

KODIAK/ALEUTIANS SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL
Meeting Minutes

Unalaska Public Library
Unalaska, Alaska
September 15 - 16, 2026

Invocation:

Council Member Patrick Holmes provided an invocation.

Call to Order, Roll Call, and Quorum Establishment:

The meeting was called to order Tuesday, September 15 at 9:12 am by Council Chair Rebecca Skinner. Chair Skinner and Council members Coral Chernoff, Brett Richardson, and Pat Holmes were present in person, and Council member Daniel Smith was in attendance by teleconference for the entire meeting. Samuel Rohrer and Natasha Hayden were absent and excused. With five of seven seated Council members present (Council has three vacant seats), the quorum was established both meeting days.

Attendees in person and via teleconference:

**indicates teleconference attendance*

- **Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA):** Dr. Glenn Chen
- **Office of Subsistence Management (OSM):** Lisa Grediagin, Katya Wessels, Anna Senecal, Dr. Jason Roberts, Leigh Honig, Robbin La Vine*, Orville Lind*, Scott Ayers*, Brian Ubelaker*, and Kevin Foley*
- **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS):** Jill Klein*, Jon Gerken*, Graham Peters*, Keely Lopez*, Paul Schuette*, and Alison Williams*
- **U.S. Forest Service:** Greg Risdahl*
- **Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G):** Aaron Poetter*, Greg Russell*, Maddie Christiansen*, and Jacqueline Keating*
- **Tribal Representatives, Local Government, and Public:** Suzie Golodoff, Jacob Calvitti, Chelsey Dorrough*, Elizabeth Hinkle*, and Chelsey Dorrough (Qawalangin Tribe of Unalaska)*, Pamela Skonberg (Koniag, Inc.)*, Matt Van Daele (Sun'aq Tribe of Kodiak)*, Kristi Tapio-Harper (Native American Fish and Wildlife Society)*, and Vince Tutiakoff (Unalaska Mayor and Qawalangin Tribe)

Review and Adopt Agenda:

Motion by Member Holmes, seconded by Member Richardson, to **approve** the agenda after reordering several agenda items.

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

Review and Approve Previous Meeting Minutes:

Motion by Member Richardson, seconded by Member Chernoff, to **approve** the previous meeting minutes.

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

Council Member and Chair Reports:

Coral Chernoff of Kodiak reported that Kodiak experienced a long, cool spring followed by a dry summer, with very little precipitation. She observed low water levels in some rivers and noted that the Buskin River was closed to subsistence and sport fishing for approximately 30 days after weir counts indicated low fish passage. The Buskin weir was removed early, making it difficult to determine how many fish entered the river.

Berry production was also low, with significant salmonberry die-offs and the berry season was approximately three weeks later than usual. Member Chernoff reported that emperor geese returned to Kodiak on time. As a Kodiak representative member on the Alaska Migratory Bird Co-Management Council Native Caucus, she noted that an egg and hunting closure for emperor geese would again apply throughout the region except the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta.

Patrick Holmes of Kodiak reported very low Sockeye Salmon returns to the Buskin River. Funding to operate the weir through the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program (FRMP) was not available, although ADF&G was able to piece together funding to operate the weir for part of the season. Aerial surveys suggested that the early portion of the run was fewer than 2,000 fish, compared with a typical return of 10,000 or more.

Member Holmes also reported poor berry production, particularly salmonberries. The late Pink Salmon run contributed to increased bear activity in Kodiak, including bears moving through town. He noted that the even-year Pink Salmon return was one of the strongest in several decades, with more than 20,000 Pink Salmon initially entering the stream, and that the Kiwanis Kids Pink Salmon Derby was successful.

Brett Richardson of Unalaska reported that Unalaska experienced a volatile winter weather pattern with increased wind and less precipitation, followed by a warm, dry summer. He reported strong Pink Salmon returns and described subsistence fishing at Front Beach as having increased, in part because of its proximity to town. Halibut catches were generally average, while cod fishing appeared low and octopus was prevalent.

