



YUKON-KUSKOKWIM DELTA
SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL
ADVISORY COUNCIL
Meeting Materials

April 4-6, 2023
Bethel



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USFWS photo by Kristine Sowl

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YUKON-KUSKOKWIM DELTA SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

ONC Multipurpose Room
Bethel, AK
April 4-6, 2023
convening at 9:00 am daily

TELECONFERENCE: call the toll-free number: 1-866-326-9183, then when prompted enter the passcode: 48576438

PUBLIC COMMENTS: Public comments are welcome for each agenda item and for regional concerns not included on the agenda. The Council appreciates hearing your concerns and knowledge. The Chair will identify the opportunities to provide public comments. Please fill out a comment form to be recognized by the Council Chair. Time limits may be set to provide opportunity for all to testify and keep the meeting on schedule.

PLEASE NOTE: These are estimated times and the agenda is subject to change. Contact staff for the current schedule. Evening sessions are at the call of the chair.

AGENDA

*Asterisk identifies action item.

- 1. **Invocation**
- 2. **Call to Order** (*Chair*)
- 3. **Roll Call and Establish Quorum** (*Secretary or DFO*)
- 4. **Meeting Announcements** (*Council Coordinator*) 4
- 5. **Welcome and Introductions** (*Chair*)
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 - Vice-Chair (*New Chair*)
 - Secretary (*New Chair*)
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- 9. **Reports**
 - Council Member Reports
 - Chair’s Report
- 10. **Public and Tribal Comment on Non-Agenda Items** (available each morning)

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- a. Follow up on May 2023 North American Caribou Workshop and Arctic Ungulate Conference (*OSM Wildlife*)..... 17
 - i. Feedback from Councils on the State and Federal ungulate management in Alaska symposium. 18
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12. New Business (Chair)

- a. Wildlife Reports
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- b. Wildlife Closure Reviews (*OSM Wildlife*)

Regional

- i. **WCR24-38** Portion of Unit 18 (Kuskokwim River hunt area) closed to moose hunting except by residents of Tuntutuliak, Eek, Napakiak, Napaskiak, Kasigluk, Nunapitchuk, Atmautlauk, Oscarville, Bethel, Kwethluk, Akiachak, Akiak, Tuluksak, Lower Kalskag and Kalskag 46

Crossover

- ii. **WCR24-43** Unit 19A Remainder closed to moose hunting except by residents of Tuluksak, Lower Kalskag, Upper Kalskag, Aniak, Chuathbaluk, and Crooked Creek..... 65

- c. Call for Federal Wildlife Proposals* (*OSM Wildlife*)..... 80
- d. Call for Alaska Board of Game Western Region Proposals* 83
- e. Temporary Fisheries Special Action FSA23-01- Kanektok River Chinook and Chum Salmon Fishing Closure for Non-federally Qualified Users* (*OSM Fisheries*)
- f. 2021 Council Charter Review* (*Council Coordinator*)..... 111
- g. Review and approve FY2022 Annual Report* (*Council Coordinator*)..... 86
- h. Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program Update (*OSM Fisheries and Anthropology*)
- i. Partners for Fisheries Monitoring Program Update (*OSM Fisheries and Anthropology*)
 - i. Partners Presentations (*Native Village of Napaimute and Orutsararmiut Native Council*)
- j. Regulatory Cycle Update (*OSM Fisheries*)

13. Additional Reports

(Time limit of 15 minutes unless approved in advance)

- a. Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission Update (*KRITFC*)

Agenda

- b. Overview of YK Delta Climate Change Adaptation Efforts and Gravel-to-Gravel DOI
Keystone Initiative (*USFWS Science Applications*) 93
- c. Salmon Bycatch Report (*NPFMC*)
- d. Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association Update (*YRDFA*)..... 95
- e. 2023 Yukon River Salmon Fisheries Outlook (*USFWS*)
- f. Office of Subsistence Management

14. Future Meeting Dates*

- a. Confirm Fall 2023 meeting date and location 108
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- c. Select Fall 2024 meeting date and location..... 110

15. Closing Comments

16. Adjourn (*Chair*)

To teleconference into the meeting, call the toll-free number: 1-866-326-9183, then when prompted enter the passcode: 48576438

Reasonable Accommodations

The Federal Subsistence Board is committed to providing access to this meeting for all participants. Please direct all requests for sign language interpreting services, closed captioning, or other accommodation needs to Brooke McDavid, Council Coordinator at 907-891-9181, brooke_mcdavid@fws.gov, or 800-877-8339 (TTY), by close of business on 3/28/2023.

REGION 5
Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Regional Advisory Council
Members

Seat	Yr Apptd Term Expires	Member Name & Address	Represents
1	2021 2025	Henry Parks <i>Nunapitchuk</i>	Subsistence
2	2021 2025	Norma T. Evan <i>Marshall</i>	Subsistence
3	2006 2025	John W. Andrew <i>Kwethluk</i>	Subsistence
4	2022 2025	Walter A. Morgan, Sr. <i>Lower Kalskag</i>	Subsistence
5	2021 2023	Jacqueline K. Cleveland <i>Quinhagak</i>	Subsistence
6	2018 2023	James C. Landlord <i>Mountain Village</i>	Subsistence
7	2017 2023	Alissa Nadine Rogers <i>Bethel</i>	Subsistence
8	2021 2023	Phillip K. Peter, Sr. <i>Akiachak</i>	Subsistence
9	2021 2023	Wassilly B. Alexie <i>Russian Mission</i>	Subsistence
10	2001 2024	Raymond J. Oney <i>Alakanuk</i>	Chair Subsistence
11	2021 2024	Myron P. Naneng, Sr. <i>Bethel</i>	Vice Chair Subsistence
12	2021 2024	Robert J. Hoffman <i>Bethel</i>	Subsistence
13	2018 2024	Richard B. Slats <i>Chevak</i>	Secretary Subsistence

**YUKON-KUSKOKWIM DELTA SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY
COUNCIL
Meeting Minutes**

Yupiit Piciryarait Cultural Center
Bethel, AK
October 27-28, 2022

Invocation:

Phillip Peter Sr. provided an invocation.

Call to Order, Roll Call, and Quorum Establishment:

The meeting was called to order Thursday, October 27, 2022, at 9:25AM. Council members Henry Parks, John Andrew, Jaqueline Cleveland, Alissa Rogers, Philip Peter, Sr., and Myron Naneng Sr. were present in person, and Robert Hoffman and Norma Evan were present via phone. With seven of 13 seated Council members present, the quorum was established. Myron Naneng Sr. presided as Chair due to Raymond Oney's absence. James Landlord was delayed by weather and joined in-person the afternoon of the first day. Norma Evan joined in-person the second day. Wasilly Alexie, Thomas Alstrom, and Raymond Oney were not present and were excused. Richard Slats was not present and was not excused.

Attendees:

* Denotes attended telephonically

- Yup'ik Interpreters: Sophie Evan and Joann Andrew
- Office of Subsistence Management (OSM): Brooke McDavid, Katya Wessels, Robbin La Vine, Tom Plank, Kevin Foley, Pippa Kenner, Cory Graham
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: Regional Office: Jill Klein; Fisheries & Ecological Services - Gerald Maschmann; Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) – Aaron Moses, Ed Davis, Christopher Tulik, Bryan Daniels, Paul Larson, David Therchik; Togiak NWR – Andy Aderman*
- Bureau of Land Management: Walker Gusse*, Chris McKee*, Tim Sundlov*
- Bureau of Indian Affairs: Rosalie Debenham*
- National Park Service: Regional Office: Eva Patton*
- Alaska Department of Fish and Game: Wildlife Conservation - Luke Rogers*; Commercial Fisheries - Deena Jallen*, Kristy Gleason*, Shane Ransbury*, Nick Smith*, Sam Decker*; Sport Fisheries – John Chythlook*, Lisa Stuby*
- Kuskokwim River Intertribal Fish Commission – Terese Schomogyi, Nikki Pollock, Andrew Magel
- Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA) - Catherine Moncrieff, Serena Fitka, and Gabe Canfield
- Kwethluk Inc. - Nick Ayapan*, Senka Guy*, Anthony Olick*, George Guy*

- Native Village of Napaimute: Dan Gillikin*
- North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC): Dr. Diana Stram*
- Association of Village Council Presidents: Ashley Johnson
- Donlin Gold: Enric Fernandez, Rebecca Wilmarth
- Public: Timothy Andrew, Jeff Sanders, Abrose Aguchak, Nels Alexie*, Stanilas Sheppard*

Review and Adopt Agenda:

Motion by Member Peter, seconded by Member Andrew, to adopt the agenda as presented with the following changes:

- Addition of item 11(j) to elect a Council member to represent the Y-K Delta RAC on the State of Alaska Wood Bison Planning Team.

The motion passed on a unanimous vote.

Review and Approve Previous Meeting Minutes:

Motion by Member Peter, seconded by Member Andrew, to approve the winter 2022 meeting minutes as presented with the following modifications:

- Correct spelling of John Hanson's last name on page 9.

The motion passed on a unanimous vote.

Council Member and Chair Reports:

Robert Hoffman of Bethel reported that he is proud of the Council for continuing to discuss important issues affecting subsistence in the region and for working together to find solutions to those issues. He kept his report short because he was joining via teleconference.

Henry Parks of Nunapitchuk reported that he was very excited to be meeting in person again after the pandemic. He shared about the various subsistence activities he participated in since the last meeting and observations he made during this time out on the land. He reported that ptarmigan numbers are increasing, salmon fishing was decent, whitefish fishing was great, and the salmonberries were good this year. Blackberries were low due to weather, and there were hardly any snow geese in the spring. He thanked Federal and State agencies for allowing some salmon fishing opportunity in the Kuskokwim Region during the summer. He requested that managers consider that some people cannot fish on Sundays due to religious practices causing their available fishing time to decrease when openers are on Sundays. He also requested that openers do not start at 6:00 am but shift to a later opening of 9:00 am. He ended by saying that everyone needs to continue keeping a watch on the land, sea, plants, and animals and making sure that they are taken care of so that the subsistence way of life that is so vital to culture and food security may continue.

John Andrew of Kwethluk reported that it was a tough fishing season this year because the fish came late and there were not many openers. They did not get enough reds (Sockeye Salmon) and kings (Chinook Salmon), so they were anxiously waiting for a chance to harvest silvers (Coho Salmon). He was very upset the Alaska Department of Fish and Game closed for silvers. They saw the fish jumping in the river but could not harvest them. Mr. Andrew said that a lot of people want to see restrictions put on Area M commercial fishing because they are catching salmon that should be coming to Kuskokwim, Yukon, and Norton Sound areas. He said they shouldn't wait for more studies. Same thing with Bering Sea trawlers; they need to restrict salmon bycatch. He said he has been asking for restrictions on those fisheries since the 1980s. Mr. Andrew wants to see community representation on the NPFMC, and not just one or two advisory seats because that will be a powerless minority on the Council.

Alissa Rogers of Bethel reported that she currently has only smelt and birds in her freezer because of the lack of salmon. She said that smelt were plentiful and good sized this year. She was also glad that the bird flu did not end up being as bad as they were afraid it might be. She observed the incoming bird migrations in the springtime were smaller than usual, but there were a lot of baby birds and the outmigration seemed much bigger. Her family also had a good year of trapping and gathering eggs and greens. Ms. Rogers shared how difficult it is to pass on traditions when they are not allowed to go salmon fishing. The closures are resulting in a lot of pain. She said that the king salmon ran very late this year, someone caught one on September 6th. She did not go salmon fishing in order to aid in conservation and let the elders who really need it have the salmon instead. She reported that blueberries and salmonberries were good, and the salmonberries ripened early. She has heard about a lot more bear activity than normal and camps getting broken into, attributing it to the lack of salmon in the spawning grounds. She ended her report by sharing that climate change is causing lakes to disappear and the land to sink and turn into swampland in some areas, but that other areas are uplifting into hills.

Jacqueline Cleveland of Quinhagak reported that there are no fishery monitoring programs in place for the Kanektok River except for an aerial survey for Chinook Salmon. The lack of monitoring data is an issue because management does not have much to go off when making decisions. Most Quinhagak residents were able to meet their needs for salmon. Sockeye Salmon were abundant. Most king salmon were jacks. Chum Salmon showed up very late at the end of July and there was more than the previous year. Silvers were lower than usual but not so low like on the Kuskokwim River. Overall, she observed fish racks to be about 60% red salmon and 40% kings since Chum Salmon were late. Climate change is impacting our communities significantly. For other subsistence foods, it was a good year except for berries. Erosion of our coastline and riverbanks is on-going and washing away archeological sites. Permafrost melt is putting village infrastructure at risk making some building unsafe. Hunting and fishing patterns are changing; for example, hunters must go further out to sea to get seals.

Phillip Peter, Sr. of Akiakchak reported that one of his uncles predicted to him a long time ago that someday the red salmon would take over and there would be no more Chum Salmon. They are starting to see this happening on the Kuskokwim River. Mr. Peter expressed concern about the small mesh nets sizes being required recently because they may be causing fish numbers to go down. He said that the Federal and State governments must work together and stop fighting about management because it's not a

game, subsistence is people's livelihood. When they set different regulations between the State and Federal Governments along the same river, it is confusing for people and makes them mad. They really needed Coho Salmon this year but weren't allowed to fish for them. Mr. Peter is glad that the Bering Sea bycatch and Area M impacts are finally getting attention after all these years. He ended by saying that moose have been plentiful, and everyone needs to work together to make salmon plentiful again too.

Norma Evan of Marshall reported that it was a bad year for blueberries in Marshall because it was very hot and dry in May and June. The subsistence salmon fishing closures resulted in very little fishing and people could not meet their needs. Some people set nets and caught pikes. Pike are getting bigger and bigger in size. She did not notice any small salmon fry swimming around this summer and is very concerned about that. She is also concerned about Lamprey Eels because it has been four years since they have seen them. Eels are an important food in her area. Grizzly bears have been hanging around the community and killed a moose one mile upriver from town. During a recent funeral she was so sad because they could not provide salmon like they traditionally do, but they were still able to share a little bit.

James Landlord of Mountain Village reported that the first fish they harvest after breakup are Sheefish and everyone is excited to get them after the long winter. He referenced the public comment from George Smith about four-inch mesh nets not being good for catching Sheefish. He said that there was a big wildfire near St. Mary's that resulted in evacuations from there and Mountain Village during June. Mr. Landlord was not able to go out this year because of health reasons, but he said that he was grateful for the whitefish and moose shared with him. He heard reports that moose were abundant.

Myron Naneng Sr. of Bethel reported on the on-going hardships related to salmon declines. He said it has been particularly hard for people on the Yukon who have had heavier restrictions in recent years. He has had to share more fish with his family on the Yukon because they cannot harvest their own. Even fishing in the Kuskokwim is difficult because of the restrictions. They travel to the non-spawning tributaries, which can be as far as a three-hour boat ride one way to get the food they need. Mr. Naneng grew up in Hooper Bay and reported that the Tomcods that used to be abundant during spring and fall have not been returning as they should. Halibut sizes are getting smaller, and more people are fishing them because of the salmon restrictions. He expressed frustrations toward decision making bodies such as the Alaska Board of Fisheries and NPFMC, who do not take the observations of rural residents seriously and just call them "anecdotal". Mr. Naneng is also angry that Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim (AYK) subsistence fisheries have been closed, but commercial fisheries that intercept their salmon are allowed to continue. They have already done genetic studies that prove the Alaska Peninsula salmon fisheries are mixed stock and that fishers there harvest a significant amount of AYK salmon. He stated the importance of all agencies working together to protect resources and cultural traditions. He said the restrictions are killing culture, leaving people without proper nutrition, and disrupting family unity.

Service Awards:

Jill Klein, the USFWS Alaska Regional Subsistence Coordinator and an Interagency Staff Committee Member, presented a 5-year service award to Alissa Rogers and a 20-year award to John Andrew.

Public and Tribal Comment on Non-Agenda Items:

Tim “Kamguk” Andrew from Bethel notified the Council of a recently filed lawsuit related to salmon management on Day 1 of the meeting. He also stated that there are major data gaps for important subsistence resources such as Arctic Lamprey, ptarmigan, and blackfish. He wants to see more studies done on these animals so that management can be better informed. On Day 2 of the meeting, Mr. Andrew let the Council know that he has been hearing about more bear problems in the Bethel area recently. He attributed the increase in bears coming into town to a lack of berries and salmon. He also let the Council know he intends to submit a proposal to the Alaska Board of Game to open a muskox hunt in the Kuskokwim Mountains behind Kalskag.

Serena Fitka with YR DFA relayed a comment on behalf of the Fairbanks Advisory Committee requesting that the Council support Alaska Board of Fisheries proposal 140.

Stanislaus Sheppard from Mountain Village reported that their culture and way of life is disappearing because of the lack of salmon for the past three years. He said that the Yukon River has been closed to subsistence fishing, but other areas can fish. He thinks the U.S. and Canada Pacific Salmon treaty should do more to protect the salmon.

Adolph Lupi from Tuntutuliak provided a comment about the difficulties of merging traditional indigenous ways of knowing and governance systems with Western science and regulations. He said it is even more difficult during times of conservation.

George Smith from Scammon Bay provided a written comment, which was read into the record by Acting Chair Naneng. Mr. Smith stated that the four-inch mesh size restriction only allows them to harvest skinny and undesirable species of whitefish in the spring. It is too small to harvest the Broad Whitefish and Sheefish that they want to catch. He also noted that it is not fair that Kuskokwim region residents can harvest salmon in non-spawning tributaries, but that they are not allowed to do the same in the Yukon region. He highlighted the Kun River, stating that all its tributaries end in lakes to the north and become dead ends to the east just like the Johnson and Tuntutuliak rivers do in the Kuskokwim.

Old Business:

The Council received presentations on the following topics:

- Federal Subsistence Board (Board) 805(c) Report Summary by Brooke McDavid, Council Coordinator
- Board FY2021 Annual Report Reply Summary by Ms. McDavid
- Council Correspondence Update by Ms. McDavid
- Special Actions Update by Pippa Kenner, OSM Anthropologist

New Business:

Fisheries Management Reports:

Yukon River update

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Yukon River Assistant Manager Gerald Maschmann provided the Council with a review of the 2022 salmon fishing season. There was no Chinook Salmon fishing opportunity in 2022 due to the lowest Chinook Salmon runs ever recorded. Summer and fall Chum Salmon runs were also too small to fish. Mr. Maschmann also told the Council about an *Ichthyophonus* sampling project aimed to help better understand in-river mortality and about how the USFWS is trying to offer more opportunities for Government-to-Government consultations with Tribes. Deena Jallen, ADF&G Summer Season Manager, and Shane Ransbury, Assistant Fall Season Manager, extended their sympathies to the Council for another poor year of salmon returns and provided information about upcoming Yukon River Panel and Alaska Board of Fisheries meetings.

Bering Sea Salmon Research Update

Sabrina Garcia from the ADF&G Salmon Ocean Ecology Program presented an update on Bering Sea salmon research including juvenile salmon abundance estimates and factors impacting marine survival. She stated the most important takeaway from the research is that whatever is causing good or bad future run sizes of Yukon River Chinook Salmon is occurring very early in their life stage, either during the year they spend in the fresh water, their first few months in the ocean, or a combination of those two life stages. She also told the Council that she is working on a habitat model for Chinook Salmon in the Bering Sea as part of her PhD dissertation.

Kuskokwim River 2022 Season Summary

Aaron Moses, Subsistence Resource Specialist, and Spencer Rearden, Supervisory Fisheries Biologist, from Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge provided an overview of Kuskokwim River salmon management for the 2022 season. Yukon Delta staff worked collaboratively with Kuskokwim River Intertribal Fish Commission and ADF&G to manage salmon runs. Chinook and Chum salmon numbers were once again low and required fishing restrictions. Limited fishing opportunities were provided to harvest Chinook, Chum, and Sockeye salmon during June and July, and allowable gear was limited to six inch or less gillnets to conserve larger female Chinook Salmon. Coho Salmon returned in very low numbers and no fishing opportunity was provided for that species.

Kuskokwim River Intertribal Fish Commission Fall 2022 Update

Terese Schomogyi, Programs Manager with the Kuskokwim River Intertribal Fish Commission (KRITFC), provided an update to the Council about KRITFC's participation in Salmon Management during the 2022 season, staff changes, research and monitoring projects, and advocacy work. She also provided an overview of the KRITFC 2022 Kuskokwim River Salmon Situation Report, which was given to the Council as a handout.

Broad Whitefish Project Update

Frank Harris, Fisheries Biologist with the USFWS Kenai Fisheries Resource Office, updated the Council about a Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program (FRMP) funded research project to collect baseline data about Broad Whitefish spawning in the Kuskokwim River drainage. The project is a collaborative effort between Orutsararmiut Native Council, the Native Village of Napaimute, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Project partners are striving to estimate number of spawners in the area between McGrath and Medfra, to estimate harvest rates on the spawning aggregate, and to describe the population's demographics, such as age and weight. Fall 2022 was the first year of data collection.

Temporary Fisheries Special Action FSA23-01 Briefing

Kevin Foley, OSM Fisheries Biologist, let the Council know that Temporary Fisheries Special Action Request FSA23-01 had been received and validated by OSM. The request was submitted by the Native Village of Kwinhagak and seeks to close the Kanektok River to the harvest of Chinook and Chum salmon to non-federally qualified users during the month of June. OSM will analyze the request and present the analysis to the Council at their Winter 2023 meeting.

Partners for Fisheries Monitoring Program Update

Mr. Foley let the Council know about an open funding opportunity through the Partners for Fisheries Monitoring Program. It is a competitive grant for Alaska Native and rural non-profit organizations. The intent of the program is to strengthen Alaska Native and rural involvement in Federal subsistence management by providing salary funds to organizations to hire biologists, social scientists, or educators. The grant also provides funds for science and culture camps and paid student internships.

Joint meeting: North American Caribou Workshop and Arctic Ungulate Conference in May 2023

Tom Plank, OSM Wildlife Biologist, presented to the Council about the North American Caribou Workshop and Arctic Ungulate Conference to be held in May 2023 in Anchorage. Mr. Plank requested that the Council provide input into topics and issues that should be discussed during a facilitated discussion about State and Federal ungulate management. The Council did not offer any suggestions.

Mr. Plank also notified the Council that OSM would pay for one Council member to attend the conference and asked the Council to choose a member to represent them. Jacqueline Cleveland was nominated with Phillip Peter, Sr. as an alternate.

Fisheries Proposals and Closure Reviews:

Regional:

FP23-02: Revise customary and traditional use determination for Yukon River salmon

Motion by Member Rogers, seconded by Member Andrew, to support fisheries proposal FP23-02.

The Council noted that residents of the three communities in the proposal rely on subsistence foods and are highly dependent on salmon that are destined for the Yukon River drainage. They have a long-term pattern of use of all species of salmon. These communities are known to share their harvests of salmon with other communities through kinship networks. These communities were not included in a customary and traditional use determination when they clearly should have been. Supporting this proposal will fix the regulations.

The motion passed on a unanimous vote.

Crossover:

FP23-01: Rescind Jim River nonsalmon closure, institute Arctic Grayling harvest limit

Motion by Member Rogers, seconded by Member Peter, to support fisheries proposal FP23-01.

The Council stated this proposal would support subsistence uses in the area and sport fishing should not be allowed when subsistence uses are prohibited. There is no conservation concern with the proposal.

The motion passed on a unanimous vote.

FCR23-02: Review closure to subsistence harvest of all fish in the Kanuti River

Motion by Member Rogers, seconded by Member Andrew, to modify the closure to only rescind for non-salmon species.

The Council believes rescinding the closure to nonsalmon fish would support subsistence users in the area but felt the closure to salmon should be maintained due to conservation concerns. They noted that a special action can be used to temporarily set harvest limits for nonsalmon species until a proposal can be submitted by the Western Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Western Interior Council) during the next fisheries regulatory cycle.

The motion passed on a unanimous vote.

FCR23-03: Review closure to subsistence harvest of all fish in Bonanza Creek

Motion by Member Rogers, seconded by Member Peter, to modify the closure to only rescind for non-salmon species.

The Council noted that rescinding the closure to nonsalmon fish would support subsistence users in the area but felt the closure to salmon should be maintained due to conservation concerns. They noted that

special actions can be used to temporarily set harvest limits for nonsalmon species until a proposal is submitted by the Western Interior Council during the next regulatory cycle.

The motion passed on a unanimous vote.

FCR23-05: Review closure to subsistence harvest of all fish in the Delta River

Motion by Member Rogers, seconded by Member Peter, to defer the closure review.

The Council noted the home region wanted to defer to hear from affected users. The Council believes the home region should make the decision.

The motion passed on a unanimous vote.

2024 Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program Update and Priority Information Needs Review:

Mr. Foley reviewed regional FRMP projects that were funded for the 2022 cycle. This included 5 new projects in the Yukon region and eight in the Kuskokwim region. Mr. Foley also provided information to the Council about the upcoming 2024 FRMP funding opportunity. Finally, he presented the draft list of Yukon and Kuskokwim regions priority information needs to the Council.

Motion made by Member Rogers, seconded by Member Evan, to support the draft priority information needs outlined in the 2024 FRMP presentation for the Yukon and Kuskokwim regions. The Council thought that all the areas of research listed would produce information beneficial to management.

The motion passed on a unanimous vote.

During discussion of the priority information needs, Member Landlord brought up a concern about potential impacts to salmon caused by mining in Canada and the Whitehorse dam. The Council agreed they would like more information on these issues.

Motion made by Member Rogers, seconded by Member Peter, that the Council write a letter to the Yukon River Panel expressing concerns about the impacts of mining and dams in the Canadian portion of the Yukon River and requesting information about the issue.

The motion passed on unanimous vote.

Fall 2022 Council application/nomination open season:

Ms. McDavid notified the Council that the Board is currently accepting applications and nominations to serve on Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils with a deadline of February 21, 2023.

Elect Council Member to represent YKDRAC on Wood Bison Planning Team

Luke Rogers, ADF&G Wood Bison Project Technician, provided an update to the Council about the Innoko Wood Bison Herd and the outcome of recent planning meetings. The Council elected Raymond Oney to represent the Council at future planning meetings with Wassily Alexie and Philip Peter serving as alternates.

State of Alaska Board of Fisheries proposals:

Proposal 80 - Restrict subsistence king salmon harvest in the middle and upper Yukon River

Motion by Member Rogers, seconded by Member Peter, to support Proposal 80.

The Council supported Proposal 80 because they feel that lower Yukon River fishing districts have been unfairly restricted in the past while upper river districts were allowed more opportunity.

Motion passed with a vote of 7-0, with one member abstaining

Proposal 90 - Create a Tier II subsistence king salmon fishery in the Kuskokwim River

Motion by Member Rogers, seconded by Acting Chair Naneng, to support Proposal 90.

The Council did not support this proposal because subsistence fishers should not be more heavily regulated under a Tier II system while commercial fishers in the Alaska Peninsula continue to intercept our salmon stocks for profit. This is unjust and does not adhere to the subsistence priority. By law, restrictions should be put on commercial fisheries before subsistence fisheries.

The motion failed on a unanimous vote.

Proposal 91 - Modify Kuskokwim Area lawful gear and gear specifications and operation to provide greater opportunity to harvest salmon other than king salmon, during times of salmon conservation.

Motion by Member Rogers, seconded by Member Peter, to support Proposal 91.

The Council supported Proposal 91 because it would give managers the tools needed to allow targeted fishing opportunities for other species of salmon during times of Chinook Salmon conservation. It will potentially increase subsistence harvest opportunity and help people better meet their subsistence needs while still protecting Chinook Salmon stocks.

Motion passed with a vote of 7-0, with one member abstaining

Proposal 140 - Amend the South Unimak and Shumagin Islands June Salmon Management Plan to reduce commercial salmon fishing time

Motion by Member Rogers, seconded by Member Andrew, to support Proposal 140.

Motion to amend the motion by Acting Chair Naneng, seconded by Member Phillip, with the modification that commercial fishing is prohibited beyond a distance of three miles from shore.

The motion to amend passed on a unanimous vote.

The Council agrees that commercial salmon fishing time should be reduced in the South Unimak and Shumagin Islands June Salmon Management Plan because there is a major conservation concern for Western Alaska salmon that are intercepted in these commercial fisheries. Subsistence fishing has been closed for several years on the Yukon and Kuskokwim rivers, while commercial fishers have been allowed to harvest the same stock of concern. This does not adhere to the subsistence priority nor sustainable management practices. By law, restrictions should be put on commercial fisheries before subsistence fisheries. In supporting the modification, the Council seeks to limit the commercial fishers in the South Unimak and Shumagin islands to the same geographical restrictions faced by commercial and subsistence fishers in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region that is limited to fishing within 3 miles from shore.

The motion as amended passed on a unanimous vote.

The Council nominated Raymond Oney, Myron Naneng, and Alissa Rogers to represent the Council at the upcoming Alaska Board of Fisheries meetings in Winter 2023.

Identify Issues for FY2022 Annual Report:

The Council identified the following issues of concern to be included in its FY-2022 annual report:

- Kuskokwim River Salmon management
- Typhoon Merbok impacts to communities and subsistence
- Interception and bycatch of AYK Salmon in the Alaska Peninsula Region (Area M) and Bering Sea commercial fisheries
- Declines in Tom Cod and halibut, especially near Hooper Bay
- Competition between international hatchery salmon and wild Alaska salmon
- Fukushima radiation effects on salmon and other marine life
- Lamprey declines and needed monitoring on the Yukon River

- Salmon fishing should be allowed in non-spawning streams of Yukon Region like it is in the Kuskokwim Region
- Increase in bears raiding fish camps in the Kuskokwim Region
- Increased harvest pressure on whitefish during times of Salmon conservation and concerns about four-inch mesh size impacts
- Increasing Northern Pike and declining trout near Quinhagak

Agency Reports:

- *Salmon Bycatch Update* by Dr. Diana Stram North Pacific Fishery Management Council
- *Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association Update* by Serena Fitka, Catherine Moncrieff, and Gabe Canfield
- *Avian Influenza Report* by Bryan Daniels, Yukon Delta NWR
- *Donlin Gold LLC Update on Barging Plans, Subsistence Committee, and Rainbow Smelt Study Results* by Enric Fernandez and Rebecca Wilmarth
- *Snowy Owl Report* by Steve Lewis, USFWS

Future Meeting Dates:

The Council confirmed their Winter 2023 meeting dates as April 4 - 6, 2023, in Alakanuk with St Mary's as the alternate location.

The Council selected their Fall 2023 meeting dates as October 10 – 12, 2023, in Anchorage with Bethel as the alternate location.

Brooke McDavid, Designated Federal Officer
USFWS Office of Subsistence Management

Raymond Oney, Chair
Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

These minutes will be formally considered by the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Subsistence Regional Advisory Council at its April 4-6, 2023, meeting in Alakanuk or St. Mary's, and any corrections or notations will be incorporated in the minutes at that meeting.

For a more detailed report of this meeting, copies of the transcript and meeting handouts are available upon request. Call Brooke McDavid, Council Coordinator, at 1-800-478-1456 or 907-891-9181, email brooke_mcdavid@fws.gov.

2023 NORTH AMERICAN CARIBOU WORKSHOP & ARCTIC UNGULATE CONFERENCE

Anchorage, Alaska ■ May 8-12, 2023

Come to the conference to share your knowledge and learn from others! Join an international group of managers, biologists, Indigenous and Local Knowledge holders, and others to share knowledge of caribou, muskoxen, Dall's sheep, moose, and reindeer. The meeting will provide opportunities for exchanging viewpoints, concerns, and recommendations regarding the health, stewardship, use, and study of these important species.

The theme for the joint meeting is *Crossing Boundaries*. Arctic ungulates regularly cross landscape boundaries, connecting ecosystems and peoples, necessitating partnerships and collaboration across management and political boundaries. A critical component of such partnerships involves crossing the boundaries of Western science and Indigenous knowledges to identify creative opportunities to sustain Arctic ungulate populations in a changing world. We will explore these themes across four days of research talks, storytelling, workshops and panel discussions. Join us!

For more information visit www.nacw-auc-2023.org or e-mail info@nacw-auc-2023.org.





