

EASTERN INTERIOR SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes

Via teleconference due to COVID-19 pandemic
March 4, 2021

*These minutes are an abbreviated record of the business conducted at this meeting.
For full details, transcripts of this three day meeting are available at:
<https://www.doi.gov/subsistence/library/transcripts/9-eastern-interior-alaska>*

Invocation

Council member Timothy McManus led the Council in the invocation. He requested a special prayer for Council Vice-chair Andrew Firmin of Fort Yukon who was in the hospital.

Call to Order, Roll Call and Quorum Establishment

Madame Chair Sue Entsminger called the meeting to order on Thursday, March 4 at 9:08 AM. Council members Linda Evans, William Glanz, Robert Wright (Council Secretary), Charlie Jagow, Donald Woodruff, and Timothy McManus all called in for the Council teleconference. Nicholas Henry and Andrew Firmin were not present. Nicholas Henry's absence was not excused. The Council has one vacant seat. A quorum was established with 7 of 9 seated Council members participating by phone.

Attendees:

In addition to Council members, at least the following 39 people from agencies, organizations and members of the public participated in this teleconferenced Council meeting:

- Office of Subsistence Management (OSM) - Pippa Kenner, Dr. Brent Vickers, Katya Wessels, and Tom Kron
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) - Holly Carroll, Tim Lorenzini, Shawn Bayless, Bryce Lake, Ally Mulligan, Vince Mathews, Jimmy Fox, and Steve Berendzen
- National Park Service (NPS) - Dr. Barbara Cellarius, Amy Craver, Dave Sarafin, Kyle Joly, Marcy Okada, Dr. Joshua Ream, Kim Jochum, Pat Owen, and Caroline Ketron
- Bureau of Land Management (BLM) - Jim Herriges
- Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) - Pat Petrivelli
- Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) - Deena Jallen, Jeff Estensen, Mark Burch, Lisa Stube, Sabrina Garcia, Klaus Wuttig, and Dr. Katie Howard
- Yukon River Drainages Fisheries Association (YRDFA) - Catherine Moncrieff and Serena Fitka
- Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) - Ben Stevens, Bruce Irvine, Deborah Lind, and Jim Simon
- Ahtna Intertribal Resource Commission (AITRC) - Karen Linnell, Odin Miller, Dustin Carl, and Hanalee Stanford

- Ahtna Inc. - Gloria Stickwan
- Kluti-Kaah Eyak - Faye Ewan
- public - Jack Reakoff, Wiseman

Review and Adopt Agenda

Motion by Council member Woodruff, seconded by Council member McManus, to adopt the agenda as read with the following changes:

- Under Old Business, add Federal Subsistence Board requests that this Council works on a compromise with the Southcentral Subsistence Regional Advisory Council over a proposal to start a new subsistence fishery in Cordova.
- Under Agency Reports, remove climate change research from Dr. Todd Brinkmann; Dr. Brinkmann is unavailable today.

The motion passed unanimously.

Election of Officers

Ms. Sue Entsminger was elected as the Council's Chair.

Mr. William Glanz was elected as the Council's Vice-Chair.

Mr. Donald Woodruff was elected as the Council's Secretary.

Review and Approve Previous Meeting Minutes

Motion by Council member Glanz, seconded by Council member Woodruff, to approve the Fall 2020 meeting minutes as presented with the following modification: The Council wished to shout out to Council member McManus for his involvement in helping to feed the local people in his city and Village Council. The motion was approved unanimously.

Council Member and Chair Reports

Council Vice-Chair William Glanz of Central reported that the caribou situation has been very challenging and there have been lots of hunters from outside the area and there was a lot of ATV activity. He noted that the ADF&G objective was for a 5,000 caribou harvest and that the situation was dangerous. People are tearing up the countryside with ATVs and rural residents around Central have been very concerned. People are not able to get moose in the upper Yukon River area.