Member Richardson also reported increasing numbers of sea otters and abundant seals, sea lions, porpoises and whales in the inner bay. Berry production was among the poorest in recent memory, with salmonberry and blueberry production apparently affected by the lack of precipitation, although moss berries and nagoon berries appeared to be doing well.

Daniel Smith of Kodiak reported that Pasagshak Sockeye Salmon escapement was below average but reached the lower escapement goal of 3,000 fish. Buskin Sockeye escapement was very low, resulting in sport and subsistence closures in late June. He noted that the escapement estimate was likely an underestimate because the weir was not installed until June 5 and operated for only about three weeks following flooding in late May and early June.

Member Smith reported a large even-year Pink Salmon return to the Buskin River in August. He observed hundreds of Pink Salmon and several Coho Salmon dead near the river mouth and attributed the mortality to low dissolved oxygen levels. Member Smith also expressed concern about the lack of FRMP funding for the Buskin Weir Monitoring Project, which the Council had identified as a priority.

He also reported on Aleutian terns, noting continued low nesting success due to predation and abandonment at Kodiak road-system colonies. The Sun'aq Tribe was beginning efforts to monitor and

control invasive mink near tern colonies. Member Smith reported fewer gray whale strandings in the Kodiak area this year and noted ongoing research with Oregon State University's Marine Mammal Institute to conduct photo identification, assess body condition and genetics, and better understand gray whale use of the Pasagshak and Ugak Bay areas.

Rebecca Skinner of Kodiak (Chair) reported that she attended the Federal Subsistence Board's (Board) August summer work session, along with chairs or representatives from the other Regional Advisory Councils (Councils). The Council representatives participated in training, information sharing and an afternoon session focused on the salmon crisis in Alaska.

Chair Skinner also discussed the annual report process. She reported that the Council Chairs and Board had an opportunity for more direct discussion of issues raised in the Councils' annual reports and that Board members provided guidance on the types of regional context and information that can be useful to the Board in its decision-making. She noted that the Board is considering ways to improve the process and make annual reports more useful for communicating important subsistence issues.

Chair Skinner also discussed the development of a draft Board communication policy. She said the policy could provide clearer expectations for communication between the Board and Councils and establish a clearer chain of communication. She noted that Council correspondence previously did not have a defined process for Board review or response, which had resulted in some correspondence remaining unanswered for extended periods.

Chair Skinner noted that the Council chairs discussed issues of common concern, including fisheries and wildlife monitoring, and that these discussions contributed to the development of a joint Council letter requesting adequate funding and staffing for resource monitoring.

Council Member Service Awards:

Patrick Holmes was recognized for 25 years of service on the Council. Member Holmes first joined the Council in 2001 and was recognized for his extensive fisheries knowledge and experience throughout the Kodiak, Alaska Peninsula and Aleutians regions, his strong connections with subsistence-dependent communities, and his willingness to share his knowledge and experience with the Council and the Federal Subsistence Management Program. Member Holmes received a commemorative plaque and thanked the Council for the recognition.

Coral Chernoff was also recognized for 12 years of service on the Council, beginning in 2014. Member Chernoff was recognized for her knowledge of the land, waters and subsistence traditions of the Kodiak region, her connection to Alutiiq traditions, and her dedication and contributions to the Council and the Federal Subsistence Management Program. Member Chernoff said she was stepping down because she would be out of state for a year but intended to remain involved in subsistence issues.

Public and Tribal Comment on Non-Agenda Items:

Vince Tutiakoff, Sr., Mayor of Unalaska and honorary chief of the Qawalangin Tribe, expressed concerns about enforcement, fishing practices and the subsistence permit process. He reported observing people fishing in Unalaska Lake while it was closed and said some individuals were fishing without licenses. He also expressed concern about salmon being harvested for eggs and the remaining fish being discarded. Mr. Tutiakoff requested increased enforcement presence in the community and said some individuals receiving subsistence permits in Unalaska may not be residents. He also raised concerns about people traveling to Unalaska to harvest salmon and shipping their catch out of the community, which he said affects local access to salmon. He noted that elders who depend on salmon for winter food may have

difficulty obtaining fish and said Trident Seafoods has provided salmon fillets to the local food bank for distribution to elders.

