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FEDERAL SUBSISTENCE BOARD

REGULATORY MEETING

VOLUME I

LAKEFRONT ANCHORAGE HOTEL

Anchorage, Alaska

April 2, 2024

MEMBERS PRESENT:

- Rhonda Pitka, Madame Chair
- Charles Brower, Public Member
- Sara Boario, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Sarah Creachbaum, National Park Service
- Chris McKee, Bureau of Land Management
- Jolene John, Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Chad VanOrmer, U.S. Forest Service

Ken Lord, Solicitor's Office

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P R O C E E D I N G S

(Anchorage, Alaska - 4/2/2024)

(On record)

MADAME CHAIR PITKA: Hi, everyone.
It's about 1:32 p.m. We had a little bit of a late start this morning, so I'd like to start right now. At this time I'd like to call the meeting to order and establish a quorum.

MS. HOWARD: Thank you, Madame Chair.
I will go through and do a roll call for the Federal Subsistence Board members.

First up from Bureau of Indian Affairs,
Jolene John.

MS. JOHN: BIA present.

MS. HOWARD: For Bureau of Land Management, Chris McKee.

MR. MCKEE: BLM is here.

MS. HOWARD: Fish and Wildlife Service,
Sara Boario.

MS. BOARIO: Fish and Wildlife Service
is here.

MS. HOWARD: National Park Service,
Sarah Creachbaum.

MS. CREACHBAUM: Good afternoon. NPS
is here.

MS. HOWARD: For the Forest Service,
Chad Vanormer.

MR. VANORMER: Yes, Forest Service is
present.

MS. HOWARD: Public Member Charlie
Brower.

MADAME CHAIR PITKA: He informed me
he'd be a little bit late this afternoon.

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1 MS. HOWARD: All right. Thanks, Madame
2 Chair.

3
4 Chair Rhonda Pitka.

5
6 MADAME CHAIR PITKA: Here.

7
8 MS. HOWARD: With that, Madame Chair,
9 we have established a quorum.

10
11 MADAME CHAIR PITKA: I thank you all
12 for coming to the meeting today. We have established a
13 quorum and at this time I'd like to -- there are some
14 additions to the agenda. Would you like to cover them?

15
16 MS. HOWARD: Yes. Thank you, Madame
17 Chair. So a few items, additions, amendments and some
18 housekeeping for the agenda. First I wanted to cover
19 opportunities for public participation. The public
20 will have the opportunity to provide testimony to the
21 Board each day as noted in the agenda.

22
23 Public testimony on non-agenda items at
24 the beginning of each meeting in person or by phone.
25 Public testimony on agenda items as the Board moves
26 through the agenda and comments that are submitted by
27 fax or emails during the meeting these will be
28 forwarded to the Board but not read into the record.
29 You can find more details on opportunities to
30 participate during this Board meeting on the
31 subsistence website.

32
33 An announcement for tomorrow after
34 lunch we will have a dance group scheduled, so they
35 will come in and perform and hopefully get
36 participation from people in the room as well. So mark
37 your calendars for that.

38
39 The third thing is the Student Art
40 Contest. Similar to previous years the Office of
41 Subsistence Management sponsored a Student Art Contest
42 this year. We received 124 entries from students all
43 over Alaska representing different schools and
44 homeschool programs in grades K-12. It was wonderful
45 seeing so much talent and the appreciation for the
46 subsistence way of life from youth in the state.

47
48 The winning artwork will serve as cover
49 art for the 2024-2026 Federal Subsistence Management
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1 Harvest of Wildlife Regulations Book to be distributed
2 statewide. Artwork submitted will be used for
3 brochures, fliers, the website and other mediums.

4
5 So for this group the top submissions
6 are on the Art Contest table for the Board members and
7 the Regional Advisory Council Chairs to judge during
8 the meeting. That table can be found out in our lobby
9 and welcome area. Judging forms are included in the
10 Board members and Regional Advisory Council Chairs
11 meeting materials. You should see those on the inside
12 of your binders.

13
14 Please take time to view and enjoy the
15 art. Turn in your judging forms to Kayla McKinney.
16 Kayla, can you raise your hand. So Kayla is back there.
17 By the end of the day on Wednesday, April 3rd. So
18 tomorrow by the end of the day. The winners will be
19 announced on Thursday. If you have any questions or
20 can't find the table, please ask Kayla and she will
21 help direct you there.

22
23 So, Madame Chair, we have a few
24 amendments and requests to change the agenda. So first
25 up agenda item 8 as it's currently written, we would
26 like to move this agenda item regarding delegation of
27 authorities on Unit 6 deer and moose. We'd like to
28 move this to become agenda item number 6.

29
30 The reason being on the move of this is
31 because dependent upon how the Board decides on this
32 delegation of authority item it could impact a proposal
33 later on on our agenda. So we want to get it resolved
34 first.

35
36 Secondly, the Council correspondence
37 update, which is currently number 9 on our agenda, we
38 would like to move that to a time certain spot for
39 Thursday, April 4th, at 1:30 p.m. after lunch.

40
41 Next, the Alaska Department of Fish and
42 Game asks the Board to add the Wood Bison Management
43 Plan for the Lower Innoko Yukon River in West Central
44 Alaska 2024-2034. A copy of the plan is also included
45 in the Board supplemental materials, but that is
46 another agenda item that has been requested by our
47 State of Alaska partners.

48
49 Next we would like to add an
50

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1 announcement for our student Art Contest winner to be
2 after lunch on Thursday. Last, we would like to honor
3 the request that we heard during Tribal Consultation
4 from Gayla Hoseth; add a discussion for the Board for
5 HJR No. 22.

6

7 Our last change that I have is to
8 remove Wildlife Proposal 24-18 from the consensus
9 agenda and move it to the non-consensus agenda so that
10 the Board takes it up individually and we can hear
11 additional testimony about potentially expanding the
12 area.

13

14 Are there any additional requests from
15 any other members of the Board?

16

17 MS. BOARIO: Just a clarification,
18 Madame Chair. Fish and Wildlife Service. Where on the
19 agenda were we having the discussion on HJR 22? I
20 guess I missed that.

21

22 MS. HOWARD: We would just generally
23 add it to the end unless you wanted to have it time
24 certain for any reason.

25

26 MS. BOARIO: Okay.

27

28 MS. HOWARD: With that, Madame Chair,
29 those are all the changes proposed.

30

31 MADAME CHAIR PITKA: At this time I'd
32 like to entertain a motion to adopt the agenda as
33 amended.

34

35 MR. BROWER: Madame Chair. I move to
36 adopt the agenda as presented.

37

38 MADAME CHAIR PITKA: You mean as
39 amended?

40

41 MR. BROWER: Yes.

42

43 MADAME CHAIR PITKA: Can I get a second
44 for the motion to adopt the agenda as amended.

45

46 MS. BOARIO: Fish and Wildlife seconds.

47

48 MADAME CHAIR PITKA: Thank you. So now
49 we're under discussion for the agenda items. I believe
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1 we've had a clarification and at this time we'd like to
2 vote. Roll call vote, sorry.

3

4 MS. HOWARD: So roll call vote to adopt
5 the agenda as amended. We'll start with Public Member
6 Charlie Brower.

7

8 MR. BROWER: Here. Yes.

9

10 MS. HOWARD: Public Member Brower you
11 also have Tony Christianson's proxy vote.

12

13 MR. BROWER: Yes.

14

15 MS. HOWARD: For Bureau of Indian
16 Affairs Jolene John.

17

18 MS. JOHN: Bureau of Indian Affairs,
19 yes.

20

21 MS. HOWARD: Bureau of Land Management,
22 Chris McKee.

23

24 MR. MCKEE: BLM supports.

25

26 MS. HOWARD: Fish and Wildlife Service,
27 Sara Boario.

28

29 MS. BOARIO: Fish and Wildlife Service
30 supports.

31

32 MS. HOWARD: National Park Service,
33 Sarah Creachbaum.

34

35 MS. CREACHBAUM: NPS supports.

36

37 MS. HOWARD: And Forest Service, Chad
38 VanOrmer.

39

40 MR. VANORMER: Forest Service supports.

41

42 MS. HOWARD: And Chair Rhonda Pitka.

43

44 MADAME CHAIR PITKA: Yes, I support.

45 Thank you.

46

47 MS. HOWARD: Passes unanimously, Madame
48 Chair.

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1 MADAME CHAIR PITKA: Thank you very
2 much. At this time we'd like to go around and do the
3 Federal Subsistence Board information sharing. Member
4 Boario, would you like to begin.

5
6 MS. BOARIO: Madame Chair, thank you.
7 Fish and Wildlife Service, Sara Boario. I know after
8 this morning's tribal government-to-government and
9 ANCSA corporation consultation we were all a little bit
10 hungry and so I just wanted to take a moment first
11 ahead of my updates to thank everyone earlier today who
12 participated in the morning session. I know you're
13 wearing many, many hats. I know this week there's also
14 the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council.

15
16 I think it was Frank who said I could
17 sit here in meetings for the rest of my life when you'd
18 rather be out on the land and there's so much to do.
19 So thank you so much for being with us and for
20 everything that you do to ensure the health of fish and
21 wildlife and the land and the continuation of
22 subsistence uses and lifeways.

23
24 I heard folks across the morning speak
25 to a number of barriers, including our own consultation
26 processes, and I commit to doing my part to improving
27 and strengthening those and I'm sure everyone else
28 feels the same. So thank you for raising those with us
29 today. I'm listening as I know all of the Board
30 members are up here as well doing.

31
32 A few updates though I want to share as
33 well. At the recent All RAC meeting down at the
34 Dena'ina Center leaders from the Department of
35 Interior, our Solicitor Bob Anderson and the Senior
36 Advisor to the Secretary Raina Thiele provided updates
37 and fielded questions.

38
39 One of those updates was on the
40 decision and subsequent congressional action in this
41 year's Appropriations Bill to transition the Office of
42 Subsistence Management from within the Fish and
43 Wildlife Service to the Office of the Secretary.

44
45 I wanted to make sure that everyone was
46 aware that our team in Fish and Wildlife Service along
47 with the Staff within OSM and within the Office of the
48 Secretary are working hand in hand to ensure that
49 smooth transition and to do it in a way that hopefully
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1 does not lead to interruptions for subsistence
2 harvesters and users across the state.

3

4

5 There's a lot to do and it's going to
6 take us a little bit of time to figure it out, but we
7 really are cooperating very closely to do that. I
8 really want to commend the Staff within the Office of
9 Subsistence Management for their incredible focus and
10 support for this meeting this week when we're in the
11 midst of that transition and doing a lot to support
12 that. So thank you to the Staff.

12

13

14 I also wanted to share a few staff
15 announcements. At the All RAC meeting I was able to
16 share some of these, but there's a few new ones as
17 well. We have new leadership in our National Wildlife
18 Refuge Program in the Alaska Region. Carlin Itchok is
19 our new Assistant Regional Director for Refuges and
20 Stephanie Brady, our new Deputy Assistant Regional
21 Director for Refuges. Soon we'll be announcing a new
22 manager for the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge
23 and we have opening in Kodiak and Galena and we'll be
24 sharing those, providing updates as things progress
25 there.

25

26

27 We also have a new leadership for our
28 Marine Mammals Management Program, Alice Garrett. A
29 long time leader in our fisheries program, David
30 Wigglesworth, retires at the end of this month. Many
31 of you may know David from his years of work in the
32 Fish and Wildlife Service and also his more recent
33 efforts to support the Gravel-to-Gravel Keystone
34 Initiative, focus on salmon resilience and recovery in
35 Western Alaska.

35

36

37 One other thing that I heard at the All
38 RAC meeting, and I know we're awaiting, I think, the
39 final correspondence for some of the RACs as they
40 codify recommendations, was hearing a lot about the
41 larger concern -- and we heard it earlier today in
42 consultation -- about the full life cycle of the salmon
43 from the ocean to the rivers and how we can better
44 coordinate and work with our other agencies, primarily
45 NOAA, and how can the Fish and Wildlife Service in
46 particular use our non-voting seat at the North Pacific
47 Fishery Management Council to maybe have a much more
48 visible and coordinated presence.

48

49

50 So I'm hoping to be able to find the

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1 right time this Thursday to actually step out of this
2 meeting, and my apologies, Madame Chair, to be able to
3 make it over to that meeting as well this week. So we
4 really are thinking and re-looking at how do we show up
5 in many spaces just like all of you do as well. So
6 thank you for bringing that to our attention.

7

8 I think I have one more thing that also
9 came up at the RAC. There was some interest and
10 questions and I think concern around the National BIDEH
11 Policy. BIDEH standing for Biological Integrity,
12 Diversity and Environmental Health Policy. There are
13 proposed regulations nationally for the National
14 Wildlife Refuge System.

15

16 That has been extended into May, May
17 6th I believe, and in this region we'll be hosting
18 Government-to-Government Consultation on April 23rd
19 from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. Alaska Time and a second
20 Government-to-Government Consultation on May 2nd. So
21 we can make sure to really listen and integrate any
22 feedback and concerns from across Alaska on that
23 policy.

24

25 Finally, in addition to having to
26 potentially step out a little bit on Thursday, Madame
27 Chair, I apologize, I do have a personal commitment
28 later today that I'm going to have to step out a little
29 early today as well. Appreciate everyone's
30 understanding. With that I will conclude. Thank you.

31

32 MADAME CHAIR PITKA: Thank you very
33 much, Member Boario.

34

35 Would you like to go next, please.

36

37 MR. VANORMER: Good afternoon. Chad
38 VanOrmer here with the U.S. Forest Service. Thank you
39 Madame Chair for the opportunity to provide some
40 updates here.

41

42 I'm first going to start off with some
43 transitions. I'm currently acting as the Regional
44 Forester behind the previous Acting Regional Forester
45 Janelle Crocker, and before that Dave Schmid, who
46 retired this past September. So we're in the process
47 of filling the Regional Forester position permanently
48 and hopefully within the next few weeks to months we'll
49 have a decision announced on that. So in the interim

50

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1 I'm here to represent the Forest Service and happy to
2 be with you all here today.

3

4

5 First I want to start off again
6 thanking the Consultation and folks who participated
7 this morning. That's such an important step and an
8 honored step to be here and doing
9 Government-to-Government consultation and learning and
10 listening on how we can do a better job here as a
11 Federal Subsistence Board to meet the subsistence needs
12 of our rural residents, especially our Native tribes
13 and folks that rely on these resources. So much
14 gratitude for the sharing that happened here this
15 morning.

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I also have gratitude for our
Southcentral and Southeast RACs and the works that
they've done over the past year or more here to get us
to where we're at today with some wildlife proposals to
consider moving forward with. So thank you for your
service on the RACs. Also for your time and commitment
to trying to make this system work for everybody here.

A couple regulatory updates or actually
just one of them. We are getting ready to publish the
Tongass Submerged Lands Regulation and that looks like
that rulemaking is going to be finalized here I think
within the next few days is my understanding.

