

SOUTHEAST ALASKA SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes

Cape Fox Lodge
Ketchikan, Alaska
October 25 – 27, 2022

Invocation:

Orville Lind, Office of Subsistence Management, provided an invocation.

Call to Order, Roll Call, and Quorum Establishment:

The meeting was called to order Tuesday, October 25, 2022, at around 9:00 a.m. Council members Donald Hernandez, Calvin Casipit, Michael Douville, Ian Johnson, Harvey Kitka, Cathy Needham, Patricia Phillips, John Smith III, Louie Wagner Jr., and Frank Wright Jr. were present in person. Council members Albert Howard and James Slater were present by telephone. Council member Robert Schroeder was not present and was excused. With 12 out of 13 seated Council members present, the quorum was established.

Attendees:

- U.S. Forest Service (USFS): *Dave Schmid, Frank Sherman, Greg Risdahl, Cathy Tighe, Ray Born, DeAnna Perry, Rob Cross, Jacob Musslewhite, Andrew Sanders, Susan Oehlers, Jennifer Hanlon, Kim Ramos*
- Office of Subsistence Management (OSM): *Orville Lind, Brent Vickers, Ph.D., Lisa Grediagin, Robbin La Vine, Jason Roberts, Ph.D.*
- Ketchikan Indian Community (KIC): *Trixie Bennett, Tribal President, Tony Gallegos, Keenan Sanderson, Steven Hartford*
- Organized Village of Saxman (OVS): *Joe Williams, Tribal President*
- Organized Village of Kake (OVK): *Justin McDonald*
- Angoon Community Association: *Maxine Thomson, Mayor*
- Cape Fox, Tongass Tribe: *Willard Jackson, Speaker of the House, Teikweidi Brown Bear*
- Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA): *Glen Chen, Ph.D.*
- National Park Service (NPS): *Eva Patton, Wendy Bredow, Barbara Cellarius*
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS): *Jill Klein, Doug Cooper, Sara Markegard*
- Bureau of Land Management (BLM): *Chris McKee*
- Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G): *Mark Burch, Lauren Sill, Ross Dorendorf, Tom Schumacher, Patrick Ballard*
- Members of the Public: *Heather Bauscher, Ryan Oney-Miller, Joshua McGaw, Jordan Sletten, Owen Johnson-Knipes, Kurk Cabudol, Triston Quigley, Jason Young, Rowan Olney-Miller, Lena Keilman, Larry Bemis, Amy Daugherty, Marcie Haynes, Judith McQuerry, Naomi*

Michelson, Leah Benning, Steven Hartford, Wayne Weiling, Jerry Holderman, Judy Leask Guthrie

Welcomes:

Trixie Bennett, President of KIC, welcomed the Council to the traditional homelands of the Saanya Kwaan and the Taanta Kwaan people and delivered a Tlingit prayer. Joe Williams, Tribal President of the OVS, also extended his welcome to the Council.

Dave Schmid, Regional Forester, USFS, welcomed the Council to Ketchikan and the Tongass National Forest. Mr. Schmid, as a Federal Subsistence Board member, congratulated Council members Michael Douville and Don Hernandez for their dedicated service and presented 20-year service awards to each.

Review and Adopt Agenda:

Motion by Member Wright, seconded by Member Needham, to adopt the agenda as read with the following changes:

- Designate 10 c. non-rural determination threshold analysis as an action item
- Add USFS Regional Forester report to Old Business
- Move 10 j. Caribou Workshop/Arctic Ungulate Conference to first item under New Business
- Move 10 l. to first item on Wednesday if there are questions

The motion passed unanimously.

Review and Approve Previous Meeting Minutes:

Motion by Member Needham, seconded by Member Smith, to approve the winter 2022 meeting minutes with a correction on page 6: replace ‘elected’ with ‘re-elected’ for Frank Wright, Jr. as Council Secretary. The motion passed unanimously.