Feedback from Regional Advisory Councils on the State and Federal Ungulate Management in Alaska Symposium

At the North American Caribou Workshop and
Arctic Ungulate Conference www.nacw-auc-2023.org

Description: This session is intended as a neutral forum for Federal Regional Advisory Council (Council) members, State Fish and Game Advisory Committee members, Federal and State agency staff, and any other interested parties to discuss ungulate management in Alaska, specifically regarding harvest regulations. The format will be facilitated discussion where participation by all attendees is encouraged. Specific topics will be determined after the Councils provide input during their fall 2022 and winter 2023 meetings.

Potential Topics

1. The effectiveness and impact of antler restrictions in moose harvest management (i.e. do spike-fork and brow-tine restrictions actually provide more subsistence harvest opportunity or is it just an easy way to manage moose populations).
2. How to manage young growth forests for moose
3. Regulations that conflict with each other and across user groups (e.g. State community hunts)
4. How biological data is collected (e.g. population surveys)
5. Habitat changes (natural, manmade, and from climate change) and their effects on ungulates
6. Predator Control
7. Identification, viability, and utilization of resident caribou herds (vs. migratory)
8. Effects of climate change, disease and overgrazing on ungulate populations
9. Summer vs. winter diet of caribou (e.g. protein intake)
10. Bull caribou harvest during the rut
11. Effects of hunting pressure on caribou movements and migration routes
12. Effects of roads/development on caribou distribution and movements
13. Population thresholds for caribou herd recovery
14. Wanton waste of meat
15. The importance of funding wildlife surveys and receiving timely reports
16. Muskox harvest management
17. Honoring and incorporating Traditional Ecological Knowledge into harvest management (i.e. letting the leaders pass and ensuring uninterrupted caribou migrations)
18. Harvest management strategies when caribou populations are too high (e.g. showing signs of nutritional stress).
19. Unsafe and disrespectful hunting practices; need for better hunter education
20. Food security
21. Climate change impacts on ungulates, particularly caribou migration routes
22. Caribou distribution patterns in relation to village harvest needs; and exploring new ways to address the needs of villages (e.g. village quota systems)
23. Sport hunter disturbance to caribou and law enforcement
24. Harvest reporting: how to improve

Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

c/o Office of Subsistence Management
1011 East Tudor Road, MS 121
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6199
Phone: (907) 786-3888, Fax: (907) 786-3898
Toll-Free: 1-800-478-1456

In Reply Refer To:
RAC/YK.22142.BM

DEC 28 2022

Art Nelson, Executive Director
Board of Fisheries
Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Boards Support Section
P.O. Box 115526
Juneau, AK 99811-5526

Dear Mr. Nelson,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council) to provide the Council's comments on four Alaska Board of Fisheries proposals that will be discussed at upcoming 2023 meetings.

The Council represents subsistence harvesters of fish and wildlife resources on Federal public lands and waters in Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Region. It was established by the authority in Title VIII of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) and is chartered under the Federal Advisory Committee Act. Section 805 of ANILCA and the Council's charter establishes the Council's authority to initiate, review and evaluate proposals for regulations, policies, management plans, and other matters related to subsistence uses of fish and wildlife within the region. The Council also reviews resource management actions occurring outside their regions that may impact subsistence resources critical to communities served by the Council. The Council provides a forum for the expression of opinions and recommendations regarding any matter related to the subsistence uses of fish and wildlife within the region.

The Council held a public meeting on October 27-28, 2022, in Bethel. Among the items discussed were various proposed changes to State of Alaska fishing regulations. The proposals that the Council discussed, and our positions and comments, are listed below by regional meeting.

Arctic / Yukon / Kuskokwim Finfish

Proposal 80 - Restrict subsistence king salmon harvest in the middle and upper Yukon River.
The Council **supported Proposal 80 with a vote of 7-0, with one member abstaining.**
The Council supported this proposal because they feel that lower Yukon River fishing districts have been unfairly restricted in the past while upper river districts were allowed more

opportunity.

Proposal 90 - Create a Tier II subsistence king salmon fishery in the Kuskokwim River.
The Council voted to unanimously oppose Proposal 90. The Council does not support this proposal because subsistence fishers should not be more heavily regulated under a Tier II system while commercial fishers in the Alaska Peninsula continue to intercept our salmon stocks for profit. This is unjust and does not adhere to the subsistence priority. By law, restrictions should be put on commercial fisheries before subsistence fisheries.

Proposal 91 - Modify Kuskokwim Area lawful gear and gear specifications and operation to provide greater opportunity to harvest salmon other than king salmon, during times of salmon conservation. The Council **supported Proposal 91 with a vote of 7-0, with one member abstaining.** The Council supports this proposal because it would give managers the tools needed to allow targeted fishing opportunities for other species of salmon during times of Chinook Salmon conservation. It will potentially increase subsistence harvest opportunity and help people better meet their subsistence needs while still protecting Chinook Salmon stocks.

Alaska Peninsula / Aleutian Island / Chignik Finfish

Proposal 140 - Amend the South Unimak and Shumagin Islands June Salmon Management Plan to reduce commercial salmon fishing time. The Council voted to **unanimously support Proposal 140 with a modification that commercial fishing is prohibited beyond a distance of three miles from shore.** The Council supported this proposal with modification because there is a major conservation concern for Western Alaska salmon that are intercepted in these commercial fisheries. Subsistence fishing has been closed for several years on the Yukon and Kuskokwim rivers, while commercial fishers have been allowed to harvest the same stock of concern. This does not adhere to the subsistence priority nor sustainable management practices. By law, restrictions should be put on commercial fisheries before subsistence fisheries. In supporting the modification, the Council seeks to limit the commercial fishers in the South Unimak and Shumagin Islands to the same geographical restrictions faced by commercial and subsistence fishers in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region, that is, limited to fishing within three miles from shore.

The Council thanks you for the opportunity to comment on these proposals. If you have any questions or would like to follow up, please contact me through our Subsistence Council Coordinator Brooke McDavid at (907) 891-9181 or brooke_mcdavid@fws.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ray Oney", is centered on a light gray rectangular background.

Raymond Oney
Chair Regional Advisory Council
Yukon/Kuskokwim Region

cc: Federal Subsistence Board
Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Subsistence Regional Advisory Council Members
Office of Subsistence Management
Interagency Staff Committee
Benjamin Mulligan, Deputy Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Mark Burch, Special Projects Coordinator, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Administrative Record

Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

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1011 East Tudor Road, MS 121
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6199
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Toll-Free: 1-800-478-1456

In Reply Refer To:
RAC/YKD23017.BM

FEB 13 2023

Mr. Steve Gotch, Co-Chair
Mr. John Linderman, Co-Chair
Yukon River Panel
c/o Pacific Salmon Commission
600-1155 Robson Street
Vancouver, BC Canada V6E 1B5

Dear Mr. Gotch and Mr. Linderman,

I write to you on behalf of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council) seeking information about potential impacts to Yukon River salmon and salmon habitat in the Canadian portion of the drainage.

The Council represents subsistence harvesters of fish and wildlife resources on Federal public lands and waters in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Region in Western Alaska. It was established by the authority in Title VIII of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) and is chartered under the Federal Advisory Committee Act. Section 805 of ANILCA and the Council's charter establishes the Council's authority to initiate, review, and evaluate proposals for regulations, policies, management plans, and other matters related to subsistence uses of fish and wildlife within the region. The Council also reviews resource management actions occurring outside their regions that may impact subsistence resources critical to communities served by the Council. The Council provides a forum for the expression of opinions and recommendations regarding any matter related to the subsistence uses of fish and wildlife within the region.

The Council held a public meeting on October 27-28, 2023, in Bethel, Alaska. Among the items discussed at the meeting were continued poor returns of salmon to the Yukon River. Chinook and Chum salmon have traditionally been two of the most important subsistence resources for rural residents in our region, playing a critical role for both food security and cultural well-being. Salmon declines and the ensuing fishing closures have had devastating impacts to our communities. The Council recognizes that the factors contributing to low returns are multi-faceted and we are seeking to learn more about all such factors.

Residents of our region observe Yukon River salmon at the very start of their upriver journey, but salmon travel a long way past our communities to their spawning grounds in the upper portions of the drainage in Canada. Some lower Yukon River residents have expressed concerns

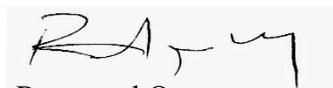
Mr. Gotch and Mr. Linderman

about the potential impacts that mining operations in Canadian headwaters and the Whitehorse Dam may have on salmon habitat and the ability of salmon to reach their spawning grounds. The Council kindly requests information about these two topics and extends an invitation to the appropriate Canadian entities to present this information at a future Council meeting. We hope that you will consider this an opportunity to foster communication and information sharing across our large drainage, and we look forward to the chance to learn more about the upper river region.

The Council has two up-coming meetings in 2023 and would welcome presentations in-person or virtually at either of them. Our Winter meeting will be held April 4-6, 2023, in Bethel, Alaska and our Fall meeting will be October 10-12, 2023, in Anchorage, Alaska.

The Council would like to thank you in advance for considering our information request and helping subsistence users in our region better understand how impacts to salmon and salmon habitat are mitigated in the upper reaches of the Yukon River drainage. We look forward to continuing discussions about these issues and concerns. If you have any questions or would like to follow up, please contact me through our Subsistence Council Coordinator Brooke McDavid at (907) 891-9181 or brooke_mcdavid@fws.gov.

Sincerely,



Raymond Oney
Chair Regional Advisory Council
Yukon-Kuskokwim Region

cc: Federal Subsistence Board
Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Subsistence Regional Advisory Council Members
Office of Subsistence Management
Interagency Staff Committee
Benjamin Mulligan, Deputy Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Mark Burch, Special Projects Coordinator, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Administrative Record

Subsistence Regional Advisory Council Correspondence Policy

The intent of the Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council) correspondence policy is to ensure that Councils can correspond appropriately with the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) and other entities. In addition, the correspondence policy will assist Councils in directing their concerns in an effective manner.

The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), Title VIII required the creation of the Councils to serve as advisors to the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture and to provide meaningful local participation in the management of fish and wildlife resources on Federal public lands. Within the framework of Title VIII and the Federal Advisory Committee Act, Congress assigned specific powers and duties to the Councils. These are also reflected in the Councils' charters. (*Reference: ANILCA Title VIII §805, §808, and §810; Implementing regulations for Title VIII, 50 CFR 100 .11 and 36 CFR 242 .11; Implementing regulations for FACA, 41 CFR Part 102-3.70 and 3.75*)

The Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture created the Board and delegated responsibility for implementing the Title VIII rural subsistence priority regarding fish and wildlife resources on Federal public lands and waters. The Board was also given the duty of establishing rules and procedures for the operation of the Councils in accordance with the requirements of the Federal Advisory Committee Act. The Office of Subsistence Management (OSM) was established to facilitate the work of the Federal Subsistence Management Program.

Policy

1. **Council correspondence shall be limited to subsistence-related matters, including matters related to the operation of the Federal Subsistence Management Program, and issues relevant to the subsistence way of life.**
2. Councils may and are encouraged to correspond directly with the Board. The Councils are **advisory bodies** to the Board.
3. Councils are urged to make use of the annual report process to bring matters to the Board's attention.
4. Types of communication encompassed by this policy include but are not limited to the following: letters of support, resolutions, letters offering comment or recommendations, **ANILCA §810 comments (subsistence and land use decisions)**, and any other correspondence to any government agency or any tribal or private organization or individual.
5. The correspondence process is as follows:
 - **Councils shall discuss and agree upon the contents of proposed correspondence during a public meeting.**
 - Council Coordinators draft the correspondence in accordance with the Council's position.
 - Council Coordinators will transmit all draft correspondence to the Assistant Regional

Director (ARD) of OSM for review prior to mailing, except as noted in items 6, 7, and 8 of this policy.

- Recognizing that such correspondence is the result of an official Council action and may be urgent, the ARD will complete this review in a timely manner.
 - Modifications identified as necessary by the ARD will be discussed with the Council Chair. **Council Chairs have the final authority to approve letters.**
6. Councils may submit notification of appointment directly to Subsistence Resource Commissions under §808 without review by the ARD of OSM.
 7. **Councils may submit comments regarding proposed regulatory changes affecting subsistence uses within their regions to the Alaska Board of Fisheries and the Alaska Board of Game without review by the ARD of OSM. The comments will be channeled through the appropriate OSM division(s) supervisors for review. A copy of comments or proposals will be forwarded to the ARD when the original is submitted.**
 8. Administrative correspondence such as letters of appreciation, requests for agency reports at Council meetings, and cover letters for meeting agendas will be channeled through the Council Coordinator to the appropriate OSM division(s) supervisor for review.
 9. **Due to Hatch Act restrictions, Councils may not communicate with elected officials political appointees in other Federal agencies. Councils further may not write Secretaries of Federal agencies or their offices, and instead may write to the Board to request that the Board relay correspondence on relevant subject matters of interest to the Secretaries of the Interior or Agriculture or to other Federal agencies at the Secretarial level.** This does not prohibit Council members from acting in their capacity as private citizens or through other organizations with which they are affiliated.
 10. Councils will submit copies of all correspondence generated and received by them to OSM to be filed in the administrative record system.

Approved by the Federal Subsistence Board on June 15, 2004.

Revised by the Federal Subsistence Board on XXXXXXXX.

Subsistence Regional Advisory Council Correspondence Policy

The Federal Subsistence Board (Board) recognizes the value of the Regional Advisory Councils' role in the Federal Subsistence Management Program. The Board realizes that the Councils must interact with fish and wildlife resource agencies, organizations, and the public as part of their official duties, and that this interaction may include correspondence. Since the beginning of the Federal Subsistence Program, Regional Advisory Councils have prepared correspondence to entities other than the Board. Informally, Councils were asked to provide drafts of correspondence to the Office of Subsistence Management (OSM) for review prior to mailing. Recently, the Board was asked to clarify its position regarding Council correspondence. This policy is intended to formalize guidance from the Board to the Regional Advisory Councils in preparing correspondence.

The Board is mindful of its obligation to provide the Regional Advisory Councils with clear operating guidelines and policies, and has approved the correspondence policy set out below. The intent of the Regional Advisory Council correspondence policy is to ensure that Councils are able to correspond appropriately with other entities. In addition, the correspondence policy will assist Councils in directing their concerns to others most effectively and forestall any breach of department policy.

The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, Title VIII required the creation of Alaska's Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils to serve as advisors to the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture and to provide meaningful local participation in the management of fish and wildlife resources on Federal public lands. Within the framework of Title VIII and the Federal Advisory Committee Act, Congress assigned specific powers and duties to the Regional Advisory Councils. These are also reflected in the Councils' charters. (*Reference: ANILCA Title VIII §805, §808, and §810; Implementing regulations for Title VIII, 50 CFR 100 __.11 and 36 CFR 242 __.11; Implementing regulations for FACA, 41 CFR Part 102-3.70 and 3.75*)

The Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture created the Federal Subsistence Board and delegated to it the responsibility for managing fish and wildlife resources on Federal public lands. The Board was also given the duty of establishing rules and procedures for the operation of the Regional Advisory Councils. The Office of Subsistence Management was established within the Federal Subsistence Management Program's lead agency, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, to administer the Program. (*Reference: 36 CFR Part 242 and 50 CFR Part 100 Subparts C and D*)

Policy

1. The subject matter of Council correspondence shall be limited to matters over which the Council has authority under §805(a)(3), §808, §810 of Title VIII, Subpart B §____.11(c) of regulation, and as described in the Council charters.
2. Councils may, and are encouraged to, correspond directly with the Board. The Councils are advisors to the Board.
3. Councils are urged to also make use of the annual report process to bring matters to the Board's attention.

4. As a general rule, Councils discuss and agree upon proposed correspondence during a public meeting. Occasionally, a Council chair may be requested to write a letter when it is not feasible to wait until a public Council meeting. In such cases, the content of the letter shall be limited to the known position of the Council as discussed in previous Council meetings.
5. Except as noted in Items 6, 7, and 8 of this policy, Councils will transmit all correspondence to the Assistant Regional Director (ARD) of OSM for review prior to mailing. This includes, but is not limited to, letters of support, resolutions, letters offering comment or recommendations, and any other correspondence to any government agency or any tribal or private organization or individual.
 - a. Recognizing that such correspondence is the result of an official Council action and may be urgent, the ARD will respond in a timely manner.
 - b. Modifications identified as necessary by the ARD will be discussed with the Council chair. Councils will make the modifications before sending out the correspondence.
6. Councils may submit written comments requested by Federal land management agencies under ANILCA §810 or requested by regional Subsistence Resource Commissions (SRC) under §808 directly to the requesting agency. Section 808 correspondence includes comments and information solicited by the SRCs and notification of appointment by the Council to an SRC.
7. Councils may submit proposed regulatory changes or written comments regarding proposed regulatory changes affecting subsistence uses within their regions to the Alaska Board of Fisheries or the Alaska Board of Game directly. A copy of any comments or proposals will be forwarded to the ARD when the original is submitted.
8. Administrative correspondence such as letters of appreciation, requests for agency reports at Council meetings, and cover letters for meeting agendas will go through the Council's regional coordinator to the appropriate OSM division chief for review.
9. Councils will submit copies of all correspondence generated by and received by them to OSM to be filed in the administrative record system.
10. Except as noted in Items 6, 7, and 8, Councils or individual Council members acting on behalf of or as representative of the Council may not, through correspondence or any other means of communication, attempt to persuade any elected or appointed political officials, any government agency, or any tribal or private organization or individual to take a particular action on an issue. This does not prohibit Council members from acting in their capacity as private citizens or through other organizations with which they are affiliated.

Approved by the Federal Subsistence Board on June 15, 2004.



Federal Subsistence Board News Release



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Bureau of Land Management
National Park Service
Bureau of Indian Affairs

Forest Service

For Immediate Release:
February 7, 2023

Contact: Kayla McKinney
(907) 786-3888 or (800) 478-1456
kayla_mckinney@fws.gov

Federal Subsistence Board Acts on Subsistence Fish and Shellfish Regulations, Fishery Closure Reviews, Deferred Wildlife Proposals, Delegation of Authority Letters, Threshold Analysis for Request for Reconsideration RFR22-01, and Threshold Assessment for Nonrural Determination Proposal NDP25-01

The Federal Subsistence Board (Board) met January 31 to February 3, 2023, at the Egan Center in Anchorage, to consider proposed changes to Federal subsistence fish and shellfish regulations and fishery closure reviews. In addition, the Board acted on deferred Wildlife Proposals WP22-40, WP22-07, WP22-08, and WP22-10, a threshold analysis for RFR22-01, a Nonrural Determination Proposal threshold assessment, and other items.

After hearing staff analyses and comments from the public, Regional Advisory Councils, Tribes, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and the Interagency Staff Committee, the Board adopted 7 out of the 16 fishery proposals and took no action on 3 of them. The Board also acted on 19 fishery closure reviews, voting to rescind 10, maintain status quo on 6, and defer action on 1 until the next fisheries regulatory cycle. The Board took no action on 2 closure reviews based on action on submitted proposals. Some of the more significant decisions, which will be implemented in the 2023–2025 regulatory years, included:

- FP23-01- Rescinds the Jim River drainage closure to fish other than salmon, allows for the use of rod and reel, and establishes a Grayling harvest limit
- FP23-02- Recognizes the customary and traditional use of all salmon in the Yukon River Management Area by residents of Chevak, Hooper Bay, and Scammon Bay
- FP23-06a- Rescinds Womens Bay closure to salmon, allows for the use of rod and reel, and matches State sport fishing limits
- FP23-06b- Rescinds Buskin River closure to salmon and allows for the use of rod and reel
- FP23-08- Recognizes the customary and traditional use of all fish in the Kenai Peninsula District waters north of and including the Kenai River drainage within the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge and the Chugach National Forest by residents of Moose Pass
- FP23-20- Recognizes the customary and traditional use of shellfish in the Southeastern Alaska Area by residents of Southeastern Alaska and Yakutat Fishery Management Areas
- FP23-21- Closes Kah Sheets Creek to non-federally qualified users from July 1 to July 31

The Board did not recognize the customary and traditional use of salmon in the Kodiak Area by residents of the Kodiak Coast Guard Base (FP23-05a) and in the Chitina Subdistrict of the Upper Copper River District by residents of the Serendipity subdivision and residents who live between named communities

along the Alaska Highway from the U.S./Canada Border to Dot Lake (FP23-14/15). The Board also opposed changes to the description of the Kodiak Area (FP23-05b), changes to the subsistence rod and reel fishery on the Kenai River (FP23-07), and a request to remove the lower Copper River Area dip net and rod and reel fishery (FP23-19). The Board deferred Fisheries Closure FCR23-05 to the next fisheries regulatory cycle.

The Board adopted with modification deferred Wildlife Proposal WP22-40 to allow the use of snowmachines to approach and pursue wolves and wolverines in Units 9B, 9C, and 17, provided the snowmachine does not contact a live animal. The Board also opposed the three deferred wildlife proposals requesting restrictions to deer hunting by non-Federally qualified users in Unit 4 (WP22-07, WP22-08, and WP22-10).

The Board took action on Request for Consideration RFR22-01, submitted by Ahtna, Incorporated, requesting the Board reconsider their 2022 decision on FP21-10 which provided an opportunity for a subsistence dipnet and rod and reel fishery on the lower Copper River. The Board found potential merit with one of the claims identified in the threshold analysis. Office of Subsistence Management staff will conduct a full analysis of that claim for Board consideration at a future meeting.

The Board concurred with the Office of Subsistence Management's recommendation that the Nonrural Determination Proposal NDP25-01 met the threshold requirements. Office of Subsistence Management staff will proceed with a full analysis of the request to rescind the nonrural determination of Ketchikan, which could result in a rural designation of the Ketchikan Area. The Board will take action on NDP25-01 at the next fisheries regulatory meeting in 2025.

Lastly, the Board updated all fisheries delegation of authority letters to include the authority to issue Temporary Special Actions, supported a Hunter Ethics Education and Outreach Initiative, and recommended the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture approve a list of identified submerged lands in the Tongass National Forest for inclusion in the areas where Federal subsistence regulations apply.

Transcripts from the January 31 – February 3, 2023 meeting will be posted at <https://www.doi.gov/subsistence/library/transcripts/federal-subsistence-board> when available.

Additional information on the Federal Subsistence Management Program may be found on the web at www.doi.gov/subsistence or by visiting www.facebook.com/subsistencealaska.

Missing out on the latest Federal subsistence issues? If you'd like to receive emails and notifications on the Federal Subsistence Management Program you may subscribe for regular updates by emailing fws-fsb-subsistence-request@lists.fws.gov.

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Federal Subsistence Board Action Summary

2023 Fisheries Regulatory Meeting

Region	Proposal/Closure Review	YKDRAC Position	Board Action
Western Interior	FP23-01 Jim River Grayling	Support	Adopt
Yukon- Kuskokwim Delta	FP23-02 Update Yukon C&T to include Chevak, Scammon Bay, and Hooper Bay for all species of salmon	Support	Adopt
Western Interior	FCR23-02 Kanuti River Closure Review	Modify the closure to rescind to nonsalmon only	Modify the closure to rescind to nonsalmon only
Western Interior	FCR23-03 Bonanza Creek Closure Review	Modify the closure to rescind to nonsalmon only	Modify the closure to rescind to nonsalmon only
Eastern Interior	FCR25-05 Delta River Closure Review	Defer to Eastern Interior	Defer to next cycle



Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Board of Fisheries
 PO Box 115526
 Juneau, AK 99811-5526
 (907) 465-4110
www.adfg.alaska.gov

ALASKA BOARD OF FISHERIES
Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim Areas Finfish
 January 14-18, 2023 | Egan Center, Anchorage

PRELIMINARY SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

This summary is informational only. The actions indicated below will have legal effects in regulations that provide the sole legal action of the board. All references to meeting materials, including this summary, may be located on the Board of Fisheries meeting website at:
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=fisheriesboard.meetinginfo&date=01-14-2023&meeting=anchorage>

Board Members Present

Märit Carlson-Van Dort, Chair John Jensen, Vice-chair
 Tom Carpenter Mike Heimbuch
 McKenzie Mitchell John Wood
 Stan Zuray

C=Carried, C/A=Carried as Amended, F=Failed, F/A=Failed as Amended, N/A=No Action

Action	#	Proposal	Audio Tracking Info ¹
<i>North Alaska Peninsula Dungeness Crab and Prince William Sound Groundfish (3 proposals)</i>			
C/A 6-1	170	Establish vessel and overall fishery pot limit for the North Peninsula Dungeness crab fishery. <i>Amended with substitute language in RC 42.</i>	01-16-23 09:31:17 AM
C/A 7-0	171	Allow groundfish pots to be longlined in the Prince William Sound Area. <i>Amended with substitute language in RC 43.</i>	01-16-23 10:00:27 AM
N/A	172	Adopt gear marking requirements for longlined pot gear in the Prince William Sound Area. <i>No action based on the action taken on Proposal 171.</i>	01-16-23 10:11:41 AM
<i>Tanana Subsistence and Sport Fisheries (12 proposals)</i>			
F 0-7	63	Establish an annual bag limit of 20 northern pike and modify daily bag limit of fish greater than 30 inches in the Chatanika Harvest Area subsistence fishery.	01-16-23 01:46:12 PM

¹ The audio tracking information correlates with the meeting audio available at the bottom of each meeting page. The entry "Meeting 01-16-23" indicates the meeting day. The start time indicates when board discussion on the proposal began according to the meeting audio.



Board of Fisheries

Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim Finfish 2023

Summary of Actions

F 0-7	64	Modify the daily bag limit to require retention of the first 10 fish caught and length limit for northern pike in the Chatanika Harvest Area subsistence fishery.	01-16-23 02:02:39 PM
C/A 7-0	65	Require retention of sport caught salmon, if removed from the water, in the Tanana River Area. <i>Amended with substitute language in RC 48. The board further clarified their intent that this not apply to stocked lakes.</i>	01-16-23 02:10:47 PM
F 3-4	66	Allow a catch-and-release fishery for northern pike in Harding Lake.	01-16-23 02:19:58 PM
N/A	67	Prohibit retention of northern pike caught on set lines in the Tanana River drainage.	01-16-23 02:32:57 PM
F 0-7	68	Repeal setline prohibition and bag and possession limit for burbot in T Lake.	01-16-23 02:35:01 PM
F 0-7	69	Restrict the sport fishing season for Arctic grayling in the lower Chena River.	01-16-23 02:40:39 PM
C/A 7-0	70	Allow harvest of Arctic grayling in the lower Chena River from June 1 to March 31. <i>Amended with substitute language in RC 47</i>	01-16-23 02:49:14 PM
C 7-0	71	Remove the size limit for lake trout in Fielding Lake.	01-16-23 02:58:50 PM
C 7-0	72	Allow for catch-and-release fishing in Bathing Beauty Pond, Bear Lake, Moose Lake, Polaris Lake, Piledriver Slough, and Moose Creek.	01-16-23 03:07:54 PM
C 7-0	73	Update the Tanana River Area stocked waters regulations.	01-16-23 03:11:17 PM
C 7-0	74	Update the Tanana River Area Stocked Waters Management Plan.	01-16-23 03:14:03 PM
<i>Kotzebue and Norton Sound Commercial and Sport Fisheries (4 proposals)</i>			
C 6-1	75	Modify Arctic grayling bag, possession, and length limits in the Northwestern Area.	01-16-23 03:48:42 PM
C/A 7-0	76	Allow Kotzebue commercial salmon fishermen to leave their set gillnet gear unattended during commercial fishing periods. <i>Amended with substitute language in RC 44.</i>	01-16-23 04:10:13 PM
F 3-4	77	Establish an optimal escapement goal of 7,000-12,000 sockeye salmon for the Salmon Lake drainage within the Port Clarence District.	01-16-23 04:31:47 PM
C 7-0	78	Modify the start and end dates of the herring sac-ro, and food and bait fishing seasons.	01-16-23 04:50:21 PM
<i>Yukon Subsistence, Personal Use, Commercial, and Sport Fisheries (11 proposals)</i>			
C 7-0	79	Allow hook and line attached to a rod or pole when subsistence fishing upstream of the Nulato River mouth, to and including the Koyukuk River drainage up to the closed waters of the Koyukuk and the subsistence permit area.	01-17-23 02:18:04 PM



Board of Fisheries
Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim Finfish 2023
Summary of Actions

N/A	80	Restrict subsistence king salmon harvest in the middle and upper Yukon River. <i>The board took no action on this proposal based on a request by the proposal's author.</i>	01-17-23 02:40:35 PM
F 0-7	81	Implement a Yukon River drainage subsistence salmon permit to allow retention of king salmon less than 24 inches with an annual limit 10 fish during times of king salmon conservation.	01-17-23 02:41:06 PM
March 2023	82	Modify the dates sinking of gillnets is allowed in the Yukon Area from October 1 to April 30. <i>The board received public comment at this meeting and the proposal will be deliberated at the board's March 2023 meeting.</i>	01-17-23 02:49:59 PM
C 7-0	83	After August 15, a person may not take salmon with a gillnet that has a mesh size greater than six inches in the Yukon Area Personal Use Salmon Fishery.	01-17-23 02:50:47 PM
C/A 7-0	84	Repeal and readopt Yukon Area subsistence fishery lawful gear and gear specifications. <i>Amended with substitute language in RC 55 and further amended.</i>	01-17-23 02:58:29 PM
C 7-0	85	Modify Yukon Area Personal Use Salmon Fishery specifications for selective gear types and gillnet mesh size during times of salmon conservation.	01-17-23 03:15:32 PM
C/A 7-0	86	Require retention of sport caught salmon, if removed from the water, in the Yukon River Area. <i>Amended with substitute language in RC 54.</i>	01-17-23 03:49:17 PM
March 2023	87	Establish a definition of an eel stick. (To be heard at this meeting and deliberated during the Statewide Finfish and Supplemental Issues meeting). <i>The board received public comment at this meeting and the proposal will be deliberated at the board's March 2023 meeting.</i>	01-17-23 03:56:21 PM
C 6-0	88	Repeal and replace Yukon Area commercial salmon fishing gear specifications. <i>Member Zuray recused.</i>	01-17-23 04:01:28 PM
N/A	89	Modify Yukon Area commercial dip net gear operations in the commercial fishery to include a single rigid handle with a single line attached. <i>The board took no action on this proposal after being advised that it was already legal.</i>	01-17-23 04:08:07 PM
Kuskokwim Subsistence, Commercial, and Sport Fisheries (8 proposals)			
F 0-7	90	Create a Tier II subsistence king salmon fishery in the Kuskokwim River.	01-18-23 08:56:03 AM
C 7-0	91	Modify Kuskokwim Area lawful gear and gear specifications and operation to provide greater opportunity to harvest salmon other than king salmon, during times of salmon conservation.	01-18-23 09:01:52 AM
C 7-0	92	Increase subsistence opportunity before, during, and after commercial fishing periods set by emergency order.	01-18-23 09:06:22 AM



Board of Fisheries
Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim Finfish 2023
Summary of Actions

F 0-7	93	Close the Buckstock River between June 14 and September 1 to all fishing.	01-18-23 09:09:49 AM
F/A 2-5	94	Close sport fishing for chum salmon to nonresidents in the Kanektok River from June 1 to July 15. <i>Amended date range to June 1-June 30.</i>	01-18-23 09:16:28 AM
F 0-7	95	When a federal special action or emergency special action is in effect under ANILCA Title VIII the Department of Fish and Game would not provide set gillnet fishing periods prior to June 12 when the projected escapement is within the drainagewide escapement goal range.	01-18-23 09:29:28 AM
F 0-7	96	When a federal special action or emergency special action is in effect under ANILCA Title VIII the Department of Fish and Game would not provide directed king salmon fishing periods after June 11 when the projected escapement is within the drainagewide escapement goal range.	01-18-23 09:35:00 AM
C 5-2	97	Establish times when a commercial gillnet permit holder in Kuskokwim Area may use dip net and beach seine gear to commercially harvest salmon and standardize Kuskokwim Area dipnet lawful gear specifications and operation.	01-18-23 09:36:26 AM

Miscellaneous Business:

The board received information (RC 22) about the Joint Board of Fisheries/Board of Game Committee that met on Dec 20, 2022. The board agreed with the Joint Committee recommendation that the scope of the call for proposals should include 5 AAC Chapters 97, 97, and 99 and also that the proposed Joint Board meeting dates of March 25-29, 2024 is acceptable. Since the Board of Game has not set their 2024 schedule yet, the board opted to allow the BOG to officially call the Joint Board meeting once their schedule is established.

