YUKON-KUSKOKWIM DELTA SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL
Meeting Minutes

Yupiit Piciryarait Cultural Center
Bethel, Alaska
March 17-19, 2026

Invocation

Council Member Henry Parks provided an invocation.

Call to Order, Roll Call, and Quorum Establishment

The meeting was called to order Tuesday, March 17, 2026, at 9:24 am. Council members Henry Parks, John Andrew, Francis Prince, Jr., Alissa Nadine Rogers, Phillip Peter, Sr., Wassily Alexie, Tiffany Agayar, Frederick Beans, and Chair Jacqueline Cleveland were present in-person and member Myron Naneng, Sr. attended via teleconference. Norma Eva and Walter Morgan were absent and excused. With ten out of twelve seated Council members present, a quorum was established. There is currently one vacant seat on the Council. Although present the first day, Member Naneng was absent and excused on Days 2 and 3. Member Rogers attended via teleconference on Days 2 and 3.

Attendees

* *Denotes attended virtually*

- Office of Subsistence Management (OSM): Brooke McDavid, Katerina Wessels, Liz Williams, Kevin Foley, Tom Plank*, Lisa Grediagin*, Robbin La Vine*, Scott Ayers*, Anna Senecal*
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS): Spencer Rearden, Laurie Boeck, Chris Tulik, Christian Alexie, Jr., Stanislaus Sheppard*, Nate Akers, Aaron Moses, Holly Carroll*, Shane Ransbury*, Keith Herron*
- Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G): Subsistence Division – Brooke Fisher, Blake Spears, Tim Bembenic*; Sport Fish Division – Lisa Stuby*; Commercial Fisheries Division – Sam Decker*, Madison Hardwig*
- Bureau of Indian Affairs: Glenn Chen
- Tribal and Native Organizations: Orutsararmiut Native Council – Jacob Wade, Alfred Clark; Kuskokwim River Intertribal Fish Commission (KRITFC) – Terese Vicente, Erald Murati; Association of Village Council Presidents – Jennifer Hooper; Alaska Migratory Bird Co-Management Council – Patty Schwalenberg*; Calista Corporation – Rose Bennett*; Kwethluk Inc. – Senka Guy, Nick Ayapan, Martin Nicoli
- University of Alaska Fairbanks: Will Samuel*
- Yup'ik Interpreter: Patrick Sampson
- Talking Circle Media: Gabe Tegoseak

Election of Officers

- Jacqueline Cleveland was re-elected as Chair
- Tiffany Agayar was re-elected as Vice Chair
- Alissa Nadine Rogers was re-elected as Secretary

Review and Adopt Agenda

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

Review and Approve Previous Meeting Minutes

- Motion by Member Rogers, seconded by Member Andrew, to approve the Fall 2025 Council meeting minutes. *The motion passed on a unanimous vote.*

Service Awards

Member Alexie was presented with a certificate in recognition of five years of service to the Council.

Council Member and Chair Reports

Phillip Peter, Sr., of Akiachak reported on the subsistence conditions along the Kuskokwim River, noting an increase in the moose population and ptarmigan numbers. He voiced deep concern about the waste of moose meat he observed recently along the ice road, recalling elders' teachings about the importance of respecting food resources, especially given the region's history of starvation. Member Peter emphasized that the current abundance of wildlife should not lead to overharvesting or waste and urged everyone to be mindful and responsible. He recounted the five-year moose hunting moratorium that led to today's abundance and stressed the need to pass on traditional values about sustainable harvest and sharing. He also remarked on the unusually deep snow this year and wished everyone a successful fishing season ahead.

Henry Parks of Nunapitchuk shared that the winter has been particularly harsh, with persistent cold and wind making hunting activities difficult in the area around the treeless, flat tundra villages. He observed a pair of moose passing near his home, one of which was likely harvested by a neighbor, but otherwise reported little subsistence activity due to the weather. Member Parks expressed hope that federal agencies would provide fishing opportunities again in the coming summer and asked that no fishing openers be provided on Sundays since that is a day of rest for those in his community and faith practice.

Francis Prince, Jr. of Kotlik reported an abundance of moose but noted a decline in whitefish. He hopes whitefish will recover with the return of spring and after a particularly cold winter. He mentioned that locals would soon begin pike fishing. Member Prince observed a decline in rabbits after Typhoon Halong but noted that ptarmigan remained plentiful. He described the region's recurring flooding, which sometimes occurs even in winter. However, this year's thick river ice prevented water from reaching the

village. He also reported a decline in the seal population over the past few years. Member Prince suggested that local tribes consider applying for grants to introduce reindeer herding, which could provide both jobs and additional subsistence food for the villages.

