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1 EASTERN INTERIOR ALASKA SUBSISTENCE
2 REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

3
4 PUBLIC MEETING

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6
7 VOLUME III

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10 PYKE'S WATERFRONT LODGE
11 Fairbanks, Alaska
12 March 5, 2026
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18 COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

19 Robert C. Wright, Sr., Chair
20 Susan Entsminger
21 Linda Evans
22 Eva Burk
23 Andrew Bassich
24 Gerald Alexander

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30 Regional Council Coordinator, Brooke McDavid
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P R O C E E D I N G S

(Fairbanks, Alaska - 3/05/26)

(On record)

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Good morning, everybody. Day 3 of the Eastern Interior RAC, starting 9:05 a.m., welcome. Good morning, everybody. Yep.

MS. MCDAVID: Good morning, everyone. This is Brooke McDavid Council Coordinator for the record. We'll start this morning with roll call and we'll start online. Has Sue Entsminger joined us?

(No response)

All right, we'll try again. Dorothy Shockley.

(No response)

Not seeing Dorothy. Linda Evans.

MS. EVANS: Present.

MS. MCDAVID: Linda is present. Eva Burk.

MS. BURK: Here.

MS: MCDAVID: Thank you, Eva. Andy Bassich.

MR. BASSICH: Present.

MS: MCDAVID: Thanks, Andy. Chair Charlie.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Right here.

MS. MCDAVID: Galen Gilbert and Donald Woodruff are absent. Gerald Alexander.

MR. ALEXANDER: Here.

MS. MCDAVID: Mr. Chair with 5 of 9 members present, we have quorum.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you so much.

0003

1 MS. MCDAVID: And this is Brooke again.
2 Just a couple housekeeping announcements. We'll start
3 the day off with Public Comments on Non-Agenda Items.
4 And if you're here in the room and would like to comment,
5 there are green cards on the table in the back. If you're
6 online, you can raise your hand on teams or press star
7 5 on your phone and we'll call on you -- or when the
8 time arises. We left off yesterday, just so you're aware,
9 on the agenda, we finished up item 11.f, the Secretarial
10 Review - Comment Period Extension and after public
11 comments this morning, we'll move into talking about the
12 Lower Tanana Wood Bison Management Plan. So, thank you,
13 Mr. Chair.

14
15 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay. So, we're to
16 Public Comments. Go ahead, Carrie. Do you have the floor?
17

18 MS. STEVENS: Good morning. Can you hear
19 me?
20

21 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Yes, ma'am.
22

23 MS. STEVENS: Through the Chair. I
24 appreciate you very much. Thank you all. I am on my way
25 to you. I apologize, I had a information request at my
26 day job this morning. But I wanted to take the
27 opportunity to address with all of you my concerns
28 regarding enforcement and criminalization. And it really
29 became aware to me [sic] at the most recent Board of
30 Fish meeting, and I wanted to put it on record here.
31 Also at your last fall meeting, I made comments
32 regarding, you know, illegal behavior in 25D West
33 particularly regarding moose. And it was quite shocking
34 to me. It was really brought to light during the actions
35 and deliberations and following the actions and
36 deliberations of reducing fishing time in Area M at the
37 Alaska State Board of Fish meeting. There was grave
38 concern by the department that they are unable to support
39 enough enforcement in the area. And I did not write down
40 all of the numbers. But there were only very few troopers
41 stationed in the area. That was alarming to me. And
42 quite egregious, quite frankly, considering the level
43 of enforcement and criminalization along the Upper Yukon
44 regarding fishing. My experience, you know, personal
45 experience this summer of seeing troopers harass and
46 criminalize an elder, taking her net and what very few
47 fish she caught seemed beyond inequitable that the
48 department, the state and even the feds choose to have
49 such a presence in a region that is wholly depressed
50 with fishing closures and low moose populations. Where

0004

1 people are literally according to state reports at the
2 fall Board of Fish AYK are being starved out, yet the
3 department cannot adequately enforce commercial fishing
4 regulations. Now, I know that largely what I'm
5 referencing is a state issue and you are the federal
6 EIRAC. Oh, can you hear me? Okay. Can you still hear me?
7 Okay.

8
9 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Yes.

10
11 MS. STEVENS: Okay, sorry. I just heard
12 some background noise. That, you know, I really do
13 believe that, you know, this is something to consider.
14 I apologize, I have been in meetings and unable to be
15 with you. You know, your annual report or other issues
16 that, you know, you bring forward to the Secretary, and
17 the Federal Subsistence Board. I know with the move to
18 defer to the state -- to really have the federal
19 subsistence program more defer to the state and work
20 more closely with the state under this administration.
21 This is a grave inequitable concern. The level of funding
22 for enforcement in depressed areas, areas with closures
23 versus in commercial fisheries or otherwise. I can only
24 imagine the amount of man hours and the cost that it
25 took for these troopers to, you know, save 3 fish versus
26 thousands of fish in commercial fisheries.

27
28 We do know that there were 9 chum
29 chucking citations in Area M last year. And as we face
30 a salmon crisis, I know that makes all of us in this
31 room and in this process, probably a little sick to our
32 stomach. But what became apparent to me at the Board of
33 Fish is they had extremely limited coverage in that area.
34 It was stated multiple times by the department. So, if
35 they had 9 chum chucking citations, we can only imagine
36 that it is exponentially worse in that area. And yet we
37 see elders ticketed and fined, criminalized and
38 harassed. The elder to which I'm speaking asked to keep
39 her fish, that was in her net. I believe it was anywhere
40 between 1 to 3 salmon and she was told no. And it was
41 all taken from her. I bring this up because I do not
42 know that there are adequate studies or reviews of levels
43 of enforcement and criminalization in subsistence areas
44 versus in commercial fisheries and it is further
45 creating an even larger inequity while the Yukon River
46 is shut down in full, while they are still catching fish
47 in commercial fisheries. I believe that a strong case
48 was made that this goes against current state of Alaska
49 subsistence law. And I just think maybe this is something
50 that the RAC can, you know, comment on or weigh in on, or

0005

1 ask for further information.

2

3 I mentioned again last fall the illegal
4 activity we witnessed in 25D West on moose. And, you
5 know, the ensuing kind of social fallout on social media
6 that I believe was also brought to enforcement's
7 attention. My concern is that in a call to address this
8 misuse, we will see further criminalization and
9 ticketing and fining and harassment, even by the refuge
10 of subsistence users. I'm not good at dates. And I was
11 really trying to nail down the year, and I don't think
12 in all these years I have adequately put it on record
13 that, I want to say 15 years ago, could have been 16,
14 could have been 17, U.S. Fish and Wildlife flew the
15 refuge manager and enforcement biologist at the time,
16 all the way from Fairbanks, as we know, the refuge is
17 the 3rd largest refuge in the nation but managed wholly
18 remotely from Fairbanks. Flew all the way to our family's
19 fish camp. I believe it was less than 10 minutes after
20 a closure, I believe they landed there about 6:06. I
21 believe the closure was at about 6. To essentially harass
22 our family and ensure that our fishnet was not in the
23 water. Of course it was not. We are conservation-minded
24 and regulatory minded, even when it does not serve us.
25 And I can only imagine that that single action with no
26 fish camps or villages in -- within dozens of miles of
27 my family's camp cost Fish and Wildlife Service
28 thousands of dollars to criminalize one family's set
29 net.

30

31 And I really wanted to take the time to
32 put this on record today for all of you. Because I became
33 quite concerned that my comments at your fall meeting
34 were encouraging further enforcement and harassment and
35 ticketing, you know, of the people of the Yukon Flats.
36 And I'm sure many of you at the table have similar
37 stories from your families and so forth. And so, I just
38 wanted to put this on record today for all of you. I
39 just pulled up. I'm here. Sorry that I was a moment
40 late, but I really appreciate it through the Chair. I
41 would like to also just make a statement that I believe
42 you have the best Council Coordinator in the state, and
43 I want to show appreciation for Brooke McDavid's
44 continued outreach to tribes and individuals who
45 participate in the system, to increase participation as,
46 as we look at these issues.

47

48 I know the 25D remainder proposal was,
49 I believe up yesterday, again, I apologize, I was in
50 other meetings, I couldn't be with you. And I'm concerned

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1 that there was not, you know, a lot of tribal input
2 there. So those are my comments for this morning, and I
3 will see you in about 2 minutes. Thank you very much.
4 Through the Chair.

5
6 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you for that
7 testimony also, Carrie, look forward to seeing you.
8 Thank you.

9
10 MS. STEVENS: Thank you.

11
12 MS. MCDAVID: Hi, Carrie, this is Brooke.
13 I just wanted to say thank you for your kind words.

14
15 MS. STEVENS: You can't go anywhere,
16 Brooke. We are lucky to have you.

17
18 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Jack Reakoff, you
19 out there?

20
21 MR. REAKOFF: Good morning, Mr. Chair.
22 Do you hear me okay?

23
24 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Yes, sir. Good
25 morning to you.

26
27 MR. REAKOFF: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair.
28 Eastern Chair Regional Council members present. Brooke
29 got ahold of me and said that you know, we'd had some
30 transporter issues in our region, and you may have
31 commonalities. We also might have some other issues I
32 might want to talk about this morning, but we have a
33 bunch of air taxis flying people into the Innoko Refuge.
34 And you know, we're getting reports of rotten meat coming
35 into McGrath. People are out there for too long. They're
36 left -- these air taxis are leaving people out there.
37 And our bull-cow ratio in the Innoko has plummeted with
38 the amount of hunting pressure that's actually occurring
39 on the Innoko Refuge. So, this Council -- West ---
40 Western Interior Regional Council had a big discussion.
41 We had Cody Smith for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Enforcement.
42 We had Tina Moran, who's the Deputy Manager for Koyukuk,
43 Nowitna, Innoko and Kanuti. And we come to find out that
44 they -- all these air taxis are permitted. They drop
45 these people off and then they have to report by December
46 31, what happened. Well, we didn't like that. We are
47 going to send -- are sending a letter and after much
48 discussion, we feel that enforcement needs to be told
49 when -- immediately, when the air taxi dropped somebody
50 off where at on a GPS coordinate so the enforcement

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1 knows where they're at because there's all this wanton
2 waste stuff going on. And that has to be immediate. And
3 when they're removed from the field, they have to report
4 also. Those are our concerns right now. Getting a report
5 months after all of the clients have all left and there
6 could be massive amounts of wanton waste. The
7 enforcement is so spread out, so thin. Let's just allow
8 them to know where the clients are at so that if they're
9 in the area, they can check their camps. That was one
10 issue that we had.

11
12 We had a discussion with Lieutenant
13 Valentine, who is Alaska State Trooper. We're talking
14 about trespass on Native allotments and the lack of
15 enforcement of those trespasses. And so, they -- come
16 to find out during their discussion with him that they
17 will write tickets for trespass. But if someone lands
18 and goes back on your allotment or Native Corp lands and
19 shoots a moose, they don't give them a ticket. But we
20 don't think that that's right. We think that's
21 absolutely pathetic. They're trespassing. Go down to the
22 continental United States, you go to Montana or
23 somewhere, you see an elk or some animal out there on
24 somebody's ranch. They're not -- you're not allowed to
25 shoot it. If you shoot it, you're going to get a big
26 fine for doing that. You can't trespass. And so, Alaska
27 has a problem. Apparently, these Native Corp land --
28 that's why the state pushes this the all lands -- that
29 are non-federal under state control because, I says if
30 somebody shoots a moose on somebody's farm on Chena Hot
31 Springs Road, they they're not going to get a ticket?
32 No, they're going to get a trespass citation. That's a
33 -- that's more or less a civil thing.

34
35 We feel that the Native organizations
36 and the Councils and various people who have concerns
37 about that should really start thinking about submitting
38 a bill to the legislature that changes that. If you
39 trespass on somebody's land and shoot an animal, you're
40 going to get a ticket for doing that. A fine and a
41 specific fine and has to be statutory fine so the Board
42 of Game is compelled to do that. That was one of our
43 issues about trespass. The other issue that we talked
44 about extensively, as you well know, is the presidential
45 order to lift the public land orders. And so, the Dalton
46 Highway Corridor -- Utility Corridor with 2.1 million
47 acres, it was on last Friday, they -- they've sent into
48 the Federal Register that the court order is now going
49 to be lifted by another -- or correction, a public land
50 order issued by the Secretary of Interior to convey the

0008

1 -- allow the state to attach to the lands. They're
2 telling us that you know, that once it attaches, it's
3 like it's selected. It's like, no, it's not. There's a
4 whole process with this. The state under the Statehood
5 Act, the Statehood Act allows the state to go to 126%
6 over selection and they were. Their top filed on a whole
7 bunch of public land orders. In the Western Interior
8 Bering Sea to the west, west coast, there's 28 million
9 acres, and the executive order filed on January 20th,
10 2025, tells the Secretary of Interior to lift those
11 orders, all of them where appropriate, which means if
12 there's minerals or something under there to lift it.

13
14 The state has top filed on 6.8 million
15 acres of land, but they're only due 5.2 million acres
16 of land. So, when they top file on this, they tell us
17 that after March 27th at 8 a.m., it's closed. The Dalton
18 Highway Corridor -- Utility Corridor is closed to
19 subsistence. That is a big deal for our community.
20 Stevens Village, Rampart, Allakaket, Alatna, Bettles,
21 Evansville, Coldfoot, Wiseman, Anaktuvuk Pass and
22 Nuiqsut. These are communities I'm naming off that
23 utilize the utility corridor for subsistence. And so,
24 we disagree, we disagree in that if when the state
25 selects the lands, then it goes through the tentative
26 approval that would -- then they would be closed and
27 under their management. Until that time, I have not seen
28 a map of selection. And we are writing a letter to the
29 to the Federal Subsistence Board, specifically to the
30 BIA and the BLM for a legal interpretation of those
31 impacts to subsistence. They do not have a 810. Brooke's
32 probably got Title VIII sitting on her desk right there.
33 Under 810, the federal government is required to have a
34 meeting in the affected area. Have you had a meeting in
35 your area? No. Have I had one? No. There's been no
36 meeting in the affected area. And it also specifically
37 says that they're supposed to have the least adverse
38 impact to subsistence. By letting the state claim they
39 -- they're taking the whole lands without doing it --
40 without actually selecting the lands, they may select
41 only half of the amount of lands. There may be areas
42 that we may be able to hunt or utilize that are still
43 under federal subsistence regulations.

44
45 So, we're writing a letter in regards
46 to that. But after March 27th at 8 a.m., we can't --
47 we're basically -- we're at starvation mode. This land
48 is not managed for subsistence by the state of Alaska.
49 The utility corridor is managed for high quality hunt
50 area. It's an archery only area. It has specific drop

0009

1 permits for moose, there's specific regulations. And so
2 basically, these communities are going to be out of luck.
3 We're going to be having a really hard time meeting our
4 subsistence needs. We live in the Arctic. We've got deep
5 snow the last 10 years. This 1st year we haven't had
6 deep snow. We've lost about 60% of the moose population.
7 We're down to about 10% of the Dall sheep population.
8 And caribou populations have fallen off, as you well
9 know. The Porcupine Herd is near us here if -- within
10 the utility corridor. I need to get 3-4 caribou before
11 the before this all ends on March 27th. And then we have
12 nothing. We need to know what federal lands are going
13 to be -- the state is going to not take and that is
14 going to be open to federal subsistence. The 810 analysis
15 should show that. They should be specific to that because
16 they're supposed to have -- the federal government is
17 supposed to have the least adverse impact to subsistence
18 users. That would be my comments, Mr. Chair. Any
19 questions?

20

21 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Yes. Hold on one
22 second. Andy has a question.

23

24 MR. BASSICH: Yeah. For the record,
25 Member Bassich here. Good to hear your voice, Jack. I'd
26 like to get back to your issue on the air taxis. Did
27 your Council take any action on trying to come up with
28 some recommendations to address some of those issues?

29

30 MR. REAKOFF: Our recommendations are
31 going to be going forward in our letter to the Koyukuk,
32 Nowitna, Innoko and Kanuti, they should re-develop the
33 -- their issuance of permitting to where the air taxi
34 operators, they have to give a GPS coordinate with the
35 day they drop them off. Everybody's got Starlink.
36 Everybody's got all this capability. They have to give
37 a coordinate. They have to give the location of their
38 clients when they're dropped in the field on the federal
39 refuge lands. That's what we're writing about, that's
40 what we want. That -- the enforcement, Cody Smith, I
41 says suppose that would help you out a lot, wouldn't it?
42 And he goes, yeah. Instead of like, trying to play hide
43 and go seek with where these camps may be, let's just
44 give the enforcement where they're at. Because there was
45 a trooper in Coldfoot back in the early 2000s. He had
46 28 wanton waste cases and 26 of them were non-residents.
47 They chronically are wasting meat. They don't want the
48 meat, they want the antlers. This would help out
49 phenomenally. And EIRAC should be seriously considering
50 -- you have, you know, we have a part of the Arctic

00010

1 Refuge in our region, our customary and traditional use
2 and the Yukon Flats. You should really be seriously
3 considering the same line of thought on how these air
4 taxis -- because guess what? You've probably heard all
5 about it. When the Porcupine Herd gets over here close
6 to the (indiscernible), they've been coming further and
7 further west. They want to cross this road. The Porcupine
8 Herd, they have trails, historic trails etched in the
9 ground that go right past Coldfoot and Wiseman and go
10 way to the west. There's big beaten down trails still
11 etched into the ground. You can still see them in early
12 October when all the leaves are off. So, those caribou
13 want to go west. But this road has impeded them for 8
14 years. This is the 1st year that they actually have
15 crossed in some areas and we don't have much snow, so
16 they're starting to learn -- those trails are actually
17 how they know where their home range is. Fortymile did
18 the same thing. When they got up to 90,000 they crossed
19 the Dalton Highway and wanted to go to the Ray Mountains.
20 The trails go to the Ray Mountains trails go to the
21 Ogilvie Mountains. You know, you see, you know where
22 that Fortymile Herd goes because those trails tell them
23 where to go.

24
25 We have caribou here. Porcupine Caribou
26 Herd is here. There's going to be tons of air taxis like
27 there was in 2024. You know, there's a guy that from
28 Coldfoot hunted to the east of Coldfoot. He says it was
29 constant air traffic flying all the time, dropping off
30 hunters. Those hunters need to be, you know, those drop
31 offs need to be coordinated with enforcement, with the
32 GPS coordinate. That's what I feel. If they're in the
33 Arctic Refuge, if they're in the Yukon Flats, they need
34 to be -- or any of the refuge lands, they need to be --
35 the refugees need to require them to have a GPS
36 coordinate. That's part of their permit. That's what
37 we're trying to get them to do, is change the permitting
38 process. This is a regional -- this is a statewide issue.
39 But we started at WIRAC.

40
41 MR. BASSICH: Yeah. Thank you, Jack.
42 Member Bassich. And that was my next question to you.
43 Are your AC's in the region.....

44
45 (Distortion)

46
47 Sorry, we're getting a long echo here.

48
49 MR. REAKOFF: I hear that.

50

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1 MS. MCDAVID: Jack, I'm sorry. Do you
2 mind just muting while talking and then you could unmute
3 again to answer?

4
5 MR. BASSICH: Okay. The question I was
6 going to ask you is if some of the local ACs in Western
7 Interior RAC region are also going to be trying to
8 address this as a statewide issue through state of
9 Alaska. It's going to probably take a -- an effort from
10 both the federal RACs and the ACs to get some meaningful
11 actions that would impact all areas in the state, which
12 would be really the preferred way to do this in my --
13 from my position. Thank you. Appreciate hearing your
14 words.

15
16 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Jack, this is
17 Charlie.

18
19 MR. REAKOFF: Okay. Open mic. Oh.

20
21 (Distortion)

22
23 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: I wanted to ask a
24 question. I got a friend up over the hill up in the
25 flats towards Utqiaġvik that sits on the RAC up there,
26 and he says he sees an awful lot of airplanes dropping
27 people off there too. And they have problems with the
28 transporter doesn't come back for them in due time, so
29 they get into trouble. And he said that Utqiaġvik search
30 and rescue has to pick them up. And it's causing a lot
31 of money being spent by their system there. And so, I
32 just wanted to ask, you do see an awful lot of airplanes
33 flying by, don't you?

34
35 MR. REAKOFF: Yes, Mr. Chair and Andy.
36 Yeah, this -- no, we just developed this idea back this
37 last meeting, last week. ACs and nobody's on -- nobody's
38 onboard with it. We're just trying to get the word out.
39 Koyukuk River Advisory is going to meet on March 26th
40 down in Huslia. Yeah, we'll be talking -- I'll be talking
41 about that down there. This is a statewide issue.
42 Regional Council -- this is where the Councils need to
43 be aware of this issue. When our letter is transmitted,
44 I'll have our Coordinator -- we have Nissa Pilcher. I'll
45 have her send it to all Regional Councils that have
46 lands. But this is a statewide issue. It should actually
47 be -- there's a Commercial Services Board that -- this
48 should be a regulation with transport. The Commercial
49 Service Board support regulates transporter --
50 transporters. But we don't -- we can't -- I don't have

00012

1 a whole lot of faith in that actually moving forward
2 with, you know, without spending a lot of time going to
3 Juneau and all these meetings and stuff. I don't have
4 that kind of money. So, this issue needs to be
5 highlighted at the Regional Council levels because 60%
6 of Alaska's federal lands. And so, this is a -- an issue
7 that's directly affecting our refuge lands. And so, we
8 need to address it there. It could move -- the Regional
9 Councils could work it through the Federal Subsistence
10 Board process, but it also needs to go through the state
11 process. But this -- we just found this out that the
12 filing is not until last part of December. That's why
13 we decided things have to be fixed. This is
14 unconscionable that they're getting away with -- that's
15 why it would help in a location like, you know, they get
16 dropped off if they don't -- if the air taxi operator
17 gets killed in a plane crash, there's people sitting out
18 there in the field. This would help the public out. This
19 is a public safety issue also. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

20

21 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you very much.
22 The Tanana, Manley, Rampart AC will be meeting soon and
23 I'll bring it up there too. Thank you.

24

25 MR. REAKOFF: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Any
26 other questions?

27

28 MS. MCDAVID: Hi, Jack, this is Brooke.
29 I just wanted to note that the Big Game Commercial
30 Services Board is meeting next week on March 11th at
31 9:00a.m. Their meeting information can be found online
32 and there is a virtual attendance option. Their
33 processes are something that I personally don't know
34 much about, and the council members have also indicated
35 that they would like to learn more about. So, EIRAC in
36 the future is hoping to invite someone from Big Game
37 Commercial Services Board to just sort of give an
38 introduction to their processes and maybe an opportunity
39 to talk about some of the Council's concerns. Just wanted
40 to share that for awareness.

41

42 MR. REAKOFF: Okay, I'll look into that
43 one. I might actually call into that. And if they give
44 public comment, I might make that suggestion to the
45 Commercial Services Board or find out about the proposal
46 process to you know, maybe get the -- our Koyokuk River
47 Advisory to sign on to that. So, thank you for that
48 information on the Commercial Services Board. I also
49 wanted to state for EIRAC that that our meeting Brooke
50 asked would it be -- would we be amicable to a joint

00013

1 meeting again. I think we had a really good joint meeting
2 with EIRAC, and I would like to see a joint meeting
3 possibly in next winter's -- winter meeting this -- the
4 winter session, this one of 2027.

5

6 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Yes, sir. We voted
7 to overlap meetings and we appreciate that. And we think
8 it was a very good meeting also. Thank you -- so thank
9 you so much for that.

10

11 MR. REAKOFF: Okay. Thank you very much,
12 Mr. Chair. If there's no other further questions, I'll
13 continue to listen in.

14

15 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you for your
16 testimony today.

17

18 MS. MCDAVID: This is Brooke. Is there
19 anyone else online who would like to give a comment to
20 the Council? You can raise your hand or press star 5.

21

22 (No response)

23

24 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay. We're going to
25 move on with the agenda then. Thanks to everybody who
26 testified this morning. I expected more but that's the
27 way it is sometimes. So, we're going to move on with the
28 agenda. We are on action item number 11, and we are down
29 to g, Lower Tanana Wood Bison Management Plan - Comments
30 to Federal Subsistence Board.

31

32 MS. MCDAVID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This
33 is Brooke. So, at the Board's regulatory meeting last
34 year, Alaska Department of Fish and Game presented the
35 Lower Tanana Wood Bison Management Plan to the Federal
36 Subsistence Board seeking the Board's endorsement of
37 that plan. The Federal Subsistence Board decided that
38 they wanted to first send that plan to the Eastern
39 Interior Council for review and comment before the Board
40 decided whether or not to endorse the plan. And so, that
41 is why it has come up on your agenda. And the Board will
42 be meeting in April, and this should be on the Board's
43 agenda at that time. So, we didn't have time to do a
44 real thorough review or working group about the plan as
45 we had hoped, there's just been so much going on. But
46 we were able to have a small huddle yesterday morning
47 with Member Evans and Chair Charlie Wright. And we've
48 also talked to Eva -- Member Eva Burke about this. And
49 so, this is an action item for the Council to discuss
50 what comments you want to send to the Federal Subsistence

00014

1 Board about this plan.

2

3 And I'll just summarize a couple of
4 notes that I had from the discussion between members
5 yesterday. It sounded like there were some frustrations
6 about the process of how wood bison introduction --
7 reintroduction has occurred in that you know, there have
8 been community planning meetings, but that there have
9 not been any real tribal consultations. Also, bison have
10 been put out on the landscape despite community
11 opposition. And there was feelings that this plan should
12 have come to the Council before the bison were actually
13 put out there on the land. And there are a lot of
14 concerns about how hunting in the future is going to
15 work and how there will be a priority for subsistence
16 of bison.

17

18 And on that note the working group did
19 note the importance of establishing customary and
20 traditional use determinations for wood bison in the
21 areas where the bison are located. There is a proposal
22 in -- from this Council to the Federal Subsistence Board
23 to recognize C&T for wood bison in the Eastern Interior
24 region. And that has been deferred so that it can maybe
25 be modified to be a little more tailored to the areas
26 where the wood bison are or are planning to be
27 reintroduced in the near future. There was a little bit
28 of discussion about, well, bison are out there now. Could
29 they potentially be helpful with the food security
30 issues that are occurring due to, you know, the, the
31 salmon fishing closures lo moose and lo caribou numbers.
32 And that ties back into the need for a subsistence
33 priority.

34

35 There was also brought up comments about
36 the need for continued monitoring and studies to learn
37 about how these reintroduced bison are impacting
38 habitat, their interactions with other wildlife and the
39 importance of having local people involved in that
40 monitoring and research. Folks did note that the
41 department and, you know, particularly Luke Rogers has
42 been working with some local folks as bison guardians
43 and that has been appreciated, but that more could
44 potentially be done in that area. So, that's a summary
45 of some of the comments I noted down but I'd love to
46 turn it back to you, Mr. Chair and the other council
47 members who participated in this discussion. For
48 additional input. Thank you.

49

50

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1 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: I think you covered
2 it really well. But if anybody else has anything to add,
3 please do.

4
5 MS. BURK: This is Eva.

6
7 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Go ahead, Eva.

8
9 MS. BURK: The echo.

10
11 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay, I'll turn my
12 mic off and it should be alright.

13
14 MS. BURK: Okay. Well, as you recall, the
15 Bison Guardian Program, I think I have concerns about
16 it still. Because the -- what I did see -- because
17 people, you know, I'm from Nenana and those bison, it's
18 kind of funny because a herd of 9 broke off from the
19 group that they put in, and they put that herd in right
20 by our fish camp, our Native allotment down on the mouth
21 of the Kantishna River. And I herd of 9 broke off and
22 made their way to Nenana, for those who don't know or
23 didn't hear about it and the -- they had a heck of a
24 time getting them out of Nenana. And it's not really
25 clear if predators chase them out. Where the -- where
26 they put them out is also near the mouth of the Tolovana
27 River. And there's kind of -- through talking to local
28 chapters and people who are out there trying to trap
29 wolves, there's a big pack of (indiscernible) wolves and
30 I don't think there's as much trappers as there used to
31 be. And I do know some people are trapping wolves in the
32 area. But the -- when they -- when that herd went into
33 Nenana the Bison Guardian Program, we were like, who's
34 your Bison Guardians? And you know, no offense to Luke
35 or any of the managers but those people that were bison
36 guardians, I think there needs to be a few other folks.
37 And I think there needs to be better training. And
38 because what we saw pictures of were people chasing those
39 bison down and they were in a full run as a herd. And
40 they were by buildings in town. And I don't know, it
41 just seemed like a little out of control and kind of
42 dangerous. And then I think they worked on using hay
43 kind of like the breadcrumbs, right. Trying to get the
44 bison to maybe follow that trail of hay out and start
45 making it back to the other larger group. And I don't
46 know the progress of all that, but I just have concerns
47 still about the Bison Guardian Program and about how
48 they're going to keep those bison out of the ag area.
49 And I think a comment was made because we own agriculture
50 land and even to put in a small fence just to keep moose

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1 out, because it doesn't have to be a strong one for
2 moose, but it's expensive. And so, the idea of having
3 to put in bison proof, which is also not realistic
4 because I'm pretty sure in Delta, especially with this
5 high snow right now, ain't [sic] no fence going to help
6 with that. They're just going to get up on and over. And
7 so, I'm concerned still about the planning and what's
8 going on and, and the future conflicts that I think
9 there's going to be more, but I just want to add that
10 stuff for folks that might not be familiar with what's
11 happening on the ground. Thank you.

12

13 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you, Eva. I
14 see we have somebody that's affiliated with that herd
15 here if he wants to add any comments, I would give him
16 that chance. If you wanted to. No pressure.

17

18 MR. SHERRY: Good morning. For the
19 record, I'm Christopher Sherry. And yeah, I wouldn't say
20 I'm necessarily affiliated anymore. I did work with the
21 Wood Bison Restoration Project. And I'd like to
22 acknowledge Eva's comments. Wery legitimate concerns
23 that have been discussed before. And I would agree that
24 bison guardians should be well trained and well-equipped
25 people to deal with these animals. They're very, very
26 large and public safety is always a concern. I did
27 comment with you guys last year about establishing a
28 customary and traditional use finding -- positive
29 finding for the wood bison upon a potential harvestable
30 surplus of these animals. And basically, it's -- to me
31 it's a signal of what the broader significance of wood
32 bison returning to Alaska. What drew me in and made me
33 want to be involved was that there are -- those animals
34 had a very long history that -- whose story hadn't been
35 properly captured. And restoring the animals restores
36 the connection with tribal people and the ability for
37 people to one day, you know, honor each other with a
38 potlach animal would mean very much to not just myself,
39 but to a lot of people. And so, I just want to thank you
40 guys for your time.