Mr. Timothy McManus of Nenana reported that they had a lot of rain in Nenana during the fall hunting season. He said that he helped with several rescues. He said that there were lots of berries last fall and that he had been able to put up some fish last summer. Winter has been good and he has been seeing lots of lynx and wolf tracks.

Council Secretary Donald Woodruff of Eagle reported that they have been seeing caribou all winter. He said that snowshoe hare and lynx populations have been falling rapidly. He said that about 90 percent of the people in Eagle have been vaccinated for COVID-19 and thanked TCC for the vaccination effort.

Mr. Charlie Jagow of the Porcupine River reported that they only had light snow early in the winter. He noted that the marten population crashed in his area and is only about 25 percent of what it was. He noted that the snowshoe hare population crashed last year and that lynx population is declining. He said that there were lots of wolverines this year.

Mr. Robert Wright, Sr. of Tanana reported that there have been salmon conservation issues on the Yukon River. He said that black bear populations are down, and that moose are scarce around Rampart. He said that the snow was deep last year. He noted that COVID-19 infections are down and that he is looking forward to spring. After the COVID-19 pandemic, he is looking forward to being able to meet person to person again. He said that there had been a lot of hardship on the river, and that he is looking forward to a better year ahead.

Ms. Linda Evans of Rampart reported that she has been out of Alaska this winter, but will be coming back to Alaska in the spring. She shares the concerns expressed by Robert Wright. The lack of subsistence has been a hardship for everyone.

Madame Chair Sue Entsminger of Mentasta reported that they had about a foot of snow early, and that February was cold. She said that they have had more snow in the past two weeks. She was out with friends who got 3 wolves earlier. Moose and sheep are dealing with deep snow now, and she hopes that they will do OK through the rest of the winter. She is concerned about the Forty Mile Caribou Herd. She noted that she had been able to get a sheep last fall. She has been appointed to the Ahtna Intertribal Resource Commission (AITRC Board). She recently participated in teleconferences for the Federal Subsistence Board meeting and Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve Subsistence Resource Commission (SRC). She said that she looks forward to being able to have face to face meetings again after the COVID-19 pandemic. She noted that the Federal Subsistence Board had asked the Southcentral and Eastern Interior Councils to see if they could reach a compromise on the Fisheries Proposal FP21-10, and that the Eastern Interior Council would talk about this later in the meeting.

Public and Tribal Comments on Non-agenda Items

Mr. Jack Reakoff from Wiseman expressing concerns about BLM's Central Yukon Plan to transfer the Haul Road corridor to the State of Alaska. Both the Western Interior and North Slope Councils opposed the BLM plan at their meetings the past two weeks. Council member Wright made a motion, seconded by Council member Woodruff, to send a letter to BLM opposing their Central Yukon Plan. The motion passed unanimously. The Eastern Interior Council asked BLM to extend the comment period noting that the process had been rushed and that there had not been adequate public input. The deadline for comments was March 11. Tom Kron was to work with the Madame Chair Sue Entsminger to get the Council letter out before the deadline.

Ms. Karen Linnell of AITRC gave an update on their community hunt framework for 8 Ahtna communities. Last year there were poor salmon runs on the Copper River and there were poor moose harvests.

Ms. Gloria Stickwan of Tazlina thanked the Council for voting against the Fisheries Proposal FP21-10.

Mr. Ben Stevens from TCC thanked the Council for voting against the BLM Central Yukon Plan.

Ms. Faye Ewan of Kluti-Kaah expressed concerns about Copper River salmon conservation and the need to provide for elders and to maintain the subsistence way of life.