Frederick Beans of Mountain Village reported that moose are very abundant near his community, and several have been seen within the village itself. Ptarmigan have been flocking into town, though he rarely encounters them while hunting outside the village. He noted that subsistence fishing was limited this fall due to rapidly fluctuating water levels, rough ice, and jagged conditions that made setting nets difficult. Some whitefish, sheefish, and lush (Burbot) were caught, but not in the quantities seen in previous years. Member Beans also mentioned that blackfish are now scarce, and the cold winter with heavy snowfall has further limited subsistence activities. Although grateful for an abundance of moose, he remarked that people can grow tired of eating moose meat when it becomes so plentiful, especially when other traditional subsistence foods like salmon are not available.

Wassily Alexie of Russian Mission reflected on a difficult personal year, having lost family members. He reported that moose are plentiful throughout the region, recounting seeing 26 moose in a single area near Russian Mission. He also observed a resurgence of ptarmigan after several years of absence. Member Alexie described the challenges of gathering firewood due to deep, crusted snow, which makes travel hazardous. He echoed concerns about the waste of moose meat by non-local hunters, noting that some trophy hunters take only the antlers and leave the rest. He warned that such resource abundance can be fleeting, as seen with past caribou and fish populations that suddenly disappeared. He stressed the importance of protecting the moose population, which is currently the main food source for many in the region.

John Andrew of Kwethluk shared that he was unable to fish or hunt moose himself due to motor problems but was grateful for the generosity of community members who provided him with moose, burbot, pike, rabbits, and ptarmigan. He observed an abundance of ptarmigan around the villages this year and noted he prefers to wait to process the ptarmigan he was given until warmer weather comes so he can dry the meat. Member Andrew noted that the freeze-up was unusually late this year. Despite not being able to fish himself, he continued to share the food he received with others in need, maintaining the tradition of sharing within the community. He recounted receiving a nearly whole moose from an ADF&G employee, and he also distributed that moose meat to others.

Tiffany Agayar of Alakanuk also reported a notable increase in moose in her area. She attributed having a lot of moose coming into the village as an indicator of large numbers of wolves nearby. She recounted that during a recent cold spell with wind chills of 35–40 below, several moose died in the area, including two in her local slough. The community has been able to harvest and share winter moose, which she noted was a new experience for her generation. In the past they were not plentiful enough for winter harvest. Member Agayar also observed a resurgence of ptarmigan, with flocks returning to areas where they had been absent for years. However, she noted a decline in rabbits this winter compared to last year. The region experienced heavy snowfall, similar to the previous year, but she did not anticipate major flooding. She mentioned that people were preparing for pike and sheefish fishing upriver, though catches had been

slow so far. Member Agayar attended the North Pacific Fishery Management Council meeting and commented on the new Chum Salmon bycatch cap, acknowledging the sacrifices required of everyone to conserve salmon. In a later addition to her report, she noted the appearance of redheaded winter birds, challenges in obtaining logs due to increased competition for firewood, and that beaver populations are growing because fewer people are trapping them.

Myron Naneng, Sr. of Bethel/Hooper Bay discussed the significant impacts of recent typhoons on coastal villages, including Kipnuk, Kwigillingok, and Nightmute. He raised concerns about increased trespassing by guided hunters on village corporation lands, leading to competition with local hunters and wanton waste of moose. Member Naneng described efforts by his village corporation to address these issues by notifying State Troopers and guiding companies, emphasizing the need for permits to hunt on corporation lands. He also highlighted the positive impact of a new boardwalk trail, built with support from USFWS and U.S. Department of Agriculture, in reducing tundra damage from all-terrain vehicles. He stressed the importance of protecting lands around villages, which are vital for subsistence, and reducing competition from outside hunters. He expressed concern about ongoing fishing closures in Hooper Bay, Chevak, and Scammon Bay, and criticized the complete subsistence closures on the Yukon River. Member Naneng welcomed recent Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF) actions to reduce fishing in Area M and called for continued advocacy to reduce bycatch and ensure food security for local communities.

Alissa Nadine Rogers did not provide a report.

Chair Jacqueline Cleveland of Quinhagak reported that, since the last meeting in January, not much had changed in her area. She observed a significant decline in blackfish caught in traps and a decrease in rabbit populations, but noted an increase in ptarmigan, consistent with reports from others. Elders in her community described the winter as the longest and coldest they could remember, with March still feeling like deep winter rather than the onset of spring. The community continued to recover from the impacts of Typhoon Halong and a recent power outage disaster. Many people, including herself, had been ill, but she was recovering. Chair Cleveland noted that people were pleased to have winter moose hunting opportunities, including in the Federal Kuskokwim Zone 2 hunt, and through an extended State season after Halong. She reported stable numbers of trout, smelt, and pike. On the Tribal side, she mentioned ongoing efforts to address recordable disclaimers of interest (RDIs) on the Arolik River, with the tribe and corporation working together to oppose them. The Tribe also received 420 acres of land from the corporation for a future subdivision where some families may relocate due to flooding in lower lying areas.