We're going to get that published in
the Federal Register and what this essentially does it
identifies areas in Southeast Alaska, submerged lands,
that are under Federal jurisdiction that will be
subjected to subsistence regulations. There will be a
map that's published with that. There are a lot of
very small parcels scattered about submerged lands in
Southeast Alaska.

So that was dictated by a court order
several years ago and we're finally getting to the
finish line with that court order to be able to
identify those Federally submerged lands there. So
keep an eye out for that.

Another big effort we're undertaking in
Southeast Alaska just to do some sharing here is around
our Tongass National Forest Land and Resource
Management Plan. It hasn't been revised since 1997 and
we're going to be starting in earnest this week going

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1 out and doing public engagement on an assessment that
2 will really help drive kind of the purpose and need and
3 the change for a new revised Tongass Land and Resource
4 Management Plan.

5

6 I would imagine subsistence will be a
7 pretty prominent discussion point as we enter the
8 community engagement as well as when we engage in our
9 open tribal Government-to-Government Consultation.
10 That's open at this point in time along with our ANCSA
11 corporations as well.

12

13 So it's a real exciting time. It's a
14 big effort and we expect this process to unfold over
15 the next probably two to three years. I'd just
16 encourage you all to participate and collaborate and
17 consult where appropriate along the way here so we can
18 develop a robust plan that is really enduring.

19

20 I think the final thing I want to share
21 is a little bit of a good news piece I shared, I think,
22 with the working group the last time I was with the
23 Federal Subsistence Board. Alaska has been chosen to
24 provide the Capital holiday tree for this December. So
25 it's been decided that the tree will come from the
26 Tongass National Forest and we're in the process of
27 looking around for the perfect Christmas tree to be
28 able to ship off to the Capital.

29

30 There's going to be a lot of excitement
31 generated around that. Senator Murkowski as well as
32 the Forest Service issued a press release this past
33 week announcing the effort and just looking forward to
34 our communities and tribes and everyone participating
35 and celebrating that honor to be able to provide that
36 holiday event here for the nation.

37

38 So with that I again appreciate the
39 opportunity to be heretoday, do a little sharing and
40 looking forward to working with the Board.

41

42 Back to you, Madame Chair.

43

44 MADAME CHAIR PITKA: Thank you so much
45 for your updates. It's really exciting about the
46 Christmas tree.

47

48 Jolene John with the BIA.

49

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1 MS. JOHN: Quyana, Madame Chair.
2 Wiinga, Arnaqullugua. Nunakauyarmiunek kingunengqertua.
3 Aataka Kangrilngullruuq, aanaka-wa Anguyaluk. I'm
4 Jolene John. My Yup'ik name is Arnaqulluk with origins
5 of the Nunakauyarmiut Tribe. My late father is
6 Kangrilnguq Paul John and my mom is Martina John.

7
8 Having held this position since
9 November '23. Prior to that we had Dr. Glen Chen
10 providing much of his expertise to the Federal
11 Subsistence Board, so I want to first and foremost
12 thank him for that. As well as quyana to everyone that
13 came in person as well as participate online during the
14 Tribal Consultation this morning because it is through
15 your heartfelt conversations and sharing that we get to
16 hear a little bit more of what really happens at the
17 community level. Without those stories it would be
18 difficult for us to make any decisions here that are
19 for your benefit.

20
21 Recently I attended the Tribal Interior
22 Budget Council meetings in Washington, D.C. I just
23 want to share that during that time the tribal members
24 as well as the staff have brought forth their
25 priorities, which subsistence was one of them as well
26 as their intertribal commissions and committees that
27 exist across Alaska.

28
29 Also while I was there we were informed
30 that there have been really sincere concern concerning
31 food security issues occurring in St. Lawrence Island.
32 So our Staff have been involved in trying to network
33 with other offices and agencies to see how we can
34 contribute toward their lack of food issues in Savoonga
35 and Gambell.

36
37 (In Yup'ik) and basically they were
38 sharing that their freezers are empty because of
39 climate change. In the last two years they have not
40 been able to fish adequately the amounts that they need
41 to keep their families fed throughout the year. This
42 year the complications of not being able to harvest
43 enough walrus.

44
45 So we're trying to help in ways that we
46 can with their food security issues. With that said
47 I'd like to thank Raina Thiele for utilizing her
48 network in trying to assist those two tribes in the
49 west part of Alaska.

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1 As a happy note, I'd like to share that
2 our Juneau office, the Natural Resource Manager
3 position is finally being filled and that person is set
4 to begin in early April. We also just got notice in
5 the last half hour that our Fairbanks Agency
6 Superintendent position is now posted for the next two
7 weeks. So we hope that we can fill that job in short
8 order.

9
10 So that said, if I do have to leave
11 it's because of my mom who has been hospitalized this
12 weekend. We'll be asking Dr. Glenn Chen to step in.
13 Quyana.

14
15 MADAME CHAIR PITKA: Thank you very
16 much for that. I appreciate it.

17
18 Public Member Charlie Brower.

19
20 MR. BROWER: Good afternoon. Thank
21 you, Madame Chair. I just want to take the time to
22 thank everyone that had public concerns on non-agenda
23 items and tribal consultation issues. I take it to the
24 heart and listen very hard to understand what's
25 happening even though I don't get very much information
26 until I come to these meetings. I stand my stand to
27 understand what's happening.

28
29 Even though I'm a Federal Subsistence
30 Board member, as a public member I don't have the
31 privilege to get involved with the daily activities
32 through the agencies, so this is where I get to hear
33 everyone's concerns and their needs. I take them to
34 heart and I will support every one of you guys.

35
36 Thank you.

37
38 MADAME CHAIR PITKA: Thank you very
39 much, Member Brower.

40
41 Sarah Creachbaum.

42
43 MS. CREACHBAUM: These microphones
44 always scare me. Good afternoon, everyone. I'm Sarah
45 Creachbaum with the National Park Service and I think
46 that's a great reminder, Charlie and Rhonda, to just
47 thank our public members on the Board from the bottom
48 of our hearts. I learn so much from you that helps me
49 make wiser decisions. So I appreciate you very much,
50

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1 sir.

2

3

4 Also appreciate all of the comments
5 from this morning, particularly regarding regulations
6 and food security. We all here listen with our hearts,
7 I think, and it's moving and we listen with our ears
8 wide open in order to make the best decisions that we
9 possibly can. I wanted to take a minute to thank our
10 resource commissions that work for the National Park
11 Service and in particular note the passing of Shield
12 Downey, who was our Kobuk Valley SRC chair, who passed
13 away a couple of weeks ago. If we could just take a
14 moment to honor Shield's passing.

14

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(Moment of silence)

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MS. CREACHBAUM: Thank you. I have a
lot going on in the National Park Service. A quick
update. It doesn't have anything to do with
subsistence resources, but the National Park Service,
as you may remember, more than a year ago introduced a
proposed rule for hunting and trapping in National
Preserves. That rule's comment period closed about a
year ago and the team worked very hard to incorporate
everyone's comments and concerns into a new draft final
rule.

That rule has been and remains in the
Secretary of the Interior's Office and I don't have an
update for you on when that will be released, but I
wanted you to know where it was in the process. That's
just a matter of information. Again, it doesn't affect
subsistence resources, but can tangentially have
effects, so I wanted to keep you all aware.

In good news the National Park Service
was really fortunate to get about \$6.2 million and some
change out of the Inflation Reduction Act. That money
is going specifically to communities that work with our
National Parks and Preserves to help them with food
security issues through co-stewardship agreements and
specifically to help with monitoring of different
subsistence resources so that we can get really
accurate in the information that we can provide to our
SRCs and our RACs to help us with the decision-making.
So those monies and consultation meetings on how those
monies might be distributed are beginning now and
should probably continue through this year.

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1 I was reminded by one of my favorite
2 elders that we didn't want to hear that we just spent
3 \$6 million on a bunch of meetings, so we will not. I
4 promise you. The money is to go directly to the
5 communities.

6
7 We have a really wonderful program in
8 the National Park Service. Many other DOI agencies
9 also have ANSEP students that work with them, but we
10 have a pretty robust group and it's the Alaska Native
11 Science and Engineering Program. So we intend to hire
12 a new cadre of college students to also be working
13 directly with the communities through that IRA money.
14 So kind of an exciting program.

15
16 The NPS Subsistence Resource
17 Commissions are currently meeting in all of the Park
18 regions. Anaktuvuk Pass is coming up April 24th and
19 25th. Iliamna is April 13th. So a lot of really good
20 work going on out there and much appreciation from me
21 to all of you for your participation and your work.
22 You really are the best of what we do.

23
24 Thank you.

25
26 MADAME CHAIR PITKA: Thank you very
27 much for that update.

28
29 Chris McKee.

30
31 MR. MCKEE: Thank you. Chris McKee,
32 Statewide Subsistence Coordinator for the Bureau of
33 Land Management sitting in for Steve Cohn, State
34 Director, who couldn't be here today. I know Steve's
35 intention is to attend this meeting, so I will leave
36 any information exchange or updates from the agency to
37 him when he does come here, but I do want everyone here
38 to know how much I appreciated the Tribal Consultation
39 that took place today. I've been involved in
40 subsistence for about 13 years now and I have to say
41 this is probably one of the more extensive and involved
42 consultation processes we've had at the Board's
43 regulatory meeting, so I really appreciate that.

44
45 I took probably what Steve is going to
46 find entirely too copious notes from this consultation
47 and I'm going to be providing hopefully a better
48 summary to him because he really will need that
49 information to make informed decisions on the proposals
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1 and other items that the Board will have before them
2 today.

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4 I just wanted to thank everybody that
5 participated in that and also to Orville and everyone
6 else at OSM for doing such a great job on that. So
7 much appreciated.

8

9 Thank you.

10

11 MADAME CHAIR PITKA: Thank you for
12 that.

13

14 At this time we'd like the OSM ARD to
15 give the update.

16

17 MS. HOWARD: Thank you, Madame Chair.
18 Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you for joining us or
19 coming back from this morning. My name is Ameer Howard
20 and I'm the Acting Assistant Regional Director for the
21 Office of Subsistence Management.

22

23 Sue Detwiler, our ARD for the last
24 almost I think four years decided to retire at the end
25 of 2023. So I have been asked to step in for this
26 first bit of transitioning into 2024. It has been a
27 busy quarter for the group, so I thought I would just
28 go through a few of the items that the OSM team has
29 tackled so far in 2024.

30

31 We kicked off with an amazing
32 Co-Stewardship Symposium in Fairbanks that was
33 sponsored by the Tanana Chiefs Conference, Central
34 Council for Tlingit and Haida, Fish and Wildlife
35 Service and many other partners. It was a week-long
36 effort and event where we were able to meet with many
37 of the tribes and tribal organizations across Alaska
38 and dive deep into some deep co-stewardship discussions
39 and conversations.

40

41 The team also this quarter has traveled
42 to Juneau and Seattle to brief the Transboundary River
43 Panels established by the Pacific Salmon Treaty. Both
44 the U.S. and the bilateral panels on the Federal
45 Subsistence Board's rescission of the closure on the Taku
46 River. This has taken a lot of coordination, a lot of
47 hard work from the OSM team and from the Forest Service
48 team. So my gratitude to Chad, Rob Cross and company,
49 I know there's many more, for being our partners in
50

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1 those briefings.

2

3

4 I also wanted to give recognition to
5 Troy Thynes with the State of Alaska for his help as
6 well. He is the chair of the U.S. Transboundary River
7 Panel.

8

9 We also traveled to multiple Board of
10 Fish and Board of Game meetings this month. Worked on
11 comments, submitted comments to both bodies, got to
12 meet a lot of incredible State employees, State
13 biologists and scientists at those meetings, got to
14 talk with community members and local knowledge
15 holders.

16

17 We attended a BLM D-1 Withdrawal
18 meeting in Kotzebue. Heard the stories and the
19 testimonies there and the fear and concern from local
20 subsistence users and rural residents on what that
21 means to them. And I think we heard some of that this
22 morning during the Tribal Consultation.

23

24 We have held a multiple tribal
25 consultations this quarter. One was noted in Arctic
26 Village. It was a very successful consultation and
27 definitely something that we would like to do more of.
28 We also were joined by partners from across Fish and
29 Wildlife Service. I think you, yourself, Rhonda, were
30 on the phone during that consultation in Arctic
31 Village.

32

33 I did want to update the group as well
34 that we are working on updating our Tribal Consultation
35 Policy. We will get a draft finalized and it will need
36 to go to the Regional Advisory Councils for their input
37 before it comes back around to the Board.

38

39 We also held a Federal Subsistence
40 Board work session in early February and we've also
41 held multiple public hearings. One of note is on the
42 Nonrural Determination for Ketchikan that the Board
43 will be deliberating on at their January 2025 meeting.
44 However, I do want to give a shout-out to the
45 anthropology team and DeAnna Perry from USDA Forest
46 Service for their work on multiple public hearings on
47 that effort.

48

49 A Nonrural Determination Proposal, when
50 that comes in, is a multi-year effort. So for the team

50

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1 to keep moving that needle forward on that it takes an
2 incredible amount of work.

3
4 We've also had some Special Action
5 public hearings that we've done and then we held a
6 public listening session on Wildlife Proposal 24-28/29
7 concerning the Western Arctic Caribou Herd, which the
8 Board will hear more about and hear a summary from that
9 public listening session.

10
11 Then the culmination so far, until we
12 got to this meeting, was at the beginning of March we
13 held the All-Council meetings. I can't express my
14 gratitude to all the Council Chairs here, Council
15 members in the audience and listening in, to the
16 Federal Subsistence Board for all of your participation
17 that week. It was what I like to say an epic meeting.

18
19 We covered a lot of very intense and
20 very important topics in the joint sessions. Each of
21 the Councils held individual Council meetings and got a
22 lot of work done in a very compressed
23 timeline. So thank you all for that.

24
25 We also held sessions of interest on
26 food security, co-stewardship, Bristol Bay salmon, Gulf
27 of Alaska salmon, caribou, sheep. It was again in my
28 mind and in my terms epic. So I thank all of you
29 epically.

30
31 Most of all I want to give recognition
32 to the incredible team that helped OSM and helped the
33 Federal Subsistence Management Program accomplish all
34 these things. I'm only talking about the last three
35 months. The OSM team and the Forest Service team.

36
37 Thank you OSM for the incredible amount
38 of hard work, dedication, patience and adaptability.
39 Especially me stepping in as an acting, I really
40 appreciate everyone's problem-solving, everyone's
41 talent and willingness to try new things and also adapt
42 to the things that we know and holding such a high
43 standard.

44
45 I will say there's been also some
46 acknowledgment from Fish and Wildlife Service through
47 their Regional Excellence Awards that I would like to
48 also give a nod to. One is to Sherri Gould-Fehrs. She
49 has been nominated as Administrative Professional of
50

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1 the Year for Fish and Wildlife Service. Then the other
2 group that has been nominated for a Regional Excellence
3 Award this year is our amazing Council Coordination
4 Team. So thank you to them and all of their incredible
5 hard work.

