

**Interagency Staff Committee recommendations
to the Federal Subsistence Board on
2023 Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils' charter change requests**

The Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils (Councils) were chartered under the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). The Councils' charters are reviewed and approved by the Secretary of the Interior every two years on odd-numbered years. During this time individual Councils may recommend changes to their charters. The Councils can only recommend changes to the parts of the charter not mandated by FACA.

During the 2023 Charter Review process the Councils recommended the following charter changes:

1. The Southeast, Southcentral, Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, Western Interior, and Eastern Interior Councils requested to ADD a non-voting youth representative seat for ages of 18 to 25

Each of the five Councils were slightly different in wording their requests; however, overall, all five Councils desired to engage and educate a younger generation of users in the Federal Subsistence Management Program and requested to add one non-voting youth representative seat on each of their Councils. The Councils made various suggestions on the qualifications of applicants for the requested seat, which included that they be:

- Knowledgeable and experienced in matters related to subsistence uses of fish and wildlife
- Interested in learning about subsistence issues and the Federal subsistence fish and wildlife regulatory processes
- Active in subsistence activities or be involved in fish or wildlife management studies

Although the Councils are proposing this seat to be non-voting, they suggest that the member would contribute to the Councils' discussions and provide valuable feedback as any other Council member. Four Councils (Eastern Interior, Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, Southeast, and Western Interior) agreed that the applicants for the requested seat should be residing in their respective subsistence region. Two Councils (Southeast and Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta) suggested to establish an age range of 18 to 25 for the requested seat. The Southcentral Council suggested that a youth representative in the requested seat should be eligible to earn 3 credits in the University of Alaska system. The Southeast Council suggested that a term for such non-voting youth representative member should be two years.

Council's justification for their request

The following is a compilation of justifications provided by five Councils.

The Councils feel it is essential for younger subsistence users to learn about the Federal regulatory process with firsthand knowledge so that the new generation of leaders can better understand the complex regulatory process and maximize the Council's effectiveness moving forward. The Councils feel it is extremely important to actively encourage the next generation of

leaders to become involved, especially considering all of the issues climate change is going to bring in their future.

The Federal regulatory process is complicated, and it can take a long time for a new Council member to master the basics of their positions and learn how the regulatory process operates. It can also be more difficult for young people to qualify to serve on a Council when they do not have as much experience in leadership and communication, although they might have been doing subsistence all through their younger years. Establishing a youth seat would give valuable hands-on experience to interested youth and better prepare them to serve as appointed Council members in the future. It would help them become more familiar with the major subsistence issues in their region and overall help prepare the next generation of leaders to fight for the resources residents of the region depend on for food and culture. Additionally, it would provide an opportunity to teach and mentor the next group of leaders in the processes and complexities of resource management and regulatory impacts to subsistence uses.

The Councils feel that the youth engagement provides an additional perspective that they can integrate into the decision-making process and that will allow them to hear from the next and future generations. The Councils has found youth input through public testimony at the Council meetings and associated workgroup meetings useful and important to consider in its deliberations. Youth representation on a Council would be beneficial in understanding the younger generation's reliance on resources and would help predict future needs for subsistence users.

The Interagency Staff Committee (ISC) reviewed the Councils' requests and formed the following recommendation.

The ISC recommends the Board support the Councils' request to add a non-voting young leader seat to the requesting Councils. The ISC proposes to add the following language to Section 12, Membership and Designation of five Councils' charters:

One non-voting young leader member who is a resident of the region, over the age of 18, and who participates in subsistence activities, or is knowledgeable in matters related to subsistence uses of fish and wildlife, or engaged in a resource management related field of studies.

Additionally, the ISC suggests the Board consider recommending to the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture to add the same language to the other five Councils' charters.

The ISC considers that an addition of a non-voting young leader seat will allow the Federal Subsistence Program to benefit from engaging and training the next generation of young leaders who potentially will become future Council members. It will provide an onramp for the next generation of advisors to the Board and cultivate expertise in the Program that will benefit from the perspective of young leaders.

Bearing in mind all of the benefits of adding a non-voting youth representative seat, the ISC also wants the Board to consider that if the Secretaries approve this additional language to the charters, the Federal Subsistence Management Program will have to acquire additional costs to

support these non-voting members and will have to develop new selection criteria for young leader seats.

2. The Northwest Arctic Council requests to ADD geographic membership balance criteria under Section 12, Membership and Designation as follows:

For geographic membership balance, it is a Council goal to seat a minimum of one Council member from communities within each of the following five Districts. These Districts are: Upper Noatak Area (Kivalina and Noatak); Upper Kobuk Area (Ambler, Kobuk, Shungnak); Selawik Area (Kiana, Noorvik, Selawik); Seward Peninsula Area (Buckland, Deering); and Kotzebue.

Council's justification for their request

The Northwest Arctic Council has discussed this desire in prior meetings as well. Specifically, the Council expressed the desire to have more representation from underrepresented communities such as Noatak, the Upper River Communities, and Kivalina. Currently 5 five of the 10 Council members reside in Kotzebue, with no representatives from the Noatak region and upper Kobuk. The Council also wanted to have representation from these other communities also because many of these communities are where caribou winter and live year-around and where caribou arrive in the fall time. The Council voted unanimously to amend the charter to push for better representation across the whole region for this RAC. They voted and passed a motion to re-district Northwest Arctic subsistence region to the upper Noatak Area, upper Kobuk Area, Noorvik area, the Buckland and Deering area, and Kotzebue.

The ISC reviewed the Northwest Arctic request and formed the following recommendation.

The ISC recommends supporting the Council's request to add a geographic membership balance for the Northwest Arctic subsistence region based on a 10-member Council with the understanding that this goal might not be met depending on the submitted applications and ratings of the applicants. Based on the language of the Council's request, the ISC proposes to add the following modified language into the Section 12, Membership and Designation of the charter:

To ensure that there is geographic membership balance and balanced representation on the Council the Secretary will strive to appoint members to equally represent the following five Districts: Upper Noatak Area (Kivalina and Noatak), Upper Kobuk Area (Ambler, Kobuk, Shungnak), Selawik Area (Kiana, Noorvik, Selawik), Seward Peninsula Area (Buckland, Deering), and Kotzebue.