

YUKON-KUSKOKWIM DELTA SUBSISTENCE

REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes

Yupiit Piciryarait Cultural Center
Bethel, Alaska
January 20-22, 2026

Invocation

Council member Henry Parks provided an invocation.

Call to Order, Roll Call, and Quorum Establishment

The meeting was called to order Tuesday, January 20, 2026, at 9:28 am. Council members Henry Parks, John Andrew, Walter Morgan, Sr., Francis Prince, Jr., Phillip Peter, Sr., and Chair Jacqueline Cleveland were present in-person and member Norma Evan attended online. Members Myron Naneng, Fred Beans, and Wassily Alexie were absent and excused. With seven out of twelve seated Council members present, a quorum was established. Member Tiffany Agayar was absent on the first day but attended on subsequent days. Member Alissa Nadine Rogers was absent on the first two days, but present on the last day. There is currently one vacant seat on the Council.

Attendees

* *Denotes attended virtually*

- Office of Subsistence Management (OSM): Brooke McDavid, Justin Koller, Tom Plank, Lisa Grediagin*, Liz Williams*, Kevin Foley*, Katerina Wessels*, Grace Cochon*, Robbin La Vine*, Hannah Voorhees*
- Secretary of the Interior's Office: Sara Taylor*
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS): Spencer Rearden, Laurie Boeck, Chris Tulik, Christian Alexie Jr., Stanislaus Sheppard, Aaron Moses, Shane Ransbury*, Keith Herron*, Jill Klein*, Boyd Blihovde*, Jonathan Cawlfeld*
- U.S. Forest Service: Greg Risdahl*
- Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G): Karak Domnick*, John Chythlook*, Sean Larson*
- Yup'ik Interpreter: Patrick Sampson
- Tribal and Native Organizations: Kuskokwim River Intertribal Fish Commission (KRITFC) – Terese Vicente, Erald Murati; Association of Village Council Presidents – Jennifer Hooper*; Alaska Migratory Bird Co-Management Council – Patty Schwalenberg*; Calista Corporation – Rose Bennett*
- University of Alaska Fairbanks/Arctic Beaver Observation Network – Ken Tape*
- Public: Tim Andrew, Kansa Alexie, Michael David, Grant Kopplin*

Review and Adopt Agenda

- Motion by Member Parks, seconded by Member Andrew, to adopt the agenda as presented. *The motion passed on a unanimous vote.*

Review and Approve Previous Meeting Minutes

- Motion by Member Parks, seconded by Member Peter, to approve the Winter 2025 Council meeting minutes. *The motion passed on a unanimous vote.*

Council Member Service Awards

Jacqueline Cleveland and Henry Parks received 5-year service awards.

Council Member and Chair Reports

John Andrew of Kwethluk spoke in Yup'ik, describing how changing seasons and shifting environmental patterns affect subsistence activities in his community. He emphasized how people without boats or motors rely heavily on others to share salmon, and he expressed gratitude that many families distributed their catch to elders, widows, and others in need. He noted that recent summers have brought abundant red (Sockeye) salmon but that Chinook and Chum salmon numbers are below average. Constant rain last year resulted in poor drying conditions, forcing people to jar or freeze more fish. Dry fish, which historically lasted through winter, now runs out by November. He also reported unusually high river conditions during freeze-up, which made under-ice netting difficult. Some people caught silvers (Coho Salmon) under the ice — something he considered unusual and a sign of changing times.

Francis Prince, Jr. of Kotlik reported that after Typhoon Halong, whitefish populations in the Yukon area were noticeably low. Where he normally caught around ten whitefish per day at the start of the season, last year's harvest was extremely poor, with fish appearing skinny, including sheefish and broad whitefish. Pike seem healthy and fat, and he remains concerned about their increasing numbers. Moose hunting was generally good, but he raised concerns about increasing numbers of outside hunters targeting moose primarily for antlers. Areas like St. Mary's, Mountain Village, and Emmonak were particularly affected, and he voiced support for a draft Alaska Board of Game proposal by Grant Kopplin to limit moose harvest by non-locals.