41

42 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you very much.
43 Any questions for him?

44

45 (No response)

46

47 Okay. Thank you, thank you for very much
48 for enlightening us this morning. We appreciate you.

49

50

1 MR. BASSICH: Mr. Chair, yeah, Member
2 Bassich here. I'm just trying to kind of piece together
3 what some of the issues are here. I appreciate the
4 comments that Brooke read off and some of the concerns
5 and everything. I guess the -- a couple of the questions
6 I have is, were these animals released on federal lands,
7 tribal lands, or state lands? That would be my first
8 question. It seems like there wasn't much consultation
9 with the locals prior to them being put in there. At
10 least not detailed collaboration with them. So, maybe a
11 little bit more information on how they were -- how the
12 spots were chosen and how that took place. And then it
13 sounds like one of the biggest concerns that I'm hearing
14 is public safety issues or encroachment on potential
15 agricultural lands for people, and then also trying to
16 get some sort of a C&T or a rights to take animals into
17 the future if they get to a harvestable surplus level.
18 Is there anything else there that is outstanding that
19 I'm missing here? I'm just trying to kind of summarize
20 what I'm hearing and kind of put the pieces together for
21 me because it was a little bit scattered the way it
22 came. I haven't actually looked at the state's plan. So,
23 is there anything that I'm kind of missing that is a is
24 a contentious point?

25
26 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: I think you covered
27 it pretty well, but I'm not the expert on it. So, I
28 think there's -- there should be a little bit more
29 looking into it. I just haven't had the time to really
30 go into it. But from what I know, unless somebody else
31 has more to add, I think that you covered it pretty well
32 with the concerns. Go ahead.

33
34 MS. MCDAVID: Thank you, through the
35 Chair, Member Bassich, for the questions. Yeah, I think
36 you summarized most things pretty well. To your question
37 about where they were released, it was on state land.
38 We heard from Luke Rogers at our next meeting [sic] that
39 there are plans to release another herd or to start
40 another herd in the Yukon Flats, between Circle and
41 Chalkyitsik potentially. There was a planning team
42 meeting this past winter, which Member Linda Evans
43 attended. And it is a complicated issue because it --
44 these animals fall under the Endangered Species Act.
45 They're considered an experimental population. So, there
46 are some interesting things there that we won't get into.
47 But until the wood bison are delisted, and that, you
48 know, that could be a very long time in the future. The
49 reintroduction efforts do fall under state jurisdiction.
50 There can't be a federal hunting opportunity on them.

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1

2 I anticipate that we will hear again
3 from Luke Rogers in -- at a future meeting to get an
4 update potentially this fall about those plans for Yukon
5 Flats. But yeah, it is complicated. Where the bison were
6 released in the Lower Tanana area, there are not many
7 federal lands in that area, it's a very large section
8 of state lands. But in the Yukon Flats as you're probably
9 aware -- well aware that's much closer to federal lands
10 and the potential for those bison to spread. So, just a
11 little more background information. The Fish and
12 Wildlife Service Endangered Species Program has been
13 coordinating with the state. But that's an office that's
14 more at the regional level than at the local refuge
15 level. Thanks.

16

17 MR. ALEXANDER: This is Member Alexander.
18 I have a concerned comment about this wood bison. Upon
19 releasing these animals, I would think that there
20 should, you know, you're introducing these animals to a
21 new place, and I think they should be confined for a
22 while. You know and then have your monitors there with
23 them. And it'll get them better adjusted to where they're
24 at instead of just taking off, you know? So that's my
25 concern/comment.

26

27 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Yeah, they did have
28 it -- for a year I think, they kept them in a pen and
29 let them get acclimated to the land a little bit. But
30 some of them do just take off and stray but not a lot
31 of them. But it does happen down in the Lower Yukon,
32 they had herd there for quite a while now and they
33 strayed hundreds of miles, but not all of them, but some
34 of them do. Just like muskox come all the way to the
35 Yukon, you know, they just get a wild hair sometime and
36 take off, you know. Yeah. Polar bears, Fort Yukon. Yeah.
37 So, things do happen. Leonardo, are you online? You can
38 have the floor right now if you're still there.

39

40 MR. WASSILIE: Yeah, I -- so the -- on
41 the bison, I was going to make a comment about that. We
42 had one of our members, he sent me a picture of it. And
43 so -- and I remember the Guardian Program when Luke was
44 here, we got -- I reached out to people, got guardians
45 to get trained and one of them, I know, like -- and so
46 when I reached out, like she went and tried to work with
47 people who were like engaging with the animals and trying
48 to educate them on like what to do. So, I think part of
49 it is -- there's a -- an education and understanding of
50 kind of what to do. Because they were chasing them with

00019

1 the snowmachine trying to get them to get away. And
2 where the guardians were trying to like, train the
3 animals by using these rubber bullets. And clapping or
4 whistle like -- and then associating that rubber bullet
5 with a whistle. And so, you know, and so I think there's
6 like some education -- more education needing to happen
7 in the communities so that people understand, like how
8 to or what to do. And some good practices on like how
9 to get the animals to -- it's kind of getting them
10 trained right is what I understood. So, I just want to
11 make that comment while the iron was hot, so.

12

13 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you very much
14 for that. Appreciated. Duly noted. Any questions for
15 him? Not seeing any. I thank you -- oh. Go ahead. Eva
16 has a question for you. Leonardo.

17

18 MS. BURK: Thank you. Leo, thanks for
19 calling in this morning. This is Eva, for the record.
20 How do you feel like that -- the hazing went? And do you
21 know if they -- if those 9 animals that broke off, if
22 they started heading back to their release site?

23

24 MR. WASSILIE: From what I understood,
25 like they still stayed out and were -- like one of our
26 tribal members -- it was like they were blocking the
27 road. So they -- when they were out there getting some
28 wood and so they kind of just sat there kind of waiting
29 for the bison herd to move. And then from what I've
30 understood from the guardian when they went to go help
31 assist, like one of the community members. It sounded
32 like what the community member was attempting to do with
33 like by hurting it with a snowmachine was kind of not
34 helping. So, did that does that answer your question?

35

36 MS. BURK: Yeah. That does. So, I guess
37 there's a job position for bison whisperer down Nenana.
38 That's what I'm hearing.

39

40 MR. WASSILIE: Yeah, yeah. Now, you know,
41 the members who do it, they initially got paid a stipend
42 to attend the class. And then -- but afterwards, it's
43 kind of like on a voluntary basis and for people to
44 like, engage and understand. So, I just happen to know
45 one of the guardians and they were really -- because
46 they're really passionate about and they live out there.
47 And so, they're really -- and so, she was really kind
48 of upset with the way it went. Because she's wanting to
49 do it the proper way.

50

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1 MS. BURK: Thanks, Leo. Maybe we should
2 think about a cultural exchange. Yeah. As, as a community
3 to learn more about bison ourselves. Maybe visiting
4 Stevens Village bison farm and other bison farms might
5 -- in the area in Delta might be a good idea. I had
6 another question, and then I forgot. So, thanks, Leo.

7
8 MR. GORN: My pleasure.

9
10 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay.

11
12 (Simultaneous speech)

13
14 MR. BASSICH: Mr. Chair. Andy, please.
15 Yeah, it sounds to me like maybe one of the issues is
16 that there isn't the community education and outreach
17 prior to animals being released, and that's kind of
18 putting the cart before the horse. And I just want to
19 point to the fact that it's come up numerous times over
20 the years, and that is that humans think that they're
21 going to control wild animals all the time, and they
22 don't. They think they can, but they can't. But we have
23 this unique ability to think that we can control nature
24 and nature is going to do what nature is going to do.
25 And we need to learn through our policies and through
26 our actions to work with it instead of trying to corral
27 it.

28
29 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you very much,
30 Member Bassich. I think we have another one online. Haida
31 Gordon. You have the floor.

32
33 MS. GORDON: Good morning. Good morning,
34 Mr. Chair and Eastern Interior RAC. I'm sorry to not be
35 in the room with you in person this morning. Thank you
36 for all of the discussion and comments. Just for the
37 record, this Chaya Gordon and I am a first year PhD
38 student at the University of Alaska Fairbanks in Todd
39 Brinkman's lab. And I'm focused on large mammal ecology
40 and human dimensions. And I have been attached to wood
41 bison. And I'm very much in a listening and learning
42 stage in my own work. And I just -- this isn't really -
43 - this is just something I want to put out into the
44 space for this committee and for other people who are
45 involved in these conversations, and about wood bison.
46 My research right now is very formative, but -- formative
47 stages but my intention is to be focusing on some of
48 these questions that have come up in terms of the need
49 for more ecological understanding of how the wood bison
50 will impact habitat and perhaps other wildlife

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1 interactions, other interactions with other species of
2 cultural importance. And I'm in the formative stages of
3 that research. And of course, we know in an academic
4 structure you know, that things have to keep moving
5 forward. So I just want to put this into the conversation
6 that if there are members of the committee and or other
7 community members that have thoughts about what kinds
8 of questions we would want to ask in terms of looking
9 at those pieces of ecological and habitat impact,
10 questions that would be pertinent and relevant and
11 helpful for our subsistence conversations and our
12 community conversations, please reach out to me. My goal
13 in being here is to be doing research and work that is
14 of use and meaning to Alaska communities. And we have a
15 student here who has been given time and resources and
16 funding to look at some questions. So, if we can help
17 connect me with what those questions might be that can
18 be applicable and helpful and pertinent that would be
19 really amazing. So, I just wanted to put that out into
20 the dialogue. Thank you very much.

21

22 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay. We have some
23 questions for you. Go ahead, Chris. Your questions for
24 her or...? Okay, go ahead then, Andy.

25

26 MR. BASSICH: Yeah. Thank you, Chaya.
27 Andy Bassich for the record. Could you give us a really
28 brief background on your experiences with wood bison?
29 Many of us don't know you, so I think given your offer,
30 it'd be really good to have a little bit of a background
31 on who you, who you are, what your experiences are with
32 bison. And I think you clearly articulated what you want
33 to do. That would be helpful. Thank you.

34

35 MS. GORDON: Great, yes. Thank you,
36 Member Bassich, for that question. My background is
37 quite unconventional. I arrived in Alaska in August from
38 South Dakota. But I also arrived in wildlife biology
39 within the last 2 years from a background as a theater
40 artist and a professor. So, this is actually a career
41 pivot for me and I'm building towards this. I've been
42 working in Nebraska and South Dakota as master
43 naturalist and getting conservation background. I have
44 an undergraduate degree in chemistry from quite a while
45 ago. But I've had -- I've been working in the arts and
46 in Native communities in the arts and in South Dakota
47 and nationally. So, this is a switch for me. So, I am
48 new in many ways but bringing different kinds of
49 experiences with me. Like I said, working in and with
50 communities, but in very different contexts and

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1 geographies and, you know, science in different contexts
2 and geographies.

3
4 My relationship to bison really comes
5 very much through -- I mean, I'm really trying to change
6 out my Lower 48 goggles for Alaska goggles, right. It's
7 a very different world here and I'm just in very much
8 in a listening and learning stage to trying to understand
9 the landscape that I'm in and to not bring in all of the
10 old assumptions. But of course, I know I appreciate it,
11 I believe it was Christopher Sherry who made the comment
12 earlier this morning about some of the potential for
13 bison to really have those cultural restorative pieces
14 you know. In plains bison and plains contexts are -- and
15 I'm sorry, it's so hard for me to not be able to see the
16 room while talking about this stuff that's very, very
17 like sensitive and meaningful and important. But here
18 we go. You know, plains bison, as many people know,
19 right. They are widely accepted in the across the
20 Northern Plains as keystone species ecologically. And
21 when I use the term ecologically, I mean holistic,
22 ecologically like environment and communities, right.
23 They're sacred, they bring environmental benefits, they
24 are ceremonial source, they were a source for everything
25 for tribes, right. And I know that wood bison have a
26 very different story and different relationship up here,
27 and that that's not my story. So, I have my understanding
28 biologically of bison is via plains bison. We believe
29 that wood bison biologically behave in very similar
30 ways. But of course, a boreal ecosystem is different
31 than a grassland. And Alaska, culturally and
32 ecologically, is of course completely different from
33 Lower 48. So, I bring in certain understandings and
34 knowledge, information, and then I'm also really
35 learning and growing. But that being said the -- yeah,
36 I think that's probably enough at this time. Thank you.

37
38 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you very much
39 for that. Appreciate it. Did anybody have any more
40 questions?

41
42 MS. BURK: Thanks. This is Eva. I kind
43 of have, like, comments and questions, and I know that
44 we're going to talk some more after this through your
45 work at the university, but just for other RAC members
46 to kind of get an idea of what we in Nenana might be
47 thinking of would be a good research topic. And I think
48 one for me and why I've always been open to the idea of
49 bison on the landscape is that the Native people predict
50 that the interior will turn into grasslands through fire

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1 and plant succession. And climate models at the
2 university show similar like modeling results. So, I'm
3 just wondering, you know, how do -- how will bison --
4 how do they change the habitat that's there? And then
5 thinking of where they've been released, this is a big
6 fire scar. And so, when you walk over it -- it's a mosaic
7 of different ecological, I guess it's called like an
8 ecological site, right? And so, you have wetlands, you
9 have peatlands, you have a boreal forest that was once
10 characterized by a lot of big spruce, but that burned.
11 And in its place, the thing that grows back the quickest
12 is a bunch of hardwoods. So, you have like willows,
13 cottonwood, birch, and it's really brushy in there. And
14 so, I'm just wondering, like, do bison -- can they help
15 with peatland restoration or wetland preservation?
16

17 And then thinking about something I seen
18 on my own land, the agriculture land is you can have
19 mixed in -- because this area in the Kantishna River
20 that's coming down to Nenana -- coming down to the Nenana
21 River, it's like an old stream bed that filled in. So,
22 they're used -- that's it's kind of a lot to explain in
23 -- over the audio like this. So, it'd be a lot easier
24 to show you on a map. But I -- but the last comment I
25 have is, you have these areas of discontinuous
26 permafrost within the swamplands. And I'm just wondering
27 how the bison affect that is -- cause what I see is in
28 the summer, if you cut across like when they did the
29 brush cutting with the equipment on our land, when they
30 cut across our permafrost bog swamp, which is like a
31 berry patch, it created a thaw line. And then now that
32 thaw line is kind of melting and draining the rest of
33 our swamp. And so, I'm just wondering, like, as bison
34 are attracted to these grasses in the swamplands, how
35 that permafrost thawing and all that interaction, if
36 it's positive or negative. So those are just some of my
37 thoughts right now about how bison might improve the
38 transition or they might actually be harmed by the
39 transition. And I, and I don't know, I'm just putting
40 it out there for thought. Food for thought. Thanks.
41

42 MS. GORDON: Great. May I respond?

43
44 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Yes, you may.
45

46 MS. GORDON: Wonderful. Thank you. And I
47 don't -- obviously I don't have, you know, answers. Eva,
48 I just want to say thank you for those really exciting
49 and interesting questions and thoughts. And I look
50 forward to us speaking further. You know, my -- you

1 know, without -- I don't know. We don't know. And I
2 think this is what's both like interesting, exciting,
3 and also a little bit you know, unsettling to not know
4 these things when they're already beginning to play out
5 in real time. But we have some opportunities to dig into
6 some of these questions. I will say that we know a lot
7 about how bison behave in grassland and prairies, and
8 that they have tremendous ecological benefits and a
9 variety of levels. So, I think that there is actually a
10 really good opportunity to see some positive impacts and
11 mitigations. And I've been thinking a little bit about
12 fire as well. So, there are a lot of things we can think
13 about in terms of permafrost, in terms of fire, in terms
14 of like, species diversity. So, we'll talk further, you
15 know, outside of the full committee meeting here, but I
16 just really appreciate all of the knowledge that you are
17 bringing in. And I look forward to listening and learning
18 more from you and to collaborating in a way that is good
19 for the communities and where we can really, you know,
20 make the most of our circumstances. Thank you.

21
22 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you so much.
23 That sounds wonderful, going forward. Okay. Any more
24 questions? Linda? Okay. Go ahead. We have a question for
25 you.

26
27 MS. EVANS: I don't have a question. I
28 just have a comment that, you know, I went to the
29 December meeting on bison and there were a lot of people
30 there from the Yukon Flats area, and they're talking
31 about putting bison in the Yukon Flats area. It was a
32 pretty open meeting. It seemed like people were, you
33 know, there was not a lot of dissent or anything. There
34 was just a lot of willingness to learn more about the
35 bison. And my takeaway from that was that, you know,
36 maybe the state needs to go to these communities or
37 areas where they have dropped these bison and start and
38 educate the people about them. You know, even I was
39 thinking, even in the schools. You know, if you can
40 start in the schools, you can -- the kids will take the
41 information home to the parents, you know, and because
42 they're there and I don't know if they're going to get
43 not be there [sic]. You know, it depends on how they
44 survive on the land. Because I have questions also about,
45 you know, the deep snow, you know, and the cold weather.
46 You know, it can get pretty harsh, especially with the
47 deep snow. And they're supposed to be grazers. So, you
48 know how they're going to dig down through that deep
49 snow. You know how it is in like springtime or it'll --
50 the snow will melt. They'll get a little crust and then

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1 it'll snow or warm up again, and then it'll get another
2 crust. And how hard that is underneath all that to get
3 down to the grass that they need. Those were the things
4 I was thinking about. But yeah, I believe in more
5 education to the communities where these animals are.
6 Thank you.

7

8 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you, Linda.

9

10 MS. GORDON: Thank you. May I respond?

11

12 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Yes, you may. And
13 then we have another question for you after.

14

15 MS. GORDON: Great. Linda, thank you so
16 much for sharing all those comments and thoughts. And
17 yeah, I'd seen that you've been part of those meetings
18 and that's fantastic. You know, and again, I am not --
19 I'm not affiliated with the state. I am doing my own
20 research, but I'm, you know, trying to, you know, keep
21 up with sort of what's going on in all the different
22 spaces. I definitely, you know, believe that community
23 involvement and engagement is really important on every
24 level from like educating, you know, in both directions,
25 right. Everybody learning and listening from each other.
26 And involving communities and I know Eva had mentioned
27 involving communities like in the monitoring and in the
28 research. And also, like all of the observational
29 knowledge that already exists, right. Especially the
30 herd that's been out for, you know, 10 years already.
31 Like, and, you know, that's a different area, but there's
32 just a lot of, you know, a lot of learning to happen in
33 multiple directions.

34

35 One interesting thing about the deep
36 snow and I can't, of course, speak to how these bison
37 will continue to, you know, perform or thrive out here.
38 But what's a cool and interesting little morphological
39 fact about wood bison you know, wood bison and plains
40 bison are, you know, they're cousins. They're very
41 biologically similar, but they have some morphological
42 differences and those are connected directly to their
43 environment. So, wood bison are actually, you know,
44 specifically adapted to these northern latitudes and
45 these cold environments. And that's why they're the --
46 they're so large, like they're the largest land mammal
47 in North America, and they're bigger than the plains
48 bison. And the location of their hump is slightly
49 different so that they have these huge, like massive,
50 strong heads. So, I'm kind of making this motion that

1 you can't see, but so that they're able to like forage
2 really deep through that snow to reach their food source.
3 Now, of course, there are extreme winter events that
4 even, you know, are too harsh for that adaptation. But
5 it's interesting, just like a cool little fact where for
6 fun, for learning about bison that the wood bison are
7 actually uniquely adapted to be able to forage through
8 that deep snow. But yeah, your comment about education,
9 I just, I couldn't agree more. I think, you know, and
10 it's an exciting -- it can be an exciting opportunity
11 for everybody to learn and grow together. Thank you.
12

13 MR. ALEXANDER: Yeah. This is Member
14 Gerald Alexander. I got a concerned comment, or it could
15 be a question too, I guess. Are there any surveys being
16 done on these bison that are being released? And another
17 thing is how do they interact with other animals such
18 as caribou herds and whatnot? You know, do they, I mean,
19 are the bison going to overrun the caribou or, you know,
20 it's just a concern. Thank you.
21

22 MS. GORDON: Great. And then just to
23 position myself for the record, I, you know, I am not
24 you know, I am not affiliated with the reintroduction
25 that is happening. So, I'm not the person to like,
26 directly answer those questions, but I can just share
27 like what I know from -- because we also do have a longer
28 history of reintroduction in the Yukon and in Canada.
29 So, we have a lot more information to that's already
30 come out of there. So, what we -- our understanding so
31 far is that that is not a direct interaction or area of
32 concern, but it does not mean that it you know, I think
33 it's another really good question to be looking at. Lots
34 of good questions. Thank you.
35

36 MR. BASSICH: Yeah. This Member Bassich,
37 I just wanted to kind of echo that that was a comment I
38 was going to make as well. The Yukon Territory has had
39 bison now for I believe it's almost 2 decades or maybe
40 a little more than 2 decades. And they're extremely well
41 established and have dispersed quite a bit throughout
42 the Yukon territory now. So, you know, this, this may
43 be new to Alaska, but it's not new to them. And if you
44 want to understand where our future is, we just need to
45 have conversations with them because it's their future
46 is already there. And how they're dealing with it on the
47 local level, how they're dealing with it with conflict,
48 how they're dealing with it with harvestable surplus.
49 So, that would -- It's always better to visit the wheel
50 instead of reinvent the wheel.

1

2 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: So, I do go to
3 Canada for the Yukon River Panel, and I do have a lot
4 of friends there. And those friends tell me these are
5 tribal members and they tell me that they don't get any
6 of it. That's all for sale. And I don't know how true
7 that is, but they said that they come and kill them on
8 their land and they leave the gut piles and there's
9 bears around, and it's kind of torturous to watch meat
10 walk away from on your property and not get any. So, I
11 don't know if that's the truth of the whole thing, but
12 that's what a few of the tribal members told me. So, I'm
13 not really against it. I know that the area that these
14 bison have been dropped off in the Minto Flats is a
15 windy area. Some of the strongest wind in the Interior
16 coming out of the Minto Flats. When you fly an airplane
17 to Tanana or Manley, when the wind is blowing, you can
18 see the sand flying into the atmosphere so it's really,
19 really powerful wind there. And it will help clean that
20 -- lot of that snow off of the flats and give them a
21 little bit easier access I think in certain situations.
22 But I think there's going to be a learning curve for
23 them just as well as us, on how to survive in that land.
24 And everything is having hardship right now with the
25 winter that we had. We know that deep snow brings
26 hypothermia to calves and kills them. When we have
27 weather, especially exactly like we're having here right
28 now with the 40 below morning and near zero afternoons,
29 the animals rolling around in the snow and get wet. And
30 then the evening they get hypothermia and they freeze
31 to death. So, it's a learning curve for everybody. And
32 that's what I see going forward. That's my own thoughts
33 anyway. Thank you. Anybody else have anything to add?
34 Oh, I better go back to the -- Brooke here. We'll be on
35 this all day.

36

37

38 MS. MCDAVID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I did
39 -- this has been really great discussion. And I do want
40 to kind of bring us back to sort of the action item at
41 hand though, which is to forward comments to the Board.
42 There was one other or two other things that came up
43 that I didn't note when I gave my summary earlier that
44 were points raised by folks on this Council. And that
45 was also about -- I know Eva mentioned bison moving into
46 ag land, but also, I've heard the concern about bison
47 moving on to Native corporation land, and what sort of
48 support is going to be given to corporations to deal
49 with those bison should they move in and be having
50 impacts on those private lands.

50

1 Additionally, I've heard it brought up
2 that you know, there hasn't -- there weren't
3 consultations done on this. I mean, the state doesn't
4 typically do government to government consultations, but
5 that is something that U.S. Fish and Wildlife can do
6 upon request by tribes. And there have been some
7 questions raised about how subsection 10(e) of the
8 Endangered Species Act might apply to wood bison. And
9 that's the subsection that allows for the taking of
10 endangered species by Alaskan Natives for subsistence
11 uses. And that is how like marine mammals are taken. And
12 so, I'm just putting that on the record because that has
13 been raised and maybe something you want to include in
14 your comments to the Federal Subsistence Board that more
15 information needs to be provided about that subsection.
16

17 MR. BASSICH: This is Member Bassich. I
18 would like to request that at a future meeting OSM
19 provide us with an analysis or an explanation on the
20 10(e) -- is it 10(e)? Yeah, 10(e) process so that we can
21 be informed for making decisions in the future. Thank
22 you.
23

24 MS. MCDAVID: Thank you, Andy. And I
25 think we will have to reach out to U.S. Fish and Wildlife
26 Service endangered species program for that, but we can
27 definitely note it down for a future meeting. And I see
28 that Chaya has her hand up. Charlie has stepped out.
29 Haya, did you have a comment?
30

31 MS. GORDON: Yes, sorry. Just briefly,
32 and then I will close my mic for good on this meeting
33 and just listen in. But I just wanted to briefly in
34 terms of resources, I'm sure that many people are already
35 aware, but just in case we're not I just wanted to
36 mention the Intertribal Buffalo Council as I really like
37 incredible national organization that is doing, you
38 know, doing in terms of not reinventing wheels, but
39 visiting wheels. And of course, Alaska's wheel is
40 different and Intertribal is largely Lower 48, but I
41 think that just might be a really useful resource for
42 people to be aware of who want to learn more about bison
43 and bison in relationship to tribes and communities on
44 every level, like education and biology and culture. And
45 then I also just wanted to for the record, you know,
46 officially volunteer. If there are opportunities for a
47 working group or other ways to help facilitate further,
48 you know, conversations, if I can be of use to this
49 committee in that way. Thank you.
50

1 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you very much.
2 And I want to add one more thing before we change here
3 on the agenda. Can't remember everything as we go along
4 where -- this is March madness this year has been really
5 busy. But talking to residents a couple in Minto and
6 Nenana and Manley and in the opposed the bison. And
7 there's a bit of mistrust with the state because their
8 food has been eradicated from the flats from south of
9 Fairbanks all the way along the highways. The moose
10 counts are really down. And they think of it as
11 mismanagement or eradication when you kill cows and
12 calves and bulls that kill everything. So, there's a
13 little bit of mistrust there on their ability to feed
14 themselves and their families into the future. And I
15 think it would be a lot easier to welcome this in Yukon
16 Flats, where they could still have the ability to have
17 a little more trust. And it's not state there, it's
18 mostly federal, but they still have the ability to go
19 out and get some food. They're not influenced by the
20 highway real bad. So, I think it's a little easier and
21 a little bit more comfortable to see and let things
22 happen like that. And I really feel for the people along
23 the highway because I've been affected by it myself in
24 Rampart. On 20F there's only 3 moose killed last year.
25 This is really a time of hardship for our people. Moose
26 numbers are way down low, so of course there's going to
27 be concerns and trust issues. So, I just wanted to add
28 that comment to the pile of others. Thank you.

29
30 MS. MCDAVID: Mr. Chair. I just want --
31 this is Brooke. Just wanted to bring us back to the
32 action item and that is to send comments to the Federal
33 Subsistence Board. I might offer -- you could consider
34 a motion to send comments based on the discussion today.
35 And then I could work with yourself, Member Burk and
36 Member Evans, who've been really involved in this to,
37 to finalize that comment letter.

38
39 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you.

40
41 MR. BASSICH: Mr. Chair, Member Bassich.
42 I'd like to make a motion that the Eastern Interior RAC
43 send a letter to the Federal Subsistence Board. And I'll
44 identify the topics discussed in this discussion that
45 we just had as the subject matter of that letter on wood
46 bison.

47
48 MR. ALEXANDER: I'll second it.

49
50

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1 MR. BASSICH: And then just speaking to
2 the motion.....

3
4 (Simultaneous speech)

5
6 MS. MCDAVID: Can you say your name,
7 please?

8
9 MR. ALEXANDER: This is member Alexander.

10
11 MR. BASSICH: Yeah. Member Bassich here
12 and speaking to the motion, just referencing all the
13 previous discussion points on this agenda topic. Thank
14 you. And I call question, unless there's other -- any
15 other comments?

16
17 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: I'll ask for
18 unanimous consent. All those against, please signify by
19 saying aye.

20
21 (No response)

22
23 Hearing and seeing none. Passes. Thank
24 you. You may make your comment.

25
26 MR. SHERRY: Again, through the Chair,
27 I'm Christopher Sherry. I was quite fascinated to join
28 in on this conversation. The bison's effect on habitat,
29 I think is a super important thing to examine. In my
30 years involved with this project, if you look at you
31 know, the largest land stakeholder on their website,
32 they state their reasons for opposition to the wood
33 bison. And I'll just read directly you know, they have
34 it highlighted. "We additionally have not seen data
35 regarding impact to the environment from the
36 introduction of this species in the Innoko. We would
37 like ADF&G to view and analyze these impacts over a
38 longer time frame before initiating establishment of new
39 herds. Doyon would also like to be updated on the impacts
40 to the land before any introductions in other areas."

41
42 And I feel comfortable reading this
43 because I'm a shareholder, but what I'm getting at is -
44 - if besides Doyon, TCC has a resolution, that's -- that
45 opposes the wood bison. And so, I put a lot of thought
46 into this where tribes and the state government can work
47 together is in habitat monitoring. And as Linda pointed
48 out, the wood bison experience growth 8 out of 10 years
49 in their reintroduction. 2018, 2020 and 2023, we've
50 experienced snow like we've had this year. If we are

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1 working on some proposals here for tribes and for the
2 state and this is just in my spare time, but we got 1
3 or 2 villages in the GASH, 1 or 2 villages from Minto,
4 Manley, Rampart, Nenana and somewhere out of (In
5 Native), Birch Creek of Fort Yukon to participate in
6 capturing normal high water elevation, which is another
7 not just snow, and then freezing rain in the late spring
8 and composite over time. It will give everyone a much
9 better understanding and information available to drive
10 game management decisions. And so that's my comment. And
11 so again, thank you.

12

13 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you very much
14 for that. Okay. Does anybody need a break? Yep. 10
15 minutes. Thank you.

16

17 (Off record)

18

19 (On record)

20

21 Yeah. We're having too good of a time.
22 We're going to be here for another day, Linda. We just
23 can't stand it being away from each other. Okay, we're
24 moving on down the agenda. Okay. So, we're at the.....

25

26 (Talking)

27

28 Okay. Call for Alaska Board of Game
29 Proposals.

30

31 MS. MCDAVID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This
32 is Brooke, for the record. There is currently a Call for
33 Alaska Board of Game Proposals out for the Interior and
34 Eastern Arctic region and also Western Arctic and
35 Western regions. Those proposals are due Monday, May 1st
36 and so that covers also the Eastern Interior region.
37 This is the only meeting you'll have with the opportunity
38 to consider submitting proposals as a RAC. As you know
39 this is not a required action item since that is the
40 state system and the state call for proposals, but you
41 are welcome to consider submitting proposals as a
42 Regional Advisory Council if you wish. There are just a
43 couple things that were noted down following the last
44 meeting based on discussions that could be possible
45 ideas for Board of Game proposals. I'll just list them
46 for consideration. They're certainly not required but
47 just wanted to bring them up.