6

7

(Applause)

8

9 MS. HOWARD: Again thank you to OSM and
10 also thank you -- I do not want to leave out our Forest
11 Service partners and team members. So Rob Cross,
12 Andrew, Jake, Greg, thank you all for the immense
13 amount of hard work.

14

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I would be remiss to also not give recognition to our InterAgency Staff Committee. They have taken on a great deal of work for the Federal Subsistence Board. They have taken on a great deal of work for the program overall. Their knowledge and experience that they bring and also their dedication and heartfelt -- just wanting to do the right thing. I can't speak more highly. So thank you InterAgency Staff Committee members.

We did get a couple of new members to our OSM team in 2024 so far. So Glenn Westdahl is our new OSM executive secretary and you'll meet him. I think he's out in the entry welcoming everyone. Then we also have a new Council Coordinator Gisela Chapa. There she is. Hi, Gisela. Who has definitely just dove right into the deep end. She started right before the All-Council meeting or not long before. Probably maybe a month we gave you. So thank you both and welcome to this crazy world that we call OSM, but there's just something about it.

I also wanted to recognize our partners. A lot of work across Alaska. We need our partners. So a shout out to Deputy Commissioner Ben Mulligan and Mark Burch. Thank you both for always coming, bringing comments, helping us with data, helping us work through the analyses at every step of the way. So thank you for your time and engagement in the Federal program.

Our partners at the Chugach Regional Resources Commission, Raven Cunningham and Michael Opheim. They've done an incredible amount of work helping educate and outreach for the Federal program.

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1 We have incredible partners at Tanana
2 Chiefs Convention. I can name Kari Stevens and Jim
3 Simon always bringing important perspectives to the
4 room.

5
6 AITRC, so the Ahtna Intertribal
7 Resource Commission, Karen Linnell. I know Deanna's in
8 the -- there she is. Hi, Deanna. Thank you for your
9 engagement as well.

10

11 The Native Village of Eyak, Matt Piche
12 and all of his incredible work. And the Qawalangin
13 Tribe, Chris Prince and his incredible amount of work.
14 I could go on and on and that would probably take up
15 the rest of the time we have allotted.

16

17 I did want to put out a couple more
18 things, Madame Chair, if I may. We have updates for
19 some Federal Register notices. Our Fish Final Rule
20 published on February 29th. It was a little late we
21 realize; however, appreciate everyone's patience as
22 that got published and into the Federal Register at the
23 end of February.

24

25 Then our call for proposals to change
26 fish and shellfish regulations was published and that
27 call for proposals is open now and open until May 21st.
28 As Member VanOrmer discussed, the Tongass Submerged
29 Lands Final Rule publishes tomorrow, Chad. So we are
30 excited to close out that chapter and looking forward
31 to moving forward with that.

32

33 Then we have a proposed rule to add
34 three public members to the Federal Subsistence Board
35 that some of you may have heard of and I think was
36 mentioned as well during Tribal Consultation. A thank
37 you to another important partner that was supposed to
38 be on my list, Gayla Hoseth, and also Ben Mallott from
39 AFN, among many hats that Gayla wears.

40

41 Those comments can be submitted through
42 regulations.gov and more information can be found on
43 the Department of Interior website. That comment
44 period is open through April 26th. However, if anyone
45 has questions on where to find that information, please
46 let one of the OSM team know.

47

48 I think the other big news is the OSM
49 move. I think it was March 9th Congress signed the
50

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1 budget for FY24 and in that budget it was secured that
2 OSM would be moving out from Fish and Wildlife Service
3 to under the Office of the Secretary in the Department
4 of Interior.

5
6 This is a big transition in terms of
7 transitioning systems and people and all of the
8 logistics that go along with it, but we are working
9 incredibly close with Member Boario and the Fish and
10 Wildlife Service team, of course, what has been our
11 home for many years, and working with the Office of the
12 Secretary closely. We're hoping to make it a smooth
13 transition and we want to maintain uninterrupted
14 service to subsistence harvesters.

15
16 The transferring of the systems will
17 take some time and OSM will be diligently working to
18 implement the transfer again with minimal disruption to
19 the Federal Subsistence Management Program. Ultimately
20 the transfer will be complete by the end of September
21 or the end of the fiscal year '24.

22
23 We'll continue to work in support of
24 the Federal Subsistence Board, the Regional Advisory
25 Councils and fish and wildlife regulations that are
26 responsive to subsistence harvesters' needs throughout
27 this process.

28
29 So I'm going to stop there. I can go
30 into what's coming up, but for now, again, I do want to
31 thank the OSM team, thank everyone for being here at
32 the Federal Subsistence Board meeting and really
33 appreciate the time, the discussion and the engagement.

34
35 Thank you, Madame Chair.

36
37 MADAME CHAIR PITKA: Thank you for the
38 update. Right now it's my turn. I'd like to thank you
39 for attending today and all of the consultation
40 comments that we got this morning. I really think
41 public comment and tribal consultation are some of the
42 most important processes with this system that are some
43 of my favorite.

44
45 I really enjoy listening to all the
46 consultation comments and the public comments too. The
47 comments that we get by email also are all a part of
48 the administrative record. It's always so informative
49 to me because sometimes when you read the proposals
50

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1 you'll read the whole stack of 1,200 pages and you
2 still won't have quite a clear idea of someplace that
3 you've never been.

4
5 I'm from the village of Beaver and I
6 live in the Interior of Alaska on the Yukon River. So
7 my knowledge of deer in Alaska is very limited and I
8 really appreciate all of the Regional Advisory Council
9 comments that we get on those proposals and I think all
10 of the substantive comments that we get.

11
12 So, as you noticed, Chair Anthony
13 Christianson couldn't make it to this meeting, so I'm
14 taking his place today as Chair. He always made it
15 look so very easy and he could probably sit up here and
16 talk for like two hours, but I'm Athabascan, so I'm a
17 little bit more brief.

18
19 (Laughter)

20
21 MADAME CHAIR PITKA: We did attend the
22 All RAC meeting. I feel like I've been practically an
23 employee for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the
24 last month or so beginning with the All RAC meeting and
25 then the Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments,
26 which I'm also the Chair of, is a partner with the Fish
27 and Wildlife Service on Alaska Native Relations
28 Training Class. So we just wrapped that up last week,
29 right before Easter.

30
31 I don't know how I missed the fact that
32 it was Holy Week last week, but one of the elders was
33 like you really need to remember that on your calendar.
34 I was like okay. So the beginning of the year my
35 calendar is blank and I don't have very important dates
36 like Holy Week, so I definitely need to be more
37 cognizant of that in the future.

38
39 I'd really like to thank you all for
40 coming this week also. This is a very busy week.
41 North Pacific Fishery Management Council is also
42 meeting. Let's see. Right after this we have Yukon
43 river Panel meeting. So it's going to be an exciting
44 time. I'm really interested in all the comments this
45 next week.

46
47 I'd like to thank the Staff for
48 providing us with a ton of information and making sure
49 that we have public briefings and that we have all the
50

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1 information that we need to make good decisions.

2

3

4 I think that's why I was so grateful
5 for the All Regional Advisory Council meeting last
6 month because there was a number of trainings. I think
7 when you're like a person sitting in those particular
8 trainings they seem really boring and like check off
9 the box, but it's so important to the system that
10 everybody has the same information .

10

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I look at Amy's tattered, dog-eared
copy of ANILCA. Every time I think of somebody
accusing us of not knowing ANILCA, I'm like, oh, God.
Do you want me to recite it? I could. So it's just
really good that our members all have that information
and that they had a really good discussion that was
pretty productive all week.

I really spent a lot of time listening
to the Advisory Councils and it was very informative to
me and I really appreciated all of their time and
effort. They're a volunteer group and they don't get
paid for their time, so I truly appreciate all of that
time and effort and things that make the system better
for the public.

The Tribal Consultation this morning,
Chris was right. This was really a good consultation
and I really appreciated it all. There have been a
number of really good consultations that I've been a
party of and this was one of the decent ones.
Sometimes it comes at a bad time. Like we'll show up
somewhere and there's something going on in the
community that can't be prevented at that time. So I
really appreciate it when we do get really good
consultation on items.

I think that's about it for my updates.
Thank you all.

Right now we would like to have an
introduction of the Regional Advisory Council Chairs.

MS. HOWARD: Thank you, Madame Chair.
Yes, I would like to just go through a roll call for
our Regional Advisory Council Chairs, then our State
Liaisons and then also our legal counsel.

So for Southeast Don Hernandez.

0024

1 MR. HERNANDEZ: Here.

2

3 MS. HOWARD: For Southcentral Regional
4 Advisory Council, Judy Caminer.

5

6 MS. CAMINER: Here.

7

8 MS. HOWARD: Kodiak Aleutians, Rebecca
9 Skinner. I believe you're on the line hopefully.

10

11 MS. SKINNER: I am on the line. Am I
12 coming through?

13

14 MS. HOWARD: I can hear you. Thank
15 you, Rebecca.

16

17 For Bristol Bay, Dan Dunaway.

18

19 MR. DUNAWAY: Here.

20

21 MS. HOWARD: For Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta,
22 Alissa Rogers.

23

24 MS. ROGERS: Present.

25

26 MS. HOWARD: For Western Interior, Jack
27 Reakoff.

28

29 MR. REAKOFF: Here.

30

31 MS. HOWARD: For Seward Peninsula,
32 Louis Green.

33

34 MR. GREEN: Here. Thank you.

35

36 MS. HOWARD: For Eastern Interior,
37 Charlie Wright.

38

39 MR. WRIGHT: Here.

40

41 MS. HOWARD: For North Slope, Brower
42 Franz.

43

44 MR. FRANZ: Maaniittuma. I'm here.

45

46 MS. HOWARD: Thank you. For Northwest
47 Arctic, Thomas Baker, are you on the line?

48

49 (No response)

50

0025

1 MS. HOWARD: Thomas wasn't sure he
2 would be able to join us for the meeting, so we'll have
3 his Council Coordinator or the Council Coordination
4 Supervisor provide any recommendation in his absence.

5
6 So our Regional Advisory Council Chairs
7 are here. I would also like to introduce and check in
8 with our State of Alaska liaisons. Deputy Commissioner
9 Ben Mulligan.

10
11 (No response)

12
13 MS. HOWARD: And Mark Burch.

14
15 (No response)

16
17 MS. HOWARD: And then for our legal
18 counsel Ken Lord from Department of the Solicitor.

19
20 MR. LORD: Good afternoon, everyone.

21
22 MS. HOWARD: Department of the
23 Interior, Solicitor's Office. Thank you.

24
25 MR. LORD: There you go.

26
27 MS. HOWARD: And then Boykin Lucas from
28 USDA's General Counsel. Waving behind us.

29
30 So, Madame Chair, our Regional Advisory
31 Council Chairs and our Liaisons to the Board and our
32 legal counsel. I hand it back to you.

33
34 MADAME CHAIR PITKA: Thank you very
35 much. So at this time I'd like to ask the Regional
36 Advisory Council Chairs to discuss topics of concern
37 with the Board. This is our round robin. We'd like to
38 start with Don Hernandez.

39
40 MR. HERNANDEZ: Thank you. Good
41 afternoon, everyone. Don Hernandez from the Southeast
42 Regional Advisory Council. First of all our Council
43 has appreciated the recent All Council Meeting that we
44 held here last month in Anchorage. I'd like to let you
45 know that Council members were very excited to
46 participate. It was nice to build relationships with
47 our new Council members and rekindle friendships with
48 other Regional Council members, Staff, public members
49 and others.

50

0026

1 Although we appreciated the agenda, I
2 believe most of our Council members would have liked to
3 have had a little more opportunities to interact with
4 others and meet as a joint Council. Perhaps the next
5 All Council meeting the Councils could meet for joint
6 sessions at the beginning and also at the end of the
7 week was one suggestion.

8
9 It would also be nice to have a bit
10 more time to get through our individual Council
11 business. I think everyone was very happy for the
12 opportunity to get together. So thanks to the program
13 and all those that helped plan and carry out those
14 details for a very successful meeting. And thanks to
15 the Board members who were present for the first day of
16 that meeting as well.

17
18 There was significant discussion of
19 matters and interests in common by Councils at the
20 recent All Council meeting. I'm sure you'll hear more
21 details from other Chairs about letters signed by
22 numerous Councils, but I did want to let you know that
23 although Southeast Council was supportive of most of
24 the positions voiced for joint letters, our Council
25 chose to send their own letters to the Board.

26
27 So in the near future you'll see
28 correspondence from the Southeast Council addressing
29 some topics such as requesting additional resources
30 from OSM to aid Council members in their work,
31 requesting that the agency representation on the North
32 Pacific Fishery Management Council be reviewed, and
33 also Council member compensation.

34
35 Also the Council recently sent you a
36 bycatch letter detailing the negative effects of trawl
37 bycatch on subsistence resources and also supporting
38 previous letters from several Councils on the issue. I
39 believe you were in the process of elevating that to
40 the Secretaries. The Regional Administrator of NOAA
41 and National Marine Fisheries and the Under Secretary
42 for Department of Commerce. We are hoping for some
43 real action on this.

44
45 The Council also plans on sending a
46 letter to Admiralty Monument Ranger to see what might
47 be done about erratic jet boat traffic on Hasselborg
48 Creek that endangers salmon spawning beds. We're also
49 sending a public comment letter supporting the addition
50

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1 of three new public members to the Board pursuant to
2 the information contained in the Proposed Rule.

3

4

5 During our individual RAC meeting the
6 Council also voted to submit two Federal fish proposals
7 and three proposals to the Board of Fish. I'd also
8 like to mention that by vote of the Council and with
9 funding by OSM one of our Council members engaged in an
10 aquaculture workshop last week. NOAA has begun a
11 four-year process to identify aquaculture opportunity
12 areas and our member attendant to provide traditional
13 ecological knowledge about subsistence as well as
14 cultural and natural resource areas that should be
15 protected from aquaculture and mariculture development.

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We want to express our appreciation to the Assistant Regional Director of OSM for approving funding for this participation. It is anticipated that we will stay engaged and informed throughout this process with hopes that NOAA and Department of Natural Resources will consider our input along the way.

Continuing with our Council's work on regional issues of interest, members remain concerned about mining in Canada that could negatively impact the transboundary river watersheds and the fishery resources they contain. We sent you a letter on this issue last May and requested that you elevate our concerns to the Lt. Governor. Recently we received a copy of the Board's letter conveying that to the Lt. Governor with a request for her to work with the U.S. Department of State to engage with Canadian officials to ensure protection of these international watersheds.

Although this letter took a very long time to go through the review process, we appreciate such a well written letter from the Board. We recognize that it would have been easy to just forward our letter and attachments to the Lt. Governor, but time was devoted to writing a detailed letter further supporting the Council's position. I wanted to acknowledge that this effort was appreciated by the Council.