Old Business

Madame Chair Sue Entsminger explained that the Federal Subsistence Board, at their January 26-29 meeting, has asked that the Eastern Interior and Southcentral Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils try to find a compromise on the lower Copper River dip net proposal (FP21-10). The Board has faith that the Councils have the correct process to figure this out. Council member Wright made a motion, seconded by Council member Woodruff, for the joint fall 2021 Eastern Interior Council meeting with the Southcentral Council on October 14, followed by an October 15 Eastern Interior Council meeting in Fairbanks. The proposal is for the two Councils to meet face to face in Anchorage on October 14 and then for the Eastern Interior Council to travel back to meet in Fairbanks on October 15. The Eastern Interior wants to hold their Council meeting in Fairbanks to allow for public participation from the Eastern Interior Region. If travel to Anchorage is not approved, the request is for a teleconference for the joint session between the Eastern Interior and Southcentral Councils. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Jimmy Fox (Manager, Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge (NWR)) reported on hunter ethics, education and outreach work they did last summer at Circle and Ft. Yukon. With the COVID-19 pandemic last fall, there wasn't as much activity around the Ft. Yukon airport. There was more activity out of Circle, and they have been working with the public there to help with hunter ethics and education.

Ms. Kim Jochum gave the NPS Individual Customary and Traditional (C&T) update. Council member Woodruff made a motion, seconded by Council member Glanz, to support the Mayo family for an Individual C&T for moose for Denali National Park and Preserve (NP&P). The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Jim Herriges (BLM) and Tom Kron (OSM) gave an overview of the Nome Creek issue and the recent Closure Review. Ms. Lisa Stuby (Fisheries Biologist, ADF&G, Sport Fish Division) gave an update on ADF&G's and BLM's plans for a telemetry and mark-recapture study in Nome Creek to better assess Arctic Grayling population dynamics there. The Council felt that they should wait on this issue and plans to submit a subsistence fishery regulatory proposal for Nome Creek at their winter 2022 meeting for the 2023-2025 regulatory years. The Council thought that it would be helpful to have more information before moving forward. The Council noted that the subsistence fishery in Nome Creek has been closed in

Federal regulations for 2 decades. The Council is not planning to submit a special action request for the subsistence fishery there for the next two summers.

New Business

Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program Update

Ms. Pippa Kenner (OSM Anthropologist) presented the Council with the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program update.

Call for Federal Wildlife Proposals

Ms. Kenner informed the Council that the Board is accepting proposals through May 24, 2021, to change Federal regulations for the subsistence wildlife hunting and trapping on Federal public lands for the 2022-2024 regulatory years. The Board will consider proposals to change Federal subsistence hunting and trapping seasons, harvest limits, methods, and means related to taking of wildlife for subsistence uses, as well as customary and traditional use determinations. The Council did not have any wildlife proposals at their March 4 meeting.

Council Charter

The Council reviewed their Charter and requested that a “carryover” provision be added so that Council members are allowed to continue to serve on the Council until a decision is made on appointments. This is based on delays in Council appointments in recent years. It was noted that NPS Subsistence Resource Commissions (SRC) had such a condition in their charters, and that this provision was subsequently move out of the SRC charters and into NPS regulations. Council member Woodruff made a motion for a “carryover” provision in the Eastern Interior Council Charter; the motion was seconded by Council member Glanz. The motion passed unanimously.

Other new Business

Mr. Mark Burch (ADF&G) helped to explain Alaska Board of Fisheries and Alaska Board of Game proposed meeting schedules during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Council member Wright expressed concern that the number of moose along the upper Yukon River has been declining, and that there has not been a recent moose survey. Mr. Wright made a motion, seconded by Council member Glanz, that the Council send a letter to upper Yukon land and resource managers (ADF&G, FWS, NPS and BLM) requesting moose surveys along the upper Yukon River. The motion passed unanimously.