Suzie Golodoff, an Unalaska resident, raised concerns about snagging salmon with jig hooks, particularly at the mouths of Summer Bay and Morris Cove where low water levels can cause fish to congregate near the beach. She reported observing fish being damaged or killed during snagging and said some fish were discarded when they were not the desired species. Ms. Golodoff suggested that the Council consider whether regulations could address the practice.

Action Items:

Regional Fishery Proposals and Closure Reviews

Anna Senecal, OSM Fishery Biologist, and Dr. Jason Robert, OSM Cultural Anthropologist, provided an overview of the fishery proposals and closure reviews for the Kodiak/ Alaska Peninsula and Aleutian Island Region to the Council.

FP27-02: Unalaska Bay Subsistence Salmon Harvest Regulations

Motion by Member Richardson, seconded by Member Chernoff, to **support** FP27-02.

The Council stated that the systems of particular concern (Unalaska Lake, Summers/Morris lakes) are protected by other localized closures. Rescinding closure of the entire Unalaska Bay area, which is superimposed over smaller localized closures, would simplify regulations. The areas that would become open are not of concern within the community. Implementing this proposal would provide more federal subsistence fishing opportunities and more options for in-season management within the Makushin, Nateekin, and Shaishnikof drainages.

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

FCR27-06: Unalaska Bay Salmon Closure Review

Motion by Member Richardson, seconded by Member Chernoff, to **take no action** on FCR27-06.

The Council voted to take no action because of their action taken on FP27-02.

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

FP27-03: Summer Lake Subsistence Salmon Harvest Regulations

Motion by Member Holmes, seconded by Member Richardson, to **support** FP27-03.

While the Council supported submitting this proposal at their winter 2027 meeting, they no longer support opening either Summers or Morris lakes drainages due to direct community input referencing limited salmon population numbers, lack of enforcement, ease of access to these fishing locations, and degraded habitat. The Council also expressed concerns over the misuse of treble hooks used to snag fish illegally and discussed how incidental snagging mortality could compound population declines associated with overharvest.

The motion **failed**, 2-3.

FCR27-05: Summers and Morris lakes Salmon Closure Review

Motion by Member Holmes, seconded by Member Richardson to **retain status quo** on FCR27-05.

The council voted to retain status quo because of continued conservation concerns. They stated that these systems are very small and very accessible. Public testimony supported retaining this closure due to low returns of salmon.

The motion **passed** 3-2.

FCR27-04: Unalaska Lake Salmon Closure Review

Motion by Member Richardson, seconded by Member Holmes to **retain status quo** on FCR27-04.

The Council voiced concern over salmon survival in this very small and very accessible system (it is within the boundary of the Unalaska City). There is no public support for increasing any fishing opportunity (subsistence or otherwise) within the river or lake system. The Council and public want to see better fish numbers and regular presence of law enforcement before considering any additional fishing opportunity.

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

FP27-01: McLees Lake Subsistence Salmon Harvest Regulations

Motion by Member Richardson, seconded by Member Holmes to **support** FP27-01.

The Council supported expanding opportunity for federal subsistence users in an area that already allows sport fishing. The Council noted that there was no community opposition to this proposal. Access to this fishery is difficult, requiring a boat, good weather, and multiple people. Landing on shore and hiking to the lake itself presents additional challenges for access. Therefore, harvest pressure is expected to remain very low. This proposal was also supported by the Qawalangin Tribe.

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

FCR27-07: McLees Lake Salmon Closure Review

Motion by Member Holmes, seconded by Member Chernoff to **take no action** on FCR27-07.

The Council voted to take no action because of their action taken on FP27-01.

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

FP27-04: Kodiak Area Salmon Customary and Traditional Use Determination

Motion by Member Smith, seconded by Member Holmes to **support** FP27-04 as submitted.