The board reviewed a draft letter (RC 52) regarding enforcement funding. The board approved the letter in concept and delegated the Chair the authority to make minor edits and then send the letter to the Governor, ADF&G Commissioner, and to the appropriate leadership in the Alaska Legislature.

The board had a brief discussion to clarify that their intent in the adoption of the substitute language (RC 48) for proposal 65, that the regulation not be applied to stocked lakes.

The board considered two emergency petitions:

RC 29 contained a petition to expand tendering for Dungeness crab in Registration Area J. By a vote of 0 in favor and 7 against, the board did not find that an emergency existed based on the criteria found in 5 AAC 96.625(f).

RC 49 contained a petition to expand tendering for Tanner crab in the Kodiak Area. By a vote of 0 in favor and 7 against, the board did not find that an emergency existed based on the criteria found in 5 AAC 96.625(f).



Federal Subsistence Board News Release



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Bureau of Land Management
National Park Service
Bureau of Indian Affairs

Forest Service

For Immediate Release:
November 22, 2022

Contact: Robbin La Vine
(907) 786-3353 or (800) 478-1456
robbin_lavine@fws.gov

Federal Subsistence Board Approves Emergency Wildlife Special Action Request WSA22-04 (Unit 18 Moose)

The Federal Subsistence Board (Board) approved Emergency Wildlife Special Action Request WSA22-04 as modified by the Office of Subsistence Management (OSM) on November 21, 2022 by voting via e-mail. Emergency Wildlife Special Action Request WSA22-04, submitted by the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), requested the Board amend an existing delegation of authority letter for moose in the Kuskokwim hunt area of Unit 18 to delegate the Yukon Delta NWR Manager the additional authority to determine the number of permits to be issued and any needed permit conditions for the may-be-announced winter moose season. This addition to the delegation of authority letter only applies to the 2022/23 winter may-be-announced season. The Board approved this request as modified by OSM to clarify the effective period ends January 31, 2023, and to specify permit conditions must comply with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) information collection policy.

The Board noted that the authority delegated to the Yukon Delta NWR Manager in 2022 to manage the newly established winter moose hunt in the Kuskokwim hunt area of Unit 18 was intended to give Federally qualified subsistence users additional opportunity to harvest moose in Zone 2 when the quota is not met during the fall season. In approving this request, they support limiting permits and setting any needed permit conditions to ensure the in-season manager can more effectively manage this hunt, safeguarding against overharvest while providing additional subsistence hunting opportunity. Further, the Board supported the OSM modification to ensure permit conditions are in accordance with current OMB information collection policy.

Information about the Federal Subsistence Management Program may be found on the web at www.doi.gov/subsistence or by visiting www.facebook.com/subsistencealaska.

Missing out on the latest Federal subsistence issues? If you'd like to receive emails and notifications on the Federal Subsistence Management Program you may subscribe for regular updates by emailing fws-fsb-subsistence-request@lists.fws.gov.

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United States Department of the Interior

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge

PO Box 346

Bethel, Alaska 99559



In Reply Refer To:

TO: Yukon Kuskokwim Delta Regional Advisory Council

FROM: Aaron P. Moses Subsistence Specialist

THROUGH: Boyd Blihovde, Refuge Manager

DATE: 13 January 2023

SUBJECT: Spring, 2023 Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge Update

Refuge Management

It is our pleasure to give a brief update of activities at Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge (YDNWR) for the Spring 2023 Regional Advisory Council (RAC) meeting. The winter months are always a bit slower for the Refuge staff, but this year we've been as busy as a typical summer season. Our primary focus has been to keep promoting salmon conservation, caribou conservation, and we've expanded hunting opportunities for moose on federal lands in a portion of Unit 18.

Here's a summary of some specific items staff has focused on:

1. The fish management team has submitted a Special Action Request (SAR) to the Federal Subsistence Board. That SAR is on hold until the upcoming Federal Subsistence Board meeting. The FSB will be deciding on changes to Delegation of Authority Letters (DAL) to determine whether temporary special action authority may be added to the DALs for the Kuskokwim River. Based on the 2022 salmon run, and preliminary discussions with partners, the Kuskokwim River will likely see conservation measures in place for the 2023 salmon season.
2. The YDNWR implemented its first-ever winter moose hunt (FM1803), 54 tags were issued for the hunt in the area known as zone two of the Kuskokwim area.
3. We are continuing our meetings with communities and Tribal councils to receive input from local users on Mulchatna caribou management, lead shot outreach and exchange, Emperor goose management, and Kuskokwim salmon management.
4. Refuge Information Technicians are working hard giving presentations to local schools on waterfowl, fish, and moose.

Waterfowl



Above- The 2023 waterfowl field crew pause for a photo on Kigiak Island

Refuge staff will participate in 9 waterfowl projects during the 2023 field season from May 14 – August 25, 2023. They include:

1. Emperor Goose Nesting Ecology and Survival.
2. Emperor Goose Transmitter Deployment.
3. Avian Influenza Sampling and Monitoring.
4. Black Brant Colony Survey.
5. Environmental Monitoring and Habitat Sampling on Kigigak Island.
6. Black Brant, Cackling Goose, and Emperor Goose Banding.
7. Tule Goose Telemetry.
8. Kgun Lake Duck Banding
9. Stellers eiders molt survey

Fisheries Program



Kwethluk Freshwater Production Survey

Top Left- Kwethluk screw trap in operation, Spring 2022

The Kwethluk Freshwater Production Survey is a cooperative study between the Kuskokwim River Intertribal Fish Commission and the US Fish and Wildlife Service to understand the relationships between smolt abundance, adult returns, and environmental drivers. Understanding environmental factors, especially in times of rapid climate change, can help managers understand factors that affect salmon productivity.



Bottom Left- Kwethluk River Weir meeting in the Organized Village of Kwethluk.

Methods involve utilizing a rotary screw trap to capture juvenile salmon out-migrating in Spring (end of April - the end of June), to mark, and then recapture to estimate the number of smolt. The study is a continuation of work done in 2015-2018, where brood year fall water temperature was correlated with smolt production. As brood year fall temperatures

increased the condition and production of migrating juvenile salmon decreased (Boersma et al. 2019). This project is planned to continue in year 2023 and possibly longer pending funding and support.

Staff Changes at the Refuge



Above- Big Game Biologist (Aaron Webber, left) and Supervisory Biologist (Spencer Rearden, right) while taking a break during moose surveys.

1. Big game biologist Aaron Webber has moved on to work for Forest Service.
2. The new Deputy Project Leader is named Laurie Boeck and she will start on March 12th. Laurie is moving to the refuge from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. She has about 30 years of experience working in Alaska (mostly in the Fairbanks area).
3. Spencer Rearden has decided to move back into the Big Game/Mammal Biologist position so he can spend more time with his family, We have started the process to advertise his old Supervisory Biologist position.
4. We are in the process of hiring a fish biologist, visitor services manager, and more refuge information technicians.



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Togiak National Wildlife Refuge
P.O. Box 270
Dillingham, Alaska 99576
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INFORMATION BULLETIN - January 2023

Kanektok River salmon weir removal Contact: Pat Walsh

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game operated a salmon weir on Togiak Refuge on the Kanektok River from 2002-2015. The weir has been inoperative since 2016 due to lack of funding. In spring 2022, ADF&G began removing the weir materials and field camp. It is anticipated that weir removal will be complete by spring 2023.

Aerial Salmon Survey Contact: Truett Cawfield

The Fish and Wildlife service has initiated an aerial survey of the Salmon River which flows into the Kuskokwim Bay. The aim of this survey is to establish a baseline for salmon run timing and run size for this system. A weir will be constructed on the Salmon River in 2023 and will be managed by the Kenai Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office, who is partnering with the Togiak Refuge staff on this project. The weir will be utilized to ensure the accuracy and precision of aerial surveys.

Arctic Char Population Inventory Contact: Truett Cawfield

Togiak Refuge has developed a multi-year study to inventory Arctic char populations throughout the Refuge. This species was previously confirmed to occur in 27 lakes. Since the beginning of the study 34 lakes have been sampled, and Arctic char occurrence has been documented in 13 new lakes. We have collected size and genetic information from 355 fish and provided the UAF museum with voucher specimens. If you have any first-hand knowledge of small or unique Arctic char populations and would be willing to share that information please contact Truett Cawfield at the Togiak Refuge office.

Mulchatna Caribou Contact: Andy Aderman

Togiak Refuge assisted ADF&G with telemetry and law enforcement flights, satellite data acquisition, data entry and database management. A June 2022 post-calving survey estimated the Mulchatna herd at 12,112 caribou, slightly down from 12,850 estimated in 2021, and well below the population objective of 30,000-80,000 caribou.

Togiak Refuge Manager Moos, under authority delegated by the Federal Subsistence Board, closed caribou hunting and closed Federal public lands in the RC503 hunt area for caribou hunting.

ADF&G staff radiocollared 12 caribou in April 2022 in the area from Cape Newenham north to the Arolik River. On June 23, 2022 we located 11 collars in 8 groups and 1 collar that was a recent mortality. We also observed 9 uncollared groups ranging from 1-7 caribou. The combined total for all groups was a minimum of 470 caribou. A composition survey in early October 44.4 bulls and 46 calves per 100 cows. Thus far these caribou have remained in the general proximity of where they were captured. We plan to deploy additional radiocollars on caribou in this area in March 2023.

Nushagak Peninsula Caribou Contact: Andy Aderman

A photocensus of the Nushagak Peninsula Herd on June 25, 2022 found a minimum of 359 caribou in 7 groups which resulted in a total population estimate of 442 +/- 118 (359-560) caribou at the 95% confidence interval. A similar effort in 2021 found a minimum of 258 caribou in 2 groups resulting in an estimate of 287 +/- 47 (258-334) caribou. A composition survey in early October estimated 41.3 bulls and 63.3 calves per 100 cows. The calf to cow ratio was highest since 1994. The bull to cow ratio was similar to 2021.

The Nushagak Peninsula Caribou Planning Committee met via teleconference July 27, 2022 and reviewed results of previous hunts, population and lichen monitoring, and the harvest strategy. Following the Harvest Strategy adopted in 2019, the Committee favored having a hunt with a total of 48 permits, with 8 permits going to each of the 6 communities: Aleknagik, Clark's Point, Dillingham, Manokotak, Togiak and Twin Hills. Refuge Manager Moos' decision was to open the Federal caribou hunt on the Nushagak Peninsula from August 1-March 15 with a harvest objective of 48 caribou, a harvest limit of 1 caribou per hunter, and 8 permits going to each of the 6 communities. As of January 5, 2023, hunters reported taking 3 caribou. We plan to deploy additional radiocollars on caribou in this area in March 2023.

Nushagak Peninsula Lichen Monitoring Contact: Andy Aderman

Lichen cover on the Nushagak Peninsula declined from 48.1% in 2002 to 18.7% by 2022. Surveys estimated cover had declined 2.3% from 2002 to 2007; 6.3% from 2007 to 2012; 8.9% from 2012 to 2017, and 11.4 from 2017 to 2022. The declining trend from 2002 on, suggests lichen cover could decrease to a low enough level in the next 10 years, such that caribou may abandon the Nushagak Peninsula. It is likely Nushagak Peninsula caribou would leave the peninsula before lichens were depleted. What is not known is if caribou leave the peninsula will it be temporary, seasonal, or long term.

Moose Contact: Andy Aderman

In 2022, 14 of 19 collared adult cows produced a minimum of 25 calves (3 singles and 11 sets of twins) suggesting a production rate of 131.6 calves per adult 100 cows. Adult twinning rate was 78.6%. Three of 8 2-year old cows had a single calf. Calf survival from birth to November was 28% which was higher than 2021 (11%) and 2019 (22.5%).

During the 2021-2022 fall moose hunts in Unit 17A (RM 571, RM 573, and DM 570), hunters reported harvesting 60 moose (57 bulls, 3 cows) which was similar to the 60 moose (55 bulls, 5 cows) taken the previous year. During the 2021-2022 winter moose hunts in Unit 17A (RM 575 and RM 576), hunters reported harvesting 86 moose (28 bulls, 58 cows). In southern Unit 18, hunters reported harvesting 7 bulls in the RM 617 hunt and 12 bulls in the RM 620 hunt. Harvest was down 5 moose for the RM 617 hunt and no change for the RM 620 hunt.

Togiak Refuge and ADF&G-Dillingham staff conducted a moose survey in Unit 17A and southern Unit 18 (south of and including the Goodnews River drainage) from October 17-23, 2022. In Unit 17A the population estimate was 1,976 \pm 358 (1,618-2,334) which was 7.6% lower than the October 2019 estimate of 2,139 \pm 495 (1,644-2,634). In the Goodnews drainage the moose population estimate was 464 \pm 106 (358-570). Togiak Refuge and ADF&G-Bethel staff conducted a moose count in southern Unit 18 (south of and including the Goodnews River drainage) from February 27-28, 2020 and counted a minimum of 450 moose.

The relationships of wolf and brown bear predation with moose population density and growth at Togiak National Wildlife Refuge and BLM Goodnews Block, Alaska Contact: Pat Walsh

In summer 2014, Togiak Refuge, the USFWS Genetics Lab, ADF&G, and BLM initiated a study to understand the effects of wolf and brown bear predation in regulating the populations of moose. The study relies on radio telemetry and stable isotope analysis. Our approach is to relate the predation impact by

wolves and bears on moose at varying levels of moose population density. This requires having population estimates of both bears and wolves. We estimate the brown bear population totals approximately 855 bears (95% confidence limits: 664 – 1,154). Using radio telemetry, we estimate the wolf population varies widely but averages 90-100 wolves consisting of approximately 12 packs averaging 7 wolves plus approximately 10% of wolves unaffiliated with packs. Using these demographic data, we will model wolf and bear predation on moose based on the diet composition of both species determined through analysis of carbon and nitrogen isotopes occurring in wolf and bear tissues. Lab analyses are complete and modelling is currently underway.

Walrus Contact: Pat Walsh

The Togiak Refuge has annually monitored the number and timing of Pacific walrus at haul-outs since 1985, using ground counts (1985-2008), aerial surveys (2003-2011) and time lapse photography (2010-2022). Overall, walrus numbers observed at haul-outs on Togiak Refuge have declined, with the greatest declines at Cape Peirce and Cape Newenham. Peak annual haul-out counts have varied greatly, ranging from >12,000 in 1985 to <300 in 2002. Since 2002, peak counts have averaged 1,615. However, in fall 2021, a group of approximately 7,500 walrus hauled out on Hagemeister Island (Fig. 1), which was the greatest number of walrus using Togiak Refuge since 1998.

Seabirds Contact: Jannelle Trowbridge

The abundance of black-legged kittiwakes, common murres, and pelagic cormorants has been monitored at Cape Peirce since 1990. Monitoring was not conducted in 2015 and 2020. This year's average number of birds counted on study plots was 669 kittiwakes, 241 murres, and 28 cormorants. Over the past 30 years, the average number of birds counted on study plots are 1,040 kittiwakes (range = 238-1,906), 2,437 murres (range = 53-4,490), and 84 cormorants (range = 14-149). Abundance has been below average for kittiwakes since 2021, murres since 2014, and cormorants since 2016.

Signs of avian influenza were observed at Cape Peirce this year, although lab tests were not possible in most cases. About 230 black brant were found dead along Nanvak Bay this spring. Symptoms of bird flu such as swimming in circles were also observed in living black brant. At Cape Peirce 4 glaucous-winged gulls, 1 glaucous gull, 1 raven, 1 common eider, and 1 jaeger were also found dead.

Invasive Aquatic Plant Surveys Contact: Kara Hilwig

Elodea spp. is a highly invasive and difficult to control aquatic plant implicated in the degradation and loss of fish habitat across the world. It was confirmed present in Alaska in 2009 and is now found in several waterbodies across the State. Refuge and Park staff are cooperating to complete the fifth *Elodea* survey within the Togiak Refuge, Wood-Tikchik State Park and the surrounding area. Twenty-five annual monitoring sites have been established in high use areas such as lodge docks, boat ramps, and popular float plane destinations. In 2022, field crews visited 33 lakes, ponds, and rivers. Crews sampled 9 locations in the Park, 15 in the Refuge, and 6 in the outlying area from June 29 to September 26, 2022. These included 3 fishing lodges located in the Park. Sampling effort included overflights of 7 lakes, 25 fragment searches, and an intensive sampling effort in Mission Bay at Lake Aleknagik. In total, 2,072 rake samples were collected. No *Elodea* or other invasive aquatic plants were detected.

Water Temperature Monitoring Contact: Truett Cawlfeld

Stream temperature monitoring has been conducted at 21 locations on 14 rivers in Togiak Refuge since August 2001. Continuous hourly water temperatures were recorded at each site. Over 2.4 million temperature records were collected, quality-graded, and digitally stored in a database. The warmest month each year was July. The warmest temperatures were observed in the Kukaktlim Lake outlet and the coolest temperatures were observed in the Weary River. Project reports are available upon request.

In addition to the stream temperature monitoring, we monitored lake temperature using moored all-season temperature arrays to record hourly temperatures throughout the water column in 2 lakes since 2011. The lakes differed significantly in surface area, water volume, and elevation with Ongivinuk Lake being smaller and at higher elevation than Snake Lake. We observed variation in lake ice timing and fewer days of ice cover on Snake Lake than on Ongivinuk Lake. We observed that both lakes turn over in spring and fall. We observed water temperatures in excess of standards for fish rearing and migration habitats during summer down to 12.5 m in Snake Lake and down to 5 m in Ongivinuk Lake. Project reports are available upon request.

Quantifying River Discharge Contact: Pat Walsh

Togiak Refuge and the USFWS Water Resources Branch have worked cooperatively since 1999 to acquire hydrologic data of the flow regime (magnitude, duration, timing, frequency, and rate of change) and water quality on rivers throughout the Refuge. A network of stream discharge gages collected stream flow data from 1999-2005 at 20 locations. A subset of five of these stations continued to collect data through fall 2009, after which three of the five stations were removed. We continue to monitor discharge in the Togiak and Kulukak Rivers, although due to Covid-19 travel restrictions, the gages were inoperative in 2020-2021. Both stations were brought back into operation in July 2022.

Education and Outreach Contact: Terry Fuller

At the time of this writing, Togiak Refuge's education and outreach efforts have slowly started to resume. Togiak Refuge normally has a very active education and outreach program. From an education standpoint, during a normal school year, Refuge staff conducts an average of 60+ classroom visits throughout 12 Bristol Bay villages annually, Classroom visits include lessons about the Migratory Bird Calendar, National Wildlife Refuge Week, careers in natural resource conservation, and numerous teacher requested classroom presentations. The Refuge works with several school districts and private schools including the Southwest Region, Lower Kuskokwim, Dillingham City school districts and the Dillingham 7th Day Adventist School. Some topics often include bird walks, wilderness survival skills, archery, salmon life cycles, aquatic resources, and bear safety. School visits started back up early in 2022 and we anticipate even more during the new school year. The refuge website, one of our educational tools, is undergoing a migration to a new platform, and we are excited about better access it will allow and the content it will provide.

Togiak Refuge, in partnership with ADF&G and the Southwest Region School District, also conducts hunter safety courses throughout western Bristol Bay Villages. Classes have impacted more than 100 students in Manokotak, Dillingham, Twin Hills, Togiak, Aleknagik and Quinhagak. The refuge plans to continue these courses, as requested, in 2023 and is in the planning stages to add a National Archery in School Program to its offerings in the future, pending a return to normal outreach efforts.

The Refuge education program also produces Bristol Bay Field Notes, an award-winning weekly radio program on KDLG 670 AM that covers an array of outdoor-related topics (past episodes can be found on KDLG's website). Togiak Refuge has an active and heavily followed Facebook page which disseminates information on a daily basis to a rapidly growing global audience.

The Refuge normally hosts an Open House event, in celebration of National Public Lands Day and National Hunting and Fishing Day. This year that event was pushed back to October 2022. Approximately 100 people attended; on hand were a wide range of displays, hands on activities, food and beverages.

Togiak Refuge staff continues to work with the Alaska Migratory Bird Co-Management Council and the ADF&G to conduct household subsistence waterfowl surveys. Refuge staff and volunteers conduct surveys in a number of southwest Alaska communities, Aleknagik, Dillingham, Togiak, Clark's Point, Newhalen,

Chignik Lake and Chignik Lagoon. Due to budgetary constraints those surveys are on hold for this year. .

Also, the Refuge partners with others to conduct three environmental education camps. As with other Service sponsored education camps, those camps were cancelled for 2021 due to covid-19 related concerns. Summer 2022 saw a partial return of camp offerings.

Cape Peirce Marine Science and Yup'ik Culture Camp Contact: Terry Fuller

This camp was scheduled to happen in July 2022 but was cancelled due to weather. Most recent camp: In July 2019 an enthusiastic group of seven area junior high students representing three villages (Dillingham, Togiak and Platinum) traveled to Cape Peirce for this camp. Students were able to observe seabirds, marine mammals, and learn how field work is conducted, as well as learning about the food webs and ecological relationships found at the Cape Peirce area. Students also learned about traditional Yup'ik uses of animals and plants and about Native survival skills. This camp is designed to help students gain a better understanding of the biological diversity of a marine ecosystem. It also strengthens their sense of stewardship for local natural resources. Other topics at this camp included tide pools, wilderness survival skills, archery, bear safety, Leave No Trace camping practices and careers with USFWS. Refuge Interpreter Jon Dyasuk spoke with students about traditional resource uses. A special offering for this year's camp was the chance for the students to try their hand drawing with Colorado pastel artist Penny Creasy. Traditional councils and school districts from throughout western Bristol Bay are cooperators with this camp.

Southwest Alaska Science Academy (Salmon Camp) Contact: Terry Fuller

*Note: Was not held during 2022. Most recent: In July 2019, Togiak Refuge helped with the 19th year of a summer camp aimed at teaching middle and high school students about fisheries science and the importance of salmon to our ecosystem. Students were selected from the Bristol Bay region. During the camp students worked in the field alongside fisheries professionals. Cooperators with the Refuge on this project included the Bristol Bay Economic Development Corporation, Bristol Bay Science and Research Institute, University of Alaska, University of Washington School of Fisheries, the Dillingham City and Southwest Region school districts, and ADF&G.

Summer Outdoor Skills and River Ecology Float Camp Contact: Terry Fuller

This camp was a modified camp held during mid-August 2022. The camp still used rafting as one of the major activities, but it was a stationary camp at Pungokepek Lake for six junior high students. Students observed and learned about the many fish, wildlife and plant species found around Pungokepek Lake. Rafting skills, water safety, different angling practices (Catch and Release), Leave No Trace camping practices and bear safety were topics during the trip. Students also participated in other outdoor activities such as wilderness survival skills. This camp helps students grasp the biological diversity of riparian ecosystems and the importance of salmon as a nutrient source, while developing a deeper sense of stewardship for local natural resources. Traditional councils and school districts in western Bristol Bay are cooperators with this camp.

Division of Refuge Law Enforcement Contact: Derek Thompson

Federal Wildlife Officers work to protect wildlife and habitat and make refuges safe places for visitors and staff. Regional Law Enforcement Specialist (RLES) Derek Thompson is stationed in Dillingham, AK. He is the Officer responsible for patrolling Togiak NWR and providing Regional assistance and guidance for the AK Division of Refuge Law Enforcement (DRLE).

Visitation and use in 2022 within Togiak NWR was at pre-covid levels, with many local and non-local users in the Refuge. Mulchatna caribou are a local and regional priority. RLES Thompson is the Federal team lead for patrolling and monitoring the Eastern Mulchatna herd. This winter AK DRLE will again team up

with up with ADF&G, AWT, BLM, and FWS OLE to enforce the Mulchatna caribou hunting closure. Nushagak Peninsula caribou permits have been increased for the 2022-2023 season. RLES Thompson reminds hunters who obtain a permit for this hunt to be familiar with the permit conditions and designated hunter permits and conditions. Please call if you have any questions.

RLES Thompson encourages anyone with questions regarding USFWS law enforcement to contact him; and reminds all who enjoy and rely upon the resources in the Bristol Bay Region the USFWS Division of Refuge Law Enforcement is here to help protect those resources for future generations.

Staff Update

The Fisheries Biologist position was filled by Jonathan Cawfield (aka Truett) in May. Truett comes from South Texas, having completed an acoustic telemetry study on marine fishes in fulfillment of a Master of Science degree in 2021.

Budget Analyst Yong Ellis has retired from the Service effective 12/30/2022. We are happy to have LoRae Helms as our new Budget Analyst. LoRae moved to Dillingham in November from Montana. We are excited to have her as part of our refuge team and she will also provide budget coverage for the Alaska Region Fire Program.

**FEDERAL WILDLIFE CLOSURE REVIEW
WCR24-38**

Issue: Wildlife Closure Review WCR24-38 reviews the closure to moose hunting in a portion of Unit 18, except by residents of Tuntutuliak, Eek, Napakiak, Napaskiak, Kasigluk, Nunapitchuk, Atmautlauk, Oscarville, Bethel, Kwethluk, Akiachak, Akiak, Tuluksak, Lower Kalskag, and Kalskag.

Closure Location and Species: Unit 18, that portion east of a line running from the mouth of the Ishkowik River to the closest point of Dall Lake, then to the east bank of the Johnson River at its entrance into Nunavakanukakslak Lake (N 60°59.41' Latitude; W162°22.14" Longitude), continuing upriver along a line 1/2 mile south and east of, and paralleling a line along the southerly bank of the Johnson River to the confluence of the east bank of Crooked Creek, then continuing upriver to the outlet at Arhymot Lake, then following the south bank east of the Unit 18 border and then north of and including the Eek River drainage (Unit 18, Kuskokwim)—Moose (**Figure 1**).

Current Federal Regulation

Unit 18 – Moose

Unit 18, that portion east of a line running from the mouth of the Ishkowik River to the closest point of Dall Lake, then to the east bank of the Johnson River at its entrance into Nunavakanukakslak Lake (N 60°59.41' Latitude; W162°22.14" Longitude), continuing upriver along a line 1/2 mile south and east of, and paralleling a line along the southerly bank of the Johnson River to the confluence of the east bank of Crooked Creek, then continuing upriver to the outlet at Arhymot Lake, then following the south bank east of the Unit 18 border and then north of and including the Eek River drainage¹ - 1 antlered bull by State registration permit during the fall season *Sept. 1-Oct. 15.*

Or

1 antlered bull by Federal registration permit during a may-be-announced winter season *May be announced between Dec. 1-Jan. 31.*

Federal public lands are closed to the taking of moose except by residents of Tuntutuliak, Eek, Napakiak, Napaskiak, Kasigluk, Nunapitchuk, Atmautlauk, Oscarville, Bethel, Kwethluk, Akiachak, Akiak, Tuluksak, Lower Kalskag, and Kalskag.

¹Referred to as the Kuskokwim hunt area throughout the analysis.

Closure Dates: Year-round

Current State Regulation

Unit 18 – Moose

Residents: Zone 1¹ – One bull excluding male calves, by permit, RM615 Sept. 1-Sept. 9²
available in person in Bethel and villages within the hunt area Aug
1-25 and online at [http:// hunt.alaska.gov](http://hunt.alaska.gov) Aug 1-Oct 1

Residents: Zone 2³— One bull excluding male calves, by permit, RM615 Sept. 1-Oct. 15
available in person in Bethel and villages within the hunt area Aug
1-25 and online at [http:// hunt.alaska.gov](http://hunt.alaska.gov) Aug 1-Oct 15

Non-residents: Unit 18 no open season

¹Zone 1 descriptor: Unit 18, all Kuskokwim River drainages north and west of a line beginning at the confluence of Whitefish Lake and Ophir Creek at the Unit 18 boundary and continuing southwest to the confluence of Tuluksak and Fog Rivers, then southerly to the lower Kisaralik River-Kasigluk River cutoff of the Kisaralik River, then southwesterly to the lower Kisaralik River-Kasigluk River cutoff of the Kasigluk River, then southwesterly to the Akulikutak River where the snowmachine trail crosses the river from the east side of Three Step Mountain, then westerly to the confluence of Kwethluk River and Magic Creek, then southwesterly to the confluence of Eek River and Middle Fork Eek River, then southwesterly to the Unit 18 boundary at 60° 4.983' N, 161° 37.140' W; and all drainages easterly of a line from the mouth of the Ishkowik River to the closest point of Dall Lake, then to the east bank of the Johnson River at its entrance into Nunavakanukakslak Lake at 60° 59.41' N, 162° 22.14' W, continuing upriver along a line ½ mile south and east of, and paralleling a line along the southerly bank of the Johnson River to the confluence of the east bank of Crooked Creek, then continuing upriver along the east bank of Crooked Creek to the outlet at Arhymot Lake, then following the south bank of Arhymot Lake easterly to the Unit 18 boundary (**Figure 1**).

²full season is Sept. 1-Oct. 15, but ADF&G uses discretionary authority to set dates in Zone 1 each year

³Zone 2 descriptor: Unit 18, all Kuskokwim River drainages south and east of a line beginning at the confluence of Whitefish Lake and Ophir Creek at the Unit 18 boundary and continuing southwest to the confluence of Tuluksak and Fog Rivers, then southerly to the lower Kisaralik River-Kasigluk River cutoff of the Kasigluk River, then southwesterly to the lower Kisaralik River-Kasigluk River cutoff of the Kasigluk River, then southwesterly to the Akulikutak River where the snowmachine trail crosses the river from the east side of Three Step Mountain, then westerly to the confluence of Kwethluk River and Magic Creek, then southwesterly to the confluence of Eek River and Middle Fork Eek River, then southwesterly to the Unit 18 boundary at 60° 4.983' N, 161° 37.140' W (**Figure 1**).

Regulatory Year Initiated: 1991, closed to non-Federally qualified users; 2004-2009, closed to all users (harvest moratorium); 2010, closed except by some Federally qualified subsistence users (§804 restriction).

Extent of Federal Public Lands

Unit 18 is comprised of 67% Federal public lands and consists of 64% U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) managed lands and 3% Bureau of Land Management (BLM) managed lands.

The Unit 18 Kuskokwim moose hunt area is comprised of 57% Federal public lands and consists of 56% USFWS managed lands and 1% BLM managed lands (**Figure 1**). Zone 2 within the Kuskokwim moose hunt area is comprised of 82% Federal public lands and consists of 79% USFWS managed lands and 3% BLM managed lands (**Figure 1**).