You'll soon be receiving our Annual Report, which contains a few items from the past along with some new ones. I wanted to specifically bring to your attention this Council's desires to participate in the public engagement opportunities for the Tongass

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1 National Forest Plan Revision. This Plan is a resource
2 management tool that provides the framework for
3 managing the forest and is developed using process
4 where the public has the ability to shape the final
5 document.

6
7 Since it is very possible that the
8 public engagement and comment periods will fall outside
9 our normal Council meeting cycles, we are asking the
10 Board to support an additional out-of-cycle meeting
11 should it be necessary.

12
13 The Council recognizes the importance
14 of public input on revisions to the Tongass Plan and
15 ask that this Board support the engagement to assist
16 the Forest Service in making sure our resources are
17 protected, healthy ecosystems maintained and community
18 needs are met.

19
20 For almost four years now the Council
21 has been involved in the nonrural determination
22 proposal process. This proposed request to rescind the
23 nonrural determination of Ketchikan changing the
24 designation of Ketchikan to a rural community. Last
25 fall there were two in-person public hearings, one of
26 which was on the night before our RAC meeting so the
27 Council members could attend and listen. Then a third
28 public hearing was held this past February virtually.

29
30 The Council has received updates
31 throughout this process and has appreciated the time
32 that people spent to come to our RAC and public
33 meetings to provide public comment. The Council looks
34 forward to seeing the fall analysis and making a
35 recommendation to this proposal at our upcoming fall
36 meeting. I believe it will be ready for your final
37 decision come January.

38
39 Lastly, I'd like to take a little extra
40 time to address an issue that could affect all the
41 Councils. That is the interpretation of certain
42 sections in Title VIII of ANILCA. The intent of the
43 words "when necessary for the continuation of
44 subsistence uses as a justification for a restriction
45 and how to implement this in order to provide a
46 meaningful preference for Federally-qualified
47 subsistence users.

48
49 I hope you all had a chance to read the
50

1 Council's position statement which we put out on
2 February 3rd. So the Council looked into the
3 regulatory history of ANILCA, the Native Claims
4 Settlement Act, as well as legislative history and case
5 law. We would like for this Board to seriously
6 consider some of the points made in the Council's
7 position statement as it deliberates proposals during
8 this meeting.

9
10 Namely, Title VIII of ANILCA primarily
11 talks about uses. Section .801 presents congressional
12 findings which include that subsistence uses are
13 essential to Native physical, economic, traditional and
14 cultural existence and to non-Native physical,
15 economical, traditional and social existence.

16
17 That providing the opportunity for
18 continued subsistence uses as a matter of equity. Also
19 of interest Congress noted that the increasing human
20 population of Alaska threatens subsistence uses and
21 that there would be increased access to remote areas
22 containing subsistence resources.

23
24 Well, Congress anticipated that
25 Alaska's population would increase. It could not
26 predict some of the social changes that would occur,
27 such as the amplified tourism industry, but also
28 changes to the landscape as well due to such things as
29 climate change and habitat loss from large-scale
30 clearcut logging, especially in Southeast Alaska.

31
32 There have also been technical changes
33 that have occurred, such as GPS, digital charts,
34 increased horsepower engines on larger boats, all of
35 which greatly improve hunting and fishing success,
36 particularly for urban residents who can afford them.

37
38 Our letter took a very long time to go
39 through the review process -- oh, excuse me. Wrong
40 page. So also in Section .802 Congress declared that
41 use of the public lands in Alaska is to cause the least
42 adverse impact possible on rural residents who depend
43 upon subsistence uses of the resources of such
44 lands..... and the purpose of this title is to provide
45 the opportunity for rural residents engaged in a
46 subsistence way of life to do so. Subsistence shall be
47 the priority consumptive use of fish and wildlife
48 resources on the public lands of Alaska.

0030

1 Section .815 authorizes restrictions on
2 the taking of fish and wildlife for non-subsistence
3 uses on the public lands if necessary for the
4 conservation of healthy populations of fish and
5 wildlife. Is what we hear so often at our board
6 meetings. The Board will adopt or reject proposals
7 based on the existence or not of conservation concerns.

8
9 There are two other reasons that the
10 Board can consider under this Section .815. They are
11 for the continuation of subsistence uses or for reasons
12 of public safety or administration. ANILCA is clearly
13 aimed at protecting subsistence uses and ensuring the
14 continuation of rural subsistence way of life. The
15 Council feels that this could support some of the
16 Board's actions.

17
18 The Council would like the Board to
19 acknowledge that subsistence uses may be threatened
20 even when there is no general resource scarcity,
21 increased Alaska's population and non-resident fishing
22 and hunting can result in increased competition and
23 reduce access to subsistence resources. Either of
24 these may threaten the rural residents ability to meet
25 their community subsistence needs. This seems contrary
26 to protecting resources for the continuation of
27 subsistence uses.

28
29 The last thing I'd like to highlight
30 from our position statement is the fundamental
31 difference between how the State of Alaska looks at
32 subsistence or personal use as opposed to how the
33 Federal program looks at subsistence.

34
35 When the Council looked into ANILCA
36 Title VIII we did not find any provisions that referred
37 to individual hunting and fishing harvest limits or to
38 the right of individuals to hunt and fish under
39 subsistence provisions. Congress seemed to focus on
40 use rather than harvest, recognizing that subsistence
41 use is community-based.

42
43 The fundamental characteristic of
44 subsistence is the customary and traditional use of
45 wild renewable resources. When making a customary and
46 traditional use determination for a community we must
47 take a holistic look at all the factors involved in
48 subsistence harvesting, including when, where and how
49 people harvest, not just how much.

50

0031

1 This is key when you were asked to take
2 action to meet the subsistence needs of rural Alaskans.
3 The Council feels that if the Board deliberates
4 proposals, keeping this and other points I mentioned in
5 mind, then instead of rejecting proposals solely based
6 on consideration of whether or not a conservation
7 concern exists we will be able to say yes and would be
8 justified to adopt proposals that provide meaningful
9 priority to subsistence users and protects the
10 continuation of subsistence uses.

11
12 That's all I have.

13
14 Thank you.

15
16 MADAME CHAIR PITKA: Thank you very
17 much.

18
19 Judy Caminer.

20
21 MS. CAMINER: Good afternoon. My name
22 is Judy Caminer and I'm the Vice Chair of the
23 Southcentral Regional Advisory Council. Greg
24 Encelewski, our Chair, will probably be here on
25 Thursday. So I'm happy to fill in for him in between.

26
27 I have been on the RAC since about 2009
28 with a few short breaks in between and have served on
29 the Federal Subsistence Board before that. The
30 Southcentral Region is bounded by the Alaska Range to
31 the north, the Canadian border to the east and
32 encompassing all of the Kenai Peninsula to the south.
33 It runs through a bit of Lake Clark as well as Denali
34 National Park and Preserve on the west side. This
35 region also contains the waters of Cook Inlet, Prince
36 William Sound and a good portion of the Copper River,
37 including the delta.

38
39 Contained within these boundaries are
40 45 rural communities, while also containing several
41 non-subsistence areas with very large populations.
42 Aside from the already-mentioned Federal lands, the
43 Southcentral Region also contains the Chugach National
44 Forest and the Kenai National Refuge in their entirety
45 and a large portion of the Wrangell-St. Elias National
46 Park and Preserve. Also includes much BLM-administered
47 lands.

48
49 Some of the areas of concerns for our
50

0032

1 Council include the omnipresent threat of climate
2 change and what it's doing to our wildlife populations,
3 freshwater fish, salmon and marine resources. This
4 includes increased parasite loads in moose
5 and caribou and the changing distribution and timing of
6 paralytic shellfish poisoning in our shellfish.

7

8 Also this Council's boundaries contain
9 within it the highest population of the state and a
10 good percentage of these individuals who live in urban
11 centers are not Federally-qualified subsistence users,
12 of course. There are miles of roads and many
13 freshwater and marine boat launches within the
14 communities that allow easier access to the resources
15 for both subsistence and non-subsistence users. This
16 brings up unique and concerning challenges on several
17 levels.

18

19 As Don mentioned, as the availability
20 of subsistence resources is decreasing, the pressure on
21 those resources from both rural and nonrural users is
22 not. How should these resources be distributed,
23 including how should those resources be distributed
24 among only rural users, is a topic that seems to be
25 coming up before our Council more regularly.

26

27 How to appropriately mitigate conflict
28 between Federally-qualified users and sport fishers and
29 hunters in the patchwork of land ownership and in
30 marine waters that are dependant on for subsistence
31 needs but are managed by the State.

32

33 Another concern of this Council is how
34 the Board's nonrural policy is implemented and what
35 communities outside of these urban centers should be
36 given customary and traditional findings on dwindling
37 subsistence resources.

38

39 As people move out of the urban centers
40 and establish rural subdivisions, they would like to
41 gain access to Federal resources, establishing what
42 makes a group of people a community and at what point
43 is that community eligible for access to Federal
44 subsistence resources is a recurring topic that our
45 Council faces.

46

47 The Council has frequently discussed
48 Delegation of Authority letters, so I'm glad that's
49 going to be on your agenda. Specifically how they're
50

50

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1 created, how they should be enacted and what the
2 effects are on both the Council responsibilities and
3 the rural users these letters will have.

4
5 Regional priorities for our Council
6 encouraging further research on climate change and how
7 it affects resources, how to mitigate further effects
8 on subsistence needs, advocating for our region to
9 receive Fisheries Resource Monitoring funds to ensure
10 viable fisheries, especially in the Copper River as
11 well as on the Kenai Peninsula, and advocacy of getting
12 youth involved in the Council and the regulatory
13 process. We recently asked for OSM to have a look or
14 review the current Cook Inlet fishing regs. Hopefully
15 the reorganization won't interfere with this effort,
16 but understand that's a big change for everybody too.

17
18 In closing, while these next few days
19 will probably be very long, getting together with all
20 the other Councils is an important event and the
21 Council is glad to be participating. We also discussed
22 the All RAC meeting and unanimously people thought it
23 was great, it was terrific. People were exhausted. A
24 future one perhaps. I know it's really hard to put
25 something like that together because there's so much
26 you want to say and so much everybody wants to
27 exchange, but we do appreciate all the hard
28 work that went in it and everybody's endurance for
29 getting through it.

30
31 Thank you.

32
33 MADAME CHAIR PITKA: Thank you very
34 much. I really appreciate your report.

35
36 So next on the phone we have
37 Kodiak/Aleutians, Rebecca Skinner.

38
39 MS. SKINNER: Yes. Thank you. This is
40 Rebecca Skinner, Chair of the Kodiak/Aleutians RAC. I
41 want to start by thanking the Board for the All-Council
42 meeting in March of 2024. The opportunity to meet face
43 to face with other Regional Council members was really
44 helpful. As usual I think we all learned a lot from
45 each other throughout the week.

46
47 Echoing comments from one of the other
48 reports you just heard, we also would have appreciated
49 more time for discussion amongst all of the Councils
50

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1 and also more time for our individual Regional Council
2 meetings. It was challenging to get through that in
3 four hours.

4

5 This is my first report as Chair of the
6 Kodiak/Aleutians RAC and I welcome feedback that anyone
7 has. Additional information would be helpful in future
8 reports. I was advised for this report to cover four
9 topics. A general regional overview, Annual Report
10 items, correspondence and wildlife proposals.

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Regional overview. Our region is seeing impacts of climate change and rapidly changing ocean conditions. The timing and location of where fish can be found has changed radically and we are seeing salmon declines in some of our systems.

The Buskin River area in Kodiak, which is one of the main subsistence areas, has been closed several times in the past few years for sockeye and coho. On the other hand, other systems in the Aleutians are reported as doing well. McLees Lake had sockeye salmon runs at a decade high and a successful subsistence salmon fishing season with good weather for sockeye, pink and coho.

I also want to note that our Kodiak/Aleutians region communities are highly dependent on commercial fisheries both for economic stability and often as a source of fish for our households. The last couple years have been challenging and particularly in the last six months.

We've had processors withdrawing or ceasing operations in our communities, including King Cove and Kodiak and/or operating at a reduced scale with early closures and limits. I mention this because again these are impacts that happened at a community level and they're certainly going to increase the reliance on subsistence resources.

For Annual Report items we had four items. One was noting the continued concern with decline of sockeye returns at Buskin River on Kodiak. Two, a concern with invasive species in general in our region and the effect on subsistence resources, particularly noting signal crayfish on Kodiak Island that are found in Buskin Lake.

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1 Noting our concern that our region was
2 not included or informed on the listening sessions that
3 occurred in 2022 and we didn't have one of the talking
4 circles scheduled for our region. Reaching back a
5 little farther, we were concerned that all of the RACs
6 didn't have prior notification or some sort of a heads
7 up about the proposed move of OSM from Fish and
8 Wildlife Service to Indian Affairs.

9
10 The fourth Annual Report item is
11 supporting a land exchange for the King Cove Road and
12 we did a separate letter for that noting no subsistence
13 resource or subsistence harvest concerns due to the
14 proposed road.

15
16 Second item, letters written. The
17 KARAC did approve and submit several letters that were
18 included in the Board's meeting book for the last
19 meeting. If there's any questions on those letters,
20 I'd be happy to take those. So those are letters we've
21 already seen.

22
23 In addition we approved two letters
24 during our Regional meeting at the All-Council meeting
25 in March 2024, including signing on to RAC compensation
26 joint letter. Also our own individual letter regarding
27 prioritization of subsistence fisheries. Noting that
28 the last two letters I mentioned are currently going
29 through the review process.

30
31 I also wanted to note that in previous
32 meetings our Council had talked about concerns with how
33 long the correspondence review process takes. This is
34 particularly noticeable when RAC members are generating
35 and drafting the letter. We would like to better
36 understand why the review process takes -- it usually
37 takes over a month, I think. Some of our letters it
38 took two months going through the review process.

39
40 Then the last item. The Council
41 considered eight wildlife proposals at it's fall 2023
42 meeting and I will report out on our specific
43 recommendation later in this meeting when you get to
44 the wildlife proposals.

45
46 I do want to note Wildlife Proposal
47 24-11 because it included some extra discussion at our
48 most recent winter 2024 meeting. WP24-11 was for Unit
49 8 and it proposed to liberalize deer harvest on Kodiak
50

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1 Island. The Council approved this proposal with
2 changes that eliminated the proposed opportunity for
3 additional doe and fawn harvest. We did that at our
4 fall 2023 meeting.

5
6 We then subsequently learned that there
7 were concerns that our changes were too substantial and
8 that the public didn't have adequate notice and that
9 our proposed changes wouldn't be able to be considered
10 by the Board at this meeting. However, we
11 included it in our agenda for the March 2024 meeting
12 and had quite a bit of discussion during the meeting,
13 which we were advised did provide enough notice to the
14 public and enough opportunity for the public to comment
15 and engage if they desired. We didn't receive any
16 public engagement or comments on that.