Council Member and Chair Reports:

Ian Johnson of Hoonah reported concerns about local food security and sovereignty due to the high cost of living in his community and the impact that fuel costs have had on the subsistence user’s ability to harvest food. Climate change has affected resources. The drought of 2019 and early 2020, the hemlock sawfly and budworm outbreaks all contributed to significant die-off of old growth tree stands in his area and many are concerned with wildfire risk. Warmer temperatures and ocean acidification are suspected of low Coho Salmon returns and late-returning Sockeye Salmon. Crab harvest was hit-or-miss, and very experienced crab fishermen were experiencing lower harvests. He reported that Hoonah is working at engaging and educating youth in resource policy processes.

Frank Wright, Jr. of Hoonah reported that the ferry schedule will be cut back this winter, and he described the problems caused by the decrease in transportation options throughout Southeast. His community saw a record number of tour ships this season. Unlike previous years, he did not have to sort Tanner Crabs this year or last, because there were only a few small females. He and his crew experienced

bad weather while on the water with little Tanner Crab success – worst he’s ever seen. He reported a lack of young people participating in Khu.eex’ (potlatch) because of the pandemic and he expressed concern that when any portion of a culture is taken away, it diminishes the identity of those people.

Calvin Casipit of Gustavus reported that the number of visitors and sportfishermen returned to the pre-COVID pandemic levels and that there were many fish boxes leaving the community. Because of the warm weather, there were few moose that came down from high country; however, Gustavus did meet the quota of 11-12 moose this season. Warmer temperatures are also keeping deer in higher elevations. He expressed the desire to receive more information from staff on ‘meaningful preference’ as it pertains to the direction in the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act and guidance on how the Council, through its work, can address it and provide it to subsistence users.

Michael Douville of Craig reported that hunting season has just started on Prince of Wales Island with no significant harvest success yet. Fishing was good (best he’s seen in 10 years) except the notable lack of king (Chinook) salmon. Residents remain concerned about the high, healthy wolf population and the loss of winter habitat for deer. These impacts are affecting the ability of subsistence users to harvest deer in his area.

James Slater of Pelican reported that fishing for Chum Salmon seemed to be more lucrative than fishing for Coho Salmon this year. Halibut fishing was slow and there were few Pink Salmon in the creeks in his area. Deer remains at higher elevations so there has been minimal harvest success so far this season. A successful growing season allowed him to share his bounty with the community.

Albert Howard of Angoon reported the cost of living in his community is on the rise and residents rely on king (Chinook) and Coho salmon as well as deer to supplement their food sources. However, he is concerned that Angoon residents are in for a bad winter due to lack of resources. He reported that fishing returns have declined. King (Chinook) salmon was almost non-existent this year, Sockeye Salmon returns were very low, halibut fishing was very slow, and Coho Salmon showed up more than a month later than usual.

Donald Hernandez of Point Baker shared his observations of some of the many changes in salmon behavior in his area throughout the 40+ years that he has been commercially fishing in Sumner Strait. The early run of Stikine Sockeye Salmon surprisingly came in good; however, subsistence fishing may have been limited due to high water. Fishing in the north end of Sumner Strait was very bad with greater success in the South. Pink Salmon harvest, local Sockeye and Coho salmon runs were all poor, and king (Chinook) Salmon were so lacking that the season never closed. It was a good Chum Salmon season. Sawfly outbreaks were extensive and the spruce budworm attacking young growth was concerning. The community remains concerned about the ever-expanding non-resident sportfishing industry. In his community, the number of non-resident sports fishermen outnumber the local residents every single day of the summer and this has depleted local stocks that are important to subsistence users. Additional concerns of unguided fishermen are wasted fish and complicated bag limits, where fishermen make multiple fishing trips in one day, having each trip’s take processed while fishermen go back out to take

another bag limit. Chair Hernandez wondered how possession limits can be better enforced. People are not optimistic about the upcoming deer season.

Patty Phillips of Pelican reported that a result of changes in ocean waters are evident in the wasting starfish observed in her area. There are less sea otters, so locals have been able to harvest scallops and abalone to share with the community. There was hardly any shrimp this year. She has heard reports of wolves and is concerned about them showing up soon (as they are good swimmers). There have been heavy torrents of rain, scouring the streams, which resulting in poor Pink Salmon runs. Charter fleets and clients returned to the area. Compounding the shortage of salmon harvest is the Wild Fish Conservancy lawsuit, which may devastate the Chinook Salmon harvest. The treaty allocation between commercial, personal use, and charter/sport will affect subsistence users at a local level. There has been a large conifer stand die-off and there are concerns that in drier years, there could be an increase in the risk of forest fires.

