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SEWARD PENINSULA SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

PUBLIC MEETING

VOLUME I

Old St. Joseph's Hall

Nome, Alaska
March 22, 2023
9:19 a.m.

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

Louis Green, Chairman
Martin Aukongak
Tom Gray
Raymond Hunt
Ronald Kirk
Mary Freytag
Robert Moses
Elmer Seetot

Regional Council Coordinator - Nissa Pilcher

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P R O C E E D I N G S

(Nome, Alaska - 3/22/2023)

(On record)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: All right, folks, so I guess we're going to call this meeting to order here right after we do an invocation. So, Mr. Seetot, if you would.

MR. SEETOT: (Invocation)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you, Elmer. So that brings us to the calling the meeting to order, it will be called to order at 9:19 on my clock here. 9:19.

So we have roll call. Nissa.

MS. PILCHER: Hello. For the record this is Nissa Pilcher, Council Coordinator for the Seward Peninsula Regional Advisory Council. So we have Mary Freytag from Unalakleet, who is not in the room currently, she will be in later so.

Raymond Hunt from Shaktoolik.

MR. HUNT: Yeah, I'm present.

MS. PILCHER: Louis Green from Nome.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Here, thank you.

MS. PILCHER: Tom Gray from Nome.

MR. GRAY: Yep, here.

MS. PILCHER: Deahl Katchatag is absent today, he is attending another meeting.

Martin from Golovin, he is also -- he will be with us shortly but he is not currently here.

Elmer Seetot, Jr.

MR. SEETOT: Here.

MS. PILCHER: Here. And then Robert

Moses, are you online.

MR. MOSES: Yes, I am.

MS. PILCHER: Morning, Robert.

MR. MOSES: Good morning.

MS. PILCHER: And then Ronald Kirk, are you online?

MR. KIRK: Yes, here.

MS. PILCHER: Morning, Ronald.

MR. KIRK: Good morning.

MS. PILCHER: All right, we currently do have a quorum.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Okay, thank you for that Nissa. We have established quorum so now we're at the meeting announcements, what do you have for us Nissa.

MS. PILCHER: All right, so welcome, good morning everyone. Welcome to the Seward Peninsula Subsistence Regional Advisory Council meeting. Once, again, my name is Nissa Pilcher and I am the Council Coordinator for this Council and I'm also the Designated Federal Officer for this meeting as well. I have a few housekeeping announcements to make before we get started.

For those attending our meeting in person please make sure that you sign in at the front table. There is a sign in sheet for each day in the back, if the pen goes missing let me know, we could get a new one. For those joining us on the phone, you can find the current agenda and meeting materials online on the Federal Subsistence Program website. That internet address is www.doi.gov/subsistence. Under the regions tab choose Seward Peninsula, 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 star, six and that will mute your phone. If you would like to speak unmute your phone by, again, pressing star, six. If a line is not muted and creates

a distraction the operator will have to mute your line.

So just to give you guys a current membership update. We do have one new member who was appointed to the Council in December, Raymond Hunt, from Shaktoolik. Welcome and thank you for volunteering to represent subsistence users in the Seward Peninsula region.

We also did have one resignation from the Council this winter. Leland Oyoumick stepped down from the Council and, therefore, we do currently have one vacant seat.

The application period for the Regional Advisory Council seats just closed on March 7th for the 2024 year and from there hopefully we can get all the seats filled.

For those wanting to address the Council on non-agenda topics there will be an opportunity for this each morning. The Chair will announce this opportunity and call on individuals who wish to address the Council. Folks here in person, please fill out a blue card located on that back information table if you wish to address the Council either during this time or during a specific agenda topic and hand them to me and I will relay them to the Chair. The Chair will also ask if there's anyone on the phone that would like to provide comment after folks comment in person. For those on the phone who would like to speak start by saying, Mr. or Madame Chair -- Mr. Chair, in this case, and wait to be recognized by the Chair before speaking. Please identify yourself for the record by stating your first and last name and if you are representing some affiliation other than just yourself when it is your turn to comment. If you would like to submit written comments instead or in addition to oral comments you may turn those in to me or by emailing subsistence@fws.gov.

And then just one more brief update that is new.

So Council member conduct and ethics.

Just as a quick reminder, as Council members, you represent the people of your region to the

Federal Subsistence Board, the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture, agency Staff and the general public. As Secretarial appointees, Council members also represent the Federal Subsistence Management Program to the people of their region so Council members are expected to engage respectfully towards all persons both at public meetings and elsewhere. Additionally, the Department's policy regarding the ethics responsibility of Advisory Committee members states that no Council or subcommittee member will participate in any specific party matter including a lease, license permit, contract claim agreement or related litigation with the Department in which the member has a direct financial interest. If any topic will be discussed during the meeting where you may have a conflict of interest, please make a conflict of interest statement on the record and recuse yourself from the discussion.

And that concludes my morning update.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you, Nissa. That concludes Item No. 4. So we're into Item 5.

I'd like to welcome everybody here. I see a lot of agency folks here that have presentations to give. So what I'd like to do is have the Council, to my right, to the left, to the phone to introduce themselves starting with you Mr. Seetot.

MR. SEETOT: (In Native) Elmer Seetot, Jr., Brevig Mission.

MR. GRAY: Tom Gray from the Seward Peninsula, Nome recently.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Louis Green from Nome, always.

(Laughter)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Seward Peninsula. Thank you.

MR. HUNT: Raymond Hunt from Shaktoolik.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Do we have somebody on the phone at all.

MR. KIRK: Ronald Kirk, Stebbins.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Say that again, please.

MR. KIRK: Ronald Kirk, Stebbins.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you, Ron. Any other Council members on the line.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Hearing none we'll move on. The lady at the end of the table over there is our -- just introducing you, Tina, the lady with all the gadgets.

We'll start with you, please, thanks.

MR. AYERS: Scott Ayers. I'm the Fisheries Division Supervisor at the Office of Subsistence Management.

MS. BELLA: Hello. Elizabeth Bella, National Park Service Regional Office.

MR. UBELAKER: Good morning. Brian Ubelaker, Wildlife Biologist, OSM.

DR. VOORHEES: Good morning. Hannah Voorhees, Anthropologist with OSM.

MS. LITTLE: I'm Suzanne Little with the PEW Trusts.

MS. KOELSCH: (In Native) Jeanette Koelsch, Superintendent of Bering LandBridge and the Beringia Heritage Program of Nome.

MS. BRAEM: Good morning. Nikki Braem, Bering Landbridge National Preserve, Nome.

MR. MCKEE: Good morning. Chris McKee, I'm the statewide Subsistence Coordinator for the Bureau of Land Management out of Anchorage.

MS. JOCHUM: Good morning. Kim Jochum, National Park Service, Subsistence -- Regional Subsistence Program.

MR. SEPPI: Good morning. Bruce Seppi, Anchorage Field Office, BLM, Wildlife and Subsistence.

MR. CHEN: Good morning, Mr. Chair and Council members. My name is Glenn Chen. I'm the Subsistence Branch Chief for the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Always a pleasure to attend your meetings.

MS. GANNON: Morning. This is Megan Gannon, I'm a reporter with the Nome Nugget in Nome.

MS. GERMAIN: Good morning. Sara Germain, Fish and Game, Area Biologist for Game Management Unit 22.

MS. SCHREK: MaryBeth Schrek, National Weather Service, SeaIce Program.

MS. IVANOFF: Morning. Renae Ivanoff, I'm with NSEDC. I'm the Fisheries Research and Development Department Director.

MR. METZGER: Good morning. I'm Ryan Metzger and I'm a Meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Fairbanks.

MR. LEAN: Hello. I'm Charlie Lean, the Northern Norton Sound Fish and Game Advisory Chair and sometimes biologist.

MS. SOPOW: Good morning. I'm Kitty Sopow. I also work for the National Weather Service stationed here in Nome for the winter of 2023 and I'm a social scientist.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you. Anybody on the phone -- Nissa, go ahead.

MS. PILCHER: Okay, I'm going to take the reins for just a little bit. So what we're going to do is we're going to do introductions by agency and then as well as members of the public. So if there's anyone online for tribal government or Native organization, if you could introduce yourself now please.

(No comments)

MS. PILCHER: All right. If there's

anyone online with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, not OSM affiliated, if you could introduce yourself now please.

MR. GARLICHMILLER: Good morning. Joel GarlichMiller, Marine Mammals Management at Fish and Wildlife Service. Thank you.

MS. KLEIN: Good morning. This is Jill Klein, Regional Subsistence Coordinator with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service based in Anchorage. Good morning.

MS. PATTON: Good morning. This is Eva Patton, Subsistence Program Manager with the National Park Service in Anchorage. Good morning everyone.

MS. PILCHER: All right, so if -- and if I skip over somebody and you don't get an introduction please feel free to pipe up later. So anyone online from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that is OSM affiliated, if you could introduce yourself now please.

MS. WESSELS: Good morning, Mr. Chair. Council members. This is Katya Wessels, Council Coordination Division Supervisor with OSM.

Thank you.

MR. STONE: Good morning, Mr. Chair. Members of the Council. This is Jarred Stone, Fisheries Biologist with the Office of Subsistence Management.

MS. PILCHER: All right. Is there anyone from the U.S. Forest Service on.

MR. RISDAHL: Yes, good morning, Nissa. This is Greg Risdahl with the USDA Forest Service. I'm the Subsistence Program Leader for the Forest Service here in Alaska and the InterAgency Staff Committee member out of the Chugach Forest Supervisor's office in Anchorage. Nice to be here today, thank you.

MS. PILCHER: Good morning, Greg.

Is there anyone online from the National Park Service other than Eva.

MR. PATTERSON: Good morning. This is Dillon Patterson, National Park Service, Regional Subsistence Program.

MS. PILCHER: Could you say that one more time, it was kind of garbled on our end.

(No comments)

REPORTER: It was Dillon Patterson, NPS.

MS. PILCHER: I think there might have been two people that introduced themselves and we didn't hear it in the room, could you try it again, please.

MR. PATTERSON: Yeah, sorry about that. This is Dillon Patterson with the National Park Service, Regional Subsistence Program.

MS. PILCHER: Thank you so much. All right, how about is there anyone on from the Bureau of Land Management.

MR. GUSSE: This is Walker Gusse with the Bureau of Land Management out of Anchorage.

MS. PILCHER: All right. And then is there anyone online from the Office of -- or excuse me, Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

(No comments)

MS. PILCHER: All right. Is there anyone on that is just represent -- not just, but is there any members of the public that are on that would like to introduce themselves now.

(No comments)

MS. PILCHER: All right. I think that concludes the introductions.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you, Nissa. Thanks for all you folks coming up to the mic, it's kind of a hassle but it's kind of necessary. I wish we would have had a couple of mics to pass around, maybe that could be something to look forward to bringing to

the meeting the next time. Especially here, this place is terrible for sound as you can tell.

So we move on to the Council here. We have review and adopt the agenda. What do we have here?

MS. PILCHER: This.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: You want to add those on there. We have a couple of additional items that Nissa will put on here.

MS. PILCHER: All right. So the agenda items that we're looking to add would be the Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs briefing on Office of Subsistence Management. That would be at a time certain 10:00 a.m., tomorrow, on the 23rd. And also -- and that would be under reports, but since it's time certain it would be at that time.

And then under new business, WSA22-05, it's a special action request submitted by the Northwest Arctic Regional Advisory Council concerning Western Arctic Caribou. That agenda request -- addition request would be under -- after the call for proposals so it would be inserted under new business, which is 12G.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thanks, Nissa. So I would ask the Council members to review and adopt -- or move to adopt this agenda, and at that point in time when we're ready somebody can make a motion.

MR. GRAY: So moved.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Tommy makes a motion to approve and adopt the agenda as amended. Is there a second.

MR. SEETOT: Second. Brevig.

MR. KIRK: Second.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Second by Elmer. All those in favor of the motion say aye.

IN UNISON: Aye.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: All those against, same sign.

(No opposing votes)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Hearing none, the motion is passed, the agenda's been adopted. So at this time there's No. 7 there. We've got some Council members that are attending other meetings and we'll move this No. 7 item, election of officers, to later on in the afternoon when we have a full Council here. So is that good with you?

(Council nods affirmatively)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Yeah, okay. So we have the Item No.8 would be review and approve previous meeting minutes. Any Council have any comments, concerns, have you reviewed -- the only thing I worry about is my own comments.

(Laughter)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Mine are fine, have you read yours.

MR. GRAY: No. But I'll move to approve.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Is there a second.

MR. KIRK: Ronald Kirk, seconds.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you, Ron. First and a second on the motion to approve previous meeting minutes dated October 4th and 5th of 2022. All those in favor of the motion say aye.

IN UNISON: Aye.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: All those against, same sign.

(No opposing votes)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Hearing none, the motion to approve the previous meeting minutes of October 4th and 5th 2022 has passed. That moves us into No. 9 -- Item No. 9, with Council member reports,

I will start with those on the line, I think there's Ron and Robert. Ron you go first, you have any report.

MR. KIRK: Not really, Mr. Chair. The only thing that I'd like to report is that our climate change weather is really affecting us and I'm pretty sure it's affecting our reindeers because with a little bit of rain it's hard for them to get to their food once it freezes over.

Other than that we're doing good, subsistence-wise, and I'm hoping the ocean will open up so we can go out oogruk hunting.

Okay, good morning.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you, Ron. Good morning.

Robert.

MR. MOSES: The winter has been pretty stormy this year and few people got caribou above Fish River. A few (indiscernible), just a couple people got a few. No caribou has been around. They're pretty scarce now. Some people have been subsistence crabbing. The Tom Cod showed up pretty late this year. They're mostly small. We also got smelt, some trout. People did good moose hunting this fall, and the quota was lower for January because of the storm for our region.

Other than that everything's been great so far except the storms.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you, Council Member Robert.

Elmer.

MR. SEETOT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Brevig Mission, early ice -- early ice melting last spring was that we had to do our marine mammal hunting in a timeframe that wasn't -- that we had to adjust to, late April and early May.

The red salmon run was pretty dismal. We keep waiting for the red salmon to come around in numbers that we had seen before but we didn't catch too

much red salmon in our area.

Snow conditions were pretty good November and December and then recently with the wet weather, it seems like April conditions right now in and around Brevig. Outside of Brevig and Teller I think the snow conditions are a little better because being in and around the water causes our precipitation to kind of change in a way that what we used to except in early winter, now it's pretty much like now and then April.

Tom Cod and melt fishing throughout the winter was dismal in the fact that we had had constant south winds in Grantley Harbor, that's our main fishing area for Tom Cod and smelt. With the current going in they're going into Imuruk Basin and then we really can't catch any fish like that. Recently, Port Clarence ice -- the ice in front of Teller and Brevig is about three and a half to four feet thick because I was trying to fish for Tom Cods to hang and anyway the hunters are, I think, going up toward the American River area to look for caribou.

Other than that a few wolves have been harvested and I think that's a good outlook for the ungulates to be up there, especially moose. I think we are seeing big declines. I know that wolves play a big part in moving the animals around and hopefully with the harvest of these wolves that our animals on our side, on the northern Seward Peninsula will kind of be in their places.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you, Elmer.

Mr. Gray.

MR. GRAY: Well, I was reading my comments from last year and not a whole lot's changed. You know we have lots of wind, lots of snow. I was down in Stebbins and I was kind of shocked at how little snow they had. And looking at the snow that we have here, you know, the same storms hit Stebbins and St. Michael's down in that region but we've been dumped on.

Oogruk hunting, beluga hunting, you

know, that's all -- it was all awesome last year, everybody got what they needed. Beluga hunting, it can be tough catching them sometimes and other times there's lots of -- I think region-wide they were catching -- they caught belugas all the way up to Brevig and Shishmaref which is, in recent years, has been something new. It's not a common thing.

So the fisheries. I am always crying and whining about silver salmon. And I want silver salmon recovered in my river system. But if you look at the fish as a whole, I mean the chums and the pinks and the, whatever, silvers and reds, you know, we struggled last year, we couldn't get reds. I had to buy reds from the fish plant last year. I mean it cost me a fortune to buy a handful of reds. But, you know, life goes on. But the fishery itself needs attention. And whether it's -- wherever the problem is, whether it's in the rivers or out in the high seas or wherever, I mean people need to start paying attention. Look at the Yukon. I mean people are affected all the way to Canada. And everybody's saying oh, gee whiz, golly, that's too bad. Well, let's figure out how to fix it, and it's not going to fix itself. I mean you put a human nature into any of these problems, the humans are going to win. And, you know, I looked at the commercial fishery, there's 200 commercial permits that could take up to 2,000 fish a day, or 2,000 pounds of fish a day. How is that impacting that run on the Yukon, and people wonder why we have no fish. I mean the trawlers in the ocean. You add all this together and it just -- you know, we sit here and try and figure that we're going to help manage this stuff but, boy, there's bigger issues than what we can adapt to.

Last year we got fish, dry fish and it.....

(Cell phone ringing)

MR. GRAY: Let me turn this off.

(Laughter)

MR. GRAY: You know after -- in my river system nobody got dry fish last year, or two years ago, last year we did. So that was a bonus to us. I mean everybody's racks were full and a lot of happy campers. Let's just hope that that goes on.

Moose hunting, you know, we should be in a Tier II situation. Moose hunting, we got a two week hunting period and some areas are closed in three or four days. And it's just a rat race to get out there and get the animal and get home and some of us are good at it, I mean we get our moose every year, and others whine and cry and want regulations changed. I was in an AC meeting a couple years ago and a guy was talking about changing the regulations so he would have opportunity, the season would go longer and he would have opportunity to get an animal, you know, there's issues with our hunting here.

Caribou. We don't see the caribou that we seen in the past. And that's another situation that is in the dog house and it's going to take some attention to fix. Our people got used to eating caribou and they don't come anymore in numbers like they have. So, you know, White Mountain, Golovin, all the villages are struggling when it comes to caribou, it's not like it was in the past.

So what else.

Rivers. You know, last year we -- two years ago we had lots and lots of rain and we, again, we did not get dry fish. Last year we got dry fish and the rivers stayed high but they didn't -- at least we had windows of time to put dry fish away and smoke salmon and stuff.

But, you know, I've been sitting here at the table for a long, long time and I was thinking the other day, we're putting our two cents in in managing different resources whether it's moose, muskox or whatever it is and I'm not a fan of Zoom or the calling in and participating in meetings, it's like checking a box. I like to look somebody in the eye and see if they're lying to me or what's going on. But I -- and this is to the Board, I think we need to have a time, a session that we evaluate or talk about who should be in this meeting, who are the -- the core products, I mean we're talking about -- and I'm talking about State and -- and the government, OSM, or whoever the players are, we're both managing a resource, whether it's fish or animals or whatever it is and we can't manage -- we can't have information come to us just one sided. I see one Fish and Game person in the room here and -- there's two, okay -- and they're both

from the game division. You know we -- we need to manage this as a marriage, you know, the State and the Feds work together one way or the other to manage resources and we should have the -- this Board should have the common courtesy of the agencies coming to this meeting and being on key, ready to respond to our questions and work with us, I mean we're the conduit to the people in this region.

So anyway, I'm going to get off the soap box and let somebody else tear you up.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Gray. We have a lot of say there because it's the honest truth and the facts about things around here so appreciate your speak.

Mr. Raymond Hunt.

MR. HUNT: Raymond from Shaktoolik. Just like Tom said, in Shaktoolik it's pure brown, no snow, all the snow we had got in December had blown away and same thing for both subsistence and commercial fishermen, I always worry about the silver salmon runs. Over the past few years it's been low. Same as the chum salmon. The humpies were normal. Seem normal numbers over the past few years but, you know, I always -- we always worry about our silvers but over the past few years I've become a concerned fisherman, it's become more controlled, you know, fishing, you know, nothing that we can do about it but could see the declined numbers and that's kind of a -- a concern, for sure. Not only just for a commercial fisherman but also subsistence.

And as far as oogruk and beluga it's been good numbers. Everyone got what they needed and have never over catch anything.

As far as moose, moose season has been great over the past few years. And I honestly think it has a lot to do with our wild fires that we had -- not in Shaktoolik, but I want to say more Interior, you know, the wild fires I want to think that they pushed them to our region. Because let's say 10 years ago you'd be lucky to catch a moose, if you got one. Nowadays we get, you know, over 20 easily in a season, which is good for the community. So I honestly think that our -- you know the surrounding wild fires around

Shaktoolik had pushed them in our direction.

And also for muskox. Muskox as well, over the past few years, I know we have two or three different herds or, you know, number -- areas, anywhere from 20 to 30 plus and that's a concern because last summer -- actually before that accident happened here, in our own village area, not too far, there's a whole herd of like 27 muskox roaming around and not only that but tearing up our berry -- where they are at they sure tear up our salmonberry area. And I don't know, if anything, could try to focus on trying to maintaining the muskox or the herd or if there's anything that we can do about it or hopefully, I don't know it's hard to say on that, but do have more numbers -- high numbers of muskox in Shaktoolik which wasn't like that in the past few years.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you, Raymond.

Mr. Gray, you wanted to add something.

MR. GRAY: So I'm sure those of you living in the region have heard all the horror stories of the bears and something this last summer happened, I'm not sure if it was the lack of fish, the lack of berries, but I personally had -- how many, one, two, I had four cabins tore up by bears. And in the region there was lots and lots and lots of cabins, and this is kind of unique. You know the last time I had a cabin tore up was probably 25 years ago and I mentioned that to somebody up north in Shishmaref and they said, yeah, we had lots of cabins tore up a couple of years ago and then it disappeared, you know, the bears didn't tear them up afterwards. So I don't know if it was a food related issue last year. You know all of us ran out and bought bear fences and now we have bear fences and on and on but there was a big, big issue, and I expect to hear more and more about the bear problems that we had last year but I -- you know, I'm a hunting guide and I hunt bears and I can't say there's more bears than there's ever been. I think this bear issue, it was something tied back to feed or something, smaller bears maybe, who knows.

So thanks.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Gray. I don't think that leaves anybody else but me to make

my comments. Anybody else on the Council have anything additional that comes up, how about you, Ron Kirk, or Robert, on the line, do you have anything to add after hearing others.

MR. KIRK: Mr. Chair. Through the Chair, Ronald Kirk, Stebbins. Yeah, our snow is gone and our moose season was pretty good and I agree with what Tom is saying concerning bears because we had an abundance of bears in our neck of the woods down here. I don't know, like Tom says, I don't know if that's related to the lack of salmon or we don't know what.

But another thing I'd like to mention is -- what I forgot to mention was, yesterday I was very fortunate to be on a -- on a two way conference via computer to Mary Peltola, Congressman Peltola, and I brought up the issue concerning pollock fisheries, letting her know that pollock fisheries are interfering with our marine mammals and our bycatch of salmon here throughout in Alaska. Not only in our area but all over Alaska. And she was very thankful that I brought that tissue up and I told her that we need to do something about pollock fisheries. And she also mentioned that the pollock fisheries, they get a lot of crab and what not in their nets and she mentioned that they destroyed crabs, broken crabs are not counted in the pollock fisheries when they do their fishing out there, they're not counted by the people doing the bycatch counts on the boats.

That's all I have for now, Mr. Chair, thank you.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you, Ron. Robert, you're online, do you have anything to add.

MR. MOSES: No, I don't, not at this time.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Okay, thank you. So we've heard from all Council members and a little bit of additional comments here.

So it's my turn.

I can be as lengthy as Tommy and, if not, longer. So, yeah, the -- Tommy and others have talked about the moose. There's different areas, sub-

units around here that are more better -- are more successful with the herd than others and unfortunately around our road system we have a tough time because there's an over abundance of hunters and an under abundance of moose. We have plenty of bears, we have plenty of wolves running around that causes competition for those animals. And like Tommy says, you have to be -- some of us are really good and some of us aren't and those of us that are well prepared usually are able to fill our freezers with our fresh moose meat around here. That's not very easy to come by. Some people spend $15,000 on a machine just to get out there and get something and sometimes they don't.

Last fall -- or this fall, like Tommy said there was beluga hunters out there, we heard from Raymond from Shaktoolik how there was a lot of success with beluga and my crew did well. So we could say something good about that beluga herd, that it just keeps feeding people. And it seems like there's more additional hunters taking -- the younger guys are getting involved too so that's a good thing.

I hear about the Tom Cods, the Tom Cods are far and few between and some people are saying they're small and some people are saying they're showing up late and some people are saying they're not showing up at all so that's -- to me that's a worry because belugas eat Tom Cods in the falltime, they also eat herring. I'd sure like to know what's going on with these Tom Cods, it's been happening for the last, I don't know, half a dozen years, been hearing about it. To me that's the bottom of the food chain and so when we start seeing something like that that's something to really worry about.

Caribous. We have to travel a long ways from the Nome area here to get out here to get them. People, there are some that are successful and the probably majority aren't, and so the herd is affecting our gathering, hunting, by not getting enough of those and that's an issue that, I think -- well, we're going to hear about it today from Charlie, who will be talking about it, the Western Arctic Caribou Herd conversation will come up. But, you know, to get caribou you have to travel a long ways from here.

Oogruks. I'm looking forward to a good hunt this spring. I see a lot of ice out here so I

think that there might be some ice hanging around here for quite a while so I'm hoping that the spring hunt for oogruk and walrus will be a good one for everybody in the area.

I'm going to hit the deal with the salmon. I was looking at my notes from this fall and I was fortunate last year that I had a friend that grew up in Nome a long time ago that invited me to go down there and dipnet for the first time in my life. I thought that was a -- quite the interesting way to fish for your reds but we were able to get some reds. Because up here in Nome there was nothing. The salmon runs weren't very good and the -- you heard from Elmer over there, the red run on the Pilgrim River to Salmon Lake, was terrible. The people all the way down to -- from the coast all the way up the river weren't doing so well with them.

So I hear this thing about co-management and, you know, I've been listening to this co-management -- I don't know if it's a buzz word or what because I haven't seen any co-management and I've been dealing with this stuff since 1993 and I'm really, really disgusting with the direction we are -- where we're at now.

In 1993 I decided I was going to be on the Advisory Committee and I got on the Advisory Committee and started representing my community here at Board of Fish meetings. And every time I opened my mouth and said something about a trawler I was told, you can't talk about that, that's a Federal fishery and we don't have any jurisdiction. I understand that. Fully. What I don't understand is why these two agencies can't sit down at the table and get this thing straightened out and hammer it out because, look, we -- there was a handful of us at these meetings. My first meeting, I think, was at the Fourth Avenue Theater in Anchorage and I met Virgil Umphenour there, and he's still out there, talking about this intercept and Area M and a statewide fishery, oh, we don't have any -- we don't have any proof that it's our fish. You know, I've heard that, you know, there's two genetic studies that have been done. Lisa Seeb and the WASSIP study and it just seems to be that that's not enough evidence to point a finger at somebody, or point the fish in the direction of a certain river and catching that fish over here in a trawler or in Area M, and being able to

prove it came from the Nome River, for instance, there's not enough there. And all this time. Back then we talked about -- there was a handful of us that said, if you don't start managing this thing, co-managing this thing with the Federal and the State getting together on this thing, our salmon runs are going to -- they're going to walk away from us and, you know, there was like a handful of us that would talk about it, and we came to the conclusion -- I said, you know, Nome's the first red flag in the whole doggone deal, Western Alaska, which is one of two salmon production areas in the state. One is Western Alaska, up here in Norton Sound, and the other one is in Bristol Bay. That's been proven. That was a study that was done a long time ago. It had to do with the Pacific Rim and why it was here and why it was so rich. It was because of salmon.

So we talked about this and I just -- I came to the conclusion, I said, look, you know, people in Unalakleet are going to start suffering, you watch. Our kings are disappearing here. We don't have a real big king runs, but we had big kings in our rivers, and those are gone. The Pilgrim River was the last stand. There used to be a thousand fish running in there a season and which was a -- biologically a run, you need 400 fish to make -- to consider it a run. They're gone. Fish and Game keeps allowing people to take them in the seine fishery and I don't understand that. But I guess they've written them off themselves.

