35 those chum are going to be actively spawning way up in
36 those tributaries.

37
38 But to the other point where you're
39 saying, you know, why do you think the chums crashed, I
40 think it's what everyone is saying here. It's all
41 these things. You know the marine environment is
42 producing poor food, I think -- Kevin I think you said
43 it best, I love that phrase that we need gravel to
44 gravel management, that has never been more true. You
45 know we are so silhoed in what we do. I'm a manager, I
46 manage just the fish that come back, whatever God gives
47 to me or the ocean gives to me or however you want to
48 look at it and this year I got, you know, we got 20,000
49 fall chum to the Border, you know, it should have been
50

0130

1 more than 70,000. For the kings we were supposed to
2 have 44,000 to the Border, we counted 40,000 at the
3 Pilot Station sonar that should have been more like
4 150. So at that point there's nothing I can do, right.
5 But we need to be thinking about what's happening with
6 the smolt and what's happening in the gravel. You know
7 someone brought up Sabrina Garcia's research, she
8 presented it at the Eastern Interior RAC and I think
9 you guys would really benefit from a presentation of
10 that data at your next meeting because they are
11 starting to see that what happens to those fish from
12 gravel to three months in the ocean might be the most
13 important. And, I, myself wonder if we are looking at
14 those things enough, you know. We have this major
15 spawning river, the Chena, for our Yukon kings and yet
16 we have hundreds of miles of degradation in the city
17 and yet young little salmon rely on good stream banks
18 and so I know that at Fish and Wildlife Service we have
19 Mitch Osborne doing restoration projects on the Chena
20 with land owners, even like this place, Pike's Landing,
21 I believe has done some great work. But that's one
22 little program trying to fix on spawning area that's
23 super important. So there's all these areas I think we
24 can be working on.

25
26 So that's a super long answer to say,
27 you know, these chums crashed 20 years ago, they're
28 crashing again now. The difference before when they
29 crashed was in three or four years we saw record
30 returns. I hope that occurs now. But if it was going
31 to occur we're seeing those returns creeping at a very
32 small pace. So 2022 the only bright spot for me,
33 biologically was that those chum returns were what we
34 forecast roughly so that tells me our forecasts are
35 working okay and they were a little better than 2021.
36 But will they rebound like they did before and have
37 record runs, I don't know, because we haven't seen
38 escapements this low ever.

39
40 So short answer is I don't know what's
41 happening to the chums but what is happening is
42 affecting all four species of salmon now for the Yukon
43 and for Western Alaska.

44
45 MR. HONEA: Madame Chair. Just one
46 last, you know, maybe this is kind of a brighter spot
47 but we had a fisheries meeting here and whether it was
48 YRDFA or somebody this past summer and so Catherine
49 Moncrieff of YRDFA did some research for me and found
50

0131

1 out that this one -- yeah, you're exactly right, I
2 don't know if it was in the late '50s or what -- what
3 exact year it was but this has happened before and
4 maybe it's just a -- some kind of encouragement that it
5 will rebound.

6
7 I appreciate that, thank you for saying
8 that.

9
10 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Kevin.

11
12 MR. WHITWORTH: I just want to make one
13 quick comment. So in the summer, you know, we always
14 talk about run size, you know, the forecast for the run
15 size is going to be 100,000 let's say, and I'm glad
16 Holly had mentioned this, you know, in-river her job is
17 managing just in-river and so when we, as managers,
18 think of run size, it's just in-river, so it's in-shore
19 returns basically from the mouth of the Yukon up river,
20 or the mouth of the Kuskokwim up river, well, really
21 run size should include all the bycatch and all of the
22 intercept fisheries. That's that gravel to gravel that
23 I keep talking about. The entire run of the Kuskokwim
24 or Yukon chinook salmon, when they go out to the ocean,
25 that's their run size. When they return into the
26 river, that's in-shore run size.

27
28 So it's a little thing but, anyway, I
29 just wanted to make that comment.

30
31 Thank you.

32
33 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay, thank you.
34 Okay, any more comments.

35
36 (No comments)

37
38 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: If not we'll
39 just take a bathroom break. So that's really quick.

40
41 (Off record)

42
43 (On record)

44
45 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay, if we
46 could make our way back to our seats. We have some
47 more stuff to cover.

48
49 (Pause)

50

0132

1 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Are you ready
2 Tina?

3
4 REPORTER: We're on, yes.
5

6 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay, we're
7 ready to go. Darrell had to leave, he has another
8 meeting but we still have a quorum so we'll continue
9 our meeting. With that we have the next report from --
10 we'll have an update on the Kuskokwim River broadfish
11 -- whitefish subsistence harvest and spawning abundance
12 project by Frank Harris.

13
14 REPORTER: Number 2 Jenny.

15
16 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Oh, sorry.