Louie Wagner, Jr. of Metlakatla reported that the Pink Salmon run was good but there was limited Chum or Coho salmon. Deer populations seem to be good as many are being sighted. There is a good population of wolves in the area, and they swim between islands. His garden did well. Area clams and cockles need to be tested again to determine if the grey water being discharged by cruise ships are making them unfit for human consumption. He reported some information, he learned by serving on the Transboundary Committee regarding mining impacts, and he voiced his concerns about threats to the Stikine, Unuk, and Taku rivers in the Transboundary River watershed.

Harvey Kitka of Sitka reported that the concerns about the lack of herring continue, and he reflected on the drastic change of herring spawn that used to be in almost all bays of Sitka Sound, which are now down to just a small area and a light spawn south of Dorothy Narrows. Redoubt has provided for Sockeye Salmon harvest; however, other places on Chichagof Island have had poor salmon runs. Sea otters seem to be under control as they are seeing gumboots, abalone, and cockle beds coming back. Deer harvest seems to be down, and guided hunters seem to be taking most goats. Interaction between humans and bears have increased. He also commented on the challenges of having previous Council meetings by virtual means.

John Smith, III. of Juneau reported that there is a concern about low numbers of salmon and how a landslide from a few years ago may have damaged young fry. Trolling fishermen seemed to have a good year out on the ocean. The growing season was good. Many families were growing cabbage and broccoli as well as cherries and apples, and it was a productive year for many berries. He commented on the increase in bear/human interaction and believes that having a more liberal bear hunting season would help decrease these incidents. He would like to see better relationships between State Fish and Game officers and subsistence users.

Cathy Needham of Juneau shared some of her personal history of growing up in a subsistence lifestyle and that although she is not currently a Federally qualified subsistence user, she keeps in mind the representation of subsistence users in her work with the Council. She believes the Council should

advocate for continued uses and connection to the land and move forward with making good, positive food security decisions for families in the region. She's heard from community members regarding the Unit 4 deer proposals. She worked with Hydaburg Cooperative Association regarding the wolf issue and encouraged local people to share traditional ecological knowledge. She hopes that this information will be used more in decision-making processes, especially in moving towards indigenous co-management.

Chair's Report – Don Hernandez reported that the Council's Indigenous Co-Management Workgroup met over the summer to finalize a drafted position statement for the Council to review. He was involved in the planning and participation of the Unit 2 Deer Summit and was pleased by the participation by various groups and agencies.

Old Business:

The Council received information on the following topics: Federal Subsistence Board (Board) 805(c) Report summary; Board FY2021 Annual Report Replies summary; Special Actions update; Sitka Kaagwaantaan Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction petition; Southeast Alaska Sustainability Strategy; and the Alaska Roadless Rule.

Indigenous Co-Management Position Statement:

The Council reviewed and discussed the drafting committee's position statement and made suggested edits.

Motion by member Needham, seconded by member Phillips, to finalize and send the Council's position statement for indigenous co-management of natural resources to various agencies.

The motion **passed** on a unanimous vote.

Unit 2 Wolf Update:

Sarah Markegard, biologist with U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, provided a status update on the Endangered Species Act petition for listing the Alexander Archipelago wolf. The species status assessment and the 12-month finding are expected to be published concurrently in the Federal Register sometime between July and September, 2023.

Tom Schumacher, ADF&G Regional Supervisor, announced the Unit 2 wolf population estimate was 268 wolves with a 95% confidence interval of 216 to 332 wolves. Based on that estimate, ADF&G supports a one-month trapping season from November 15th to December 15th.