So we talked about the Unalakleet area is going to suffer. We even went as far as to say the Yukon is going to happen and the Kuskokwim is going to get it. Where are we now? That's exactly where we're at. And we still say we're co-managing. I don't -- I don't get it. We're not co-managing anything, if we're co-managing anything we're running it into the ground until there's nothing left.

And that's why I sit at these tables, I've been doing this over 25 years. I've done it between the State and the Feds and I still see the same thing, nothing's getting done, we're just getting worse.

You're hearing about the trawlers right now, they're out there fishing and squishing everything in the bottom of the sea floor to get what they're

going to get but there's no crab -- king crab, red king crab fishery, there's no -- what is it bairdi snowcrab, that's the first time it's been shut down.

I fail to understand how we're still saying we're co-managing when there's no management at all in my mind.

1993 was a long time ago. There's some people, maybe in here, that were pretty young at the time.

So I've watched -- I'm going to use the Nome River for instance. Back in the '80s I was down with Frieda Larson, Lela Oman, Irene Kapik, and Assica Muse and you know what we were cutting, we were cutting chum salmon. So since then we've allowed the Fish and Game to manage our fisheries into a cultural deprivation, or whatever you want to call it, assassination if I was to choose a word. We've taken a chum culture and we've turned ourselves into a pink culture if we're lucky because the pink salmon is a boom and bust fish. It could be there in the millions one year and the next two years it comes back it's not. So I -- I fail to see where this co-management is really taking place.

You know, we've asked for people to come to the table, Tommy Gray talks about participation, and I'm not asking for anybody to feel sorry for me by any means but my father just died, I'm sitting at this doggone table, where are the agencies at, where are these people, why are they going to call us on the phone and talk to us and give us these summary reports or whatever it is they're going to do. You know, I think it's that important, I'm here.

I've asked for Fish and Game to have representation at this table over and over again in the fisheries and that's been far and few between, it's not always there. I've thanked the man for being here when he does come here. I appreciate Charlie coming in here, the Chair of the Advisory Committee. I served 13 years over there. And I expect people to be here. So I'm like Tommy, you know, been involved in this for a long time. Elmer. We're here. Elmer you have 25, 30 years in here. I don't know what Tommy's got but he's probably got more than I do. So these agencies need to come to the table and there needs to be real co-

management between the State and the Federal government on our fisheries in the Bering Sea.

Marine mammals. That's another one. When I saw an allowance for, I think it was the NOAA, I think it had to do with -- I think there was 9,700 bearded seals allowed as bycatch and 8.200 ribbon seals. They can -- in a trawler rock fishery. That blew my mind. I could not fathom that. We don't even do that in one year for just bearded seals alone, we don't come close to 9,700 in all of Western Alaska, I'm sure. So why is it that this industry is still out there hammering the Bering Sea, I don't know, when everybody else has to sit on the beach. When a subsistence fisherman and a fisherwoman and their family has to sit on the beach then everybody should be on the doggone beach. So I can't wait to talk to my basketball teammate Mike Dunleavy one of these days and he's going to get an earful. I just saw that they put another industry person on the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council, I didn't get the name, but I don't understand that. But what about us. What about the people that are at this table, why aren't we involved in that kind of stuff. We probably have more knowledge about what's going on around here than the doggone Department as a whole.

So enough from the Chairman. The Chairman needs to calm down a little bit and get back to the meeting. So that was my report.

Tommy, your turn.

MR. GRAY: Before we get too far away from this mind set that we're in I want to make sure that at our next meeting we have a discussion of who should be in this place, who's representing what, what is this Board, what is our goals and our options -- not options, why are we sitting here, what are we going to do, what are we going to manage, who are the players that should be here. And, again, I understand Ron Kirk not making the meeting because of the storm and having to be on speakerphone, but I do not understand agencies not making this meeting. And I would like to make sure that at our next meeting that we discuss -- have a good discussion about this so -- so I've been sitting here for many, many years and I brushed it off, oh, Fish and Game isn't here, oh, Johnny isn't here, Sam isn't here and blown it off. Well, if we're going to co-manage

something we need the co-managers at the table, not half the co-managers, not a third of them, we need everybody represented so we can have a good discussion. We're here to help manage that resource, whatever the resource is. And we can't do our job unless everybody else is doing their job.

So, anyway, I just want to make sure we get that on the next agenda as a work session.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Gray. And I want to be.....

MR. BURCH: Mr. Chair, this is Mark Burch, Department of.....

CHAIRMAN GREEN: .....clear that.....

MR. BURCH: .....Fish and Game.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Who is that?

REPORTER: Mark Burch, Fish and Game.

MR. BURCH: Mark Burch from the Department of Fish and Game.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Mark Burch.

MR. BURCH: Yes. B-U-R-C-H.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Okay, just hold on a minute Mr. Burch. Just to follow up on Tommy, I wanted to be clear that I'm talking about agencies and managing entities here, not Council members. We don't even get paid, we're volunteers to this thing. So I have a lot of respect for the people on the Council.

So Mr. Burch, you have something to bring to the table.

MR. BURCH: Yes. For the record this is Mark Burch from the Department of Fish and Game. I serve along with Ben Mulligan, the Deputy Commissioner in kind of a liaison role between the Federal Subsistence Program and the State, Department of Fish and Game. I'm usually one of the people that get the invitations to attend Regional Advisory Council meetings and I just wanted to say that I hear the

discussion here today and we generally -- have, of course, limited Staff doing a lot of different kinds of work and so what we do is we assign Staff or ask Staff to attend meetings that we're invited to when there's an agenda topic where, let's say in this case the Federal Subsistence Program has a fishery that they're managing and they put the agenda on your -- the topic on your agenda, whether it's to discuss a proposal or perhaps to develop proposals for management and that's when we send our Staff to give presentations, answer questions and that kind of thing.

So I just wanted to invite you to -- as you're developing your agendas to think about what Staff you might need for what purposes and include those invitations to us when you work with your local coordinator there.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Burch. Appreciate your comments. We'll take note of that. And I do understand there's Staff shortages everywhere.

So I've given my report, now we have Nissa, Item No. 10, what are we doing with Item 10?

Go ahead.

MS. PILCHER: I think I actually accidentally gave that update earlier when I said how you can give public comment so just as a reminder in order to give public comment, if you're in person, there's a blue card located in the back, fill it out and turn it in to me, or actually any OSM Staff, and if you're online get the Chairman's attention by saying, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to speak about this and then wait for him to call on you. But otherwise, we do have a blue card so we can go with public comments.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: This blue card has a name of Suzanne Little on here so we'll call you to the mic. And please get a chair there for her.

(Laughter)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you, Suzanne, you have the floor.

MS. LITTLE: Thank you very much. My name is Suzanne Little. I'm employed by the PEW Trust and I provide Staff support to the 37 tribe member, Bering Sea Interior Tribal Commission, but I am not representing the tribal commission today, I am just here to provide some information.

I wanted to make sure that the Subsistence Regional Advisory Council was aware and I think Bruce Seppi told me that he's made a presentation to you before, but there is an environmental impact statement process going on right now that's really -- the decision made in that process is really going to impact this region. If you look at this map over here that I hung on the wall, the giant chunk of red up in the Seward Peninsula, Bering Sea region is going to -- decisions are going to be made about that land. Currently there are these things called Public Land Orders that sit on top of this BLM managed land that currently prevent different forms of mineral entry. And this environmental impact statement process is going to decide whether to keep those Public Land Orders that prevent mining, lift them to open the land to mining or modify them somehow. Only the Secretary of the Interior can make this decision. And the Secretary makes the decisions based upon recommendations in resource management plans.

So this environmental impact statement process is looking at five -- recommendations in five resource management plans; the Kobuk/Seward Plan; the Bering Sea Western Interior Plan; the East Plan; the Bay Plan; and the Ring of Fire Plan and it involves 28 million acres. It's a big deal.

So I wanted to make sure you all knew about it. The process is under way. The announcement was made about the EIS process last August. And we expect that sometime in late September or early October there will be a Draft Environmental Impact Statement issued by the BLM. But I just wanted to make sure you knew about it because it's going to really impact the -- the decision will impact the spawning and rearing habitat of important subsistence fisheries, fish resources.

So I have a little bit of other information here too. Would be glad to provide it to you, but I just wanted to bring that to your attention

and make sure you knew about it.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you, Suzanne. I think Mr. Gray might have a question.

MR. GRAY: So EIS scares me. I can't stand that process. I went through that process with the reindeer industry. The reindeer industry got hosed in stipulations and stipulations and stipulations. So -- but the question I have is is this going to impact all Federal lands, or is it just zoning in on certain things, certain areas?

MS. LITTLE: This is pertaining only to BLM managed lands, and there's a lot of it. All that red area is BLM managed lands. And Bruce is the expert here.

MR. GRAY: Okay.

(Laughter)

MR. GRAY: So what I'm digging for is this a blanket coverage to open up whatever this EIS project is, is it -- it's not handpicking certain like Ambler Mine or the Ambler Road or the -- the fields up north that they're trying to open up for oil development and things like that. Is it.....

MS. LITTLE: No.

MR. GRAY: .....a blanket coverage that addresses all lands and Bruce maybe you're the one to answer that.

MS. LITTLE: Yeah, in this area, the Kobuk/Seward planning area and the Bering Sea planning area, all of the BLM managed lands are covered with these Public Land Orders and there's about 25 different ones and they've all been amended. It's very complicated. So the choices in the EIS will be to -- I think, to retain, modify or lift these Public Land Orders. And it'll be up to BLM, based upon public input as to what the agency decides to do.

MR. GRAY: So -- and, again, I'm going to ask Bruce because you're probably ramrodding this thing.....

(Laughter)

MR. GRAY: .....I'm -- again, I was involved with Ambler Mine and I was -- and this reindeer issue, I just cringe when we go into these things because there's a process for the public to have public input and if you miss that process you're screwed and life goes on. And granted the process might be a year, it might be five years, but at the end of the day if -- and my people, Tom Gray might be aggressive in jumping on things, but my people aren't, and -- and all of a sudden they wake up and realize that, oh, geez, the Ambler Mine's a true reality now because BLM let them go through or something in that scenario. So -- but what I'm curious about is, is this a blanket coverage to open up all BLM lands to whatever the issues are?

MR. SEPPI: I have to respond. This is Bruce Seppi, BLM, Anchorage Field Office. Mr. Chair. Members of the Council. It's a little dangerous for me to do this off the cuff because it is very complicated.

But these lands aren't -- these are lands that were withdrawn at Statehood, they've been withdrawn for decades under Public Land Order and as lands were selected and conveyed to the State and Native Corporations, these are the lands that were withdrawn because they had special significance or there was more lands that were over selected but over the years BLM has been slowly conveying lands to both the State and Native Corporations but because these lands were withdrawn they were never able -- able to be conveyed or selected.

So the last Administration went through this process to make this happen quickly, and they did. And there was an .810 subsistence analysis done and the biggest thing about this is these lands won't be Federal lands anymore, if these withdrawals are lifted and they become selected lands or they're conveyed to the State there's no longer a subsistence priority on them. That's the key thing.

We're not talking about whether they're mined or not but it's an administration action that when it happens they're no longer selected so there's no longer a priority for them for subsistence hunters. So if there was a moose hunt on these lands that only

Federal subsistence had a priority they're not Federal -- they're selected so they're not Federal lands under ANILCA and it doesn't apply. That's the key thing that's happening here.

So this -- the new Administration -- this was done at the very end of the last Administration and the new Administration, the Biden Administration has stopped the whole conveyance process and wanted to reanalyze this and I know, Mr. Gray, when you hear EIS you think, oh, my God here's another Federal Bureaucracy but it's a process that he wanted to -- this Administration wants to slow the process down and they realize it was done too quickly and they wanted to look to see what the impacts to subsistence were going to be from this, among a lot of other things. So BLM has contracted with a contractor to do this, it's a monumental task, it's not just in this region, it's 28 million acres over five land use plans. And so for Staff to just be dumped on that -- for me to do an .810 analysis on 28 million acres, I think I'd have to retire first before I would be able to handle that so it was a -- a contractor has been hired and BLM Staff are now working on it, we're putting together alternatives which some of these lands may not be conveyed under these alternatives. Some of them -- if they're important to subsistence, this is the chance where we can say these lands are too important to be conveyed away and opened.

The main thing people think about when this happens is all these lands, 28 million acres are going to be opened to mining, and, oh, my God, there's going to be tons of mining and in some areas, in some instances, yes, but for the vast majority of them they've already been opened and there's been no mineral potential there and they were open anyway and there's no interest in mining them. Some of them are -- have been closed to mining and now when they are -- these withdrawals are lifted they will be open to mining but the whole process of NEPA and an environmental impact statement will be done if -- if a mining company comes in and says we're interested in mining there, but it's a smaller portion of those 28 million acres that will be open for that, it's not all of them.

And, Mr. Gray, you were talking about Ambler Road, it's not associated with that, it's just these lands, these 28 million acres, and they're on the

map over here that Suzanne has brought. Those are the only lands we're talking about, it's not all BLM lands, it's not all Federal lands, statewide, it's just those ones that were withdrawn under this Public Land Order during Statehood.

So I know that's not giving you a complete picture here but are there any other basic questions that I can answer?

MR. GRAY: I hate to be the bad guy but there's a couple of things.

Number 1 is if this blanket coverage happens to all this 28 million acres, is the government retaining part of that 28 million?

MR. SEPPI: Potentially, yes. Under this last Administration, it was all going and so they've pulled them back and said some of these lands will potentially be too important to convey to the State and we want to retain them and so this process will allow us to pick the most important areas and potentially retain them and not convey them all to the State.

MR. GRAY: So I guess, and you're talking to a layman here that really doesn't understand this process, why -- why isn't the government -- and I have another question about the Western Arctic Caribou Herd area, but why isn't the government talking about, well, if we're going to hand out this land to this selected process, give it to the State or the Corporations, or whoever, that the lands that are being handed out will have a lifted process, or whatever you're -- the -- the EIS thing you're going through, that way you're fulfilling whatever agreements or needs for these people and, yet, you're not affecting the other Federal lands that are in the region? That is -- but, you know, I sit here and listen to this and I think our big Board just passed a ruling that non-Federally-qualified people can't hunt caribou on Federal lands and it seems like this process would wipe that out.

MR. SEPPI: Yes. That's the -- the concern, the main concern with this. This whole process, by the way, is different than the regular conveyance process of lands -- of Federal lands going

to the State and Native Corporations. These lands were withdrawn at Statehood, they were removed from that whole process and so the State and the Native Corporations have gone along and selected lands and some of them have been conveyed, a lot of them have been conveyed but these with withdrawn from the process and BLM was supposed to be working on, over the years, getting all of these lands into a process where they could be surveyed and then when the withdrawals were lifted they would go to the State or the Native Corporations, mostly the State, but it took Congressional and Presidential action to make it happen and now that it's finally happened and accelerated, this Administration has held it back and said, well, wait a minute, before we let those lands go, especially lands that are what we call top filed by the State we want to know what the impacts to subsistence are and some of those lands may be held back and remain in Federal ownership and still be open as Federal lands to qualified subsistence users.

MR. GRAY: So, you know, we sit here as representing subsistence for our region, and it just galls me that I look at the fishery and commercial fishing supersedes subsistence. We look at all kinds of different avenues, industry shuts out subsistence, on and on, and -- and, you know, here we are trying to manage a resource together, whatever that -- whatever it is, whether it's a river, whatever, you know, I sit here and look at you and your land issue, under your EIS system, my subsistence should supersede whatever you're talking about. My subsistence is a lot more important than any, any -- and, you know, we can all cry but I'm Big Brother, I'm the government, but we're the bottom line and -- and I just struggle, you know, the EIS with the reindeer program taught me a little bit about how the government operates and -- and stand up and be counted or you're going to be left behind and I feel sorry for our people in the region because this lady understands how important this is, our people don't and it's going to have huge, huge impacts, but subsistence, again, is the bottom line, whether you go to the State or the government, subsistence is the bottom line and that should carry a lot of weight in your guys' decisions, you know, and I'm -- I'm the Chairman of a Native Corporation and I looked at you guys, BLM was going to give us a final paperwork for the thing and I'm going through it and I said, wait a minute, we got short changed on the land. Your people

went back and, oh, no kidding, we short changed you 5,000 or 8,000 acres and so, you know, I understand a little tiny bit about this process of giving people land and here we are eight years later waiting for this land to come and -- and it takes a long time for this process.

But, you know, what she's talking about, and I hope you give the public time to respond or interact. You know these Zoom meetings and crap, I'm not -- I don't believe in it, I don't -- you guys need to go out and talk to the people and make them understand.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you, Tom. Bruce.

MR. SEPPI: Mr. Gray. I can respond quickly. Part of the EIS process, under ANILCA, requires there to be a subsistence impacts analysis under Section VIII, an .810 analysis, which I do for -- as a subsistence biologist for all levels of NEPA, whether it's a simple action or it's an EIS, this EIS will also have that. And, if, in the preliminary findings of that, if they find significant impacts to subsistence and I suggest that they probably will because they've got all of these million of acres going out of Federal ownership to the State and they're no longer would be Federal lands and have a priority for subsistence so I would call that an impact, that would mean that we would have to go and do public hearings in all the communities that would be impacted. And that's what the -- how the -- the message would get out to people on the ground and subsistence people to have their comments of what areas are important to them and whether they should remain in Federal ownership or be conveyed to the State. So I'm hoping that process -- or I know that that process is going to take place, I'm responsible for that -- for this EIS, so I hope that answers your question.

I know it's not very satisfying to hear me say that but it's.....

MR. GRAY: I'm going to back off. I just -- the message I want to leave is make sure people are well informed, don't do it by Zoom, go talk to people in the villages, go talk -- I mean subsistence is everything to my people. Everything. And we can't

just let industry or whatever it is -- the State is industry as far as I'm concerned, Native Corporations is industry, I'm the head of a Native Corporation and we can't let industry walk all over our subsistence. We can't. We're going to have nothing in the end so.

MR. SEPPI: Just finally, the meetings are required to be in person so they won't be over telephonic, they're required to be in person.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you. One question, Bruce. BLM lands, mining. What we're seeing here that has come up pretty much all our BLM, all our Federal lands, can you get a mining permit on any of that land?

MR. SEPPI: Yes. Yes, those lands are -- unless they're withdrawn from mining by this PLO, yes, but it's a process that they have to go through.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you for that. So that tells me there's no real danger of worrying about mining because nobody's chose them in the first place.

MR. GRAY: There is.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: There may be some. One of the things, you know, I talked about going back to 1993 and Board of Fish meetings, listen, the Seward Peninsula was heavily mined, it's been mined for over 120 years. JakebowlWinnono is one guy that I reflect on, making comment, running a dredge, he was the lever man running a dredge, he said the way we're going down there, and this (indiscernible) coming up the bucket line and going out the tail chute, he chuckled and said we had lots of salmon we didn't have any problem with salmon, okay. Carl Evans said every river and creek and stream on the Seward Peninsula was pushing mud and silt out into the ocean but we still had salmon. I never heard of any stuff back in the times of salmon shortages when people were crawling all over the Seward Peninsula. I guess I'm trying to say that mining's not that -- has never been really detrimental to our salmon runs. What I do see has happened to our salmon runs is we've had commercial fisheries in Norton Sound, since we have got trawler industry pounding the heck out of everything out in the Bering Sea, that's the mining that I see that's happening, and it's eliminating

subsistence. So if all the commercial fishing went away I'd be happy because I think doing away with all that commercial use of that wild stocks we'd start seeing everything come back to normal again.

But, anyway, I grew up in a mining industry, I mean that's what the Seward Peninsula has been about. And it's really interesting, you know, they're talking about this EIS thing and I agree that if there's something there that is of significance to the priority of subsistence that the government maintains it under that and hangs on it so that it's not given to the State because sometimes I wonder about the State management.

But I kind of want to push away at this idea of mining is all terrible because it's not all terrible. There's been good mining. I guess in Montana you could see a mountain moved and it's over there in the water zone, they got to worry about that kind of mining but we don't have that, we have water and gravity and mining.

So I'm glad that you guys are on it, Bruce, and it's not just a hurry up and push it over the edge. Appreciate Suzanne for enlightening us here at the meeting and Bruce filling in the rest of us from the other side of the fence.

Thank you.

MR. SEPPI: Thank you. No further questions?

MR. GRAY: The.....

(Laughter)

MR. GRAY: I can't -- I'm sitting here -- I'm sitting here, Bruce, thinking, I'm glad we're not hurrying this process up and just a minute ago I heard in six or eight months we're going to have an answer to this question and, yet, the public has not had a chance to respond, so to speak, and I'm a little -- again, I got to speak for the little guys and I -- I need to make sure that the people -- I mean I look at the red on that map over there and I think, holy toledo if that happens it's going to impact people all through Alaska and you don't have time in the next eight months

to go talk to all the people in Alaska. So, anyway, that was my thought.

MR. SEPPI: Just for clarification, the draft will be done in six to eight months, then it goes out to the public and so then it goes out to subsistence hearings in the communities so.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: And as my mother's first cousin, Richard Fosser, representative of our district used to say -- he'd refer me to Junior because I'm Junior, he said the wheels of bureaucracy turn slowly and only the squeaky wheel gets the grease so it's going to take a long time.

MR. SEPPI: Yes, it's bureaucratic and there's no doubt about it, it's the Federal government, it's bureaucratic but by law we're supposed to bring it out to the public and take public comment so we have to do it.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Okay. Well, thank you folks for sharing that with us and that's on the record so we're doing our part to make sure that public has access through this process.

I'm chasing my new agenda.

Anyway, I forgot to ask people if there was any comments. This is public testimony from Suzanne Little about the EIS process that's coming our way on BLM lands, Federal lands in our area. I beg your pardon on that. Is there anybody out there that has any questions of Bruce or Suzanne.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Hearing none we'll move on.

MR. MOSES: This is Robert.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Oops there's somebody there, go ahead.

MR. MOSES: This is Robert Moses, I have a question for Bruce.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Go ahead, Robert.

MR. MOSES: Okay. So when no one hunts or subsists on BLM land or the corporation, will BLM just take it over and make use for farming, or is that just a cover up for to show that we don't use our land where we subsist and if there is fine print with that, or is BLM just using it like Tom said, a cover up to take over the land for farming in the future. Because our country is growing, you see it on the news, it's going to take way more to farm and is that a way to come get Alaska to get into farming like that, and if that's right or wrong, and if they do that, is there any fine print along with that. You see on the news how much land they're taking for farming nowadays even in other countries. And you know Alaska has a lot of land per square mile and acres and there has been farming outside of Anchorage in Palmer area, you see it on the news. I was just wondering what BLM is going to do about that or if it's up to us or them to protect it from farming, because Alaska is a great big subsistence use for everybody in each community and there's also some sport in it if they do it right and manage it right and that's where we have all the problems. A lot of people use it and some people go -- abide by the law and some people don't.

So I just had a question for Bruce, if BLM has the -- the farming has something to do with the BLM with the land?

MR. SEPPI: Hi, this is Bruce again, BLM Anchorage Field Office. Lands that are Federal public lands need permits to do any activity on them so to generally answer your question, no, lands -- Federal lands would not be open to farming. Any activity that would require a special authorization to do anything, reindeer grazing is the closest thing we have to any kind of agriculture in the state, especially in the Northwest Arctic. It's not really land and climate that would be useful for agriculture and any type of farming outside of reindeer grazing, so, generally, to answer your question, no, those lands would remain Federal public lands under BLM management and would not be open to farming.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you, Bruce. Does that answer your question, Robert?

MR. MOSES: Yeah, it does. Okay, I understand. But he has to understand, see, there's no

reindeer in the whole state of Alaska, you know, and the reindeer -- there's no reindeer outside Fairbanks grazing where there's no herd and there's BLM land everywhere. Are they just basing it on the reindeer grazing statistics or what he just mentioned?

MR. SEPPI: No. This is Bruce again, BLM. Those lands, no matter where they are would remain under Federal management, they would be Federal public lands under BLM management. So to answer your question, no, they would not be open, wherever they are in the state.

MR. MOSES: Okay, thank you.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you, Bruce. Thank you, Robert, for your questions. I don't think we have anybody else asking anything online so that gets us into Item No. 11 of old business and I think we have something from Hannah Voorhees about caribou, and she's already at the table with her sign, Doc.

(Laughter)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: I like that.

(Laughter)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: You have the floor Hannah.

DR. VOORHEES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good morning. Members of the Council. This is Hannah Voorhees, I'm an Anthropologist with OSM. And during your fall 2022 meeting you heard about a conference on moose, caribou, reindeer and other ungulates that will take place in Anchorage May 8th through 12th this year.

All Councils nominated one member to attend the conference and also provided input on a specific management symposium that will take place at the conference and the symposium is on ungulates such as caribou and moose. And an informational flier about the conference, in general, can be found in your meeting books on Page 12.

Before I proceed are there any questions from Council members on the conference, in general?

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Hannah, thank you for that. Anybody online, Ron or Robert, Council members online any questions of Hannah about this conference.

MR. MOSES: No.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Okay, thanks, we'll move forward. Go ahead Hannah.

DR. VOORHEES: So on Page 13 of your meeting books you'll find a summary of potential topics for this specific ungulate symposium and if you remember at your last meeting, I believe that this Council added No. 16, muskox harvest management. I don't know if other Councils also addressed that topic. This is, you know, obviously, all the topics combined so when the organizers of the symposium are choosing the topics that will be addressed, they'll be probably focusing on those topics that got the most interest from the most Councils so some of these will fall off but I know at your last meeting, I believe Leland brought up a concern about muskox numbers around his community and then we also discussed concerns about wanting to keep management of muskox local and you noted that the current management structure doesn't seem to be working very well for -- when it comes to muskox and local needs.

So I'm here just to get your feedback on this list of topics and to see if there are certain topics that you would like to prioritize as you're looking through it. If you want to expand the language of that muskox harvest management bullet point, and if you have any other feedback.

And just to let you a little bit more about this symposium. This session is intended to be a neutral forum for Council members, State Fish and Game Advisory Committee members, National Park Service Subsistence Resource Commission members, Federal and State agency Staff and other interested parties to discuss management of caribou, moose and other similar species in Alaska regarding harvest regulations specifically.

So, Mr. Chair, now I'll turn the discussion over to you and any additional feedback you may want to provide will be very helpful to OSM.

Thank you.

MR. GRAY: So with him gone I guess I got to ask a question.

(Laughter)

MR. GRAY: I'm on the Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group and the executive committee and I haven't been -- I haven't involved myself in the discussions even though I've been asked to of -- of building the platform and on and on for this -- this symposium. You know I think what -- what can this group get that is -- that would be worthy of that symposium and -- and, you know, things that impact my people are numbers of animals, cycles of animals, fish runs, and to me I think what would be worthy in promoting in this process is issues that can be reported back to this committee after the symposium talking about what can be done to manage muskox, what can be done to manage moose, what are the critical issues in managing a resource and things like that. Because we can talk all day about the effects of managing antlers and -- and managing a herd.

You know I brought this up earlier, we have X amount of moose that we're going to kill in this region, we already know that, so, you know, unless there's something in that report of shooting a spike or shooting a 50 inch animal that would help the herd, you know, if -- if it all just ties back to opportunity I'm not interested in hearing it. But, you know, I think about when I was a kid there was thousands of moose on the Seward Peninsula and today it's pretty dismal. Muskox, you know, muskox boomed and then they crashed. They were on their way and all -- I mean we had areas that they were shooting in 22D or something, 50 animals a year, and all of a sudden we have the whole herd is 35 animals or something, and, you know, so -- so what would be worthy -- coming back to us is something that we can report and look at in managing that -- whatever the resources are.