Public Comments on Non-Agenda Items

- Nick Ayapan from Kwethluk commented in support for longer continuous subsistence fishing schedule, instead of short “stop-go” windows.
- Martin Nicoli from Kwethluk commented about increasing moose in villages causing safety concerns and the need to expand cow hunts to help address this. He expressed gratitude for salmon fishing opportunities and noted a desire for fur buyers to return to the region to help provide economic opportunity for villagers.

Action Items

Call for 2027-2029 Federal Fisheries Proposals and Notice of Upcoming Fisheries Closure Reviews

Kevin Foley, OSM Fisheries Biologist, notified the Council of the open period to submit federal fisheries proposals. He also provided notice that three Federal Fisheries Closure Reviews for the Yukon Management Area in the Western Interior Region will come before the Council at the fall 2026 meeting.

The Council discussed recently adopted Alaska BOF Proposal 12 that added eel sticks to the list of allowable gear types for subsistence on the Kuskokwim but opted against submitting a similar proposal for the Federal cycle.

Call for Rural/Non-rural Determination Proposals

Liz Williams, OSM Cultural Anthropologist, notified the Council of the open period to submit proposals for rural/non-rural determination. This opportunity occurs every other fisheries regulatory cycle. The Council did not want to submit any proposals.

Review and Approve FY2025 Annual Report

The Council reviewed their draft FY2025 Annual Report to the Federal Subsistence Board and suggested minor edits to the narrative. Motion by Member Peter, seconded by Member Agayar, to approve the FY2025 Annual Report with the changes discussed. *The motion passed unanimously*.

Secretarial Review of the Federal Subsistence Management Program

The Council reviewed the comments they submitted following discussion at their fall 2025 meeting. They were notified of the comment period extension but did not wish to submit additional comments.

Wildlife Special Action Requests WSA26-01/02

Tom Plank, OSM Wildlife Biologist, provided an overview of recent special action requests submitted by the Western Arctic Caribou Working Group and Bering Land Bridge National Preserve. WSA26-01 requests to reduce the caribou harvest limits in Unit 22, 23, and the Southwest portion of Unit 26A to four caribou per year, only one of which may be a cow. WSA26-02 requests to close federal public lands in Unit 22 to caribou hunting by non-federally qualified users for the 2026-2028 regulatory cycle.

Motion by Member Rogers, seconded by Member Agayar, to take no action and defer to the home Councils affected more directly. *The motion passed unanimously.*

Alaska Board of Game (BOG)

Discussion of a draft proposal to create a Lower Yukon Management Area and limit non-resident moose hunters via draw permits

The Council discussed a draft BOG proposal shared with them by Grant Kopplin, a member of the public from Palmer. Mr. Kopplin requested Council feedback on the proposal so he could incorporate it into his final version. The proposal recommended creating five hunt zones in the lower Yukon River area for non-

residents targeting moose. A total of 24 draw permits would be issued per zone (120 total overall), but each permit would allow hunting only during one of three 10-day windows in September so that only eight non-residents could hunt at any given time in each zone. The aim of the proposal is to address growing non-resident hunting pressure and user conflicts by attempting to spread out non-resident hunting over time and areas.

The Council suggested the following modifications to the proposal draft:

- Reduce the number of non-resident permits from 24 per zone to 20 per zone
- Add a sixth hunt zone to include the area encompassing the Black River, Kusilvak, and Nunam Iqua because this area is accessible by boat and float plane by non-residents and it is an important local subsistence hunting area for coastal village residents

The Council noted concerns about poor meat care and wasted meat by non-resident hunters targeting trophy antlers, and they expressed a desire to see checkpoints at hub community airports to help address this. They also noted that more outreach is needed to inform non-resident hunters how to donate meat to local communities.