17
18 That concludes my report.

19
20 Thank you.

21
22 MADAME CHAIR PITKA: Thank you,
23 Rebecca. I forgot to ask if anybody has any questions
24 of the Regional Advisory Councils as they were
25 happening, but if you can think of any over the break
26 for the next 15 minutes, we can come back. When we
27 come back we'll start with Bristol Bay. Okay. Fifteen
28 minutes. Thank you. That puts us at 3:10. We're on
29 government time, so 3:10 is 3:10.

30
31 (Off record)

32
33 (On record)

34
35 MADAME CHAIR PITKA: It's 3:11. I'd
36 like to come back to order.

37
38 So I would like to resume the Regional
39 Advisory Council discussion with Bristol Bay, Dan
40 Dunaway.

41
42 MR. DUNAWAY: Thank you, Madame Chair.
43 Dan Dunaway. I'm the Vice Chair of the Bristol Bay
44 RAC. Our Chair Nanci Morris Lyons couldn't attend this
45 meeting. First off, I want to echo quite a bit of what
46 Mr. Hernandez and Judy also discussed about the All RAC
47 meeting. I know a number of our RAC members had wished
48 maybe a little less joint time in the beginning, but a
49 lot more at the end after we'd had an opportunity to
50

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1 digest the data that had come to us in our individual
2 RAC meetings.

3

4

5 Also our individual RAC meetings were a
6 bit rushed and we didn't have the opportunity to get as
7 much data as we would have liked, but overall it was a
8 great meeting. Really knowing how hard it was to pull
9 it together. The Staff did a wonderful job. I want to
10 thank everybody. I think the whole RAC wants to thank
11 everybody because I know it's a lot of work.

11

12

13 More in particular advantages of the
14 joint RAC, a unique situation with Bristol Bay and the
15 Kodiak RAC is that we share funding for projects, which
16 requires cooperation and collaboration. This RAC
17 meeting offered an opportunity for more than a couple
18 designated individuals to discuss things. I noticed
19 that some of the Kodiak RAC members attended our
20 individual RAC meeting and vice versa.

20

21

22 I'm often one of the designated people
23 and speak for myself. I'm really proud when we can work
24 together. We have some other issues that are pretty
25 divisive, but we don't focus on those. We work pretty
26 well on other items. So thank you for that.

26

27

28 Going down some of the lists and our
29 issues for salmon. Generally salmon in the Bristol Bay
30 was quite good. We've recently experienced some
31 all-time-recorded good, unprecedented, mind-boggling
32 good, but the Chignik has not been doing so good and
33 Bristol Bay RAC shares deeply the concerns for Chignik.
34 A lot of the Chignik users live in the Kodiak RAC area.
35 That's one of our highest concerns and priorities. We
36 were relieved to see that Chignik squeaked into their
37 escapement goals for 2023, which is cause for
38 encouragement.

38

39

40 We also observed chum runs across our
41 area are not doing well. The only place we can
42 enumerate them is in the Nushagak River where there's a
43 sonar. The Board of Fish could very well designate
44 that stock one of concern. That just sounds like a
45 general term, but it brings a whole lot of baggage with
46 it.

46

47

48 We've also seen that the silver and
49 pink salmon runs seem to have declined and silver
50 salmon have been observed to be rather small the last

50

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1 couple years. I'm kind of concerned where that's
2 going.

3
4 Of course king salmon have not been
5 doing well. Again, the only place we enumerate them is
6 in the Nushagak River and we've had to put a lot of
7 restrictions. The commercial fleet had to sit several
8 weeks on the beach, much to their distress, watching
9 lots of red salmon and dollars going upriver. That had
10 been worked out to try to help the kings.

11
12 Going on to game. A little bit ago we
13 were very concerned about ptarmigan, but they have
14 bounced back incredibly across Bristol Bay area. Moose
15 hunting opportunities or our populations seem to be
16 better. We were getting -- racing more and more for
17 more restrictions, but recently the new biologist -- we
18 have a full team of biologists again for the State in
19 the area that have found a more encouraging sign and
20 even extended a couple seasons when the weather was
21 poor, including most recently. It just shut down in
22 17A. We've had a lot of weather that made it hard to
23 take advantage of the opportunities, but I think a few
24 more moose were taken in the last couple weeks before
25 it closed mid-March.

26
27 Caribou. We do have ongoing concerns.
28 The Mulchatna Herd just doesn't seem to be recovering.
29 However, some of the Alaska Peninsula herds that were
30 terrible to really poor for years seem to be slowly
31 coming back and there's been increased harvest
32 opportunity. For some of those reasons the Bristol Bay
33 RAC was hesitant to sign on to the All RAC caribou
34 letter. Partly we were waiting for more data for our
35 own area before we signed on. It's not like we
36 necessarily totally disagree. We just weren't quite
37 sure where it was going to go or how it was going to be
38 used. So we chose not to sign on onto that.

39
40 We also have a great interest over near
41 Kokhanok, south of Kokhanok in Igiugig. There's a
42 small population of caribou that the Department and I
43 think the Feds also view as a fragment of the Mulchatna
44 Herd, but local knowledge says that herd has been there
45 for years in small numbers. They're trying to get a
46 handle on the numbers of it.

47
48 In these years where it was only 50
49 cents a pound for reds and stuff, money is really tight
50

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1 in these villages. If they could harvest a little bit
2 of meat this time of year, it could make a real
3 difference. So we're supportive of their concerns
4 there. We're happy that finally some population were
5 getting down there.

6
7 Annual report topics. Another high
8 concern of ours, Fish and Game changed their
9 sustainable escapement goal for the Chignik River
10 sockeye salmon run. They wanted to combine early and
11 late runs into a single goal. This just doesn't sit
12 well with our representatives from that part of the RAC
13 area. As a former biologist, I struggle with the
14 concept as well. There's some highly respected
15 biologists out of the University of Washington who seem
16 to disagree a lot. So the RAC tends to prefer we stick
17 with the traditional management viewpoint there.

18
19 We've also, as you heard earlier in
20 Tribal Consultation, requested the Solicitor's opinion
21 be included in Staff analysis. We'd like to see that
22 continue. We're supportive of the concerns. Gayla
23 kind of leads the charge on that a lot, but we agree
24 with her.

25
26 And at times some of our candidates for
27 the RAC have complained that the process of approval is
28 so long. Some of them have ended up taking on other
29 obligations or something else has come along. They
30 almost forgot to even apply. I was kind of wondering
31 if that couldn't be accelerated a little bit.

32
33 Some of our potential Council members
34 -- or even we have some Council members who don't have
35 very good access to internet or it can be extremely
36 expensive. When they're asked to listen to a Zoom or
37 Teams meeting long distance, it's either painfully
38 expensive or just almost impossible. It's been a
39 frustration for a few folks and a few folks have
40 declined I think to apply because it's so difficult.
41 So compensation to Council so they could afford to do
42 this would be requested.

43
44 Under correspondence from the RAC, a
45 high point -- there was a very active predator removal
46 program, bears and wolves, north of Dillingham last
47 spring. It took a lot more bears than anybody
48 expected. That activity has been strongly supported by
49 every village I know of and the RAC wrote a letter in
50

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1 support of it. I think there's some agencies and
2 activist groups that are trying to make a fuss about it
3 and we really don't appreciate that whatsoever.

4

5 Really large salmon runs have fed a
6 real boom in bear populations. I remember this place
7 in Naknek there was this known couple of sows a couple
8 years ago had -- one had three cubs and another one had
9 four cubs. They brought all those cubs all the way
10 through to the next spring. At one dumpster there was
11 nine big bears, including those two mamas. They were
12 really good mamas, but usually that doesn't happen.

13

14

15 Parts of the villages that weren't
16 included in this control area, which is ultra remote,
17 have been requesting to be included. The general
18 consensus out there is we got too many bears and we
19 hope that -- you know, we're not advocating
20 extirpation, we're advocating control. They're going
21 to do it again this spring and we hope that continues.

21

22

23 The RAC has supported the protection of
24 BLM D1 lands I believe in the status quo. We spent a
25 lot of talk last fall on the King Cove Road Project,
26 the RAC as a whole. I think we unanimously supported
27 completing that road. Respecting the desires of our
28 friends and neighbors in the King Cove area. That's
29 been going on for a long, long, long time and they
30 would like to see it completed.

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We also composed a letter of concern
regarding the combined escapement to Chignik salmon
opposing their approach. I mentioned earlier there was
a letter that was proposed out of the All RAC meeting
about caribou that the Bristol Bay RAC didn't sign
onto. We share a lot of the concerns. But we did sign
on to the bycatch letter. That's a great concern. The
letter was really well written. I'm impressed with
whoever wrote it and we appreciated their work and
support it.

That pretty much concludes my report.

Thank you.

MADAME CHAIR PITKA: Thank you so much
for that report.

Now we're on Yukon-Kuskokwim Alissa

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1 Rogers.

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MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Madame Chair. I'm Anguksuar Qiuran, granddaughter of John and Alice Hanson and also granddaughter of Ala Bridget Hill Joseph and Qiuran Cyril Lincoln Fred Joseph. My parents are Marita Hanson and Allen Joseph. I am the Vice Chair of the YKDelta RAC. I've been sitting on this Council for eight years and five out of the eight years I was the Chairman.

I also co-chair on the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group, the secretary of Alaska Bethel Advisory Committee, First Nations Fellow Leaders with Stanford University, co-founder of No Donlin Gold Working Group, co-founder of Yukon Kuskokwim River Alliance, co-founder of Calista Women's Group, ambassador for NOAA, and also I sit on -- I'm an Alaskan Youth Congressional Delegate.

For the Yukon-Kuskokwim Regional Advisory Report the concern is on the AYK salmon crisis. Subsistence needs for salmon by residents of the AYK area have not been met for years. Other areas across the state are having similar issues. Salmon is not only important for our food, it is vital to our culture.

One of the most important aspects of subsistence is harvesting, processing and sharing of the resource with families and friends, as well as passing cultural traditions and our ways to our younger generation. It is a huge part of our identity and well-being.

Federal and State managed commercial fisheries that bycatch AYK-bound salmon continue to operate while subsistence fishing is closed or heavily restricted. The subsistence priorities, ANILCA and the State Constitution are not being upheld. This is unjust and we need a solicitor to review this.

Salmon are not being managed collaboratively across jurisdictional boundaries. Ecosystem-based management and long-term conservation planning is not happening. The Departments of Interior, Agriculture and Commerce in the state of Alaska must develop a collaborative ecosystem-based management plan for Alaska salmon in the Bering Sea and

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1 the Gulf of Alaska.

2

3 Our Council has written countless
4 letters, some of which have been forwarded to the
5 Secretaries, but we still have not seen any action to
6 address the salmon crisis in a holistic manner to
7 ensure that subsistence priorities are being upheld.
8 We would like to see the Federal Subsistence Board take
9 a stronger action and a stronger stance to protect our
10 subsistence rights.

11

12 The YKDelta Council would also like to
13 request a joint Council action to send a letter to the
14 Federal Subsistence Board requesting they once again
15 elevate the issue surrounding salmon crisis to the
16 Secretaries and ask for meaningful action to be taken.
17 We're under a crisis. Why are we having to beg?
18 Perhaps the voice of all 10 Councils would make a
19 louder impact.

20

21 Additionally, our Council would like
22 the joint Council action to write a letter to the North
23 Pacific Fishery Management Council to reduce chinook,
24 chum, halibut bycatch, reduce bottom dragging, and to
25 request two voting seats and the representatives to be
26 added to the North Pacific Fishery Management Council.

27

28 Item bullet number 2, Mulchatna
29 caribou. The population remains below management
30 objectives and the herd is currently under a three-year
31 moratorium to close all hunting, including by
32 Federally-qualified users. Our Council supports a
33 moratorium on hunting Mulchatna caribou until the herd
34 can reach a size where there's harvestable surplus.

35

36 We also as a Council took action to
37 support the Alaska Department of Fish and Game
38 intensive management of the herd because a reduction in
39 predators is helping the herd recover. This needs to
40 be done consistently for three years.

41

42 Item number 3, food security. The lack
43 of salmon and caribou are significantly impacting food
44 security in our region. The cost of living continues
45 to skyrocket. Families are struggling to have enough
46 to eat and they're also struggling because they're
47 having to make a decision and tough choices between
48 paying for their bills, gas or keeping food on the
49 table.

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1 Item number 4, Council member
2 compensation. Our Council has previously requested
3 that a compensation policy for the Subsistence Regional
4 Advisory Council members be reviewed and revised. We
5 requested that the Council members be paid a fair daily
6 rate of compensation when attending Council meetings
7 and other meetings as Council representatives.

8
9 The Board forwarded our request for
10 fair compensation to the Secretaries, who have the
11 authority to revise the compensation policy. We have
12 not yet to receive a response. The local indigenous
13 knowledge provided by the Council members is
14 fundamental to the Federal Subsistence Management
15 Program and needed by the Board to make informed
16 decisions about resource management across Alaska.

17
18 Federal Staff are paid for attending
19 Council meetings, but Council members are not
20 compensated in the same manner. We feel this is
21 unfair. We would like to ask the other Councils if
22 they would like to join in together to make this a
23 stronger request.

24
25 Item number 5, climate change. We are
26 seeing many impacts of climate change in our region.
27 This is affecting our communities, some of which are
28 having to relocate and also our subsistence resources.

29
30 Item number 6, competition for moose
31 with non-local hunters. Although portions of the moose
32 population in Unit 18 are presently at highest recorded
33 levels, the growing presence of non-local hunters
34 increasing competition with rural subsistence users for
35 this resource. Furthermore, an increase in non-local
36 hunters has resulted in additional problems for
37 subsistence users.

38
39 More non-local hunters result in
40 Federally-qualified users spending more time and money
41 to successfully harvest moose. It is leading to
42 conflicts between user groups. We constantly hear
43 complaints of trespassing on Native allotments have
44 increased and so have reports of wanton waste. When
45 regional residents and non-local hunters travel with
46 only antlers we question whether the meat was harvested
47 and if the animal was given the proper respect it
48 deserves.

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1 Item number 7, Donlin Gold. The
2 Council is extremely concerned with outdated
3 information used in the Donlin Gold EIS and the lack of
4 meaningful tribal consultation during the NEPA process.
5 The Donlin Gold EIS is outdated and does not consider
6 climate change impacts or severe declines to the
7 Western Alaskan salmon and the Mulchatna Caribou Herd
8 that have occurred since it was released.

9
10 It does not accurately represent the
11 significant impacts that the project will have to
12 subsistence and traditional cultural practices. We
13 have requested that a new supplemental EIS be initiated
14 to address the inadequacies of the first EIS.

15
16 Item No. 8, Calista Gravel Quarry. The
17 effects of Calista Gravel Quarry that was recently
18 developed is affecting the migratory paths for cranes.
19 Community members of Marshall and Russian Mission have
20 seen a huge reduction of cranes and they are having to
21 go farther and search longer for these resources.