There's going to be a lot of people. They're coming from all over the world to talk about all kinds of things so there's going to be lots of information. But, you know, you got 20-some things here and you want us to prioritize it. I'm not going to prioritize it but I'll tell you we need something

that comes back to us as a report that is going to help us make decisions.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you, Tom. So basically these potential topics are what people have put in there from the Councils, or from agencies?

DR. VOORHEES: That's correct, yep. And this includes the one that you offered, No. 16. So, you know, I think it's -- I can take what Tom Gray stated as well just the general discussion that this Council has about ungulates, moose and caribou and, you know, I understand which issues are most important to you.

In terms of a report -- if I may, Mr. Chair. In terms of a report coming back to this Council, I would note that Louis Green has been nominated by this Council to attend the conference and I believe that the hope is that you will also participate in this symposium, if you so desire, you're certainly invited, and I will note that most other Councils have nominated one person, then an alternate to attend. So if you would like to name an alternate in the case that you can't attend, that's something you could do today. I just wanted to note that. But I will be there and I'm certainly happy to bring a report back to this Council.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you, Hannah. And I was just discussing that with Nissa about an alternate. So Council members think about that here and let me know is there somebody here that wants to -- Mr. Gray is probably going to -- are you going to be avail -- you're not going to be available -- Elmer.....

MR. GRAY: So -- so I've already told the reindeer industry that I want to go on behalf of the reindeer industry so.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Elmer, go ahead.

MR. SEETOT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I've been with the Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group for, I think it's inception, replacing a Shishmaref person who was not doing his duties according to the ADF&G biologist, Mr. Trent, who was

very involved in formulating, or putting together the management plan for the Western Arctic Caribou Herd. Mr. Tim Poolman, who's on the conservation side sent me a letter inviting me to participate in this forum talking about how we went about formulating the management plan for the Western Arctic Caribou Herd so I said that I would go since -- since I was there from the start pointing out -- or putting out the Western Arctic Caribou Herd management plan to its approval so I -- I wanted to just inform you that I have accepted an invitation to be -- be part of a discussion to discuss, you know, the management plan from the Western -- or from the TEK side and along with the Western science and -- and that's just what I -- I wanted you to be aware of.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you, Elmer. So you're going to represent WACH, are you part of the -- I'm trying to make sure. I was just going to say that if you're representing something that's not at this table then we could actually pick another one for an alternate, that would give us more -- what was it?

MR. SEETOT: I was invited to participate in a panel discussion on the formulation of the Western Arctic Caribou management plan and that -- that was the main focus of the invitation from Mr. Poolman of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Okay. So you're going to be representative of the WACH group, right, is that what I'm.....

MR. SEETOT: Just -- just for the management plan. I'm -- I'm not really too sure.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: You've already accepted and invited so I'm -- I'm -- okay, so with that I think if we picked another person as an alternate from this Council that would be appropriate. So Raymond?

MR. HUNT: Yeah, I'd be up for that.

(Laughter)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: There you go. That's

pretty direct.

(Laughter)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: All right, so Raymond's going to be the alternate at this point. I want to make sure we fill all the shoes.

All right, so we'll move on. Any -- I guess, Hannah, do you have anything further to add to this.

DR. VOORHEES: I guess just one more -- just to make sure that there aren't any other topics on this list that you want to flag for me, but other than that that's all I have.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Okay. Any -- go ahead, Raymond, you have a question.

MR. HUNT: On 16, the muskox harvest management. Would Shaktoolik somehow be on the list on this? Over the past few years, like I said we never had a muskox problem at all and now that we have muskox all over the place, up our rivers, and the Toomingak River and this past summer there was a whole herd of, like I said, 27 not too far from our village and just checking to see if we can have somehow manage on that with the harvesting them or something. We never did hunt them before. We had one person harvest one but other than that I think we kind of need to manage in our area, for sure, in Shaktoolik.

DR. VOORHEES: Thank you, Mr. Hunt. Through the Chair. So I'm hearing, again, that this is a very important topic in the region and is particularly in Shaktoolik. So I want to reiterate that the conference is open to the public and we are very much hoping to have lots of rural participation and participation by subsistence users with concerns such as these.

OSM was only able to provide funding for one member of each Council to attend. There are some other efforts that are being made to bring people from the villages and I can certainly be in touch with you on that. And it might also just be worth talking

to the -- I'm not the actual organizer of the symposium, just checking in with them and seeing how they're making contact with different communities to let them know about the symposium. But the conference, more widely, I think will be a really great opportunity. It'll be a, you know, neutral forum, and I just hope that we can get as much participation as possible and thanks for your interest.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Well, thank you Hannah. Any more comments, concerns, questions.

Tommy.

MR. GRAY: So I'm sitting here again because of subsistence. And if you look at across the state, across the world, and this is basically a northern hemisphere symposium talking about resources all around the top of the world, I thought how does subsistence play into this thing and the -- the need for subsistence and -- and -- and how it impacts our lives here. As I read through this thing I see a couple places in there that could tie into subsistence but it does not directly talk about subsistence. And to me it's really important that people hear how the people's needs are met through caribou, moose, muskox, whatever it is and how subsistence is an issue in the northern hemisphere and the impacts that it has to our people all around the top of the world and, you know, hopefully comes in with a talk on that type of an issue so.

But you were asking to raise things to the top and I want subsistence talked about.

DR. VOORHEES: Thank you, Mr. Gray.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: If there's no further questions, is there anybody in the public out there that had any that's online, any questions, comments, concerns for Hannah.

MR. GRAY: No, I don't know if there are.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Not hearing none, anybody at the table, any more?

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: All right, Hannah, thank you.

DR. VOORHEES: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: We have Renae Ivanoff under old business, Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation on Salmon Lake and the South River.

MS. IVANOFF: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you. Renae, you have the floor.

MS. IVANOFF: Renae Ivanoff with NSEDC. I'm just here to give some insight on a couple of our projects, Salmon Lake and our South River chinook restoration project.

Salmon Lake, we've been in cooperation with Fish and Game, Kodiak Island Limnology Lab since 2015. We have a cooperative agreement and we're working with them to assess the health of the lake and look at the sockeye returns. We have been taking limnology samples twice a year to do that and we're looking at physical data, we're looking at nutrients, we're looking at zooplankton abundance and -- and -- and do you guys have any questions on that program? I know you guys had some questions regarding this -- this project that we have been doing for quite some time now.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Any Council members.

MR. SEETOT: What's she asking?

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Yeah, she's asking if you have any questions about this topic here. I guess you're asking about -- were you just talking about the Salmon Lake at this point?

MS. IVANOFF: Yeah, just Salmon Lake but I could move on before -- if we have any other further questions for -- or we could do it all at once, you know.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Okay, we'll hold off on the continue but we'll -- these guys wanted to ask about Salmon Lake.

MS. IVANOFF: Okay.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: So I think Elmer.

MR. SEETOT: Elmer Seetot, I represent Northern -- Grantley Harbor. All the fish that go to Pilgrim River kind of pass through Port Clarence Bay, Grantley Harbor, Toksook Channel, Imuruk Basin.....

MS. IVANOFF: Uh-huh.

MR. SEETOT: .....and -- and when ADF&G or the regulatory agencies said that they were going to, what you call it, feed the small fry, or what do they call that.

MS. IVANOFF: Oh, yeah, our fertilizer program.

MR. SEETOT: Fertilizing.....

MS. IVANOFF: Yes.

MR. SEETOT: .....fertilizing.....

MS. IVANOFF: Yes.

MR. SEETOT: .....Salmon Lake, I had some questions because they -- I was saying that with all the fertilizer or whatever they put into Salmon Lake it's going to have some residue and -- and I would think that residue from -- from the chemicals or from the food that -- that comes out of Salmon Lake into Pilgrim River, into -- into these river systems that it would provide -- or promote growth or something in the water, like algae or some -- I -- I have been in and around Brevig. We used to go up to Kuzitrin River every summer to go pick berries up there because that -- that's where they used to grow first and every -- every time we went up there we used to run into green algae on top but -- but that was pretty much around Imuruk Basin and over the years I -- I think beaver have colonized part of that and I know there are a lot of pike in and around that system. You -- you get a three footer or four foot pike up there, you see there's egg -- egg counts, they're huge and -- and -- and in the early years the -- Mary's Igloo people, especially the ones that lived in Teller, John Earl, these old-timers, they -- they used to fish for pike

and -- and then cut open the belly and have their roe like that, have -- have eggs like that. And -- and over the years I think my -- my assumption was that fertilizing Salmon Lake would -- would provide some kind of residue run-off to our waters, promoting algae growth or stuff like that. Is there any -- anyway, NSEDC told me in the early years that -- that it didn't have any effect on that. In and around Imuruk Basin, I -- I went up the rivers some years ago and I noticed algae growth on the bottom of the river systems. I -- I never really did see that in the early -- during the early times I was growing up, now I see it pretty much prevalent, even -- even around town, even around the community of Brevig Mission with the sun rays shooting down on the water provides algae or something, and then they talk about these algae blooms now, you know, I -- I know it's a process of synthetic, it's a process of turning something -- our water into green algae.

And -- and my -- I -- I'm still not comfortable with -- with the -- what -- what that it didn't produce any algae growth or anything else like that. And then I say I'm -- I'm still skeptical about that because anything you put in the water, something's going to come of it because it's not just going to stay dormant. Look at pretty much our ocean bottom. In and around Grantley Harbor, our bottom is pretty much mud, sand, mud, sand, dirt, whatever all the way from the river system and goes all the way to the Bering -- or into Port Clarence Bay so our waters are getting shallower and -- and that over years and years of -- in and coming out of tide, in and around Teller area, our ocean bottom -- or our sea bottom has been kind of -- kind of went up a little bit and -- and that's how come our water, when it's from the south when it produces kind of brown dirty look but -- but with the warming climate, will the nutrients, or -- or will the fertilizer for the nutrients for the Salmon Lake, will it help the growth.....

MS. IVANOFF: Through the Chair.

MR. SEETOT: .....on the bottom of the Kuzitrin River because I -- I noticed that there's everything -- everything on the bottom of these fresh water systems that will provide growth to all kinds of whatever is imagined that can live in these systems.

MS. IVANOFF: Yeah, through the Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Seetot, for all of your background and to the -- the traditional knowledge on Salmon Lake.

We do work with -- we have a calculator to the amount of fertilizer that we're putting into the lake and phosphorus and nitrogen are the nutrients that we're putting into the lake. And so this year we're going to be putting 17 tons of certo -- fertilizer, that's two tons up from last year, this, in turn, does -- it's going to supplement -- giving nutrients to the lake so that in turn is going to produce phytoplankton, phytoplankton is going to -- the zooplankton is going to feed on the phytoplankton and then that in -- in turn it's going to feed the juvenile salmon for the zooplankton abundance and so that is our main goal and why we do the fertilizer.

As far as the algae growth, I can't really speak to that because we haven't really looked at that and maybe Charlie, do you have anything on algae? He might be able to be -- he's the -- obviously he's the, you know, historian, so maybe he has better insight on that, but for our program we're just making sure we're getting enough food for the juvenile salmon to be able to go out into -- out-migrate into the ocean at a healthy and -- and a good size that we can assess whether they're going to come back in good returns or if they're going to be a poor -- based on their weight and their length.

Go ahead, Charlie.

MR. LEAN: Yeah. So we started the fertilizer program, I think, in 1997 and for the first five years the -- the fertilizer rate was the 60 tons as I remember, per year, and she just told you it's about one third of that today. So after the first five years the fish came back very strongly, the red salmon, and so we thought, well, job's done. I was working at Fish and Game during -- until 2000, I was the lead biologist for fish and I'm probably the guy you talked to. And then -- then after about five years the -- the number of fish crashed because there was -- the lake was over populated. So then we started to fertilize again but everything costs money and at that point BLM had pulled out of the three-way partnership, Fish and Game had reduced their -- their participation. NSEDC took it over at -- at about 2005 and the fertilizer started again at about half of what we'd done in the

past.

Anyway, now we've -- NSEDC has refined, with the help of Fish and Game the amount necessary to keep it going.

I guess the short answer is the fertilizer does enhance the algae, mostly in the lake. Most of the algae that's produced in the lake is microscopic free floating algae, not weeds that grow in the bottom. It -- it's possible that some of that productivity moves down stream, probably not as fertilizer anymore, probably as algae. As it goes things consume it, zooplankton, you know, bugs basically and it really is a more likely component of -- the algae production further down river is probably dead fish carcasses so dead fish and fertilizer are almost the same thing and, yeah, it's called marine drive trans -- or nutrient transport.

Anyway, I don't know -- yes, once you put something in the river it's going to get down the river but I don't think it's -- if you look at the streams in Nome area it's -- there's algae too, so, yes.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you, Charlie. So what -- I just wanted to -- from what I know about this fertilization process, and I know it's gone back all the way to '97. It was done with 60 tons per year, we had about 100,000 fish show back up. Some people talked about over carrying capacity. I asked Eugene (Indiscernible) about have you guys taken samples at the bottom from three to 500 years ago, what's in the sediments and he said they did and they got a report back and it was phenomenal numbers of 200,000 or something beyond that. Well, Tommy and I grew up on that river as well as he did on the lower end, we know we had a lot of sockeye back in the '60s and then they kind of disappeared on us but we had a fleet fishing right out here with sunrise to sunset nets and probably targeted a lot of those fish so our runs went down so that depletes the nutrients in the system in the lake and it's a cold lake and so you got to do something to bring it back. I thought that 60 tons was what we needed and when we see 100 [sic] fish come back up the river, that, to me, was a good thing.

When we shut down the fertilization

process, Elmer, we basically starved the -- the little fellows that were in the lake and so then they reintroduced it again but it's a lower level now. So back when it was high level of 60 tons it didn't seem to affect anything in the river system and just like Charlie says there's -- there's going to be some kind of pay off on the way down and he's talking about, what, phytoplankton, zooplankton, and that's what the sockeye feed on in the lake and so maybe some of it dribbles down that -- that other species like those little crabby looking things that are in the water, different types of bugs and what not would benefit from it. But there's one thing missing out of that whole sequence there -- what is it, nitrogen, and phosphorus, is they found that a carcass dying in the river was more effective than treating a river -- or a lake system with what those two were because carbon is the other ingredient and that's the best one so what they're doing, I don't have a problem with, I'd like to see them put more in that lake than they do. But because of past results, certainly showed the -- the -- great benefits to the system.

So I don't think there's any harm in these nutrients going into the ground.

Go ahead, Elmer, you got a question.

MR. SEETOT: You mentioned about the fat in juvenile fish, I have an exception to that. The fat in juvenile fish are good food for the pike and that's how come they're increasing. You -- you -- you check the whole Kuzitrin system, on the north side I -- I mentioned a couple years -- quite a few years back in a meeting, I -- I fish -- I -- I put my salmon net in the slough to fish for broadnose whitefish on the north side. I set it overnight, you know, in -- in front of Kuzitrin River there's a slough that goes in pretty much it used to be around (Indiscernible) Fish Camp. Hogue and I, we caught 63 pike in just that one area maybe in lake slou -- maybe on -- that wasn't very big, oh, well, we'll try on the other side. And then on Windy Cove side we -- we set a net again for -- for the same purpose of getting broadnose whitefish. Guess what, we got two more -- two more -- we got 65 pike on the other side. So, you know, from the north side to the south side, Imuruk Lake is about 15 miles or so. That -- that was gathering place for many -- many of the early people that -- that harvested fish, berries,

whatever, in and around Quoruk.

And so that -- that's what he's saying, they're -- they're helping the juvenile fish, you're also helping fatten the pike on the other side. Pike's got to eat something. Chum's got to eat something. So -- so -- so.

So that's my argument on that side.

We need to find a way to keep the pike numbers down. I don't think we can because not only the pike but other -- other -- other fish than the red salmon and I'm not too sure what other salmon, you know, don't go after the small fish, Tom Cods, whatever, they all go after the small but -- but I would say that with fattening juveniles it also fattens the pike and maybe gets their numbers up.

But -- but for me to say, we'll get all the pike in and around that system is -- is impossible because there's so many numerous lakes, ponds, you know, where -- where the fish can go. And I -- I know a place -- or I know a place, Old Igloo where -- where that slough -- or where that channel was blocked off by beavers so that's one of the things that I see quite a bit. Beavers and northern -- northern pike.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you, Elmer.

MR. GRAY: Tom.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: This is the Pilgrim River guy here.

Go ahead, Tommy.

MR. GRAY: So like Elmer and Louis, when these guys talk about Old Igloo, New Igloo, mouth of the Kuzitrin, I grew up down there as a kid too.

And -- and that was my education to being a river rat, I guess. The pike, we're not going to get rid of it. Bottom line. The pike is going to be there forever. The -- you know, I think about this -- this fattening up of pike, I -- in my opinion, and I don't know, biologists know, to me the -- the fry

running that run from Salmon Lake to the ocean is a gauntlet and that happens in a short period of time and poof they're out to sea and -- and the process starts. You know when I was young I remember Laura Johnson, my aunt, was one of the few people that canned reds and I was just -- you know, this is 60-some years ago, so the -- you know, the big thing that -- that I look at at Salmon Lake is -- is we've conditioned our people to love reds. I mean Tom Gray, I couldn't get reds last year so I bought reds. I spent $500 buying reds so I could have reds and we've -- we have -- I am of the -- I won't put silver salmon in my freezer, I put reds, if I got to buy them, I got to buy them. The -- the -- and Nome has become a hub for these reds. We've got two rivers that have reds. And I'm very concerned about Senik River. You know right now there's a limit of 100 fish per person on that river and that run can't stand that if -- if we -- and I've run that river and got 50 reds. There's a group of guys that run that river. That river's going to get hammered. Over time people are going to figure it out and if it isn't protected, it's going to get hammered.

This Salmon Lake thing, you know, I -- it's kind of like ebb and flow, you know, you try one thing and it works, works great for awhile and then all of a sudden, oh, it's not working and we all kind of learn from it, I guess. And eventually it'll get dialed in. But as soon as it's dialed in then the need is going to change, there's going to be twice as many people here and it's going to be a Tier II situation and on and on. So we're constantly dealing with it.

I look at the last two or three years and last year I did not put reds in the freezer. The year before I think I put 25 in the freezer. The year before it was 25. It's been kind of dismal for awhile. Is this what we're looking at, and I think I'm asking Charlie this because he's probably more educated than all of us on Salmon Lake, but is this going to be this way for awhile yet?

MR. LEAN: Yeah, that's two more years of low numbers, this year and next. The -- it's a balancing act. So the original thought, assumption was that when we had a huge run we would be able to cut it down with the commercial fishery in Port Clarence but that -- that's a no go so the towns of Teller and Brevig have said they don't like that idea. So now the

problem is trying to temper the production of the lake so that it produces approximately 10 to 15,000 for harvest and 10 to -- 10 or so for reproduction, so a total run of 45-ish-thousand. And, yeah, we've had runs as big as 90,000 so that -- that's when we did over did it so we don't want to do that again. So the trick is to temper it, produce a moderate number, and that's -- in a sense we're only using subsistence harvest that on the very best years took 15,000 fish, that's -- that's -- sometimes we're trying to cut a tree down with a pocket knife, it's -- we just don't have the power to do it. So that's what's going on, it's a balancing act and that's why the smaller amount of fertilizer and trying to not hit those really high numbers.

MR. SEETOT: One thing I forgot to mention earlier was that I was going to put into a sentence, during World War II the military stockpiled fuel. There's a stockpile, I see drums around the north side of Brevig and around Davidson, around that one pond where the lake starts -- I mean the Davidson River goes down without interruption but in and around the east of the river there's a lake that is constantly, you know, just colored wrong and then talking with people who had been up there, the Mary's Igloo people who live in Teller they told me that that has been like that for a number of years and that they assume that something was buried in and around Davidson landing area. And with that leaching into the water system, that's an off shoot of the Kuzitrin River that goes all the way to wherever, Bendeleben Mountains, I think. And I have witnessed or known that people that were in and around that area during the early days, you know, they kind of died from cancer so that's something that I have been -- we have been looking at for a long time. And people in and around these areas, you know, that their life expectanc -- how long they live, I think, is determined, you know, by what -- what exposures they had to certain stockpiles which they probably didn't know at that time.

So I think that that was one of the things that I was going to put that -- World War -- military stockpile field in -- and over many places and -- and then they would leach out into the water system, how -- how would that interact with what fertilizer, you know, that is put into the system -- you know, into Salmon Lake. That was what I was getting to.

Thank you.

MR. LEAN: Mr. Chair. So my dad was in World War II in Nome, has interesting stories about fuel storage around Nome, where they'd just go out and they'd put 10 or 15 drums in a pile and then over here and over there so that if the Japanese bomb, the whole thing wouldn't go up in a big fireball and then to get the drums out of the frozen ground the next winter or two they would go out with a Cat and put a chain around one drum and just burst it, just rip it out of the ground and then they could pull entire drums out into the hole they'd created by wrecking one drum so there's major oil spills around town.

Davidson Landing was a fuel depot, even before World War II in the 1920s and '30s, Davidson's Landing's function was to stockpile fuel in the summer, they'd bring it in by barge and tugboat and -- and then a Cat train in the early winter up to the Taylor or to a number of mines up there on the Kougarok area so there's all -- so if you fly over there's all these Cat trails all over the ground and that's from pre-World War II and then World War II it was, again, a fuel depot and weather station and back in those days, you know, accounts of how they stored oil by digging a pit, dig a big pit, fill it with oil because they didn't have a container to put it in, you know, some of it ran away but they got most of it, right, you just keep adding water, it floats up and floats on the water, you don't lose much oil -- I'm being facetious but that's how the attitude was. And so I am sure that's why the military went in to clean up Davidson's Landing, there's a lot of oil spill there. There's less than there used to be but I don't think -- there's no cure for what's left. It's just going to be there.

Also Davidson's Creek was dredged and so part of that brown stuff is leaching from the broken bedrock from where the dredge worked and so leaching in this area is pretty high in arsenic, that's a cancer causing element. That's a metalloid. But anyway, I would bet you there's a lot of arsenic there, I haven't tested that. So -- and I don't -- it's just one of those things it has to dilute itself and wash away, I don't know how to fix that.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Question, Charlie. Is there any data to go along with what you just said

about arsenic to go with these, in Davidson's Landing or anything of the sort?

MR. LEAN: No, I don't have any.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Okay.

MR. LEAN: I -- I -- it's -- here in Nome, arsenic is really prevalent out there at Satellite Field and the creeks running out of Satellite Field, the Center Creek and Dry Creek are well documented to be saturated to the point that fish can't survive in arsenic.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Well, the Dry Creek, since my kids were little, running around out at Icyview in the mid-90s or so, even before that, I -- I would say in the '60s, I've seen silver salmon all the way up and now there's a dredge bond up there and silver salmon are actually populating in the creek better than they ever did. Dredge 5 has been sitting there for, I don't know, a couple decades now.

But, anyway, I wanted to say something. I'm hearing about all these chemicals, basically it's fuel we're talking about and I'm aware of all this World War II stuff too and the activity they did. They did go up there and clean up Davidson's Landing, went up there in 1991 or so. Ronnie Angston was one of the guys that was there and talked to me about it. They did a pretty good job cleaning it up. All we got to do is look at the worst oil spill in the history of Alaska and that was the Exxon Valdez, and that was crude oil, but, geez, Prince William Sound is producing Copper River reds that chefs around the world can't wait for, Alaska Airlines are flying the king salmon all the way down to Seattle and makes these big presentations, there's ways to recover our salmon runs, we're just not doing them. We're doing nothing.

And when it comes to this hatchery stuff, we should be doing hatchery work up here. There's a lot of things we could be doing that we're not doing. So I want to see Salmon Lake produce something and I wish you folks would bring that tonnage up, that's just my two cents about that. If we're going to do any kind of recovery around here, you need to work together and get things going. The CDQ is getting a bad name because of the trawler industry, you

know, they're getting hammered. I might be one of those people that are hammering them. I don't want to talk about that at the moment but the point is is that back in the 2000s or so, the trawler industry in Nome, I said why don't you folks just put into a hatchery process, you know, and then there'll be plenty of fish; they didn't want to do it. I couldn't understand why but then, again, now I know why, because if there's chum salmon swimming out of the Hopson Creek Hatchery in the Nome River, getting out in the Bering Sea and they're getting caught in a trawl and they're showing up in the samples, there's your scientific data that says you're catching my fish. The same thing with Area M State fishery.

I wanted that on the record today because I think that's something that people just don't think about and, you know, educating people in Brevig and Teller about what the commercial fishery could do for their economic benefit over there, and that should come first. There's a lot of young people we need to take care of. Subsistence benefits from that, and it -- it could. So if you have a commercial fishery developed before you start doing this -- building up that red run again to what it should be, maybe people could be convinced that it is a benefit to them. I'm listening to guys here saying they're not catching any reds anymore, well, apparently there's not enough tonnage being put in the lake because it's not producing enough. A healthy river -- he's talking about healthy, fat, how many grams -- whatever they're leaving -- the sockeye are leaving the lake, the more grams they weigh the better off they have a chance to survive but also the other thing is they're feeding other things down the river. Healthy salmon runs are healthy rivers. You get chums, you get pinks and you get silvers running together that's a healthy river and so why can't we just sit down and pencil out something that's going to benefit subsistence and benefit the economy around here instead of, you know, I don't know I've been interested in salmon since I was kid. I did the first lake study at Glacier Lake in 1974. It was a class project. I was the first guy to go do it. The State hadn't even gone up there. I brought them their samples and stuff and they were, oh, geez, thanks, we never did this yet. After that it was -- there was some work done after that.

But, anyway, I -- you know, people

don't know -- they don't understand. Like he's asking about the phosphorus and nitrogen going in to the water, is it causing other problems. I don't think it is. Salmon do it all the time when they die, they leave phosphorus, they leave nitrogen and they leave carbon in the water. It's the same thing.

So that's my two cents for now.

And, Mr. Elmer, you got one more to go, we have to move on.

MR. SEETOT: Additional comment. When I was a little tot, maybe about that big, maybe a little bit bigger, my -- not my parents, but the community leaders at that time said that they did not want to see any commercial fishing in and around Grantley Harbor or Port Clarence Bay because it benefited -- you know, subsistence lifestyle. If -- if we did go commercial fishing probably wouldn't have seen the Nome community flock to Pilgrim River to get their fish aft -- after they go into the river. I'm a front line observer of the salmon that come into Port Clarence Bay, majority of the salmon that pass through to -- the red salmon that pass through to Salmon Lake occurs when there's good south winds and -- and I -- I was commenting one time, gee, I only got 20 fish because of constant south winds and wet weather and then I hear that I wasn't -- I just was kind of saying, oh, I guess at least we feed the people, the community of Nome, by not going into the commercial fishing business because I think forefathers had initiative to say, I think we need to, you know, keep this area for the benefit of subsistence fishermen.

During the early days it was very tough for our people because they had to fish for, not only for themselves, but for their transportation, you know, dogs and stuff like that but nowadays I'm happy that we didn't go into commercial fishing or, at least, the communities Teller and Brevig -- go into commercial fishing because it benefited the people of the Seward Peninsula, especially those that were coming from Nome to the Pilgrim River to go after the number 1 prized fish that I think it is, other than king salmon, and silver.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you, Elmer. What's interesting is before the State took over the State there was a real bartering system up there and dry fish was a big thing, sockeyes, chum salmon, that was the industry up there. It was a commercial industry. The people going to the store trading fish for goods. So -- when I bring it up about commercial fishing, I think that it is something that could be introduced up there to the benefit of the people right there and not against it. But it's something to control the population that returns to the lake so that's why I brought it up.

But, anyways, we've gone a long ways here and, Charlie, I really appreciate your comments here and Renae, you have something about South River. Maybe we could.....

MS. IVANOFF: Yes, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: .....get through that, it's about lunch time.

MS. IVANOFF: Yep. One last.....

CHAIRMAN GREEN: If Charlie has anything to add he.....

MS. IVANOFF: Yeah, just last one comment.....