Unit 4 Deer Proposals:

Jake Musslewhite, USFS biologist, and Rob Cross, Tongass National Forest (TNF) Subsistence Program Leader, presented the updated analyses for wildlife proposals deferred by the Board. The Council took the following actions:

WP22-07: Deer, Admiralty Island – closure to non-Federally-qualified users (Unit 4)

Motion by Member Casipit, seconded by Member Needham, to **support WP22-07 with modification** to remove wildlife analysis areas 4043, 4044, and 4054 from the proposal area and to reduce the harvest limit for non-Federally qualified users to two bucks within the remaining area (WAAs 4042, 4055, and 4041).

The Council further limited the area addressed in this proposal from its Fall 2021 recommendation and recommended a bag limit reduction instead of a full closure, which will have a lesser impact on non-Federally qualified users. The Council supports Angoon in its efforts to protect their way of life but recognizes that there is a higher threshold to achieve when justifying a closure versus reducing harvest limits. The Council considered this recommendation to be a reasonable compromise, which the Board asked for in its deferral.

The motion **passed** with 9 votes in favor to 3 against.

WP22-08: Deer, NE Chichagof – harvest restriction on non-Federally-qualified users (Unit 4)

Motion by Member Casipit, seconded by Member Johnson, to **take no action on WP22-08**, maintaining the fall 2021 recommendation.

The Council noted that there is a higher level of criteria required to close an area to harvest that are not appropriate in this case of reducing harvest limits, which still provide hunting opportunity for non-Federally qualified users. The buck restriction on non-Federally qualified users will offer a meaningful preference to Federally qualified subsistence users by reducing competition and have a dual purpose of protecting/supporting the deer population. The Council noted that previous testimony indicated that non-Federally qualified users primarily target bucks anyway.

The motion **passed** on a unanimous vote.

WP22-10: Deer, Lisianski Strait – closure to non-Federally-qualified users (Unit 4)

Amended motion by Member Phillips, seconded by Member Casipit, to **support WP22-10 with modification** to reduce the harvest limit for non-Federally qualified users to two bucks (and maintain the area recommended in Fall 2021).

The Council believes that there is a higher level of criteria required to close an area to harvest, which is not appropriate in this case of reducing harvest limits, which can still provide hunting opportunity for non-Federally qualified users, and ensure a subsistence priority. The buck restriction on non-Federally qualified users will provide a meaningful preference to Federally qualified subsistence users by reducing competition. This additional limitation on harvest in the Lisianski area will also minimize conflict in regulations and align the harvest limit by non-Federally qualified users with the harvest limit for the Hoonah area (WP22-08), making the regulations for these areas easier to understand overall. With this regulatory alignment, addressing Unit 4 deer issues in the future will be easier.

The motion **passed** on a unanimous vote.

New Business:

Fisheries Management Reports:

Jake Musslewhite, USFS, provided a Federal Subsistence Fisheries Update for the Southeast Region to the Council, including results from the Sockeye Salmon escapement monitoring project from the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program.

Regional Fisheries Proposals and Closure Reviews:

FP23-20: Revise customary and traditional use determination for Southeastern Alaska-Yakutat Area Shellfish

Motion by Member Phillips, seconded by Member Casipit, to **support FP23-20**, as written.

Though there are few marine waters under Federal subsistence fisheries jurisdiction in Southeast Alaska, the Council is aware of a pending Final Rule that may establish additional Federal marine waters. The Council felt that there was more than substantial evidence presented to support this proposal and would like to take the first step in providing a potential benefit to subsistence users. The Council does not “think that this recommendation for C&T use is really going to restrict any other users at this point.” The motion passed on a unanimous vote.

FP23-21: Limit Sockeye Salmon harvest in Kah Sheets Lake and River to Federally qualified subsistence users

Motion by Member Phillips, seconded by Member Casipit, to **support FP23-21, with modification** to close Kah Sheets Creek to non-Federally qualified users from July 1 – July 31, while leaving Kah Sheets Lake open to all users.

Although it is difficult to determine if there is a conservation concern without stock assessment data, this area attracts a fair number of fishermen so it can be assumed there are lots of fish. Since fish are being harvested under a Federal permit, the Council feels obligated to provide a meaningful priority for an important resource (Sockeye Salmon) to subsistence users to help meet their subsistence harvest needs. This will not unnecessarily restrict non-Federally qualified users. The modification still meets the general intent of proponent as it reduces competition and may prevent non-Federally qualified users flooding into the area where there is already a significant competition for physical space between sport fishermen and subsistence users.