17
18 MS. PILCHER: Sorry.

19
20 REPORTER: No. 2.

21
22 MS. PILCHER: Sorry, No. 2.

23
24 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay, No. 2,
25 sorry about that. And this is by.....

26
27 REPORTER: By Aaron Moses first.

28
29 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA:by Boyd --
30 oh, Aaron.

31
32 MR. MOSES: Madame Chair. Boyd
33 Blihovde, the in-season manager is online. I'm just
34 here to make sure that you guys have the paper, it's
35 the handout that was given out and I just wanted to
36 make a small point.

37
38 We work really closely with Kevin and
39 the Kuskokwim River InterTribal Fish Commission and on
40 Fish and Wildlife side we have a management team that
41 consists of five of us and four of us are from Yukon
42 Delta, grew up, born and raised on the Delta and so we
43 work really well with the Kuskokwim River InterTribal
44 Fish Commission and our Refuge Manager and the in-
45 season manager. So, Boyd, are you online.

46
47 MR. BLIHOVDE: Hey, Aaron, thank you.
48 Can everyone hear me okay.

49
50

0133

1 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Yes, we could
2 hear you.

3
4 MR. BLIHOVDE: Okay, thank you. Hello,
5 Western Interior RAC members. Madame Chair. Thanks
6 for allowing the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge
7 to give a report on the Kuskokwim River salmon
8 situation. As Aaron mentioned my name is Boyd
9 Blihovde, I am the Refuge Manager at Yukon Delta
10 National Wildlife Refuge based here in Bethel. I wish
11 I could have made it there to the meeting in person,
12 especially after hearing most of your voices for the
13 last two years. Really apologize for not being able to
14 be there. Although I've been in this position for over
15 two years I consider myself new here to the Yukon Delta
16 and someone who will continue learning from the local
17 indigenous people who care for and utilize this
18 resource. I am proud to say that I live in the Yup'ik
19 country and I work with Yup'ik, Chup'ik and the
20 Athabascan cultures that are here represented in the
21 Yukon Delta Refuge.

22
23 You heard from Aaron Moses there and he
24 mentioned this a bit, I just want to expand on what he
25 was saying. Aaron Moses is our Subsistence Specialist
26 and he's there in Fairbanks with you and I'm glad that
27 he could be there in-person. As he mentioned, Aaron
28 and the rest of our fish management team at the Refuge
29 are local, experienced fishers on the Kuskokwim River
30 and I think that is very important. The team is made
31 up of Aaron Moses, who's there with you, Spencer
32 Riorden, our Supervisory Biologist, Christopher Tulik,
33 who's our lead Resource -- sorry Refuge Information
34 Technician, and then Emmitt Nicori is a new member of
35 the team who's from Kwethluk and also another RIT, we
36 call it, basically like a tribal liaison position. So
37 I believe it's a very strong team that helps me and the
38 rest of the Fish and Wildlife Service make good
39 decisions here on the Kuskokwim. Those decisions, we
40 try to make the best decisions for salmon conservation
41 but also for the people, balancing conservation of
42 salmon with a continuation of subsistence uses. So a
43 huge part of our salmon management and conservation
44 team is the Kuskokwim River InterTribal Fish
45 Commission. The partnership we have with the
46 InterTribal Fish Commission is vital to conserving
47 salmon and lately that conservation concern has meant
48 concern not only chinook salmon but for chum, and now
49 this past year, coho, also. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife
50

0134

1 Service and the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge
2 depends heavily on the traditional knowledge that the
3 InterTribal Fish Commission brings to the table at our
4 in-season management meetings. And I hope that will
5 only increase and become stronger in 2023.

6
7 So to get to the point of what happened
8 in 2022, I'd like to say that as Aaron mentioned, he
9 had a hand out that basically includes all the
10 information we wanted to provide on the Kusko salmon
11 summary for 2022 so I hope you all have that in front
12 of you. And there's no real need for me to go through
13 it page by page or line by line. But, once, again,
14 salmon conservation started on June 1st this previous
15 year with the start of conservation measures for
16 salmon. And in your packet you can see the number of
17 special actions that we initiated on the Kuskokwim for
18 Federally-qualified subsistence users, those special
19 actions were set to both conserve salmon species for
20 current and future generations but also to allow for
21 that traditional harvest of salmon that we're also
22 charged with here at the Refuge.