48

49 The first one was potentially submitting
50 a proposal to establish a customary and traditional use

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1 finding for brown bear in Unit 20E and perhaps 25B. The
2 state noted in some of their comments on the Eastern
3 Interior RAC proposal to the Federal Subsistence Board
4 that the state does not have a C&T finding in 20E for
5 brown bear. Another idea that was potentially posed, was
6 whether or not you'd want to consider increasing the
7 brown bear limit in 25B to 2 bears. You had put in a
8 proposal to do that on the federal side but it was noted
9 that on the state side it was just 1 bear. And then
10 lastly you could consider establishing the requirement
11 for registration permit for 25D Moose for potentially
12 better harvest reporting of moose in the flats. But those
13 are just ideas. And then I'll turn it back over to you
14 all for discussion of any other ideas or these ideas.

15

16 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: This is Charlie. I
17 like to follow suit with -- or either sign on to Western
18 Interiors RAC's possible proposal for wanton waste.
19 Guides and transporters need to have a waypoint and
20 location of their drops. I think that's really
21 important. You know, after hearing the Chair of the RAC
22 that's on the coast at Utqiaġvik, they've been spending
23 an awful lot of their search and rescue money rescuing
24 and picking up hunters that have been dropped off by
25 transporters and guides when they get in trouble and
26 they can't get a call back or answer back from the guides
27 and the people who drop them off. So, the price has been
28 going to the Utqiaġvik search and rescue, and they're
29 not really happy about it. So, there's a problem here
30 and it's a safety problem. Some of these people get hurt
31 and then they can't get ahold of their people that drop
32 them off and the people can start dying. So, I think
33 it's really important, and I like to add a little bit
34 more to the wanton waste part. It's real important. I
35 hunt in the Nowitna Wildlife Refuge most years, and you
36 got to check in when you go in there and you check out
37 whether you got a moose or not, just so they know --
38 have a better account and everything and I like that.
39 But the only thing I don't like is when I check in and
40 I go past -- a little bit past the checkpoint and there's
41 a big camp there, and there'll be a moose hanging there
42 in the game bag, right in the sun, now 60, 70 degrees,
43 this is earlier in the season. And when I -- whether I
44 get a moose or not, I only bring enough gear to stay for
45 about a week or so, and I'm leaving with a moose or
46 without that meat is still hanging there in the sun, and
47 there's worms dripping out the bottom of it, and it's
48 in view of the checkpoint. So that's what really bothers
49 me is that nobody is holding anybody accountable for the
50 meat. It's all about the rack on the animal. And there's

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1 many, many people that can't get a moose. There's many
2 units that have no moose anymore. And so, it's really
3 hard for me to see and hear about wanton waste. So, I
4 think that's really important. Thank you.

5
6 MS. MCDAVID: Thank you, Mr. Chair, this
7 is Brooke. I just wanted to follow up on your comment
8 about potentially signing on to Western Interiors idea
9 about the requiring that GPS point from transporters
10 dropping folks off. It's my understanding that's not
11 something that the Board of Game can regulate. And so,
12 I think Western Interior Council is writing a letter.
13 If you all want to sign on to that letter you could make
14 a motion to do that, and then I could chat with Jack
15 after the meeting and just make sure that's fine with
16 him to put your name on there as well.

17
18 And then it sounds like we need to find
19 out more about how to put in proposals or approach the
20 Big Game Commercial Services Board about some of these
21 requirements on state lands. As for federal lands, I
22 think that the letter that Western Interior is writing
23 might be going to the Innoko Refuge in particular. So,
24 perhaps we could write our own to the refugees as in our
25 region. And sorry, I'm just kind of talking through this
26 on the fly, so maybe not necessarily signing on to
27 Western Interiors letter to their refuge but sending a
28 very similar letter to the refugees. And perhaps the
29 other land managing agencies in the Eastern Interior
30 region requesting the same requirement to guides and
31 transporters.

32
33 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: That's why I'm so
34 happy you're here. Thank you for that. Let's -- go ahead,
35 Andy.

36
37 MR. BASSICH: Yeah. Thank you. For the
38 record, Member Bassich. First of all, while it's fresh
39 in my mind, I'd like to identify this as a topic of
40 discussion in our joint RAC meeting with the Western
41 Interior. And I'd really like to begin to pursue this.
42 And we need some information on the regulatory process
43 for air taxis within the state of Alaska, both on state
44 and federal lands. The processes for who regulates them,
45 what authority they have. And I'd also like a lot more
46 information on what authority or what liabilities air
47 taxis must carry in the event that they cannot pick up
48 their clientele. So, the point I'm making is if this is
49 an issue and it's a public safety issue, and it's a
50 trespass issue too, if air taxis are dropping off

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1 hunters, they're not picking them up, or they need to
2 be picked up or rescued by another entity, there needs
3 to be somebody held accountable for that. That should
4 not be the state of Alaska or any federal program's
5 money to do that, because that's a commercial endeavor.
6 So, whether it be their insurance or what -- or they --
7 the person who's signing on with the air taxi. I don't
8 know anything about that, but that cost must be incurred
9 by those two entities, not the state of Alaska and not
10 the federal rescue services that are out there. So, I
11 need a little bit more information on how we might be
12 able to address that. And I think that should be
13 thoroughly discussed in our Western RAC joint --
14 Eastern/Western RAC meeting. Thank you.

15
16 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you, Andy. I'm
17 also hearing some testimony yesterday about people
18 covering up the numbers on the airplane. That's really
19 concerning to me. I think that might be a federal
20 offense. And they could take pictures. And I'm just
21 saying, I'm not saying we need a proposal, but we need
22 to do something. But they have to be told that they take
23 pictures and time and dates, and then they can get a
24 flight path if they really want to dig into it, if the
25 authorities really want to find out too it's not hard.
26 Who it is, you know. But it's just a little extra work,
27 and I think that's terrible. I know that's something
28 that smugglers do. It's just crazy that they're doing
29 that and harassing animals and people and covering their
30 -- that's pretty privileged to me that way too far.

31
32 And another thing we want to talk about
33 was the, the kill count in 20F last fall was 3 moose and
34 I've been talking about that winter hunt. They have two
35 hunts in 20F, one in September and one in December. And
36 I don't think that we can justify having two hunts in
37 that that unit anymore with the amount of moose that's
38 being killed and harvested. Had concerns about this hunt
39 for a long time. People come into the valley, the big
40 (indiscernible) valley in the daytime with the
41 snowmachine, and they can kill a cow moose, which is not
42 allowed, and they haul it out to Eureka, to the highway
43 and be in Fairbanks before the daylight the next day.
44 We noticed when we're hauling wood in the road, we seen
45 cow moose standing on the side of the road at a certain
46 place, and then the next day, when you're going back out
47 for another load of wood, there's just a gut pile. So,
48 we know that they're taking cows and a bull hunt and
49 getting away with it. There used to be a nice little
50 herd of cows in that valley, and there's not one in

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1 there anymore. So, they've -- they're all gone. And it's
2 due to not only human pressure but weather pressure also.
3 We had really deep snow out there a couple years, but
4 they're having enough pressure on them. I don't know how
5 to address that. But other than closing this hunt that
6 we have. And I'd like to make a proposal to close that.
7 What's the number of that, Eva, can you tell us, please?

8
9 MS. BURK: Thanks. This is Eva. It's 20F
10 and the permit number would be RM781. The hunt is
11 December 1st through December 15th for one bull in 20F.
12

13 MS. MCDAVID: This is Brooke for the
14 record. So procedurally we will need motions for these.
15 If you have a couple, you can decide if you want to --
16 it might be best to just vote on them one by one. Then
17 it's more clear for the record.

18
19 MS. BURK: This is -- well, can I make a
20 comment about another similar closure? It's -- or do you
21 want to make a motion to do this one at a time?

22
23 MS. MCDAVID: Well, if you're going to
24 do a proposal to the Board of Game those will need to
25 go in individually, so.

26
27 MS. BURK: This is Eva. I make a motion
28 to submit a proposal to the Board of Game to close Unit
29 20F hunt number RM781, which is the winter hunt. December
30 1st to December 15th. Due to low population and low
31 harvest numbers.

32
33 MR. BASSICH: Member Bassich. Second.

34
35 MS. BURK: Yeah. Charlie already spoke
36 to this one. And there's also it's, you know, we've been
37 putting in a lot of people away in my area lately. We
38 just -- Charlie just lost his nephew and it's getting
39 harder and harder to get potlatch moose. And the moose
40 that we're getting, they have tapeworms. The meat is so
41 tough, you can't even -- and boil it to get it soft
42 enough. You're just chewing, chewing, chewing. I think
43 Charlie did -- and his team did a good job of tenderizing
44 the meat. But as soon as I took a bite, when I got home,
45 I asked him -- I said, hey, I think this moose got worms
46 in it. And then I found one in the marrow. And I've seen
47 them in the meat, the fascial tissue before, but I had
48 never seen it in the marrow. And we've talked about this
49 earlier in this meeting is there's concern about maybe
50 there's not older moose teaching those younger moose how

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1 to worm themselves with different plants. And I, again,
2 sometimes I really want to caution Fish and Game
3 management to not just look at numbers alone, but to
4 take these observations of health very seriously as to
5 the overall herd stability and the ability to maintain
6 harvest pressure at historical levels, we may need to
7 think really carefully about our moose hunts and listen
8 to folks on the ground that are bringing up concerns
9 about the health.

10
11 MR. BASSICH: Member Bassich. I call
12 question on the motion. Can we restate the motion,
13 please?

14
15 MS. MCDAVID: This is Brooke. The motion
16 on the floor is to submit a proposal to Alaska Board of
17 Game to close the Unit 20F winter moose hunt, and that's
18 RM781.

19
20 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you. I'll ask
21 for unanimous consent. All those against, please signify
22 by saying aye.

23
24 (No response)

25
26 Hearing and seeing none. Passes. Thank
27 you.

28
29 MS. MCDAVID: This is Brooke. Yeah. If
30 you all wanted to send a letter to federal land managers
31 about the air taxis. We would need that as a motion and
32 maybe a little specific, I know you mentioned refugees,
33 but if you want that to go to all the federal land
34 managers in your region would be helpful to clarify.

35
36 MR. BASSICH: Member Bassich here. I'd
37 like to make a motion Eastern Interior RAC write a letter
38 to all federal agencies within the Eastern RAC region
39 in regards to concerns with air taxis, both in wanton
40 waste issues and in public safety and not verifying where
41 their hunters are being dropped off, and potential
42 liabilities with rescues of hunters of air taxi
43 operators.

44
45 Yeah, and I guess I would add to that
46 motion, there's also concerns and observations of some
47 air taxi operators covering the aircraft identification
48 numbers on their aircraft. And we have great concerns
49 with that for illegal operations within federal lands.

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1 MR. ALEXANDER: I second.

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10 MR. ALEXANDER: I got a comment on -- oh,
11 I'm sorry. My name is Gerald Alexander. On the air taxis
12 they are -- the pilots being, you know I -- the penalties
13 I mean to fit into there somewhere, I mean there should
14 be, I mean, a big penalty. I mean, you know you leave a
15 hunter out there and they don't answer you back, you
16 know. And they have, like you mentioned, that some --
17 Charlie mentioned that, you know, something happened to
18 the hunter or something and, you know, God forbid that
19 he, you know, died or something. And the pilot should
20 be fined. The plane should be garnished, you know, and
21 so forth. I mean, there's got to be penalties.

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CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Where are we at? All
right. I'll ask for unanimous consent again. All those
against, please signify by saying, aye.

(No response)

Hearing and seeing none. Passes. Thank
you.

MS. BURK: Thanks. This is Eva. Yeah. I'm
concerned about some of these Southcentral Board of Game
proposals that affect the Interior region. Specifically,
Proposal 256 which looks to reauthorize the antlerless
moose season in Unit 20A. And then Proposal 257, which
looks to reauthorize the antlerless hunt in 20B. I'm
double checking that I'm -- yep. So, these -- I'm just
-- I want to -- this -- I want to submit proposals to
the Board of Game for the upcoming cycle for our area
and 2 proposals that are affecting our area, they're
being presented at the Southcentral Board of Game right
now. That's 256 and 257. And I think -- I don't think
we took action on those here, did we? Yeah.

So, I've got a real issue with these
antlerless hunts with the rationale behind using them
to control populations. I think when I'm reading the
proposed -- because these are proposed by Department of
Fish and Game, right. And the section and what is the
issue you would like the Board to address and why. 20B

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1 we -- that one is below objectives the population. And
2 20B is Minto Flats. And that's where they've
3 consistently had an antlerless hunt up until a few years
4 ago. And people in our area thought that you had to
5 reauthorize the antlerless hunt in order to be able to
6 take a cow for ceremony. And that was just wrong. And
7 so, they did not really understand that. And so, our
8 elders recently have been asking us -- that's actually
9 why I started getting involved in 2020 with the Board
10 of Game and these bodies, was because our elders in the
11 Minto region said our moose are declining, and we need
12 you young people to show up and speak up. And then after
13 that, that's when we saw that the scientific data did
14 confirm what our elders were saying as there was a big
15 moose decline in Unit 20B. So, the reauthorizations that
16 are asking for 20B are there in Proposal 257 and I think
17 we should take away all antlerless hunts in 20B. There
18 -- they didn't hold any. They kind of have to reauthorize
19 these every few years -- 4 years. And so, they didn't
20 do any for the past few years because of the deep snow
21 and population declines. But in 20B there -- there's
22 been a lot of roadkill lately because of deep snow. And
23 so, part of the department's solution is to have a cow
24 hunt in the roadway corridors, which I think is just
25 counter intuitive to rebuilding a population in 20B and
26 understanding that in times of deep snow, yeah, they're
27 going to use that corridor. It's the easiest route for
28 them. And so, I don't think that I -- the response should
29 be us taking more moose -- we need to have -- we need
30 to figure out ways along the highway to provide reprieve
31 for these moose. I've heard of different department
32 ideas of creating a browse off the highway to try to
33 entice moose to this other section. I'm moving my arms
34 so they're like, the moose aren't on the roadway, but
35 they'd be off. But then you'd have to be plowing trails
36 for them, right, like during the deep snow. So, it's a
37 little tricky, but I think we as humans, we can work
38 that out. We're Alaskans and this again, is a education
39 of understanding that resources are in serious decline
40 in Alaska. And we need to all work together to preserve
41 them.

42
43 And then the one hunt I'm a little more
44 concerned about -- because I know 20B is not trying to
45 have the registration antlerless hunt. But Proposal 256
46 right now that's Southcentral is trying to reauthorize
47 the Antlerless hunt in 20A. And the one that I'm really
48 concerned about is the antlerless moose by registration
49 permit only October through February hunt. And in 20A
50 we've been hunting, like I said, we've been putting a

00039

1 lot of people away. And so, in 20B we're having decline.
2 That's to the west and then 20A is to the east. And
3 that's where we've been going recently to try to look
4 for moose for potlatch. And so, we're having to rely on
5 20A more. And I'm really concerned the way that we did
6 cow hunt in 20B if we take that methodology and
7 management approach in 20A within a few years from now,
8 we could be facing similar conditions. And also, the
9 rationale in the department specifically says deep snow
10 can cause hardship on moose populations. And that's what
11 we're seeing this year. So, I feel like this
12 authorization for registration cow hunt is premature.
13 And I'm just against cow hunts in general, especially
14 when we're looking at the state of things across the
15 board.

16
17 And the part that's the most concerning
18 is offering this registration hunt before it's clear to
19 me, as somebody who gets permits for hunters, whether
20 or not we can hunt for a cow in 20A for potlatch. Because
21 the last time we applied for a permit, you could not
22 take a cow in 20A. And to me, that's a problem. So, you
23 should be allowed to take a cow for a ceremony first.
24 That needs to change before we're going to allow these
25 registration hunts. And so, I think these have to be two
26 separate proposals, but I'm similarly asking to rescind
27 the antlerless authorizations in 20A and 20B. And I went
28 on there and I mix things up so if anything's unclear,
29 please let me know.

30
31 MR. BASSICH: I point of clarification,
32 do you think it's best to create new proposals to oppose
33 the authorizations, or should we just oppose the
34 proposals that are trying to seek reauthorization?

35
36 MS. BURK: I think we need to do 4 things
37 right. Well, I think we should oppose these proposals
38 for Southcentral Board of Game that's coming up here
39 shortly. I think those on time comments were due already
40 though.

41
42 MS. MCDAVID: Tomorrow.

43
44 MS. BURK: Tomorrow, okay. So, we've got
45 time. Always working at the last minute. And then I
46 think what I'm concerned about is in the cycle for our
47 region that these proposals, if they don't make it
48 through here, or if they do make it through, I want to
49 have a proposal in place to rectify the situation for
50 next go around. Yeah.

1

2

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: This is Charlie. I would -- I think there's a win-win here. If they would work with the tribe and let us take some of those cows for potlatch and we'll help them out with that problem. You know, there's a lot of people have been passing away and I'm not joking, there's been over 20 deaths in the last year in Nenana, and that right there would take care of their problem. As with the weather uncertainties right now this year with the deep snow and like I stated earlier, the calves are dying in it. They get wet in the heat of the day and then it gets 40 below at night, they die of hypothermia. So actually, they need to dig a little deeper in a year like this and figure it out a little better. But I think that it could work directly with the tribe if they want to do eradicate or lower the number of animals in that particular area. Thank you.

18

19

MS. MCDAVID: This is Brooke. Okay. For procedure since there are comments due tomorrow for Board of Game proposals that are coming up at that Southcentral meeting for these Antlerless Moose Hunt Reauthorizations, I would suggest that you consider someone putting a motion on the table to, as Member Burk suggested, oppose 256 and 257. And then perhaps if that motion is seconded, just provide a real take home point justification. Because I'm not going to have time to go back through the transcripts and really dig out a lot of -- weed through your great comments that you just made. But if we could condense that would help me. Thank you.

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CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: I agree that just putting them back in there really quick and we could do other things with the call for proposals coming in our area if we wanted to add more. So, I appreciate that in the timely manner.

MS. BURK: This is Eva. I make a motion for the EIRAC to oppose Proposals 256 and 257 at the upcoming Southcentral Board of Game meeting, March 2025 -- or sorry, March 2026. Thanks.

MR. BASSICH: Member Bassich here, seconds the motion.

MS. BURK: Yes. Thank you. This -- these proposals seek to reauthorize a antlerless moose hunt. In 20B we are below the management objective for population by quite a bit. And these proposals are

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1 intended to relieve moose vehicle collisions on highway
2 corridors for 20B, and we think there are better ways
3 to do that. For 20A, the antlerless reauthorization for
4 drawing hunt is because they want to use it as part of
5 an intensive management to -- for -- to meet their
6 population objectives. However, in November of 2024, in
7 Unit 20A, the population estimate was 11,696 moose with
8 a 90% confidence interval, which mean a range of 10,155
9 to 13,237 moose. They further state that this is within
10 the intensive management population objective of 10,000
11 to 15,000 moose. And as I've mentioned earlier, when
12 we're talking about setting population, whether it's for
13 salmon escapement goals or for moose, where it's a
14 population objective range, in this instance, we are
15 only -- with the confidence interval at 10,155 were only
16 155 over the number of the bottom population objective
17 of 10,000/15,000 moose. And for me, that type of
18 rationale and just barely getting above lower ends of
19 escapement of population objectives, is a sure way to
20 continue to see declines in the population. And
21 antlerless hunts, there's been lots of documentation,
22 especially from the Canadian side on by taking one cow,
23 how many moose you take out of the population from that
24 cow in the future, so. I hope that was brief, but good
25 enough. Thanks.

26
27 MS. MCDAVID: This is Brooke. Yes, that
28 was very helpful. Thank you. I have those points noted
29 down.

30
31 MR. BASSICH: Call question. Member
32 Bassich calling question.

33
34 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay, I'll ask for
35 unanimous consent again. All those against, please
36 signify by saying aye.

37
38 (No response)

39
40 Hearing and seeing none. Motion passes.
41 Thank you.

42
43 MS. MCDAVID: Thank you, Mr. Chair and
44 Council Members. We'll work to get that letter in by the
45 comment deadline tomorrow. So, Mr. Chair expect to --
46 for me to follow up by the end of the day tomorrow with
47 the draft for your approval. And it sounded like there
48 was some other discussion. I wanted to ask if you
49 thought, Eva and Charlie, if that some of those proposal
50 ideas might be put in by your local ACs and then EIRAC

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1 could support them or take them up in the fall time at
2 the fall meeting? Okay. And I'm seeing yeses for those,
3 but let's turn back to, I guess if there are other ideas
4 for proposals that the Eastern Interior RAC would like
5 to submit to Board of Game.

6
7 MR. BASSICH: Member Bassich here. Yeah,
8 thank you for the reminder on some of those grizzly
9 bear, brown bear proposals that were put in at this
10 point in time. I don't feel that from my region we need
11 to do anything, along those lines. So, I think at this
12 point in time we'd like to hopefully see our -- what has
13 been asked for done and then give it a year or two and
14 see how things developed and adjust at that point. Thank
15 you.

16
17 MS. MCDAVID: Thank you, Member Bassich.
18 Yeah. And as I just said you know, most of you are all
19 involved in your local ACs. So, come fall time, if there
20 are proposals, we can take those up as a Council. I also
21 wanted to note, and this isn't for this Board of Game
22 cycle, but the Fairbanks Area Biologist Jeff Wells had
23 got in touch with me to talk about something for the
24 next federal wildlife cycle. The Fairbanks area moose
25 hunts went to a registration permit this last Board of
26 Game cycle for better harvest reporting. And he wanted
27 to propose to the Council whether you would want to
28 consider submitting a similar proposal on the federal
29 side for that. But what we can bring that up next federal
30 wildlife cycle. I just wanted to have that on the record
31 so we don't forget about it. Any other Board of Game
32 proposal ideas at this time?

33
34 (No response)

35
36 And I will say -- this is Brooke again.
37 I will say, if there are other ideas before the Council
38 adjourns at the end of the meeting, you can always bring
39 those back for consideration.

40
41 MS. BURK: Brooke, just so I'm clear, the
42 Board of Game proposals are -- I know I should know
43 this, but I've been working very heavily in fisheries,
44 so.

45
46 MS. MCDAVID: Those are due May 1st, and
47 the call for Board of Game proposals is on page 55 of
48 your meeting packets.

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1 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you for that.
2 Moving on. So, we're way down on the list now.

3
4 (Talking)

5
6 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Hello. Next on our
7 list is 12, fishery -- Fisheries Reports. We're on f -
8 Copper River Fisheries Reports. Are you guys online?

9
10 MS. COHEN: Hi, Mr. Chair. This is Amber
11 Cohen from Wrangell-St. Elias. I am online.

12
13 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Well, you have the
14 floor. Thank you for being here.

15
16 MS. COHEN: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair.
17 And thank you to the Council again for the record, my
18 name is Amber Cohen. I'm a Cultural Anthropologist for
19 Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve but I'm
20 giving this report as an Acting Subsistence Program Lead
21 for the park. The updated fisheries report is a
22 supplemental handout. And I'm just going to ask the
23 Coordinator, does the Council have the handout printed
24 out?

25
26 MS. MCDAVID: Hi, Amber, this is Brooke.
27 Yes, they do. Council members in your binder on page 71,
28 you'll find the Wrangell-St. Elias Fisheries Report.

29
30 MS. COHEN: Okay. Thank you so much,
31 Brooke. I want to direct the Council's attention to the
32 3rd page of that report. It will say highlights of as
33 of February 24th, 2026. Wrangell St.-Elias issued 251
34 Chitina subdistricts, 323 Glennallen subdistrict and 3
35 Batzulnetas permits. So, in terms of permitting, we were
36 between the 5- and 10-year average for the Glennallen
37 subdistrict, but we were definitely permitting higher
38 than both the 5-year and the 10-year average for the
39 Chitina subdistrict. Of the permits that we issued for
40 the Glennallen subdistrict, around 54% of them had been
41 fished on and 46% were returned as did not fish. For the
42 Chitina subdistrict, 52% were fished on and 48% were
43 returned, as did not fish. For both subdistricts, we are
44 at or over 95% of harvest reports returned and that is
45 our highest return rate since 2002. One of the things
46 that I get to do in my job is to follow up with people
47 when they are late for reporting, and so I get to hear
48 why people didn't fish, which is usually a reason why
49 someone did not send in their report. And what I heard
50 last summer was a lot of issues with low water in the

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1 Copper River. There was a lot of debris that were hitting
2 fish wheels, particularly in the upper part of the Copper
3 River. Some people reported that they did not need to
4 use their fishing permit because they were given fish
5 by family and friends. And then, as usual, there are
6 life things that happen. Some people had work or they
7 ended up moving out of Alaska and did not use their
8 permits.
9

10 The overall expanded estimated harvest
11 this season was 19,095 fish, of which 18,561 of those
12 were sockeye salmon. 439 were chinook salmon and 85 were
13 coho salmon. This overall total harvest is just slightly
14 below the 5- and 10-year averages. Sockeye salmon
15 harvest was also slightly below the 5- and 10-year
16 average. And chinook salmon harvest was 42% below the
17 5-year average and 51% below the 10-year average. 2018
18 and 2019 were the last strong years for chinook harvest,
19 and since then we've been seeing a trend downwards for
20 decreased harvests overall for chinook. Sockeye harvest
21 in the Glennallen subdistrict was slightly below average
22 and chinook harvest was below average. Sockeye harvest
23 in the Chitina subdistrict was above average. And though
24 the chinook harvest was below the 5-year average, it was
25 above the 10-year average.
26

27 About 70% of fish were harvested by fish
28 wheel and 30% by dipnet. But the dipnet harvest was a
29 little higher than the 5-year average and significantly
30 higher than the 10-year average. Most harvests occurred
31 in June and July. About 80% of harvests for the Chitina
32 subdistrict. For the Glennallen subdistrict about 50%
33 of harvests occurred in July. In the Glennallen
34 subdistrict most of the fish were caught in the section
35 between Tazlina and Gakona. And in the Chitina
36 subdistrict Wood Canyon, O'Brien Creek and Healy Creek
37 were 3 locations with the most harvest.
38

39 So, to summarize, our past season dip
40 netting has increased though fish wheel still take most
41 of the harvest. Sockeye harvest was relatively on
42 average, and chinook harvests overall has been
43 decreasing for the past few years, which is in line with
44 some weaker chinook runs in the Copper River. And I just
45 want to end with a few highlights from the rest of the
46 report. One thing that you all may know is that our
47 Fisheries Biologist Dave Sarafin, retired in May of last
48 year, so we've been a real team effort here at Wrangell-
49 St. Elias to fill in the gaps from his retirement. And
50 one way that we fill in the gaps is to work with some

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1 really awesome partners. So, we work with Ahtna
2 Intertribal Resource Commission on quite a few projects,
3 which I'll mostly let AITRC talk to. But to highlight
4 our Tanana Creek weir, and we're working on an inventory
5 of harvestable fish projects on 10 lakes in Wrangell-
6 St. Elias. And I just want to end with talking a little
7 bit about plans for this upcoming season. So, the
8 upcoming fisheries season, park staff have plans to meet
9 with different partners, such as the Alaska Department
10 of Fish and Game in Glennallen, Native Village of Eyak,
11 Chugach National Forest and AITRC for pre-season
12 coordination discussions. The federal subsistence salmon
13 fishery of the Copper River will open on May 15th, and
14 it should remain open until September 30th, unless in-
15 season run assessments prompt concerns of meeting salmon
16 escapement goals. So, that is what I have for the Council
17 and happy to take any questions.

18
19 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Very good report.
20 Thank you. Any questions for her?

21
22 (No response)

23
24 Oh, that was a great report. I really
25 appreciate it. Thank you. That was so good, we don't
26 have any questions. Thank you.

27
28 MS. COHEN Great. Thank you.

29
30 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Oh, I'm sorry I lied
31 to you. We have one.

32
33 MS. COHEN: Okay.

34
35 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: But it was a good
36 report.

37
38 MS. BURK: Thank you, yes. Charlie likes
39 your numbers. I do too. This is Eva. I remember the
40 permit or not permit sorry, proposal. Fisheries proposal
41 that you all put in last year. Right? To limit the
42 commercial opener in the mouth of the Copper River. It
43 wasn't that put in by the Wrangell-St. Elias. Am I mixing
44 people up? No, this is right.

45
46 MS. COHEN: Through the Chair.

47
48 MS. BURK: Yes.

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1 MS. COHEN: Correct. That was put in
2 through Wrangell-St. Elias for the Board of Fisheries
3 meeting in Cordova. And that was proposal 51, which was
4 adopted by the Board of Fisheries, but amended slightly
5 from what the park had originally proposed.
6

7 MS. BURK: Okay. Thanks for that. And
8 then what I'm trying to recall is -- because I thought
9 the idea was to limit the commercial opener so that
10 chinook salmon could have a chance to get through. And
11 if I recall from talking to local people and I'm still
12 going back through stuff from this last year, wasn't
13 there an emergency closure? And wasn't there a
14 commercial opportunity for king salmon but there was no
15 subsistence opportunity for king salmon on the Copper
16 River? Can you help me kind of sort that out a little
17 bit? Thanks.
18

19 MS. COHEN: Yeah. Of course. So, through
20 the Chair there were emergency closures in the state
21 fishery, particularly in the Chitina personal use
22 subdistrict. But for the federal subsistence, there were
23 no closures last year. Sometimes there are some
24 confusion when the state closes or the state restricts
25 in the state subsistence in the Glennallen subdistrict.
26 But it does not affect federally qualified subsistence
27 users. So sometimes on the park, as federal managers,
28 we have to clarify for users who think that they are
29 being restricted by the state and we reassure them
30 because federal subsistence is open, their opportunities
31 remain the same. So last season, there were no federal
32 special actions that were taken, no emergency closures
33 and federal subsistence remained open the entire season.
34

35 MS. BURK: Okay. Thank you. That helps
36 me clarify it. That was very helpful. Thanks so much.
37

38 (Pause)

39 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Great report. Thank
40 you.
41

42 MS. COHEN: Thank you to the Council.
43

44 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay. Now on the --
45 next on the list is g - OSM Fisheries Resource Monitoring
46 and Partners for Fisheries Monitoring Programs Updates.
47
48

49 MS. WILLIAMS: Good morning, Mr. Chair
50 and Members of the Council. I'm Liz Williams,

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1 Anthropologist for OSM. And Brooke, can you tell us what
2 page this is on in their packet? It's not in there.
3 Okay. The Office of Subsistence Management posted a
4 notice of funding opportunity for the Partners for
5 Fisheries Monitoring Program during the spring of 2025.
6 And so, we call this the Partners Program. And this is
7 a competitive grant for Alaska Native and rural
8 nonprofit organizations to get funding to strengthen
9 Alaska Native and rural involvement in federal
10 subsistence management by providing salary funds to
11 organizations so they can hire professional biologists,
12 social scientists like an anthropologist or an educator.
13 And the grant also provides funds for science and culture
14 camps and paid student internships. The funding lasts
15 for 4 years, and the Program Review Panel was made up
16 of federal staff throughout Department of Interior. So,
17 biologists and anthropologists. And they reviewed the
18 proposals and the Office of Subsistence Management
19 regional director has approved funding for 3 new
20 partners and that includes the Bristol Bay Native
21 Association, the Native Village of Eyak, and the Ahtna
22 Intertribal Resource Commission that Amber just
23 mentioned. And it's really nice that the Native Village
24 of Eyak and Ahtna Intertribal Resource Commission
25 collaborate and that way we have a better look at what's
26 going on in the Copper River. Because they work together
27 and share information.