The Council supported the proposal as written, noting that the history and importance of harvesting salmon has been a key component of livelihood and identity throughout the Kodiak Archipelago for generations. However, the Council felt that excluding residents of the U.S. Coast Guard Base or residing in the off-base military housing located within Kodiak Station CDP from this customary and traditional use determination was appropriate due to the differences in the average length of residence, harvest and use of subsistence resources, availability of non-subsistence resources to these residents, and lack of subsistence knowledge generally exhibited by them. The Council further noted that permanent residents of Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge housing should be included in this customary and traditional use determination because there is a history of long-term residence by permanent Refuge staff here, with staff actively participating in subsistence activities. Additionally, residents of refuge housing do not have the same benefits as coast guard base residents, who have access to grocery stores with lower costs on base as well as boats and planes.

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

FP27-05: Kazakof (Danger) Bay Rod and Reel Only

Motion by Member Holmes, seconded by Member Smith to **support** FP27-05.

The Council cited mounting local concern regarding overharvest of Danger Creek Coho Salmon by seine and gillnet. Based on these concerns, the Council finds that it is appropriate to restrict gear types, mirroring recent changes to State regulations, which disallowed use of nets by closing the State subsistence fishery. This proposal allows federally qualified subsistence users to harvest their allotted Federal limit while also slowing catch rates and reducing accidental overharvest by restricting harvesting methods and means to rod and reel. The Council explained that while harvest limits remain unchanged, it will take much longer to catch the same number of fish with rod and reel versus nets. People may only intend to catch 10 fish in their net, but end up catching 70 fish, and that's how overfishing can happen. The Council perceived this as striking a balance between upholding both subsistence priority and conservation practices.

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

FCR27-08: Kodiak and Afognak Area King Crab Closure Review

Motion by Member Holmes, seconded by Member Chernoff to **retain status quo** on FCR27-08.

The Council supported retaining the status quo for this closure due to continued conservation concerns for the Kodiak King Crab population. They communicated their desire to ensure that a limited harvest opportunity remains available for federally qualified subsistence users under these circumstances.

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

Annual Report

Federal Subsistence Board FY2024 Annual Report Reply Summary

Leigh Honig, Council Coordinator, provided an overview of the Board's replies to the Council's FY-2025 Annual Report topics.

Federal Subsistence Board Draft Communication Policy

Lisa Grediagin, OSM Acting Deputy Operations, presented the draft Federal Subsistence Board Communication Policy, which was developed following discussions between the Board and Council representatives during the August work session. The draft is intended to provide guidance on how the Board responds to Council correspondence and annual reports and to clarify which matters are within the Board's authority and which may need to be elevated to the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture. The final policy would be posted publicly, while detailed procedures would be handled internally by staff. Ms. Grediagin explained that the draft policy does not establish a specific response deadline for Council correspondence, although providing updates on outstanding correspondence as a standing agenda item was discussed as a possible approach. Under the draft, the Board would also discuss annual reports directly with Council Chairs during a public work session before preparing written responses. Staff noted that the policy remains in draft form and requested Council feedback before the Board considers the final policy at its February regulatory meeting.

Chair Skinner said the policy could provide clearer expectations for both Councils and the Board regarding correspondence and establish a clearer chain of communication. She noted that Council correspondence previously did not have a defined process for Board review or response, which had resulted in some correspondence remaining unanswered for extended periods. Chair Skinner also noted it could be helpful to separate policy guidance on Annual Reports from guidance on Correspondence.

Member Smith asked about the role of the Interagency Staff Committee and how priority issues identified in individual Council annual reports would be combined for potential elevation to the Secretaries. Staff explained that these aspects of the process were still being developed and noted that the Board and Council Chairs had discussed requesting an annual meeting with the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture.

No formal recommendation or action was taken by the Council on the draft policy.

Identify Issues for FY2026 Annual Report

The Council identified the following issues to include in their FY2026 annual report.