CHAIRMAN GREEN: .....can add.....

MS. IVANOFF: We should also be working with ADF&G managers in terms of high abundance, we need to -- you know, for subsistence users to exploit that resource and in terms -- and in times of low abundance we need to conserve so we need to -- another thing we need to look at is just working with managers to better -- during these cyclic -- cyclic years, and for sockeye salmon.

Okay.

And actually I want to talk to you later but this is off the record about pike in Salmon Lake, it sounds like you have a lot of good traditional knowledge that I would like to talk to you about, but off the record.

Before I move on to our king salmon program we have our -- it's a rehabilitation program, it's not a hatchery. It's enhancement. So we apply for aquatic resource permits through the State of Alaska, we're not going through the P&P hatchery process, this is small scale. It started off experimental and this is just to enhance our king salmon run on the Unalakleet River so we're taking the wild stock king salmon from Old Women River and Unalakleet River and then we are taking their eggs, fertilizing them, and we did this same process here in Nome for -- for Snake; coho and -- and we did in the past on chum as well, Solomon and Snake River chum, but we're -- we're shifting our efforts towards Snake River coho.

But anyways for the king salmon in Unalakleet, this last year -- in the past we started off with mist incubation and we went over to upgrade it to better heat trays and we used to plant them as (indiscernible) before but less chance of survival and we -- we now rear them all the way through the fry stage just before the sac is absorbed, before we release them out in South River. And so during this process we're marking them, their otoliths, their ear bones with a specific mark that is provided by Fish and Game and so that we know that these fish are -- they're essentially like a tree ring, you -- they tell you -- they can -- it's a distinct mark that -- so we know that that fish is ours that we had fertilized.

And so this last year we had actually had success in our program, we've been doing it since 2012 but we haven't had a lot of effort to collect the dead fish to collect their ear bones, their otoliths, and last year I finally p ut in the effort -- I mean I applied to collect king salmon from subsistence users so I found that the best way to collect these king salmon because -- because not a lot of people, too, are willing -- you -- and they wash out up river, water gets high, you're not going to be finding -- you have to access it through helicopter, it's pretty hard if you want to go all the way up there, float down, so there's a lot of logistics and stuff so I found it easier to collect the king salmon from subsistence users. And we only collected 29, I believe, last year, and 11 percent came back. Three -- three of those 29 fish came back with a mark and so that's our first evidence of a successful return for king salmon.

So I just want to let you know it's not a hatchery, it's just an enhancement program right now that we're doing. And we plan to continue to do that again this year if our escapement allows.

And do you guys have any other questions before we -- lunch?

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Just a question, Renae. So you got three fish returning out of 29, when you said the subsistence fisher provided the samples, say at the cutting table or something, or did they find dead ones and bring them to you?

MS. IVANOFF: They -- through nets, like it could be -- it was in-river. Like during the openings we target king and chum and people catch kings and so I'll ask -- I post fliers around town but a lot -- not a lot of people are actually willing to give up their king salmon heads, you know, their prize fish, and so a lot of my samples I take are from my own personal catch and -- and we had a few submissions with my fliers but it's still hard to try to get those samples still.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Okay. So you're getting some samples back and you're saying -- well, there's no more mist incubation, I understand that, so if you're not operating a hatchery, how are you making these fish, how are you raising -- rearing them from egg to.....

MS. IVANOFF: Heat tray incubators.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: What?

MS. IVANOFF: Heat tray. Heath.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Heat tray incubators?

MS. IVANOFF: Yes.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: I'd like to see what that looks like. Where are you doing that at?

MS. IVANOFF: We can -- if you want to stop by our NSEDC we have some set up there too, they're -- they're actually not -- we tested them -- we ran -- we did a testing run just to make sure, you

know, everything water and plumbing is all good but, yeah, they're all set up that way, they're not your typical.....

CHAIRMAN GREEN: What's the situation with the water quality and where you're getting the water from?

MS. IVANOFF: In Unalakleet or?

CHAIRMAN GREEN: No, here.

MS. IVANOFF: Here.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: You said you got your heat trays here.

MS. IVANOFF: Oh. Yeah, we use biofilters and we -- we do a bunch of -- I'm very unfamiliar with the program here. Our -- our -- and that's what we're trying to get under control here is because a lot of our Staff in the Nome office and all of our people that worked here in Nome for the incubation program here, they essentially left and we're here with all new biologists, and so I'm kind of getting a grasp on that and learning the functions here in Nome as well, and so part of that is why I'm here because we have a new employee and so we're just running through. So hopefully we can -- I'll get that all sorted out this -- this spring before -- or summer before our field season.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Well, thank you, Renae. I'm looking forward to seeing something maybe in the Nugget. Maybe you'll have something that you'll put in there and get that information out to folks because I've had -- I've had questions about it for the last several years and I've talked bits and pieces with people in Unalakleet and around here and never got the whole story so I think -- I think that the people's resource -- that the people ought to know about it.

MS. IVANOFF: Uh-huh.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: So I'd really appreciate it.

MS. IVANOFF: Okay.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: And when it comes to subsistence, if that's going to benefit subsistence then I think people really ought to see what's going on.

MS. IVANOFF: Yeah.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Maybe that'll lead on to more work like that.

MS. IVANOFF: Yeah.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: So I.....

MS. IVANOFF: Yeah, and they do retrieve fish to assess the mark for -- they do have some success but again they it's based on the amount of fish you collect and so -- and it does appear that coho seem to be more successful than, say, chum, for incubation so.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Gray.

MR. GRAY: So this ecolith -- whatever you called.....

MS. IVANOFF: So otolith -- yeah, you could just say.....

MR. GRAY: .....the otolith.

MS. IVANOFF: .....yeah, it's ear -- you could just say ear bone.

MR. GRAY: Otolith. So -- so a suggestion. I don't know if it was Fish and Game or NSEDC or who it was but they contracted with me to pick up a bunch of heads.

MS. IVANOFF: Oh, okay.

MR. GRAY: And -- and a suggestion, if you're going to run a project I would look to some local person in Unalakleet or whatever and tell them so much a head and, you know, the problem -- the problem with -- silver salmon, and I produced silver salmon that time -- the problem, unless you're seining a lot

of silvers and smoking or canning or whatever, you know, I would go through 50 to 100 silvers a year so that's why they came to me, but if you're going to go on the river and pick them up, they're hard to find. I mean I'm on the river every day all summer long and you're -- it's going to be hard to find the otoliths or whatever. But guys like me that have a smokehouse going, you could capitalize on that real quick.

MS. IVANOFF: Thank you, yes. Through the Chair, yes, Tom. We -- that is why I put in for our -- when we do -- under our permit is you have different methods to collect these fish and so some of it -- you can actually request subsistence users to prov -- to -- to provide the fish or if they want to volunteer their -- to obtain their head -- or the ear -- otoliths.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: So I guess for science sake, for it to make it through the peer press -- whatever it's -- peer review or what not, you got to do that consistently so you got to take this crusty old guy and he's the only one that gets to it so you get them.....

(Laughter)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: .....samples every year, consistently, right, and then Charlie's over there running around the Snake River picking them up. So you have to do it consistently so hopefully -- I mean if you're going to do this recovery plan with -- with these -- recovering these otoliths, I hope you find a way to do it that's consistent that works for science because that's what we need.

My only other thing is, if we'd just get to work and get our hatchery back together and do our hatchery work like we should be doing, like they started in the '90s, we'd probably be way ahead of ourselves right now but for some reason we're just not making much forward momentum, movement, whatever you want to call it.

But, anyway, thank you very much for your presentation, Renae.

MS. IVANOFF: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: I know we put you through the task here and you have Charlie as a back up and that's.....

MS. IVANOFF: Yeah, that was good.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: .....that means we are doing our job. Okay, thank you.

MS. IVANOFF: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Are there any other questions.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Anybody online, sorry.

(No comments)

MR. GRAY: Good luck.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Nobody online, anybody as far as public online.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: I have to ask these questions.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Hearing none, thank you. I think we're about at lunch time break here, we're hitting right at noon. Are we going to want to come back at 1:00 or 1:30, tell me folks.

MR. SEETOT: We went all morning without even a break.

(Laughter)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: You had a break, you were going back there all the time.

MR. SEETOT: Not only me, there was no

break.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Okay, so what time. Tina, what do you want it to be.

REPORTER: Any time is good with me, your call.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Okay. Council.

MR. SEETOT: 1:30.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: I hear 1:30, the guy's older than me that are telling me that, so 1:30.

(Off record)

(On record)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Okay, I'm going to call the meeting back to order here at 1:36. And, Mr. Charles Lean has something to tell us about Western Arctic Caribou.

Thank you, Charlie.

MR. LEAN: Good afternoon. I'm Charlie Lean, I think most people know that. But this is my 50th year in Nome, that snuck up on me. Anyway.....

CHAIRMAN GREEN: I'm at 60-something.

(Laughter)

MR. LEAN: Yeah, well, I didn't say Alaska I just said Nome. So my dad was here before me, so you haven't gotten rid of the Lean clan in a long time.

I have two things I hope to talk to you about today. One was the caribou working group, Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group and that's my first topic. I hope to give you a report on the recent Board of Fisheries meeting regarding Area M and intercept fishery of salmon in Western Alaska. But that's second.

So I asked this figure be distributed, and that's for those -- there may be one or two extra

copies. Alicia with Fish and Game was kind enough to make copies for me and -- because people take care of elders like me.

(Laughter)

MR. LEAN: So, anyway, what I wanted to show with this graph is this is the representation of the past 50 or so years of the caribou -- Western Arctic Caribou Herd population, and this population cycles roughly every 50 years and it's pretty well documented from about 1870 to present, it cycles up and it cycles down about every 50 years, and we're now at the second low point of the cycle in my lifetime. It's a -- in 1976 the population was estimated to be 70,000 animals, right now it's 160,000 animals. So -- and it's still going down from the looks of it. So when any population gets really low that's when all the conservation flags get raised and -- and hunting is poor just because there aren't many animals and also because of regulation management, people are concerned that if you overharvest when the population's low you can knock it flat.

So we had some false hopes raised about 2015. You can see in the graph it -- it seemed to be bottomed out and it started to come up and then it collapsed again. This has been a concern at the Western Arctic Working Group for a number of years. The rapid decline beginning in about 2010 to -- and -- and so the last three censuses, that trend is very alarming to me and others, in fact, the entire working group, and I know that there are people in the room that were there with me at this last meeting.

In 2021 we had quite a discussion about the state of the caribou and how they were declining so fast. And we discussed taking conservation actions but chose not to and then this -- this past fall, the caribou -- well, the caribou last winter didn't really migrate very far south on the Seward Peninsula. A lot of concern there. And then more concern this year because apparently they weren't migrating south again. Kotzebue really missed the caribou, they went much further east and the Kotzebue RAC came to the Western Arctic Herd Working Group meeting with a proposal to severely restrict caribou harvest because they were concerned about the lack of caribou and the trend that's going on. Their proposal was a total of four

caribou per year, only one of which should be a female, or one of which could be a female, preferably it would be a male. You know that's a huge cutback from what they had which was 20 days unlimited year-round. That showed just how serious they were. And there was a lot of discussion, a lot of concern. But even the people that lived in the Kobuk/Shungnak/Ambler area where the bulk of the caribou herd overwintered in 2021/22 agreed that it was a serious problem. And after much discussion, the working group put forth a proposal -- and now I've forgotten how many people were there but it was like 17 to 1 the vote favoring this very restrictive harvest. One disagreed from -- from Ambler -- or not Ambler, I'm sorry, from Kobuk Village.

But, you know, that doesn't -- the rule, if this passes the Board of Fish [sic] and everything, won't go into effect for another year.

If you extend the line on this graph that I just showed you and continue it down, it passes the 130,000 level in about two years. 130,000 is a significant number because that's when this would trans -- go from what has been termed as a preservative management action to a preservation, critical management action and that -- that warrants even more restrictions.

So this whole management plan, it's a working document, but this was the goal of what Elmer remembers, and I remember, at the first caribou working group meetings, is trying to come up with a plan, you know, before it was a crises, and trying to figure out, what, step wise, we should be doing as the population rose and fell. And as I said it's a 50 year cycle. And so we were pretty assured that it was going to collapse again someday but that someday is today.

And so I know this is bad news but it's what -- for those of us that believe that we kind of own the resource, we need to take care of it to make sure it's still here. And I could talk to more issues but I think that's the nuts and bolts of what I was trying to say.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you. Council members, any questions for Charlie.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Come on, you got your chance now, Tommy's not here.

(Laughter)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Martin, go ahead.

MR. AUKONGAK: I think you know, you know, with the fish, you know, you can't get any salmon, what do you do, you go after caribou, or vice versa. If you don't have the caribou you're going to go get more to put something in your freezers so -- and look at the prices of meat in the store right now, it's super high. So if you add one and one and one it's going to have an effect. So that's my comment.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Elmer. Thank you, Martin.

MR. SEETOT: I wasn't able to make it to the Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group since I got away from there. Where is the main herd at, are they still up around Unit 23, Kotzebue area, or did they move down to Buckland, Deering and then move on down? That's my question, thank you.

MR. LEAN: So last year the -- I think only 20 percent of the population really got south of the Kobuk River. Most of those got over to -- got over in the Buckland area. This year there was a small pocket that came down towards Buckland, too, but, again, it was even less than 20 percent. The main herd seemed to be staying up in the Kobuk country. And then I heard recently that there are caribou getting into the Kuzitrin -- upper Kuzitrin area.

The -- you know that there's these -- I call them rainbou herds, one up near Serpentine and one over by Mt. Bendeleben and those are kind of hybrid groups of half caribou, half reindeer and they are resident year-round on the Seward Peninsula. And there's been occasional calves observed on the Seward Peninsula so -- but I don't think it's out of line to say that there's a resident herd on the Seward Peninsula and I could go on a little bit of a rant about that.

Sheldon Jackson, back in the 1800s, a missionary decided that we needed reindeer and then

reindeer were going to substitute for the caribou that had just seemed to have disappeared. I don't really believe that all the caribou were dead when he brought in the reindeer, but I do think that the reindeer herder industry in the early 1900s homogenized all the caribou and reindeer on the Seward Peninsula and so we have great big reindeer compared to, say, Lapland and that's probably hybrid vigor, I mean that's the mixing of two genetic stocks and that's a good thing, and I think that that accounts for why the animals on the Seward Peninsula are healthy where they are.

I mean I hope I answered the question.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Elmer.

MR. SEETOT: Nope.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Tommy.

MR. GRAY: Am I supposed to say something.

(Laughter)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: I don't know, you got that look in your eye.

MR. GRAY: So I -- I will say this, that when caribou come on reindeer range, the reindeer herders can introduce them to their reindeer herds and they are now reindeer. And BLM and I will fight over that, but that's our interpretation.

And, you know, Tom Gray is trying to get a reindeer herd and I'm wanting to reintroduce reindeer on the Seward Peninsula from Stebbins/St.Michael and it's a project I've been working on for a couple years. We thought we were going to drive reindeer this year but didn't happen. And I think, what I've been told, all the paperwork's been signed, it will happen next year. We did have a permit to drive animals. BLM pay attention. I'm coming whether it's reauthorized or not. It's -- so, anyway.

You know, if you talk to some of the old-timers the caribou will peak and then they'll drop to nothing and it takes 100 years to make this cycle.

If I never see another caribou in my life I would be one happy camper. I don't think that's true for subsistence users on the Seward Peninsula but, you know, I think we're a few years -- quite a few years away from lots of caribou on the Seward Peninsula.

The reindeer industry tried to get studies done on the animals that were staying on the Seward Peninsula. Kyle Joly came to me, they wanted to -- he wanted to put satellite collars on animals, the State had a conniption fit and threw a tantrum and said, over my dead body, and the results of that was we will do a DNA study and -- and go forward on that. The University did the reindeer DNA study, the State didn't do shit. So it -- it never went anywhere.

I -- I do know through history, I guess, you can see reindeer in caribou DNA up around Barrow. So -- and if you look at the history, I mean we had 500,000 reindeer at one time on the west coast of Alaska, then all of a sudden there's 500,00 caribou on the west coast of Alaska so it only makes sense that there's traces of reindeer in the caribou.

A few -- or one thing I'm a little frustrated with is I'm all about subsistence. And the Western Arctic Caribou Herd is at a low and the ANS can't meet the harvest needs right now and in reality what that means is it should be in a Tier II situation. Nobody wants to talk about this. Nobody wants to go there. It's going to be a mountain of work and nobody wants to acknowledge it. But as a subsistence user I'd like to shove it down the people's throats and do your damn job. Because it's our livelihood, it's our lifestyle, it's -- you need to protect that subsistence. And -- and, you know, people are getting paid big bucks to manage this herd and look at this herd and -- and do their thing, but, you know, for what it's not -- it's not for the biologists that's in Kotzebue managing it, it's for us subsistence users. That's what that herd's here for. And we need to follow that and ensure that the herd is managed correctly.

You know there's a big crying, how can I say this, the non-resident hunters can't come to Kotzebue and go hunting anymore on Federal lands. I don't care. If the ANS can't be met, we can't meet our own needs, why should the outsiders get it, and I'm a

hunting guide. I'm a guy that stands up for these non-resident hunters. But subsistence first. We need to keep that in mind.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you. Go ahead Charlie.

MR. LEAN: I just wanted to relay a story I read recently and I think it's true. The -- so the Loman Brothers, which ran their reindeer industry right after World War I they had a contract with the government of Canada, Northwest Territories, to drive a couple thousand reindeer from the Seward Peninsula to the Delta of the McKenzie River. And their chief herder, the best herder at the time was Mr. Barr, from Shishmaref, and they called him Moses of the North in the newspaper articles. This guy was a highly respected reindeer herder and in the course of three years he drove -- started out with like 2,200 reindeer and took off across the North Slope, north around Point Hope and north over the Slope and he got there with -- now, I've forgotten, about three-quarters of the number he started with, but only a quarter of those animals were animals he'd actually started with, the rest were either born on the way or caribou he picked up on the way. And so you know that he lost three-quarters of what he started with too, so that's another explanation why there's reindeer blood in all the caribou because he just -- his herd was leaking both ways, in and out, and I thought that was very interesting and I think it just shows how inter-connected things are, even then.

So, anyway, thanks.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you, Charlie.

Go ahead, Elmer, you're next.

MR. SEETOT: You could pretty much quantify animals on a range by -- by a harvest report and by photo census but you really can't quantify predator kills because you have to have someone out in the field doing that.

About 15 -- about 15 years ago we ran into wolf kills where -- I think maybe more than that, the Maniilaq Herd was being hammered by wolves in and around Mary's Igloo and we were following the tracks of the wolves, here they were just killing the reindeer

just for the tongue and -- and for the blood and we counted over 15-plus, but we couldn't go in the brush, you know, to see if there was any further more. So wolves are predators that can do indiscriminate killing if they need to.

And then in a winter of about 25 years ago going through the Kuzitrin, American and Davidson Landing river system, me and my nephew we counted over 20 moose kills, you know, that were pretty much over the winter, so -- so the wolf kills are pretty devastating to local herds.

And one that I heard, that was from many years -- not many years ago, many generations ago was maybe up around the Kougarok Mountains or so, the reindeer or the animals were spooked by wolves and they just milled around constantly until they dropped dead just from milling around, so those numbers can't be quantified because, you know, nobody's out there. We can quantify the numbers by, okay, here's a harvest ticket, here's a photo census, oh, we think there's just so many animals, but for other stuff like that, you know, you have to have someone out in the field doing that kind of work.

I'm just only one of a handful of persons maybe that have seen these kind of kills but, you know, that's not really forwarded to the regulators. Our -- our TEK, you know, nature happens and that's how nature's intended it to be so we just got to kind of go from that. With the Western Science, I think, you know, we're being regulated constantly. You have to get so much, you have to hunt so much, don't hunt this and that, certain things that have been ingrained into our heads by State and Federal regulations, we have been so much, but we do have TEK, get only so much, whatever you need, you know, this and that, share, share alike, waste not, want not, you know, all these TEKs but that's not -- pretty much that's not integrated with Western Science, they just, oh, is that something you just heard, and they don't take that into account, but -- but for us living in the real world, I get a moose out of season, I don't tell anyone, guess what, it's going to kick me in the butt in later years, maybe when I need it the most. That's been what's ingrained into our heads over the years by community leaders, by our forefathers, by our grandparents and -- and that's how we've been able to

subsist, how we've been able to survive. Right now we're talking about caribou and caribou wasn't really part of my diet until the mid'90s until I shoot -- I went over toward the Bendeleben Mountains and I went over toward the Lava Beds, Imuruk Lake, Bendeleben Mountains, those are the ones that hold the animals, they're going there because there's food for them to subsist on. I met this guy how many times out in Bendeleben Mountains.

(Laughter)

MR. SEETOT: Couple times, muskox hunting. I -- I met Tom on.....

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Sparks.

MR. SEETOT: .....Tom Sparks. He -- I think I mentioned it one time, they were down towards Mary's Igloo and they happened to see us at Davidson's using binoculars, he was hunting with a buddy. He said, let's go see those Brevig guys. He say how you know they're Brevig, he say they're the only ones I know use parkies.

(Laughter)

MR. SEETOT: So, you know, you could identify people, you know, out in the country.

But for him to come from his side and for me to come that side, you know, once -- you don't -- you don't, oh, I'll meet you over there, you know, just -- we just so happened to be going after the same -- or other resources that, you know, we have to go far and wide to get our animals.

But I think something like that needs to be documented because all of a sudden you're losing 24,000 animals, where'd they go, I know I didn't poach them, you know, they're so far out.

But I think with Western Science they just have that tunnel vision, this is so many animals that were lost and -- and what happened, oh, I'll -- I'll tell you on my side, they wouldn't listen to me, am I credible, I don't know. You know it's all to the person that's taking all the information.

Thank you for me commenting on that, thank you.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you, Elmer. And, Mr. Gray.

MR. GRAY: So I sit here and listen to him and it caught my mind one of the hurdles that, or struggles that I've had sitting on the Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group is these biologists will come in and say you can't shoot a cow, you can't shoot a calf, you can't, you can't, you can't and they're bringing their idea of -- of how this herd is to be managed and good or bad, it's still their idea. It's an outsider's idea. And our people -- I was sitting there one time thinking, I want a calf skinned parkey, or I want a sleeping bag that's made out of a calf, that's history, that's our ancestry. And, yet, some outsider's telling me I can't go there anymore. You know it's a grain of salt that I can't stand sometimes. And people need to be open-minded and compassionate when it comes to stuff like this and weigh these thoughts or ideas. You know, again, I'm subsistence and I'm going to look at a decision based on my subsistence lifestyle. I've had wolf skin leggings, I've had reindeer leggings that I wear. I've had fox skin parkeys. I've had all this stuff and -- and, yet, I'm told, oh, you can't shoot a calf. I've gone out to my reindeer and clubbed calves so I can have a calf skin parkey and killed them, killed the calf reindeer when they were about three weeks old. You know the -- and -- and there's generations in our history of Native people that probably did the same thing with caribou.

So anyway I -- I went home and I told my wife, I got to learn how to keep my dang mouth shut.

(Laughter)

MR. GRAY: But, anyway.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Keep talking Tommy, I'm looking gooder [sic] all the time.

(Laughter)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Charlie, go ahead.

MR. LEAN: Yeah, I could tell you

family stories too about subsisting and shooting things out of season and some are amusing and some are not. But I walk the line between both.

But I wanted to say that this -- this management plan was the product of a collaboration between agency people and subsistence users and this is -- this is what we agreed to when the animals were abundant and then this year -- you know, in 2021 we had our meeting and, hell, no, we're not going to restrict caribou hunting and this year, the majority of the group thought things were bad enough that there needed to be conservation, you know, and it's a -- this proposal was put forth by Kotzebue and Noatak. They were the ones that really pushed this one. So it's not just some agency guy saying this is what has to happen it was a real hot topic and Maniilaq's lead guy was leading the charge. So it's not a -- this is not a management biologist telling you what to do, it's a strong suggestion that things have reached a point you need to take action.

So anyway, that's it.

MR. GRAY: So I just want to say that I sat there with Charlie at the Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group meeting and I was part of that and I agree, we need to back off. I mean the subsistence world needs to be conservative. I'm the head of the Beluga Whale Committee in Alaska and we're looking at a management plan for beluga whales and we're talking the same language. We have so many animals and we have a certain amount that we can slaughter and we have to set up a management plan, that's exactly what this thing is going to do. So don't get me wrong, I'm supportive of this proposal but I'm also -- one side of me, one half of me is White, and half's Native, my Native side is very critical sometimes so.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Okay, thank you, Tom. Anybody online, any folks online on the Council have any questions, comments or concerns for Charlie. I don't know who's on.

Mary, you're here, go ahead.

MS. FREYTAG: Hi, yes, my name is Mary Freytag, I'm from Unalakleet and also there's other villages below me and also on the Yukon and the

residents that travel up to the herd to subsist and I just wanted you to reiterate on the restrictions, the proposed restrictions that the working group had put together, the proposal, I just would like you to reiterate because it affects a lot of residents that do really rely on this subsistence caribou herd.

MR. LEAN: Okay. So the proposal that's probably going to pass is that one hunter should only take four caribou per year from the Western Arctic Herd and only one of those legally could be a female. And the idea is that the -- the female/male ratio, that there's too few female for the number of males, that's one way to look at it, and we're saying it that way because we think that the total population should be greater than it is now. We're trying to get up to the 200,000 plus herd size. It's been as high as 400 10 years ago so.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: So, Charlie, I'm looking at this continued study on how predation has anything to do with it. Do -- is there any information out there about like the wolf -- kind of a wolf census and a bear census that would -- bears probably not the easy one but I would think that wolves would be kind of.

MR. LEAN: There's not. There's been some attempts at bear census, but as far as caribou go, the Caribou Working Group thinks wolves are by far the greater predator because they operate all year long and the bears only operate in the summer. So -- so, yeah, we talked a lot about predation, about wolves in particular and as far as I know there's -- it's not addressed.

One of the problems with wolves is that they're -- you know, one litter is five puppies and you really have to almost exterminate wolves to control the population of wolves. Where bears have generally one or two cubs, it takes a lot longer for a bear population to recover if you're trying to knock it down. So the wolf is the -- is the big predator that's hard to manage.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Yeah, I hear people telling stories like what Elmer's talking about, predation by the wolves. I seen what the wolves did to the Davis Reindeer Herd up on the other side of Salmon

Lake back in the late '70s, I mean they just do whatever they wanted. I was going through them putting them to sleep because they were all chewed up and just laying there. So I know what wolves and how fast and these things aren't even close to the area where they're coming to these wolves, they can be 30, 40 miles away. So, yeah, I understand that wolves are pretty devastating.

So like you say the bears are a seasonal, summertime, springtime, falltime, the predation is probably on a different order.

So, anyway, anybody else.

Mary.

MS. FREYTAG: Yes, one more.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Mary and then Elmer.

MS. FREYTAG: Sometimes during the winter we get really, really warm weather and it starts to rain, rain, rain like a couple of winters ago and an ice forms over the tundra and sometimes it affects the -- for the caribou to reach their food. Do you guys take that into consideration?

MR. LEAN: I mean we discussed that and we try to document when there's a freeze-down like that. And if you ever look at caribou and reindeer, you know, the -- the females, especially in late winter are the ones with antlers and the pregnant females, and then the males are out without antlers and the females are chasing them away from any food that the males find, so the males are the scouts that run around and dig up feed and then the females all move in and chow down. So it's -- we talk about this a lot but, you know, it's important to see the vanguard of males going across the tundra looking for food because they're feeding the rest of the herd and -- but, yeah, we haven't -- I mean we're looking at this at a higher altitude picture saying that, you know, the population is down. We're not saying that we can -- we want to have at least, what, at least 15 males per -- 15 males per 100 females but right now it's much more than that. So the males are not the problem right now, it's the lack of females so.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you. Great question, Mary.