28
29 The next notice of funding opportunity
30 will be sometime in the spring of 2027 for funding to
31 begin in 2028. And if anyone wants more information about
32 this program, you can contact Fisheries Biologist Jarred
33 Stone or anthropologist Liz Williams, me, via email or
34 phone. Our contact information is on the Partner's web
35 page at the doi.gov/subsistence/partners or if anyone
36 is interested, just, you know, approach me at this
37 meeting and we can talk about it. So that is the
38 conclusion of our update about the Partners Program.
39 Would you like for me to proceed to the fisheries
40 Resource Monitoring program update? Okay.

41
42 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: One question first,
43 please.

44
45 MS. WILLIAMS: Oh, sure.

46
47 MR. BASSICH: Yeah. Thank you. On the
48 program that you just described, is that solely for
49 Native corporations or can that be pretty much any
50 entity?

1

2

MS. WILLIAMS: It's rural and Alaska Native.

3

4

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MR. BASSICH: Okay. And you said that there is an educational or communications section for that? All right. Thank you very much. Appreciate that.

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MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you. Okay. The mission of the Monitoring Program is similar, but it's to identify and provide information needed to sustain federal subsistence fisheries. And you know about this because you've worked on developing the priority information needs for your area. So, it also supports meaningful involvement in fisheries management by Alaska Native and rural organizations and promotes collaboration among federal, state, Alaska Native and local organizations. So, the OSM is currently in the final phase of the 2026 Monitoring Program funding cycle, and the Federal Subsistence Board met in early February and approved the final monitoring program funding plan. So, when this cycle or as this cycle comes to an end, it's time now for Councils to begin developing new priority information needs for the 2028 monitoring program call for proposals.

MR. GRAHAM: Mr. Chair and we would also we'd like to ask for volunteers from this Council to help develop PINs. We got some from Western Interior and then we'll meet when we get some from YKD. And then you'll all meet together and collaborate and come up with the PINs.

MS. MCDAVID: This is Brooke, for the record. This comes up every couple years. And a lot of times the priority information needs that you've brought up in the past continue forward and Cory and fisheries staff have record of those so they'll share those when the group meets. But we do need a couple volunteers. It doesn't actually have to be a couple, it could be one or as many as you'd like to join in with that small working group. And those priority information needs will come back to your Council at your meeting in the fall, I believe, for you to review as a whole Council. I did here earlier in this meeting priority information need mentioned already for those discrete stocks that you all discussed. So, we'll be sure to make sure that is funneled into to this process, but would anyone like to volunteer to participate?

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1 MR. BASSICH: Member Bassich here. I
2 participated in that for many, many years, and I'm happy
3 to lend my voice and 2 cents. Oh, you guys are in trouble
4 now.

5
6 MS. MCDAVID: So, for the record Eva Burk
7 volunteers to bring all her numbers to the PIN meeting.
8 Thanks.

9
10 MS. BURK: There's movie. This is Eva.
11 About deliver us from Eva. And in this movie, this lady
12 embodies my first nickname ever given to me by my
13 classmates, which was Sergeant Nerd Burk, so.

14
15 (Laughter)

16
17 MR. BASSICH: This is Member Bassich. I
18 think that should be played at our next meeting please.
19 During lunch break.

20
21 (Laughter)

22
23 Member Bassich here. Do you have a time
24 frame for when you may begin to have some of those
25 discussions?

26
27 MR. GRAHAM: Mr. Chair, through the
28 Chair, this is Cory. We don't have -- we tend to do it
29 end of the summer, but we just work with everyone to
30 find something that fits into your schedule. I think
31 last time was around August, but it's flexible and, you
32 know, whatever works for you.

33
34 MR. BASSICH: Thank you.

35
36 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you all so
37 much. Oh, go ahead.

38
39 MS. MCDAVID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We
40 had a request if it would be okay for Amber Cohen to go
41 ahead and give the rest of Wrangell-St. Elias report
42 because she has to leave at noon.

43
44 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Please do.

45
46 MS. COHEN: Okay. Thank you so much. Yep.

47
48 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: We can hear you
49 fine.

50

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1 MS. COHEN: Thank you. Okay. Thank you
2 for the record again this is Amber Cohen now, speaking
3 as the Cultural Anthropologist for Wrangell-St. Elias
4 National Park and Preserve. And just to confirm with the
5 Coordinator that the Subsistence and Anthropology Report
6 is also a supplemental handout for the Council.

7
8 MS. MCDAVID: This is Brooke. Yes, ma'am.
9 That is correct. Council members, you can find that on
10 page 95.

11
12 MS. COHEN: Thank you so much, Brooke.
13 I'm going to start on the bottom of page 95 where it
14 talks about the Alternative Harvest Monitoring Project.
15 And then I'll go into permitting and harvest report data
16 for the last year. This project was developed with Ahtna
17 Intertribal Resource Commission's Anthropologist David
18 Hooper, and it came from doing harvest assessments in
19 Slana, Chistochina and Mentasta, where when we were
20 interviewing people about their subsistence history. You
21 know, we were really focusing on a 1-year snapshot, and
22 what came up from the interview participants is that
23 subsistence is their whole life. And, are there ways
24 that we can capture a subsistence life history in order
25 to give more context to what people are seeing out there
26 and experiencing as they are engaging in subsistence?
27 So, we came up with this project to figure out a
28 methodology that could do that. So, we're looking at
29 developing a network analysis methodology to capture
30 sharing and resource use. We've interviewed one person
31 so far and we're looking to do more interviews throughout
32 this year. So, I just wanted to highlight this project
33 because if anyone might be interested in having their
34 subsistence life history documented, particularly people
35 who live within the Copper Basin or the Ahtna traditional
36 territory, then we would be very excited to interview
37 you. And you can reach out to me, or you can reach out
38 to David Huber at AITRC.

39
40 For the top of page 95 on your report,
41 it gives a summary of overall permits that were issued
42 this year. So, we issued 221 federal subsistence hunting
43 permits for moose, goat, and sheep for Wrangell-St.
44 Elias lands in Units 11 and 12. Our most frequently
45 issued permit was the Unit 11 remainder or the FM1106
46 permit, and that was 147 permits issued, 55 people hunted
47 and 5 moose were harvested. So that's a 9% success rate.
48 To put that into context, both the 5- and 10-year average
49 is 13 moose harvested on this hunt, so 5 moose is about
50 61% below the average. In terms of success rate, the 5-

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1 year average is about 20%. So, a 9% success rate is
2 about 55% below the average. But I will say I am waiting
3 on 3 harvest reports. So, the harvest could go up to 8.
4 But I'm thinking that 5 moose is probably what people
5 got this past year. The RM291 harvest is on the 3rd page
6 of your report on Table 2, and you can see that success
7 rates were also lower for both the overall hunt and for
8 federally qualified subsistence users, but not as much
9 as with the FM1106 hunt. Success on the RM291 has been
10 decreasing since 2022, but federally qualified hunters
11 are continuing to take most of the harvest. This year,
12 8 out of 13 moose were harvested by federally qualified
13 subsistence users. The 5-year average of total harvest
14 is 18, so this year's harvest was about 27% below the
15 average. And what we've heard out there for -- and maybe
16 you all have heard too, is that it was sort of a warmer
17 fall. Moose weren't moving as much until the season
18 really closed. And so, there was less success going out
19 there for people who are moose hunting in Unit 11.

20
21 Going to the second page of your report
22 for all the other hunts are listed. All the harvest
23 reports have been returned. For the Unit 11 goat hunt,
24 5 individuals hunted and one goat, the first since 2019
25 was harvested, and that was a 20% success rate. For Unit
26 11 winter moose, 6 people hunted, 2 moose were harvested,
27 and that was a 33.3% success rate. For elder sheep in
28 Unit 11, 11 people hunted, 2 sheep were harvested and
29 that was 18% success rate. For Unit 12 caribou 4 people
30 hunted, but no caribou were harvested this year. On the
31 next page for Unit 12 elder sheep, 2 people hunted and
32 no sheep were harvested. On the 4th page of the report,
33 you'll see the projects and we've introduced these to
34 the Council a few times. But there's two things I want
35 to highlight on here. One is that the technical paper
36 for the harvest assessments for Slana, Mentasta and
37 Chistochina will not be published until likely the late
38 spring. And that was due to some staffing capacity with
39 the Division of Subsistence, but we hope to get that out
40 soon.

41
42 And then another exciting update, and
43 why I have to leave at 12:00 today is that with the park
44 geologists, we are heading to Yakutat and we're doing a
45 weekend of workshops that bring elders from Cordova to
46 Yakutat, and they are going to meet with elders there
47 and talk about landscape change on the coastline, as
48 well as doing some site visits in Yakutat. And this will
49 help inform our ethnographic landscape study that we're
50 doing out there. So, we're excited to get started on

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1 that. And that is what I have for the Council and happy
2 to answer any questions.

3
4 MR. BASSICH: Yeah. This member Bassich.
5 Thank you very much for that. It's kind of interesting
6 that you brought this up, because we were having some
7 discussions earlier about potentially trying to get us
8 some sort of data on ANS. What the state calls ANS for
9 federally qualified people. And so, it seems like you're
10 a little ahead of the game here. I'm just looking at
11 some of these success rates for moose and I'm actually
12 kind of surprised that they're as low as they are. Are
13 the people in the region concerned about that, or is
14 this just kind of a normal harvest rate success for that
15 particular area?

16
17 MS. COHEN: Yeah. Thank you for the
18 question, through the Chair. I do think this was a much
19 lower year than the past few years. I think generally
20 on the FM1106 hunt, we tend to have like a relatively
21 lower success rate within like, you know, 10 to 13 moose
22 harvested. So only 5 moose harvested this year was pretty
23 low. I haven't heard from users that they are
24 particularly concerned about the moose population. I
25 think it was just the weather. And for some people, it
26 was not having enough time to be out there. And the Unit
27 11 remainder area is really large. So, the moose really
28 move around quite a bit. But there have been a few
29 proposals that, you know, the Council looked at in your
30 winter meeting that looked at extending the Unit 11 moose
31 season due to these warmer conditions in the late fall
32 or early fall. And I think that it -- I think it would
33 provide some more opportunity for federally qualified
34 hunters to potentially get moose you know, if it was
35 extended a few days. But so there is definitely a low
36 year, and we'll see how this upcoming year goes as well.

37
38 MR. BASSICH: And, Member Bassich here,
39 again. Thank you for that. And you mentioned at the
40 beginning of your talk that you are going to be doing
41 more extensive surveys with people. Could you elaborate
42 on that?

43
44 MS. COHEN: Yes, through the Chair. I
45 would love to elaborate on that. So, the project that
46 David Hooper from AITRC and myself are working on are
47 doing long form interviews. So, part of it is going
48 through different subsistence resources that people may
49 use. Part of it is looking at genealogy and who you
50 share with in your family and outside of your family,

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1 and trying to create a network relationship in the Copper
2 Basin area. The goal is -- and then also looking at
3 things like transportation and economic costs that come
4 into subsistence. So, the idea was to get a more holistic
5 methodology for capturing subsistence use in a person's
6 lifetime. And we're working on how that might look. So,
7 these -- in a way, we look at these interviews as almost
8 experimental. And then the end result will be a technical
9 paper that comes up with a methodology that hopefully,
10 for example, AITRC could use so that David could go out
11 and do a form of harvest assessments that could
12 complement what the Division of Subsistence does in
13 their realm.

14
15 MR. BASSICH: Yeah. Member Bassich again,
16 thank you for that. Could you keep us informed as to how
17 that project develops over time? I'm really interested
18 in that. And I think there's -- I think it's really time
19 -- timely that you are working on this, considering some
20 of the earlier discussions in our meeting regarding the
21 need for some of this type of data from the federally
22 qualified people. So, I'd really appreciate that in
23 reports moving forward in time. If you could, update us
24 on how this program is developing and what you are
25 learning. Thank you.

26
27 MS. COHEN: Through the Chair. I
28 definitely will. Thank you.

29
30 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you very much.
31 No other questions? Okay. Linda has a question. Thank
32 you. Go ahead, Linda.

33
34 MS. EVANS: Yeah. My question is about
35 the cultural knowledge, how you're implementing that
36 into your process. Local cultural knowledge.

37
38 MS. COHEN: Yeah. Thank you. Through the
39 Chair. I just want to clarify how we're incorporating
40 it within this particular project or how we incorporate
41 within projects that we develop in general?

42
43 MS. EVANS: This particular project.

44
45 MS. COHEN: Yes. Okay. Through the Chair,
46 thank you for that question. So, this project was
47 inspired by people who have a long-term traditional
48 knowledge within the Copper Basin saying that the
49 traditional methodology that was being used to capture
50 subsistence use wasn't quite holistic enough. So,

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1 getting that feedback is what developed the types of
2 topics that David and I are looking at, which I said was
3 a wide range of resources, transportation methods, gear
4 methods, sharing networks family, the idea of adding in
5 genealogy into this really came from traditional
6 knowledge as well. And then as we write up the
7 methodology, hearing what people say throughout these
8 interviews will really determine the way that report
9 will end up looking.

10
11 MR. BASSICH: Yeah, Member Bassich here
12 again, Amber. I'm wondering if you might consider -- I
13 think another data point that might be really
14 interesting to track over time is asking individuals to
15 try and describe how competition or I'm going to use the
16 word competition with other hunters, but how that might
17 be impacting them over time. There's a lot of concern
18 with growing populations or expansion throughout the
19 state of Alaska into the more rural areas with that --
20 this kind of hunter conflict. So, I think that would be
21 a really interesting topic to bring into this and try
22 and track that over time and see how that impacts some
23 of the subsistence activities. Thank you.

24
25 MS. COHEN: Through the Chair. Thank you
26 so much for that suggestion.

27
28 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: All right. Thank you
29 so much for your report.

30
31 MS. COHEN: Thank you so much to the
32 Council.

33
34 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Well, it looks like
35 it's about lunch time. We don't want anybody getting
36 hangry in here. It's 12:00. I'd say 1:00 is good enough
37 so we can try to get done today. Thank you all.

38
39 (Off record)

40
41 (On record)

42
43 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Good afternoon,
44 everybody. Well, call the meeting back to order. I --
45 Eva says I got to use the gavel.

46
47 (Gavel bangs)

48
49 For -- so first up, on other reports,
50 we have a little -- it says we have a time limit of

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1 about 15 minutes on these reports unless approved in
2 advance, so keep timely manner and first in line is
3 Tanana Chiefs Conference Tribal Resource Stewardship
4 Department, but I don't see them in the room, so unless
5 they're online, let me know at this time. If not, then
6 if Ahtna Intertribal Resource Commission is online,
7 we'll let them go first and come back to Tanana Chiefs.
8 Are you there, Ahtna?

9

10 MS. KOSBRUK: Yes. Good afternoon, Chair.

11

12 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: I hear you well.....

13

14 (Simultaneous speech)

15

16 MS. KOSBRUK: Great.

17

18 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT:you have the
19 floor.

20

21 MS. KOSBRUK: All right. Thank you. Good
22 afternoon, Eastern Interior RAC and Chair Wright and
23 Council Members. For the record, this is Deanna Kosbruk.
24 I work for Ahtna Intertribal Resource Commission as the
25 Regulation Specialist. I'll just go through our report
26 on and an update on each project as well as our Community
27 Harvest System Report executive Summary. So.....

28

29 (Simultaneous speech)

30

31 MS. MCDAVID: Deanna, this is Brooke.
32 Sorry to interrupt you. I just wanted council members
33 to know they have a copy of your report on page 81 in
34 their binders. And again, sorry for the interruption.
35 You can continue.

36

37 MS. KOSBRUK: Oh, no. Thank you, Brooke.
38 All right. I'll start off with our Wildlife Department.
39 Our wildlife biologist has two TWIG grants; one is for
40 the Mentasta caribou. And so, while the original plan
41 called for deploying neonate calf GPS collars, ADF&G did
42 not approve the research permit application. So,
43 adapting to a new plan, AITRC pivoted to conducting
44 aerial surveys from late May through mid-July to
45 estimate the -- calving rate -- rates and recruitment
46 for the Mentasta caribou cows. There were -- the first
47 observation was from May 28th, 2025, with the peak calf-
48 to-cow ratio of 47 to 100. And that was on June 13th,
49 2025. The final survey on July 16th indicated a decline
50 in calf to cow ratio of 34 to 100. So, in the 2026 field

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1 season, we continue to use aerial surveys to estimate
2 the calving and recruitment rates.

3
4 The second project -- research project
5 under wildlife is also -- is the second TWIG grant. And
6 that's for wolf research. And that had started in
7 November 2020. Our wildlife biologists successfully
8 captured in GPS collars nine wolves and that during the
9 2024 and 2025 field season, two AITRC technicians
10 conducted systematic site investigations at clustered
11 GPS locations. And they also recovered -- and while in
12 those sites, they recovered biological samples and
13 deployed trail cameras at kill sites and denning
14 locations and rendezvous areas. The -- we had also
15 partnered with the local trappers to collect
16 supplemental biological samples from harvested wolves,
17 and that was to expand and dietary sampling and analysis
18 across a larger area of the eastern portion of the Ahtna
19 territory. In total, 50 wolves were sampled during the
20 2024-2025 trapping season. This funding was extended
21 through September 30th, 2026. This will allow additional
22 captures in spring of 2026 and -- due to weather delays
23 during spring and fall captures of 2025.

24
25 And for the sample analysis. Preliminary
26 results from stable isotopes analysts show distinct
27 dietary changes in segmented whiskers. And lastly -- oh,
28 and another highlight from this research that AITRC and
29 the attending veterinarian are preparing a manuscript
30 describing the anesthesia protocol used to immobilize
31 the wolves during this project, and that this new
32 protocol includes a reversible sedative that reduces
33 recovery time from hours to minutes, making it safer and
34 more ethical.

35
36 Now I'll go down to the Dall sheep.
37 There have always -- there's been concern in the recent
38 years on our sheep, not recent years, but, you know,
39 with the decline in population numbers. But AITRC had
40 developed an assessment program soliciting voluntary
41 hunter samples for the 2025 sample. AITRC first attempt
42 -- this marks AITRC first attempt at understanding the
43 health status of Dall sheep populations in the portion
44 of the Ahtna territory. We are working with tribal and
45 local hunters to collect these samples. The hunter
46 donated samples of organs, muscle tissue, hair, feces,
47 and a nasal swab, and that will be analyzed to assess
48 levels of heavy metals and essential minerals,
49 reconstruct dietary intake and estimate disease
50 prevalence. So, through this project, we hope to learn

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1 more on the decline in the Dall sheep abundance if it's
2 due to mineral deficiencies, contaminants or diseases.

3
4 The next project under wildlife is our
5 bear project. The field data collection was completed
6 in 2022. DNA analysis of these samples were completed
7 in May 2023, resulting in the genetic identification of
8 1,077 successful hair trap samples assigned to 137
9 grizzly bears. So that had left it -- or that had
10 separated it to 52 males and 85 females, as well as 143
11 black bears; 75 male, 68 female. So, this is to -- for
12 population model -- modeling efforts. In June 2025, we
13 were able to execute the new data sharing agreement
14 between AITRC, ADF&G and UAF for now -- or for how the
15 data was accessed, used and shared -- and it establishes
16 clear expectations -- sorry, for how data are accessed,
17 used and shared, ensuring appropriate tribal stewardship
18 of data while maintaining scientific transparency and
19 integrity.

20
21 So, there has been some changes. So
22 AITRC wildlife biologist had to make some adjustments
23 in working with the agent -- partner agency staff. And
24 this project uses two complementary scientific
25 approaches. Spatial explicit capture-recapture which
26 models using the DNA from hair samples to estimate how
27 many bears are on the landscape and how densely they are
28 distributed. Second is resource selection function,
29 which models identifying where bears are most likely to
30 occur by examining how they use different habitats such
31 as river corridors, uplands, and areas closer to or
32 farther from human activity. So, you know, the methods
33 allow the researchers to answer both how many bears are
34 there, and where bears are most likely to be found and
35 why.

36
37 And so, with the current efforts and
38 finalizing the model covariances they're preparing or -
39 between AITRC biologists and agency staff, they're
40 preparing maps and technical summaries. Once this is
41 completed, this work is expected to provide valuable
42 long-term context for state and federal managers by
43 improving understanding of bear abundance, the
44 distribution and habitat use in Game Management Unit 13.
45 Before I move on, are there any questions or would you
46 like me just to go through our whole report?

47
48 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: We do have one
49 question for you.

50

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1 MR. BASSICH: Hi, this is member Bassich.
2 I'm interested in in some of the grizzly and black bear
3 studies that you're doing. I'm just curious if you're
4 looking also back in time, if you have data back in
5 time. And what I'm kind of interested in is if you're
6 seeing any kind of a change in the grizzly to black bear
7 ratio in regions. Sounds like your populations are
8 fairly stable. But I'm just kind of curious if there is
9 any either data or if there's any traditional knowledge
10 or local knowledge from the people in the areas in your
11 region that would indicate that there are some shifts
12 in the ratios between grizzly bear and black bear right
13 now. Thank you.

14
15 MS. KOSBRUK: I -- yes. Thank you.
16 Through the Chair. Thank you for that question. I can't
17 say for sure the numbers of populations before this
18 project. I do want to point out that this project had
19 started because one of our tribal elders -- we were
20 talking about -- this was brewing regulation --
21 regulatory process -- regulatory proposals cycle. And a
22 tribal elder had asked, well, why are we going to be
23 discussing these proposed changes when we don't even
24 know how many are out on the land? So that's how this
25 project came about and Member -- sorry, I don't want to
26 mispronounce your name, but if I can get you in contact
27 with our wildlife biologist at some point, if that's
28 something you would like to further converse [sic]
29 about.

30
31 MR. BASSICH: Yeah. Thank you. Maybe --
32 Member Bassich here. It's like a fish with an itch.
33 That's how you pronounce it.

34
35 (Laughter)

36
37 MS. KOSBRUK: Okay. Thank you.

38
39 MR. BASSICH: Maybe. Maybe at a future
40 presentation, if you could just footnote that as
41 something that would be interesting for us to hear. And
42 that might also get a chance to maybe survey some of the
43 elders or some of the local people who are out on the
44 land a fair amount to see what their local observations
45 are over time. I'm just really curious because we're
46 seeing some shifts in our area, and I'm just curious if
47 that's happening in other regions of the state. And I
48 really applaud all the work that your organization does
49 on all the different species that are so important to
50 our subsistence. I've always been incredibly impressed

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1 with the level of studies that you do and the
2 thoroughness, both scientifically and ethnographically
3 in what you do. So, I just wanted to put that in there
4 while we're speaking but thank you for your presentation
5 so far. And be looking forward to getting any additional
6 information in the future at other meetings. Thank you.

7
8 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you.

9
10 MS. KOSBRUK: Through the Chair.

11
12 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: I think Sue had the
13 question of you also. Please. Thank you.

14
15 MS. ENTSMINGER: Actually, yeah. Thank
16 you, Deanna. Yeah, very good report. I was just wondering
17 if Andy wanted some local knowledge. I -- from myself,
18 after 50 years in this country. I think the question
19 was, is there more black bears or a ratio? Was that your
20 question?

21
22 MR. BASSICH: Yeah. Member Bassich. Thank
23 you, Sue. Yeah. I'd love to hear your comments. What I'm
24 interested in is if there are more grizzly bears showing
25 up in the country, if that's maybe impacting where the
26 black bears are so kind of that grizzly bear to black
27 bear ratio. And if -- I know everything cycles. So, I'm
28 just kind of curious in other regions if they're seeing
29 some of these cycles between those ratios of grizzly to
30 black bear where they're overlapping. I know in a lot
31 of places they don't overlap as much. But yeah, any
32 information along those lines. It's just kind of a
33 personal thing I'm trying to observe and understand.
34 Thank you.

35
36 MS. ENTSMINGER: Well, my husband and I
37 have walked all over this country in the last 50 years
38 and years before that, before we moved here. And I can
39 tell you that we do have a lot of bears, and I'd say
40 that we probably have more black bears than we do grizzly
41 bears. But we have not seen much of a change. There's -
42 - I mean, we in the fall, when they're concentrated on
43 berries, you can in one drainage see 15 to 20 bears.
44 Because some of the sows have three cubs, it adds up.
45 But we're seeing the same ratio that we've had all the
46 years we've lived here.

47
48 MR. BASSICH: Thank you, Sue.

49
50 MS. ENTSMINGER: You're welcome.

1

2 MS. KOSBRUK: Through the Chair, this is
3 Deanna. Thank you, Sue, for your comment and your
4 knowledge and what you've been seeing on the land
5 throughout the years. I know that in the past that when
6 the elders had brought up the concern that had led our
7 staff to ask the state for population numbers and they
8 couldn't give a definite number. And so that's how our
9 wildlife biologist was able to secure the funding and
10 work with the partner agency staff and see this project
11 through. So, if you don't mind, Mr. Chair, I'll go on
12 with the report.

13

14 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Please do.

15

16 MS. KOSBRUK: Next is our ecology
17 projects. Our Ecologist Kelsey Stanbrough has been
18 surveillancing [sic] and genetic stock identification
19 sampling of the Copper River salmon and its monitoring
20 of disease and parasite burdens in the Copper River
21 sockeye and chinook salmon. So, this project had begun
22 in 2023. During 2025 season samples included the weight,
23 the length, overall body condition, a pelvic fin
24 clipping. And this was to -- for the genetic stock
25 identification. Scales and otolith, and that is to
26 determine the age of the fish as well as a plasma immune
27 protein for biomarkers of health status. And she had --
28 with each salmon had also take in whole blood for the
29 thiamine. Eggs, that is to indicate the reproductive
30 success and fry survival. She had taken samples from the
31 heart, spleen, kidney, and that gave -- it gives a
32 histology and a QCCR, gastrointestinal tract parasite
33 burden and a muscle tissue.

34

35 Current results. So, she had added a few
36 more samples during the 2025 sample -- season. But the
37 current results that she had gotten from 2023 out of 148
38 samples, 137 were sockeye, 11 were chinook. They had
39 realized that it was --the sampling the -- that she had
40 possibly collected too many samples and that could have
41 been where they had some problems with some contaminant
42 and couldn't get clear readings from each. But she had
43 -- and it just not the enough -- not enough capacity.
44 So, the culture based for the ichthyophonous conducted
45 at ADF&G pathology lab yield either negative or
46 inconclusive. And that's due to the inherent
47 contamination challenges. And in response, they had
48 adapted it to an analytical approach and transition to
49 Quantitative PCR, which is less susceptible to
50 contamination and provides improved sensitivity for

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1 pathogen detection. The parasitological analysis of the
2 intestine -- intestinal tract samples collected in 2022
3 revealed approximately equal portions of roundworms and
4 spiral nematodes, with occasional cestodes. The
5 tapeworms. So, which was not currently recognized as a
6 public health concern, but it has been implicated in an
7 NIH supported research as a potential human health risk
8 if consumed if it's not cooked properly. In 2024, 84
9 samples -- and so the -- it was conducted through ADF&G
10 and is currently being written in a report to be released
11 earlier, you know, later on this spring. And in 2025,
12 there are samples are currently being conducted at
13 UAF's.

14
15 And additional results are considered
16 preliminary. And additional statistical analysis will
17 be required to assess numerous trends, estimated
18 population levels evident in incidents, and evaluate
19 relationships between the pathological findings and
20 other measured fish health metrics. With the serum
21 samples from 2023 to end 2024 the biomarkers are ongoing
22 and will contribute to a more comprehensive
23 understanding of salmon health as a results -- as results
24 are finalized. The stable isotope analysis has been
25 completed for all three years and they are -- the data
26 and analysis are -- the report is still being written.
27 And once that's finalized, it'll provide insight into
28 the feeding differences of trophic positions among the
29 -- our salmon and a more comprehensive understanding of
30 population ecology and health. So, with all these
31 collection -- sample collections, it helped support
32 ongoing Copper River salmon genetic stock identification
33 marker expansion and reevaluation by ADF&G's gene
34 conservation laboratory. Altogether without with over
35 1800 genetic samples were collected in 2025. Are there
36 any questions? If not, I'm going to move on to.....

37
38 (Simultaneous speech)

39
40 CHAIRPERSON FRANTS: Yeah, you have one.

41
42 MS. KOSBRUK:our ecologists. Yes.

43
44 MS. BURK: Hi, this is Eva. Thank you for
45 the great report Deanna, it's very thorough. I had a
46 question about the.....

47
48 (Simultaneous speech)

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50 MS. KOSBRUK: Thank you.

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MS. BURK:about the worms that you mentioned. Because I was talking to some of my friends from Chisto who were fishing on the Copper River, and they just had lots of worms, and they said it was attributed to warmer waters, but does it causing an issue like as far as like quality of meat and having to discard or anything like that?

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MS. KOSBRUK: Yes. Thank you for the question. Through the Chair. I would just -- from our observations within the last couple of years with doing -- with our ecologists doing this monitoring along with our in-season teleconference, it was about two seasons. So, season 2024, we were getting a lot of report of our fillets were falling apart as you know, we were cutting into our fish too and there were a lot of parasites in that as well. To this last season, where we were seeing a lot better stronger fillets and they weren't breaking up as much. And I -- and as it was explained to me was the warmer weathers -- what the warmer water temperatures were affecting the conditions of the meat of the fish and the increase in parasites. Does that answer your question or give you more information?