Walter Morgan, Sr. of Lower Kalskag reported good salmon fishing overall, with kings appearing larger in size than recent years and a good late run of dog (Chum) salmon. Red salmon were abundant but they are not as sought after. Families harvested only what they needed and they only got enough to just make it by. Some residents harvested a few silvers (Coho Salmon) for jarring. He noted a poor blueberry year, but black and red berries were plentiful. Under-ice burbot fishing was strong and fall whitefish numbers were solid. Member Morgan also described an unusually high number of moose entering the village, possibly because they were seeking safety from wolves and bears, and that the moose pose safety concerns for children and dogs.

Phillip Peter, Sr., of Akiachak spoke in Yup'ik and described traveling a lot during berry season when he observed many moose and bears along the river. Blueberries and red berries were scarce, but blackberries and cranberries were adequate. Spring brought plentiful birds and smelt. He described successfully fishing in a large river eddy in late May where he caught unusually large king (Chinook) salmon with high fat and highly developed teeth. He noted that it was the first time in a long time he caught king "bottom swimmers" which he interpreted as a sign of a strong king run. It proved to be true because later in the season he harvested 41 king salmon in one week, drying half and distributing the rest to community members. Red (Sockeye) salmon were abundant, though few people set nets during summer openings. He noted current high moose numbers and increased wolf presence pushing moose toward villages. Phillip emphasized unity, stewardship, and teachings from elders about maintaining harvest practices to keep animal populations healthy.

Henry Parks of Nunapitchuk spoke in Yup'ik and expressed gratitude for a safe year and abundant subsistence harvests. He thanked state and federal agencies for providing salmon fishing opportunities and appreciated that Sundays remained closed to fishing, aligning with community religious practice. Salmonberries were plentiful, and whitefish harvests in the lake-rich tundra villages were strong. Waterfowl arrived in strong numbers. Member Parks raised concerns about outside hunters using ATVs on federal lands, which he said negatively impacts subsistence users and the landscape. Local people were previously told they were not allowed to use ATVs but now non-local people are and he wants this looked into. He questioned whether tribal members could be given exclusive access to federal lands for subsistence hunting. He also described the impacts of Typhoon Halong that severely impacted several villages, noting that he shared subsistence foods to help families who lost homes. After high water receded in the fall, whitefish harvests in lakes were strong and winter fishing for burbot and pike were also productive.

Norma Evan of Marshall reported an average moose hunting year. She has noticed more big-game hunters flying into the area. She observed an increase in ptarmigan and a strong bird presence in the fall. They were allowed to dipnet in the summer season, and keep pink and sockeye salmon. This allowed families to taste salmon again. She noted some nets were set for whitefish and there were plenty of pike. Berries were average, with a welcome return of salmonberries which were low the year before.

Jacqueline Cleveland of Quinhagak summarized her Council Chair activities which included attending the summer Federal Subsistence Board work session and meeting with representatives from the Secretary's Office regarding the Secretarial Review. After the last meeting, she followed up with a student that attended and shared photos with her for a project about subsistence life. Chair Cleveland highlighted ongoing work with her Tribal Council to comment to BLM about Recordable Disclaimers of Interest (RDIs) affecting several rivers in the region. In Quinhagak, the community is partnering with the KRITFC on a pilot escapement project using drones and counting towers to enumerate salmon on the Kanektok River and the village corporation is trialing escapements studies using drones on the Arolik River. She noted that Quinhagak experienced two major floods within a year and recently endured a prolonged power outage during 55-below temperatures, causing significant damage to homes and

equipment. Subsistence harvests were generally good: bird needs were met despite shifting migration routes; kings and silvers were abundant; chums improved but remain below historic levels; reds exceeded escapement goals; berries were plentiful and there was a record crop of lingonberries; and moose hunting benefited from extended fall and winter seasons. She was surprised like some of the other Council members to see king salmon larger in body size than recent years, and she also noticed there were more females. Chair Cleveland said that some residents took advantage of being added to the customary and traditional use determination for Zone 2 moose hunting. She reported that at the time of the meeting, community members were harvesting rabbits, ptarmigan, and catching trout. There are still a lot of pike mixed in with the trout. diverse winter harvest activities

Note: Members Tiffany Agayar of Alakanuk and Alissa Nadine Rogers of Bethel did not give reports due to their absence on the first day and the lack of time later in the meeting.

Action Items

Wildlife Proposals and Closure Reviews

Tom Plank, OSM Wildlife Biologist, and Liz Williams, OSM Cultural Anthropologist, presented proposal and closure review analyses and OSM recommendations to the Council.