22
23 Item No. 9, D(1) lands. The protection
24 of subsistence priority is highly important and we're
25 worried that we will lose the protection of subsistence
26 rights and the continuation of Bush community life.
27 Tribes and testifiers have a wide range of reasons for
28 supporting these protections. With resources being
29 restricted, it is hard to imagine that now would be a
30 time to open up our lands.

31
32 A non-governmental organization had to
33 inform our RAC. BLM should have directly notified us
34 given the significant issue and its potential impacts
35 on our subsistence and subsistence way of life.
36 Protecting our resources. We were not informed by BLM.
37 It was a non-governmental agency that came to our RAC
38 meeting to inform us and we were blown out of the water
39 because we had no idea what they were talking about.

40
41 Thank you all so much for everything
42 that you do, all the hard work, and all the Staff. I
43 really appreciate all the hard work that goes into it.
44 It is very, very, very, very, very, very beneficial and
45 appreciated because we also have to make decisions on
46 our resources.

47
48 Thank you.

49
50

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1 Thank you, Madame Chair.

2

3 MADAME CHAIR PITKA: Thank you very
4 much.

5

6 Western Interior. We have Jack
7 Reakoff.

8

9 MR. REAKOFF: Thank you, Madame Chair.
10 Thank you Federal Subsistence Board members. I
11 appreciate being here before the Board in person. We
12 had Covid and then in the fall of 2022 I fell 13 and a
13 half feet and broke my feet, ankles, stuff like that.
14 I can walk. I'm doing good and I'm sitting before you
15 today.

16

17 I appreciate all of the Federal
18 Subsistence Board members that you're attentive to the
19 Council's discussions and needs and our opinions. I
20 appreciate that aspect of the Federal Subsistence Board
21 members. I feel that that's very important in the
22 whole deliberation process is to understand how the
23 Councils feel about things, the customary and
24 traditional use knowledge that they employ in our
25 deliberations. We also use significant scientific data
26 that's provided by Staff and we appreciate that. We
27 also do our own scientific researches also.

28

29 OSM's support is very important so that
30 we can perform our meaningful role as Council members.
31 That's statutory. So I appreciate the Office of
32 Subsistence Management providing Staff analyses. The
33 only issue that I identify with OSM as a significant
34 problem is the correspondence review process. It's
35 taking far too long and sometimes we've met critical
36 dates and so forth.

37

38 Regarding the compensation that's
39 discussed by these Council members, in our Regional
40 Council meeting we discussed this issue also. The
41 Regional Councils are looked at as under FACA, Federal
42 Advisory Committee Act members, but in reality the
43 Regional Councils are decision-makers. We are not only
44 advisory. So the Councils should be looked at as
45 decision-makers. We have deference with the Federal
46 Subsistence Board.

47

48 So we should be looked at not under
49 FACA but under another analysis so that Council members

50

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1 should receive some kind of a compensation for the
2 considerable work that we put into these Council
3 meetings and so forth. Also the loss of revenue if
4 you're working and missed subsistence opportunities.
5 I've attended meeting where I've missed subsistence
6 opportunities because I had to go to the meeting.

7
8 The All RAC meeting I considered a
9 great success. I feel that there was some things that
10 could have worked a little differently, but it's a
11 huge, huge process and I attended the All RAC meeting
12 in 2016 and co-Chaired that meeting. It's quite a deal
13 for OSM to pull that off and I highly appreciate all of
14 the work that they put into that. Yeah, I've got some
15 complaints, but don't listen to me, OSM. You did a
16 great job.

17
18 I feel that the Councils all speaking
19 together, working at understanding aspects, like we
20 worked with the Western Arctic caribou with all the
21 Regional Councils and we came to consensus on that
22 issue because we could talk to each other. That would
23 have never happened if we were trying to do it by
24 correspondence and not in the same room. That just
25 can't happen.

26
27 So the All RAC meeting, it was very
28 important that it happened. That particular issue was
29 on the table during that All RAC meeting and we came to
30 consensus, which you'll hear about.

31
32 So last May I went to the
33 caribou/ungulate meeting, which was at the Captain Cook
34 Hotel. There were 600 members there. The National
35 Park Service sent me down there because I'm on the
36 Gates of the Arctic Subsistence Resource Commission.
37 That was a huge learning experience.

38
39 There was a lot of data on caribou
40 that's completely not even known about, really.
41 There's 3,000 years of reindeer herding. The same
42 thing as a caribou. There's a lot of data on what it
43 takes for caribou to survive deep snow years with rain
44 on snow. Scandinavians have quantified those things.

45
46 I feel that we need to look more into
47 the datasets that are in Scandinavia because it takes
48 three to five times more energy for a caribou to
49 survive in a deep snow year with rain. Three to five
50

0047

1 times more energy. Stuff like that. We're just by
2 guess and by golly what happens with caribou in deep
3 snow. I actually have quantification. So I'm into the
4 scientific.

5

6 So I feel that we have fisheries
7 monitoring programs and we
8 have funding for those. I feel that there needs to be
9 wildlife monitoring programs also, but also there's a
10 lot of research that could be done to assist the
11 Federal Subsistence Board process to actually make
12 sound, scientific analyses regarding caribou and other
13 animals.

14

15 So I attended the Gates of the Arctic
16 Subsistence Resource Commission. Resource commissions
17 actually are part of the Council process. The
18 commissions have recommendations to the Councils. The
19 Councils analyze those and use those in the
20 deliberation process. So I've been on the Gates of the
21 Arctic Subsistence Resource Commission for 30 years.
22 The Western Interior Council for 31 as you know. I'm
23 also the Chair of the Koyukuk River Advisory Committee.

24

25 So this was a Board of Game year. We
26 went through a lot of game proposals and it's very
27 important for the Boards of Fish and Game to have the
28 Advisory Committees to express their opinions and
29 deliberate the various proposals. It's important for
30 the State Boards to listen to those. There's 84
31 Advisory Committees and it's very important for the
32 State Boards to listen to those Advisory Committees.

33

34 Advisory Committees are also another
35 one of our Council's aspects. We look to the Advisory
36 Committees for comments. It's on the back of our card
37 here. We want to know the more wider base opinions.
38 Two heads are better than one and a lot more people
39 speaking on the same issue can draw out more of the
40 issue. So I feel the Advisory Committees -- it's in
41 Title VIII that Congress intended Advisory Committees
42 to be part of the Regional Council. If there weren't
43 enough Advisory Committees, they were supposed to come
44 up with more of them. It's in the statute.

45

46 Our region currently we're experiencing
47 between moderate dry snow into the north. We don't
48 have rain on snow, which is advantageous for Dall sheep
49 and caribou. They'll survive at a better rate. The

50

0048

1 wind blew the snow off the mountain, so the sheep are
2 having a lot better -- what few sheep are around are
3 having a better winter. They've had brutal winters for
4 over six years of hard winters.

5

6 In the Middle Yukon and Lower Koyukuk
7 River they have rain on snow. The snow is deeper down
8 there, which affects moose populations, but moose are
9 more bulletproof against deep snow and rain on snow
10 events than caribou and Dall sheep. They had moose die
11 in Fairbanks in 2021-22 winter from rain on snow
12 events. The Koyukuk River has had deep snow with rain
13 on snow.

14

15 There was three-quarters of an inch of
16 ice in the snow that killed significant amounts of
17 calves and it was very detrimental to the bison
18 population, which is within our region. The bison
19 release is dead center in the lower part of our region.
20 So the bison population fell off from 130 down to like
21 72 or something like that. So these deep snow years
22 with rain on snow events are really super hard on game.

23

24 We have multiple caribou herds that
25 have come to the Central Brooks Range in Unit 24. The
26 Teshekpuk Herd is on the north side of the Brooks Range
27 down into the South Slope in the John River
28 drainage. We've got -- the Central Arctic Herd has
29 moved west of the road. A lot of it's in the
30 headwaters of the drainages and we also have Porcupine
31 Caribou for the last five years; '18, '19 until now.

32

33 The Porcupine Herd has been -- caribou
34 have migration trails. They're not old enough to know
35 where they're going. They just follow these trails.
36 All of those trails from the Porcupine Herd -- the
37 elders that live in Wiseman and the elders in Anaktuvuk
38 Pass, they knew the Porcupine Caribou came out of the
39 east and they moved to the west.

40

41 I had Raymond Paneak two years ago, a
42 very respected elder from Anaktuvuk Pass calling me on
43 the phone, have you seen any Porcupine Caribou. They
44 were waiting for these caribou. Well, the road was an
45 impedance. The caribou were stacked up on the side of
46 that road for five years. They wouldn't cross the road
47 until this year. Only a month and a half ago they
48 started crossing just north of Wiseman, about 20 miles.

49

50

0049

1 Once those cow caribou that lead
2 migrations -- and that's highly refuted. I've watched
3 caribou migrating and there's cow caribou that lead
4 migrations. Once those cows from Porcupine crossed
5 into the Gates of the Arctic Park they have 200 miles
6 of habitat that's basically been unused by caribou for
7 50 years. I've lived in that country my whole life and
8 there hasn't been caribou in significant numbers since
9 1973. So now the Porcupine Caribou Herd is going to
10 start using more and more of the Western Interior
11 Region is what I'm telling the Board today.

12
13 Our hare population is low and the
14 population with low hare population there's basically
15 very few aerial predators, hawks, owls and even raven
16 populations have declined. So the grouse population
17 and the ptarmigan populations have absolutely exploded
18 with unreleased -- there's lots and lots of ptarmigan
19 and ptarmigan are migratory.

20
21 I've got people telling me they've got
22 lots of ptarmigan in the Kobuk, lots of ptarmigan in
23 the Koyukuk River and lots of ptarmigan just north of
24 the Yukon River. We have ptarmigan all over. We just
25 love them to death. They're our State bird and, oh,
26 they're delicious.

27
28
29 Thank you, Madame Chair.

30
31 MADAME CHAIR PITKA: Thank you. And I
32 agree.

33
34 (Laughter)

35
36 MADAME CHAIR PITKA: Okay. So for
37 Seward Peninsula we have Louis Green.

38
39 MR. GREEN: Thank you, Madame Chair.
40 Good afternoon, Members of the Board. My name is Louis
41 Green, Jr. from Nome, Alaska. I'm the Chairman of the
42 Seward Peninsula Regional Advisory Council. I would
43 like to bring a few issues of concern brought forward
44 by the Council that are negatively impacting the
45 subsistence users in my region.

46
47 First I'd like to recognize the Staff
48 and the Federal Subsistence Board members. It's a
49 pleasure to be here again. I do want to say something
50

0050

1 about that event that we had and I'd love to see that
2 every year because getting everybody's heads together
3 in one room is really amazing, that event of the All
4 RACs meeting.

5
6 I hope it comes sooner than it did this
7 last time. It gave us all a chance to recognize each
8 other's issues and then find common ground and work
9 together on formulating some letters that are really
10 important to all of us. And we got those connections
11 made with others. I can't wait for the next one. We
12 came together to work on two important letters that are
13 pretty important to all of us.

14
15 So first the Council continues to be
16 concerned regarding commercial fisheries occurring in
17 the marine waters off the coast of Alaska, such as the
18 Federally-managed Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands fisheries
19 and the State-managed South Alaska Peninsula salmon
20 fishery. We're concerned with the associated impacts
21 these fisheries have on subsistence resources in the
22 Seward Peninsula.

23
24 I come from the community of Nome where
25 we have seven main rivers there and in 1998 the Board
26 of Fish came to Nome and decided that we needed to be
27 working towards a Tier II fishery. They handed us the
28 charge of conducting the framework -- putting the
29 framework together for this fishery. I ended up as the
30 chairman for that year and it was a rugged trail. Got
31 to the end where we couldn't sign the paper and the
32 chairman of the Board of Fish wasn't happy.

33
34 Of course they already had a framework
35 and they gave it to us and it lasted about 20 years.
36 The only Tier II fishery in the state. We've been
37 there longer than anybody and we know darn well the
38 impacts it brings to cultures and traditions. It's a
39 horrible thing. I'm hearing the same story all the way
40 down.

41
42 Back in the '90s at the Board of Fish
43 meetings we spoke and there was a few of us that
44 brought it up -- I remember in '93 or '94 that we were
45 talking about trying to bring the idea that the
46 trawlers were an issue and that there's intercept
47 fisheries in the state that were issues -- and they
48 wouldn't let us talk about the Feds because it was out
49 of their jurisdiction.

50

0051

1 What we did say was -- me, being in
2 Norton Sound, said that Unalakleet is going to start
3 collapsing. They're going to have problems. The Yukon
4 is going to have problems. The Kuskokwim is going to
5 have problems if we don't start doing something with
6 what's happened here in Nome. It's a red flag. A
7 canary in the coal mine so to speak.

8
9 So anyway, I'll carry on here. All
10 those associated impacts of the fisheries, the
11 multi-species, salmon stocks in Norton Sound, have been
12 depressed for years as I've just told you about the
13 Tier II. Yet little seems to be done to alleviate the
14 burden of these shortages on subsistence users.

15
16 The Nome Subdistrict again is the only
17 fishery that was launched into Tier II by our State
18 government and that was, I think, in 1999.
19 Additionally a multi-species of salmon in the Yukon and
20 Kuskokwim Rivers have now collapsed. These lower
21 salmon numbers are not just impacting subsistence
22 users' ability to harvest the salmon, but the lack of
23 salmon traveling to spawning grounds are changing
24 ecosystems in this region. Without salmon the
25 marine-driven nutrients aren't getting back to where
26 they need to be.

27
28 The Pacific Rim, as rich as it is today
29 we see, it was because of salmon. They've been around
30 for about 5 million years. If it wasn't for them we
31 probably wouldn't have what we have today. So less
32 salmon also means hungry bears, hungry wolves, which
33 then prey on other animals who are also important for
34 subsistence like muskox, caribou, even reindeer and
35 such.

36
37 So a change must be made to the
38 regulations governing the number of salmon intercepted
39 and thrown overboard as unusable bycatch in the Bering
40 Sea Aleutian Islands trawl fishery. Change must be
41 made to reduce the number of salmon intercepted and
42 sold as non-targeted salmon in the South Peninsula
43 fishery.

44
45 The regulatory bodies that control
46 these fisheries have had opportunities to make
47 meaningful action to address the trawler industry's
48 interception and the wanton waste of multiple species.
49 There's also the destruction of the sea floor, the
50

0052

1 ocean floor in the Bering Sea in the Gulf of Alaska.

2

3 We're losing our food fish. You want
4 to talk about something not getting the right
5 nutrition? How come the king salmon are smaller than
6 they used to be? They're not getting the food that
7 they used to get. So the trawler industry has to be
8 tackled.

9

10 There has not been any action taken to
11 resolve the actual assistance to the recovery of
12 Western salmon stocks. More pressure must be put on
13 these regulatory bodies to do so. The
14 Federal and State agencies need to manage commercial
15 fisheries differently. Recovery of these salmon stocks
16 are a priority.