23
24 The harvest estimates coming from those
25 opportunities were well received and they were very
26 productive this past year. For instance, if you look
27 at Table 1 in the back of your handout, or packet, it
28 should be the last page, you will notice that on June
29 22nd, Kusko fishers had one of the -- a record harvest
30 day for chinook salmon. Since Federal protection has
31 begun, we've had very few days that have hit this
32 level, an estimated 14,000 chinook salmon were
33 harvested on that single day opportunity. And the
34 conservation significance of a harvest like that might
35 be kind of confusing or hard to understand but it is
36 significant that people were allowed to go out and
37 catch chinook salmon at that level because what
38 happened was the lower Kuskokwim felt some relief from
39 harvest pressure and the middle and the lower Kuskokwim
40 felt that relief and salmon managers were able to
41 comfortably keep the lower Kuskokwim waters closed
42 until June 29th, which you might notice was one of the
43 next dates down for another harvest opportunity which
44 we had a set net opportunity that was allowed for two
45 days. So in total we had 13 days of harvest
46 opportunities for salmon fishing in 2022 during the
47 Federal closure period. The opportunities targeted
48 different species as best we could but on July 21st the
49 InterTribal Fish Commission and the Yukon Delta
50

0135

1 National Wildlife Refuge team agreed that Federal
2 restrictions could be rescinded. At this point
3 managers felt okay about how we handled fishing on the
4 Kuskokwim this past year given the challenges and the low
5 number of fish overall. But 2022 was once, again, an
6 unprecedented year on the Kuskokwim. Fisheries
7 managers were taken by surprise by the coho numbers and
8 how low they were as Kevin had mentioned earlier in his
9 summary, they really took many of the fisheries
10 managers by surprise. So the coho situation that we
11 held meetings and had salmon restrictions up to
12 September 15th and through September 15th of this past
13 summer and into the fall. And that was also
14 unprecedented. The State placed restrictions on the
15 main stem of the Kuskokwim specific to coho on August
16 16th, those restrictions lasted, like I mentioned,
17 until September 16th when they were lifted. The State
18 restrictions included Units -- all of the units on the
19 Kuskokwim, 1 through 5, of the river. The Yukon Delta
20 National Wildlife Refuge supported those conservation
21 measures in principle for coho but we recognized that
22 the restrictions were going to be difficult for up
23 river communities as they were. The State's
24 restrictions were directed at coho but they were harder
25 on up river communities, one, because of the timing
26 being that it was getting into the fall and they had
27 already gone through all the restrictions of summer
28 just like the lower and middle river communities. But
29 because the rules targeted all gear types it was very
30 difficult for anybody to fish for other species, like
31 whitefish and that was something that they
32 traditionally would do during that time of the year.
33 So it was a challenging part of the year and something
34 we didn't deal with in previous years, or really any
35 time since Federal closures had started to take place
36 on the Kuskokwim.

37
38 So coho really was a different
39 situation this year for us just like chum had been for
40 the previous two years, something fairly unprecedented,
41 now we're dealing with a third species of serious
42 concern and that's coho.

43
44 So in total some more news about the
45 harvest is that the harvest data as documented in Table
46 1, that you can see there, is just an estimate and it's
47 not a complete picture but it does show the estimate of
48 species, all the species of salmon that were harvested
49 for the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge boundary
50

0136

1 and as you can see the numbers look better than many
2 other rivers were able to harvest but it wasn't even
3 close to the historical or the traditional harvest
4 needed for subsistence by the local users. So you can
5 see the estimate for chinook salmon was 29,300, 3,650
6 for chum, and 24,840 for sockeye. So those harvest
7 estimates, again, are, you know, just estimates, but we
8 put a lot of work into those numbers with the Kuskokwim
9 River InterTribal Fish Commission taking survey data on
10 the ground and then our Fish and Wildlife Service Pilot
11 and aircraft counting boats from the air. And I just
12 want to make it very clear that although there was
13 harvest opportunity those numbers are very poor harvest
14 numbers for the traditional local subsistence users on
15 the Kuskokwim.

16

17 So it was basically a real dire year
18 again for folks trying to depend on salmon for their
19 food.

20

21 On the positive side, it looks like the
22 preliminary numbers for chinook escapement were right
23 around where we are targeting. We and the InterTribal
24 Fish Commission have come up with a 110,000 escapement
25 goal for the Kuskokwim and we have sort of a confidence
26 interval around that number and it looks like based on
27 ADF&G's post-season preliminary estimate 143,622
28 chinook was the total for the Kuskokwim with an
29 escapement of 105,774, those are very preliminary
30 numbers still and they will come up with a more solid
31 number here later on but that's the estimate so far and
32 the State also estimates that the total harvest for the
33 entire Kusko, this is the harvest estimate is 37,848
34 and that's for the whole river, even outside the Refuge
35 boundary. So, again, not where it needs to be or where
36 it has been over the tradition in the past but we are
37 happy that we were able to provide for harvest
38 opportunities working with the Kuskokwim River
39 InterTribal Fish Commission to come up with the dates
40 and timing of those to both conserve and balance for
41 subsistence at the same time.