The motion passed on a unanimous vote.

FCR23-23: Review closure to subsistence harvest of salmon in the Taku River

Motion by Member Phillips, seconded by Member Johnson, to **rescind the closure**.

The Council was informed that this fishery was not mentioned in the Pacific Salmon Treaty, but it wasn't necessarily intentionally excluded, it was just never listed, addressed, or approved. This is the last hurdle to overcome before the Council could support creation of a Chinook Salmon fishery and although the Taku River will continue to be closed until the escapement goal is reached, this could lay a foundation to help subsistence users meet their harvest needs in the future. This would not restrict anyone since there is no regulation being created with the rescinding of this closure. The Council was happy to see the Transboundary Tech. Committee citation in the analysis, encouraged that subsistence has a place in that treaty.

The motion passed on a unanimous vote.

FCR23-24: Review closure to non-Federally qualified users for Sockeye Salmon in Neva Lake, Neva Creek, and South Creek

Motion by Member Phillips, seconded by Member Casipit, to **maintain the status quo**.

The Council found that there is substantial evidence to show that unguided sportfishing is negatively affecting subsistence users' harvest of Sockeye Salmon. This Council has made significant attempts in the past to address this issue, including but not limited to, submitting various proposals through the State's Board of Fisheries to help gather data and address the impacts of this virtually unregulated type of fishing. The Council continues to recognize the challenge of developing information other than traditional ecological knowledge (a perspective that gets discounted), which results in no action being taken and a continued impact on subsistence resources. Maintaining the status quo of the closure will help subsistence users meet their needs and provide safer conditions to fish.

The motion passed on a unanimous vote.

NDP25-01: Request to rescind the nonrural status of Ketchikan Area

Motion by Member Needham, seconded by Member Casipit, to support the OSM conclusion that the proposal has met the threshold requirements and should proceed to the next steps in the nonrural determination proposal process, including a full analysis.

The Council found, based on the information shared with them, that the proposal provided sufficient details to warrant a full analysis for determination of nonrural status of Ketchikan. The Council received public testimony from area residents in favor of non-rural status and the Council looks forward to completing the rest of the steps in the nonrural determination process, should the Board accept the Council's recommendation and find that the threshold criteria has been met.

The motion passed on a unanimous vote.

2024 Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program and Partners for Fisheries Monitoring Program:

Dr. Brent Vickers, Anthropology Division Supervisor, OSM, advised that the notice of funding opportunity for Partners of Fisheries Monitoring Program (a competitive grant for Alaska Native and rural non-profit organizations) is currently open.

Dr. Vickers then provided introductory information on funding of research and monitoring projects that help manage subsistence fisheries in Federal public waters of Alaska. Rob Cross, TNF Subsistence Leader, led the Council in discussing priority information needs, which are used to identify local concerns and gaps in fisheries knowledge based on the Council's knowledge about Southeast Alaska communities. The Council identified several priorities such as: producing reliable estimates of Sockeye Salmon escapement and in-season harvest and of stream discharge in several systems, establish escapement indexes or population estimates for Eulachon at the Unuk River and Yakutat Forelands, develop escapement goals for Sockeye Salmon systems with long term escapement data sets, incorporate the use of indigenous co-management, and update community household fish harvest surveys, to name a few.

Subsistence Resource Commission Appointment

Dr. Barbara Cellarius, cultural anthropologist and subsistence coordinator for Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, NPS, informed the Council of the eligibility requirements for serving on the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve Subsistence Resource Commission.

Motion by Member Needham, seconded by Member Phillips, to appoint Darrell James to represent the Council on the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve Subsistence Resource Commission. The motion passed on a unanimous vote.

Harvest of Wildlife for Sport Purposes in National Preserves

Eva Patton, Subsistence Program Manager, NPS, advised that NPS is re-examining the risk associated with bear baiting on Preserve lands and is asking for feedback from all Regional Advisory Councils. The Council had no input at this time.