17

18 What's interesting is the State of
19 Alaska has the Board of Fish as the ability to regulate
20 State fisheries where there's intercept. The other one
21 is the State of Alaska has six out of eleven seats on
22 the North Pacific Fishery Management Council.

23

24 So what I want to know is why Alaska
25 subsistence users are sitting on the beach and the
26 trawl industry, who is based out of Seattle, is out
27 there doing whatever they want. I understood that not
28 to long ago there was a quota getting bumped up against
29 the bycatch of herring and I heard that the North
30 Pacific Fishery Management Council doubled the quota so
31 they could continue to trawl.

32

33 We asked for the opportunity to
34 collaborate with other agencies to develop a more
35 sustainable ecosystem-based management approaches that
36 integrates the management of salmon across the
37 boundaries in the jurisdictions for all users to do.
38 We require your support. I think it's high time that
39 we start dealing with this one way or the other.

40

41 I would also like to take this
42 opportunity to highlight another major issue. I'm
43 shifting gears. I'm going over to the Seward Peninsula
44 in the interior of it. The issue that Seward Peninsula
45 RAC is concerned about is the Western Arctic Caribou
46 Herd.

47

48 The Seward Peninsula has not seen the
49 Western Arctic Caribou Herd in large numbers for quite
50

0053

1 some time. Given the current population trends, it's
2 expected the impacts on climate change, on the
3 environment -- we are unfortunately not expecting them
4 any time soon.

5

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Council members are further concerned over the current proposed roads or other development in rural Alaska that could cause a downward population trend in the Western Arctic Caribou Herd by interfering with caribou migration and the ability to access calving grounds.

The Council also is concerned that this development could impede caribou migration onto the Seward Peninsula and can undermine rural residents' opportunity for this harvest for subsistence from this herd as was historically done.

Additionally, the RAC has had discussions of a residential herd in the Bering Land Bridge Preserve. This herd I know. I've hunted off this herd for 40 years myself. It started with an abandoned reindeer herd in the Bendeleben Mountains and it may have remnants of other reindeer herds and actual caribou as part of that herd, but they are residential. Somebody said there's between two to three thousand there.

So the concern is that -- we just decided that 15 animals could be taken with one cow. I think that's above us. I'm worried that -- the Council is also worried that that might fall into Unit 22 where this residential herd is. That has no exchange back and forth. The collars have not been showing up from the Western Arctic Caribou Herd down on the Seward Peninsula like they used to. So that is a big concern.

We would like to see that the State and the Federal, Park Service or whomever, get together and study these animals. Collar some of them. See what they're doing. Otherwise everybody up there is just going to be taking out those animals and pretty soon we won't have that herd anymore. So that's a big concern.

We require feasible avenues to plausible solutions to address unprecedented changes and pressures to the resources we depend on. We are losing our food security. You're hearing it across the whole state. We have two management systems. One is

0054

1 the Federal and one is the State. How do we get them
2 to co-manage to protect our ability to be able to feed
3 ourselves. That's a real deep question.

4

5 So these are a few of many issues we'd
6 like to share with the Board. The Seward Peninsula
7 Regional Advisory Council appreciates the Board's
8 attention to these matters and the opportunity to
9 assist the Federal Subsistence Management Program in
10 meeting its charge of protecting subsistence resources
11 and use of these resources on Federal public lands and
12 waters.

13

14 We look forward to continuing
15 discussions about issues and concerns of subsistence
16 users of the Seward Peninsula Region.

17

18 Madame Chair, thank you for the time.

19

20 MADAME CHAIR PITKA: Thank you for your
21 report. I appreciate it.

22

23 So we have Thomas Baker on the phone.
24 Robbin, is that correct? From Northwest Arctic.

25

26 MR. BAKER: Madame Chair, can you hear
27 me?

28

29 MADAME CHAIR PITKA: Yes, we can.
30 Thank you.

31

32 MR. BAKER: Thank you, Madame Chair.
33 This is Thomas Baker, Chair of the Northwest Arctic
34 Regional Advisory Council. I'd like to thank the
35 Federal Subsistence Board for this opportunity for the
36 Chairs and representatives of the different RACs to
37 bring forward concerns our different regions have been
38 facing.

39

40 I'd like to take this opportunity to
41 discuss several of those topics of concern for the
42 Northwest Arctic Regional Advisory Council. During our
43 biannual meetings the Council has had many
44 opportunities to hear from the people of the Northwest
45 Arctic and gather information about the state of
46 subsistence in our area.

47

48 First and foremost I'll be speaking on
49 the Western Arctic Caribou Herd, its population,

50

0055

1 migratory patterns and the impact of hunter placement
2 by transport services on caribou migration. This has
3 been an ongoing concern preceding and during my time on
4 the Council.

5

6 The herd has been in a state of decline
7 for years and accurate numbers for local harvests are
8 yet to be determined.

9 An example being the estimated harvest by local area
10 hunters are between 10-14,000 caribou a year despite
11 the trend of entire communities not having access to
12 the animals each year.

13

14 Local observations as well as some data
15 collected by agency staff presented before the Western
16 Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group have shown the change
17 of the fall migration of the herd in recent years. The
18 migration continues to be delayed as well as moving
19 further to the east, which has led to many communities
20 in the Northwest Arctic not being able to harvest bulls
21 in the customary fall season prior to the bulls going
22 into the rut and being rendered near inedible.

23

24 One factor to be considered in this is
25 the placement of non-local hunters by non-local
26 transportation services each summer and fall. These
27 transport services come to Kotzebue to bring typically
28 non-resident hunters to State land on the North Slope
29 from mid-July to the end of September to skirt Federal
30 closures enacted to protect the herd.

31

32 This timing places hunters far to the
33 north of where any Northwest Arctic residents can
34 reasonably access. Not to mention this is an area and
35 time where the herd is only beginning its southern
36 migration. Harvest of animals early in the migration
37 can divert the herd and scatter it into smaller groups
38 allowing for a higher chance of predation.

39

40 Support for local hunters and the
41 capacity to harvest resources is another concern. The
42 Council has expressed its desire to see a streamlined
43 system to ensure that hunters are actually able to have
44 the proper access to wildlife resources without being
45 labeled as rule-breakers when providing for their
46 community.

47

48 Areas of concern for this are
49 increasing the availability of hunts for certain
50

0056

1 species such as muskox or lengthening the season for
2 harvest of brown bears where bears are becoming more
3 prolific closer to communities.

4
5 The Council has heard concerns
6 regarding the process for getting a permit to harvest
7 muskox and that the process is not clear for smaller
8 communities that may have internet connectivity issues
9 and no Agency staff to interpret what application
10 questions are really asking.

11
12 Another topic to speak on is dealing
13 with the rising populations of problem species. Muskox
14 have been noted as coming closer to and into
15 communities in recent years, leading to an increase in
16 numbers of encounters muskox have with people and
17 property. This has in turn led to property damage and
18 unfortunately the loss of life. In some communities
19 they have also become a problem for transportation as
20 they break runway lights and inadvertently create
21 hurdles for aircraft to be able to reach the community.

22
23 The Council has heard concerns that
24 there should be a way for a local individual or entity
25 in a rural community that may not have a State or
26 Federal employee certified to haze animals to prevent
27 them from moving into the community and creating
28 hazards.

29
30 The Council has also fielded concerns
31 over rising populations of predators such as bears and
32 wolves. Calls for population studies on these species
33 have come up frequently at RAC and other subsistence
34 group meetings. There have also been suggestions of
35 management programs such as aerial harvest of bulls and
36 have targeted bear hunts in certain areas to reach a
37 decrease in these populations so that they are not as
38 detrimental to caribou and moose populations.

39
40 A final area of concern that has been
41 brought to the Northwest Arctic RAC's attention is
42 bycatch and its negative effects on the resources in
43 the Bering Sea. At our most recent RAC meeting in
44 Anchorage the Council joined other RACs to request
45 timely and meaningful action related to the bycatch and
46 interception of subsistence resources in commercial
47 fisheries in the Gulf of Alaska and the Bering Sea.

48
49 Subsistence needs for various rural
50

0057

1 communities are not being met while the issue of
2 bycatch in tens if not hundreds of thousands of pounds
3 of fish is not being addressed.

4

5 At this point I would like to also add
6 -- this was not mentioned in my report, but I, as the
7 representative for House District 40 introduced House
8 Joint Resolution 22 which would establish a rural
9 subsistence priority. It was brought to my attention
10 that this item was added to the agenda and I'd be happy
11 to take questions at such time that the Board would
12 like to discuss this.

13

14 In conclusion, the Northwest Arctic
15 Regional Advisory Council looks forward to continuing
16 working with the Federal Subsistence Board to ensure
17 that the subsistence needs are being met. I'd like to
18 thank the Board for hearing our concerns over the years
19 and working to take actions that meet the needs of
20 those who rely most on our subsistence way of life.

21

22 Thank you, Madame Chair.

23

24 MADAME CHAIR PITKA: Thank you, Chair
25 Baker.

26

27 Moving on to Charlie Wright with
28 Eastern Interior.

29

30 MR. WRIGHT: Thank you, Madame Chair.
31 Thank you to the Board, the Coordinator, Staff for all
32 your hard work for putting on these meetings. We also
33 would like to see more All RAC meeting opportunities.
34 It's great to work in unity as one people. Things got
35 done. Great to see and look forward to more.

36

37 In the Eastern Interior Region our
38 subsistence needs are not being met at all. We're
39 struggling. Moose numbers are down, caribou numbers
40 are down. There's a hardship and we're to the point of
41 no other means in some communities.

42

43 As you all know at the All RAC meeting
44 we crafted two letters. One was for caribou and one
45 was for salmon to be sent to the Federal Subsistence
46 Board. I'd also like to see that going to NOAA and the
47 Secretary's Office.

48

49 Caribou, number one. There's a big
50

50

0058

1 concern about the caribou herds in Interior. We want
2 to see immediate action taken on the caribou herds,
3 especially the ones that have lost great numbers.

4

5 We want to see climate uncertainties
6 added. If you say that they can take 1,000 animals,
7 let's say 500 or 750 to account for uncertainties going
8 into the future on those herds that have been
9 devastated in the last couple years.

10

11 The Eastern Interior Council said that
12 the Forty-Mile Coalition has not met in a long time and
13 they need to. They're a big part of the management
14 strategy. We want BLM and the Feds to show up and be
15 part of the management also. We don't want just the
16 State to be managing these resources. It's not
17 working.

18

19 When it comes to moose in the Interior
20 with all the roads and stuff, we have a lot of people
21 coming in to hunt and we don't support cow moose hunts
22 in the Interior. We have very low moose counts along
23 the Yukon River. Some villages are only getting two or
24 three to five moose a year and that's not feeding our
25 people. These areas are not seeing caribou no more and
26 there's no salmon in the river, so therefore we have no
27 other means.

28

29 We'd like to see the bycatch intercept
30 and hatcheries be monitored. It is affecting the whole
31 ecosystem. Not only the people are hungry, but all the
32 animals, the birds, furbearers, bees, blue fly.
33 Everything that's part of this ecosystem is being
34 affected. The longer this takes to fix in the Bering
35 Sea, our bycatch intercept and hatchery problems, the
36 more devastation it's going to cause on the Interior
37 animals. It's messing up the whole ecosystem. You've
38 got to think of it that way as a whole.

39

40 The highways in the Interior are very
41 hard on the resources. There's so many people in the
42 Interior now along those highways. We'd really like to
43 see some hunter ethic. We do have one started in the
44 Eastern Interior, but we'd like to see more support for
45 that because there's a lot of people out there shooting
46 animals, especially caribou, with AR-15's. Caribou is
47 a really strong animal. It can take a hit and go for
48 miles before it falls down.

49

50

0059

1 People just keep shooting until they
2 hit it good and it falls over. There's a whole bunch
3 going over the hill and falling over. There's ones
4 walking around with three legs. It's really hard to
5 see. The people along those highways are scared to go
6 hunting because they don't want to get shot. People
7 are shooting in all directions. It's just craziness
8 going on out there. It's really getting hard to
9 survive in a subsistence lifestyle in these areas.

10

11 I'll move on to sheep. The
12 Yukon-Charley and Glacier Mountain Sheep Management
13 Area after last count it is in very bad shape and
14 really low numbers. EIRAC voted to close this area
15 because of extremely low numbers. EIRAC would like to
16 see a Sheep Management Plan made for the Eastern
17 Interior.

18

19 Now back to salmon again. We have a
20 Special Action Request put in by the Yukon River
21 Intertribal Fish Commission. I think it's very
22 important that we pay attention to the SAR, Special
23 Action Request. We've got chums coming back in a
24 little better now. We have to be real careful on that
25 because they'll crash again if we don't be careful.

26

27 We need to get some of those chums to
28 the spawning ground and we also need -- there's a great
29 need for people to eat, so it's going to be something
30 that we really have to pay attention to and manage
31 correctly.

32

33 I'd also like to take this opportunity
34 to thank Holly Carroll for the consultation that
35 happened yesterday. It was a really good conversation
36 that happened. It was the best one I've ever been to
37 and I really want to commend her for that. I don't see
38 her in the room. I just wanted to say thank you.

39

40 It was a really good conversation and
41 really great ideas for going forward and working
42 together. There was talk about co-management and all
43 the people along the river are the true stewards of
44 this land and these waters and their voices count.
45 Their way of life counts. The way they respect
46 animals, fish, game. We need to have co-management to
47 go forward in a good way.

48

49 One last note to talk about good

50

0060

1 ptarmigan and I've been seeing them a little bit also.
2 I'd just like to say that last spring in Arctic Village
3 there were ticks on the ptarmigan. Quite a few of the.
4 So that's just something to look forward to. I don't
5 look forward to it, but it's coming.

6
7 We did have a good cold winter in that
8 area, so maybe that will help out the forward
9 progression of those ticks. There's seven different
10 kinds coming forward and they're devastating some
11 animals as they come.

12
13 I think that's about all I have to
14 report right now, Madame Chair.

15
16 Thank you for the time.

17
18 Appreciate it.

19
20 MADAME CHAIR PITKA: Thank you very
21 much for your report.

22
23 North Slope. Last but not least,
24 Brower Franz.

25
26 MR. FRANZ: Thank you, Madame Chair.
27 Brower Franz, North Slope Regional Advisory Council.
28 I'd like to thank the Board for having us here today.
29 A couple of the concerns that we had over the last year
30 reflect exactly what Mr. Baker had talked about, was
31 the fly-in hunters in the Brooks Range.

32
33 There's multiple locations where they
34 fly in and out of. Kotzebue, they fly out of Coldfoot
35 and other areas that are outside of the North Slope.
36 Absolutely none of them are either from up there or
37 utilizing the meat as they should. On top of that
38 though the biggest issue is that we had an abundance of
39 rescue calls from them over the last year. Over 15
40 individuals that were left out in the middle of
41 nowhere. I mean if you look at a map, this is the most
42 remote place in Alaska.