42

43 So I could continue and go on and on
44 about some details but I don't want to take too much
45 time. I'd like to conclude, though, that just a
46 reminder that, you know, the goal right now for the
47 Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge and working with
48 partners is that we've got to continue to focus on
49 people and relationship building and then, at least, my
50

0137

1 personal belief is that conservation is all about
2 people and people like you in the room that are putting
3 your time into RAC meetings and giving advice and
4 guidance to managers like myself. So we're happy to be
5 at the meeting and to provide our summaries but we
6 really want to hear from you and folks like Kevin who's
7 on the InterTribal Fish Commission and other local
8 users who really depend on the salmon. We believe that
9 we need to continue to focus on building strong
10 relationships on the Kuskokwim, we should expand our
11 efforts to understand the issues that are facing the
12 Yukon users as well, that's also in the Refuge and we
13 also need to expand our attention to the Coast where
14 salmon are also an issue there, along with waterfowl
15 and other species that are also in decline.

16

17 So we need to work harder to be a good
18 partner to groups like the InterTribal Fish Commission
19 who are doing so much to help us. So our relationship
20 is good with the InterTribal Fish Commission and strong
21 and we believe that to be true and we hope that they do
22 too. But we also want to improve on that relationship
23 in 2023.

24

25 So there's more data and info we could
26 provide but I think that's enough for now and I could
27 turn it back over to Aaron if he's got anything to add
28 that maybe I missed.

29

30 Thanks.

31

32 MR. MOSES: Thank you, Boyd. The only
33 thing I have is for escapement goals. And we hit -- we
34 achieved escapement goals on two of the species but we
35 didn't on two so for chinook and sockeye for the
36 Kuskokwim, we did make our escapement goals, but for
37 chum salmon and coho we did not. And with coho we
38 didn't make it by a lot, like on the Kwethluk it's
39 supposed to be over 19,000 and by the end of the season
40 they counted roughly 6,000. So we've been pretty low
41 on the coho.

42

43 And with that, if you guys have any
44 questions for Boyd or me.

45

46 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Anybody have any
47 questions or comments.

48

49 Don.

50

0138

1 MR. HONEA: Yeah, Madame Chair. Aaron,
2 I was just wondering, I mean you're throwing a lot of
3 numbers out there so you have a lot of sonars or you
4 have some way of counting -- coming up with these
5 numbers?
6

7 MR. MOSES: Yeah, we have -- the Alaska
8 Department of Fish and Game has a test fish and a sonar
9 out in Bethel, and then the tribes, Fish and Wildlife
10 Service, InterTribal Fish Commission have, what is it,
11 about five weirs, roughly, throughout up and down, so
12 we do have one sonar and one test fishery.
13

14 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Any other
15 comments or questions.
16

17 MR. WHITWORTH: Madame Chair.
18

19 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Kevin.
20

21 MR. WHITWORTH: Thanks, Madame Chair.
22 Thank you, Aaron. Thank you, Boyd. Really appreciate
23 your participation here. I just wanted -- you had
24 mentioned you hoped that our partnership is good and
25 I'll tell you what, our partnership is very good.
26 Working with Boyd, his local Staff like Aaron Moses,
27 Spencer, Chris, those guys from the Refuge but -- they
28 work for the Refuge but they're from the Region. There
29 couldn't be a better situation as far as working with
30 that Refuge and the collaboration that they bring to
31 the table and working with us and they're so open to
32 working with the tribes. It couldn't be any better.
33 We've had it in the past where it's been very rocky and
34 difficult.
35

36 Even though -- I mean 2022 was
37 difficult in different ways. I mean the salmon run was
38 very difficult, it was hard on the people, we had
39 pressure continuously throughout the entire summer to
40 try to provide some opportunity but we had to do what
41 we had to do to try to conserve and it always impresses
42 me that the people from the river are leading the
43 conservation effort to try to rebuild chinook, chum and
44 now coho, people like Boyd's Staff, people from the
45 Fish Commission, even other people within the river,
46 that is something that Boyd told me when he first moved
47 to Alaska that he was so surprised that the people from
48 the river were leading the way for conservation and
49 it's still that way today.
50

0139

1 And people had to sacrifice. The
2 reason why we made escapement goals on chinook salmon
3 was because of the people, they forego harvest, they
4 had to, they knew that. I mean it's not hard -- I mean
5 it's not easy, but the people agreed with management
6 and there was no protest fisheries and it worked out
7 real well. And this co-management agreement that we
8 have with working with Fish and Wildlife Service is
9 just -- it's getting better and better and Boyd is open
10 to doing more and more so we have -- now we have
11 management plans and harvest strategies that we've co-
12 developed. There's other reports that Boyd reaches
13 out to the Fish Commission to review and collaborate
14 on. It's a really good working relationship and I'm
15 just proud to work with him.