1. **Subsistence Priority:** The Council seeks greater clarity regarding how subsistence priority is defined and implemented by the state and federal governments, including the criteria and factors considered when making management decisions affecting subsistence.
2. **Consultation Prior to In-Season Closures:** The Council requests clear requirements for timely consultation with Regional Advisory Councils before in-season closures affecting subsistence harvest. The Council noted that some in-season decisions may need to be made within hours and that the timing of consultation can directly affect subsistence opportunities. The Council (Chair Skinner) noted the new guidance for consultation with State of Alaska and recommends the same guidance be applied to Council consultation.
3. **Subsistence Access and Fishery Closures During Commercial Fisheries:** The Council recommends clarification and greater transparency when subsistence or federal fisheries are closed while commercial fishing is occurring in the area. The Council noted that, regardless of whether the fisheries involve the same stocks, the situation can create confusion and concerns among subsistence users.
4. **Coordination and Transparency in Federal and State Fisheries Management Decisions:** The Council recommends greater transparency regarding how federal and state fisheries managers communicate and coordinate when opening or closing fisheries, including communication between state managers and federal in-season managers.

5. **Enforcement Capacity and Seasonal Enforcement Presence:** The Council continues to identify limited enforcement capacity as a concern, particularly in Unalaska. The Council discussed the need for more specific consideration of locations and periods when additional enforcement presence would be most beneficial.
6. **Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program (FRMP):** The Council recommends improvements to the FRMP process, including more timely notification of funding awards, a shorter application-to-award timeline, and better alignment between funding decisions and the timing of seasonal fisheries research.
7. **Weir Funding and Data Continuity:** The Council emphasized the importance of consistent funding for weir operations and maintaining continuity of escapement data. The Council expressed concern that gaps in weir funding can result in gaps in long-term monitoring data.
8. **Joint Meeting with the Bristol Bay Subsistence Regional Advisory Council:** The Council expressed interest in holding a joint meeting with the Bristol Bay Subsistence Regional Advisory Council to discuss issues of mutual concern, including resource management and enforcement capacity.

The Council approved the identified topics by motion from Member Smith, seconded by Member Richardson.

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

Separate Council Action – Commercial Fisheries Data: Following approval of the annual report topics, Member Smith moved to send a letter to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game requesting additional information related to commercial fisheries and harvest data, particularly in connection with the Buskin Sockeye Salmon subsistence closure. Member Richardson seconded the motion. The motion passed on a unanimous vote.

Consider Joint Council Letter Requesting Funding and Staffing for Resource Monitoring

The Council reviewed a joint letter from the 10 Regional Advisory Councils requesting adequate funding and staffing for fisheries and wildlife resource monitoring in Alaska. The letter requests restoration of Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program funding to at least FY2025 levels adjusted for inflation, establishment of an equivalent wildlife resource monitoring program, and lifting the hiring freeze and filling vacant positions to ensure adequate staffing for Alaska resource management.

The Council recommended adding language to clarify that increased funding for wildlife monitoring should not come at the expense of fisheries monitoring. The Council also discussed making the request to lift the hiring freeze more specific by requesting that vacant positions be filled.

Member Holmes moved to **support** the joint resource monitoring letter, and Member Smith seconded the motion.

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

Separately, Member Holmes moved, and Member Richardson seconded, to generate a Kodiak/Aleutians-specific letter emphasizing the region's dependence on fisheries resources and the importance of maintaining fisheries monitoring while supporting wildlife monitoring.

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

Future Meeting Dates

The Council confirmed its winter 2027 meeting for **March 10–11, 2027, in Kodiak**. Member Holmes moved to confirm the dates and location, and Member Richardson seconded the motion. The motion **passed** on a unanimous vote.

The Council also discussed the fall 2027 meeting, currently scheduled for **September 15–16 in Cold Bay**. After discussing other possible locations, the Council agreed to leave the meeting as scheduled and revisit the dates and location at its March 2027 meeting. Member Holmes moved to retain the current schedule, and Member Richardson seconded the motion. The motion **passed** on a unanimous vote.

Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program

Anna Senecal, OSM Fisheries Biologist and acting Fisheries Division Supervisor, provided an overview of the FRMP and the process for developing priority information needs (PINs). She reviewed the draft PINs developed by the Southwest Region volunteer subgroup, which focused on salmon abundance and changes in salmon growth and survival.

The Council heard comments from local managers and resource users regarding research needs, long-term weir data, and the FRMP application and funding process. Following discussion, the Council combined the two draft PINs into one primary PIN, with scale analysis as an additional component.