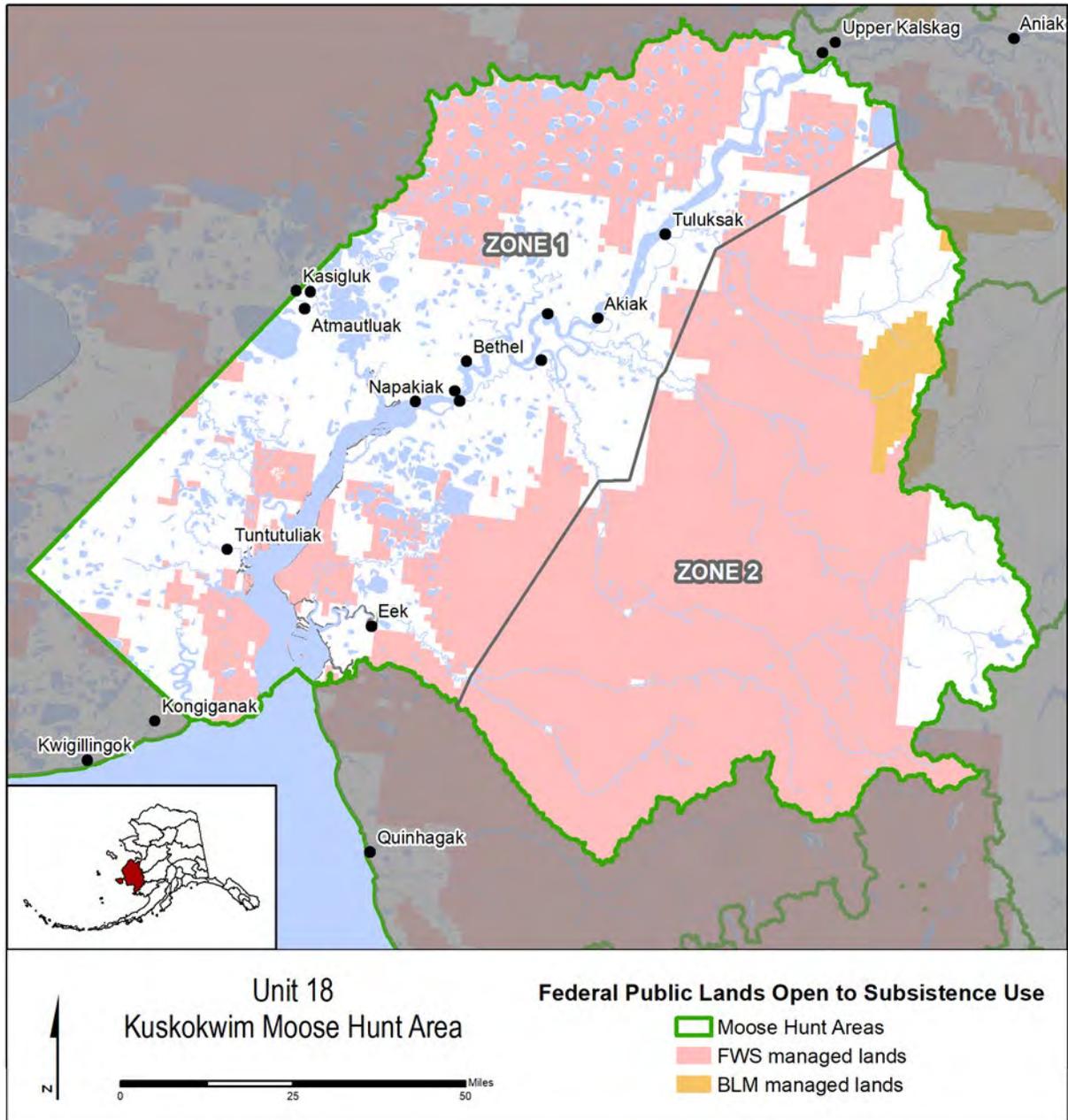


Figure 1. Land status and hunting zones in the Unit 18 Kuskokwim moose hunt area.

Customary and Traditional Use Determination

Residents of Unit 18, Upper Kalskag, Aniak, and Chuathbaluk have a customary and traditional use determination for moose in Unit 18, that portion of the Yukon River drainage upstream of Russian Mission and that portion of the Kuskokwim River drainage upstream of, but not including, the Tuluksak River drainage.

Residents of Unit 18, Lower Kalskag, and Upper Kalskag have a customary and traditional use determination for moose in Unit 18 remainder.

Regulatory History

Federal public lands in the Kuskokwim area have been closed to non-Federally qualified users since 1991, when the Board acted on Proposal P91-124. Submitted by the Togiak NWR, P91-124 requested that the moose season in the southern portion of Unit 18, including the Kanektok and Goodnews River drainages, be closed to allow establishment of a harvestable population. The Board adopted this proposal with modification to close Federal public lands throughout Unit 18 to moose harvest, except by Federally qualified subsistence users, given low moose densities throughout Unit 18.

Until 2004, Federal and State moose harvest limits for the lower Kuskokwim River area were one bull or one antlered bull, and the fall seasons were approximately one month. The State winter season varied widely from a continuous fall/winter season (Sept. 1–Dec. 31) to a 10-day December season and a winter “to be announced” season. The Federal winter season has varied from a 10-day season to a “to be announced” season.

Both the Federal and State seasons were closed in the fall of 2004 as part of a coordinated effort to build the Kuskokwim moose population. In 2003, at the request of local residents, the Alaska Board of Game (BOG) established a five-year moratorium on moose hunting under State regulations. The Board adopted Proposal WP04-51 in April 2004 that established a five-year moratorium on Federal public lands. The intent of the moratorium was to promote colonization of underutilized moose habitat. The moratorium was largely instigated by the Lower Kuskokwim Fish and Game Advisory Committee, which worked with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), USFWS, and area residents to close the moose season for five years or when a population of 1,000 moose was counted in the lower Kuskokwim survey unit. Considerable outreach efforts were made to communicate the impact of the moratorium on the growth potential of the affected moose population to local communities.

In March 2009, the BOG established a registration hunt (RM615), in preparation for ending the moratorium on June 30, 2009. A September 1 – 10 season was established, with a harvest limit of one antlered bull by registration permit. The season was closed when the quota was met. In November 2009, the BOG adopted a proposal that changed the boundary separating the Unit 18 lower Kuskokwim area from the Unit 18 remainder area.

In May 2010, the Board adopted Proposals WP10-58 and WP10-62, with modification to make boundary changes similar to the BOG actions. Adoption of these proposals helped to clarify the boundary for moose hunters and law enforcement. At the same meeting in May 2010, the Board adopted Proposal WP10-54 with modification to reduce the pool of Federally qualified subsistence

users eligible to hunt moose on Federal public lands within the lower Kuskokwim. This was necessary because of the small number of moose available to harvest relative to the large number of subsistence users with a customary and traditional use determination for moose (42 communities including Bethel).

Special action requests were approved to establish Federal moose seasons in the lower Kuskokwim hunt area in 2010 and 2012. In 2010, Emergency Wildlife Special Action WSA10-02 was approved to establish a Sept. 1 – 5 moose season. In 2012, Emergency Wildlife Special Action WSA12-06 was approved to establish a Sept. 1 – 30 moose season. The harvest quota was set prior to the start of the season and the harvest limit was one antlered bull via a State registration permit.

In April 2014, the Board adopted WP14-27 with modification, establishing a Federal moose season in the lower Kuskokwim hunt area. The Sept. 1 – 30 season had a harvest limit of one antlered bull by State registration permit. The Yukon Delta NWR Manager was delegated the authority to establish an annual quota and close the season once the quota was met.

In August 2018, the Tuluksak Native Community submitted Emergency Special Action Request WSA18-02, requesting that the Board open the moose season early in the Kuskokwim hunt area to accommodate a food shortage emergency. The Board approved this request with modification to open an August 18 – 31 emergency season only to residents of Tuluksak, with a quota of seven antlered bulls by Federal registration permit.

In 2020, the BOG adopted Proposal 7 as amended to change the State season dates for the RM615 moose hunt to Sept. 1-Oct.15 with a harvest limit of one bull, excluding the take of male calves. The first amendment to Proposal 7 was to extend the season from Sept. 1 – Sept. 30 to Sept. 1 – Oct. 15. Consideration was made to accommodate the holiday and teacher in-service days by keeping the season open date the same to allow continued opportunity for youth hunts. The second amendment to Proposal 7 changed the harvest limit from one antlered bull to one bull excluding the take of male calves. This was done to allow for proxy hunting but continue to prohibit the potential harvest of calves or incidental harvest of cows (ADF&G 2020).

In April 2020, the Board considered Closure Review WCR20-38 and Proposal WP20-35 concerning moose in the Kuskokwim hunt area. The Board voted to maintain status quo on the Federal lands closure reviewed by WCR20-38 because demand for moose by Federally qualified subsistence users exceeded sustainable harvest levels. Proposal WP20-35 requested the addition of a may-be-announced season between Dec. 1 – Jan. 31. The Board rejected this proposal as part of the consensus agenda because of conservation concerns. While the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council) had submitted this Proposal, they recommended to the Board to oppose it to allow more time for the moose population to fully recover following the harvest moratorium. Additionally, the Council noted that snowmachine access during a winter season could dramatically increase harvest pressure in the area, including accidental harvest of cows, further hampering recovery of the population.

In July 2020, the Board approved Wildlife Special Action WSA20-05, which requested extending the fall moose season in Zone 2 of the Unit 18, Kuskokwim hunt area from Sept. 1 – 30 to Sept. 1 – Oct. 7 for the 2020/21 regulatory year. Yukon Delta NWR submitted, and the Board approved Wildlife

Special Action WSA20-05 to provide more subsistence hunting opportunity since moose harvest quotas were not being met.

In August 2020, the Board approved a revised closure policy, which stipulated all closures will be reviewed every four years. The policy also specified that closures, like regulatory proposals, will be presented to the Councils for a recommendation and then to the Board for a final decision. Previously, closure reviews were presented to Councils who then decided whether to maintain the closure or to submit a regulatory proposal to modify or eliminate the closure.

In 2021, the Board adopted the Council's recommendation on Temporary Special Action Request WSA21-03, extending the fall moose season in Zone 2 of the Unit 18, Kuskokwim hunt area from Sept. 1–30 to Sept. 1–Oct. 15 for the 2021/22 regulatory year. The Board adopted this special action to provide additional subsistence opportunity as quotas were not being met and to reduce regulatory complexity by aligning with State regulations.

In 2022, the Board considered Proposal WP22-43 and Proposal WP22-44 concerning moose in the Kuskokwim hunt area. The Yukon-Kuskokwim and Western Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils opposed Proposal WP22-43 and supported Proposal WP22-44. The Board adopted Proposal WP22-44 as modified by OSM to extend the fall moose season in the Kuskokwim Zone 2 hunt area of Unit 18 from Sept. 1–30 to Sept. 1–Oct. 15, and to establish a may-be-announced winter season from Dec. 1–Jan. 31 with a harvest limit of one antlered bull by Federal registration permit. The modification was to clarify the regulatory language and to delegate authority to the Yukon Delta NWR Manager to announce the winter season via delegation of authority letter. Proposal WP22-43 requested delegating authority to the Federal in-season manager to increase the moose harvest quota in Zone 1 of the Kuskokwim hunt area of Unit 18 if the water levels are too low to access Zone 2. The Board rejected this proposal as part of the consensus agenda because of conservation concerns.

In November 2022, the Board approved Special Action WSA22-04 as modified by OSM to amend the existing delegation of authority letter for moose in the Kuskokwim hunt area of Unit 18 to delegate the Yukon Delta NWR Manager the additional authority to determine the number of permits to be issued and any needed permit conditions for the may-be-announced winter moose season. This addition to the delegation of authority letter only applies to the 2022/23 winter may-be-announced season. The Board approved this request as modified by OSM to clarify the effective period ends January 31, 2023, and to specify permit conditions must comply with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) information collection policy. The Board supported limiting permits and setting any needed permit conditions to ensure the in-season manager can more effectively manage this hunt, safeguarding against overharvest while providing additional subsistence hunting opportunity.

Closure last reviewed: 2020 – WCR20-38

Justification for Original Closure:

§815(3) of ANILCA states:

Nothing in this title shall be construed as – (3) authorizing a restriction on the taking of fish and wildlife for nonsubsistence uses on public lands (other than national parks and monuments) unless necessary for the conservation of healthy populations of fish and wildlife, for the reasons set forth in section 816, to continue subsistence uses of such populations, or pursuant to other applicable law...

The original closure in 1991 noted a conservation concern for the moose population. Given low moose densities throughout Unit 18, the moose population could not sustain harvest by all users as additional harvest would not allow for the maintenance of this wildlife resource in a condition that would assure a stable and continuing natural population. The Board stated that the closure of Federal public lands except to Federally qualified subsistence users provided rural users a subsistence priority.

In 2004, a five-year moratorium on moose hunting in the Kuskokwim River drainage was needed to recover a low moose population. The moratorium facilitated the establishment of a moose population capable of supporting annual harvests. Approximately 10,000 residents along the Kuskokwim River in Unit 18 could benefit from a moose population capable of supporting harvests.

In 2010 the closure was modified to specify the pool of Federally qualified subsistence users eligible to hunt moose when the Federal season opened in the moratorium area. This was necessary because of the small number of moose available to harvest relative to the large number of subsistence users with a customary and traditional use determination for moose (42 communities including Bethel).

Council Recommendation for Original Closure:

The first closure was in 1991. This closure was initiated prior to the formation of the Regional Advisory Councils in 1993.

For the closure initiated in 2004 by Proposal WP04-51, the Western Interior Council deferred to the home region. The Yukon/Kuskokwim Delta Council supported instating the moose moratorium within this area of the Kuskokwim River to allow for an increase in the moose population. The Council expressed concerns of allowing a winter moose season below Mountain Village in the lower Yukon portion of the proposed area because a cow moose can be mistaken for a bull moose during late-winter hunt. The lower Yukon and coastal area moose hunters were experiencing economic hardships due to a decline of salmon for commercial harvests, making it more difficult for hunters to make any extended trips during moose hunting seasons. However, the Council hoped the moratorium would yield more moose that would be available to subsistence users in this area

In 2010 the Yukon/Kuskokwim Delta Council supported Proposal WP10-54 with modification to include the results of the Section 804 analysis and also recommended further modification to establish a one antlered-bull season Sept 1–5 by joint Federal or State registration permits and allow the Refuge Manager in consultation with AD&G to set the harvest quota and extend the season by up to five days if harvest quota has not been met.

State Recommendation for Original Closure:

The first closure was in 1991. Apart from the southernmost drainages, the State did not support closure of Federal public lands in Unit 18 to non-Federally qualified users, arguing that a closure was not warranted in terms of biological information or demands for moose by local users.

In 2004 the State supported the 5-year moratorium closure with a modification to the descriptor of the area to align the State and Federal areas and seasons. Furthermore, at its fall 2003 meeting, the BOG closed the moose season in a portion of Unit 18 that differs slightly from the closure area described in Proposal WP04-51. The State regulation allowed moose hunting in the portion of Unit 18, south of the Eek River drainage, which was proposed for closure in Proposal WP04-51.

In 2010 the State supported WP10-54 with a modification to establish a season on Federal public lands that matched the State season. This approach would minimize confusion for hunters and law enforcement. The State also recommended a cooperative harvest quota that would be managed between State and Federal managers. This action would be effective in the seventh year since the moratorium had been initiated in the lower Kuskokwim hunt area and fulfilled the original strategy supported by both State and Federal managers of closing the area for 5 years or reaching 1,000 moose.

Biological Background

Moose are believed to have begun colonization of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta in the 1940s (Perry 2014). By the 1990s, when the Federal public lands closure was initiated, moose densities throughout much of Unit 18 were very low. Though established populations existed in the far eastern portions of Unit 18, moose were only sparsely distributed throughout much of the unit. Harvested moose were likely immigrants from other areas, rather than part of a local breeding population (FSB 1991), and hunting pressure was effective in limiting growth of the moose population along the Kuskokwim River corridor (Perry 2014). The 2004 – 2008 hunting moratorium was effective in establishing a harvestable population, and the most recent indicators suggest that the population along the Kuskokwim River main stem and in its tributaries continues to grow.

Prior to 2020, the most recent population survey of the lower Kuskokwim survey area, which includes the main stem riparian corridor between Kalskag and Kwethluk, occurred in 2015. At that time, the population was estimated to be 1,378 moose, or 1.6 moose/mile² in Zone 1 (**Figure 2**). This represents an annual growth rate of 20% between 2011 and 2015. The population estimate for Zone 2 was 508 moose (YKDRAC 2019a). At that time, the Kuskokwim moose population remained below the State's population objective of at least 2,000 moose in this area (Perry 2014).

Lack of snow cover in recent years precluded additional population surveys between 2015 and 2020. The survey completed in 2020 shows an increase of the moose populations in both zones. The estimated mid-point population in Zone 1 was 3,220 moose, and the minimum count in Zone 2 was 789 moose, which exceeds State population objectives (**Figure 2**) (Jones 2021, pers. comm., YKDRAC 2019). Browse surveys indicate that the population in Zone 1 is potentially reaching a point that will limit or stop growth, and Zone 2 is about one-half of what it could be (Jones 2021, pers. comm.).

Composition estimates for the main stem in 2020 were 25 bulls:100 cows (ADF&G 2020). Bull:cow ratios, which were quite high during the harvest moratorium, declined when harvest resumed in 2009, but remained consistently above the minimum State management objective of 30 bulls:100 cows until 2020 (**Table 1**). The recent decline in the bull:cow ratio follows an increase in reported harvest and a liberal hunting season in 2019. Unreported harvest, increased winter mortality, and misclassification of young bulls with small antlers during surveys may also have contributed to the lower ratio in 2020. Bull:cow ratios in the Kuskokwim tributaries (Zone 2) are very high, although surveys have occurred infrequently. In 2015 and 2020, ratios were 83 and 42 bulls:100 cows, respectively (Oster 2020, Jones 2021, pers. comm).

Fall calf:cow ratios of < 20 calves:100 cows, 20-30 calves:100 cows, and > 30-40 calves:100 cows may indicate declining, stable, and growing moose populations, respectively (Stout 2010). Between 2007 and 2020, calf:cow ratios in the main stem survey area (Zone 1) ranged from 45-73 calves:100 cows (**Table 1**; Jones 2018, pers. comm., ADF&G 2020, Oster 2020). In 2015 and 2020, calf:cow ratios in the Kuskokwim tributaries (Zone 2) were 62 and 40 calves:100 cows, respectively (Oster 2020). These high calf:cow ratios indicate a growing moose population. Twinning rates, which provide an index of nutrition, are also high, averaging 43% between 2015 and 2019 (YKDRAC 2019a, ADF&G 2020).

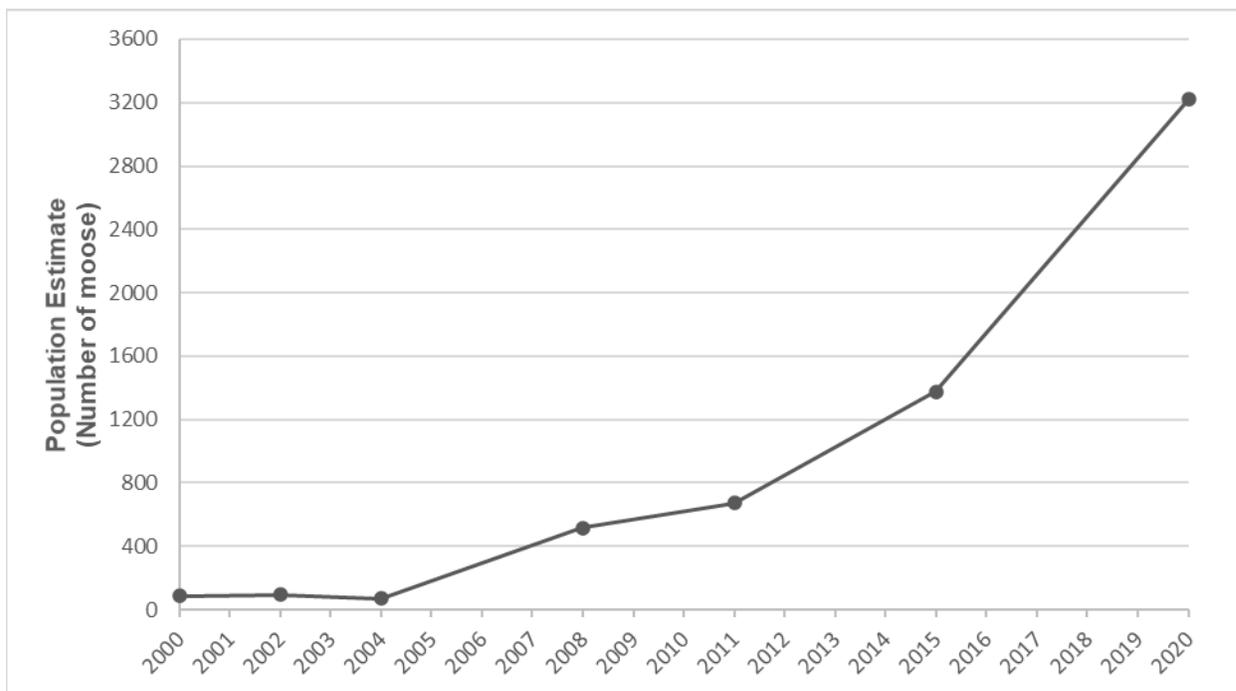


Figure 2. Estimated moose population size along the main stem of the Kuskokwim River, 2000 – 2020 (Perry 2014; Jones 2018, pers. comm.; Jones 2021, pers. comm.)

Table 1. Composition estimates for moose along the main stem of the Kuskokwim River, 2007 – 2020 (YDNWR 2015; Jones 2018, pers. comm.; ADF&G 2020; Oster 2020).

Year	Bulls:100 cows	Calves:100 cows
2007	98	73
2009	52	49
2010	51	49
2011	50	49
2013	41	72
2015	73	53
2016	70	56
2019	43	49
2020	25	45

Cultural Knowledge and Traditional Practices

Forty-two widely dispersed communities, roughly 27,000 people, have a customary and traditional use determination for moose in the Unit 18 Kuskokwim hunt area (ADLWD 2022). However, in 2010 the Board found that 15 communities (roughly 13,000 people) have the highest customary dependence on moose in the Unit 18 Kuskokwim hunt area, based on the three criteria in ANILCA Section 804: customary and direct dependence upon the populations as the mainstay of livelihood, local residency, and the availability of alternative resources. Only residents of these 15 communities area eligible to harvest moose in the Unit 18 Kuskokwim hunt area, presented from lower to upper river: Tuntutuliak, Eek, Napakiak, Napaskiak, Kasigluk, Nunapitchuk, Atmautluak, Oscarville, Bethel, Kwethluk, Akiachak, Akiak, Tuluksak, Lower Kalskag, and Kalskag. All but two of the 15 communities are situated within the hunt area; Kalskag and Lower Kalskag are situated along the Kuskokwim River in Unit 19A, upriver from the hunt area.

These communities share some characteristics. Most are small with populations between 70 people in Oscarville to over 800 in Kwethluk (**Table 2**). The exception is the community of Bethel, population over 6,000 people, which is the hub community in the area, a center of healthcare, trade, and government, providing services to outlying areas. Most of the communities are not connected by roads and are accessed by boats or planes, and snow machines, ATVs, or highway vehicles on trails and the frozen river during winter. Kalskag and Lower Kalskag are connected by a State-maintained 4.2-mile road.

Table 2. The population of communities eligible to harvest moose in the Unit 18 Kuskokwim River drainage hunt area 1960-2010, organized from lower to upper river communities and based on the US Census (blank cell=0 or not available, ADCCED 2022).

Community	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Tuntutuliak	144	158	216	300	370	408	485
Eek	200	186	228	254	280	296	404
Napakiak	190		262	318	353	354	358
Napaskiak	154	259	244	328	390	405	509
Oscarville	51	41	56	57	61	70	70
Kasigluk	244		342	425	543	569	623
Nunapitchuk	327	526	299	378	466	496	594
Atmautluak			219	258	294	277	386
Bethel	1,258	2,416	3,576	4,674	5,471	6,080	6,325
Kwethluk	325	408	454	558	713	721	812
Akiachak	229	312	438	481	585	627	677
Akiak	187	171	198	285	309	346	462
Tuluksak	37	195	236	358	428	373	444
Lower Kalskag	122	183	246	291	267	282	278
Kalskag	147	122	129	172	230	210	212
Total	3,715	4,977	7,143	9,173	10,760	11,514	12,639

Harvest and Use of Moose

The estimated harvest (from all areas) and use of moose based on periodic household surveys is displayed in **Table 3**. The estimated moose harvest ranged from a high of 357 moose by Bethel residents in 2012, to a low of 2 moose in Oscarville in 2010 and Lower Kalskag in 2005. The difference between these harvest levels is in part because Bethel's population is so much higher than other communities'. These harvest estimates track well with the reported harvest to ADF&G (ADF&G 2022a). Some of these harvest surveys were comprehensive surveys that included questions regarding the harvest of all wild resources during the study year. Based on these surveys, moose made up between 2% and 25% of the harvest of all wild resources, in pounds of edible weight (ADF&G 2022b). **Table 3** demonstrates that while local users hunting for moose are not always successful, a majority of households use moose either by harvesting it themselves or receiving it from another hunter. Of the total reported annual harvest of moose by these communities from 2011 to 2021, between 37% and 62% were taken from other areas, outside the Unit 18 Kuskokwim hunt area, based on the ADF&G reporting system and online database (ADF&G 2022a).

A primary source of information regarding the harvest and use of moose on the Kuskokwim is focused on Chuathbaluk, a central Kuskokwim Yup'ik village that has much in common with lower Kuskokwim communities in terms of culture, weather, environment, and hunting patterns (Charnley 1983).

Seasonal harvest patterns are influenced by several factors. Moose are hunted year-round; however, the intensity of harvest effort is influenced by weather conditions and regulations. Moose are available to hunters July, August, and September in habitats such as willows bordering rivers, creeks, and lakes. Bulls and cows are especially fat during these times. Bulls enter the rut in late September. In October the better-tasting meat of cows is preferred. In fall, access to moose habitat is possible if and when rivers and creeks are swollen from heavy rain. However, moose are more sedentary in rainy weather and harder to find, and gravel bars, where moose can sometimes be found feeding, become submerged. Freeze-up along the Kuskokwim River usually occurs in November, and it is often unsafe for travel. Warm spells in winter can return rivers and creeks to dangerous conditions for travel by hunters. Deep snow aids hunting by allowing travel by snow machine and by hampering moose mobility (Charnley 1983).

Community involvement in harvesting depends on the season. Moose hunting is almost always engaged in by the adult and adolescent men. During September an extended family group that often includes the wife, sisters, mother, and daughters of hunters camp together for up to a week. At this time, generally, women and children gather berries while men hunt moose and black bear. Sometimes two or three households camp together in one area. The November and February hunts usually involve the male members of a household only, and hunting occurs while checking trap lines and during day or overnight trips from the village. In February, camping is limited by cold weather (Charnley 1983).

Several means are used to access harvest areas. Moose are typically hunted from boats in the fall. Motors are shut off and boats are allowed to drift downstream, guided by oars. Most moose hunting takes place within one mile of either side of the waterway that is being hunted. Snow machines also are used to travel to areas where moose are likely to be found. Fresh tracks are followed on snow machine or foot. Moose are sometimes tracked with snowshoes to beds where they are resting for the day. Aircraft is seldom used in moose hunting (Charnley 1983).

The season of harvest dictates proper processing and preservation methods of the harvest. Generally, moose are butchered at the kill site by members of hunting parties, taken back to the village, and further processed. In the past, meat was dried and smoked at fall hunting camps. When enough animals had been taken, skin boats were constructed using the animal hides, and the hunters drifted back downstream (Charnley 1983).

Dry meat is a staple food eaten throughout the summer when families are at fish camp. Most villagers depend on the weather to prevent their meat from spoiling. For this reason, hunting seasons that occur during months when temperatures have already fallen below freezing are preferred. The hind and front quarters and rump are commonly hung in a salmon smokehouse, or suspended from a rack, wrapped with material such as burlap to protect them from animals (Charnley 1983).

During warm months, meat is placed in garbage bags and submerged in creeks to be kept cool. If meat is hung, it is also brushed with a brine solution to discourage flies from laying eggs. The large, butchered parts of the animal such as legs, rump, and ribs are smoked to create a hardened outer layer over the meat. This protective layer keeps flies off of the meat (Charnley 1983).

Preparing moose meat for meals commonly means boiling it, and less often frying, roasting, and barbecuing. Marrow from the leg bone is considered a delicacy. Moose head soup is a favorite dish, the nose, tongue, cheek meat, and brains being the most desirable parts. The liver, heart, kidneys, part of the stomach muscle, and one of the four stomachs are all eaten. Moose fat is highly valued and is cooked and eaten or rendered into oil (Charnley 1983).

Table 3. The estimated harvest and use of moose by communities eligible to harvest moose in the Unit 18 Kuskokwim hunt area, organized by study year and based on household surveys (blank=question not asked) (ADF&G 2022b).

Community	Study year	Percentage of households using moose	Percentage of households attempting to harvest moose	Percentage of households harvesting moose	Estimated harvest of moose	Lower estimate	Upper estimate	Per person in pounds edible weight
Nunapitchuk	1983			24%	12	3	22	19
Kwethluk	1986		63%	29%	33	33	33	45
Akiachak	1998	95%	84%	68%	106	93	119	145
LowerKalskag	2003	74%	62%	24%	30	14	52	53
Kalskag	2003	74%	59%	29%	21	12	32	46
LowerKalskag	2004	36%	41%	17%	12	10	15	25
Kalskag	2004	72%	76%	16%	9	9	10	26
LowerKalskag	2005	40%	30%	3%	2	1	10	5
Kalskag	2005	59%	50%	18%	12	6	21	24
LowerKalskag	2009	81%	81%	24%	18	15	21	32
Kalskag	2009	92%	92%	25%	15	12	18	40
Akiak	2010	94%	62%	27%	27	20	33	38
Kwethluk	2010	84%	51%	22%	33	25	42	25
Oscarville	2010	75%	33%	17%	2	2	4	20
Tuluksak	2010	71%	65%	24%	20	16	24	24
Bethel	2011	61%	28%	13%	279	220	338	25
Napakiak	2011	71%	46%	14%	13	13	13	29
Napaskiak	2011	89%	64%	29%	29	29	29	43
Bethel	2012	75%	34%	19%	357	294	419	34
Eek	2013	77%	59%	16%	14	14	14	22
Tuntutuliak	2013	87%	64%	15%	17	17	17	22

Harvest History

Following the harvest moratorium, moose harvest on non-Federal lands was allowed under State regulations, beginning in 2009. In 2010, harvest on Federal public lands was opened to a subset of Federally qualified subsistence users, including residents of Tuntutuliak, Eek, Napakiak, Napaskiak, Kasigluk, Nunapitchuk, Atmautluak, Oscarville, Bethel, Kwethluk, Akiachak, Akiak, Tuluksak, Lower Kalskag, and Kalskag. In this analysis, this user group will be referred to as local users.

Since 2011, reported harvest has averaged 183 moose annually (ADF&G 2022a). Notably, reported harvest has increased, doubling between 2014 and 2017 (**Figure 2**). Local users have taken 95% of the reported moose harvest in the Kuskokwim hunt area since 2009, with 30% of the harvest attributable to residents of Bethel. However, non-local use is increasing, from two harvest reports in 2013 to 18 in 2021 (ADF&G 2022a). Non-local users that report harvesting moose are primarily Federally qualified subsistence users from coastal communities of Unit 18, but also include a few users from southcentral Alaska (ADF&G 2019a). About 30 moose, including around 20 cows are harvested each year for funerals and potlatches in Zone 1 (YKDRAC 2019; Moses 2020, pers. comm.).

Despite increases in quotas and harvest, demand still outweighs moose availability. From 2009 to 2019, an average of approximately 1,450 hunters have obtained permits to harvest moose in the Kuskokwim hunt area each year, but only 10% of permit holders successfully harvested moose (ADF&G 2019a). The disparity between demand and the relatively small quotas has routinely resulted in emergency closure of the State season within days of its opening. This has resulted in some frustration among locals, who note that short unpredictable seasons make planning difficult. In response to this, ADF&G no longer uses quotas or closes Zone 1 with emergency closures. Fixed dates determined by estimated time needed to reach the set harvest objective is released prior to the start of each season (Jones 2021, pers. comm.). Local residents have also commented on the challenges of hunting in early September in recent years, given warm conditions that make proper meat care difficult. To this end, many subsistence users have advocated for a later moose season (YKDRAC 2017b).

In an effort to better serve users in an area of checkerboard land status, State and Federal managers adjusted the structure of the hunt in 2017, introducing a zone-based hunt (**Figure 1**). An important feature of the zones is that, while they correspond roughly to State and Federal lands, they are delineated by easily identifiable geographical features (e.g. river confluences). Each of the two zones is managed with its own harvest objective. Zone 1, which is comprised primarily of State managed lands, is located along the main stem of the Kuskokwim River. The season and harvest objective for the main stem hunt are managed by ADF&G. Zone 2 is comprised primarily of Federal public lands, including those in the Tuluksak, Kisaralik, Kasigluk and Eek river drainages (“tributaries”). The season and harvest quota in the tributary hunt is managed by the Yukon Delta NWR (Rearden 2018, pers. comm.; YKDRAC 2017a).