16

17 I just want to leave it at that.

18

19 Thank you.

20

21 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Thank you,
22 Kevin. Any more.

23

24 MR. GERVAIS: Jenny.

25

26 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Tim.

27

28 MR. GERVAIS: Who's operating these
29 weirs?

30

31 MR. MOSES: Yes a lot of them are
32 partnerships like on the Kwethluk, and even Takotna,
33 the Fish Commission is working with the tribes and Fish
34 and Wildlife Service. The Native Village of Napaimute
35 operates, I believe it's two weirs and that's mostly
36 the middle river, the Aniak River and I think they help
37 out on the George River. So a lot of these are in
38 partnership with Alaska Department of Fish and Game and
39 Fish and Wildlife, but it's also the Fish Commission
40 and the tribes are the ones that are leading a few of
41 them.

42

43 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Any other
44 comments or questions.

45

46 (No comments)

47

48 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: If not then --
49 oh, Tim.

50

0140

1 MR. GERVAIS: Yeah, I would just
2 comment that congratulations to the parties involved
3 for getting this opportunity to the people and without
4 too much drama. I was talking to Kevin and Aaron
5 during the break about a lawsuit that the Fish and
6 Wildlife Service had sued the Department of Fish and
7 Game but it sounds like they got past that and even
8 though it wasn't a big year for fish they were able to
9 meet two escapement objectives and not have a lot of
10 protests on the river. So that's significant to have
11 that many successes given the low abundance.

12
13 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay. Any other
14 comments or questions.

15
16 (No comments)

17
18 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: If not thank you
19 Aaron and Boyd, thank you very much. Okay, with that
20 we're going to -- we're going to hear from who?

21
22 MS. PILCHER: Frank.

23
24 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay, we'll hear
25 from Frank, Frank?

26
27 REPORTER: He's online.

28
29 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Oh, Frank is on
30 the phone, okay, go ahead, Frank.

31
32 MR. HARRIS: Good afternoon, Madame
33 Chair. Members of the Council. My name's Frank
34 Harris, I'm with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service,
35 Fisheries Biologist with the Kenai Fisheries Office.
36 Can everybody hear me fine?

37
38 MR. GERVAIS: Yes.

39
40 MR. HARRIS: Okay. Yeah, I'm just
41 going to give you a brief update on the Kuskokwim River
42 broad whitefish subsistence harvest and spawning
43 abundance project and then kind of ask for everybody's
44 help and assistance in getting some recapture
45 information on that.

46
47 But in an effort to collect baseline
48 information and address subsistence fishers concern
49 about seeing fewer broad whitefish on the Kuskokwim
50

0141

1 River than in the past, the -- and forgive me if I
2 don't pronounce this quite right, the Orutsararmiut
3 Native Council, the Native Village of Napaimute and the
4 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have begun a four year
5 study of broad whitefish spawning in the Kuskokwim
6 River near McGrath. So there's multiple spawning
7 aggregates of broad whitefish, we're just focusing on
8 one of them and it's near the -- the population that
9 spawns near McGrath. And this project was funded by
10 OSM during the 2022 FRMP funding cycle. The purpose
11 was to estimate the project -- to estimate the number
12 of broad whitefish on the spawning grounds between
13 McGrath and Medfra, estimate harvest rates of this
14 spawning aggregate in the Kuskokwim River and describe
15 population demographics.

16
17 To accomplish this the U.S. Fish and
18 Wildlife Service, with the help of ONC will be using
19 electrofishing techniques to capture, mark and
20 recapture tagged broad whitefish in the area around
21 McGrath. Since most broad whitefish spawn every other
22 year it will take us several years of sampling to come
23 up with an estimate for the total number on the
24 spawning grounds in this area.

25
26 The tagging will occur in the fall and
27 last six to eight weeks. During 2022 we began sampling
28 and tagging on August 22nd, and the tagging ended
29 October 11th, so just last week we finally finished up
30 with tagging just before the river started running ice
31 there in McGrath. In 2022 we had one crew tagging and
32 we tagged 628 broad whitefish. In 2023 we anticipate
33 having two crews to maximize the number of fish we can
34 tag and we anticipate similar timing for the next three
35 years. These tags on the broad whitefish, they are
36 long, maybe up two inches long, they're grey so that
37 predators can't easily spot them, and they're located
38 near the dorsal fin. They have a tag number and an 800
39 phone number to call to the Fish and Wildlife Service
40 to report this tag if any subsistence fishers capture
41 one. Additionally, the tags can be reported to ONC,
42 NVN, and the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge.