The Council adopted the following PIN for the 2028 FRMP: Reliable escapement estimates of returning salmon populations important for subsistence use in the Kodiak/Aleutians and Bristol Bay regions, with scale analysis of fresh- and saltwater growth patterns as an additional component to examine changes in salmon growth and survival.

Member Richardson moved to adopt the PINs for the 2028 FRMP, and Member Holmes seconded the motion.

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

Partners for Fisheries Monitoring Program Update

Ms. Senecal provided an update on the Partners for Fisheries Monitoring Program. OSM plans to issue a notice of funding opportunity in late 2026 or early 2027 for competitive grants available to tribes, Alaska Native organizations and rural nonprofit organizations. The program supports Alaska Native and rural involvement in federal subsistence management through capacity building, including funding for professional staff, science and culture camps, and paid student internships. Awards are expected to become available in spring 2028.

Council Chairs Meeting/Salmon Crisis Workshop

Ms. Senecal provided an overview of the August Council Chairs Meeting and Alaska Salmon Crisis Workshop. The workshop brought together Council Chairs and representatives to discuss common

concerns and explore how the Regional Advisory Councils could work together on issues of shared interest.

Chair Skinner said she supported the concept of Councils working together and leveraging their collective voice on issues where they can find common ground. She noted, however, that it was difficult to determine whether to continue the effort without more specific information about potential projects, participants, goals and timelines. Chair Skinner acknowledged the challenge of adequately keeping the Council up to speed on workshop discussions (trying to report eight hours of work into a few minutes of reporting), and that more directly including more Council members would be beneficial if this effort moves forward. She said a smaller working group may be more practical than an all-Council meeting and suggested a joint meeting with the Bristol Bay Subsistence Regional Advisory Council as a possible first step.

Member Holmes expressed a similar interest in determining when and how the Councils should move forward with collaborative efforts. OSM staff described several potential areas for future collaboration identified during the workshop, including joint Council meetings, a joint Council working group, resource monitoring, and collective actions such as letters or meetings.

Other Business:

Board's 805c Report

Leigh Honig, Council Coordinator, provided a summary of the 805(c) Report outlining Board's action on proposals and closure reviews impacting residents of the Kodiak/Aleutian Region.

Update on Deferred WP26-01: Move authority delegated through letters to unit specific regulations

Ms. Grediagin provided an update on deferred Wildlife Proposal WP26-01. OSM determined that delegated authority is an administrative function and is no longer proposing to move it into codified regulations. Instead, OSM is developing a system to consolidate the more than 60 existing delegation letters into one letter with a comprehensive table of specific delegations and associated guidance. The regulatory housekeeping portions of WP26-01 will be retained. The Board is expected to consider the revised approach at its February 2027 meeting.

Reports:

- *Izembek NWR- Activity Report* – presented by Alison Williams, Wildlife Biologist
- *Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge Update* – presented by Keely Lopez, acting Deputy Manager
- *Fisheries and Ecological Services Southwest Alaska Distinct Population Segment of Northern Sea Otters* – presented by Paul Schuette, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Marine Mammals Management
- *ADF&G, Division of Subsistence, Regional Subsistence Projects Update* – presented by Jackie Keating, Subsistence Resource Specialist

- *OSM Update* – presented by Lisa Grediagin, Acting Deputy of Operations

The meeting was adjourned at 5:25 PM September 16, 2026.

Leigh Honig, Designated Federal Officer
U.S. Department of Interior, Office of Subsistence Management

Certified by Chair on 10/03/2026 by email
Rebecca Skinner, Chair
Kodiak/ Aleutians Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

These minutes will be formally considered and approved by the Kodiak/Aleutians Subsistence Regional Advisory Council at its March 10-11, 2027, meeting in Kodiak, Alaska, and any corrections or notations will be incorporated in the minutes at that meeting.

A more detailed report of this meeting, copies of the transcripts, and meeting handouts are available upon request. Call Leigh Honig, Council Coordinator, at 1-800-478-1456 or 907-891-9053, email leigh_honig@ios.doi.gov.