Elmer.

MR. SEETOT: Not really a question but a comment in line with what Mary said. Even though the biologists talk about numbers and about the animals, what other considerations are they taking into account, are they taking into account the ecosystem and, you know, we -- we do have a lot of low pressure systems that carry clouds, what is in -- are there any airborne articles, you know, that may be landing on our side from the Russian side to alter, you know, the grass growth. Because you know over the years what used to be prime reindeer grazing areas, those areas have kind of dried up because of not enough snow or rain during the winter and then possibly not being used as much as before but I -- I think you'll be missing the whole point of the size of -- or the population of animals if you disregard the ecosystem, period. Because that -- that's -- that's their place where they live, that's their garden, that's where they eat, that's where they flee, give birth, stuff like that. But our land has been going through many changes over the years and -- and being so close to Russia we don't know what's happening over on that side, airborne particles, oh, no, I don't think so. I went to (indiscernible) in '92, pretty much almost -- almost like our mountains and then I was staying in an apartment, they were using coal and you -- you could see soot all over, you know, all over the place where you were walking because they were using that coal for heat so that's -- that's something that I don't think we really consider at all. We just maybe take it as a given but in order to really study the animals you have to look at the whole aspect of what makes the animal as it is. It's not just being an animal, because it's there, it has to go from there to there, much like we are doing here in this room. We stay in our communities but we come here for the meetings. We go to different places for this and that. So many factors I think not -- that we kind of forget about in, you know, determining, oh, the size of a population, or the health of the population.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you, Elmer. Charlie, if you have nothing else to add -- do you have

something or are you pretty well?

MR. LEAN: Well, you know, that -- the -- the Reindeer Herding Association and the BLM did a couple of vegetation studies on the Seward Peninsula and it's been 10 years or so since they did those but they did one like 20 years ago, 10 years ago and it's about time for another one but there is a little bit of work on that but it was Reindeer Herders that did it.

So, I don't know, that's all I -- I think I'm done on caribou so.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Okay. Tommy, one second, go.

(Laughter)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Time's up.

(Laughter)

MR. GRAY: So the reindeer industry did this study on the Seward Peninsula probably 35 years ago, 30 years ago. Dave Swanson did that study. And -- and I've requested, because I'm planning on getting reindeer next year, I've requested to, gosh, Karen, the Soil Conservation Service to reevaluate my range and I'm only worried about winter lichens so that's going to happen, that will be in the process. But that's something -- this being said, that's something that the Western Arctic Caribou Herd has never done and they should look at how the range has been impacted by all these animals. I mean they've gone from 70,000 in the early '70s to 500,000 back to 100-and-some thousand, and they cry because, oh, Onion Portage doesn't have the animals coming again. They quit coming for 10, 20 years. Well, let's get real, maybe they overgrazed the range coming into Onion Portage and they're going a different path now. I mean caribou and reindeer feed in different styles, but the impacts are the same at the end of the day.

So, anyway, I just wanted to suggest that to the Western Arctic Caribou Herd and Charlie's a whole lot more effective at getting stuff done at that group than I am.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Okay, thank you.

Charlie, are you?

MR. LEAN: I'm done with caribou and if you would hear me sometime I could talk about fish or not.

MR. GRAY: I'd like to hear the fish.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: He wants to hear the fish, you're on.

MR. LEAN: Okay. I have my fish hat on. So I went -- I'm the Chair of the Advisory Committee and I got sent to the Board of Fish twice here in the last three months to talk about fish. So we -- what, this is March, April -- so in January I went and spoke about my primary issue was -- was about Salmon Lake and how to manage Salmon Lake and -- and that's why I'm pretty well versed in it right now because I've been thinking about Salmon Lake, but the point is that we -- the NSEDC Program and Fish and Game programs don't match. We're about to see a change over in management. I heard that the Assistant Area Manager, Kevin, is going to be the new area manager so I have a new target to work on. But, anyway, the idea is to align management of the fishery to be more responsive to whether it's strong or weak and try to run the red salmon.

And then last month I went to the Board of Fish again to talk about the collapse of salmon in the Bering Sea. And I have graphs and all kinds of stuff to show you but -- trend lines for salmon, different species they're all in decline, including pink salmon. And then there's another graphic about how the young salmon, chum salmon, primarily, migrate back and forth through the Aleutians and all the way up to Norton Sound and back every year and so chum salmon spend a couple years at sea, up to three years at sea.

Anyway, the Area M fishery, since 2003, has been gradually raising their fishing time and catching more and more salmon and so the State is talking about Area M, if you wanted to talk about the pollock fishery you would be talking to the North Pacific Council, so I was focused on chum salmon in Western Alaska and I don't know if everybody in this room knows both the Kuskokwim, and the Yukon River have had complete, or nearly complete closures for the last

three years. That's not just chums or kings, that's chums, king, coho, even pinks.

So -- so what people need to remember is that those -- the Bering Sea summer chums were the largest single chum run in North America, perhaps the world, and now they barely exist. The king salmon on the Yukon was the -- still is, the premiere king salmon in the world, highest oil content, most desirable, best tasting fish, you know, the basis of subsistence trade for millennia; those things are closed completely. It's really a black eye to the State of Alaska that we let that fall apart so badly.

So there were roughly 130 AYK testifiers at the Board of Fish meeting this last month. That's a lot of people, it took three days for everybody to get their say. And everybody was limited to three minutes or 10 minutes, depending, so I got to talk for 13 minutes because I'm a resident and because I'm an Advisory Committee Chair; I spoke for the committee. It was to no avail. It was very frustrating. There were three Board members that were basically sympathetic to the Bering Sea fishers and there were four that weren't and they wouldn't change. And it was -- I couldn't have -- I'm getting pretty emotional so let me read a few statements that were written cold turkey so I wouldn't scream at anybody.

The four members of the Board of Fish who voted down Proposal 140, which was a proposal put forth by the Fairbanks Advisory Committee but we all -- all of AYK supported and Bristol Bay and Chignik and Nelson Lagoon, all communities that target salmon locally, were -- we were trying to increase the windows for fish to move through that Area M fishery to two or three day lengths. That's what Proposal 140 was. So it basically reduced the Area M commercial fishery by about half during June -- the month of June. So, anyway, the four members of Board of Fish that ignored it, or didn't vote in our favor ignored science, ignored subsistence law, ignored the precautionary principle and sustainability clauses in the Constitution of Alaska and -- and just kind of blew us off. So what they did was they made a very token restriction of fishing time at Area M and gave us one-sixth of the amount of time we'd asked for. It was just enough so that they could avoid a lawsuit.

Anyway, the Board of Fish basically delegated chum conservation to the commercial seine fleet, the commercial seine fleet was the only fishery that was restricted, not the drift gillnet fleet, drift gillnetters saw no restrictions at all.

The Area M fishers, you know, average $250,000 a year in their fishery, many make a million, it's a pretty lucrative fishery. The Fish and Game asked the commercial fishers there to be on the honor system and try to avoid chum. And that's really hard to accept the Department who has the authority to close fishing just said, well, we trust you, do something, so the -- so there was a genetic study, you've heard of WASSIP, you've heard about -- today you heard the Seebs, Mr. and Mrs., Doctors, did genetic studies, well, there was another genetics study last summer and it's continuing for the next three summers and they all agree that anywhere from 55 to 25 percent of the chum caught in Area M in June are bound for Western Alaska. Last year that was about 100,000 chums. Of those chums, about 20 percent might have gone to Norton Sound. It doesn't even talk about the king salmon.

So you may hear that, oh, it's inconsequential, the Area M doesn't really affect Western Alaska. When you can't make escapement and you can't have subsistence fisheries, 100,000 chums would go a long way.

They tried to lay the blame on climate, particularly in the ocean, and food -- food changes and things like that. And the Commissioner of Fish and Game said, oh, this is an allocative issue. And I have another letter -- I have way too much stuff here -- the Chief Counsel for the Alaska Outdoors Council, a group that usually scorns subsistence responded and said that, you know, there's a subsistence priority, there's an escapement priority, it is not allocative in the definition of the law to award fishing and harvest to a commercial entity and not provide for escapement and subsistence first.

That's the State law.

That's the Federal law.

So anyway there was -- after the meeting, disappointment, a whole bunch of us walked out

of the meeting and Tanana Chiefs, Calista both had their legal teams as did Alaska Outdoors Council all write pretty tough sounding letters and there's still a group of people that I participate with trying to figure out what to do and maybe make this a Legislative issue or elevate it to the Federal Board.

So lots of frustration and, you know, we really did give it our best effort.

So it's very frustrating.

And to some of the things I heard said this morning, Calista determined that Area M was eight times as impactful to the chum runs as the pollock fishery. That's a group that studies -- that did that study that's not employed by the -- not employed by the pollock industry or the State.

And another thing you should realize, that if you look at the king salmon kind of collapsed about 2000, the year 2000 and if you look at the hatchery production of pink salmon in the Gulf of Alaska, Alaskan hatcheries, that is when they reached full production for pink salmon. So there's kind of circumstantial evidence and there are studies in Oregon and Washington with the Columbia king salmon and pink salmon production there that indicate that the ocean isn't an endless cornucopia of food, in fact, pink salmon do compete with king salmon and it's very coincidental that the pink salmon production in hatcheries peaked at the same time the king salmon populations collapsed all over Alaska, not just in the Bering Sea. So the Board of Fish, in their wisdom decided they didn't need to have a hatchery meeting this year.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: What?

MR. LEAN: The Board of Fish decided that they would cancel their hatchery discussions this year and cancelled the meeting because this Area M meeting took too long because we made too big of a stink. So they have a budget and they're saying that they can't afford to do their job.

So it's -- anyway, I think this is an issue that's going to boil for a couple years. I hope to come back with better news sometime.

Thanks.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you, Charlie. You know, you know as well as I do I got involved back in '93, we were at the table together, we played good cop, bad cop with the Board of Fish, you and I, I'm hearing the same story again. We're right back at the table, we're pointing fingers in one direction when we need to point them both ways. There's no way that I'm going to be convinced that the trawler industry isn't part of the problem. It just doesn't add up.

I am not disagreeing with you or anybody about Area M. In fact I raised my hand at AFN to take them on there with a resolution. But what I'm hearing is we're going to fight with the same swords that we used in 1993 and it didn't get us anywhere then and I'm wondering what we're going to do to change the way we fight this, and that's why one of the things I do is I keep preaching that -- you know, I keep preaching the hatchery issue. Use the fish -- use the hatchery fish to find an ID and do all this stuff. That Kotzebue hatchery up there, Sisualik, my buddy Brian has been living there for seven years, that was his dad's place and he worked there when he was a little kid, Peter Robb and Kate, he said the fish are still coming back to the creek. So if those fish are -- DNA is built into those guys, go back to that creek, and the last release was in '94, why can't we do that with hatchery marked fish, put them in those guys' plate there and say, look, you're stealing our fish. We've got scientific proof.

You know we went through this thing with the Norton Sound Advisory Committee, I was the Vice Chair for, I don't know, more than half the time I was there. We went in there and we battled all the way through there and then we got to 1998 and by golly we had a Tier II -- we had Board of Fish show up here on our doorstep and tell us, you know, if you guys don't want us to do the Tier II right now we'll give you a year to create the framework for it. I ended up with the -- it was Caleb Pungowi that started it off as the Chair and I ended up getting the Chair seat and I went through that whole year, I think there was -- maybe I am hallucinating, but I think there was 20-something meetings and it got divisive at the table. I mean I could tell people were starting to play chess with how they were going to get their chance at it. And there

were certain people that I think were right that said don't go there, don't let them do this to us, we've got the only Tier II salmon fishery in the whole state of Alaska, in the history of the state of Alaska put on us and it didn't do anything for conservation. It just put a band-aid on the whole issue and until we went to a commercial fishery, the Nome subdistrict, again was lifted and that was nothing, that didn't do us any good either, it just stripped some more fish out of our system.

So, you know, how do we fight this. We can't fight the way we did before, we got to do something different. So I'm saying this because I'm reaching out, I'm saying we need to look at all alternatives. Yes, there's fish out there, those pinks are taking a lot of the feed away from the kings but in the Gulf, why don't we put some of our own fish out there and let them do what the Sitsusualik Hatchery did for 14 years, they got some wonderful runs up there, I mean some of the best chum salmon in Alaska are there. I think you'd agree with that, they're big fish.

So you know how they got the hatchery up there, it was kind of -- it was supposed to come to Nome, but they said well, heck, you guys are intercepting our fish so we'll just put it up there and people went, oh, yeah, we'll catch them on the way by, well, that didn't happen but they got a nice 14 year run up there and they still have fish. The EIS said the Aggi River was a trout run, it's a great chum run I've heard, I haven't been there myself.

But, anyway, Charlie, I was just trying to make that point that we should be looking at something else to do that. Because at these Board of Fish meetings -- that's why I haven't gone because I know I'm going to be doing what you're doing, banging your head against the wall, it's frustrating, how do we fight these guys. Science. We got to use that -- but we got to use that building that has a can in there that's going to put some eggs in there so when they go out they get marked and they get caught, there's two fisheries they could get caught in.

So anyway, that's my -- thank you.

So go ahead.

MR. LEAN: So I wanted to say when we're -- trying to take it to the Legislature, trying to -- trying to look for other allies as well. We picked up Nelson Lagoon and Chignik which are next door neighbors to Area M. So we're -- and Bristol Bay has always been on our side. So I think there's hope.

The other thing is that the Yukon and Kuskokwim are more affected than they were back in our day. And so there's, you know, 130,000 people in the state affected badly by this, that's, you know, geographically about half the state is badly affected by this. I think we can make points, you know, it's different than when just Norton Sound was in crises.

I have some hope, I'm not trying to be as depressed as I probably sound, but it was a terrible frustration so.

MR. GRAY: So one of my downfalls is I usually don't like to start at the bottom, I like to start at the top. If I have a problem, I go make a phone call right to the top. And, you know, I -- I've heard this fishery issue since I was, gosh, a young adult, and it's been all of -- everybody who is local here has lived through this, different ideas, different fingerpointing and stuff. You know my thoughts on this is we should ask OSM to give us a report on this, somebody in OSM figure this out, study it, look at the trends, look at whatever it is and come back and give us a report. This is where it's at. We need them to go to the big Board, our big Board and say we want action. And not only action, let's get the Congressional Delegation involved. We're in politics that we can't compete in. I mean when the Board votes and three vote in favor and four vote against, that's -- that's not -- that's been set up by the industry and we're never going to get that control so now it's how do we get control, let's quit piddling around down at the bottom here, let's climb the ladder and make somebody responsible to advise us, which I think -- and my thoughts is to throw it in OSM's lap, go deal with it, figure it out, come back to us and advise us and then we throw it in the big Board's lap and so on and so forth.

But, you know, we're going to be here 20 years from now talking about the same issue. And, you know, all of us have game plans. I've got my

traditional council trying to get a half a million dollar study and part of that study is to do DNA work on Fish River salmon. And once we get that on the shelf we can go back to Area M and buy some fish and, oh, there's my DNA right there, whether it's ecol -- whether it's DNA from the river or whatever it is. And, you know, marking fish through a hatchery, whatever -- whatever the process is. We're down in the weeds trying to make things better for ourselves and in reality it may be Congress that has to step in and say this is the way it's going to be. But somehow we've got to get out of the weeds and get up on top of this thing.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Gray. I threw myself at this pretty hard back in 1993. By 1994 I was running for the Board of Fish. I had to wait seven weeks to find out it was John White that got it out of Bethel. All we got out of that guy was Tier II. He was a green guy, he wanted -- they used us. They used us to get what they wanted and it didn't work, Tier II didn't work. We hashed it over at the Advisory Committee level, came to the conclusion that wasn't the right thing to do. Hannah Miller was asking me, telling me not to go there, you know, my grandma and her fished together. So I threw myself in the fire there and -- and the region got behind me, I didn't get it. Johnny (Indiscernible), of all people, told me, you got really close, our lobbyist was pulling for you. Since then AVCP has approached me a couple different times and I just never went there because I seen what we did then and we hadn't changed up.

And I'll end this one right now and we'll move on, is that, to do the same thing over and over again expecting a different result, a different end result is insanity and Einstein, it's -- we can't do this again. We're going to be here, like he says, in 20 years talking about it, if we're still alive Charlie, you and us guys here, so we got to change up the fight and hatchery work is one way to do it.

So let's move on.

We're pretty emotional about or salmon.

And we've got -- oh, Mary, go ahead.

MS. FREYTAG: Yes. We talk a lot about

the fish in the ocean. A couple of three years ago on the Unalakleet River, going up the river, we had salmon bellies up coming down, just dead, because of the climate change. I was just wondering if ADF&G collaborates with Canada on the spawning, where the salmon actually spawn on the Yukon River on their side, if anything's happening on their side, if it would affect the small salmon going back into the ocean. You know, that's just another instant to look at, it would be neat to see, because we're neighbors, and we share the river. So it would be cool to see some research done at the spawning grounds.

Thank you.

MR. LEAN: So -- so Canada does do research and studies their juveniles and things like that. But speaking of dead fish floating down the river, you may have heard of ichthyophonus, it's a disease kind of like gangrene in people. It creates a necrosis, or dead flesh, you know, pussy growth stuff, bad tasting fish, but it usually doesn't strike the fish until they approach the spawning grounds. And on the Yukon the place where those fish seem to fall apart is at Rampart, which is below Ft. Yukon, above Tanana and that's -- so there is studies going on right now at the University of Alaska-Fairbanks and I think Washington and they are trying to -- talking about putting another sonar counter in the river to -- because if they get the right number of fish at the river mouth, by the time they get to Eagle, at the Alaska border and Canada, the fish have dropped by a third or so so they're dying somewhere in between, they're not dying on the spawning grounds, they're dying before they get there, which means they didn't spawn. So that is being investigated. I don't think the results are in yet so.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: You good, Mary, did he answer your question?

MS. FREYTAG: So you guys don't work with Canada at all at the spawning grounds at all?

MR. LEAN: Just a disclaimer, it's been 20 years since I worked at Fish and Game.

(Laughter)

MR. LEAN: But, yes, there's a Treaty, and not only does Fish and Game and Canadian DFO, Department of Fisheries and Ocean, and the Federal government all work together trying to figure out king salmon on the Yukon and I'm not really up on that research because it's not what I usually worry about but I want to assure you that there are people looking at it and in what they're most recently concerned about is ichthyophonus in the middle Yukon. So that's my answer.

MS. FREYTAG: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you, Mary. Thank you, Charlie. So, you know, I hear about diseases, like humans, fish have diseases, salmon have diseases, a curiosity of mine is because a human being can have allergies to certain types of food, well, we kind of pick and choose what we eat, right, so -- but those fish that are swimming around in that ocean rearing up in the sea don't get to pick what they get, they're going to get what they can get, period. And if there's a missing link in there somewhere and it's causing these fish to be weakened out there in the ocean in the marine environment to where they can't get what they need like old Vic Olsbury told me, oh, everybody needs their meat, potatoes and vegetables, well, he said, they're not getting them out there, he told me this over 20 years ago. So is that an issue, is that causing a problem, we don't know. Nobody's going to know until they decide to bless us with the information some day but couldn't that be something, you know, who knows.

But, anyway, I -- I guess Tommy wants to make one more comment and then we got to get off of this.

MR. GRAY: Yeah. And I'm sorry but I -- I haven't heard -- you know I suggested OSM do a study and a report and it got real quiet in here. And, anyway, I'd like to throw this to Charlie, is how can this Board help with this situation, is -- is -- are we missing something that we can help the process with?

MR. LEAN: Well, I think you're doing it in bringing heat to the table. The more people complain, the more people pay attention.

So the thing to ask, you know, is if it -- if it's -- any of these big businesses, you know, whether it's the Area M fishery, whether it's hatcheries, whether it's the pollock fishery, all those are big, big entities with lots of money and lots of expertise in addressing sticky issues. And what we, in Western Alaska, lack is -- is money and -- and the only thing we can do is make a big stink and I think that's what we all need to do. You know this used to be the capital of chum salmon. This used to be the place where the best king salmon in the world lived. And Alaska bills itself, you know, as the pristine place where we really take care of our fish and wildlife resources, and all those things are not true anymore, and it's very frustrating. I spent my entire career trying to make it that but it's not true. And it's very frustrating so.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Okay.

MR. SEETOT: I think -- think one -- one example is that Western Science versus TEK. I think I can see in example what -- what I've been taught over the years, argue about the resource it won't be there for you. I talked to one elder before he passed, he said that the fish will be the first to go. When the time comes the fish are the first to go. He had that prior knowledge, I don't know how many thousands of years ago but it was known, you know, to that person, and here we're overlooking, we -- oh, we -- we could solve problems on our own, no we can't. Look at the shape our world is in, it -- it -- no matter how much we try to turn it back we really can't turn it back. Bering Straits, the west side of Diomede, lots of traffic now, going on the Russian side, what invasive species are there, what kind of pollution that they're doing, petroleum, other than under ground, under water noise, pollution, micro plastics in -- in the water, and then we really don't know the sea dynamics of the Bering Straits. They talk about cold bottom moving to the north side, letting the fish go up north, the -- how much acid is in the water bottom, natural mortality of the species. We can pretty much estimate on land the mortality of certain species of animals because we can see what is being unfolding before our eyes. Under water, we just -- we really don't know. We really don't know because we can't -- we just only see the surface.

Back home, a lot of plastic is washing ashore on the shores, it's coming from somewhere. The water quality isn't that great anymore due to water run-off from the Kuzitrin River, stuff like that.

Certain things that we're not being able to do like drink out of Imuruk Basin like we did 30 years ago before the beaver came around, you know, we caught fish in untold numbers because during that time we used the species more and according to TEK, the more you use it, the more it will be there for you. And -- and that's one side I think that is constantly missing, is that, when we try to argue about a point, we don't look at all the issues that arise and we just focus on one thing and we start blaming this and that.

So water pollution.

And then it -- it just -- everything is going at a face pace that we're not really up to speed on that. And so our fishermen are able to catch large numbers because of modified gear or new modern gear that -- that can pretty much wipe out a species. But that's one of the things that -- I live right along the coastline, I -- we try to be good stewards to the salmon that pass through there, but other than that that's all we can do because unforeseen circumstances come into play. Winds from the south bring pollution, the winds from the south bring erosion and with that erosion might be something uncovered from long ago, that's constantly on our mind, constantly on my mind. It might not be for those that are -- that think that they're Native but are not -- did not receive that instruction from early on from the elders and elders before us. Because I grew up in a strict family -- family environment where we're doing this and that. We were told not to do this and that, we were told to do this and -- and many of the things that I kind of forgot because I had my own agenda in the younger days and I didn't quite process all that information correctly. Now I'm trying to place catch up and most of that information that I should have presented 30 years ago, you know, oh, maybe I think it's this or that.

But it's pretty much like the caribou, moose situation ecosystem here, you have to look at what's underneath and all we can see is just the top and the water -- so much of our planet but I'm seeing

things into play, you know, that I was told to be cautious about.

So that's all I got, thank you.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you, Elmer. I think like I said I think we'll turn this on there's something else, but all I know is there's good, great salmon runs up north of us and there's great sockeye runs in Bristol Bay but in the middle, Norton Sound, Yukon and Kuskokwim something's really wrong out there and I sure would like to find a way to get to it and I've told you what I think and I'm not going to change what way I think how we could get there and it would be lot sooner, five years. Bureaucracy, we got to elect people to go out there and fight for us because the people that are there now have not done it. I brought Mike Dunleavy to a hatchery out here when he was a Senator and was willing to put money there but he said your Senator and your Representative have to ask for it, we have the control over that and we'll send it your way. It didn't happen. So I heard my Senator tell me in Unalakleet during a chum salmon summit, Bethel people were there, and everybody was there and the old -- Jim, you were there, we have to do something, he was dancing up and down yelling at AYK, Director Jon Lindermann, and everybody else in the room, we have to do something or our children and our grandchildren are going to blame us for what's going on and what's happening.

So bureaucracy, it's one way to do it but it's going to take a long time. A simple project of running a hatchery which has proven itself above the Arctic Circle certainly could work here.

But, anyway, I've said enough and I think we've been killing this one sweetly, and, Charlie, thank you. Okay, we're done with that.

Where are we at?

Somebody here with moose? Poor gal, she knows more about fish than she knows about moose now.

Yes. Sara Germain, you have the floor.

MS. GERMAIN: Okay, thank you, Mr.

Chair. Good afternoon and hello to the Council members as well. It's been awhile since I've been before you and I see a couple of new faces so I figured I'd reintroduce myself. My name is Sara Germain. I have moved into the Area Biologist position exactly a year ago. Bill Dunker left us for Kodiak and so now I've moved into his position and Alicia Carson is here with me, she's moved into the Assistant Area Biologist position coming to us from King Salmon most recently.

So I wanted to talk to you guys quickly about a moose update. We just finished our survey maybe five days ago so this is kind of breaking news to share with you today and then a couple of other things on moose and muskox. I'll stop after moose and feel free to ask me questions and then move on to muskox.

So, yeah, we completed our survey out in Game Management Units 22D and E and I think Nissa handed out a flier with a map of where that is and a little bit of information for you guys to look at. But, yeah, it was kind of a cooperative effort between Fish and Game, Park Service and BLM, and what we ended up seeing is about exactly the same as we did back when we did the survey last in 2020 so things look pretty stable up north which is kind of what we expected. And that's the most recent abundance survey that we've done. Next year we're going to focus on muskox instead of moose. So taking a year off from moose.

Otherwise, back in the fall we did a composition survey in the same area, Units 22D and E in November and we ended up seeing bull/cow ratios which were pretty much the same as what we'd seen the last time we'd gotten in the area. So for Unit 22D and the Kuzitrin River we saw 28 bulls per 100 cows and 22D Remainder, which is in the American and Agiapuk Rivers, that was still pretty low at 23 bulls per 100 cows and in 22E we found 30 bulls per 100 cows. So 30 bulls per 2100 cows is kind of what we aim for as a minimum when deciding our harvest rates and so 22D Remainder is still pretty low so still trying to figure out what's going on in that neck of the woods but, yeah, that is our composition survey.

And, otherwise, I wanted to quickly touch on some research projects that we've got going on with moose. So we have been surveying a sample of collared moose since 2020 looking at their calving

rates and twinning rates to kind of get a better idea of what the reproduction looks like for moose in -- specifically in Game Management Units 22C around here and in 22D. So we've been doing that for three years now. And then last summer we just started a calf collaring study, which is my graduate research project and we just did that last summer and we're going to do another year of that for two years total and then I've attached a graph here showing the twinning rates. So basically what that means is everything looks pretty good. They've got really high calving and twinning rates for our area. And then, yeah, the calving mortality stuff should conclude next year and I should have the report next time -- I guess next year, what the mortality looks like.

And then the only other thing going on with moose this year, Alicia and I are hoping to do a browse survey in the Unalakleet area just to get a better idea of what the habitat looks like out there. So we're hoping to do a browse survey as soon as the weather clears up down there and then next year we may weigh short yearlings just to get a better idea of how they're doing and that's pretty much it for moose and so I'll stop there for questions.

Yes.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you, Sara. You mentioned browse and so you're doing a study on browse. What do fires do for browse?

MS. GERMAIN: Yeah, so generally in the forested areas I think when fires move through it's kind of a 10 year period that new growth moves through and it produces some pretty good moose habitat so fires can be good for moose sometimes.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Yeah, and that's what I heard. Thank you. I heard that years ago at a Board of Game meeting. I guess I asked the question then. But I just wanted to make sure I was on the same as there. So browse is created by burn just like people burning their yards every spring, they got nice grass growing all summer long, uh, you see that in Unalakleet every year.

Okay, so anybody else, any questions about moose for Sara. Tommy, go ahead, you're next.

MR. HUNT: Yes.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Okay, him first, old guy, and you're next, young guy.