43
44 They had issues to where the operators
45 were not even picking up the phone for days to pick
46 them up. So this is a big issue. Not only from the
47 stance that they're dropping them exactly where the
48 herds are all meeting up for the migration routes
49 there, this is hurting rescue services.

50

0061

1 I mean it was over 20 hours of flying
2 that inundated the North Slope's helicopter and they
3 had to put it down for maintenance for multiple weeks
4 after this to where they couldn't even respond to their
5 own hometown crisis if they occurred. Nobody else has
6 rescue service there other than the military, which
7 would come from down here or even Kodiak.

8
9 Local resources up north then you're
10 talking over five to six hours one way just to get
11 another helicopter there from down south in Alaska.
12 You're going to have to fly clear across Alaska to go
13 rescue these individuals. So that's a big issue. They
14 are dropping them exactly in the middle of nowhere in
15 the Brooks Range and not having the necessary
16 insurances, they don't have backup. There's no
17 redundant systems to pick them up.

18
19 So it's a pretty big issue to where I
20 would say just get rid of it altogether if I could
21 because this is -- it's not a safe situation for the
22 individuals and it's definitely not good for the
23 Western Arctic Caribou Herd. We're talking an area
24 exactly where they're trying to lower the numbers for
25 the North Slope. It's just not fair and we're not
26 seeing the fairness. We're not seeing the subsistence
27 priority.

28
29 We're bending, we're flexing for that,
30 but I would like to see something happen to where they
31 do fix something like that to where they do get rid of
32 the fly-in hunters before getting rid of the
33 subsistence hunts. So it's a big issue. I wish you
34 would tackle that. It sounds consistent with even the
35 fish down in the Interior. So if there's something
36 consistent it's that we're not being taken care of
37 fairly. So please look at the big picture and do the
38 right thing.

39
40 Accountability. The clients need to be
41 -- I mean the guys that are flying them out there need
42 to be accountable. Not answering their phones to pick
43 up their guys when they're supposed to be is completely
44 no good, especially for a location like that.

45
46 All right. So the other one is the
47 fly-in hunters that are coming from the opposite side
48 of the North Slope. So this is a big issue on the
49 Anaktuvuk Pass side to where there are thousands of
50

0062

1 hunters that drive up the Haul Road, but also meet up
2 with some of the guided services or fly-in
3 do-it-yourself services that have locations on State
4 locations.

5
6 Some of those fly-in services actually
7 fly outside of their jurisdiction to where they're
8 allowed to be. They've been caught red-handed over the
9 last five, six years for the North Slope and handed
10 fines. You know, they were flying all over different
11 lands. The SRC was one of them. They flew to SRC
12 lands and got caught by the troopers.

13
14 This is all stuff that you can look up.
15 I mean they were over 90 miles from where they were
16 supposed to be. All of that has got to stop. There's
17 nothing that the State or anybody else has really that
18 is out there for them to be monitored. You know,
19 they'll come in and send the reports in, but their
20 reports are faulty. They're not accurate.

21
22 For Anaktuvuk Pass though I would like
23 to try to have something done for them to where the
24 locations would be changed for where they're able to be
25 flown in and look at those permitted areas and the
26 migration routes. Even if they've got collared data
27 make it mesh with the State's permitted fly-in hunts
28 and see if it is cause for concern for migration
29 shifts.

30
31 It's an area to where it's not heavily
32 regulated. I mean there is regulation, sure. You can
33 hand somebody regulation all day long, but if you don't
34 have anybody there to monitor them or look at them,
35 then they just do whatever they want. So please keep
36 that in mind as well.

37
38 Waterfowl. I guess I'll shift gears.
39 I think that's enough for the caribou portion of it.
40 The waterfowl has been on the rise here. Some of the
41 Spectacled and Steller eiders they seem to be on the
42 rise, so that's a good sign. No real issue there, but
43 just noted that there was an abundance of some of the
44 species that were on the decline. It looks like
45 they're looking up, at least in the Barrow area.

46
47 Whaling has been abundant. Seals and
48 walrus have been around. They're definitely -- they
49 look stable. Beluga as well. Multiple sightings. Some
50

0063

1 of the newer stuff though, our porpoise, we're starting
2 to see more porpoise in the Barrow area consistently
3 over the last two years. We've run into pods of small
4 porpoise.

5
6 So maybe some monitoring or numbers on
7 that. It might be something that we can look into for
8 harvest maybe in years to come. But those seem like
9 they might be here to stay. If they keep coming in,
10 porpoise are definitely showing up in Barrow.

11
12 Another thing, we ran into 25 to 30
13 orca during the fall time whaling in Barrow. I was
14 actually in the boat for one of them. There was about
15 25 to 30 that we'd counted while we were whaling. It
16 seems like those are more active in the years too. So
17 if there are anything funding-wise for any type of
18 monitoring programs, I'm sure the north could use
19 something like that to where a possibility for grants
20 or any type of porpoise/orca monitoring would be
21 available. To make fundings available for the local
22 communities.

23
24 All right. So muskox. Muskox are
25 definitely on the rise in numbers. We've had limited
26 hunts that were approved both on the State and Federal
27 side over the last few years, but it seems that almost
28 none of the people that got any of the permits have
29 actually made the hunts successfully. So maybe take a
30 look at the method for the harvest them or even give
31 out more tickets in order to meet your goals. It seems
32 like only a handful of them, maybe one, two or three,
33 have been caught for the entire locations up north.

34
35 It's heartbreaking because I drive by
36 them every single fall and springtime and I've been
37 trying to get these permits for years and years and
38 years. I even tried an emergency hunt, nuisance hunt,
39 because they were next to our cabin scaring all the
40 caribou away, but the State declined that because they
41 said, well, we've got open hunts now. We're not giving
42 out the emergency tickets anymore. So, please, if
43 there's any other population counts that you can do on
44 muskox, please make that possible.

45
46 We know the numbers are a lot higher
47 than they used to be because we're seeing them
48 everywhere now. So if you can make a good effort to
49 have the population counts for the North Slope
50

0064

1 possible, by all means, you know, make those permits
2 available to us if the numbers are met. They're a
3 nuisance. They're hanging around cabins, scaring
4 caribou away and you can hear them for miles. We can
5 hear them head-butting each other next to the cabin.
6 They'll keep you awake. So please hand out those
7 permits.

8
9 Let's see. Predators. So in the area,
10 the specific area to where we're talking about for the
11 Western Arctic Caribou Herd number, you know, drop it
12 to 15 for the year. Where the border is, in that same
13 exact area this last year there has been an incredibly
14 high number of wolves and wolverine taken in the area.

15
16 It seemed like every hunter that went
17 out of Wainwright south, in that area to where they're
18 talking about lowering the caribou take, it seems like
19 every single hunter that went out came back with
20 multiple wolf or multiple wolverine. It's a very high
21 predator year in that specific area.

22
23 So I know I'm saying a lot of
24 population counts here, but even a wolf population and
25 wolverine for that area would be beneficial. And maybe
26 even an incentive program or maybe something to where
27 it would make it more attractive for people to go out
28 and go get these furbearing animals locally even. The
29 predators are definitely higher this year for the
30 entire North Slope and more specifically in that
31 location. The more predators that are taken from there
32 the better.

33
34 Other than that I think -- oh, and
35 moose. Moose as well. If they're flying around -- I'm
36 pretty big on moose. So if there's something along the
37 lines of population and numbers for moose on the North
38 Slope, more specifically 26A for me, it sounds like
39 other areas are being done already, but 26A moose.

40
41 If there's something going on around
42 the area, I would like to see some moose population
43 numbers. I haven't seen any brought up, but that is an
44 area that I do hunt moose at and I've not seen any
45 numbers for that since I've been with this RAC.

46
47 I think that's it for the North Slope.

48
49 Thank you.

50

0065

1 MADAME CHAIR PITKA: Thank you for
2 that. That was a really great report. So now that all
3 the 10 Chairs have provided their reports do any
4 Federal Subsistence Board members have any questions of
5 the Regional Advisory Chairs?

6
7 MS. CREACHBAUM: Thank you, Madame
8 Chair. Sarah Creachbaum, National Park Service. Mr.
9 Reakoff, how come the -- this is going to sound silly
10 because I was just getting ready to ask why the caribou
11 cross the road, but it's not a joke. When you said
12 they piled up for five years and then they crossed the
13 road, do you know why?

14
15 MR. REAKOFF: If they're hunted from
16 the road, they become concerned about getting near the
17 road. It's mainly the lead cows. So they were
18 following these migration trails. Several years ago
19 they got on the Dempster Highway. The Porcupine Herd
20 went way to the east, they got to the Dempster, and
21 First Nations hadn't seen them in a long time and they
22 killed a lot of caribou on the road there.

23
24 So the lead cows become afraid of the
25 road and then they avoid the road and the calves
26 actually learn that from their mother. So there's
27 telemetry data from back in 2018/19 and the Porcupine
28 Caribou Herd was from south of the Brooks Range and the
29 Hodzana Mountains all the way up to north of Wiseman.
30 So basically a hundred mile wide.

31
32 The Porcupine Caribou Management Board
33 they have telemetry. You can go on their website and
34 look at it. You can just see them all stacked up along
35 the edge of the road. I commented at the time, I said
36 this is graphic as to what the roads do to caribou. If
37 they're hunted from a road, they become really afraid
38 of the road.

39
40 Actually that happened in 2010. The
41 Board of Game opened cow caribou harvest on Unit 26B
42 and the caribou, when they showed up near the road,
43 they got -- the cows had never been hunted until
44 October. So when they start hunting them in July,
45 August and September, then they became afraid of the
46 road. Hardly many Central Arctic Caribou have been
47 going near the road. Really they sort of avoid the
48 road. They go around it. They learned how to get
49 around it.
50

0066

1 It's a facet of caribou how they
2 respond to hunting pressure. They avoid areas if they
3 get heavily hunted in a certain area. So if they're
4 concerned about certain mountain valleys where the
5 wolves get them, they won't go there. This is
6 all TEK. It's not written down. We've got to put GPS
7 collars on lead caribou. That's what we need to do and
8 then we'll see how they respond to roads. Right now
9 it's just collars are randomly deployed.

10

11 MS. CREACHBAUM: Didn't you say that
12 they started crossing the road though?

13

14 MR. REAKOFF: There's virtually no
15 hunters there in winter time. The caribou were really
16 warming up to the idea of getting across the road.
17 There's a certain vector -- there's a great big, huge
18 map on the wall of the museum in Anaktuvuk Pass and it
19 shows that huge vector coming down the Soakpak -- refer
20 to it as the Soakpak River and they walked across
21 there. It's traditional knowledge that they cross
22 there. That's where they cross. Now that they've
23 gotten across there's lots of lichen for about 200
24 miles. They're really going to want to come back there
25 now.

26

27 MS. CREACHBAUM: Thank you.

28

29 MADAME CHAIR PITKA: Thank you very
30 much. Are there any other questions for the Regional
31 Advisory Council members?

32

33 (No comments)

34

35 MADAME CHAIR PITKA: Okay. So at this
36 time I'd like the State liaisons to the Board to share
37 information.

38

39 MR. MULLIGAN: Thank you, Madame Chair.
40 We came in this afternoon, so we appreciate hearing
41 from the RACs. I've been thinking about it for the
42 last few days plus sitting here. There's so much that
43 has been going on, at least since we all last sat at a
44 table together. From the Department's perspective it's
45 really hard how to distill that down into a report to
46 you all.

47

48 As you guys are well aware, both our
49 Boards have been in meeting cycles covering the various
50

0067

1 regions across the state. I would say if you've heard
2 anything about the passage of those proposals, you can
3 always go back to the meeting info sites on our website
4 and we do have a summary of the actions taken. If you
5 have additional questions from there, either our area
6 regional folks are always happy to answer questions
7 about the outcome of those proposals.

8

9

10 Just as an example we heard the
11 concerns across the Steese Highway. I know during the
12 recent Board meeting the Board of Game took action and
13 put buffers in certain areas across that. I know it
14 doesn't get to every point, but it was an action that
15 they took that came to mind. It's just good to hear
16 some of the information such as from Mr. Reakoff about
17 the Porcupine Herd. That was good info. I've been
18 taking notes.

18

19

20 The thing about ticks on ptarmigan.
21 You know, that's something that we're always looking
22 for. I know one of the fears that we have as we watch
23 climate change and we watch new animals migrating
24 through Canada up into here one of our concerns about
25 seeing mule deer come up into the Interior is what kind
26 of ticks and other parasites they might be carrying
27 with them and what that might potentially mean to our
28 moose populations, to our caribou, our other ungulates
29 that might be impacted by those.

29

30

31 We've had a lot of -- just on the
32 fishery side I might as well make that plug. I mean
33 there was a lot of meetings going on there. Our big
34 one was, of course, Upper Cook Inlet, which impacts a
35 lot of folks in that area, both Federally-qualified and
36 otherwise.

36

37

38 If there's questions, I'll keep it to
39 this point and just have you guys ask. Like I said,
40 there's a lot of stuff that's happened in the last year
41 and it's really hard to bring it to a point of what
42 might be interesting to the Board and others.

42

43

44 MADAME CHAIR PITKA: Does anybody have
45 any questions for Mr. Mulligan and also Mr. Woerch is
46 available too.

46

47

(No comments)

48

49

MADAME CHAIR PITKA: Thank you very

50

0068

1 much for your report. I appreciate it. So the State
2 of Alaska website that you're referring to that's the
3 Board of Game or the Board of Fish website?

4
5 MR. MULLIGAN: Madame Chair. Yes, we
6 understand that our website is not the best. We are
7 working on updating that and we know it's too many
8 clicks to find the information you want. If you go
9 into just -- if you look at the header off our website,
10 you go into regulations, and it will drop down and you
11 can click on Board of Fish or Board of Game. From
12 there just click on the meeting info site. That will
13 bring you to the meeting info for the schedule.

14
15 Once you click on that particular
16 region, right there at the top it will give you a
17 summary of Board actions and it will tell you what
18 passed, what failed. If the Board amended that, it
19 will give the language for the amended version of what
20 occurred. So it will give you everything. Like I
21 said, if from there you guys still do have questions,
22 we're more than happy to answer those as you guys send
23 them our way.

24
25 MADAME CHAIR PITKA: That's a really
26 good option. Thank you so much for that. So at this
27 time if you have nothing further for the day, then I'd
28 like to recess until tomorrow morning unless there's
29 any objection.

30
31 (No comments)

32
33 MADAME CHAIR PITKA: No? Okay. So
34 we'll recess until tomorrow morning at 9:00 a.m.
35 That's government time, 9:00 a.m. I have the gavel.

36
37 (Off record)

38
39 (PROCEEDINGS TO BE CONTINUED)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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

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

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

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

DATED at Anchorage, Alaska, this 8th day of April 2024.

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