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MS. BURK: Yeah. That's great. That's kind of what I heard too. And then it just makes me think of something that was coming up when we were doing the chum salmon bycatch stuff. And in 2017 we had an abundance number wise, but the fish were poor quality. And so, I'm just like wondering in those poor-quality years that you just had, if in a couple of years or from now or even next year, that the returns from those years might be bad because the fish was in poor condition. So that's the kind of stuff I'm just curious and kind of thinking about the different major rivers across Alaska. Thanks.

38
39

MS. KOSBRUK: Thank you, Member Burk.

40
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42

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: I don't see any questions.

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44
45

(Simultaneous speech)

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47

MS. KOSBRUK: Through the Chair.

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CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: So, you could carry on. Thank you. I'm sorry to interrupt you.

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1 MS. KOSBRUK: Yeah. No, you're fine.
2 Thank you, Chair Wright. So, I'll go on to the next
3 project under ecology, and that is our Moose Health
4 Monitoring Project. So, we're -- AITRC had entered into
5 the fourth year of the Moose Health Monitoring Program,
6 which initiated from a tribal citizens concern about
7 meat quality and the health risks. So, sample
8 collections in 2022 were collected and about 8 samples
9 were collected. In 2023, 33 were collected. In 2024, 41
10 samples were collected. And in 2025, 36 samples were
11 collected. These samples were from hunter harvest,
12 roadkill, educational or ceremonial take, to diversify
13 research opportunities. And one of our tribal citizens,
14 she's completing her master's on micronutrient
15 interactions and nutritional status of moose in the
16 Ahtna area. So, she's evaluating for heavy metal
17 accumulation, and accumulation and assessing risks for
18 moose and human health. So hopefully we'll hear more on
19 that as she's completing her manuscript, a peer-reviewed
20 manuscript as well. And then I'm going to go on if
21 there's -- are there any questions on our moose project?
22

23 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: I have a question.
24 I see it's been four years and that's going to continue
25 on into the future. Is that true?
26

27 MS. KOSBRUK: That is a good question.
28

29 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Yeah, I have a --
30 if you're done, I have a -- we've been seeing parasites
31 in moose here in the Interior. So, I just thought I
32 would tell you that, we're wondering about other people
33 seeing it. So, it would be really cool if you could --
34 if somebody could add that observation to that Moose
35 Health Monitoring Project would be wonderful. We're
36 seeing it in the even down into the marrow, full grown
37 parasites up to 4 or 5in long in my lifetime. We, we
38 seen them in cyst form in the meat. But lately, in the
39 last few years alone in Yukon, in the Interior, we've
40 been seeing parasites beyond the cyst stage and like I
41 said, 4 or 5in long. And so, I just thought I'd like to
42 mention that to you and see if we can add that or any
43 way we can. Thank you. Just a visual anyway.
44

45 MS. KOSBRUK: Yes. Yes. Thank you. Thank
46 you, Chair Wright. I had taken those notes down and
47 after you had mentioned that I want to say it was maybe
48 two falls. So, fall of 2024, I had gone with our
49 ecologist to collect samples from a moose that was
50 harvested. And when we had gotten to the heart, we found

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1 a parasite if I remember correctly. So that is actually
2 a good thing to add into the monitoring health and I'll
3 pass these notes to our ecologist and maybe she can talk
4 with the other biologist that's working on this project
5 with her.

6
7 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you very much.
8 We noticed that it makes the meat a lot tougher. There's
9 no fat at all on the moose that are affected bad. And
10 they're really strong, not strong in smell, but strong
11 -- hard to cook really tough and chewy. So, it's
12 definitely affecting the health of them. So that's why
13 I wanted to add it. Thank you so much.

14
15 MS. KOSBRUK: Yes. Thank you. Making
16 notes notes too. So, thank you. I'll go ahead and move
17 on to our (indiscernible) bio monitoring. This is a new
18 project and it's going to be analyzing fish species from
19 ten lakes across the Ahtna Region. This is to develop a
20 scientific baseline of environmental conditions by
21 measuring the stable isotope -- measuring stable
22 isotopes, elemental concentrations and mercury and PFAs.
23 So, by pairing the contaminant data with species
24 composition and trophic information, this will help
25 assess ecosystem health and potential hydrology and
26 shifting the species distributions, distributions
27 continue to reshape northern freshwater ecosystems. This
28 will help support inform the management decisions and
29 protect food security and strengthen our understanding
30 on how environmental changes may be affecting culturally
31 important fish resources. If there are no questions,
32 I'll move on into fisheries.

33
34 (No response)

35
36 Not hearing any. I'm going to -- so in
37 fisheries our biologist Dan (indiscernible). As
38 mentioned earlier by Amber Cohen, AITRC and Wrangell-
39 St. Elias National Park Service had been working
40 together on the Tanana Creek Weir. And so, this was one
41 of the first -- 2025 was one of the first years that
42 AITRC had taken lead due to Dave Sarafin's retirement.
43 The 2025 season ended with a minimum count passage of
44 11,067 sockeye and 1 chinook. Daily counts were made
45 from June 19th through September 26th. There were times
46 where there were extremely high waters so there were no
47 counts due to no fish going through, and because the
48 water was too high that they couldn't get a good visual
49 on the footage -- the video footage. And so, they made
50 some improvements with their software and they're going

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1 to continue to make adjustments to the we're that better
2 fits and gives more accurate counting.

3
4 Going on to the stream temperature
5 monitoring. AITRC has deployed remote temperature
6 loggers in the major tributaries of the Copper River and
7 various other feeder streams. Because we've been seeing
8 ambient summer temperatures affect non-glacial stream
9 temperatures more than glacial influenced streams. These
10 monitoring efforts were placed on the precipitation
11 driven Gulkana River system and were partnered with U.S.
12 Fish and Wildlife. We maintain and collect data via rafts
13 over approximately ten days from 121 remote sensors in
14 the middle and west port Gulkana each summer. And all
15 data from both the 2023-2024 and the 2024-2025
16 monitoring periods, along with the updated site
17 locations, are now publicly available on the Alaska
18 Water Temperature Database. And to pair with the stream
19 temperature, air temperature monitoring stations were
20 installed at Mentasta, Tanana Creek, and Klutina Lake.

21
22 And going on to the National Park
23 Service inventory of freshwater fish, AITRC will begin
24 an inventory of harvestable freshwater fish in lakes and
25 streams of the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park
26 beginning in the spring of 2026. So that's underway. And
27 another new project that our biologist had secured
28 funding for is Partners for Fisheries Monitoring Program
29 and that's with OSM as that was mentioned earlier as
30 well. And Alaska Sustainable Salmon Fund, the Gulkana
31 River chinook and sockeye Salmon escapement, Gulkana
32 River sonar feasibility assessment project with ADF&G,
33 Division of Sports Fisheries begin will begin in 2026.
34 And the Alaska Sustainable Salmon Fund that will be
35 conducting radio telemetry monitoring of chinook salmon
36 in the Copper River, and more details are to come on
37 that come with that.

38
39 Moving on to Stream Restoration. So,
40 this position is currently vacant and we're accepting
41 applications. So, if you -- if anyone's listening or if
42 anyone's interested who may know who may be interested,
43 please pass this along. And they can find the application
44 and job description on our website. So, with this, a
45 portion of our NOAA grant is geared towards engaging
46 with local tribes to help create prioritization of
47 streams, creeks, lakes, culverts, low water crossing and
48 area of any disturbance. A number of fish -- let me back
49 up, sorry. Excuse me. So, this position was filled and
50 during that time, they had attended tribal consultation

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1 meetings with four of our tribes and attended our annual
2 ANCSA Native corp. meeting. And a number of the concerns
3 of fish passages were identified that were including
4 culvert replacements, beaver dams mitigation -- beaver
5 dam mitigation and areas to improve stream trail
6 crossings. And also increased water temperature
7 monitoring efforts were also identified as important,
8 given the potential for water temperatures to reach
9 levels lethal to salmon, as documented on the Yukon River
10 and elsewhere in 2019. And in partnership, we work with
11 the Copper River watershed, and they had identified and
12 surveyed failing culverts. So, they reached out to the
13 Alaska Department of Transportation to see if that was
14 on any of their priority lists. And they're not
15 determined priority. So, they're working with ADF&G and
16 tribal leadership, Fish and Game, habitat permanent
17 coordinator and an aquatic -- excuse me. Yes. Sorry.
18 Aquatic resource permit to conduct minnow trapping and
19 electrofishing above and below the crossing. However,
20 no fish were found during the initial site visit. And
21 are there any questions before I move on to anthropology?
22

23 (No response)

24
25 Not hearing any -- oh.

26
27 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Go on, please.
28

29 MS. KOSBRUK: Okay. Thank you. Sorry. So,
30 as you heard from Amber Cohen from Wrangell-St. Elias,
31 she and our anthropologist have been working together
32 on community harvest assessments. And we should know
33 more from a technical report late spring. And we had
34 just closed out our ANA Grant and completed our
35 objectives for a tribal historic preservation office for
36 the Chitina area, and we work closely with the Native
37 Village of Chitina Native, Chitina Native Corp, as well
38 as Ahtna Inc., and Alaska D.O.T. We contracted Northern
39 Land Use Research Alaska LLC, and conducted a number of
40 archaeological sites. And one of our main concerns was
41 the public access to the Chitina subdistrict personal
42 use fisheries and brought up objectives for the state
43 and tribal partners to protect our Ahtna graves, our
44 cultural sites and ensuring access to fishery. We are
45 going into -- we had just completed our second year of
46 our in-season salmon teleconferences. These calls
47 continue to serve as an important space for dialogue,
48 connection and collaboration among our tribal citizens,
49 state and federal managers and local biologists. The
50 main updates that we've heard were from our biologists

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1 and managers were on sonar counts, tower numbers, permit
2 used, permits issued, harvest data. And then we heard
3 from our subsistence users and what they were seeing and
4 their -- a lot of what we were hearing was high water
5 levels. Low catches because of the high waters and many
6 of our subsistence users that had fish wheels were
7 turning their wheels off because of debris interfering
8 and getting caught up into the fish wheel and -- but in
9 the lower river Chitina area and Native Village of Eyak,
10 where -- had had an opportunity to harvest them and in
11 areas where they couldn't because in the past season,
12 the waters were too high. And more information if you'd
13 like to see past summaries are on our website
14 ahtnatribal.org. If there are no questions, I'll move
15 on.

16

17 (No response)

18

19 All right. The next is our tribal
20 stewardship project and this is documenting our past and
21 present land use of tribal members, requiring skills in
22 GIS mapping, interviews with community members, and a
23 detailed study of regional land and water use. Research
24 also explores key issues that conflict with tribal
25 stewardship values and seek strategies to mitigate these
26 challenges ensuring future management decisions reflect
27 both culturally -- cultural priorities and sustainable
28 practices. Even though it is titled tribal stewardship,
29 we are also interviewing non-tribal just with the
30 insight of a non-tribal married into tribal, and that
31 they had learned practices from the family they married
32 into, or even just them being affiliated with and around
33 and learning from tribal citizens that, you know, we
34 capture their side as well, so. With our education and
35 outreach, Bailey has been doing great with that. She's
36 held workshops for tribal citizens and non-tribal. And
37 one was a trapping course and a -- they work closely --
38 Bailey will find our knowledge holders and get them to
39 either participate or even teach a workshop. And she's
40 in our schools quite often, especially with the younger
41 grades and she's doing a salmon in the classroom, which
42 is just going over the salmon life cycle letting the
43 kids watch salmon develop from the eggs to fry. And
44 that's in partnership with the Copper River Watershed.
45 And she also does weekly science lectures. There's a
46 number of things. And this past fall as well, we did a
47 wildlife and fisheries management and the role of Ahtna
48 (In Native) in protecting tribal ways of life in Alaska
49 through UAF of tribal government -- department and
50 tribal governance. And that was led by Dr. Jim Simon. Are

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1 there any questions? I'm not hearing any.

2

3 MS. BURK: No, none. No questions,
4 Deanna.

5

6 MS. KOSBRUK: Okay. Thank you. One last
7 report. And I am sorry if I've gone overtime. But this
8 is over -- this is reviewing of our Community Harvest
9 System report from years 2023 to 2025. So, this is a
10 cooperative management framework grounded in federal
11 law, indigenous knowledge and scientific wildlife
12 management. This community hunt is under both state and
13 federal subsistence regulations and recognize the
14 community pattern of customary and traditional use that
15 differ from individual and household patterns of use.
16 The participation in the AITRC community harvest system
17 is open to all federally qualified subsistence users
18 whose primary residence are within the consensus
19 designated places surrounding the villages of our eight
20 tribes. And this applies to BLM, NPS, Fish and Wildlife
21 Service lands within the designated geographical areas
22 of Game Management 11, 12 and -- or 12 and 13 and 11.
23 This is voluntary and operates in full compliance with
24 existing federal subsistence regulations. And so AITRC
25 is responsible for administrating the CHS
26 in coordination with our federal partners and our -- the
27 registration and eligibility verification quota and an
28 effort tracking, registration harvest and non-harvest
29 weekly reports throughout hunt seasons and coordination
30 with NPS, Denali NPS, BLM, Tetlin National Wildlife
31 Refuge, and OSM.

32

33 Since implementation, participation in
34 the CHS has increased gradually and in addition to
35 standard harvest report requirements within both state
36 and federal system, AITRC tracks the number of
37 registered participants, number of days hunted, reasons
38 of non-harvest. So, while successful harvests have not
39 yet occurred, participation data highlight persistent
40 challenges within Game Management Units 11, 12 and 13.
41 And that, you know, a common thing that we were hearing
42 were low overall subsistence participation rates. There
43 were environmental factors such as warmer seasonal
44 conditions earlier in hunt seasons. Access limitations
45 and increased traffic. Increased competition from non-
46 local and urban hunters. And just to paint a little --
47 a better picture. During fall 2025, we had 26
48 participants under the federal moose hunts in Game
49 Management Units 11, 12 and 13; 24 which reported hunting
50 activity, 2 reported no hunting activity of a total of

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1 290 days that were hunted by 24 registrants with an
2 average of 12 days, and there was no successful harvests
3 reported under the AITRC CHS during the 2025 season. In
4 fall 2024, we had 10 participants, 8 reported hunting
5 activity, giving that a total of 81 days hunted by eight
6 registrants with an average of 13 days and there were
7 no successful harvests. Fall of 2023 were 12
8 participants, 2 reported hunting, 10 reported no
9 hunting, with a total of 15 days and an average of 7
10 days, with no successful harvests that were reported.

11
12 And in conclusion, federally recognized
13 -- federally qualified hunters participating in the
14 AITRC community harvest systems are not meeting their
15 customary and traditional needs for moose and Game
16 Management Units 11, 12, and 13. We ask that you support
17 our -- wild -- consider and adopt wildlife regulatory
18 proposals that concern our region and that would be WP26-
19 28A and WP26-28B which would extend -- no, let me take
20 that back. Sorry. We had consulted with one of our tribal
21 elders and there are a few -- a couple proposals that
22 were submitted and it was to either extend or shift the
23 dates of the moose hunt. And we are in favor of shifting
24 the moose dates -- the hunting dates and for our
25 consultation and talking with our elders is that they
26 said there shouldn't be too much of a concern of the
27 right timing. And just because of the environmental
28 changes that we're seeing. We're seeing warmer
29 temperatures in the beginning of our hunting seasons.
30 And nobody's out hunting because the moose aren't moving
31 anyway, and it's just too warm to harvest a moose.

32
33 And we also had submitted WP26-30 and
34 that is to close federal lands to non-federal qualified
35 users and that just goes back to we're seeing too much
36 traffic out here. There are a lot of non-local urban
37 hunters that are coming out here and coming into our
38 camps and pushing, you know, pushing families out who
39 have hunted there for years, generations. And so that's
40 why we had -- that's why one of our locals had put in
41 that proposal. So just going back adjusting our season,
42 whether it be shifting the dates or lengthening, we feel
43 that there would be no concern and because it's -- our
44 concern is our environmental conditions. So -- and our
45 customary and traditional needs are not being met within
46 the Ahtna territory. Do I have any questions? That
47 completes my report.

48
49 MS. BURK: Thank you. This is Eva. You
50 gave a lot of stuff that wasn't in the written report,

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1 Deanna. Especially about no successful hunts. Which
2 units those hunts were taking place in. And then also
3 the numbers of the proposals. And then I was asking our
4 Council Coordinator if we had already taken action or
5 are those proposals that we take action on in the fall,
6 because they're 26-30, 26-28 and A and B, is that what
7 you said? 26-28A and B.

8
9 MS. KOSBRUK: Yes, yes.

10
11 MS. MCDAVID: This is Brooke. If -- I'm
12 sorry, I didn't note the proposal numbers that you just
13 said, but the wildlife proposals were taken up at your
14 last meeting. And if you could repeat the numbers, I
15 could look up if you took action on them.

16
17 MS. KOSBRUK: Okay, so that was -- I just
18 want to make sure I give you guys the right ones. So,
19 one is the WP26-30. And then in this CHS report we had
20 noted WP26-28A and WP26-28B which is to extend our moose
21 hunting seasons GMUs 11 and 13. But we're more in favor
22 of shift season by ten days later or even five days
23 later. And those proposals are WP26-29 and WP26-30. Oh,
24 and the WP26-31, that is the -- to close BLM lands to
25 non-federally qualified users.

26
27 MS. MCDAVID: This is Brooke. So, for
28 those proposals at your last meeting this Council opted
29 to defer to the Southcentral Council, which is the home
30 region. And I can give you a summary of what Southcentral
31 did again, if you would like. So, for WP26-28A
32 Southcentral Council supported. 26-28B, they also
33 supported. And then they didn't take action on -29 or -
34 30 based on I believe their action on -28B. And then 26-
35 31 they supported.

36
37 MS. BURK: So just to clarify, they
38 supported closing to federally -- to non-federal
39 qualified users?

40
41 MS. MCDAVID: Was that for 31?

42
43 MS. BURK: Yes, Brooke.

44
45 MS. MCDAVID: Yes. So, they supported it,
46 says the Council recognized that extending the Unit 13
47 moose season would provide additional opportunities to
48 subsistence users. However, they noted that there is an
49 extreme level of competition with state users for moose
50 in this area. Non-federally qualified users arrive in

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1 large numbers with high-powered off-road vehicles
2 outcompeting locals. Federally qualified subsistence
3 users do not have comparable equipment and are not able
4 to access areas where they feel they can safely hunt.
5 If locals can get far enough off the road system to hunt
6 safely, meat care becomes problematic. The increased
7 amount of time -- sorry, I'm getting notifications. They
8 increased the amount of time to get meat out of the
9 field combined with warmer fall weather makes safe
10 handling of harvested meat a concern. This competition
11 is also eroding local cultural practices, as most wild
12 game is now coming off the roadkill list. This makes
13 passing along knowledge and tradition almost impossible
14 and makes it very difficult to keep a culture alive.

15
16 The proponents stated that not all the
17 communities with C&T for moose in Unit 13 are qualified
18 to hunt in the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and
19 preserve. That exclusion makes these BLM lands even more
20 important. The Ahtna Intertribal Resource Commission
21 Community Harvest report indicates no moose harvest has
22 occurred in their federal community harvest system hunt
23 for the last three years, despite substantial hunting
24 efforts suggesting locals are being outcompeted. Their
25 hunter questionnaire cites reduced moose population's
26 environmental conditions, access issues, and increased
27 competition as reasons for this lack of success. So, in
28 short, Member Burk. That is correct.

29
30 MS. BURK: Thank you. That's really
31 helpful. That sounds pretty rough. That sounds even
32 worse than where I'm at. So, I don't know how to support
33 you guys from here so. But thanks Deanna, for calling
34 in. Maybe Chair Charlie has some ideas. If they're not
35 meeting any of their -- they're not getting any of the
36 moose harvest. They're unsuccessful. Deanna, could you
37 go over some of those numbers again? It might be good
38 if you submitted those in writing the -- you had talked
39 about the number of permits folks had and that they --
40 nobody got a moose.

41
42 MS. KOSBRUK: Yes. Thank you, Member
43 Burk, through the Chair. I do apologize that we had
44 completed this report after I had sent Brooke our
45 organizational report update so, and I have just sent
46 over to Brooke the copy of our executive summary of the
47 community harvest system. And so, in -- zero moose
48 harvested between 2023 through 2025, even when 92% of
49 our registrants hunted a combined total of 290 days. And
50 that's in in 2025 alone. So, I just wanted to share that

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1 with you guys, especially with -- after hearing from the
2 national park and hearing their fall report. And one of
3 the council members had asked Amber if there were
4 concerns with the success rate and so I just wanted to
5 say yes, there is concern. And we're not meeting our
6 customary and traditional needs and practices. Although,
7 you know, we are -- we don't have as many participants
8 or registrants as NPS or BLM, but that's trying to shift
9 them to come to ATRIC that live in within the designated
10 areas of one of the tribes. And that this covers both
11 the BLM, NPS and the Fish and Wildlife lands. So, did
12 that answer everything that you needed Member Burk?

13

14 MS. BURK: Yes. Thank you. And then are
15 there any proposals at this upcoming Southcentral
16 region? Are there going to be -- I haven't gone through
17 all the proposals for the Board of Game meeting for
18 Southcentral Region, but I'm wondering if there are
19 proposals that have some type of biological analysis for
20 moose in the Units 11, 12 and 13. Are you aware of any
21 proposals that affect those units in this upcoming Board
22 of Game meeting?

23

24 MS. KOSBRUK: Thank you. Member Burk,
25 through the Chair. I am -- I'll have to get back with
26 an answer on that. I'm sorry.

27

28 MS. BURK: Oh, no. That's a -- we have
29 too many things to keep track of, right. Never enough
30 time.

31

32 MS. KOSBRUK: Yeah.

33

34 MS. BURK: I'll take a peek and then what
35 I'm just curious about maybe is some of your numbers and
36 like the -- what's the management objective and are they
37 within that range for these units? And I think there
38 might be some information in the Southcentral, but I'd
39 have to go through proposals and double check. But I
40 could take a look. Thanks.

41

42 MS. KOSBRUK: Thank you. Are there any
43 other questions?

44

45 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Sue, do you have a
46 question for her?

47

48 MS. ENTSMINGER: No.

49

50

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1 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay. I thought your
2 hand was up. I'm sorry. Okay. It doesn't look like
3 there's any other questions. Thank you.

4
5 MS. KOSBRUK: Thank you and you guys have
6 a good afternoon.

7
8 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: You as well, thank
9 you.

10
11 MS. MCDAVID: Member Burk, you had asked
12 if there was a way to, I think you said like support
13 their recommendations on those federal proposals and
14 that's not on your agenda at this meeting, but if, you
15 know, the Board doesn't meet until April, so if you
16 wanted to comment on one of those you would be able to.
17 I would want us to maybe pull it up and at least read a
18 little bit of that information on those proposals into
19 the record but just wanted to say that.

20
21 But I will say that you know, the Board
22 has deference to the Councils and since the Southcentral
23 Council made a recommendation in line with AITRC's
24 comments -- well, I mean, I have no idea what the Board
25 will do, but generally they defer to the Councils unless
26 there's a very explicit reason not to.

27
28 MS. BURK: This is Eva. I just need to
29 make -- for the record, I would think I was confusing -
30 - because we were saying Southcentral region and the
31 Southcentral Game Management Unit. I don't see any
32 proposals at this upcoming Southcentral region because
33 that's not the region that for Board of Game, it would
34 be the Central Southwestern region that would have Units
35 nine through 11 and 13. So I just wanted to note that
36 that's not in this year's Board of Game cycle. So don't
37 worry about that yet, Deanna.

38
39 (Pause)

40
41 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Moving down the
42 agenda. Tanana Chiefs Conference on?

43
44 MS. MCDAVID: Mr. Chair. Diloolala let me
45 know, since the subregional meetings had started today
46 that they were going to opt out of giving their report
47 at this meeting.

48
49 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Okay. Going down the
50 list. Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

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MS. MCDAVID: This is Brooke again. I do not believe they will be joining us today. Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: How about Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve? They already went. Yukon-Charley Rivers National preserve? Someone's in the house.

MS. OKADA: Good afternoon, Mr. Chair, Council Members, my name is Marcy Okada. I work for Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve as the Subsistence Coordinator, and I'd like to refer you to a page in your meeting packet. 95. 99. And I'm going to pass it on to my esteemed colleague Matt Sorum.

MR. SORUM: I am Matt Sorum. I'm the Wildlife Biologist for Yukon-Charley. I help monitor the large mammal populations within the preserve. So -- sure. Thanks for the heads up. Yes, I'm getting there too. We'll talk about sheep first. In 2023, we did a sheep survey and found a 78% decline in Yukon-Charley population from the long-term. And so, with that the Federal Subsistence Board recommended a closure and that went from 2023 to 2025. We were planning on surveying last year. We got a grant to survey last year, but the funding was frozen. And then we also wrote a grant to survey the population this year for the next three years. That money hasn't been allocated yet, but we're kind of hoping it comes through. So, and if not, we're kind of looking for extra funds to just make sure we get that surveyed this year so, but I don't have an update on that on what the population is looking at.

MR. BASSICH: Quick question. Just do you want us to ask questions as they're reaching each topic or wait till the end? What would be your preference, Mr. Chair? Quick question here then. Okay, I'll do a quick question right now. In regards to the sheep surveys, are you going to do all of the areas indicated on the map in this handout? I guess what I'm most curious about is the Ogilvie Mountain range area, if that will be surveyed. It seems like that is -- from what my recollection, that's probably where the most pressure has been in in most years.

MR. SORUM: Yeah. So, we'll survey the entire preserve, including those seven surveyors in red and then the yellow one in Ogilvie, the Ogilvie survey, which was added three surveys a year ago. But yeah, our

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1 intentions are to do all of them. And right now the
2 Ogilvie continues to remain open. That's the only area
3 you can hunt sheep in the preserve. Yeah.

4

5 MR. BASSICH: And if I could add, has
6 that declined or was that only the red areas that decline
7 down to that super low?

8

9 MR. SORUM: It was the red areas that had
10 declined the most. The Ogilvie's seemed less affected
11 by the decline but was still lower than it had been. But
12 we hadn't been collecting data over the last 20 years
13 on the Ogilvie, so we -- it was harder to compare long
14 term trends. Next, we'll talk about moose and actually,
15 we've done -- we've been doing a lot of moose work in
16 Yukon-Charley over the last six years. And so, I'll start
17 with just a collar project update. We started doing a -
18 - collaring moose in 2020. Oh man, I had my -- good
19 thing I think I took a picture of my screen because I
20 was wondering if that was going to happen. One moment.

21

22 (Pause)

23

24 Sorry, I got a little rattled there. So,
25 in 2020, we started a moose collaring project, and over
26 that period we collared about 38 moose and then tracked
27 them so we could -- and collared them with GPS collars.
28 And so, we collected survival and then calf recruitment
29 data and then calf production data on that. So, every
30 year we would -- we'd go out and we'd do 20 flights in
31 the spring and see how many calves produced -- how many
32 moose produced calves, and then how many produce twins.
33 And then we'd follow up with 2 flights, one in the fall
34 and 1 in the late winter to see how calf survival was
35 doing throughout the year. And so, we are on our sixth
36 year, and this is our last year actually, it's planned
37 to go next week and we're going to remove the collars
38 from the remaining moose and complete that project.

39

40 So, I'll just give a little update on
41 what the last year has been like and then kind of what
42 we've learned so far over these last six years. So,
43 we've had -- this last year, we've had, we had really
44 good calving rate, 95%. That's our highest. And then we
45 had a pretty good twinning rate, which was 47%. So,
46 about half the cows had twins, which is great. And that
47 resulted in about 125 calves per 100 cows when they were
48 produced. So, which was above average. On average over
49 the last six years, I'll just give you that on average
50 here. Our calving rate was 80%, our twinning rate was

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1 47%, our adult survival has been 86%. So pretty high
2 adult survival, and our post calving is about 105 moose,
3 105 calves per 100 cows but then in the spring, by the
4 springtime. So, the kind of the full year survival is
5 29 calves per 100 cows, right. And so, from 2021 to
6 2023, during that period, we had a lot of snow. We had
7 three big snow years. And so, during those periods we
8 had about -- we produced about 40 less calves per 100
9 cows during those three springs on average. What do I
10 have? I had the number here, but yeah, about 40 less
11 cows, calves per 100 cows. And that was largely due to
12 -- we had 19% less calving rate. So, we had 19 less --
13 19% fewer cows had calves, those during those three years
14 and then about 5% less twinning rate during those
15 periods. So, it appeared -- it appears that, you know,
16 potentially snow conditions. And whether we're affecting
17 the calving rates and calving production during those
18 periods.

19
20 So then that kind of helps -- that kind
21 of context helps inform -- helps us kind of understand
22 the moose surveys. So, we've been running -- conducting
23 moose surveys in Yukon-Charley since the 80s. Since
24 2003, we've been using the GSP unit, which is kind of
25 the state standard for doing moose surveys. And so, we
26 do those every three years, and we conducted one this
27 last fall. And so, we -- and you'll see this on the
28 moose update page. At the bottom there's a graph here
29 with year on the x and the observable moose per square
30 mile on the y axis. And so, we are kind of at the low
31 end of our population. We're pretty low density in
32 general, but we're at the lowest or near the lowest it's
33 been. And that was a bit surprising, I guess for us, we
34 were expecting to kind of pop back up after being so
35 low, but we're kind of wondering if the day from the
36 data we collected those three years where we had really
37 bad calf production and calf recruitment, that kind of
38 created a cohort of three years where we aren't now
39 producing calves from those cows that, you know, we
40 essentially had had half to three quarters production
41 as we would normally have had. So, I think -- we kind
42 of think that just losing those cohort years has kind
43 of helped maintain a lower production. And we think that
44 in general, because -- two factors largely we haven't
45 had any large habitat shifts. There hasn't been any large
46 fires. There hasn't been any fires that have aged out
47 of the habitat that went from good habitat because it
48 burned to bad habitat because it aged out of that kind
49 of like prime forage period, which is 10 to 30 years
50 post-fire. So, we're still kind of right in that meat

00077

1 of the 10 to 30 years where all these big fires happen
2 in 2004 and 1999. And so, landscape wise, we're kind of
3 in a sweet spot. So, we were kind of hoping we would
4 move back up to that. But I think some of these big
5 fires we've experienced -- big snow years we experienced
6 in the 2020s are still kind of keeping us down. So that's
7 our interpretation, at least at this point. Yeah. So
8 that's.....