There is more demand for moose in Zone 1, along the main stem, compared to Zone 2, in the tributaries. This is evidenced by the rate at which the quota is met within each zone, and the corresponding season length. On average, the main stem hunt has been open fewer than six days annually from 2011 through 2018, and the quota has been met or exceeded most years. Since ADF&G

has changed to the fixed season using the harvest objective method, Zone 1 hunt was open for 11 days in 2020 and for 9 days in 2021 and 2022 (Jones 2021, pers. comm.). For the hunt in the tributaries, the quota has only been met once, in 2014, despite increasing season lengths (**Tables 4**). Local managers report that hunting in the tributaries is difficult, requiring specialized boats, longer travel times, and more fuel. Heavy vegetation along the banks contributes to the difficulty. It is believed that the unmet quota is a function of these difficulties, rather than lack of need for moose meat (YKDRAC 2017a, 2017b, Rearden 2018, pers. comm.).

ADF&G is currently managing the Kuskokwim moose population for continued growth and advises maintaining harvests within quotas and for bulls-only. However, ADF&G expects regulations in the Kuskokwim hunt area will be liberalized over the next five years if the moose population approaches carrying capacity as indicated by browse removal surveys (YKDRAC 2019a).

Local users took 51% of their reported moose harvest outside the Unit 18 Kuskokwim hunt area from 2011 to 2021, primarily in the reminder area of Unit 18, from a low of 42% in 2011 to a high of 63% in 2020 (ADF&G 2022a).

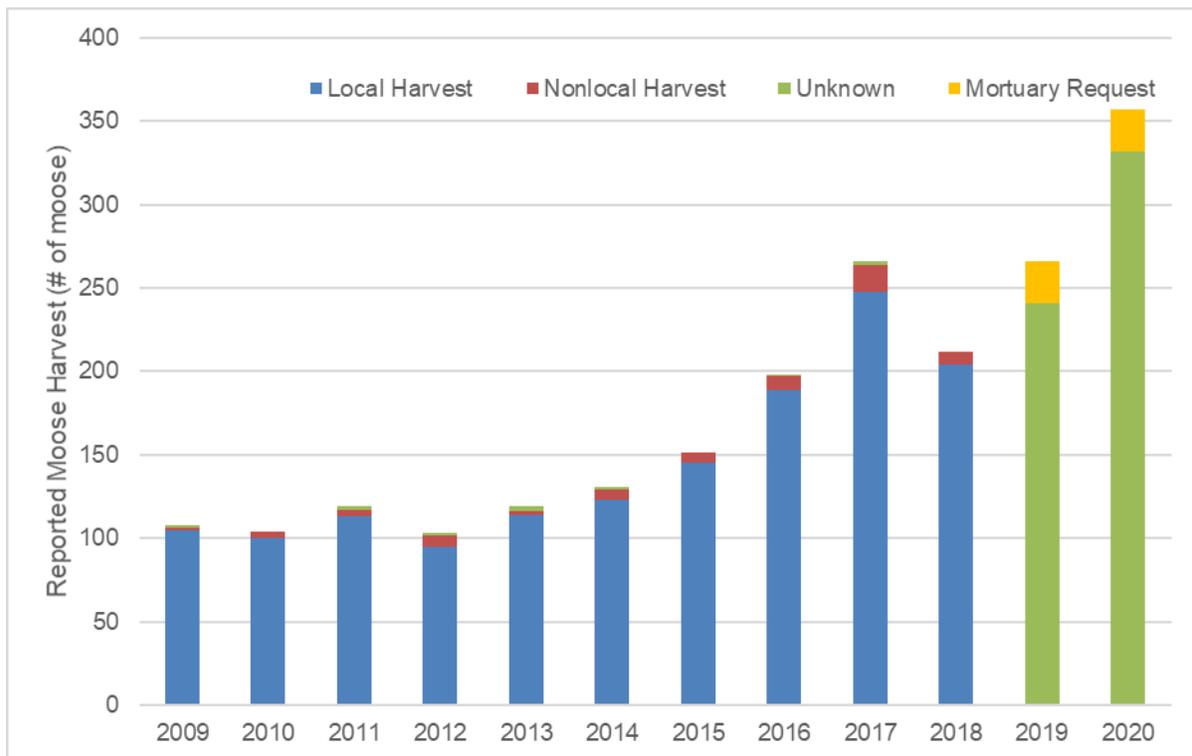


Figure 3. Reported moose harvest by RM615 in the Kuskokwim hunt area, 2009 – 2020 (ADF&G 2019a, Oster 2020, Jones 2021, pers. comm.). Note: 2019 and 2020 data does not distinguish between local and nonlocal harvest.

Table 4. State and Federal moose quotas and harvest, 2011 – 2020 (Rearden 2018, pers. comm.; ADF&G 2019b; Jones 2019, pers. comm.; Moses 2020, pers. comm.; ADF&G 2020; Oster 2020).

Year	Quota (number of moose)			Harvest (number of moose)				
	State	Federal	Total	State	Federal	Cultural	Unknown	Total
2011	81	19	100	93	11	5	15	124
2012	81	19	100	82	17	12	4	115
2013	81	19	100	89	21	18	9	137
2014	81	19	100	93	15	18	23	149
2015	110	45	155	105	31	24	15	175
2016	150	90	240	136	44	23	14	217
2017 ^a	170	110	280	186	80	36	0	302
2018 ^a	170	110	280	141	72	30	0	243
2019 ^a	N/A ^c	120	300	160	70	48	0	278
2020 ^a	N/A ^c	110	N/A ^c	239	90	33	5	367
2021 ^a	N/A ^c	110	N/A ^c	151	76	29	1	257
2022 ^a	N/A ^c	110	N/A ^c	188 ^b	60 ^b			

^a The State quota corresponds to Zone 1 and the Federal quota corresponds to Zone 2.

^b Reported harvest as of Oct. 24, 2022.

^c State uses fixed season dates instead of quota.

Other Alternatives Considered

One alternative considered was to change the winter may-be-announced season to a draw permit system instead of a registration permit system. This would reduce conservation concerns associated with overharvest as the number of permits issued could be determined annually by the in-season manager based on the quota remaining after the fall season. A draw permit would also provide more equitable permit distribution amongst Federally qualified subsistence users who could apply for a permit during a certain time period and then be randomly selected for the limited number of permits. Registration permits must be given out on a first-come, first-serve basis, which could put some Federally qualified subsistence users at a disadvantage if only a limited number of permits are available. However, this modification is beyond the scope of a closure review. The Council may want to consider submitting a proposal to request this modification at their winter 2023 meeting

Effects

Retaining the status quo would continue to limit moose hunting on Federal public lands within the Unit 18 Kuskokwim hunt area to only the Federally qualified subsistence user of the 15 communities identified in the §804 restriction. Retaining the closure ensures that these 15 communities who have demonstrated the most dependence on this resource continue to have a subsistence priority on Federal public lands.

Modifying the closure to open to all Federally qualified subsistence users but remain closed to non-Federally qualified users would provide additional opportunity to some Federally qualified subsistence users, but would likely decrease opportunity for residents of the 15 communities identified in the §804 analysis as being the most dependent on this resource.

Completely rescinding the closure would increase hunting opportunities for all users and would simplify regulations but would likely result in increased competition for moose on Federal public lands. While the moose population is growing in this area, demand still far exceeds supply, although the moose population may remain protected through very short seasons in Zone 1 and harvest quotas in Zone 2.

Extending the closure to all users is unnecessary at the moose population can sustain some harvest and that would completely preclude subsistence harvest opportunity on Federal public lands.

OSM PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION:

- Retain the Status Quo**
- Rescind the Closure**
- Modify the closure to . . .**
- Defer Decision on the Closure or Take No Action**

Justification

Despite recent increases in population size and harvest quotas, demand for moose still far outweighs the harvestable surplus of the Kuskokwim moose population. The problem of unmet demand is exacerbated by the difficulty of the hunt in the tributaries, as evidenced by unmet Federal quotas over the past years. Seasons have been extended and a may-be-announced winter season has been added to provide additional harvest opportunity and achieve unmet quotas. However, retaining the Federal public lands closure ensures that the 15 communities who have demonstrated the most dependence on this moose population continue to have a subsistence priority on Federal public lands.

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**FEDERAL WILDLIFE CLOSURE REVIEW
WCR24-43**

Issue: Wildlife Closure Review WCR24-43 reviews the closure to moose hunting, except by residents of Tuluksak, Lower Kalskag, Upper Kalskag, Aniak, Chuathbaluk, and Crooked Creek in Unit 19A, remainder.

Closure Location and Species: Unit 19A, remainder—Moose (**Map 1**)

Current Federal Regulation

Unit 19A—Moose

Unit 19A, remainder—1 antlered bull by Federal drawing permit or a State permit. Sept. 1-20.

Federal public lands are closed to the taking of moose except by residents of Tuluksak, Lower Kalskag, Upper Kalskag, Aniak, Chuathbaluk, and Crooked Creek hunting under these regulations

Closure Dates: Year-round

Current State Regulation

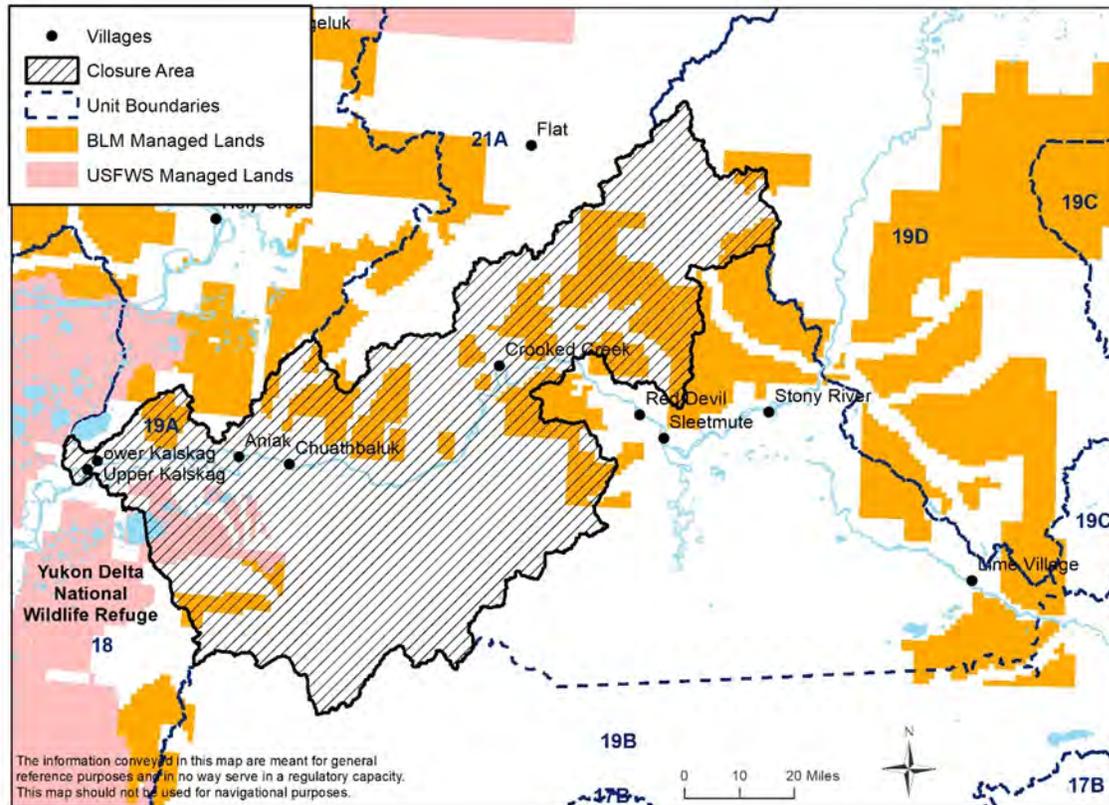
Unit 19A—Moose

Residents: Kuskokwim River drainage downstream from, and including, the George River drainage, and downstream from and excluding the Downey Creek drainage — One antlered bull by permit TM680 Sept. 1- 20

Regulatory Year Initiated: 2007

Extent of Federal Public Lands

Unit 19A is comprised of 23.6% Federal public lands and consist of 21.3% Bureau of Land Management (BLM) managed lands, and 2.4% U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) managed lands (**Map 1**).



Map 1. Federal hunt area closure for moose in Unit 19A remainder.

Customary and Traditional Use Determination

Residents of Unit 18 within the Kuskokwim River drainage upstream from and including the Johnson River, and residents of Unit 19 have a customary and traditional use determination for moose in Unit 19A.

Regulatory History

In 1990, Federal hunting regulations were adopted from State regulations. The moose season in Unit 19A was Sept. 1-Sept. 20, Nov. 20-Nov. 30, and Feb. 1-Feb. 10. The harvest limit was one moose, although antlerless moose could be taken only from Nov. 20-Nov. 30 and from Feb. 1-Feb. 10.

In 1992, the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) adopted Proposal P92-111 with modification to change the Unit 19A moose season to Sept. 5- 25, Jan. 1-Jan. 10, and Feb. 1-Feb. 5 to provide harvest opportunity during Russian Orthodox holidays in January (FSB 1992). Antlerless moose could only be taken during the winter seasons. The Board rejected Proposal P92-66 to liberalize moose hunting regulations in several units including Unit 19A because moose densities were too low to sustain increased harvests.

In April 1994, the Board deferred Proposal P94-54 to align Unit 19A Federal harvest limits and seasons with State regulations because not all affected Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils (Councils) had considered the proposal. In November 1994, the Board adopted P94-54 with

modification, aligning Unit 19A Federal moose regulations with State regulations with the exception of retaining the January season (FSB 1994). Unit 19A was divided into two hunt areas: that portion north of the Kuskokwim River upstream from, but not including the Kolmakof River drainage and south of the Kuskokwim River upstream from, but not including the Holokuk River drainage (Unit 19A east) and Unit 19A remainder. The seasons in both hunt areas were Sept. 1-20, Nov. 20-30, Jan. 1-10, and Feb. 1-10. The harvest limit in Unit 19A east was one moose, although antlerless moose could only be taken during the February season. The harvest limit in Unit 19A remainder was one bull.

In 2003, the Board adopted Proposal WP03-31 to shorten the February season in Unit 19A east to Feb. 1-Feb. 5 and eliminate the antlerless moose season because of declines in the Unit 19A moose population.

In 2004, the Board adopted Resolution 04-1 to support the Central Kuskokwim Moose Management Plan (Management Plan) (ADF&G 2004). The Board also adopted Proposal WP04-58 to eliminate the November, January, and February moose seasons in Unit 19A. Additionally, the Board adopted Proposal WP04-59 with modification to combine the Unit 19A hunt areas, require a State registration permit, and change the harvest limit to one antlered bull. These restrictions addressed severe declines in the Unit 19A moose population and complied with the Management Plan.

In 2006, the Alaska Board of Game (BOG) established a Tier II only moose hunt in Unit 19A, Kuskokwim River drainage downstream from, and including, the George River drainage, and downstream from and excluding the Downey Creek drainage (same as the Federal Unit 19A remainder hunt area) and eliminated the registration permit hunt to conserve the moose resource (OSM 2006). Subsequently, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) submitted Special Action Request WSA06-01a to require a permit in Unit 19A remainder that worked in concert with the State's Tier II hunt (WSA06-01b requested closing moose hunting in eastern Unit 19A). The Board approved WSA06-01a with modification, requiring a Federal drawing or State Tier II permit and closing moose hunting in Unit 19A remainder except by residents of Tuluksak, Lower Kalskag, Upper Kalskag, Aniak, Chuathbaluk, and Crooked Creek (OSM 2007). A limited harvestable surplus required a §804 analysis, which determined these six communities to be the most dependent on the Unit 19A remainder moose population (OSM 2006).

In 2007, the Western Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Western Interior Council) submitted Proposal WP07-35, requesting the same changes as WSA06-01. The Board adopted Proposal WP07-35 with modification because of continued conservation concerns for the Unit 19A moose population including low productivity, bull:cow ratios, and density combined with historically high hunting pressure (OSM 2007). This proposal also codified the temporary regulatory actions the Board took on Special Action requests WSA06-01a and WSA06-01b for moose in Units 19A and 19B in 2006. The modification was to delegate authority to the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) Manager to annually establish the harvest quota and number of available draw permits. The Western Interior and Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils and ADF&G supported the proposal because of conservation concerns over the moose resource (OSM 2007).

Federal regulations for moose in Unit 19A remainder have not changed since 2007. In 2008, the Assistant Regional Director for the Office of Subsistence Management (OSM), with unanimous consent of the Interagency Staff Committee, rejected WSA08-07 to extend the Unit 19A remainder moose season by 10 days, ending Sept. 30 because the request did not meet the criteria in § __.19(b) and (c) of ANILCA for accepting Special Action requests. Specifically, there was not an unusual, significant, or unanticipated change in resource abundance or hunting conditions (OSM 2008).

In August 2020, the Board approved a revised closure policy, which stipulated all closures will be reviewed every four years. The policy also specified that closures, like regulatory proposals, will be presented to the Councils for a recommendation and then to the Board for a final decision. Previously, closure reviews were presented to Councils who then decided whether to maintain the closure or to submit a regulatory proposal to modify or eliminate the closure.

In 2020, the Board adopted a modification for Closure Review WCR20-43 that maintained the closure in the western portion of Unit 19A, eliminated the closure for the Lime Village Management Area, established seasons, harvest limits, and permit requirements for the Lime Village Management Area hunt area, and removed the language referring to establishing quotas and permit numbers from the unit-specific regulations, and delegated authority to the Yukon Delta NWR manager to set quotas and permit numbers via a delegation of authority letter only. As the bull/cow ratio was still at the lower end of the ADF&G objective, the Board preferred a more robust bull/cow ratio before relaxing the closure. The Lime Village Management Area had inadvertently been included in Unit 19A remainder, so the modification primarily corrected a past oversight. Additionally, the modifications to the closure would increase harvest opportunities for Lime Village and reduce regulatory confusion by aligning Federal seasons with State regulations.

In 2022, the BOG adopted proposal 171 dividing Unit 19A into two subunits (19A, 19E). Dividing Unit 19A into two smaller units would align with the current State moose hunting boundaries and would benefit moose management in these units (Alaska Board of Game 2022).

Closure last reviewed: 2020 – WCR20-43

Justification for Original Closure (ANILCA Section 815 (3) criteria):

§815(3) of ANILCA states:

Nothing in this title shall be construed as – (3) authorizing a restriction on the taking of fish and wildlife for nonsubsistence uses on public lands (other than national parks and monuments) unless necessary for the conservation of healthy populations of fish and wildlife, for the reasons set forth in section 816, to continue subsistence uses of such populations, or pursuant to other applicable law...

The combination of low moose population densities, low calf production and survival, low bull:cow ratios and high hunting pressure contributed to declines in the Unit 19A moose population. In response to these conservation concerns, the Board closed moose hunting in Unit 19A remainder except by residents of Tuluksak, Lower Kalskag, Upper Kalskag, Aniak, Chuathbaluk, and Crooked Creek in 2007.

Council Recommendation for Original Closure:

The Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta and Western Interior Councils supported the closure to protect the moose resource for future generations.

State Recommendation for Original Closure:

The State supported the closure due to continued conservation concerns for the Unit 19A moose population and to better align with State regulations. The State established a Tier II only hunt in a portion of Unit 19A in 2006.

Biological Background

In 2004, ADF&G in cooperation with the Central Kuskokwim Moose Management Planning Committee published the Central Kuskokwim Moose Management Plan (Management Plan) (ADF&G 2004). State management objectives for the composition of the moose population in Unit 19A are the same as those in the Management Plan (Peirce 2018, ADF&G 2004):

- Maintain a minimum fall post hunt bull:cow ratio of 20-30 bulls:100 cows.
- Maintain a minimum fall post hunt calf:cow ratio of 30-40 calves:100 cows.
- Maintain no fewer than 20% calves (short yearlings) in late winter.

ADF&G has the additional intensive management objective for both Units 19A and 19B (Peirce 2018, Seavoy 2014):

- Achieve a moose population of 13,500-16,500 moose (7,600-9,300 in Unit 19A) with 750-950 moose available for harvest annually.

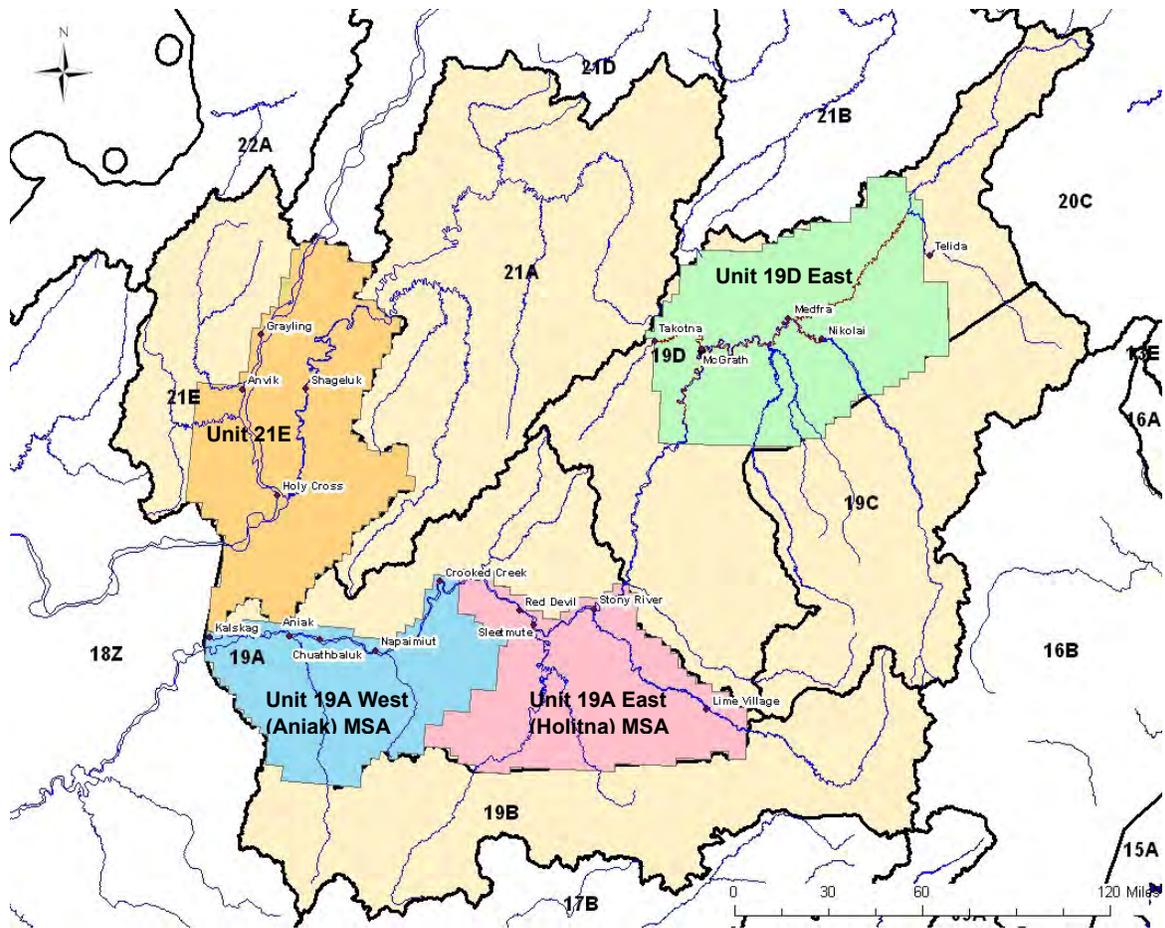
ADF&G conducts aerial surveys in Unit 19A to estimate the moose population in March (**Map 2**) (Peirce 2018, Seavoy 2014). The Federal closed area, Unit 19A remainder, primarily falls into the Unit 19A West (Aniak) moose survey area (MSA). ADF&G only surveys the Aniak MSA opportunistically, but surveys eastern Unit 19A every 3 years (**Map 2**) (Seavoy 2014). While the moose population in the Unit 19A West (Aniak) MSA appeared relatively stable between 2006 and 2010, it increased significantly in 2017 (**Figure 1, Table 2**). ADF&G also surveyed the entire Unit 19A West hunt area (TM680) for the first time in 2017, estimating 4,135 moose with 0.7 moose/mi² (Peirce 2018, pers. comm.). The population survey in winter 2020 indicates that the Unit 19A West population is continuing to increase with an estimate of 5,224 moose and 0.9 moose/mi² (Peirce 2022, pers. comm.).

Moose densities of 0.75-0.93 moose/mi² are required to meet State population objectives (Seavoy 2014). Between 1998 and 2017, estimated moose density in Unit 19A ranged from 0.25 moose/mi² to 1.3 moose/mi² (**Table 1**) (ADF&G 2018a, Peirce 2018, Seavoy 2014, ADF&G 2004, Peirce 2018, pers. comm.). While the 2017 density estimate for the Unit 19A West (Aniak) MSA of 1.3 moose/mi² is the highest ever recorded for this area and is well above State population objectives, the 2020 density estimate for the entire Unit 19A West hunt area increased to 0.9 moose/mi², which is within State management objectives (**Table 1, Table 2**).

ADF&G conducts aerial surveys to estimate the composition of the Unit 19A moose population in November (Peirce 2018). Between 1987 and 2018, the bull:cow ratio in Unit 19A ranged from 6 bulls:100 cows to 58 bulls:100 cows (**Figure 2**). Between 2004 and 2018, the bull:cow ratio in the Aniak MSA ranged from 20 bulls:100 cows to 42 bulls:100 cows (**Table 3**). The lowest bull:cow ratio occurred in 2001 but has met or exceeded management objectives since 2007. However, the 2017 bull:cow ratio in the Aniak MSA just met management objectives (20 bulls:100 cows). While the 2018 bull:cow ratio increased to 26 bull:100 cows, the number of large bulls in the population is fairly low (**Table 3**, WIRAC 2019). Intense hunting pressure and predation likely contributed to the low bull:cow ratio in 2001 (Boudreau 2004).

Between 1987 and 2017, the calf:cow ratio in the Holitna MSA and Aniak MSA ranged from 8 calves:100 cows to 72 calves:100 cows (**Figure 3**) (Peirce 2018, Seavoy 2014). Between 2004 and 2017, the calf:cow ratio in the Aniak MSA ranged from 23 calves:100 cows to 64 calves:100 cows. The lowest calf:cow ratio also occurred in 2001. Since 2011, the calf:cow ratio has been within or above management objectives. The 2017 calf:cow ratio in the Aniak MSA is the highest ever recorded but fell back below State objectives in 2018 (**Table 3**, Peirce 2018, pers. comm., Peirce 2022, pers. comm.).

Predation by wolves, black bears, and brown bears influences moose abundance in Unit 19 and may be limiting population growth (Peirce 2018, Keech et al. 2011). ADF&G conducts intensive management in Unit 19A to reduce predation on moose. However, management activities only occur in eastern Unit 19A (ADF&G 2018a).



Map 2. Units 19, 21A, and 21E showing the 3 scheduled moose survey areas (MSA): Unit 19D East moose survey area, Unit 19A East (Holitna), and Unit 21E moose survey area. Also shown is the Unit 19A West (Aniak) moose survey area which is surveyed opportunistically. The area south of the Kuskokwim River includes both the Unit 19A East (Holitna) and Unit 19A West (Aniak) survey areas (figure from Seavoy 2014).

Table 1. Moose density estimates in Unit 19A (moose/mi²). See Map 2 for survey areas. The TM680 State hunt area is similar to the Federal Unit 19A remainder hunt area. Note: The BOG divided Unit 19A into two subunits, 19A and 19E, in 2022. (ADF&G 2018a, Peirce 2018, Seavoy 2014, ADF&G 2004, Peirce 2018, pers. comm.).

Year	South of Kuskokwim River	Unit 19A West (Aniak)	Unit 19A East (Holitna)	Unit 19A West hunt area (TM680)
1998			1.25	
2001		0.7		
2005	0.27			
2006		0.39		
2008			0.44	
2010		0.33		
2011			0.25	
2011			0.43 ^a	
2014				
2017		1.3 ^a	0.52 ^a	0.7 ^a
2018				
2019				
2020				0.9 ^a
2021				

^a Includes a sightability correction factor

Table 2. Estimates from Moose surveys in the TM680 hunt area (5,704 mi²) 2010-2020 (Peirce 2022, pers. comm.).

Year	Estimate of observable moose	SCF	Estimate with SCF applied	Calves %	Total moose/mi ²
2010 ^a	1,577	1.25 ^b	1,971		0.3
2017	3,392	1.22	4,135		0.7
2020	4,354	1.20	5,224	14	0.9

^a Extrapolated estimate because the survey area was a different size

^b Extrapolated SCF.

Table 3. Aniak fall aerial moose composition counts (Peirce 2022, pers. comm.).

Regulatory Year	Bulls:100 Cows	Calves:100 Cows	Calves	% Calves	Adults	Moose	Moose/Hour
2005-2006	20	23	66	16	344	410	18
2007-2008	28	52	35	29	87	122	41
2008-2009	42	23	7	14	44	51	26
2013-2014	38	41	34	23	113	147	28
2016-2017	22	52	245	30	574	819	55
2017-2018	20	64	95	35	178	273	39
2018-2019	26	28	45	18	206	251	83

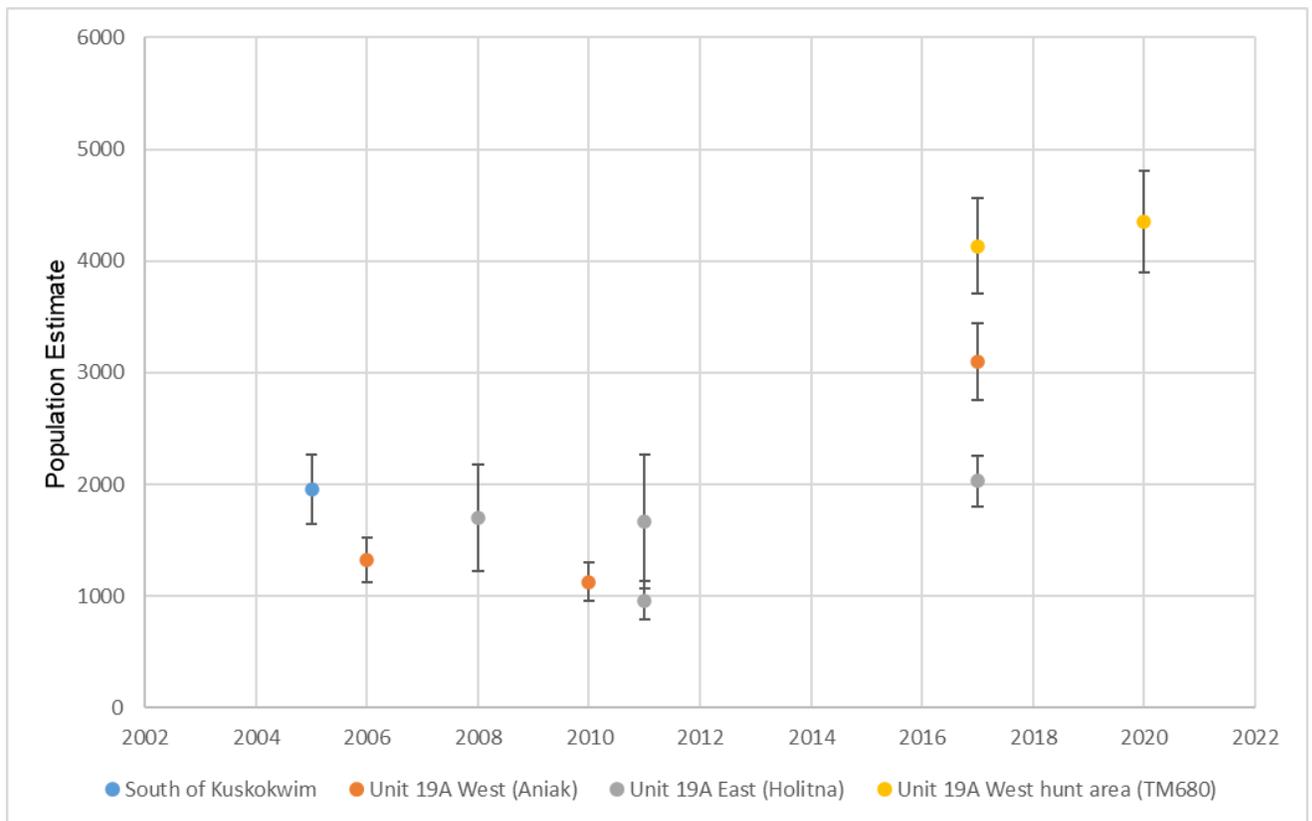


Figure 1. Population estimates for moose in Unit 19A with 90% confidence intervals. The higher estimate in 2011 and the 2017 estimate in the Unit 19A East (Holitna) survey area include sightability correction factors. See Map 2 for survey areas. The TM680 State hunt area is similar to the Federal Unit 19A remainder hunt area. Note: The BOG divided Unit 19A into two subunits, 19A and 19E, in 2022. (ADF&G 2018a, Seavoy 2014, Peirce 2018, pers. comm.).