Review and approve FY-2020 Annual Report

The Council reviewed their draft 2020 Annual Report and agreed to the report with the addition of a request for the following Copper River salmon information:

“The 2021 preseason estimates indicate that Sockeye and Chinook will be below the most recent 10-year average by 37.4% and 22.4% respectively. For Chinook, this recent 10-year average already represents a steep decline from previous decades. The 10-year average for the 1998-2007 period was 86,684 compared with only 47,386 for the 2010-2019 period (Schwanke 2019). While sockeye runs were generally strong during the early 2010s (Botz and Somerville 2017), they have been markedly smaller since 2017, and alarmingly low during 2018 and 2020. The estimated total run size for 2018 is 817,121 Sockeye Salmon, while preliminary estimates for 2020 put the number at 602,000, making these among the lowest returns since at least the early 1980s. The declines indicate an urgent need for more research into better understanding Copper River salmon fisheries, in order to inform management of those crucial subsistence resources. The Office of Subsistence Management should prioritize funding research.”

Council member Glanz made a motion, seconded by Council member McManus, to approve the annual report with the Copper River salmon addition. The motion passed unanimously.

Agency Reports:

- Ms. Karen Linnell (Executive Director) reported again on AITRC issues.
- Council member McManus reported on Tribal issues for Nenana. He said that fall salmon fishing had been poor. He had released Chum Salmon while keeping Silver Salmon at this fishwheel last summer. He noted that TCC had gotten salmon from Bristol Bay last summer and he was very thankful for that.
- Dr. Katie Howard and Ms. Sabrina Garcia (Fisheries Biologists, ADF&G) gave updates on early marine life of Yukon River salmon.
- Ms. Holly Carroll (new USFWS Yukon River fisheries manager) gave the overview for the 2020 Yukon River salmon fishery. She noted that the Chum Salmon return last year was poor, and that the U.S. didn't make the Canadian Boarder passage goal last year. She said that they have a preliminary projection for a Yukon River return of 102,000-189,000 Chinook Salmon in 2021, but that they won't finalize the numbers until after a joint meeting with the Canadians on April 12-14. She said that she expects conservative fisheries in Alaska this coming summer. Mr. Jeff Estensen (Fall Season Yukon River Manager, ADF&G), joined in with for the salmon update.
- Ms. Serena Fitka (Executive Director) gave the YRDFA update to the Council. They plan an April 29 pre-season meeting and a June 1 start for the first in-season teleconference. Ms. Catherine Moncrieff (Anthropologist) gave an update on YRDFA projects along the Yukon River.
- Mr. Steve Berendzen (Refuge Manager) gave the Arctic NWR report.
- Mr. Tim Lorenzini (Supervisory Ranger) gave the Tetlin NWR report.
- Mr. Jimmy Fox (Refuge Manager) gave the Yukon Flats NWR report.

- Ms. Amy Craver (Subsistence Manager) and Pat Owen (Wildlife Biologist) gave the Denali NP&P report. Amy thanked Council members Wright and McManus for their good work on the Denali SRC.
- Ms. Marcy Okada (Subsistence Coordinator) gave the update for the Yukon-Charley River National Preserve.
- Mr. Dave Sarafin (Fisheries Biologist) and Ms. Caroline Ketron (Biological Sciences Technician) gave the report for the Wrangell-St. Elias NP&P.
- Mr. Jim Herriges (Wildlife Biologist) gave the BLM report.
- Mr. Tom Kron (Acting Council Coordinator) gave the OSM report.

Future Meeting Dates:

The Council agreed to hold their winter 2022 meeting on March 8 & 9 in Ft. Yukon (1st choice) or Fairbanks (2nd choice).

After closing comments by Council members, the Eastern Interior Alaska Regional Advisory Council adjourned at 3:30 PM on March 4.

_____/signature on the original/_____
 Tom Kron, Acting Council Coordinator, Designated Federal Officer
 USFWS Office of Subsistence Management

_____/signature on the original/_____
 Sue Entsminger, Chair
 Eastern Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

These minutes will be formally considered by the Eastern Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council at its fall 2021 meeting, and any corrections or notations will be incorporated in the minutes at that meeting.

A more detailed report of this meeting, copies of the transcript, and meeting handouts are available upon request. Call Tom Kron at 1-800-478-1456 or 907-351-0081, email tom_kron@fws.gov.