9

10 (Simultaneous speech)

11

12 MR. BASSICH: Yeah, quick question on
13 your surveys. Is that spread out through Yukon-Charley
14 Rivers or is it focused more along the Yukon corridor?
15 I'm sure you're probably doing some up in the higher
16 country but is the vast majority of that along the Yukon
17 River corridor where there might be more hunting
18 pressure?

19

20 MR. SORUM: Yeah, it -- the surveys and
21 the collaring work were all really tied together. We
22 tried to capture most of our moose within that -- the
23 survey area, which is, you know, it runs up the (In
24 Native), the nation, up to Charlie and it really -- it
25 stops right at the -- where the mountains run into the
26 Charlie or the -- where the Charlie runs into the
27 mountains. So, it really doesn't push south of that into
28 the kind of the Charlie bowl, the upper Charlie at all.
29 Yeah.

30

31 MR. BASSICH: Okay. Yeah. And thank you.
32 Just local observations. I think you're spot on with the
33 heavy snowfalls from what I'm witnessing, the
34 activities. Those snowfall years are what I see as the
35 moose tend to yard up a lot more. And so, when the wolves
36 come in, they have a much better chance of getting one
37 down. That's what I'm seeing and then the other thing
38 is we've had longer cold spells into the spring than we
39 have. Seasons are shifting, I think -- I see that also
40 in some of your data here, but seasons are shifting. So
41 winter is going longer into spring. Spring is going
42 longer into summer. The whole system is kind of shifted
43 on the calendar from my observations. And a couple of
44 years ago, we had some warm weather that created heavy
45 crust so wolves are staying on top and moose weren't.

46

47 MR. SORUM: Yep.

48

49 MR. BASSICH: And so that that was a
50 really bad year for moose I knew that. The other

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1 observation I just want to point out as far as moose is
2 we seem to be pretty cyclic in our region as far as
3 hunter pressure. So, we'll get a few years where people
4 are really successful with moose hunt, the word gets out
5 and then there's a high pressure for 2 or 3 years. And
6 then there'll be a year or two where almost nobody gets
7 a moose. Word gets out that it sucks to hunt here, and
8 we have a few years. So, it's really cyclic and if that
9 coincides with poor calf survival or recruitment, you
10 could see a lot of effects from hunting there too. So
11 just -- those are just local observations tying things
12 together that I see that might also account for the
13 densities being as low as it is right now. And that's
14 my pretty local area, basically Montauk to Eagle. Thank
15 you.

16
17 MR. SORUM: I'll respond to two of those
18 things. As you noted, you're seeing this variability in
19 climate or weather shifting and pushing where our
20 calving date was May 20th, a peak calving, the average
21 calving date was May 20th. And it only across the six
22 years, it averaged only -- five of the six years were
23 within one day of that date and one -- and the six year
24 was three days -- three days from that date. And so, the
25 moose don't really have -- they're not shifting with the
26 weather. They're not able to produce -- drop the calf,
27 you know, when it's cold, they can drop it two weeks
28 later, that's not a thing. They drop the calves when
29 they have to drop the calves. So, they're kind of stuck
30 with what it's like on the ground on May 20th. So, if
31 it's not greened up yet, that might -- that likely
32 affects the health of the calf because it affects the
33 health of the mom. So, they're kind of pushed in a box
34 there. So yeah. There was another thing and I can't
35 remember now, but great.

36
37 And then we can talk about wolves
38 because we're kind of keeping an eye on multiple trophic
39 levels here and we can kind of speak to wolves a little
40 bit, which is kind of handy. So, this biological year
41 we tracked 19 GPS collared wolves across seven packs.
42 Six of those seven packs denned, but only four those
43 packs retained pups in the fall. It's pretty unusual.
44 You know, we've been doing this for 30 some years now,
45 and we generally, if the pack has -- or if a pack dens,
46 usually they at least will, you know, most of the packs
47 will have pups, they don't all survive and often they
48 don't survive into November, but generally they -- most
49 of them do. But we only had four packs of retained pups
50 in the fall. Of the 19 GPS collared wolves, so far six

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1 died and zero dispersed outside of the preserve. The
2 zero -- yeah. And then three packs disbanded due to the
3 death of both breeders. The number of wolves monitored
4 within the preserve in the fall was 35, which represents
5 a decline of about 37% compared to the long-term average.
6 And so, I have a graph here at the bottom of the update.
7 And it shows both the reproduction. So, the mean natality
8 and then the number of wolves monitored. And so, when I
9 say number of wolves monitors, that's within our
10 project. Long-term monitor -- we kind of monitor the
11 same areas. And so, we have about -- we can kind of
12 assess the population size and use that.

13
14 And so, we're at about the lowest
15 recorded population size we've recorded in Yukon-
16 Charley. In 2020 to 2023, the population had rebounded
17 after predator control was lifted in 2018. And then --
18 since then it's kind of tanked and reproduction has not
19 returned as well, which is pretty unusual. Usually when
20 the population goes down, reproduction goes up and we're
21 just seeing reproduction going down and -- or the
22 abundance going down and reproduction staying low and
23 meanwhile, also, we're not having any this dispersal --
24 dispersing wolves. And one thing we learned when the
25 population was higher is you'll have a lot of dispersals,
26 like wolves will just start peeling out of Yukon-Charley
27 and start populating other areas. And right now, it seems
28 like they're kind of -- it seems like they're probably
29 above or at carrying capacity, and there isn't a lot of
30 room for growth in Yukon-Charley, so. And my perspective
31 is there's way fewer moose, there's way fewer sheep and
32 there's a lot fewer caribou than there was, you know,
33 10-20 years ago. So, there's not a lot to eat after
34 that. So, I think we're just seeing wolves kind of
35 following the trend of what's available to eat. and
36 there's not much. And so, there's just much fewer wolves,
37 at least within the preserve. Is there any questions
38 about wolves?

39
40 MS. BURK: This question, I was trying to
41 -- trying to look and understand because I know like in
42 25D we were talking about low density and a lot of the
43 conditions that you're describing, and I'm thinking about
44 low density in my areas, which is 20A, 20C and 20B, but
45 especially 20B recently. I was just wondering if maybe
46 some of the low density -- because there isn't any surveys
47 or data in 25D that maybe a person could assume that
48 there's -- they could be having some similar low-density
49 issues as you're describing, and as we're seeing in Minto
50 Flats, which is a similar landscape as for 25D.

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MR. SORUM: Yeah. And your low density is with which species?

MS. BURK: With moose. Sorry, I wasn't sure about that.

MR. SORUM: Okay. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

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MS. BURK: I'm just wondering, do you feel like maybe low density might be a problem? And we're hearing also in the Ahtna region in 11, 12 and 13, some concerns about potential low density. And then Andy's question about pressure and I'm -- you know, we're highway Indians. I'll just say it. And knowing that growing up like that, it's always been an issue of pressure. And I think we're getting at this point where we're really seeing that pressure show up in the biological data. And so, it's not only about numbers, but I don't know if you caught Charlie's comments about the tapeworms in the meat. And then Gerald seems pretty concerned that he's like, I don't ever remember hearing about like meat like this. That's tough from tapeworms and doesn't have fat. And so, I'm just kind of worried about the state of moose because we're -- the salmon decline was kind of like, boom. But we have like, I feel like more consistent data on that, whereas we might have a survey or we might not when it comes to moose and I'm hearing a lot of patterns around these road systems and just kind of feeling really concerned about the overall health of moose. And maybe, I don't know if you have any thoughts kind of as you listen in similar.

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MR. SORUM: Yeah, yeah. So, we just wrote -- we're writing the report -- we wrote the report; it's supposed to be published. It was -- we wanted it published for this. Our goal is to have published, but it didn't get published. So, I couldn't present that. But looking through the literature in general, like Tetlin population tanked and it's at -- and not to speak for them, but their population in their report had dropped dramatically. Yukon Flats population had dropped. And so, I'm kind of just speaking to the adjacent populations. Yukon-Charley. Also, the Taylor Highway corridor had dropped over the last five years. And so it's kind of this region-wide decline. And so sometimes these local areas have these local, unique issues that lead to these declines and maybe an increase, you know, randomly increased predator population for some reason, right. And that could be a big fire moves

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1 in. And then all of a sudden, 20 years later, the big
2 berry crop, and now you just have a lot of black bears
3 or something in that area. So, there's these like really
4 unique situations that can occur. But when you see these,
5 these declines across huge swaths of areas. You know,
6 generally you're dealing with more of the same thing and
7 a lot of times it's weather because, you know, what
8 affects us here often affects Eagle or Minto. You know,
9 we kind of under the same weather patterns and systems.
10 So, you know, luckily with moose, unlike caribou,
11 caribou live off of, you know -- their food reproduces
12 at a 50-year cycle. You know, lichens grow really slow
13 and they take a long time to reproduce. With moose, you
14 know, alders will, well not alders -- willows, sorry,
15 willows. They grow really quick. And so, you can have
16 moose over eat their food source. But then when they
17 drop below carrying capacity or where their food comes
18 back, they can produce two calves, unlike caribou can
19 only produce one. They can respond really quickly to
20 great conditions and kind of grow back up, but they also
21 can then go over carrying capacity a lot easier. So, I
22 mean, this is my take on, it is that I think, you know,
23 if we have good weather conditions, moose can respond
24 quickly, but we're this year seems like another year
25 where it's not a very good weather pattern, which was
26 what I wasn't hoping for. Yeah.

27

28 MS. BURK: Do you -- so my dad always
29 told me that -- this is Eva, for the record, that the
30 moose really liked the birch saplings. And I was like,
31 thinking about the different sugars and things that are
32 in the birch bark. Do you ever kind of note the
33 difference or track if moose are -- what they're actually
34 eating? If it's not just willows, but maybe they're into
35 a patch of birch?

36

37 MR. BASSICH: This is Member Bassich.
38 They like the buds that come up in the springtime. I've
39 seen them browsing on that real heavy. From -- especially
40 from younger trees.

41

42 MS. BURK: I think they strip them too,
43 right though. Like, yeah, I see that too.

44

45 MR. SORUM: Yeah, yeah. We did it -- so
46 unfortunately, you know, we -- with the collaring
47 project we have -- we had 38 animals that we sampled,
48 you know, and so like hunter surveys or -- you guys have
49 a lot better sense, you get -- you know, your groups can
50 touch hundreds of moose a year through hunting and

1 others, you know, and where we touch 38 animals. And so,
2 we did parasite analysis, ectoparasites. So not internal
3 because we didn't -- weren't eating them. And so, we
4 didn't see anything -- we didn't see ticks or bugs or
5 anything on Yukon-Charley moose, which was a great sign.
6 We're keeping an eye on that. Also, we're doing diet
7 analysis with stable isotopes, similar to what the Ahtna
8 had described, where they're using hair and blood and
9 then looking at stable isotopes to estimate diet. And
10 so, we actually have a PhD student publishing a couple
11 papers on that, and one just got submitted. So hopefully
12 we can provide that next year. But that was looking at
13 how the diet of moose and how that affects -- how that
14 can affect reproduction and everything too. So anyway,
15 so we have a couple of things related to that. But when
16 it comes to like those smaller measurements, we're not
17 in the field enough to, you know, to watch them the way
18 you guys do, which is great, you know, we kind of kind
19 of come together here.

20
21 MR. BASSICH: One very quick comment and
22 then we obviously move on. In regards to the moose,
23 again, with having those lower population densities, the
24 other thing that I've been noticing, and we actually
25 made a proposal for it a few years ago -- last year, was
26 I'm seeing a real shift from black bear populations to
27 grizzly bear populations. Especially down in that nation
28 area. If you walk the, the shorelines there in the fall
29 time, you'll see almost no black bear tracks anymore.
30 It's all grizzly bear and I've been seeing that moving
31 up into my region as well, too. Last summer -- I did not
32 see a single black bear all summer. That has never
33 happened. So that's why I was asking the questions a
34 little bit earlier about some of the other areas. If
35 they're seeing those kinds of shifts and ratios between
36 grizzly bear and black bear, because I know grizzly bears
37 are far more successful at taking moose than black bears
38 are. They both take them, but grizzly bears are much,
39 much better at it. So that might be another thing holding
40 those populations down as well. So just an observation.
41 Local observation anyway.

42
43 MR. SORUM: Great. Yeah. Unfortunately,
44 we don't do anything with bears in Yukon-Charley. It's
45 been a bit of a dream to go do a genetic sample, like a
46 study like Ahtna described earlier, which is like pretty
47 unique and great to be able to do over a big area. And
48 that's kind of the only way you could do -- in my opinion
49 a survey in Yukon-Charley. But it would be fantastic.
50 You could do it along the river. It'd be great. Yeah.

1

2 MR. BASSICH: Well, I would suggest maybe
3 trying to just stay closer in touch with the hunting --
4 people that are out hunting. At least you get that time
5 frame in the fall for those observations. But my guess
6 is if you had been collecting that, you'd probably hear
7 from hunters that they're seeing a lot more grizzly bears
8 in the area.....

9

(Simultaneous speech)

10

11

12 MR. SORUM: Okay.

13

14

15 MR. BASSICH:than they have.
16 Obviously, some have been going back to the same places
17 for a while. There's a lot of transient hunters that
18 come through and actually from my community, not too
19 many Eagle residents really go deep into Yukon-Charley.
20 They just don't have the economic means to do it. But
21 anyway, for what it's worth.

21

22

23 MR. SORUM: I can give one more -- a quick
24 update on peregrines. If you guys...? Yeah. So, I'm not
25 the peregrine biologist, but I talk to them, so I give
26 you their notes. Essentially from the population has
27 been recovering since the 1970s. In 2020 to 2024, they
28 thought they were starting to see a decline, kind of
29 rapid decline in peregrines along the Yukon -- along the
30 Charlie or along -- within Yukon-Charley. And then last
31 year they did their annual survey and they started seeing
32 -- they saw potentially a bounce back. One -- it looked
33 like the population started to bounce back, but they
34 definitely want to do another year or two to see if it's
35 recovering from that dip that occurred. So that's the
36 update.

36

37

38 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: It sure is a
39 pleasure to watch a family of peregrines hunt ducks
40 together. Yeah, they work as a group and they're very
41 effective. Thank you so much for your report. Any more
42 questions for them?

42

43

44 MS. OKADA: And then, Mr. Chair Marcy
45 Okada, for the record. The last two pages of your update
46 are just sharing information about some of the findings
47 on cultural resources within the preserve. Yukon-Charley
48 was also created to protect the mining history within
49 the preserve. And then there's also a bit of information
50 on Charlie's village. That's also within Yukon-Charley.

50

1 (Pause)

2
3 MR. BASSICH: I -- Member Bassich here.
4 I was just looking at the last page something that always
5 piques my interest is watching climate and climate
6 change and you know, speaking about the moose
7 populations and the caribou populations, I think climate
8 change is having a much greater and subtle impact on
9 these animals. We talked a little bit about the shifting
10 seasons and what that does to moose calving seasons. I
11 think creation of fires really impacts caribou in a great
12 way. And I can remember in 2004-2005 a lot of the caribou
13 habitat burned quite extensively down to the tundra,
14 burning the tundra. And there was a lot of questions
15 about what fire does to caribou. And so anyway, I think
16 it's just really great that you're tracking -- locally
17 tracking climate change, and wetter. Everything that
18 I've read says we expect to get warmer and wetter as
19 time goes on through climate change. And so, I think
20 drawing those correlations between what we're seeing
21 with some of these declines in species, i.e. mainly
22 caribou and moose, it's really important to watch
23 climate -- climate change and what's happening with that
24 because those animals have to adapt and they're not going
25 to adapt fast. It's going to take generations for them
26 to adapt to that or to learn how to adapt to it. So
27 anyway, just more of a holistic outlook on how all of
28 these things are tied together. We always tend to, as
29 scientists, we always tend to look at one thing or maybe
30 two, but they're all tied together. And so, I just wanted
31 to get that on the record. I'm going to keep hammering
32 that home because I think that's the direction. If we
33 really want to save our resources, we have to look at
34 everything and its connection to everything else. We
35 can't just say, okay, we're going to manage moose or
36 okay, we're going to manage salmon. And we have to also
37 understand how it relates both climatically and through
38 the trophic regimes. What depends on what. And I'll
39 reference -- I've been speaking a lot about chum salmon
40 and how important they are as a keystone species for
41 bringing marine derived nutrients and such. And once you
42 lose those for a certain period of time, that changes
43 the entire ecosystem. And that's hard to recover from.
44 Once you get to a tipping point, it's hard to recover.
45 So anyway, just wanted to get that on the record, Mr.
46 Chair. Thank you. I know it was a little off topic.

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48 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: I believe in the
49 cycle, and I believe in the same thing. So, it's all right.
50 Really, thank you for your report today. Any questions?

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(No response)

Is that all you have? Thank you.

MS. OKADA: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Sure. Appreciate your time. Really good report. Next, we have Yukon Flats and Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

MS. MCDAVID: And council members -- this is Brooke. The Yukon Flats report is on page 107, and the Arctic Refuge is on 115 just after that.

(Pause)

MR. MERRILL: Good afternoon, Mr. Chair, Members of the Council. This is Clayton Merrill, Subsistence Coordinator for Arctic and Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuges. As we start, I just wanted to point out these are the annual reports from last year that were meant to be presented at the October meeting prior to the shutdown. We haven't begun compiling our annual reports for this year, we traditionally present those at the fall meeting. So, a lot of this is old. But we'll be giving -- I'll be giving another presentation for both refuges at the fall meeting. With that being said, this is a great time if there's anything you want more details on, to point that out before we get to writing the annual report, and I can make sure to capture any special interests.

Starting out with Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge and staffing. Refuge staffing over 2025 was reduced by more than 50%. We lost Refuge Manager Jimmy Fox, Pilot and Wildlife Biologist Nikki Guldager, Wildlife Biologist Delia Vargas, all retired. Adding on to that, in 2024, we had the Assistant Refuge Manager Emily Magnuson lost, the Refuge Administrator Deanne Robinson, the Refuge Biologist Sheila Dufort and Refuge Biologist Jim McCarron. We are now three staff, if you count me as fully being with Yukon Flats. But I spend part of my time with Arctic. So, we are a very small staff currently. In spite of that reduction, Yukon Flats managed to complete most of our projects for the year. We've -- actually right now we are conducting the 10th year of our lynx movement study at Canvasback Lake Refuge Biologist and Acting Refuge Manager Mark Bertram is currently out there snow machining and hopefully

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1 capturing many lynx.

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4 We completed our waterbird surveys for
5 scoters, scaup and loons. The 2024 numbers for scoters
6 and scaup were similar to the long-term mean. The 2024
7 loon numbers were slightly down, but within that, the
8 common loon numbers were up from the long-term mean.
9 After 23 consecutive years, we were unable to conduct
10 the spring aerial scoter-scaup surveys in 2025 due to
11 the loss of our pilots that year. We were, however, able
12 to conduct the August loons survey. Data has not been
13 tabulated for that yet, but that's one of the updates
14 I'll have for you at the fall meeting.

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We were able to conduct the 10th annual survey of bald eagle nests and other stick nesting birds. We observed one active osprey nest and seven active bald eagle nests, plus 18 empty nests. We were able to complete the sheep survey and the White Mountains in July of 2025, working with ADF&G and the refuge. Overall counts of rams, ewes and lambs were low, at 123 total sheep compared to the long-term average of 354. There's a detailed table, and fewer observed lambs were the primary cause of the low estimate. This year, only eight lambs were observed. We suspect the high snow load its persistence until late in the spring, and the likelihood of ice on snow events may have contributed to the poor crop of lambs in 2025.

In July of 2025, we conducted the duck brood survey at four wetland complexes within the refuge. This survey is focused on diving ducks such as lesser scaup. Data -- the data for that has been analyzed but not added to this report. That will be in the fall report, but I do have some notes to add that are not in the reports you have. So in -- for lesser scaup production in 2024 was greater than the long-term average at all four wetlands. In 2025, it returned to being similar to the long-term averages. In 2024, for white wing scoter, the production was greater than the long-term average at three of the four wetlands. In 2025 it similarly returned to being similar to the long-term averages. For Canvasback, the production in 2024 was greater than the long-term average at three of the plots, and similar to the long-term average at the fourth. 2025, the production of Canvasback was below the long-term average at all four sites. For the American wigeon in 2024, production was greater than the long-term average at three of the sites and lower than the long-term average at the fourth. We saw similar results in 2025

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1 with greater at some of the -- at most of the sites.
2 Green-winged teal production was well above the long-
3 term average in 2024 at Canvasback Lake and greater than
4 the long-term average at two of the other sites and
5 similar to the long-term average at the fourth site. It
6 was a similar mixed result this year, with some sites
7 being greater than long-term average and some being
8 below, but two of them being similar.

9
10 In August of 2025 we conducted a duck
11 banding project at Canvasback Lake and we managed to band
12 219 ducks, 18 mallards, 134 northern pintail, 67 green-
13 winged teal. During this project, we didn't observe any
14 sick or dead birds or any evidence of avian influenza.
15 And one highlight of that project was recapturing a
16 female northern pintail, which was originally banded as
17 a young of the year in 2021. Important to note is we
18 observed that the young of the year numbers for all
19 species were down, which indicates poor production for
20 dabbling ducks in 2025.

21
22 As we heard from the state from Alaska,
23 from Department of Fish and Game, Mark Nelson is
24 currently hopefully working on the moose survey for the
25 eastern half of 25D or 25D remainder. We don't have any
26 other moose data, and I don't currently have the results
27 of the 25D West moose hunt. That hunt just closed last
28 week on the 28th, I believe. So, there's still quite a
29 window before those hunt reports are expected to reach
30 me. By the fall, I hope to have a better -- I hope to
31 be able to report out about usage of those permits in
32 25D West and hunt success in 25D West.

33
34 The pollinator sampling is ongoing as
35 part of the Alaska Bee Atlas. And this year, in response
36 to the state of Alaska's plan to release bison on state
37 lands northeast of Circle, at the time of writing this
38 in 2028, but my understanding is that's been changed --
39 advanced and the new proposed is 2027 for that release.
40 But we did conduct a -- or in partnership with the Alaska
41 Center for Conservation Science. We conducted habitat
42 assessments to estimate potential available food for
43 bison and moose in refuge lands in July and August of
44 2025. Those results haven't come back in, so I don't
45 have anything to report out yet. I know that will be
46 something of interest to this Council, so as soon as I
47 have any information, I'm happy to send it along.

48
49 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Yeah.

50

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1 MS. BURK: Thank you. This is Eva, I --
2 what -- how you did those surveys for that forage for
3 the bison? So, what was your technique?
4

5 MR. MERRILL: So, that was one that was
6 not run by refuge staff specifically a -- our Inventory
7 and Monitoring out of Anchorage handled it. I have a
8 flyer I can give you that goes into those details, but
9 it's a project I wasn't directly involved with. So, I
10 can send that as soon as I'm done speaking. I can send
11 that over to Brooke to distribute.
12

13 A brief update from our law enforcement
14 program. In addition to the refuge staff loss this year,
15 we also lost Collin Maier, the Law Enforcement Officer
16 for Yukon Flats. With that being said, our new Law
17 Enforcement Officer Bill Cato, who's an experienced fish
18 and wildlife officer from the Lower 48, was supposed to
19 reach Fairbanks today. But I received a report the hub
20 on his trailer blew out in Whitehorse. So, we don't
21 expect him until next week or whenever Whitehorse gets
22 a new hub for his trailer. With that being said, I've
23 been talking with the patrol captain, Curtis Stevens,
24 for the Northern Patrol Zone and Senior Law Enforcement
25 Officer Cody Smith quite extensively as Bill Cato comes
26 on to quickly orient Bill to many of the issues that are
27 raised at these Council meetings. And an update to from
28 Senior Law Enforcement Officer Cody Smith, who I spoke
29 to briefly this morning. He's out in Galena conducting
30 patrols right now, or else he would be here, but he
31 wanted to let the RAC know that the many complaints that
32 have come in through this RAC -- or many reports that
33 have come in through this RAC are not falling on deaf
34 ears. He has, off the top of his head he was able to
35 identify four open investigations that he has into air
36 taxis and guides in the area that this RAC oversees, so
37 we are working on them. Many of the details of those
38 cases can't be shared because they're still open. But
39 he wanted to make sure the RAC knew we are -- these
40 reports are not being ignored. We are trying to address
41 them. So yeah, happy to pass that on and keep you in
42 touch -- keep the RAC in touch with him as anything
43 develops. I think that's all I have for Yukon Flats.
44 Unless there's any questions or if there's any special
45 interest you want me to make sure, hit the annual report
46 for this year. Thank you. Okay. Yes.
47

48 MS. MCDAVID: This is Brooke. Clayton,
49 just so you know, and you probably already know. The
50 Council is hoping to meet in Fort Yukon in the fall, so

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1 if there's opportunity for you all to join and present.
2 We're hoping to get a lot of the community to that
3 meeting. So, thank you.

4
5 MR. MERRILL: Yeah, I certainly hope to
6 be in Fort Yukon. I love Fort Yukon, it's a great place.
7 We have the bunkhouse there, which is underutilized, so
8 I hope to be able to get out there and touch base with
9 a lot of our -- a lot of the people that I work for. All
10 right, so a brief update on Arctic. Again, this is
11 largely old. This year at the request of the Western
12 Interior RAC, Arctic resumed two historic Dall sheep
13 surveys. One on the Hulahula, which hasn't been
14 performed since 2015 and one on the Atigun Gorge, which
15 was last done in 2011. Predictably, the numbers for sheep
16 in both of these places were historically low. In the
17 Hulahula, 16 groups totaling 166 individuals on the --
18 were located on the east side of the river, and no groups
19 were spotted on the west side of the river. The lambs
20 per 100 ewe and yearlings per -- the lambs per 100 ewes
21 were 62 lambs per 100 ewes and 30 yearlings per 100
22 ewes, with 16% of the population being rams and three
23 full curl rams identified. This is the lowest number of
24 sheep on record, representing a 54% decrease since the
25 last survey in 2015, and was approximately 70% lower
26 than the long-term average. It is important to note that
27 they were unable to access the entire historical survey
28 route. Therefore, caution should be exercised when
29 interpreting this data. Additionally, this is a single
30 year of data compared to long-term. We do plan on
31 conducting these surveys again in early June of this
32 year and start building up a record again.

33
34 For the Atigun Gorge we observed five
35 groups of sheep totaling 34 individuals on the north
36 side of the Atigun River. No groups were spotted on the
37 south side of the river and the lambs -- there were zero
38 lambs identified in the whole survey. And 67 yearlings
39 per 100 ewes, which works out to eight yearlings out of
40 34. The percentage of rams in the population was 41%,
41 but no full curl rams were observed. The total number
42 of sheep observed is the lowest on record, representing
43 a 79% decrease since the survey was last conducted in
44 2011 and approximately 87% lower than the long-term
45 average. The lambs per 100 ewes ratio is the lowest ever
46 documented, as it was zero lambs per 100 ewes. Well, the
47 yearlings per 100 ewes was higher than the long-term
48 average, but not a record high. This was not the usual
49 pattern for lamb production in this area, but with no
50 relevant data from 2024, we can only surmise that forage

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1 conditions were unfavorable for use to gain needed
2 reserves by fall breeding season. It is possible that a
3 group of ewes with lambs had already migrated to the
4 into the adjacent high country to find more forage. The
5 overall low number of sheep coincides with anecdotal
6 observations from various user groups, including air
7 operators, fleet pilots, RACs, hunt guides and
8 subsistence users. Western Brooks Range Game Management
9 Units have seen a decline in the sheep population since
10 at least 2011. This trend may be affecting Eastern Brooks
11 Range as well.

12
13 For moose in Arctic in 2024 and 2025,
14 the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Park -- National
15 Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management and the
16 University of Alaska continued working together on a
17 broad study to better understand the ecology of moose
18 in the Upper Yukon drainage, Richardson Mountains and
19 the Arctic. The study continues to gain insight on moose
20 seasonal movements, distribution, habitat use, diets and
21 spatial ecology. The project is also focused on how these
22 factors influence population status through adult
23 survival and recruitment of young into the population.
24 The project, which started in 2022, is expected to
25 continue through 2027. Of the 24 cow moose that were
26 collared in Arctic Refuge in 2022, 20 of them were still
27 alive in 2024, and of those 20, 17 had calves, including
28 six sets of twins. In 2025, 16 of those collared cow
29 moose remained. Of those, ten were observed in spring
30 and four had calves, including one set of twins. Another
31 mortality occurred in June of 2025, which leaves 15
32 collared cow moose on Arctic.

33
34 Arctic continues much of its bird
35 monitoring across the coastal plains and tundra. Which
36 I don't think this RAC touches on too much. So, I'm just
37 going to skip over unless there's specific interest in
38 it. I did also want to talk briefly -- I don't have a
39 ton of details, but following up on the conversation of
40 this RAC on the reforming of the Hunter Ethics Working
41 Group and the revitalized interest. Arctic National
42 Wildlife Refuge has also identified many of these same
43 use issues or had many of these same use issues
44 identified to them and has begun working on some similar
45 education and outreach measures. I would like to link
46 in with the working group as much as I can to make sure
47 that both of those measures are cohesive. And the
48 messaging comes from both an official refuge standpoint,
49 but also from a subsistence use standpoint. So, the more
50 I can tie in with you all on that, the happier I'll be.

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1 Thank you. Do I have any questions? Yes.

2

3 MS. BURK: Thanks. I'm just -- this is
4 Eva. I -- is it normal for the cow moose to have so many
5 mortalities in three years? Is there -- you know, just
6 kind of seems like a lot, but maybe I'm -- maybe it's
7 natural. You said 24...?

8

9 MR. MERRILL: Right, 24. Down to 20 and
10 then down to 15. I don't know, and so I don't know -- I
11 don't have that full report sitting in front of me. I
12 can certainly dig into it some because a lot of that
13 would depend on like, what's the -- what was the reason
14 for each of those deaths. You know, was it natural? Is
15 there -- was it predation? Was it sickness? Was it --
16 so I'm happy to dig into that and send along any
17 information, but I don't know it off the top of my head.
18 I'm sorry.

19

20 MS. BURK: Yeah. Just out of curiosity,
21 with all the things going on with moose.

22

23 MR. MERRILL: Yeah, absolutely.

24

25 MS. BURK: Just I'm wondering.

26

27 MR. MERRILL: Yeah. And hearing about the
28 parasites -- or development of parasites and stuff. It
29 is something that we should look into a little. I'm
30 happy to report out on that a little more.

31

32 MS. BURK: And then another thing that
33 Charlie told me, but I don't -- I can't speak to this
34 the way that he can is that sometimes like a big animal
35 would target a pregnant moose. Because knowing that
36 they're pregnant, like it's, it's something.....