MR. GRAY: Your goal, 23 bulls to 100 cows in D Remainder, 28 bulls to 100 cows in the rest of D, are we going to see changes in harvestable surplus or what's your plans here? And then the other question I have in those two sections, what kind of numbers do we have for cows? I mean you say 23 bulls, 100 cows, is there 5,000 cows in there or 200 cows? What -- what are we talking about? But more importantly, you know, if I was a biologist and saw 23 bulls to 100 cows, I would say, oh, we got to slow down, or maybe they're migrating, who knows, you know, the remainder is not that big of an area. And I do know at AC meetings we talked about migrating animals in and out of that area, so this 23 number, are there some hidden issues here?

MS. GERMAIN: Through the Chair, yeah, good questions, Tom. As far as the number of cows I'd have to do some weird math to figure that one out specifically to get from there from the 1,900 moose that we estimate in that 22D and E combined area.

But as far as differences in harvest strategy, so that 22D Remainder, we already closed it down and added it to -- well, it's not -- closed down for non-residents but for residents it became part of the RM8440 area and it was managed by a quota beginning in 2020 so our quota has been just 17 bulls since then and that was kind of the reduced response -- reduction in harvest and response to that low bull/cow ratio so it's been, I guess, three years since we did the composition survey before this one we just did in 2022 and numbers haven't changed so you may see even fewer moose being harvested than the 17 that we've got in that area but haven't had any real concrete conversations about that yet. But as far as the rest of the area, in 22D Kuzitrin, I think the reason why that kind of dipped a little bit is a really high harvest this year. We went above the quota which of like 27 moose, bulls, and ended up harvesting somewhere around 38 bulls. I guess learning -- this is my first year managing the hunt by myself and I just under anticipated the hunting force of folks in Kuzitrin, you know, usually the season goes for four days and this

year it kind of seemed like it should have been closed in two so it's kind of going the way of 22C these days. It seems like hunters are just getting better and better at harvesting moose and faster at getting them in those two days. So, yeah, I guess nothing should change as far as quotas for 22D Kuzitrin. And then in 22E in response to that, the fact that it's now right at our threshold for 30 bulls per 100 cows, we did reduce the non-resident number of draw permits that we issue. It used to be 10 and now it's five starting this fall and the next so.

MR. GRAY: So that was going to be my next question, is, where is non-residents going to go because, you know, 30 bulls to 100 cows is not a good number to sit and tell us. If it was 40 bulls to 100 cows I think all of us would do backflips here. But, you know, that's -- that's a tough, tough number.

So five bull -- so you're going to keep it on the books, the non-resident hunt for the time being, I mean that -- I mean if it's going to change next year that's a two year cycle, is that, so we've got -- we've got five bulls for non-residents for the next three years.

MS. GERMAIN: (Nods affirmatively)

MR. GRAY: Okay. I mean you got this year and it's got to pass so that would be at least three years.

MS. GERMAIN: (Nods affirmatively)

MR. GRAY: Yeah, okay. Well, a lot of people are watching us and everybody is after a moose and you guys are going to get criticized for lowering numbers but you got to remember you're managing a resource and that resource is a whole lot more important than my freezer, so, good luck.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: So these permits, these five permits, non -- that's -- is that dealing with some of the guides up there?

MS. GERMAIN: (Nods affirmatively)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Yeah, because I've been over there and seen a lot of activity over there.

Okay, so we got Raymond. Thank you.

Sorry, Raymond, you were supposed to go after Tommy.

MR. HUNT: So you're saying that you're going to go to Unalakleet next, I'm wondering would it be possible -- I'm kind of curious of Shaktoolik's numbers now, you know, I live there and I'm a hunter there and see if it's possible to -- to count our bulls and cows there. And is this a -- is this a yearly thing or every two years that you guys survey or?

MS. GERMAIN: So through the Chair, yeah, thank you. We usually do them every three years but we've changed to a four year cycle just so we don't have both a muskox and a moose survey in the same year. It was just too hard to get both done. And Shaktoolik area, I think that isn't a part of our schedule, it's more of an extra credit, or bonus area if we do get the weather but it seems like since I've been here anyway, the weather has just been, you know, so poor that when we do the Unalakleet area it's all we can do to finish by the end of March when the snow is starting to melt and moose are just harder to see. So Unalakleet usually is the priority, that drainage, 22A Central, but then if the weather were to work out we would try to do what's called a minimum count where we'd just see like how many moose are in that area. And then in this fall there is a chance that -- we don't have any surveys planned so I'm hoping if the weather looks good, it's kind of on my wish list to get into the Shaktoolik area as well as the Koyuk Drainage and look at bulls and kind of report back so.

MR. HUNT: And were you going to go over muskox next?

MS. GERMAIN: (Nods affirmatively)

MR. HUNT: Okay. I'll ask a question then for that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you, Raymond. Of those permits that are up there, I think that's 22E, what kind of size of animal are they taking out of there, are they taking out some pretty big breeders, and that's what I kind of think I see on Facebook every now and then, somebody will show it off.

MS. GERMAIN: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Doesn't that kind of put a dent in our breeding stock a little bit?

MS. GERMAIN: Well, they have an antler restriction so it's 50 inches on -- 50 inch spread or four or more brow tines on each side so potentially.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you. Anybody.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: On the phone.

MR. KIRK: Mr. Chair, Ron Kirk, Stebbins.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Go ahead.

MR. KIRK: I've been asking this for years, you know, you've been doing moose surveys up that way and every year I ask, are you going to do any moose counting in the remainder of 22A from -- towards Pikmiktalik drainage, because with all these wildfires we've been getting a lot of moose and I'm curious to see what our moose count is in 22 -- the remainder of 22A from Golsovia to Pikmiktalik River. We've been seeing moose off and on, even this past winter, so I'm wondering what our count is in that area. I've been asking that for years, since I've been on this board and you guys haven't been responding or making an effort to do a moose count in our drainage, of Pikmiktalik River and Nunanakok (ph) River. There's a -- there's a valley that goes up from Nunanakok River, we call (In Native) and that -- that valley there there's an abundance of moose there and I'm wondering what the count is.

Thank you, through the Chair.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you, Ron. Go ahead.

MS. GERMAIN: Yeah, through the Chair. Thank you, Ron, for that question. Yeah, I think the last time we were in that neck of the woods was back when Letty was working with Fish and Game and was able

to do a spring recruitment survey back in 2018, somewhere around there. But, yeah, it has been awhile. I wish that we could get down there. But, again, same as Shaktoolik, seems like our window to get down and survey moose is so short these last few winters that we really only get like a few days of flying and it is just hard to get even the Unalakleet drainage done with the short window and, of course, I would like to get in there, it's just a matter of getting the weather window and the pilots on the hook and being able to get it done. But, yeah, again, our next survey -- the next time we're going to do the abundance survey for moose in 22A, that Unalakleet drainage, is 2024, so -- I'm sorry, that would be 2025, the spring of 2025 so maybe if things were to work perfectly and we were to get the survey done right away and we had some time, of course, we would love to get into that Shaktoolik and kind of south of the Golsovia and your neck of the woods to count moose but I guess we'll see what the weather does. It usually doesn't cooperate with us.

MR. KIRK: I got the tail end of your report, I got cut off somehow so I had to redial in. This is Ron Kirk again from Stebbins. Did you say you were going to do the Shaktoolik area then our area if you have time or what was your response?

MS. GERMAIN: Through the Chair, yeah, we -- I was saying that both the Shaktoolik, that 22A north and that 22A Remainder, which is down by you Ron, we -- that is kind of like a bonus area if the weather is perfect and we'd get the Unalakleet survey done right away but usually the weather does not cooperate for us to even be able to get the Unalakleet drainage done in time but, yeah, so not sure when we're getting down there next. But Unalakleet is scheduled for spring of 2025.

MR. KIRK: Okay. And I'm curious because with all these wildfires happening down south I'm pretty sure the moose are being pushed up into our area and I'm wondering -- I've been wondering what our count is in this area. I sure would like you guys to make an effort to come down to our remainder of 22A and do a moose survey and count and have that available for our people in this area because we're curious, too, of what stock we have in our area.

Thank you, through the Chair.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you for your questions, Ron.

Mary, go ahead.

MS. FREYTAG: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. I see that you done the survey in March, that's springtime. Falltime is when the rutting season and they start mating and stuff, that's when they all congregate. Isn't that a better time to do a survey than in March when they're all spread out and all over the creation. I mean just a suggestion or a comment.

Thank you.

MS. GERMAIN: Yeah, through the Chair. Thank you, Mary, for that. We do get our bull/cow ratios in the falltime when they are aggregated in those like post-rutting clusters like you're saying but the spring surveys, everywhere else in the state it seems like does surveys in the fall but we just have such poor snow conditions, like in Unalakleet, Alicia and I were there, I believe, in December, and there was just not a lot of snow yet and it makes it really hard for us to be able to see moose when we're looking through like just patches of brown and tussock so generally we get our bull/cow ratios during those composition surveys during the fall and then we do the abundance in the spring when the snow is theoretically deep enough to push them into the drainages and the main river so it's much quicker for us to count them, but thank you for that.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: You got it, thanks.

MS. FREYTAG: Thank you. That was just a suggestion since I had the benefit of witnessing 40 bull moose in the falltime in one area, in one sitting. It was quite the scene. So just a suggestion I wanted to make on the surveys, you know, take the surveys when they're all congregating together and coming together.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thanks for your comments and suggestion, Mary.

Anybody else. Any questions of Sara.

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Okay, Tommy.

MR. GRAY: So I'm sitting here crunching numbers and I caught 1,900 moose in D and E, and I'm -- I came up with about 500 bulls, am I in the ball park or, I'm sorry, 402 bulls, am I close to being on track or no?

MS. GERMAIN: Through the Chair. I may -- I guess if you just did it on your calculator maybe but we -- I just got these numbers yesterday at 3:00 p.m., and I haven't been able to like do anything, yeah.

MR. GRAY: So what I did was I took all your so many bulls to cows and crunched it and, anyway, I'm thinking about this non-resident hunt up there and -- and want to make sure that we're not overstepping by taking away from the non-resident hunters and, believe me, I'm first one to cry subsistence but when we're talking almost 2,000 moose and 400 animals, you know, I think we're being very conservative at five animals. So that being said, the -- the other point that I want to make is that in the springtime all the animals are coming out of the trees and I never hear of surveys like in April, or in May, but I counted on a hillside one time 106 moose in about a mile circle and I couldn't figure out -- I thought, gosh, caribou are coming, I got to get my reindeer out of here and I went and looked at it and here it was a burn and all those moose just were on this old burn, which amazed me. So -- and, you know, as a guide, bear -- moose aren't going to stick around the trees too much in the deep snow when the bears are coming out. They're on the creeks and rivers where they're pretty stable walking. So, you know, I sympathize with Raymond Hunt because he's asking to be -- his area be justified or whatever, that his hunt is going good. You know these guys have open registration and they can take 200 moose out of there if they want to but hopefully you guys are tracking that and making sure that it's not over hunted, so to speak.

But, anyway, there's more to the story and I just wanted to touch on his request because it could go sideways on you.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Anybody else.

0101

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Sara, is that it?

MS. GERMAIN: Oh, yeah, through the Chair. I was just going to add to Tom's comment.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: I was just trying to wake you up.

MS. GERMAIN: Oh, I look -- oh, I'm not done.

(Laughter)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: You have the floor yet.

MS. GERMAIN: Yeah, I was just going to say as far as reducing that non-resident harvest, that was -- we had kind of accumulated all of the resident data and then harvest from, yeah, it just ended up being too high a harvest rate for that neck of the woods and that's kind of the justification for reducing the number of permits that were going to non-residents in 22E because they are just so successful with those hunts and, yeah, whereas maybe resident numbers fluctuate you are always going to see 10 come out of there so that's the -- kind of what we did in an effort to slow that bull/cow ratio from going down further and we'll see how it goes.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: You can eliminate all five of them.

(Laughter)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Okay, so you've got muskox next right.

MS. GERMAIN: Yeah.

(Coughing)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Bless you.

MS. GERMAIN: Okay. So through the Chair, just transitioning over to muskox. We really don't have a whole lot new items to update so I just

kind of figured I'd reiterate the last survey that we did which was back in 2021 just to inform those wildlife closure reviews that we're going to next.

So the last time that a population abundance survey and composition survey was done was 2021 and the results of the abundance survey was that there is an estimated 2,071 muskox throughout the Seward Peninsula. And just to translate that it just means that it's been stable since, gosh, 2012 now, 10 years. So next year, like I was saying earlier we're hoping to get back and do another abundance survey for that and then the composition survey, again things seem generally stable with that. So the bull/cow ratio -- or the mature bull to cow ratio for the muskox survey was estimated to be 38 mature bulls per 100 cows and our management goal is 40 mature bulls per 100 cows so pretty much right where we want them. At our current harvest rates everything stayed the same for the most part. So that is the composition and abundance survey.

And otherwise the harvest, I just wanted to quickly show that, we generally issue 45 to 50 permits every year and the most recent data we have completed is from 2021 so 32 of those permits were filled for a hunter success rate of 68 percent.

And I guess the only other thing to talk about with muskox is there's a research project going on by our co-worker Brinn Phar and she's doing a calf mortality study and that's been going on for several years now and should be concluding this year and hopefully she's going to have an update for everybody next year, the year after that with everything she's found.

So that's it for muskox and if you guys got questions.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you, Sara. Mr. Gray has a question or a comment.

MR. GRAY: So you -- you listed 47 permits issued, 32 permits filled, is this both State and Federal or is this just.....

MS. GERMAIN: (Nods affirmatively)

MR. GRAY: It's both State and Federal?

MS. GERMAIN: (Nods affirmatively)

MR. GRAY: Okay. Yeah. And I understand -- I understand that you have increased the number of permits around Nome. Did you increase it by much or what's the story, and are you going to shut it down early like you did bear hunting once you meet a certain quota?

MS. GERMAIN: Through the Chair. So, yes, in 22C we did increase the number of permits so int he past years we had five permits for TX095, the inner-Nome area, and four permits for the outer Nome area for a total of nine permits for 22C and starting this regulatory year we have gone up to 15 muskox, not just bulls so 15 muskox for that inner-Nome area and 15 muskox for the outer Nome area and, yes, we will have a quota on cows so up to five cows may be taken per TX095/096 and we'll emergency order the season closed once we hit those five cows but the bull season would remain open so you could still hunt a bull, but the cows might be a shorter season, depending on how many people end up harvesting.

MR. GRAY: So you went from nine to what?

MS. GERMAIN: To 30.

MR. GRAY: Nine and something, I caught 15 and what.....

MS. GERMAIN: Sorry, that was confusing. Five and four to 30 total, 15 and 15, does that make sense?

MR. GRAY: Nine -- from nine in both areas to 30?

MS. GERMAIN: (Nods affirmatively)

MR. GRAY: But you're going to keep the bulls open?

MS. GERMAIN: (Nods affirmatively)

MR. GRAY: And the rest of the region we're just on the same path we've been?

MS. GERMAIN: (Nods affirmatively)

MR. GRAY: Okay. And then, you know, it looks, to me, this is kind of interesting because for 10 years the herd hasn't grown, so to speak, and, you know, the Seward Peninsula has a lot more wolves than we had 10 years ago, you know, depends who you talk to, the bear population is such as it is, but, you know, my -- I know this herd has expanded. I mean you're seeing animals a long ways from here and our numbers, in a sense, have stayed the same, but would you say that the herd has actually increased in expansion it's taking in a bigger area, so we're staying status quo? Am I making sense?

MS. GERMAIN: Yeah, through the Chair. I see what you mean. They have expanded their range but we do survey that whole area for the census and you can kind of see it, it's kind of a poor quality graph, but we do look at the -- I guess the inner -- gosh, the historical area I guess is what it would be called, if I could show you a map, and then the expanded area includes Unalakleet, Shaktoolik and now even parts of what's called Game Management Unit 21Delta, but, yeah, they have expanded the range but the numbers overall have stayed the same from what we've seen. But every time that we see muskox kind of outside of our survey area we try to expand it to include that but like you were saying, every time we fly it's like, oh, shoot, there are muskox even south of what we just added on so, yeah.

MR. GRAY: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Raymond.

MR. HUNT: So on the survey of the muskox, I think really suggest open, you know, eyes on Shaktoolik, because over the past few years we never had muskox but I know there's like three different herds and they grow and obviously you can see like more than half of them are young, you know, babies that -- calves that grow and that's obvious that the herds are expanding and but like I said there's like, I know three different areas of Shaktoolik, up river from Shaktoolik and then between Shaktoolik and Unalakleet foothills we call it, but that area, that herd has grown a lot too, I know over 30 or so. But I think eyes need to be opened, or for Shaktoolik-wise. And

so, you know, I'm a hunter and I don't -- I've never hunted muskox before but I think, you know, wanted to try to help, you know, Shaktoolik muskox has grown and then we had a chance to see what kind of damage they do to the land and the -- they did a lot to our salmon grounds this past summer, or a different herd that we didn't know, came, and -- but, yeah, trying to maintain, manage, you know, their population because it's grown quick for Shaktoolik.

And I don't know, how are the permits -- how are they, let's say I want to get one, how do I get one, or is it chosen, is it picked or what?

MS. GERMAIN: Yeah, through the Chair. Thank you, Raymond, that's a great question. So a hunt did just open up in 22A a couple years ago and that includes just the whole game -- Shaktoolik, Unalakleet, down to St. Michael and Stebbins and I guess I could try to explain the Tier II system but maybe off the record to you, but basically you apply in November and December and it is like -- the applications get ranked and the highest scores get permits. So like you were saying someone from Shaktoolik has gotten a permit and you, absolutely, could as well but we could talk about it a little bit more and we will try and get out to that neck of the woods this fall and help people apply and hopefully get muskox tags because there are nine available for that whole 22A area. So, yeah.

MR. HUNT: Okay, yeah, thank you. Because I -- you know, been thinking about that, but I think I need to get into that though because our numbers, you know, or Shaktoolik's numbers has grown, you know, tremendously over the past few years and it's like kind of getting out of hand now. And like I said we got to see what kind of damage that they do with -- to our land -- or, you know, it happened to our salmonberries unfortunately and, yeah, I just want to check up on that try to maintain, you know, because it's going pretty crazy with the muskox.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: You're done, Raymond.

MR. HUNT: Yeah.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Okay, thank you.

Tommy.

MR. GRAY: Okay, I'm back again, sorry. The State program, you know, and the State, Federal I really like the Federal program. I really like it. I've been involved in this hunt since it started. And when the State decided we're going to have you guys cut the antlers and send me the antlers, for what? I mean back in the day they justified this by we're going to take the trophy value away from the animal. Get real. It's a subsistence hunter, it's a subsistence hunt, it's us guys that are out there hunting. And, you know, my son is carving ivory -- or not ivory, muskox handles out of this thing, you're taking away from our people for a trophy value, that's a guide issue. That's where that all started. And -- and I just struggle with it, I do. And, you know, you're going to say well go put a proposal in and change it, well, you guys started this can of worms, you fix it. You know I'm not agreeable to change this can of worms because it's -- it's not going to fly unless you guys support it and if you guys don't support it it'll die. I can put proposal after proposal and it don't matter. But I do have -- it just -- I got drawn for a permit and -- for next year and I'm going to put in for a Federal one, and if I get a Federal one, shoot I'm going to drop that State one in a heartbeat. So here we go now, we've got a State permit that's out there that should be reassigned but I don't think you guys will reassign it, it just gets dropped and that's not fair to the system either.

So, anyway, I'm sorry, I just -- some things are not right.

This young lady's getting an education.

(Laughter)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Sara. Sara, he's made out of glass, you can throw rocks at him.

(Laughter)

MS. GERMAIN: I knew about you before you even came in the office.

(Laughter)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Elmer, go ahead.

MR. SEETOT: Just a comment to Raymond. Welcome to the muskox club.

(Laughter)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Okay, where are we at here. Anybody online, muskox.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Hearing none, I think we're done.

MR. GRAY: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: We're going to have a break here because people got to set up a camera or do a presentation or some sort of thing.

(Off record)

(On record)

MS. PILCHER: Actually real quick. Nissa Pilcher for the record. Just to let everybody know that's online, we did have Mary and Martin come in after lunch, they've been here the whole time, I forgot to give a rundown after we came back on the record so we do have everyone other than Deahl on.

So, Joel, I guess we'll turn it over to you.

MR. GARLICHMILLER: Okay, well, thank you very much for inviting me to this meeting. Nissa, I'll just check briefly, I'm -- if you have my slides up and are able to help me.

MS. PILCHER: Yep, they are up and Brian is ready whenever you say next slide, or you may do it earlier, he's warned.

MR. GARLICHMILLER: Okay. Okay, well, good afternoon everyone. My name is Joel GarlichMiller. I'm a walrus biologist. I work for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Marine Mammals Management. And I've been a walrus researcher manager for the past 30 years. I've had the opportunity to work with subsistence walrus hunters

from Arctic Canada, Russia, and Alaska, and most everything I know about walruses I've learned from that.

So I'm currently working primarily with the Eskimo Walrus Commission based in Nome on the co-management of the subsistence use of walruses in Alaska. So today I thought I'd give you a brief overview of some of the information on current status and likely future trends of the Pacific walrus population and a brief update on some of our planned walrus co-management projects for this coming year.

Next slide, please, which should be titled current status and future trends of Pacific walrus population.

So back in 2012 the Fish and Wildlife Service was petitioned to list walruses under the Endangered Species Act due to threats associated with sea ice loss across the Bering and Chuckchi Seas. In response we conducted a species status assessment which examined the current status and future threats to the Pacific walrus population to try to predict what impacts population stressors might have on the population over time. Major findings of the analysis included that the Pacific walrus population is relatively large and healthy at the present time. Subsistence hunting is occurring at sustainable levels and changing sea ice conditions do not appear to be significantly impacting reproductive rates or growth so far.

Now, the future of the population is a lot less certain, we see a lot of ecological changes occurring and stresses associated with changing sea ice habitat are expected to increase in the future and eventually result in a population decline but we don't really have enough information. There's quite a bit of uncertainty about how soon or how much the population will decline.

I think for me the most importantly in our analysis is that we identified several things that we can do as a society can do to help walruses cope with ongoing and projected environmental changes that could help preserve walruses for future generations.

Ultimately the analysis we conducted

supported a decision not to list the walruses under the Endangered Species Act at the present time but in full disclosure that decision is being challenged in court and it sounds like we're expecting that we might have to prepare a new analysis in the near future.

So next slide, please, and this is a graph titled walrus population trends.

So for our ESA we have information collected from all the previous population surveys, and available information on walrus reproductive rates and survival as well as historical harvest patterns in the United States and Russia to describe population trends up to about 2015. The data analysis suggests that the walrus population experienced a decline in the 1980s, the 1990s associated with high harvest rates in the U.S. and Russia and relatively low reproductive and survival rates for those -- for that time period. But the population appears to have stabilized in the late 2010s. Our most recent data suggests that calf production and survival rates have improved since the 2000s and it's notable that harvest levels in the U.S. and Russia are also much lower today than they were back in the '80s and '90s.

Next slide, please, titled, Pacific walrus abundance.

Although the model I just described talks about population trends to about 2015, it doesn't really tell us how many walruses are currently out there. So in -- starting in 2013 we began a project to estimate the size of the Pacific walrus population using a technique known as mark/recapture, mark and recapture. So this approach involves collecting large numbers of skin, biopsy samples from free-ranging walruses. We use cross bows outfitted with black (indiscernible). Those of you familiar with detective stories know that all of us and every animal has a unique genetic identity coded in their DNA and we can extract and analyze this DNA to identify individual animals, and based on the number of individuals we captured every year we were able to estimate population size. So we just published a paper with that new population estimate. We collected and analyzed more -- or samples from more than 8,000 individual walruses and this -- we were able to populate estimate of approximately 257,000 walruses. There's still quite a

bit of uncertainty around that estimate but it's notable that it is higher than our previous 2006 estimate of 126,000 animals.

Next slide, titled, next generation of walrus population surveys, population studies.

So we are currently planning another series of walrus population surveys. We hope to conduct three more annual walrus research cruises in the Chuckchi Sea, Bering Sea, possibly starting in June of 2023. We hope to collect about 1,800 genetic biopsy samples per year using crossbows. We will also be collecting information about the age and gender structure of the population using visual observations.

Next slide, partnership with Alaska Native communities.

So during our previous walrus studies, Alaska Native walrus hunters joined us and they provided invaluable guidance and walrus distributions, behavior, sea ice conditions, and their participation was very crucial to the success of the mission. This year, three subsistence walrus hunting captains from St. Lawrence will be joining our field team working alongside our Fish and Wildlife Service biologists on the skiff to sample walruses. As with our previous survey efforts we plan to maintain close contact with coastal communities during the survey effort and coordinate daily with community contacts if we want or need to approach within 15 nautical miles of the village. We are very sensitive to concerns about any potential conflicts with subsistence hunting activities.

Okay, next slide, please, future outlook for walrus.

So looking to the future there's obviously some very significant environmental changes occurring in the Bering and Chuckchi Seas that over time are expected to influence walrus distribution and abundance. By mid-century winter sea ice across the Bering Sea is expected to be greatly reduced and it's quite possible that areas of current winter and spring abundance in the Bering Strait region and below St. Lawrence Island may move north over to areas of heavier ice over time. Potentially even to areas north of the

Strait. There's also already some acoustic evidence of walruses overwintering up in the Chuckchi Sea. Now, historically most of the population spent -- of walrus spend the summer months in broken ice habitats in the Chukchi Sea but as you likely know in recent years we've seen summer sea ice routinely retreat beyond the shallow Continental Shelf waters will all recede forcing walrus to relocate to coastal areas to rest and forage from land. The increased use of coastal walrus, it may have population consequences over time. Walruses that haulout, appear to be spending more energy traveling to find food sources and this could potentially lead to less energy for reproduction. The most immediate concern is sources of disturbances which are much greater at coastal haulouts than in off shore ice habitats and because the walruses haulout in tight -- in large tight groups they could lead to trampling events and trampling mortalities. Particularly small calves, they're vulnerable. And the population models we've looked at suggest that walrus population can be very sensitive to even small changes in calf survival. So these are some -- certainly some conservation concerns.

So t he next slide is adapting to climate change.

I've given you kind of a bleak outlook but I think it's really important to note that the future of the walrus population has not yet been written and there are, indeed, some things, you know, we can do and should figure out how to do to help walrus with changing habitats and preserve them for future generations. So as walruses become more dependent of coastal areas and human activity and Arctic (indiscernible) we'll need to work hard to minimize disturbances at haulouts the best we can. Mortalities at coastal haulouts is a very real management concern but it has a lot of potential for mitigation, or correction. We've seen in recent years that some number of walruses dying from disturbances at coastal haulouts, sometimes even exceeds the number of walruses harvested by subsistence hunters so, you know, reducing unnecessary mortality of calves is going to be crucial to keeping the walrus population healthy into the future. If and when the population starts to decline due to environmental conditions, we, managers, subsistence users need to work very closely together to ensure that harvest levels continue to remain

sustainable and obviously the best normal way for this to succeed will be working through co-management structures.

So I guess my outlook is as the climate stressors increase, co-management efforts are going to be increasingly important for the future of the species.

The next slide is a picture of a large coastal walrus haulout in the Chuckchi Sea village of Bankorion and I'd just like to say there are many reasons for optimism. We've seen some very effective efforts to minimize disturbance related stampedes at coastal haulouts occurring very much at the local level. Coastal communities both in Alaska and in Chukotka (ph) are developing local management programs to help minimize impacts. These efforts are resulting in some solid and positive conservation metrics including -- efforts have included self-imposed hunting restrictions for walruses at the haulouts, rerouting aircraft supply flights away from the haulouts and developing viewing guidelines for visitors to reduce unnecessary trampling events. Here in Alaska, the Native Village of Point Lay has taken on a very active and effective role in the protection and stewardship of an enormous walrus haulout which is has formed in front of their communities in recent years. They actively are involved in the management and protection of that haulout from disturbances and are partnering with Eskimo Walrus Commission and Fish and Wildlife Service on walrus research and management at that site.