43
44 After spawning, which occurs right
45 about now near McGrath, these broad whitefish will drop
46 back down stream of McGrath to overwinter. Some of
47 these fish will travel as far down stream as
48 Tuntutuliak and we know from previous tagging studies
49 that some of these fish will be harvested down stream
50

0142

1 of McGrath in the subsistence fisheries. As part of
2 our study we'll need to estimate mortality from the
3 harvest. This is where the help of the subsistence
4 fishers come in. When you capture a tagged broad
5 whitefish, we would like to know the date caught, the
6 location, tag number, your name, the village you live
7 in, and phone number. So this is so we can enter you
8 into a monthly drawing for a gas car. Additionally,
9 there will be a yearly grand prize gas card for the
10 people who have captured these fish and reported
11 capturing them to us. The data, again, the data from
12 the tagged recoveries will be used to estimate the
13 harvest from this population and this informs
14 researchers on how many tags are no longer in the
15 population and are available for recapture in the
16 future. So basically we take them out of the pool of
17 what might be available to make our estimates from.

18

19 So getting all these tagged fish
20 reported is very important for accurate estimates.

21

22 We appreciate everyone's help on this
23 in reporting these tags.

24

25 That's all I really had on this
26 project. We just got done doing the sampling this
27 year. The only information we have is how many we
28 captured this year. We haven't done any age
29 information yet, aging of the fish. But I just wanted
30 to update the Council on this and start spreading the
31 word that we're looking for recapture information and
32 that there's gas cards available for a monthly drawing
33 for people who report catching these fish.

34

35 So I thank you for your time and if
36 anybody has any questions I'll do my best to answer
37 them.

38

39 Thank you.

40

41 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay. Do we
42 have any questions or comments.

43

44 Tim.

45

46 MR. GERVAIS: Hi, Frank, this is Tim
47 Gervais. Thanks for your presentation. Does this
48 study area, does this correlate to the spawning area
49 that we tried to set aside during the BLM area of --

50

0144

1 salmon and then they get fertilized?

2

3

4 MR. HARRIS: So whitefish are what are
5 considered broadcast spawners, humpback whitefish do
6 this too, sheefish, when the conditions are right --
7 and I haven't witnessed this but I've heard people who
8 have, when the conditions are right, they all kind of
9 go up to the surface in the spawning area and they
10 expel their gametes, just kind of up at the surface,
11 and everything just kind of mixes together and it all
12 kind of falls to the bottom and the eggs are kind of an
13 sticky substance and they'll kind of stick to the
14 bottom and that's where they'll -- in the gravel there
15 and that's where they'll kind of incubate until they
16 hatch.

16

17 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay, any other
18 questions or comments.

19

20 (No comments)

21

22 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: If not, if you
23 don't have any more to add, Frank, thank you very much.

24

25 MR. HARRIS: Okay, well, thank you very
26 much.

27

28 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay, thank you.

29

30 (Pause)

31

32 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay, we'll go
33 ahead and go with -- hum.

34

35 (Pause)

36

37 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay.

38

39 MR. HONEA: Madame Chair. Are we
40 going to continue on because if we are we should at
41 least have a five, 10 minute break if we're going to be
42 going another half hour or 45 minutes.

43

44 (Pause)

45

46 MS. PILCHER: Through the Chair.
47 Madame Chair. Nissa Pilcher for the record. So it is
48 currently 5:18 it is up -- so Cory -- the Staff's ready
49 to present on the fisheries proposals if you'd like to
50

0145

1 hear but it is up to you guys if you'd like to continue
2 this evening or not since it is after 5:00 but like I
3 said it's up to you.

4

5 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: What's the
6 preference of the Board.

7

8 MR. HONEA: I myself wouldn't go over
9 another half an hour, or 20 minutes or something
10 because I have something going on at 7:00 so, I mean if
11 it's -- you know, I've got to go eat and then attend
12 something at 7:00 but, you know, 20 minutes is fine
13 with me. I don't know about anybody else, but not more
14 than a half an hour.

15

16 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay, that
17 sounds good. I think he'll make it short.

18

19 (Laughter)

20

21 MR. GRAHAM: Madame Chair. Members of
22 the Council. Again, for the record my name is Cory
23 Graham and I'm a Fisheries Biologist with OSM. I'll
24 now present Fisheries Proposal 23-01, which can be
25 found on Page 68 of your Council book. This proposal
26 was submitted by your Council and requests the Federal
27 Subsistence Board rescind the closure to the harvest of
28 non-salmon fish in the Jim River drainage by Federally-
29 qualified subsistence users and modify regulations to
30 allow rod and reel gear only and an Arctic grayling
31 harvest and possession limit of 10 per day.

32

33 The proponent states this would
34 continue subsistence uses by allowing harvest of non-
35 salmon fish by Federally-qualified subsistence users in
36 an area that is currently closed. The Council believes
37 there is a verifiable traditional use of non-salmon
38 fish in this drainage and a limited harvest by rod and
39 reel should be allowed. While the Council also
40 believes there's a verifiable traditional use of salmon
41 in this drainage it does not believe the salmon runs
42 can support any harvest at this time and the closure
43 should be rescinded only for non-salmon fish.