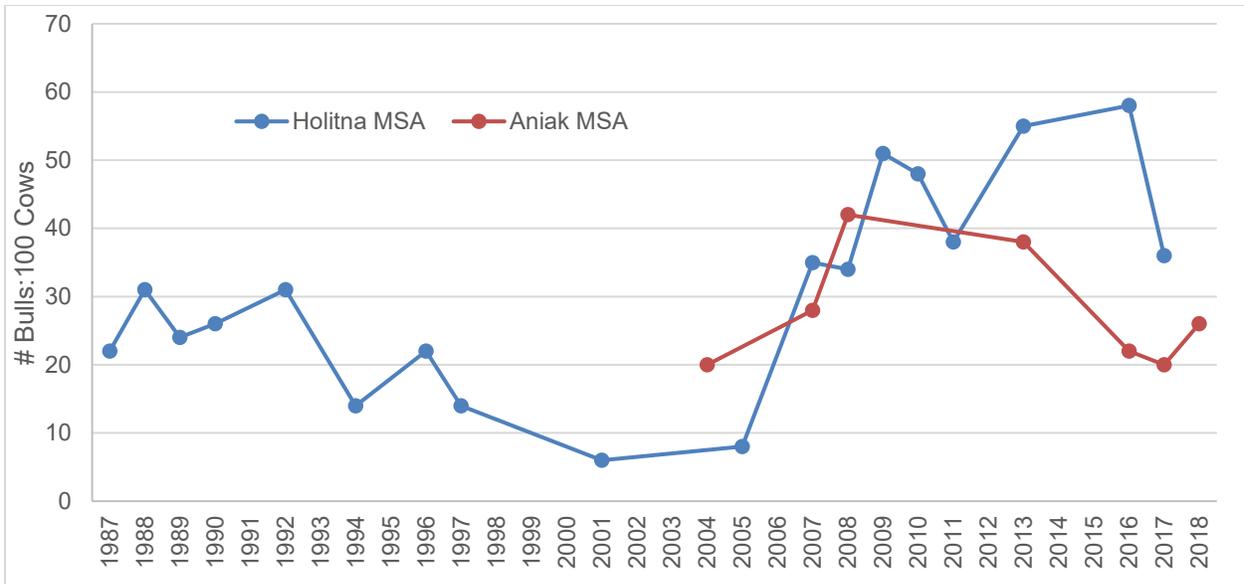


Figure 2. Fall bull:cow ratios for the Unit 19A East (Holitna) and Unit 19A West (Aniak) moose survey areas (Peirce 2018, ADF&G 2018a, Seavoy 2014, Peirce 2018, pers. comm., Peirce 2022, pers. comm.; WIRAC 2019). See Map 2 for survey areas.

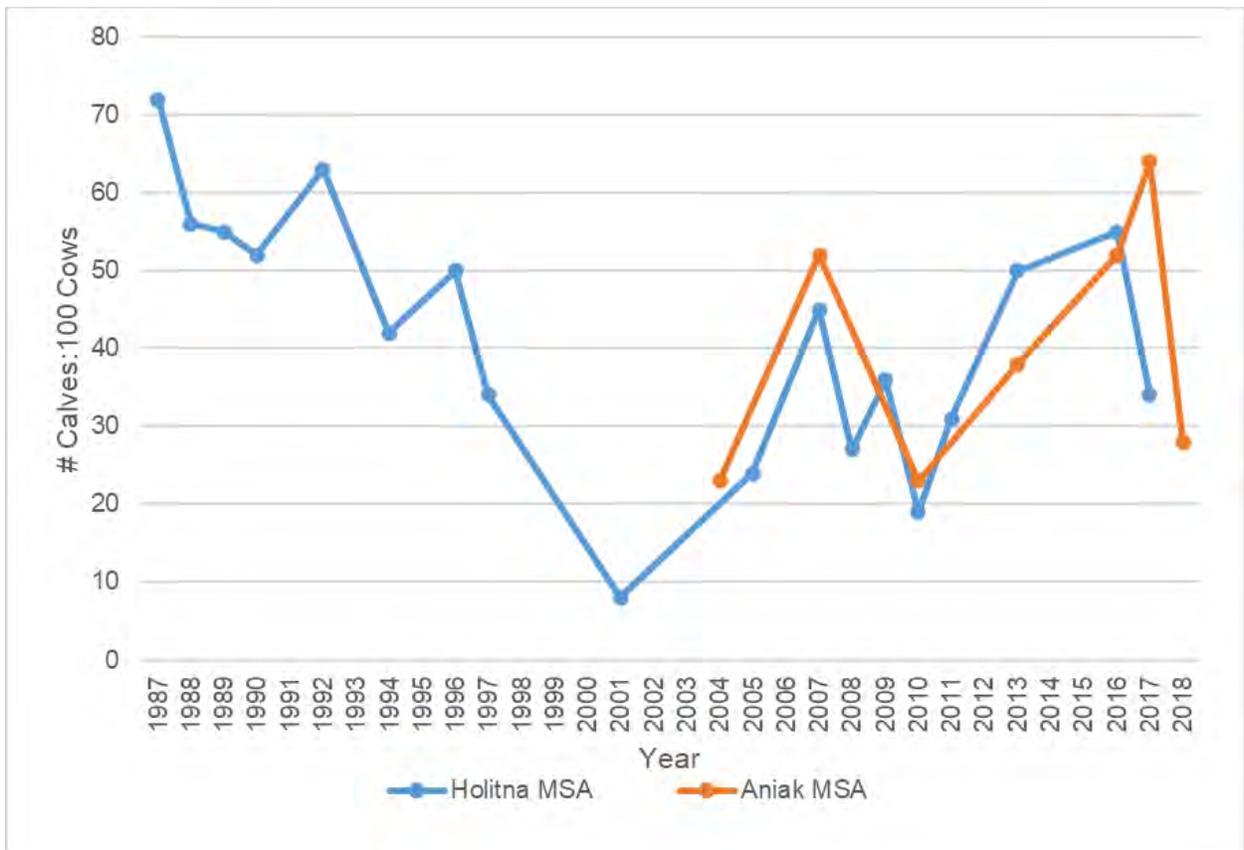


Figure 3. Fall calf:cow ratios for the Unit 19A East (Holitna) and Unit 19A West (Aniak) moose survey areas (Peirce 2018, ADF&G 2018a, Seavoy 2014, Peirce 2018, pers. comm., Peirce 2022, pers. comm.). See Map 2 for survey areas.

Harvest History

Since 2006, moose harvest in Unit 19A remainder has only occurred under a State Tier II hunt, TM680, and a Federal drawing permit hunt, FM1901. Harvest for both hunts is limited to antlered bulls and restricted to Alaska residents. Harvest on Federal public lands is restricted to residents of Tuluksak, Lower Kalskag, Upper Kalskag, Aniak, Chuathbaluk, and Crooked Creek.

Between 1994 and 2005, prior to any closures, annual reported moose harvest in all of Unit 19A ranged from 67-184 moose and averaged 127 moose (ADF&G 2004, 2018b). Between 2006 and 2021, annual reported moose harvest in Unit 19A remainder averaged 82 moose, ranging from 28-157 moose (**Figure 4**) (ADF&G 2018b, OSM 2022). Over the same time period, annual reported harvest on FM1901 averaged 36 moose, ranging from 4-73 moose (OSM 2022).

In 2006, ADF&G estimated the harvestable surplus of moose as 60 bulls for all of Unit 19A remainder (TM680 hunt area) and as 20 bulls on Federal public lands only (ADF&G 2006, OSM 2007). Most moose harvest on Federal public lands in Unit 19A remainder occurred on Yukon Delta NWR (ADF&G 2006). ADF&G estimated the harvestable surplus of moose for the Yukon Delta NWR portion of Unit 19A remainder as 16 bulls with a few additional harvests from BLM lands (ADF&G 2006).

Between 2006 and 2016, the moose population in the Unit 19A West (Aniak) MSA (**Figure 1**) appeared stable, suggesting the harvestable surplus had not changed. Since 2007, annual reported harvest has exceeded 60 bulls, the harvestable surplus. Since 2012, annual reported harvest has exceeded 110 moose (**Figure 4**). On Federal public lands, harvest has exceeded 20 bulls/year since 2014. While the number of available Tier II and Federal drawing permits has not changed substantially, hunter success rates steadily increased between 2006 and 2021 (**Table 4**).

The significant increase in the 2017 population estimate for the Unit 19A West (Aniak) MSA suggests a parallel increase in the harvestable surplus. At the 2019 winter meeting of the Western Interior Council, the ADF&G area biologist stated that the harvestable surplus is currently 160-165 moose per year while total reported harvest is roughly 150 moose per year (100 from Tier II permits and 50 from Federal permits) (WIRAC 2019). However, low 2016-2018 bull:cow ratios in the Unit 19A West (Aniak) MSA indicate few surplus bulls.

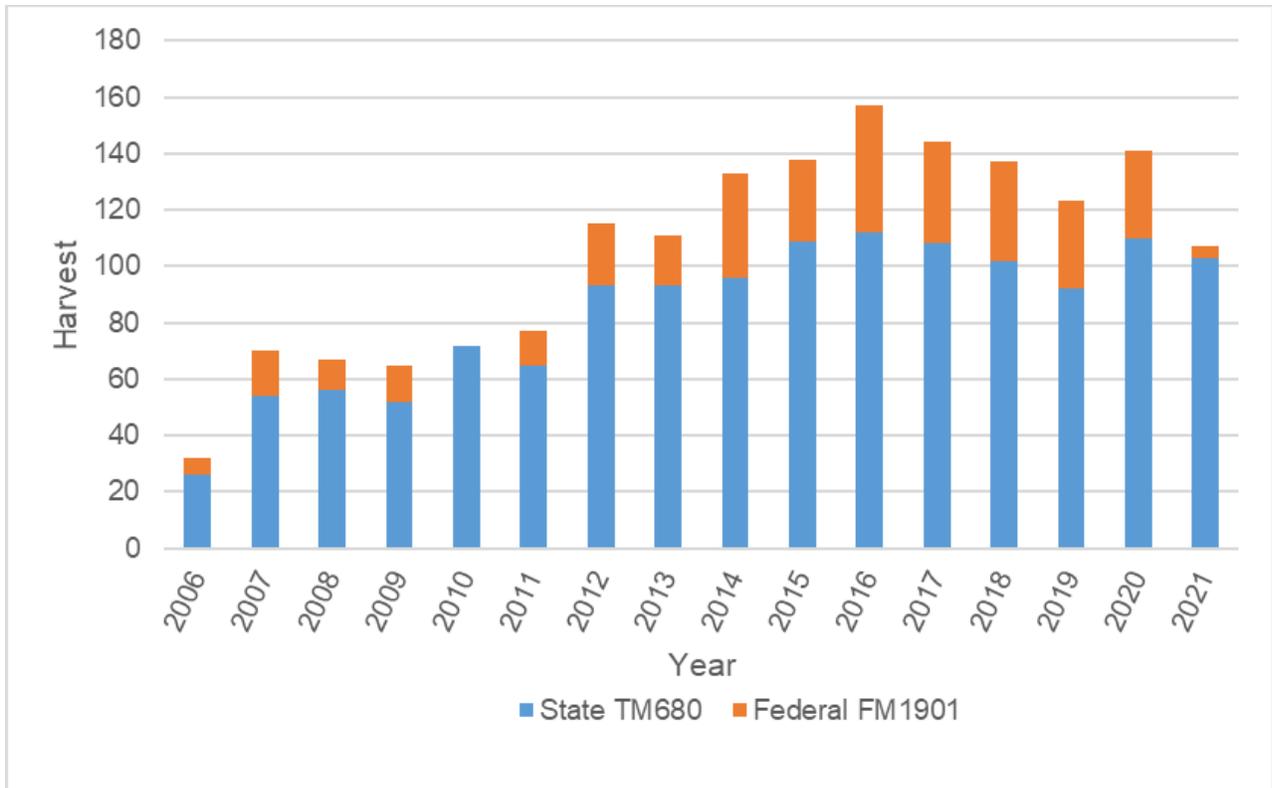


Figure 4. Reported moose harvest in Unit 19A remainder (ADF&G 2018b; OSM 2022; Peirce 2022, pers. comm.).

Table 4. Number of permits issued and success rates for the State Tier II, TM680 hunt and the Federal drawing permit, FM1901 hunt (ADF&G 2018b, 2022; OSM 2022).

Year	TM680 Issued	TM680 Success (%)	FM1901 Issued	FM1901 Success (%)
2006	200	15	92	13
2007	230	28	92	25
2008	230	28	97	14
2009	231	28	92	22
2010	200	41	*	*
2011	200	39	72	29
2012	200	56	82	43
2013	223	49	74	32
2014	192	60	92	64
2015	200	67	77	73
2016	200	64	96	65
2017	199	60	96	62
2018	210	56	100	35
2019	200	52	99	31
2020	200	64	68	31
2021	201	62	70	4
* No data available				

Effects

Maintaining status quo would continue to limit moose harvest on Federal public lands in Unit 19A remainder to only residents of Tuluksak, Lower Kalskag, Upper Kalskag, Aniak, Chuathbaluk, and Crooked Creek. This allows for the continued growth of the moose population towards population goals, while providing the Federally qualified subsistence users (FQSUs) most dependent on the resource opportunity and priority on Federal public Lands.

Rescinding the closure could increase harvest opportunities for all residents, although the State hunt is currently a Tier II hunt, which limits hunters and harvest. However, this could increase hunting pressure on a slowly growing moose population, hampering recovery. Additionally, it would eliminate the Federal subsistence priority and decrease opportunity for FQSUs.

The closure could be modified to allow hunting by all FQSU but remain closed to non-Federally qualified users. This modification could increase the harvest pressure on the moose population, but would, furthermore, open the limited permits to all residents of Unit 18 within Kuskokwim River drainage upstream from and including the Johnson River, and residents of Unit 19. This could limit the permits and moose available for the residents of Tuluksak, Lower Kalskag, Upper Kalskag, Aniak, Chuathbaluk, and Crooked Creek who have been determined as the communities most dependent on

this moose population. The closure could also be extended to all users, which would unnecessarily eliminate opportunity for FQSUs.

OSM PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION:

- Retain the Status Quo**
- Rescind the Closure**
- Modify the closure to . . .**
- Defer Decision on the Closure or Take No Action**

Justification

The moose population has increased over the years but remains at the lower end of the State's population goals, and the estimated harvestable surplus is usually met. The existing closure is necessary to allow the moose population to continue to grow, while still providing the FQSU most dependent on the resource priority and opportunity on Federal public lands. The affected area should remain closed to moose hunting until the population recovers to allow increased hunting pressure.

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Bureau of Land Management
National Park Service
Bureau of Indian Affairs

Federal Subsistence Board Informational Flyer



Contact:

Office of Subsistence Management
(907) 786-3888 or (800) 478-1456
subsistence@fws.gov

How to Submit a Proposal to Change Federal Subsistence Regulations

Alaska rural residents and the public are an integral part of the Federal regulatory process. Any person or group can submit proposals to change Federal subsistence regulations, comment on proposals, or testify at meetings. By becoming involved in the process, subsistence users and the public assist with effective management of subsistence activities and ensure consideration of traditional and local knowledge in subsistence management decisions. Subsistence users also provide valuable fish and wildlife harvest information.

A call for proposals to change Federal subsistence regulations is issued in January of even-numbered years for fish and shellfish and in odd-numbered years for wildlife. Proposals to change the nonrural determinations will be accepted in January of every other even-numbered year (every other fish cycle). The period during which proposals are accepted is no less than 30 calendar days. Proposals must be submitted within this time frame. Announcements are made each year regarding the proposals being accepted and timelines that apply.

You may propose changes to Federal subsistence season dates, harvest limits, methods and means of harvest, customary and traditional use and nonrural determinations.

What your proposal should contain:

There is no form to submit your proposal to change Federal subsistence regulations. Include the following information in your proposal submission (you may submit as many as you like):

- Your name and contact information (address, phone, fax, or e-mail address)
- Your organization (if applicable)
- What regulations you wish to change. Include game management unit number, drainage, or area, and species. Quote the current regulation if known. If you are proposing a new regulation, please state “new regulation.”
- The proposed regulation written as you would like to see it
- An explanation of why this regulation change should be made
- Any additional information that you believe will help the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) in evaluating the proposed change

You may submit your proposals by one of the following methods:

- Electronically: Go to the Federal Rulemaking Portal: <https://www.regulations.gov>. In the Search box, enter the Docket number [the docket number will list in the proposed rule, news releases, and other forms of outreach]. Then, click on the Search button. On the resulting page, in the Search panel on the left side of the screen, under the Document Type heading, check the Proposed Rule box to locate this document. Ensure you select the proposed rule by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and **not** by the U.S. Forest Service. You may submit a comment or proposal by clicking on “Comment.”
- By mail: Submit by U.S. mail or hand delivery: Public Comments Processing, Attn: [list the Docket number]; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 5275 Leesburg Pike, MS: PRB (JAO/3W); Falls Church, VA 22041–3803.
- By hardcopy: If in-person Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council) meetings are held, you may also deliver a hard copy to the Designated Federal Official (DFO) attending any of the Council public meetings. Information on the dates, locations, and call-in numbers for the Council meetings are announced with several news releases, public service announcements, on our webpage, and social media (see bottom of page for web addresses).

Submit a separate proposal for each proposed change; however, ***do not submit the same proposal by different accepted methods listed above.*** To cite which regulation(s) you want to change, you may reference 50 CFR 100 or 36 CFR 242, or the proposed regulations published in the Federal Register: <https://www.federalregister.gov/>. All proposals and comments, including personal information, are posted online at <https://www.regulations.gov>.

We cannot accept proposals delivered or sent to the Alaska Regional Office of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, this includes: phone or voicemail, fax, hand delivery, mail, or email.

For the proposal processing timeline and additional information contact the Office of Subsistence Management at (800) 478-1456 / (907) 786-3888 or go to <https://www.doi.gov/subsistence/proposal/submit.cfm>.

How a proposal to change Federal subsistence regulations is processed:

- Once a proposal to change Federal subsistence regulations is received by the Board, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Subsistence Management (OSM) validates the proposal, assigns a proposal number and lead analyst.
- The proposals are compiled into a book for statewide distribution and posted online to the Program website (<https://www.doi.gov/subsistence/current-proposals>). The proposals are also sent out to the applicable Councils and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) and the Interagency Staff Committee (ISC) for review. The period during which comments are accepted is no less than 30 calendar days. Comments must be submitted within this time frame.
- The lead analyst works with appropriate agencies and proponents to develop an analysis on the proposal.
- The analysis is sent to the Regional Advisory Councils, ADF&G, and the ISC for comments and recommendations to the Federal Subsistence Board. The public is welcome and encouraged to provide comments directly to the Councils and the Board

at their meetings. The final analysis contains all the comments and recommendations received by interested/affected parties. This packet of information is then presented to the Board for action.

- The decision to adopt, adopt with modification, defer, or reject the proposal is then made by the Board. The public is provided the opportunity to provide comment directly to the Board prior to the Board's final decision.
- The final rule is published in the Federal Register and a public regulations booklet is developed and distributed statewide and on the Program's website.

Missing out on the latest Federal subsistence issues? If you'd like to receive emails and notifications on the Federal Subsistence Management Program, you may subscribe for regular updates by emailing fws-fsb-subsistence-request@lists.fws.gov. Additional information on the Federal Subsistence Management Program may be found on the web at <https://www.doi.gov/subsistence> or by visiting www.facebook.com/subsistencealaska.



Alaska Board of Game

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www.boardofgame.adfg.alaska.gov

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

ALASKA BOARD OF GAME 2023/2024 Meeting Cycle

The Alaska Board of Game calls for proposed changes to hunting and trapping regulations for the following Regions:

1. Western Arctic / Western Region – (GMUs 18, 22, 23, and 26A)
2. Interior and Eastern Arctic Region (GMUs 12, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26B, and 26C)

PROPOSAL DEADLINE: Monday, May 1, 2023

The Alaska Board of Game is accepting proposed changes to hunting and trapping regulations for the Interior, Arctic, & Western areas of Alaska which covers Game Management Units 12, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, and 26. The Call for Proposals includes the following topics:

Hunting seasons and bag limits, including subsistence and general hunts for all species; trapping seasons and bag limits; big game prey populations and objectives for intensive management; predation control areas implementation plans; restricted areas including controlled use areas, management areas, closed areas, and closures in state game refuges.

Proposed changes to 5 AAC Chapter 92, Statewide Provisions specific to the GMUs in these regions will also be accepted, excluding changes to Game Management Unit Boundaries. This includes regulations under the categories of general provisions, permits, permit conditions and provisions, methods and means, possession and transportation, and the use of game.

The following topics will be considered for all Game Management Units:

- Brown Bear Tag Fee Exemptions
- Reauthorization of Antlerless Moose Hunts (*State statute requires all antlerless moose hunts be reauthorized annually.*)

Proposals may be submitted by email, mail, fax, or online:

Online: www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=gameboard.proposal

Mail: ADF&G, Boards Support Section
P.O. Box 115526 Juneau, AK 99811-5526

Fax: (907) 465-6094

Proposals must be received by May 1, 2023, at the Boards Support Section office in Juneau. (A postmark is NOT sufficient for timely receipt).

You are encouraged to submit proposals at the earliest possible date on Board of Game proposal forms available from the Boards Support Section regional offices and on the website at:

www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=gameboard.proposal. All proposals must contain an individual's name and an organizational name if appropriate, contact telephone number, and address. Regional proposals must specify the applicable region or game management unit.

Providing clarity on the proposal form helps the board, advisory committees, and the public more fully understand the proposed regulatory changes. Proposals that are incomplete or unclear may be omitted from the proposal book. You are encouraged to contact the Boards Support Section staff if you have questions or need assistance with completing the proposal form. Proposals published in the proposal book will be formatted, referenced with the appropriate Alaska Administrative Code citation, and include a brief description of the action requested. Proposals with emotionally charged language will be rejected or redacted as they detract from the substance of the proposals, may draw opposition not germane to the element(s) of the proposal, and may elicit nonresponsive charges from the public/board members. Proposals not meeting this call or submitted late will not be published.

Proposal books will be available to the advisory committees, agencies, and the public at www.boardofgame.adfg.alaska.gov for review and comment.

Proposals received per the above "Call for Proposals" deadline will be considered by the Board of Game at their Western Arctic / Western Region meeting scheduled for January 26-29, 2024 and the Interior and Eastern Arctic Region Meeting scheduled for March 15-22, 2024. For more information, please contact the [ADF&G Boards Support Section](#) at (907) 465-4110, or email kristy.tibbles@alaska.gov.



Alaska Board of Game

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ALASKA BOARD OF GAME
2023/2024 Cycle
Tentative Meeting Dates

Meeting Dates	Topic	Location	Comment Deadline
January 25, 2024 (1 day)	Work Session	Kotzebue	January 18, 2024
January 26-29, 2024 (4 days)	Western Arctic/Western Region Game Management Units 18, 22, 23, & 26A	Kotzebue	January 12, 2024
March 15-22, 2024 (8 days)	Interior and Eastern Arctic Region Game Management Units 12, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26B, and 26C	Fairbanks	March 1, 2024

Total Meeting Days: 13

Agenda Change Request Deadline: Wednesday, November 1, 2023

(The Board of Game will meet via teleconference to consider Agenda Change Requests following the November 1 deadline.)

ANNUAL REPORTS

Background

ANILCA established the Annual Reports as the way to bring regional subsistence uses and needs to the Secretaries' attention. The Secretaries delegated this responsibility to the Board. Section 805(c) deference includes matters brought forward in the Annual Report.

The Annual Report provides the Councils an opportunity to address the directors of each of the four Department of Interior agencies and the Department of Agriculture Forest Service in their capacity as members of the Federal Subsistence Board. The Board is required to discuss and reply to each issue in every Annual Report and to take action when within the Board's authority. In many cases, if the issue is outside of the Board's authority, the Board will provide information to the Council on how to contact personnel at the correct agency. As agency directors, the Board members have authority to implement most of the actions which would effect the changes recommended by the Councils, even those not covered in Section 805(c). The Councils are strongly encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity.

Report Content

Both Title VIII Section 805 and 50 CFR §100.11 (Subpart B of the regulations) describe what may be contained in an Annual Report from the councils to the Board. This description includes issues that are not generally addressed by the normal regulatory process:

- an identification of current and anticipated subsistence uses of fish and wildlife populations within the region;
- an evaluation of current and anticipated subsistence needs for fish and wildlife populations from the public lands within the region;
- a recommended strategy for the management of fish and wildlife populations within the region to accommodate such subsistence uses and needs related to the public lands; and
- recommendations concerning policies, standards, guidelines, and regulations to implement the strategy.

Please avoid filler or fluff language that does not specifically raise an issue of concern or information to the Board.

Report Clarity

In order for the Board to adequately respond to each Council's annual report, it is important for the annual report itself to state issues clearly.

- If addressing an existing Board policy, Councils should please state whether there is something unclear about the policy, if there is uncertainty about the reason for the policy, or if the Council needs information on how the policy is applied.
- Council members should discuss in detail at Council meetings the issues for the annual report and assist the Council Coordinator in understanding and stating the issues clearly.

- Council Coordinators and OSM staff should assist the Council members during the meeting in ensuring that the issue is stated clearly.

Thus, if the Councils can be clear about their issues of concern and ensure that the Council Coordinator is relaying them sufficiently, then the Board and OSM staff will endeavor to provide as concise and responsive of a reply as is possible.

Report Format

While no particular format is necessary for the Annual Reports, the report must clearly state the following for each item the Council wants the Board to address:

1. Numbering of the issues,
2. A description of each issue,
3. Whether the Council seeks Board action on the matter and, if so, what action the Council recommends, and
4. As much evidence or explanation as necessary to support the Council's request or statements relating to the item of interest.

Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

c/o Office of Subsistence Management
1011 East Tudor Road, MS 121
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6199
Phone: (907) 787-3888, Fax: (907) 786-3898
Toll Free: 1-800-478-1456

In Reply Refer To:
RAC/YKD.23020.BM

Anthony Christianson, Chair
Federal Subsistence Board
c/o Office of Subsistence Management
1011 E. Tudor Road, MS 121
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6199

Dear Chairman Christianson:

The Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council) appreciates the opportunity to submit its FY-2022 Annual Report to the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) under the provisions of Section 805(a)(3)(D) of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). At its public meeting on October 5-6, 2022, the Council identified concerns and recommendations for this report. The Council approved this Annual Report at its March 1-2, 2023 meeting. The Council wishes to share information and raise a number of concerns dealing with implementation of Title VIII of ANILCA and the continuation of subsistence uses in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Region.

1. Kuskokwim River salmon management

The Council is concerned with disagreements between the State of Alaska and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service over salmon management in the Kuskokwim Region in recent years. The Council feels strongly that all salmon management parties need to work together and strive for consensus on management decisions, especially in times like the present when there are threats to conservation. However, the Council also feels that the rural subsistence priority in ANILCA must be upheld and that Federally qualified subsistence users should have the priority to harvest salmon for subsistence over other users.

2. Typhoon Merbok impacts to communities and subsistence

The Council wants to inform the Board of the impacts that Typhoon Merbok had to communities and subsistence in our region. The storm surge generated by Merbok caused severe flooding and erosion damage in our region and resulted in a loss of infrastructure in many of its communities. Damaged infrastructure included many fish camps used for subsistence. The Council is worried that strong storms may become more common as the climate continues to change. There is a need for research projects that monitor the impacts of such storms to subsistence in our region,

Chairman Christianson

and we would appreciate being briefed on any such on-going projects at our next Council meeting.

3. Interception and bycatch of AYK Salmon in the Alaska Peninsula Region (Area M) and Bering Sea commercial fisheries

The Council continues to be extremely concerned about the interception of Yukon and Kuskokwim River salmon in other fisheries. We have experienced low returns of Chinook and Chum salmon at unprecedented levels in recent years. It is appalling that other fisheries have been allowed to harvest Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim (AYK) salmon stocks while subsistence fisheries have been closed.

We are particularly concerned about the interception of salmon in the Area M commercial fishery, especially Chum Salmon. Previous studies have shown that in this mixed stock fishery a large proportion of Chum Salmon harvested during the month of June is of AYK origin. The Council supported an Alaska Board of Fisheries proposal seeking to limit commercial harvest time in this region in an effort to reduce interception. We are anxious to hear if that proposal passed. We also support on-going genetic monitoring of the commercial salmon harvest in the Alaska Peninsula region and request that results of such research efforts be presented to the Council as they become available.

The Council also continues to be concerned about bycatch of salmon in the Bering Sea trawl fisheries. Although we understand that bycatch may not be the primary driver of declining salmon in our rivers, we feel that more strict bycatch caps are warranted during times of conservation. The burden of conservation has primarily fallen to subsistence users: we have had heavy restrictions and closures to salmon fishing in our rivers while salmon bycatch continues in the high seas.

The Council feels that salmon management must take place on an ecosystem scale and that cross-region management planning efforts between the State of Alaska, Departments of the Interior and Agriculture, and the Department of Commerce need to be implemented immediately to save our salmon. The Council requests to be briefed on any such efforts. We also request to be briefed on whether the Secretaries of the Interior or Agriculture liaised with the Secretary of Commerce about salmon bycatch and management following the joint letter from the four Councils within the Yukon drainage sent to the Board last year that was then forwarded by the Board to the Secretaries.

4. Declines in Tom Cod and halibut, especially near Hooper Bay

The Council is concerned about a decline in the number of Tom Cod in the coastal areas of our region, especially near Hooper Bay and Chevak. Tom Cod are an important subsistence fish and user observations indicate that populations levels are in decline. We request any information about Tom Cod monitoring efforts in Coastal Western Alaska. If there is no on-going monitoring, we request that agencies represented on the Board make it a priority.

Chairman Christianson

In addition to Tom Cod, the Council is also concerned about the declining number and size of Halibut in Western Alaska. Halibut are an important subsistence resource, even more so in times of salmon decline. Commercial Halibut fishing has also provided a source of income for coastal residents in our region in the past. The Council requests to be briefed about trends in Halibut population and size in Western Alaska and encourages on-going monitoring of Halibut.

5. Competition between hatchery and wild salmon in the Bering Sea

The Council is concerned about competition between hatchery salmon released by other countries and wild AYK salmon in the Bering Sea. We would like to be briefed on any research and monitoring efforts regarding the competition between wild and hatchery salmon in the Bering Sea, including the numbers of hatchery salmon released by Russia and other Asian countries. The Council would also like to be presented information about any treaties or collaborative management agreements among the U.S., Russia, and other Asian countries regarding salmon in the Bering Sea.

6. Fukushima radiation effects on salmon and other marine life

The Council is continually concerned about the lingering effects of the Fukushima nuclear disaster. We would like to have on-going updates about radiation monitoring and testing of marine animals and fish included in the fisheries updates provided to us at every Council meeting. We ask the Board to direct the appropriate agency staff to include this information in their reports moving forward.