Statewide Proposals

WP26-01 – Move authority delegated through letters to unit-specific regulations

Motion by Member Parks, seconded by Member Peter, to support Proposal WP26-01 as modified by OSM. *The motion passed with a 7-0 vote.*

The Council voted to **support WP26-01 as modified by OSM**. The Council supports the proposal because it will hopefully help make the regulations easier for users to understand by having all the information in one place. The Council was happy to see that no changes were made to the requirement for the in-season manager to seek input from the Council Chair before finalizing management actions.

Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Region Proposals

WP26-41/42 - Unit 18 caribou/moose; eliminate take from boat moving under power

Motion by Member Rogers, seconded by Member Peter, to support Proposals WP26-41/42. *The motion failed with a 1-7 vote.*

The Council voted to **oppose WP26-41/42**. They stated safety concerns as their primary reason for opposing, citing the highly variable and often dangerous water and weather conditions encountered when hunting and the importance of having full control of a boat during such conditions and with multiple people and loaded firearms on board. The Council expressed frustration with the on-going disputes over navigable waters and the impact this has on subsistence users. They agreed that the best course of action is to change the State regulations to match the Federal ones and intend to submit a proposal to the Alaska Board of Game during the upcoming meeting cycle to address this issue and better align regulations.

WP26-43/44 - Unit 18 moose; establish fall antlerless hunt and delegate authority; extend winter season in Kuskokwim hunt area

Motion by Member Andrew, seconded by Member Parks, to support Proposal WP26-43/44 as modified by OSM. *The motion passed with a 7-0 vote.*

The Council voted to **support WP26-43/44 as modified by OSM**. They noted that the moose population in Zone 2 is very abundant and can withstand additional harvest. They supported the additional opportunities for subsistence users that these proposals seek to provide.

WP26-45 - Unit 18 moose; extend cow season to open July 16 in Lower Yukon hunt area

Motion by Member Prince, seconded by Member Andrew, to support Proposal WP26-45 as modified by OSM. *The motion passed with a 7-0 vote.*

The Council voted to **support WP26-45 as modified by OSM**. The Council submitted this proposal to provide additional subsistence opportunity. The Lower Yukon moose population is very high, and there are local concerns with over-browsing and habitat degradation. The Council supported the OSM modification to also extend the bull season because there are no conservation concerns for moose. The additional opportunity is especially important due to the salmon shortages.

WP26-46 - Unit 18 ptarmigan; increase harvest limit to 25 per day, 50 in possession

Motion by Member Andrew, seconded by Member Prince, to support Proposal WP26-46. *The motion passed with a 7-0 vote.*

The Council voted to **support WP25-46**. The Council noted that ptarmigan populations go through cycles, and the numbers have recently increased to high levels so there are no conservation concerns. Ptarmigan are an important subsistence food and this proposal will provide additional opportunity for subsistence users. The proposal will also align Federal and State regulations, reducing confusion for hunters.

WP26-47 - Unit 18 beaver; eliminate restrictions on disturbing or destroying beaver houses under trapping regulations

Motion by Member Peter, seconded by Member Agayar, to support Proposal WP26-47. *The motion passed with a 7-1 vote.*

The Council voted to **support WP25-47** which they submitted. The Council noted that beaver numbers are very high and there are no conservation concerns. Juvenile beaver pelts are prized for use in skin sewing because of their soft, warm fur and removing this restriction could help subsistence users more easily harvest them. During discussion, it was mentioned that adopting this proposal does not mean that all trappers will start disturbing or destroying beaver houses because beaver houses are very labor intensive for humans to dismantle. Additionally, beavers are very good at what they do and can repair any disturbances very quickly.

WP26-48 - Unit 18 wolf; increase hunting harvest limit to 15 wolves

Motion by Member Andrew, seconded by Member Phillip, to support Proposal WP26-48. The *motion failed with a 7-0 vote.*

The Council voted to **support WP26-48** which they submitted. The Council supports additional opportunities to harvest wolves. They noted that wolf numbers are abundant and increasing in Unit 18, and there are no conservation concerns. They also discussed the potential benefits that increased wolf harvest could have for public safety and predation on other important subsistence species.

WP26-49 - Unit 18 coyote; increase hunting harvest limit to 4 coyotes and extend season

Motion by Member Andrew, seconded by Member Prince, to support Proposal WP26-49. *The motion passed with a 8-0 vote.*

The Council voted to support WP26-49 which they submitted. They noted that coyote numbers are increasing and there are no conservation concerns. This proposal would increase subsistence opportunity. The Council also discussed that coyotes did not use to occur in the region and shared that there is no Yup'ik word for coyote.