44

45 The Jim River drainage is closed to
46 subsistence fishing under both Federal and State
47 regulations, however, sportfishing is allowed under
48 State regulations. The Federal closure was reviewed
49 during the previous fisheries regulatory cycle and your
50

0146

1 Council recommended eliminating the closure and
2 modifying regulations as they are in this proposal,
3 however the Board determined those modifications would
4 not allow appropriate notice and opportunity for public
5 comment, therefore, the Board voted to maintain the
6 closure with the expectation that a proposal could be
7 submitted to eliminate the closure and that is the
8 proposal that is currently before you.

9

10 The Jim River drainage crosses the
11 Dalton Highway. Approximately 3 miles of Jim River
12 exists within the Kanuti Refuge boundary managed by
13 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the remainder of the
14 drainage is on general domain land managed by BLM.

15

16 Chinook, chum and coho salmon spawn and
17 rear in the Jim River but aerial surveys indicate
18 relatively low numbers in the drainage. The
19 predominate non-salmon fish include Arctic grayling,
20 burbot, humpback and round whitefish, long nose sucker
21 and northern pike. Stock assessments of Arctic
22 grayling indicate the Jim River is one of the more
23 productive drainages in the area. Wiseman and Coldfoot
24 are the communities most likely to subsistence fish in
25 the area if the closure is rescinded due to their close
26 proximity to the drainage.

27

28 Harvest is allowed under sportfishing
29 regulations and Arctic grayling make up the majority of
30 sportfish harvest along the Dalton Highway Corridor.
31 During 2009 to 2018 an average of 122 Arctic grayling
32 were harvested from the Jim River.

33

34 If this proposal is adopted,
35 subsistence fishing for salmon would remain closed
36 under Federal regulations in the drainage, non-salmon
37 fish could be taken by rod and reel only, subsistence
38 rod and reel harvest limits would match State
39 sportfishing harvest and possession limits except for
40 Arctic grayling, which would have a harvest and
41 possession limit of 10 per day. The current sportfish
42 harvest and possession limit is five per day.

43

44 If this proposal is not adopted
45 subsistence fishing will remain closed and Federally-
46 qualified subsistence users could continue to harvest
47 fish under State sportfishing regulations.

48

49 The OSM preliminary conclusion is to

50

0147

1 support Proposal FP23-01. The drainage is, again,
2 currently closed to subsistence fishing but open to
3 other uses. Allowing a limited subsistence harvest
4 using rod and reel only would provide subsistence
5 opportunity and protect populations from overharvest.
6 Increasing harvest and possession limits of Arctic
7 grayling would provide a subsistence priority for
8 Federally-qualified subsistence users, and maintaining
9 the closure to salmon will protect small populations
10 within the drainage.

11

12 That concludes my presentation and I'll
13 standby for any questions you may have regarding the
14 analysis.

15

16 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay. Do we
17 have any questions or comments for Cory.

18

19 (No comments)

20

21 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Hearing none I
22 guess -- that was fast, thank you very much. I didn't
23 mean that fast but.

24

25 (Laughter)

26

27 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: I didn't mean to
28 scare you.

29

30 (Laughter)

31

32 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay. We
33 have.....

34

35 MR. REAKOFF: Madame Chair, this is
36 Jack Reakoff.

37

38 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Yes, go ahead.

39

40 MR. REAKOFF: The analysis and overview
41 is very thorough and I appreciate that. Is that the
42 end of the presentation.

43

44 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Yes, that was
45 fast.

46

47 MR. REAKOFF: Okay, I make a motion to
48 adopt FP23-01.

49

50

0148

1 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Not yet. Not
2 yet.

3
4 MR. REAKOFF: Okay.

5
6 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Hang on.

7
8 MS. WESSELS: Madame Chair. Sorry, Mr.
9 Reakoff, you know, we need to go through all the
10 closure review procedure first before the Council can
11 make a motion.

12
13 MR. REAKOFF: Excuse me.

14
15 MR. HONEA: Madame Chair. I'm kind of
16 confused here. If Cory could come back to the mic and
17 maybe discuss, are we doing the three -- I realize
18 there's three of them, are they submitted by -- who is
19 actually submitting this?

20
21 MR. GRAHAM: Through the Chair. This
22 is the proposal FP23-01 and it was submitted by the
23 Western Interior Regional Advisory Council.

24
25 MR. HONEA: Okay.

26
27 MR. GRAHAM: We have closure reviews
28 after this but we're not discussing those yet.

29
30 MR. HONEA: Okay.

31
32 MR. REAKOFF: Madame Chair, this is
33 Jack.

34
35 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Yes, Jack, go
36 ahead.