37

38 MR. MERRILL: It's easier and yeah.

39

40 MS. BURK: Easier. And yeah, I mean, I
41 don't want to be like, it's a twofer situation, but.

42

43 MR. MERRILL: Well, but that's probably
44 how the animal is -- I will make a note, and I will --
45 I'll follow up. I'll talk to Arctics biologist and get
46 some more information.

47

48 MS. BURK: Appreciate it and appreciate
49 all the responsiveness to local people's concerns. We
50 like to know that those things are being addressed. I

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1 was starting to dig around with, but -- about like low
2 flying zones and are there areas of Alaska -- because
3 I'm trying to remember this for an oil and gas
4 development that I felt like there was protections
5 sometimes for caribou in certain areas because they
6 birth, where they birth. But I may or may not be
7 remembering that correctly. And when I looked up like
8 low flying zones in Alaska, I didn't really see a lot.
9 It almost seems like it's kind of a free for all right
10 now. And I don't know -- I'm not a pilot, so I don't
11 even know how to begin to address those concerns. Yeah.
12 There's Andy.

13
14 MR. BASSICH: Yeah. Thank you. Just two
15 things that I can recall from previous years. There was
16 a period of time in Yukon-Charley, where there was a
17 great concern because of military training along the
18 Yukon corridor. And the peregrine -- that's a very heavy
19 populated peregrine falcon density area. And that was
20 resolved to or it was mitigated, let's put it that way.
21 So, and then the other thing I can remember from many
22 years ago was there was a lot of concern with military
23 training across the flats here and impacting sheep,
24 young sheep scaring them. They'd fall off. They died.
25 But that was all military and jet aircraft. It had
26 nothing to do with small planes. There's never been, to
27 my recollection, from what I remember, any discussion
28 about small plane restrictions or anything, because
29 sometimes they're forced to fly under weather. And
30 that's usually a lot of times, as we heard from Charlie
31 Jagow, sometimes you're forced to do that. Some people
32 try not to. Some people probably do it on purpose, but
33 it'd be really difficult to put in any altitude
34 restrictions for aircraft because of safety reasons, in
35 my view.

36
37 MS. MCDAVID: This is Brooke. Yeah. Thank
38 you so much for all that information, Clayton. Something
39 that the Council identified earlier that they would like
40 information on. And we can certainly follow up on this
41 after the meeting. If, you know, you're not prepared to
42 speak to it now, but if you are, you're welcome to. Is
43 about how the refuge's issue permits to guides and
44 transporters for operating within the refuge. And if you
45 know anything about like the number of permits that you
46 all issue and any sorts of you know, restrictions or
47 guidelines that they have to adhere to.

48
49 MR. MERRILL: I don't have any of that
50 in front of me. It is something that with the reduction

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1 in staff, I have reluctantly been dragged into this year.
2 So, I'm happy to get a lot of that information prior to
3 the fall meeting. But I don't have it right off the top
4 of my head.

5

6

MS. BURK: We have a question online.

7

8 MR. WASSILIE: Hi, there is the question
9 or comment. I was just curious. You know Charlie's
10 mentioned a few times about, you know.....

11

12

(Simultaneous speech)

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MS. MCDAVID: Excuse me, could you please
say your name for the record. Thank you.

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MR. WASSILIE: Sorry. Yes. My name is
Leonardo Wassilie. I'm from Nenana, Alaska. And I'm also
on the local, the Nenana/Minto local advisory committee.
And through the Chair, my question would be if -- like
Charlie's mentioned a few times about the, you know,
elder moose teaching younger moose like some of the foods
to help us reduce the like incidence of you know,
tapeworms or other parasites. And I'm wondering if it's
because there's a lack of it or if some of the moose
habitat is lacking for that? I just didn't -- I'm just
curious about that. Thank you.

28

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MR. MERRILL: This is Clayton Merrill
from Yukon Flats. So, I guess the question sounded like
there's kind of two parts to it. One, are there older
moose able to teach the younger moose? And two, are --
is the habitat changed enough that those food sources
have changed? Moose.....

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(Simultaneous speech)

MR. WASSILIE: Yes.

MR. MERRILL:tend to be primarily
solitary except for their, you know, the mother and
calves. We have made large efforts in 25D to not harvest
cow moose. So, I would think after those efforts that
the mother moose is still available for the whole time
that the calf is remaining social and attached to her.
With the habitat, that is a good question. And that
would be kind of similar to -- so I'm from Maine
originally, where we also have moose, but we have moose
with much higher parasite loads, especially recently.
And a lot of that is associated with the habitat becoming

1 worse as Maine warms up and the moose range kind of
2 retreating. That's a reasonable assumption that I don't
3 actually have the -- like have any data to connect with
4 it. I don't have any habitat surveys in front of me to
5 show whether or not the browse has changed over the last
6 several years or decades even. That is certainly
7 something that could be dug into but might be best left
8 until after we receive this report from the bison and
9 moose browse survey that happened this last summer,
10 because that might include some useful data about what
11 is out there on the landscape. I'm sorry for that non-
12 answer answer, but that's unfortunately the best I can
13 give right now.

14
15 MS. BURK: This is.....

16
17 (Simultaneous speech)

18
19 MR. WASSILIE: Very much appreciated.

20
21 MS. BURK: Oh, thanks, Leo. This is Eva.
22 You know, moose -- I flew over when I was searching for
23 my father a few years ago in the winter. So, it was late
24 October and there was already a snowfall in the -- there
25 was like these groups of moose all together. And I
26 believe there was like mostly cows with a bowl. And then
27 how Charlie's explained -- and then one time I've also
28 seen right here on -- what's that road out there?
29 (Indiscernible) there's a valley and I feel like it was
30 like November and there's the moonlight, and the whole
31 field was full of moose. So sometimes moose do gather
32 on a bigger scale.

33
34 MR. MERRILL: Yeah. Especially in the
35 winter for like when they're, when they're like yarding
36 up and stuff. I didn't mean to -- saying that they're
37 largely solitary. I didn't mean to say that they're
38 exclusively solitary, but for the bulk of the year,
39 they're not super -- so, they're not really like a super
40 social animal, like a sheep would be.

41
42 MS. BURK: And then the -- what Charlie
43 says is like the younger bulls, you know, they're like,
44 they fight each other, you know, and the younger bulls
45 will know better than to fight the super big bull. But
46 what they're doing is they're kind of watching and
47 learning. And so, they're mimicking the behavior and the
48 way Charlie explained the warming to me -- the deworming
49 is the bull moose are teaching the younger moose what
50 plants to eat, especially after they fight too for pain

1 relief. So that -- Leo's question goes back to the
2 landscape. And I think this goes back to some of my
3 comments to folks when we're talking about caribou and
4 moose, just how the landscape is changing from fires. I
5 think there's this assumption that fire is good for the
6 land, but in fact, fire -- there isn't a lot of study.
7 I'm actually brought a whole bunch of researchers from
8 the university, the International Arctic Research
9 Center, down to the fire scar Nenana, where the
10 agriculture land is. And what you can see is it brushes
11 up. So, what was a boreal forest that a moose could get
12 through easily and kind of had this willows and hardwoods
13 on the side of it is now overtaken by hardwoods. And it
14 brushes up and it becomes harder for the moose to get
15 through that. And then also, the moose will knock over
16 the tops and -- of the trees to a certain point. And
17 then it then they don't, right. And then also those
18 trees, the hardwoods they drink, they take a lot of
19 water. So, they're drying out the land. And I think that
20 these fires and permafrost and brushing and drying of
21 the land in the climate models is why we have this
22 prediction of moving into more of a grasslands in our
23 areas. And so, I think we kind of need to be thinking
24 about those type of changes. And that I think is what
25 Leo is getting at is how are our wetlands peatlands
26 changing that might have those medicinal plants. And
27 here's the plant medicine wormer moose guy that knows -
28 - that I'm just like, I'm combining my dad's knowledge,
29 what I know and what he knows, so.

30
31 MR. MERRILL: Right. Well, and that would
32 be -- so this is something that kind of touches on a
33 study I worked on in Maine, which is not necessarily
34 comparable because we have a completely different suite
35 of trees. But I was working on a moose browse study where
36 we were finding -- there's a type of maple tree that's
37 called moose maple and just around in Maine because the
38 moose love it, but we were finding they weren't actually
39 browsing on it. They were using it -- they were scraping
40 their velvet off and it's because there's something in
41 the bark that's a -- that was also used historically by
42 the Penobscot Tribe as an antiseptic. And so there -- I
43 will say there is some anecdotal information that I have
44 observed firsthand with moose in a different part of the
45 country that does sound very similar, but I don't know
46 enough about the browse that is available on Yukon Flats
47 right now and how it's compared to past browse to really
48 infer if that's what's going on with the parasites or
49 not. Yeah, this is a lot of me basically saying like, I
50 can't answer this question.

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CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: I want to add, I went and had lunch over at the restaurant here in the - - caribou and reindeer over there is in terrible health and it still has this velvet on. Is that maybe because it couldn't find the right tree?

(Laughter)

Well, you know, it could be, you know, because he's in a little fence just as big as this circle right here.

MR. MERRILL: Yeah. It just doesn't have anything to scrape it off on.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Yeah, except for the fence, you know. So, he just he's sitting there. He don't look too happy to me. He doesn't look very healthy either. But I think that it really means something. And I believe in what you just said. I think and I believe in that the big ones teach the little ones. And it's all important to have those big bulls that teach the young ones and the big moms and older moms to take care of the young ones and teach them. And I know that black bears also lose a couple of their cubs in the starting one while they're learning. You know, they have to learn through hardship and how to take care of their kids and what to do and what to remember they were taught. So, I think it's -- everything is connected in the circle and it's important. Thank you.

MR. MERRILL: Yeah, absolutely. I don't mean to discount anything. I'm purely trying to say I don't I don't know enough about what browse is available out there and how it's changed to really tell you if that's what's going on or not, so.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: It was worth a shot. Five-minute break, please. Are you done? Okay.

MR. MERRILL: If you're done with me, then yeah. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: If we think of something over break, maybe you'll still be here.

(Off record)

(On record)

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CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: It's necessary sometime. You have the floor. Yeah, yeah. Need a good straw.

MS. YEMMA: Good afternoon. My name is Angela Yemma. I am the Acting Field Manager for the BLM Eastern Interior Field Office. I'll let Kent introduce himself too but I'm going to speak first and then I'll give an update. But if you want to say who you are real quick? Nope. All right. He doesn't. Okay. So, I'm just -- you guys should have four handouts. The first one is an Eastern Interior Office update. It's just a synopsis of kind of the main items going on in the office. Since we weren't able to do the updates at the last meeting, I have both 2025 and what we're planning for '26 that have already started. So that's where you'll see the dates varying in there. So just again, and this is kind of high level. So, if there's anything you want a lot more info on, I'll try to answer it, but I can also look it up and get back to you.

So first one stream habitat restoration. We're continuing to implement that work. Last year we did a bunch of work at Nome Creek and also up at Wade Creek. And then this year we're not planning on doing work at Wade Creek, but we will be continuing work in Nome Creek, which would go through 2026 and probably summer to 2027, just splitting up kind of the last planned work at this time. And so, 2026 will be creek realignment is what we're looking at and contouring tailings piles. Along with that, we did a National Public Lands Day event back in September of 2025 and would like to do it again in 2026, so we can send it out if anyone would like to come. But it was a lot of fun back in September, got several volunteers and did a revegetation project. So along with the restoration happened. So, Willow staking, collecting Native seeds and also dispersing that seed. So, we're hoping to do that same thing again this coming September after the restoration work is done.

Along with all of the restoration work that we're doing, we've also been monitoring habitat and most of that -- well, actually, all of that's the BLM AIM program. It's assessment, inventory and monitoring. And there's three types of that. There's lotic, which is instream, this one next to it called lotic riparian and wetland integrated, AIMS LRI and that's really in the floodplain. And then there's kind of what you would

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1 call the uplands. A little different for Alaska than the
2 Lower 48, but that's riparian and wetland AIM. So, with
3 the restoration work, as you see in the first bullet,
4 we did that at three different creeks, Nome, Wade and
5 then Harrison Creek as a control. So that's really just
6 monitoring pre-restoration conditions and then post-
7 restoration work so that we can see how successful we
8 were over time. Along with that we're going to start
9 implementing this year office wide AIM and that's for
10 our resource management plan monitoring. Just kind of
11 what our current conditions and what do things look like.
12 So, we will be implementing that. We've done some of
13 that in the past. And we're going to start doing that
14 again this summer with the contractor and those sites
15 are planned in the Steese White Mountains and Fortymile.
16 And then we're looking at hopefully going into the (In
17 Native) next year.

18
19 For wildlife population and habitat
20 monitoring, we talked a lot about Fortymile Caribou on
21 Tuesday. But we do continue to collaborate with ADF&G
22 and Yukon, Canada, mostly through collaring efforts to
23 monitor the Fortymile, along with, of course, the hunt
24 monitoring that we've been doing and all the topics we
25 discussed on Tuesday. We also implemented some caribou
26 range exclosures back in last summer. It was in August.
27 So, there's four exclosures. Jim Herriges worked a lot
28 on this before he retired, but there's two in the North
29 Steese Unit and two in the South Steese Unit. I think
30 there are about 400 square feet. It's kind of big, big
31 old steel round cages. And so those are to look at kind
32 of what the vegetation looks like with caribou grazing
33 presence and absence. So, what does it look like inside
34 of there with the caribou not being able to get inside
35 of it. So, we did monitoring on that, collected
36 vegetation data. And then in 2026 we'll primarily be
37 just seeing how those are holding up, checking on them,
38 but the data collection is more long-term, like 5 to 10
39 years.

40
41 For moose, Park service already
42 mentioned the moose surveys earlier, so we're
43 collaborating with them on some of that. And then we're
44 also looking at -- so that was both last year and this
45 year. And then this coming season, we are planning on
46 hopefully implementing a moose survey with ADF&G and
47 25C. So, Claire's been working on that and hopefully
48 we'll be able to do that. Birds. Last year we did two
49 bird projects. Raptor nest surveys and those were in the
50 Steese White Mountains and Fortymile Wild and Scenic

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1 River. And a little bit more info on what those look
2 like that I can go over if you would like. And then
3 there's also -- we help fund a grad student who did some
4 upland shorebird monitoring and the Steese National
5 Conservation area to see where shorebirds are nesting
6 and how they're using the Steese. So, he is working on
7 writing all of that up as part of his thesis, which will
8 be interesting. And if you have any questions, just stop
9 me. Otherwise, I'll just keep going.

10
11 Otherwise, infrastructure and
12 recreation. Nome Creek road, we did a lot of upgrades
13 last year. Hopefully we will finish that work this
14 summer. We have to because the contract ends this summer,
15 so Nome Creek Road improvement work. Hopefully finishing
16 that up by August is the target. If not, it will be by
17 September at the very latest. And then we also continue
18 to do recreation trail maintenance and cabin
19 maintenance, particularly in the White Mountains. So,
20 for the Nome Creek road work, along with the restoration
21 work in Nome Creek, because there's a lot going on in
22 Nome Creek, we will start getting public announcements
23 out next month. So, we're still getting all of that
24 tidied up. And then we will roll those out next month
25 so the public can see what's going on and plan for
26 visitation.

27
28 Other activities that we always do is
29 mining and realty. So, mining compliance continues to
30 go out. We do about 80 inspections a year and then
31 realty. We don't have a realty specialist at the moment,
32 but we do continue to have some actions usually a little
33 bit smaller scale in Eastern Interior at the moment. So
34 like communication sites, renewals and then some right
35 of ways. For fire and fuels. I know there was some
36 discussion on fire. Just a little bit ago, but I think
37 we gave you a handout last year and I probably should
38 have brought it today. But we implemented a fire
39 management option change in the Steese primarily for
40 caribou habitat. And that changed that -- the fire
41 suppression from limited to modified. So basically,
42 trying to suppress fires before July 15th to conserve
43 caribou lichen just because of how long it takes to
44 recover and how much it's changing things out there. So,
45 we just started out last year, but we'll continue to
46 implement this year and see how that turns out.

47
48 We're also doing some (indiscernible)
49 treatments. Right now, I know of three. There Washington
50 Creek, Gilmore we're planning and then there's some work

000100

1 to be done down at Tanacross. And lastly on this synopsis
2 here, we've been inventorying and treating invasive
3 species weeds. So last year we did inventory in the Wild
4 and Scenic River corridor, mine sites, campgrounds, a
5 lot of the Taylor Highway, primarily bird vetch and white
6 sweet clover and did some treatments at camp sites. And
7 then this year we've already done some work with Yukon
8 Quest with getting out like -- I have weed free here,
9 but we don't necessarily require weed free straw. But
10 just getting the word out how straw can leave weeds and
11 cleaning up after you're done. So doing that both with
12 the (indiscernible) and then also just the cabins in
13 general. And then we'll continue to do office wide
14 inventory and treatments. And then we're going to focus
15 on some elodea inventory this year. One of our staff is
16 planning that out and trying to look at aviation sites.
17 We really dip for fire and seeing if we have elodea out
18 there and inventorying it and then figuring out what to
19 do if we find it for treatment. So, we're looking at
20 about 50 lake acres. So that's my synopsis of these
21 updates. If anyone has any questions.

22

23 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: I have a question
24 about your mining and inspections. What is that detail?
25 I mean what's that?

26

27 MS. YEMMA: That is, our mining -- oh
28 this is Angela. Our mining staff, we have two geologists
29 on staff. And so, where the -- where we have active
30 claims on BLM, our mining staff will go out. So, all of
31 the miners have a plan of operations, how they're
32 supposed to operate, reclamation. And so, our -- they
33 basically are inspecting the site and see if it's going
34 according to plan, if there's any issues, any
35 (indiscernible) that was unnecessary, undue degradation
36 going on, how to address it and for compliance. So, we
37 have about 40 sites to inspect and so they do those two
38 times in the summer. So that's where the (indiscernible)
39 comes from. So, a lot of them in the Fortymile is our
40 main area. And then kind of up around Central and then
41 some here around Fairbanks.

42

43 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: I ask about it
44 because I know of a lot of mines that have been around
45 for a long time that just turn into big -- small villages
46 in the fall time during moose season with family and
47 friends and it seems like not a lot of mining going on,
48 but there's a lot of recreating going on. So, I just
49 kind of -- I hear the people of these areas talking
50 about it being like a loophole to people being able to

000101

1 -- or recreate. And so, I was just curious about that.
2 Are they required to mine every year? Are they required
3 to report? And I was just curious about them because I
4 don't know a lot about it and I've been hearing a little
5 bit about it. And I know people that go out to mines in
6 Rampart area also, in the wintertime. So, I was just
7 curious in a whole.

8
9 MS. YEMMA: This is Angela. Yeah, that's
10 an interesting observation. So, most of our minds, at
11 least here, placer mining, it's all in the summers
12 primarily when they do the work, right. They're not
13 usually doing any mining activities in the winter, but
14 they will have an occupancy that is only for the miner.
15 But yeah, those are open for access. But if there's a
16 site at some point -- if a mine site hasn't had any work
17 done, eventually it can become abandoned. And so, we
18 track that and the notify miners if it's getting ready
19 to go abandoned. You need to do some work, so on and so
20 forth. But we do have some sites that are totally
21 abandoned, and some of those are a mix of miners still
22 cleaning them up or they're very old. And then BLM is
23 working on cleaning up, especially some hazardous sites
24 too.

25
26 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: So, so like in the
27 Tofty area outside of Manly, I've been traveling by these
28 mines for my whole life, and there's been smoke coming
29 out of the stove pipe and winter and fall and I don't
30 see no mining going on and I don't see no reclamating
31 [sic] going on. You know, there's big holes and full
32 of willows and moose are in them. So, I'm just curious,
33 you know, if they could just keep paying their permit
34 and not do no mining and just use it for recreation and
35 hunting. I was just curious if that goes on.

36
37 MS. YEMMA: That's an interesting
38 observation Charlie. This is Angela again. Yeah, that
39 would probably depend on if they're patented or not. If
40 it's BLM, state, where you're looking. But we can
41 certainly look if you show me on a map, we can see where
42 that might be too. Because of top of my head.....

43
44 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you. Thank you
45 for that. I could look too, but I know that there's some
46 patented ones near Rampart that has the tag right on the
47 door of the old cabin, you know, that says they're patent
48 and everything. So, I'm just trying to learn from you
49 on how to check and look. So, I appreciate you know we
50 can talk again after. Thank you.

1

2 MR. BASSICH: Yeah. Mr. Chair and Andy
3 here, Member Bassich. In the Fortymile region, the
4 increase of gold prices is really dramatically increased
5 the placer mining and it's all placer mining in that
6 Fortymile corridor there that you can probably see it
7 on one of these maps. I know I saw it in one of our maps
8 earlier. And then that country is extremely cold
9 country, and it's not -- at least in our area, it's not
10 used much in the winter by anybody because it's usually
11 20 degrees colder than what everybody else has. It's
12 just a deep valley that the cold air settles in. There
13 is a little bit of trapping. There are some of those
14 miners, I'm noticing now are starting to spend the
15 winters a little bit more there and trapping a little
16 bit, but it's not -- from what I can see from the area
17 closer to Eagle, it's not, as you described it, where
18 people are just kind of squatting in there. There's
19 always been a little bit of that, but it's not an issue
20 or anything. But it is noticeable in the community of
21 Eagle because that's kind of one of the -- I want to say
22 recreational or rest places for them. They come out of
23 the mine and then they'll come to Eagle and just kind
24 of hang out for a little bit. So, it's noticeable with
25 the gold prices increasing how much more activity there
26 is out there on the country, which is putting more
27 pressure during the summer and fall season on the hunting
28 in the area. That's the only potential impact that I'm
29 seeing from it. If the caribou come around, there's more
30 opportunity. And certainly, from what I'm hearing,
31 they're shooting the heck out of the black bears that
32 they see around there, grizzly bears.

33

34 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: And it could be just
35 people going and using old mines that are left over. As
36 far as I know, I haven't -- you know, I wouldn't dare
37 go over there during the moose season and ask the
38 question because Lord knows they could be drunk and have
39 a gun in their hand or whatever. So, I stay away. I'm
40 just curious.

41

42 MS. YEMMA: All right. Thank you. I'll
43 hand it over to Kent.

44

45 MR. SLAUGHTER: All right. Good
46 afternoon. I'm Kent Slaughter. I'm the Acting District
47 Manager for the Fairbanks District for BLM Alaska. And
48 I do have a couple other things that occurred to me
49 while Angela was talking, I'm primarily going to speak
50 to you about PLO 5150 and what's I'll give you an update

000103

1 from what I gave to the joint RACs in December. But two
2 things, Angela forgot she's got a new ranger. So, we did
3 have Johnson Friday. The -- our chief ranger retired
4 rather suddenly in at the end of December, but we do
5 have a new Ranger. Cory -- Zack Arnold, sorry, who
6 started in just before the shutdown. And so, we finally
7 are -- actually and then was off in Montana for training.
8 So, we're finally seeing him around the office a lot.
9 And he'll -- he's for Eastern Interior. We have another
10 ranger starting in two weeks.

11

12 (Distortion)

13

14 So, the Eastern Interior will have two
15 staff rangers here shortly. Central Yukon still is
16 without a ranger because their ranger did retire in
17 September, and we haven't replaced him yet. And then the
18 other update, it affects all the Department of Interior
19 agencies. But the Secretary did roll out the new U.S.
20 Wildland Fire Service. And last -- oh, in January is
21 when the first person started with that. And they have
22 now consolidated all the fire staff from all the
23 agencies. So, where the Alaska Fire Service was part of
24 BLM, it's now works for the office of the Secretary and
25 they've pulled staff from Fish and Wildlife Service,
26 Park service and BIA. Also, they're all consolidated
27 now. They just named the new regional director for that
28 last Friday, and she's coming out of the Park Service
29 out of Anchorage. I believe she'll stay in Anchorage
30 there. We're not expecting any change in service to the
31 land managers, but just awareness that there is a change
32 there and so that may affect, and when Angela was
33 mentioning looking at the changing some things from
34 limited to modified, that reminded me of that little
35 change in the system.

36

37 So, since I spoke with the RACs in
38 December, last Wednesday, the -- well, a week and a half
39 ago, the sSecretary signed a new public land order 7966
40 that partially rescinds PLO 5150 and 5180, and it affects
41 2,127,485 acres approximately, north of the Yukon River.
42 We passed out maps to everybody just before our
43 presentation. Both those maps are showing essentially
44 the same thing. One that has a lot of crosshatching is
45 showing all the areas that the state has selected within
46 the area affected by the new public land order. And then
47 the other one shows in green the lands that the state
48 has not selected. So, it is a fair change. It will be a
49 fair change in land management there. The new public
50 land order is scheduled to take effect on March 27th at

000104

1 8 a.m. Alaska time. When that does take effect, then all
2 these lands that the state has selected, the state
3 selections will attach because right now because of the
4 PLO, the existing PLO, those state selections have been
5 held in abeyance since the state selected those and now
6 they will attach, which will mean we'll be consulting
7 with the state on all activities. It will also really
8 affect subsistence on all those lands that the state has
9 selected. So that's the concern I think probably was
10 voiced by and certainly was voiced by the Western
11 interior RAC last week when I spoke with them.

12
13 The state has pledged to start a public
14 process to withdraw some of their selections statewide,
15 approximately 2 million acres statewide, including about
16 1 million acres within an adjacent to this area
17 designated by the -- that the state has selected inside
18 or adjacent to the PLO, the 5150. But that's a process,
19 the state has to go -- a public process a state has to
20 go through. They haven't started that, yet where they
21 have to provide notice that they are planning to withdraw
22 their selections and then once they do that, then those
23 selections will lift, and federal subsistence
24 regulations will apply to those remaining BLM managed
25 lands within that area.

26
27 Let's see. The determination of NEPA
28 adequacy and the decision rationale to support the new
29 PLO were published on the BLM e-planning site recently.
30 They're tied to a 2025 decision. So, if you're looking
31 for them, you'll have to look under calendar year 2025.
32 I made the mistake of using 2026 because that's when the
33 new things just showed up and returned nothing. And I
34 had to go back and look and find, oh, it was 2025 when
35 it was initially posted to e-planning. So, if you're
36 curious about those, those are available there. And
37 other than that, I'm open to answering any questions you
38 may have or try to answer any questions.

39
40 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: What's the process?
41 I know we've been hearing about this for a while. Is
42 there supposed to be a consultation done with villages
43 and stuff before this has happened, or is this fast
44 tracked? Can you tell me more about that?

45
46 MR. SLAUGHTER: So, under the
47 determination of NEPA adequacy, the state director
48 determined that when the BLM did the planning for the
49 Central Yukon Resource Management Plan, that because
50 they had partially analyzed the effect of full lifting

000105

1 of the withdrawal on subsistence that, that essentially
2 met the requirements for the subsistence management. The
3 state has in -- this last fall, the state did pledge to
4 engage in a robust public process acknowledging that
5 there will be an impact on subsistence resources and
6 availability of subsistence -- areas for subsistence use
7 by residents. They pledged to engage in a robust public
8 process to identify prime areas, corridors, access to
9 remaining federal lands. And we are awaiting their --
10 for them to begin that. I know this morning the state
11 director met with some of the DNR staff and brought that
12 concern up with them that that is one of the things that
13 the decision is hinged upon. The decision rationale does
14 cite that process and that pledge. Thank you.

15

16 MR. BASSICH: Member Bassich here. I have
17 a question. Are there other areas that are potentially
18 going to be selected and taken from BLM and turned into
19 state within our Eastern RAC region?

20

21 MR. SLAUGHTER: The next area that the
22 President directed us to look at in his executive order
23 focused on Alaska last year was the rest of the 5150
24 withdrawal. So, the rest of the corridor for the
25 pipeline. And so basically coming down past Fairbanks
26 through the -- along the Richardson and down to Valdez.
27 So, the remaining portions of the remaining withdrawals
28 within there. We're just starting to take a look at
29 that. Angela's staff has started looking at the
30 remaining little parcels in Eastern Interior and see
31 what we have for any analysis on that. And see what we
32 have for withdrawals or anything with that. So yes, there
33 probably will be some additional areas within this RAC's
34 area.

35

36 MR. BASSICH: Member Bassich here again.
37 And then looking at 25B, which is basically east of
38 Circle and east of Chalkyitsik. Sorry about
39 pronunciation. I see some quite a large plot of BLM land
40 there. Is there any discussion at that point in time for
41 land selections or transfers there?

42

43 MR. SLAUGHTER: No, not for that area at
44 this time. So, the state does -- only has about 5 million
45 acres left in the remaining entitlement under the
46 Statehood Act, and they have -- once these selections
47 attached, they will have, I believe, about 16 million
48 acres selected. So, they really have to start
49 prioritizing and ramp and both what they want title
50 transferred to and start withdrawing a lot of selections

000106

1 to come into compliance with the law.

2

3 MR. BASSICH: One final question. I know
4 probably doesn't show up in these maps because they're
5 too large a scale, but I know in the region around Eagle,
6 it's an incredible checkerboard of state, BLM, Native
7 allotments. And I've always been kind of dumbfounded how
8 and why that ever took place. It makes it absolutely
9 impossible to know where you're -- almost impossible to
10 know where you're hunting. And I'm just kind of curious
11 if to know the history of how and what the logic was
12 behind that.

13

14 MR. SLAUGHTER: I really wish I could
15 answer that question. I'm sorry. I've been with BLM, but
16 mostly with the fire service for 30 odd years. And that
17 has always confounded me too. So, I'm sorry that I --
18 yeah.

19

20 MR. BASSICH: No, I guess from my
21 perspective, that was country I used to go out and trap
22 in and it really didn't matter for the way I was
23 utilizing the land, but I always was just dumbfounded
24 in the logic of why you would try and do something like
25 that on a scale that they did. I understand the large
26 selections, which make a lot of sense, but whatever. I
27 was just kind of curious. If you ever hear of any
28 explanation of that, and maybe we need to go back to
29 someone who was around during statehood, I guess. I don't
30 know, but I would love to hear it. I think there are
31 other people that are also kind of curious as to why
32 that is, because it creates a real conundrum for
33 management.

34

35 MR. SLAUGHTER: Yeah. That's understood.
36 And that's not the only place that it creates problems
37 and you end up -- I mean, even the maps that we just
38 handed out, if you look up northeast of Coldfoot, you
39 can see one little BLM section that's totally isolated,
40 that's surrounded by state, which is blue and probably
41 Doyon in brown. How that ended up -- that anomaly, I
42 don't know, because under the statehood Act, we're not
43 supposed to end up with those isolated parcels. So,
44 there's problems like that all over the place.