Joint meeting: North American Caribou Workshop/Arctic Ungulate Conference May '23

Lisa Grediagin, Wildlife Division Supervisor, OSM, informed the Council of an upcoming conference on caribou and arctic ungulates. She asked the Council for possible topics for an ungulate management symposium and for a representative/alternate nomination by the Council if they wished a Council member to attend.

Motion by Member Howard, seconded by Member Wright, to nominate Member Cal Casipit to attend the conference on behalf of the Council to represent local knowledge and the concerns of the region related to ungulates.

Motion by Member Howard, seconded by Member Phillips to nominate Member Cathy Needham as an alternate.

Both motions **passed** unanimously.

Council Member reimbursement for telephonic/internet expenses related to Council teleconference meetings

DeAnna Perry, Council Coordinator, USFS, provided information to the Council regarding possible reimbursement of telephonic/internet expenses. He outlined the process to submit expenses associated with a Council member's participation in the Council meetings over the last two and a half years that were in excess of his/her normal bill.

Fall 2022 Council application/nomination open season:

Ms. Perry advised that the window to apply for a seat on the Council is currently open. There will be four vacancies to fill on the Southeast Council. The deadline to apply is February 21, 2023.

State of Alaska Board of Game proposals:

The Council voted on October 26 to form a working group to perform an initial review of the pending Alaska Board of Game Southeast Region wildlife proposals that evening and put together thoughts for comments to be discussed and approved by the Council during their meeting the following day when the comments would be finalized and forwarded to the Alaska Board of Game before its January meeting.

Motion by Member Casipit, seconded by Member Kitka, to provide comments, as discussed on record, to 24 wildlife proposals affecting Southeast Alaska resources. Motion **passed** on a unanimous vote.

Motion by Member Needham, seconded by Member Phillips, to send a representative/alternate to the Alaska Board of Game meeting in Ketchikan in January 2023 to present the Council's comments, with a request that this travel be funded by the Office of Subsistence Management. Motion **passed** on a unanimous vote.

Motion by Member Needham, seconded by Member Phillips, to nominate John Smith as the primary Council Member and Albert Howard to be the alternate Council Member to represent the Council and deliver its comments at the Alaska Board of Game January meeting. Motion **passed** on a unanimous vote.

Identify Issues for FY-2022 Annual Report:

Motion by Member Needham, seconded by Member Phillips, to approve the following list of items to be included in the draft FY-2022 Annual Report to the Board:

- Transboundary mining potential impacts to resources
- Unguided sports fishermen issues
- Adaptive management techniques to be used for young growth harvests
- Support awareness for bycatch issues
- Indigenous co-management of resources

- Youth input/representation on Regional Advisory Councils
- Commercial fisheries impact to subsistence fisheries
- Lack of law enforcement for fisheries
- Need to fund studies – document any decline of harvests due to decline of users
- Climate Change
- Current status of fish and wildlife resources throughout Southeast Alaska

Correspondence:

The Council voted to send the following additional correspondence:

- Letter to North Pacific Fishery Management Council regarding concerns about the bycatch issue
- Letter to Secretary of State (pursuant to correspondence policy) regarding the concerns about the impacts to resources of mining around transboundary rivers and watershed

Future Meeting Dates:

The Council voted to have its winter 2023 meeting February 28 through March 2, 2023, in Juneau.

The Council voted to have its fall 2023 meeting October 24 – 26, 2023, in Sitka.

**There was not enough time during this meeting to hear agency reports so they will be carried over onto the winter meeting agenda.*



DeAnna Perry, Designated Federal Officer
USDA – United States Forest Service



Don Hernandez, Chair
Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

These minutes were reviewed and approved in their current form at the Winter 2023 Meeting of the Southeast Subsistence Regional Advisory Council.

A more detailed report of this meeting, copies of the transcript, and meeting handouts are available upon request. Call Office of Subsistence Management at 1-800-478-1456 or Council Coordinator, DeAnna Perry at 907-209-7817 or email deanna.perry@usda.gov.