The next slide is keeping walrus harvest sustainable in the future.

I know it's a sensitive topic but it's one that -- that we're having fruitful conversations on. Pacific walrus have been harvested by subsistence hunters, as you know, for many thousands of years and in many coastal villages, both here in Alaska and Russia, they're very important to the economy and the culture of those communities. We've seen harvest levels fluctuate from about 2,000 to about 16,000 animals per year over the past 60 years. Recent harvest levels, as I mentioned earlier, are much lower than some of these historical highs. I think, in part, due to the cessation of commercial hunting in Russia starting about the mid-1990s and we've also seen

steadily declining harvest rates in Alaska, this, I think, is primarily, as I understand it from hunters, due to lost opportunity because of unstable ice. In recent years total harvest removal, you know, in the United States and Russia, combined, have averaged under 4,000 walrus per year. This represents less than two percent of our current population estimate and is a harvest rate that we consider sustainable.

Next slide, and that's strengthening walrus harvest management.

So to maintain sustainable harvest in the future we'll need to, you know, work to try to keep total harvest levels in the U.S. and Russia below a safe biological removal level and this is going to depend on good population and harvest monitoring data to do that. We have always -- we continue to work on strengthening co-management structures and relationships. We work very closely and collaboratively with the EWC and I think we're making very good efforts there. We're trying to work to develop a shared management vision and shared decisionmaking for all of our decisions. It's important, I think, to point out to this group, in case you didn't know that the Fish and Wildlife Service, or the government, does not have any authority or plans to regulate the size or composition of the subsistence walrus harvest in Alaska, but that the communities certainly do.

Public outreach is another point I put on the slide.

There's been one issue that has -- a lot of walrus hunters in Alaska are facing, there's been a growing number of restrictions on the sale of walrus ivory products online, there's even some State bans that have popped up, you know, due to the misguided belief that walrus hunting is not sustainable. And so, you know, the Eskimo Walrus Commission and others face the challenge of trying to educate the public to try and preserve markets for ivory products.

The Marine Mammal Protection Act is what sort of guides our management activities and it provides -- it urges co-management of subsistence use of walruses and so that co-management activities for

walrus are carried out jointly by Fish and Wildlife Service and Eskimo Walrus Commission, so we have laid out sort of a shared vision for walrus co-management through a series of meetings and our co-management mutual -- co-management goals include maintaining healthy walrus population, providing for sustainable subsistence uses of walruses and preserving walrus subsistence culture now and into the future. There's not much we can do to reverse the effects of climate change but we're trying to work together through a co-management framework to help walrus adapt to changing habitats. So key components of our co-management framework include, you know, coming up with a shared management vision and shared decisionmaking authority for those decisions, relying on good and accurate population and harvest data to inform those harvest management decisions and we need to inform and involve subsistence hunters broadly across rural Alaska on walrus management activities and incorporate the incredible knowledge base of subsistence users in our management efforts.

So next slide, self regulation of walrus harvest in Alaska.

Some of you may be aware of the efforts by the tribal governments of Gambell and Savoonga on St. Lawrence Island to develop, or they actually resurrected old ones but they tried to reestablish tribal marine mammal hunting ordinances including establishment of trip limits for walrus hunting and so this has been a really proactive effort on their part and -- and may provide a potential model for establishing tribally based harvest management systems across the rest of the state at some point in the future. In 2019 we participated in a joint meeting of the Gambell and Savoonga Marine Mammal Advisory Councils, and those are the traditional councils that oversee the hunting ordinances and we talked about some of the challenges faced by the communities in developing and standing up the ordinances so we just received some funding this year to support another joint meeting and we're -- they want to develop a business plan and we're trying to find out how the Eskimo Walrus Commission and Fish and Wildlife Service can help with technical, logistical or financial support.

Next slide, please. I'm almost done.

The next slide is walrus harvest assessment.

So one of the priorities identified by our co-management partners at some of these recent meetings is the need for accurate population and harvest information to track the status of the population and provide good information to inform tribal hunting ordinances. The good news is that we have some breathing room. The recent population studies suggest that walrus population is larger than expected and harvest levels appear to be well within sustainable range so we have some breathing room to figure out a good strategy before we go into any sort of crises mode. And population models can be a really useful tool for this purpose, for informing harvest management strategies. And they also are able to -- may be helpful to win the battle for ivory bans by demonstrating that current harvest levels is being carried out in a responsible and sustainable way. So we are in the process of building a population model based on the best available information about walrus population and its resiliency to sea ice loss and disturbances. The model is intended to be developed as a flexible tool, it could be used to evaluate various harvest patterns for walruses in a changing environment.

Next slide. Incorporating indigenous knowledge.

We wanted to make sure that the walrus harvest assessment model includes both Western Science and indigenous knowledge. There are many, many gaps in Western Science about walrus life history and things like that that the seasoned walrus experts around the state could help us fulfill. The Eskimo Walrus Commission is encouraged to incorporate indigenous knowledge directly into the model and we're in the process of consulting with the tribal governments to see what management objectives and harvest scenarios that they would like to see. So, again, we received a grant this year to facilitate incorporation of indigenous knowledge into the model and we're tentatively planning this workshop in Nome in August of 2023.

Next slide is just my wrap up, I'm sorry I went so fast. I wanted to take time to thank you for your time and attention and I'm happy to

address any questions or comments as time allows.

Thank you.

(Pause)

MS. PILCHER: This is Nissa Pilcher.....

MR. GARLICHMILLER: Hello?

MS. PILCHER: .....for the record. Joel, we do hear you loud and clear, I'm not sure there's any questions at this moment but we did appear to lose our Chair, are Council members good.

MR. GRAY: I asked who was that?

MS. PILCHER: Joel GarlichMiller with Fish and Wildlife Service.

MR. KIRK: Tommy, you fall asleep.

MR. GARLICHMILLER: Did I put everyone to sleep, apologies.

MR. GRAY: So my name is Tom Gray. I don't know that I've met you. I've met some of the Fish and Wildlife guys. I'm glad to see -- I was very concerned that the State was doing all the talking here and -- and I was happy to hear it's the Feds and -- and involving hunters in co-management. You know, I'm head of the Beluga Whale Committee and I deal with NMFS and NOAA and on and on. And it's refreshing to see co-management talked about and in a priority. And -- and management of animals and working on issues prior to usually things aren't worked on until it's a crises and, anyway, it's good to see this process being talked about and moving forward.

So thank you for your presentation.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you, Tom. Anybody have any other comments or questions.

Martin, go ahead.

MR. AUKONGAK: I will comment on the ivory there. You know I was in Hawaii twice this

winter and the people there they have shells, those shells were living before too, but they get to sell them, and that thing was a live animal. You know, I go beachcombing, I get ivory all the time, you know, it's our people, we do carving. You know I don't go to a farm in Texas and tell a guy to kill a cow and don't sell the leather. I mean our people are a little too nice and I hope they reverse that law.

(Laughter)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: That was a great way to put it, Martin, thank you.

Anybody else.

Ron Kirk, online.

MR. KIRK: Yeah, I'm online, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Did you have a question or a comment.

MR. KIRK: Only comment I'd like to make is like that young man said, our ivory is our way of life. I'm doing a little bit of that right now and it's pretty hard to try to sell it to a non-Native like our teachers that are from out of town and they're afraid to take it back to their state because it's illegal and everybody's saying that, you know, how do they know it's not elephant ivory and where -- whereas it comes from our source, you know, we go out there, we comb the beach and we gather ivory and that's how we make our living.

That's all, thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you, Ron. I spent a lot of time on the beach with a SuperCub back in the day so, yeah, it is a way of making a living up here, it's our way. Appreciate your guys' comments.

Anybody else on the Council.

MS. FREYTAG: Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Mary.

MS. FREYTAG: This is Mary Freytag. I

was just curious if, you know, we talk a lot about fish bycatch, those Russian trawlers, I know you don't have any information from them but is it possible that there's any kind of bycatch possible when they're trawling, do they catch big mammals and stuff and report that, is that something in your area?

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you, Mary.

MR. GARLICHMILLER: Through the Chair. Mary, hello. We do have some information -- oh, you're talking about direct interaction with the walrus rather than impacts to the bottom, those are two different things. Here in Alaska we do have fishery observer programs, and with respect to interactions with walruses it's fairly limited, four or five walruses, mostly down in the trawl fishery, yellow fin sole, Bristol Bay, they -- they pick up and a lot of them tend to be mortalities. So there's not too much of a conservation concern here in Alaska. In Russia we don't -- as you alluded, we don't have a lot of information. I do hear anecdotally and I saw -- I've seen a couple of videos, I know occasionally that walruses do interact with pollock fishery gear over there but we don't have a full picture of numbers.

MS. FREYTAG: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you. Thank you for the question, Mary. It's interesting, is that, there's such a thing -- I sat through the courthouse hearings on the Marine Mammal Protection Act while they were working it out and I -- I have a hard time believing that doesn't apply to these trawlers, even on the American side, how they can destroy that animal and not have any repercussions. They're not Alaska Natives fishing with a trawler boat.

Anyway, is there anybody else.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: I guess we can move forward. Thank you.

MR. KIRK: Mr. Chair, Ron Kirk, Stebbins.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Oh, go ahead, Ron.

MR. KIRK: Just one more comment. Yeah, I just wanted the person making the -- talking about the hand people that they're aware of what I was taught when I was young going out hunting with our elders, if you notice the walrus -- some of the walrus have tan ivory like yellowish ivory. Our elders told me that you have to -- you need to avoid those, they consider those orphans, they consider those walrus orphans. They're meat eaters. The elders used to tell us to be very careful of walking on thin ice because if a walrus see a shadow through the thin ice, a meat eater, he's going to break through that ice and pull you down. That's all I wanted to say, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you, Ron, for your comment. Anyone else.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Okay, thank you. We'll move forward. Thanks.

MS. PILCHER: Mr. Chair, through the record -- or for the record this is Nissa Pilcher, so next up we have Mike -- or Michael Cameron with, I believe NOAA. Mike, are you on?

MR. CAMERON: Hello, yes, I am, can you hear me?

MS. PILCHER: Sure can. And your presentation is up and ready.

MR. CAMERON: Okay, great, thanks very much. I'd like to thank the Council for the opportunity to talk today about our program of research. I know that these Regional Advisory Councils don't always include marine mammals, but the Alaska Native Ice Seal Committee recommended that we gave this presentation once we were invited.

One thing to be aware of, I guess, is when I use the term, subsistence, I'm referring to Alaska Native subsistence hunting and the use of marine mammals, so that might be a little bit different than the use of subsistence for moose and caribou that I heard earlier today.

There's no restrictions on Alaska

Native harvest of seals in Alaska other than if they're -- it can't be wasteful.

I'm here to talk to you about the program of research conducted at the Polar Ecosystems Program, which is part of NOAA Fishery, the Marine Mammal Laboratory in Seattle, Washington. Some of you might know the name Peter Boveng, he was the leader of our program for many years. He's actually still with the program but he recently stepped down and I've taken over those duties. So I wanted to take the opportunity to introduce myself and the program.

You can skip over Slide 2 and go to Slide 3.

The Polar Ecosystems Program monitors and studies bearded, ringed, spotted, ribbon seals, collectively known as ice associated seals and also harbor seals in Alaska. So we are responsible for conducting Federal research on all five of the true seals in Alaska. Given that this is the Seward Peninsula RAC, I'll mostly just be restricting the rest of this talk to the ice associated seals.

Slide 4.

There's some evidence that seals might be responding to changes in the Bering Sea. There's been some evidence in some studies that have declined in body condition of some age classes and species and so it's more important to be monitoring these animals. Many ways that we want to monitor them can only really be done or can best be done in the spring when we recognize that residents will be hunting marine mammals and we've shown -- we believe and we've shown that we can conduct this work without impacting that hunting success. NOAA has a mandate under the Marine Mammal Protection Act, which we just heard about and also the Endangered Species Act to manage and conserve marine mammals. The Marine Mammal Protection Act also establishes ways for us to co-manage these species directly with tribal nations and indigenous people.

Slide 5.

So as part of that NOAA has a co-management agreement with the Alaska Native Ice Seal Committee. There are two representatives from each of

the five regions that take ice associated seals for subsistence purposes. From the Bering Strait region, I believe your two current representatives are Brandon Ahmasuk and Ben Kiwana (ph).

In addition to the co-management agreement and the ice associated -- excuse me -- the Ice Seal Committee also has a working group, which in addition to NOAA includes researchers from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, educational institutions like University of Alaska-Fairbanks and other institutions. Together this co-management working group developed the Alaska ice seal research plan. This plan is available online and it outlines all of the projects that the Ice Seal Committee and the working group has deemed important, either have been conducted in the past or are currently being conducted or hopes for being conducted in the future. All of the projects I'll be describing from here on out were described in that plan.

Slide 6.

So as I mentioned we monitor and study the four species of ice associated seals and harbor seals in Alaska to support management and co-management. We do that research mostly by two main methods. The first is using aerial surveys for abundance and distribution. We've been doing that since the 1990s. But we also have a very active tagging and sampling program. That work is either based out of -- directly out of communities or from vessels at sea.

Slide 7.

So speaking first about that program of vessel based work, we want to understand how many seals there are in the populations, their seasonal movements and also how healthy they are and how they're responding to habitat changes.

Slide 8.

So those vessel based projects typically occur at the southern edge of the Bering Sea pack ice. Earlier on these were being conducted annually in May and June, but more recently since 2014, in even years they've been conducted in April, although

we did have to cancel our crews in 2020 for Covid concerns. We are expecting to conduct these vessel based projects again in the Bering Sea in April of 2024 and I'll be talking a little bit about that later. Essentially we use the NOAA ship Oscar Dyson to help us gain access to the sea ice edge. We launch small inflatable boats, we move quietly through the pack ice and when we can we jump out on the ice flows using what's essentially salmon landing nets to capture the seals on the ice flow where they are. At this location and at this time of year we're mostly capturing ribbon and spotted seals although we have had the opportunity to capture ringed and bearded seals as well.

Slide 9.

So once an animal is captured, we will instrument them with satellite tags. The satellite tags are tags that are glued or affixed -- glued to the seal's fur or hair or also connected to its rear flippers. These satellite tags provide information on their seasonal movements and their foraging behavior which is useful for understanding how they use their habitat and move within their ecosystem. These tags also record information on the timing of their hauling out, the time of day that they haul out on to the ice, how long they're hauled out and when they go back into the water. These vary with lots of different co-variants, age and species, obviously but also weather, time of day and such. And all of this goes into models that help us to correct our aerial surveys. Aerial surveys can only count the number of animals that are hauled out on top of the sea ice and so we need information from these satellite tags to help us estimate the proportion of the population that's under water at any one time. We also collect measurements and tissue samples from these animals to help us understand their health and condition and to help measure their genetic distinctiveness which could be useful for stock structure. And most recently we've also started using uncrewed aerial systems, or UAS, to help us start additional investigations into body condition.

Slide 10.

This kind of shows the area where we normally conduct our vessel based work, this black oval to the left of St. Matthew Island is our general

location where we conduct our work. We chose this location for a few reasons. One, it's close to the shell break, the sea ice edge is also coincident with the shelf break at about this location in April. Also the distribution of ribbon and spotted seals tends to increase the further we go to the west so we have the greatest opportunity of encountering lots of animals to capture. These pink buffers that you see around the coastline I'll discuss a little bit later in detail, but, specifically, they are locations where we have, through various agreements, to never use our Oscar Dyson, the large vessel, we'll never be entering into those regions in April when we're conducting our work. And, again, I'll mention that a little bit later.

I'd like to mention that this most recent trip, in particular, in 2022, we were able to partner with Bering Sea communities. The Ice Seal Committee co-management group recommended that we involve Alaska Native seal hunters in future expeditions aboard our Oscar Dyson. In 2019 the Ice Seal Committee agreed that we should work with Kawerak to help make that happen. As I mentioned, in 2020 we had to cancel our expedition, but in 2022 Kawerak selected Austin Ahmasuk as a partner on that expedition. Overall we found it very useful, rewarding to be able to work with Kawarek and Austin, in particular, on these cruises. We hope to continue this relationship by partnering with other Bering Sea communities for our crews in 2024. Decisions for the regions that'll we'll be participating with will be informed by the Ice Seal Committee. But really the best part of that is, I think, is we're able to really involve traditional knowledge and be able to see the ecosystem and the habitat with the eyes of an Alaska Native seal hunter, it's necessarily different than a Western Scientists view it and I'd like to think that the cooperative back and forth conversations that we had while either out on the ice or around the dinner table really helped to solidify that relationship and can only serve to improve our science going forward -- our science and co-management going forward.

Slide 12.

So this is the slide that I wanted to give you a little more information on.

These are the agreements we currently

have about restrictions on where we will and won't work. In general, everywhere along the coast we won't be entering within 12 nautical miles or 30 nautical miles with any of the whaling and sealing communities. If we ever see more than one walrus we tend to move to a different location. If we ever see hunters we also move to another location. We send out daily communications via email and text to over 200 different people in communities. Each one of those daily communications gives a map of our location, the existing sea ice concentration and an idea of what our plan is for that day as well as ways to communicate with us if any of the recipients decide that it would be smarter for us to be operating in a different location.

The main thing, though, that I think is important is like hunters, we don't want to disturb the seals. Capturing seals requires stealth and quiet and any disturbance from any of our work will necessarily impact our ability to effectively monitor these seals. The Oscar Dyson, in particular, is specifically designed as a fisheries research vessel and as such it's one of the most acoustically quiet vessels out there. All of these plans here have been developed over years of discussions with the Ice Seal Committee and coastal communities. It's an iterative process and there's always room for improvement.

Slide 13.

Our next way of conducting research is through aerial surveys. Our goal, of course, is to be able to determine the abundance and distribution of seals and polar bears, as a recent addition. Our surveys are conducted as frequently as we can but they are extensive and logistically challenging to conduct so there's quite a lot of time in between being able to conduct different surveys. Our first group of surveys was conducted in the Bering Sea in 2012 to 2013. The Chuckchi Sea then in 2016. And the Southern Beaufort in 2021. We hope to be and we expect to be back in the Bering Sea in 2024, next year, in April again conducting aerial surveys. We conduct these surveys in the spring when a large proportion of the seal population has crawled out on to the ice in order to give birth and to molt. All of the plans were, again, discussed with the Ice Seal Committee, coastal communities and various other organizations for their

input and we have modified our plans multiple times at their request and recommendation.

Slide 14.

So I'm just going to give you a quick example of what we've done here most recently in our Beaufort Sea survey in 2021. Instead of using surveys with a person looking out the window and estimating distance and age and species of the seals that they're seeing, we conduct all of our work with cameras. The advantage of this is it allows us to fly much higher, which greatly reduces disturbance, it also allows us to fly faster, faster than a human being could be able to reliably see all the animals in their field of view. By being able to take images, it also allows us to go back over any of these images to reanalyze them for various other things, for example, habitats or new ways of being able to identify seals on the ice.

We have a suite of camera systems that we use to detect animals. The first is through a thermal or infrared camera which detects the heat signature of a seal against the cold background sea ice. Once we get those hot spots we link them up with the visual imagery which allows us to identify the hot spot to species. Recently we've also been incorporating an ultraviolet camera which being able to detect polar bears when they're in their habitat. Suffices to say we bring back a lot of imagery as these are recording continuously throughout all our flights.

Slide 15.

Well, I guess I should have used this slide with my earlier description, but on the left hand side you can see an example of our infrared imagery and this image on the left is hot, or warmer and you can see those same dots represented in the color imagery on the right hand side, we can zoom in and identify them as bearded seals.

Slide 16.

There's a lot of complications with conducting these sorts of research. I'm not going to be into all of the statistical methods that we've been using to make our estimates of our population abundances but suffices to say that we incorporate a

lot of different variables in these estimates. The big one, of course, the one that changes a lot, day to day, is the sea ice concentration. So I wanted to make it clear that we are incorporating the change in sea ice during the course of our survey, basically making multiple models each of the days that we're surveying and using the combined model to be able to look at all of those sea ice and abundance estimates together for our final abundance estimate.

Slide 17.

This is a similar slide to the one you saw before. Right now we're just looking at the water here and data from 2013. You can see that bearded seals have a broad distribution but a heavy presence in the Central Bering. Ribbons and spotted seals tend to prefer the southern ice edge at this time of year and ringed seals occur in higher numbers up into the north. I wanted to touch a little bit on the fact that these surveys, at least in 2012 and 2013 in the Bering and then in 2016 in the Chuckchi Sea were done cooperatively with Russian researchers. We both employed nearly -- well very similar, if not identical methods in the same year surveying at the same time and we came together and we were able to, in many ways, analyze our data together so that we didn't have to concern ourselves as much with the potential for transboundary issues or animals moving from one side to the other of the International Date Line while this survey was happening. Unfortunately it looks like we might not be able to accomplish that in these upcoming surveys. The Russians are considering being able to do some surveys closer to their shores mostly with unmanned aircrafts but we're hoping that in 2027, the same as we were able to do in 2016 in the Chuckchi, we're hoping in 2027 the Russians will be able to also conduct surveys on their side of the Chuckchi Sea.

Slide 18.

So this is a combination of all of the Bering Sea abundance estimates combining both the Western, meaning the Russian or the Eastern Bering Sea numbers. I'm not going to be going through this, my understanding is that you have been provided examples of this presentation and if you have specific questions about the numbers or any of these, anything that I'm speaking about, feel free to reach out. At the very

bottom you'll see a number of footnotes that gives information on some of the published papers that are the basis for these numbers that I'm showing in Slide 18.

Moving to Slide 19.

Ideas for Bering Sea 2024.

In 2024 we plan to switch to, or plan to be using a NOAA King Air aircraft instead of our standard Twin Otter aircraft. The advantage of the King Air is that it's a faster airplane with a much longer range. That means that we can conduct this work in much less time. Previously in the Bering Sea we would have required, in 2012 and in 2013, we were required to use two different Twin Otter aircraft flying at the same time over 200 flight hours and it took us up to seven weeks of surveying. The King Air that we'll have access to now will require just one aircraft over three weeks with just 75 flight hours because it can fly so much faster and has so much longer range. The advantage of this, of course, is we're able to minimize impacts to the models that result from a changing sea ice habitat but it also greatly reduces disturbance. Theoretically we can also fly higher with the King Air and the new camera systems we're planning to put in there. I'm putting these lines up here as an example, that being said, I can tell that just our most recent meeting with the Ice Seal Committee has already recommended that we increase the number of lines that we -- or increase the density of lines that we use in the Bristol Bay region and so based on their advice we're doing that. We do have buffer zones around St. Lawrence Island and the Bering Strait region as well. Like all of our work we'll be communicating with that large list of folks that I mentioned, giving weekly updates -- or excuse me, daily updates of our locations and field plans.

The last slide is Slide 20.

This slide with the URL goes to a handout that I think everybody was provided. This is a field work flier that we produce once a year at the Marine Mammal Lab and it identifies all of the marine mammal research that our laboratory is conducting in that year along with the month that it will be occurring. And on the back side it provides a short

blurb of why we're doing the work, what we expect to gain from it and also contact information. It's very brief, but it allows you to go to learn a little bit about the work that we're doing and know who to contact if you have any questions. You'll recognize that my program, the Polar Ecosystems Program do not have any.....

(Cell phone ringing)

MR. CAMERON: .....sorry about that, field work planned in 2024 on ice associated seals. All of our work this year will just be on harbor seals so next year there'll be another flier coming out with a lot more information from our work.

And that's it.

Thank you.

(Pause)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Anybody with questions or comments on the line.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Ronald.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Hearing none, and none at the table.

MR. GRAY: No questions, just.....

CHAIRMAN GREEN: No questions, keep moving. Thank you.

MS. PILCHER: This is Nissa, next up should be Lori if she's still on.

MS. QUAKENBUSH: Yes, I'm still here.

MS. PILCHER: Or?

MS. QUAKENBUSH: Do you have my presentation up, Nissa?

MS. PILCHER: We're getting it -- yep, it's up right now.

MS. QUAKENBUSH: Okay. Okay. Hi, this is Lori Quakenbush. I work for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game with Arctic Marine Mammals and I'm also a member of the Alaska Beluga Whales Committee and do research for them and I think you've heard a couple times today that Tom Gray is the Chairman of the Alaska Beluga Whale Committee, and Raymond Hunt, who's also on your Council is a delegate of the Alaska Beluga Whale Committee.

So I'm planning, today, to give you an overview of the Eastern Bering Sea beluga stock, which is the one in Norton Sound and Yukon area so it's very adjacent to your RAC boundaries and it's an abbreviated presentation that Tom and I have been using to kind of go around Norton Sound down the Yukon to talk about the status of this stock and what we know about it and what we've learned in recent years.

So the slide that's up right now is the summary areas of five different stocks of beluga whales and in order to understand sort of what the Eastern Bering Sea or the Norton Sound stock is doing we kind of need to know how it fits in with the other ones, and we know that belugas go different places in the summertime and now we know from genetics, from samples we see by the hunters and from satellite telemetry a little bit more about how these different groups operate separately and together. So the one stock we're not talking about today is the Cook Inlet belugas, which are, they don't winter in the Bering Sea, so we're really just talking about the ones that interact together in the Bering, Chuckchi and Beaufort Sea.

So next slide, Nissa.

We kind of learn as much as -- more than -- we're trying to learn something about the Norton Sound, Eastern Bering Sea belugas and we couldn't catch any of them to put satellite transmitters on and Tom Gray kept telling us that he catches them alive and if he could learn how to put a tag on he'd put a tag on and let it go. So we ended up training Tom and Tom went out with his crew and indeed he caught six belugas and put tags on them and let them

go.

Next slide.

And sometimes he did it with his crew, sometimes he did it with BJ, his wife, sometimes BJ was in charge -- go to the next slide, Nissa.

Sometimes BJ was in charge of letting a beluga go after it was tagged. I think Tom's taking the picture here but it looks like he's letting the women do all the work if you ask me.

(Laughter)

MS. QUAKENBUSH: So this is a beluga whale with a satellite transmitter on it and it was one that he caught in a net and let go.

So the next slide.

So this a track of two different belugas caught in the same year. The red one was tagged on the 29th of September 2012, the yellow one was on 14 October and both of these whales were tagged by Tom. This shows you where they went between September and November following the locations that go up to the satellite that we can then link together and see the track.

Next slide.

So this should be a slide of a beluga and.....

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Oops, this is Louis, can you give the slide number?

MS. QUAKENBUSH: This should be Slide No. 6.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you.

MS. QUAKENBUSH: Okay. So this is the crew, we went to Stebbins to try to capture belugas and Tom Gray came from Nome, we worked with Kellen Katchatag and his family and then Marvin*Okitkin from Kotlik came with his two sons, Donovan and Duncan and some of their crew members and we caught this male

beluga between Stebbins and Kotlik.

Next slide, No. 7.

This is the track of that one whale. We tagged it on the 23rd of May, the tags went off the air on the 21st of January and this is the entire track for that whale in 2019 and into 2020. So the yellow track is where that male beluga spent most of the summer. So more inner Norton Sound, 23rd of May to the 31st of August. And then in September and October and it moved out of the bay a little bit, south of Cape Nome, or south of Nome, and a little bit out of to the outer part of Norton Sound. And then in November, the green, out a little bit father, went up to Bering Strait and then December -- this is the only tagged whale we've seen go north of Bering Strait out of the six that have been tagged, and then December this one went north Bering Straits and they did a loop and it came back out and then you can see January is in blue and it got as far south as Kuskokwim, but outside of Nunivak Island. So this is just the type of information we can get from a satellite tagged whale.

And then we can go to the next slide, No. 8.