37
38 MR. REAKOFF: Yeah, there's -- I failed
39 to -- I don't have the card in front of me, there's
40 public comments, et cetera, et cetera, State comments,
41 we need to go over those, I don't have that card in
42 front of me.

43
44 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: They gave me a
45 bigger one.

46
47 MR. REAKOFF: Do you want to help,
48 Nissa.

49
50

0149

1 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay,
2 introduction of the draft analysis. Okay. Are there
3 any -- is there any tribes on the line.

4
5 (No comments)

6
7 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: ANCSA
8 Corporations.

9
10 MS. WESSELS: I'm sorry, so the first
11 thing there in the procedure, that's the result of the
12 tribal consultations on this closure review with tribes
13 and ANCSA Corporations and I -- Nissa, have you heard
14 that there were any comments from the tribes or ANCSA
15 Corporations?

16
17 MS. PILCHER: Through the Chair. No, I
18 have not.

19
20 MS. WESSELS: Yeah, so we don't think
21 there were any comments from the consultations from the
22 tribes or corporations. There may be additional
23 comments from tribes and ANCSA Corporations but they're
24 later in the procedure.

25
26 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay, thank you.
27 ADF&G.

28
29 MS. JALLEN: Hi, yeah, this is Deena
30 Jallen with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.
31 Could you read back which waters are in Proposal 01?

32
33 MS. STUBY: Madame Chair, Lisa Stuby,
34 Alaska Department of Fish and Game. The Department's
35 -- Alaska Department of Fish and Game is neutral on
36 Federal Proposal FP23-01. The proposed daily harvest
37 of 10 Arctic grayling from the Jim River by Federally-
38 qualified users from low population areas will not be a
39 conservation concern. However, this amendment will
40 result in conflicting State and Federal regulations for
41 the Jim River and could complicate enforcement.

42
43 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay, thank you.

44
45 Federal.

46
47 (No comments)

48
49 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay. And we

50

0150

1 already went through tribe, right, tribal -- okay,
2 Advisory Group comments, other Regional -- other RACs.

3

4 MR. GRAHAM: Madame Chair. The Eastern
5 Interior Regional Advisory Council supported this
6 proposal. The Council noted there is no biological
7 concern related to the proposal and it will benefit
8 subsistence needs of people in the area. The North
9 Slope Regional Advisory Council also supported this
10 proposal. And the Western Interior -- or excuse me,
11 Yukon Kuskokwim Delta RAC has not met yet, they'll meet
12 next week and consider this proposal then.

13

14 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay, thank you.
15 Fish and Game Advisory Committees.

16

17 (No comments)

18

19 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Subsistence
20 Resource Commissions.

21

22 (No comments)

23

24 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Nissa, any
25 written comments.

26

27 MS. PILCHER: (Shakes head negatively)

28

29 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: No written
30 comments, okay. Public testimony.

31

32 (No comments)

33

34 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay. Regional
35 Council recommendation.

36

37 MR. REAKOFF: Madame Chair, this is
38 Jack Reakoff.

39

40 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Yes, go ahead.

41

42 MR. REAKOFF: I jumped the gun. I make
43 a motion to adopt Proposal FP23-01 with my intention to
44 support.

45

46 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay, is there a
47 second.

48

49 MR. HONEA: Second.

50

0151

1 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: A motion made by
2 Jack to support FP23-01 and seconded by Don.

3
4 Discussion.

5
6 MR. REAKOFF: Madame Chair.

7
8 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Yes, go ahead.

9
10 MR. REAKOFF: As I said previously the
11 analysis was very thorough, the fresh water stocks of
12 the Jim River drainage can support this harvest by
13 subsistence -- Federally-qualified subsistence users.

14
15 Thank you, Madame Chair.

16
17 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay, thank you.

18
19 MR. SIMON: Question.

20
21 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: There's been a
22 question. All in favor say aye.

23
24 IN UNISON: Aye.

25
26 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Those opposed.

27
28 (No opposing votes)

29
30 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Motion carries.
31 Whew, that was good.

32
33 (Laughter)

34
35 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: Okay, with that,
36 I think we'll just go ahead and break until tomorrow.
37 I think we're getting a little worn down here.

38
39 MR. HONEA: Yeah.

40
41 MADAME CHAIR PELKOLA: So at 9:00
42 o'clock we'll resume here in this room and I hope it's
43 warmer tomorrow. We'll see you tomorrow, Jack.

44
45 MR. REAKOFF: Thanks so much, have a
46 great evening.

47
48 (Off record)

49
50

0152

(PROCEEDINGS TO BE CONTINUED)

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

0153

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 WESTERN INTERIOR SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING, VOLUME I taken electronically on the 19th day of October 2022;

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 5th day of December 2022.

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