Bristol Bay Region Crossover Proposals

WP26-38/39 – Unit 17 brown bear; increase harvest limit to 2 bears, eliminate permit requirement, and extend season

Motion by Member Morgan, seconded by Member Prince, to support Proposal WP26/38/39. *The motion passed with a 7-1 vote.*

The Council voted to support WP26-38/39. They noted that it will increase harvest opportunity and there are no conservation concerns. This proposal will also align State and Federal regulations, reducing confusion for hunters.

Annual Report

Federal Subsistence Board FY2024 Annual Report Replies

Brooke McDavid, Council Coordinator, provided an overview of the FY2024 replies from the Board.

Identify Issues for FY2025 Annual Report

The Council identified five topics of their FY2025 Annual Report:

1. Salmon and caribou concerns
2. Need to form Mulchatna Caribou Working Group
3. Retention of federal subsistence eligibility for displaced natural disaster victims
4. Delays in elevation of Council correspondence and lack of engagement
5. Council comments made regarding the Secretarial Review of the Program

Motion by Member Rogers, seconded by Member Peter, to approve these topics for the Council's FY2025 Annual Report. *The motion passed with a 8-0 vote.*

North Pacific Fishery Management Council Chum Salmon Bycatch Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)

Terese Vicente, KRITFC Policy and Programs Director, presented an overview of the Chum Salmon Bycatch DEIS alternatives to the Council.

The Council voted to submit a joint comment letter to NPFMC supporting Alternative 5, Option 1 – In-season corridor cap, Alternative 2 – overall Chum Salmon bycatch cap of 50,000 – 100,000 chum, and Alternative 4 – mandatory Chum Salmon savings measures.

Motion by Member Andrew, seconded by Member Peter, to support the above alternatives. *The motion passed with a 8-0 vote.*

Alaska Board of Fisheries Proposal Comments

The Council voted to submit joint comments to the Alaska Board of Fisheries in alignment with some of the recommendations of the Tri-Council Working Group that reviewed proposals. They chose not to comment on the hatchery related proposals because they did not feel informed enough about those issues.

Motion by Member Andrew, seconded by Member Morgan, to support Area M Proposals 136 and 131 to reduce interception of Western Alaska salmon. *The motion passed with a 8-0 vote.*

Motion by Member Parks, seconded by Member Andrew, to support Proposals 163, 164, and 165 to better regulate trawl fisheries and protect salmon at all life stages. *The motion passed with a 8-0 vote.*

Secretarial Review of the Federal Subsistence Management Program

Sara Taylor, Alaska Region Congressional Affairs and Policy Advisor with the Office of the Secretary of Interior, provided an overview of the Secretarial review. The Council had a lengthy discussion and voted to submit a comment letter to provide feedback on the topics outlined in the scoping documents, as well as other topics related to federal subsistence management.

Motion by Member Rogers, seconded by Member Andrew, to submit Council comments. *The motion passed with a 9-0 vote.*

Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program (FRMP) and Partners for Fisheries Monitoring Program

Kevin Foley, OSM Fisheries Biologist, gave an overview of Yukon and Kuskokwim area FRMP proposals, and the Council provided input on the projects that are seeking funding. Liz Williams, OSM Cultural Anthropologist, provided an update on the Partners program.

Future Meeting Dates

The Council confirmed their winter 2026 meeting date and location: March 17-19, 2026, in Bethel.

The Council confirmed their fall 2026 meeting date and location: October 27-29, 2026, in Bethel.

Other Business

- The Council received an update on correspondence sent since the last meeting and an overview of their 805(c) report from the previous federal fisheries regulatory cycle
- Justin Koller, OSM Regulations Specialist, shared an update from the Office of Subsistence Management
- The Council was informed about the call for Western Region Alaska Board of Game proposals. Motion by Member Rogers, seconded by Member Prince, to form a working group to develop proposals. *The motion passed unanimously.*

Brooke McDavid, Designated Federal Officer
U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Subsistence Management

Jacqueline Cleveland, Chair
Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

These minutes will be formally considered by the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Subsistence Regional Advisory Council at its Winter 2026 meeting in Bethel, and any corrections or notations will be incorporated in the minutes at that meeting.

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