7. Arctic Lamprey declines and needed monitoring on the Yukon River

Residents of the lower Yukon River have observed declines in the number of Arctic Lamprey, locally referred to as eels, returning over the past few years. Eels are an important subsistence resource in the region. The Council is concerned that commercial harvest of eels has been allowed without adequate population assessments or understanding of the impacts of commercial harvest on the resource. We request to be briefed on any Arctic Lamprey monitoring efforts completed or underway and encourage the agencies represented on the Board to fund on-going monitoring and research of this species.

8. Salmon fishing should be allowed in non-spawning streams of Yukon Region like it is in the Kuskokwim Region

The Council is concerned about a discrepancy in subsistence fishing regulations between the Kuskokwim River and the Yukon River. In the Kuskokwim River region, salmon fishing is allowed in non-spawning tributaries when subsistence salmon fishing is otherwise closed. Fishing in non-spawning tributaries provides a limited subsistence harvest opportunity that has become increasingly important in recent years of continued low returns and restricted fishing. The Council asks that the Board request USFWS to identify non-spawning streams in the coastal and lower Yukon River region and to evaluate opportunities for subsistence harvest in those systems. USFWS should utilize the expertise of Council members and other area residents to

Chairman Christianson

identify these streams. The Council would like to be briefed on this topic at an upcoming Council meeting.

9. Increase in bears raiding fish camps in the Kuskokwim Region

The Council wants to inform the Board of the recent increase in the number of problem bears in the Kuskokwim region. An increased number of bears have been raiding fish camps and cabins and causing destruction to personal property and subsistence infrastructure. Residents speculate the cause for the increase in problem bears may be two-fold. First, there are less bear hunters than there were in the past. Second, declines in salmon have led to less available food for the bears in the headwaters, causing them to move around more and seek food elsewhere.

10. Increased harvest pressure on whitefish during times of salmon conservation and concerns about four-inch mesh size impacts

The Council is concerned about the increased harvest pressure on whitefish and other nonsalmon species during salmon fishing restrictions and closures. Subsistence users are seeing lower numbers of many nonsalmon fish. Additionally, we are concerned about the impacts that 4-inch mesh gillnets are having on whitefish and Sheefish. The Council does not want the populations of these other species to decline like salmon populations and requests the Board to urge USFWS to develop on-going assessment projects for nonsalmon populations like they have for salmon.

11. Increasing Northern Pike and declining trout near Quinhagak

The Council wants to inform the Board of increasing numbers of Northern Pike near Quinhagak in lakes and in the Kanektok River. These predatory fish are decimating the local trout population. The Council would like to receive information on what is being done to control Pike in other areas of the State where this is also an issue and learn more about what actions might be taken in our region to control Pike numbers.

The Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Regional Advisory Council appreciates the Board's attention to these matters and the opportunity to assist the Federal Subsistence Management Program in meeting its charge of protecting subsistence resources and uses of these resources on Federal public lands and waters. The Council looks forward to continuing discussions about the issues and concerns of subsistence users in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Region. If you have any questions regarding this report, please contact me via Brooke McDavid, Council Coordinator, Office of Subsistence Management, at brooke_mcdavid@fws.gov or 907-891-9181.

Sincerely,

Raymond Oney
Chair

cc: Federal Subsistence Board

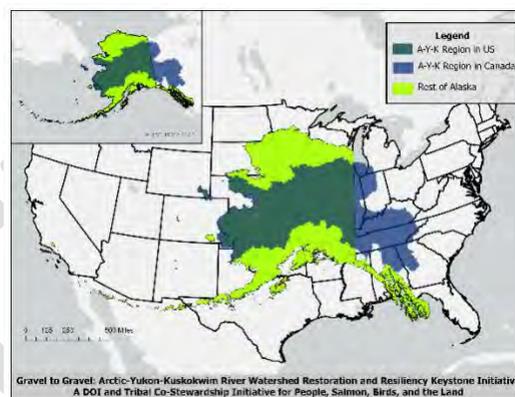
Chairman Christianson

Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Office of Subsistence Management
Interagency Staff Committee
Administrative Record

DRAFT

**Gravel to Gravel: Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim River Watershed
Restoration and Resiliency Keystone Initiative
DOI and Tribal Co-Stewardship for People, Salmon, and the Land
Executive Summary**

Overview: The *Gravel to Gravel* Keystone Initiative is an initiative to support equal voice and power through co-stewardship for Tribes in the Arctic-Yukon and Kuskokwim (AYK) watersheds regarding management and research decisions that affect subsistence resources. This investment in the vast, remote region (see map) is designed to help support Alaska Native Tribes, multiple agencies and organizations, and user groups in much-needed restoration, research, and cultural investments. Recent consultation sessions and Congressional field hearings with Alaska Native Tribes and subsistence users generated requests that DOI act with immediacy (and over the long-term) to address ecosystem changes and social hardships that people of this region are experiencing. Enhanced co-stewardship between Tribes and DOI agencies is needed to: 1) strengthen existing conservation and management activities, 2) give greater voice to Tribes in the conservation decisions and research affecting subsistence resources, 3) gain consensus, using traditional and western science, on priority fish and wildlife habitat assessment, monitoring and restoration activities, and 4) take collective action to ensure resiliency of the ecosystems that sustain the people, fish, wildlife and the cultural heritage of this Arctic region.



The AYK region has sustained people, fish, birds, and other wildlife for more than 10,000 years. Traditional harvesting of the region's resources is critical to food security and sharing Indigenous culture across generations for members of the over 100 tribes in the A-Y-K, most of which are accessible only by boat or plane. However, climate is changing four times faster in Alaska than other parts of North America, and the AYK is one of the epicenters of that change. Pacific salmon population declines have resulted in subsistence salmon fishing closures and much hardship for the people that rely on salmon resources to survive. Indigenous communities also rely on a variety of species of fish and wildlife, including caribou, moose, and migratory birds (and their eggs) for food security, especially during spring and summer when salmon resources are not available. Climate change is affecting the hydrology, vegetation, and fire regimes in the Yukon and Kuskokwim watersheds and Norton Sound; coupled with other human-caused alterations (e.g., large- and small-scale developments), salmon and migratory bird populations important to people for sustenance are also declining.

As much as possible, our approach to obligating funding received under this initiative is through existing partnerships and agreements with AYK Tribal consortia and organizations already working on ecosystem restoration issues and projects. We will primarily look to what already exists and being led by Tribes and subsistence users and expand on these relationships and build new partnerships only as needed to fill gaps in capacity and information.

Investment Priorities

Investment actions to support effective co-stewardship and implementation of *Gravel to Gravel* Keystone Initiative are incorporated into three emphasis areas: 1) Building a foundation for conserving and restoring cultural heritage through durable co-management and co-stewardship agreement, 2) Immediate response

to declining salmon populations at the center of the subsistence crisis and cultural loss, and 3) Investment in broader ecosystem threats that impact migratory birds and other species important for subsistence and cultural identity.

#1 Co-Stewardship/Management Demonstration Project: A Dedicated Co-Designed and Co-Productive Priority Setting Process for Tribes and the Federal Bureaus: Relationships, inclusion, transparency, and trust are central to the success and durability of this initiative. Investments in co-stewardship and co-management capacity, coalition building, priority setting – and the resulting projects - will help to achieve these outcomes, providing a solid co-stewardship foundation for decades to come.

#2 Tribal-Supported, Shovel-Ready Salmon Focal Species Investments: Immediate investments will enhance resiliency of wild Pacific salmon and their freshwater habitats in the AYK region and build upon co-management and other agreements in place to address issues of shared concern. Projects already identified by partners through previous planning efforts to address declines in Pacific salmon include:

- Tribally-led salmon assessments, harvest and escapement monitoring.
- Fill gaps in baseline ecosystem information to inform salmon conservation and management, scaling up the Bureau of Land Management aquatic Assessment, Inventory and Monitoring (AIM) protocols for the AYK watersheds.
- Tribal liaison to the North Pacific Fishery Management Council.
- Capacity for conducting stock assessment to support co-management actions between federal fishery managers and fish commissions.
- Field projects to determine impact of disease, rising stream temperatures on salmon productivity and other research to understand factors limiting juvenile salmon freshwater survival.
- Habitat conservation and restoration projects, including fish passage, in-channel restoration, and bank stabilization, as well as leveraging non-federal contributions
- Invasive species prevention, early detection and rapid response actions.

#3 Broader Eco-System Threats to Subsistence and Food Security: To address ongoing and emerging threats to subsistence food resources necessary to conserve and restore Alaska Native cultural heritage, new tools, partnerships and strategies are required. The approach for identifying opportunities for restoring and enhancing resiliency of subsistence foods in the AYK watersheds will draw on these fundamental actions:

- Collaborative forums for fish and wildlife habitat restoration and resiliency, including migratory birds.
- Tools to increase knowledge sharing.
- Co-develop bird monitoring and assessment plans.
- Empower communities to detect and report avian diseases.
- Enhance local subsistence and recreational access.

Taken together, proposed investments in the *Gravel to Gravel* Keystone Initiative align with several Ecosystem Restoration Activity Funding areas, including Activities 1,2, 4, 6, 7 and 8. Also, these investments will ensure evaluation criteria for DOI Keystone Initiatives achieve strategic restoration, are durable and robust, are equitable, and promote community and tribal resilience.



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Email: info@yukonsalmon.org

***Report to the Regional Advisory Councils
March/April 2023***

FRMP PROJECTS

In-Season Salmon Management Teleconferences:

The In-Season Salmon Management Teleconferences will begin on June 6, 2023. In preparation for the teleconferences, posters will be sent to all the communities along the Yukon River including Canadian First Nations in late April 2023. A meeting will be held with the fishery managers to discuss any concerns or issues associated with the upcoming season and if we need to adapt the teleconference due to no salmon fishing opportunity. We plan to utilize the platform to provide other information pertaining to the Yukon River, such as, Area M updates from ADF&G, Bycatch Report from NPFMC, water monitoring report from Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council, and climate change research project from NOAA.

There is value in having a public forum that is accessible to the people of the Yukon River to call in to hear first hand about the status of the salmon fisheries. While there are other methods such as e-mail or newsletters that are sent out to communities, this is the only toll free number that a person can call in and speak with the manager in a weekly forum. In the rural and remote Yukon River, the internet availability to attend a virtual meeting is not always the option to attend meetings, so providing the opportunity for everyone to participate by a simple toll-free number is the best means possible.

In-Season Salmon Survey:

The In-season Subsistence Salmon Survey Program is an important communication tool that helps managers ensure that both Yukon River escapement is met and, in a normal year, as many subsistence fishers are meeting their goals as possible. YRDFA hires a local person in 10 communities along the Yukon River stretching from Alakanuk to Eagle to survey fishers during the Chinook salmon season in their community. The observations fishers share with YRDFA surveyors are summarized by the community to protect anonymity and then shared with Yukon River In-season Managers and the Yukon River community through the In-season Salmon Management Teleconferences. This project is funded by the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program through March of 2024.

In March, YRDFA will begin rehiring our surveyors for the 2023 season. A training event will take place during the week of April 17-20 during one evening of the meeting series which includes the YRDFA annual board meeting and the annual Yukon River Preseason Planning Meeting. These meetings are planned to take place in Fairbanks. We expect to rehire our surveyors in Alakanuk, Mountain Village, Marshall, Russian Mission, Tanana and Eagle. We expect to be looking for new surveyors in Anvik, Ruby, Huslia, and Fort Yukon.

OTHER PROJECTS:

Yukon River Watershed Clearinghouse: A culturally responsive monitoring program.

The Yukon River Watershed Clearinghouse project, funded by the State of Alaska, is underway with YRDFA and the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council meeting regularly to plan for the upcoming summer. The goal of this project is to establish a clearinghouse that allows for tracking of both social and ecological changes in ways that are culturally relevant and responsive to the needs of the people of the Yukon River watershed. This spring we plan to train 7 locally hired technicians who will each work in their district to conduct water quality monitoring and Traditional Ecological Knowledge interviews with their Elders. These interviews will focus on fish health and abundance changes, observed changes, and local concerns of the Yukon River freshwater environment.

They Told Us There'd Come a Time, Conserving Fish, Preserving Tradition on the Yukon River, A catalog of Elders Warnings:

This project, funded by the North Pacific Research Board, has YRDFA partnering with the Tanana Chiefs Conference young adult Emerging Leaders to research documented Local and Traditional Knowledge of salmon and search for advice or warnings from the Elders. Our third training event took place in Anchorage at the BP Energy Center in November of 2022. At this training event, we learned about creating short videos from our interviews and archival research. We also learned about podcasting as an alternative to semi structured interviews. Some of the Emerging Leaders were considering trying this approach with some potential participants. Entering our third and final year of this project, we are beginning to wrap up our interview phase and turn to producing final products, which will include short videos, presentations, summary brochures, and reports. In addition, part of our final products will be the submission of our interviews to the UAF Alaska and Polar Region Collection and Archives. Our team has spent the last two years digging through the archives, learning about Elders from their communities, and conducting interviews with their Elders. Some of the team participated in the Tanana Chiefs Conference Board of Fish training event in Anchorage in January. They were able to interview many of the participants attending the training and Board of Fish meeting. These knowledgeable and passionate Yukon River fishers traveled from their communities to testify at the Board of Fish and the Emerging Leaders were able to capture their passion and concerns in semi structured interviews. We look forward to

their exploration into how to share all we have learned. Next steps include short presentations at upcoming meetings this spring.

November 2022 Elders Warnings Training at the BPEnergy Center. From Left: Gabe Canfield, Catherine Moncrieff, Nataawnee Wiehl, Millena Jordan. Missing: Katie Turner.



March 2022 Elders Warnings Training in Fairbank at UAF. From left: Millena Jordan, Nataawnee Wiehl, Katie Turner, Catherine Moncrieff.



Nataawnee Wiehl speaking to Elder at Denakkanaaga 2022, Fairbanks, Alaska. Millena Jordan and Nataawnee Wiehl at YRDFA Preseason Meeting March 2022, Anchorage.

Integrating Local and Traditional Ecological Knowledge (LTK) into Anadromous Waters Cataloging and Fish Inventories of select drainages of the Tanana and Yukon rivers 2021-2024:

This project, funded by the Alaska Sustainable Salmon Fund (AKSSF), is a partnership between YR DFA and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Together, we are working with the communities of Tanana, Nenana, and Manley Hot Springs to identify important areas with anadromous fish and other fish for investigations to nominate areas for the Anadromous Waters Catalog and the Alaska Freshwater Fish Inventory. In year one, we conducted interviews and mapping activities with 20 knowledgeable fishers and hunters in the three communities. In year two, the ADFG team attempted to document fish presence, rearing, and spawning through river boat and helicopter surveys. They were unable to complete their work due to inclement weather and fires, thus we have extended this project for one year through June of 2024. Nominations were made for water bodies supporting anadromous fishes such as least cisco, broad whitefish, humpback whitefish, and/or Chinook salmon. In total we caught 15 species. Through the field work to date, ADFG team was able to make 29 nominations to the Alaska Freshwater Fish Inventory on 30 water bodies. As a result of these nominations, there were 13 new or extended water bodies added to the Anadromous Waters Catalog, 8 water bodies had new species or species life-phases added, and 33 miles of previously unlisted anadromous fish habitat (streams) were added.



Community meeting Tanana 2021



Mapping activity Manley Hot Springs 2021

Engaging Fishers in Chinook and Chum Salmon Decline

This project, funded by the North Pacific Research Board, began in January of 2023 and has a goal of contributing to an understanding of the drivers of decline and collapse in Yukon Chinook and chum salmon. Through this project we will be partnering with four Yukon River communities - Alakanuk, Emmonak, St. Mary's, and Huslia - and another NPRB funded project, Exploring Linkages of a Changing Climate and Productivity of Chinook Salmon led by Drs. Katie

Howard and Vanessa von Biela. Local and Traditional Knowledge interviews on historical Chinook salmon health in Alakanuk and Emmonak will inform their biological research on drivers of salmon decline by learning about the historic health of Chinook salmon as they leave the marine environment and enter the freshwater environment. A community meeting and interviews are scheduled for Emmonak in March. Additionally, Yukon River fishers in St. Mary's and Huslia will be trained to document carcass/egg studies, temperature monitoring, and develop a rapid community response Standard Operating Plan to document heat events and impacts on Yukon River salmon. This project will go through February 2026.

IMPORTANT ISSUES

2020 & 2021 Yukon River Fisheries Disaster

The second round of comments for the Fishing Disaster Spend Plan went underway. The following allocation are:

2020/2021 Yukon River & 2020 Kuskokwim River commercial \$2,531,005

2020/2021 Yukon River Subsistence \$12,660,315

Once the funding is available for the people we will make sure that all the communities along the Yukon River are aware.

2022 Yukon River Fisheries Disaster

The Governor submitted a fisheries disaster for the Yukon River for the 2022 fishing season. The determination by the Department of Commerce is pending. I am assuming the same process will apply once funded by the federal government. The funding will go through the State of Alaska with public comment for allocation.

Meetings:

Tanana Chiefs Conference Annual Convention - March 13-17, 2023, Fairbanks, AK

Salmon Bycatch Committee Meeting - March 20-22, 2023, Anchorage, AK

American Fisheries Society Alaska - March 27-31, Fairbanks, AK

Yukon River Panel Meeting - April 1-6, Whitehorse, YT, Canada

YR DFA Annual Board Meeting - April 17-18, 2023, Fairbanks, AK

Yukon River Preseason Meeting - April 19-20, 2023, Fairbanks, AK

Native American Fish and Wildlife Society Meeting - April 24-27, 2023, Anchorage, AK

YR DFA/YRITWC Summer Technician Training - May 2-4, Galena, AK

North Pacific Fisheries Management Council Meeting

Yukon River Educational Exchange - July 2023

FINAL SUMMARY 2022

Salmon and Whitefish in the Yukon Flats and the Draanjik Drainage



Tanana
Chiefs
Conference

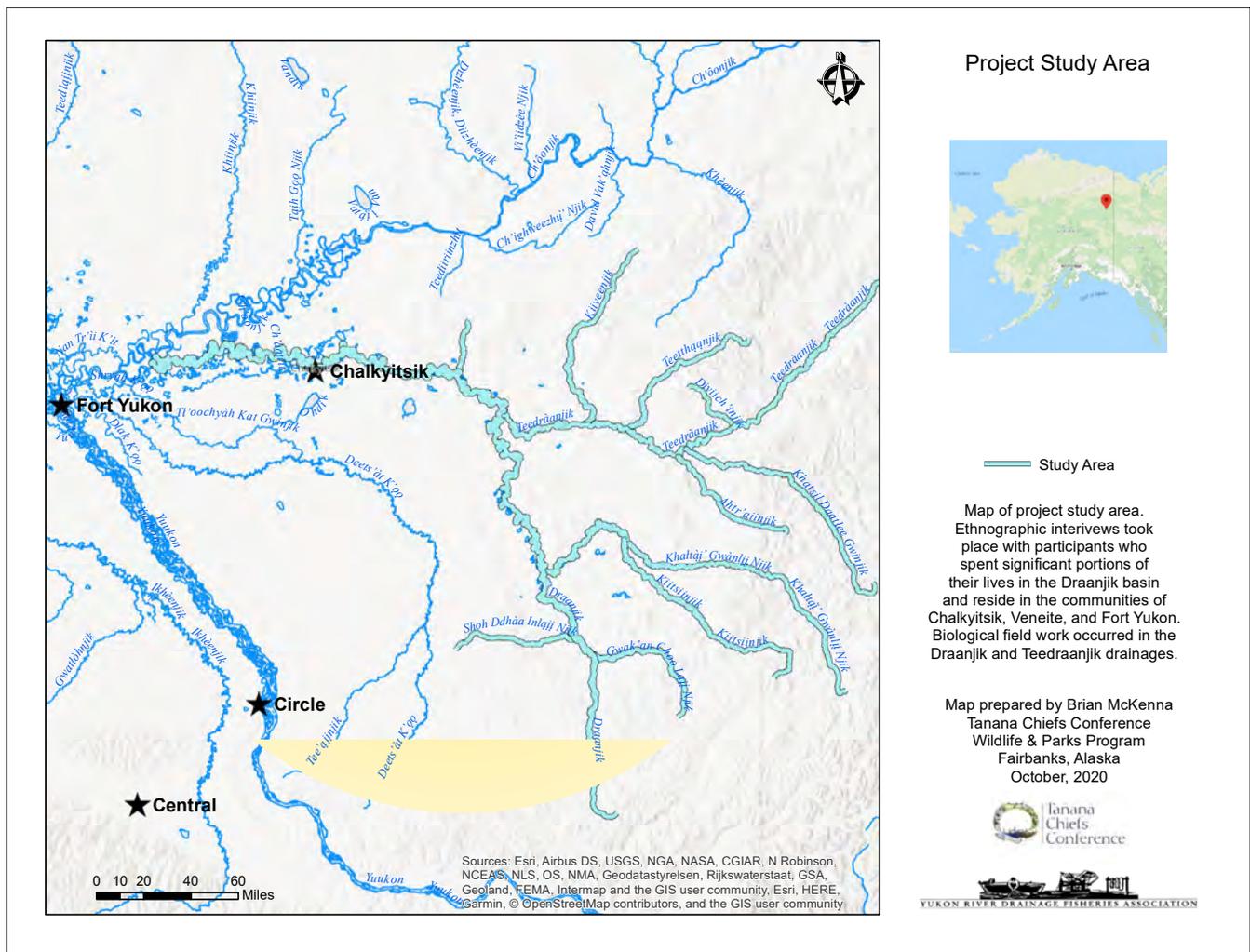


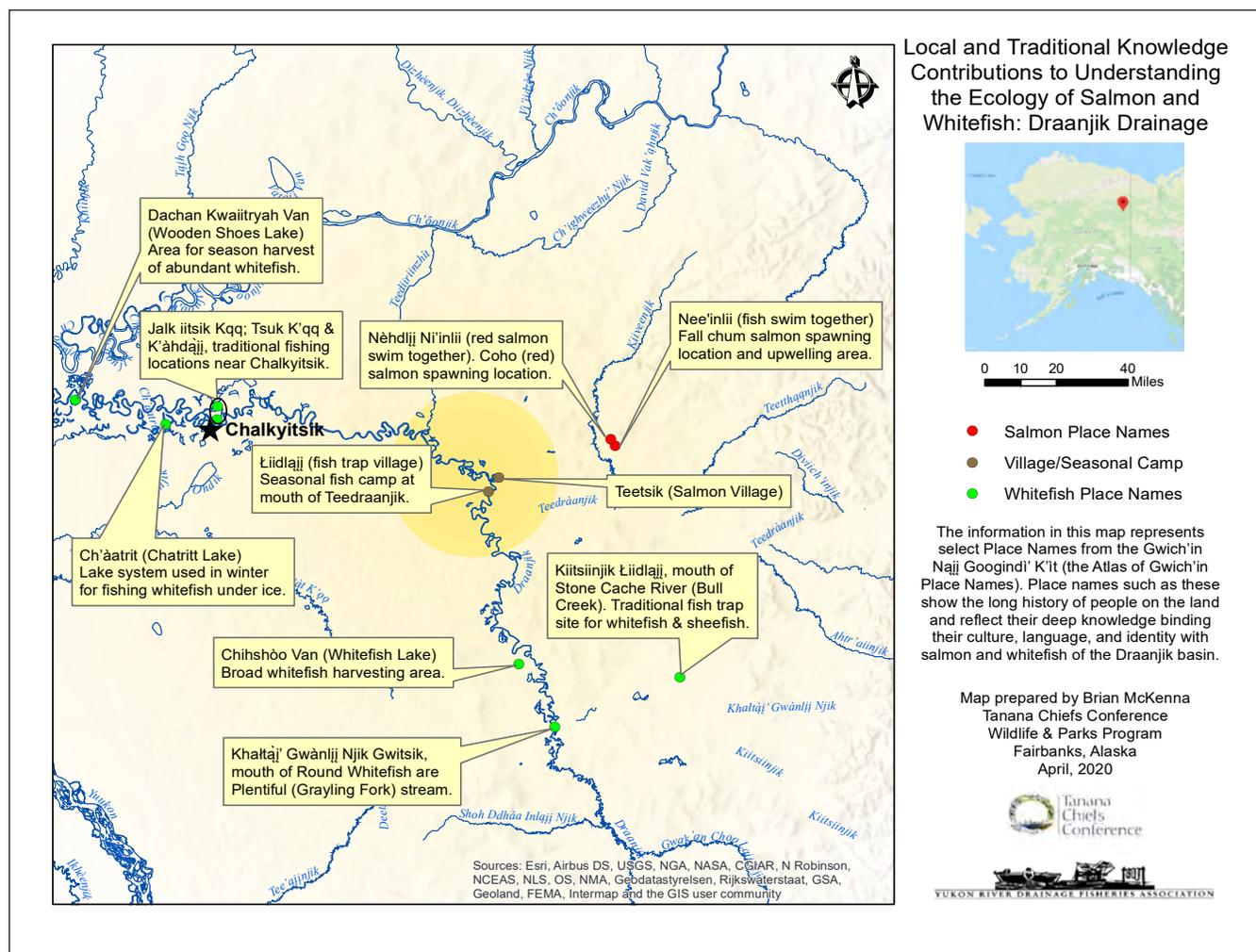
YUKON RIVER DRAINAGE FISHERIES ASSOCIATION

Summary Statement

This project documents Local and Traditional Knowledge (LTK) of salmon and whitefish in the Yukon Flats region and documents spawning and rearing activity in the Draanjik Black River subbasin.

Researchers with the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA) and the Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) collaborated on this project, seeking and confirming locally observed contributions to the Anadromous Waters Catalog (AWC), using a combination of social and biological methods, and collaborating amongst agencies and communities. Broadly, researchers engaged standard anthropological methods of ethnographic fieldwork to identify potential search areas based on local knowledge including place name mapping. Next, researchers used a combination of fisheries techniques to document and identify migrating, spawning, and rearing habitats used by salmon and whitefish as identified by local knowledge. This project was designed as a partnership with the Tribal Councils (TC) of Chalkyitsik, Venetie, and Gwichyaa Zhee, with the TCs selecting local research assistants for the ethnographic fieldwork. Local hires were trained in interviews and mapping techniques, and they participated in outreach activities.





Background

- Multiple salmon and whitefish species are known to utilize habitats within the Yukon Flats, and the Draanjik subbasin at multiple stages in their life cycles for migration, spawning, and rearing. However, while their presence is known, the extent of their anadromous geographic distribution is not fully identified and documented within the AWC.
- The AWC documents streams, rivers, and lakes important for spawning, rearing or migration of salmon and whitefish.
 - The Draanjik basin was selected after review of primary literature and the current state of the AWC. The presence of salmon and whitefish is known but their extent is not fully documented within the AWC.
 - Incorporating the most up to date anadromous information into the AWC through biological fish surveys enables fisheries managers and biologists to protect habitats necessary for spawning, rearing, and migrating of anadromous fishes, and provides baseline information critical to understanding any future changes that may occur in an uncertain and changing environment and climate.
- This project was created because of concerns relating to population declines in Yukon River salmon species.
- The knowledgeable people of Chalkyitsik, Fort Yukon, Venetie, and Fairbanks provided valuable LTK informing fish locations through ethnographic interviews and mapping.



Views of Nee Inlii in December 2021 during flight to investigate coho spawning area.



Nee Inlii, January, 2022.

Research Goal

The main goal of this project was to provide information critical to the management of anadromous fishes and the habitats that support them.

Study Objectives

This project will achieve that goal through the following objectives:

1. Document and record local and traditional knowledge of anadromous waters utilized by salmon and whitefish species occurring in the Yukon Flats with a focus on the Draanjik sub-basin.
2. Verify the presence of salmon and whitefish species and document and record anadromous waters used for spawning and rearing as described by local and traditional knowledge, primary literature, and field observations for the Draanjik sub-basin.
3. Submit nominations to the Anadromous Waters Catalog for all verified water bodies used by salmon and whitefish species to maximize the spatial extent of mapped anadromous waters.
4. Engage the local communities and build capacity by collaborating with the Tribal Councils and by hiring local research technicians to assist with the ethnographic and biological research.

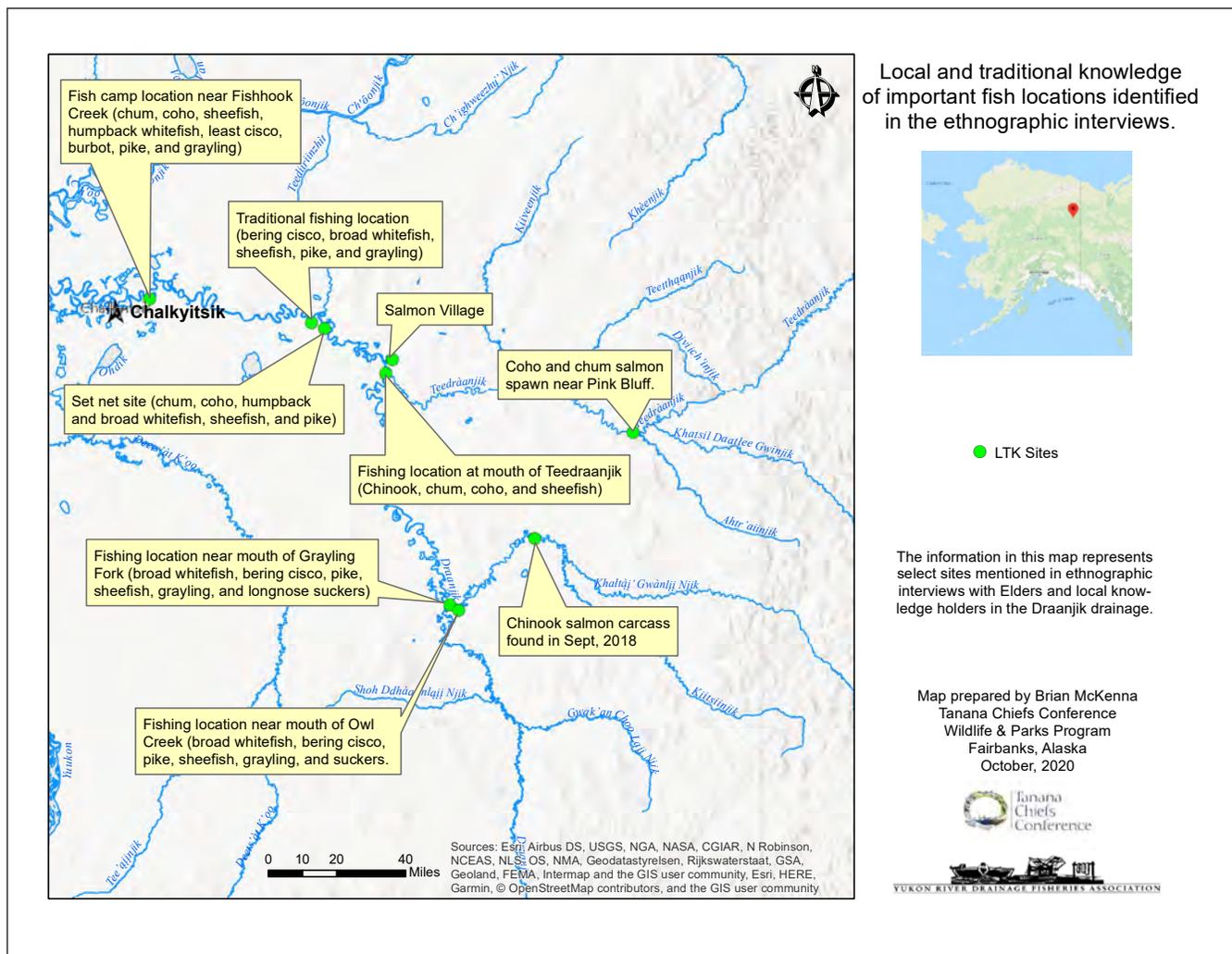
Methods

- Ethnographic interviews were used to learn local and traditional knowledge identifying potential spawning and rearing habitats used by salmon and whitefish. Ethnographic methods used included participant observation, semi-structure interviews, and mapping
 - Local research assistants guided researchers while in each community, making introductions and assisting with interviews.
- A combination of fisheries techniques were used to verify spawning and rearing habitats identified by the LTK. Biological methods used included aerial surveys, eDNA analysis, minnow trapping, and electrofishing.
 - Local research assistants in year 1 were instrumental in getting to the sites along the river for sampling
- A collaboration of entities (YRDFA, TCC, TCs of Chalkyitsik, Venetie, and Gwichyaa Zhee, and the ADF&G) contributed to success of this project.