45

46 MR. BASSICH: Member Bassich. That was
47 probably a hunting cabin from a high powered legislator.
48 Thank you for that. I really appreciate this
49 presentation. I'm actually really kind of concerned and
50 I really feel for the people of Western RAC region this

000107

1 is going to be an extremely dramatic change to management
2 and both wildlife and fish to a certain extent. There
3 are fish issues up in those areas. And I think it's
4 going to be really important for us to watch this pretty
5 closely over the next couple years and see how that
6 develops. Not that we can probably do anything about it,
7 but we might learn from it.

8
9 MR. SLAUGHTER: All right. Well, thank
10 you unless there's any more questions.

11
12 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you so much
13 for your report.

14
15 (Pause)

16
17 MR. KOLLER: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair,
18 Members of the Council. Justin Koller, Regulations
19 Division Supervisor with the Office of Subsistence
20 Management. I just have a summary of what's happened
21 with OSM and the Federal Subsistence Management program
22 since the fall 2025 meeting cycle ended. And just a
23 quick preview of upcoming events for the program and the
24 Board.

25
26 First, an update on the wildlife
27 regulatory cycle. All ten Regional Advisory Councils
28 were able to hold their fall 2025 meetings. Most were
29 being -- or most were rescheduled for December and
30 January. Councils provided recommendations on most
31 wildlife proposals and closure reviews, with only a few
32 that needed to be moved to the winter meetings. We
33 recognized that this was quite a disruption for the
34 program and for the council members and others in the
35 public and we just really thank you for all your
36 commitment to making these meetings happen. It's quite
37 an undertaking.

38
39 Tribal and ANCSA corporation
40 consultations on wildlife proposals and closure reviews
41 were held virtually on February 17th and 18th. OSM Native
42 Liaison Orville Lind is the best person to contact
43 regarding tribal and ANCSA corporation consultations.
44 The Federal Subsistence Board will hold its wildlife
45 regulatory meeting on April 20th through 24th at the
46 Egan Center in Anchorage. And as a reminder, public
47 testimony provided to the Council on Regulatory
48 proposals does not go directly to the Board. For those
49 who want to provide testimony to the Board, the Board
50 receives comments on non-agenda items every morning. And

000108

1 testimony on regulatory proposals when they come up on
2 the agenda. Another opportunity for tribal consultation
3 will take place right before the Board meeting on April
4 20th. With virtual or in-person options for that.

5
6 Next update is on the Secretarial
7 Review. Brooke touched on this quite a bit yesterday, I
8 believe, but I'll just run through a quick -- few
9 highlights. A public comment period was opened on
10 December 15th for the Secretarial Review. All ten
11 Councils took up this topic and submitted comment
12 letters on the review. A public listening session on the
13 review was held in Anchorage on February 3rd. We had
14 about 76 people provide oral comments in person or over
15 the phone at that meeting. The period for written public
16 comments was extended 45 days and now closes March 30th.
17 Statewide tribal ANCSA consultations on the review will
18 be held March 10th and 17th, and any tribe can request
19 a separate consultation on this topic at any time by
20 contacting OSM. Kara Moriarty is the Senior Advisor to
21 the Secretary of the interior for Alaska Affairs, and
22 she's noted that all comments will be reviewed by the
23 department and that no decisions have been made on
24 whether the review will result in any program changes
25 at all. So, there's that.

26
27 And the third update I have is on the
28 Board's winter work session. The Board met in Anchorage
29 on February 5th. During the session, the Board took care
30 of two main administrative tasks. Number one, the Board
31 accepted the 2026 Fisheries Resource Monitoring Plan as
32 presented to them. And the Board approved Regional
33 Advisory Council transmittal letters with minor changes.
34 And the topics for those letters were the Council
35 concerns about ANCSA D -- or excuse me, 17(d)(1) lands,
36 cross jurisdictional and conservation related fisheries
37 concerns and Regional Advisory Council membership
38 compensation.

39
40 The Board also received updates during
41 that meeting on the three ongoing topics. One was the
42 request for reconsideration for RFR25-01. That request
43 asked the Board to reconsider its 2025 decision to
44 designate Ketchikan as a rural community. The Board will
45 decide during its April meeting whether this RFR meets
46 the threshold for full analysis and consideration. They
47 also received an update on the Federal Subsistence
48 Permitting System. The transition to a new permitting
49 system is near complete, but the online option for
50 obtaining permits is still being developed. As part of

000109

1 the modernization efforts, we wanted the users to be
2 able to get permits online instead of going into a field
3 office or contacting a field office. And that's just
4 still being developed. There's some kinks we're working
5 out with that, so we hope that's going to be available
6 later this year. Finally, the Board received an update
7 from the Senior Advisor to the Secretary of the Interior
8 on Alaskan Affairs regarding the Secretarial Review. And
9 I already covered that update a few minutes ago.

10
11 The Board will meet in Anchorage for its
12 summer work session in August on the 4th and the 5th.
13 This is a great opportunity for Council Chairs to meet
14 with the Board and have face-to-face discussions on
15 topics of concern included in the Council's FY25 annual
16 report. Fourth update is on the current fisheries cycle.
17 The Fish and Shellfish proposed rule was published on
18 February 12th. And so, this means that anyone can now
19 submit a proposal to change federal subsistence fish and
20 shellfish regulations, customary and traditional use
21 determinations and also, for those nonrural
22 determinations of communities or areas. There's more
23 information on submitting the proposals on our program
24 website. And the last day to submit is April 3rd. The
25 Councils will be making recommendations on proposals
26 affecting the regions and their fall meetings as usual.
27 And the Federal Subsistence Board will act on the
28 proposals at the Fisheries Regulatory meeting in
29 February 2027. It's scheduled for the 1st through the
30 5th of February, I believe.

31
32 And last but not least is an update on
33 Council Membership. The 2025 Council membership
34 application submitted during last year's recruitment
35 cycle are still under consideration at the Secretary of
36 the Interior's office. And so as soon as we know, we'll
37 share the results. You know, once they're all final. And
38 on February 13th, the Board opened the next call for the
39 council applications and nominations. And application
40 forms are available on the table over there at the
41 entrance to the room and also on the program's website.
42 And we encourage council members, as usual, to reach out
43 to people in the region and pass out those applications.
44 So, we get a robust set up to review. Those applications
45 can either be submitted in person or via email or by
46 mail by April 2nd. So, April 2nd is the deadline to
47 submit. And that's all I have for you today. So yeah,
48 thanks, Mr. Chair, Members of the Council. Your hard
49 work and dedication to the program is always really
50 appreciated. And this is my first Eastern Interior RAC

000110

1 meeting. And as usual, these new Councils never
2 disappoint. And I'm always kind of amazed at the depth
3 and breadth of knowledge that you all share and the
4 passion that you share for the program and the -- how
5 you represent your region and the constituents in your
6 region. So, thank you for that. And it's been my
7 pleasure. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

8
9 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you so much.
10 And the good words are appreciated for all the hard work
11 that these people do around the table. I really
12 appreciate that. Thank you.

13
14 MR. BASSICH: Yeah. Thank you, Justin.
15 On the Secretarial Review process, if the public wants
16 to give testimony, it can be written. Can -- is there
17 an oral way to give testimony or...? In that process?
18 I'm just wondering if there's someone you can call or
19 talk to and just have like an interview to talk to them.
20 Because I think -- I've been trying to drum up a little
21 bit of interest in my community and some people don't
22 feel comfortable trying to write a long letter sharing
23 their feelings on the program, but they would probably
24 be willing to sit through an interview with someone who
25 could summarize that. I'm just curious if there's any
26 process like that.

27
28 MR. KOLLER: Yeah. Thank you. Through the
29 Chair, Member Bassich. I believe there is a way to do
30 that written comments and materials or an appointment
31 request to provide oral comments could be emailed to our
32 email address subsistence@ios.doi.gov.

33
34 (Pause)

35
36 Yeah. So, there is an avenue to request
37 oral testimony. And you can do that by submitting or
38 emailing that subsistence@ios.doi.gov. And then written
39 comments can be submitted by March 30th is the deadline
40 for that. And they can be submitted electronically
41 through regulations.gov. Or they can be, I believe they
42 can be sent to the -- directly to the Office of the
43 Secretary Senior Advisor for Alaskan Affairs. And
44 there's address right on the opening page of our website.
45 There's a tile there that you can click on and it'll
46 take you to this page that I'm looking at right now,
47 reading from. So yeah, sure.

48
49 MS. MCDAVID: And this is Brooke, just
50 to follow up. And if you forget all that, just send me

000111

1 a message and we'll route you to the right direction.

2

3 MR. BASSICH: Member Bassich. I have too
4 much white hair. I definitely will be contacting you.

5

6 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Appreciate you.
7 Thank you. Okay, we're at number 14, Other Business.
8 Correspondence Update. Coordinator.

9

10 MS. MCDAVID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Well,
11 I wanted to start -- usually, I try to put together a
12 little table that shows the correspondence from the last
13 meeting, and I apologize. I wasn't able to do that in
14 time for this meeting. But a brief recap, at your last
15 meeting, you submitted three comment letters as joint
16 letters with the Western Interior Council and that was
17 on the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council chum
18 bycatch, the Area M and statewide Board of Fish proposals
19 and the Secretarial Review. As an individual Council,
20 you also voted to send a letter to -- well through the
21 Federal Subsistence Board with a request to elevate to
22 the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture your
23 concerns about USDA purchasing surplus pollock and pink
24 salmon due to the impact of those fisheries, and the
25 hatchery releases on wild salmon stocks. That letter has
26 not been sent yet. I did provide a draft to Members
27 Bassich and Burk for their review. So, whenever both of
28 you and all of your free time. I know you guys are both
29 busy. Have a chance to look that over and provide any
30 input. We'll make any edits you'd like to see or add any
31 details and then run that through our Chair, and we can
32 send that off.

33

34 So, I just wanted to recap that. And
35 then at this meeting, you have also voted to send some
36 correspondence. So, you're going to comment on statewide
37 Board of Fish proposals, in addition to the ones you
38 commented on with Western Interior. And that'll be 171
39 and 180 that will need to be submitted as an RC. And we
40 should have fisheries staff going to that meeting that
41 can help with that if no one on the Council will be
42 there with your ACs. Another letter about the need --
43 requesting small amounts of funding to go towards
44 outreach efforts in the hunter ethics and education
45 initiative from our federal agencies. Another letter to
46 the federal agencies about your concerns about the air
47 taxis and transporters. A letter to Fish and Game and
48 Fish and Wildlife about the discrete stocks and funding
49 for genetics for that genetics research. For that to
50 hopefully get to a finer scale for fall chum. Also

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1 commenting on letter Southcentral Board of Game
2 proposals, those two antlerless Moose proposals that are
3 due tomorrow. I did draft up those comments that Eva
4 mentioned and they're with our leadership team now for
5 review. Eva did look them over. You also formulated --
6 well, we will be taking your discussion on the wood
7 bison plan and formulating that into comments to submit
8 to the Federal Subsistence Board. Also, additional
9 comments on the Secretarial Review and you are going to
10 be submitting a proposal to Board of Game to close the
11 Unit 20F Winter moose hunt. So that's correspondence Go
12 ahead, Andy.

13

14 MR. BASSICH: Member Bassich here. On the
15 section on discrete stocks genetics. I want to make sure
16 that it was clear that we were also asking for in-river
17 monitoring of discrete stock spawning escapements.
18 That's actually more important to me, quite frankly,
19 than the genetics. The genetics are really important but
20 starting to get some clearer definition on returns
21 within the Yukon River drainage as discrete stocks is
22 going to be paramount to keep us from -- keep an eye on
23 stocks that might be extirpated due to low numbers.

24

25 MS. MCDAVID: And just a follow-up
26 question. This is Brooke. So, are you saying like in the
27 actual tributary drainages, you would like to see things
28 like weirs or sonars, carcass surveys, things like that?
29 That's actual on the ground monitoring versus trying to,
30 you know, refine the genetics so that it, you know,
31 Pilot Station or wherever they could apportion?

32

33 MR. BASSICH: I think we have to be
34 creative given the lack of monetary funds available. I
35 mean, that's why some of these things are being pulled.
36 But there is new technologies in ways to test, such as
37 DNA, working with locals, flying with drones to do
38 different counts of reds and things like that. So, I
39 don't really want to lock it in place, but I think there
40 needs to be an effort in stream at spawning sites for
41 discrete stocks within Alaska of Yukon River tributaries
42 that are showing declines in summer and or fall chum
43 escapements.

44

45 MS. MCDAVID: One more follow up. This
46 is Brooke. I know there was some discussion, and I'll
47 go back, but just off the top of your head, maybe Eva
48 could also, and Charlie could chime in. Are there
49 specific any specific tributaries that you would suggest
50 be prioritized, given the fact that there probably isn't

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1 funding to do all the ones in an ideal world?

2

3 MR. BASSICH: Yeah, it's my understanding
4 the Sheenjek is probably the only one that's doing really
5 well right now. And it sounds like the Tanana is kind
6 of on the edges, especially with summer chum. They've
7 been declining. I'm not -- I haven't really been keeping
8 real tight now, watching the fall chum, but I know
9 they're in there. They're kind of in decline. All of
10 them are in decline. And the concern that I have, I want
11 to be very clear from this. The concern that I have is
12 that by having a drainage escapement, for example, this
13 year the drainage escapement was 300,000 fish. They
14 counted 275,000 fish at Pilot Station. So, with an
15 additional 25,000 fish, the state of Alaska is going to
16 claim that the Yukon River is fine with escapement. And
17 this is part of the reason why we're having the issues
18 that we're having is that you can't do it that way and
19 protect the discrete stocks. And it's really important
20 for the people on the river, especially regionally, to
21 make sure that the stocks that reach them, i.e. the
22 upper river, have healthy spawning populations and a
23 sustainable salmon run otherwise, they'll never harvest
24 again. So just to be very clear that that's the concern
25 I have, because I've seen this happen in the past where
26 I get a report that says, oh, well, we made our escape.
27 It might be the lower end, as he's -- Eva talks about,
28 where are we shooting for the lower end. But then there's
29 everybody feels like, oh, we're okay. We made
30 escapement. And that's the chronic problem that we've
31 had on this drainage for ever since I've been on the
32 Yukon River Panel and ever since I've been a fisherman.
33 So, I just want to start addressing that because for the
34 upper river fall chum is going to be the only thing we
35 have any hope for in the future, period.

36

37 MS. MCDAVID: Thank you for that. That
38 really helps clarify and I did make some notes, and I
39 referenced this section of the meeting to make sure I
40 refer back in the transcripts to this in addition to the
41 earlier discussion. Thank you, Andy. Any other
42 correspondence things before I move on to just 1 or 2
43 other miscellaneous business?

44

45 MS. BURK: Did you -- this is Eva. Did
46 you want me to add any comments for the letter to the -
47 - about the seafood purchasing?

48

49 MS. MCDAVID: I think we had a pretty
50 robust discussion on the record at the last meeting. We

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1 could probably do wordsmithing off the record if that's
2 okay with you guys. All right. Well then, I will move
3 on. So miscellaneous other business. I don't have much
4 to bring up here, but I first wanted to say that we are
5 in the process of trying to get some of the RAC Chairs
6 together. Hopefully before the Federal Subsistence Board
7 work session this summer to talk about salmon issues.
8 And that will be the Yukon RACs, I believe Seward -- the
9 Western Alaska RACs and the Kodiak Aleutians RACs.
10 Pretty much all the ones that are connected to the Bering
11 Sea fisheries and that have been experiencing declines.
12 And I think -- I believe the goal of that meeting is to
13 just, well, one, to promote some more cross-regional
14 communication about, you know, this specific issue
15 that's impacting everyone. And that was brought up
16 during the work session last summer and just with
17 everything that's been going on with the government and
18 the shutdown, etc. There hasn't been an opportunity to
19 do that, but our director wanted me to make you all
20 aware that that's still in the works and just a little
21 TBD for details. And then the last thing I wanted to
22 circle back on, you know, this was one of the main things
23 that came up for this meeting as an action item was the
24 call for federal fisheries proposals. And you know, the
25 Council didn't vote to submit any, but I just wanted to
26 bring that back up because her little chatter and I
27 wasn't sure if that was any -- if there was anything
28 folks wanted to revisit there before we wrap up. If not,
29 no problem. But I just wanted to make sure we didn't
30 miss something there.

31
32 MR. BASSICH: So, Member Bassich here.
33 One other thing I wanted to check in with our coordinator
34 on is currently I've just kind of volunteered or was put
35 in the position of representing the RAC for the Fortymile
36 Coalition meeting and that's hopefully going to happen
37 fairly soon. I'm happy to continue to represent the RAC
38 if the RAC is comfortable with that. And I've talked
39 with some other members in Eagle that are on our AC that
40 could potentially step into that role from our AC to
41 represent us. Fortymile Caribou is extremely important.
42 It's probably first or second right along with salmon
43 as far as our needs. So, we want to be well represented
44 on that coalition. So, I just want to bring that up. I
45 don't know how or where to proceed at this point. I just
46 wanted to put that out there. I'm certainly willing to
47 shift gears and go from representing the AC to
48 representing the Eastern RAC at that forum.

49
50

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1 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: This is Charlie. I'm
2 happy with it if everybody else is. Doesn't look like
3 there's anybody hollering in here. So, we accept that.
4 Thank you. Yep.

5
6 MS. MCDAVID: Thank you, Andy. This is
7 Brooke. And I guess that's one thing I kind of left off
8 was as a -- when I was summarizing some of the actions
9 where the discussion and the comments that you will be
10 taking to that. So that meeting, so thank you for
11 bringing that back up. And then we'll be sure to flag
12 follow up for our fall meeting to bring back any
13 discussion from the HMC and updated draft plans to the
14 Council.

15
16 MR. BASSICH: Yeah. Thank you. And so, I
17 just want to kind of recap what's on my mind right now.
18 Obviously formalizing that plan and bringing the
19 discussions that we had during this meeting to that. And
20 in addition to that starting to work on communications
21 and outreach through the education initiatives or
22 communication initiatives. Trying to get that ball
23 rolling again. I think focusing on the Dortymile might
24 be in a much more easy way to start that process and
25 then maybe build it into other aspects of the region
26 since that's front and center right now.

27
28 And then the last thing I wanted to just
29 say is, I really want to recognize Don Woodruff's
30 contribution here once again. He set and represented
31 this RAC at the Fortymile Coalition for many, many years
32 and has always done a really great job of that. And I
33 just want to remind people of the services that he gave
34 us. He always did his homework. He was well informed and
35 understood the issues and brought a lot of really great
36 perspectives to that forum. And so, I just wanted to
37 take a minute or two to recognize him for those efforts
38 that he continued to do even when he was -- he's been
39 having some pretty tough health issues for a number of
40 years, and he still took the time and dedication. And
41 quite frankly, I'm seeing a lot of healthy people that
42 aren't even willing to do that. And so that says a lot
43 about his character and his concerns for this lifestyle.
44 This subsistence lifestyle was his life. And when I met
45 him out on the Kanuk River he was living about as close
46 to nature as you can. He didn't have two pennies to rub
47 together, but he was living a good quality life out
48 there. And I think that's what built the foundation. And
49 I think that's why we have to get youth back out there.
50 If we want this to continue into the future. We got to

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1 get those young people back out there so that they can
2 gain that perspective and build that love for that
3 lifestyle, because it's going to be hard to build it up
4 on an app. Thank you. Thank you for just giving me a
5 minute or two to do that. I think it's really important.
6

7 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you, Andy. Any
8 other miscellaneous business?
9

10 (No response)
11

12 Moving on. Was that your Council member
13 closing comment or you want to add another one sir?
14

15 MR. BASSICH: If I'll just do my closing
16 comment and that is, I think this was a really, really
17 good meeting. I really appreciate it. I know there wasn't
18 a great deal of public participation as far as sitting
19 in the room, but we had good participation online, and
20 I understand a lot of that is just this fisheries meeting
21 cycle was a killer. And I'm really impressed with Eva
22 sticking it out here. I know she's put in probably more
23 time and energy than anybody than I know into that. And
24 thank you for that, Eva. And it's just for me. It's
25 always good to be here. My last meeting I had to do
26 online and I really value coming to into the table and
27 seeing everybody and catching up and seeing the people
28 out in the audience and connecting with those people
29 that are new out there. That's really important to me
30 because they're here for a reason, and I want to know
31 what that reason is. But anyway, it's great seeing
32 everyone again and I hope everybody has a really good
33 spring and look forward to seeing everybody in the fall.
34 And I really hope that everybody has a good summer and
35 hopefully a good hunting season this coming year because
36 that's what we're -- that's why we're all here.
37

38 Thank you. Mr. Chair, did a great job
39 running and one last thing. Thank you, Brooke, for
40 everything that you do for us. I am constantly amazed
41 at what you can retain and keep track of. And it seems
42 effortlessly. And I know it's not, but I really, I spend
43 a lot of time talking with Brooke on a lot of different
44 things because we talk about so many different
45 communications aspects and all that. And one of the
46 things I do want to share is I noticed that when I call
47 a lot of people, I never get return calls because people
48 are so busy. But I got to say, every time I either call
49 or email her within 12 hours or 24 hours, I get a
50 response. And that's becoming more and more rare. And I

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1 really value that as an old guy because it used to be
2 you just got on a phone on the wall and you went like
3 this a couple times, nine times, and you actually talked
4 to somebody and now we have these, which is supposed to
5 make it easier, but it's making it harder to talk to
6 people. And so, I really value the fact that you are so
7 consistent and reachable. And anyway, I'll stop there.
8 Thank you.

9

10 MR. ALEXANDER: Good evening. My name is
11 Gerald Alexander. It's great to be here. There's a lot
12 of things I really, you know, it's only my third meeting,
13 and there's a lot of things I'm not really familiar
14 with, so I just sit and listen and try to soak it all
15 in. And it's, you know, listening to Charlie and
16 especially Eva, love that one. She's always got it down.
17 Anyway. Andy here, it's got a lot of knowledge and I'm
18 glad to be here. It's the wood bison thing is -- I need
19 to really follow up on that. I think Mike Peter was in
20 charge of that with Fish Commission and he hasn't been
21 spitting any words out, so, you know. It was brought --
22 I think Brooke brought it to me and asked me if I knew
23 anything about it, and I said, so anyway, I'm going to
24 follow up on that and really get down to earth on it.
25 Again, I'm looking forward to more meetings. Thank you.

26

27 MS. EVANS: Linda Evans here. I too think
28 this is a pretty good meeting. Lots of information. Lots
29 of input. I think we just need to keep moving forward.
30 You know, the more often we can put our heads together
31 and talk about these issues that are concerning our
32 resources out there on the land is a good thing. And to
33 share that information with other people like this wood
34 bison thing. I think we really need to get some education
35 out there to our communities and, well, all the issues,
36 I think to just to get their point of view on -- just
37 to find out. Before I came to this meeting, I tried to
38 call the -- some of the villages that I represent and I
39 wasn't very successful. But, you know, I'll try again
40 next -- before next meeting. I also like to somehow
41 thank Don for his services to this EIRAC. He was very
42 knowledgeable and he understood the issues and he wasn't
43 afraid to speak up about things. I think that's all. I
44 just like to thank all of you, especially Charlie and
45 Eva and Brooke, all of you for your input and for your
46 point of view on things. It really helps to understand
47 what's going on. Thank you.

48

49 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Is Sue on? Are you
50 there, Sue? If you are well let you go next.

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MS. ENTSMINGER: Yes, I am okay. Be quick about my mic. Sorry.

CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: No problem.

MS. ENTSMINGER: Yeah. Closing comments. I just keep it short. I didn't know what to do when I was told that I'm still on the Council. I could hear you laugh, Charlie. You're not on it off yet. But I decided to stay and participate in the meeting just to bring the point of view from my part of the world, this part of the region of the Council. And I said, I'm just going to state that it's really important -- I agree with what everybody has said here. It's really important to stay engaged and it's really important to have the respect for each other. And it's the effort of working together is huge. And I feel like I see that in the RAC and I hope and pray that it continues. And I want to honor also Donald for hanging in there with everything he's been going through. And I want to send if it's at all possible our love to him and his wife and prayers for him. And I've been dealing with a young 20-year-old, 20 plus, 25 to something like that. A young Native guy from Mentasta village who's fighting for his life right now. And the parents and grandparents I know quite well, and I had asked for prayer at the SRC meeting when I was there for him, and I'm going to do it. His name is Antoine. He was medevac from Fairbanks to Anchorage hospitals and now medevac to Seattle. I don't know any details other than he's fighting for his life, and that probably takes a lot out of my mind at this meeting. But I want to commend you all, and I have to say, I am impressed. The amount of work that you all do for the fisheries on the Yukon. And it's amazing that we're -- it's when I got on, I don't see that as an improvement to this for these 24 years. It just seems like what, what can you do? What can you do to bring those fish back? So, and Eva, you guys are doing so much work. I deeply appreciate it. And I pray to God that you guys can find some solution, some solutions for the Yukon fish. And thank you all for your participation. I am on AC, a state AC now that Tok Cutoff Nabesna Road AC and still on the SRC. You might be hearing from me from time to time, but I think in a couple of years I might be done with meetings. So, I thank you all for being patient with me. And I hope you have a great meetings in the future. Thank you.

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1 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Thank you so much,
2 Sue, for hanging tough with us. We really appreciate
3 you. Thank you for your report or comments. And now
4 we'll go to Eva.

5
6 MS. BURK: Thanks. It's Eva. Thanks
7 everyone. Thank you for your kind words. And yeah, it's
8 been a rough past month with all these meetings and then
9 sitting here. So, I was really glad to hear that because
10 Andy almost lost it yesterday morning. Oh, it's -- I
11 really enjoy sitting here and listening to people. I
12 also want to thank Dan -- or Don and Jan for their
13 service on Jan in YRDFA and Don here. And I hear you,
14 Andy, on people and the way of life. And I want to assure
15 you that Charlie and I are working hard to create space
16 to teach young people, especially Native people, who
17 might be stuck in Fairbanks to get back out on the land
18 and to connect with that side of themselves. Me and
19 Gabe, who's doing our audio here, we're kind of talking
20 about success is measured differently in a Western
21 world. Oftentimes it's measured with degrees and status
22 and wealth. And I think for us, it's measured in how
23 much time, and do I have the resources to get out on the
24 land? I think to me, that is the way I'm trying to build
25 a life for me and my kids and my grandkids. I became a
26 grandma last year. And I'll tell you what, when we do
27 culture camp in Nenana, the phones are a non-issue. Not
28 one kid is on their phone, so it's if you create that
29 space and you bring in a lot of activities and a lot of
30 different teachers, the kids, they're just so excited
31 to learn and what we learned from that is it can't be
32 one week out of a year that we need a whole place that
33 we're living by season and we're really empowering our
34 young people to get out there and get their own snow
35 machines and boats and know how to navigate safely. How
36 to have, you know, that kind of -- how to take care of
37 yourself in case something happens when you're out
38 there. And I really am grateful for my own upbringing
39 and having confidence in going out and sometimes having
40 to figure out how to win, to get out of a situation. So,
41 I'm just grateful for all that. And I just wanted to
42 share a little extra about our work. So that Andy, you
43 can rest assured that there's going to be a new
44 generation of hunters, fishers, trappers, people of the
45 land again. It's, it's something that we're working on
46 really hard. And that's why I think it's really important
47 for young people to continue to sign up for these bodies
48 and continue to do the youth outreach. And I am excited
49 to see because I know several youth applied for the
50 youth seat here, so I'm excited to see them attend. And

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1 I think like me, they'll be hooked. And maybe like Sue
2 hooked so long that even after 24 years, we just can't
3 step away. So, thank you for that.

4
5 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: What everybody
6 said. I want to thank Brooke first for all her hard
7 work. Yeah. Thank you. Yep. Yeah. We can't get through
8 this without you. And we really thank you for your hard
9 work and all that you do. And able to do it without
10 showing any pain. I like that part about it. I know it's
11 really tough. I appreciate you. Then Linda, I really
12 appreciate your wisdom. I have to say that it's somebody
13 else in the room knows that Linda even used to be my
14 teacher. So, I owe you a little bit about how and where
15 I'm sitting and how I hold myself. And I appreciate
16 that. And Donald, he's a true example of how one who
17 lives in the circle of life out in the woods can gain
18 so much wisdom and patience, and his service is greatly
19 appreciated, and we will miss him and continue to send
20 prayers to him and his wife. Gerald, thank you for biting
21 the bullet and hanging on and learning. Being part of
22 this process. It's really important for your people and
23 your future generations. So, I'm really happy that
24 you're sitting here with us. Thank you. And, Eva, I
25 don't know how I put up with you. I just want to thank
26 you for your patience with me also and working alongside
27 you has been great and going to be great going into the
28 future. I just appreciate all your hard work. And the
29 same with Andy, the wisdom and the longevity he has
30 here. I've really leaned on you and Don in the past when
31 learning and Sue. Sue has taught me so much, and I really
32 appreciate her hanging here to help me learn and navigate
33 the system. I really appreciate that, Sue, and I just
34 appreciate each and every one of you and the people that
35 come here to report to us all your hard work and
36 dedication to the resources that's so important for
37 future generations, for us all to work together and
38 collaborate and work in unity. That's the only way that
39 things get done. So, I appreciate everybody and thank
40 you all for your time and being here. Thanks.

41
42 MR. BASSICH: Mr. Chair. This is a Member
43 Bassich. I make a motion that we adjourn.

44
45 MS. ENTSMINGER: I second it.

46
47 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: I'm waiting for a
48 question, but it's 4:49. The meeting is over. Thank you,
49 Sue.

50

000121

1 MS. ENTSMINGER: Okay. And thank you,
2 Charlie. I appreciate that.

3
4 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: Yeah.

5
6 MR. BASSICH: Sue, Andy here. Thank you
7 so much. It's so good to hear your voice. And I hope
8 everything goes well for you this spring.

9
10 CHAIRPERSON WRIGHT: I didn't hear nobody
11 -- no nays. So that motion passes, by the way. Yeah. I
12 hope everybody has a great spring, too. It's always great
13 to feel the (indiscernible) of the sun. And knowing that
14 the geese are coming soon. And we'll be -- being part
15 of a fresh start and a new beginning this spring. And
16 all the baby ducks and people are running around, so
17 it's going to be nice. Looking forward to it. Everybody
18 have safe travels home. Appreciate you all.

19
20 (Off record)

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22 END OF PROCEEDINGS
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I, Rafael Morel, for Lighthouse Integrated Services Corp, do hereby certify:

THAT the foregoing pages numbered 1 through 121 contain a full, true and correct Transcript of the EASTERN INTERIOR ALASKA SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING, VOLUME III recorded on the 5th day of March;

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 Isabela, Puerto Rico this 20th day of March 2026.

Rafael Morel
Chief Project Manager