So we can look at the whales that were tagged in different locations from different stocks and put all the dots out there together. Each dot is a location of a whale that was tagged colored by what the Nome stock is. So by genetic, or by location of tagging, seven whales were tagged on the Russian side, the blue dots, the Beaufort Sea is the orange and there were 33 belugas tagged there. Bristol Bay we tagged 40. And eastern Bering Sea which is Norton Sound, and mostly whale Tom tagged, six, and then the eastern Chuckchi Sea is the green dots and so these are locations for these whales in May through November. So open water. And Bristol Bay, basically in Bristol Bay but we'll show some winter data as well, so this sort of shows there's some overlap between Beaufort Sea in the red, kind of orange, sorry orange, and the Chuckchi Sea in the green and there's more overlap there than there is with the others.

So the next slide is Slide No. 9.

And this goes back -- so this was the

first slide I showed, so this is the summering area and you can see the Beaufort Sea and the Chuckchi Sea, whales to the north, they overlap quite a bit and really hard to tell them apart if you're just looking at whales, counting whales, but they're all going to come back into the Bering Sea for winter.

Next slide, this is Slide 10.

So now this is December through April and you got the Russian whales are still along the Chukotka*Cove, the blue lines, the Beaufort Sea belugas now are coming into Bering Sea, closest to the Russian whales that are on the farthest side of the Bering and then the green ones, the eastern Chuckchi are coming into the Bering Sea as well and then the red ones are the Norton Sound eastern -- sorry eastern Chuckchi are the green coming in, eastern Bering are the red, the Norton Sound whales and they're kind of spread out between Norton Sound and Bristol Bay, and then the Bristol Bay whales come out of the bay more in the wintertime as well.

So even though there's five different stocks coming into the Bering Sea, when we look at their winter data -- go to the next slide, No. 11.

And draw kind of lines around where we've seen locations, these different wales actually, even though they're kind of in the same general area, they stay separate. There's a little bit of overlap between eastern Bering Sea and Bristol Bay but when we look at the actual time that whales are in that overlap zone they're not there at the same time. So Bristol Bay whales kind of stay to Bristol Bay, if eastern Bering Sea whales move away they might go out and overlap that area, but we -- the data don't show them in the same place at the same time, and that's the same thing with the Chuckchi and the Beaufort Sea, even though they overlap in their range in the winter, they don't -- they're not there at the same time. And this is supported by the genetics data that does these five stocks -- we can tell them apart by their DNA and that's something -- yeah, that means that they've been -- not been interbreeding for quite some time.

Slide No. 12.

So this slide you've seen before. This

is the open water but what I wanted to point out here is that, you know, we have yellow belugas, we have red belugas, we have green ones and we have orange ones, but if you look in Norton Sound the only color in there is red. We don't see Bristol Bay belugas going into Norton Sound and along the Yukon and we don't see the green or the orange ones either. So this is pretty strong evidence that the eastern Bering Sea stocks are the ones that are found in Norton Sound and that all the belugas harvested in this area are likely from the eastern Bering Sea stocks. And this is fairly new information and supported both by genetics and by satellite telemetry.

So a little bit more about what we know about just the eastern Bering Sea stock now is what the current abundance estimate is and this comes from a 2017 aerial survey and so the estimate that we're using right now is 11,112 whales.

So next slide, oops, I didn't -- we should be on -- did we go through 13 -- I'm changing slides for myself. Are you on Slide 13?

MS. PILCHER: Slide 13.

MS. QUAKENBUSH: Is that where we are, okay. So those are the take home points from the satellite telemetry work.

So now Slide 14.

It's a current abundance estimate that we got from aerial surveys in 2017, and if we go to the next slide, look at the harvest level and it averaged 229 over the last five years and it's gone up steadily from 190 in 2016 to 259 in 2020. We've got an increase in harvest of this stock.

Next slide.

We know the information for struck and loss is not complete and we get some reporting on struck and loss but -- and struck and loss is also hard to know whether an animal is struck so that information is hard to come by and not everybody reports it when they have it.

Next slide, Slide 17.

These are data from the Alaska Beluga Whale Committee. The delegates go to the annual meeting and report the harvest for their communities and that's one of the delegates responsibilities and if you just take 1988 just to kind of look at what these information say, the harvest is 309; S/L is struck and loss and in this case it's not available. As you can see later years there are some struck and loss numbers. And then at the bottom there's a percent population and I think you can remember when Joel was talking about walruses, he said that walrus populations, the harvest was sustainable at two percent and at the Beluga Whale Committee we've been using 2.4 percent, pretty similar reasons. I'll talk about kind of how we get that number. But anything over 2.4 percent we start getting a little bit worried about that harvest may not be sustainable. So I've highlighted the years where it was over 2.4 percent here. And it doesn't happen very often but if you look at the most recent years it's getting pretty close more often, so the harvest is going up for this stock and for the season so there's some concern about that.

Next slide, please, No. 18.

So one of the things that affect the sustainability of a harvest is how fast the stock or the population can replenish itself and grow and that has a lot to do with sort of your females and how productive they are. Belugas can't reproduce for the first time until she's about nine years old and she can only have one calf every third year or so, so it's just not like wolves, it's not like, you know, there's not one calf per year, there's one calf every third year and she can't start having calves until she's nine, so it's a slower replacement type of situation, which is why that two percent, I think, is like a safe sustainable number.

Next slide.

So this talks about sustainability.

Go to the next slide.

What is sustainable take. And I think everybody in this group knows what that is, but the next one, how is sustainable take calculated. This is where the 2.4 percent comes in and using the abundance

estimate that we have and the average harvest over the last five years at 229 is 2.1 percent. So that is in the safe zone still but it's getting close to the top and this is why the Beluga Whale Committee and Tom Gray would like to get this message out to the hunters and start talking about a management plan so that we don't end up trying to figure out what to do when there's not enough whales to harvest, but try to be proactive and get out and see what can be done sooner, rather than later.

Next slide, 21.

So this is just a slide of the human population growth for the region and virtually all of the human population is going up, not down, that doesn't necessarily mean greater harvest but it does mean there's more people that might want to eat belugas.

Slide 22.

So what can we do.

Go ahead to Slide 23.

So, you know, how do you keep your harvest sustainable, what are things that can be done in the short term and certainly reducing struck and loss might be a straightforward sort of way to go, talk to the young hunters make sure everybody's ready to hunt and has their gear, that kind of thing, or the hunters locally know what that is and know what to do. Target male belugas when you harvest, if you can. That's not always possible but it's something to think about, and conserving the females so they can have more calves and keep the population growing. Make sure you only harvest the number you need and then support and work on a management plan and some conservation types of things for what the Beluga Whale Committee has come up with to talk about.

So I tried to go through pretty quickly. I know you guys are -- it's after 5:00, but you guys have some experts in the room if you have questions and want to ask them tomorrow, Tom Gray knows all the stuff really well and so does Raymond.

So that's all I have Nissa.

(Pause)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you.

Tommy.

MR. GRAY: I don't know what I can say, she did a good job.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Okay, just making sure. he said you did a good job. Thank you.

MS. QUAKENBUSH: Okay.

MR. GRAY: Hey, thanks for joining us and doing this. And if I can help you answer questions I'd be happy to. You know I think to the crowd here, this is a good example of what it's going to take to make co-management work. If we don't do it we're going to have troubles. If we get a management plan in place, we're going to be leaps and bounds ahead of the problem and it's better to get it in place now than when it's a crises. And, you know, some of the players that -- the Beluga Whale Committee had a vision that there will be a crises down the road and let's nip it in the butt. And, you know, I'm sad to say that I've been involved in this process and I understand it as well as Lori, or maybe not quite as well, but it's going to take cooperation from the government, it's going to take cooperation from the hunters in the region and sadly to say, it's going to take money to put a program together to get this management plan in place.

And, you know, we are a very fortunate people. You've heard of the Marine Mammal Act, the walrus and the seals and on and on, belugas fall under the same thing, our Native people are in -- we are the ones that can take these animals and we're the only ones, you know, the White crowd can't take it, but with this comes responsibility, and I think we need to be better at managers than the government or the managers, the science world. We have got to take the road and run with it. So anyway, I'm -- I'm proudly talking to the choir.

So any kind of questions.

MR. SEETOT: Elmer Seetot, Jr., with a

comment. U.S. Coast Guard demolished a 13,000 -- 1,300 loran station a couple years back, they built it in 1963. Before that time, when I was growing up, we used to see beluga going up the channel, up into Imuruk Basin, after -- after the fall of the loran tower it took maybe a couple years for the beluga to come -- or to pass through Port Clarence.

Last year was a good example. I was at a meeting, I think, in Anchorage, and they were talking about a three day run of beluga from the north right along the shoreline and from what I heard, a month or two later, was that there was some killer whale predation on both the beluga and the bowhead on the upper waters of the North Slope, so I think that was the reason we were -- Brevig Mission was able to see and harvest belugas right from the beach. I -- I don't see that happening very much. I heard that, you know, Norton Sound, that they go after them by boat and get the beluga like that. They were just a couple feet from the beach so -- so the hunters were able to catch a beluga from that position. I -- I hung a net -- beluga net for my son after giving instructions on where to place the buoys and the line and that -- that day when I went back he say he got four beluga in his net so he was able to cut, harvest and share a majority of the beluga with the community. How -- there were some hunters that were able to get their beluga and they were able to retrieve them, you know, like in Louisiana they fish alligators with hook and line and -- and that's how they were able to get their belugas that they sank in Brevig Mission.

So -- so this is new. I think this is a new species that we have been looking at for so many years but we weren't able to harvest them due to their sonar sensitivity to sound and electronic signals. Now that -- now that they have gone through Port Clarence I think that they will be a constant presence when they migrate from the north and hopefully we will be able to harvest and go with what -- what ABC has, you know, with their regulations and harvest and -- and with that in mind I'm not too sure if the community of Brevig Mission would be able to get an invitation from ABC to join their committee or be a part of their committee because now we have an animal that passes regularly through our waters. It -- we -- we do see them year-round, or not year-round, we do see them throughout the summer but they're out in the open water out in the

Bering Sea and that -- that's what I would like to, you know, present to the -- present my comments at this time.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you, Elmer.

So we're -- is there anybody else -- sorry, Mary.

MS. FREYTAG: Yes. No question, just a comment on Mr. Gray's presentation -- what he was saying. I just wanted to say that the co-management plan that you guys are putting together is like preventative maintenance, we're taking care of what we need to do so I just want to thank you all for all the hard work you guys are doing.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you, Mary. Anybody else.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Ron.

MR. KIRK: No comment, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you, Ron. Is Robert still on?

MR. MOSES: No comment.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you, sir. Is there anything else here?

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: All right, so just looking at this agenda here. We've got the wildlife closure reviews with Brian Ubelaker. So I would like to say thank you to, oh, my goodness.

MR. GRAY: Lori.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Lori. I got two pieces of paper here and I'm looking at the wrong pink

one. Thank you, Lori, Quakenbush.

MS. QUAKENBUSH: No, problem, you're welcome. Thank you for the opportunity.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Yes, we really appreciate it. Thank you for your work.

I guess we'll call Brian here for a dash to the end of the trail.

(Pause)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Go ahead, Brian, you got it.

MR. UBELAKER: Thank you. Good evening, Mr. Chair. Members of the Council. My name is Brian Ubelaker. For the record I am a Wildlife Biologist with the Office of Subsistence Management. Before we get into the closure review analysis I'd like to give you a brief overview of the process for these reviews.

In August of 2020 the Federal Subsistence Board approved a revised closure policy which stipulated all closures will be reviewed every four years. This policy also specified the closures similar to regulatory proposals will be presented to the Councils for a recommendation and then to the Board for a final decision. However, regulatory actions on closure reviews are limited to retaining, rescinding or modifying the closure. Actions such as changing seasons and harvest limits or delegating authority to in-season managers are outside of the scope of closure reviews. To this end, closure review analysis are being presented to the Councils now, during the call for wildlife proposals, to inform their decision on whether or not to submit a proposal addressing the closure that would be outside the scope of the closure review.

So this is not an action item, this is just informational. However if Councils do decide to submit a proposal to address the closure a motion and vote is needed.

The Councils will make a formal recommendation on the closure reviews during their fall

2023 meetings and the Federal Subsistence Board will take final action on these closure reviews in April of 2024.

So before I proceed into the summary of the analysis, are there any questions I can answer on this process.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Any Council members have any questions.

MR. SEETOT: What section are we on?

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Wildlife closure reviews, under D, new business.

Anybody else.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Hearing nothing, Brian, go ahead.

MR. UBELAKER: Okay. And I believe as Nissa has briefed you, I'm going to roll all the muskox closures into one, provide a very, very brief summary seeings how they're all related.

So these closure reviews, WCR24-10, 19, 28, 29, 30, and 44 all are dealing with Unit 22 and 23 muskox on the Seward Peninsula. Please keep in mind that these reviews are all separate items that you will take action on at the upcoming fall meeting but like I say I will present them all as one closure review today. If anybody would like more detail or have any questions about anything specifically please stop me at any time.

These closure reviews are found on Pages 14, 37, 58, 69 and 78 of your meeting books. And as I stated they all deal with muskox on the Seward Peninsula and Units 22 and 23 Southwest.

Most of these closures have been in place since 1995 when the Federal muskox season was established. As the muskox population grew the range expanded as well as hunting opportunity. As new hunts were established Federal lands were closed to maintain a Federal subsistence priority and then when the

population was sufficient most of these closures were rescinded and Federal public lands were open to all users. However, as the populations started to decline in 2011 Federal lands were closed to all but Federally-qualified subsistence users and currently all Federal public lands with an established muskox season are closed to all but Federally-qualified users.

And because Sara was so nice to give us a rundown on muskox biology I will skip that section unless anybody wants me to dig in to it.

(No comments)

MR. UBELAKER: Moving on. Harvest of muskox on the Seward Peninsula has declined drastically since the increasing harvest rates leading to 2012 and stabilized at lower levels since then. The majority of muskox harvest occurs by State permit from 2013 to 2021, Federal harvest on the Seward Peninsula has averaged 3.4 muskox per year accounting for about 10 percent of all muskox harvest.

If these closures are retained there would be no change in how the hunts are currently managed. Only Federally-qualified subsistence users would be allowed to harvest muskoxen on Federal public lands on the Seward Peninsula by either Federal or State permit. If the closures are rescinded, Federal public lands would be open to the harvest of muskoxen by anyone hunting under State regulations. Overharvest would not be a concern as harvest would still be managed by a shared quota with a limited number of permits issued. If the closures were modified to close to all users, Federally-qualified subsistence users would unnecessarily lose the opportunity to harvest muskox under Federal regulations on the Seward Peninsula.

Therefore, it is OSM's preliminary conclusion to maintain the status quo on all these closures.

Thank you.

And if there are any questions I will answer them to the best of my ability.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Any Council on the

phone have any questions, Ron or Robert.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Hearing none, anybody in the room here, Council.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Nope. Shame on you Raymond, you're yawning.

(Laughter)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Oh, Elmer, go ahead.

MR. SEETOT: In the literature you say that the muskox were declining, is that in pretty much all subunits that were -- I mean in previous years, was that the problem, in most of the subunits within 22, they -- it was stating that -- that there was probably no growth but, you know, coming from other -- other areas the muskox would come from other areas indicate that maybe there was no population growth, you know, from -- from the males and females, you know, that were there to produce offspring. But that's what I kind of understood that decline after they peak so many years and then they kind of went or stayed at a stable rate, is that pretty much a standard for the animals within 22 where, you know, I think -- you know, the introduction of muskox was new to the areas, I think that they found a growth and the food availability, however, I -- I think predation might have stopped, you know, some of these muskox from venturing out because instances where the -- the bears were able to, you know, attack from the front and gore the muskox in that fashion. So I'm not really too sure how the predation from the wolves are but -- but I'm assuming that they -- they provide -- you know for the animals around them, and that was just one of the things I was just kind of looking at, is, why the decline when the numbers speak in certain areas of 22.

Hopefully I -- hopefully I asked the question in a way that you -- that you understand. Sometime I don't even understand what I kind of say because, unlike Tom, he keeps his comments to the point, my -- mine are just all over so -- but -- but what I was reading was that, you know, they peak and

then they decline and then move on. Is that standard in pretty much species or -- or just muskox?

MR. UBELAKER: I'm not sure if I can speak to that specifically but as far as the Seward Penn population went, I mean they -- when they were reintroduced they grew fairly rapidly, experienced a big decline, 2011/2012, mostly due to a lot of harvest, I believe, and then they have -- harvest rates were modified at that point so they have stabilized at a lower level since then and kind of -- I wouldn't say declined, they're -- they're not growing, so they're kind of in a stabilized situation right now.

As far as predation maybe -- I don't see Sara.....

(Laughter)

MR. UBELAKER: I would point to Sara to answer that question. Maybe Alicia.

MS. CARSON: I can make a comment. Most of the.....

REPORTER: So I'm going to need you to make your comment from up here. Thanks.

MS. CARSON: From a general comment of speaking with the muskox biologist, which is Brinn Phar most of her mortality on her collared calves is from predation and most of that predation is typically classified to bears.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Anybody else. Thank you.

Mary has one.

MS. FREYTAG: Yes, just one question. I was looking at the map and the areas that we're concerned about, according to the map, are 22E and D. With the muskox moving further down into areas 22C, B and A, were those going to be included in the future for these muskox?

MR. UBELAKER: Included as far as surveys?

MS. FREYTAG: (Nods affirmatively)

MR. UBELAKER: I believe, yes, State surveys -- the extended survey area covers northern 22A and 21D as the -- yeah, as the herd has grown and expanded they've -- they've included all the areas that they're seeing muskox so they're all getting counted.

MS. FREYTAG: Okay, thank you. Because I was just seeing where the map showed that you guys were concentrating in 22D and E and, you know, the muskox did move further into A, B and C, too.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Anybody else got any comments, questions or concerns for Brian.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Tina, did you raise your hand.

(Laughter)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: I'm just kidding.

(Laughter)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: It doesn't sound like it. It sounds like you got 'er taken care of to this point. Thanks.

And what are we after now -- call to -- excuse me.

(Pause)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: We got to circle back to the moose, it's a one line sentence there. You're on.

MR. UBELAKER: Okay. Closure Review WCR24-15 which deals with Unit 22D moose can be found on Page 16 of your meeting books. And WCR24-15 reviews the closure to moose hunting in Unit 22D Remainder except by Federally-qualified subsistence users.

In relevant regulatory history, in

2001, the Board divided Unit 22D into several hunt areas which created the current subunit arrangement. Then in 2002 the Board closed Federal public lands in Unit 22D Remainder to the taking of moose except by Federally-qualified subsistence users. The Board's justification stated that the closure would improve rural subsistence harvest opportunities in an area recently deemed unnecessary by the State to restrict the moose harvest. Then in 2006 this Council submitted a proposal to eliminate the moose closure in Unit 22D Remainder which was adopted in 2007. Then by 2016 the Board closed the December antlerless season due to a decrease in population estimate in order to protect cow moose. Then in 2020 the Board reestablished the closure of Federal public lands in Unit 22D Remainder to moose hunting except by Federally-qualified subsistence users. Unit 22D Remainder was the only hunt area in Unit 22D that remained open to all users. Also in 2020 the Board of Game established a registration permit for both State hunts with a harvest quota system. The registration permit is only available in person from vendors on the Seward Peninsula which helps limit the number of non-local hunters that could obtain it.

Once, again, I'm going to jump over the biology section unless anybody would like a repeat.

(No comments)

MR. UBELAKER: Moving to harvest. Within the closure area, harvest occurs by Federally-qualified subsistence users under Federal regulations by State registration permit during the early fall season and the may be announced winter season. In Unit 22D Remainder the average annual reported moose harvest by State residents between 2009 and 2022 was 14 moose. In 2022 ADF&G estimated the harvestable surplus for Unit 22D Remainder as 17 moose per year which translates roughly to a three percent harvest rate.

Another alternative to consider would be under Federal regulations the winter may be announced season required the use of a State registration permit, therefore, the Federal season is dependent on the State announcing a winter season, which may preclude a Federal priority if the State does not announce an opening. If the Federal regulations were changed to require a Federal permit then a winter

Federal hunt could occur independently from a State hunt. Since this is outside of the scope of this closure review, a proposal would have to be submitted to institute a Federal permit.

If this closure were rescinded, non-Federally-qualified users would be able to harvest moose in Unit 22D Remainder. There would be no concern of non-resident harvest as there is no non-resident moose season in Unit 22D. Since moose harvest is managed by State registration permit and a quota rescinding the closure would likely result in a zero to minimal increase in harvest and have no impact on the moose population. Competition with non-Federally-qualified users may increase, however, public lands only compromise eight percent of the closure area and State permits are only available on a restricted basis limiting non-local hunter participation.

If the closure were retained there would be little added protection for moose as the amount of land protected by this closure is small. While the closure remain -- excuse me -- while the closure provides a subsistence priority for Federally-qualified subsistence users it may also be an unnecessary restriction for non-Federally-qualified users. Given the actions by the Board of Game maintaining this closure may slightly reduce competition from non-local resident hunters but would likely contribute little to overall conservation.

Therefore, it is OSM's preliminary conclusion to rescind the closure.

I'd be happy to answer any questions anybody may have.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Go ahead.

MR. GRAY: So I sat here the whole time you were reading this thing trying to figure out where in the heck is he and -- and in this booklet is Page 22 the actual whatever you're talking about?

MR. UBELAKER: (Nods affirmatively)

MR. GRAY: Okay. And right now what do we have in place that this proposal's going to change -- first, what's in place?

MR. UBELAKER: What is in place in this closure review is that the Federal public lands in 22D Remainder are closed to non-Federally-qualified subsistence users.

MR. GRAY: And OSM is recommending to rescind it, get rid of that closure and open it up to non-Federally-qualified users; is that what I'm hearing?

MR. UBELAKER: That is the preliminary conclusion, yes.

MR. GRAY: And are you asking us to take action today or is this at the next meeting?

MR. UBELAKER: Action will be taken at the fall 2023 meeting.

MR. GRAY: And what's the justification. You know I'm sitting here -- the first thing I'm saying is pack your bags and leave, I need to protect my subsistence people, and I could care less about outsiders taking moose and aligning with the State. You know the State doesn't make right decisions sometimes and, again, I'm here to protect my subsistence users and if that's to oppose this and keep this -- this in place that's probably where I'm going to go.

So anyway I -- the -- if you're talking about getting rid of it and getting rid of that protection for our local people and opening it up to outsiders I'm not in favor of that, and that's what you're saying.

MR. UBELAKER: That -- and so the recommendation will be to lift the closure and that's due to the fact of the action taken by the Board of Game with RM -- what's the permit out there, 846?

MR. GRAY: Yeah. And I don't care what the State does, I mean.....

MR. UBELAKER: 840-- it's the -- the permit is available here locally in Nome for a restricted timeframe. That in -- take that into consideration along with, you know, there's still a harvest -- or there's a quota system in -- in effect,

harvest isn't going to increase just because Federal lands are open and where -- we feel with the action that the Board of Game has taken in restricting how the permit is available to the public, you pick it up in person in Nome in -- at licensed vendors, that's going to restrict the number of non-locals that may come up, that, along with eight percent of 22D Remainder is Federal lands, is a very small portion that is being protected by this closure.

But with that all being said, that's our preliminary conclusion, the Board can take whatever action they would like to take at the fall meeting.

MR. GRAY: So I don't mind taking a stand and -- I sat on the AC forever and I was the lone vote make people pay 25 bucks for a bear tag forever and I still do that, but I'm here for subsistence people and I'm going to -- you know if it takes you guys to create a permit to -- if that's what you're trying to get around, and I don't know for that certain area, so be it, go create a permit, you know, we don't need to follow the State in all the games or rules that are being played.

So anyway we got time to think about it, you got time to convince me that it's the right thing to do, on and on.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Okay, are we done with that one -- all right, Tommy's done, you're done, anything else -- yeah, we have the call for proposals, I was just going to -- call for proposals, Item F under the new business.

MR. UBELAKER: Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair. Once again for the record my name is Brian Ubelaker, Wildlife Biologist with OSM.

And now is the call for wildlife proposals land the Councils opportunity to submit proposals to change Federal subsistence wildlife harvest regulations. An informational flier on how to submit a proposal to change Federal subsistence regulations can be found on Page 89 of your meeting books.

Proposals need to include the regulations you wish to change, the specific changes

you are proposing, an explanation of why the regulation change should be made and any additional information which may help in evaluating the proposed change. The window to submit proposals opened February 27th and closes April 12th. The Council can vote to submit a proposal during this meeting and your Council Coordinator will then officially submit it. Also the opportunity for Councils to submit proposals is available during this entire meeting. If a Council member thinks of a proposal later or in response to another agenda item they're welcome to suggest submitting a proposal then. Of course anyone can submit a proposal as an individual before the submission window closes.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am happy to answer any questions about the proposal process and will standby while the Council discusses.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you, Brian. Anybody on the phone there, Robert, Ron, questions.

MR. KIRK: No comment, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you, Ron.

Anybody here at the table, any questions for Brian.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: It sounds like we got through that one pretty quick, right on.

(Pause)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Nissa wants to talk.

(Laughter)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: She's been listening to me and Tommy all day so.

(Laughter)

MS. PILCHER: For the record this is Nissa Pilcher. And just to reiterate what Brian said,

if you guys go home tonight and think about this and come up with another -- with a proposal you want to talk about tomorrow, please, this is your time to put those in. I know we're rushing because it's the end of the day and we're trying to get through it, but, really, if you think of anything just bring it up tomorrow morning and we can take care of it then.

Okay.

And then that will lead me into -- there's also currently a call for proposals for the Alaska Board of Game.

So the Board is accepting proposals on hunting and trapping for different state regions, one of which is the Arctic Western region, which includes the Seward Peninsula, the other one is the Interior meeting. Your Council is welcome to discuss and draft and submit proposals to the Board of Game. These proposals are due by May 1st and the Arctic Western meeting will occur in late January of next year in Kotzebue. And, once, again, if you want to submit any State proposals I will gladly work with you guys to get them drafted and get them submitted in a -- before they're due.

And that is it.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Thank you, Nissa. Okay, so anybody have anything to add, any wishes, you'll dream about them tonight and have nightmares and cry on your pillow in the morning and come in and introduce a new proposal.

(Laughter)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Yeah, right. Okay, so thank you. What's -- what are we doing on Item G there, the annual report?

MS. PILCHER: So that's your guys' annual report. I can go through it -- oh.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Somebody's over here -- Hannah.

DR. VOORHEES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I believe we had added WSA22-05 to the agenda. I'm happy

to do that now or later. Thanks.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Mary's hungry, I think we're going to wait. What is it that it was, I missed it for some reason.

MS. PILCHER: It's this.

(Pause)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: We're going to recess, it is now 5:47, okay, until tomorrow morning at 10:30 -- no.

(Laughter)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Did you hear them go, uh, what, yeah, in the morning, the earlier the better guys.

MR. GRAY: You can have a meeting by yourself.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Yeah.

(Laughter)

MS. PILCHER: It's your guys' call, if you want to start at 6:00 we'll be here at 6:00.

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Recess back until 9:00.

MR. KIRK: Did you say back until 8:00?

CHAIRMAN GREEN: Well, we're just going to go to the Airport Pizza and we'll be back in about an hour and a half.

MS. PILCHER: He's pulling your leg.

(Laughter)

MR. KIRK: Okay.

MS. PILCHER: He's pulling your leg.

MR. KIRK: Okay. See you guys later. Tomorrow morning at 9:00.

MS. PILCHER: Yep, tomorrow at 9:00 sound good.

(Council nods affirmatively)

CHAIRMAN GREEN: That's what I said.

MS. PILCHER: Okay.

(Off record)

(PROCEEDINGS TO BE CONTINUED)

C E R T I F I C A T E

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)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:

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DATED at Anchorage, Alaska, this 27th day of April 2023.

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Salena A. Hile
Notary Public, State of Alaska
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