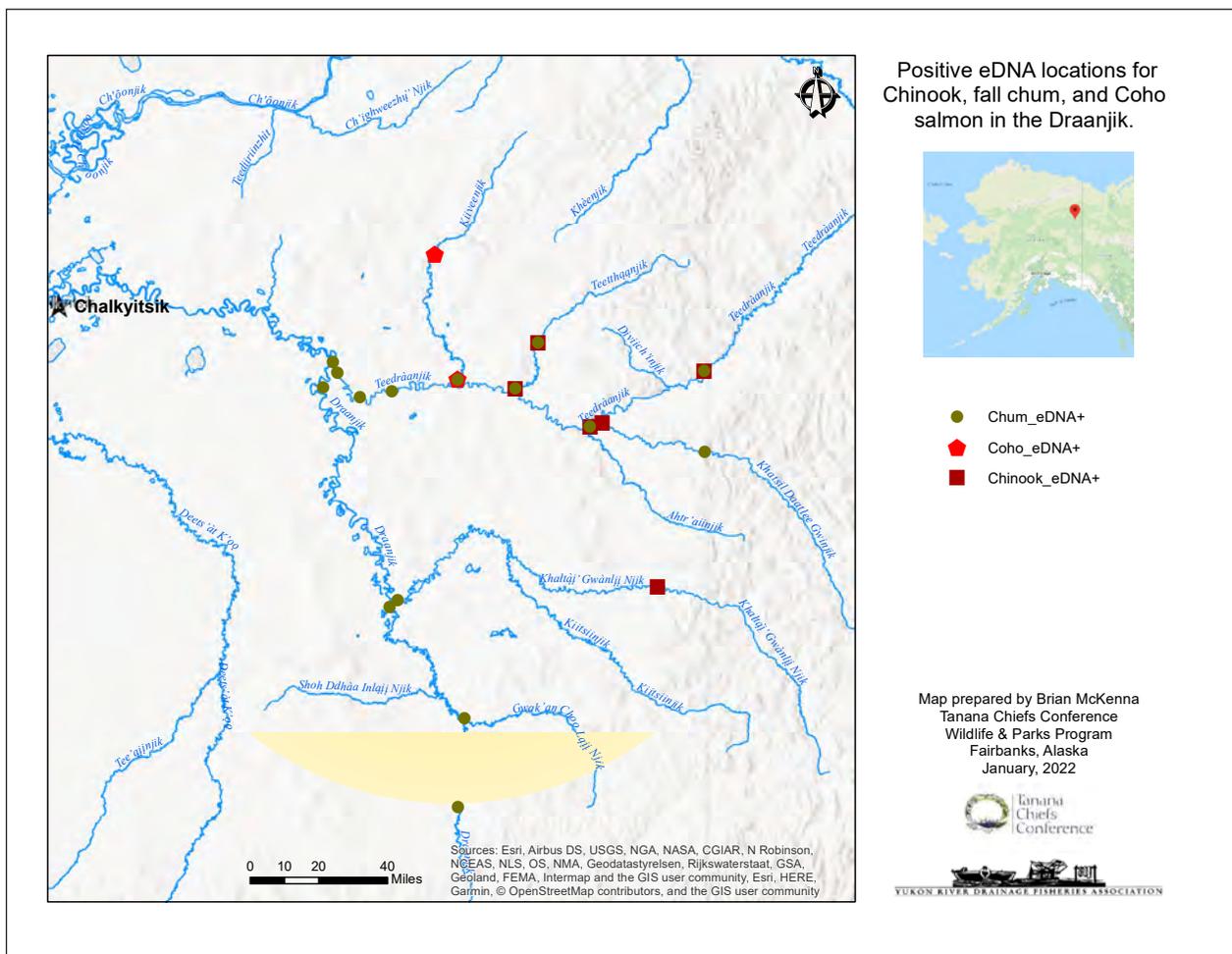
Results

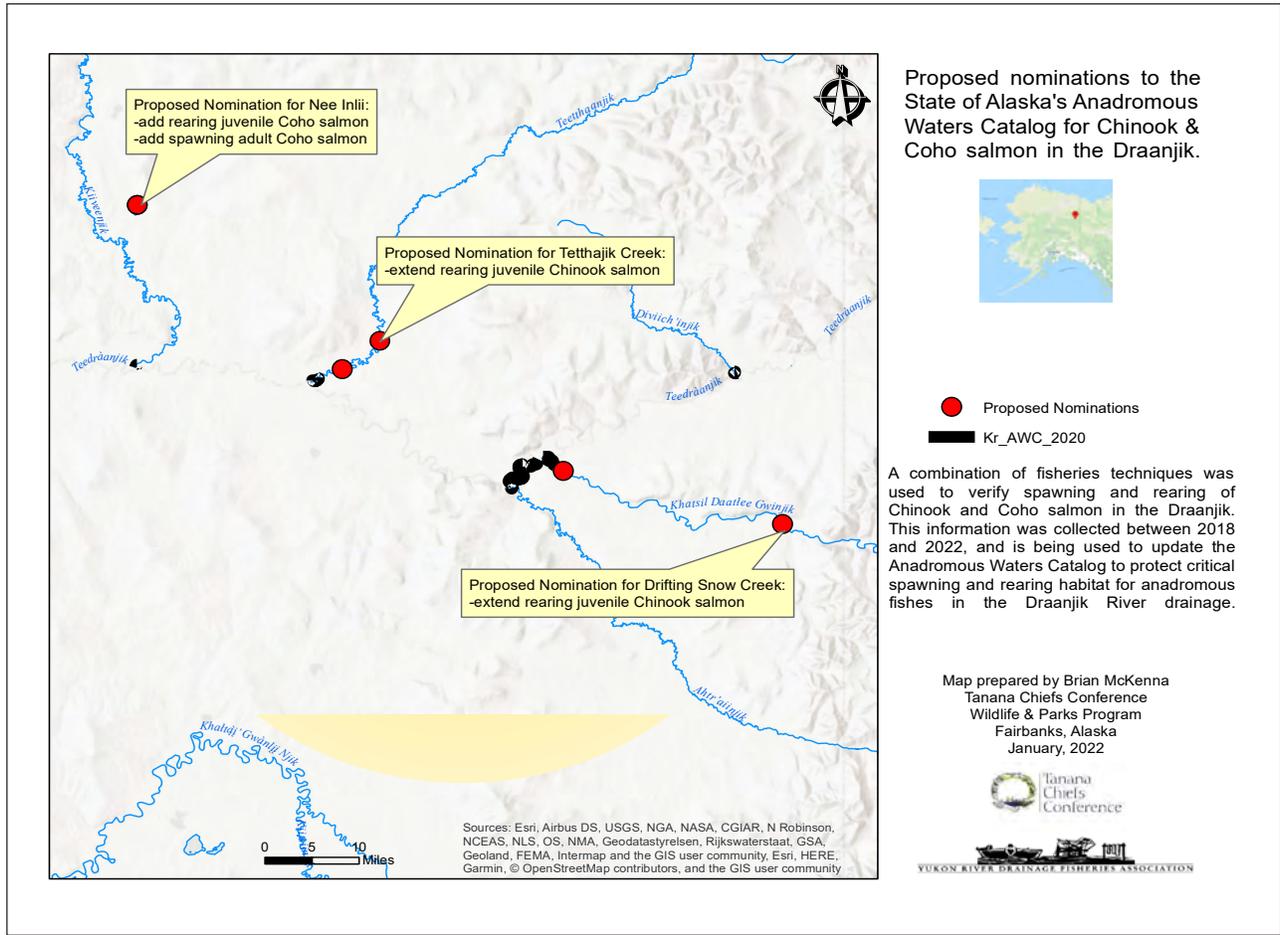
- Ethnographic Interviews
 - Regional fishing profile: respondents primarily target for fish harvests are whitefish species; chum salmon are also harvested, and some Chinook salmon are observed; in the spring, humpback whitefish, least cisco, and broad whitefish are harvested as they are coming out of lakes; in the fall, whitefishes heading back to the lakes are harvested, including sheefish, or “Koonies”, full of eggs; in the winter, whitefishes and northern pike are harvested through the ice.
 - Over 19 fish locations identified.
 - Topics: learning to fish, fishing methods including ‘can’ fishing, traveling Fort Yukon/Chalkyitsik, Salmon Village, the school at Chalkyitsik.

“I started fishing when I was really young, maybe just a little kid. My dad taught me, we learned from [other] kids. We all fished out here in this little river, [it was] common knowledge, I can’t even remember who taught me. But I remember fishing for as long as I can [remember].” (Kyle Joseph, Chalkyitsik)



- Concerns and changes:
 - o System is changing, as lakes are drying up and more trees are growing
 - o Breakup is happening earlier and winters are more mild
 - o Decrease in longnose sucker and arctic lamprey over past 10 years
 - o Whitefish populations are decreasing due to increasing beaver populations, which are affecting whitefish access to lake habitats; “Now there are less whitefish because of the beaver dams. The fish do not come up.” (Eddie Frank, Venetie)
 - o Some animal populations are decreasing (muskrats, rabbits, squirrels)
- Fisheries Surveys
 - Environmental-DNA (eDNA) results from water samples suggest the presence of Chinook, fall chum, and Coho salmon in numerous tributaries throughout the Draanjik drainage.
 - Data acquired from minnow trapping, angling, electrofishing, and aerial surveys will result in nominations to the State of Alaska’s Anadromous Waters Catalog for the following species and locations:
 - o Rearing juvenile Chinook salmon in Tetthajik and Drifting Snow Creeks
 - o Spawning adult and rearing juvenile Coho salmon at Nee Inlii in the Kevinjik Creek drainage
 - o Presence of adult and juvenile Round Whitefish in Kevinjik Creek, Drifting Snow Creek, and Grayling Fork Black River
 - o Presence of juvenile Arctic Lamprey in Kevinjik Creek, Tetthajik Creek, and Grayling Fork Black River

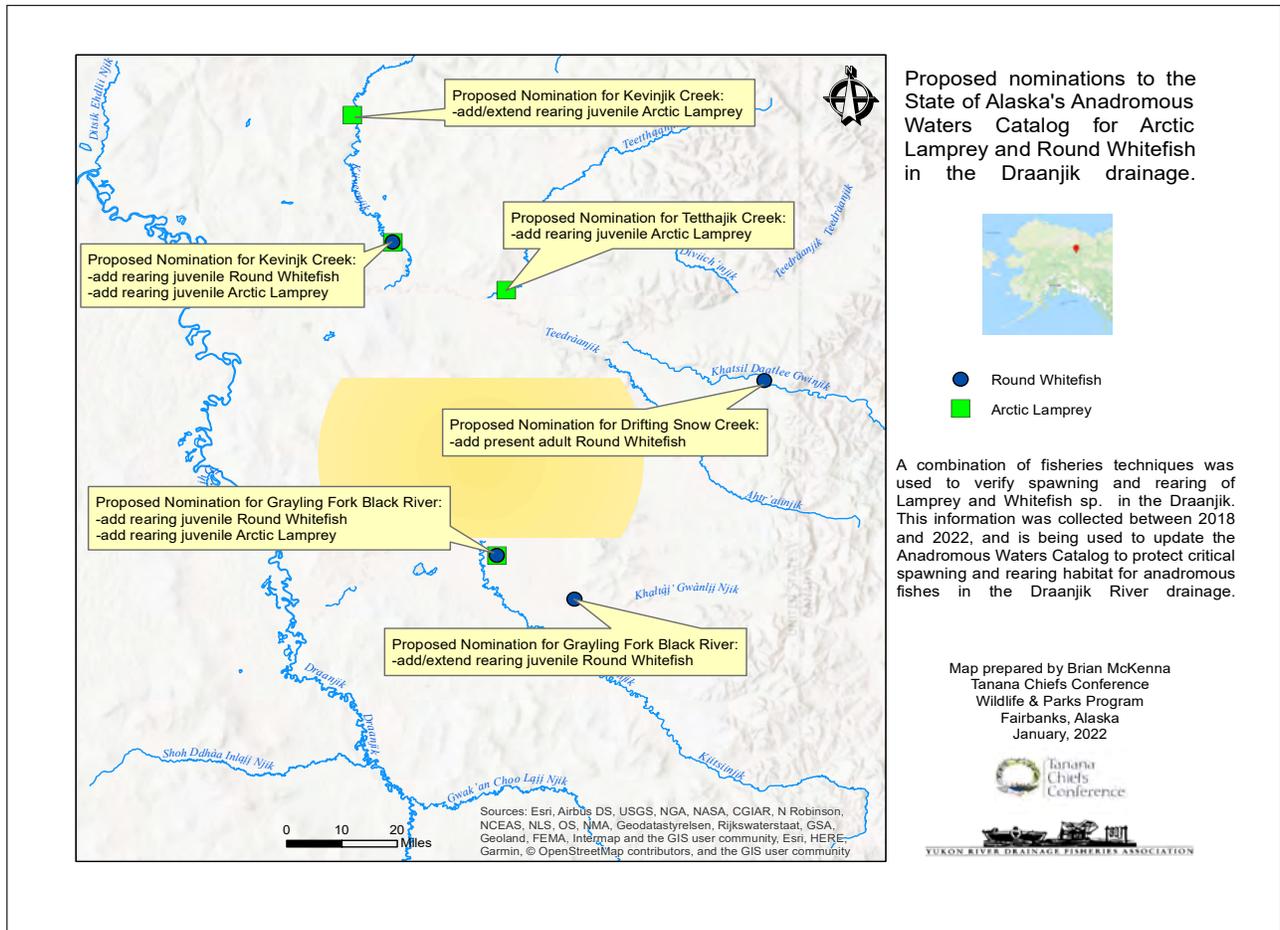




Proposed nominations to the State of Alaska's Anadromous Waters Catalog for Chinook & Coho salmon in the Draanjik.



A combination of fisheries techniques was used to verify spawning and rearing of Chinook and Coho salmon in the Draanjik. This information was collected between 2018 and 2022, and is being used to update the Anadromous Waters Catalog to protect critical spawning and rearing habitat for anadromous fishes in the Draanjik River drainage.



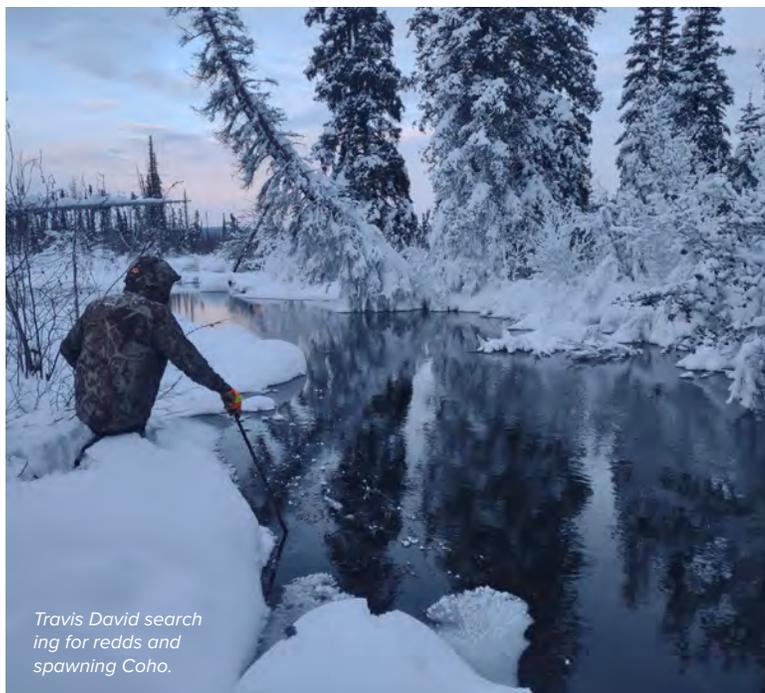
Proposed nominations to the State of Alaska's Anadromous Waters Catalog for Arctic Lamprey and Round Whitefish in the Draanjik drainage.



A combination of fisheries techniques was used to verify spawning and rearing of Lamprey and Whitefish sp. in the Draanjik. This information was collected between 2018 and 2022, and is being used to update the Anadromous Waters Catalog to protect critical spawning and rearing habitat for anadromous fishes in the Draanjik River drainage.



Open water containing redds (salmon nests).



Travis David searching for redds and spawning Coho.

Conclusions

The combination of traditional knowledge and western science techniques has documented anadromous fish in the locations noted above and this project will conclude with those nominations to the AWC.

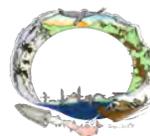
Recommendations

- Aerial survey Kevinjik Creek & Nee Inlii for spawning Coho salmon during years of higher returns
- Aerial survey Tetthajik Creek for spawning Chinook salmon during years of higher returns
- Aerial survey Drifting Snow Creek for spawning Chinook salmon during years of higher returns
- Electrofishing and minnow trapping on upper portion of Drifting Snow Creek for rearing juvenile Chinook salmon
- Aerial survey Grayling Fork Black River for spawning Chinook salmon in years of higher returns
- Beach seine or other collection technique for documenting spawning chum salmon in the upper Draanjik drainage above the Salmon Fork confluence.

Acknowledgements

We thank the knowledgeable participants and the communities of Chalkyitsik, Fort Yukon, and Venetie for sharing their vast knowledge and for their support in this project.

We also thank that Office of Subsistence Management and the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program for funding this project.



Tanana
Chiefs
Conference

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Fall 2023 Regional Advisory Council Meeting Calendar

Last updated 11/7/2022

Due to travel budget limitations placed by Department of the Interior on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Office of Subsistence Management, the dates and locations of these meetings will be subject to change

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Aug. 13	Aug. 14 Window Opens	Aug. 15	Aug. 16	Aug. 17	Aug. 18	Aug. 19
Aug. 20	Aug. 21	Aug. 22	Aug. 23	Aug. 24	Aug. 25	Aug. 26
Aug. 27	Aug. 28	Aug. 29	Aug. 30	Aug. 31	Sep. 1	Sep. 2
Sep. 3	Sep. 4 Labor Day Holiday	Sep. 5	Sep. 6	Sep. 7	Sep. 8	Sep. 9
Sep. 10	Sep. 11	Sep. 12	Sep. 13	Sep. 14	Sep. 15	Sep. 16
Sep. 17	Sep. 18	Sep. 19	Sep. 20	Sep. 21	Sep. 22	Sep. 23
		KARAC (King Cove)				
Sep. 24	Sep. 25	Sep. 26	Sep. 27	Sep. 28	Sep. 29	Sep. 30
Oct. 1	Oct. 2	Oct. 3	Oct. 4	Oct. 5	Oct. 6	Oct. 7
	SCRAC (Kenai)		EIRAC (Tok or Fairbanks)			
Oct. 8	Oct. 9 Columbus Day Holiday	Oct. 10	Oct. 11	Oct. 12	Oct. 13	Oct. 14
		YKDRAC (Anchorage or Bethel)				
		WIRAC (Fairbanks)				
Oct. 15	Oct. 16	Oct. 17	Oct. 18	Oct. 19	Oct. 20	Oct. 21
	NWARAC (Kotzebue)					
Oct. 22	Oct. 23	Oct. 24	Oct. 25	Oct. 26	Oct. 27	Oct. 28
		BBRAC (Dillingham)				
		SEARAC (Sitka)				
Oct. 29	Oct. 30	Oct. 31	Nov. 1	Nov. 2	Nov. 3 Window Closes	Nov. 4
			NSRAC (Utqiagvik)			
			SPRAC (Nome)			

Winter 2024 Regional Advisory Council Meeting Calendar

Last updated 12/22/2022

Due to travel budget limitations placed by Department of the Interior on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Office of Subsistence Management, the dates and locations of these meetings will be subject to change.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday-	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<i>Mar. 3</i>	<i>Mar. 4 Window Opens</i>	<i>Mar. 5</i>	<i>Mar. 6</i>	<i>Mar. 7</i>	<i>Mar. 8</i>	<i>Mar. 9</i>
<i>Mar. 10</i>	<i>Mar. 11</i>	<i>Mar. 12</i>	<i>Mar. 13</i>	<i>Mar. 14</i>	<i>Mar. 15</i>	<i>Mar. 16</i>
<i>Mar. 17</i>	<i>Mar. 18</i>	<i>Mar. 19</i>	<i>Mar. 20</i>	<i>Mar. 21</i>	<i>Mar. 22</i>	<i>Mar. 23</i>
<i>Mar. 24</i>	<i>Mar. 25</i>	<i>Mar. 26</i>	<i>Mar. 27</i>	<i>Mar. 28</i>	<i>Mar. 29 Window Closes</i>	<i>Mar. 30</i>

Fall 2024 Regional Advisory Council Meeting Calendar

Last updated 12/22/2022

Due to travel budget limitations placed by Department of the Interior on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Office of Subsistence Management, the dates and locations of these meetings will be subject to change

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Aug. 18	Aug. 19 Window Opens	Aug. 20	Aug. 21	Aug. 22	Aug. 23	Aug. 24
Aug. 25	Aug. 26	Aug. 27	Aug. 28	Aug. 29	Aug. 30	Aug. 31
Sep. 1	Sep. 2 Labor Day Holiday	Sep. 3	Sep. 4	Sep. 5	Sep. 6	Sep. 7
Sep. 8	Sep. 9	Sep. 10	Sep. 11	Sep. 12	Sep. 13	Sep. 14
Sep. 15	Sep. 16	Sep. 17	Sep. 18	Sep. 19	Sep. 20	Sep. 21
Sep. 22	Sep. 23	Sep. 24	Sep. 25	Sep. 26	Sep. 27	Sep. 28
Sep. 29	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Oct. 2	Oct. 3	Oct. 4	Oct. 5
Oct. 6	Oct. 7	Oct. 8	Oct. 9	Oct. 10	Oct. 11	Oct. 12
Oct. 13	Oct. 14 Columbus Day Holiday	Oct. 15	Oct. 16	Oct. 17	Oct. 18	Oct. 19
Oct. 20	Oct. 21	Oct. 22	Oct. 23	Oct. 24	Oct. 25	Oct. 26
Oct. 27	Oct. 28	Oct. 29	Oct. 30	Oct. 31	Nov. 1 Window Closes	Nov. 2

**Department of the Interior
U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

Charter

1. **Committee's Official Designation.** The Council's official designation is the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council).
2. **Authority.** The Council is renewed by virtue of the authority set out in the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) (16 U.S.C. 3115 (1988)) Title VIII, and under the authority of the Secretary of the Interior, in furtherance of 16 U.S.C. 410hh-2. The Council is regulated by the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), as amended, (5 U.S.C., Appendix 2).
3. **Objectives and Scope of Activities.** The objective of the Council is to provide a forum for the residents of the Region with personal knowledge of local conditions and resource requirements to have a meaningful role in the subsistence management of fish and wildlife on Federal lands and waters in the Region.
4. **Description of Duties.** Council duties and responsibilities, where applicable, are as follows:
 - a. Recommend the initiation, review, and evaluate of proposals for regulations, policies, management plans, and other matters relating to subsistence uses of fish and wildlife on public lands within the region.
 - b. Provide a forum for the expression of opinions and recommendations by persons interested in any matter related to the subsistence uses of fish and wildlife on public lands within the Region.
 - c. Encourage local and regional participation in the decision-making process affecting the taking of fish and wildlife on the public lands within the region for subsistence uses.
 - d. Prepare an annual report to the Secretary containing the following:
 - (1) An identification of current and anticipated subsistence uses of fish and wildlife populations within the Region;
 - (2) An evaluation of current and anticipated subsistence needs for fish and wildlife populations within the Region;
 - (3) A recommended strategy for the management of fish and wildlife

populations within the Region to accommodate such subsistence uses and needs; and

- (4) Recommendations concerning policies, standards, guidelines, and regulations to implement the strategy.
 - e. Make recommendations on determinations of customary and traditional use of subsistence resources.
 - f. Make recommendations on determinations of rural status.
 - g. Provide recommendations on the establishment and membership of Federal local advisory committees.
5. **Agency or Official to Whom the Council Reports.** The Council reports to the Federal Subsistence Board Chair, who is appointed by the Secretary of the Interior with the concurrence of the Secretary of Agriculture.
 6. **Support.** The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will provide administrative support for the activities of the Council through the Office of Subsistence Management.
 7. **Estimated Annual Operating Costs and Staff Years.** The annual operating costs associated with supporting the Council's functions are estimated to be \$196,000, including all direct and indirect expenses and 1.15 Federal staff years.
 8. **Designated Federal Officer.** The DFO is the Subsistence Council Coordinator for the Region or such other Federal employee as may be designated by the Assistant Regional Director – Subsistence, Region 11, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The DFO is a full-time Federal employee appointed in accordance with Agency procedures. The DFO will:
 - (a) Approve or call all Council and subcommittee meetings;
 - (b) Prepare and approve all meeting agendas;
 - (c) Attend all committee and subcommittee meetings;
 - (d) Adjourn any meeting when the DFO determines adjournment to be in the public interest; and
 - (e) Chair meetings when directed to do so by the official to whom the advisory committee reports.
 9. **Estimated Number and Frequency of Meetings.** The Council will meet 1-2 times per year, and at such times as designated by the Federal Subsistence Board Chair or the DFO.

10. **Duration.** Continuing.
11. **Termination.** The Council will be inactive 2 years from the date the charter is filed, unless prior to that date, the charter is renewed in accordance with provisions of section 14 of the FACA. The Council will not meet or take any action without a valid current charter.
12. **Membership and Designation.** The Council's membership is composed of representative members as follows:

Thirteen members who are knowledgeable and experienced in matters relating to subsistence uses of fish and wildlife and who are residents of the region represented by the Council.

To ensure that each Council represents a diversity of interests, the Federal Subsistence Board in their nomination recommendations to the Secretary will strive to ensure that nine of the members (70 percent) represent subsistence interests within the region and four of the members (30 percent) represent commercial and sport interests within the region. The portion of membership representing commercial and sport interests must include, where possible, at least one representative from the sport community and one representative from the commercial community.

The Secretary of the Interior will appoint members based on the recommendations from the Federal Subsistence Board and with the concurrence of the Secretary of Agriculture.

Members will be appointed for 3-year terms. Members serve at the discretion of the Secretary.

To ensure that there is geographic membership balance and balanced representation on the Council, the Secretary will strive to appoint members to equally represent the communities across the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region and on both the Yukon and Kuskokwim rivers.

If appointments for a given year have not yet been announced, a member may continue to serve on the Council following the expiration of his or her term until such appointments have been made. Unless reappointed, the member's service ends on the date of announcement even if that member's specific seat remains unfilled.

Alternate members may be appointed to the Council to fill vacancies if they occur out of cycle. An alternate member must be approved and appointed by the Secretary before attending the meeting as a representative. The term for an appointed alternate member will be the same as the term of the member whose vacancy is being filled.

Council members will elect a Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary for a 1-year term.

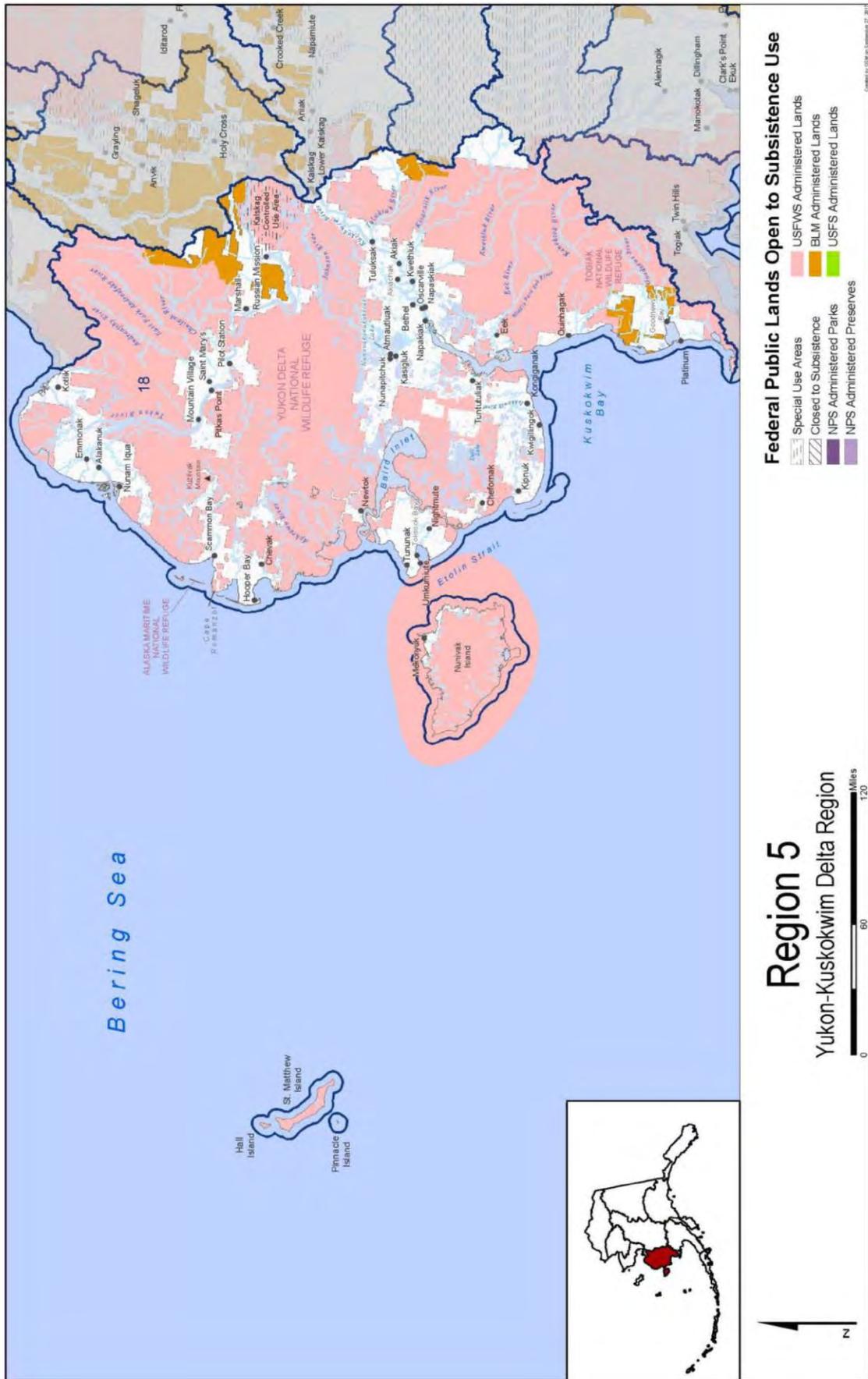
Members of the Council will serve without compensation. However, while away from their homes or regular places of business, Council and subcommittee members engaged in Council, or subcommittee business, approved by the DFO, may be allowed travel expenses, including per diem in lieu of subsistence, in the same manner as persons employed intermittently in Government service under Section 5703 of title 5 of the United States Code.

13. **Ethics Responsibilities of Members.** No Council or subcommittee member will participate in any Council or subcommittee deliberations or votes relating to a specific party matter before the Department or its bureaus and offices including a lease, license, permit, contract, grant, claim, agreement, or litigation in which the member or the entity the member represents has a direct financial interest.
14. **Subcommittees.** Subject to the DFO's approval, subcommittees may be formed for the purpose of compiling information or conducting research. However, such subcommittees must act only under the direction of the DFO and must report their recommendations to the full Council for consideration. Subcommittees must not provide advice or work products directly to the Agency. Subcommittees will meet as necessary to accomplish their assignments, subject to the approval of the DFO and the availability of resources.
15. **Recordkeeping.** The Records of the Council, and formally and informally established subcommittees or other subgroups of the Council, must be handled in accordance with General Records Schedule 6.2, and other approved Agency records disposition schedules. These records must be available for public inspection and copying, subject to the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. 552).

_____/signature of the filed original/
Secretary of the Interior

Dec. 10, 2021
Date Signed

Dec. 13, 2021
Date Filed



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