Call for Alaska BOG Proposals

Brooke McDavid, Council Coordinator, notified the Council of the call for BOG proposals for the Western region and provided a list of proposal ideas that were generated at the fall 2025 meeting. The Council voted to submit six BOG proposals:

1. Motion by Member Prince, seconded by Member Beans, to shorten the nonresident moose season in Unit 18 remainder to September 10-30. *The motion passed unanimously.*
2. Motion by Member Beans, seconded by Member Prince, to extend the lower Yukon resident moose season in Unit 18 remainder to start July 16. *The motion passed unanimously.*
3. Motion by Member Beans, seconded by Member Prince, to increase wolf hunting harvest limit to 15 in Unit 18. *The motion passed unanimously.*
4. Motion by Member Prince, seconded by Member Rogers, to increase the coyote hunting harvest limit to 4 in Unit 18. *The motion passed unanimously.*
5. Motion by Member Agayar, seconded by Member Rogers, to allow the take of moose from a motor driven boat in Unit 18. *The motion passed unanimously.*
6. Motion by Member Andrew, seconded by Member Beans, to allow the take of caribou from a motor driven boat in Unit 18. *The motion passed unanimously.*

Yukon Fisheries Delegation of Authority Letter – modification suggested by the Eastern Interior Council

Ms. McDavid notified the Council that the Eastern Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council has requested that Tanana Chiefs Conference, AVCP, YRITFC, and YRDFA be added to the list of entities with whom the Yukon River In-season Manager is required to coordinate. She noted the Western Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council is also in support of this.

The Council also supported these additions as a way to move toward co-management and more directly involve Tribal entities and subsistence users in decision making.

Feedback on Updated Draft Regulatory Map with Native Corporation Lands and Native Allotments Added

The Council reviewed a draft version of a regulatory map for Unit 18 that showed Native corporation lands and Native allotments. They liked the new map version and strongly supported updating the maps in the regulation book with these changes.

Additionally, the Council requested that efforts be made to put large versions of maps like these at boat launches and airports throughout the region to help raise awareness of land ownership, and where State versus Federal regulations apply.

Other Correspondence:

- Motion by Member Andrew, seconded by Member Parks, to send a letter to Togiak Refuge and ADF&G requesting the formation of a Mulchatna Caribou Working Group. *The motion passed unanimously.*
- Motion by Member Beans, seconded by Member Peter, to send a letter to ADF&G and the Yukon Delta Refuge, requesting hunter checkpoints be established at hub community airports. *The motion passed unanimously.*

Future Meeting Dates

The Council confirmed their fall 2026 meeting date and location: October 27–29, 2026, in Bethel
The Council selected their winter 2027 meeting date and location: March 24–26, 2027, in Bethel
The Council selected their fall 2027 meeting date and location: September 28–30, 2027, in Bethel

Fisheries Reports

The Council received the following fisheries updates:

- *Kuskokwim Inter-Tribal Fish Commission Update* by Terese Vicente, Policy and Programs Director
- *Kuskokwim River Salmon Management 2025 Season Review and 2026 Outlook* by Spencer Rearden, Yukon Delta Refuge Manager
- *Overview of the Ecological Impacts of Beaver and their Interactions with Fish in Alaska* by Will Samuel, UAF Doctoral Student
- *Overview of the Life History of Norther Pike and Research on the Yukon River* by Lisa Stuby, ADF&G Sport Fish Division
- *Yukon River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission Update* by Craig Chythlook, Executive Director
- *Yukon River Salmon Management Update* by Keith Herron, Assistant Fisheries Manager
    - The Council provided feedback to managers about non-salmon areas where they would like to have six-inch gillnet opportunities for non-salmon species
- *Fisheries Resource Monitoring and Partners for Fisheries Monitoring Programs Update* by Liz Williams and Kevin Foley
    - Chair Cleveland volunteered to help draft Priority Information Needs (PINs) for the Kuskokwim Area, and, although Member Morgan was not present, he was suggested as a

potential additional Kuskokwim Area working group member. Members Agayar, Prince, and Alexie volunteered to help draft PINs for the Yukon Area.

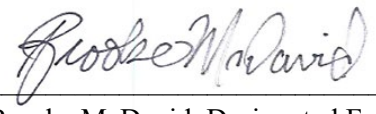
Other Reports

Additional reports received by the Council included:

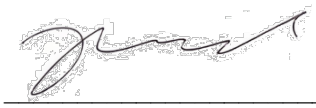
- *Alaska Migratory Bird Co-Management Council Overview* by Patty Schwalenberg, Executive Director
- *ADF&G Subsistence Division Update* by Brooke Fischer, Subsistence Resource Specialist
- *Association of Village Council Presidents Natural Resource Department Update* by Jennifer Hooper
- *Office of Subsistence Management Update* by Katerina Wessels

Other Business

- The Council received an update on correspondence sent since the last meeting
- The Council was notified of options for receiving travel vouchers via direct deposit
- The Council was informed of vacancies on State Fish and Game Advisory Committees



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



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

These minutes were certified by the Chair for accuracy on June 8, 2026, and were formally considered by the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Subsistence Regional Advisory Council at their fall 2026 meeting.

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